

## THE GRAY ZONES: ESSENTIAL VARIABLE OF EXPLANATION OF THE CONFLICTUALITY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

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**Abstract:** *This scientific production brings out the conflictual dynamism which characterizes the political climate in Africa during the post bipolarized period. The type of anarchy<sup>32</sup> that characterizes the contemporary world today is the continuation of international relation during the pre-cold war era. This situation was a result of the lack of world hegemony punctuated by the absence of a power which could regulate the world on its own. That is what serves as a distinction between internal political sphere and international political life. This political ovni which are gray zones characterizes a period marked by the deliquescence of interstate system from which it is derived. Systematized by a manipulation and the instrumentalisation of different actors who participate in the internal game, the safeguard of their self-interest is their main goal, to the expense of the population whose sovereignty is not only compromised but the concept of development is also utopic. The geopolitical and geoeconomical assets cuts across the ambiguity of gray zones that is the existence of resources and the paradox of under development; which complicates the understanding of a state which has difficulties in managing and is weak so to say.*

**Keywords:** Gray zones, Variable, Conflictuality, Sub-Saharan Africa.

### 1. Introduction

The defense of interest and especially the search for power incites a race to armament which gives a configuration of which the manifestations constitute the spectacular events that the world has known: That is cold war (Hans, 1993). This system was that of military condominium (nuclear) spear headed by the USA (United States of America) and USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) leading the world to what Raymond Aron called «Impossible peace» «improbable war» (Aron, 1984). It becomes difficult to instaur state authority and the circumscription of this situation takes the politological appellation «zone grises» gray zones constitute space (geographical space) in which insecurity has become rampant not only because of the weakening of the «authority of legitimate violence» as thought by Max Weber, but also because of extortion of certain resources thought criminal acts (Bayard, Stephen and Hibou, 1997: 20) notably in regions generally at the frontier between two states at least. Border regions and particularly very rich in resources (natural resources) for certain people and strategic for others, gray zones illustrate themselves through their tendency of creating conflict. On the internal plan it is the desire to obtain these riches that make states in a region to enter into endless wars. This is completed by other external factors which arise from either western countries<sup>33</sup>, non-Gove mental organization and other who invest by sapping principles which regulate the existence of the states in a general framework and sub-Saharan Africa in particular. That is what is at the origin of chaos in the gray zones of which the materialization is found in the conflictual nature of this part of the African continent. As such some questions have to be posed. How can we understand the concept of gray zones and its implication in the post bi-polar period? How does gray zones constitute the profound factors in the comprehension of the proliferation of conflicts in Africa? What explains the existence of lawless zones?

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<sup>32</sup> Anarchy is not in the common sense of disorder, but in the scholarly sense of absence of central authority over sovereign states.

<sup>33</sup> Allusion est faite à la France, aux Etats-Unis d'Amérique, la Grande Bretagne et autres

In the framework of this study the technique is first of all qualitative which has the advantage of integrating description, analytical and evaluative methods in the empirical implementation of the notion «gray zones. This model being limited due to the nature of the subject, we are going to also make use of historical and sociological approaches which apprehend international relations as social facts. An analyses of the geopolitical and geoeconomical framework of sub-Saharan Africa is apodictic meddelling the influence of factors which the dynamism of relation between sub-Saharan Africa and other parts of the world bringing out the complexity and diversity of actor in gray zones of which the presence is a source of conflict and tension.

## **2. Gray zones : a multi-purpose concept**

The expression «gray zones<sup>34</sup>» comes from aeronautic control vocabulary which designates the areas of the sky which is not covered by the action rays of radar. Therefore «gray zones» may be designated as those areas of the world which because they are confronted by crises and frozen conflicts are plunged in areas of lawlessness, drama usually internal for which these are hardly solution. In these areas parallel economies flourish, transnational traffics and illegal goods proliferate and international illegal actors find a fruitful zone.

A more precise definition is given by Pascal Gauchon and Jean-Marc Huissoud (2010) who identify “gray zones” as an area where the rule of law is absent and where state sovereignty is not really exercised or where criminal powers living from guerrilla or terrorism and illegal traffic exercise power. In these region government who know these realities have difficulties in applying the minimum rule of law. For Jean Christophe Ruffin these «gray zones» prosper in the third world since the end of the cold war, due to the failure to institutionalize the concept of Nation state in the western world (Ibid.). These zones are prone to the existence of armed groups and criminal organizations which reinforce themselves mutually and contribute to the sustainability of conflicts transformed into states for delinquent networks. The term designates an area of a country usually a border between two countries of which there is little or no public administration. They are areas where the fight against criminality (organized) is an objective of defense of external policies. It is following this perspective that Medhi Taje apprehends the expression «grey zone» as a «puzzle» of strips of spaces (areas) indecisive oscillating according to movement of forces from political center stable and well defined (Taje, 2010). If then it is true that a grey zone is a zone that escapes the control of one or more states, is the state not responsible. What Luc Sindjoun (2009: 241) calls «Archipelagic Sovereign» limited only in towns and less in hinterlands and interiors which favors the implantation of extremist groups in disfavoured zones (Gregoire, Bourgeot, 2011: 6). They are characterized by the situation at the border, ethnic diversity, the existence of natural resources and at the same time they are affected by all sorts of convulsion meddling elements of interstate war, civil war interethnic wars, inter religious and social conflicts (Encyclopedia Universalis, 2002 : 241). These zones can be termed gray since they are not found in neither in «white» an area of established peace (frontiers recognized and accepted, stable states, dialogue mechanisms and cooperation between states) nor in the «dark» area of anarchy<sup>35</sup> and war<sup>36</sup>. As such which all these shades «gray» symbolizes states that are intermediary between white and dark, licit and illicit, legal and illegal. The term that suits well the idea of gray zones is without any doubt that of “failed state”. This question of failed state, of those regions where the attachment of the state to the west is difficult has become omnipresent in the circle occupying international relation.

