

A RETROSPECTIVE AND PROSPECTIVE ASSESSMENT OF U.S. POLICY IN THE CEMAC SUB-REGION

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ABSTRACT: The global power competition has intensified game nations play in the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) sub region. In the Post Cold war period, there is a general feeling by the six member states that, there was *an absence* of a clear policy gold by the US. The U.S had no Grand Strategy for the African continent, that is why the U.S prefers a selective engagement approach. The objective of this study is to assess the impact of U.S. foreign policy on the political, economic, and social landscapes of individual CEMAC countries both in Republican and Democratic administrations. This would involve analyzing quantitative data on economic indicators, political stability, and social development, along with qualitative research to understand the perspectives of various stakeholders. Understanding the historical trajectory of U.S. engagement and projecting future trends necessitates a multi-faceted approach, considering economic interests, security concerns, and the evolving geopolitical landscape. Most US-African policy was conducted through the European colonial masters. The successive U.S president saw the sub region as out of the U.S sphere of influence. So, the US-CEMAC relations fluctuated. The sub region is considered to be within the sphere of influence of Paris and the lack of consistent U.S. policy towards specific regimes has created uncertainty and a shift in policy in the sub- region. The U.S policy toward the sub region is historically values-based approach to global engagement, that makes strategizing its role in the Great Power Competition with Russia, Turkey and China more complicated.

Keywords: Retrospective, Prospective, Foreign policy and CEMAC sub region

I. INTRODUCTION

'Knowledge will forever govern ignorance, and a people who mean to be their own governors, must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives' JAMES MADISON

Most US-African policy was conducted through the European colonial masters. The Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) sub region is considered to be within the sphere of influence of Paris. France therefore, had a particular and significant influence on the six member states (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo Republic, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon). The U.S have various foreign policy orientations but, they predominantly pursued two orientations in their history, that is Unilateralism and engagement.¹ However, there are four ways in which the Americans think their Foreign Policy; *Jacksonian*, *Jeffersonian*, *Hamiltonian (Mercantilism)* and *Wilsonian*.² The US had no Grand Strategy for the African continent,³ that is why the U.S prefers a selective engagement approach when dealing with African issues, mostly crisis oriented, and acting according to priorities, the US get involved in conflict crises that might threaten their long-term interest in the sub region. The U.S. foreign policy towards CEMAC under both Republican and Democratic administrations has been characterized by a complex interplay of strategic interests, security concerns, and developmental assistance. The CEMAC subregion is seen to be outside the U.S sphere of influence.⁴ Democrats administrations have often

¹ Joyce P. Kaufman, A concise History of U.S Foreign Policy, fifth edition, Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2021

² Interview with Professor Khan at the university of Delaware July 5th 2024 at 2 30 pm

³ Linda Kulman, Teaching Common Sense. The Grand Strategy Program at Yale University. Foreword by Henry Kissinger. Prospecta Press Westport and New York, 2016, P.139

⁴ Joyce P. Kaufman, A Concise History of US Foreign Policy, fifth edition, Rowman and Littlefield, 2021

prioritized promoting democracy, human rights, and good governance,⁵ while Republican administrations have sometimes shown a greater focus on counterterrorism and strategic partnerships.⁶

According to Tibor Nagy, *The U.S is losing the fight against terrorism, and losing to Russia, China, India and Turkey. The U.S is also losing African support in the UN and are being beaten A to Z. Our adversaries go in with battle axes while we come with Robert's Rules of order.*⁷ An assessment of the impact of U.S. foreign policy on the political, economic, and social landscapes of individual CEMAC countries would involve analyzing quantitative data on economic indicators, political stability, and social development, along with qualitative research to understand the perspectives of various stakeholders. Africa is a considerable voting bloc in the UN, one of the world's largest trading blocs for strategic geopolitical position and economic competition for the rich natural resources and market opportunities. It is the second largest continent and second largest population in the world, made up of 54 countries and very rich in mineral deposit. The global power competition has intensified game nations play in the CEMAC sub region. The sub-region shares a common market, common currency and promote sub-regional integration through a monetary union and an economic union. The sub-region holds strategic importance due to its natural resources, geopolitical location, and the complex security dynamics within the region. Understanding the historical trajectory of U.S. engagement and projecting future trends necessitates a multi-faceted approach, considering economic interests, security concerns, and the evolving geopolitical landscape.

