



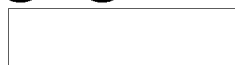
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# France's Changing Role in Africa



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**A Research Paper**

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*ALA 85-10097  
September 1985*

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# France's Changing Role in Africa

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**A Research Paper**

This paper was prepared by  the  
Office of African and Latin American Analysis with a  
contribution by   
 the Office of Central Reference. It  
was coordinated with the Directorate of  
Operations.

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Comments and queries are welcome and may be  
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**France's Changing Role in Africa** [redacted]

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**Key Judgments**

*Information available as of 11 September 1985 was used in this report.*

President Mitterrand's decision in August 1983 to send troops to Chad to counter Libyan intervention there, only to be followed 15 months later by the abrupt withdrawal of French forces, illustrates some of the constraints that complicate France's African policy. France wants to maintain a high profile in francophone Africa, where it enjoys substantial economic and strategic advantages and has longstanding cultural and sentimental ties. But France's limited resources constrain its involvement and assistance at a time when the francophone community's needs are soaring. The Chad imbroglio has been a sobering turning point at which the French realized the limits of their ability to control events in Africa. [redacted]

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To maintain "great power" status in the region without ruinous expenditures, the French Government is mixing highly visible diplomatic gestures such as state visits with a variety of helpful but limited assistance programs. Over the past two years, budgetary difficulties have forced Paris to allow—and even to seek—other Western and multinational donors to share the burden of keeping its jealously guarded sphere of influence afloat, while trying to keep policy decisions in its own hands. [redacted]

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President Mitterrand appears to be committed to preserving France's role as the principal Western actor in Sub-Saharan Africa. The French Government, we believe, continues to view its extensive involvement in Africa—including specifically its political role—as vital to its interests and prestige. Although a change of government in Paris seems likely after next year's legislative assembly elections, there are virtually no major differences between Mitterrand's Socialists and France's conservatives on African policy. We believe a new government, even if led by conservatives, is likely to follow the same fundamental policy line in dealing with African problems. [redacted]

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We believe the Mitterrand government is intensifying efforts to expand financially profitable relations with African countries outside the French community [redacted] total French trade with Nigeria and South Africa, for example, now exceeds the volume of trade with all of Paris's former African colonies, and access to strategic minerals in Nigeria, Zaire, and South Africa is of particular importance to Paris.

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Continuing problems in the French economy, however, have forced France to reevaluate the levels and recipients of French economic and military assistance to Africa. We believe France's evident inability to maintain support to its African clients commensurate with their rapidly growing needs will present serious problems, particularly for the francophone states that depend on French financial support to keep their economies afloat.

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We believe that France, over time, will be less inclined to commit troops to Africa—particularly in areas of little or no economic interest such as Chad—except under extreme provocation such as a direct attack on French personnel and property. The French Government plans cuts of 8 to 10 percent in its military assistance programs for Africa, although it still maintains approximately 13,000 troops in seven African countries to protect French personnel and economic interests in the region.

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Such a scaling back of French security involvement in Africa is likely to cause Africans increasing concern. As it is, Mitterrand's decision to withdraw French troops from Chad without consulting his African allies already has caused many African leaders to question French resolve to check Libyan expansion in Africa. Moderate leaders such as Senegal's Diouf and Ivory Coast's Houphouet Boigny have made it clear that they regard anything less than wholehearted French security support as a clear invitation to Libyan expansion throughout the region. Indeed, France's failure to counter Libyan expansion probably will increase domestic political pressures on African governments to seek accommodation with Tripoli.

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We expect Mitterrand, as well as African leaders, increasingly to look to the United States to supplement declining French economic and military assistance. Cooperation with the United States will have built-in elements of stress, however, as France's attitudes toward a US presence in its sphere of influence remain ambivalent. Indeed, many French officials and expatriate businessmen fear that Washington intends to supplant rather than supplement France's role in Africa, according to US Embassy reporting. Under a more conservative and nationalistic regime in Paris, we believe there would be an even greater danger than at present that France would become intransigent and less cooperative with US regional activities out of fear that US firms would take lucrative contracts away from French businesses.


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We believe there is little doubt that France in the next few years will attempt to keep intact the essential elements of its traditional policy and role in Africa. In the most likely circumstances, therefore, Paris will cut back only marginally its military and economic aid, adding minimally to the burdens the United States might have to shoulder. In a less likely scenario, however, it is possible that France's limited retrenchment in Africa could turn out to signal a long-term reduction in its role in Africa. This would leave the United States some stark policy choices as the only Western power able to offer significant military and economic support to the weak regimes in the area. 

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We believe that, if Paris were to make a long-term decision to cut significantly its financial and military commitments in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Libyans and Soviets would attempt to take advantage of politically and economically weak countries in the region—especially those with sizable Muslim populations. Libya has already made clear by its actions to date that it intends to expand its influence and replace the French presence in Africa. The Soviets are in no position to match or outdo the French in providing economic assistance to these increasingly vulnerable states, but they probably can be expected to offer modest increases in military assistance to ingratiate themselves and promote Soviet interests. 

