"Till Death Do Us Part"?

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Sanctuary of Ideas, Committed Actors, and Lifetime Rulership in Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon and Togo

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Martello Paper Series

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For too long international relations as a field of study has failed to face up to questions about the applicability of its core schools of thought to non-Western states. As the author Nadège Compaoré points out – "satisfactory theories of IR should be able to address how states behave in all parts of the world." Indeed, mainstream international relations theories do not lay out their assumptions and claims only to add "except for states in Africa." And yet, much of international relations work on African politics implies or is based on a sense that African states are somehow different or "other." In this *Martello Paper* Compaoré seeks to highlight and challenge those tendencies.

To do that Compaoré examines three African states where leaders have remained in power for an extraordinarily long time – until their death – and argues that the explanation for why this is so comes not just from reasons internal to the states in question but also from external sources and, most importantly, from the relationship or dialectic between those internal and external factors and actors. In order to establish and study that dynamic she uses a critical social constructivist analysis since this is an analytical framework that focuses on ideas and their construction. In using this framework she reveals the extent to which regime longevity is fundamentally linked to ideational frameworks created and maintained by external actors that

effectively enable the perpetuation of particular regimes. In bringing that dynamic to the forefront and in revealing the extent of external culpability in the process, Nadège Compaoré brings greater insight to these African cases as well as to international relations theory.

As is the case with all *Martello Papers*, the views expressed here are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Centre or any of its supporting agencies.

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Contents

Acknowledgments

1. Introduction

Arthur A. Nwankwo once issued an unambiguous warning to African dictators, urging them to recognize that historically 'most dictatorships have come crashing down, like a pack of cards' (Nwankwo 1990, 16). The inevitability of the fall of dictatorial regimes is clear in Nwankwo's statement, indicating the necessity for dictators to seriously consider transitioning to democratic governments, and calling on African leaders to avoid a doomed dictatorial path. In 2010, when most Sub-Saharan African countries celebrated their fiftieth anniversary of independence from colonial powers, a significant number of those countries had in fact spent their independence years under a different type of yoke: uninterrupted, dictatorships. In fact, Nwankwo's premonition was perfectly evidenced on October 31, 2014, with the fall of Blaise Compaoré, the long-serving leader of Burkina Faso. Indeed, fuelled by his desire to run another term following his 27 years in power – against popular will, Compaoré's insistence in amending the Burkinabè Constitution[1] met with a historic popular uprising in the capital Ouagadougou, which forced him to resign from power on October 31, 2014, a year before his term was over (Carayol 2014).

While Nwankwo's prediction of the unsustainable nature of dictatorship is indeed compelling, especially in light of the recent events in Burkina Faso, evidence also points to a number of African dictators who have managed to spend their lifetime in power. Francophone Africa is particularly notorious in this matter. Since the independence years of the 1960s, the counts three rulers who came to power – either through elections or *coup d'états* – and died in power. This paper problematizes the phenomenon of regime longevity in francophone Africa, by focusing on the mechanisms that have encouraged, and indeed enabled some francophone African regimes to extend their terms well-beyond their initial appointed time.

I seek to discuss this, by using case studies of authoritarian regimes in francophone Africa, which benefited from an uninterrupted reign. I argue that by actively supporting undemocratic regimes in Africa with which they have strong ties, or by failing to condemn such regimes, France in particular, has contributed to legitimating authoritarian regimes in its former colonies. In this context, the paper can be understood as part of a critique of the so-called *Françafrique*[2] politics, which illustrates French foreign policy in francophone African countries following independence era of the 1960s. Indeed, it is not a secret that France has actively supported francophone African autocrats, for instance by 'sanctioning sham elections in Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Gabon, Niger and Togo between 1992 and 1996, and resuming aid to fraudulent, undemocratic regimes' (Adebajo 2008, 243–4), by providing military support to defend the autocratic regimes of Chad and the Central African Republic against coups attempts, or to overthrow the elected government of Pascal Lissouba in Congo-Brazzaville (Adebajo 2008, 245, 251). However, the aim of this paper is to further look into how and why such an undemocratic and continued French support for African autocratic regimes has seemingly been accepted by other major players within the international system, and has ultimately contributed to the longevity of some African autocratic regimes.

The paper considers three prominent francophone African leaders who have successfully personalized and eternalized their power, namely: Félix Houphouët-Boigny in Côte d'Ivoire, Omar Bongo Ondimba in Gabon, and Etienne Gnassingbé Eyadéma in Togo. These cases highlight the fact that Pius Adesanmi (2010, 266) is not wrong to assert that 'Louis XIV's utterance, *l'état c'est moi,*[3] the most famous incidence of personalization of ruthless power recorded in history, found its most literal appropriation and actualization in francophone Africa's long list of life presidents and fathers of the nation.' Why and how is this so? Specifically, what explains the longevity of the aforementioned dictatorships in francophone Africa? The paper will address these questions, by anchoring the analysis within the three case studies mentioned above, and within the context of French foreign policy in Africa.

Logically, the prospect of the inevitable fall of dictators should be a serious disincentive to those who may be interested in pursuing the same path. Yet, one may wonder whether the proven success of some dictators to hold on to power until natural death may potentially constitute an appeal for others to try their fortune. It is important at this stage to make it clear that this paper does not seek to investigate the latter argument. Rather, it seeks

to identify under what circumstances, Houphouët-Boigny (in office from 1960 to 1993); Bongo (in office from 1967 to 2009); and Eyadéma (in office from 1967 to 2005), succeeded in eternalizing their power. This is an issue that has previously concerned other commentators, and the present analysis does not claim novelty in that respect. However, while analysts such as Nwankwo mainly emphasize the accountability of individual dictators and their international partners in perpetuating undemocratic rulerships,[4] this research seeks to 'emphasize the interaction of international and domestic influences on state behaviour and [to] take the role of ideas – knowledge, values and strategic concepts – seriously' (Risse-Kappen 1994, 186). As such, the paper examines not only the responsibility of domestic and international actors in enabling the longevity of such regimes, but is especially concerned with the *dialectic* between both sets of actors, as well as with the influence of specific norms and constructs in shaping the behaviour of these actors.

The key objective of the present analysis is therefore to address the issue of uninterrupted dictatorship in francophone African countries following independence, by specifically looking at why and how the regimes of Houphouët, Bongo and Eyadéma successfully lasted a lifetime. The research hypothesizes that the overarching international structure is characterized by constructs from various actors, and in turn permits a specific behaviour from domestic and international actors. This dynamic relationship can ultimately serve to explain the longevity of the dictatorships presently examined. The term dictatorship highlights the role and significance of the *one-man* rulership in the three selected countries. This research suggests that while important, it is not enough to identify actors (both state and non-state actors, at the domestic and international level) who are involved in maintaining dictatorial regimes in African states. This analysis aims to uncover the nature of those norms and constructs, how and why they shape the behaviour of the relevant actors.

The remainder of this paper will be divided into five parts. Following this introduction, I will elaborate on the theoretical foundations underpinning the above hypothesis, and which guides the rest of the research. Specifically, I will evaluate how existing literature on African politics on the one hand, and IR theories on the other, may or may not be helpful in exploring the present question. The subsequent three chapters deal with the respective regimes of Félix Houphouët-Boigny in Côte d'Ivoire, Omar Bongo Ondimba in Gabon, and Etienne Gnassingbé Eyadéma in Togo. In chapter three, I examine the economic logic behind the longevity of Houphouët's

reign. This chapter seeks to demonstrate the primacy of economic interests over political instability, and uses the arguments surrounding the "Ivorian miracle" as a case in point. Subsequently, chapter four aims to uncover the roots of Omar Bongo's regime survival. This chapter highlights the political importance of the idea of "good governance", and argues that hegemonic discourses can have the unanticipated effect of perpetuating autocratic regimes such as Bongo's. Chapter five investigates Eyadéma's regime, and seeks to explain the survival of the Togolese president, whose regime is perhaps the most paradoxical one of all three cases, on account of the the global tolerance for the highly undemocratic "Republic" of Togo. The sixth chapter discusses the conclusions and implications of these case studies. This closing chapter will also evaluate the theoretical insights presented in the study.

2. Theoretical Foundations

2.1 Investigating African Politics: "Realities" or "Particularities"?

Many scholars of Africa argue that mainstream International Relations (IR) theory such as realism and liberalism cannot accurately serve to analyze the complexities of African politics (Brown 2006, 143). The implication of this position is that the model of the Westphalian sovereign state on which dominant IR theories are based does not apply to African states. In the same vein, a survey of key influential literature on post-colonial African states shows that their modes of governance 'have been characterized as *personal rule* (Jackson & Rosberg 1982), *elite accommodation* and *belly politics* (Bayart 1993) and as *shadow state* (Reno 1998), whereas Jean-François Médard (1996) describes the post-colonial state as a *neo-patrimonial state*' (Bøås 2003, 32; emphasis added). Before proceeding, it is worth briefly examining these depictions of the African post-colonies, in order to situate whether they can help explain the longevity of dictatorial rule in francophone Africa.

In their 1982 book titled *Personal Rule in Black Africa: Prince, Autocrat, Prophet, Tyrant,* Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg's affirmation of the importance of rulership and leadership *vis-à-vis* the politics of sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is explicit. However, the authors are not interested in investigating the personalities of the rulers, nor are they interested in the personal authority of those rulers. They are rather concerned with their political capacities (Jackson and Rosberg 1982, 4). In other words, their research agenda deals with the political structure in which rulership in SSA takes place. Inspired by Max Weber's typology of legitimate domination, Jackson and Rosberg have classified the concept of personal rule into "princely rule" and "autocratic rule" on the one hand; and "prophetic

rule" and "tyrannical rule" on the other (Jackson and Rosberg 1982, 73-82). Thus, in general terms, one can situate dictatorship as a type of personal rule, based on Jackson and Rosberg's elaboration of the defining feature of personal rule:

> It is a dynamic world of political will and action that is ordered less by institutions than by personal authorities and power; a world of stratagem and countermeasure, of action and reaction, but without the assured mediation and regulation of effective political institutions. (1982, 12)

Further, an autocratic ruler 'tends to dominate the oligarchy, the government, and the state without having to share power with other leaders' (Jackson and Rosberg 1982, 78). This paper will suggest that African dictatorships correspond to autocratic forms of government. It is important to note that personal rule as described above is by no means confined to contemporary Black Africa (Jackson and Rosberg 1982, 5). It may be concluded that these authors describe certain realities of most African states post-independence. By highlighting the non-institutional character of rulers' political capacities, they point to the importance of individual rulers in much of SSA. Yet, by insisting on the dynamic character of those rulers' choices, Jackson and Rosberg point to the importance of actors who remain outside the realm of rulership, without elaborating on the non-rulers' connection to power. I argue that it is essential to investigate the relationship between rulers and non-rulers who are at the heart of political choices and actions in SSA.

William Reno's *Warlord Politics and African States* (1998) effectively deals with the aforementioned relationship, by showing the importance that rulers give to non-rulers such as warlords, ultimately impacting on rulers' decision-making patterns as well as their chances of survival. Reno's piece is very useful in beginning to explicate how some autocratic rulers may last longer in power than others, thanks to the aforementioned relationship now widely known as "warlord politics". Paralleling Reno's identification of warlord mechanisms as a power consolidation strategy used by African rulers, J. Andrew Grant (2010, 229-231) identifies "subregional strongmen" in West Africa as key "power-brokers" sought by state leaders who seek to secure control of regions outside the state capital. The relationships between state leaders and subregional strongmen have varying degrees of success, with leaders such as Sierra Leone's Stevens, Zaire's Mobutu and Côte d'Ivoire's Houphouët having proven to be among the most able in securing the loyalty of their subregional strongmen (Grant, 2010: 237). This line of argumentation reveals the importance of the link between rulers

and non-rulers, and is helpful when aiming to understand the longevity of dictatorships in Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon and Togo. It also highlights the importance of neopatrimonial systems as tools for power consolidation. The significance and limitations of neopatrimonialism for the present discussion will be elucidated shortly.