However, the U.S foreign policy at different point reflects changes from previous policies, but then, if there are shift in policy, how can an in-depth analysis of the CEMAC states in shaping their relationship with the U.S. can be assessed? This requires examining the foreign policy strategies of individual CEMAC countries and understanding how they navigate the complex dynamics of great power competition. Evidence shows that China's and Russia's growing influence in the sub-region is as a result of the U.S not attaching great importance to the sub region especially after the cold war. And a power vacuum is created, China, Russia and Turkey tend to step in and fill the void. The U.S policy toward the sub region put priorities into 4 pillars that is, Peace and security issues, strengthen democratic institutions, Spur Economic growth, investment and development. For the United States, with its historically values-based approach to global engagement, that makes strategizing its role in the Great Power Competition with Russia, and China more complicated.

In 1990 the U.S Department of State announce that aid to Africa is conditioned or prior to progress towards democracy.⁸ The geopolitical approach used in this reflection is interested in the conditions of materialization of power. It therefore combines several variables such as strategy, political leadership, economic, among others in the global power strategies. Turkey, Russia and China are challenging the status quo in the sub region, using insecurity and diplomatic disputes with Western powers as a springboard to expand its presence in the sub region. At a certain moment, Mercantilism dominate especially when it concerns trade issues, since trade benefits to all. China in the sub region goes against the U.S policy of free trade, Chinas increasing influence in the region is seen as a threat. The Chinese dominance strategy in the subregion is increasing because they are able to buy influence among African nations.⁹ Russia too seeks to take advantage of this neglect to position itself in the subregion. Russia is trying to **improve its economy** with access to African markets, expanding its military outreach, and strengthening its position in the African continent. The current situation in Central African Republic (C.A.R) is providing a playbook. Russian support is welcomed by Central Africans who are hopeful that Moscow could succeed where other foreign powers had not in taming conflict. The U.S and its historical allies (France, Britain and other European powers) failed to bring back peace in the sub-region especially in CAR and Chad. Russia is investing in the diplomatic, socio-economic frameworks in order to increase its influence in Africa through the Central African Republic. Moscow finds in the Central African Republic a space for projecting and strengthening its power status in the sub-region in particular and on the continent in general.

⁵Pempel, T. J. "The 2012 United States election and the implications for East Asia". None. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2013.76957>, 2013.

⁶Grauvogel, J. "The "Internal Opposition" Effect of International Sanctions: Insights from Burundi, Zimbabwe and a Qualitative Comparative Analysis of Sub-Saharan Africa". None. <https://doi.org/None>, 2018.

⁷ Interview with Tibor Nagy, Former Assistant Secretary for Africa 2018 to 2021, 16th November 2023

⁸ Linda Kulman, Teaching Common Sense. The Grand Strategy Program at Yale University. Foreword by Henry Kissinger. Prospecta Press Westport and New York, 2016, P.139

⁹ Linda Kulman, Teaching Common Sense. The Grand Strategy Program at Yale University. Foreword by Henry Kissinger. Prospecta Press Westport and New York, 2016, P.139

II. THE U.S STRATEGIC AMBIGUITY IN THE CEMAC SUB REGION

The U.S. engagement with the CEMAC sub-region has been characterized by a blend of strategic and pragmatic approaches. While a dedicated, singular policy document specifically outlining a comprehensive U.S. strategy for the CEMAC sub-region is not readily apparent, we can infer key elements from broader U.S. foreign policy in Africa and surrounding regions. The post-Cold War era saw a shift towards promoting democracy and free markets,¹⁰ often intertwined with counter-terrorism efforts.¹¹ This approach, however, has not been uniform across the CEMAC countries, reflecting varying levels of political stability and economic development. Traditionally, the U.S. priorities in the continent was the promotion of transparent governance and human rights, addressing democratic backsliding, and maintaining security. But we noticed that the U.S Policy was mainly based on “*Vital Interest* and desirable interest”, which can further be explained through the U.S policy in the continent during the cold war period and post-cold war period.

A/ The Cold War period (from independence to 1990s) and The Post Cold war period (after 1990s)

The relation during the cold war period was mainly centered around the “*cold war politics.*” The relation was mostly based on maintaining and promoting Anti-Communist ideology among African elites during this era. The U.S had good alliances with all African states that supported their stand in its fight against the Soviet Union. Dan Whitman ones commented that “*We have lost the sense of how to do public diplomacy. We had it when there was U.S.S.R. Now no longer. We only harangue other countries on cultural issues as an extension of our own domestic culture wars in the U.S.*”¹²

The "war on terror" following 11th September 2001, significantly impacted U.S. foreign policy in the CEMAC sub-region in the post-cold war period.¹³ The fight against extremist groups, particularly in the Sahel region bordering the CEMAC, influenced U.S. military and security assistance to certain CEMAC states.¹⁴ This engagement, however, has been subject to criticism concerning its effectiveness and potential unintended consequences.¹⁵ The U.S. has also sought to diversify energy sources and transportation routes, reducing reliance on specific regions or countries.¹⁶ This has potentially influenced its engagement with the oil-rich nations within CEMAC. In the Post Cold war period, there is a general feeling by the six member states that there was *an absence* of a clear policy gold by the US.