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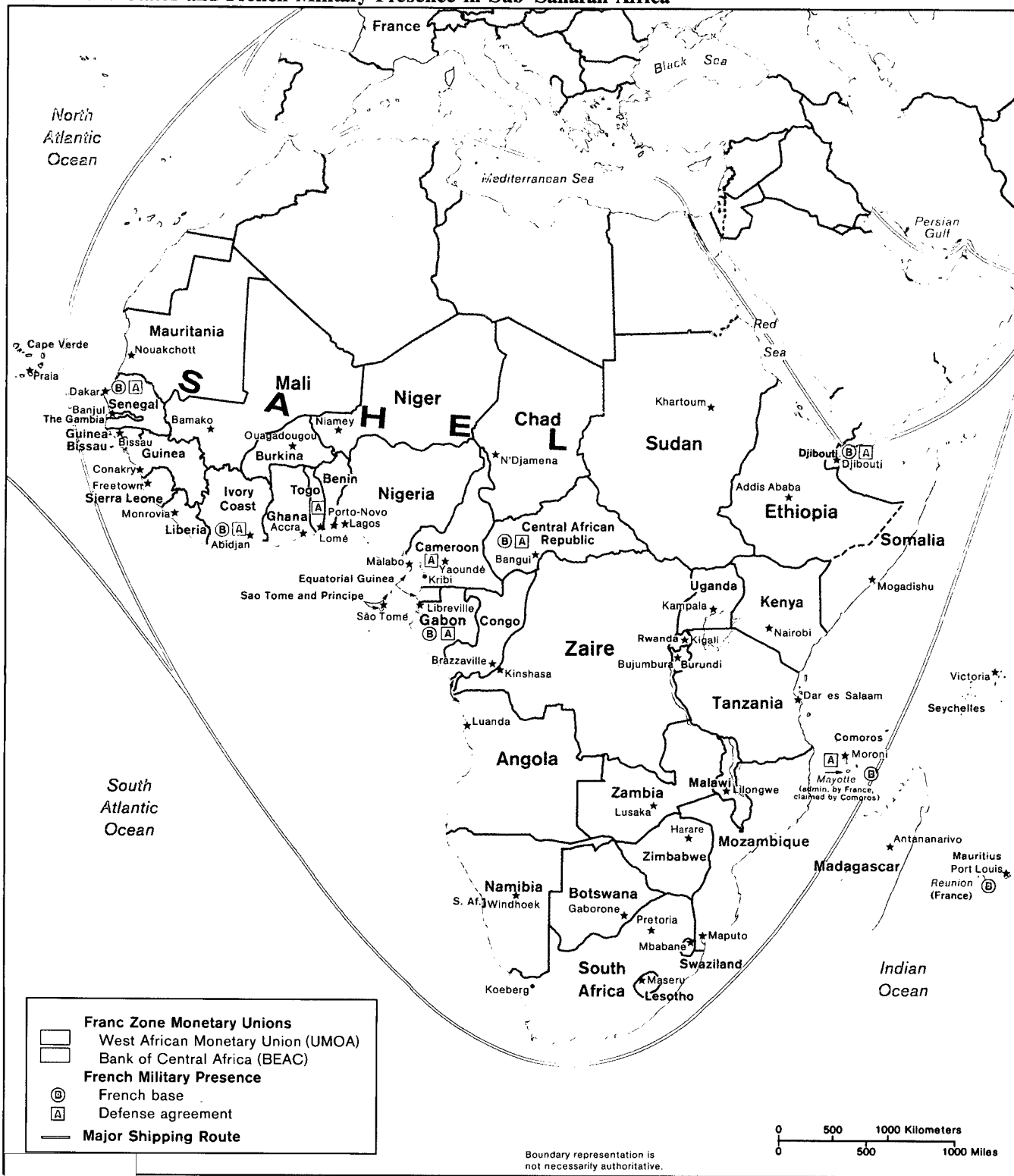
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Figure 1  
Franc Zone States and French Military Presence in Sub-Saharan Africa



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### France's Changing Role in Africa [redacted]

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#### Introduction

*Without Africa there will be no history of France in the 21st century.*

*Francois Mitterrand*

Initial indications in 1981 that a Socialist government led by Francois Mitterrand would abandon the activist, interventionist role in Africa of previous French administrations raised serious concerns among francophone leaders. Mitterrand and his top advisers quickly decided to follow the precedents established by conservative French governments and committed themselves to increasing economic and military assistance in Africa.<sup>1</sup> [redacted]

The Socialists' willingness to continue the role played in Africa by previous governments was put to the test, in our view, by the 1983-84 crisis in Chad. Chad has no economic interest for France, but Paris views a stable, pro-West Chad as a barrier to Libyan expansion into areas of strategic and economic importance to France, according to a variety of published statements. US Embassy reporting has indicated that France's substantial—if somewhat tardy—response to the Libyan invasion of Chad in 1983 allayed the fears of some francophone African leaders that France would no longer protect them from external aggression. [redacted]

Paris's decision to withdraw from Chad in September 1984, leaving Libya in control of the north, reawakened African leaders' worst fears that France was not prepared to "stay the course." The Africans' concerns were echoed in the French press, including papers normally sympathetic to Mitterrand. The influential daily *Le Monde*, for example, asserted that, because

<sup>1</sup> In this paper francophone Africa includes the former French colonies of Benin, Burkina, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Djibouti, Gabon, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, and Togo. The ex-Belgian colonies, Zaire, Rwanda, and Burundi, though French speaking, are considered separately from the French community. [redacted]

Paris allowed itself to be duped by Libya, francophone Africans probably would turn to either the United States or the USSR for their security needs. [redacted]

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In considering the question of France's future role, this paper looks at the effects of the events in Chad on broader French interests throughout black Africa. It discusses developing trends that could jeopardize Franco-African ties, the French role in the political and economic life of francophone Africa, and the implications of these developments for US interests in the region and for US-French bilateral relations.

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#### Mitterrand's African Policy . . .

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President Mitterrand's policies generally have followed the policy fundamentals established since the de Gaulle era, but with a cost-consciousness more recently imposed by France's increasingly tight budget. US Embassy reporting indicates that the French Government continues to view its extensive involvement in francophone African affairs as vital to its interests and prestige. High levels of French economic and military aid to Africa bear witness to Mitterrand's often stated conviction that France must undertake a leading role in Africa if it is to play a prominent role in world affairs. [redacted]

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[redacted] Mitterrand is convinced that expanding markets in the Third World are essential to French economic recovery and that Soviet and Libyan gains in Africa can be halted or even reversed by subtle diplomacy backed by carefully tailored economic support and military assistance.

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[redacted]

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To reestablish confidence at home and abroad in its determination to remain a major power in Africa, the Mitterrand government has increased its diplomatic

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activity to supplement its development and military assistance. There has been a flurry of official visits over the past year by top French officials to stalwart allies such as Ivory Coast and Senegal. [redacted]

Besides reaffirming old ties, the Mitterrand government has taken steps to broaden its contacts with Africa's left-leaning regimes—Angola, Benin, Guinea, Congo, Seychelles, and Mozambique—where, according to US Embassy and press reports, the French believe there are opportunities to reduce Soviet influence. Thus, for example, the French Government is actively seeking to improve long-troubled relations with Guinea where, except for the language, French influence was virtually excluded after President Sekou Toure broke with France in 1958. Since Toure's death last year, according to US Embassy sources, the French have allocated \$3 million to support efforts to restructure Guinea's financial and educational sectors.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the US Embassy reports that over the past year the French have been using additional economic aid as a lever to moderate the behavior of the Sankara regime in Burkina. [redacted]

Paris is emphasizing its support for the francophone African position on a number of issues. Mitterrand has publicized widely his support for Western aid to Africa and for a settlement in Namibia, and his opposition to South Africa's racial policies. While carefully insulating its established economic relations with South Africa, Paris's recent recall of its Ambassador and imposition of economic sanctions have won praise even from critics such as Burkina's President Sankara, according to press reports. [redacted]

Nevertheless, we believe that French domestic economic problems make it increasingly difficult for Paris to back up its political goals in Africa with the economic and military support proportionate to African needs. The French economy has ground virtually to a halt over the past year with annual GNP growth projected at 0.9 percent for 1985. Rising inflation and a soaring current account deficit have forced the