Jean-François Bayart's book, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (1993) is a vivid account of the post-colonial state in SSA, in which Bayart describes the African political scene as one characterized by the 'politics of the belly'.[5] In his use of the term, Bayart (1993, 242) insists that there be no hierarchy that subordinates one concept over the other. In other words, the term "belly" is just as important as the term "politics". Thus, "politics of the belly" does not merely refer to corruption and clientelism, but is very much a depiction of *power relations* in SSA. The author argues that the "politics of the belly" is a mode of government (Bayart 1993, 268). The explanatory detail that Bayart allocates to this terminology is particularly important in that it allows for a helpful analogy. Indeed, investigations on African political behaviour often deal with both incentives and mechanisms that are connected to specific regimes' hold on power. However, there is often a clear hierarchy that separates the incentives-related questions (why-questions) from mechanisms-related ones (how-questions). Bayart's call to allocate the same degree of importance to both "politics" (focus on power mechanisms) and "belly" (focus on economic incentives) can be seen as removing the hierarchy between "how" questions and "why" questions, since both sets of questions deal with mutually constitutive issues. The "politics of the belly" according to Bayart can be thought of as the politics of personal power, which reveal individualism in African politics – albeit one different from Western individualism. According to Bayart, unlike the self-centred connotation evoked in the latter concept, African individualism holds significant distributive implications, thus giving individuals constant social importance (1993, 266). While Bayart can be commended for helping explain the "politics of the belly", there is an integrative aspect which he fails to address – that of the dynamic between external and internal "politics of the belly". It may seem, indeed, as if mostly domestic actors were involved in the "politics of the belly". As in the previous case with Jackson and Rosberg (1982), one is left in want of a more inclusive explanatory tool.

Like the above, the literature on neopatrimonialism in Africa cannot be fully explored in a single chapter. However, as a key concept used to point to the situation in many post-colonial governments (Bøås 2003, 32), it is worth assessing how neopatrimonialism may help explain lifetime dictatorships.

It is helpful to base this evaluation on Ian Taylor's recent overview of what neopatrimonialism indicates *vis-à-vis* Africa. Taylor (2010, 3) defines neopatrimonialism as a system where in theory, the public and private spheres are two separate realms; while in practice, the line between the two is blurred, with rulers depending on patron-client relationships to maintain power. Furthermore, and echoing Bøås (2003), Taylor (2010, 3) argues that neopatrimonialism has virtually become 'the standard tool of analysis' of African states. It is easy to concede with Taylor that while neopatrimonialism is a concept that is not unique to Africa, it constitutes a very useful methodological tool for analyzing African politics. Yet, it seems paradoxical to argue as he does, that concepts such as neopatrimonialism are *necessary* to understand *the* African State (Taylor 2010). Indeed, while it may appear redundant to argue that concepts that are currently seen as necessary tools of analysis for African politics were once inexistent, my aim here is to stress that such concepts are indeed constructed, through specific perspectives and for specific purposes. Otherwise, one could infer for instance that neopatrimonialism is a fixed condition of "the African State". If this were the case, similar assumptions about other characteristics of African states such as the prominence of lasting dictatorships being a fixed condition on the continent would be made, but with predictable objection. By conceding to concepts such as neopatrimonialism being "necessary" to the study of African states, one is containing the concept within African states alone, unless it is also "necessary" to use the same concept in the study of any region where neopatrimonialism exists. Furthermore, by containing the necessity of the use of the concept to the African realm, one implies that the neopatrimonial system in Africa exists without international facilitation.

By insisting on domestic actor-led strategies, much of the literature on African politics confounds the line between realities and particularities. That is, unless external factors are integrated with internal factors in the explanatory framework, one risks telling a tale whereby African actors are seen as the primary culprits for problematic governments. Were both internal and external factors considered, the approach would point to the "realities" of African political culture. Otherwise, as long as issues are made particular to internal factors within African governments, thereby giving primacy to African actors over their external allies, as well as alienating the structure within which they all operate, one may be witnessing a depiction of African particularities.

Why are concepts such as *neopatrimonialism* and *personal rule* mostly associated with African politics? Evaluating African politics through the

aforementioned concepts can indeed help explain some political realities on the continent. Yet, as discussed thus far, such realities are not exclusive to the African continent. If this is the case, a primary intuition in surveying existing literature is to note the paradoxical insistence on an "African Way", as reflected in much of the existing literature on Africa – and this, despite the relevant authors' claim to the contrary. Furthermore, although rejecting the portrayal of an exotic Africa remains an important argument in itself for the reasons mentioned in the preceding section, the impetus behind this denunciation is mostly instrumental, as it serves to highlight the dangers of particularising African governments. To be sure, the literature which focuses on the precarious circumstances surrounding domestic politics in post-independence Africa does not only contribute to marginalizing African governments, it is also plagued with limitations. It is important to stress that this claim is not directed at all existing literature. Rather, given that some of the above authors can account for an important sample – however small – of the literature on African politics, the remainder of this section proposes to highlight the limitations of that sample.

For the present purposes, these limitations can be regrouped into one major point, namely the overwhelming focus of existing analyses on domestic actors. Although it is clear that domestic politics in Africa is a core subject of analysis, failing to give equal importance to external factors is limiting. For instance, the incentives driving domestic actors may be explained, but unless those driving their external supporters are also investigated, much is left to the imagination as far as the supporting mechanism is concerned. Thus, even though analyses such as those of neopatrimonial African states do put forward the involvement of both domestic and international actors in domestic affairs (Reno 1998), the actual *dynamics* between domestic processes (involving both domestic and international actors) and the international structure remain unclear.

2.2 Comparative African Politics and IR

This analysis suggests that it is the particularisation of African politics that in large part impedes on the ability of much of African comparative politics literature to provide a useful standard tool of analysis. Christopher LaMonica (2010, 351) echoes this argument when he states that 'students and scholars of African affairs need to identify parallels of political experience and theory, rather than follow the prevailing norms of social science

methodology, which stresses the importance of Africa as "different".' He further argues that in order to systematically theorize about African politics, it is important to begin identifying "patterns of human behaviour" rather than differences (LaMonica 2010, 361). With this suggestion, LaMonica calls for a dialogue between African political literature and Western-dominated IR. Inspired by LaMonica's vision, this analysis seeks a dialogue between African comparative politics and Western-dominated IR theories. This objective keeps in mind the great divide that separates both disciplines however, and which has been the subject of much debate (Caporaso 1997). For instance, Caporaso (1997) has evocatively equated the issue with a persistent academic division of labour. What is unsatisfactory about dominant IR theories and what can be done to address this deficiency? This question investigates the potential of dominant IR theories to analyse African politics and to examine the subject of lifetime dictatorship more specifically.

Dominant theories of IR such as structural realism hold states to be unitary and rational among other characteristics. The previously examined literature on African politics highlights the impossibility of such state characteristics in SSA. Rather than immediately point to differences of the state in SSA however, I argue that theories of IR are perhaps unsatisfactory. Since all states are part of the international system, and since domestic politics affect and are affected by the international system, satisfactory theories of IR should be able to address how states behave in all parts of the world. The rest of this chapter will elaborate on that argument.

2.3 Structural Realism, IR Theory, and the 'Unchanging' International System

In response to the many critics of structural realism, Kenneth Waltz (2000, 41) declared that 'until and unless a transformation [of the international system] occurs, it [structural realism] remains the basic theory of international politics.' Past the conclusiveness evident in Waltz's assertion, it is important to explore his argument further. One may concede to Waltz that structural realism (or neorealism)[6] has indeed remained a basic theory of IR, in so far as most – if not all theories that emerged after neorealism – support or oppose the latter. That is, the necessity of neorealism relies not on its indispensability as an explanatory framework, but on its perceived indispensability as a point of reference for other theories. Furthermore, Waltz is able to affirm that structural realism is the most fundamental

theory of IR, perhaps because the international system as a competitive milieu characterized by anarchy and self-help constitute an assumption that most dominant theories hold to be unchanging and true. For instance, while one may argue that the immediate challenger to neorealism is neoliberal institutionalism, the latter accepts some essential tenets of structural realism to be true.

Although neoliberal institutionalism sets to challenge neorealism, it remains inexplicably selective in its objections. It is useful to recall that in *Man, the State, and War*, Kenneth Waltz (1959) proposes a three image-approach to studying International Relations: the individual (human nature), the state, and the international system. Neorealists argue that states are independent rational actors, whose actions are guided by a competitive and selfish human nature, and are restricted within the confinement of a self-help system. Neoliberal institutionalists contest the competition between states, arguing instead that states are interdependent and seek to cooperate. Yet, rather than being the anti-neorealists that a quick analysis may infer them to be, neoliberal institutionalists are merely against the key characteristics of the first image elaborated by Waltz. This argument is made in light of neoliberal acceptance of the international system as anarchic, while holding that states aim at maximizing their interests through co-operation rather than competition. In both realist and liberal paradigms, the behaviour of states is a reflection of human nature. In this respect, neoliberal institutionalist arguments are obscured by a realist framework, as they fail to elaborate on how, why and when states choose to cooperate rather than compete in the anarchic system. In other words, it is not sufficient to evoke common interests as a trigger to co-operation, as this sheds no light on how and why states prioritize their agenda into "state security" issues as neorealists do or "common interests" as neoliberal institutionalists do. Sterling-Folker (1997, 16) illustrates this problematique best when she maintains that the liberal paradigm discriminately elects to consider the most favourable processes and outcomes (such as co-operation), and ignores less favourable processes and outcomes such as the persistence of self-help. In contrast, Sterling-Folker (1997, 22) argues that structural realism 'explain[s] all the process outcomes that a process-based theory such as liberalism is supposed to explain but cannot.' Although Sterling-Folker holds an unambiguously neorealist agenda, one would concur with her position that neorealism is more causally consistent than neoliberal institutionalism, as far as

the deductive space of both systemic and domestic-level variables are concerned. However, the neorealist paradigm fails to explain why, given specific actors within a specific structure, some foreign policies are chosen over others in a given situation. This analysis maintains that some policies become preferential in a given situation, due to a preference for specific ideas and constructs. Risse-Kappen (1994, 190) contends that for instance, structural realists are unable to account for the end of the Cold War as the result of unexpected foreign policies.

The espousal of Waltz's three-image approach by competing theories, the latter which fail to critically assess the construction of the Waltzian approach, has led to the ultimate perception of rational states operating within an unchanging international environment as a reflection of reality. In this regard, Waltz may be entitled to his claim that structural realism is the basic theory of international politics, since the international system appears indeed 'unchanged'; but mostly through a perpetuation of neorealist constructs and ideas by competing theories, rather than a reflection of an existing reality. This paper targets the aforesaid perpetuation of constructs as an issue that needs addressing, in an attempt to prevent further marginalization of SSA in IR, and to move beyond the syndrome of *ad hoc* explanations in IR *vis-à-vis* African politics.

