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A Case of Neocolonialism? Political Economy and Relations between Togo and France in Time of Decolonization and Independence

Supervisor: Prof. STEFANO BELLUCCI

Candidate: KEKELI DANIEL QUENUM

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the transformation of neocolonialism in Togo from the period of formal decolonization to the contemporary neoliberal era. Drawing on theories of neocolonialism, Françafrique, and critical development studies, the research argues that the end of colonial rule did not result in genuine political and economic autonomy for Togo. Instead, colonial relations were progressively reconfigured through political networks, financial mechanisms, development aid, and multinational corporate influence.

The study first analyzes the decolonization process and the establishment of postcolonial relations between France and Togo. Particular attention is given to the examination of the Françafrique networks associated with Jacques Foccart. The dissertation argues that these networks enabled France to maintain significant political and economic influence in Togo after formal independence while relying on domestic authoritarian structures, particularly under the Eyadéma dynasty.

The research further examines how development aid, the CFA franc system, and Structural Adjustment Programs promoted by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank contributed to the reproduction of dependency relations. While these policies were officially presented as instruments of modernization, economic stabilization, and development, critical scholarship suggests that they often reinforced external control over domestic economic policy, weakened state capacity, and increased reliance on foreign capital and international financial institutions. The dissertation also explores the neoliberal transformation of neocolonialism in Togo through the growing role of multinational corporations, particularly Bolloré, in controlling strategic infrastructures such as the Port Autonome de Lomé.

Methodologically, the dissertation adopts a qualitative historical and political economy approach. The analysis is based on both primary and secondary sources, including academic literature, official reports, and archival documents from the French National Archives. These sources are used to trace the continuity and transformation of French influence in Togo from the colonial period to the present day.

Overall, the dissertation argues that colonialism in Togo did not disappear after independence, but instead adapted to changing international contexts and transformed into neocolonialism. It evolved from direct political domination into more diffuse forms

of economic control embedded in globalized markets, development institutions, and corporate networks.

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Acronyms

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
AFD	Agence Française de Développement (French Development Agency)
AGL	Africa Global Logistics
BAL	Bolloré Africa Logistics
BEAC	Banque des États de l'Afrique Centrale (Bank of Central African States)
BCEAO	Banque Centrale des États de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (Central Bank of West African States)
CEMAC	Communauté Économique et Monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale (Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa)
CFA	Communauté Financière Africaine (African Financial Community Franc); originally *Colonies Françaises d'Afrique* and later *Communauté Française d'Afrique*
CJIP	Convention Judiciaire d'Intérêt Public (French Public Interest Judicial Agreement)
CTMB	Compagnie Togolaise des Mines du Bénin
CUT	Comité de l'Unité Togolaise
EEC	European Economic Community
EDF	European Development Fund
EU	European Union
FAC	Fonds d'Aide et de Coopération (French Cooperation Aid Fund)
FCFA	Franc de la Communauté Financière Africaine (CFA Franc)
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IDA	International Development Association
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (German Development Bank)
LCT	Lomé Container Terminal
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MSC	Mediterranean Shipping Company
OAU	Organization of African Unity
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PAL	Port Autonome de Lomé
PNF	Parquet National Financier (French National Financial Prosecutor's Office)

Acronyms

RPT	Rassemblement du Peuple Togolais (Togolese People's Rally)
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SDV	Société de Distribution et de Valorisation (Bolloré logistics subsidiary)
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
TEU	Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit
TIL	Terminal Investment Limited
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UEMOA	Union Économique et Monétaire Ouest-Africaine (West African Economic and Monetary Union)
UPC	Union des Populations du Cameroun
URSS	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WB	World Bank

Introduction

More than six decades after the wave of African independences, the question of whether colonial domination truly ended remains the subject of academic and political debate. While formal colonial rule disappeared across the African continent during the second half of the twentieth century, many scholars have argued that former colonial powers developed new mechanisms through which they continued to exercise political, economic, and strategic influence over their former territories. These forms of indirect domination are commonly described as neocolonialism, a concept popularized by Kwame Nkrumah, who defined it as a system in which formally sovereign states remain subjected to external control through economic dependence, political influence, and unequal international relations.[1]

Among the various forms of neocolonialism in Africa, the French case occupies a particular place. Following the independence of its African colonies, France developed a dense network of political, military, economic, and personal relationships commonly referred to as *Françafrique*. Originally associated with the political system constructed by Jacques Foccart under Charles de Gaulle, Françafrique relied on close ties between French political elites and African leaders to preserve French influence in strategic sectors such as natural resources, trade, finance, and security. Although the system evolved over time, numerous scholars have argued that it survived the end of formal colonialism and adapted to changing international circumstances.

Togo provides a particularly relevant case through which to examine these dynamics. The establishment of the authoritarian regime of Gnassingbé Eyadéma in 1967 and the subsequent succession of his son, Faure Gnassingbé, created one of the longest-lasting political dynasties in Africa. Throughout this period, French governments, multinational corporations, and economic networks maintained a significant presence in the country, particularly in strategic sectors of the economy. As a result, Togo offers an important

[1] Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1965), 4

example of how the mechanisms of Françafrique have persisted and evolved from direct political influence toward more complex forms of economic control.

This dissertation analyses how these dynamics evolved in Togo, a small West African state. Formerly a German colony and later administered by France under a League of Nations mandate and subsequently a United Nations trusteeship, Togo achieved independence in 1960. However, the country's postcolonial trajectory remained deeply intertwined with French political and economic interests. Against this background, the dissertation examines how and to what extent neocolonialism was reproduced in Togo through the Françafrique system in the decades following independence.

The thesis argues that the evolution of Franco-Togolese relations can be understood as a transition from a predominantly political form of Françafrique to a more economically driven system of influence. While the earlier phase relied heavily on diplomatic support, military cooperation, and personal political networks linking French and Togolese elites, the contemporary phase increasingly operates through multinational corporations, privatization processes, infrastructure projects, concession agreements, and global financial flows. In this context, French corporations have emerged as central actors in the reproduction of forms of influence that were previously exercised through more direct political channels. Rather than representing a rupture with the past, this transformation illustrates the adaptation of Françafrique to the neoliberal era, in which economic actors and market mechanisms increasingly replaced traditional instruments of political control while continuing to serve many of the same strategic interests.

To better understand these dynamics, the first chapter analyzes several key concepts that provide the theoretical framework for the dissertation. These include the concept of Neocolonialism, understood as a system in which formally sovereign states remain subject to external influences; Françafrique, the network of political, economic, and military relationships that has historically defined the "special" relationship between France and its former African colonies; the concept of development aid rhetoric, which is embedded within both Neocolonialism and Françafrique and has often served to legitimize the continued presence of former colonial powers in Africa, particularly through the rise of the Bretton Woods institutions and development cooperation frameworks; and finally, the concept of the Predatory State, which refers to a state in which ruling elites use public institutions primarily to extract resources and accumulate wealth while providing limited collective benefits to society. Taken together, these concepts provide the analytical lens through which Franco-Togolese relations are examined throughout this dissertation.

The second chapter investigates the historical development of Françafrique in Togo as a system of political control. It argues that, in the aftermath of the Second World War and at the beginning of the Cold War, France faced a severe economic crisis and the decline of its status as a global power. This situation, combined with the difficulties of containing colonial wars in Indochina and Algeria, pushed the French state to manage and control the decolonization process in Africa in a manner that would preserve its strategic interests. In this context, the chapter analyzes the strategies adopted by France to grant independence to its African colonies, including Togo, while retaining substantial influence over the newly independent states. These strategies included the creation of the CFA franc, the placement of former League of Nations mandates such as Togo and Cameroon under the United Nations Trusteeship system in 1946, the adoption of the *Loi-cadre* in 1956, and the organization of UN-supervised political processes leading to Togo's independence in 1960.

The chapter further demonstrates that the independence project pursued by Sylvanus Olympio was incompatible with French interests. As Togo's first elected president, Olympio sought to reduce the country's dependence on France and pursue a more autonomous political and economic path. The chapter argues that this orientation contributed to the circumstances that culminated in the first military coup in sub-Saharan Africa in 1963, carried out by Étienne Eyadéma, a former sergeant of the French colonial army. The coup, which allegedly benefited from French support and exploited existing ethnic divisions within Togolese society, resulted in Olympio's assassination and the re-establishment of French influence in Togo. The chapter then examines the bilateral agreements concluded between France and Togo, demonstrating that they were not merely technical instruments of cooperation but key mechanisms through which French political, military, and economic influence was maintained. Finally, it analyzes how the Françafrique system operated under Eyadéma's rule, showing that the regime relied heavily on an ethnically based military apparatus, a personality cult, and continuous

French support, including military interventions carried out under the framework of defense agreements.

Having examined the political dimension of Françafrique, the third chapter focuses on the transition from political control to economic influence. To explain this shift, the chapter first investigates the factors that contributed to the transformation of the Françafrique system. It argues that the weakening of Jacques Foccart's networks after the Gaullist era and the growing competition among political and economic actors for influence in Africa altered the mechanisms through which French interests were pursued. The chapter then examines Togo's failed democratic transition during the 1990s. It argues that the economic crisis of the late 1970s and 1980s, together with the failure of bilateral and multilateral aid programs, pushed the Togolese government to rely increasingly on structural adjustment programs promoted by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The growing linkage between development aid and democratic governance, combined with domestic demands for political reform, forced Eyadéma to accept a process of limited political liberalization. However, this transition resulted in what can best be described as a pseudo-democracy, characterized by Eyadéma's controversial re-election in 1993 and the preservation of authoritarian rule through military repression and constitutional manipulation.

The chapter also analyzes the restructuring of the Togolese economy under neoliberal reforms. It demonstrates that, despite France's formal commitment to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, French governments continued to support the Gnassingbé regime, including the dynastic succession that brought Faure Gnassingbé to power despite widespread concerns regarding electoral legitimacy and human rights violations. The chapter argues that the transformation of the global economy, the growing influence of the Bretton Woods institutions, and the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC) encouraged France to "europeanize" its former colonial relationships. At the same time, the promotion of market liberalization, privatization, and structural adjustment programs created new opportunities for foreign investment in strategic sectors of the Togolese economy. These developments facilitated both the consolidation of French multinational corporations and the entry of other foreign actors into key sectors such as banking, infrastructure, logistics, transport, and agro-industry. The chapter concludes by examining the predatory relationship that emerged between French political and economic interests and the Togolese ruling elite under the Gnassingbé dynasty, laying the foundations for the subsequent analysis of the Port Autonome de Lomé and the Bolloré Group.

Finally, the last chapter examines the Port Autonome de Lomé as a case study through which the economic dimension of the Françafrique system can be observed. Beginning with an analysis of the historical development of the port, the chapter highlights its importance not only for the Togolese economy but also for the landlocked Sahelian states of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, which rely heavily on the Port of Lomé for access to international trade. Among the various strategic sectors of the Togolese economy, the port was selected as a case study because it constitutes the country's most important economic asset. As one of the few naturally deep-water port on the West African coast, it has become a major regional hub and, together with its related activities, represents one of the most productive sectors of the Togolese economy.

The chapter acknowledges that the success and expansion of the port were facilitated by the liberalization policies promoted by the Bretton Woods institutions, which encouraged foreign investment and infrastructure development. Nevertheless, it is precisely at this point that the chapter argues that the dynamics surrounding the Port of Lomé best illustrate the economic dimension of the Françafrique neocolonial system. It contends that the 2008 global financial crisis encouraged multinational corporations to increase their interest in port infrastructure and logistics networks, which had become increasingly strategic within the global economy. In this sense, the rhetoric of development assistance that characterized the post-war period, and later the structural adjustment programs of the 1980s, which often benefited multinational interests more than recipient states, finds continuity in the liberalization and privatization of African ports.

The chapter further examines the figure of Vincent Bolloré and the activities of the Bolloré Group as a particularly revealing example of the economic form of control associated with contemporary Françafrique. It demonstrates how Bolloré, after taking over the family business, capitalized on the opportunities created by neoliberal reforms and existing postcolonial networks to acquire port concessions and other strategic assets across Africa, including in Togo. The accumulation of wealth and the economic influence exercised by the Bolloré Group over African governments, particularly in former French colonies, illustrate the growing manifestation of Françafrique as a system increasingly based on economic rather than direct political control.

Finally, the chapter analyzes the controversial acquisition of the Port of Lomé concession by Bolloré. It argues that the informal networks traditionally associated with Françafrique—based on personal relationships, patronage, and corruption—have not disappeared but have instead evolved. Whereas the earlier phase of Françafrique relied primarily on agreements between the French and Togolese states, the contemporary phase of economic control is increasingly implemented through arrangements involving the Togolese regime, international financial institutions, and multinational corporations. This transformation demonstrates how the mechanisms of Françafrique have adapted to the neoliberal era while continuing to reproduce asymmetrical power relations between France and Togo.

Chapter 1: Literature Review, Research Question and Methodology

1.1. Neocolonialism, Françafrique, International Financial Institutions, and the Predatory State

What does political independence truly mean in the absence of economic autonomy? In the case of Togo - a western African country, formal decolonization did not mark the end of external domination, but rather its transformation. This dissertation examines how French neocolonialism evolved after independence, shifting from direct political control to more subtle mechanisms of economic and institutional influence. It argues that neocolonial domination in Togo has been sustained through a combination of political alliances, externally driven economic reforms, and the strategic role of key infrastructures such as the Port Autonome de Lomé. By analyzing the interaction between domestic elites, foreign actors, and international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, this study aims to demonstrate how sovereignty has been constrained not through overt control, but through embedded systems of dependency and economic governance.

This study examines the concept of neocolonialism and how its instruments of control have changed specifically in Togo. Accordingly, the literature review examine the present concept of Neocolonialism, used to describe a new colonial link between former colonial empire and former colonies, based on Kwame Nkruma's definition. The concept of Françafrique dated 1960-1990 which underlines the nature of French relationships with its former colonies included Togo, and the neoliberal policies adopted by the Bretton Woods institutions, namely the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), which led to the privatization of the economy in different part of the world, including the privatization of Togolese economy which driver force is Port Autonome de Lomé.

It is important to mention that the neocolonialism system in Togo is not an isolated case. Concepts as Neocolonialism, Françafrique, together with multilateral aid agency policies are issue that tackle different region in the world including Asia, South America and Africa. Hence, in this dissertation, the analysis of these concepts refers mainly to sub-Saharian countries or former colonies which include, of course, Togo.

1.1.1. Neocolonialism

Before analyzing the concept of neocolonialism, it is important to first define its historical predecessor, colonialism, which basically can be understood as a system of domination in which one people subjugates another.[2] It is put in place by European empires to serve their interests in different regions across the globe.

According to Osterhammel, colonialism entails: conquest trough military invasion, treaties or coercion used to establish control; resistance of indigenous people; the formation of colonial administration (governors, legal codes, bureaucracies, and collaborators), local elites or intermediaries who help maintain colonial rule; economic policies including forced labor, taxation, land expropriation, and monoculture; colonizer's social structures stratified societies based on race and power relation that put Europeans at the top and colonized Africans at the bottom, segregating the latter in housing, education and legal rights; cultural encounter between colonizers and colonized imposing on the latter language, religion and education system disrupting traditional authority, economies and social norms; and "civilizing mission" ideology based on racial theories, religious justification.[3] From this perspective, neocolonialism can be understood as a continuation of colonialism due to the similarities they share.

The word "Neocolonialism" was first used internationally by Ghana's foreign minister, under Nkrumah's administration, Alex Quaison-Sackey on April 19, 1958, during a

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[2] Margaret Kohn and Kavita Reddy, Colonialism, May 9, 2006, 1, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/colonialism/?f[0]=topic:1&countryid=391&f%5B0%5D=region%3A46.

[3] Jürgen Osterhammel, "Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview," Argument Synopsis, 1997, 1, https://www.colleenlnugent.com/exams/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/04/colonialism_theoretical_overview.pdf.

speech at the UN General Assembly defining it as "the practice of granting a sort of independence with the concealed intention of making the liberated country a client-state, and controlling it effectively by means other than political ones". [4] This idea of Neocolonialism entails the "granting" of independence without letting go of exploitation and effective control on the states deemed independent. Even if this definition was provided before the French decolonization process in Africa, it offers an accurate picture of what French reserved for its colonies. "Neo" as it implies the rupture with the colonial power through decolonization and independence, nevertheless it presents almost the same features as colonialism but much subtle.

This literature review identifies a significant theoretical continuity between Kwame Nkrumah and Christopher Walsh. Although their analyses were published forty years apart, both converge on the concept of neocolonialism as a product of intentional fragmentation. By tracing the exploitation of the continent back to the balkanization measures of the decolonization era, both authors emphasize that the creation of small, economically weak states serves to preserve domination. This alignment underscores a persistent understanding of neocolonial structural mechanisms within the field.[5]

By analyzing Kwame Nkrumah's definition of neocolonialism in his book *Neocolonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, the similarities between neocolonial practices and colonialism, as outlined in Jürgen Osterhammel's theoretical overview of colonialism, become clear. Nkrumah explained that neocolonialism has different methods and forms including; in extreme case, former colonizer's military presence in the neocolonial State and control of its government; treaties which keep the link between the former colonizer and its former colonies - as well as between countries that had not have colonial link; neocolonial administration through power exercise in international financial institutions and corporates; collaborators identified in local elites willing or forced to follow their former colonizers leads or to engage with neocolonialist state; resistance of

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[4] Godfrey N. Uzoigwe, "Neocolonialism Is Dead: Long Live Neocolonialism," Journal of Global South Studies 36, no. 1 (2019): 62.

[5] Kwame Nkrumah, Neocolonialism, The Last Stage of Imperialism. (1965), p.22; Christopher Walsch, "The Africa Policies of France, 1956 - 1990". (University of Vienna, 2003), 5, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.25365/thesis.64967.

subjugated people through protest against local rulers, former colonial master, and international institutions through which the act; economic and monetary means including preferential commercial agreement, establishment of raw material extraction economy, infrastructural control, and neocolonial currency adoption. It holds the ideology of help for development through aid enlargement and structural adjustment policies, maintaining meanwhile cultural influence through language and educational system among others. He further describes the essence of neocolonialism as the subjection of a State which is deemed independent in theory and has all the formal attributes of international sovereignty but *"in reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside"*.[6] As it will be explained later, these are the very objective of France neocolonial system: to control the economy of their former colonies, through manipulation of African leaders.

In his view, the decolonization is just a word used hypocritically by imperialist leaders to describe the transfer of political control from colonialist to African rule. However, the control dynamics have not changed. *"The change in the economic relationship between the new sovereign states and the erstwhile masters is only one of form. Colonialism has achieved a new guise"* becoming Neocolonialism. It operates through large companies and economic groups that take advantage of Africa's struggle for independence and unity. In fact, the newly proclaimed independent countries still provide raw materials while the former colonial powers continue dominate in manufactured products.[7]

Also Tomas Profant, sharing Walsch's definition of neocolonialism, shows the latter author's alignment with the characteristics highlighted by Nkruma. He asserts that neocolonialism is set through a local elite that is prompt to govern its country according to the demands of the world market. The author explains that neocolonialism presents itself in different forms throughout which the imperial power holds its control over the neocolonial State. These forms can be manifested in the military field via military officials, police, and army education and the supply of weapons - the bilateral military

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[6] Nkrumah, Neocolonialism, The Last Stage of Imperialism., 4.

[7] Nkrumah, Neocolonialism, The Last Stage of Imperialism., 34.

agreements signed between France and its former colonies are clear examples. In the political field, it is visible through influence zones building and international organizations which favor the interest of the Western nations. Culturally through missions, involvement with local media and local education system building. It controls the communication fields by constructing posts and telecommunications. It creates dependency on the imperial power's technological know-how in the technical field. Socially, it exploits the emigration of highly skilled, educated, or professional people while backing local elites in their efforts to transform indigenous traditions and ways of life so as to align more closely with contemporary Western, non-traditional norms. In the financial field through allowing, controlling and conditioning loans from international financial institutions including the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF); and finally in the economic field by transnational corporations' exploitation[8].

The conception of the international financial institutions as neocolonial tool is not new. Before Walsch, Nkruma viewed multilateral aid through international organizations as *"neo-colonialist trap on the economic front"*. In his view the Bretton Woods institutions, among others, are institutions largely supported by U.S. and Western capital. These organizations often require prospective borrowers to comply with intrusive conditions [9] which result in power limitation for the independent states.

While Nkrumah highlighted that exploitation of this kind occurs due to the balkanization of the African continent tracing it back to the Loi-Cadre of 1956, which implemented a series of fragmentation measures by establishing the frontiers of the French's *pré-carré*, Walsh asserted that the Loi-Cadre initiated a decolonization process rooted in the "divide and rule" principle. In his view, de Gaulle succeeded in establishing small, and thus economically weak, states, thereby influencing decolonization in a way that allowed France to maintain "a maximum of influence". [10]

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[8] Tomas Profant, "French Geopolitics in Africa: From Neocolonialism to Identity," Perspectives 18, no. 1 (2010): 46.

[9] Nkrumah, Neocolonialism, The Last Stage of Imperialism., 188.

[10] Nkrumah, Neocolonialism, The Last Stage of Imperialism., 22; Walsch, "The Africa Policies of France, 1956 - 1990.," 5.

According to Nkrumah, the African fragmentation process was completed by 1958. At this time, each territory established by the Loi-Cadre was called to decide separately whether it desired to remain an overseas territory of France, become an autonomous Republic within the French Community, or pursue full independence.[11]

It is important to mention here that when Sékou Touré's Guinea voted "no" in the 1958 referendum on that Community, France retaliated against Guinea by dismantling and removing administrative and technical infrastructures pushing the country in a major economic crisis. The destructive aspects of the withdrawal suggest that it was not just a neutral decolonization step, but also meant to punish Guinea and deter others.

Nevertheless, not every scholars condemn neocolonialism. As discussed by Elpiniki Paisi, Bruce Gilley argues that colonial and even neocolonial relations possessed a certain degree of legitimacy because, in some cases, indigenous populations collaborated with colonial authorities or did not openly resist colonial rule. From this perspective, Gilley controversially maintains that elements of the "colonial toolkit" could still contribute to effective governance and international order. However, this argument has been strongly criticized for minimizing the widespread historical resistance to colonial domination and for interpreting the collaboration of selected local elites or individuals as representative of the will of colonized populations as a whole. In contrast, Lea Ypi rejects the idea that colonial relations could genuinely be based on consent. She argues that consent under colonial conditions cannot be considered fully free or legitimate because colonized populations operated within structures of deep political, economic, and military inequality. According to Ypi, what appeared as consent often reflected coercion, dependency, or the absence of meaningful alternatives rather than genuine political autonomy.[12]

However, this dissertation follows the critical perspective that colonial and neocolonial relations cannot be understood as genuinely legitimate when they are shaped by structural inequality, dependency, and unequal access to political and economic power. In the

[11] Nkrumah, Neocolonialism, The Last Stage of Imperialism., 23.

[12] Elpiniki Paisi, "NEOCOLONIALISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT IN TAHITI:" (Università degli studi di Padova, 2025), 39-40.

specific French context, the neocolonial system in Togo and other former French colonies in Africa has been termed the Françafrique system, denoting France's distinctive approach to constructing and maintaining neocolonial domination. In Togo, the Françafrique system helped Gnassingbé Eyadéma build and maintain his regime. The next paragraph will examine the Françafrique system in order to better understand the functioning of French neocolonial influence in the country.

1.1.2. Françafrique and Development Aid

To examine the Françafrique system, this study relies on the foundational work of *La Françafrique (1958- 1998): Le plus long scandale de la République* by François-Xavier Verschave, which "examines the political crimes of the Franco-African system of relations established by Jacques Foccart at the time of the 'independences'".[13] His analysis has been extensively cited in academic literature and remains central to understanding the dynamics of the system.

Françafrique denotes the special French sphere of influence in its former colonies in Africa. It comes from "France-Afrique" firstly used by Félix Houphouët-Boigny, the first president of Côte d'Ivoire, in 1955 to define the close and friendly relationship between his country and its former colonizer France.[14] The term then moved beyond Franco-Ivorian context to refer to the specificity of the Franco-African relationship.

To put the term in context, Kaye Whiteman and Bovcon identified the World War II and french military defeat in Indochina (1946-1954) and struggle during Algeria's war (1954-1962) as its historical ground. According to the author, these events had considerably weakened France. Hence, to avoid colonial wars in sub-Saharan Africa, which represented France's last major imperial stronghold, maintaining close ties with its former colonies became a strategy for restoring France's status as a great power and asserting

[13] François-Xavier Verschave, La Françafrique: Le plus Long Scandale de La République (Stock, 1998), 59.

[14] Maja Bovcon, "Françafrique and Regime Theory," European Journal of International Relations 19, no. 1 (2013): 5, https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066111413309.

itself on the international stage as a counterbalancing force between the two Cold War superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. Moreover, managing a successful decolonization was crucial for preserving national pride and securing the country's future.[15] Hence, for France, a successful decolonization process translated into the creation of networks designed to maintain control over its former colonies and preserve its *grandeur. In La Françafrique (1958- 1998): Le plus long scandale de la République,* François-Xavier Verschave coined the modern critical use of the term Françafrique and provided an empirical analysis of the network and its functioning. For Verschave, Françafrique refers to:

> "a nebulous network of economic, political, and military actors, in France and in Africa, organized into networks and lobbies, and oriented toward the appropriation of two forms of rent: raw materials and public development aid. The logic of this extraction is to prohibit initiative outside the circle of insiders. The system, self-degrading, reproduces itself through criminalization. It is naturally hostile to democracy. The term also evokes confusion, a domestic familiarity leaning toward undue intimacy".[16]

France began constructing these relationships during the decolonization period through several steps. This literature review identified three mains step noted by Nkrumah, Walsh, and in the french national archives. The first was the balkanization of its colonies through the Loi-Cadre of 1956 mentioned earlier. This was an important step because, for France, it was more profitable and strategically advantageous to deal separately with small and economically weak states in order to maintain its position of power.[17]

Another crucial step is the establishment of the French Community. According to the French archival records from the Secretary-General for African Affairs and the Community, when Charles de Gaulle realized it was more advantageous to maintain close

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[15] Bovcon, "Françafrique and Regime Theory," p.10; Kaye Whiteman, "The Man Who Ran Françafrique," The National Interest, no. 49 (1997): 94.

[16] Verschave, La Françafrique, 175.

[17] Nkrumah, Neocolonialism, The Last Stage of Imperialism., p.22; Walsch, "The Africa Policies of France, 1956 - 1990," 5.

ties rather than direct colonial rule, he established the French Community as a formal institutional framework to preserve strong links during the process of decolonization. The General Secretariat of the Community is intrinsically linked to the institutional reforms of the Fifth Republic. This body was created in January 1959 as the result of the December 1958 reform of the Ministry of Overseas France (formerly the Ministry of the Colonies). The Ministry led to a political separation between the colonial territories destined for independence in the short term (French West Africa [AOF], French Equatorial Africa [AEF], and Madagascar), and the overseas departments and territories (DOM-TOM) intended to remain associated with the Republic (some overseas territories, such as the Comoros or Djibouti).[18] The community was necessary to control the decolonization process allowing France to manage and manipulate the pace and the terms of independence.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly because of its secrecy, General de Gaulle established, within the Élysée, a *domaine reservé* (reserved domain), an informal institution that exercised effective control over the decolonization process. The reserved domain was managed directly by the presidency, especially through Jacques Foccart, in which lies the real decision-making authority over African affairs. The exclusive domain had a double objective: to ensure a stable succession to the Empire by placing the soon-to-be independent countries within the hands of *les amis de la France*; and to secure the secret funding on which political life is heavily dependent.[19] These objectives were the drivers of Françafrique system.