[redacted]

Mitterrand government to abandon expansionist economic policies. As part of a governmentwide austerity program, Paris has had to cut back on economic assistance to Africa—although it still provides more aid overall than any other Western donor—giving first priority to a few of its traditional French-speaking partners and moderating some of its ambitious plans to develop ties to English- and Portuguese-speaking African countries, according to US Embassy sources. [redacted]

We believe that economic considerations will be critical if France is called on again to intervene militarily in Africa. We expect that Paris will resist being drawn into such interventions in the future, particularly in areas of little or no economic interest, such as Chad. With diminishing resources at their disposal, French officials are likely to give first consideration to the security needs of countries where France has a relatively high economic stake, such as Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Zaire, and Gabon. If trade with franc zone countries continues to decline, however, France's need for export markets and sources of raw materials will fuel expanding commercial relations with Nigeria, South Africa, and Libya—now a potential market for French arms and other goods. We believe these broader ties will at times run counter to the desires or best interests of France's francophone partners. Where conflicts of interest occur—in Chad, along the Cameroon-Nigerian border, or in connection with South African policies—we believe that Paris will be reluctant to take any action, even under pressure from francophone leaders, that will substantially endanger its economic interests elsewhere in the region. [redacted]

**... And the Africans' View of Paris**

In our judgment, the withdrawal of French troops from Chad, leaving the northern region to Libya and effectively partitioning the country, has severely damaged France's credibility, which had until then survived the crises of decolonization, economic decline,

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**Battleground for Conflicting French Interests in Chad**

*We believe France's intervention in Chad placed Paris squarely between a loyalty to its traditional African partners and its need to develop profitable markets elsewhere. In our judgment, French intervention in Chad in 1983 was designed to reassure African leaders that Paris will honor its defense agreements against external aggression. Paris's support of the Habre government in its conflict with Libyan-backed rebels temporarily reassured the francophone states that fear Qadhafi's expansionism. It, however, disrupted potentially profitable Franco-Libyan trade, particularly in arms. Paris has maintained diplomatic ties and some commercial exchanges with Tripoli throughout the past two years, hoping to use them both to temper Qadhafi's behavior and to safeguard France's markets. Indeed, high-level French Government officials as well as French businessmen involved in trade with Libya lobbied throughout the conflict for accommodation with Tripoli, according to US Embassy reporting from Paris. Libya continues to provide about 4 percent of France's oil imports, while it purchases 10 percent of its weapons from French manufacturers. Although France partially suspended its arms trade with Libya at the beginning of the Chadian crisis, refusing to sell new and sophisticated weapons to Tripoli, it has continued to train Libyan pilots and repair Libyan aircraft.*

*During the past year, US Embassy reporting from Paris indicates that officials of both countries have*

*discussed future possibilities for wide-ranging exchanges in the fields of energy, agriculture, heavy industry, arms, and nuclear technology. In our judgment, Qadhafi is angling for more sophisticated arms systems from France while Paris would welcome the lucrative commercial and arms deals.*

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*Thus, when faced with the costs of its 15-month stalemate in Chad—over \$50 million in operating expenses in 1984 alone—and a setback to potential arms sales to Libya, the French decided to cut their losses in September 1984 in much the same way as in 1980. This left many francophone leaders wondering, whether France's old loyalties were not being replaced by newer, more lucrative connections.*

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*In our judgment, despite divisions within the French Government on how much support to give Habre, Mitterrand still appears committed to thwarting a Libyan takeover of N'Djamena. To protect the integrity of its security agreements with other francophone states, Paris is likely to intervene if Libya were to send troops across the 16th parallel. As time passes, however, we believe that economic considerations will make the French Government reluctant to send back troops or planes. Instead, Paris will try to arrive at a political solution in the form of a coalition government or compromise leader for Chad.*

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and the Socialist party victory. According to US Embassy and press reporting:

- President Houphouet, long one of Mitterrand's closest African allies and a personal friend, was outraged over the French withdrawal.
- President Mobutu, who had sent his own troops to support the N'Djamena government, openly rebuked Mitterrand during the French President's visit to Kinshasa in December 1984 and was angered over not having been consulted before the French withdrawal was announced.

- President Biya of Cameroon has complained privately that the impression of diminished French security support would clearly invite Libyan expansion throughout the region.
- To underscore these concerns, some francophone leaders boycotted last year's Franco-African summit in Burundi, according to press reports, and President Kountche went to Washington instead of to Bujumbura.

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- President Kolingba of Central African Republic has publicly chastised Mitterrand for the tragic consequences of Paris's abandonment of northern Chad to Libya.

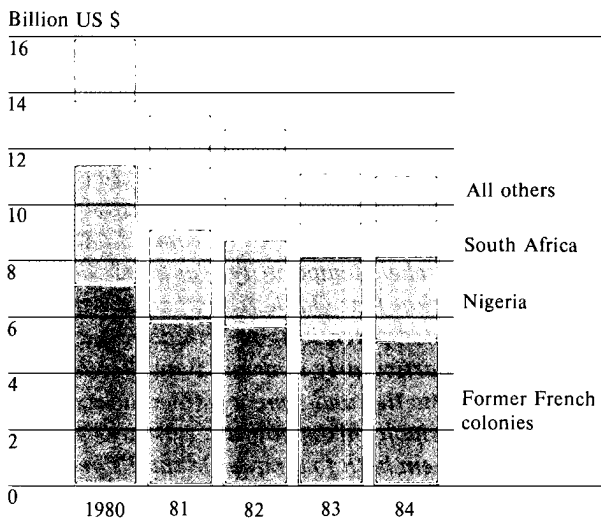
Now keenly aware that the Socialists are unlikely to win a parliamentary majority in the elections scheduled for next March, most francophone African leaders appear to be letting their relations with the Mitterrand administration drift. According to US Embassy reports, Presidents Diouf and Houphouet urged fellow delegates at a recent meeting of francophone heads of state to play down contacts with the Socialists until after the elections. Some African presidents, such as Houphouet and Gabon's Bongo, are hedging their bets, according to press reporting, maintaining close contact with conservative leader Jacques Chirac and other rightist candidates to succeed Mitterrand. US Embassy sources in Paris report that there are even signs that the old network of conservative interests in Paris, francophone leaders, and the rightist French expatriate communities in Africa, is again coming to life.

