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The imperial legacy of international peacebuilding: the case of Francophone Africa

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Abstract. Comparisons of peacebuilding with historic practices of imperialism are common, but these comparisons have sustained a hegemonic antagonism between humanitarian and imperialist interpretations of international peace intervention. This article argues that this common framing externalises the problem of intervention, romanticises local resistance, and forecloses to investigation the articulation between militarised peace practices and transnational capitalist relations. To do so, the article analyses the case of Francophone Africa, thus providing a context that has been left unexplored in peacebuilding debates. By bringing back in the historicity of particular Franco-African imperial experiences into peacebuilding research, the article reveals the militarisation of politics, transnational elite networks, and the dominant intellectual predispositions that work to reproduce the legitimacy of hegemonic practices of 'peace' interventionism. In the last section, the article analyses the debates over the UN-French 2011 intervention in Côte d'Ivoire to reveal the connections between the ethics of humanitarian interventions and the political economy of imperialism. The article concludes that the imperial legacy of peacebuilding is found in old capabilities, new organising logics, and specific practices and power relations and that to focus on the humanitarian-imperialist antagonism caricatures the relationships between 'local' and 'international' actors.

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This article discusses the imperial legacy of international peacebuilding in the context of academic comparisons between imperialism and peacebuilding. To do so, it examines the case of Francophone Africa where France plays a key role in international peace intervention. Where comparisons between imperialism and peacebuilding are made, the British Empire is the common point of reference. The context of Francophone Africa and France-Africa security relations is one that is typically left unexplored in peacebuilding deliberations. Certainly, recent French military deployments in Côte

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d'Ivoire (2011), Libya (2011),[1] Mali (2013),[2] and the Central African Republic (2013)[3] emphasise the need for such an analysis. It is a context that deserves more serious attention, if only because it provides a fertile ground to explore the questions raised in this article.[4]

The starting premise is that the meaning of imperialism varies throughout space and time, but that it is particularly malleable as an explanatory concept for the proponents of peacebuilding. The argument proceeds to examine what it means, historically and politically, to speak of imperialism in reference to international peacebuilding in a specific context. I argue that comparisons made between imperialism and peacebuilding around their respective objectives and modalities are founded upon the spatial and temporal constitutive limits of the field of International Relations (IR), thus in many ways pointing to the ideological expressions of the modern nation state and system of states. As a consequence, the key disagreement in peacebuilding debates becomes one between the external imperialist and the country united in its anti-imperialist struggle. This is the critique of imperialist excess, where the peace/humanitarian intervention 'goes too far', thereby hindering the analysis of both the conditions of possibility for international peacebuilding and of the purpose and rationale of force and violence in international order.

But while this article questions the usefulness of the concept of 'imperialism' as an explanatory device, it also points to its concrete political expressions and consequences. Franco-African imperial and postcolonial experiences have been politically and emotionally charged, especially in the last decade, with debates ranging from the legitimacy of French militarism,[5] to questions of immigration and identity,[6] to the so-called positive effects of the French empire.[7] In Côte d'Ivoire in 2011, the polarisation effects of the debates over the international intervention were quite obvious: one was for or against international intervention; for or against regime change. This reproduced a clear line between international and local actors, thus enabling discursive strategies based upon interpretations of military intervention as either humanitarian or imperialist. The point being made in this article is not that of a middle

[1] While Libya cannot be said to be part of Francophone Africa, there is a long and convoluted history of French-Libyan relations and involvement in African conflicts, notably in Chad in the 1980s. On the French role in the 2011 Libyan war, see Jean-Christophe Notin, *La vérité sur notre guerre en Libye* (Paris: Fayard, 2012). On the French role in the Chad-Sudan-Darfur conflict system during the European Union 2008–9 military deployment, see Bruno Charbonneau, 'France', in David Black and Paul Williams (eds), *The International Politics of Mass Atrocities: The Case of Darfur* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 213–31.

[2] On the French military intervention in Mali, see Bruno Charbonneau and Jonathan Sears, 'Defending Neoliberal Mali: French Military Intervention and the Management of Contested Political Narratives' in Florian Kühn and Mandy Turner (eds), *Where Has All the Peace Gone? The Politics of International Intervention* (London: Routledge, forthcoming).

[3] French President François Hollande refused to rescue the President of the Central African Republic François Bozizé when the rebels reached Bangui in December 2012. Yet, the French military has kept about 200 soldiers in the country since 2003. After the *coup d'état* of 24 March 2013, the force was strengthened to 550 troops to protect French citizens and interests. Operation Boali officially supports the Mission for the consolidation of peace in Central African Republic (MICOPAX) that is since 12 July 2008 under the responsibility of the Economic Community of Central African States.

[4] Bruno Charbonneau and Tony Chafer (eds), *Peace Operations in the Francophone World: Global Governance Meets Post-Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 2014).

[5] Raphaël Granvaud, *Que fait l'armée française en Afrique?* (Marseille: Agone, 2009).

[6] Charles Tshimanga, Didier Gondola, and Peter Bloom (eds), *Frenchness and the African Diaspora: Identity and Uprising in Contemporary France* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

[7] Jean-François Bayart and Romain Bertrand, 'De quel "leg colonial" parle-t-on?', *Esprit* (December 2006), pp. 134–60.

ground, of a bridge that should be built between opposite positions. Rather, it is to question this interpretative dichotomy and to analyse its effects as it establishes and enables a very common or primary contradiction. What is foreclosed by the antagonism between humanitarian and imperial readings of intervention? How does the distinction made between international and local actors fit within this antagonism? What are the costs of reproducing this common antagonism?

By bringing back in the historicity of particular imperial experiences into peacebuilding research, it becomes possible to notice the dominant intellectual predispositions that control stories about violence, security, and peace,[8] to reveal both the continuity and transformation of particular international peace intervention practices, to better understand such practices, and to reflect on the political effects of making comparisons between imperialism and peacebuilding. As this article suggests, locating the imperial legacy of international peacebuilding is to reveal not only the abuses of the latter, but also how comparisons between imperialism and peacebuilding can work to assert a narrative about the limits enabling modern forms of peace. The incompleteness and ambivalence of international peacebuilding as an apparatus of control and domination, or line of dependence, point to the necessity of a critical engagement with 'local' agency and with how this agency is constituted by, indeed dependent upon, a clear-cut division between local and international spaces. This engagement must consider both the capacity of 'local' societies and agents to construct or sustain their own dependency and the considerable energies involved in struggles for power that transcend national borders and North-South divisions. Instead of asking whether international peacebuilding is an imperial form of rule, as most peacebuilding supporters and some critics do, I examine how the old capacities of French imperialism have found new organising logics through particular practices and power relationships. This allows a historically specific understanding of international peacebuilding in Francophone Africa that shows how complex militarised capitalist relations can set up or sustain conditions for specific forms of peace.

I proceed with a short discussion of peacebuilding and imperialism and the limits of the recent literature on this issue, then follow with an analysis of Francophone African experiences of French military interventionism. The last section briefly examines the debates over Côte d'Ivoire in order to show the inevitability of the imperial legacy and the limited purchase of the common humanitarian-imperialist interpretative dichotomy in explaining the events.

Peacebuilding and its critics

According to Michael Doyle, 'Effective peacebuilding ... creates a unified polity, one army, a return to civilian participatory rule, an economy geared to civilian consumption, and the first steps toward reconciliation' and, if successful, 'peacebuilding changes not merely behavior, but, more importantly, it transforms identities and institutional contexts'.[9] In practice, peacebuilding is a concept that frames and organises the different activities of a remarkable number of actors that often come

[8] Florian Kühn, 'The Peace Prefix: Ambiguities of the Word Peace', *International Peacekeeping*, 19:4 (2012), pp. 396–409; Michael Pugh, 'Reflections on Aggressive Peace', *International Peacekeeping*, 19:4 (2012), pp. 410–25.