Bovcon shared Verschave view asserting that this informal structure was composed of highly personalized, family-like relations between French and African political leaders and the parallel networks of economic and political elites organized around the figure of Foccart and few others. An alarming example could be that of François Mitterrand. French President from 1981 to 1995, he has placed his son JeanChristophe at the head of

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[18] "Archives du secrétariat général des Affaires africaines et malgaches et de la Communauté (1958-1974)," Paris, 2015, 7, Archives nationales de France, https://www.siv.archives-nationales.culture.gouv.fr/siv/rechercheconsultation/consultation/ir/pdfIR.action?irId=FRAN_IR_032929.

[19] Verschave, La Françafrique, 31.

the African cell of the Élysée, allowing him to forge inextricable relationships with many sons and daughters of African autocrats.[20]

The relationship between these elites serves as tool to perpetuate the system in both France and African. As it will be analyzed later, these relationships are at the core of the Eyadema dynasty. In Togo, after the death of Gnassingbé Eyadéma, France backed up his son Faure to cease power.

The institutions, upon which the Françafrique system was grounded, were either created or closely orchestrated by Jacques Foccart, often referred to as *Monsieur d'Afrique*. Foccart is considered to have been "without contest the principal architect of Françafrique", which he directed in a centralized manner until 1974.[21] He, who took part in the founding of the Rassemblement pour la France (RPF), assumed responsibility in 1948 for overseas affairs, at General de Gaulle's request; in March 1950, he was appointed adviser to the French Union as part of this mission (his only elected mandate, alongside his seat on the municipal council of Luzarches) and he specially dedicated his attention on sub-Saharan Africa.[22] Foccart was one of the principal figures behind the Gaullist scenes and he considered that his mission within the Gaullist movement was to prepare the General's return to power. In June 1958, during the formation of General de Gaulle's cabinet, Foccart was among the first to be called and was entrusted with African affairs. His position was maintained and his scope of responsibilities was broader and covered four areas: Africa, overseas territories, liaison with Gaullist organizations, and intelligence and security matters. In March 1960, he was appointed Secretary General of the French-African Community with the objective of defining France's African policy in

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[20] Bovcon, "Françafrique and Regime Theory," 11; Verschave, La Françafrique, 31.

[21] Kevin Alleno, "La « Françafrique », instrument d'un soft power associatif et « stigmate » pour la politique africaine de la France," Science Politique, Relations internationales 182, no. 2 (2020): 102, https://doi.org/10.3917/ri.182.0099.

[22] RPF (Rally for France) was a French sovereignist and Gaullist political party founded in 1999 by Charles Pasqua and Philippe de Villiers.

the longer term, and he was no longer accountable to anyone other than General de Gaulle in person.[23]

By examining Kaye Whiteman, it appears that the “nebulous network of economic, political, and military actors, in France and in Africa” to which Verschave refers has its roots in the 1960s. While General De Gaulle was putting together structures for a collection of newly independent states, Foccart had the essential role of architect a series of Cooperation accords with each new state in the sectors of finance and economy, culture and education, and the military.[24]

The countries firstly involved in the bilateral agreements were: Mauritania, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Dahomey (now Benin), Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), Niger, Chad, Gabon, Central African Republic, Congo-Brazzaville, and Madagascar. Togo and Cameroon, former UN Trust Territories, were also co-opted into the club. Later on, also Mali and the former Belgian territories (Ruanda-Urundi, now Rwanda and Burundi, and Congo-Kinshasa), some of the ex-Portuguese territories, and Comoros and Djibouti. [25]

The goals of the bilateral agreements where indeed to secure raw materials from those country and continue french hegemony in the region. These agreements were not always reached peacefully, as in some cases violence was used to secure their conclusion. In the Togolese case, the bilateral agreements were signed on 10 July 1963, four months after the assassination of Sylvanus Olympio, the first elected president of independent Togo, as he wanted to cut all ties with France. This assassination was allegedly backed by France, particularly through Jacques Foccart, as Olympio sought to sever ties with France.

Indeed, the use of violence and assassination was not limited to Togo. Criminalization was a systemic tool to maintain control. According to Verschave, Foccart was involved many crimes including, among others: the killing of UPC leaders and Bamilékés in Cameroun, the assassination of Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso, and rearming french

[23] “Archives du secrétariat général des Affaires africaines et malgaches et de la Communauté (1958-1974),” 3-4.

[24] Whiteman, “The Man Who Ran Françafrique,” 94.

[25] Whiteman, “The Man Who Ran Françafrique,” 94.

supporter in former colonies under humanitarian aid guise.[26] The violations were committed in order to ensure that power of the newly independent states where placed into the hands of French loyalists.

To build and maintain the "friendships", Foccart managed to build a personal network with African leaders - *réseaux Foccart*. Talking about his network for the book *Foccart Parle,* he said:

> "I disposed of several antennae. It is correct that I was a well-informed man. Many people are inclined to think that someone who has numerous precise, exact and rapid pieces of information can only have obtained them by dubious means and has clandestine networks. However, it is simply a question of organization. Why was I well informed? First because I knew a lot of people in France and in Africa, who were themselves well informed, each one in his sector because of his political, administrative or economic functions and his contacts. They knew my telephone numbers and I knew theirs. We called each other without particular motives, simply to maintain relations".[27]

Foccart's words, highlight the intimacy and secrecy of these relations, and the centrality of Foccart. Bovcon shows that, as a result, the system, on one hand, helped France to stand in the international arena as a global power, and on the other hand, France maintained its influence by protecting its loyal African clients. Furthermore, the Françafrique offered, through its formal and informal avenues, the possibility of personal enrichment and political empowerment to individuals on both sides.[28]

The economical gain motive is reinforce in Whiteman analysis asserting that the deputy prime minister under de Gaulle, Louis Joxe, when asked about Foccart's role, replied, "copinage des présidents et la fin du mois" which can be translate as "nursemaiding presidents and making sure that African civil servants were paid at the end of the

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[26] Verschave, La Françafrique, 41.

[27] Whiteman, "The Man Who Ran Françafrique," 94-95.

[28] Bovcon, "Françafrique and Regime Theory," 11.

month".[29] In other words, Foccart's had to ensure that African presidents were carefully supported and cultivated in order to secure their continued loyalty to France.

Paying loyalty to France means to be the gateway of the system, yet African leaders and elites are not included in the decision making process. Bovcon examines that the rules and decision-making procedures involved institutional, semi-institutional and informal levels including political, economic, military and cultural spheres. African policy was perceived as domestic politics more than formal inter-state relations because it was a shared responsibility of General de Gaulle, Foccart and their advisers on African matters, known as the "African cell". The cell operated mainly through informal channels of network of french businessmen in the public and private sector and the French Secret Service. An additional decision-making center was the Ministry of Cooperation. This Cooperation Ministry, focal point of the new evolving Françafrique system, regarded Foccart both as their "guarantor" and their advocate with de Gaulle. The Ministry was considered by francophone African leaders as "their ministry", since almost all France's financial support to the African continent was channeled through it in the form of official public aid.[30]

African elites, on their side, beyond the external support provided by this network, secure their domestic position through ethnically based militaries, which they use as tools of repression - as illustrated by Gnassingbé Eyadéma's recruitment practices, which heavily favored soldiers from Pya, his hometown in northern Togo.[31] In fact, Achille Mbembe explains Françafrique as a system in which a fraction of the ruling elite seizes control of the state apparatus through alliances with the military, highlighting how the latter, often organized around an ethnic core, becomes the key instrument of repression and is vital for African leaders to maintain domestic power. Externally, he also shares the view that collaborating elites rely on networks and connections built through privatizations, as well

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[29] Whiteman, "The Man Who Ran Françafrique," 96.

[30] Bovcon, "Françafrique and Regime Theory," 10.

[31] Jennifer C. Seely and Samuel Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, Fourth edition, Historical Dictionaries of Africa (Rowman & Littlefield, 2021), 174- 75.

as their own international networks of informal finance, including smuggling and the trafficking of precious stones, arms, and drugs. Mbembe further argues that, from this advantageous position, these elites use violence to impose a controlled multiparty system by co-opting political groupings while simultaneously maintaining repression, intimidation, and the criminalization of state intervention against society, among other practices.[32]

According to François-Xavier Verschave, the African elites that collaborate with the Françafrique system include: the Gabonese Omar Bongo, the Togolese Gnassingbé Eyadéma, the Cameroonian Paul Biya, the Ivorian Henri Konan Bédié, the Senegalese Abdou Diouf, the Mauritanian Maaouya Ould Taya, the Equatorial Guinean Teodoro Obiang, the Congolese Denis Sassou Nguesso, the Beninese Mathieu Kérékou, the Malagasy Didier Ratsiraka, the Djiboutian Hassan Gouled, the Comorian Mohamed Taki, the Moroccan Hassan II, the Tunisian Ali Ben Ali, the Egyptian Hosni Mubarak, the Burkinabé Blaise Compaoré, the Nigerien Ibrahim Baré Maïnassara, the Chadian Idriss Déby, the Angolan José Eduardo dos Santos, the Kenyan Daniel Arap Moi, the Sudanese duo Bashir- Tourabi, the Algerian generals, and the Liberian Charles Taylor. Eventually, Foccart's network was dismantled in about ten networks and lobbies in the hands of the brothers and nephews Giscard, the sons of Mitterrand and Pasqua. Also some multinational lobbies including the Elf, Bouygues, Bolloré have taken their ease, and the members and correspondents of the secret services and the mercenaries entered held part of the network.[33]

Jean-Pierre Dozon condenses the perspectives above in his book *Frères et sujets: la France et l'Afrique en perspective* . The text argues that decolonization under the French Fifth Republic did not mark a complete rupture with colonial economic structures, but rather their transformation into a form of "Franco-African state capitalism". Through mechanisms such as the CFA franc, bilateral cooperation, linked aid, and state-backed enterprises, France maintained strong economic influence over its former colonies while

[32] Verschave, La Françafrique, 32-33.

[33] Verschave, La Françafrique, 34,292.

presenting these relations as cooperation and development. The system enabled French companies to benefit from protected markets, preferential trade, and development aid tied to French firms, while African states remained integrated into a financial framework largely shaped by the French Treasury. According to the author, this created a self-reinforcing network linking French political and economic interests with African elites, allowing France to preserve strategic economic dominance in Africa after formal decolonization.[34]

From this perspective, it becomes difficult to argue that French imperial influence simply disappeared with independence. Rather, it was rearticulated through mechanisms that allowed France to continue accessing raw materials, shaping political leadership, and exerting influence over financial and monetary systems, often through non-transparent practices and, at times, coercion or violence. The endurance of such networks supports the argument that Françafrique represents a form of neo-colonial governance, where sovereignty is formally recognized but substantively constrained.

If the formal justification for colonialism was the "civilizing mission," the corresponding justification for neocolonialism became "development" through foreign aid - that is, the idea of helping former colonies achieve economic growth and modernization. In this regard, François-Xavier Verschave highlighted the foundational role of development aid within the Françafrique system by writing that "the centers of power do not want to interfere with public development aid because they benefit from it; cooperation is a sub-system of Franco-African relations, which are increasingly taking on a foul smell. A 'confusional' system - both confused and fused - that we have begun to call Françafrique".[35]

To understand these dynamics, it is necessary to examine the functioning of development aid and the ways in which it can reproduce relations of dependency and external influence between former colonial powers and African states. Although the Françafrique system

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[34] Jean-Pierre Dozon, Frères et sujets : la France et l'Afrique en perspective (Flammarion, 2003), 258-266.

[35] Verschave, La Françafrique, 55.

fully developed after formal independence, many of its economic instruments were already prepared during the late colonial period, when the rhetoric of development began to replace the older language of colonial domination. Development aid therefore became a crucial bridge between colonial rule and postcolonial influence, allowing France to present its continued presence in Africa as cooperation and modernization rather than control.

Development aid in this dissertation is analyzed primarily through the edited volume The Business of Development in Post-Colonial Africa by Véronique Dimier and Sarah Stockwell, which offers empirically grounded case studies showing how development aid has often been closely linked to European economic interests. The book's comparative approach reveals recurring patterns in which aid functioned less as a purely humanitarian or developmental instrument and more as a mechanism for sustaining neocolonial influence after formal independence.

By unpacking the rhetoric of development aid - officially framed as a way to support poorer countries - it becomes apparent that aid often served to maintain control over recipient states in favor of European corporations. The volume emphasizes that the idea of "development" did not emerge only after decolonization but was already present in the late colonial period, when, during 1940s, colonial powers began advocating a stronger role for the state in managing development. In the French case, this was institutionalized in 1941 through the Caisse Centrale de Coopération Économique (CCCE) (renamed Agence Française de Développement (AFD) in 1998), which became the main financial vehicle for colonial investment and later extended loans and tied-aid arrangements in post-colonial Africa.[36] The Caisse increasingly funneled funds through tied-aid loans that required African governments to purchase French goods and services, and in 1977 it created Proparco, a CCCE subsidiary specifically designed to promote projects carried out by African public authorities in partnership with French firms.[37]

[36] CCCE: Central Fund for Economic Cooperation; AFD: French Development Agency

[37] Véronique Dimier and Sarah Stockwell, eds., The Business of Development in Post-Colonial Africa, Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies (Springer International Publishing, 2020), 12-13, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-51106-7.

Similarly, the Fonds d'Investissement Économique et Social (FIDES), established in 1946, supported the creation of semi-public local companies that in practice channeled a large share of colonial development funding toward European business interests.[38] Together, these institutions ensured that even after formal decolonization, a significant portion of public investment remained aligned with French corporate priorities.[39] In the 1960s, as France withdrew politically from sub-Saharan colonies, French enterprises faced the risk of losing their colonial monopolies. To preserve their economic foothold, France relied heavily on the Fond d'Aide et de Coopération (FAC), whose tied-aid logic required that French aid be spent on French exports.[40] New African states thus entered independence under structural constraints: a lack of domestically owned financial institutions, a weak African professional class, and continued dependence on foreign commercial, mining, and oil interests, all anchored in the CFA franc system.[41]

The CFA franc - originally the Franc des Colonies Françaises d'Afrique - was established in 1945 and pegged to the French franc, giving France effective control over the monetary policy of its African colonies.[42] After decolonization, its name was symbolically changed to the Franc de la Communauté Financière Africaine in West Africa, but the management framework remained deeply asymmetric.[43] African member states were required to deposit a large share of their foreign-exchange reserves with the French Treasury and to accept a fixed parity that often served French economic interests. For this reason, Pigeaud and Sylla describe the CFA franc as "the most powerful weapon of the

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[38] FIDES: Economic and Social Investment Fund

[39] Dimier and Stockwell, The Business of Development in Post-Colonial Africa, 13.

[40] FAC: Aid and Cooperation Fund

[41] Dimier and Stockwell, The Business of Development in Post-Colonial Africa, 1-2.

[42] Franc of the French colonies of Africa

[43] Franc of the African Financial Community

'Françafrique'" a neocolonial system established by the French state on the eve of independence "with the precise aim of preserving the advantages of the colonial pact".[44]

The creation of the EEC in 1957 further reshaped this relationship. France sought to integrate its former colonies into the EEC's orbit through instruments like the Yaoundé Convention (1963), the Lomé Convention (1975) and The Cotonou Agreement (2000), which established trade preferences and the European Development Fund (EDF). [45] Officially aimed at promoting growth and welfare, these arrangements in practice allowed France and other former colonial powers to "europeanize" their neocolonial ties, sharing the costs of aid with other member states while preserving privileged market access for their firms.

Opening France's former colonial economic sphere to competition proved highly challenging, even within the EEC framework. Hence, French companies continued to rely on former colonial officials who now served as technical advisers or consultants in newly independent states, often under cooperation agreements, and used these networks to shape project design and tenders in their favor. Backed by the French state, they also cultivated neo-patrimonial relationships with African elites, reinforcing the idea that development aid was a negotiation among domestic and foreign power-holders rather than a purely public-good endeavor. [46] In this sense, the center of power shifted: whereas colonial rule foregrounded overt political control, the post-colonial order maintained formal political sovereignty while relocating the real locus of influence to economic and financial mechanisms—aid instruments, monetary arrangements, technical cooperation, and loan conditions.

In the contemporary period, this pattern persists in the EU's development discourse, which, as Edmond and Farag argue, has intensified since the end of the Cold War and is framed around normative commitments to democracy, human rights, and good

[44] Fanny Pigeaud et al., Africa's Last Colonial Currency: The CFA Franc Story, trans. Thomas Fazi, with JSTOR (Organization) (Pluto Press, 2021), 3.

[45] Dimier and Stockwell, The Business of Development in Post-Colonial Africa, 242.

[46] Dimier and Stockwell, The Business of Development in Post-Colonial Africa, 3.

governance. Yet, this rhetoric is often used to legitimize interventions that advance geopolitical interests and secure European market access. Mechanisms such as the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa have been explicitly linked to border externalization strategies, often involving cooperation with authoritarian regimes and thereby effectively continuing forms of "soft" neocolonial control.[47] Development aid, therefore, appears not only as a financial or technical instrument but as a political and ideological strategy through which former colonial powers reconfigure their authority - moving from an explicitly political center of domination to a more diffuse, yet equally powerful, economic and financial center.

In the context of this dissertation, Togo's experience with development aid cannot be understood merely as a form of foreign assistance. Rather, it should be interpreted as part of a broader system of structural dependency, in which the mechanisms of control shifted from direct political domination to indirect economic influence through the CFA franc, tied aid, and European institutional frameworks. This transformation served to perpetuate both economic exploitation and the durability of authoritarian rule.

On a broader scale, other multilateral financial institutions also play a strategic role in the development aid rhetoric. These include the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). To better understand their function, the next section will place these institutions in their historical and economic context.

1.1.3. Bretton Woods Institutions and Structural Adjustment Programs

As mentioned earlier, Kwame Nkrumah argued that multilateral aid in post-colonial Africa constitutes a "neocolonialist trap on the economic front". In his view, institutions established under the Bretton Woods Conference are largely supported and influenced by U.S. and Western capital,[48] and therefore exercise de facto financial governance over

[47] Chick Edmond and Mohamed Farag, "The Role of the European Union in Managing African Crises Between Development Aid and Geopolitical Interests," World Affairs 189 (January 2026): 1,8, https://doi.org/10.1002/waf2.70050.

[48] Nkrumah, Neocolonialism, The Last Stage of Imperialism., 188.

developing countries. Kwame Nkrumah anticipated the risks that these institutions would pose to the independence of former colonies, as the "neocolonialist trap" intensified with the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programs during the 1980s and 1990s in Togo and across Africa. Analyzing the transition from political to economic neocolonialism in Togo requires an examination of the Bretton Woods institutions. The rise of these institutions (the IMF and the WB) fundamentally shifted the power dynamic from traditional diplomatic/military colonial structures to fiscal and technocratic ones.

Their establishment have roots in July 1944, a year before World War II ended, when representatives from 44 nations gathered at the United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire. The goal was to design a system for international economic cooperation and post-war recovery. The conference led to the creation of the IMF and the WB. Initially focused on rebuilding war-torn economies—starting with loans to Europe—the WB quickly shifted toward financing global infrastructure projects once the Marshall Plan took over European reconstruction. During this early phase, it expanded its role by supporting private sector development through the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and assisting poorer countries via the International Development Association (IDA).[49]

On the other hand, the IMF aims to promote sustainable economic growth and prosperity across its member countries by supporting policies that ensure financial stability and foster monetary cooperation - key conditions for productivity, employment, and overall economic well-being. Governed by its member states, the IMF operates with three core objectives: strengthening international monetary cooperation, encouraging the expansion of global trade and economic growth, and discouraging policies that could undermine economic stability and prosperity. Over the decades, as global economic dynamics changed significantly, the IMF expanded its role, by offering concessional lending to poor countries.[50]

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[49] WorldBank, "World Bank Group - International Development, Poverty and Sustainability," accessed April 23, 2026, https://www.worldbank.org/ext/en/home.

[50] "International Monetary Fund," IMF, https://www.imf.org/en/home.

Although the general goal of these institutions is to support development as a way to combat poverty and guarantee well-being around the world, their policies outcome show the failure to reach those goals. The U.S. and the European countries domination of the Bretton Woods conference, due to the fact that participant countries in Africa, Asia and South-America were present by colonial representatives, is already a signal of an unequal power relations on which these institutions were created. Moreover, the voting system of these institutions further reinforces unequal representation.

Analyzing their voting system, the WB and the IMF operate on a weighted voting system in which power is determined largely by financial contributions. Voting shares combine basic votes with quota- or share-based votes, the latter reflecting each country's economic weight. As a result, wealthier Western states hold disproportionate influence over decision-making. [51] This unequal distribution of voting power - based on financial contributions and economic weight - ensures that Western economies retain disproportionate power within the Bretton Woods institutions, thereby reinforcing Nkrumah's characterization of these bodies as instruments of neocolonial financial governance. A study conducted by Robert Barad analyzed the context of these institutions and the part they play in the development aid rhetoric.

According to the author, the debt crisis faced by African countries in the 1970s causes an alteration on the role played by the IMF and the WB. Departing from different area of competence, due to the crisis they had to set a common objectives and adopted similar methods for carrying them out. By establishing Structural adjustment Programs (SAPs), these entities were claiming an integral role in the macroeconomic policy decision of African states. [52] To this matter Dimier and Stockwell argue that initially, France sought to resist structural adjustment programs, perceiving them as a multilateral intrusion into its pré-carré. However, mounting deficits in franc zone countries placed significant

[51] IMF, "International Monetary Fund"; WorldBank, "World Bank Group - International Development, Poverty and Sustainability".

[52] Robert A. Barad, "Structural Adjustment, Privatization and the Industrial Sector: Lessons from Recent Experience in the Republic of Togo" master's thesis, The American University, 1988), 31, https://doi.org/10.57912/23876058.

pressure on the French Treasury, affecting its own budgetary stability. As a result, France was ultimately compelled to support multilateral financial solutions. [53]

To address the economic crisis of the 1970s, the Lagos Plan of Action - drafted by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Council of Economic Ministers - proposed a self-reliant development strategy centered on regional integration, industrialization, and the progressive reduction of dependence on raw material exports. In contrast, the World Bank, through the Berg Report, advocated export-oriented growth and deeper integration into global markets, attributing Africa's crisis primarily to internal policy failures. These competing visions reflect a broader tension between nationalist and internationalist development models. While the former emphasized economic sovereignty and state-led industrialization, the latter promoted liberalization, private investment, and external trade. However, this internationalist approach revealed a structural contradiction: although it prescribed free trade and outward-oriented strategies for African economies, many industrialized countries simultaneously maintained protectionist policies, exposing a clear double standard in the global economic system.[54]

This divergence is crucial for understanding the transformation of Françafrique. Whereas earlier forms of French influence, associated with Jacques Foccart, relied heavily on direct political control and personalized networks, the rise of neoliberal development policies and the growing influence of multilateral institutions facilitated a shift toward more indirect, economically mediated forms of dominance. In the case of Togo, this transition is particularly visible. As African states were encouraged or compelled to abandon self-reliance strategies in favor of liberalization and privatization, strategic sectors of the economy became increasingly accessible to foreign capital.

Within this context, French multinational corporations, most notably the Bolloré group, were able to consolidate control over key infrastructures such as the Port Autonome de Lomé. This illustrates how Françafrique adapted to the neoliberal era: rather than relying primarily on overt political intervention, it increasingly operated through economic

[53] Dimier and Stockwell, The Business of Development in Post-Colonial Africa, 228.

[54] Barad, "Structural Adjustment, Privatization and the Industrial Sector," 11-13.

leverage, corporate dominance, and control of critical nodes of trade. Thus, the shift from the Lagos Plan's vision of self-reliant development to the World Bank's outward-oriented framework did not merely represent a policy divergence, but also marked a structural transformation in the mechanisms of external influence in Africa. In Togo, this evolution underscores how neocolonial relations persisted, notwithstanding in reconfigured forms, moving from political control to economic entrenchment within globalized markets.

Support for this perspective can be found in the study conducted by Robert A. Barad. Barad argues that, by the mid-1980s, IMF standby arrangements aimed at stabilizing debt repayments had largely failed. The policy conditionalities attached to these programs - including import reductions, cuts in government expenditure, and decreases in public investment - produced limited fiscal improvements while imposing significant social costs on local populations. This led the IMF to shift toward medium-term balance-of-payments support through concessional multi-year programs linked to eligibility for financing from the World Bank's IDA. According to Barad, this transition reflected the growing dominance of the World Bank within the global development system. [55]

At the same time, the World Bank transformed its lending strategy. Whereas earlier lending had focused mainly on development projects, the perceived failure of many of these initiatives led the Bank to promote Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). These reforms, implemented through sectoral and structural adjustment loans, aimed to liberalize economies, encourage private investment, reform public enterprises, and reduce state intervention. In exchange, recipient countries were required to adopt externally prescribed economic reforms. In cases such as Togo, these policies often weakened state capacity, reduced social spending, and increased dependence on global market dynamics. Barad further argues that development aid became a central instrument for promoting macroeconomic reforms in Africa. The shift from bilateral to multilateral donors was driven by several objectives: improving aid efficiency, ensuring debt repayment, supporting the commercial interests of donor-country investors, and promoting market-oriented economic systems aligned with Western liberal models. Debt relief mechanisms,

[55] Barad, "Structural Adjustment, Privatization and the Industrial Sector," 32.

particularly through the Paris Club and IMF agreements, effectively tied financial assistance to the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programs. The study also highlights how development aid increasingly served commercial purposes. Official Development Assistance (ODA) was frequently used to support investments by firms from donor countries, prioritizing private profitability over social welfare objectives. This process reinforced economic dependency, as recipient states were encouraged to provide favorable conditions for foreign investors through tax incentives, deregulation, and liberalization policies.[56]

Finally, Barad notes that, from the 1980s onward, donor institutions strongly criticized state-led development models and promoted market liberalization as a path toward efficiency and democratic governance. However, these assumptions were largely based on European historical experiences and often proved difficult to apply to postcolonial African contexts characterized by structural dependency and institutional fragility. In many cases, as the new independent states lack of local investors, the privatization policies secured the penetration of former colonizers companies in the former colonies, reducing state intervention and weakening development outcomes rather than improving them.[57]

Taken together, these dynamics reveal how development aid functioned not only as a financial tool, but also as a mechanism of economic restructuring aligned with the interests of donor countries. Furthermore, the development aid tool entails a significant reductions of decision-making power of African governments regarding their national economic policies. This supports interpretations of aid and conditionality as instruments of neocolonial influence, particularly in contexts like Togo, where external actors played a decisive role in shaping economic policy trajectories.