The establishment of United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) in 2007 marked a significant shift in U.S. military engagement across the continent. While AFRICOM's activities was also extended to the CEMAC sub-region, a comparative analysis approach reveals that U.S. foreign policy in the CEMAC sub-region emphasizes on counter-terrorism, economic development, and promoting democratic governance which has been a consistent theme across many regions and sub regions.¹⁷ However, the intensity and specific focus of these policies have varied depending on regional contexts and strategic priorities. For instance, the U.S. engagement in the Middle East, marked by military interventions and significant financial investment, differs considerably from its approach in the CEMAC sub-region.¹⁸ Similarly, the U.S. policy towards Central Asia, influenced by the "Great Game" dynamics

¹⁰ Pempel, T. J. “The 2012 United States election and the implications for East Asia”. None. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2013.769457>, 2013.

¹¹ Grauvogel, J. “The "Internal Opposition" Effect of International Sanctions: Insights from Burundi, Zimbabwe and a Qualitative Comparative Analysis of Sub-Saharan Africa”. None. <https://doi.org/None>, 2018

¹² Dan Whitman Comment from Tibor Nagy in ‘United States Policy on Africa: Do We (Still) Matter? In Journal of World Affairs by the Foreign Policy Research Institute (ORBIS), Spring 2024, Vol, 68, NO 2, p.250.

¹³ Khamis, Assistant Professor. Dr. Kholoud Mohammed. 2017. "US foreign policy toward East of Africa After the events of September. The constants and the variables”. Journal of Juridical and Political Science. <https://doi.org/10.55716/ijps.2017.6.1.2>, 2001

¹⁴ Cohen, L. NaN. “Administrative Development in "Low-Intensity" Democracies: Governance, Rule-of-Law and Corruption in the Western Balkans (SWP 5)”. None. <https://doi.org/None>

¹⁵ Pategi, Aliyu Ahman and Alam, Anwar. NaN. “US Foreign Policy and Counter-Terrorism Since 9/11 In the Maghreb Region of Africa: A Study of Libya”. International Journal of Management Studies and Social Science Research. <https://doi.org/10.56293/ijmssr.2024.5108>

¹⁶ . Pratt, B. « Editorial ». None. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2013.756460>, 2013.

¹⁷ Yaseen, Mehreen, Ghayoor, Sadaf, ul, Musaiab, Shakir, Hassan, and Zafar, Iqra.. "US Foreign Policy: Towards Middle East (2018-2023)". None. <https://doi.org/10.59075/ijss.v2i2.314>

¹⁸ Fornella, Maria L. “The Obama Revolution: First One Hundred Days”. None. <https://doi.org/None>, 2009

and resource competition, presents a different set of priorities.¹⁹ The level of U.S. military presence and engagement also varies significantly across different regions. The heavy military involvement in the Middle East contrasts with a more limited but strategically important presence in the CEMAC region. The sub-Saharan Africa especially the central African states was initially not been a primary focus of the U.S foreign policy. The successive U.S president saw the sub region as out of the U.S sphere of influence. So, the US-CEMAC relations fluctuated. The U.S has great interest elsewhere and Africans understood that Africa is an afterthought engagement mainly limited to counterterrorism.

Republican administrations have often prioritized a more transactional approach to foreign policy, emphasizing strategic partnerships and national security interests.²⁰ This approach has sometimes resulted in greater engagement with authoritarian regimes in the CEMAC region, where stability is seen as crucial for counterterrorism efforts. However, this has been criticized for neglecting human rights and democratic governance concerns.²¹ The focus on counterterrorism has also led to increased military assistance and security cooperation, which can have unintended consequences for political stability and human rights. The U.S are having a less consistent policy and issue bland statement on Military coups,²² the respect of institutions and the rule of law. *Evidence shows that Russia and China seek to take advantage of this neglect to position themselves in the CEMAC subregion even by the use of soft power.*