[9] Michael Doyle, 'The John W. Holmes Lecture: Building Peace', *Global Governance*, 13:1 (2007), p. 9.

together in regional, multilateral, and/or multinational settings. This multiplicity of actors and activities translates into critical divergence in approaches to and conceptualisation of peacebuilding.[10] The debates and conflicting interests around peacebuilding 'suggest that one of the concept's talents is to camouflage divisions over how to handle the postconflict challenge'.[11] Nevertheless, there is widespread agreement in the academic literature on examining the effectiveness of peacebuilding operations in order to devise best practices and identifying the institutions that will be conducive to 'peace' and eliminate the 'root causes' of conflict. As such, peacebuilding is often intertwined with international statebuilding.[12]

This 'agreement' has been criticised severely from various angles and theoretical perspectives. The dominant form of peacebuilding (the 'liberal peace') has faced severe criticisms and is argued to be in crisis.[13] The debates have become so intense as to develop 'the contours of an epic intellectual struggle'[14] and the perceived need for 'liberal peacebuilding' to be 'saved' from the 'exaggerated backlash' of 'hypercritical writings'.[15] Several critics argue that the dominant approaches to peacebuilding are largely hegemonic projects of domination and control.[16]

These debates have led to comparisons being made between peacebuilding and imperialism. For Michael Barnett, given the historical roots and the inherent paternalistic attitude of Western humanitarianism, comparisons with imperialism are understandable, even predictable.[17] What is striking, as Philip Cunliffe writes, is the 'frank comparison with imperialism and colonialism' that proponents of peacebuilding make: 'the comparison between peacebuilding and imperialism is not a bitter concession made by these authors in the course of a struggle with their critics … [as] there is at least as much "mainstream" literature that makes the comparison … as there is critical literature'.[18] Indeed, some 'mainstream' authors make direct analogies between the 'classical' European empires and the post-Cold War humanitarian imperialism.[19] Alex Bellamy and Paul Williams write of 'uncomfortable similarities with earlier structures of Western imperialism'.[20] Michael Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis describe the 'quasi-colonial presence' of peacebuilding situations.[21] Such overt references to imperialism, according to Cunliffe, enable comparisons favourable to

[10] For an overview of these critical differences, see Michael Barnett, Hunjoon Kim, Madalene O'Donnell, and Laura Sitea, 'Peacebuilding: What Is in a Name?', *Global Governance*, 13:1 (2007), pp. 35–58.
[11] Barnett *et al*., 'Peacebuilding', p. 44.
[12] For instance, see Edward Newman, 'The Violence of Statebuilding in Historical Perspective: Implications for Peacebuilding', *Peacebuilding*, 1:1 (2013), pp. 141–57.
[13] Neil Cooper, 'Review Article: On the Crisis of the Liberal Peace', *Conflict, Security and Development*, 7:4 (2007), pp. 605–16.
[14] Oliver P. Richmond, 'Introduction', in Oliver P. Richmond (ed.), *Palgrave Advances in Peacebuilding: Critical Developments and Approaches* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 2.
[15] Roland Paris, 'Saving Liberal Peacebuilding', *Review of International Studies*, 36:2 (2010), p. 339.
[16] David Chandler, *Empire in Denial: The Politics of State-building* (London: Pluto Press, 2006).
[17] Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).
[18] Philippe Cunliffe, 'Still the Spectre at the Feast: Comparisons between Peacekeeping and Imperialism in Peacekeeping Studies Today', *International Peacekeeping*, 19:4 (2012), p. 429.
[19] Marina Ottaway and Bethany Lacina, 'International Interventions and Imperialism: Lessons from the 1990s', *SAIS Review*, 23:2 (2003), pp. 71–92; Kimberly Zisk Marten, *Enforcing the Peace: Learning from the Imperial Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).
[20] Alex Bellamy and Paul Williams, 'Introduction: Thinking Anew about Peace Operations', *International Peacekeeping*, 11:1 (2004), p. 12.
[21] Michael Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 318.

the legitimisation of contemporary peace operations.[22] There are, in other words, political effects to making the comparison.

For some critics, the key problem is the liberal nature of Western policy intervention. The problem is identified as the relationship between Western liberal interveners and non-liberal and non-Western others, where the West claims on behalf of others the know-how to peace, progress, democracy, and development. Mark Duffield traces a genealogy between what he calls the 'imperial peace' and the 'liberal peace', showing how both deployed a depoliticising humanitarian discourse of human development to impose, and/or police, order. The two are distinguished according to their purported goals: the 'imperial peace' aspired to direct control while the 'liberal peace' is said to aim at stability through non-territorial and networked relations of governance.[23] John Heathershaw argued that the pragmatism of the peacebuilding discursive environment incorporates all approaches in the praxis of security for development and development for security, all activities converging to build a liberal state, liberal society, and liberal subjectivities.[24] Lindsay Stark notes that interventions addressing psychological and social factors have increased, but the dominant 'Western medical' approach emphasises the diagnosis and the treatment of symptoms of individuals, thus disregarding the context of armed conflict and war, the social context, and the available resources found in the community that could support trauma healing.[25] Such interventions are even conceived as examples of 'psychological imperialism'.[26] The links to the promotion of (Western) individualism as a value, morality, and mode of life are here latent if not patent, thus indeed making this pathological framework open to critiques of cultural Western imperialism. While victims and survivors have and retain knowledge and skills that contribute to healing, reconciliation, and reconstruction, their resources and abilities are delegitimised or undermined by 'external' interventions,[27] or are instrumentalised to justify international approaches.[28] This works to keep civilians in a state of victimhood, perpetuating their problems by dismissing their coping strategies. A key consequence is that the political demands of victims and survivors are of little to no consequence to post-conflict healing and reconciliation.[29] Important social and political issues related to the causes of the conflict and to the possibilities of reconciliation and peace are obscured, neglected, or decontextualised by the focus on survivors' pathologies.[30]

[22] Cunliffe, 'Still the Spectre at the Feast'.

[23] Mark Duffield, *Development, Security and Unending War: Governing the World of Peoples* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007).

[24] John Heathershaw, 'Unpacking the Liberal Peace: The Dividing and Merging of Peacebuilding Discourses', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 36:3 (2008), pp. 597–621.

[25] Lindsay Stark, 'Cleansing the Wounds of War: An Examination of Traditional Healing, Psychosocial Health and Reintegration in Sierra Leone', *Intervention*, 4:3 (2006), pp. 206–18.

[26] Michael Wessells and Carlinda Monteiro, 'Psychological Intervention and Post-war Reconstruction in Angola', in D. Christie and R.V. Wagner (eds), *Peace, Conflict and Violence: Peace Psychology for the 21st Century* (New York: Prentice Hall, 2001), pp. 262–75.

[27] Derek Summerfield, 'The Effects of War: Moral Knowledge, Revenge, Reconciliation and Recovery', *British Medical Journal*, 325:7372 (2002), pp. 1105–7; Vanessa Pupavac, 'International Therapeutic Peace and Justice in Bosnia', *Social and Legal Studies*, 13:3 (2004), pp. 377–401.

[28] Sandrine Lefranc, 'A Critique of "Bottom-up" Peacebuilding', in Bruno Charbonneau and Geneviève Parent (eds), *Peacebuilding, Memory and Reconciliation: Bridging Top-down and Bottom-up Approaches* (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 34–52.

[29] Geneviève Parent, 'Peacebuilding, Healing, Reconciliation: An Analysis of Unseen Connections for Peace', *International Peacekeeping*, 18:4 (2011), pp. 375–94.

[30] Bruno Charbonneau and Geneviève Parent (eds), *Peacebuilding, Healing, Reconciliation: Bridging Top-down and Bottom-up Approaches* (London: Routledge, 2012).

Roger Mac Ginty and Andrew Williams are sceptics of the 'liberal peace' critique: there might not be such a widespread *liberal* agreement, but for the cohesion of various activities around the promotion of the 'open market' and neoliberal economics as a way to build a durable peace.[31] Michael Pugh, Neil Cooper, and Mandy Turner have emphasised the need for political economy analyses of peacebuilding.[32] Their key argument is that 'the overall framing of peace by external agencies reinforces neoliberal prescriptions, particularly in the realm of political economy, that neither take sufficient account of local needs and agency, nor reflect the role of global capitalism and structural adjustment policies as drivers of conflict'.[33] Peace is limited to and by various neoliberal conceptualisations and agendas.

Building on such critiques of 'liberal' peacebuilding, others have argued that local agency is the key source to 'escape from liberal enclosure'[34] and the key source where a 'post-liberal' or 'hybrid' peace is found and created.[35] For Kristoffer Lidén, Roger Mac Ginty, and Oliver Richmond, the solution to the debate between proponents and critics can take two directions: 'further research into more localized understandings of peace that allow for multiplicity or hybridity, human needs, welfare and human security to emerge in a bottom-up manner ... or the continuation of the old 'world federation' project in which the liberal is refined until it really does become a one-size-fits-all, top-down and transferable blueprint for a universal peace'.[36] The problem with such a framing is that it reifies the distinction, and the power relationship, between international peacebuilders and local agencies.[37]

As a *fait accompli*, the 'liberal peace' critique leaves little to no place for 'local' agency and freedom as we have all become victims of modern governmentality.[38] Where it focuses on 'local' agency, it reifies the distinction between local and international actors, thus obscuring or neglecting the *a priori* interactions that have made this distinction possible in the first place. And while a political economy approach is right in bringing attention to capitalist relations, it should examine to what extent neoliberal prescriptions are indeed imposed and to what extent 'local' actors participate (or not) in constructing or sustaining their own dependency.