This analysis seeks to address the limitations highlighted in dominant IR theories above, by turning towards the importance of ideas and constructs in shaping the behaviour of a given set of actors within a given structure. The analysis holds the role of ideas as key to a comprehensive account of the dynamic relationship between internal and external actors *vis-à-vis* the maintenance of African autocratic regimes. This paper is therefore rooted within a social constructivist approach, and specifically within *critical* social constructivism. It is important to note that critical social constructivism is rooted in critical social theory (Hopf 1998, 172), whereas conventional social constructivism refers to problem-solving theories, as understood by Robert. W. Cox (1981). Note that the distinction between 'critical' and 'conventional' social constructivism is made by Ted Hopf (1998), and parallels Cox's distinction between problem-solving and critical theories. Elsewhere, Emmanuel Adler (1997, 334) also argues that constructivism can be both "critical" and "problem-solving". The significance of these distinctions will be elaborated further in the next section.

2.4 The "Promise" of *Which* Constructivism? The Gap between *Critical* and *Conventional* Constructivism[7]

The concluding section of this chapter seeks to reinforce the argument that taking 'the role of ideas – knowledge, values, and strategic concepts' *seriously*[8] is fundamental to forming a useful explanatory framework in IR. In the absence of such considerations, Risse-Kappen (1994, 188) argues that prevailing theories such as realism and liberalism are not wrong, but merely need to be complemented. In this general background, the rest of the section will examine whether optimism towards the role of ideas in IR theory and the promise of constructivism is justified; and what that may imply for the study of African politics in IR.

Often dubbed one of the pioneers of social constructivism, Alexander Wendt has written one of the most popularly referenced pieces in social constructivism, namely his 1992 article "Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics". Wendt's analysis highlights how key concepts such as anarchy and sovereignty have gradually been reified in the field of IR. According to Wendt, *anarchy*, one of the core concepts of neorealism, has come to be seen as a given; yet, as Wendt (1992, 395) reminds us, there is no "logic" of anarchy. By stating that 'anarchy is what states make of it', Wendt illustrates the gap that exists in both neorealists and liberal institutionalists' explanations of state behaviour. That is, it is through intersubjective understanding that states tend to be competitive, and it is the same mechanism of intersubjectivity that leads states to co-operate (Wendt 1992, 395). Similarly to anarchy, *sovereignty* is a social construct: 'sovereignty is an institution, and so exists only in virtue of certain intersubjective understandings and expectations; there is no sovereignty without an other' (Wendt 1992, 412). To make further sense of Wendt's argument, it is worth examining Emmanuel Adler's definition of constructivism. Adler calls social constructivism 'the view that the manner in which the material world shapes and is shaped by human action and interaction depends on *dynamic* normative and epistemic *interpretations* of the material world' (Adler 1997, 322; emphasis in original). Adler's position is that knowledge and interpretation are necessary to understanding and explaining the social construction of international reality (Adler 1997, 348). Finally, it is important to note that constructivists insist on the intersubjectivity of language, in order to stress that the latter is neither strictly subjective – because language always exist prior to individual usage – nor

strictly objective – because language is not independent of our minds and usage (Guzzini 2005, 498).

In this context, I argue that along with the concepts of anarchy and sovereignty, which are constructed through intersubjective knowledge and interpretation, dominant concepts in the study of African politics such as democratization or state crisis have also been constructed in that manner. That is, through an intersubjective understanding laden with specific interests and perspectives, and which gradually led to the reification of the aforementioned concepts. Note that both actors and structures are at play in the process of concept reification, and are mutually constitutive from a constructivist standpoint (Hopf 1998). Understanding this mechanism is helpful in order to understand how and why domestic and international actors behave in a given way in the context of some African states; it also serves to understand in what structures those actors operate.

Both Wendt (1987; 1992) and Adler (1997) do not hold constructivism to be anti-rationalist. Nevertheless, one may argue that because social constructivists insist on the intersubjectivity of knowledge and interpretation, it is difficult to account for the latter's reconciliation with a rationalist account, since knowledge and interpretation involve individuals' projections of their own interests and perspectives. Adler (1997, 337) anticipates this issue when he argues that a constructivist approach should question 'which interpretations and whose interpretations become social reality ... which norms and whose, come to constitute the games nations play.' Thus, Adler (1997, 326) demonstrates a critical analysis of knowledge as instrumental in creating and reproducing a particular order. Furthermore, he reveals the critical roots of his arguments when he argues the disciplinary effects of knowledge and discourse (Adler 1997, 340).[9] I contend that this indicates a critical constructivist view, which cannot be reconciled with a rationalist approach. In other words, to call for a 'middle ground between rationalist and relativist IR theories' as Adler (1997, 340) recommends, is not a welcome project. Instead, there is need for a firm and critical constructivist standpoint, lest one risk conflating the constructivist framework with a realist/liberal agenda.

Adler's main objection to adopting a firm and critical stance is that arguments rooted in critical theory are useful in explaining the how but fail to understand the why (Adler 1997, 337). Wendt (1987) best illustrates this issue by equating "how-questions" to structural analysis (the realm of the possible) and "why-questions" to historical analysis (the realm of the actual). As was suggested in the introductory section of this chapter, both

types of questions are mutually constitutive. Wendt (1987, 364) supports this proposition and calls for a dialectical analysis that would incorporate a structural-historical analysis. I embrace this call for a dialectical analysis, which I view as a key characteristic of the critical aspect of social constructivism. So far however, the overly rationalist tones of existing social constructivists approach have created a gap between the conceptual aims of the approach and their implementation. This gap is the characteristic of "conventional" social constructivism.

   Critical social constructivism is particularly useful in approaching the issue of African politics within the field of IR on two accounts. First, social constructivism allows the understanding of actors and structures as mutually constitutive. In this respect, African states, their international allies and the structures in which they operate can be analysed in a non-hierarchical manner as far as understanding the nature of their regimes are concerned. This framework helps overcome the subordination of agents to structures and vice-versa, and allows for a dialectic analysis of both (Wendt 1987, 356). Second, if as Hopf (1998, 199) argues, social constructivism stresses the importance of identity politics, and if the latter involves 'a social construction of an Other,' then critical social constructivism will allow for a critique of the study of African politics in IR as a social construct that positions the "African state" to be "different". Thus, the argument can be made that African rulers – similarly to African states – are viewed differently from their counterparts elsewhere, through a set of constructs that subsequently become the reality of policy-makers. The term policy-makers in this context refers to international policy-makers who hold the economic and political power to influence African politics. At the multilateral level, major policy-makers include donor and aid institutions such as those of the United Nations (UN), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank, as well as the European Union (EU). Another key international policy-maker is France, who acts not only as a significant donor in SSA, but also as the Western state who provides the most military support to francophone African states. The latter security link is so significant and holds such wide political, economic and social implications that it has been dubbed as France's 'New Imperialism' in SSA (Charbonneau 2008). It is worth noting that in Charbonneau's analysis, France's exceptional security policy in SSA is associated with the existing global political order (Charbonneau 2008, 171). According to the author, 'the recent restructuring of France's power and influence has been in accordance with present day conceptions of political order whose one key characteristic is the persistence of the concentration

of power emanating from the West' (Charbonneau 2008, 171). Charbonneau's argument reinforces the importance of concepts (ideas) in facilitating specific actions or behaviour, be it from individuals or, in this case, from state actors. Note that a significant number of issues explored through this elaboration of critical social constructivism coincides with key points of interest to post-colonial literature in IR. For instance, the politics of "otherness" and imperialism are often at the centre of post-colonial approaches in IR. However, because this paper is centred on the importance of ideas and constructs rather than the politics of otherness *per se*, a critical social constructivist approach may indeed provide more useful tools with which to examine outcomes such as the longevity of autocratic regimes. This position will become more apparent through the case studies to follow.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to reinforce the need for a critical social constructivist approach in IR. Unlike conventional social constructivist approaches which advocate a bridging point with rationalist theories (Wendt), or a search for an indecisive "middle ground" (Adler), this analysis argued that social constructivism needs to be more firmly critical if its explanatory framework is to have a more useful impact than neorealism or liberal institutionalism. By taking a critical stance, social constructivists could contribute to revealing the alienating effect of reified concepts on policy-making *vis-à-vis* African states.

3. *Economic Primacy and the Construction of the "Friendly Regime" in Côte d'Ivoire*

Introduction

This chapter asks why, despite being a "troubled"[10] state during the authoritarian regime of Félix Houphouët-Boigny (1960-1993), Côte d'Ivoire remained uncontested globally, with France acting as its main appraiser at the international level. In other words, the chapter examines why global actors did not firmly condemn Houphouët's government, thus contributing to the longevity of Houphouët's regime. By the same token, the chapter inquires into the political role of actors driving the conceptualization of state crisis. When is it decided that a state is in crisis? By whom? And what does that mean for attitudes towards "non-crisis" states? Answering these questions will be instrumental in addressing how and why the dictatorial regime of Houphouët survived undeterred. To this end, the chapter seeks to examine the mechanisms underpinning the widespread use[11] of concepts such as "stable", "fragile", "crisis" and "failed" states, with particular attention to Côte d'Ivoire. This chapter will suggest that such mechanisms have facilitated the normalization and eventual acceptance of Houphouët's regime, ultimately permitting the reign of the first Ivorian president in his own terms. The term "mechanisms" refers to the combination of structure-led and agent-led mechanisms, a combination which is possible given a set of ideas that operate within a specific structure. Based on the theoretical foundations discussed earlier on, this chapter investigates the importance of International Relations theory in explaining the norms and constructs that underlie the interaction between domestic and international politics.

The critical aspect of my analysis justifies the examination of discourses and representations of a post-colonial state such as Côte d'Ivoire. I argue that such discourses have gradually become dominant and reified, and have contributed to legitimizing the non-democratic Ivorian state under Houphouët-Boigny. In this respect, the hypothesis made in this chapter is the following: French-led legitimization of Houphouët's authoritarianism praised economic growth and turned a blind eye on socio-political issues, facilitating an international tolerance of the Houphouëtist dictatorship. This answer proposes that the status quo in international politics reflects the construction of a uni-dimensional understanding of state crisis. This construct is made possible through a separation of the political from the economic, the domestic from the global, and through a marginalization of the social. Ultimately, the key argument made here is that this static understanding of state crisis is spurred by IR scholars and serves to guide, as well as legitimize the political actions of state actors, both internationally and domestically. The case of the longevity of Houphouët's reign serves to illustrate that argument.

    In the next section, the imperative of elucidating the conceptual underpinnings that guide this case study as well as the subsequent two, are undertaken. Thereafter, the remaining sections argue the inherent political power of such concepts, by advancing that they impacted on the strength of Houphouët's authoritarian regime.

3. 1 "Crisis States" = Violent States?

Before further empirical discussion, an examination of the conceptualization of state crisis in dominant discourse is necessary. By dominant discourse, this analysis designates discourses that have come to influence wider scholarship and policy-making; and/or discourses that directly follow from existing operationalized concepts. In this respect, and given the limited scope of this paper, an examination of Robert H. Bates' 2008 book titled *When Things Fell Apart*: *State Failure in Late-Century Africa* will be used to illustrate a dominant discourse that fits within existing literature and that is directed towards African crisis states.[12] Bates (2008, 5) uses the term *state failure* to refer to 'the collapse of political disorder.' In this case, state failure is also known as state collapse. Other scholars of Africa have associated crisis states in Africa with political disorder, by demonstrating for instance their paradoxical "fetishism of the law" such as the

obsession of authoritarian regimes with [irregular] elections (Comaroff and Comaroff 2007, 134); this is a political pattern that Richard Joseph (2003) has convincingly categorized as "electoral autocracies". Throughout his book, Bates seems to conflate political disorder and state failure into civil wars and political violence. Bates (2008, 5) determines the conditions for political order as follows:

> In light of the evidence Africa offers, political order *cannot* be treated as a given. Rather, I argue, it results when rulers – whom I characterize as "*specialists in violence*"[13] – choose to employ the means of coercion to protect the creation of wealth rather than prey upon it and when private citizens choose to set weapons aside and to devote their time instead to the production of wealth and to the enjoyment of leisure.