### Enduring Economic Ties

#### Examples of Interdependence

In our judgment, both France and its African partners continue to profit from the complex web of their economic relationships despite African political concerns. It is widely known that commercial distribution channels, sources of financing, product standards, and long-established personal ties tend to keep Franco-African economic and commercial relationships moving along a well-established track profitable to French businesses. Frenchmen in senior positions in many francophone governments traditionally use their influence to assist French firms in obtaining contracts. In Gabon and Ivory Coast, for example, French advisers use their influence to block non-French contracts, according to US Embassy sources. French companies frequently have as partners senior African government officials to ensure that their interests are protected. French import-export firms, shipping companies, and financial institutions are generally known to work together in francophone Africa for their mutual benefit. French investors receive substantial support

**Figure 2**  
**French Trade With**  
**Sub-Saharan Africa, 1980-84**



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from Paris in the form of government guarantees by the French Insurance Company for Foreign Trade (COFACE) and access to substantial amounts of concessional money. About half of all official French aid goes to African subsidiaries of French firms, according to press reports.

France, in turn, is dependent on the raw materials, strategic minerals, and oil it gets from its ex-colonies and other Sub-Saharan countries, according to US Embassy reports. Conflicts in the Middle East have prompted France gradually to seek other sources of petroleum, and by 1984, according to press reports, Africa furnished over a third of France's oil needs. More than 50 percent of this petroleum comes from the Sub-Saharan region, principally from Nigeria, along with Gabon, Cameroon, and Congo. In 1983, France imported over 80 percent of its copper and nickel ores, over 60 percent of its manganese, and 45

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**France's Aid Structure**

*The organizations within the French Government responsible for foreign assistance are complex and often overlap. Although this contributes to bureaucratic infighting, US Embassy sources in Paris indicate that it also creates a flexibility unparalleled among other donors. Most bilateral aid is disbursed through three channels: the Fond d'Aide et de Cooperation (FAC), the Caisse Centrale de Cooperation Economique (CCCE) and the French Treasury. Within budgetary limits set for the FAC and CCCE, funds can be shifted between countries and projects at the discretion of the government with no accounting to Parliament. There are other sources that also can be tapped on occasion. For example, according to US Embassy reporting from Paris, part of the French military operations in Chad were financed from the Prime Minister's special fund, and the President's African adviser was able to give Air Madagascar \$2 million from an unknown government source.*

that Paris provides nearly twice as much aid as the United States, although French GNP is only one-sixth that of the United States. In 1983—the latest year for which data are available—55 percent of all French bilateral aid went to Africa south of the Sahara. Over half of this aid was given for technical and cultural assistance—that included partial support for some 12,000 French technical assistants—a third supported investment, and the rest went for economic and financial aid that included nonproject assistance, balance-of-payments subsidies, and food assistance.

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The economic relationship between France and Africa is most fully realized in the franc zone—in our judgment, one of the few relatively effective experiments in international monetary and economic integration anywhere and one of the principal factors in the good economic performance of some of the francophone states. The zone provides a common monetary system for its members, overseen by French personnel and guided by French expertise through direct links with the French Central Bank and Treasury. The monetary system is administered jointly by two African monetary unions—the West African Monetary Union (UMOA) and the Bank of Central Africa (BEAC). Members of the franc zone can borrow from the French Central Bank at a token 1-percent interest and may in practice exceed their nominal lines of credit. The franc zone countries have overdraft privileges with the zone's central banks that show up as charges on the French treasury but not as budgetary expenditures. Any franc zone balance-of-payments deficits with the outside world are automatically folded in and financed along with the French balance-of-payments deficit. Furthermore, the franc zone states share a currency—the African Financial Community franc (CFAF)—that is fully convertible with the French franc (FF) and guaranteed by the French Government at a fixed rate of 50 CFAF to 1 FF. The convertibility of the franc zone currency facilitates international trade and foreign private investment.

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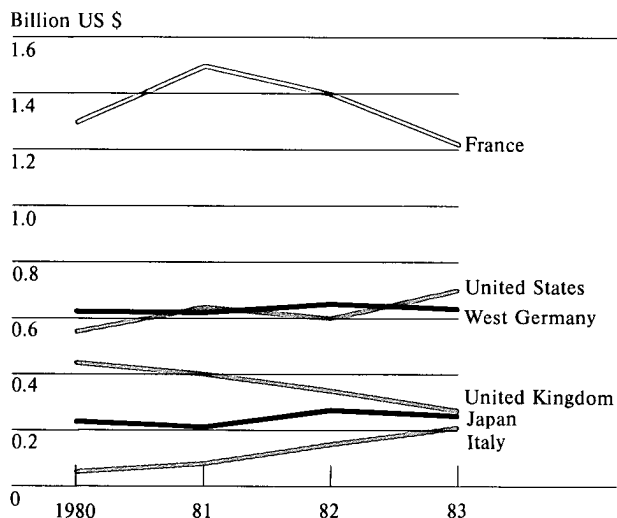
percent of its uranium from African countries, according to US Embassy reporting from Paris. Most of its bananas, cocoa, peanut oil, and substantial amounts of its cotton, coffee, and wood came from the zone as well. According to the most recent trade statistics, purchases of these commodities are on the rise. In exchange, France markets machinery and electrical appliances, transport equipment, chemicals, iron and steel, textiles, and other manufactured products.

We believe that the Mitterrand government appreciates that France's trade with francophone Africa is directly related to levels of French economic assistance. In our judgment, France's aid ultimately pays for imports of French goods by these states and for many years has, in effect, financed France's positive trade balance with the region.

French financial assistance is crucial to sustaining the fragile economies of many African states. According to OECD statistics, France is still by far the largest single source of aid—excluding emergency food assistance—for Sub-Saharan Africa. These figures show

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**Figure 3**  
Major Western Donors to Sub-Saharan Africa, 1980-83



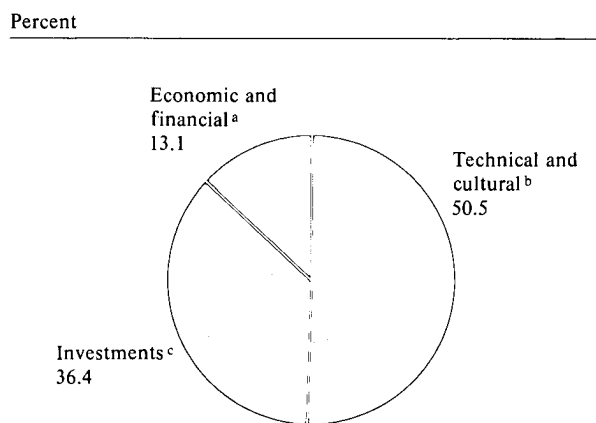
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Most of France's concessional assistance abroad goes to members of the franc zone, according to US Embassy reporting. Of the 96.8 percent of project loans that went to Sub-Saharan Africa between 1980 and 1984, 66.8 percent went to franc zone countries.