Other scholars, such as Pierre-Pascal Lassou and Trevor Hopper, support Barad's analysis by arguing that, after independence, many African countries - including Togo - adopted state-led development policies that eventually resulted in financial crises. They agree that

[56] Barad, "Structural Adjustment, Privatization and the Industrial Sector," 34, 26, 29.

[57] Barad, "Structural Adjustment, Privatization and the Industrial Sector" 30-31.

the market-based policies impose upon them through development aid by WB, IMF and their structural adjustment programs only causes further crisis distress in the long term. They share Nkrumah's view on these institutions as promoters of neocolonialism, allowing former colonial powers to maintain control over political and economic institutions of former colonies favoring multinational corporations. In their view, the dominance of western powers over the South has enabled it to control trade and investment in decolonized countries and maintain direct political influence. They also identified the WB, IMF and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) plus the United Nations (UN) as key players.[58] Such economic policy requiring former colonies to liberalize and privatize their economies, results in the consolidation of the continuity of colonial economy: decolonized countries continue to export cheap raw materials to the former European empires while, they have to comply with aid policies which often include the importation of high value added goods and services from former colonizers companies.

During an interview, Thomas Sankara stated that his impression was that the conditions imposed by the IMF were endless. When asked why he rejected food aid, he replied:

> "They have not helped us to develop; instead, they have created a beggar mentality. Every day, we hold out our hands to receive food, and that is not a good thing. Food aid prevents our farmers from producing, because when they do produce, they cannot sell their goods. What is brought to us are the surplus products of farmers from other countries. We want something different. Those who truly wish to help us should provide ploughs, tractors, fertilizer, insecticides, watering cans, drills, and dams. That is how we would define real food aid".[59]

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[58] Philippe Jacques Codjo Lassou and Trevor Hopper, "Government Accounting Reform in an Ex-French African Colony: The Political Economy of Neocolonialism," Critical Perspectives on Accounting 36 (April 2016): 40-41, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpa.2015.10.006.

[59] Wow Me, Thomas Sankara of Blessed Memory Speaks of Financial Aid and IMF, 2025, 02:50, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzYb6G815Fc.

His response illustrates how aid, rather than empowering developing countries, can be structured in ways that reinforce dependency and sustain the economic advantages of donor countries. This perspective aligns closely with Walter Rodney Dependency theory, which argues that underdevelopment and dependency in the Global South are not a natural or temporary stages of progress, but structural conditions produced through the historical and ongoing exploitation of Africa and other peripheral regions within the global capitalist system.[60] From this viewpoint, forms of assistance such as food aid and structural adjustment programs often function as mechanisms that integrate peripheral economies into dependent relationships, limiting local productive capacity while reinforcing the dominance of core countries. Sankara who sought to break dependency ties with France and the Western world institutions was tragically assassinated in a coup by Blaise Compaoré. Under Compaoré's new leadership, the country was immediately brought back into the orbit of France and the IMF. Despite the clear drawbacks of these frameworks, the SAPs were broadly adopted across the African continent during the 1980s and 1990s, trapping many nations in a vicious cycle of debt.

However, not all scholars view development aid as a neocolonial tool. Institutional and neoliberal perspectives, in particular, do not uniformly reject international development institutions and often present development aid as a necessary instrument for economic growth, poverty reduction, and integration into the global economy. While scholars such as Deepak Lal defend market liberalization and limited-state approaches, other institutional figures adopt a more reformist position within the same global framework. For instance, Jeffrey Sachs, former Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General and president of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, argues in *The End of Poverty* that extreme poverty can be significantly reduced through increased development assistance, debt relief, and investments in health, education, infrastructure, and food security, particularly through frameworks such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), to which he contributed. Although supportive of international development institutions, Sachs criticizes the United States for prioritizing militarism and geopolitical

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[60] Walter Rodney, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa. (Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications and Tanzania Publishing House, 1972; repr., Black Classic Press, 2011), 43-59.

interests over poverty reduction, and he also condemns austerity-oriented policies promoted by Bretton Woods institutions, particularly the IMF, arguing that excessive market "shock therapy" and strict fiscal discipline often worsened poverty in vulnerable countries. Nevertheless, his approach ultimately maintains confidence in the existing global capitalist and institutional framework, presenting poverty as a technical and solvable policy issue rather than as a consequence of deeper structural inequalities within the international system.[61]

Similarly, Lal argues that economic development does not require the adoption of Western political or cultural models, but rather the establishment of institutions capable of ensuring free markets, property rights, and fair competition. From this perspective, reforms promoted by the IMF and the WB - such as privatization, deregulation, and trade liberalization - are justified as pragmatic measures intended to reduce corruption, rent-seeking, and inefficient state intervention, while fostering economic growth and integration into the global economy.[62]

Nevertheless, while acknowledging these institutional and liberal perspectives, this dissertation adopts the critical approaches discussed earlier, arguing that development aid, Bretton Woods institutions, and postcolonial economic arrangements have often contributed to reproducing relations of dependency, external influence, and unequal power structures between former colonial powers and African states.

1.1.4. The Predatory State

The concept of the predatory state is central to political economy debates on state power, rent extraction, and underdevelopment. In contrast to theories that view the state primarily as a provider of public goods, protection, and institutional order, the predatory approach understands the state as a coercive and extractive apparatus. Vahabi defines the predatory

[61] Doug Henwood, "A Critique of Jeffrey D. Sachs's The End of Poverty," International Journal of Health Services 36, no. 1 (2006): 199-203, https://doi.org/10.2190/DR5B-3X5T-8AMX-5F3G.

[62] Deepak Lal, "Culture, Democracy and Development: The Impact of Formal and Informal Institutions on Development," 1999, https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/seminar/1999/reforms/lal.htm?utm_source=chatgpt.com#Con.

state as one that promotes the private interests of dominant groups within the state, such as politicians, the army, and bureaucrats, or influential private groups with strong lobbying power. From this perspective, protection and predation are not necessarily opposites: the state may provide protection, but mainly in order to secure and reproduce its capacity to extract resources from society and the private sector.[63]

Peter Evans offers a significant formulation of the concept. He distinguishes predatory states from developmental states by examining how different state structures affect economic transformation. For Evans, a state becomes predatory when those who control the state apparatus extract large amounts of surplus while providing little in return in terms of collective goods. Such states do not simply fail to promote development; they actively impede it by transforming society into an object of extraction.[64] He identifies Zaire under Mobutu as a classic example of predatory rule. In this case, the ruling elite accumulated vast personal fortunes from mineral revenues while the population experienced economic decline and impoverishment. The political class's preoccupation with rent-seeking turned the rest of society into "prey". Evans's analysis shows that predation is not only a matter of individual corruption, but also a structural feature of the state apparatus. In the Zairian case, personalistic rule, patrimonialism, and the absence of bureaucratic coherence undermined the possibility of rule-governed administration. Public offices became instruments of private accumulation, and access to state power became a means of converting authority into wealth.[65] This contrasts sharply with the developmental state, where bureaucratic autonomy, institutional coherence, and embedded ties with productive sectors allow the state to promote long-term economic transformation. Predatory states, by contrast, lack the capacity or willingness to organize

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[63] Mehrdad Vahabi, "Introduction: A Symposium on the Predatory State," Public Choice 182, nos. 3- 4 (2020): 233, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11127-019-00715-2.

[64] Peter B. Evans, "Predatory, Developmental, and Other Apparatuses: A Comparative Political Economy Perspective on the Third World State," Sociological Forum 4, no. 4 (1989): 562, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01115064.

[65] Evans, "Predatory, Developmental, and Other Apparatuses," 569- 71.

accumulation in a developmental direction; they privilege immediate extraction over productive investment.[66]

Robinson develops the concept further by linking predation to the distribution of political power. He argues that whether a state becomes predatory depends on the relationship between development and the preservation of the political status quo. Developmental policies, such as infrastructure building, education, secure property rights, and efficient bureaucracy, may empower social groups capable of challenging the ruling elite. For this reason, elites may rationally oppose development when it threatens their political survival. In this sense, predatory behavior is not necessarily irrational. It may be a deliberate strategy through which ruling elites preserve power, even at the cost of national development. Robinson also argues that predation is more likely in societies marked by low income, high inequality, political instability, and economies where wealth is concentrated in land or natural resources.[67]

In the Togolese case, Eyadéma's regime can be read through Evans's and Robinson's understanding of the predatory state. As Seely and Decalo show, from the late 1970s the regime became increasingly marked by fiscal corruption, costly and unproductive state projects, and the appointment of opportunistic "yes men," cronies, relatives, and friends to positions of power.[68] This reflects Evans's view of the predatory state as one in which those controlling the state apparatus extract resources while providing little in terms of collective goods. It also echoes Robinson's argument that ruling elites may deliberately block or distort development when preserving political power becomes more important than national economic transformation.

On a broader scale, this interpretation is consistent with the arguments of Verschave and Mbembe. For Verschave, Françafrique was rooted in a clientelist and patrimonial system concerned with preserving France's imperial sphere of influence through the placement

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[66] Evans, "Predatory, Developmental, and Other Apparatuses," 580- 81.

[67] James A. Robinson, *"When is a State Predatory?"* CESifo Working Paper No. 178 (Munich: Center for Economic Studies and ifo Institute, 1999), https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/75563/1/cesifo_wp178.pdf 2–4.

[68] Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, 164- 65.

of political power in the hands of France-friendly elites and the continued extraction of wealth. Mbembe similarly argues that ruling elites who seize control of the state apparatus often rely on intimidation, permanent harassment, large-scale corruption, the worsening of clientelist practices, and the criminalization of state interventions against society.[69] In this sense, the Gnassingbé's dynasty can be understood not only as an authoritarian system, but also as part of a broader predatory political order in which coercion, clientelism, and external support helped reproduce elite power.

Taken together, these authors show that the predatory state should not be reduced to corruption alone. Instead, it describes a broader political-economic logic in which public authority itself becomes organized around extraction. A predatory state may use legal instruments, concessions, monopolies, public contracts, taxation, coercion, privatization, and clientelism to transfer resources from society to ruling elites and their allies. It may also collaborate with powerful private actors, including foreign firms, when such alliances help reproduce elite power and rent extraction.

1.2. Academic Debate Related to Togo and the Cold War Context

While existing literature has extensively analyzed either external economic control or internal political dynamics, less attention has been paid to how these two dimensions interact in specific national contexts such as Togo. This dissertation aims to bridge this gap by examining how external forms of neocolonial influence and domestic authoritarian structures mutually reinforce one another, contributing to the persistence of subtle political dependency, economic exploitation, and regime stability in Togo. In doing so, it also traces a shift in the center of power, which, while still formally political, has become increasingly dominated by structures of economic and financial control.

The concepts analyzed in this literature review provide the theoretical and historical framework through which neocolonialism in Togo is examined in this dissertation. The

[69] Verschave, La Françafrique, 283,285.

academic debate on Togo largely revolves around the extent to which the country's post-independence political and economic structures remained influenced by external actors - particularly France - and the role played by domestic elites in sustaining these relationships.

Continuity / "Françafrique" thesis. A significant body of scholarship argues that French influence in Africa did not end with formal independence in 1960s; rather, decolonization was managed so as to preserve French strategic, political and economic interests. [70] In this view, bilateral cooperation agreements (e.g. July 10, 1963), monetary arrangements such as the CFA franc, development aid and privileged trade relations functioned as mechanisms that ensured continued access to raw materials, protected French commercial interests, and preserved French geopolitical influence in Togo.

Sovereignty contestation and the Olympio case. The assassination of Sylvanus Olympio (January 1963) occupies a central symbolic and empirical role in this tradition: scholars portray Olympio as seeking greater economic autonomy for Togo - attempting to reduce dependence on France and to challenge aspects of the CFA system. [71] His murder is interpreted in this dissertation as emblematic of the broader tension between national sovereignty and postcolonial influence. While some authors suggest that French political networks associated with key Françafrique actors may have helped create conditions conducive to the coup, direct involvement remains debated and contested in the literature.[72]

Domestic-agency / elite-capture thesis. Complementary studies emphasize the agency of Togolese elites in reproducing postcolonial orders. Under Gnassingbé Eyadéma, political power was consolidated through military control, ethnic patronage (notably favoring recruits from northern Togo and Pya), and clientelist networks that institutionalized rent

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[70] Verschave, La Françafrique; Bovcon, "Françafrique and Regime Theory"; Whiteman, "The Man Who Ran Françafrique".

[71] Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo; Pigeaud et al., Africa's Last Colonial Currency; Kevin Shillington, ed., Encyclopedia of African History. Vol. 2: H - O (Fitzroy Dearborn, 2005); Verschave, La Françafrique.

[72] Verschave, La Françafrique, 117.

distribution and repression. These accounts argue that external support and internal authoritarian structures were mutually constitutive: domestic elites used foreign backing to stabilize rule, while foreign actors relied on compliant local partners to secure economic access.[73]

Neoliberal reconfiguration thesis. From the 1980s onward, scholars trace a transformation in the modalities of external influence: rather than direct political intervention, neocolonial power increasingly operated through international financial institutions, SAPs, multinational corporations, and development finance. In Togo, IMF and WB conditionalities promoted privatization and market opening while French multinationals (e.g. corporate groups active in port, transport, and utilities) consolidated control over strategic infrastructure such as the Port Autonome de Lomé. These studies contend that liberalization reconfigured dependency rather than eliminating it, shifting the center of power from overt political domination to economic and corporate levers.[74]

Points of contestation and synthesis. Institutional and liberal scholars often interpret cooperation agreements, aid and market reforms as tools for modernization and integration.[75] By contrast, critical approaches argue these same mechanisms reproduced asymmetric relations and constrained Togolese autonomy. The main contested issues are causality (to what extent external actors versus internal choices explain outcomes), mechanism (which instruments matter most: monetary, fiscal, corporate, military), and agency (how much room for local counter-strategies exists). This dissertation responds to these debates by tracing the mutual reinforcement of external economic structures and domestic authoritarian institutions in Togo, arguing that the locus of influence has shifted from direct political control to a more diffuse economic-financial center that continues to shape political outcomes.

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[73] Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, p.2; Verschave, La Françafrique, p.32-33; Comi M. Toulabor, Le Togo sous Eyadéma (KARTHALA Editions, 1986), 3.

[74] Barad, "Structural Adjustment, Privatization and the Industrial Sector," 31.

[75] Henwood, "A Critique of Jeffrey D. Sachs's The End of Poverty"; Deepak Lal, "Culture, Democracy and Development: The Impact of Formal and Informal Institutions on Development".

It is important to place these concepts within the context of the Cold War. During this period, the fear of communist expansion shaped the primary objective of Western powers, including France: preventing the spread of communist ideology and Soviet influence throughout the world. Consequently, Western powers sought to defend capitalism and the values of liberal democracy in order to preserve their geopolitical influence. As mentioned earlier, the initial goal of the Bretton Woods institutions was to rebuild European economies after the Second World War; later, however, these institutions expanded their activities toward poor and developing countries. It can be argued that one of the reasons for this expansion was the imposition of the liberal economic model by linking recipient countries to Western political and economic ideologies.

In this context, it is logical to contend that the prevention of communist influence became one of the main drivers of French policy in postcolonial Africa. The need to control and shape the decolonization process was essential for France to maintain influence over its former colonies even after independence. Hence, it can be argued that the construction of the Françafrique system, the rhetoric of development aid, and the expansion of the Bretton Woods institutions functioned as tools to prevent newly independent states from aligning with the Eastern Bloc represented by the Soviet Union. Supporting this perspective, France repeatedly demonstrated its involvement in coups d'état and its support for authoritarian regimes within its pré-carré through military interventions. These actions were justified not by a commitment to the democratic values that the Western world claimed to defend, but rather by the objective of preventing the emergence of Soviet-aligned governments.

1.3. Research Question(s), Methodology and Research Limitations

After independence, Françafrique functioned primarily as a system of political control engineered by Jacques Foccart. Through networks linking French political elites, African leaders, military cooperation agreements, and diplomatic influence, France was able to maintain a significant degree of control over many of its former colonies despite the formal end of colonial rule. This system enabled the preservation of French strategic, political, and economic interests across West and Central Africa while providing support to allied African regimes. Over time, however, the international environment in which Françafrique operated underwent profound transformations. The end of the Cold War, the acceleration of globalization, the rise of neoliberal economic policies, and the growing influence of international financial institutions altered the mechanisms through which external influence could be exercised in postcolonial states.

Rather than disappearing, French influence adapted to these changing circumstances. Direct political intervention and personalized networks of power remained important but were increasingly complemented by economic forms of influence. Multinational corporations, development assistance programs, international lending institutions, and control over strategic sectors of national economies became central instruments through which French interests could be maintained. In this context, companies such as the Bolloré Group acquired prominent positions in transport, logistics, infrastructure, and port management, extending French influence through economic rather than exclusively political channels. The evolution of Françafrique therefore raises important questions about the continuity of neocolonial relations and the extent to which old structures of domination were transformed rather than dismantled. Understanding this transition requires an examination of both the political foundations of French influence after independence and the economic mechanisms that increasingly came to sustain it.

This dissertation asks: how did the French neocolonial system in Togo evolve during the post-independence period, particularly in its political and economic dimensions? Which political institutions and economic structures sustained French influence after independence? Who were the principal Togolese and French political and economic actors, and what roles did they play?

To address these research questions, this dissertation adopts a qualitative case study approach to examine the evolution of French neocolonial influence in Togo from independence to the contemporary period. The case study method was selected because it allows for an in-depth analysis of complex historical and political processes within a specific national context while situating them within broader regional and international dynamics. By focusing on Togo, the dissertation seeks to investigate how structures of political and economic dependency inherited from colonial rule were maintained, transformed, and adapted in the post-independence era.

The research combines historical analysis with perspectives drawn from critical political economy, postcolonial studies, dependency theory, and theories of the predatory state. The conceptual framework is informed by the works of Kwame Nkrumah, François-Xavier Verschave, Maja Bovcon, and other scholars who have examined the persistence of colonial power relations after formal independence. In addition, theories of state formation and predatory governance developed by Peter Evans, James Robinson, and Mehrdad Vahabi are employed to analyze the interaction between domestic political structures and external economic interests.

Methodologically, the dissertation relies on both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include archival materials from the French National Archives, particularly the archives of the *Secrétariat Général des Affaires Africaines et Malgaches*, official treaties and cooperation agreements between France and Togo, Togolese legislation, official government publications, reports from international organizations such as the World Bank and the United Nations, electoral observation reports, and contemporary institutional documents. These materials provide direct evidence of the political, economic, and institutional arrangements that shaped Franco-Togolese relations throughout the post-independence period. The use of these documents is particularly important for reconstructing the early years of independence and understanding the mechanisms through which France sought to preserve influence in Togo following decolonization.

The dissertation also draws upon a wide range of secondary sources, including academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, doctoral dissertations, policy reports, investigative journalism, and specialized studies on Françafrique, neocolonialism, development aid, state formation, and multinational corporations operating in Africa. Works focusing on the political history of Togo, the Eyadéma regime, democratization processes, structural adjustment programs, and the privatization of strategic sectors provide important contextual and analytical insights. Particular attention is given to scholarship examining French economic interests in Africa, the CFA franc system, the role of development institutions, and the activities of major French multinational corporations such as the Bolloré Group.

The analysis proceeds through a historical examination of the political and economic mechanisms that sustained French influence in Togo across different periods. The first part of the dissertation investigates the colonial foundations of dependency and the emergence of Françafrique as a system of political control after independence. The second part examines the institutional and political networks that enabled France to maintain influence through diplomatic relations, military cooperation, and support for political elites. The final part explores the increasing importance of economic mechanisms, including development aid, structural adjustment policies, privatization programs, foreign investment, and the strategic role of multinational corporations in sectors such as transport, logistics, and port infrastructure.

Particular attention is devoted to the Port Autonome de Lomé as a case study through which broader processes of economic influence can be observed. The port represents one of the most important strategic infrastructures in Togo and provides a useful lens for analyzing the relationship between state power, privatization, foreign capital, and multinational corporate interests. Examining the evolution of port governance allows the dissertation to assess how economic influence increasingly complemented or replaced earlier forms of direct political control associated with the classical Françafrique system.

While this methodological approach provides a comprehensive framework for examining the evolution of French influence in Togo, several limitations should be acknowledged. This dissertation faces several limitations related to both data availability and the existing state of the academic literature. First, access to detailed information concerning the Togolese political economy remains limited. Official documentation regarding concession agreements, privatization processes, financial arrangements, and negotiations involving multinational corporations is often difficult to obtain due to limited transparency and restricted public access. This challenge is particularly relevant for the analysis of the Port Autonome de Lomé and the activities of foreign corporate actors operating within strategic sectors of the Togolese economy.

Second, although substantial scholarship exists on Françafrique, neocolonialism, development aid, dependency, and state formation in Africa, relatively few studies focus exclusively on Togo. Much of the available literature examines broader regional trends in Francophone Africa or Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole. Consequently, some theoretical frameworks and empirical observations employed in this dissertation are derived from studies conducted at the regional level and then applied to the Togolese case. While this approach allows for meaningful analysis, it may not fully capture all of the specific historical and political dynamics unique to Togo. This limitation is itself indicative of a relative underrepresentation of Togo within the wider academic literature on postcolonial political economy and African studies.

Third, the nature of the research topic presents methodological challenges. Neocolonial influence often operates through informal networks, personal relationships, and opaque institutional arrangements that are difficult to document directly. As a result, establishing clear causal links between French political and economic actors and specific outcomes in Togo can be challenging. To mitigate this limitation, the dissertation relies on the triangulation of multiple sources, including archival documents, academic studies, institutional reports, official publications, and investigative journalism.

Finally, the dissertation is limited by the availability of archival and documentary evidence concerning contemporary developments. While historical sources are often accessible through archival collections, recent political and economic interactions are frequently documented through journalistic investigations, corporate publications, and institutional reports rather than through publicly available official records. Despite these limitations, the combination of primary and secondary sources provides sufficient evidence to identify major patterns of continuity and transformation in the French neocolonial presence in Togo.

Chapter 2: Françafrique and Political Control

This chapter aims to analyze how the Françafrique system was established. It traces the origins of the system back to the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the Cold War, a period in which France was economically devastated by the consequences of the war. For this analysis, the chapter first examines Togo's historical background, providing an overview of the main events from the Berlin Conference, where Togoland was claimed by the German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, through the League of Nations mandate, when Togoland was divided between France and the United Kingdom, to the struggle for independence led by Sylvanus Olympio and his subsequent assassination by Eyadéma. This section also considers Togo's ethnic background. The argument is that France exploited the resentment created during colonial administration between two major ethnic groups, namely the Ewe and the Kabyé, in order to regain influence over Togo after independence.

The second section explores France's condition at the beginning of the Cold War and argues that granting a controlled form of independence to its former colonies was convenient for France, as it allowed it to maintain its grip on newly independent states. In addition, this section examines how the creation of the CFA franc was conceived as a tool for maintaining such control and facilitating the continued exploitation of former colonies before and after independence.

The section then examines French policy during the Cold War through the figure of Jacques Foccart, the architect of Françafrique. It argues that Togolese independence under Olympio represented a threat to French interests in Togo and that France may have plausibly supported his assassination through Eyadéma. It further analyzes how the coup d'état enabled France to reassert control over Togo through bilateral agreements designed by Foccart and implemented by Eyadéma with French support.

2.1. From Colonial Rule to Françafrique: The Foundations of Political Control in Togo

Before the Berlin Conference in 1884-85, the territory now called Togo, was an indeterminate buffer zone between the Kingdom of Asante and Kingdom of Dahomey. It was inhabit by various ethnic groups which mostly settled in the coastal area. The first European to arrive was the Portuguese in the late 15th century, followed by other European powers. From then until the 19th century, it was one of the major slave trade center and gained the name of "The Slave Coast" together with the surrounding region.[76]

During the Scramble for Africa, moved by racism, imperialism and religious justifications, Germany under Ottowon Bismark, claimed a coastal protectorate. When the Germans arrived in Togo in early 1884, they encountered limited resistance and forced local authorities into negotiations. They subsequently expanded their occupation inland, ultimately transforming the territory into the colony of Togoland in 1905.[77] During World War I, Togoland was invaded by British and French troops. As a consequence, the territory was divided between United Kingdom and France under the League of Nations mandate system, with approximately one-third assigned to Britain and two-thirds to France. Under the League of Nations' Type B mandate system, the Togolese population was considered not yet ready for self-government. The mandatory powers were therefore tasked with ensuring the well-being and development of the population, promoting education and healthcare, and preparing the territories for eventual independence. British Togoland later became integrated into the Gold Coast - present-day Ghana - following the 1956 referendum and gained independence together with Ghana in 1957. French Togoland, by contrast, achieved independence as Togo on 27 April 1960. The independent Togo cover an area of about 56,000 square kilometers (21,620 square miles),

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[76] Shillington, Encyclopedia of African History. Vol. 2, 1563.

[77] Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, 6.

stretching from a narrow 32-mile (51 kilometers) coastline along the Gulf of Guinea to a point approximately 320 miles (510 kilometers) inland. Bordered by Benin to the east and Ghana to the west, Togo also shares a northern border with Burkina Faso, providing the latter with access to the sea.

The leading figure of the independence movement was Sylvanus Olympio, who served as Prime Minister (1958- 1961) under French rule and became the first elected President of independent Togo in 1961. Olympio, during Togo's transition to independence and early presidency, was met with hostility from France, which grew concerned over his alignment with British and American interests. Unlike most leaders from former French colonies, Olympio distanced Togo from France, avoiding French aid and instead seeking limited support from West Germany. During his presidency, Sylvanus Olympio focused on economic austerity, aiming to develop Togo without relying on foreign aid, openly criticizing the CFA franc, which he believed undermined national sovereignty. He thus aimed to establish a national currency "The Togolese Franc", pegged to German currency, as a key step toward genuine independence.[78] His most notable budget cuts affected the military, which he initially sought to eliminate altogether. Due to regional threats, particularly from Ghana's Nkrumah, he conceded to maintaining a small force refusing to expand the army or recruit former-French colonial administration. Politically, Olympio's regime evolved into a one-party state. After a failed assassination attempt in 1961, opposition parties were outlawed. [79]

On 13 January 1963, Olympio was assassinated during Africa's first post-independence coup d'état. Étienne Eyadéma - a former sergeant in the french colonial army - later claimed responsibility for the fatal shot. Eyadéma would seize power in 1967 - with another military coup - and remain in office until 2005. Eyadema established a dictatorial regime, using the military to repress any form of opposition. He amended the Togolese constitution multiple times to maintain power and to secure its transfer to his sons, particularly Faure Gnassingbé, who has been ruling since 2005. The endurance of the

[78] Pigeaud et al., Africa's Last Colonial Currency, p.48-50; Verschave, La Françafrique, 122.

[79] Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, 296.

Eyadema dynasty can be attributed in part to the support provided by France—from the assassination of Sylvanus Olympio to the consolidation of Faure's rule and beyond.

On the one hand, the Eyadema dynasty represents a clear example of what Osterhammel refers to as "collaborator" in his definition of colonialism. This is because they enable France to maintain its neocolonial control while remaining dependent on it. On the other hand, France has an interest in supporting the dynasty in order to preserve its control over Togo. After Olympio's death, his efforts to cut ties with France were nullified. Just a few months following the military coup, on 10 July 1963, a series of important agreements and conventions were signed between France and Togo. These included a Diplomatic Convention, a Defense Agreement, a Judicial Convention, an Establishment Convention, a Cultural Cooperation Agreement, a General Technical Cooperation Agreement, an Economic, Monetary, and Financial Cooperation Agreement, as well as a Convention governing relations between the French Treasury and the Togolese Treasury. These conventions put the newly independent nation, once again, under France management within its Françafrique system.