One can infer from Bates' considerations that the absence of violence signals political order. Bates' conceptualization of state failure can be paralleled to that held by the American think-tank the Fund for Peace (FfP), which, in collaboration with the magazine *Foreign Policy*, has established a Failed States Index (FSI) since 2005. Although the Failed States Index employs twelve indicators of state vulnerability to measure the economic, political and social welfare of countries, the FfP's methodology tells of a strong focus on conflict, namely the *Conflict Assessment System Tool (CAST)* (FfP 2014a, para. 7), which measures state 'vulnerability in pre-conflict, active conflict and post-conflict situations' (FfP 2014b, para. 1).[14]

Having established that dominant discourses on state crisis in Africa (as seen in Bates and the FfP) revolve around the concept of state failure, I now return to what state crisis means within the existing literature. The Crisis States Research Centre (CSRC), affiliated to the London School of Economics and Political Science, classifies three stages of crisis, which, as suggested earlier, has been considerably used by scholars and policy-makers alike. According to the London-based research center, a *fragile state* is the opposite of a *stable state*, in that it is 'significantly susceptible to crisis'. A *crisis state is* one 'under acute stress, where reigning institutions face serious contestation and are potentially unable to manage conflict and shocks' (CSRC 2006). In other words, a crisis state presents a danger of *state collapse*. Finally, a *failed state* is defined as 'a condition of state collapse – that is, a state that can no longer perform its basic security and development functions, and that has no effective control over its territory and borders' (CSRC 2006). It is clear from the CSRC's working definitions that the concepts "stable", "fragile", "crisis", and "failed" states are deeply

interconnected and dynamic. Paradoxically, what uncovers from the above definitions is the relative conceptualization of each stage of "crisis" against the potential of failure. Thus, current security discourses on African states focus on state failure, isolating the reality of troubled states that do not fit existing indicators of conflict. To recall, I refer to the latter category of states as "troubled" states, given that they are problematic and yet are not acknowledged as such.

Having located the aforementioned conceptions of state crisis as revolving around the concept of state failure, the intention here is not to portray the concept of state failure as an uncontested discourse, far from it. An important critique has come from Morten Bøås and Kathleen Jennings (2007), who have argued that the conceptualization of failed states and state failure is mere political rhetoric that serves the interests of the Western world. This paper aligns with the arguments made by the two authors, in that the label of state failure depends on whether or not states pose a security threat to the West. Dickinson, Lowrey and Keating (2009, para. 2) put it convincingly when they state that the prioritization of the global security agenda on terrorism and nuclear proliferation explains why there is more concern for Pakistan (10) than Guinea (9), or why North Korea (19) is more worrying than Côte d'Ivoire (12) in global security discourses.[15] These two critiques are very significant in revealing the inconsistencies of Western foreign policies towards failed states. In other words, they demonstrate the poverty of the concept in its policy applications.

However, moving beyond the irregularity between dominant discourses and relevant policy measures, this study stresses the conceptual inconsistency within the discourses of state crisis in itself. It discusses the motivations of, and tools for actors who operationalize this concept. For instance, while Bøås and Jennings's critique of Western powers' use of the concept of failed state is a very important one, it perpetuates dominant discourses that failed states are either on the brink of violence or in full-scale violence.[16] This analysis problematizes a notion of state crisis that measures the latter against violent conflict. Specifically, why was Houphouët-Boigny's regime, authoritarian in nature,[17] not considered a crisis state in need of intervention by global actors? Indeed, state actors such as the United States and the United Kingdom, Western NGOs, and International Financial Institutions often lead the rhetoric that address cases of states in crisis and typically propose resolutions that range from economic incentives such as added conditionality on aid, to military interventions. One may point to the fact that authoritarian regimes such as Houphouët-Boigny's rule would be

unacceptable in twentieth century Western countries, regardless of the type of political interests at stake. Yet, such a scenario seems more more acceptable outside the West.. For instance, former French president Jacques Chirac expressed a memorable view on this apparent double-standard regarding democratization, when he declared in February 1990 that multi-partyism was a "political error" for developing countries (Houngnikpo 2001, 54). Houngnikpo (2001, 54) rightly notes that while Chirac's remarks clearly illustrated the unfailing French support to African one-party systems at the time, especially since the one-party rule was championed by France's long-time "friend" Houphouët-Boigny, it also reflected a wider Western view that democracy was a luxury for developing countries. Indeed, France was not alone in holding the opinion that economic reform was preferable to democratization, as other Western actors viewed democracy as a "relative" good (Reno 1998, 44). The construction of this understanding of African democratization has perhaps been facilitated by a post-colonial structure in which African states have remained subordinated to their Western counterparts, and are told to focus on their economic agenda.

The present critique highlights that the above discourses are the product of Western representations, and fit within the description of reified constructs. As discussed in the introductory section, this investigation is informed by a critical social constructivist perspective. The critical attribute of the present analytical framework is informed by Edward Said's seminal work on Orientalism (1979). According to Said, an Orientalist discourse imagines and reinvents the "other" as significantly different and also as subordinate to the Western "self". A subaltern is therefore a subordinate power, outside of the hegemonic structure constructed by the "self". In this context, one can talk about subalternism to designate Western discourse that conceptualizes the "subaltern other" (for instance the African state) as significantly different. Western conceptualizations appropriate the right to represent the "other", thereby silencing the voice of the subaltern. Spivak (1988, 308) puts it in unambiguous terms when she states that: 'The subaltern cannot speak ... Representation has not withered away.' The case studies in this paper focus on constructs that are born from subalternist representations, and which have profound political implications on African autocracies. In line with Said's argument that Orientalism is a discourse of power, this paper stresses that the conceptual is also political, and suggests that the critique of "privileged academic intellectuals" who develop univocal constructions of crisis states should be instrumental to critiques of international policy-making that impacts on domestic politics.

3.2 Houphouëtist Authoritarianism *versus* Ivorian [Economic] "Miracle"

Côte d'Ivoire consists of more than sixty ethnic groups, which can be regrouped into four wider categories: the Mandé (Malinké, Dan, Kwéni); the Voltaics – more commonly known as the Gur (Sénoufo, Koulango, Lobi); the Kru (Wê, Bété, Dida, Bakwé, Néyo); and finally the Kwa – also known as the Akan entity (the Agni, Baoulé, Abron, Alladian, Avikam, and the ethnic groups from the lagoon region) (Akindès 2004, 14). Houphouët has established his power on the myth of the superiority of the State over ethnic belonging. Although he belonged to the Akan entity and was a Baoulé himself, Houphouët's regime appeared, on the surface, to promote the ethnic cohesion of a socio-cultural mosaic (Akindès 2004, 14). However, as Memel Fotê (1999; cited in Akindès 2004, 14) points out, Houphouët's inclusionary framework was a façade for what was a clientelist system of unequal resource redistribution.

The ambivalent politics of identity under Houphouët notwithstanding, an incontestable fact remains that his government created an ''inclusive'' ideological structure – the National Council [*Le Conseil National*], in order to promote integration between the diverse Ivorian ethnic groups and migrant groups. Bazin (1999, 84) argues that the motivation for such zeal towards ethnic integration was of a highly economic order, as it was important for Houphouët to gain and retain the loyalty of migrant workers on the cocoa plantations. Ultimately, Houphouët's ideological structure, although theoretically intended to foster diversity in the public space, was in practice an engine of political control; an amalgamation of coercion, cooptation and clientelist regulation (Bazin 1999, 84). This illustrates the sombre political conditions of the Ivorian state, in sharp contrast with its ambitious economic agenda.

It is precisely the economic prowess of Côte d'Ivoire under Félix Houphouët-Boigny's reign that prompted the global praise (led by France) towards the country, and this despite the authoritarian nature of Houphouët's regime. Indeed, Houphouët's presidency achieved 'steady economic growth, averaging approximately 6% per annum throughout the 1960s and 1970s' (Grant 2010, 237). According to the FfP (2009a, para. 6), Côte d'Ivoire was 'one of Africa's wealthiest and *most stable*[18] nations'. The easy correlation between wealth and stability is not surprising and is certainly convincing if placed within a rational choice perspective, with Western interests guiding the rhetoric. In the Ivorian case, France as a former colonial power

symbolizes the Western representative par excellence in this analysis, having the most vested interests in the country. Dele Ogunmola (2007, 117) points to Houphouët's extraordinary tenacity in pursuing French economic policies after independence, which also signals the strong political and economic ties that linked Houphouët's one-party regime to France. The close relationship between Paris and Abidjan was unequivocal. Côte d'Ivoire received unlimited preferential treatment from France, as part of the French special relationship with its most privileged francophone states regrouped under what was called *pré-carré* states. In return, Houphouët-Boigny gave immense economic concessions to French investors (Ogunmola 2009, 240).

3.3 French Interests and the Rhetoric of "Friendly" States

Given its special relationship with its *pré-carré* states, France's foreign policy towards those privileged states led to the rhetoric of "friendly regimes" to designate preferentially treated states such as Côte d'Ivoire and Gabon (Ogunmola 2009), thus avoiding terms such as "stable", "fragile", "crisis" or "failed" states altogether. However, beyond the economic and strategic interests that guided France's preferential attitude towards Côte d'Ivoire, which explain the lack of French denunciation *vis-à-vis* Houphouët's authoritarian regime, it is important to locate the rhetoric used by French foreign policy for approving Houphouët's regime within global discourses of state crisis. This argument is comparable to Bruno Charbonneau's assessment that the re-legitimization[19] of France's new security policy in SSA in the 1990s is integral to the global security discourses and practices of the time, such as the renewed militarization of policy options (Charbonneau 2008, 74). In other words, much like French military intervention in SSA in the 1990s locates its justification within existing global discourses and practices (Charbonneau 2008, 171), the global perspective that posits non-violent yet "troubled" states as stable, offered legitimization for France's support of so-called "stable" regimes such as Houphouët-Boigny's. Going back to Bates' analysis of political order, it can be concluded that by using the means of coercion towards the creation of wealth,[20] and by successfully repressing violence, the Ivorian state from 1960 to 1993 could not be accused of experiencing "political disorder". Accordingly, the potentiality for state crisis was deemed remote. Thus, with a focus on the production and protection of wealth, as well as the absence of conflict as key indicators of a "stable" state, Côte d'Ivoire did fit the label of "stability" under Houphouët.

Without exaggerating the link between research and policy, one cannot underestimate the importance of IR scholarship in shaping or challenging norms and policies in international politics. I argue that whether or not a concept is applied into policy, it remains fundamentally political, given its potential consideration by policy makers. In other words, discourse is inherently linked to power. This is why western representations of Ivorian "stability" can be seen as a dominant discourse on a subaltern nation, which eventually led to the consecration of Côte d'Ivoire as a role model for West Africa. The lack of full-scale violence was a sufficient factor to exclude Côte d'Ivoire under Houphouët from the family of crisis states, as determined largely by Western actors and illustrated in global indices of state crisis. This was the case despite persistent poor state performance such as human rights' abuses and the lack of political space conducive to democracy. This last point highlights the separation of economic factors from socio-political ones, reflective of a traditional IR theory that isolates 'the domestic from the international, the political from the cultural and economic, and state from society' (Rupert 2009, 176). The limitations brought by a separation of various factors within mainstream IR scholarship can begin to be uncovered by adopting a critical social constructivist theory of IR.