David Chandler argues that the critique of the liberal peace can 'result in the reproduction of the ideological binary of the civilisational divide between the interveners and the intervened in'.[39] According to him, the issue is not that of liberal universalism, but 'one of restricted possibilities, where democracy and development

[31] Roger Mac Ginty and Andrew Williams, *Conflict and Development* (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 51.
[32] Michael Pugh, Neil Cooper, and Mandy Turner (eds), *Whose Peace? Critical Perspectives on the Political Economy of Peacebuilding* (New York: Palgrave, 2008).
[33] Neil Cooper, Mandy Turner, and Michael Pugh, 'The End of History and the Last Liberal Peacebuilder: a Reply to Roland Paris', *Review of International Studies*, 37:4 (2011), p. 2000.
[34] Oliver Richmond, 'A Pedagogy of Peacebuilding: Infrapolitics, Resistance, and Liberation', *International Political Sociology*, 6:2 (2012), pp. 115–31.
[35] Oliver Richmond, *A Post-liberal Peace* (London/New York: Routledge, 2011); Roger Mac Ginty, *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance: Hybrid Forms of Peace* (New York: Palgrave, 2011).
[36] Kristoffer Lidén, Roger Mac Ginty, and Oliver Richmond, 'Introduction: Beyond Northern Epistemologies of Peace: Peacebuilding Reconstructed?', *International Peacekeeping*, 16:5 (2009), p. 593.
[37] Audra Mitchell, 'Quality/control: International Peace Interventions and the ''Everyday''', *Review of International Studies*, 37:4 (2011), pp. 1623–45.
[38] David Chandler, 'Critiquing Liberal Cosmopolitanism? The Limits of the Biopolitical Approach', *International Political Sociology*, 3:1 (2009), pp. 53–70.
[39] David Chandler, 'The Uncritical Critique of the Liberal Peace', *Review of International Studies*, 36:S1 (2010), pp. 137–55.

are hollowed out and, rather than embodying the possibilities of autonomous human subject, become mechanisms of control and ordering'.[40] Certainly, to analyse the imperial legacy of international peacebuilding requires displacing and disrupting conventional oppositions between the local and the international. Hence, the following analysis refuses to fetishise one side of this opposition as a privileged standpoint to critique the other. Presented with a choice between a humanitarian and an imperial order, as Rob Walker argued, we are inevitably brought back to the state as the site of 'local/national' capacity to integrate, or resist, this liberal/imperial world.[41] To question 'empire' and 'imperialism' as concepts to explain or understand peacebuilding requires a historical sensitivity to the imperial legacy. Such historical sensitivity must highlight the consequences of presenting the antagonism as between international humanitarians or imperialists who facilitate or impose peace, and local agents who welcome or resist peace. This is crucial because, in many respects, the local-international binary reflects the politics of the metropole-colony binary that used to justify imperial violence and conquest.

Imperialism and peacebuilding

The unspoken assumption of debates over the imperial legacy is the complete contrast made between imperial hierarchy and international anarchy as the key principle of modern political life. According to Alejandro Colás, 'any sharp and absolute contrast between imperial hierarchy and international anarchy is historically and conceptually untenable'.[42] Yet, as Walker argued, recent political analysis and judgment have framed many issues as a choice between a universal humanitarianism and an empire, where

> system sovereignty begins to trump state sovereignty, at least up to the point at which all rules of international order are pushed back so as to reveal the always potential possibility of empire as the regulative negation of modern political life; the point at which claims about the international slide into claims about the humanitarian and the universal, or the hegemonic and the imperial.[43]

For Walker, to explain by calling them 'imperial', the struggles over where and when international sovereignty ought to trump state sovereignty is questionable. This reflects one of the limits constitutive of the field of IR and, in many ways, the ideological expression of the modern nation-state.[44] As Tarak Barkawi put it, 'IR was founded amidst empire, but discovered instead only a world of sovereign states and their collective action problems.'[45]

[40] David Chandler, *International Statebuilding: The Rise of Post-Liberal Governance* (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 40.
[41] R.B.J. Walker, *After the Globe, Before the World* (New York: Routledge, 2010).
[42] Alejandro Colás, *Empire* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p. 21.
[43] R.B.J. Walker, 'Lines of Insecurity: International, Imperial, Exceptional', *Security Dialogue*, 37:1 (2006), p. 72.
[44] R.B.J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
[45] Tarak Barkawi, 'Empire and Order in International Relations and Security Studies', in Robert Denemark (ed.), *The International Studies Encylopedia*, Vol. III (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 1360–79.

The comparisons made between imperialism and peacebuilding are only made possible by marking categorically, and ahistorically, the legalistic end to formal empire as an absolute normative shift. This avoids having to explain how imperial violence was transformed into international violence (a move that secures IR's claims to universal truth). Instead, it seems useful to examine 'the point at which claims about the international slide into claims about the humanitarian and the universal, or the hegemonic and the imperial', in order to analyse how old imperial capabilities can find new organising logics in *international* relations as an expression of the limits of modern peace(building).[46]

Saskia Sassen speaks plainly of what changes or what does not between an old and new order. Change is found in

> the organizing logic of what are often old capabilities. If the new is going to have any level of complexity, it will include some of the old capabilities of the preceding order, as capabilities are constructed over time, collectively, out of conflict. But capabilities are multivalent: their valence is partly shaped by their positioning in an organizing logic. In the shift from one order to the other, the valence changes, and that is why explaining change is so difficult because there is a familiarity about the capability, but it is situated in a different logic.[47]

Within IR conventional accounts of imperialism, the legalistic end of European empires plays a crucial, if underestimated, ideological role. It establishes, first and foremost, a *temporal* line between imperial and international imaginations, worlds, and territories once empires are legally dismantled. The common narrative is one of moral evolution from a time of illegitimate imperial dynamics and practices to a time associated with legitimate dynamics and relations between legally equal sovereign states. This temporal perspective is necessary to assert the universality of a second line, a *spatial* line between local and international spaces and actors. This spatial-temporal intellectual predisposition dismantles the geography of empire to transform it into national-territorial spaces. The creation of national-territorial maps marks these spaces as 'sovereign', thus outside the realm of imperial intervention and power and as evidence to the transition to an international world order and an 'international community'. Within this mindset, the spatial line becomes conceptually necessary to judge the legitimacy of international peace intervention,[48] and to determine if the transgression of the spatial line separating the 'local' from the 'international' was justified. The resulting judgment finds expression in the choice we are presented with between peacebuilding as an instance of humanitarianism or imperialism.

However, in practice the local/international line is continuously asserted and transgressed, sometimes simultaneously, and its temporality exposes its contingency. For instance, in the case of the French empire in Africa, the *process* of decolonisation was (and remains) contested. The period after World War II was a time of incredible opportunity and possibility in sub-Saharan Francophone Africa,[49] albeit in the context of terrible wars in Indochina and Algeria that suggested certain limits to legitimate African political demands. The period of French decolonisation in Africa

[46] Walker, *After the Globe, Before the World.*
[47] Saskia Sassen interviewed in Jane Kenway and Johannah Fahey (eds), *Globalizing the Research Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 125.
[48] On this conceptual necessity, Cynthia Weber, 'Reconsidering Statehood: Examining the Sovereignty/intervention Boundary', *Review of International Studies*, 18:3 (1992), pp. 207–12.
[49] Tony Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa: France's Successful Decolonization?* (Oxford: Berg, 2002).

(circa 1945–60) was, first, a history of struggles over the meaning and significance of empire; over how best to transform it, to sustain it. In sub-Saharan Africa, no one asked for or imagined decolonisation, not even Africans, before 1956–8. Only later, when negotiations over reforms failed, was it about creating new states and defining postcolonial relationships. Decolonisation was a long process that cannot be analysed reading history backwards as the inevitable conclusion of rising African nations or nation-states, and thus as the inevitable end of French imperialism,[50] as the next section will make clear.

To locate the imperial legacy of peacebuilding is thus to examine how old imperial capabilities have, or have not, found, a new organising logic in international peacebuilding. Such an analysis cannot take for granted the location of the local/international line, nor the distinction between local and international agents, spaces, and temporalities. To show how, where, and when the elusive and porous characteristics of the boundary between local and international are produced, sustained, challenged, and/or transformed is to reveal both its historicity and how the distinction itself can generate resources of power. I suggest that exposing the contingency and ambiguity of this line, which necessitates as critical an analysis of 'local' agency and processes as that of 'international' peacebuilders and processes, disrupts, and politicises the humanitarian-imperialist interpretative dichotomy, thus illustrating how the dichotomy can participate in reproducing structures of violence and the limits to modern forms of peace. Put another way, the local-international line can be deployed to construct, sustain, and/or authorise new logics that work to organise old capabilities.

The imperial legacy in Francophone Africa

In many ways, peace efforts in the contemporary states system have depended ultimately upon the legitimacy of war and its management.[51] An examination of the specificity of French imperialism makes it possible to see the construction, negotiation, transformation, and reproduction of spaces, temporalities, identities, and narratives that justified imperial violence and that justify twenty-first century peace operations in Francophone Africa.

