

Redesigning Cooperation: The Eschatology of Franco-African Relations

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ABSTRACT This study traces the relationship between France and Africa through historical and colonial links in Francophone Africa during the post-independence era. Especially, the relevance of Francophone Africa to France's economic, strategic and geo-political calculus. The unipolar system brought about by the end of Communism witnessed a shift in France's African foreign policy. The article highlights the dilution of France's African policy in the foreign policy of the European Union in the face of American assertion in Africa. The disquisition scrutinizes the dynamics of France's attitudinal change. Franco-African relations witnessed a twin-diversification. As France opened new economic vistas with the Anglophone and Lusophone states in Africa, so did Francophone Africa with the Anglo-Saxon and Asians. This dynamics translates also into France's programmed disengagement from its Francophone bastion. This vacuum is gradually and constantly being filled by the United States and other members of the G 8. Apparently, the American assertion is perceived by the Hexagon as an encroachment on its 'private ground'. In conclusion, it is argued that France is caught in a dilemma. For complete withdrawal from Francophone Africa will be difficult to carry out.

"If France still retains an international dimension which its Hexagon does not justify on its own, a lot is due to the political, economic, cultural, sometime effective network that it maintains in Africa with about fifteen states whereabout tens of million people speak its language" Imbert (1982).

"Successive governments and the majority of public opinion were for a long time convinced by the fact that restoring the greatness of France could come only from its Empire and not in its strong integration in the structures of global economy" Bost (1999).

"The French economy is not strong enough to pull Africa toward a sufficient level of growth" Freeman (1999).