

# The impact of French foreign policy towards Africa on the external migration policy of the European Union

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**Abstract** This article analyses France's foreign policy towards Africa from a realist perspective. It identifies how this policy creates a state of inequality in terms of Franco-African relations through the *Francafrique* system and how the long-term policy's consequences have led to negative impacts on the European Union's External Migration Policy towards the world's poorest continent. This inequality in terms of Franco-African relations is explained from the perspective of other theories including the Dependency theory and Capital System that highlight inequality between the Global South and the Western world. As a result, it is highly important to examine the volumes of illegal migrant flows to the European territories crossing the Mediterranean Sea from the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Francophone countries to understand how the EU's External Migration Policy is impacted by the foreign policy adopted by one of the most powerful players in the international system and EU's member states towards Africa.

## Introduction

In this article, the impacts of French foreign policy towards Africa on the European Union's external migration policy will be analysed. The examination of France's foreign policy vis-à-vis Africa will be mainly from a realist perspective to understand the factors shaping this policy after the colonial era. To understand the connection between the two policies, the interrelated impacts will be examined through reports and data on irregular migrants heading to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea.

The overall purpose of this research paper is to highlight the French foreign policy towards the African continent, especially the region of Francophone Africa during and after the decolonization era in the 1960s. It is important to conceptualize and analyze France's foreign policy vis-à-vis Africa from a theoretical framework and different approaches. For this reason, it is necessary to highlight the theoretical dimensions of foreign policy in general before focusing on French foreign policy towards Africa and the historical background of the African-French relationships.

After World War II, Charles De Gaulle founder of the 5<sup>th</sup> Republic decided to adopt a new model of foreign policy towards Africa to defend the interests of Paris in the continent. In this context, the *Francafrique* system was founded as the neo-colonialist policy of France toward the poorest continent in the world and as the most important tool in shaping the foreign policy of France towards Africa. It is necessary to conceptualize this policy from the perspectives of International Relations Theories such as realist theory and other theories to understand the roots of inequality between the Global South and the West and the origins of French foreign policy towards Africa based on political and economic factors through the adoption of the *Francafrique* System. Additionally, the factors shaping the French foreign policy towards Africa shall be examined empirically to understand the impacts of the *Francafrique* system on the EU's external migration policy.

Furthermore, the French foreign policy towards Africa is an important factor in understanding the economic underdevelopment of French former colonies such as the Sahel countries and other Sub-Saharan Francophone countries like Guinea Conakry. As many European political public figures have declared, this policy is seen as an obstacle to the economic development of African countries. As a result, Francophone nationals are under pressure to leave their countries and migrate illegally to France and other EU member states to live in better conditions. With the developments after the Arab Spring, the problem of irregular migrants has come to the fore and has become an important issue the EU has to deal with.

Methodologically, this research is based on the qualitative analysis of primary and secondary data sources including interviews, official documents, policy statements, and reports. Moreover, the theoretical analysis in this research is mainly based on the realist approach to highlight the inequality in terms of Franco-African relations based on which the impacts of *Francafrique* policies on the EU's external migration policy will be examined.

Consequently, this research tends to examine the credibility of a hypothesis stating that France's foreign policy towards Africa, driven by realist considerations of power, security, and national interest, creates an unequal relationship between France and African countries, as manifested through the system of *Francafrique*. This inequality in Franco-African relations, exacerbated by global dynamics highlighted by theories such as the Dependency theory and the Capital System, has negative repercussions on the EU's External Migration Policy, specifically in terms of illegal migrant flows from Sahel and Sub-Saharan Francophone countries crossing the Mediterranean Sea to European territories.

## Foreign policy behaviours of states and international policy in terms of Realist Theory

Generally, foreign policy refers to the way how a state shall interact with other global actors. While in the nowadays complex world order, this definition has several limitations since there is no precise definition of foreign policy. It is somehow seen as a complex system of actions and agencies aimed to alter the behaviour of other states and allow their state to adapt to the global environment. Foreign policy is a boundary issue between the international environment and domestic politics. Understanding foreign policy requires creating a mixture of the knowledge of political science related to domestic policies and the International Relations discipline related to international politics. Therefore, foreign policy plays the role of a bridge between the nation-state and its international environment (Tayfur, 1994, p. 115).

Theoretically, realist political scientists emphasize the importance of national interest in shaping any state's foreign policy. They assume that the national interest assures all the dimensions of power such as the state's survival, security, and well-being. For example, according to Morgenthau, the foreign policy of the United States is based on two main major interests: maintaining its security and dominance in the Western Hemisphere and maintaining the balance of power in Europe. According to the realists, the US shapes its foreign policy on these two axes. Therefore, realists claim that in such an international system, where there is no higher authority to which individuals can turn whenever they get into trouble, the States intend to strengthen their forces and there is no way for cooperation among them due to the dominance of mistrust. As a result, realist foreign policy is generally based on external factors, and actions of other states since they are the only actors in the international system (Morgenthau, 1954, p. 20).