Imperial violence

Violence was intimately linked to French colonisation and sought, in various ways, to enforce or impose particular dynamics of inclusion and exclusion.[52] However, it was never a matter of total control and domination. Historians have demonstrated that colonisation and decolonisation were not straightforward 'us' and 'them' situations, and that colonial authority worked best when the colonised recognised it or contributed to its implementation.[53] As students of Franco-African dynamics know,

[50] See the chapters in Tony Chafer and Alex Keese (eds), *Francophone Africa at Fifty* (Manchester University Press, 2013).
[51] Oliver Richmond, *Peace in International Relations* (London/New York: Routledge, 2008).
[52] Martin Thomas, 'Introduction: Mapping Violence Onto French Colonial Minds', in Martin Thomas (ed.), *The French Colonial Mind, Volume 2* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), pp. xi–liii.
[53] Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

it has often proved difficult to draw the (local-international) line clearly between French and African agencies and institutions. As Gary Wilder argued, the 'French imperial nation-state' should be analysed as a whole and as 'an internally contradictory artefact of colonial modernity that was simultaneously imaginary and real, abstract and concrete, universalizing and particularizing, effective and defective, modern and illiberal, republican and racist, welfarist and mercantilist, Franco-African and Afro-French, national and transnational'.[54] Notions of citizenship, republicanism, nation, sovereignty, democracy and others were constituted within and across an imperial imaginary and space.[55]

In this context of imperial contradictions, French and African military practices were intimately linked. On the one hand, the violence of the colonial encounter created divergent moral spaces that discriminated between the superior 'French' from the inferior 'African'. On the other, it created a space of common identity that brought together Franco-Africans. The day-to-day routines of the French empire involved contingent accommodation and experiences of violence that informed processes of identity formation, both in France and in the colonies. Military and police routines and operations included a diverse mix of experiences: 'patriotism, idealism, the romance of the exotic, challenging hardship, close comradeship (not only with other Frenchmen), but also careerism, personal gain, racial assertion and temptations for the weak in character'.[56] Africans of various origins participated in imperial wars of conquest, pacification campaigns, and other coercive actions.[57] These shared experiences validated, for some, the purpose of the empire, inspiring loyalty and identification. The armies of Africa were deployed in almost every war: *la Coloniale* served in Algeria, Crimea, Mexico, Italy, Darnelles, Balkans, the Levant, Tunisia, Morocco, Western Sahara, the wars of 1870–1, 1914–18, 1939–45, and the political repression and wars of decolonisation in Madagascar, Indochina, and Algeria. Through these varied soldiering experiences, a Franco-African militarism and associated identities emerged out of contradictions that challenged the commonly accepted binaries of France/Africa. This military-imperial system was paternalistic, racist, and full of tensions and apparent paradoxes, but one that was sometimes justified on humanitarian ground. For influential French officers such as Joseph Gallieni (1849–1916) and Louis Hubert Gonzalve Lyautey (1854–1934), the fact that African soldiers waged wars of French imperialism was not exploitative, but instead contributed 'to the dignity of indigenous cultural peoples'.[58] Even among Algerian and other African soldiers, many believed that the military system was more just than the non-military aspects of the colonial system. In spite of discriminatory and racist experiences, revolts and desertion were rare.[59]

[54] Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanitarianism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp. 21–2.

[55] Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, 'Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda', in Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (eds), *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 1–37.

[56] Anthony Clayton, *France, Soldiers and Africa* (London: Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1988), p. 19.

[57] Myron Echenberg, *Les Tirailleurs sénégalais en Afrique occidentale française (1857–1960)* (Paris: Karthala, 2009).

[58] Clayton, *France, Soldiers and Africa*, p. 4.

[59] Vincent Joly, *Guerres d'Afrique: 130 ans de guerres coloniales. L'expérience française* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2009), p. 8.

The significance of this Franco-African militarism is in how it justified violence in ways that not only made it acceptable, but also performed the authority and legitimacy of the empire, and performed 'French' agency in opposition to 'African' agency. Many African soldiers went on to internalise French military values. Many of them would go on to be the core of African national armies and governments after 1960. Shared experiences of violence taught them that the empire was 'real'. And yet, the same experiences were also the roots of protest, challenges, and resistance against the empire. Others attached themselves to the *Parti communiste français* and participated in the *Union intercoloniale* and the *La Paria* newspaper of Ho Chi Minh. Frantz Fanon's experiences during World War II subjected him to a colonial racism that changed radically his views of French universalism. Shared experiences, notably the two World Wars, produced contradictions between the coherence of the empire and the common destiny of different peoples, and the racist tropes and practices that marked the very difference between 'us' and 'them', between a moral space (continental France and Europe) and an exceptional space (the colonies) where the laws and rules of war were allegedly different.[60]

In short, the history of the French empire in sub-Saharan Africa was a story of limits, of exclusion and inclusion dynamics until its very end, but one that does not conform to the familiar metropole-colony binary. The humanitarian discourse of the *mission civilisatrice* served not only to justify imperial conquest and violence, but also to protect and isolate the universal ideals of the French republic from the colonial racism of the French empire; that is to perform the distinction between metropole and colony.[61] With time, the universalising ideals of the civilising mission that sustained the idea of empire were undermined by the particular assumptions associated with the construction of French nationhood and nation-state and by African demands for recognition and imperial citizenship. Furthermore, the new United Nations Charter universalised the nation-state as the newest legitimate form to organise the political community, and 'international relations' as the newest legitimate form of interactions between European and non-European political communities. Hence, after 1945, it was the violent interventionist face of the empire that changed: 'Rapidly changing cultural expectations in the colonies and in France about permissible interventionism and permissible levels of violence – about what colonial administrations could or should be doing – added to the weight on official minds.'[62] The 1940s and 1950s were a context of increasing tensions between (inter)national and imperial modes of governance, of increasing ambiguities and uncertainties over the spatial referents of new national ideologies, but it did not mark the end of Franco-African militarism.

[60] While I have limited myself to military practices, the history of imperial violence should include colonial policing practices of all *corps habillés* (state security forces, as commonly called in Francophone Africa). See Jean-Pierre Bat and Nicolas Courtin (eds), *Maintenir l'ordre colonial: Afrique et Madagascar, XIXe–XXe siècles* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2012).

[61] Nicolas Bancel, Pascal Blanchard, and Françoise Vergès, *La République coloniale: essai sur une utopie* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2003).

[62] Thomas, 'Introduction: Mapping Violence', p. xxvii.

International violence

In contrast with other regions of the world, according to Tony Chafer decolonisation in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa marked 'a restructuring of the imperial relationship'.[63] Old capabilities and human relationships found new logics in the context of the Cold War. Post-decolonisation Franco-African 'military cooperation' was to build the national armies conceived as necessary to avoid accusations of neo-colonialism and to support the sovereignty claims of the new African states. As a process to build functional African armies, it has largely failed.[64] The transition process from an imperial model of Franco-African troops and armies to a model of national armies was gradual, sometimes tumultuous, and intimately intertwined with the political process of decolonisation. As Camille Évrard demonstrated in the case of Mauritania, tensions rose from the necessary collaboration between a political apparatus that was becoming African and a military apparatus and command that remained 'white' for years after decolonisation.[65] Yet, given the very limited resources of African states, the French military quickly became a dependable source of support to consolidate the regimes of African elites who looked favourably upon French involvement in Africa.

Decolonisation had rewritten the imperial model as 'international relations' between legally sovereign member-states of the United Nations, thus writing military cooperation as between nominally equal partners. However, the 'local-international' line between France and African states took a particular form. Military agreements authorised the permanent existence of French military bases (originally in Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Chad, Djibouti, Gabon, Cameroon, and the Central African Republic), the presence of 'pre-positioned' French troops and French officers in the ranks of the African armies, and the option for the French state to intervene militarily almost anywhere.[66] During the Cold War era, on top of military interventions to support or topple African regimes, numerous routine interventions included military exercises, protection of French citizens and ambassadors, shows of force, humanitarian deployments, UN missions, and undetermined others. Africa became both an exercise ground for French troops (notably Special Forces) that were without any chance to have such 'prestigious training' elsewhere and a place to show the strength of the French military in circumscribed missions.[67] These aspects of a 'muscled presence' perpetuated, albeit in different forms, the routines, habits, and effects of the Franco-African security apparatus.

The Cold War provided the official rationale that authorised these particular practices and protected the French monopoly of military intervention. After the Korean War (1950–3), Charles de Gaulle could claim: 'Finally, France is the only world power whose army currently fights communists.'[68] Within this mindset, the

[63] Tony Chafer, 'French African Policy in Historical Perspective', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 19:2 (2001), p. 167.

[64] Niagalé Bagayoko-Penone, *Afrique: les stratégies française et américaine* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), pp. 164–72.

[65] Camille Évrard, *La transmission du pouvoir militaire en Mauritanie 1955–1965*. Mémoire de Master 2 Recherches en Histoire sous la direction du Professeur Pierre Boilley, Université Paris 1 (2008).

[66] Bruno Charbonneau, *France and the New Imperialism: Security Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

[67] Charbonneau, *France and the New Imperialism*, pp. 68–72.

[68] In Yves Benot, *Massacres coloniaux 1944–1950: la IV^e République et la mise au pas des colonies françaises* (Paris: La Découverte, 1994), p. 33.

notion of 'peace' was irrelevant and not part of the policy vocabulary.[69] African social and political movements were categorised as pro-Soviet or, later, as pro-Chinese and pro-West, thus informing and influencing the kinds of independence, violence, and security that were deemed tolerable. In short, the 1950s and 1960s radically changed the global context of the empire: the UN Charter on the one hand, and the Atlantic Charter on the other, combined to define and redefine the political possibilities of a Franco-African field of action. The convergence of the 'transatlantic community' and the 'France-Africa community' created the possibility to reimagine Francophone Africa as the French '*pré carré*' (sphere of exclusive influence). The Cold War rhetoric whereby France was the defender of Western interests largely legitimised the transformed mechanisms, structures, and violent practices of Franco-African militarism. It transformed France into the *gendarme de l'Afrique*, where Francophone Africa became the space for privileged intervention. Where the 'transatlantic community' met with Franco-African militarism, the epistemological foundations of the Cold War security imagination had fundamental ontological effects: 'France' became an ontologically stable nation-state completely distinguishable from African states, thus performing the local-international line. African states became separate state entities that were partaking in the geopolitics of East-West confrontation.