B/The realities of soft power

The realities of soft power in the 21st century demand a cohesive strategy to combat the asymmetric hybrid warfare methods the melding of modern warfare and business strategy used by Beijing and Moscow. According to Kevin Limonier there is a 'growing spread of Russian content across the French-speaking African web', explained by the great popularity of anti-Western discourse propagated by the major Russian international media (RT and Sputnik) among African public opinion, which often views Russia through the prism of its anti-colonial Soviet past.²³ The impact on the political landscape is difficult to isolate from other factors influencing the sub-region, such as internal conflicts, regional power dynamics, and the influence of other international actors.²⁴ For example, while the U.S. has provided support for democratic institutions and processes in some CEMAC countries, the success of these efforts has been uneven, hampered by factors such as weak state capacity, corruption, and ethnic tensions.²⁵ Furthermore, U.S. engagement with authoritarian regimes in the region, sometimes driven by strategic considerations, has been criticized for undermining democratic progress.²⁶ if we compare it to other politico-economic spaces in sub-Saharan Africa, is the one where power retains and lasts the longest. The six current heads of state together have nearly a century in power with strong disparities. The lack of consistent U.S. policy towards specific regimes, shifting based on the prevailing administration, has created uncertainty and instability in the region. This inconsistency makes it difficult to definitively assess the overall impact of U.S. foreign policy on the political stability of CEMAC. The influence of U.S. foreign policy is also mediated through various channels, including bilateral aid, multilateral organizations, and engagement with civil society groups. The effectiveness of these channels is influenced by factors such as the absorptive capacity of CEMAC governments and the local political context.²⁷ For instance, while U.S. aid has been instrumental in supporting various development initiatives, the lack of transparency and accountability in some CEMAC countries has limited the impact of this assistance.²⁸

¹⁹ Kreuter, Helena, "The Politics of Globalization". None. <https://doi.org/None>, 2019

²⁰ Grauvogel, J. "The "Internal Opposition" Effect of International Sanctions: Insights from Burundi, Zimbabwe and a Qualitative Comparative Analysis of Sub-Saharan Africa". None. <https://doi.org/None>, 2018.

²¹ Fornella, Maria L. "The Obama Revolution: First One Hundred Days". None. <https://doi.org/None>, 2009

²² Ibid

²³ Quoted in a report by the Centre for Analysis, Forecasting and Strategy (CAPS) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Strategic Research Institute of the École Militaire (IRSEM), the work of Kevin Limonier, lecturer at the University of Paris 8 and researcher at the French Institute of Geopolitics and the Castex Chair of Cyber Strategy

²⁴ Regilme, S. and Untalan, C. Y. NaN. "The Philippines 2014-2015: Domestic Politics and Foreign Relations, A Critical Review". None. <https://doi.org/None>

²⁵ Cohen, L. NaN. "Administrative Development in Low-Intensity" Democracies: Governance, Rule-of-Law and

²⁶ Regilme, S. and Untalan, C. Y. NaN. "The Philippines 2014-2015: Domestic Politics and Foreign Relations, A Critical Review". None. <https://doi.org/None>.

²⁷ Pratt, B. 2013. "Editorial". None. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2013.756460>

²⁸ Cohen, L. NaN. "Administrative Development in "Low-Intensity" Democracies: Governance, Rule-of-Law and Corruption in the Western Balkans (SWP 5)". None. <https://doi.org/None>

Additionally, the U.S. approach towards regional organizations, such as the African Union, has varied, impacting the effectiveness of collective efforts to address political challenges in the CEMAC sub-region.

For the American research centre Brookings Institution, these are projection of power on the world scene, access to raw materials and natural resources, and security, associated with arms sales. Roland Marchal asserted that *'The Russians know how to do three things that are of interest to Africans and the continent. They know how to exploit mines and manage energy resources. They can sell civil nuclear power and they sell arms and have security expertise.'*²⁹ But in Bangui, the authorities believe that the priority for Central Africans, who have been plunged into a spiral of violence since 2013, is security, peace and stability. *'Russia has been present in C.A.R since independence. Currently, the main expectation of national opinion is first and foremost security. And on this point, military cooperation with Russia is bearing fruit. I would like to remind you that, not so long ago, 80% of the territory was occupied by terrorists. Russia is not a friend of the West, of course, but it is a friend of the Central African Republic. Let us be clear about that. So according to our interests, we will not allow ourselves to be dictated to by whom we must make a pact or not. Those days are over. The development of the CAR is so huge that there is room for everyone.'*³⁰ The Russian presence in the Central African Republic is also part of a more general desire of Moscow to advance its views and assert its interests on the continent. The Russians plan to install military bases in five to six African countries. Moscow is going to build a military base on the Red Sea, in Port Sudan. This is a first in Africa since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Russia will use the base to refuel its fleet, according to a draft agreement with Sudan that was presented by Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishoustin and approved by President Vladimir Putin. This is a first for Moscow on the African continent since the fall of the Soviet Union.³¹

