

***French imperial and military
development (and some feed back
on yesterday's discussion)***

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

- « Imperialism in context : the case of France » (2015) *Historical Materialism*, Volume 23, Issue 2
- “Vive le rafale,Vive la république et vive la France : retour sur la place du militaire en France” (July 2015)
[http://alencontre.org/europe/france/vive le rafale vive la republique et vive la france 1 retour sur la place du militaire en france i.html](http://alencontre.org/europe/france/vive-le-rafale-vive-la-republique-et-vive-la-france-1-retour-sur-la-place-du-militaire-en-france-i.html)

Theoretical perspective

- The international status and influence of a country depends on both economic strength and military-political power :
 - "*IMPERIALISM is the political expression of the accumulation of capital*" (Capital letters in the text, R. Luxemburg, "The Accumulation of Capital", 1910, C.31) . France is obviously part of the imperialist system
 - How economy and politics interact with each other requires analytical and empirical research (and not a strictly determinist influence of economic on politics)
 - Informs on some reasons for resurgent French military activism since the end of the 2000s

A new geopolitical (and economic) situation

- To the already existing disorder, Bush's adventurist war in Irak (2003) added further instability compounded by the 'long recession' (2008-????)
- At the end of the last decade, the situation was exploited by France, first in Africa, obviously not *against* the US, but as her best ally (in contrast with Britain's Irak trauma and stronger peace movement)
- France has a long record of militarism, and remains one of the top arms producer and exporter (5th)
- The Defence White paper (2013) defines regions of vital interest for France : “*[O]n the fringes of Europe, the Mediterranean basin, part of Africa (from the Sahel to Equatorial Africa), the Arabo-Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean*”

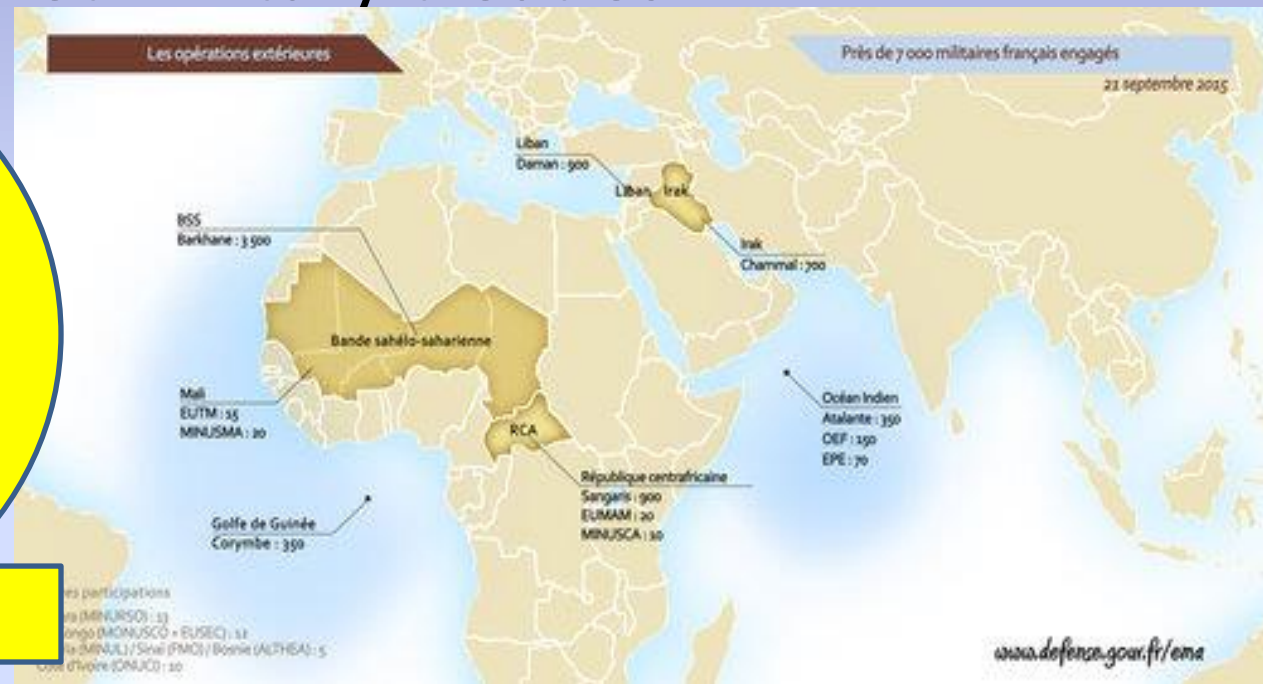
Africa : a core component of the international status of France