The achievement of national interests is the main purpose of states in the anarchic international system since it is the only way for them to survive in this system of mistrust and non-confidence. Therefore, the States are to avoid falling into a case of military weakness since military power is necessary for their survival (Waltz, 1959, p. 160). For realists, the absence of a higher authority is the source of international anarchy. As a result, the maximization of power is the priority of any state to defend its interests. In such a case, there is no way to cooperate among the international system's unique actors since they usually see themselves in a mistrustful situation. For this reason, the neorealist theorists highlight the concept of structural anarchy referring to the argument of Kenneth Waltz asserting that the States have only a chance to enhance their power to survive under the given circumstances. This behaviour of states reflects the logical result of the anarchic nature of the international system and even the approach of structural realism (Waltz, 1959, p. 40).

In parallel with this approach, the realists emphasize the violation of moral norms by the powerful States. The States tend to comply sometimes with moral norms without taking into consideration the cost of non-compliance. For this reason, despite the state of international anarchy, in some instances, the States can afford to be moral such as in the case of spreading democracy or combating preventable childhood diseases that may be certainly costly. Realists argue that politicians and even ordinary citizens in democratic states tend to exaggerate the pursuit of moral

interests. According to them, there should be a balance between moral interests and immoral interests in the adoption of foreign policy. In other words, decision-makers must weigh the costs and benefits of pursuing all relevant interests alike. Therefore, foreign policy must be based on a rational calculation of benefits and costs (Burchill, 2005, pp. 49–50).

Realists have turned to arguments against moral goals. According to George Kennan, a US realist diplomat and the father of the “containment doctrine”, the primary obligation of any government is to protect the interests of the national community it represents. Therefore, it does not have to be bound by moral rules. In this context, he warned of the negative aspects of the American moralist-legal tradition. The field of International Relations is anarchic, it is a futile effort for states to try to maintain international order. For Kennan, the national interest is paramount, the “inevitable necessity”, therefore he claims that it is not a subject to classification as either “good” or “bad”. For example, there is no reason to judge the international political behaviour of the States if it requires national interest. It is a ‘necessity’ regardless of physical or logical compulsion (Burchill, 2005, pp. 49–50).

Joseph Nye, one of the pioneers of neoliberal theory, focused on the moral views impacting the foreign policies adopted by the American administrations. Nye takes a more flexible approach to morality in shaping policy. He argues that it is pointless to claim that ethics will have no role in foreign policy debates. For Nye, it is necessary to accept that moral reasoning is used to judge and evaluate a state’s foreign policy, and political scientists and thinkers should learn how to use this reasoning better in terms of analysis (Nye, 2020). It is not true to state that the struggle for survival is identical to the struggle for power but the international system and its structure push the States to behave according to the dictates of realism. However, many moral foreign policy objectives pose no risk to national survival (Burchill, 2005, p. 51).

Constructivists have a different point of view from the realist paradigm. For instance, Alexander Wendt accepts the existence of an international field of anarchy but interprets it from a different perspective (Wendt, 1999, p. 2). For constructivists, identities and interests are the most important tools for shaping the State’s behaviour. In the case of compatibility of the structure of identities and interests, the States can find an environment to cooperate. On the other hand, the incompatibility of interests and identities would produce competition and in some cases, conflicts that can be intensified and lead to wars (Weber, 2005, p. 66). For this reason, it can be understood that constructivism builds a bridge between realism and liberalism. As a result, the realist paradigm offers a meaningful theoretical framework for analyzing France’s foreign policy towards some African countries (its former colonies).

## Key characteristics of French foreign policy towards Africa

France historically has been one of the imperial superpowers. For this reason, the analysis of its foreign policy towards Africa, as it was one of the most important regions for France during the colonial era, is defined by a variety of factors. The Berlin Conference of 1884-5 was a major turning point for the start of European colonial history and new imperialism in Africa (Iliffe,

2007, p. 195). France tends to maintain a foreign policy toward Africa based on a realist approach since the colonial period focusing mainly on its national interests. The signs of French appetite for Africa came into existence with the establishment of a trade port on the West African coast at St. Louis in Senegal in 1848 (Sıradag, 2014, p. 101).

After the period of decolonization of French Africa, which coincided with the era of the Cold War, France had to maintain its relations with Africa. For this reason, several agreements were enacted with many African Francophone countries, various military interventions started, and financial assistance policies have been adopted. France decided to adopt a strategy of economic cooperation with the African Francophone countries to carry on its colonial policy. The political and economic interests of the Elysee are the main basis of the French foreign policy towards Africa (Sıradag, 2014, p. 101).