These benefits have prompted several African states during the past two years to consider joining the zone. Mali became a member in 1984 and, according to press reports, was able to write off a substantial debt to France as part of its initiation into the union because the French Treasury was anxious to shift the responsibility of keeping Mali's economy afloat to the franc zone collective. Gabon and Cameroon sponsored Equatorial Guinea's membership in 1985, hoping to facilitate regional trade and promote political stability. Press and Embassy reports indicate that Madagascar and Zaire have debated joining the community, and Guinea-Bissau and Sao Tome, desperate for financial support, have considered membership. The Gambia also is considering entry as part of its nascent

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**Figure 4**  
Distribution of French Aid to Sub-Saharan Africa, 1983



<sup>a</sup> Economic and financial aid includes non-project assistance, balance of payments support, and food aid.

<sup>b</sup> Technical assistance includes support, shared with host countries, for French technical advisors and teachers.

<sup>c</sup> Investment aid supports rural development projects and infrastructure.

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federation with Senegal. Discussions between Conakry and Paris have focused so far on the need for a thorough economic housecleaning as a precondition for joining the zone—beginning with devaluation and reorganization of Guinea's Central Bank, according to US Embassy sources.

**Emerging Economic Strains**

Despite the considerable benefits shared by both France and its francophone partners, the economic ties between them—like their political relations—have undergone unprecedented stress over the past few years. On the commercial side, the record shows that French investment and trade with Sub-Saharan Africa have fallen off during the last few years. According to customs' figures, France's balance of trade with francophone Africa that traditionally has shown a healthy surplus, declined during 1983 and 1984, and recorded a deficit for the first five months

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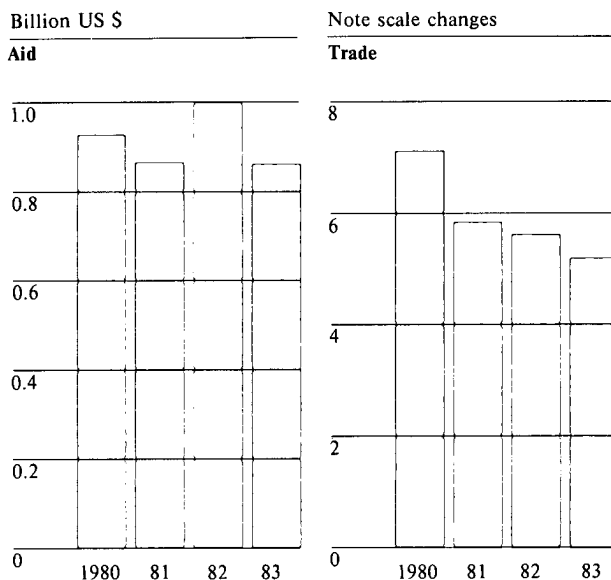
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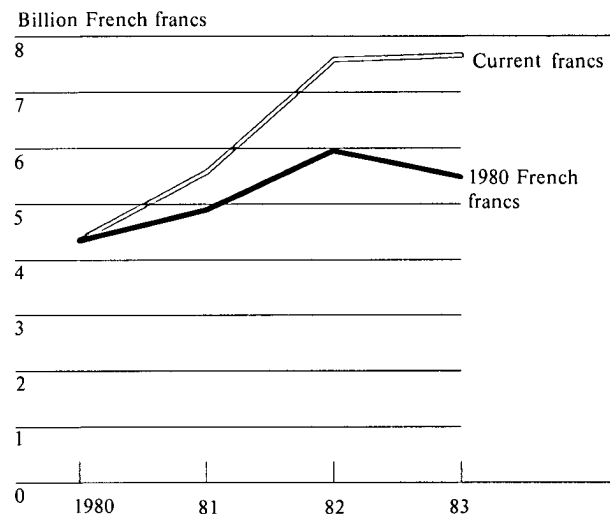
**Figure 5**  
**France: Aid and Trade With**  
**Former French Colonies, 1980-83**



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**Figure 6**  
**Value of French Aid to**  
**Sub-Saharan Africa, 1980-83**



[Redacted]

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of 1985. This downward trend, we believe, is worrisome for the French, and points to slower African markets for French-manufactured goods as well as increases in French purchases of African agricultural products and oil. [Redacted]

As commercial ties have declined, continued problems in the French economy have also forced Paris to cut back its financial outflows at a time when franco-phone Africa's financial needs, aggravated by drought, famine, unstable world markets, and escalating debt, are accelerating. Although aid totals reported by the OECD, expressed in French francs, increased between 1980 and 1983, the real value of French assistance rose only moderately between 1980 and 1982 and declined in 1983, the latest year for which there are published figures. According to US Embassy reporting from Paris, the real level has dropped even further in 1984-85. Moreover, the decline of the French franc has created problems for the zone in importing commodities, such as oil, that are denominated in dollars. For example, even though dollar oil prices dropped somewhat, the cost of a barrel of oil in francs rose from 121.1 FF in 1980 to 259.6 FF in 1985. [Redacted]

As a result of France's inability to maintain assistance and financial flows proportionate to its African clients' needs, Paris is adjusting and refining its aid programs to maximize their benefits for French political and commercial interests, according to US Embassy sources. For example, Paris is considering:

- A more flexible application of assistance, including budgetary aid and increasing use of structural adjustment loans.
- Cutbacks over the next three years estimated at 10 to 15 percent in the number of teachers and advisers jointly paid by France and host countries. The French will try to hold on to higher level positions where possible and will pay a larger portion of these salaries in order to do so.
- Softer terms for mixed credit loans—which combine government financing with that of private French banks—used to support French business ventures in

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Africa. In the past, such loans generally went to large investment projects in the wealthier developing countries. Since 1981 there has been a shift toward programs for the poorer LDCs, particularly in Africa. This type of assistance helps boost French trade by stipulating that necessary materiel must be procured in France or a franc zone country.