- Economic influence : despite China's rise on the continent, French financial and industrial interest are still strong :
 - 2000-2014 growth : FDI in Africa > FDI in the world
 - Strong presence of large financial and industrial groups (Total, Areva, Orange,...)
- Military-political influence :
 - Over 40 military interventions in the last fifty years
 - Military presence (7000 soldiers) in Africa linked with (generally) secret military treaties
- Preserves and justifies France's permanent seat to the UN Council (Africa : 70% of UN resolutions)

Africa : a core component of the international status of France

- Military presence in Africa linked with (generally) secret military treaties :

"[t]he Sahel, from Mauritania to the Horn of Africa, together with part of sub-Saharan Africa, are also regions of priority interest for France due to a common history, the presence of French nationals, the issues at stake and the threats confronting them" (Defence White Paper, 2013)



- With (at least) two benefits :
 - Expertise in ‘non-conventional’ wars, strongly appreciated by US military
 - Exports stimulus (weapons labelled as ‘combat-proven’) with arms exports driving foreign policy (Egypt, Saoudia, ...)

France pushes for an eu' military-security agenda

- The EU is not Venus-like, as opposed to Mars (the US) (Robert Kagan , 2003, *America and Europe in the New World Order*)
- Still, appetite for militarism is quite different among EU countries which have different historical record as far as the use of military is concerned
- Over decades of EU developments, a consensus has emerged for a *Common defence and security policy*

France pushes for an eu' military-security agenda

- A consensus has emerged for a *Common defence and security policy* :
 - militaro-humanitarian missions (ESDP) and NATO framework
 - Free rein given to member-states' military activism (e.g. through structured cooperations), with implicit or explicit EU support
 - Funding of defence- and security-related technological programs (FPs) (aeronautics, electronics, composites,...).

France pushes for an eu' military-security agenda

- The French-German couple : an *economic* vs *military* trade-off ?
 - Yawning gap between the two countries in economic performances weakens the French power in the management of the EU at parity with Germany
 - France possess a 'comparative advantage' as far as defence capabilities are concerned
 - Still, disagreement on defence are strong, on eg :
 - The role of NATO (*"[t]he main political home of Germany is the EU, its security home is NATO"* (de Maiziere, 2013) and German fear that 'Europe puissance' may mainly serve French interest

France pushes for an eu' military-security agenda

- Still, disagreement on defence are strong, on eg :
 - The use of military forces abroad (Lybia, Mali, Middle-East)
 - The place of arms production and exports
- **Whichever the outcome, the way France is using its military leverage to thwart her declining economic influence is illustrative the complex interaction between (geo)politics and economy**

Authoritarian developments in France

- Imperialism does not apply only to ‘foreign affairs’ : A worrying threat to civil liberties after the terror attack (13 November 2015)
 - 1) enforcement of a ‘state of emergency’ extended from 12 days to three months :
 - Interdiction of demonstrations (eg on COP21) (but soccer matches and Christmas street markets permitted)
 - allows the government to impose house arrest without authorization from a judge (including COP 21 activists), conduct searches without a judicial warrant and seize any computer files it finds