Generally, French foreign policy is based mainly on three principles. The first principle is the Independence of Action which is preeminent in terms of shaping a foreign policy independently from the behaviours of other superpowers in the international arena and without many preventive restrictions (Tiritilli, 2017, pp. 22–26). The second one is mainly based on the position of France in the biggest international organization. The permanent membership of France in the United Nations Security Council is one of the most important factors of the influence of France internationally since it allows it to be autonomous and use the right of veto to oppose any decision that is not compatible with the French interests. The third principle is the Europeanization process. In this sense, France needs to move forward with the European project to form a European coalition (De Galbert, 2015).

France's foreign policymakers towards Africa tend to adopt a realistic perspective. This approach shapes the African policy of France. Moreover, many realist factors shape the foreign policy of Paris. The understanding of French foreign policy requires the division of French national interests into three categories. The first factor that shapes French foreign policy is mainly political. The interventions of France in several African countries have been sometimes welcomed by some regimes protected by Paris but they have also been the subject of controversy and rough criticism and seen as neo-colonialist interference in the internal affairs of these countries such as the case of the intervention in Ivory Coast launched at the request of the UN Secretary-General to help enforce respect for the result of an election. This French intervention was roughly criticized by the supporters of Laurent Gbagbo who was forced out of power (Melly and Darracq, 2013, p. 11).

The second category is based on economic factors. Africa is the most important region for France economically. Recently, countries like China and other rising economic powers have started significantly increasing their presence and strengthening their positions in the African continent. The Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flowing from France to Africa reached over \$19 billion in 2014 according to the report of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development on world investment (Zhan, 2015).

During the beginning of the decolonization process, France established two banks to deal with the monetary policy and currency management of the Francophone countries. The economies

of Eight West African countries are under the control of the French Central Bank managing the West African CFA franc which was pegged to the value of the French franc and is currently pegged to the Euro (Mensah, 1979, p. 55).

The third category is fundamentally based on French national security and is deeply tied to the stability of Africa not only because of its historical and economic ties but also due to its geographical proximity. After the decolonization era, France enacted several bilateral treaties with its former colonies. These treaties are to pledge various degrees of military support to confront external and internal threats while some of those treaties remain state secrets (Hansen, 2007).

The map (Figure 1) shows the former French colonies in Africa. All of the countries shown in red are countries of the Sahel and Sub-Saharan countries. The five countries of Sahel are French Sudan (Mali), Mauritania, Niger, Upper Volta (Burkina Faso), and Chad. All of these countries gained their independence in the 1960s. While the general decolonization process in Africa did not end until the 1970s. The period of the 1960s was known as a post-colonial era during which several cooperation agreements were signed between the former African colonies and France under the leadership of De Gaulle. During and after the Cold War, France's relations with Africa, which it sees as its backyard, were based on the *Francafrique* system (Sıradag, 2014, p. 102).

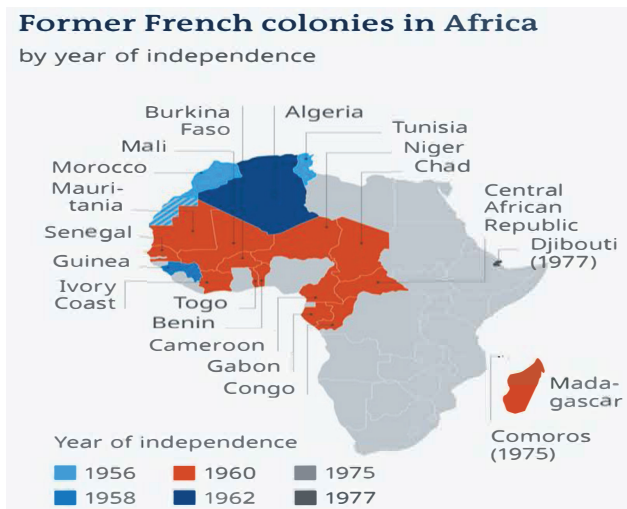


Figure 1. The Map of Former French Colonies in Africa

Source: *Deutsche Welle* (2020).

Within this context, the foreign policy of France toward Africa is based on a realist approach since nearly all of the French administrations in the period of the 1960s adopted a neo-colonial policy towards their former colonies. This policy creates a kind of inequality and an enormous gap between a rich France and a poor Africa. The French former colonies were forced to import

French goods at expensive prices compared to other exporters. While those countries export raw materials to France cheaply (Hrituleac, 2011, p. 36). The lack of balance in the economic cooperation between France as a member state of the European Union and the African Francophone countries had not only led to a huge gap regarding income and development between France and Africa but also to the failure of the EU's financial aid for the African countries and even for the illegal migrants' transit countries such as Morocco and Tunisia (Yıldız, 2016, p. 157). Therefore, the immense gap between a rich France and a poor continent is a logical result of the *Francafrique* policies.