- Greater reliance on the overdraft account at the French Treasury for CFA countries to finance French imports and investments. [redacted]

As a result of diminishing resources, the French Government also is targeting its assistance more narrowly and is focusing on countries that have strong commercial assets, according to US Embassy sources in Paris. Almost all are in the franc zone, notably Ivory Coast, Senegal, and Cameroon. Others include Zaire, Mozambique, Madagascar, and recently, Guinea.<sup>3</sup> [redacted]

**French Expatriates in a Bind**

Cutbacks in French technical assistance programs, lower levels of trade between France and the francophone African countries, and world recession and the declining value of the French franc have taken their toll of France's prosperous expatriate communities in Africa. Although we do not have precise figures, several published sources indicate that the number of French living in Africa peaked around 1982 and since then has dropped sharply. For example, there were about 60,000 French citizens living in Ivory Coast three years ago. Today, the US Embassy reports, the French community has fallen to about half that number. According to press and US Embassy reporting, several thousand advisers and technicians have been repatriated during the past two years. Hundreds of French teachers and advisers returned from this year's long vacation in France to find pink slips on

<sup>3</sup> Direct economic considerations are not the only criteria for assistance, however. Djibouti, for example, is the fourth-largest recipient of French aid in francophone Africa, although its trade with France is negligible because of its location on Africa's east coast and proximity to the Middle East. France will increase this year's economic assistance program to Ouagadougou in an effort to forestall Soviet- and Libyan-backed subversion against Ivory Coast and other francophone states, according to US Embassy sources. [redacted]

their desks. Private businessmen also have left because of the worldwide recession in recent years that wiped out many small businesses and because of greater state control of the economy. By the end of last year, morale in the Ivorian French community had slumped so drastically that France's Minister of Cooperation, Christian Nucci, was sent to Abidjan to reassure the expatriates that Paris was mindful of their concerns, according to US Embassy sources. [redacted]

This Africanization to a large extent has been encouraged by the French Government, according to US Embassy sources, both for reasons of economy and security. Paris hopes to lower the French profile in Ivory Coast because popular resentment over the French community's prosperity might surface when new leaders attempt to cope with financial pressures and declining living standards. [redacted]

Nevertheless, the expatriate communities continue to play their traditionally important role in maintaining close French economic ties to the region. On the basis of press and academic publications, we estimate that about 200,000 French citizens—a fifth of all those living abroad—still live in Sub-Saharan Africa, with the largest concentrations in Ivory Coast and Gabon. We believe that the cumulative day-to-day influence of the French communities, particularly in the economic sector, still plays a substantial role in African governments' policies. [redacted]

**Wooing Non-Francophone Africa**

As levels of trade with francophone Africa decline, France has been aggressively pursuing financially profitable relations with other areas of the continent, a policy begun during the Giscard era. OECD figures indicate that within the last decade Nigeria and South Africa have become France's most important trade partners in Sub-Saharan Africa, because of French imports of Nigeria's high-quality oil and of Pretoria's strategic minerals, particularly manganese, titanium, coal, uranium, and chrome. French firms are also active in Angola, Zimbabwe, Kenya, and

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Mozambique and are expanding French access to Zaire's mineral wealth. In a sense, French interests are shifting to countries offering potential economic profit and away from states that are dependent on France for financial assistance. [redacted]

This shift has not gone unnoticed among France's francophone allies. For example, according to press reports, francophone leaders attending the Bujumbura summit did not hide their irritation at the participation of English-speaking countries in what was billed as a Franco-African forum. [redacted]

**Nigeria**

Nigeria is now the principal site of new French investment in black Africa, and France has replaced Britain as Lagos's largest trading partner, according to British and French trade statistics. Nearly 200 French firms are active in Nigeria, and over 4,000 French expatriates are living there. The US Embassy indicates that France is one of Nigeria's best customers; it bought \$2 billion worth of goods, mainly oil, in 1984, and is the second-largest supplier of Nigerian imports. A French company was the first European firm to negotiate a lucrative countertrade deal for a half billion dollars' worth of Nigerian oil, according to US Embassy sources. France also supplies military arms to Lagos. Nigerian Army Chief of Staff Babangida and Nigeria's Minister of Trade visited Paris earlier this year to discuss the further expansion of commercial relations and of the modest French military assistance program, according to press and US Embassy reporting. [redacted]

In our judgment, Franco-Nigerian political relations have not kept pace with the surging economic relationship. A number of outstanding political issues between the two countries remain unresolved. Resentment lingers in Nigeria's dominant northern region over France's support for Biafra during Nigeria's civil war in the late 1960s. Lagos still considers France its chief competitor for regional influence, and the two countries have taken conflicting positions over Nigeria's border quarrels with its francophone neighbors. Nevertheless, we believe Lagos regards France's military presence in West Africa as an effective brake to Libya's expansionist ambitions in the area and, as a

result, has dropped for the present its usual complaints about French neocolonialism. We believe that Lagos also appreciates France's usefulness as a major customer for its oil while Nigeria desperately seeks export revenues to bolster its staggering economy. [redacted]

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**South Africa**

We believe the continuity of French policies toward South Africa with those of past French governments has been particularly striking. As in Nigeria, political relations are poor while economic ties flourish. Despite criticism by French officials of South African racial policies, US Embassy reporting shows that Paris until recently has carefully insulated substantial French-South African commercial ties—presently estimated in the press and US Embassy reporting from Paris at \$1.6 billion—from political fallout. Although in 1983 the Mitterrand government banned new nuclear contracts to South Africa, it has defended French companies' participation in the controversial Koeberg nuclear reactor construction project under old agreements and approved large purchases of South African coal and uranium by state-owned companies to meet French energy needs, according to press and US Embassy reporting. We believe that, in spite of the UN arms embargo, South Africa has been able to obtain spare parts for its Mirage fighters and French-built helicopters on the international market. [redacted]

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France's freeze on new investments in South Africa, announced in July, is unlikely to have significant impact on either economy, according to US Embassy reporting from Pretoria. The size of French investment is small—between 5 and 7 percent of total foreign investment in South Africa. Although local South African operations of one or two large French companies may lose some business, the US Embassy believes trade between the two countries will be unaffected, in particular French coal purchases. [redacted]

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**Zaire**

US Embassy reporting from Kinshasa indicates that, despite his anger at France's precipitous withdrawal from Chad last year, President Mobutu has welcomed

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an increasingly active French presence in Zaire. French trade and financial support serve to reduce Zaire's dependence on Belgium—the former colonial power—and Paris's military support is a significant factor in maintaining the stability of Mobutu's regime. The French Government has wooed Mobutu in order to assure access to Zaire's mineral wealth—and because it recognizes Zaire's importance to the stability of central Africa. Over the past two years, French Government-financed exports to Zaire have been growing steadily. [redacted]

A key element in the Franco-Zairian relationship, according to US Embassy reporting, is French command of Zaire's 31st Parachute Brigade, one of two elite units in the Zairian armed forces. In September 1986, the French are scheduled to form and start training another parachute unit. There are over 100 French military advisers in Zaire, although the military budget is modest—10 million FF in 1985—and the French rely heavily on equipment and support provided by the United States and other donors. [redacted]