As Robin Luckham argued, this militarism was a permanent state of intervention that influenced the composition of social forces, the role of the state, and the distribution of material and political resources of many African states.[70] To seek or ask for change in neocolonial arrangements resulted in being labelled communist. The space for legitimate African political agency narrowed significantly, except for those pro-Western African elites who learned to use French practices and obligations to their advantage.[71] The right to insurrection, to resistance against oppression and inequalities, and even to determine the foundations of one's society was denied by the violence of the *gendarme*, albeit often with the explicit approval or demand of African political elites.[72] To paraphrase Jean-François Bayart's thesis on the African state, African elite difficulties in securing their autonomy and in intensifying their exploitation of their dependants required mobilising resources derived from their relationship with French leading actors and military assets.[73] African agency (whether leaders or various sociopolitical movements) was fundamentally affected by French militarism, but remained autonomous. This 'special' relationship between French and African elites made it difficult to sustain a critique of French neocolonialism without an appreciation of the contingency of Franco-African relations.[74] The end of the Cold War would also require drastic changes in discourse and practice.

[69] This is to be distinguished from the use of 'peace' by Cold War anti-war/peace movements.
[70] Robin Luckham, 'Le militarisme français en Afrique', *Politique Africaine*, 6 (June 1982), pp. 45–71.
[71] Charbonneau, *France and the New Imperialism*.
[72] Bruno Charbonneau, 'Les effets du prisme de l'Atlantique sur les relations de sécurité Nord-Sud: Le cas de l'Afrique francophone', in Dorval Brunelle (ed.), *Repenser l'Atlantique* (Brussels: Bruylant, 2012), pp. 395–418.
[73] Jean-François Bayart, *The State in Africa: the Politics of the Belly* (2nd edn, Malden: Polity Press, 2009).
[74] A good example is the French military involvement in the Libyan-Chadian-Sudanese wars of the 1970s and 1980s, where African elites had, arguably, more influence on French policy than the French government had on the conflict. See J. Millard Burr and Robert Collins, *Africa's Thirty Years War: Chad, Libya, and the Sudan, 1963–1993* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999).

Liberal peace?

It was in 1994 that the end of the Cold War caught up with Franco-African militarism. Notably, the French involvement in the Rwandan genocide[75] highlighted the grave consequences that such militarism and close Franco-African elite relations could have as the deployment of 'normal military cooperation' in October 1990 translated into support for the *génocidaires*.[76] These events, coupled with the adoption of the Balladur (or Abidjan) doctrine in January 1994, initiated a rather significant shift in French policy. The French government devalued the franc of the *Communauté financière africaine* by 50 per cent, and made all future French development aid conditional on prior agreements between African states and the Bretton Woods institutions. This turn to the neoliberal agenda shook the foundations of bilateral France-Africa relationships. Prime Minister Edouard Balladur sought to 'normalise' these relationships by integrating them within multilateral frameworks and global capitalist relations, although not without strong resistance within France and among African elites. In France, the struggles over reform and 'normalisation' are commonly known as the battle between the *Anciens*, who seek to maintain the 'special' French-African relationship, and the *Modernes* who support the reforms.[77]

If 'normalisation' meant integrating global liberal governance, multilateral peace missions offered the new organising logic for military operations. In particular, the European Union was conceived as the 'multilateral framework' *par excellence* because it was argued to combine legitimacy, as a multinational and multilateral entity, and efficiency, as an international security actor.[78] The 'Europeanization' of French policy brought hopes for new institutions and modes of governance, policy-making, and solidarity, and thus hopes for renewing Franco-African relations. 'Europe', from the French government perspective, offered both material and moral resources. However, while the multilateral approach was to be the common framework for intervention, it was subordinated to the bilateral approach: the 'multilateral framework guarantees in effect the legitimacy of France's actions on the ground, while sharing the risks of standstill or contagion of crises, notably in the case of military intervention'.[79]

The 2008 French defence and security *Livre blanc* was clear: 'Africa will be at the forefront of our preventive strategy for the next fifteen years … France wishes to stay on the African continent, but the conditions, the purposes and the organization of this presence must evolve.'[80] The 'conditions, the purposes and the organization' that must be changed found in US-UK doctrinal thinking a conceptual framework that brought France closer to Western orthodox thinking and mechanisms for global liberal governance.[81] It was argued that the enlargement of the EU was confirmed

[75] Daniela Kroslak, *The Role of France in the Rwandan Genocide* (London: Hurst, 2007).
[76] Charbonneau, *France and the New Imperialism*, pp. 121–48. See also Patrick de Saint-Exupéry, *L'inavouable: la France au Rwanda* (Paris: Les Arènes, 2004).
[77] Yves Gounin, *La France en Afrique: Le combat des Anciens et des Modernes* (De Boeck, 2009).
[78] Bruno Charbonneau, 'What Is So Special about the European Union? EU-UN Cooperation in Crisis Management in Africa', *International Peacekeeping*, 16:4 (2009), pp. 546–61.
[79] Assemblée nationale (France), *Rapport d'information sur la politique de la France en Afrique* (Paris: Commission des Affaires étrangères, 13e législature, no. 1332, 2008), p. 68. See also France-Sénat, *Rapport d'information sur la gestion des crises en Afrique subsaharienne* (Paris: Commission des Affaires étrangères, de la défense et des forces armées, no. 450, 2006), pp. 34, 39.
[80] France, *Défense et Sécurité nationale – Le Livre blanc* (Paris: Odile Jacob/La Documentation française, 2008), p. 154.
[81] Charbonneau, *France and the New Imperialism*, pp. 73–92.

and consolidated by NATO's own.[82] European cooperation was conceived as necessary to face the specific threats and dangers coming from sub-Saharan Africa.[83] Increasing illicit traffic transiting through Africa and the 'issues relating to the supply of strategic raw materials, in any event, call for the careful attention [attention *redoublée*] of European states'.[84]

Despite (or because of) such changes, the French military intervened again in African politics, notably in Mali in 2013 and in Côte d'Ivoire and Libya in 2011. This continuity of intervention can partly be explained by the military infrastructure and capacity. The French state retains strategic military bases in Gabon, Senegal, Djibouti, and La Réunion/Mayotte, while the website of the État-major des Armées (EMA) lists deployments in Côte d'Ivoire, Chad, and the CAR as 'ongoing operations' (rather than bases, as it used to call them in the 1990s). In any case, with the gradual development of 'projection forces' during the Cold War that permitted troops to be stationed in France but ready to deploy swiftly in Africa through French African bases, the French government was able to incrementally close some bases and to diminish the number of permanent troops on African soil. The purpose of military bases gradually changed toward this logistics support role for projection forces. This infrastructure guarantees that the French state remains an inevitable player in African politics and in all kinds of military or humanitarian intervention on the continent.

The years since 1994–5 have seen a significant restructuring of the French military presence in Africa, including the closing of bases and the recent renegotiations of the various defence agreements between the French state and Francophone African countries. Yet, the fact and significance of the military presence were reaffirmed after it effected, with UN troops, regime change in Côte d'Ivoire. On 21 May 2011, the day of Ouattara's presidential investiture, President Nicolas Sarkozy announced at Port-Bouët – the headquarters of the French Licorne force – that 'we will always keep military forces here to ensure the protection of our nationals'. He added:

> But I want to make things clear between us. The French army is not here to ensure the stability of any government whatsoever, even if it is a friendly government [*gouvernement ami*]. Ivoirians must be the ones to choose. Here, we have thousands of our compatriots. Their security must be ensured and, thus, there will be soldiers for this in agreement with the authorities of Côte d'Ivoire. But the French army has no design [*n'a pas vocation*], this is a new era, to support or intervene in the affairs of African states.[85]

Whether the French army or government meddles directly in African affairs does not change the fact that various French and non-French actors can call upon this military presence, as the case of Mali in 2013 demonstrate.[86]

In the 1990s, the notion of 'peace' slowly became a key legitimising device for French military interventionism. Old capabilities, again, found new organising logics external to French-African relations. Yet, while French military interventions in Côte d'Ivoire in 2011 and in Mali in 2013 are premised upon a Franco-African militarism of violence, dependence, and transnational relationships, it never suspended

[82] France, *Défense et Sécurité nationale*, p. 23.
[83] Ibid., p. 44.
[84] Ibid., p. 154.
[85] Cited in 'Ouattara solennellement investi président de la Côte d'Ivoire', *Le Monde* (21 May 2011), author's translation.
[86] Roland Marchal, 'Briefing: Military (Mis)Adventures in Mali', *African Affairs*, advance access published 30 May 2013.

the historicity or agency of African societies. It was the African regional heads of states who pleaded for France to intervene in Mali in 2013, just as the Sarkozy government intervened in Côte d'Ivoire in 2011 only after negotiating and securing strong and uncontestable international support for military intervention (and to a lesser extent for Ouattara's regime).