2.2. Togo's Internal Divisions and France's Geopolitical Strategy

As recall before, Mbembe asserted that Françafrique system rely upon local elites who seize control over the state apparatus through the military alliances. Often, the latter is ethnic-based and serves as key repression instrument allowing African leaders to hold power domestically.[80] Similarly, Verschave argues that the system is reinforced by an old colonial tradition of manipulating ethnicity, which was very present among marine infantry officers.[81] The Togolese case exemplifies both authors analysis. To understand how the Françafrique system became entrenched in Togo, it is therefore essential to examine the historical relationships between the country's main ethnic groups -

[80] Verschave, La Françafrique, 32-33.

[81] Verschave, La Françafrique, 281.

particularly the Ewe and the Kabyé - as they have been central actors in the construction, consolidation, and contestation of political power.

The *Historical Dictionary of Togo* by Seely and Decalo provides a clear picture of the ethnic context. According to authors, Togo's population is composed of between 18 and 30 ethnic groups (depending on the classification used), among which the most prominent are the Ewe people (and other Adja-related groups) in the south, representing about 44% of the population, and the Kabyé people and related groups in the north, accounting for around 27%. Before colonial rule, these groups had limited interaction with one another, except in cases of contiguous territorial occupation. Apart from two small kingdoms in the north, large-scale centralized political structures did not develop. Most societies were decentralized and operated under constant military pressure from both the Kingdom of Dahomey (present-day Benin) and the Ashanti Empire in the Gold Coast (present-day Ghana). As a result, for European colonizers, the region appeared as a relatively weak buffer zone lacking a strong centralized authority between two more powerful West African states, making it easier to conquer.[82]

In Togo, southern people, namely Ewe, Mina, and other related group were the first to experience contact with Europeans and adapt to the changing of the socioeconomic context. They rapidly managed to change their social and economic status. Consequently, they ascended to local administrative position during colonial and postcolonial eras. By contrast, northern people resisted the Europeans intrusion and fought the penetration of their land. In turn, they were kept isolated and undeveloped by the German and, later, to a lesser extent, by the French administration which also included Ewe people in colonial administration and excluded the Kabyé people. This division created a socioeconomic inequality between the northern and the southern ethnic groups and fueled hostility and mutual resentment which led to the growth of regionalism and the incrementation of antagonistic regional political parties in the pre-independence period until after the

[82] Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, 2.

political liberalization of the 1990s.[83] These ethnic-based contempt shaped also the work division during the colonial administration.

At that time, administrative positions were disproportionately occupied by southern groups, particularly the Ewe and Mina, who benefited from greater access to education and colonial networks. In contrast, northern populations such as the Kabyé found in the military one of the few viable avenues for social and political advancement. Toulabor examines that at the beginning of 1960s the colonial military force was composed by 80% of northerners; arguing that this disproportion does not correspond only to ethno-regional division of labor but also to the ethno-regional division of labor and to the idea that poorer regions and social groups tend to place particular value on military service, in which they find material security and opportunities for social advancement giving that they were largely excluded from other socioeconomic opportunities.[84] During several decades, Togo's demographics shifted: the "northern population" have migrated to the center, meanwhile the capital Lomé, in the South, has created a more integrated demographic landscape breaking the traditional north-south ethno-regional division. However, this social evolution has not been mirrored in the government. The political competition and conflict continue to have ethno-regional nuances. [85]

As it will be explained later, France instrumentalized these division by supporting the Kabyé population to win back Togo after its independence. In this sense, Togo's internal political configuration was closely connected to France's broader geopolitical concerns at the beginning of the Cold War, when Paris sought to transform decolonization into a mechanism for preserving, rather than losing, influence.

France's approach to Togo did not emerge in isolation but formed part of a broader post-war strategy aimed at preserving its international influence in an increasingly bipolar world. France entered the Cold War with multiple preoccupations. Between 1944 and 1966, the country was deeply affected by the consequences of the Second World War, the

[83] Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, 2.

[84] Toulabor, Le Togo sous Eyadéma, 3.

[85] Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, 3.

colonial wars in Indochina and Algeria, European integration, the Suez Crisis, de Gaulle's search for independence and international prestige, and serious domestic political and economic issues. [86] These developments significantly weakened France and pushed it to rethink its imperial strategy. In order to avoid further colonial wars in Sub-Saharan Africa, one of its last imperial strongholds, France sought to preserve close ties with its former colonies. These relationships allowed France to rebuild its image as a great power and to reaffirm its role on the international stage as an independent force positioned between the two Cold War superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. At the same time, managing a controlled and relatively successful process of decolonization, comparable to the British model, was essential for protecting French national pride and safeguarding its future influence. [87]

For this reason, France developed several regional and country-specific strategies aimed at preserving and improving the efficiency of wealth extraction from its colonies, while making the process of decolonization politically and economically advantageous to French interests. These strategies included the creation of the colonial currency in 1945, the request to place former League of Nations mandates such as Togo and Cameroon under the new United Nations Trusteeship system in 1946, the adoption of the Loi-cadre in 1956, and the organization of UN-supervised political processes leading to Togo's independence in 1960. Together, these measures were designed to ensure that newly independent states remained economically, politically, and diplomatically close to France.

In the Togolese case, this controlled process of decolonization was later reinforced by France's support for authoritarian stability, including its tolerance or backing of military coups and dictatorial regimes that protected French interests after independence. France's preparation of the decolonization process, combined with its continued willingness to control its former colonies, reveals a clear desire to preserve the colonial project under new institutional and political forms. The reasons for maintaining this system likely included France's pursuit of international prestige, the personal and collective economic

[86] Georges-Henri Soutou, "France and the Cold War, 1944- 63," Diplomacy & Statecraft 12, no. 4 (2001): 1, https://doi.org/10.1080/09592290108406225.

[87] Maja Bovcon, "Françafrique and Regime Theory"; Whiteman, "The Man Who Ran Françafrique".

interests of political and business elites, and the dependence of the French economy on the raw materials, markets, and financial benefits derived from its former colonies. In other words, France relied on its colonial and post-colonial networks to sustain its economy and maintain its position in the international arena.

One of the most effective instruments established by France to preserve its influence over its former colonies was the creation of the CFA franc, the colonial currency introduced in 1945. The following section therefore examines the CFA franc as a central mechanism of postcolonial dependency, showing how monetary cooperation enabled France to maintain economic control over newly independent African states, including Togo, even after formal decolonization.

2.3. FCFA-Africa's Last Colonial Currency

At the beginning of the Second World War, France created a centralized monetary and trade system to control its colonial empire. [88] In 1939, the decrees of 28 August, 1 September, and 9 September introduced strict exchange controls between France and its colonies on the one hand, and the rest of the world on the other. These measures were intended to protect the empire from the structural imbalances caused by the wartime economy. It was in this context that the expression "Franc Zone" appeared for the first time. A foreign exchange stabilization fund, supervised by the Bank of France, pooled the currencies of the Franc Zone and monopolized foreign currency transactions.[89]

After the Second World War, France was forced to adjust its colonial policy. African colonies had contributed significantly to the war effort, while colonial populations increasingly demanded political and social reforms. International pressure from both the United States and the Soviet Union in favor of self-determination also made the

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[88] Pigeaud et al., Africa's Last Colonial Currency.

[89] Direction général du Trésor, "La Zone Franc de 1939 à Aujourd'hui," Direction Général Du Trésor, September 26, 2019, https://www.tresor.economie.gouv.fr/tresor-international/la-zone-franc/la-zone-franc-de-1939-a-aujourd-hui?utm_

maintenance of direct colonial rule more difficult. As a result, France introduced limited reforms, including trade union freedom, freedom of association, the abolition of forced labor, broader citizenship, improved political representation, and the creation of FIDES for colonial development. However, these reforms occurred in a context of severe French economic weakness, marked by shortages, inflation, public debt, and a lack of foreign reserves. [90] This situation contributed to the reorganization of France's colonial monetary system and led to the creation of the CFA franc on 25 December 1945 for its African colonies, including Togo. Integrated into the Bretton Woods monetary order, the CFA franc was fixed at 1 CFA franc = 1.70 French francs. [91]

Although French officials presented the CFA franc as a protective measure intended to shield the colonies from the weakness of the metropolitan currency, Pigeaud and Sylla argue that it actually reinforced the colonial pact. The CFA franc was overvalued, making French goods cheaper for African territories while making African exports less competitive on the world market. As a result, the colonies were pushed to import from France and sell their raw materials to France, strengthening their economic dependence on the metropole. The CFA franc also limited monetary sovereignty: since its value was tied to the French franc and controlled by French institutions, African territories had no real control over their exchange rate or monetary policy. [92]

This monetary strategy was later accompanied by political and institutional reforms designed to manage decolonization without surrendering the essential instruments of French control. As anticolonial tensions increased in the 1950s, the Loi-Cadre of 1956 granted greater administrative autonomy to colonized territories, but it did not transfer control over key areas of sovereignty such as currency, defense, foreign policy, finance, raw materials, and economic policy. In this sense, the Loi-cadre can be understood as part of a broader strategy of controlled decolonization: it gave African territories more local political responsibility while preserving French influence over strategic sectors. This

[90] Pigeaud et al., Africa's Last Colonial Currency, 9- 11.

[91] Franc of the French colonies of Africa

[92] Pigeaud et al., Africa's Last Colonial Currency, 9- 11.

logic continued with the French Community in 1958, which promised self-government while defining crucial areas as "common" matters under French dominance. [93] Therefore, while the meaning of the CFA acronym changed from Colonies Françaises d'Afrique to Communauté Française d'Afrique, the functioning of the monetary system remained largely unchanged. [94]

The CFA franc functions as a durable mechanism of monetary dependency by maintaining a structural link between African monetary systems and France. Indeed, the CFA franc survived formal decolonization and remained in use mainly in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly within two monetary unions: UEMOA - Union Économique et Monétaire Ouest-Africaine - which includes Togo, and CEMAC - Communauté Économique et Monétaire de l'Afrique centrale. [95] Its functioning rests on four main principles: fixed parity, free movement of capital, convertibility guaranteed by the French Treasury, and the centralization of foreign exchange reserves.[96] Between 1958 and 1994, the exchange rate was fixed at 1 CFA franc for 0.02 French francs, or 1 French franc for 50 CFA francs. The transition to the euro did not alter this system of fixed parity. On 23 November 1998, the Council of the European Union recognized the monetary cooperation agreements between France and the West African Monetary Union, the Bank of Central African States, and the Union of the Comoros, mainly on the grounds that France's commitment was a budgetary responsibility. From 1 January 1999, the CFA franc was pegged to the euro at a fixed rate of 1 euro for 655.957 CFA francs.[97] This means that the value of the CFA franc followed first French monetary policy and later eurozone monetary policy, rather than the specific economic needs of African member states.

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[93] Pigeaud et al., Africa's Last Colonial Currency, 15- 18.

[94] Direction général du Trésor, "La Zone Franc de 1939 à Aujourd'hui".

[95] WAEMU: West African Economic and Monetary Union; CEMAC: Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa

[96] Pigeaud et al., Africa's Last Colonial Currency, 19.

[97] Direction général du Trésor, "La Zone Franc de 1939 à Aujourd'hui".

The system also allows the free movement of capital within the Franc Zone, facilitating payments for trade, profit repatriation, dividends, remittances, and financial investments between CFA countries and France. While presented as a guarantee of monetary stability, this principle has also enabled the transfer of capital from African economies toward France and Europe. Convertibility is guaranteed by the French Treasury, but this convertibility remains limited and controlled: CFA banknotes are not freely exchangeable on international markets, and since 1993, the West African CFA franc and the Central African CFA franc have not been directly convertible into each other. Finally, the system requires the centralization of foreign exchange reserves. African central banks were originally required to deposit almost all their foreign exchange reserves with the French Treasury, except for daily liquidity, gold reserves, and IMF commitments. This obligation was later reduced to 65% in the early 1970s, then to 50% in 2005 for the BCEAO (Banque Central des États de l’Afrique de l’Ouest) and 50% in 2007 for the BEAC (Banque des États de l'Afrique Centrale). [98]

The central mechanism sustaining this system was the operations account held at the French Treasury. Through this account, the BCEAO and BEAC were required to deposit part of their foreign exchange reserves in exchange for France’s guarantee of convertibility. Foreign currency earned through exports, loans, remittances, foreign investment, or development aid was credited to the account, while imports, debt repayments, and profit repatriation debited it. As Pigeaud and Sylla explain, this account was not simply a reserve mechanism but the keystone of the CFA franc system: it centralized African foreign exchange in France, channeled international currency conversions through Paris, and tied CFA money creation to reserves held at the French Treasury. [99] In this sense, the CFA franc should not be understood merely as a technical monetary arrangement, but as a political and economic system through which France preserved influence over its former African colonies, including Togo, after independence.

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[98] BCEAO: The Bank of Central African States, BEAC: Central Bank of West African States; Pigeaud et al., Africa’s Last Colonial Currency, 19- 23.

[99] Pigeaud et al., Africa’s Last Colonial Currency, 23- 26.

Eventually, after France had carefully prepared the decolonization process, UN General Assembly Resolution 1416 (XIV), adopted on 5 December 1959, officially confirmed that the Republic of Togoland would become independent on 27 April 1960. The resolution recalled that the UN Trusteeship Agreement for Togoland under French administration, approved on 13 December 1946, would cease to be in force once independence was achieved. It also noted that France and the Togolese government had agreed on the date of independence and recommended that, upon becoming independent, Togoland should be admitted to the United Nations.[100]

2.4 Politics in the Cold War: The Foccart System (1960s-1990s)

This section explores: (1) why Olympio was perceived as a threat to French interests in Togo and how France exploited existing ethnic divisions to its advantage by supporting northern military figures against southern political elites; and (2) the bilateral agreements designed under the guidance of Jacques Foccart to limit Togolese autonomy after independence and examines Eyadéma's long tenure within the political and economic networks of Françafrique.

2.4.1. Independence, Coups d' État and Françafrique Rule

Sylvanus Olympio emerged as the main leader of Togolese independence through a political trajectory that combined nationalist activism, international education, and administrative experience. His early nationalist activism placed him in direct opposition to the French colonial administration. His involvement in the pan-Ewe unification movement, his links with the All-Ewe Conference in the Gold Coast and British Togoland, and his petitions to the United Nations Trusteeship Commission challenged French authority and helped establish him as one of the leading figures of Togolese

[100] United Nations, "UN General Assembly Resolution 1416 (XIV)," Resolution, December 5, 1959, https://documents.un.org/doc/resolution/gen/nr0/142/39/pdf/nr014239.pdf.

nationalism.[101] A graduate of the London School of Economics and former employee of Unilever, Olympio was perceived by France as too close to Anglo-Saxon economic networks and insufficiently aligned with French interests.[102]

As leader of the Comité de l'Unité Togolaise (CUT), he won the April 1958 legislative elections, became head of government, and later, in 1961, became the first elected president of independent Togo.[103] Verschave describes him as an internationally respected statesman, a long-standing independence activist who worked for the development of Togo.[104] During his presidency, Olympio pursued a policy of economic austerity and sought to build the country without excessive dependence on foreign aid. This domestic policy included strict budgetary discipline and significant military cuts. His emphasis on budgetary balance and austerity brought him into conflict with recently demobilized veterans, including Étienne Gnassingbé Eyadéma, of the French colonial army. These veterans demanded integration into an expanded Togolese armed forces, but Olympio rejected the request.[105]

Domestically, although Olympio initially represented the democratic aspirations of Togolese nationalism, his rule became increasingly authoritarian after independence. Following the failed assassination attempt of 1961, his regime gradually moved toward a one-party system. Consequently, his increasingly personal style of rule was reflected in a stronger campaign against organized political opposition. Leaders of rival parties and perceived internal opponents were imprisoned on accusations of plotting against the regime, opposition parties were prevented from participating in elections, and restrictive electoral laws were used as instruments of political control. This authoritarian turn

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[101] Shillington, Encyclopedia of African History. Vol. 2, 1177; Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, 295.

[102] Pigeaud et al., Africa's Last Colonial Currency, 48.

[103] CUT: Committee of Togolese Unity; Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, 296; Shillington, Encyclopedia of African History. Vol. 2, 1178.

[104] Verschave, La Françafrique, 111.

[105] Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, 296.

culminated in 1962 with the establishment of a one-party state, in which all political parties were banned except the CUT.[106]

Internationally, Olympio adopted a clearly independent and anti-French orientation. He refused to sign the full set of French cooperation agreements engineered by Foccart[107], avoided dependence on French aid, rejected pro-French alliances such as the African and Malagasy Union, and sought closer relations with West Germany, the United States, Nigeria, and African states outside the franc zone. More broadly, Olympio pursued greater economic autonomy and wanted Togo to be free to trade with any partner it chose. His most threatening policy for French interests concerned monetary sovereignty. Olympio initially accepted that Togo would remain temporarily in the franc zone and continue using the CFA franc, but he also secured recognition of Togo's right to create its own national currency and central bank. In September 1962, France and Togo reached an agreement for a national issuing institution and a future Togolese franc which would have allowed Togo to leave the franc zone. Successively, on the 12th December 1962 Olympio promulgated a law creating the Central Bank of Togo and establishing the Togolese franc as legal currency. However, this project was never implemented.[108] On 13 January 1963, Olympio was assassinated in Lomé by former Togolese soldiers who had served in the French army, including Eyadéma who later claimed the fatal shot.[109]

The assassination marked the first coup d'état in post-independence West Africa. Rather than being understood solely as an internal Togolese political crisis, it can also be read as a foundational moment in the consolidation of the Françafrique system. To support this perspective, Verschave highlights the role of Commander Maîtrier, head of the Togolese gendarmerie and security adviser within Franco-Togolese military cooperation, who was "at the heart of the plot". He further argues that French officials such as Maîtrier and

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[106] Shillington, Encyclopedia of African History. Vol. 2, 1178.

[107] Whiteman, "The Man Who Ran Françafrique," 94.

[108] Pigeaud et al., Africa's Last Colonial Currency, 49.

[109] Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, 295; Shillington, Encyclopedia of African History. Vol. 2, 1566.

Ambassador Mazoyer could hardly have acted without the knowledge of Jacques Foccart, who had decisive influence over the appointment of French personnel in Africa. [110] This interpretation is reinforced by the fact that French military and political networks appeared to perceive Olympio as an obstacle to their interests, while viewing Eyadéma and Grunitzky as more reliable partners. Verschave strengthens this point by writing: "For this French army, stuck in an unfinished process of decolonization, the choice between Eyadéma and Olympio was obvious. Jacques Foccart, for his part, had 'cordial' relations with Grunitzky", and reporting Foccart's words on Grunitzky he wrote: 'his two daughters often came to my home in Luzarches,' he confided. Olympio, by contrast, 'was not one of our friends'".[111]

After the coup, Sylvanus Olympio was replaced on 16 January 1963 by Nicolas Grunitzky, a loyal ally of France who had previously served as prime minister of the Autonomous Republic of Togo and as a Togolese representative in the French National Assembly. Grunitzky quickly signaled his intention to reinforce Franco-Togolese relations and restore closer ties with France.[112] However, his presidency did not represent the final stabilization of the Françafrique system in Togo. According to Verschave, Grunitzky was soon perceived as too weak and too civilian to fully guarantee French interests. In 1967, Eyadéma overthrew him in a second coup d'état, again on 13 January, the anniversary of Olympio's assassination, with what Verschave describes as "the approval of Paris". This transition marked the consolidation of a military regime more directly compatible with French interests, as Foccart himself emphasized when describing Eyadéma: "because there was permanently, in the former non-commissioned officer of the French army, a deep Francophilia, one could even say a French patriotism".[113]

Having in mind Verschave's definition of Françafrique as a nebulous network involving economic, political, and military actors in both France and Africa, oriented toward raw-

[110] Verschave, La Françafrique, 113- 15.

[111] Verschave, La Françafrique, 116.

[112] Pigeaud et al., Africa's Last Colonial Currency, 50.

[113] Verschave, La Françafrique, 121.

material extraction, justified through the rhetoric of development aid, and reproduced through criminalized forms of political and economic control, [114] it becomes easier to identify how this system was established in Togo. Furthermore, Mbembe's claim that the Françafrique system relied heavily on military alliances, often structured along ethnic or regional lines,[115] is helpful for understanding why Eyadéma was identified as the ideal "collaborator" for sustaining the Françafrique system in Togo. These military alliances served as key instruments of repression and allowed African leaders to consolidate power domestically while preserving France's influence.

Several factors contributed to the choice of Eyadéma as a key Françafrique actor in Togo. First, internal ethnic and regional tensions between "northern" and "southern" Togolese played an important role. These tensions were rooted in an ethno-regional division of labor: southern Togolese overwhelmingly occupied administrative positions and therefore generally enjoyed better socio-economic conditions, while northerners were largely excluded from administrative posts and often saw military service as one of the few available paths to social advancement. As a result, the French colonial army was largely composed of northerners.[116] Considering that Olympio's involvement in the pan-Ewe unification movement had already brought him into conflict with France, it becomes clearer why France relied on northern military figures to bring independent Togo back into its sphere of influence.

In Togo, France found this military ally in Eyadéma. Born in Pya, near Kara, on 26 December 1937 to Kabyé parents, Eyadéma enlisted in the French colonial army at the age of sixteen. He served in Indochina between 1953 and 1955 and in Algeria between 1956 and 1961, before being stationed in Dahomey (present-day Benin) and Niger and later repatriated to Lomé in 1962. Upon his return, he became part of the group of former colonial soldiers who petitioned President Olympio for integration into an expanded Togolese army. Olympio's rejection of this request further exacerbated tensions between

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[114] Verschave, La Françafrique, 175.

[115] Verschave, La Françafrique, 32-33.

[116] Toulabor, Le Togo sous Eyadéma, 3.

the veterans and his anti-French government. Consequently, Eyadéma emerged as a central military figure on the eve of the 1963 coup d'état against Olympio.[117]

The French preference for Eyadéma is made evident by Foccart's enthusiastic judgment of his protégé, in whom he saw "a deep Francophilia, one might even say a French patriotism". **[118]** Foccart also openly expressed his personal admiration for Eyadéma:

> "[I have] great friendship, affection, and admiration for General Eyadéma. [...] The military junta that eliminated his predecessor, Sylvanus Olympio, in order to bring Grunitzky to power, later trusted him to lead the country with order and tolerance. From then on, General Eyadéma administered Togo with a remarkable sense of organization, which earned him, after the upheavals of democratization, international recognition".**[119]**

Moreover, Foccart himself portrayed Eyadéma's rule in highly positive terms, stating that the relationship established by General de Gaulle with General Eyadéma "went far beyond the purely political aspect". He praised Eyadéma's "rigorous management" of the country and presented him as a model African leader.[120] Together, these quotations reveal not only Foccart's and De Gaulle's personal closeness to Eyadéma, but also the way in which French political networks retrospectively legitimized his rise to power. In this sense, Eyadéma was not simply a domestic military actor; he became the central pillar through which the Françafrique system was consolidated in Togo**.**

[117] Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, 163.

[118] Verschave, La Françafrique, 121.

[119] Verschave, La Françafrique, 125.

[120] Verschave, La Françafrique, 125.

2.4.2. Foccart and Eyadéma Hold on Togo

Eyadéma eventually became one of Africa's longest-serving heads of state, ruling Togo for thirty-eight years. It is therefore necessary to examine how, after seizing power, he was able to maintain such a strong and long-lasting hold over the country. His regime relied on domestic strategies such as military repression, the ethnic consolidation of the armed forces, and the construction of a personality cult. However, Eyadéma's longevity cannot be explained only through internal mechanisms. As Verschave argues, his political survival was also closely connected to his relationship with French political and military networks. [121]

These networks were institutionalized primarily through the bilateral cooperation agreements signed between France and Togo. Whiteman argues that, in 1960, de Gaulle had to improvise a new institutional structure for a group of small, newly independent African states that possessed the formal symbols of sovereignty - flags, anthems, and seats at the United Nations - but often lacked the material and institutional capacity to exercise full independence. Within this context, Foccart played a decisive role as the architect of France's postcolonial influence, designing a network of bilateral Cooperation Accords with each new state in strategic sectors such as finance, the economy, culture, education, and the military. [122]

In the Togolese case, Olympio's refusal to sign the full set of French cooperation agreements represented a direct threat to French interests. His rejection of this framework can be read as one of the key reasons why French political networks may have supported, or at least benefited from, his removal. This interpretation becomes clearer when considering what happened immediately after his assassination. On 16 January 1963, only three days after Olympio's assassination, Nicolas Grunitzky replaced him and quickly sought to restore close relations with France. More importantly, on 10 July 1963, his government signed eight cooperation agreements with France, including an economic, monetary, and financial agreement that kept Togo within the franc zone and maintained

[121] Verschave, La Françafrique, 123.

[122] Whiteman, "The Man Who Ran Françafrique", 94.

the CFA franc. In November 1963, Grunitzky also ratified the agreements linking Togo to the West African Monetary Union and to France's monetary cooperation framework.[123] In this sense, Olympio's assassination and the subsequent signing of the 1963 cooperation agreements can be interpreted through Nkrumah's perspective on neocolonialism which argues that former colonial powers often uses coercive methods to impose treaties which keep the link between the former colonizer and its former colonies.[124] From this perspective, the post-coup agreements between France and Togo did not represent equal cooperation, but rather the restoration of French influence after Olympio's attempt to pursue greater sovereignty.

The eight agreements and conventions signed on 10 July 1963 were therefore at the core of the consolidation of the Françafrique neocolonial system in Togo. They transformed the provisional cooperation regime established after Togo's independence into a permanent framework of diplomatic, military, judicial, cultural, technical, economic, monetary, and financial cooperation. This is clearly stated in French Senate Report No. 61, presented during the ratification process in December 1963. The report explains that both countries agreed to give the provisional regime a permanent character, leading to the negotiations that resulted in the signature of the eight agreements and conventions, with the aim of establishing "solid and lasting cooperation" between France and Togo.[125]

The Foccart-Engineered Franco-Togolese Cooperation Agreements was based on eight agreements and conventions that were central to the consolidation of the Françafrique neocolonial system in Togo. Examining each agreement separately helps to show how French influence was institutionalized across different sectors of Togolese sovereignty.

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[123] Pigeaud et al., Africa's Last Colonial Currency, 50- 51.

[124] Nkrumah, Neocolonialism, The Last Stage of Imperialism., 4.

[125] Par M. Jean Peridier, Rapport fait au nom de la Commission des Affaires étrangères, de la Défense et des Forces armées sur le projet de loi, adopté par l'Assemblée nationale, autorisant la ratification de divers Accords et Conventions signés le 10 juillet 1963 entre la République française et la République togolaise., no. 61, 1re Session ordinaire de 1963-1964 (Sénat de la République française, 1963), 1- 2, https://www.senat.fr/rap/1963-1964/i1963_1964_0061.pdf.