III. FUTURE TRENDS IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY IN CEMAC

Projecting future U.S. foreign policy in the CEMAC region requires considering several factors. The ongoing competition between major global powers, particularly the U.S. and China, Russia and even Turkey will continue to shape the geopolitical landscape.³² China's growing economic influence in Africa, including potential investments in infrastructure and resource extraction within the CEMAC region, will likely lead to increased competition for influence.³³ This competition could manifest itself in various forms, including economic aid, development projects, and potentially even indirect security competition. The security situation within the CEMAC sub-region remains a significant concern. The presence of extremist groups, internal conflicts, and transnational crime pose ongoing challenges.³⁴ The U.S. is likely to continue supporting regional security initiatives and providing counter-terrorism assistance to selected CEMAC states. However, the nature and extent of this support will depend on evolving security threats and the U.S.'s overall strategic priorities in the sub-region and in Africa in general. The U.S. sent a troop of 300 soldiers in Cameroon to bolster the Cameroon effort to counter Boko Haram. This U.S. troops would provide intelligence to multi-national task force alongside with surveillance drones.³⁵

A/ Geopolitical continuum

The ongoing security crises in the sub-region are an opportunity for Russia, China and Turkey to reclaim the continent. Russia delivered arms to the Central African Republic, which was under embargo in 2008, with the approval of the Security Council. Russia has also provided peacekeeping training for 1,300 Central African Republic army soldiers and nearly 160 police officers from 18 African countries. Defense cooperation is a major geopolitical resource for Russia in the context of rivalry between the two countries. The geopolitical continuum that China and

²⁹ Roland Marchal The War is Changing not over after Afqooye, Part 2, London Conference on Somalia, March 2012

³⁰ Speech from the C.A.R head of states Prof Toadera to an interview accorded to RFI in august 2022 in Bangui

³¹ Lumanae Groupe, RUSSIA IN AFRICA, December 16, 2021

³² Pursiainen, C., Alden, C., and Bertelsen, R. "The Arctic and Africa in Chinas Foreign Policy: How different are they and what does this tell us?". Arctic Review on Law and Politics. <https://doi.org/10.23865/ARCTIC.V12.2440>.

³³ Mesfin, B. "The establishment and implications of the United States Africa Command: An African perspective". None. <https://doi.org/None>, 2021.

³⁴ Njifon, Hassan Guiol Njoya, Nanfosso, R., Kountchou, Armand Mboutchouang, and Wung, Ernest Alang. NaN. "Tourism Demand in Central Africa: The Counter Effect of Terrorism". International Journal of Research in Tourism and Hospitality. <https://doi.org/10.20431/2455-0043.0901005>

³⁵ U.S. officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the troops would provide intelligence to a multi-national task force being set up to fight Boko Haram and composed of troops from Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, Chad and Benin.

Russia wish to create at the gates of France's dominion necessarily constitutes a threat to the durability of Western interests in the region. China increasingly is a near-peer competitor, challenging the United States in multiple arenas especially economically, militarily, and technologically and it is pushing to change global norms.

Russia's new foreign policy benefits from the positive image of the former USSR as a major ally of liberation movements in Africa. This proximity to African causes contributed to the emergence of a socialist clientele within the ruling elite of the time, which was useful for strengthening military and economic cooperation. Even if its action is more pragmatic today, post-Soviet Russia remains attached to yesterday's partners, as evidenced by its participation in the design and launch of *ANGOSAT*, Angola's first communications satellite.³⁶ Russia's return to CEMAC sub-region has resulted in a strong involvement in the Central African Republic, with arms deliveries, the sending of military instructors and the development of a strategy of influence, notably through the dissemination, via the Internet, of articles criticizing the French presence in the country.