In this case, it is important to focus on the World System and the Dependency approaches in order to understand the nature of this system which can be understood from these two theories' perspectives. These two interrelated theories criticize the unequal relations of Western countries with the Third World countries since the 1960s (Smith, 1979, p. 248). The Dependency theory highlights the traces of colonialism. According to this theory, the backwardness of the Third World countries is mainly related to the economic success of developed countries. The lack of development of these countries can be understood by looking at their historical processes, not their internal dynamics. Non-Western societies, as colonies or semi-colonies, had to struggle with problems such as civil wars and coups under the intervention of Western states. Political interventions are the main reasons for the political instability in these countries. The main reason for the wealth of developed countries is their exploitation of underdeveloped countries. World System Theory was influenced by Marxism and developed by the political scientist Immanuel Wallerstein. According to this theory, there are certain divisions of labour between the developed core countries and the underdeveloped peripheral countries. The role of the environment in this division of labour is to supply the core countries with raw materials and cheap labour. This dependency relationship would hinder the development of underdeveloped countries. For this reason, the foreign policies of developing and underdeveloped countries are not adopted independently. Accordingly, developed countries have intense political control over undeveloped countries (Mansbach & Rafferty, 2008, p. 581).

Within the same framework, the Italian political scientist Dario Battistella focuses mainly on the keys of capitalism that tend to create economic inequality and the huge gap between the global south such as the exportation of capital, the domination of monopolies, and the share of global territories among the world's superpowers. These keys shall help us understand the function of *Francafrique* in the Francophone countries (Battistella, 2012, p. 261).

Given the colonial circumstances, the realist approach dominated the foreign policy of France towards Africa during the Cold War era. France expanded its sphere of influence over Africa through military interventions and other plans of the *Francafrique*. During this period, Franco-African relations have been defined by neo-colonial dimensions (Martin, 2000, p. 4). The concept of 'Neo-Colonialism' was defined for the first time at the All-African People's Conference held in Cairo in 1961. The definition was as follows: "The survival of the colonial system despite the formal recognition of political independence in emerging countries which become the



victims of an indirect and subtle form of domination by political, economic, social, military or technical means” (Smith, 2003, p. 76).

Despite the dominance of the realist approach to the foreign policy of France, it is important to focus on the constructivist dimension of this policy as well. From this perspective, France tends to maintain its historical relations with its former colonies throughout the establishment of the International Organization of *La Francophonie* (L’Organisation Internationale de La Francophonie). The OIF aims to develop the historical relations of France with the francophone countries through the spread of language and maintaining the French identity in the region. Moreover, this organization tends to organize summits held every two years with the attendance of the Heads of State and the governments of member states (Siradag, 2014, p. 105).

### ***Francafrique* as the most important tool of French foreign policy towards Africa**

The *Francafrique* System is a preeminent issue to analyze since it is one of the most effective factors shaping the foreign policy of France towards Francophone Africa. The system of *Francafrique* is the neo-colonialist policy of France toward the poorest continent in the world and a network of political and public figures and companies that tend to work in Francophone Africa to serve French interests. This network was established by Charles De Gaulle in 1961 although the real designer of *Francafrique* was Jacques Foccart (Verschave, 2006).

*Francafrique* is a French tool or a stick by which the French Republic started a new process of colonial governance in the world’s poorest continent. The aspects of this tool did not emerge until the mid-1990s with the emergence of the *ELF* incident. The company *ELF* was founded in 1967 and tended to target Africa as a private oil and mining company. After the independence of Algeria, the company was deprived of oil revenues in the North African country. In this case, France needed to find alternative resources. Therefore, *ELF* started using the network knitted by Foccart for many years not only in the Francophone African countries but also in non-French former colonies like Angola to look for new resources. De Gaulle appointed Defense Minister Pierre Guillaumat to head the company which has implemented many “secret service” activities such as bribery, corruption, financing of governments, interference in the appointment of high officials, and infiltrating state bodies. The distorted political-economic system that France established in Africa through *ELF*, was exposed in the first half of the 1990s due to the “sharing fight” of the company’s senior management. For instance, *ELF* supported the president of Congo Denis Sassou Nguesso between 1979 and 1991 despite his Marxist orientations. Moreover, *ELF* helped him to return to power in 1997 after overthrowing Pascal Lissouba who started cooperating with American companies (Gaston-Breton, 2006). The emergence of the *ELF* incident in 1997 has demonstrated the real face of France in Africa and the nature of its foreign policy towards the region, especially towards its previous colonies (Vampouille, 2011).