1. Diplomatic Convention

According to the text of the agreement, the convention: "seeks to strengthen the existing bonds of friendship between the French and Togolese peoples, notably by allowing the two countries, while respecting their mutual independence, to hold regular exchanges of views on matters of foreign policy". [126]

The Diplomatic Convention did not formally deprive Togo of its sovereign right to conduct foreign policy, since Article 4 preserved each state's power to negotiate and conclude international treaties. However, the agreement institutionalized French influence over Togolese diplomacy. Article 2 established regular exchanges of views on foreign policy matters, while Article 1 granted the French ambassador in Lomé the status of doyen of the diplomatic corps. More importantly, Article 3 allowed France, at Togo's request, to represent the Togolese Republic before states and international organizations where Togo had no representation of its own.[127] From this perspective, it becomes clear that Togo was not in a position to influence France's foreign policy, but rather the opposite. In practice, the convention created diplomatic channels through which France could remain closely involved in Togo's external relations after independence.

2. Defense Agreement

The agreement was presented as a key instrument of Franco-Togolese military cooperation and was described as: "extremely important, because it provides that Togo, while remaining in control of its internal and external defense, may request assistance from France. Moreover, it will benefit from French support in the establishment of its armed forces". [128]

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[126] Peridier, Rapport fait au nom de la Commission des Affaires étrangères, de la Défense et des Forces armées, 2.

[127] Diplomatic Convention between the French Republic and the Togolese Republic N°10366 United Nations, "United Nations Treaty Series," United Nations, 1970, 31, https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%20722/v722.pdf?utm_source=.

[128] Peridier, Rapport fait au nom de la Commission des Affaires étrangères, de la Défense et des Forces armées, 2- 3.

As Verschave argues, this agreement effectively tied the Élysée to the Togolese army, whose dominant figure had become Eyadéma. [129] The treaty established that France and Togo would assist each other in preparing and ensuring their defense, and that Togo could request French aid for both internal and external defense. [130] In practice, the agreement created the legal framework through which France could remain closely connected to the Togolese army. This became particularly significant under Eyadéma, whose regime relied heavily on the armed forces and on close military cooperation with France.

A clear example occurred on 23 September 1986, when an armed group crossed into Lomé from Ghana in an attempt to overthrow Eyadéma. According to several accounts, including Seely and Decalo, The Washington Post, and Amnesty International, France dispatched around 250 soldiers, along with military aircraft, to Togo in order to stabilize the situation after Eyadéma requested assistance under the 1963 Defense Agreement. [131] Amnesty International also noted that French military assistance to the Forces Armées Togolaises (FAT) amounted to 12 million French francs, approximately US$2.1 million, in 1989. [132]

Considering that Togo was not facing any major external threat at the time, and that the FAT became Eyadéma's main instrument of domestic repression, [133] the Defense Agreement can be understood not only as an external security arrangement, but also as a mechanism of regime protection. The FAT case aligns closely with Mbembe's argument that the Françafrique system relied on local elites who seized control of the state apparatus through military alliances, which were often structured along ethnic or regional lines and

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[129] Verschave, La Françafrique, 121.

[130] France and Togo Defence Agreement No. 10365. United Nations, "United Nations Treaty Series," 23.

[131] Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, xxxii; Michael Dobbs, "France Sending Troops, Warplanes to Aid Togo," The Washington Post, September 26, 1986, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1986/09/26/france-sending-troops-warplanes-to-aid-togo/fa2d2e6a-066b-4bc9-8292-8516f628fe29/; Togo: Impunity for Killings by the Military, AFR 57/013/1993 (Amnesty International, 1993), 17, https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/afr570131993en.pdf.

[132] FAT: Togolese Armed Forces; Togo: Impunity for Killings by the Military, 17.

[133] Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, 174.

served as key instruments of repression, allowing African leaders to consolidate and maintain power domestically. [134] This becomes clear in the Togolese case. Seely and Decalo argue that Togo's armed forces, dominated by Kabyé soldiers from the North, many of them from Eyadéma's home region of Pya/Kara, played a central role in maintaining both Eyadéma and later his son Faure Gnassingbé in power. The northern dominance of the army was partly rooted in the colonial period, when military service offered northern youth one of the few available paths to social mobility, since they were largely excluded from administrative positions. After the 1963 coup d'état, which was partly driven by the demands of demobilized veterans to be integrated into an expanded Togolese army, the FAT was tripled in size, and selective recruitment policies reinforced its northern and Kabyé composition. Over time, this army became disproportionately large for a small country with few external threats and functioned as the central pillar of regime survival, using repression, violence, and political intimidation to maintain Eyadéma's long rule.[135]

3. Judicial Convention

According to French Senate on the convention "national treatment is provided for the exercise of independent judicial professions, so that, for example, French lawyers will be able, as in the past, to continue practicing their profession in Togo". [136]

Formally, the Judicial Convention organized cooperation between France and Togo in areas such as the transmission of judicial and extra-judicial documents, letters rogatory, criminal and administrative information, judicial records, civil-status documents, legal aid, enforcement of sentences, recognition of civil and commercial judgments, and extradition. [137] Although the convention was formally reciprocal, it helped preserve

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[134] Verschave, La Françafrique, 32-33.

[135] Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, 174- 75.

[136] Peridier, Rapport fait au nom de la Commission des Affaires étrangères, de la Défense et des Forces armées, 3.

[137] France and Togo Legal Convention No. 10367 United Nations, "United Nations Treaty Series," 35.

institutional continuity between the French and Togolese legal systems after independence. By regulating judicial assistance, extradition, recognition of judgments, access to courts, and the exercise of legal professions, it maintained a close legal relationship between the two states. In particular, by allowing French lawyers already registered in Togo to continue practicing before Togolese courts[138], the convention contributed to the persistence of French legal presence within Togo's postcolonial institutions. Therefore, while it did not formally subordinate Togolese justice to France, it formed part of the broader Françafrique framework by preserving legal and professional continuities inherited from the colonial period.

4. Establishment Convention

With regard to the Establishment convention, French Senate Report stated that "the essential characteristic of this convention is that, subject to the right of each party to take measures relating to public security, the nationals of each country will be able to settle freely on the territory of the other and will enjoy national treatment there, companies being assimilated to natural persons with regard to all rights that a legal person may hold".[139]

Article 1 allowed nationals of each state to enter, travel, reside in, and leave the territory of the other state freely, subject only to police, security, and public health laws. Article 2 granted them civil liberties under the same conditions as nationals of the host state, except for political rights. Article 3 extended equal treatment to the establishment of businesses and commercial, industrial, agricultural, or craft activities, while Article 9 gave nationals of each state the right to obtain administrative concessions, authorizations, permits, and public contracts under the same conditions as nationals of the other state. Most importantly for economic influence, Article 13 assimilated civil and commercial

[138] France and Togo Legal Convention No. 10367 United Nations, "United Nations Treaty Series," 35- 56.

[139] Peridier, Rapport fait au nom de la Commission des Affaires étrangères, de la Défense et des Forces armées, 3.

companies to individuals of their country of origin for the enjoyment of the rights provided by the convention, while Article 14 protected rights already acquired by individuals and companies and allowed French nationals established in Togo, and Togolese nationals established in France, to continue exercising their professions freely.[140]

Although the convention was formally reciprocal, its practical significance must be understood within the unequal relationship between France and Togo after independence. By granting French nationals and companies the right to settle freely in Togo and enjoy national treatment, the agreement helped preserve the legal conditions for the continued presence of French economic actors in the country. The inclusion of companies is particularly important because it meant that French firms could operate under conditions similar to Togolese firms, thereby facilitating the continuity of French commercial and corporate influence after formal decolonization. In this sense, the Establishment convention contributed to protect French private and corporate interests in postcolonial Togo.

5. Cultural Cooperation Agreement

One the cultural cooperation agreement the Senate Report asserts that "is of interest to our country [France], since it should make it possible to maintain, and as far as possible to develop, French-style education in Togo, and to promote cultural exchanges between the two countries".[141]

This agreement was not only a cultural instrument, but also a mechanism through which France preserved influence over education, language, training, and intellectual formation in post-independence Togo. Its practical provisions clearly privileged the continuation of a French educational model. Article 1 provided that France would help educate Togolese

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140 France and Togo Convention of establishment No. 10370 United Nations, "United Nations Treaty Series," 107- 14.

141 Peridier, Rapport fait au nom de la Commission des Affaires étrangères, de la Défense et des Forces armées, 4.

citizens wishing to follow a French type of education and obtain French diplomas. It also committed France, as far as possible, to place qualified personnel at the disposal of the Togolese government in education, culture, physical education, and sports. Article 2 further stated that Togo should apply "in the first instance" to the French government when recruiting such personnel. It also allowed France to establish and maintain educational institutions under French authority in Togo. [142]

In practice, this meant that French teachers, inspectors, and educational staff could continue to occupy a central role in the Togolese education system after independence. In this sense, the Cultural Cooperation Agreement contributed maintain French influence over education, cultural production, elite training, and institutional knowledge. Formally, the agreement was reciprocal, but in the unequal postcolonial context its main effect was to keep Togo closely tied to French educational and cultural structures after independence.

6. General Technical Cooperation Agreement

The agreement was formally presented as a mechanism of administrative assistance. In reality, however, it created a channel through which French personnel could remain embedded within Togolese public services after independence, especially in administrative, technical, and cultural sectors. This is evident in Article 1, which states that France would provide, as far as possible, the aid requested by Togo for the functioning of its administrative, technical, and cultural public services, either through temporary missions or by placing French agents and civil servants at the disposal of the Togolese government. [143]

This arrangement helped preserve French influence within the Togolese state by maintaining dependence on French expertise and personnel. It also reflects a broader postcolonial pattern. Véronique Dimier and Joseph Hodge show that there were

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[142] FRANCE and TOGO Agreement on cultural co-operation No. 10368 United Nations, "United Nations Treaty Series," 73- 77.

[143] Fance and Togo General Agreement on technical co-operation No. 10369 United Nations, "United Nations Treaty Series," 88.

significant continuities in personnel between the colonial and postcolonial eras. Dimier, in particular, argues that former French colonial officials were re-employed to effectively "recycle" the expertise acquired during the colonial period. She also highlights how the interactions between former French colonial administrators and African elites in newly independent Francophone states often resembled those of the colonial era. [144] In this sense, technical cooperation did not simply provide neutral expertise; it contributed to the persistence of colonial administrative practices within formally independent states.

<u>7. Economic, Monetary and Financial Cooperation Agreement</u>

According to the Senate report:

> "the two countries reaffirm their willingness to coordinate their economic and monetary policies as closely as possible, not only with each other but also with the other countries of the franc zone".(…) "the agreement includes various provisions aimed at promoting commercial relations between France and Togo, maintaining between the two countries a regime of free movement and customs exemption, specifying the conditions under which Togo will carry out its foreign currency purchase and sale operations, organizing the necessary coordination in exchange matters, and providing for the application of the most-favored-nation regime". [145]

This agreement was one of the most important instruments of the 1963 cooperation framework because it directly concerned trade, currency, financial transfers, foreign exchange, and development aid. Formally, it was presented as a reciprocal framework of economic cooperation. In reality, however, it reinforced Togo's integration into the franc zone and limited the country's room for autonomous economic and monetary policy.

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[144] Dimier and Stockwell, The Business of Development in Post-Colonial Africa, 6.

[145] Peridier, Rapport fait au nom de la Commission des Affaires étrangères, de la Défense et des Forces armées, 4.

With regard to monetary and financial arrangements, the convention stated that "a bilateral or multilateral cooperation system will be established; but only when Togo has chosen its monetary system and thereby brought an end to the transitional regime currently in force. Article 11 provides, in any case, for the maintenance of freedom of transfers between France and Togo". [146]

This clause is important because it shows that Togo's monetary sovereignty remained incomplete even after independence. Formally, the agreement left open the possibility for Togo to choose its own monetary system and bring the transitional regime to an end. This was precisely linked to Olympio's earlier project: he had initially accepted that Togo would remain temporarily within the franc zone and continue using the CFA franc, but he also obtained recognition of Togo's right to establish its own national currency and central bank. This led, in September 1962, to an agreement between France and Togo for the creation of a national issuing institution and a future Togolese franc. [147] However, Article 11 of the 1963 agreement maintained the freedom of transfers between France and Togo, meaning that financial flows, payments, and profits between the two countries would remain protected regardless of Togo's future monetary choices. [148] This limited any real rupture with the franc zone.

This orientation was confirmed under Grunitzky, when Law No. 63-16 of 21 November 1963 authorized the ratification of the Treaty of 12 May 1962 establishing the West African Monetary Union and the Cooperation Agreement of 12 May 1962 between the French Republic and the member republics of the West African Monetary Union. [149]

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[146] Peridier, Rapport fait au nom de la Commission des Affaires étrangères, de la Défense et des Forces armées, 4.

[147] Pigeaud et al., Africa's Last Colonial Currency, 49.

[148] FRANCE and TOGO Agreement on co-operation in economic, monetary and financial matters No. 10371 United Nations, "United Nations Treaty Series," 130.

[149] Loi n° 63-16 du 21 novembre 1963 autorisant la ratification du traité du 12 mai 1962 instituant une Union Monétaire Ouest-Africaine, et de l'accord de coopération du 12 mai 1962 entre la République française et les Républiques membres de l'Union Monétaire Ouest-Africaine, Pub. L. No. Loi n° 63-16, Journal officiel de la République togolaise (1963), https://legitogo.gouv.tg/be/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Pages-from-jo_1963-238-5.pdf.

Through this ratification, Togo abandoned Olympio's project of monetary autonomy and remained integrated into the French monetary system. Therefore, the agreement can be read as a compromise between formal sovereignty and continued monetary dependence on France.

Moreover, Title III of the financial cooperation agreement is particularly significant because it "provides for the aid France intends to continue granting to Togo and which, consequently, as with all cooperation treaties, is likely to entail a fairly heavy financial burden for our country [France]". [150] However, this aid was not unconditional. In return, Togo undertook "to purchase within the franc zone all equipment and supplies acquired through this aid, except where exemptions are agreed by mutual consent" (Article 14), "to reserve contracts concluded for the implementation of this aid for Togolese or French companies," and "to grant most-favored-nation treatment to the goods thus imported" (Article 15). [151]

These provisions show that French aid was not simply a neutral development instrument, but was legally connected to the preservation of franc-zone trade and to the privileged position of French firms. In other words, the mechanisms that Dimier and Stockwell later identify - tied aid, the use of development assistance to protect European firms, and the channeling of development projects toward companies from former colonial powers - already find concrete legal expression in the 1963 Franco-Togolese agreement. As they argue, development projects in postcolonial Africa could become opportunities for companies of former colonial powers to advance their commercial interests and protect privileged, sometimes quasi-monopolistic, positions after independence. This was facilitated by consultancy organizations specializing in technical assistance, some of which had been created before decolonization, such as the Bureau central pour les équipements d'Outre-Mer. [152] Seen through this framework, the 1963 Franco-Togolese

[150] Peridier, Rapport fait au nom de la Commission des Affaires étrangères, de la Défense et des Forces armées, 4.

[151] Peridier, Rapport fait au nom de la Commission des Affaires étrangères, de la Défense et des Forces armées, 4.

[152] Dimier and Stockwell, The Business of Development in Post-Colonial Africa, 10,18.

agreement did not simply provide aid to Togo; it institutionalized a system in which development assistance helped preserve French economic influence and channel public projects toward French commercial interests.

8. Convention concerning Relations between the French Treasury and the Togolese Treasury

The Senate report defines the convention as "merely a supplement to the preceding agreement and is purely technical in nature, calling for no comment".[153]

Despite this technical presentation, the convention created a significant financial mechanism through which Togo's treasury operations remained closely connected to the French Treasury after independence. It institutionalized a financial channel through which Togolese public finances remained partly dependent on French financial structures.

This convention should not be confused with the operations account of the CFA franc system. As Pigeaud and Sylla explain, the operations account was held by African central banks, such as the BCEAO and BEAC, at the French Treasury. Through this account, foreign exchange reserves were centralized in France in exchange for France's guarantee of CFA franc convertibility. [154] Thus, while the 1963 Treasury Convention concerned bilateral treasury relations between France and Togo[155], the operations account concerned the broader CFA monetary system. Nevertheless, both mechanisms rested on the same underlying principle: the financial sovereignty of postcolonial African states remained tied to French Treasury structures.

153 Peridier, Rapport fait au nom de la Commission des Affaires étrangères, de la Défense et des Forces armées, 4.

154 Pigeaud et al., Africa's Last Colonial Currency, 23.

155 FRANCE and TOGO Convention concerning relations between the French Treasury and the Togolese Treasury and procedures for cooperation between the French Republic and the Togolese Republic with respect to the organization and operation of Treasury Services No. 10372 United Nations, "United Nations Treaty Series," 148.

In conclusion, the bilateral agreements signed between Togo and France after independence were not merely technical instruments of cooperation, but central mechanisms through which French influence was preserved. By regulating key areas such as defense, diplomacy, monetary policy, treasury relations, trade, and development assistance, these agreements created a legal and institutional framework that limited Togo's effective sovereignty while maintaining its dependence on France. In this sense, the agreements reveal how formal independence did not necessarily mean the end of colonial domination. Rather, they became one of the foundations of the Françafrique system in Togo, transforming colonial control into a postcolonial network of political, military, and economic dependency.

The effective implementation of these agreements in Togo depended largely on the authoritarian rule of Eyadéma, which served as a key pillar of the Françafrique system. Domestically, Eyadéma maintained power through personality cult, military repression and dictatorial rule. According to Tony Hodges, inspired by Kim-il Sung's personality cult, Eyadéma turn to the North Korea for bilateral "aid" in the specialized field of personality glorification. The cult of personality around Eyadéma went far beyond public symbols such as badges, billboards, and portraits. The state-controlled media constantly produced exaggerated praise of Eyadéma, presenting him as "Le Guide" (the leader) and his words as "brilliant". Government ministers were expected to publicly flatter him, while official conferences, rallies, and state-sponsored events became performances of loyalty. These events included organized praise by political dancers and singers linked to the Rassemblement du Peuple Togolais (RPT), the ruling "national movement" created in 1969 to support and consolidate Eyadéma's regime.[156]

Eyadéma's personality cult became one of the most visible instruments through which his authoritarian rule was legitimized and reproduced. Beginning modestly in the early 1970s, it rapidly expanded into a pervasive system of public adulation, especially after the 1 February 1977 cabinet reshuffle, which left Eyadéma as the only military officer in

[156] Tony Hodges, "Eyadema's Unchallenged Rule," Africa Report 22, no. 4 (1977): 1, https://www.proquest.com/docview/1304056577/citation/91ADBB9D356749C1PQ/1?sourcetype=Scholarly%20Journals.

government and coincided with a "massive intensification" of the cult of personality in Togo.[157] Giant portraits of Le Guide appeared across the country, clothes bearing his image became common, and busts and monuments were erected in several towns. State-controlled newspapers, radio, and television constantly praised him, presenting his speeches and political statements as exceptional and repeatedly referring to him as the "Guide of the Nation," the "Founder-President of the RPT," "the General," and the "Savior of the Common Man". Public ceremonies, party rallies, and official conferences were transformed into rituals of loyalty, where ministers, dancers, singers, and members of the RPT performed collective praise for Eyadéma.[158]

This symbolic domination rested on a deeper concentration of power. According to Hodges, Togo's stability depended partly on the Eyadéma monopolization of political power. He personally appointed the members of the Council of Ministers, as well as the Political Bureau and Central Committee of the RPT. Since the dissolution of the National Assembly after the 1967 coup, Togo had no national legislature for more than a decade, not even within the limits of a one-party system. Legislative and executive authority ultimately devolved upon *Le Guide*, who issued laws by decree and became the effective source of constitutional authority in the absence of a written constitution. Even local administration was highly centralized, since local councils were re-established in 1973 but their members were appointed rather than elected.[159]

This cult alongside political power monopolization served to construct legitimacy, impose national obedience, and present himself as the embodiment of Togolese unity. Thus, Eyadéma's personality cult was a central mechanism of political control through which the regime sought to manufacture consent, suppress dissent, and consolidate dictatorial rule. However, by the late 1970s and 1980s, the limits of this strategy became increasingly evident. However, by the late 1970s and 1980s, the limits of this strategy became increasingly evident. In this context, Eyadéma engineered a constitutional

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[157] Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, xxxii.

[158] Hodges, "Eyadema's Unchallenged Rule," 1; Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, 306.

[159] Hodges, "Eyadema's Unchallenged Rule," 1.

framework to give a civilian appearance to its government while consolidating the RPT's monopoly over political life. The 30 December 1979 Constitution, promulgated on 9 January 1980, formally established Togo as a one-party state under the RPT. Although it introduced a new constitutional framework and created the Assemblée Nationale du Togo (ANT II), political competition remained entirely controlled by the ruling party. The president was elected for a seven-year term by universal suffrage, but only on the recommendation of the RPT Congress, and he was eligible for re-election. He also retained the power to dissolve the National Assembly, whose deputies were elected from lists approved by the RPT. [160]

Although the 1980 constitution, the legislature, and single-party elections attempted to give Eyadéma's rule a civilian and constitutional appearance, the regime became increasingly authoritarian, corrupt, and repressive. As the economy declined and opposition grew, especially among southern elites, the personality cult could no longer conceal the failures of the state. Instead, it accompanied a broader system of domination marked by clientelism, nepotism, military control, arbitrary arrests, torture, and serious human rights abuses. The authoritarian stability produced through this combination of symbolic domination, institutional monopolization, and repression therefore began to weaken by the late 1980s, as economic decline, corruption, clientelism, and state violence generated a growing crisis of legitimacy. As Seely and Decalo note, the collapse of development resources, the bankruptcy of the state sector, and the growth of popular grievances gradually dissolved the "social glue" that had sustained the regime, while opposition forces became increasingly active, especially among southern elites, students, workers, and intellectuals.[161]

At the same time, the end of the Cold War transformed the international environment in which regimes such as Eyadéma's had survived. Western donors and France could no longer justify support for authoritarian allies solely through Cold War geopolitical logic, and the language of democratization, good governance, and economic reform became

[160] Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, 120.

[161] Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, 8.

increasingly central to international aid. [162] This general context of discontent and frustration led to growing demands for the democratization of the Togolese political system. The democratization process represented a major threat both to Eyadéma's regime and to French interests in Togo, since it challenged the authoritarian structure through which political stability and external influence had been maintained. The next chapter examines how the post-Cold War demand for democratization, combined with broader changes in the global economy, created the conditions for a transition from direct political control to a more economic form of domination.

In conclusion, this chapter has demonstrated that the Françafrique system in Togo was not an accidental consequence of decolonization but the result of a deliberate strategy through which France preserved its influence after formal independence. By examining Togo's colonial history, the country's ethnic and political divisions, the creation of the CFA franc, the role of Jacques Foccart, and the Franco-Togolese cooperation agreements of 1963, the chapter has shown that political, military, monetary, and diplomatic mechanisms were carefully institutionalized to limit Togolese sovereignty while maintaining French strategic interests.

The assassination of Sylvanus Olympio and the subsequent consolidation of Eyadéma's authoritarian regime represented a decisive turning point in this process. Supported by French political and military networks, Eyadéma became the central domestic pillar of Françafrique in Togo, ensuring political stability favorable to France while relying on military repression, patronage, and constitutional manipulation to maintain power for nearly four decades. Rather than ending colonial domination, independence transformed it into a system of indirect control exercised through local elites, bilateral agreements, and enduring institutional dependencies.

By the end of the Cold War, however, this model of political domination faced increasing challenges. Domestic demands for democratization, international pressure for political reform, and the emergence of neoliberal economic governance gradually weakened the traditional Françafrique system based on direct political alliances. As the following

[162] Abdoulaye S. M. Saine et al., eds., Elections and Democratization in West Africa, 1990-2009 (Africa World Press, 2011), 8.

chapter argues, these changes did not bring an end to French influence in Togo. Instead, they marked its transformation into a more market-oriented form of domination, in which privatization, international financial institutions, and multinational corporations increasingly replaced political agreements as the principal instruments through which external influence and economic control were exercised.

Chapter 3: Transition Phase: Eyadéma's Pseudo-Democratization, Economic Restructuring, and the Transformation of Françafrique (1980s-2000s)

In this chapter, the dissertation examines the transition from primarily political control to economic dominance. It argues that the attempted democratic transition in Togo in the 1990s did not result from a genuine democratic conversion by the regime, but from the combined pressure of domestic unrest, economic crisis, and external conditionality. This context opened a phase of pseudo-democratization, in which Eyadéma was forced to accept the formal institutions of multiparty democracy while preserving the coercive, military, and clientelist structures that had long sustained his power.

First, the chapter examines political changes within the French government, including the weakening of Foccart's position after de Gaulle and the fragmentation of his networks among other political and economic actors. Second, it analyzes Togo's attempted democratic transition in the 1990s, which resulted in a form of "pseudo-democracy": formally, the regime accepted, or was forced to accept, multipartyism and democratic principles, while continuing to use the military as a key instrument to repress the opposition and survive the transition. The chapter also examines the succession crisis following the death of Eyadéma, who had ruled for thirty-eight years, and shows how France supported dynastic continuity despite its stated commitment to the rule of law, democratic principles, and human rights, all of which were repeatedly violated by the Gnassingbé regime.

Moreover, the chapter analyzes changes in the global economic order, particularly the growing influence of multilateral financial institutions over African politics, which contributed to the restructuring of French policy in Africa and especially in Togo. Finally, it investigates how the Togolese economy was "predated". It argues that this predatory phase was rooted in colonialism, when French enterprises were dominant actors in Togo's colonial economy. Even after independence, France sought to preserve the benefits enjoyed by its companies through development aid and bilateral cooperation. Later, with the growing influence of the Bretton Woods institutions, the European Economic Community, and subsequently the European Union, the primacy of French corporations was reduced, although not dismantled.