Côte d'Ivoire: imperialism or peacebuilding?

The 2011 UN-French military intervention in Côte d'Ivoire certainly generated tense debates, especially in Africa.[87] According to Gaston Kelman, the strong reactions to the intervention of the 'international community' suggested that nothing less than the 'awakening of the African intellectual' was at stake.[88] Certainly, the debate was polarised and questioned the right and legitimacy of the 'international community' to intervene.[89] A group of intellectuals and public figures that included French law professor Albert Bourgi, French Socialist Party member Guy Labertit, and Senegalese and ex-secretary-general of Amnesty International Pierre Sané, argued against any type of military intervention, instead proposing dialogue for peace.[90] Winner of the literature Prix Renaudot, Tierno Monénembo questioned UN authority with his provocative title ('The UN re-colonises Africa') and by arguing that the UN cannot decide who is or who is not elected in a country, even if he did not contest Alassane Ouattara's election and denounced the 'evil trio' of Henri Konan Bédié, Laurent Gbagbo, and Alassane Ouattara.[91] Cameroonian writer Calixte Beyala did not believe that Ouattara was the elected president and rejected all intervention by a UN that she 'does not believe in' or by the African Union that is allegedly not free from Western influence.[92] To these anti-imperial critics, another group of (mostly American and European, but not exclusively) scholars that included Senegalese professor Mamadou Diouf, Beninese philosopher Paulin Hountondji, and Congolese historian Elikia M'Bokolo replied that this sort of critique against intervention was a rhetorical façade that defended an ethnocentric leader.[93] Rare are those Africans, like the Ivoirian journalist Venance Konan, who publicly supported the French intervention and credited it for resolving the post-election crisis.[94] In many ways, the various official positions of governments and the discussions within the UN Security Council and

[87] For an analysis of the peace operations in Côte d'Ivoire, including the 2010–11 events, see Bruno Charbonneau, 'War and Peace in Côte d'Ivoire: Violence, Agency and the Local/International Line', *International Peacekeeping*, 19:4 (2012), pp. 508–24; Alex Bellamy and Paul Williams, 'The New Politics of Protection? Côte d'Ivoire, Libya and the Responsibility to Protect', *International Affairs*, 87:4 (2011), pp. 825–50.

[88] Gaston Kelman, 'Côte d'Ivoire: le réveil de l'intellectuel africain est en jeu', *Jeune Afrique* 2609 (9–15 January 2011).

[89] For an overview of the debates between African intellectuals, see Christophe Champin, 'Côte d'Ivoire: La crise ivoirienne divise les intellectuels', *Rfi* (18 January 2011).

[90] 'Côte d'Ivoire: un appel d'intellectuels contre les va-t-en guerre?', *Rue89*, available at: {www.rue89.com/node/182705} accessed December 2010. See also Albert Bourgi, 'Insupportable néocolonialisme français', *Le Monde* (15 April 2011).

[91] Tierno Monénembo, 'L'ONU recolonise l'Afrique', *Le Monde* (3 January 2011).

[92] Calixte Beyala 'Non, Gbagbo n'est pas seul!', *Jeune Afrique* (4 January 2011).

[93] Collectif, 'Laurent Gbagbo, chef ethnocentriste', *Le Monde* (19 January 2011).

[94] Venance Konan, 'Reconnaissons que l'Elysée rompt avec la Françafrique?', *Le Monde* (15 April 2011). See the French perspective of Yves Gounin, 'On est loin de l'interventionnisme à la George W. Bush', *Le Monde* (15 April 2011).

at the African Union reflected this polarisation between those in favour of international intervention in the name of (some form of) humanitarianism and those against it in the name of Ivoirian and African sovereignty. South African diplomacy, notably through the involvement of President Thabo Mbeki, took upon itself to lead the anti-imperialist opposition to French and UN intervention.[95]

These sharp and polarising positions externalise the problem of intervention and romanticise the local resistance to (or need for) international intervention. This polarising expresses the permissible limit of humanitarian intervention, where the excess of humanitarianism is called 'imperialism'. The antagonistic interpretations present the key contradiction as between the external imperialist(s) and the country united against it.[96] This common interpretation obscures the fundamental connections between international and local forces, and thus between the politics and ethics of humanitarian intervention and the political economy of international peacebuilding in the Ivoirian conflict. The analysis of the debates and struggles over whether international sovereignty should trump Ivoirian state sovereignty needs to take into consideration the porous and mobile nature of this line, in order to highlight how organising logics are generated, transformed, and authorised.

French-Ivoirian connections

The contested French-Ivoirian history is one of the key reasons behind the polarisation of positions. The permanent French presence in Côte d'Ivoire since independence can hardly be dissociated from Ivoirian structures and dynamics of governance, political economy, and social and cultural dynamics. The country's first President, Félix Houphouët-Boigny (1960–93), was pro-West, anti-communist, and an ardent capitalist. As president Charles de Gaulle's minister of state, he was no proponent of independence and campaigned against decolonisation in 1958. Houphouët-Boigny argued that economic development was the priority and impossible without French support.[97] As Chauveau and Dozon argued, the post-1960 Ivoirian state reinforced and legitimised the larger trends of its plantation economy within the international political economy. As they wrote, the Ivoirian state was not born out of an independence given by France, but was 'the product of a history that was colonial but also very much Ivoirian, with as a key character [*personnage*] a plantation economy that developed thanks to the [colonial] administration and against or in spite of it'.[98]

For Samir Amin, Côte d'Ivoire was a 'state capitalism' model in which the state's weight in the economy continuously and very rapidly increased through public investment and an open-door policy of direct foreign investments (especially French). Planters did not have to invest, the urban classes were not rich enough to compete

[95] Thabo Mbeki, 'What the World Got Wrong in Côte d'Ivoire', *Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC, 29 April 2011); and the response from the Chief of Staff of the UN Secretary-general, Vijay Nambiar, 'Dear President Mbeki: The United Nations Helped Save the Ivory Coast', *Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC, 17 August 2011).

[96] In the public arguments, there are potentially interesting differences from the scholarly 'international/local' and 'imperial/humanitarian' dichotomies. For instance, the former seem to emphasise the deficiencies in specific actors, thus potentially exceeding the 'international/local' binary and a principled stance for one or the other. I thank the anonymous reviewer who pointed this out to me.

[97] Amadou Koné, *Houphouët-Boigny et la crise ivoirienne* (Paris: Karthala, 2003).

[98] Jean-Pierre Chauveau and Jean-Pierre Dozon, 'Ethnies et État en Côte d'Ivoire', *Revue française de science politique*, 38:5 (1988), p. 745.

with foreign capital, and the country's elites were mainly administrative. According to Amin, Ivoirian state capitalism possessed all the key characteristics of a dependent society.[99] As Schwab wrote: 'Through the 1980s almost 70 percent of manufacturing capital was French … The economic support network provided by France was nothing short of amazing. Houphouët utilised the sensational economy, along with French adulation of his policies, to reinforce his status as a charismatic leader.'[100] Yet, while this dependence was made possible by French capabilities, and pointed to obvious power asymmetries, France did not impose it *per se*. It was also aggravated and fully implemented by Ivoirians, notably by the Ivoirian first president Félix Houphouët-Boigny.[101]

The French army provided the Ivoirian regime with security and stability, while the inflow of French nationals and capital investments participated in creating the economic 'miracle' of West Africa. But in the 1980s, structural adjustment programmes imposed economic restraints whose consequences were to accelerate the processes of pauperisation and the exclusion of an increasing percentage of the population.[102] France tempered the impact of the adjustments with substantial financial aid for the first half of the 1980s, but decreasingly so especially after the death of Houphouët-Boigny in 1993 (because of the 1994 Balladur doctrine). Historical political alliances at the heart of Ivoirian society were disrupted, notably the one between administrative elites and private planters that used to sustain the plantation economy. Instead of shattering the dependent structures and mechanisms, they were reinforced at the top in the name of economic liberalisation, efficiency, and good governance. The amalgamation of conditions of austerity and the shrinking of policy options encouraged more radical politics, exacerbated xenophobic tendencies, and led to serious sociopolitical crisis and civil war.[103]

In Côte d'Ivoire, the key sectors of cocoa exports and the growing oil industry are not in French hands, but French corporations (still) control vital sectors of the economy: telecommunications (France Telecom), banks (Société Générale, Crédit Lyonnais, BNP-Paribas), transportation (Air France; Groupe Bolloré through SAGA, SDV, and Sitarail), water (Groupe Bouygues), and energy (electricity and hydrocarbons; involving Groupe Bouygues and Total). The privatisation of the Ivoirian economy in the early 1990s that Ouattara partly supervised as Prime Minister benefitted greatly French corporations.[104] In the 1980s, Gbagbo positioned himself against these Franco-African structures of governance. Yet, once in power and despite his anti-imperial and nationalist rhetoric, Gbagbo entrusted large parts of the Ivoirian economy to French companies.[105] The contract for the third Abidjan bridge was promised to China, but was ultimately given to Bouygues. On 3 April

[99] Samir Amin, *Le développement du capitalisme en Côte d'Ivoire* (2nd edn, Paris: Minuit, 1973).
[100] Peter Schwab, *Designing West Africa: Prelude to 21st-century Calamity* (New York: Palgrave, 2004), p. 54.
[101] Francis Akindès, 'Racines des crises socio-politiques en Côte d'Ivoire et sens de l'histoire', in J.-B. Ouédraogo and E. Sall (eds), *Frontières de la citoyenneté et violence politique en Côte d'Ivoire* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2008), pp. 25–61.
[102] Bonnie Campbell, 'Political Dimensions of the Adjustment Experience of Côte d'Ivoire', in Eleanor MacDonald (ed.), *Critical Political Studies* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002).
[103] Christian Bouquet, *Géopolitique de la Côte d'Ivoire* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2005).
[104] The presence of Martin Bouygues and Vincent Bolloré at Ouattara's 21 May 2011 presidential investiture was symbolically powerful and suggestive of the shared French-Ivoirian economic interests. See 'Côte d'Ivoire: dans les coulisses de l'investiture d'Alassane Ouattara', *Jeune Afrique* (1 June 2011).
[105] Philippe Bernard, 'Gbagbo: retour sur investissement', *Le Monde* (16 February 2011).