Conclusion

Since the end of Houphouët's reign, the strong ties that linked France to its former colony have significantly weakened. This change also coincided with the escalation of political violence in the country, with increased internal and political resistance from 1993 onwards, which led to the country's first *coup d'état* in 1999, and culminated in the 2002-2005 civil war. Like many crisis states in this situation, Côte d'Ivoire's civil war was notably characterized by external military intervention, with France leading the operations. Thus, at the height of its civil war, Côte d'Ivoire was viewed as a clear representation of a crisis state within dominant discourses in the policy sector. Comparatively, the missing element required to qualify Houphouët's regime, that is, the pre-1993 Ivorian state of a crisis state was internal political conflict at a scale worthy of international attention, namely full-scale violence. Such discourses imply the construction of state crisis as equivalent to state violence. The next two chapters seek to illustrate that these dominant discourses, which can be seen as exceptionalist discourses and practices of subalternism are not restricted to Côte d'Ivoire alone.

4. The Hegemony of "Good Governance" Discourses and Regime Survival in Gabon

Introduction

In a recent entry published in the *International Studies Encyclopedia* and titled "African Foreign Policies", John James Quinn has noted that an important part of the literature on African politics concentrates on the region-wide personalization of power in Africa (Quinn 2010). While Quinn (2010, para. 17) acknowledges the pertinence of debates centered around personal power in SSA, he argues that 'with the increased democratization of Africa following the end of the Cold War, more and more research should look to domestic sources of foreign policy, though they continue to be weak'. Quinn's message to scholars is that rather than continuing to examine the consequences of international politics for domestic politics in Africa, they turn to studies that centre on the African decision-making process itself. The author is correct to warn against analyses that concentrate on the impact of international politics on domestic politics, while neglecting the relevance of domestic politics for domestic outcomes. However, as was suggested earlier in this paper, one cannot call for a further but separate focus on either international or domestic sources of African politics. Instead, an acknowledgement of the interaction between both domestic and external sources of African policies should be the preferred approach. Further, understanding the interaction between domestic and external actors and processes cannot happen without consideration of the specific environment that makes such an interaction possible. For instance, the so-called increased democratization that Quinn refers to is strongly pushed

by external donors' agenda. Moreover, in much of francophone Africa, the switch from one-party to multi-party systems was implemented in response to France's conditionality for a continued partnership with its former colonies, which was dictated in the speech of La Baule, given by then French President François Mitterrand in 1990.[21] The La Baule speech is telling, and highlights the fact that the implementation of multi-party systems in francophone African countries following independence was triggered by a push from their former colonial power. This signalled a lack of political independence of these post-colonial African countries vis-à-vis France, and represents a manifest paradox that analysts have later dubbed *Paristroika* (Ayers 2013, 235). More specifically, investigating the construction of the limits to democratization within the post-cold war context in Gabon may help illuminate the dynamics between domestic and external accounts for Omar Bongo's longevity in power.

The general objective in this chapter is to move away from one-sided explanations as far as African politics is concerned, and to seek an understanding of the dynamic interactions between domestic and external actors, given a specific socio-politico-economic environment and the ideas that shape that environment. Thus, a more focused objective will be to examine the importance of hegemonic constructs and ideological structures at play in the rise of Omar Bongo Ondimba to power in 1967, and which helped consolidate his power until his death in 2009. But first, an examination of traditional accounts for domestic and external factors involved in Bongo's presidential longevity is undertaken.

4.1 Bongo Power and French Foreign Policy in Gabon

Following the death of Gabon's first president Léon Mba in 1967, Omar Bongo, then vice-president, was handpicked by French officials within President Charles De Gaulle's government as Mba's successor. Bongo received full support from France to establish his one-party regime, the *Parti Démocratique Gabonais* (PDG) – Democratic Party of Gabon – (Gardinier 2000, 225). It is no wonder therefore that throughout his time in office Bongo was regarded as "France's pet dictator" (Sharife 2009, para. 1). Speaking about Africa's relationship with France, President Omar Bongo famously declared that 'we[22] cannot assure our development on our own' (Sharife 2009, para. 1). It is worth noting that the special relationship between Libreville and Paris did not start with Bongo. Under Léon Mba's rule from 1960

to 1967, decisions were made according to instructions from Paris. The Gabonese-French ties appeared so strong indeed that Mba once declared that 'each Gabonese has two homelands: France and Gabon'[23] (Dougueli 2010, para. 4). It may be argued, however, that the special relationship grew stronger during Bongo's presidency, given the increased military assistance that protected Bongo's regime. Thus, for instance, the two coup attempts during Bongo's time in office were effectively prevented thanks to the French military, which operated from within Gabon (Martin 1985; Gardinier 2000). During Bongo's presidency, French military assistance to Gabon was among the most significant in Africa, and comprised French officers acting as reinforcement to Gabonese armed forces, French troops, military training for Gabonese forces, as well as paid military materiel (Gardinier 2000). Thus, rather than the agenda of genuine development co-operation advanced by French officials, Franco-Gabonese relations in the aftermath of independence were equivalent to the 'pursuit of colonisation by other means' (Martin 1985, 191, citing Albert Bougri 1979, 3 and 7). Indeed, the special relationship between Gabon and France – before and during Bongo's presidency – exemplifies the neo-colonial arrangements that France has used to consolidate French power in Africa after decolonization (Charbonneau 2008, 4). In return, one may argue that this neo-colonial relationship ensures the longevity of "special" rulers such as Bongo.

The above review clearly illustrates a useful link between Gabonese and French mechanisms at the root of Bongo's lengthy time in the presidential seat. The next section deals with the economic underpinnings of this relationship, in order to highlight the importance of a comprehensive analysis that takes into account the military, economic and political interests on both sides.

4.2 Natural Resources and External Clientelism

France has vested strategic interests in Gabon, where it has secured the exploitation of strategic raw materials such as uranium, thorium, lithium, beryllium and helium (Martin 1985, 197). In telling figures, Tordoff and Young (1999, 272) illustrate the importance of Gabonese natural resources for French economy and geopolitics: in the mid-1990s, 70% of Gabon's uranium was exclusively sold to the French nuclear industry, while French oil-giant Elf-Aquitaine[24] obtained around 30% of its oil supplies from Gabon. In addition to the oil interests, 'French firms dominated export-import, domestic

commerce, banking, and insurance as well as services in the private sector'
(Gardinier 2000, 226).

In return, during the early 1990s, 85% of all development assistance to
Gabon was from France and until 1993 France was Gabon's main trading
partner (Gardinier 2000, 226). Amongst Africa's petro-states, Gabon had
become the rentier state par excellence (Jensen and Wantchekon 2004).
Given the lack of accountability within the state, resource-abundance
strengthens dictatorial regimes (Jensen and Wantchekon 2004, 816-817) by
providing voters' support to the ruling party, in exchange of resource rent
offers. In short, Bongo was able to maintain its hold on power thanks to its
access to resource rent from the Franco-Gabonese "co-operation", and given
that the 'lack of transparency and executive discretion in resource alloca-
tion affects electoral outcomes when voters only care about redistribution'
(Jensen and Wantchekon 2004, 834). In sum, French political support, the
use of military intimidation as well as that of domestic and international
clientelism, are all part of the mechanisms that explain Bongo's longevity
in power (Ngolet 2000, 57). These mechanisms show clear similarities
with Franco-Ivorian relations during Houphouët's regime, where economic
incentives largely explained France's support of an authoritarian power.
Still, in the case of Omar Bongo, I place more emphasis on the rhetoric of
"good governance" as a reason to justify the active French support to Omar
Bongo's regime, as well as the passive support from international actors
such as the UN, international financial institutions (IMF, World Bank), and
regional actors (EU), whereby Omar Bongo's government benefited from
regular relations with these international institutions, and did not suffer any
important economic or political sanctions. This support was maintained,
despite Gabon's vast resource wealth coupled with its small population
size, Omar Bongo did not achieve the economic prowess that happened in
Côte d'Ivoire, and in fact, falls into the category of rentier states that have
plundered their natural resources, and exacerbated poverty levels in their
countries (Yates 1996, 2006, 2012).

While the economic and political incentives guiding Bongo's regime and
the French government have been elucidated earlier in this chapter, some
of the key mechanisms underpinning the continued external support to
Omar Bongo's regime are yet to be uncovered. Specifically, it is not clear
why international actors mentioned above (namely the UN, EU, IMF, World
Bank) outside of the Franco-Gabonese relationship have failed to condemn
the French strong support of the Gabonese state, given both the clientelist
nature of that support and the poor performance of Bongo's government.

Addressing this point will be key to understanding both the incentives and mechanisms behind Bongo's longevity. This paper has suggested that understanding both incentives and mechanisms implies understanding the ideas that shape such incentives and mechanisms. The remainder of this chapter will focus on the ideas and concepts that have contributed to preserving Bongo's lifetime presidency.

4.3 "Historical Ties", "Good Governance" Discourses, and Regime Survival in Gabon

Arguments on the "historical ties" that link France to its former colonies continue to be made, yet they cannot account for why France maintained those ties when Britain did not, given similar politico-economic incentives present in anglophone Africa. It is worth recalling that although he has contributed to an environment of increased inequality in his country, Houphouët-Boigny had managed to establish a successful economy in Côte d'Ivoire, thus providing material justification – albeit temporary[25] – for French-led international support. In comparison, however, Bongo's government mostly fostered the personal wealth of the president and his co-opted elites, and did not improve economic conditions in the country. Thus contextualized, French-Gabonese relations appear differently problematic to French-Ivorian relations, and prompts the following question asked by Guy Martin: 'how can France do everything that it does in Africa and get away with it?' (Martin 1985, 208). One may suggest former president François Mitterrand's statement on French African policy as an official response to this question. During a visit to Cameroun in 1983, Mitterrand stated that France has 'chosen a policy of presence rather than absence' in Africa (Martin 1985, 195). Mitterrand's statement suggests heavy French involvement in post-colonial Africa, and perhaps hints at the relative absence of other Western powers on the continent in the post-independence era. The question then becomes why other Western countries did not problematize France's heavy presence on the continent, particularly when such presence involved the support of autocratic regimes such as Omar Bongo's, whose regime managed to last for nearly forty-two years, until his death.

Guy Martin's response to the issue is twofold. First, francophone African states do not have enough political and economic power to sustain themselves, hence they cannot afford rejecting "co-operation" with France.[26] Second, francophone African leaders do not have the good will and the

legitimate agenda of developing their countries through such measures as regional integration (Martin 1985, 208). While useful, this response is regrettably insufficient and one-sided. Martin's first explanation for France's uninterrupted presence in francophone Africa reflects a matter-of-fact approach that contributes to legitimizing French hegemony on the continent. Indeed, Martin's observation implies that francophone African rulers have only two choices: either be self-sufficient in managing *their* issues, or resort to French help. This perpetuates the highly problematic perspective that the inability of Africans to "self-sustain" reflects the irresponsibility of their rulers. However, similarly to Western countries' reliance on non-Western resources to sustain themselves (such as French strategic and economic dependence on Gabonese natural resources), one should not expect African states to manage their countries in a self-sufficient manner, as if autarky were an option. As has been argued so far, domestic politics and international politics are mutually constitutive. It follows that, as in the case of Côte d'Ivoire, global discourses are characterized by double standards whereby expectations for post-colonies that already experience great developmental burden is much higher than what is expected of their developed counterparts. While, for instance, France can legitimately benefit from natural resources in Africa, African states cannot legitimately expect genuine development co-operation with France or other developed countries. Instead, as can be deduced from Martin's argument, francophone African post-colonies must either succumb to French hegemonic policies, or demonstrate enough good will in working towards their *own* development.