3.1. The Transformation of Françafrique after the Gaullist Era

As argued earlier, the Françafrique system had its roots in the beginning of the Cold War and responded to France's need to maintain control over its former colonies for economic survival, strategic influence, and international prestige. Indeed, for around three decades, the Françafrique regime was mutually beneficial for both French and African elites. France gained international influence and diplomatic support, while loyal African leaders received political protection. At the same time, actors on both sides benefited from formal and informal networks that enabled personal enrichment and political empowerment. However, during the 1990s, several factors weakened this system. Internationally, the end of the Cold War reduced France's strategic justification for maintaining authoritarian African allies. The multiplication of new states after the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia also reduced the relative diplomatic value of African votes at the United Nations. France's deeper integration into the European Union further limited its ability to maintain an opaque and independent African policy.[163]

Domestically, changes within the French government may also have contributed to the reduced centrality of direct political control. After De Gaulle's presidency, Foccart's position within the French state changed, even though he retained an influential adviser status as a Gaullist symbol. After serving under Georges Pompidou's presidency from 1969 to 1974, he was removed from office in 1974 by the new president, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. Nevertheless, Foccart maintained his networks even during his years outside

[163] Bovcon, "Françafrique and Regime Theory," 11.

formal office. He returned to influence in May 1995 with the election of Jacques Chirac, once again imposing himself within the so-called presidential "reserved domain" of African policy. Moreover, the Françafrique system was weakened by several internal factors: budgetary constraints, growing public criticism of corruption, legal investigations into Franco-African networks, the fragmentation of business lobbies, and the death of key figures such as Foccart, Mitterrand, and Houphouët-Boigny.[164]

In this context, the Foccart network, which had dominated Franco-African relations until the mid-1970s, gradually lost its centralized and pyramidal structure. According to Verschave, this weakening was partly caused by the growing personalization and familialization of African policy under successive French presidents. Under Giscard d'Estaing, African affairs were increasingly entrusted to relatives and close associates; later, similar patterns appeared with the Pasqua and Mitterrand networks, especially when François Mitterrand appointed his son Jean-Christophe to the Élysée's Africa cell. This shift transformed what had once been a Gaullist political network into a more fragmented system of family ties, personal loyalties, and competing interests. As the authority of the original Foccart network declined, other actors gained autonomy. Verschave argues that, from the mid-1970s onward, the Foccart network was increasingly challenged by several politico-business, military, and corporate lobbies, including the Mitterrand and Pasqua networks, as well as major companies such as Elf, Bouygues, Bolloré-Rivaud, and Castel. In this sense, Françafrique did not disappear after Foccart's decline; rather, it became more fragmented, with multiple networks and private economic actors competing for influence within the same postcolonial system.[165]

The establishment of a left-wing government in France did not transform Franco-African relations. Certainly, the Jospin government expressed hostility toward the continuation of a caricatural form of neocolonialism in Africa. Yet, as Verschave suggests, dismantling Françafrique required more than political conviction. The system was deeply rooted in the balance of power within France itself, especially between political, military, and oil

[164] Bovcon, "Françafrique and Regime Theory," 11.

[165] Verschave, La Françafrique, 285- 86.

interests. In this sense, separating "France" from "Afrique" was far more complicated than simply declaring the end of old networks; it required confronting the institutional and economic forces that continued to sustain them.[166]

At the same time, African countries themselves were changing because of globalization, debt, political instability, democratization, and multiparty politics. With Foccart's death in 1997, there was a good opportunity to conceal the power of Françafrique under a new disguise.[167] As a result, France began reforming its African policy. The Ministry of Cooperation was placed under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1998, the French military presence in Africa was reduced and reorganized, and France increasingly "multilateralized" its cooperation and defense policies. The 1994 CFA franc devaluation and the Balladur doctrine, which linked French aid to structural adjustment agreements with the IMF and World Bank, reflected this shift toward a less costly and more conditional policy.[168] In short, during this transition phase, France did not abandon Africa but adapted its policy pragmatically to new geopolitical, economic, and institutional constraints.

In Togo, this system relied heavily on Eyadéma's dictatorial rule, which systematically repressed dissent and protected French interests. This control was intrinsically political: it was established through the bilateral agreements engineered by Foccart under De Gaulle and later reproduced through Eyadéma's monopoly over the state, the army, and the RPT. The next section examines the factors that pushed this transformation and how Togo entered a phase of pseudo-democracy and economic restructuring during the 1990s.

[166] Verschave, La Françafrique, 325.

[167] Verschave, La Françafrique, 291.

[168] Bovcon, "Françafrique and Regime Theory," 12.

3.2. Pseudo Democracy (1990s) and Dynastic Continuity

Togo's democratization crisis in the early 1990s did not produce a genuine democratic rupture, but rather a process of pseudo-democratization in which formal political liberalization coexisted with the survival of Eyadéma's authoritarian power. The roots of this crisis can be traced to the collapse of the phosphate-based development model that had sustained the regime during the 1970s. Like many African states, Togo used the commodity boom of the mid-1970s to pursue diversification, import-substitution industrialization, and large public investment projects, but when international commodity prices fell, the state increasingly relied on external borrowing to maintain its development strategy.[169] In Togo, this process was intensified after Eyadéma nationalized the Compagnie Togolaise des Mines du Bénin (CTMB) in 1974.[170] At that time, Togo held twenty-five percent of the company's shares, as established by the 1957 agreement, whereas before that agreement it had held only one percent. Shortly thereafter, world phosphate prices rose sharply, generating a substantial increase in state revenues. This surge in revenues encouraged the regime, foreign advisers, and donor agencies to expand state-led industrial and development projects. However, the collapse of phosphate, coffee, and cocoa prices by the end of 1975 quickly exposed the fragility of this economic model.[171] The so-called "Togolese economic miracle" therefore rapidly gave way to debt, deficits, corruption, and administrative incompetence, as state enterprises created during the boom became financially unsustainable and required growing subsidies, eventually forcing Togo to turn to the IMF for balance-of-payments support.[172] This economic collapse also weakened the political foundations of the regime: as development funds dried up, sinecure posts became harder to distribute, corruption expanded, and social grievances intensified, opposition grew among students, workers, intellectuals, human

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[169] Barad, "Structural Adjustment, Privatization and the Industrial Sector," 9- 10.

[170] Togolese Mining Company of Benin

[171] Barad, "Structural Adjustment, Privatization and the Industrial Sector," 1- 2, 53.

[172] Barad, "Structural Adjustment, Privatization and the Industrial Sector," 1- 2; Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, 4.

rights activists, southern elites, and political exiles, including figures linked to the legacy of Sylvanus Olympio. [173]

As Robinson argues more broadly for former French colonies in Africa, economic crisis, structural adjustment programs, budget cuts, layoffs, and donor pressure helped transform social discontent into organized demands for democratization through student militancy, independent media, trade unionism, and political associations.[174] In Togo, however, this opening remained highly constrained. Eyadéma initially tried to control liberalization from above by presenting himself as a defender of peace and human rights, tolerating selected reforms, and allowing limited political space, but these spaces soon became platforms for exposing state violence and coordinating strikes, protests, and opposition mobilization through figures such as Yawo Agboyibo and Joseph Kokou Koffigoh.[175] The public uprising led to the opening of the National Conference in July 1991 and lasted for fifty-two days. During its proceedings, it strongly criticized Eyadéma and the armed forces, proclaimed itself sovereign, dissolved the existing National Assembly and the RPT, and repealed the 1980 Constitution. A few weeks later the National Conference selected a transitional government under Koffigoh. Yet this sovereignty remained fragile because Eyadéma retained control over the Togolese armed forces, whose loyalty was reinforced by regional, ethnic, and material interests. Between October and December 1991, the Togolese army repeatedly intervened to undermine the democratic transition. During this period, the military seized Radio Lomé several times and used it to demand that Eyadéma dissolve the transitional government. The crisis escalated on 3 December 1991, when troops entered Lomé in force and kidnapped Prime Minister Joseph Koffigoh. Under pressure, Koffigoh agreed to form a government of national unity including RPT ministers, which was established on 31 December. Although the National Conference exposed the mechanisms of repression, arbitrary detention, torture, corruption, and

[173] Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, 5,9.

[174] Pearl T. Robinson, "The National Conference Phenomenon in Francophone Africa," Comparative Studies in Society and History 36, no. 3 (1994): 607- 8.

[175] John R. Heilbrunn, "Social Origins of National Conferences in Benin and Togo," The Journal of Modern African Studies 31, no. 2 (1993): 280, 287.

symbolic manipulation, it did not dismantle the military and clientelist foundations of Eyadéma's rule. He was therefore able to use the army, especially loyalist forces close to the presidency, to intimidate the opposition and reassert control over the transition.[176]

On 18 January 1993 Eyadéma dissolved the interim government while retaining Joseph Koffigoh as prime minister. Members of the former transitional government opposed this reappointment, arguing that Koffigoh was no longer capable of acting independently from Eyadéma. Consequently, protests spread throughout Lomé, and violence intensified as the military repressed demonstrations, resulting in numerous deaths and the mass displacement of civilians from the capital. Negotiations in Colmar and later Ouagadougou failed to restore trust, mainly because of the army's continued role in politics and the electoral process. Although the August 1993 election was formally organized, it was deeply flawed: the electoral register was problematic, voting cards were delayed, soldiers remained in the streets, and the main opposition candidates withdrew. The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and most international observers, including Jimmy Carter's delegation, refused to participate or observe.[177]

In this context, Eyadéma was not completely abandoned by France, even though Togo faced growing international isolation. Since February 1993, major donors had suspended their aid programs to Togo because of the regime's human rights abuses. However, as Kohnert notes, discussions within the EU were shaped by the "hardly veiled pro-Eyadéma stand of Paris," which sought to preserve France's special relationship with its former colony and blocked stronger sanctions proposed by Germany and the UK.[178] Eyadéma nevertheless held the election on 25 August 1993 and won with 96 percent of the vote, despite low turnout and hundreds of polling stations not opening.[179]

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[176] Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, xxxii, 10, 176, 236.

[177] International Foundation for Electoral Systems and Richard M. Scammon, IFES Election Assistance Project: Togo: Final Activity Report, July 28- August 23, 1993 (International Foundation for Electoral Systems, 1993), 2, 3- 4, 20- 21, 23- 25, https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/migrate/r01905_0.pdf.

[178] Saine et al., Elections and Democratization in West Africa, 1990-2009, 8.

[179] International Foundation for Electoral Systems and Scammon, IFES Election Assistance Project: Togo: Final Activity Report, July 28- August 23, 1993, 24; Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, 10.

The pseudo-democratization process and the work of the Constitutional Commission set up in October gave birth to the 1992 constitution. It was intended to establish a multiparty system, a dual executive, and stronger constitutional checks on power. However, the final version submitted to referendum removed some restrictions that would have limited the eligibility of military figures and political leaders. Although the 1992 Constitution formally established a more democratic framework, it has since been repeatedly amended, often in ways that helped preserve the power of Gnassingbé Eyadéma and, later, his son, Faure Gnassingbé.[180]

Because of the political crisis official development assistance to Togo fell from 1992 to 2002 further exacerbating the precarious economic situation.[181] However, the election of a center-right coalition in France in 1993 benefited Eyadéma and further demonstrated French support for its protégé. French influence over European and other Western partners, combined with the easing of political tensions, meant that most cooperation had been restored by 1995. Still, the 1998 presidential election between Gilchrist Olympio and Eyadéma was marked by military harassment during the voting and vote-counting process, leading to the resignation of the electoral commission. The Ministry of the Interior's declaration of Eyadéma's victory triggered protests and strikes in Lomé. Once again, development assistance was suspended again after the government and military interference in 1998 presidential election. [182]

As argued earlier, multilateral development assistance is beneficial to the French economy and to French companies. From this perspective, it was in France's interest to help Togo overcome the political isolation it faced from Western donors. To this end, France worked closely with Eyadéma to promote a more inclusive political system. In this context, and in order to restore relations with foreign donors, Eyadéma signed the Lomé Framework Agreement in 1999, which included a pledge to respect the

[180] Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, 120–21.

[181] *Togo Systematic Country Diagnostic*, nos. 108184-TG (The World Bank, 2016), 30–31, https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/179631474899157168/pdf/Togo-SCD-Final-2016-09222016.pdf?utm_.

[182] Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, xxxiv, 143–44.

Constitution and not seek re-election in 2003, following a request from French President Jacques Chirac.[183] He also agreed to dissolve the National Assembly in March 2000 and to hold new legislative elections, supervised by an independent electoral commission. However, after several postponements and the opposition's boycott of the 2002 National Assembly elections, Eyadéma no longer felt bound by his promise not to run in 2003. Consequently, the legislature amended the Constitution to allow unlimited presidential terms. Even after Eyadéma's "re-election" in 2003, Chirac continued to support the resumption of European Union aid to Togo,[184] demonstrating how France prioritized the preservation of its interests over the promotion of democracy.

Since the restoration of multiparty politics, constitutional amendments have played a central role in preserving the dominance of the ruling party. In 2002, the RPT used its parliamentary majority to amend 46 constitutional provisions, removing presidential term limits, introducing a one-round presidential election, lowering the minimum age for presidential candidates from 45 to 35, and requiring candidates to reside in Togo for the 12 months before the election. These reforms weakened opposition candidates such as Gilchrist Olympio, who lived many months of the year outside Togo, and prepared the ground for the continuation of the Gnassingbé dynasty through Faure Gnassingbé, eliminating term limits and lowering the age of eligibility so that the then-36-year-old son of the president could run.[185]

The democratization crisis that emerged in the 1990s did not end with that decade. Despite domestic and international pressure for political reform, the Togolese population did not achieve a genuine democratic transition. Instead, political power remained concentrated within the Gnassingbé family, resulting in a form of dynastic continuity. In February 2005, following Eyadéma's death, the military named his son, Faure Gnassingbé, as head of

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[183] Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, 143- 44.

[184] Togo Systematic Country Diagnostic, 30- 31; Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, 143- 44.

[185] Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, 120–21.

state, in violation of the Constitution, which stipulated that the Speaker of the National Assembly should serve as interim president until new elections were held.[186]

However, due to the international condemnation that followed these events, and especially ECOWAS's denunciation of Faure's accession as a "coup d'état", accompanied by sanctions, Faure was forced to step down as president. He was subsequently elected in the presidential election of April 2005 for a five-year term. France, aligning itself with the broader international criticism, condemned Faure's extra-constitutional accession, but quickly endorsed his election a few months later. Seely and Decalo argue that Faure Gnassingbé's electoral performance mirrored that of his father. He relied on strong support from northern constituencies loyal to Eyadéma and the RPT, while securing what appeared to be substantial southern support through mechanisms that included electoral fraud and political intimidation. The election results sparked widespread protests, as many Togolese took to the streets to denounce what they perceived as blatant electoral fraud. Videos showing uniformed soldiers allegedly removing ballot boxes from polling stations circulated widely online, reinforcing suspicions of manipulation. The subsequent violent crackdown triggered the flight of tens of thousands of people and resulted in the most severe episode of political violence the country had experienced since the 1990s. After the chaos of the 2005 election, Faure and the main political parties adopted the Accord politique global (APG), which promised a return to key demands from the political transition of the 1990s, including fair electoral lists and presidential term limits.[187] The APG enabled Faure to repair some of the damage caused by the succession crisis in the eyes of Western donors. By 2006, France and the European Union had accepted the new government and fully resumed economic cooperation with Togo, alongside the World Bank, which "rewarded" Togo with another structural adjustment program in 2008.[188] Thus, Franco-Togolese relations did not weaken after Eyadéma's death; rather, they successfully survived the political crisis, as France ultimately supported Faure

[186] Togo Systematic Country Diagnostic, 30- 31.

[187] Global Political Agreement

[188] Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, 12, 120- 21, 194- 95, 351.

Gnassingbé in order to preserve its strategic interests and maintain continuity in bilateral relations, at the expense of democratic principles.

Despite presenting himself as a supporter of democratic reform under the APG, Faure Gnassingbé continued to rely on constitutional engineering to maintain his political dominance. Following his contested victories in the 2010 and 2015 presidential elections, constitutional amendments adopted in 2019 reinstated presidential term limits and introduced a two-round electoral system - measures long demanded by the opposition. However, because the term-limit provision was not applied retroactively, the reform allowed Gnassingbé to reset the constitutional clock and potentially remain in power until 2030, while simultaneously weakening the opposition's principal demands for political change.[189] The regime's legitimacy was further called into question in April 2018 when French prosecutors charged Vincent Bolloré in connection with allegations that Bolloré Group had offered Faure Gnassingbé reduced-cost campaign assistance during the 2010 presidential election in return for advantageous contracts concerning the modernization and management of the Port Autonome de Lomé (PAL). Despite widespread discontent, Faure appeared to have secured an overwhelming and highly implausible victory in the 2020 election, winning 72 percent of the vote. Given the years of protest against unlimited presidential rule preceding the election, this result suggested a return to coercive tactics and manipulated electoral outcomes more closely associated with Eyadéma's rule in the 1990s. [190]

Yet again, Faure launched a major institutional reform in Togo that replaced the semi-presidential system with an unusual parliamentary model in Francophone Africa. Adopted by the National Assembly on 19 April 2024, the reform ended the direct election of the President of the Republic by universal suffrage and reduced the presidency to a largely symbolic office. Real executive authority was transferred to the President of the Council, chosen by the parliamentary majority and not constrained by term limits. On 3 May 2025,

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[189] Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, 195.

[190] Nina Sylvanus, "Privatising the Port: Harbouring Neoliberalism in Lomé," in Transport Corridors in Africa, ed. Hugh Lamarque and Paul Nugent (Boydell & Brewer, 2022), 175, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2x4kp3n.12; Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, 15- 16.

Faure was appointed to this position, allowing him to retain control of the state beyond 2030, despite the fact that the previous constitutional framework would have barred him from seeking another presidential term in 2025.[191]

While his father consolidated power through ethnically based military forces and the support of Foccart's networks, Faure, having inherited the loyalty of the military, relied more heavily on constitutional manipulation, controversial constitutional amendments, and electoral fraud to maintain his hold on power, often benefiting from France's political support and diplomatic backing. This shows that Togo's transition became a form of pseudo-democratization: elections formally existed, but military intimidation, administrative manipulation, and the exclusion of the opposition allowed Eyadéma to preserve power. It also demonstrates that, even after the beginning of the democratization process, the Constitution continued to function more as an instrument for winning, retaining, and legitimizing power than as a framework for democratic competition. [192]

3.3. Economic Restructuring

The end of the Cold War and the rise of neoliberal globalization contributed to a transformation of Françafrique from a system based mainly on direct political control, bilateral military cooperation, and personal ties between the Élysée and African leaders, into a more economic and market-oriented form of control dominated by multilateral financial institutions and multinational corporations. The debt crisis that affected many African countries from the late 1970s onward transformed the role of the Bretton Woods institutions. According to Barad, the crisis altered the functions of both the IMF and the WB. Although these institutions originally had different areas of competence, the debt crisis pushed them toward common objectives and increasingly similar methods of

[191] Jeune d'Afrique, "Togo. 2005-2025, les années Faure," Jeune Afrique (2006), no. 3150 (2025): 103-23.

[192] Adoté Akué Akpabie, "La Constitution : Instrument de Conquête et de Conservation Du Pouvoir Au Togo: The Constitution: An Instrument for Conquering and Retaining Power in Togo," AKIRI (Revue Des Sciences Humaines et Sociales, Lettres, Langues et Civilisations) 3, no. 4 (2025): 1276.

intervention. Through the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programs, the IMF and the WB began to play a much more direct role in shaping the macroeconomic policies of African states. In practice, they became central actors in decisions concerning public spending, debt management, privatization, liberalization, and economic restructuring.[193] This shift did not mean the end of French or European influence in Africa; rather, it changed the instruments through which that influence operated.

From the mid-1970s, the Lomé Convention officially presented EEC-ACP cooperation as a development framework designed to help African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries achieve industrialization and economic catching-up. However, as Van den Bossche shows, this "industrial cooperation" also responded to the economic needs of European industrial sectors, which were losing growth and competitiveness and sought new opportunities in ACP countries. The EEC's objective was therefore double: on the one hand, to support ACP production sectors, and on the other, to secure access to raw materials and introduce European industrial sectors into ACP economies. Industrial cooperation, funded through the European Development Fund, supported production, raw-material processing, infrastructure, industrial parks, vocational training, and small and medium-sized enterprises, but it also encouraged joint ventures that could benefit European private firms. The ambiguity of the policy lay in the fact that the texts did not clearly specify whether the "private sector" to be supported was primarily African or European.[194]

This ambiguity became clearer in the 1990s, when EU-ACP cooperation moved away from public industrial cooperation and increasingly adopted the language of private sector development. Under the influence of the WB, the IMF, and the broader neoliberal paradigm, the European Commission began to intervene less through direct industrial projects and more through macroeconomic reforms, legal reforms, fiscal restructuring, and the creation of business-friendly environments in ACP countries. Van den Bossche argues that this shift gave the impression of "forced liberalization", especially in states that had previously resisted market-oriented reforms. In Togo, the first SAP was

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[193] Robert A. Barad, "Structural Adjustment, Privatization and the Industrial Sector: Lessons from Recent Experience in the Republic of Togo" (thesis, ProQuest, 1988), 31, https://doi.org/10.57912/23876058.

[194] Dimier and Stockwell, The Business of Development in Post-Colonial Africa, 303- 5.

implemented in 1983 pushing the Togolese regime away from centralized economic planning and import-substitution industrialization, and toward greater reliance on free-market mechanisms, the private sector, trade liberalization, and export promotion. As a result, the earlier emphasis on public-sector investment in state-owned enterprises was replaced by a new policy agenda calling for government divestiture, privatization, and increased private investment, especially in export-oriented production. In the industrial sector, the most immediate consequence of these reforms was the liquidation or privatization of many previously state-owned enterprises. [195]

In official discourse, private sector development was presented as a tool for African development and poverty reduction. In practice, however, it often created favorable conditions for European companies, banks, investors, and multinationals seeking access to African markets, raw materials, and export opportunities. By the time of the Cotonou Agreement in 2000, private sector development had become one of the central pillars of EU-ACP cooperation.[196]

This transformation must also be connected to the weakening of France's traditional Françafrique mechanisms. As Profant argues, from the 1980s onward France's geopolitical influence in Africa increasingly came under pressure from the Bretton Woods institutions. The neoliberal policies promoted by the IMF and WB reduced the autonomy of France's old bilateral system, especially in the CFA franc zone. In the past, the French Treasury had allowed African governments to cover deficits through special financial arrangements, often tolerating corruption and personalistic rule as part of its privileged relationships with African heads of state. However, this system became increasingly unsustainable, and France was gradually forced to align itself with IMF and WB rules. The 1994 devaluation of the CFA franc forced by the Bretton Woods institutions symbolized this transformation: it showed that France could no longer fully

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[195] Barad, "Structural Adjustment, Privatization and the Industrial Sector," 3- 5.

[196] Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, 318- 24.

protect its former colonies from the discipline of the neoliberal international financial order.[197]

At the same time, the apparent political retreat of France did not eliminate neocolonial influence. Mitterrand's 1990 La Baule speech, which formally linked French aid to democratization, seemed to mark a break with older forms of authoritarian support. Yet, the Togolese case in the 1990s shows that this democratizing discourse often functioned as a cover for continuity. The old personal networks between the Élysée and African rulers did not disappear; they adapted to the new neoliberal context. What changed was that political control increasingly operated through economic restructuring, privatization, market liberalization, and the empowerment of large private groups. Liberalization weakened many local and small enterprises, including some French small and medium size enterprises, but larger corporations such as Bolloré and Bouygues were able to preserve or strengthen their position. In this sense, the neoliberal turn did not end Françafrique; it transformed it. The center of gravity shifted from direct political management and military protection toward economic control through development policy, private investment, privatization, infrastructure concessions, legal reforms, and market access.[198]

Therefore, economic restructuring after the Cold War should be understood as a key moment in the transformation of neocolonialism. Under the older Françafrique system, French influence was exercised mainly through bilateral cooperation agreements, military ties, monetary dependence, aid, and personal relations with African elites.[199] Under the neoliberal order, these mechanisms were partially displaced by multilateral institutions, EU-ACP frameworks, and private corporations. However, the outcome was not African economic autonomy. Rather, African states were increasingly integrated into a liberalized international economy in which European and especially French capital could maintain

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[197] Profant, "French Geopolitics in Africa," 51- 52.

[198] Profant, "French Geopolitics in Africa," 52; Dimier and Stockwell, The Business of Development in Post-Colonial Africa, 20.

[199] Verschave, La Françafrique, 288.

influence through markets instead of formal political command. In the Togolese case, this broader transformation helps explain the shift from the political control associated with Foccart-style Françafrique to a more economic form of domination, visible later in the role of multinational corporations, development aid, privatization, and strategic infrastructure such as the Port Autonome de Lomé.

3.4. Predatory Franco-Togolese Relations under the Gnassingbé Dynasty

For this section of the thesis, the concept of the predatory state is useful because it provides a framework for analyzing how political power, economic rents, and foreign corporate interests become interconnected. In the case of Togo, it helps explain how state institutions may function as mechanisms through which ruling elites and external economic actors secure access to strategic resources, public contracts, and concessions. From this perspective, the predatory phase analyzed in this dissertation is deeply connected to the Togolese ruling elite under the Gnassingbé dynasty, as well as to foreign actors, especially French public and private interests.

This phase is not necessarily chronologically separate from the earlier political phase. Rather, it should be understood as part of a long historical process that began during colonialism. During this period, France's main objective was to preserve its domination over its colonies and maximize the extraction of wealth from them. As discussed earlier, to achieve this, France adopted several measures designed to ensure that French companies would remain the primary beneficiaries of colonial economies. These included the adoption of the CFA franc, the use of development aid rhetoric, and the "Europeanization" of its colonial ties.

In the post-independence period, Eyadéma's regime focused primarily on the consolidation of political power. His son Faure Gnassingbé, while preserving his father's political dynasty, paid greater attention to the economic dimension of international relations with foreign partners, investors, and donors, while carefully consolidating power domestically. Nevertheless, the Gnassingbé dynasty has been strongly characterized by the establishment and maintenance of a predatory state. Both father and son built alliances that can be read as serving the preservation of power and the pursuit of personal and elite enrichment at the expense of the population.

While Eyadéma maintained the colonial link through the Françafrique system, which proved mutually beneficial to France and to his own entourage for several decades, the predatory character of his regime became increasingly visible. On 23 August 1991, revelations emerged that 900 billion CFA francs had allegedly been embezzled under the Eyadéma regime, one third of which was attributed to Eyadéma himself.[200] This personal connection between French political networks and Eyadéma's private interests is also suggested by Whiteman who notes - that in the book *Foccart parle* - that Foccart recounts how he guaranteed a loan for President Gnassingbé Eyadéma to buy an apartment in Paris.[201] Faure Gnassingbé, by contrast, came to power in the era of neoliberal globalization and adapted this predatory logic to a new context shaped by privatization, foreign investment, donor relations, and strategic economic concessions. The Bolloré scandal, which will be examined in greater detail later, illustrates the continuity of predatory relationships under Faure Gnassingbé by highlighting the close connections between political power and foreign corporate interests.

This predatory configuration becomes clearer when examining the concrete presence of French economic actors in Togo, whose role in privatization, infrastructure, banking, energy, logistics, and agro-industry reveals how Françafrique was transformed rather than dismantled in the neoliberal era.

By participating in multilateral organizations that promoted neoliberal reforms, France increasingly faced competition from other European states in its former colonies. These reforms aimed to improve public-sector management, rehabilitate or privatize viable state-owned enterprises, liquidate nonviable ones, liberalize markets, simplify taxation, reduce tariffs, abolish price controls, and end state monopolies on imports.[202] However,

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[200] Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, xxxiii.

[201] Whiteman, "The Man Who Ran Françafrique," 96.