**A Continuing Military Presence**

As France's traditional economic and financial linkages with francophone Africa have declined, changes also have occurred on the military side. Perhaps the biggest jolt to these relations over the last few years was Mitterrand's withdrawal of troops from Chad last year without ensuring Libya would do the same. Despite French officials' efforts to reassure the Africans of their continuing support, doubts remain both in Africa and France—in view of France's handling of the crisis in Chad—about the Socialist government's willingness or even capability to respond decisively to a major military challenge in Africa. A variety of press and other published accounts indicate that many francophone Africans are coming to view France's military role in Africa as inadequate to the region's security needs. The governments of Ivory Coast and Cameroon, for example, fear for their security, particularly because of Libyan ambitions in the area, according to US Embassy and press reporting. [redacted]

In our judgment, although it will continue to have a substantial military presence in Africa for the near

future, financially strained Paris is in the process of lowering its costs in the region. Increasingly, this will limit the possibilities for direct military intervention. Although we believe a direct military threat to Paris's economic and strategic interests, such as an attack on French personnel and property, would provoke the French to a limited military response—namely, a police action or temporary increase in military assistance—we believe the French will try at all costs to find political solutions to the region's security problems, even at the expense of traditional ties and loyalties. [redacted]

Since its ex-colonies became independent, France has carefully limited the scope and objectives of its intervention capability in Africa. As US Embassy reporting from Paris indicates, military intervention has been regarded as a limited tool to be used sparingly, not as a normal means of policy implementation. The objectives of a military intervention have been narrowly defined by conservative governments as well as the Socialists, and precise time limits set to avoid open-ended situations. Following these prescriptions, military intervention can be used only to stabilize a situation, not impose solutions. Furthermore, although on paper France's 47,000-man Rapid Deployment Force (FAR) is ready for deployment in Africa, its effective strength consists of one parachute and one marine infantry division. These units are hampered, according to US officials, by a lack of logistic support that would take time and as yet unavailable financial resources to assemble. [redacted]

Nevertheless, President Mitterrand has gone on record that France will honor its existing military agreements. We believe France's economic interests, large French expatriate communities, a nostalgic pride in its great power status in the region, and compelling strategic concerns continue to dictate a significant military role for French military assistance training in Africa. Furthermore, the French Government depends on its African air and naval bases to protect and service its fleets in the South Atlantic and Indian Oceans. The French Indian Ocean Squadron, based at Djibouti and Reunion, is the largest permanent Western naval presence in the Indian Ocean.

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The French use facilities both in Djibouti and Dakar to monitor Soviet activities in the region, and Djibouti is a vital connecting link between France's Mediterranean forces and the sophisticated communications center at its base on Reunion. [redacted]

Francophone Africa also has an important stake in the military relationship. The French security umbrella has protected ruling African elites and extensive French commercial interests since independence from both domestic dissidents and the ambitions of neighboring governments.<sup>4</sup> Influential members of African military establishments still welcome the presence of French troops as a deterrent to security threats and support to the local military command. France maintains 1,500 troops in central Africa to back up its pledge to limit Libyan expansion in the region. In Ivory Coast, the French military presence serves as a deterrent to politically ambitious Ivorians—among them the military—who might wish to challenge Houphouet's prolonged rule. [redacted]

About 13,000 French military personnel are stationed in Sub-Saharan Africa, the majority at military bases in Senegal, Ivory Coast, Gabon, Central African Republic, Djibouti, and the Indian Ocean territories of Reunion and Mayotte. Military assistance missions are located in 23 African states. Although the number of French military advisers in Africa has declined from nearly 3,000 in 1960 to some 1,300 today, this has been offset by the presence of nearly 3,000 Africans training in France. An extensive network of personal contacts between African and French military personnel that developed during the postindependence period remains strong, solidified by training and joint maneuvers held at regular intervals in the

<sup>4</sup> French forces have intervened in Africa more often than those of any other outside power—at least 19 times in the past 28 years, according to academic sources. These interventions have occurred where French economic or strategic interests are strongest. The French have been called in by host governments to repel invasions from neighboring countries (as in Chad in 1984 and Zaire in 1978); to protect Western nationals and business interests (in Chad); to mount air operations against insurgents (in Mauritania and Chad); and to provide a government with security protection at the time of independence (Djibouti in 1977). Paris, however, acted on its own initiative, engineering the overthrow of Emperor Bokassa of the Central African Empire in 1979—probably as much because of Bokassa's flirtation with the Libyans as the savagery of his rule, which was the official reason for intervention. [redacted]

African states. The emphasis of French military assistance has shifted from day-to-day command and basic training to provision of advanced training in France, often related to sales of complex hardware to the African states. France provides major weapon systems to Zaire and most of its former colonies except Benin, Congo, Guinea, Madagascar, and Mali, which are supplied by the Soviet Union. [redacted]

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Until this year, the Mitterrand government has steadily increased military aid to Sub-Saharan Africa in absolute terms and as a proportion of Paris's total foreign assistance budget. Although information is still incomplete, the 1985 budget cut military spending for Africa by about 8 to 10 percent as part of a general government austerity program. According to US Embassy sources, cuts are being made by reducing equipment deliveries rather than the numbers of French military personnel in Africa and Africans training in France. [redacted]

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**Outlook**

In our judgment, the francophone African states have little choice but to continue to look to Paris as a principal source of military and economic support. French financial aid to the poorer francophone countries, such as Niger, the Central African Republic, Burkina, and Djibouti, will remain vital to their survival. We see no other Western donor at present willing to step in and assume France's role in propping up some of the world's poorest countries. For the wealthier states, such as Ivory Coast, Cameroon, and Gabon, we believe the need for a French military and economic presence will remain strong. Ruling elites will continue to worry over the Libyan threat to the region's stability. We judge they would oppose any effort by Paris to reduce the presence of French troops, which the African leaders view as an important deterrent to local unrest. Although French involvement in these more developed economies has diminished, we believe they will still be expected to play an essential role, given the lack of adequate African capital or skilled personnel. [redacted]

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**Figure 7**  
**The French Military Presence in Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa**

Former French Colonies	French Bases	Defense Agreements	Joint Military Maneuvers	Assistance Agreements	Military Advisers
Djibouti	●	●	●	●	●
Gabon	●	●	●	●	●
Ivory Coast	●	●	●	●	●
Senegal	●	●	●	●	●
Cameroon		●	●	●	●
Central African Republic	●	●		●	●
Togo		●	●	●	●
Chad			●	●	●
Mauritania				●	●
Niger				●	●
Burkina				●	●
Benin				●	●
Congo				●	●
Madagascar				●	●
Mali				●	●
Guinea				●	●
Other					
Burundi				●	●
Guinea-Bissau				●	
Rwanda				●	●
Comoros		●		●	●
Mauritius				●	●
Seychelles				●	●
Mayotte	●				
Reunion	●				
Zaire			●	●	●

We expect France will continue to place priority on economic concerns, even if it means reducing its pressure on Libya to honor its commitment to withdraw from Chad. Both Mitterrand and Qadhafi probably will move to expand their mutual economic and arms supply relationship for commercial benefit and in order to increase the political leverage each hopes to establish over the other. We believe France's principal concern now is to deter Qadhafi from increasing his challenge to French interests elsewhere in Africa, in the Caribbean, and in the South Pacific.