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<sup>34</sup> Empty space left by a given state where the seeds of anarchy and international terrorism are developing.

<sup>35</sup> From the Greek term *anarkhia* (absence of leader) used for the first time by English Dickinson in 1916 in the scholarly sense of absence of central authority over the sovereign state.

<sup>36</sup> Carl Von Clausewitz conceives the war as an act of violence, conflict of great interests which is regulated by the blood.

However, the universe of globalization and the subsequent demands of diplomatic relations between states, of democracy and its requirement of norms and principles which take into consideration human values and laws which regulate the relation within the international community. These model states through laws have to have transparency and especially a read-through strength which gives way to some minimum security in their space. Such states have to be mutually linked by crossed networks of pacts and practices that contribute equally to predictability and security. Whereas gray zones do not fit in this pattern. They are instead areas of conflicts between diverse legitimacies some established and others in search of positioning. As such the germ of anarchy and terrorism cannot find a better theatre of develop.

### **I) The diversity of actors in gray zones**

The apprehension of gray zones as area with the absences of the rule of law where conflicts are frozen and or where administration (public administration) is ineffective and is at the origin of multitude of actors who each one, because of the safeguard of their egoistic interest do not favor a situation of optimum peace. The presence of many actors in gray zones can also be justified by globalization which prone the opening of borders for an economically uniform world notably with the establishment of planetary village. To the above we can add the wealth of the soil, the sub-soil and the presence of multiple traffics which are very vital for both internal and external factors.

### **A) INTERNAL FACTORS**

In gray zones there is more than one actor who render the climate precarious and make conflicts to persist. We can name the states and transnational forces.

#### **1) STATES THEMSELVES**

One of the most tumultuous and hottest zones in the globe is found in Africa and precisely in sub-Saharan Africa. In this part of the continent many gray zones can be identified and owing to the definition that a gray zone is a border area between at least two states it results that states are principal actors. In fact, a gray zone is an outcome of conflict which stems from the deliquescence, the will to take illegally the lands of your neighbor or more exactly to violate territorial limits between states. This can translate the will of power which ends up putting at logger heads states which seek to defend either the integrity of their territory or the limits of their borders from invaders. In other words, the fact that gray zones are characterized by real instability result from the lack of political will by these states which can through diplomacy and negotiations can create peace and stability in gray zones. This said stability or instability of gray zones depends largely on states which share a conflict linked border.

States which are the basic structure of the international structure are privilege actor in the international scene. Certain conditions regulate the existence of state which is a population, a government and a territory. Even though international public law does not require particular condition pertaining to territory it is on it that state exercises their sovereignty. As concern, gray zones which are found in border areas they are legal lines which mark the limit of territory that separate two states, we have amongst others territorial limits which include the atmospheric space over the landed territory and territorial waters (de Prince Pokam 2008: 60). As such even though these exist zones<sup>37</sup> which can go out of control of sovereignty of states. This sovereignty will permit the state government to control and safeguarded the limit of its territory in order to submit the population to established rules. However gray zones suffer from the absence of the state which is at the origin of many

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<sup>37</sup> The hint here is made to the high seas area for example.

unending crises. This situation of uncertainty further complicated with the entry or infiltration of other internal actors such as transnational actors.

## **2) Transnational actors**

Transnational groups can be defined as institution or organization that are well structured or on the country or informal groups of which the member are united or at least have a similar behaviour enough to be considered as unique actors (Gnanguenon, 2008: 4). Existing be the advent of globalization these groups reveal the existence of a transnational dimension which is not only economic. Generally, the strategy of transnational actors rest on bi-passing political institution. In order to apprehend this transnational phenomenon social sciences have made reference to the notion of defined network as a social organization composed of individuals or groups of which the dynamic aims at perpetuating the progress of the activities of the members in one or more socio political spheres.