[202] Togo Systematic Country Diagnostic, 14.

despite the increased competition, the privatizations imposed on heavily indebted African countries under the World Bank's structural adjustment programs in the 1990s largely benefited French interests within the countries of the franc zone.[203]

Between 1984 and 1985, Togolese key enterprises such as the oil refinery, steel mill, and dairy sector were leased to foreign operators, often through ad hoc negotiations that granted investors generous tax incentives and market protection. By the end of 1987, the government had fully or partially divested itself of eleven state-owned enterprises, many of which had been created during the public investment boom of the 1970s. Yet this restructuring did not produce an autonomous national industrial sector. Instead, it reconfigured dependency by increasing Togo's reliance on foreign lenders, foreign investors, donor assistance, debt relief, and public incentives. Privatized firms often remained inefficient, protected from competition, concentrated around Lomé, and dependent on state support.[204] Between 1979 and 1990, Togo privatized 30 of its 73 public enterprises as part of structural adjustment programs, a process that largely benefited foreign investors, including a number of French companies. [205]

According to Verschave, Foccart's political system was challenged from the mid-1970s by major French corporations such as Elf, Bouygues, Bolloré-Rivaud, and Castel. Thus, with Foccart's decline, the Françafrique system became fragmented among multiple networks, including private economic actors competing for influence within the same postcolonial system.[206] By examining the presence of French economic actors in Togo, it becomes clear that the Françafrique system continued to weigh on Togolese economic sovereignty after formal independence. French companies operating in Togo illustrate the continuity of French economic influence from the colonial period to the neoliberal era,

[203] Thomas Noirot, "Les entreprises françaises en Afrique. Pillage contre transparence," Économie, Outre-Terre 3334, no. 3 (2012): 539, https://doi.org/10.3917/oute.033.0537.

[204] Barad, "Structural Adjustment, Privatization and the Industrial Sector," 72, 108.

[205] Togo Systematic Country Diagnostic, 30.

[206] Verschave, La Françafrique, 285- 86.

especially in strategic sectors such as energy, banking, infrastructure, logistics, agro-industry, and transport.

One example is Elf Aquitaine. Originally created through French state initiatives in the 1930s to secure national energy autonomy, Elf expanded into former French colonial spaces, especially Algeria, Congo-Brazzaville, and Gabon. As France's second-largest oil company, the forerunner of Total, Elf Aquitaine functioned as a strategic instrument of French economic policy and remained under majority state ownership until its privatization between 1994 and 1996. By the late 1990s, Elf Aquitaine was at the center of a major corruption scandal, with former executives accused of using company funds to finance payments to political leaders in Africa and Europe. The company allegedly transferred large sums to African leaders in Gabon, Angola, Cameroon, and Congo-Brazzaville in order to secure oil contracts, protect French interests, and maintain political loyalty to France. [207] In Togo, Elf's presence was historically visible through Elf Oil Togo, later absorbed into the Total/TotalEnergies structure. TotalEnergies has operated in the country for more than sixty years in petroleum distribution, fuel, gas, lubricants, service stations, and energy services. [208]

French economic influence is also visible in the infrastructure sector. VINCI, a French concessions and construction company, is present in Togo through its subsidiary Sogea-Satom. Sogea-Satom has operated in Togo since 1954, initially under the name Travaux d'Afrique, and remains active in road, urban, and port infrastructure. The company was awarded the contract for the construction of the third container berth at the Port of Lomé

[207] "Elf Aquitaine | French Oil & Gas Corporation | Britannica," accessed June 2, 2026, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Elf-Aquitaine; Jon Henley, "Gigantic Sleaze Scandal Winds up as Former Elf Oil Chiefs Are Jailed," Business, The Guardian, November 13, 2003, https://www.theguardian.com/business/2003/nov/13/france.oilandpetrol.

[208] "TotalEnergies TotalEnergies in Togo," TotalEnergies.Com, accessed June 2, 2026, https://totalenergies.com/togo; "Journal Officiel de La Republique Togolaise," November 1, 1997, 4, https://jo.gouv.tg/sites/default/files/annee/1997/jo%201997-029.pdf.

for Bolloré Africa Logistics. [209] Similarly, Colas, the road and infrastructure subsidiary of Bouygues, has been present in West Africa since the 1930s and remains active in Togo.[210]

The commercial and distribution sector also reflects older colonial continuities. CFAO, originally the Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Occidentale and now the Corporation For Africa & Overseas, traces its origins to 1852, when it was involved in colonial trade in products such as cocoa, peanuts, soap, and rubber. Its automotive branch developed from 1913, and in Togo it operates through CFAO Motors, notably as the official distributor of Toyota vehicles. [211]

In the banking sector, BNP also had an important historical presence. BNP, the Banque Nationale de Paris, expanded its presence in Togo in 1967 by converting the Banque Nationale pour le Commerce et l'Industrie (BNCI), founded in 1946, into a branch of its banking network. In the case of the Banque Togolaise pour le Commerce et l'Industrie (BTCI), BNP Paribas later became the de facto majority shareholder following changes in the bank's capital structure, but withdrew at the end of 2002 because of disagreements with the Togolese government over corporate management and governance issues. [212]

French corporate influence also extended to agro-industry and beverages. Castel, which began exporting and investing in Africa in the 1950s, became linked to Brasserie BB

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[209] Sogea Satom - Eurocham Togo, August 1, 2023, https://cce-togo.com/teams/sogea-satom/; "VINCI to Build 3rd Quay at Container Terminal in Port of Lomé, Togo - VINCI," February 28, 2012, https://www.vinci.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/vinci-build-3rd-quay-container-terminal-port-lome-togo.

[210] Colas, Reportage Colas En Afrique de l'Ouest, no. 38, ROUTES Le Magazine Du Groupe Colas (2017), 27, https://www.colas.com/sites/g/files/tkmtob366/files/2025-08/routes-38.pdf?utm_source=.

[211] CFAO: Western Africa French Company; "Our History - CFAO," CFAO Group, n.d., accessed June 2, 2026, https://www.cfaogroup.com/en/our-history/; "CFAO Motors (Togo) - Consulting Organization from Togo, Experience with WB, BOAD - Non-Specialized Goods / Services, Vehicles Sectors —," DevelopmentAid, accessed June 2, 2026, https://www.developmentaid.org/organizations/view/14047/cfao-motors-togo.

[212] BPN: National Bank of Paris; BNCI: National Bank for Commerce and Industry; BTCI: Togolese Bank for Commerce and Industry; "Historique | IB Bank Togo," accessed June 2, 2026, https://www.ibbank.tg/node/6?utm_source=; Implementation Completion Report (Ppfi-Q0390; Tf-29423; Ida-30450), no. 25839 (The World Bank, 2003), https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/961971468781189306/pdf/258391Togo1Pub1estruc1010Priv101ICR.pdf?utm_source=.

Lomé, founded in 1964 and later integrated into Castel's African beverage network. Its expansion must be situated within the broader restructuring of Togolese public enterprises supported by World Bank adjustment programs during the 1990s.[213] Somdia, rooted in the Vilgrain family's African agro-industrial activities from 1947 and officially created in 1970, expanded flour and sugar production into Togo through its subsidiary Société Générale des Moulins du Togo (SGMT) [214]. SGMT remains a key flour producer in Lomé's port industrial zone, although it later became integrated into Castel's network. In 2022, Somdia became fully owned by the Castel Group, further consolidating French corporate networks in Africa.[215] Géocoton, formerly the Compagnie Française pour le Développement des Fibres Textiles (CFDT), founded in 1949 with a strong presence in the franc zone, also remains influential through its majority share in NIOTO, a major Togolese vegetable oil producer. [216]

Most notably, the Bolloré Group became one of the most important French actors in Africa logistics and port sector. The key turning point was 1986, when Vincent Bolloré acquired, the Société Commerciale d'Affrètement et de Combustible (SCAC) a company with deep roots in colonial-era trade and transport in Africa. [217] This acquisition marked the beginning of Bolloré's transformation into a major African logistics and infrastructure

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[213] Aurore Chal, Histoire | Castel Afrique, May 21, 2021, https://castel-afrique.com/le-groupe/histoire/; Implementation Completion Report Republic of Togo Pre-Investment Project Credit 2018-To, no. 18490 (The World Bank, 1998), https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/842881468305085478/pdf/multi-page.pdf?utm_source=.

[214] SGMT: General Milling Company of Togo

[215] Konan Koffi, Release: Notification of the Proposed Acquisition of the Société Des Grands Moulins Du Togo, a Subsidiary of the Somdia Group, by the Avos Group - Erca/Arcc, n.d., accessed June 2, 2026, https://erca-arcc.org/release-notification-of-the-proposed-acquisition-of-the-societe-des-grands-moulins-du-togo-a-subsidiary-of-the-somdia-group-by-the-avos-group-2/.

[216] CFDT: French Company for the Development of Textile Fibres; "abcBurkina - CFDT," accessed June 2, 2026, https://www.abcburkina.net/fr/le-burkina-faso/de-a-a-z/286-cfdt; "NIOTO doit être en mesure de réaliser son potentiel," République Togolaise, accessed June 2, 2026, https://www.republicoftogo.com/toutes-les-rubriques/eco-finance/nioto-doit-etre-en-mesure-de-realiser-son-potentiel.

[217] SCAC: Commercial Chartering and Fuel Company; Hubert Bonin, "The Complementarities between Merchant Shipping and Ancillary Activities: The Case of Two French Firms, SCAC and SAGA (1880s-1990s)," International Journal of Maritime History 23, no. 1 (2011): 100, https://doi.org/10.1177/084387141102300107.

actor. The group expanded further with the acquisition of the shipping company Delmas in 1991 and subsequently built a vast network of ports, railways, and logistics concessions across the continent, including major activities at the Port of Lomé.[218]

These examples show that French colonial enterprises survived the decolonization and continued increasing their size under the Eyadéma regime through structural adjustment policies and manage to dominate Togolese strategic economic sector until today. A recent French economic brief on Togo shows the continuity of the same policies. The document shows how the country's contemporary development strategy remains deeply embedded in a network of external financing, donor conditionality, and foreign corporate presence. The document presents Togo's economic model as increasingly organized around logistics, infrastructure, private-sector mobilization, and the Port of Lomé, which has become central to the country's growth strategy. At the same time, it shows that this model depends heavily on international financial institutions and development partners. The IMF's 2024 Extended Credit Facility, for example, supports policies aimed at macroeconomic stability, debt sustainability, fiscal revenue mobilization, and inclusive growth, while previous negotiations were linked to the privatization of the last public bank, Union Togolaise de Banque (UTB).[219] Similarly, the World Bank's portfolio in Togo covers projects in social inclusion, urban development, education, electricity, logistics, connectivity, and public administration, while its new partnership framework emphasizes private-sector job creation and territorial development.[220]

The same document also highlights the continuing importance of European and French development instruments. The European Union's programming for 2021-2027 focuses on human development, agro-industries, natural resource management, decentralization, and social resilience, while also preparing budget support. French development aid, mainly

[218] "History," Bolloré, n.d., accessed June 2, 2026, https://www.bollore.com/en/le-groupe/history/.

[219] UTB : Togolese Banking Union

[220] Direction générale du Trésor, Fiche Pays TOGO (Ministère de l'Économie, des Finances et de la Souveraineté industrielle et numérique, 2025), 1- 2, https://www.tresor.economie.gouv.fr/PagesInternationales/Pages/47b1e08a-4eb7-40b2-a0ce-dfa6db8108c5/files/a2e361b1-d1f8-496f-a814-00b07770ba27.

through the AFD, remains significant, with ongoing projects in water and sanitation, education, health, social protection, private-sector mobilization, electricity access, and agricultural development. Beyond aid, the document confirms that French economic interests remain present through trade, investment, export-credit instruments, FASEP (Fonds d'Études et d'Aide au Secteur Privé) studies, Treasury loans, and the activity of French subsidiaries in sectors such as logistics, energy, petroleum products, construction, agribusiness, and distribution. Albeit France no longer enjoys a monopolistic position, since the document acknowledges competition from German, Indian, Chinese, Lebanese, and other actors, French presence remains structurally significant in key sectors of the Togolese economy.[221]

Read through the lens of the predatory state, this configuration is significant because it shows how public policy and development financing can create opportunities for dominant domestic elites and influential foreign private actors, a dynamic already visible under Eyadéma and continued under Faure Gnassingbé. What is particularly problematic is the continuity of reforms promoted by multilateral institutions. On the one hand, these institutions present their interventions as supporting democracy, good governance, human rights, and inclusive development. On the other hand, their continued engagement with the Gnassingbé regime, despite its long record of authoritarian practices, raises questions about the actual political effects of these policies.

Rather than weakening authoritarian rule, donor-backed reforms, private-sector development, infrastructure concessions, and external financing have often contributed to the reorganization of state power around market-oriented priorities. These reforms have deepened Togo's economic dependence and placed strategic sectors of the economy under the influence of external financial, political, and corporate actors. This dynamic reflects Nkrumah's definition of neocolonialism, according to which a formally independent state may retain the outward symbols of sovereignty while its economic system and political direction are shaped from outside.[222] In the Togolese case, formal sovereignty coexists

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[221] FASEP: Private Sector Study and Aid Fund; Direction générale du Trésor, Fiche Pays TOGO, 2- 4.

[222] Nkrumah, Neocolonialism, The Last Stage of Imperialism., 4.

with external economic dependence, foreign corporate influence, and the persistence of an authoritarian regime that benefits from these arrangements. It further supports the argument that Françafrique has not simply vanished; it has been reconfigured within a broader neoliberal and multilateral framework in which French influence operates alongside the IMF, the WB, the EU, the AFD, and private multinational capital.

In conclusion, this chapter has shown that the 1990s did not mark the end of Françafrique in Togo, but rather its transformation. The weakening of Foccart's direct authority after the Gaullist era did not dismantle French influence; instead, it fragmented and redistributed it among political actors, economic networks, multinational corporations, and international financial institutions. In Togo, the democratic transition remained incomplete because the regime accepted the formal language of multiparty politics while preserving the coercive and clientelist foundations of authoritarian rule.

The chapter has also argued that the shift from political control to economic dominance was closely connected to the neoliberal restructuring of the Togolese economy. Structural adjustment programs, privatization, and the growing role of the Bretton Woods institutions created new opportunities for foreign corporations while reducing the state's direct control over strategic sectors. Although French companies no longer enjoyed the same exclusive position they had during the colonial and early postcolonial periods, they continued to occupy important spaces in banking, infrastructure, energy, logistics, agro-industry, and distribution.

The Togolese experience demonstrates that neocolonial influence was not eliminated by democratization or economic liberalization; instead, it evolved to fit changing political and economic realities. The continued dominance of the Gnassingbé regime alongside the enduring presence of French business interests highlights a dual shift: political control became less dependent on personal networks and more embedded within institutions, while economic influence increasingly operated through mechanisms such as privatization, development assistance, concession agreements, and multinational corporations. These developments laid the foundation for a new phase of French economic engagement in Togo, particularly through key strategic assets such as the Port Autonome de Lomé.

Chapter 4. The case study of Port Autonome de Lomé: Bolloré Model

This chapter examines the Port Autonome de Lomé as a case study through which this transformation can be observed. As Togo's principal economic asset and the only deep-water port on the West African coast, the Port of Lomé occupies a strategic position not only for the national economy but also for the landlocked Sahelian states of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, whose access to international markets depends heavily on the port. Its geographical location, combined with successive waves of infrastructure investment, has enabled Lomé to emerge as one of the leading transshipment hubs in West Africa.

The chapter argues that the port's modernization cannot be understood solely as a story of economic development or infrastructure expansion. Rather, it reflects the broader evolution of Françafrique under neoliberal globalization. It first traces the historical development of the port and examines how development assistance, foreign financing, and the policy prescriptions of the Bretton Woods institutions shaped its modernization and liberalization. It then analyses how the adoption of the landlord port model and the privatization of terminal operations transferred increasing control over strategic infrastructure from the Togolese state to multinational corporations. Particular attention is devoted to the Bolloré Group, whose expansion in Togo illustrates the growing importance of corporate actors within the contemporary Françafrique system. Finally, the chapter examines the corruption allegations surrounding the acquisition of the Port of Lomé concession and the subsequent transfer of Bolloré Africa Logistics to Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC). It argues that these developments reveal the continuity of Françafrique through new economic mechanisms, whereby long-term concessions, private capital, and international financial institutions have increasingly replaced direct political intervention while continuing to reproduce asymmetrical relations of power between France and its former colonies.

4.1. Historic Development of the Port Autonome de Lomé

The Port Autonome de Lomé (PAL) is one of the most strategic assets of the Togolese economy and a major logistics hub in West Africa. More than 80% of Togo's commercial exchanges pass through the port, making it the country's principal gateway for international trade.[223] The port area is also estimated to generate around 50% of national GDP, due to the diversity of economic activities concentrated there. Its strategic importance is reinforced by its infrastructure: protected from silting by two breakwaters measuring 950 meters and 1,720 meters, the port has a depth of 16.60 meters, allowing it to accommodate large deep-draft vessels. It covers an area of approximately 900 hectares, including a major industrial free zone that hosts several dozen companies and constitutes an essential pillar of the national economy. Beyond its national importance, the port plays a crucial regional role for landlocked Sahelian countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, which together account for approximately 30% of its annual traffic. [224] According to the annual study report on maritime transport, by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) published in 2019, the Autonomous Port of Lomé has become the first Hub port of the West African region.[225]

These elements confirm the port's dual function: nationally, as a central driver of Togo's economy, and regionally, as a key transit platform for West African integration. The Port of Lomé's contemporary economic and strategic significance is rooted in a long historical trajectory, shaped by colonial infrastructure, post-independence state-building, foreign financing, and successive reforms in maritime governance.

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[223] Noufou Ouedraogo, "Strategic Gateway: The Port of Lomé's Pivotal Role in Togo's Economic Prosperity and West African Hinterland Development Through the Lens of Communication and Information," International Journal of African Studies 4, no. 2 (2024): 4, https://doi.org/10.51483/IJAFRS.4.2.2024.1-15; Amevor Komlan Agbemadon, "Développement Des Ports et Dynamique Des Villes Portuaires Sur La Côte Ouest Africaine : Cas Du Port et de La Ville de Lomé Au Togo," no. 2024PA01H057 (Theses, Université Panthéon-Sorbonne - Paris I, 2024), 8, https://theses.hal.science/tel-05045681.

[224] Agbemadon, "Développement Des Ports et Dynamique Des Villes Portuaires Sur La Côte Ouest Africaine," 8, 106.

[225] Ouedraogo, "Strategic Gateway," 6.

The development of port infrastructure in West Africa is closely linked to European expansion and the growth of transatlantic trade. European powers established ports and trading posts along the coast to facilitate the slave trade and the export of raw materials such as gold, coffee, cocoa, rubber, and other commodities. These early facilities were primarily wharves, allowing ships to remain offshore while local pirogues transported goods and passengers between the vessels and the shore. Over time, these coastal access points evolved into important economic and political centers. From the late nineteenth century until independence, colonial administrations modernized West African ports primarily to serve their own economic, commercial, and strategic interests. [226]

The history of the Port of Lomé reflects this broader regional trajectory. Its origins are closely tied to Togo's colonial past and, later, to the post-independence effort to diversify external partnerships beyond France. During the German colonial period, Lomé became the center of colonial capitalism in Togoland. The German administration developed the port and connected it to transport infrastructure, including railway tracks and steam cranes, in order to facilitate the movement of goods and extract economic value from the colony.[227] The first port infrastructure was built by the German colonial administration in 1890 as a wooden wharf, which was subsequently rebuilt several times following fires, storms, and tidal damage. After Germany's defeat in the First World War and the partition of Togo between France and Britain under a League of Nations mandate, the French authorities constructed a new wharf, which became operational in 1928. However, by the late 1950s, increasing maritime traffic revealed the limitations of these facilities and created the need for a modern deep-water port. [228]

[226] Agbemadon, "Développement Des Ports et Dynamique Des Villes Portuaires Sur La Côte Ouest Africaine," 62; Ouedraogo, "Strategic Gateway," 2- 3.

[227] Sylvanus, "Privatising the Port," 171.

[228] "About PORT AUTONOME DE LOME (Togo)," Www.Africa2trust.Com, accessed July 31, 2025, https://www.africa2trust.com/B2BAfrica/togo/transport-logistics/ports/port-autonome-de-lome/Profile/AboutUs/1/26/9746/2?utm_source=.

After independence, President Sylvanus Olympio negotiated the construction of a new deep-water port with the Federal Republic of Germany.[229] This decision can be interpreted as part of Olympio's broader strategy to reduce Togo's dependence on France by cultivating alternative international partnerships. Construction began in 1964, and the Port of Lomé was officially inaugurated in April 1968. Rapid growth in traffic prompted successive expansions during the 1970s and 1980s, including the construction of additional quays, an ore terminal, an oil wharf, a fishing port, and a second pier. These expansions were endorsed by the World Bank and financed mainly from abroad, particularly by the European Development Fund, the German Development Bank, the French Cooperation Aid Fund (FAC), and IDA.[230] Further modernization took place in the 2000s as part of a broader strategy to modernize the Togolese economy. This phase included the construction of a third quay, financed by the Bolloré Group, and a harbor basin, financed by an international consortium led by the IFC, the private-sector arm of the WB.[231] These developments transformed Lomé into a modern deep-water port capable of accommodating a wide range of vessels and cargoes.[232] Originally created as a public industrial establishment, it was reorganized as a General Directorate under state authority in 1980. As part of the broader reform of public enterprises introduced under Law No. 90-26 of 4 December 1990, the port was transformed into a state-owned enterprise in October 1991 through a decree reforming the institutional and legal framework of public enterprise.[233] Since its creation, the port has evolved from a state-controlled entity combining sovereign and commercial functions into a more liberalized

[229] Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, 315.

[230] Current Economic Situation and Prospects of Togo, no. 458a-TO (The World Bank, 1974), 28, https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/570471468312375517/pdf/multi0page.pdf.

[231] Agbemadon, "Développement Des Ports et Dynamique Des Villes Portuaires Sur La Côte Ouest Africaine," 8.

[232] Www.Africa2trust.Com, "About PORT AUTONOME DE LOME (Togo)".

[233] Agbemadon, "Développement Des Ports et Dynamique Des Villes Portuaires Sur La Côte Ouest Africaine," 8.

structure, in which many cargo-handling activities have been concessioned to private operators.[234]

Nevertheless, the subsequent evolution of the Port of Lomé also mirrored wider trends affecting West African ports. Following independence, ports came under the control of newly sovereign states and became symbols of national development and economic autonomy. However, declining commodity prices, fiscal constraints, and the implementation of structural adjustment programs limited public investment in port infrastructure. Consequently, many West African ports became technologically outdated and remained largely peripheral to major global maritime routes until the early 2000s.[235] In Togo, this process was further complicated by the political crisis of the 1990s. During the country's attempted democratic transition, social unrest, trade union strikes, and the decline of economic activity negatively affected the Port of Lomé's operations. The turmoil of the 1990s severely disrupted the activities of the Port of Lomé, while the government later moved toward privatizing port management in 2002, although it continued to keep key political figures in important management positions.[236] As a result, the port gradually evolved into a more liberalized structure in which many cargo-handling and terminal operations were concessioned to private operators, while the state retained ownership of the infrastructure and oversight through the Port Authority. Nevertheless, the strategic importance of the port is reflected in its governance structure, where members of the ruling family, such as Rock Gnassingbé, have held senior positions in charge of port security. [237]

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[234] Ouedraogo, "Strategic Gateway," 4.

[235] Agbemadon, "Développement Des Ports et Dynamique Des Villes Portuaires Sur La Côte Ouest Africaine," 7.

[236] Seely and Decalo, Historical Dictionary of Togo, 316.

[237] Ouedraogo, "Strategic Gateway," 4.

4.2. Liberalization of the Port Autonome de Lomé

The transformation of the Port Autonome de Lomé can be understood as part of the broader neoliberal restructuring of the Togolese state during the 1990s, as well as the wider containerization revolution that transformed maritime transport into a globalized free-trade system organized around hub ports. As Sylvanus argues, the port's success cannot be explained only through functional factors such as efficiency or infrastructure; it must also be situated within a political-economic process marked by state withdrawal, privatization, and the rise of private forms of governance. Liberalization therefore marked a rupture with an earlier period in which the port was perceived as nationally controlled and organized around internal forms of hierarchy and solidarity.[238]

Similarly, Agbemadon argues that the containerization revolution was accompanied by deregulation, privatization, and the "terminalization" of ports, which became networks of specialized terminals controlled by a limited number of powerful companies. Because modern vessels require enormous investment, shipping companies increasingly depend on large financial holdings oriented toward profit and productivity. As a result, ports must reduce costs, shorten docking times, and invest heavily in efficiency. Geographical location alone is no longer sufficient to attract maritime flows; ports must also compete by improving performance and lowering costs for users. Agbemadon further explains that growing port competition and global economic pressures transformed the role of port authorities. Since public authorities could no longer easily finance expensive infrastructure or respond effectively to the increasing concentration of maritime companies, ports adopted more commercial and private-sector-oriented strategies. This shift led to privatization, liberalization, and decentralization in port management. A key outcome of the liberalization of the maritime sector was the diffusion of the landlord port model, which was actively promoted by the World Bank through its *Port Reform Toolkit* (2001), a policy guide advocating greater private-sector participation in port management and operations. This model represented a significant departure from the traditional public port system. Under the landlord model, the port authority retains ownership of the land

[238] Sylvanus, "Privatising the Port," 160.

and basic infrastructure, while private operators lease terminals, manage commercial activities, and finance equipment and superstructure. As a result, long-term concession agreements, often exceeding twenty years, became the dominant form of port governance worldwide. The widespread adoption of this model enabled international shipping lines and terminal operators to acquire control over strategic port terminals while limiting the role of public authorities to regulatory and administrative functions. [239]

The implementation of this model in Togo formed part of the broader neoliberal restructuring of the state and the port sector. As Sylvanus argues, privatization can be understood as the counterpart of state retraction: as the state withdrew from direct management, private actors increasingly assumed functions previously exercised by public authorities. This transformation was justified through a technocratic and developmentalist discourse that portrayed African port governance as inefficient, outdated, and incapable of ensuring competitiveness. In Togo, port stakeholders frequently pointed to poor maintenance, bureaucratic delays, theft, financial losses, and managerial inefficiencies as evidence of the need for reform.[240]

In the case of the Port Autonome de Lomé, the political crisis of the 1990s created a vacuum in which non-state actors were able to occupy spaces previously controlled by the state. The port therefore became a site where state authority was partially transferred to private actors, producing what Mbembe describes as a form of "private indirect government". This transformation also reflected the broader post-Cold War moment in Togo, when the weakening of Eyadéma's state, the decline of Western aid, and pressures for political and economic liberalization shifted power away from a state-centered system dominated by Eyadéma and his patronage networks toward a more market-oriented neoliberal order. [241] It was within this context of state retrenchment and neoliberal reform

[239] Agbemadon, "Développement Des Ports et Dynamique Des Villes Portuaires Sur La Côte Ouest Africaine," 5- 6; Sylvanus, "Privatising the Port," 163.

[240] Sylvanus, "Privatising the Port," 162.

[241] Sylvanus, "Privatising the Port," 160.

that international financial institutions, particularly the WB, promoted new models of port governance designed to increase efficiency and attract foreign investment.