As a result, we believe that France in time could drop withdrawal of Libyan troops from Chad as a precondition for expanding relations with Tripoli—unless Qadhafi offers a flagrant provocation. Both Mitterrand and Foreign Minister Dumas have insisted publicly that France will intervene if Libyan troops cross the 16th parallel in Chad. Other possibilities, however, remain open to Qadhafi that might not require a French response, including subversion of the Habre government by Libyan-backed rebels moving in from the north, south, and east.

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We do not expect major shifts in France's current African policies if a government of the right or a centrist coalition wins next year's legislative assembly elections. Public opinion polls indicate that a Socialist victory is unlikely. A consensus seems to be forming, according to press reports, that the centrist *Union Pour la Democratie* (UDF) of ex-President Giscard, together with the rightist *Rassemblement pour la Republique* (RPR), led by Jacques Chirac and favored by conservative French expatriates in Africa, probably will achieve a working majority in parliament. African policy, however, is unlikely to be an issue in the French elections, according to US Embassy reporting. Despite public criticism of Mitterrand's abrupt withdrawal from Chad, French popular interest in Africa is waning, and attention is focusing on European politics and domestic economic issues, according to the Embassy. [redacted]

We believe Mitterrand will try to work out a division of authority that leaves foreign and defense policy to the President and domestic affairs to the Prime Minister. In any event, there are virtually no major differences on African policy between the principal parties, according to the US Embassy. US diplomats speculate, however, that the election of a more conservative government in Paris next year may increase France's possessiveness toward its African sphere of influence and might encourage a more confrontational, nationalist rhetoric toward Libya in the Sub-Saharan region. Such a posture, in our view, would still be tempered by the domestic economic constraints and commercial ties to Libya that have faced the Mitterrand government over the past four years. In our judgment, the government's options will be limited further by a lack of critical military equipment—reconnaissance satellites and aircraft or heavy transport—to back up a more aggressive stance toward Qadhafi. [redacted]

Over the coming months, francophone governments will continue to allow their relations with France to drift, in our view, hoping that a new government in Paris will adopt new policies more favorable to their interests. Additional French concessions to Tripoli would further erode francophone leaders' confidence in French resolve and increase pressures on African governments in the region to seek accommodation

with Libya. The weakest regimes, particularly those in the Sahel that are physically closer to Libya, are likely to find Qadhafi's blandishments more difficult to resist and may be less willing to support the West on issues that might offend Tripoli. [redacted]

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African uneasiness over too great a dependence on France is certain to increase as the present generation of leaders committed to a French role in Africa passes on and is replaced by a more nationalistic elite. Economic problems in Africa and declining living standards are likely to increase pressures for Africanization as this new elite seeks the privileges and power enjoyed by French expatriates. [redacted]

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In the economic sphere, as well as the military, we believe, rising costs of French economic assistance will be more difficult to sustain as Paris attempts to cope with its economic slowdown. The French Government, we believe, will continue to pare down its technical assistance programs; and, because of uncertainty over their long-term economic payoff, we believe France will shy away from funding costly prestige development programs, such as the Kribi liquefied natural gas project in Cameroon and the Konkoure hydroelectric project in Guinea. [redacted]

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#### Implications for the United States

Although the Mitterrand government has demonstrated its commitment to a French presence in Africa as an essential element in preserving French prestige and influence on the world stage, Paris is aware of its inability to fund this presence alone. Increasingly, we believe, French officials will invite US participation in meeting the economic and military assistance needs of the francophone states. Already they have sought US help in Chad and in three of France's most important African outposts—Ivory Coast, Senegal, and Djibouti. In fact, we believe US and other Western assistance is essential to the overall goals of the French Government's African policies. [redacted]

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In our view, however, such cooperation with the United States will have built-in elements of stress. We believe that French attitudes toward the US role in

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Africa remain ambivalent, and the government is likely to keep a wary eye on US activities there. Many French officials and expatriate businessmen suspect that Washington intends to supplant France's influence in Africa. A clear-cut victory of the center-right might intensify French resistance to the access by other states to commercial contracts and market protection. In that case, Paris is likely to attempt to diminish African dialogue with the United States. Although these aspects of French thinking will continue to make France a demanding and often difficult ally, they also are likely to have the more positive effect of reinforcing France's willingness to maintain its military and economic commitments to Africa. The French suspect that any slackening of their commitment would drive the Africans to look elsewhere—to the United States or to Eastern Bloc countries—for support. [redacted]

In our view, the French Government probably will continue to see both tactical and long-term advantages to cooperating with the United States in Africa but will look at each situation with a view to preserving the primacy of French interests. While welcoming US support in many cases, French administrators in Africa almost certainly will want to control decision-making at the policy level. In Senegal, for instance, the French have a long-established interest in the structure of centralized, state-run economy and are resisting pressures from other donors for privatization and dismemberment of state-run institutions. [redacted]

Any decision by Paris to undertake fundamental cuts in its financial and military commitments in Sub-Saharan Africa would prompt an intensified campaign by francophone leaders to find substitute partners. Already they are looking to the United States for substantial increases in its economic assistance. As indicated by urgent appeals last year by Houphouet and others for US military intervention in Chad, Washington is very likely to be approached about increasing its role in the region as well. The Africans also will try to enlist US help in persuading the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to increase their assistance programs and soften their terms. [redacted]

In fact, it is very likely that the Africans' needs and expectations will exceed the abilities of France, the United States, and the international organizations to respond. In this situation, there will be growing temptation for some frustrated African leaders to be critical of US policy and business interests. To a limited extent, this atmosphere will encourage and facilitate non-Western activity in the region. [redacted]

The Libyans, for example, are already trying to take advantage of politically and economically weak countries in the region—especially those with sizable Muslim populations. Libyan leader Qadhafi has emphasized publicly his view that France is "finished" in Africa and that Tripoli will succeed Paris as the principal source of influence in the region. Already there are indications—such as Libyan Foreign Minister's visits to several West African countries and the opening of Libyan Call Society offices in the region—that Libya is using a more active diplomacy to expand its influence. Moscow, for its part, might try to fill any vacuum left by France with offers of military aid on favorable terms. Soviet efforts, however, probably will continue to concentrate on extending long-term credits for weapons purchases and military training, rather than trying to match the level of economic aid now given by France. [redacted]

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