

“Till Death Do Us Part”?

“Till Death Do Us Part”?

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

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Taking their name from the distinctive towers built during the nineteenth century to defend Kingston, Ontario, the [redacted] cover a wide range of topics and issues in foreign and defence policy and in the study of international peace and security. The Centre for International and Defence Policy at Queen's University is pleased to publish the latest in its series of monographs,

For too long international relations as a field of study has failed to face

important questions about the applicability of its [redacted] assumptions
to the [redacted] world of the [redacted] century.

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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 _____, 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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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 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

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 interaction 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 ruler 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 r

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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

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 (Jackson & Rosberg 1982), and (Bayart 1993) and as (Reno 1998), whereas Jean-François Médard (1996) describes the post-colonial state as a (Bøås 2003, 32; emphasis added). Before proceeding, ^ \$ #

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, (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 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 ir " s olit " co

It is helpful to base this evaluation on Ian Taylor's recent overview of what neopatrimonialism indicates in 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 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 nonexistent, 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

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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 unes ui tor ^ about f hdori s nd hat t d o Q s ddes in vesti â te -

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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 create ab

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2.4 The “Promise” of Y jkej"Constructivism? The Gap between Etkvkecn and Eqpxgpvkqpcn"Constructivism⁷

The concluding section of this chapter seeks to reinforce the argument that taking ‘the role of ideas – knowledge, values, and strategic concepts’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 reii]

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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

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, 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 African states.

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 use¹¹ 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 structured 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 *Great Lakes in Africa: The Making of a Political System* 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 should not be treated as a given. Rather, I argue, it results when rulers – whom I characterize as “autocrats”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 Affairs*, 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 “index of 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.

13. Bates (2008, 5) defines autocrats as “rulers who are not elected and who are not held accountable to the people”.

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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 *les États de la zone franc*. In return, Houphouët- m d

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

Introduction

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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 (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 (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 'we²² 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

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 allocation affects electoral outcomes when voters only care about redistribution' (Jensen and Wantchekon 2004, 834). In sum, French political support, 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 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 co

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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 Kof-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 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” governance²⁷ is restricted to African state

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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

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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.

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

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 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 important

5.3 Legitimizing the Undemocratic “Republic” of Togo

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 regime survival.

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.

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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 Franco-

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