For more than one century, twenty African countries were under French colonization. However, the French hegemony in Africa started drawing back with the emergence of several movements of Liberation and resistance by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. In this case, France had to adopt



a new strategy to launch a new process of colonialism in the name of deepening the historical relationships with Africa. By 1958, Charles De Gaulle accessed power again and the fifth Republic was founded. De Gaulle proposed independence for fourteen African countries by 1960. He was tending to adopt a strategy to make Africa fall into another process of colonialism for more than a half-century. De Gaulle was convinced that the political and economic weight of France in the international system is mainly dependent on meeting the needs of raw materials. For this reason, the new tasks of this strategy were assumed by two ministers Pierre Guillaumat and Jacques Foccart who were the designers of the *Francafrrique* system (Vampouille, 2011). The function of this network was mainly based on the use of hidden diplomatic pouches that were not under the control or investigation of the state or the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This procedure used to be managed directly by the president. The *Francafrrique* network does not only deal with economic issues but also with the accomplishment of several political tasks including Coup d'états, the nomination of presidents and leaders, financing the rebellion movements, and the execution of political assassinations (Verschave, 2006).

Guinea Conakry was the starting point of *Francafrrique*. This Western African country became independent in 1958 after the establishment of several liberation movements under the leadership of Ahmed Sekou Toure who was targeted by the system of *Francafrrique*. Maurice Robert the vice former intelligence officer decided to adopt a new monetary policy as a way to control the Guinean economy through the use of a weak currency pegged to the African Franc, which was under the control of France and the exploitation of natural resources. A few years after the independence, Robert started financing and training some rebellion movements and Sekou Toure's opponents to overthrow his regime. The failure of these attempts made Sekou Toure become one of the most brutal dictators in Africa (Blum, 2013, p. 4). Through the same process, France started exploiting the natural resources in Niger including the Uranium mines. Niger is the fourth producer of Uranium Globally. This process of exploitation made Niger among the poorest countries in the world (RFI, 2012).

Like the case of other French former colonies, the Republic of Ivory Coast signed a pact of defence with Paris just after its independence. In 1961, an agreement was signed between France and Côte d'Ivoire stating that Abidjan was allowed to call for French military aid to protect its regime and authority. During the first periods after its independence, the Republic of Ivory Coast experienced a state of stability since it was governed by one single president. After the death of Houphouët-Boigny in 1993, a power vacuum led to instability and violence in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In this case, France had to maintain its military relationships with Côte d'Ivoire. In 2012, French President Nicolas Sarkozy and the president of Côte d'Ivoire Alassane Ouattara signed a new agreement of defence replacing the treaty of 1961 and giving the Republic of Ivory Coast the same direct line to the French aid militarily under the same conditions of the *Françafrrique* (McGowan, 2020, p. 55).

The Central African Republic was also affected by the *Francafrrique*. France needed to maintain its interests in the country. On January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1966, Jean-Bedel Bokassa seized power from President David Dacko in a coup d'État. In the context of the Cold War and because of threats

posed by China and the Soviet Union in the East of the Central African Republic, Bokassa was supported by France militarily and the Elysee decided to send troops in 1967 when he was threatened by opponent groups. Bokassa was a close ally of France. In 1977, France supported and helped organize the emperor's coronation ceremony of Bokassa. During the same period, the Central African emperor started building ties with Muammar Gaddafi the Libyan leader. This approach was seen as a threat to the French interests in Bangui. For this reason, the well-known military *Barracuda Operation* started in September 1979 to overthrow the regime of Bokassa (Sixdenier, 2017, pp. 3–4).

The Republic of Gabon is also one of the most important legacies of the *Francafrique* network. Gabon became independent in 1960 with Léon M'ba the first post-colonial president of the country. By the beginning of the 1960s, France started displaying a kind of interventionist attitude that left no doubt as to its intent to continue to influence political life in this former colony. The gradual drift of M'ba towards autocracy led to a military *Coup d'Etat* on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 1964. The Elysee sent 2,000 French troops who had quelled the revolution and restored Mba. The coup started in 1964 but Leon Mba died in 1967. As a result, Gabon was in the quasi-state of a protectorate ruled directly by Charles de Gaulle and Jacques Foccart (EuropeNow, 2018). So, it is understood that the political role played by the *Francafrique* network is important in the overthrow of several regimes in Africa through military interventions and coups.

Generally, it can be assumed that the French neo-colonial policy towards Africa has made the world's poorest continent's economy under the control of Paris, especially when it comes to the case of French former colonies. Jacques Foccart, who is the artisan of the *Francafrique* network, designed this system to recolonize many African Francophone countries economically. Therefore, the *Francafrique* system can be also understood from a neo-Marxist perspective taking into account the inequality in terms of the economic relations between France and its former colonies (Battistella, 2012, p. 265).