2008, Vincent Bolloré was awarded the *Ordre National du Mérite* (National Order of Merit) by Gbagbo after Groupe Bolloré was given the concession of the Abidjan seaport. The World Bank returned to Côte d'Ivoire in 2008 and the IMF in 2009 with their regular financial packages. Gbagbo's Economy and Finance Minister, Charles Kofy Diby, was named 2009 'Finance Minister of the Year for Africa' by The Banker Magazine in London on 12 February 2010.[106] In short, Gbagbo worked closely with French and international capital. Mamadou Koulibaly, president of the Ivoirian National Assembly and third vice-president of the FPI (*Front populaire ivoirien*; Gbagbo's political party), even admitted that: 'We said that we wanted to open the Ivoirian market to the whole world, but, in fact, we made deals with the biggest French businesses.'[107]

These French-Ivoirian relations, and their asymmetries, provide the credible basis for an 'imperial' interpretation of events. The point is not, as some anti-imperialist critique might argue, that French actors and interests overwhelmed and dictated Ivoirian agency, but that Ivoirian politics was performed and transformed (but not exclusively) with, against, or in spite of Franco-Ivoirian interactions and networks, notably at the level of elites. Leading French and Ivoirian elites often need each other, and leading Ivoirian actors use and need the old and new capabilities of French militarism and capitalism. In this regard, Laurent Gbagbo was not different. What he threatened was the disciplinary rules of democracy under international peace interventionism[108] and thus the particular conditions under which a specific form of capitalism and peace can take shape and be allowed by the 'international community'.

The question of peace

Assessments and judgments of Gbagbo's challenge have varied greatly, but they should consider at least four undeniable groups of facts that are relevant to the 2010–11 post-election crisis, even if disagreement can occur over precision and detail. First, Gbagbo and his allies were convincing and appealing to many Ivoirians as partly suggested by the election results[109] and as he targeted what many in Côte d'Ivoire perceived as 'real' problems that affect everyday life. His methods and solutions were certainly highly questionable, inviting when not necessitating violence, and his objectives obscure, but he nevertheless touched on, at least rhetorically, the sensitive actuality of the Ivoirian condition and the asymmetry of North-South relations.[110] Second, the actuality and the potential for more violence in 2011, especially

[106] 'Cote d'Ivoire Minister of Economy and Finance to Receive "Finance Minister of the Year, Africa" From the Banker Magazine', *Marketwire* (11 February 2010).

[107] Pascal Airault, 'Côte d'Ivoire: "Nous sommes les premiers responsables", admet Mamadou Koulibaly', *Jeune Afrique* (14 June 2011).

[108] Rita Abrahamsen, *Disciplining Democracy: Development Discourse and Good Governance in Africa* (London: Zed Books, 2000).

[109] In the first round of the presidential election, Gbagbo got 38.3 per cent of the vote and 45.9 per cent in the second round. For an analysis of the election, Thomas Bassett, 'Winning Coalition, Sore Loser: Côte d'Ivoire's 2010 Presidential Elections', *African Affairs*, 110:440 (2011), pp. 469–79.

[110] Mike McGovern, *Making War in Côte d'Ivoire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), pp. 103–36. During my fieldwork in Côte d'Ivoire in November and December 2012, this claim was reaffirmed by FPI members and Gbagbo supporters during informal conversations and formal interviews.

in Abidjan, were real.[111] In this sense, the UN-French intervention stopped the worst violence and saved lives by putting an end to the war. There seemed to be a general sense of relief both in various Ivoirian communities and international diplomatic milieus. Third, it is irrefutable that the French state played a key role, at least militarily speaking and at the UN Security Council, in ending this post-electoral crisis and ousting Gbagbo. Without French military intervention, the fighting might have continued for much longer as neither UN nor rebel forces seemed capable to defeat Gbagbo's forces in Abidjan. Fourth, unlike in 2002–4, the French government did not act unilaterally in 2010–11. The French government worked very closely with the Nigerian government, ECOWAS, and made a written request from the UN Secretary-general a requirement for any French direct military action. International legitimacy was actively sought and emphasised:[112] every significant state or international organisation and authority recognised the electoral victory of Ouattara, supported UNSC Resolution 1975, and at least implicitly approved of the military intervention. The key role played by African leadership and regional bodies in Côte d'Ivoire might even suggest that the 'only initially promising aspect of this situation has been that of leadership from emerging African institutions'.[113]

In a context of apparent contradictions, the uses of humanitarian or (anti-)imperialist discourses and images were centrally important to the actors' styles of self-representation. Tales of well-intentioned (or imperialist) Westerners and violent (or liberating, decolonising) natives created a space for the saviour and the victim, or the imperialist and the freedom fighter, and thus served the different and competing discursive strategies. Gbagbo understood this well, playing on the local-international line and moving on one side or the other depending on the circumstances and objectives. As President, he was uniquely located to play both the role of 'international' member of the 'international community' and the role of 'local/national' defender of Ivoirian sovereignty.[114] After the French government refused to intervene militarily in his favour in 2002, recognised the rebels as a political force representing the North of the country, and the failure of the Linas-Marcoussis Accords in 2003, Gbagbo understood that French and international intervention threatened his sovereign authority.[115] He and his allies then emphasised anti-colonial rhetoric to justify their resistance to internationally-sponsored peace negotiations and to gather public support.[116] In this strategy, Gbagbo found a strong ally in South African President Thabo Mbeki who believed Gbagbo was fighting French neocolonialism.[117] After the diplomacy of French President Jacques Chirac and UN Secretary-general Kofi Annan who both strongly opposed Gbagbo, South African peace initiatives in Côte d'Ivoire helped him in negotiating better peace terms and in justifying his delaying

[111] Scott Straus, '"It's Sheer Horror Here": Patterns of Violence during the First Four Months of Côte d'Ivoire's Post-electoral Crisis', *African Affairs*, 110:440 (2011), pp. 481–9.
[112] Katariina Simonen, '*Qui s'excuse s'accuse* … An Analysis of French Justifications for Intervening in Côte d'Ivoire', *International Peacekeeping*, 19:3 (2012), pp. 363–76.
[113] Alex Vines, 'Côte d'Ivoire: Power Gridlock', *The World Today*, 67:3 (2011), p. 24.
[114] For a detailed analysis, see Charbonneau, 'War and Peace in Côte d'Ivoire'.
[115] Bruno Charbonneau, 'Dreams of Empire: France, Europe, and the New Interventionism in Africa', *Modern & Contemporary France*, 16:3 (2008), pp. 279–95.
[116] Giulia Piccolino, 'David against Goliath in Côte d'Ivoire? Laurent Gbagbo's War against Global Governance', *African Affairs*, 111:442 (2011), pp. 1–23.
[117] Vincent Darracq, 'Jeux de puissance en Afrique: Le Nigeria et l'Afrique du Sud face à la crise ivoirienne', *Politique étrangère*, 2:summer (2011), pp. 361–74.

tactics.[118] When both Chirac and Annan left their respective office in 2007, Gbagbo regained the initiative and the control over the peace process by instigating and signing the 2007 Ouagadougou Accords. He could argue that, protecting Ivoirian sovereignty from international interference, his government could now really work toward peace and fair elections.[119] In 2010–11, however, the international context was one of turmoil (Arab Spring, Libya, Syria). Beyond Côte d'Ivoire, what was at stake was the political credibility of too many international authorities, notably that of the UN. As secretary-general Ban Ki-moon claimed in front of the UN General Assembly on 21 December 2010, he would not tolerate in Côte d'Ivoire any attempt to 'starve the United Nations mission into submission' and that, 'Facing this direct and unacceptable challenge to the legitimacy of the United Nations, the world community cannot stand by.'[120] Put another way, according to the secretary-general, international authority trumped Ivoirian sovereignty.