Consequently, World Bank's technicians prescribed the landlord model as the preferred framework through which the Port Autonome de Lomé could be liberalized and modernized. Beginning in the early 2000s, the Togolese government gradually restructured the port according to this model, although major private investments in container infrastructure did not materialize until the early 2010s. As foreign operators assumed responsibility for terminal operations, the role of the port authority was progressively reduced to basic administrative and regulatory functions. While privatization was presented as a necessary condition for efficiency, modernization, and national development, it also entailed a transfer of functions traditionally associated with the state to private corporations. The consequences of this transformation remain contested. According to Sylvanus while many Togolese workers and businesses acknowledge that private investment was necessary to modernize the port's outdated infrastructure, others argue that the benefits of this transformation have been unevenly distributed. Despite the port's emergence as a major regional transshipment hub, some local businesses and workers experienced declining opportunities. Dockworkers, in particular, associated privatization with lower wages, reduced employment prospects, and a diminished role for the port authority, reflecting a broader shift of power toward private operators and foreign investors. Thus, the reform did not merely improve operational performance; it reconfigured the balance of power between the Togolese state and foreign capital, creating the institutional conditions through which multinational corporations could gain significant influence over one of the country's most strategic economic sectors.[242]

This transformation also coincided with broader shifts in the global maritime economy. After the 2008 economic crisis in Europe, major shipping companies intensified their activities in Africa, particularly in the West, where economic growth became increasingly attractive from 2010 onward. Port governance reforms and concession policies turned the

[242] Sylvanus, "Privatising the Port," 162- 63, 168.

region into a key investment market for terminal operators. These reforms improved the technical capacity of ports and significantly increased cargo-handling performance, but they also deepened the role of foreign private capital in the management of strategic maritime infrastructure.[243]

These developments are closely linked to the evolution of the development aid paradigm and the broader transformation of France's relationship with its former African colonies. Over time, this relationship became institutionalized through the framework of the EEC and, more broadly, through the international financial architecture established by the Bretton Woods institutions. Rather than abandoning the rhetoric of development, these new frameworks reinforced and expanded it on a global scale.

This dynamic is particularly significant in the maritime sector. As Ouedraogo argues, the maritime domain lies at the center of economic development and prosperity in Sub-Saharan Africa. In West Africa, maritime activities are not only essential for trade and economic growth but also for food security and national sovereignty.[244] Consequently, the increasing control of strategic infrastructures such as the Port of Lomé by multinational corporations operating primarily according to commercial interests raises important questions regarding national sovereignty and economic dependency. The transfer of key operational functions from the state to foreign private actors may strengthen dependency relationships by reducing national control over infrastructure that is vital to economic development and regional integration.

From this perspective, the transformation of the Port of Lomé can be interpreted through the broader transition from political to economic forms of control. While the mechanisms differ from those that characterized the classical era of Françafrique, and although French actors now compete with a growing number of non-French multinational corporations, the persistence of French influence in strategic sectors suggests that Françafrique has adapted rather than disappeared. Its contemporary expression relies less on direct political

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[243] Agbemadon, "Développement Des Ports et Dynamique Des Villes Portuaires Sur La Côte Ouest Africaine," 7.

[244] Ouedraogo, "Strategic Gateway," 2.

patronage and more on economic influence exercised through multinational corporations, infrastructure concessions, and investment networks.

It is precisely in this context that the concept of Françafrique remains analytically useful for understanding the transformation of the Port of Lomé. The point is not to argue that the port was simply taken over by France or that French actors were the only foreign interests present. Rather, the increased role of Bolloré Africa Logistics in strategic port operations shows how older patterns of political influence could be reconfigured through economic mechanisms, concessions, and corporate control. The rise of Bolloré within the Port of Lomé therefore provides a concrete example of how Françafrique adapted to the neoliberal era: from direct political patronage and state-to-state dependence toward the control of strategic infrastructure by powerful multinational corporations. The following section examines this process through the Bolloré model and its role in the restructuring of port governance in Togo.

4.3. The Economical Control: the Bolloré's Model

This section examines Vincent Bolloré and the Bolloré Group as one of the most influential French corporate actors in former French colonies. The Bolloré case provides a particularly useful lens through which to analyze the transformation of Françafrique from a network based primarily on political control to one increasingly characterized by economic influence in the context of globalization and neoliberal governance. As Olivier Blamangin recalls, Vincent Bolloré, an emblematic figure of these networks mixing financial relations, political support, judicial affairs, and media influence, embodies better than anyone else what can be called *"entrepreneurial Françafrique"*.[245]

As discussed earlier, both Verschave and Bovcon argue that the Françafrique system originally engineered by Jacques Foccart began to face growing challenges during the 1970s from major French corporations and other economic actors. This development

[245] La Rédaction, "Bolloré, un empire françafricain," Afrique XXI, January 25, 2022, https://afriquexxi.info/Bollore-un-empire-francafricain.

marked the beginning of a gradual shift from predominantly political forms of control toward economic mechanisms of influence. With the rise of multinational corporations, the implementation of structural adjustment programs, market liberalization, and the end of the Cold War, Françafrique evolved into a more fragmented system composed of multiple networks in which private economic actors increasingly occupied a central position while continuing to benefit from the broader postcolonial framework. [246]

The rise of Vincent Bolloré illustrates this transformation. Although often portrayed as a self-made entrepreneur, Bolloré's success cannot be understood solely through individual initiative. According to Blamangin, Petitjean, and Simpère, his fortune was built within a financialized and rent-seeking economic system and benefited from the support of banks, investors, political elites, and public authorities.[247] Bolloré therefore represents not only a businessman but also the embodiment of a broader system in which economic power, political influence, and public institutions are closely intertwined.

To analyze the Bolloré's model, this section draws primarily on *Le système Bolloré : de la plantation à la multinationale*, an investigative report by journalists and researchers Olivier Blamangin, Olivier Petitjean, and Anne-Sophie Simpère, who specialize in corporate accountability, political economy, and the activities of multinational corporations in Africa. The report provides a detailed examination of the Bolloré Group's expansion across the continent and its connections to political, economic, and media power. Its comprehensive analysis of the group's activities in logistics, port concessions, plantations, telecommunications, and media makes it particularly valuable for understanding the economic dimension of contemporary Françafrique.

Founded in 1822 as a paper-manufacturing company in Brittany, the Bolloré Group remained a relatively traditional industrial enterprise for much of its history. When Vincent Bolloré took control of the family business in the early 1980s, following a period in finance, the company was facing a severe financial crisis and was reportedly close to

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[246] Verschave, La Françafrique, 285- 86.

[247] OlivierBlamangin,OlivierPetitjean Anne-SophieSimpère, Le Système Bolloré : De La Prédation Financière à La Croisade Politique (Observatoire des multinationales, 2025), 5- 6, https://france.attac.org/nos-publications/notes-et-rapports/article/rapport-le-systeme-bollore.

bankruptcy. He subsequently embarked on a strategy of diversification, increasingly turning toward opportunities in former French colonies, particularly in Africa. [248] Under his leadership, the group underwent a profound transformation. A product of the era of financial deregulation and stock-market capitalism that characterized the 1980s and 1990s, Vincent Bolloré relied on aggressive acquisitions, sophisticated financial operations, and strategic investments to expand the group across a wide range of sectors, including logistics, transport, plantations, telecommunications, and later media and communications.[249] As Mediapart journalist Laurent Mauduit recalls, Bolloré built the beginning of his empire “on the ruins of French colonial capitalism”.[250]

Africa occupied a central place in this strategy. A large share of the Bolloré family's fortune was built on the continent, initially through tobacco production and sales, then through plantations, and above all through transport, logistics, and port concessions. During the 1980s and 1990s, Bolloré expanded aggressively across former French colonies through a series of acquisitions. In 1985, he acquired Sofical, owner of the Bastos cigarette brand, becoming the “king of cigarettes in Africa”. In 1986, he purchased the SCAC, which provided the foundations for his future logistics and port activities. This was followed by the acquisition of Delmas-Vieljeux in 1991, then the leading freight transport company serving Africa, and the takeover of the Rivaud Group in 1996, which opened access to palm oil and rubber plantations. These acquisitions coincided with the wave of privatization and liberalization promoted by international financial institutions across Africa. Bolloré successfully capitalized on these reforms to secure strategic concessions in transport infrastructure. As a result, the economic center of gravity of the group progressively shifted toward Africa, which became its principal source of profits.[251]

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[248] Rédaction, “Bolloré, un empire françafricain”.

[249] OlivierBlamangin,OlivierPetitjean Anne-SophieSimpère, Le Système Bolloré : De La Prédation Financière à La Croisade Politique, 8- 10.

[250] Rédaction, “Bolloré, un empire françafricain”.

[251] OlivierBlamangin,OlivierPetitjean Anne-SophieSimpère, Le Système Bolloré : De La Prédation Financière à La Croisade Politique, 9, 26.

The logistics sector rapidly became the cornerstone of Bolloré's African empire. By 2002, African activities generated only 17% of the group's turnover but accounted for approximately three-quarters of its operating profits. This profitability was largely driven by an extensive network of port concessions obtained throughout West and Central Africa. Beginning with the concession of the Abidjan container terminal in 2004, Bolloré subsequently secured terminals in Tema, Douala, Lagos, Owendo, Port-Gentil, Pointe-Noire, Lomé, Cotonou, Freetown, Conakry, and several other ports. The strength of Bolloré Africa Logistics rested on its vertically integrated business model. The company controlled not only port terminals but also road transport, railways, customs services, and logistics platforms, creating an extensive network that penetrated deep into the African continent. This integration enabled Bolloré to build what the authors describe as an unparalleled logistics grid connecting maritime trade routes to inland markets. Within this system, port concessions were particularly valuable assets because they generated revenues through docking fees, storage charges, and cargo-handling operations while also providing strategic control over key commercial gateways. African logistics revenues grew from €766 million in 2002 to nearly €2 billion in 2010 and reached approximately €2.7 billion in 2015. Even in 2021, shortly before the sale of Bolloré Africa Logistics, the African branch still generated almost half of the group's operating profits.[252]

Beyond annual dividends, the value accumulated through these concessions dramatically increased the worth of the company. When Bolloré sold its African logistics activities to MSC in 2022 for €5.7 billion, the group realized a capital gain of approximately €3.15 billion. According to the authors, the sale reflected Vincent Bolloré's long-standing strategy of maximizing financial returns by selling assets at the moment of their highest market value.[253]

The expansion of Bolloré's African activities was not achieved solely through economic performance but was also facilitated by the support of the French state. Bolloré

[252] OlivierBlamangin,OlivierPetitjean Anne-SophieSimpère, Le Système Bolloré : De La Prédation Financière à La Croisade Politique, 26- 27.

[253] OlivierBlamangin,OlivierPetitjean Anne-SophieSimpère, Le Système Bolloré : De La Prédation Financière à La Croisade Politique, 29- 31.

subsidiaries have benefited, and continue to benefit, from the support of French public authorities and politicians across the political spectrum, from the far right to the left, through public contracts, subsidies, diplomatic backing, and favorable treatment from state institutions. Although such support is common among large French multinationals, Bolloré's relationship with political power evolved into a form of mutual dependence that facilitated the group's expansion in Africa and later its growing influence in France. [254] This dimension is particularly important for understanding Bolloré as a contemporary expression of Françafrique, where economic influence often operates through close relationships between business elites, political authorities, and state institutions.

By the 2000s, Bolloré began to diversify into media and communications. The acquisition of Havas in 2005 was followed by investments in television, culminating in control over Canal+, Vivendi, and eventually major publishing and media assets in France. Significantly, the revenues generated by African activities helped finance this expansion into media and communications. The African profits, accumulated over decades of logistics, transport, and concession management, that Bolloré acquired the resources necessary to build his media empire.[255]

Despite the sale of Bolloré Africa Logistics to MSC in 2022, the group has not withdrawn from Africa. It remains active through palm oil and rubber plantations, telecommunications, and media operations. Following the sale of its logistics activities, the Bolloré Group now derives approximately 90% of its activities from the media, cultural, and communications sectors. Although not all of its assets are directly engaged in political activism, several have been criticized for providing platforms to far-right figures and ideas. Canal+ now regards Africa as one of its most important growth markets, with more than eight million subscribers across sub-Saharan Africa—almost as many as in France (9.8 million)—and nearly one-third of its total subscribers worldwide. Through Group Vivendi Africa (GVA), the company is also expanding fibre-optic internet

[254] OlivierBlamangin,OlivierPetitjean Anne-SophieSimpère, Le Système Bolloré : De La Prédation Financière à La Croisade Politique, 6.

[255] OlivierBlamangin,OlivierPetitjean Anne-SophieSimpère, Le Système Bolloré : De La Prédation Financière à La Croisade Politique, 9, 14, 26.

networks under the CanalBox brand in several African cities, including Lomé, Abidjan, Libreville, Pointe-Noire, and Kampala.[256] These investments demonstrate that, despite the sale of its logistics empire, Bolloré continues to pursue a strategy of expansion on the African continent, albeit through media, telecommunications, and cultural industries rather than transport infrastructure.

At the same time, the group's African activities remain overshadowed by allegations of corruption linked to the acquisition of strategic port concessions. Vincent Bolloré is accused of having used the communication agency Havas to provide electoral campaign services at preferential rates to the incumbent presidents Faure Gnassingbé in Togo and Alpha Condé in Guinea in exchange for favorable treatment in the awarding of the port concessions of Lomé and Conakry. These allegations led to Bolloré being placed under formal investigation in France for the corruption of a foreign public official. Building on these proceedings and other allegedly similar cases, a coalition of eleven African associations launched legal action in March 2025 seeking the restitution of profits generated through the sale of Bolloré's African logistics and port activities. The complainants argue that these profits were obtained through a broader "system of corruption" and have filed accusations against the Bolloré Group, Vincent Bolloré, and his son Cyrille for handling the proceeds of corruption and money laundering.[257]

Taken together, this evidence suggests that Bolloré's business model is deeply embedded in the capitalist system fostered by the neoliberal turn of the 1980s. More importantly, the development of this model was facilitated by France's neocolonial ties with its former colonies through the Françafrique system. This system created the political and economic conditions that enabled Bolloré and other multinational corporations to gain control over strategic sectors across Africa and, increasingly, elsewhere in the world. As a result, Bolloré was able to secure significant influence over key areas of African economic activity through a combination of political connections in both France and Africa,

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[256] OlivierBlamangin,OlivierPetitjean Anne-SophieSimpère, Le Système Bolloré : De La Prédation Financière à La Croisade Politique, 31- 34.

[257] OlivierBlamangin,OlivierPetitjean Anne-SophieSimpère, Le Système Bolloré : De La Prédation Financière à La Croisade Politique, 30- 31.

privileged access to concessions and privatization processes, and the accumulation of rents derived from strategic infrastructure. Furthermore, allegations of corruption surrounding the acquisition of several port concessions, together with the group's reliance on long-term monopolistic positions and concessionary arrangements, suggest that its expansion was not driven solely by market competition. Rather, it was also facilitated by informal personal networks, corruption, and forms of predatory accumulation that enabled the extraction of substantial economic value from strategic public assets, characteristics that have been associated with the Françafrique system.

In this sense, Bolloré represents a transition from the political Françafrique associated with Jacques Foccart to a more economic and corporate form of influence, in which private actors play a central role in maintaining patterns of dependency and extraction inherited from the colonial era.

4.4. Bolloré and Port Autonome de Lomé

Finally, this chapter analyzes the controversial acquisition of the Port of Lomé concession by the Bolloré Group. It argues that the informal networks traditionally associated with Françafrique—based on personal relationships, patronage, and corruption—have not disappeared but have instead adapted to the neoliberal era. Whereas the earlier phase of Françafrique relied primarily on agreements between the French and Togolese states, the contemporary phase of economic control increasingly operates through arrangements involving the Togolese regime, international financial institutions, and multinational corporations. This transformation illustrates how the mechanisms of Françafrique have evolved while continuing to reproduce asymmetrical power relations between France and its former colonies.

Following pressure from the IMF and the WB, which identified the Port of Lomé as inefficient and in need of reform, the Togolese government initiated a process of privatization in the early 2000s. Through a series of concessions, key port operations were gradually transferred to foreign operators, notably the Bolloré Group and later Terminal Investment Limited (TIL), the port-operating subsidiary of the MSC. According to Sylvanus, these reforms fundamentally altered the relationship between the state, capital, and port governance, creating a system in which sovereignty was increasingly shared between public authorities and multinational corporations. After Faure Gnassingbé succeeded his father in 2005, his government intensified efforts to attract foreign investment and transform the Port of Lomé into a regional logistics hub. Within this context, the Bolloré Group emerged as one of the most influential corporate actors. [258]

The concession awarded to Bolloré subsequently became the subject of one of the most significant corruption investigations involving French business interests in Africa. The affair first came to the attention of the French judiciary following a complaint lodged in 2011 by Jacques Dupuydauby, a former business partner of Vincent Bolloré whose company had managed the Lomé port concession since 2001. A second complaint by the French logistics company Necotrans concerning the Port of Conakry prompted prosecutors to broaden the investigation. French investigators alleged that Bolloré's communication subsidiary, Havas, had provided political consulting services to Faure Gnassingbé's 2010 presidential campaign at substantially discounted rates in exchange for favorable treatment in the award of a 35-year port concession. Documents seized during searches of the Bolloré Group's headquarters in 2016 reinforced suspicions that the communication services had been deliberately under-invoiced in return for commercial advantages in Togo and Guinea. [259]

Journalist Martine Orange argues that the affair should not be interpreted merely as an isolated corruption scandal but rather as an illustration of the enduring logic of Françafrique. According to her analysis, during a meeting in 2007 between Faure Gnassingbé and French President Nicolas Sarkozy - who maintained close personal ties with Vincent Bolloré - pressure was allegedly exerted to ensure that the Port of Lomé concession would ultimately be awarded to the Bolloré Group. Control over the Port of Lomé was strategically important because it had the potential to compete with the Port of

[258] Sylvanus, "Privatising the Port," 175.

[259] Martine Orange, "Why French Tycoon Vincent Bolloré Faces Probe over African Business Practices," Mediapart, April 26, 2018, https://www.mediapart.fr/en/journal/france/260418/why-french-tycoon-vincent-bollore-faces-probe-over-african-business-practices; Administrateur Sherpa, "Bolloré Case in Togo : A Trial Will Be Held in December 2026," Sherpa, March 19, 2026, https://www.asso-sherpa.org/bollore-togo-referred-criminal-court.

Abidjan in Côte d'Ivoire, where Bolloré had already secured a concession in 2004 under controversial circumstances. In May 2009, the Togolese army entered the port, seized equipment and company archives, and removed the employees of Dupuydauby's company. Within a single day, Bolloré assumed control of the concession, raising serious questions regarding due process and the role of political power in the transfer of strategic public assets. [260]

The judicial investigation culminated in 2018 with the indictment of Vincent Bolloré and two senior executives of the group, Gilles Alix and Jean-Philippe Dorent, on allegations of corruption involving foreign public officials. Although Vincent Bolloré initially dismissed the accusations as unfounded, he later sought to resolve the proceedings through a plea-bargaining procedure proposed by the French National Financial Prosecutor's Office, which would have required him to pay a fine of €375,000.[261] In 2021, Bolloré Group itself concluded the so-called Convention Judiciaire d'Intérêt Public (CJIP) - a French public interest judicial agreement - with the French National Financial Prosecutor's Office and agreed to pay a fine of €12 million, acknowledging the company's responsibility for acts of corruption committed in relation to port concessions in Togo and Guinea. However, the Paris Criminal Court refused to approve the plea bargain proposed for Vincent Bolloré and the two executives, holding that the seriousness of the alleged offences required a public trial, which has been scheduled for December 2026.[262]

Although the allegations remain contested, they illustrate the close relationship between political power and corporate interests that characterized the privatization process. More broadly, they suggest that the Eyadéma dynasty relied on different forms of French support across successive generations to preserve its political dominance. Whereas Gnassingbé Eyadéma depended primarily on political backing from figures such as Jacques Foccart, Charles de Gaulle, and later Jacques Chirac, Faure Gnassingbé

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[260] Orange, "Why French Tycoon Vincent Bolloré Faces Probe over African Business Practices."

[261] OlivierBlamangin,OlivierPetitjean Anne-SophieSimpère, Le Système Bolloré : De La Prédation Financière à La Croisade Politique, 30- 31.

[262] Sherpa, "Bolloré Case in Togo".

increasingly relied on economic actors and multinational corporations to consolidate his rule and attract international investment.

Despite the ongoing judicial proceedings, the Bolloré Group completed the sale of Bolloré Africa Logistics to MSC in 2022 for €5.7 billion. The business was subsequently rebranded as Africa Global Logistics (AGL). Rather than representing a rupture with previous patterns of control, however, the transaction largely reflected continuity. Like the Bolloré Group, MSC is a privately controlled family conglomerate, owned by the Aponte family through private trusts and headquartered in Switzerland. The company is not publicly listed and therefore is not required to disclose detailed financial information. Family succession has also followed a similar pattern, with founder Gianluigi Aponte remaining chairman while his son Diego Aponte has served as Group President since 2014. Today, approximately one-fifth of global container freight is transported by MSC. Institutionally, the transition from Bolloré Africa Logistics to Africa Global Logistics changed little. MSC explicitly committed to honoring all existing concession agreements with African governments and retained Philippe Labonne, the former chief executive of Bolloré Africa Logistics, as CEO of the newly rebranded company: the two conglomerates display a remarkable degree of continuity in both corporate strategy and operational management. [263]

From a broader political economy perspective, the concession system has consequences extending beyond the ownership of individual companies. Long-term concession agreements allow multinational corporations to capture a substantial share of the economic surplus generated by strategic infrastructure, while states receive only a fraction of the revenues through concession fees. Because many of these contracts extend for thirty years or more and provide for disputes to be resolved through international arbitration, governments face considerable legal and financial obstacles if they later seek to renegotiate their terms. Consequently, the management of strategic infrastructure is

[263] "Ports and Power: Bolloré's Exit from West Africa - Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung," April 19, 2026, https://www.rosalux.de/en/news/id/54690/ports-and-power-bollores-exit-from-west-africa.

increasingly removed from democratic oversight and placed under the control of private corporate actors.[264]

In conclusion, the chapter has shown that the evolution of the Port Autonome de Lomé reflects the broader transformation of Françafrique from a system based primarily on political patronage and state-to-state relations into one increasingly driven by economic liberalization and corporate influence. The modernization and privatization of the port, promoted through structural adjustment policies and the landlord port model, facilitated the transfer of strategic infrastructure from public control to multinational corporations. The Bolloré case illustrates how these new forms of economic governance remained embedded in the informal networks, political connections, and asymmetrical power relations that have long characterized Françafrique. Although the subsequent acquisition of Bolloré Africa Logistics by MSC altered the identity of the dominant corporate actor, it did not fundamentally change the concession-based model of governance or the concentration of control over strategic infrastructure in private hands. The Port of Lomé therefore demonstrates that, rather than disappearing after the Cold War, Françafrique adapted to the neoliberal era by replacing direct political intervention with mechanisms of privatization, long-term concessions, and multinational corporate control. This case study thus supports the central argument of this thesis: that contemporary neocolonial relations are increasingly exercised through economic institutions and corporate actors, while continuing to reproduce patterns of dependency that limit the economic sovereignty of former French colonies.

[264] "Ports and Power".

Conclusion

This dissertation has examined the evolution of Françafrique in Togo from independence to the present day, arguing that the system has not disappeared with the end of formal colonialism but has instead adapted to changing international political and economic conditions. While Françafrique initially relied on direct political support, military cooperation, and personal relationships between French and African political elites, it progressively transformed into a system increasingly centered on economic influence exercised through multinational corporations, financial institutions, and strategic infrastructure.

The first chapter demonstrated that the foundations of Françafrique were established during the decolonization period under Jacques Foccart and Charles de Gaulle. Faced with the decline of the French colonial empire, France sought to preserve its strategic and economic interests in sub-Saharan Africa by constructing an informal system of political alliances, military agreements, and economic dependency. In Togo, this system was consolidated through French support for the authoritarian regime of Gnassingbé Eyadéma following the assassination of President Sylvanus Olympio. Throughout Eyadéma's rule, France remained a crucial political and military partner, ensuring regime stability while safeguarding French geopolitical and commercial interests.

The second chapter showed that the end of the Cold War did not dismantle Françafrique but rather transformed its mechanisms. The wave of democratization during the 1990s, combined with structural adjustment programs promoted by the IMF and the WB, reduced the capacity of African states to directly control strategic sectors of their economies. Liberalization, privatization, and foreign direct investment became the new instruments through which external actors acquired influence. Rather than replacing earlier forms of dependency, neoliberal reforms often institutionalized them within a broader international framework in which multinational corporations increasingly assumed functions previously exercised by the state.

The case study of the Port Autonome de Lomé illustrates this transformation particularly clearly. Historically developed through foreign financing and promoted as a key instrument for national development, the port became one of the most valuable strategic assets in West Africa. Its modernization undoubtedly improved infrastructure, increased cargo throughput, and transformed Lomé into one of the region's principal transshipment hubs. However, the research has also shown that these achievements came at the cost of an increasing transfer of control over strategic infrastructure to foreign corporations operating under long-term concession agreements.

The analysis of the Bolloré Group demonstrates how contemporary Françafrique increasingly operates through economic rather than purely political mechanisms. The group's extensive control over logistics, transport, port terminals, and freight forwarding enabled it to occupy a dominant position within West African trade networks. The corruption allegations surrounding the acquisition of the Port of Lomé concession, together with the judicial proceedings initiated in France, illustrate how informal political networks and corporate interests continued to interact despite the formal liberalization of the economy. Although the criminal proceedings have not yet reached a final conclusion, the evidence examined throughout this dissertation suggests that the awarding of strategic concessions cannot be understood solely through the logic of market competition. Instead, they reveal the persistence of personal networks, political influence, and privileged access that have historically characterized the Françafrique system.

The subsequent acquisition of Bolloré Africa Logistics by MSC in 2022 further reinforces the central argument of this dissertation. Although ownership changed, the concessionary model, the governance structures, and the long-term contractual arrangements remained largely intact. This continuity suggests that the issue extends beyond the identity of individual corporations. Rather, it concerns a broader political economy in which strategic public infrastructure is increasingly controlled by transnational private actors operating within legal and institutional frameworks established through neoliberal reforms.

Overall, this dissertation argues that Françafrique should not be understood as a historical phenomenon confined to the decades following African independence. Instead, it represents an adaptive system capable of reshaping itself in response to changes in the international order. Political patronage, military alliances, and diplomatic influence have not disappeared, but they have increasingly been complemented—and in some cases replaced—by mechanisms of economic governance, privatization, financial conditionality, and multinational corporate power. The Port of Lomé demonstrates how strategic infrastructure can simultaneously contribute to economic modernization while reinforcing asymmetrical relationships between African states and external actors.

This research has nevertheless several limitations. It has focused primarily on Togo, without undertaking a comparative analysis with other former French colonies where similar processes have occurred. Future research could examine whether comparable patterns exist in countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Benin, or Senegal, and could further investigate the evolving role of new international actors—including China, Turkey, and the Gulf states—in reshaping or challenging the traditional structures of Françafrique. Moreover, additional empirical research on the socioeconomic effects of long-term port concessions would contribute to a deeper understanding of how infrastructure privatization affects labor, public revenue, and state sovereignty.

Ultimately, the Togolese case demonstrates that the end of colonial rule did not entail the end of colonial patterns of domination. Instead, these patterns have evolved into more complex forms of economic governance in which multinational corporations, international financial institutions, and political elites jointly shape the management of strategic public assets. Understanding these transformations is essential not only for reassessing the legacy of Françafrique but also for evaluating the broader relationship between neoliberal globalization, state sovereignty, and development in postcolonial Africa.

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