According to the United Nations Development Reports, the Sahel countries and other Francophone countries impacted by the policies of the *Francafrique* including Benin, the Central African Republic, and Guinea are among the world's less-developed countries (UNCTAC, 2020). As a result of the *Francafrique* policies over many decades, the political regimes of the Francophone countries in Africa have become more corrupted since they are mainly protected by France. These high corruption rates reflect the critical economic situation of the Sahel and the other Francophone countries. Over the last decade since 2012, most Francophone African countries have been ranked in the category of the most corrupt countries in the world. Except for a few countries such as Benin, Senegal, and Burkina Faso which have been ranked; the other countries are considered to be among the most corrupt countries worldwide like Guinea, Niger, and the Central African Republic. According to the last reports of the International Organization of Transparency for both 2020 and 2021, these countries have scored less than 30 in transparency rate (Transparency International, 2020).

The accumulation of *Francafrique* policies over long decades reflects also the situation of the Sahel and Sub-Saharan countries in terms of poverty rates over the last years. Most of these

countries suffer from extreme poverty such as the Central African Republic, Niger, Mali, Ivory Coast, Cameroon, and Guinea (World Bank Group, 2020). The extreme poverty from which these countries suffer pushes their people to leave their countries in illegal ways as shall be stated in the next section.

## The impacts of France's foreign policy towards Africa on the external migration policy of the European Union

As noted previously, the French policy towards Africa can be understood from the realist perspective since it is mainly based on a pragmatic view and tends to serve the national interest of the republic. For this reason, France aims to strengthen its position in Africa. As the statistics and reality demonstrate, Franco-African relations are not based on the principle of win-win because of the dependence of the African Francophone countries' economies on France. The colonial history of France helps any scholar or political thinker to analyse its foreign policy towards Africa from the perspective of colonial roots to understand why the Francophone countries suffer from poverty, famine, and weak services of health care. As a result, the realist foreign policy of France can be one of the reasons why Africa is currently under neo-colonial domination. This process of neo-colonialism, which started after the decolonization period, is seen by various leaders and decision-makers as an obstacle to the development of Francophone countries. For this reason, the EU has encountered difficulties due to the emergence of numerous irregular migrant movements, as these migrants often seek to enhance their economic circumstances and find living conditions that align with their aspirations. A significant portion of these irregular migrants originate from French former African countries (Yıldız, 2016, p. 16). The irregular migrants usually head to Europe through the two Spanish enclaves (Ceuta and Melilla) close to the Moroccan territories (Vacchiano, 2013, p. 342).

Generally, irregular migration is a multi-faceted phenomenon that refers to the mode of entry into a country, residential status there, employment status and type of employment. Taking each of these elements in turn, four questions can be specified:

1. Was the migrant's entry into the country regular or irregular?
2. Is the migrant's residence status regular or irregular?
3. Is the migrant entitled to work? If not, and s/he is working, this constitutes irregularity.
4. Is the nature of the employment and the work done regular or irregular (the latter refers to the avoidance of tax and insurance payments, rates below the minimum wage, etc.)? (King & DeBono, 2013, p. 4).

With the emergence of irregular migration from the Mediterranean Sea in the 1990s, which has become increasingly one of the hard security issues with the high intensity of transnational organised crimes and human trafficking, twenty-seven European and Mediterranean countries signed the Barcelona Process on 28 November 1995 known also as the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership or the Barcelona Declaration. It is a multilateral initiative to establish a framework for dialogue and cooperation in different fields including security issues such as migration between

the EU and the Mediterranean countries, encompassing both North African and Middle Eastern countries and to promote stability, peace, and prosperity in the Mediterranean region through political dialogue, economic integration, and cultural exchange (IEMed, 2009). After the implementation process of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership during the period 1995–2005, the Union for the Mediterranean was established in 2008 at the initiative of France to promote dialogue and cooperation in terms of various common issues in the region (France Diplomacy, 2023).

Despite these initiatives in which France played a crucial role, the negative impacts of the *Francafrrique* policies over long decades on the EU's migration policy and other issues related to the Mediterranean policies remain intense. These policies are considered to be obstacles to the EU's initiatives to deal with the issue of migration including the root cause approach as will be examined. For instance, the French president Jacques Chirac who was one of the first public figures and political leaders demonstrated the black face of the *Francafrrique* network despite being one of its members. Chirac dared to declare a historical confession on the function of *Francafrrique* despite being criticized for supporting the corrupted regimes in Africa. Chirac declared that it is necessary to confess that a big part of the budget of the Central French Bank comes precisely from the exploitation of African sources for long centuries. Then he claimed that France had no right to criticize the situation in Africa after exploiting its natural resources and raw materials, and then destroying the culture of Africans in the name of religion (Franceinfo: Afrique, 2019).