This part of the story is important as it expresses the intense negotiations over the rival claims of Ivoirian and international sovereignty. It articulates the boundary at the edges of the states system, where the civilised and barbarians outside the international order are separated. As Gbagbo challenged the rules of democracy under conditions of international peace intervention (as they were stipulated in the Pretoria Accords of 2005), he was at risk of becoming an exception. And indeed, the 'international community' labelled him as such when it imposed by force regime change. To call his removal 'imperialism', however, is a costly shortcut deployed to call into question the legitimacy of the action. To call it 'imperialism', as a transgression of Ivoirian sovereignty, works to affirm the same narrative about the limits enabling modern forms of peace. An anti-imperial nationalism and a universal humanitarianism are not opposites, but mutually constitutive and 'work together very effectively by enabling a priority of one over the other so as to enable a politics that is always willing to authorise the most fateful discriminations over life and death'.[121] While most argue for or against intervention, both sides of the debate externalise the problem of intervention, thus foreclosing to investigation the conditions and institutions that authorise and sustain Ivoirian capitalism, French-Ivoirian connections, and structures of violence and injustice.

The 1980s neoliberal pressures to clarify property rights, to privatise and to radically reform the Ivoirian political economy were argued to have led to conflict in the 1990s, 'to have reinvigorated particularity and custom as bases for legitimizing claims to property, citizenship and authority within as well as outside the purview of the state'.[122] After Ouattara's presidential inauguration in May 2011, more of the same policies were on offer. The French government offered 400 million euros for

[118] The difficult relationship between Chirac and Mbeki over Côte d'Ivoire was well covered by the press, notably Chirac's statement that Mbeki should 'immerse himself in West Africa … in order to understand the psychology and soul of West Africa because, in times of crisis, one must know the psychology and soul of the people'. 'Chirac en panne d'idée', *Jeune Afrique* (6 February 2005).

[119] International Crisis Group, *Côte d'Ivoire: faut-il croire à l'accord de Ouagadougou?* (Dakar/Brussels: Africa Report 127, 2007).

[120] 'UN chief warns of "real risk" of Ivory Coast civil war', *BBC News* {www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12056444} accessed 23 December 2010.

[121] Walker, *After the Globe, Before the World*, p. 230.

[122] Sarah Berry, 'Property, Authority and Citizenship: Land Claims, Politics and the Dynamics of Social Division in West Africa', *Development and Change*, 40:1 (2009), pp. 23–45; Bernard Conte, 'La responsabilité du FMI et de la Banque mondiale dans le conflit en Côte d'Ivoire', *Études internationales*, 36:2 (2005), pp. 219–28.

reconstruction, emphasised the need to reinforce the special French-Ivoirian relationship, and French investors, with the support of Prime Minister François Fillion, showed great enthusiasm to return to Côte d'Ivoire.[123] Since 2011, President Ouattara has emphasised policies that aim at promoting reconciliation. Efforts toward reconciliation have emphasised 'development' and reforms of 'security forces', but are ultimately premised on political alliances with ex-rebels that are dependent upon strong international political and financial support (investment commitments of 8.6 billion for 2013–15). The international support to Ouattara has contributed to his presidential legitimacy and authority and is, in fact, essential to manage his alliance with the ex-rebels. The latter have taken strategic positions within the state bureaucracy, are protected from international justice by Ouattara,[124] and know the president to be a source of revenue and legitimacy because of his international status. In short, the new Ivoirian regime has positioned itself comfortably on the local-international line, using to its advantage (and to the disadvantage of the political opposition) international peace conditions to establish its particular Ivoirian peace and reconciliation process.[125]

The close rapport between Ouattara and the 'international community' does not make the 'international' involvement in Ivoirian affairs 'imperial'. The question of peace does not need to be a stark choice between *either* humanitarianism *or* imperialism. The choice to be made between humanitarian and imperialist interpretations of international peacebuilding hides how the international politics of humanitarian logics are premised upon, at least in the case explored in this article, old imperial capabilities. It also hides how *both* 'local' actors struggling for power in states where international peacebuilders are deployed and the 'international community' together (cooperatively or in competition) regulate, impose, or transform the expressions, processes, and mechanisms of a particular and situated political order. As I demonstrated, it is in such a specific context, it seems, that the common anti-imperial critique that emphasises 'Western' or French interests falls short of the mark, unless one believes the preposterous claim (or implicit assumption) that all African leaders and institutions are more or less the puppets of Western imperialists or liberal peacebuilders. Just the same, the argument that defends African sovereignty or the African solution does not make the final intervention more humanitarian, nor does it preclude imperial or neocolonial considerations. As the connections between French and Ivoirian elites suggest, both a nationalist anti-imperialism as deployed by Gbagbo and his supporters[126] and a language of peace, development, and reconciliation as deployed by the 'international community' and the Ouattara government,[127] can be turned into tools to reproduce unequal and dependent capitalist relations.

[123] 'Côte d'Ivoire: la France annonce une aide "exceptionnelle" de 400 millions d'euros', *Le Monde* (12 April 2011); John Lichfield, 'A Success for France's army, but a failure of its diplomacy', *The Independent* (12 April 2011); Baudelaire Mieu, 'Côte d'Ivoire: forcing des patrons français', *Jeune Afrique* (18 July 2011); Kim Willsher, 'Sarkozy's micro-managed intervention in Ivory Coast could win votes', *The Guardian* (11 April 2011).

[124] Amnesty International, *Côte d'Ivoire: la loi des vainqueurs* (London: Amnesty International Publications, 2013).

[125] Because of the lack of space, I cannot elaborate on the Ivoirian peacebuilding process since 2011. See Bruno Charbonneau, 'Côte d'Ivoire: les possibilités et limites d'une réconciliation', *Afrique Contemporaine*, 245:1 (2013), pp. 111–29.

[126] Giulia Piccolino, 'David against Goliath in Côte d'Ivoire?'

[127] Charbonneau, 'Côte d'Ivoire: les possibilités et limites d'une réconciliation'.

The critique of international peacebuilding should include a methodical critique of 'local' agency and how it can constitute its own dependency (not only how it reacts to international peacebuilding). But this critique needs to include an analysis of how leading actors constitute themselves as 'local' or 'international' agencies and/or authorities, and how this process of constitution generates resources of power. This seems crucial, as I have argued, because assuming the local/international binary seems to inevitably bring us back to the state as the site of 'local/national' capacity to integrate, or resist, this liberal/imperial world.

Conclusion

In this article, using the case of Francophone Africa, I argued that the imperial legacy of international peacebuilding is found in old capabilities, new organising logics, and specific practices and power relationships. It involves the interplay of militarised and capitalist relations, processes, and mechanisms. The analytical strategy was to problematise the local/international line in order to avoid the imposed choice between humanitarian and imperialist interpretations of international peacebuilding. I argued that to name peace operations 'empire' or 'imperialistic' is overly simplistic and even misleading. The events in Côte d'Ivoire expressed the boundary of an international order where system sovereignty trumps state sovereignty and where the possibility of empire is revealed yet rarely actualised. As the academic and policy debates suggest, it is far from clear on what grounds it is now possible or legitimate to intervene militarily in a conflict, but to rely heavily on the common antagonism between humanitarian and imperialist interpretations of peacebuilding practices is to risk two significant and intertwined mistakes.

First, the antagonism caricatures the relationships between international and local actors, sometimes even processes, mechanisms, and structures. In the case of Côte d'Ivoire, the various relationships with France predated the international peace intervention and thus partly conditioned the possibility for peace (and war). Both military and socioeconomic connections were radically transformed after decolonisation, from an imperial 'mixed' army to national armies that 'cooperated' based on 'international' agreements, and from mercantilist capitalism to neoliberal capitalist relations. By presenting the core issue as between an external imperialist against a country united or, in its liberal variant, as between humanitarian saviours and victims in need to be saved, it imposes a worldview that excludes the critique of 'local' transnationalised actors that can benefit or aggravate the relationship between an international militarised peace agenda and capitalism. Hence, the second error is in avoiding a critique of local agency. Local agency is restricted to playing the roles of villain or victim in a humanitarian reading, or the role of anti-imperial hero or victim in the imperial reading. A caricature of local agency is always available and often deployed. This issue raises multiple questions. How radical was Gbagbo's resistance? In the name of what or whom was he resisting international regime change? Who was he really resisting, considering that many (a majority according to the UN) Ivoirians voted for someone else? What of the resistance and/or acquiescence of other Ivoirians? Similar questions can be asked of Ouattara and his Ivoirian and 'international' allies: for whom and for what were they fighting exactly? 'Local' resistance must be properly situated and analysed, as it is neither homogeneous nor

limited to a 'local' field of action. In Côte d'Ivoire, there were at least two sites of resistance in 2011: Gbagbo's actions against international actors, and Ivoirian resistance against Gbagbo (crystallised in the alliance of Ouattara and Guillaume Soro). These questions have yet to be extensively analysed (although they are hotly debated in Côte d'Ivoire), but they suggest the limited explanatory purchase of naming 'imperialism' international peace intervention. Together, these two mistakes work to avoid the critique of the ways in which structures of violence and injustice are reproduced on the local-international line. This is not to let French and international actors 'off the hook'. Rather, as this article demonstrated, it is to argue that revealing the particular hegemonic content and vested interests of Western humanitarianism is no longer enough. Critical analysis of international peacebuilding must also acknowledge the considerable energies involved in struggles for power in states where international peacebuilders are deployed.