The strong military partnerships the United States has already formed and nurtured with African nations are key foundational building blocks for all other forms of engagement to take place. African leaders, for their part, are unlikely to choose a side in the way that Western nations will want them to. Many have been waiting for years for their countries to be considered of high strategic value, and many African heads of state welcome the competition, viewing it as an opportunity to increase both resources and influence. For the United States, with its historically values-based approach to global engagement, that makes strategizing its role in the Great Power Competition with Russia, and China more complicated. The real geopolitical risk for the United States and other Western allies is the failure to recognize the groundwork that Russia is currently laying, and the threat it poses to both ownership of natural resources and relationship building. One of Moscow's main objectives on the road to regaining its status as a global power is securing energy markets. The U.S. approach to economic development and governance will continue to be a significant aspect of its foreign policy within the CEMAC sub-region.³⁷ The focus on promoting free markets, good governance, and sustainable development will likely remain, although the specific mechanisms and approaches may evolve. The effectiveness of these initiatives will depend on the cooperation of CEMAC governments and the ability to address underlying economic and social challenges. The United States start to manifest an interest and decide to establish a role in Africa by initiating trade with Africa and that has led to the economic exchange to double and the Obama administration visited Africa to stress the economic partnership with African countries.³⁸ The Obama administration has also initiated the President's Emergency Plan for Russia is trying to improve its economy with access to African markets, expanding its military outreach, and strengthening its position in the African continent. The market opportunities on the African continent are enormous. Consumer expenditure is expected to reach \$2.1 trillion by 2025 and \$2.5 trillion by 2030. The World Bank estimates that the African food market alone could be worth \$1 trillion by 2030.³⁹ China is now the largest trading partner for the African continent, and China's Export-Import Bank aims to invest more than \$1 trillion in the continent by 2025. In addition, China has now surpassed the United States government in total agriculture funding. China has increased its presence in CEMAC countries development a trend that will persist because its model is extremely attractive to both China and many African nations. The U S secretary of State, Antony Blinken, has made it clear through his statement '*Africans need not pick a side in the common rivalry among the U.S and China.*'⁴⁰ It is only in 2012 that the United States published its U.S Policy towards Sub Saharan Africa. This explains why the first U.S-Africa leaders' summit was held in 2014.

The economic impact of U.S. foreign policy on CEMAC is multifaceted, influenced by trade relations, investment flows, and development assistance. While the U.S. is not a major trading partner for most CEMAC countries, its influence is felt indirectly through its global economic policies and its engagement with international

³⁶ Alexandra Arkhangelskaya, « Le retour de Moscou en Afrique subsaharienne ? Between Soviet heritage, multilateralism and political activism », *Afrique Contemporaine*, Vol. 4 n° 248, 2013, p.71.

³⁷ Kryzhko, E. and Pashkovsky, P. I. "Features of the US Foreign Policy Towards the Central Asian States". None. <https://doi.org/10.24975/2313-8920-2021-8-1-65-81>, 2021.

³⁸ Joseph Nye, *The Paradox of American Power: Why the world's only super power can't go it alone*, Published by Oxford University Press, Inc. 198 Madison Avenue, New York, 2002, p. 9

³⁹ World bank data 2024

⁴⁰ Michele Kelemen, Blinken tells African countries they needn't pick a side as U S compete with China' NPR 8th July 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/08/08/1116390132/blinken-tells-african-countries-they-needn-t-pick-a-side-as-u-s-competes-with-chi>.

financial institutions.⁴¹ U.S. trade policies, particularly those related to agricultural subsidies and tariffs, can have a significant impact on the competitiveness of CEMAC exports.⁴² Moreover, U.S. investment in the region, though not as substantial as that from other countries, can play a crucial role in economic development, particularly in sectors such as extractives and telecommunications.⁴³ Republican administrations have often favored free market policies and reduced government intervention in the economy.⁴⁴ This approach has sometimes been reflected in U.S. engagement with CEMAC, with an emphasis on promoting private sector development and reducing trade barriers. However, this approach has also been criticized for neglecting the need for social safety nets and for potentially exacerbating economic inequality.⁴⁵ The focus on national security interests has also influenced economic policy, with security-related spending potentially diverting resources from development initiatives. New initiatives by Russia in the CEMAC sub-region, is occurring in a twofold framework in which Russia is becoming more advantageous in its competition with the U.S. and at the same time, its presence is being strengthened in regions where China is increasing its weight.⁴⁶ Russia is also turning to countries in Africa with which it had close ties during the Soviet period and has already signed economic and military agreements with Cameroon and the Central African Republic. Russia's engagement with Africa has become visible in the fields of foreign policy, economy, and culture. For instance, the trade volume between Russia and Africa doubled from 2013 to 2018, exceeding \$20 billion. Such data indicate that not only is Russia interested in the region, but African countries are also open to trade with Russia. The acknowledgement of the Russian presence in Africa manifests itself in a total of 92 agreements and memoranda of understanding signed at the Russia-Africa Summit and Economic Forum held in Sochi in October 2019.⁴⁷