The above evaluation illustrates an example of dominant discourse which conceptualizes the solution to poor state performance as resting on the good will of African state leaders. The expectation is therefore that African state leaders gear themselves towards measures of "good governance". The implications of such a discourse *vis-à-vis* Bongo's autocratic regime are far reaching. Indeed, by advocating good governance, especially as a core condition to development aid from both bilateral actors from Western countries, and multilateral actors such as the UN, the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), and the EU, Western actors, have increasingly called on African state leaders to increase transparency and accountability in their domestic affairs. I argue that this focus on good governance overlooks the importance of international factors in maintaining "bad governance" in SSA. Specifically, I propose that the strong and undeterred French support towards Bongo's regime is an outcome of the overly domestic tones that connote the idea of "good governance".

The concept of "good governance" is not new. The emergence of the term can be traced back to the 1990s in the circles of the World Bank, and became the key condition on which donor countries assessed the eligibility of a recipient country (Nanda 2006, 269). Thomas G. Weiss (2000, 797), on the other hand, traces the concept back to the 1980s, and provides a succinct and more recent definition by former UN Secretary-General Kofi-Annan as follows: 'good governance is ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law; strengthening democracy; promoting transparency and capacity in public administration.' The present focus will discuss the construction of the concept and its hegemonic implications for African states such as Gabon. From a critical social constructivist approach, one may argue that promoting "good governance" as a condition to development assistance has created a dichotomy between donors, who represent the group of states who practice "good governance", and aid recipients, who are *a priori* determined to be wanting of "good governance" practices. As Weiss (2000) argues, ideas hold considerable importance to international public policy. In this case, the idea of "good governance" is a constructed concept which assumes donors to be beyond reproach in governance matters, while aid recipients must continually be held accountable regarding their governance habits. This can be paralleled to the implication of the argument made by Guy Martin and elaborated earlier in this chapter. That is, the suggestion that the responsibility for "bad" governance[27] is restricted to African state leaders rather than encompassing a wider dynamic between both domestic and external factors. In this context, one can view the idea of "good governance" as being constructed upon dominant Western discourse, therefore reproducing Western hegemonic structures into global policy approaches of Africa.

The hegemonic power of the "good governance" discourse can be further emphasized by assessing its implications for the rulership of Omar Bongo. This chapter has argued that French (military and economic) assistance constituted a core factor to Bongo's longevity in office. By failing to acknowledge that "bad" governance is not contained within recipient countries, global policy-makers overlook the behaviour of donor countries such as France, who actively foster conditions of "bad" governance in countries such as Gabon. However, because France is expected to uphold the values of "good governance", it does not undergo the scrutiny that its Gabonese counterpart must go through. Therefore, and to answer Guy Martin's question (1985, 208), France "gets away with" with 'doing everything that it does in Africa' because it is protected by global discourses that

are constructed to discipline subordinate states such as African ones; thus all potential blame is removed from France's shoulders. In other words, the idea of "good governance" carries with it a powerful construction that on the one hand perpetuates the subordination of recipient states to donor states; and on the other hand fails to acknowledge the domestic and external dynamics that create the conditions for "bad" governance in recipient countries. As a result, France has enjoyed a considerable degree of impunity and immunity in its support for Bongo's regime, thereby contributing to legitimately maintaining Bongo in power for forty-two years.

Furthermore, early constructions of the concept of "good governance" provided significant room for domestic state leaders to exploit the discourse to their advantage. As Weiss (2000, 800) points out, international public policy that aimed at fostering "good governance" initially concentrated on mitigating two key characteristics, namely 'the unrepresentative character of governments and the inefficiency of non-market systems.' This explains why in the 1990s, autocratic regimes such as Omar Bongo's Gabon, used their shift towards multi-party systems (through France's request) and market capitalism, to claim practices of "good governance". In this case, the political importance of the idea of "good governance" resided in the fact that it provided corrupt states with loose rhetoric that legitimized their governments. For example, although Bongo's government remained highly corrupt and continued to aggravate levels of poverty and inequality in the country, it satisfied the rhetoric of *legitimacy* (multi-party representation) and *efficiency* (market system) from the 1990s onwards, and thus managed to claim those attributes as a justification for the continuation of its regime (Ngolet 2000). This paradox was possible thanks to a poorly constructed discourse, which failed to require a more significant commitment – such as social equity – from the relevant actors (Weiss 2000).

Conclusion

Gabon's wealth of natural resources has predisposed the country to attract French strategic and economic interests. In return, France provided Gabon with military assistance that protected the Gabonese government from domestic insurrections. This is the clientelist relationship that tied Omar Bongo Ondimba's regime with Paris. While the link between Libreville and Paris under Bongo's time in office may be clear, it does not suffice to account for the global tolerance of (1) the corrupt regime of Omar Bongo,

and (2) the lack of condemnation for France's actions in Gabon. The missing explanations may be found through the exploration of hegemonic discourses such as the ones surrounding the idea of "good governance".

This chapter suggests that global policy discourses stem from constructed concepts which, when poorly designed and/or unidimensionally oriented, can have dangerous ramifications. In this context, the perpetuation of Gabon's autocratic regime as resulting from the implications of "good governance" discourses in the 1990s was a case in point.

5. *The Undemocratic Republic of Togo*

Introduction

In 1967, General Gnassingbé Eyadéma[28] took power in Togo through a bloodless coup that ousted President Nicholas Grunitzky (Bureau of African Affairs 2010, para. 15). From 1967 to 2005, Eyadéma was the leader of the ruling party in Togo, the *Rassemblement du Peuple Togolais* (RPT), the Rally of the Togolese People. Like Houphouët-Boigny and Omar Bongo, Eyadéma was in office until his death. Also, similarly to the former Ivorian and Gabonese rulers, President Eyadéma maintained a single-party regime, until the democratization reforms demanded by former French president François Mitterrand forced the establishment of a multi-party system in 1991 (Houngnikpo, 2001). A further characteristic that parallels the Togolese context with the Ivorian and Gabonese cases are the conditions leading up to Eyadéma's presidency – namely the support he received from France to successfully conduct his coup d'état. Acknowledging this pre-existing French support provides a credible explanation for the lack of condemnation from France when Eyadéma accessed power through a military coup. To be sure, French politicians and armed forces were heavily involved in the two *coups d'état* conducted by Eyadéma in 1963 and 1967, which respectively led to the murder of president Sylvanus Olympio and the overthrowing of Nicholas Grunitzky, (Martin 1985, 193). Compared to the Ivorian and Gabonese cases, the Togolese government under Eyadéma was less ambiguously, illegitimate. Indeed, as was suggested in the previous chapters, Côte d'Ivoire under Houphouët-Boigny was often referred to as a role model in the West Africa. Notwithstanding the economic foundation of this appraisal, Houphouët's economic performance provided justification

for French and international support to Côte d'Ivoire (see chapter two). In contrast, as seen in chapter three, the Gabonese state under Omar Bongo simply plundered the wealth of the country without generating tangible benefits for its citizens. The survival of Bongo's regime was, however, based on its clientelist relationship with France, which was facilitated by global dominant discourses such as those promoting good governance. It will be suggested in this final case study that compared to both Houphouët and Bongo's regimes, Eyadéma's regime provided even less validation for French support. Yet, France helped maintain Eyadéma in power until 2005. Moreover, despite widely acknowledged 'decades of political unrest and a poor human rights record' in the country (The Fund for Peace 2009b, para. 4), the lack of deterring sanctions[29] from the international community contributed to the survival of Eyadéma's rule. How and why did Eyadéma's regime, founded and maintained on overtly illegitimate grounds, succeed in consolidating power for nearly four decades?

The rest of this chapter examines the intricacies of Eyadéma's paradoxical reign, in order to elucidate what concepts and constructs may have led to the global tolerance towards what one may call the highly undemocratic republic of Togo.

5.1 The General and his Battalion of Allies

The Fund for Peace observed that the Republic of Togo 'held its first *relatively* free and fair legislative elections' in 2007 (The Fund for Peace 2009b, para. 4; emphasis added). This means that General Eyadéma's regime, which was instituted through a military coup in 1967, failed to come to terms with a democratization process until the end of his rule in 2005. Instead, Eyadéma pursued various stratagems in order to maintain power and prevent rising oppositions from interrupting his time in office. Eyadéma would not have succeeded in consolidating his power without the domestic loyalty and international support that he benefitted from. In particular, the Republic of Togo under Eyadéma had maintained a strong relationship with France. This relationship was publicly asserted very early on in Eyadéma's reign. Thus in 1971, despite a continued situation of political unrest in Togo, Jacques Foccart, France's chief advisor for African policy, declared that France was fully satisfied by General Eyadéma's management of Togo's affairs (Diastode 1998, para. 5). Why was this so?

To answer this question, one should note that similarly to Gabon, Togo is considered a resource-abundant and resource-dependent country. The previous chapter established that corruption, lack of transparency and accountability *vis-à-vis* the redistribution of the resources have been suggested as consequences of resource-dependency (Jensen and Wantchekon 2004). Jensen and Wantchekon (2004, 818) have made the argument that a state's dependence on resources essentially leads to a declining level of democracy, specifically in the context of authoritarian regimes, where the discretionary use of revenues to avoid accountability (Jenson and Wantchekon 2004, 836). In Togo for instance, the discretionary use of resource revenues allowed Eyadéma to employ revenues in securing loyalty at home and abroad, through well-designed patronage and clientelist systems.

At home, the guarantors of Eyadéma's longevity in power were party members of the RPT, as well as the Togolese armed forces (Hagen and Spearing 2000). The need to secure the loyalty of the ruling party as well as that of the armed forces mainly stems from the fact that the wider public viewed Eyadéma as a mediocre ruler; yet one whose violent and repressive authoritarianism dissuaded all public contestations – except through more subtle expressions of resistance such as political satire (Toulabor 1994, 63). Abroad, as has already been noted earlier, Eyadéma's relations with France were a determining factor in helping gain and maintain power for a lifetime (Houngnikpo 2001). It is helpful to understand Franco-Togolese relations under Eyadéma as having two phases, as with Franco-Ivorian under Houphouët, and Franco-Gabonese relations under Omar Bongo. The first phase precedes the La Baule speech in 1990 in which Mitterrand called for democratization in France's former colonies, and is marked the unconditional support of Eyadéma's regime by France, regardless of the explicitly undemocratic nature of the regime, which functioned in a one-party system (1967-1990). The second one, following La Baule speech, was limited by requirements of democratization and pushed by external factors such as the end of the Cold War era and integration requirements from the EU (1990-2005). However, notwithstanding the strong push for democratization as a key conditionality to economic assistance set in the West, France remained hesitant in advancing the democratization agenda with Eyadéma, for fear of jeopardizing the strong economic ties with his regime (Houngnikpo 2001). Thus, despite the lack of a genuine democratization process in Togo, Eyadéma continued to receive French blessings for the remainder of his time in office.

By highlighting the above context, the aim here is to illustrate the importance of both domestic and international actors that contributed to the longevity of Eyadéma's regime, as well as the structural context in which they acted. However, one cannot understand the structural environment in which various actors are at play without understanding the ideas and constructs that shape the behaviour of those actors and structure. Based on the critical social constructivist approach that frames the analysis of this paper and which was elaborated in the theoretical chapter, the rest of this chapter seeks to explore the ideas that have guided the attitudes of various domestic and external actors *vis-à-vis* Eyadéma's regime. By doing so, I seek to also reveal the paradoxical nature of the structure in which those actors interact.

5.2 A "Different" Construction of Democracy for a "Different" Africa?

Larry Diamond (2008) reminds analysts of African democratization that the international community has long constituted a missing link in the democratization of the continent. The international community 'has been only too happy to embrace any African despot in the quest for resources and strategic advantage' (Diamond 2008, 147). Diamond's observation may serve to illustrate that the attitude of France – as a member of the international community – towards democratization in francophone Africa is guided by the self-interested nature of its foreign policy in Africa. I will argue that in the context of Eyadéma's dictatorship, earlier global discourses on what democracy means for Africa have been highly instrumental – even more so than in the Ivorian context – in securing the required degree of legitimacy that would justify French involvement in Togo. What was the substance of this discourse? Under what circumstances did it emerge? How and why did it facilitate Eyadéma's stay in power?