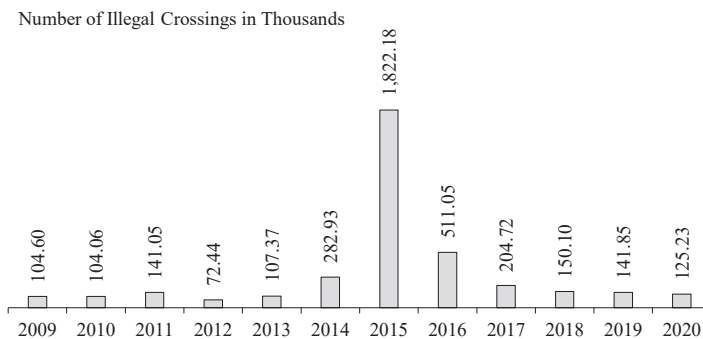
Furthermore, Deputy Prime Minister of Italy Luigi Di Maio reiterated that France's policies in Africa were creating poverty and causing migration. Di Maio said: "France is one of those countries that by printing money for 14 African states prevents their economic development and contributes to the fact that the refugees leave and then die in the sea or arrive on our coasts". In this context, Di Maio highlighted the African Franc currency used in 14 African francophone countries since it is also one of the economic dimensions and aspects of the *Francafrrique* domination in the world's poorest continent. These declarations led to a diplomatic crisis between France and Italy and impacted negatively the image of France in the European arena. The statements of Maio demonstrated that France's foreign policy toward Africa in the context of illegal migration has caused discussions within the EU. Moreover, these declarations coincided with the arrival of migrants to the Italian coastline coming from Tunisia. Most of these illegal migrants were originally from Francophone countries. Moreover, Maio's declarations led to one of the most intense diplomatic crises between Italy and France since the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War (Reuters, 2021).

Therefore, the EU's external migration policy is directly or indirectly impacted by France's foreign policy towards Africa. For this reason, Di Maio described France's foreign policy towards Africa as a neo-colonial policy and one of the obstacles to the economic development of Francophone Africa and the efforts accomplished by the European Union through several visions and approaches including the *Root Cause Approach* to migration mainly based on the causes of migration, such as the lack of job opportunities and poverty. The European Commission tends to adopt this strategy and such an approach to minimize poverty rates and create job opportunities as a method aiming to eradicate illegal migration (Yıldız, 2016, p. 15). In the same context,

another approach was adopted to manage the issue of migration (Ruhrmann & FitzGerald, 2016, p. 31). The *Remote Control Approach* is security-based and reactive and mainly aims to restrict the movement of people (Zolberg, 2003, p. 202).

Within the same framework, the EU has implemented various support programs aimed at addressing the root causes of irregular migration from Africa. These programs encompass areas such as economic development, governance, security, education, and job creation. For instance, the EU started supporting various programs such as the European Development Fund, the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, and the EU Trust Fund for Africa. These programs provide financial assistance and technical expertise to African countries to tackle migration-related challenges. Moreover, the EU started guiding its approach to migration cooperation with partner countries, particularly in Africa, through a comprehensive framework known as the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM) within which the *Root Cause Approach* recognizes that addressing the underlying factors driving migration, such as poverty, lack of opportunities, and political instability, is essential to reduce irregular migration flows (European Commission, 2015).

Despite the adoption of these initiatives and approaches over the last decades to restrict irregular migration, especially the *Root Cause Approach*, the EU did not succeed in eradicating the root causes of illegal migration (Yıldız, 2016, p. 16). These root causes are also the results of the *Francafrique* system such as the high rates of poverty in the French former colonies. The table below shows the number of illegal migrants from Francophone countries, and the number of illegal crossings between border crossing points in the European Union in the last decade.



**Figure 2.** Number of Illegal Crossings between Border-crossing Points in the European Union from 2009 to 2020.

Source: FRONTEX (Statista, 2022).

As Figure 2 shows, the number of illegal migrants to Europe has increased radically throughout the last few years due to several factors and events that led to the rise of refugees. As can be seen, together with the poverty caused by neo-colonialism in Africa, and the recent events such

as the Arab Spring, Europe is faced with serious irregular migration and refugee crises. For this reason, it is important to review the number of illegal migrants from 2009 to 2020. In the previous decades, the number of irregular migrants and illegal residents in Europe was not exact and the statistics were insufficient to examine the consequences of the *Francafrrique* system. An important number of these migrants are originally from African Francophone countries (Ambrosetti and Paparusso, 2018, p. 155).

Taking into consideration the geographic proximity to the countries where the African migration flows come from and to which European territories, it is necessary to examine the number of illegal crossings to Europe throughout the coastlines of North African countries such as Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya (Yıldız, 2016, p. 152). For instance, Spain since its accession to the European Community in 1986, used to be an attractive destination not only for Spanish-speaking communities from Latin America but also for African irregular migrants due to its close location to Africa (Ahrens, 2013, p. 116). Based on the number of illegal crossings presented in Figure 2, Table 1 shows the number of illegal migrants and crossings through the West and Central Parts of the Mediterranean Sea according to the data of Frontex (Statista, 2022).