Democrats' administrations have generally placed a greater emphasis on promoting democracy, human rights, and good governance.⁴⁸ This approach has led to increased support for civil society organizations, election monitoring, and initiatives to strengthen democratic institutions. However, the impact of these efforts has been limited by the complex political dynamics in CEMAC, including internal conflicts, weak state institutions, and corruption.⁴⁹ The effectiveness of U.S. efforts to promote democratic reforms has also been hampered by the lack of consistent and sustained engagement. Democratic administrations have generally shown a greater willingness to incorporate social and environmental considerations into economic policy.⁵⁰ This has led to increased support for development initiatives aimed at poverty reduction, improving infrastructure, and promoting sustainable development. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives has been constrained by factors such as corruption, weak governance, and the limited capacity of CEMAC governments to absorb and utilize foreign aid effectively.⁵¹ The global economic crisis of 2008 and subsequent economic downturns in the U.S. have also impacted the level of development aid available to CEMAC countries.

⁴¹ Avramenko, I. "Strategies of US foreign policy at the end of the 20-th at the beginning of the 21-st centuries". None. <https://doi.org/10.24144/2307-3322.2022.76.2.30>, 2023.

⁴² Buzan, B., et al. NaN. "INO volume 38 issue 4 Cover and Front matter". International Organization. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300026862>.

⁴³ Olekseyuk, Zoryana. NaN. "The EU-Ukraine Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement and the importance of FDI". None. <https://doi.org/None>

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ Op cit 4

⁴⁶ Kribsoo Diallo is a Cairo-based Pan-Africanist researcher in political science related to African affairs. He has written for many African magazines and newspapers. Diallo has contributed to translated editions of papers and articles in Arabic and English for several research centers within the African continent.

⁴⁷ Ismail NumanTelci is the Vice President of Center for Middle Eastern Studies (ORSAM). He is also an Associate Professor at the Middle East Institute (ORMER) and at the Department of International Relations at Sakarya University. He is the author/editor of many books including 'Dictionary of the Egyptian Revolution', 'Eastern Mediterranean in International Politics' and 'Gulf Foreign Policy'. His comments appeared on international outlets including Al Jazeera, BBC, Le Monde, TRT World and Deutsche Welle. August 25, 2021

⁴⁷ Lumanae Groupe, RUSSIA IN AFRICA, December 16, 2021

⁴⁸ Fleischman, J. "U.S.-Africa Policy as Human Rights". None. <https://doi.org/10.1353/SAIS.2001.0014>. 2001

⁴⁹ Cohen, L. NaN. "Administrative Development in "Low-Intensity" Democracies: Governance, Rule-of-Law and Corruption in the Western Balkans (SWP 5)". None. <https://doi.org/None>

⁵⁰ Fornella, Maria L. "The Obama Revolution: First One Hundred Days". None. <https://doi.org/None>, 2009

⁵¹ Reshetnikova, Liudmila. "Bidens U.S. Foreign Policy in Central Asia: Military-Political Aspect". None. <https://doi.org/10.15688/jvolsu4.2024.3.20>, 2024

The social impact of U.S. foreign policy on CEMAC is less direct than the political and economic impacts, but still significant. U.S. engagement with civil society organizations, educational initiatives, and health programs has had a positive influence on various aspects of social development.⁵² However, the effectiveness of these initiatives has been uneven, influenced by factors such as cultural context, local priorities, and the challenges of implementing programs in fragile and conflict-affected states.⁵³ The U.S. approach to issues such as HIV/AIDS, education, and gender equality has influenced social policy in CEMAC, but the impact has varied depending on the specific programs and the local context.

B/Reconfiguration of the international system

*“In the coming year, the United States and its allies will face an increasingly complex and interconnected global security environment marked by the growing specter of great power competition and conflict, while collective, transnational threats to all nations and actors compete for our attention and finite resources.”*⁵⁴ This statement comes from the U.S. intelligence communities in the 2022 Annual Threat Assessment Report. The U.S. foreign policy within the CEMAC sub-region has been shaped by a complex interplay of factors, including security concerns, economic interests, and geopolitical dynamics. While the overarching principles of counter-terrorism, economic development, and democratic governance have guided U.S. engagement, the specific implementation has varied considerably. Areas vitally important to U.S. development and diplomatic strategic objectives and other global powers are heavily influencing the CEMAC Sub region. It is important to note that there is no more a monolithic control of the continent and the CEMAC sub-regions benefits from the multiplicity of interested powers and several other Factors that gives options and choices to the member states countries of the sub region to enrich their own best judgment.