It is worth recalling that in the early 1990s, former French president Jacques Chirac said of Africa that it was "not yet ready for democracy" (Houngnikpo 2001; Sharife 2009, para. 16). Paradoxically, the 1990s had also marked the era of widespread reforms towards democratization in the non-Western world. In a speech made at La Baule Summit in 1990, former French president François Mitterrand urged the many single-party regimes in former French colonies to embrace democratization, equating it to a "second liberation". Mitterrand intended his promotion of democracy

as conditionality for future French co-operation with Africa (Houngnikpo 2001, 51). According to Houngnikpo, however, France's position on democratization in its post-colonies reflected a double standard attitude on various levels. First, France has had strong ties with autocratic governments in francophone Africa since the early years of independence (Houngnikpo 2001). Although Western partners such as the EU have put pressure on France to advocate reforms in its former colonies, one may suggest that not much else has changed between the early 1960s and the 1990s *vis-à-vis* France-Africa relationships. Second, French double standard policies are apparent when comparing French-Togolese relations to French-Beninese relations. For instance, following the La Baule speech, France continued to demand democratic reforms in some countries such as Benin, Togo's neighbour to the East, while turning a blind eye on Togo, where reforms had been stagnant (Houngnikpo 2001, 52). Such an approach is highly contradictory, given that aside from the resource-abundant nature of Togo, there was no other significant difference that could have accounted for the different policy approaches in the two countries. It is therefore not an exaggeration to consider the La Baule Summit as a mere "political stratagem" (Houngnikpo 2001, 53). Given such double standards and contradictory shifts in policy from one French president (Mitterrand) to another (Chirac) in the 1990s, the fact that France was strongly affiliated to an illegitimate regime such as Eyadéma's should not come as a surprise. Rather, examining the nature of the justifications used by France to account for its shifting policies are helpful in beginning to understand the importance that the construction of ideas occupy in the international policy-making process, and their implications for Eyadéma's Togo.

As was made clear in the introductory chapter as well as in the preceding case studies, a key component of the critical social constructivist approach is to address the dichotomy between "self" (for instance France) and "other" (for instance African states). This type of dichotomy is often created through the construction of dominant discourses. In the case of Côte d'Ivoire, the dominant construct that facilitated the longevity of Houphouët's regime was the idea of economic primacy over all other issues. In the case of Gabon, Bongo's regime survival was secured through earlier constructions of the concept of "good governance". In the case of Togo between 1967 and 2005, I propose that it is Western constructs of democratization that have provided the necessary justification behind French backing of Eyadéma's regime, which ultimately contributed to extending Eyadéma's time in office.

5.3 Legitimizing the Undemocratic "Republic" of Togo

The Republic of Togo under Eyadéma was only a "republic" rhetorically. Kwasi Prempeh echoes this evaluation, when he characterizes both authoritarian and "postauthoritarian"[30] regimes as equally dominated by presidential supremacy or what he refers to as "imperial presidency" (Prempeh 2008, 110). Commenting on the lack of genuine democracy post-1990, Eric Edi (2006, 14) for his part maintains that since the 1990s, 'democracy has become a common trading commodity to engage the sympathy of the international community' in West Africa. Edi's assessment of the use of democracy as a mere tool for international legitimization and assistance is indeed applicable to Togo. While Eyadéma actively preached against the implementation of what he viewed as democracy *à la* Western in Africa, conditions to economic assistance imposed by external donors from the early 1990s onwards forced him to adopt a rhetoric that would suggest the democratization of his regime. In reality, objectives of democratization could not be far from the Eyadéma agenda. Richard Joseph explains this democratic charade best when he states the following:

> The democratic character of many African political systems fluctuates according to the whims of their leaders, international geopolitical considerations, the timing of electoral cycles, and the freedom permitted to opposition groups. International actors who seek to advance democracy within these uncertain environments often unwittingly serve as resources for regime legitimization. By and large, African political elites can ignore critical reports from election monitors with little fear of incurring penalties... (Joseph 2003, 159-160)

Eyadéma's leadership effectively illustrated the above observation. For instance, Togo's semblance of democracy during Eyadéma's time in office mainly corresponded to the organization of fraudulent "multi-party" elections. This earned Togo the label of "electoral autocracy", alongside other West African states such as Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Gambia. The illustration of democracy-by-rhetoric in Togo has however come to persist throughout Eyadéma's lifetime, with the international community tolerating human rights violations and other social, political and economic issues as part of the Togolese status quo. Under what circumstances did Eyadéma's illegitimate regime come to survive?

The idea of democracy as a *relative* good vis-à-vis African states emanates both from Western (as in Chirac's case) and African circles. In fact, key African officials have used a similar language as Chirac. President

Eyadéma has perhaps issued the most memorable statement when he declared that democracy in Africa 'moves along at its own pace and in its own way' (BBC 2005, para. 9). Furthermore, thoughts of a "different" type of democracy are not confined to politicians, nor have they become obsolete. Most recently, Rita Edozie and Peyi Soyinka-Airewele (2010, 142), scholars of African Politics, have argued that 'African democracies cannot be viewed dualistically, that is merely as democratic or authoritarian.' While this statement correctly points to the risk associated with thinking in binary terms, Rita Edozie further claims that Africans should have the right to "indigenize" democracy, through "socially constructed [African] experiences" (Edozie 2010, 174-175). In this vein however, former president Houphouët-Boigny's claim that his one-party system was a type of democracy[31] should be respected, if one were to agree with Edozie.

This paper maintains that arguments for an "indigenization" of democracy as suggested by Edozie are not always conveniently the result of "socially constructed [African] experiences" conscious of African welfare, but can also reflect hegemonic discourses perpetuated by Western actors such as France, which are in turn co-opted by their African allies – for instance, Togo's Eyadéma. For instance, Eyadéma's claim to an "African democracy" that moves "at his own pace and in its own way" is similar to Houphouët's earlier claims to a "one-party democracy". This is so, not only because of the obvious autocratic agendas that were barely hidden behind the paradoxical propositions of both rulers, but most importantly because they reflect the fact that those rulers were co-opted to Western interests. Both Eyadéma and Houphouët may have been expressing personal interests, but they were also reflecting existing discourses of Western ideas on democratization in Africa. Therefore, neither Eyadéma nor Houphouët could have expressed "indigenous" constructions of "African" democracy *per se*. As has been argued earlier in this analysis, Western powers have long maintained their hegemony of various constructs of democracy.

In the 1990s, France has specifically demonstrated its hegemony on the idea of democracy in Africa in two different ways that seemed at first contradictory, but were in fact complementary. First, with Mitterrand's La Baule's speech in 1990, France promoted the idea of democratization to its former colonies, at a time when it could no longer do otherwise, due to changing international factors. This approach can be equated with the notion that democracy has been seen by France as a relative good for Africa, where the timing of democratization decided whether or not it was important. That is, as long as the lack of democracy did not temper with

the needs of the time, one did not need to seek democratization on the continent. Second, with the statement that democracy was 'a luxury for Africa' or even a 'political error' (Houngnikpo 2001), Chirac translated the opinion that democracy was a relative good for Africa, where the spatial location of a democracy (for example whether it was situated in Africa or elsewhere) decided whether or not it was necessary. In other words, while democracy is a must in contemporary France, it is not so in contemporary African countries, which remain subordinated to the West. In this context, until one is able to set clear criteria by which one may identify the "socially constructed [African] experiences" that can help create a suitable alternative democracy, one risks the dangerous conclusion that "electoral autocracies" such as Eyadéma's represent "indigenous" alternative democracies. In light of the above, this analysis suggests that French justifications for their support of Eyadéma's illegitimate regime rested on the rhetoric that a "different" democracy was desirable for Africa. It is this support in turn, that facilitated Eyadéma's regime survival.

Conclusion

Following the death of Gnassingbé Eyadéma in 2005, there has been no departure from the politics of façade democracy that Togo has experienced since 1967. From the unconstitutional move by the Togolese military who enthroned Gnassingbé Eyadéma's son Faure Gnassingbé at the announcement of Eyadéma's death in 2005, to the continued violation of human rights and the persistence of clientelism, Togo has remained the theatre of exceptional politics. Tellingly, Faure Gnassingbé is still in power in Togo as of February 2015, after winning contested elections in 2005 and 2010, thus highlighting a ten-year regime survival. One may be tempted to note that the country is echoing the late president's statement that democracy in Africa moves 'at his own pace and in its own way' (BBC 2005, para. 9). However, it is important to stress that the Togolese scenario is not a random outcome. Rather, a critical social constructivist approach reveals that the power of subalternist discourses in justifying problematic regimes in Togo, both during and after Eyadéma's reign, is truly tangible. Specifically, discourses such as France's position on African democratization have constructed the idea of democracy as relatively good for some states and not others; or as relatively needed in some periods and not others. Togolese democracy – or lack thereof – was thus defended as relative, and indeed tolerated – if not

validated. Ultimately, Eyadéma continued to benefit from significant French support – however reduced since the 1990s, which dissuaded any potential insurrections domestically. The reign of the undemocratic President of Togo was thus continued, undeterred.

6. Conclusion

The analysis thus far has maintained that the overarching international structure, characterized by ideas and constructs from various international actors such as Western state actors, multilateral institutions (notably the UN, the IMF and the World Bank) and regional institutions such as the EU and the OECD, permits a specific behaviour of all actors involved. In turn, it is the dynamic relationship between those various actors, motivated by economic incentives and strategic interests, which have ultimately served to explain the regime survival of the African dictatorships examined in this paper.

It is not an overstatement to argue that similarities between the three regimes investigated here are evident. Houphouët-Boigny in Côte d'Ivoire (in office from 1960 to 1993); Omar Bongo in Gabon (in office from 1967 to 2009); and Gnassingbé Eyadéma in Togo (in office from 1967 to 2005) all maintained power until their natural death. The road to what may ironically seem like a lifetime achievement for these three leaders was essentially characterized by single-party regimes for much of their time in office, until the 1990s. However, despite the unambiguous democratization agenda pushed forward by France, the three presidents maintained the status quo of their undemocratic grip on power. Uncovering the aforementioned features is not sufficient in order to understand why and how the three leaders succeeded in achieving an extraordinary longevity in office. The objective of this paper has been to explain that phenomenon, keeping in mind that all three regimes received strong support from France, despite domestic social, political and economic issues conducive to a contrary approach.

The theoretical foundations of this paper rested on critical social constructivism, which has enabled the assessment of the motivations driving relevant actors, as well as the mechanism binding agents and structure in

fostering regime survival in Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon and Togo. Furthermore, critical social constructivism highlighted existing constructs *vis-à-vis* enduring autocratic rule and its implications for democratic regime transition. It is important to note that constructs in this context are conveyed by both academics and policy-makers, hence the need to make better sense of the link between scholars and the policy world. Elaborating on the construction of ideas conveyed through scholarly and policy channels can help reveal the dynamism between different actors, and the structures within which they operate can thus be revealed. As far as concerns African politics, I share Adebayo Olukoshi's position that the biggest challenge is to link scholars and policy-makers to the subject matter not as an object that is observed unidimensionally, but as a subject that can give and receive. Olukoshi (1998, 464) summarizes this point best:

> The African experience cannot be fully understood through its subordination, as it were, to the experiences of others (...). Africa needs to be studied primarily in terms of its own dynamics, which are the products of the interplay of internal and external factors.