**Table 1.** Number of Illegal Crossings by Migrants from 6 African Francophone Countries through the West and Central Maritime Routes of the Mediterranean Sea

Country/Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Niger	4	2	55	154	694	432	77	28	29
Mali	244	1,906	8,799	5,767	10,008	6,624	926	416	816
Cameroun	147	283	928	1,331	3,677	3,074	1,324	278	367
Ivory Coast	109	144	1,727	4,267	13,946	12,692	5,191	1,391	2,083
Republic of Central Africa	103	27	287	99	107	73	105	6	11
Guinea Conakry	30	307	1,416	3,078	13,725	9,751	864	404	943
Total	637	2,669	13,212	14,696	42,157	32,646	8,487	2,523	4,249

Source: FRONTEX (Statista, 2022).

As Table 1 shows, the consequences of the *Francafrrique* system stated in the previous section can be observed empirically through these numbers and data of migrant flows from Francophone countries. The numbers of migrants who are originally from Niger and the Central African Republic are not high compared to the other illegal migrants due to several factors that must be taken into account including the geographic position of these two countries which makes them far from the sea. Apart from the northern coastlines of transit countries like Morocco and Tunisia, many flows of illegal migrants coming from countries like Cameroun, Senegal, Mali, and the Republic of Gambia consider Morocco as a transit country to head not only to the South part of Spain but also to the Canary Islands (Yıldız, 2016, pp. 158–159). The number of irregular migrants from the Francophone countries has increased dramatically during the last decade. Moreover, these numbers and rates are the consequences of the *Francafrrique* system policies

over many decades since the main causes of irregular migration that the EU has tended to deal with over the last decades are the high rates of poverty and economic dependency. These are the same results of the *Francafrique* policies that have been accumulated over many years.

It is highly complicated to determine the nationalities of African irregular migrants from Francophone countries since many of them head to Europe through the Mediterranean without their identity cards or passports to avoid any possibility of repatriation. The Sub-Saharan migrants represented the majority of irregular boat migrants while 86.8 per cent of migrants were from West African countries. Therefore, the *Francafrique* system over many years led to the results of a brutal war without weapons. Hein de Haas who concentrates on the relationship between migration and social transformation and development, claims that illegal migration from Africa to Europe is not so new but there has been a major change at the beginning of the 21st century. According to De Haas, the issue of migration is an integral part of international change and transformation and also develops a long-term perspective on migration, challenging the traditional understanding that dominates migration debates. Haas, on the other hand, asserted that 30 per cent of migrants heading to Italy were from Sub-Saharan countries. But at the same time, Haas pointed out that it is not fair to just focus on the illegal status of these migrants, there are also many migrants from the same region who usually enter the European territories legally and become irregular migrants by overstaying their visas (Haas, 2008, p. 17). Therefore, the rate of illegal migrants started increasing over the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century reflecting the failure of EU efforts in terms of the democratization process of the African states, especially the French former colonies. The real causes of illegal migration have been ignored, as EU member states, including France, adopt their foreign policies towards Africa with a 'realistic' perspective and reject the root causes of migration.

## Conclusion

Discourse and practice are preeminent and interrelated in terms of the analysis of French foreign policy toward Africa and its impacts on the EU's external migration policy. To comprehend this interrelation, it was necessary to analyse the French foreign policy towards Africa from a realist approach after reviewing the theoretical framework of foreign policy from a realist perspective as well.

The French foreign policy is based on a pragmatic and realist approach toward Africa. So, it is understood that Franco-African relations are not based on the win-win principle. They are mainly based on the historical colonial background. The establishment of the *Francafrique* system in the 1960s was the starting point of a new era of colonization of former French colonies in the world's poorest continent. In this case, the *Francafrique* has become one of the factors shaping the foreign policy of France toward Africa and preventing the development and economic independence of the Francophone countries. As a result, the flow of irregular migrants from these countries started increasing because of the critical economic situation of their countries and the high rates of corruption, poverty, and unemployment. Under the given circumstances,



the EU was obliged to adopt new policies and approaches to deal with the issue of irregular migration. France, as an EU member state, should not only assume the responsibility of being a post-colonizer who makes Africans leave their home countries illegally but also is responsible for several humanitarian crises including the high number of dead bodies of irregular migrants found on the Mediterranean coastlines monthly.

To conclude, it can be claimed that despite the criticism of the foreign policy of France towards Africa that is based mainly on the network of *Francafrique*, the responsibility must be assumed commonly with the European Union since the latter failed to deal with the root causes of the irregular migration for many years. The European Union in its policy towards the African countries has tended to focus on its economic interests with these African countries and failed to deal with the issue of irregular migration despite the adoption of several methods and approaches. But the failure of the European Union to deal with the issue of immigration via different approaches is not only a result of a pragmatic view of the EU but also a result of the accumulation and process of *Francafrique* policies since they are based mainly on a realist perspective that makes France neglect the main causes of illegal migration including poverty, and corruption in the French former colonies.

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