Authoritarian developments in France

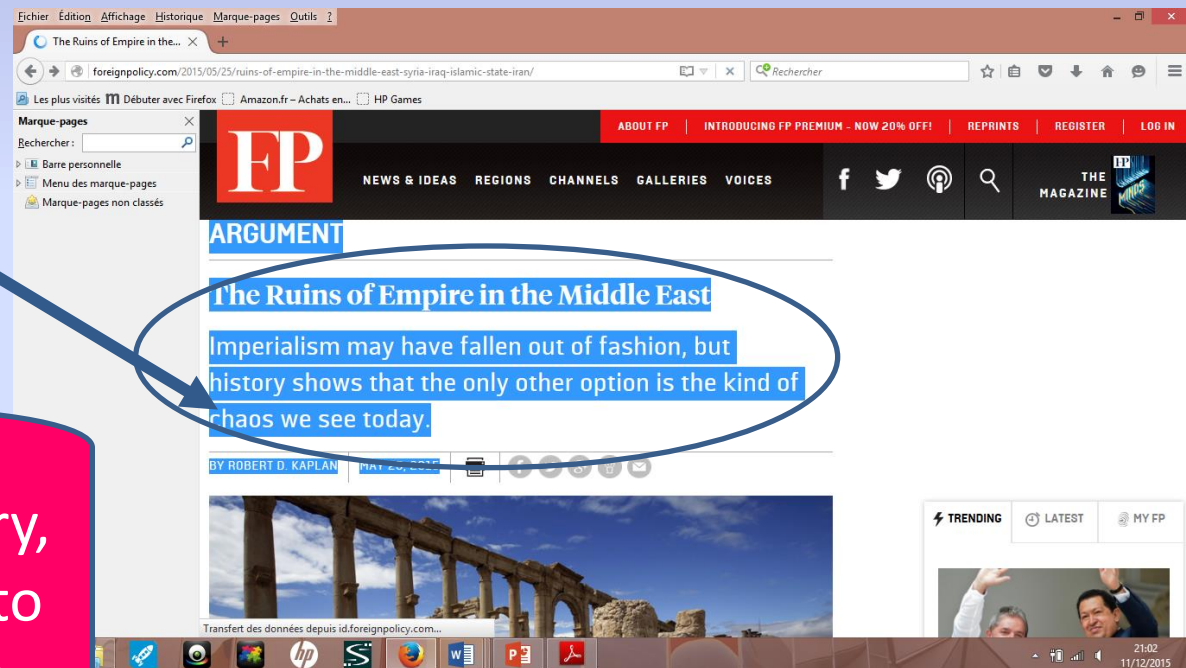
- After the terror attack (13 November 2015) :
“We are in a new era” (Hollande) : a move towards authoritarian measures to (also) address social issues ?
 - 2) Constitutional reform to introduce the state of emergency (with not preset time limit) :
 - allowing the government to dissolve organizations and groups broadly described as *“participating in carrying out acts that **seriously breach public order** or whose activities facilitate carrying out or incite such an activity”*
 - The interior minister can place under house arrest, without a judicial warrant at any time of any place, anyone *“against whom there are serious reasons to believe his or her behavior constitutes a threat to public order and security”*
 - Stripping binationals of their French citizenship, a proposal explicitly taken back from *Front National* 's program

Authoritarian developments in France

- Conclusion : on differences between 'old' et contemporary imperialism (1)

For R. Kagan
and others it is
'Imperialism
or chaos'...
(May 25, 2015)

...But in early 21th century,
humanity is confronted to
imperialism AND chaos



Authoritarian developments in France

- Conclusion : on differences between 'old' et contemporary imperialism (2) :
 - Imperial brutality abroad was accompanied with democracy within the dominant countries (in the transatlantic area)
 - Imperial brutality, goes on claiming that universal civilizational values can be spread, even through military means, BUT is now extending **within** dominant countries

Thank you for your attention