This study suggests that analyses of autocratic regimes are committing the mistake that Olukoshi warns against. By isolating the phenomenon of autocratic rule to the confinements of African states, scholars and policy-makers neglect "the interplay of internal and external forces" that lead to enduring autocratic rule in Africa, provoking misleading diagnoses which would later alter the viability of proposed policies. For instance, by focusing on the African state as the perpetrator of autocratic rule, analysts render the issue an "African" one that is dependent on Western advice. Although autocratic rule does not occur within today's Western states, the actions of the latter are fully integrated into autocratic rule in SSA. The other end of the spectrum is seen when analysts take the international dimension of the problem to be the main cause, thereby denying agency to the African actors, not only in their involvement in autocratic rule, but also very importantly, in the designing of solutions. Furthermore, by stressing the importance of *factors* rather than *actors*, Olukoshi subtly weaves in the importance of both actors and structures into the debate. To be sure, and as was illustrated in the three case studies, an autocratic regime could not survive without support from both internal and external allies, or without a favourable structure conducive to the sought regime.

The ultimate purpose of the theoretical underpinnings of this paper has been to highlight the problematic assessment that a unidimensional

understanding of regime survival in SSA may bring. To address that potential risk, one must apply critical lenses to the analysis of the dynamic interaction of ideas and processes. The importance of analyzing ideas has already been discussed and needs no further elaboration. However, given the focus of this paper on the post-colony, as well as the importance of the relationship between France and its former colonies as demonstrated through the case studies, one may wonder whether the choice of post-colonial theory would not have been a better fit for this paper. In this concluding chapter, I seek to reiterate the utility of critical social constructivism vis-à-vis the paper's objective. Moreover, I briefly discuss the contribution that this analysis has sought to add to the much discussed topic of autocratic regime survival in SSA.

As was argued earlier in this analysis, one must be critical of depictions of "the African state" and its potential functions as "different", especially when such differences are used to defend autocratic governments.[32] It is therefore reasonable to evoke a post-colonial perspective as befitting of the present study. Thus, one may indeed situate this analysis as post-colonial, as it is specifically informed by Edward Said's seminal work *Orientalism* (1979). According to Said, an Orientalist discourse imagines and reinvents the "other" as significantly different (i.e., the characteristic of "otherness") and also as subordinate (the characteristic of "subaltern") to the Western "self". It is important to insist on the term subaltern, as it designates a subordinate power (see Olukoshi's comments). The subordinate power is a power outside of the hegemonic structure constructed by the "self". One can talk about subalternism to designate Western discourse that conceptualizes the "subaltern other" (e.g., the African state) as significantly different, thereby appropriating the right to simultaneously represent and silence the "other".

Notwithstanding the effectiveness of a post-colonial perspective in providing the tools necessary to explicate key issues in Western understanding of autocratic rule in SSA, post-colonial arguments alone would be insufficient to elaborate on the role of domestic African actors in perpetuating the status quo. Indeed, critical social constructivism takes a step further than postcolonial perspectives by providing an analysis of constructs and ideas employed by various actors within a given structure. In the end, therefore, one may argue that this paper has contributed to illustrating the benefits of an inter-paradigm debate. For instance, this paper focused on the concept of "difference" as an orientalist discourse, which is essentially a loaned discourse from the post-colonial lexicon on the politics of representation. However, in contrast to post-colonial theory, critical social constructivism

insists on the process that saw the construction of subalternist ideas, as well as the motivations for such constructs. Specifically, critical social constructivism may suggest potential means to understanding how and why the dynamics between 'self' and 'other' play out in the construct of African autocracies.

In the final analysis, it is worth briefly returning to the case studies that have constituted the object of this study. In the first case study, the longevity of Houphouët-Boigny's regime was explained through the idea of economic primacy over political instability, which in turn shaped the dynamics between domestic and external factors that were responsible for legitimizing Houphouët's power. The second case study explored the roots of Bongo's lengthy hold on power as indirectly stemming from Gabon's natural wealth. Indeed, the survival of Bongo's regime was essentially based on its clientelist relationship with France, which was facilitated by global dominant discourses such as early discourses on "good governance". In the third and final case study, Eyadéma's regime appeared to be the most contested and most unstable of all three, given the highly violent and repressive methods of his regime. Eyadéma's regime survived in major part thanks to the constant relativization of democracy in Africa, and despite the post-1990s call for democratic reforms. Based on the championing of "democratic difference" that served as justification for both domestic and external allies in Togo, I suggest that all three regimes maintained their undemocratic power for a lifetime due to discourses that normalized exceptional states in Africa.

Notes

1. The sought amendment targeted Article 37 of the Constitution, which currently stipulates that the President is to be elected for a five-year term, renewable once (SGGCM 2015). While the specific terms of the proposed amendment were never disclosed, it is clear that Compaoré sought to extend his stay in power, as his last year in the presidency was scheduled for 2015. Note that the current Burkinabè Constitution is that of the fourth Republic, and that Article 37 has already been amended twice. When adopted on June 2nd 1991, the presidential term was set for seven years, renewable once. On January 27th 1997, one year before Compaoré's first term was over, Article 37 was amended to remove the stipulation on term limits, by removing the word "once", thus making the presidential term limitless (SGGCM 2015). On April 11th 2000, to appease popular unrest against the government, the Constitution was amended for the second time, reinstating the five-year term limit, renewable once (Carayol 2014, para. 7). However, the government maintained that this latest amendment would only take effect in 2005, once the remainder of Compaoré's second seven-year at the time was completed. Compaoré was therefore re-elected both in 2005 and 2010, as per the current terms of Article 37 (Carayol 2014). These constant amendments of the Constitution of Burkina Faso served to extend Compaoré's power for almost three decades. These strategic constitutional amendments are by no means unique to the country. Rather, they are part of a larger phenomenon on the continent, the analysis of which has triggered the subject matter of this paper.
2. The term is popularly used by French foreign policy analysts and analysts of Francophone African politics, to refer to the close relationship between France and its former colonies in Africa. The fact that the hyphen is eliminated from "France-Afrique" to form one word "Françafrique" is highly symbolic, and often connotes the neo-colonial tones of France's relationship with post-colonial Francophone African countries. The term was coined at the beginning of 1994 by François Xavier Verschave.
3. Emphasis added.
4. For instance, explaining the already lengthy reign of Eyadema at the time, Nwankwo evokes French protection as the main warrant for the latter's hold on power.
5. "Politics of the belly" is a Cameroonian term borrowed by Bayart.
6. Both terms will be used interchangeably throughout this paper.

7. This title makes direct reference to Hopf's 1998 article, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory" on the one hand; and to Adler's 1997 article, "Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics."

8. The adverb is essential, given that not considering the importance of ideas seriously, that is, in depth (as liberals do) leads to the same unsatisfactory theoretical outcomes as not considering the role of ideas at all (as neorealists do) (See Risse-Kappen 1994, 190).

9. Adler also indicates that his understanding of knowledge and discourse is informed by the Foucauldian concept of power.

10. "Troubled" states will be my alternative designation for states that experience social, economic and political crisis, which however do not lead to a generalized level of instability in the country.

11. This widespread use specifically refers to dominant discourses held by sovereign powers such as France, regional and international institutions such as the EU and UN; but it also reflects the prominent use of these concepts by IR scholars. I argue that the aforementioned actors have embraced a convergent perspective towards "state crisis"; this will be further elaborated in the paper.

12. That Bates is a renowned scholar in African politics and is affiliated with a powerful center of knowledge production/reproduction such as Harvard has made him a strategic choice for this paper.

13. My emphasis.

14. Although violence and conflict are not equivalent concepts, in the sense that conflict can be both violent and non-violent, the discussed methodology used by the FfP appears to conflate both terms. What is important in this paper is that it ultimately indicates the strong focus of the Failed Index indicators on uncontrolled violence, much like in Bates' terms.

15. Numbers have been updated to indicate ranking from the 2010 FSI (Foreign Policy, 2010). Note that Dickinson, Lowrey and Keating had based their argument on the 2009 FSI ranking, and their point remains pertinent given the little or no change in the 2010 ranking: the 2009 FSI ranking still indicates 10 for Pakistan and 9 for Guinea, while North Korea and Côte d'Ivoire have respectively moved down to 17 and 11. The ranking includes 177 countries.

16. For instance, Bøås and Jennings (2007, 481) denounce the fact that 'other countries share many of the features identified in [...] failed states, but do not face the same sorts of intervention'. By other failed states, Bøås and Jennings refer to those in conflict zones.

17. Like many former French colonies in Africa with one-party systems, a multiparty system was only established in Côte d'Ivoire in 1990, as a result of the La Baule speech (Houngnikpo 2001). This speech was given in 1990 by former French President François Mitterrand (in office from 1981 to 1995) at La Baule, and was a call for democratization in former French colonies in Africa. Since this appeal was strongly tied to French development aid in Africa, many African countries sought to display a positive response to it. For instance, Houphouët's PDCI (*Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire*), at the time Côte d'Ivoire's three decade old one-party, began facing electoral competition for the first time following Mitterrand's speech.

18. Emphasis added.

19. To speak of re-legitimization takes into account the fact that initial legitimacy for French security practices in SSA was based on so-called historical/colonial ties. This can help explain why France's newfound legitimacy can also be seen as a newfound "imperialism" according to Charbonneau.

20. Unlike what Bates suggested however, in Houphouet's case, creating wealth did not exclude preying upon it.

21. See earlier note, number 17.

22. "We" refers to African states in the post-independence era; the help that Africans need to develop implicitly refers to French support.

23. The original citation reads : 'Tout Gabonais a deux patries: la France, et le Gabon'. The above translation is my own.

24. Elf-Aquitaine is now part of the merger Total-Fina-Elf, known as Total since 2003 (Sharife 2009). Elf was among the top ten petrochemical companies in the world when it was acquired by Total Fina in 2000, and was one of France's largest oil companies. See http://www.referenceforbusiness.com/history2/68/Total-Fina-Elf-S-A.html (accessed 24 January 2015)

25. Note indeed that Côte d'Ivoire suffered from increased foreign debts and a stagnating economy since the 1980s; this economic decline was mainly triggered by declining world prices of cocoa and coffee (Grant 2010, 238).

26. In this context, Martin is mainly referring to francophone Africa. The subsequent evaluation of Martin's argument will also be targeted to francophone Africa.

27. Based on the definition of "good governance" given by Kofi-Annan, one may define "bad" governance as a form of governance that fails to meet key criteria such as the respect of human rights and the rule of law, democratization and transparency.

28. Previously named Etienne Eyadéma. Henceforth, Gnassingbé Eyadéma will be referred to as Eyadéma, in order to distinguish him from Faure Gnassingbé, the current president of Togo and the son of Gnassingbé Eyadéma.

29. Note that there were some sanctions during Eyadéma's rule. However, those were not severe enough to threaten the government and were easily lifted after basic conditions were satisfied.For instance, the EU cut off aid to Togo in 1993, to protest against 'voting irregularities and human rights violations'. Furthermore, the UN and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) condemned the 1998 elections as having involved systematic violations of human rights (BBC 2005, para. 6). Partial diplomatic relationships have since resumed with the EU, and the UN/OAU carried no actual sanctions.

30. By this term, Prempeh (2008) referred to the post-1990 democratic reforms that have swept the continent.

31. This claim has indeed been made by Houphouët-Boigny in 1990, and received the backing of French president Jacques Chirac (Houngnikpo 2001, 54). The personal and national interests behind this proposition are evident, as per previous discussion in this paper.

32. The argument that democracy may be a luxury for Africa or that one-party systems may be referred to as democracies in the African context are only but a few examples of such depictions of "differences".

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