The current situation in CAR is providing a playbook. Russian support is welcomed by Central Africans who are hopeful that Moscow could succeed where other foreign powers had not in taming conflict. The U.S and its historic allies (France, Britain and other European powers). Moscow finds in the Central Africa Republic a space for projecting and strengthening its power status in the sub-region. Russia is challenging the status quo in Africa, using insecurity and diplomatic disputes with Western powers as a springboard to expand its presence on the African continent. The reconfiguration of the international system and the multiploidization of decision-making centers will continue. The East is organizing itself, reviewing its financial, economic, political and strategic strategies. An opportunity to make strategic choices is therefore offered to Africa on condition that it creates the conditions for its strategic autonomy and advances in solidarity and collectivity, the paradigms are changing. Tomorrow's power will belong to regional unions or continental states, as Philippe Hugon explains, Africa must seek to reposition itself by reading the new geopolitical upheavals that are on the horizon. It is about power politics, force and violence. Hard power is the oldest form of power; it is connected to the idea of an anarchic, where countries do not recognize any superior authority. At the Sochi summit, Putin was quick to remind his audience of Russia's opposition to “colonialism, racism and apartheid” during the Soviet era, and Russian support for the African nations struggle for independence. It may also be advisable to engage Russia, through diplomatic channels, for the transfer of maintenance contracts to African defense industry companies. For instance, there are at least 80 Russian-made MiG-29 fighter jet in Algeria, Chad, Eritrea and Sudan, while Egypt has at least 46 of the upgraded variants of the same aircraft. These aircraft and other military hardware for the land and sea capabilities require reliable maintenance service providers, preferably located in Africa.

Both Republican and Democratic administrations have supported various social programs in CEMAC, but their priorities and approaches have differed.⁵⁵ Democratic administrations have generally placed a greater emphasis on human rights, gender equality, and the empowerment of marginalized groups. This has led to increased support for programs aimed at improving access to education, health care, and other essential services for vulnerable populations. Republican administrations have sometimes focused more on security-related issues and promoting economic growth, which can have both positive and negative consequences for social development. The U.S. role in promoting human rights and democracy has had a complex impact on the social fabric of CEMAC. While the U.S.

⁵² Zhuravleva, V. and Cherkashin, M. NaN. “Shaping of the China Threat Concept in the U.S. Expert-Political Discourse”. World Economy and International Relations. <https://doi.org/10.20542/0131-2227-2023-67-11-35-45>

⁵³ Mesfin, B. “The establishment and implications of the United States Africa Command: An African perspective”. None. <https://doi.org/None>, 2009.

⁵⁴ This statement comes from the U.S. intelligence community's 2022 Annual Threat Assessment Report. Two of the threats the intelligence community is most concerned about in terms of “renewed threat of nation-state aggression”

⁵⁵ Ibid

has supported various initiatives to protect human rights and promote democratic values, these efforts have been met with mixed success. The effectiveness of these initiatives has been hampered by factors such as weak state capacity, corruption, and the complex interplay of ethnic and religious identities. The U.S. approach to human rights has also been criticized for being inconsistent and selective at times, depending on strategic interests and political considerations. The relationship between Africa and the U.S needs to evolve. The US has neglected the prioritized economic ties with Africa, which has led other global actors to step in to fill the void. The real geopolitical risk for the United States and other Western allies is the failure to recognize the groundwork that Russia and China are currently laying, and the threat it poses to the perception of Africans in both the West and on the other hand China and Russia in foreign relationship building.

IV. CONCLUSION

The future of U.S. foreign policy in the CEMAC sub-region will be significantly influenced by great power competition, regional security challenges, and the evolving economic landscape. Addressing the identified research gaps is crucial for a more complete understanding of this complex and strategically important relationship. The real geopolitical risk for the United States and other Western allies is the failure to recognize the groundwork that Russia and China are currently laying, and the threat it poses to the perception of Africans in both the West and on the other hand China, Russia and Turkey in foreign relationship building. Only through such rigorous research can we fully understand the historical trajectory and project the future of U.S. foreign policy in this vital sub-region. a comprehensive assessment of the impact of U.S. policy, and an in-depth analysis of the agency of CEMAC states in shaping their relationship with the U.S.

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