The number of transnational actors has increased in the international scene. There exist in gray zones transnational firms and multinationals which are financial operators. They participate in the growth of international exchanges and the phenomenon of economic globalization. Also, NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) have multiplied with the development of international institutions and are created by states to serve their common interest. As a matter of fact, one of the preoccupations of NGIO (International Non-governmental Organization) is the search for new sources of legitimacy susceptible to modify interstate organization and questioning the functioning of state or interstate institutions<sup>38</sup>. A strategy which brings problems to sub-Saharan countries who already suffer from crises of authority.

Religions actors are not left, out given that religion is considered as the most ancient transnational phenomenon. In fact, intercultural exchanges after the expansion of Islam permitted notably from the IX to XIV century, the creation of "orders" and brother hoods<sup>39</sup> which orchestrated in Africa in general and sub Saharan Africa in particular, many interreligious wars. In Western Europe, religion institution date back from middle ages and at this époque only urban corporations and the Catholic Church permitted the exercise of philanthropic activities to the benefit of the less privileged. But now a day clandestine or recognized by the state religious institutions possess their international networks and fit themselves in diverse manners in relations between states. As such religious movement remain amongst the most influential transnational actors which take the farm of ideological movements or radical mode of action aiming to stop save aspects of state prerogatives.

We can also cite actors evolving in an informal sphere who seeks to integrate actors whose origin are not transnational neither of clearly established illicit relation with the state. In fact, there exist here diverse types of actors like traffickers, mafia, terrorist that benefit from the advantage of transnational networks. These groups of transnational actors find it favorable that their networks are implanted in gray zones in Africa (sub-Saharan). It attains it summit in areas with absence of rule of law and many wars are the perfect illustration in sub-Saharan Africa. Even though internal actors in conflict zones in sub-Saharan Africa do nothing to promote peace and stability, (social stability) external actors who are search of position (strategic position) go a long way to perpetuate this situation.

## **B) The external actors**

In gray zones there are many other actors who if they are not behind the scene they participate directly or indirectly in a means to safeguard their interest in activities that are not often legal and as such we have traditional and new actors.

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<sup>38</sup> This is one of the major challenges that is straining the authority of the state.

<sup>39</sup> [www.ingenieurumaroc.com/indexbibliotheque.html#41](http://www.ingenieurumaroc.com/indexbibliotheque.html#41), viewed on 09.08 2017.

### 1) Traditional actors

Sub-Saharan Africa today is an economic and strategic yard for many European countries amongst which are France and Great Britain. This is what Simon-Pierre Seims to say in the following terms «In the beginning of XIX century the only European powers present in Africa (west Africa) are France and Great Britain» (Ekanza, 1995: 63). Present in Africa for years, the occupation of Africa by western powers led to the Berlin conference 1884 to 1885 consecrating *ipso facto* the partition of Africa. The conference decided the partition of Africa in the absence of African representatives (Gourevitch, 2004: 155). From this partition, France had Senegal and Gabon where Brazza concluded a treaty with Makoko king of the Bateke's, France extended its protectorate to the Fouta-Djallon (Guinea) and to the west bank of the Niger up to Toumbouktou. France also possessed some areas like Cote d'Ivoire and Dahomey and installed itself in Bamako where it constructed a railway linking Kayes to Bamako (Gourevitch, 2004: 156).

To be more explicit France implanted itself in sub-Saharan Africa in the area constituting states of AEF (French Equatorial Africa) and of OAF (Occidental French Africa). In fact France obtained strategic positions in Africa south of the Sahara which were reinforced from 1929 in order to ensure resources to the French national economy. In fact, France involved public and private mechanisms and official or unofficial channels. As such France exercises a certain diplomatic and strategic influence in Africa in general and sub-Saharan in particular. Due to its international status as a great diplomatic power it presents itself as a spokesman of African states. Despite the fact that French diplomatic position faces competition France remains present. This presence in sub-Saharan Africa is reproduced through official channels and legitimate political representation, economic, techno scientific and sociocultural representation<sup>40</sup>.

Just like France, Great Britain also invested in sub-Saharan Africa its objective being to establish strategic bases. The presence of Great Britain in this part of the continent was already manifest in South Africa, West Africa as well in East Africa. As such we could talk of British colonies in Africa. It is important to note that at the beginning of the XIX century the position of Great Britain was more comfortable than that of France in West Africa and during this period the influence of Great Britain in the Gulf of Guinea was notorious (Ekanza, 1995: 63). As a matter of fact, Sierra Léon was the first British establishment created by humanitarianism in the end of the XVIII century (Ibid: 64). Gold Coast belonging to Great Britain a colony is established in the coastal zone in 1874. Still in West Africa Gambia which is the smallest country in Africa because a British colony very early from 1765, Nigeria also remained a British colony up till 1963 (Fleury, 1999: 34). Great Britain was also present in Africa (central) through Cameroun mandate status notably the position with France in 1922 (Ibid: 37). East Africa was not left behind also called imperial British East Africa, the British were implanted there. As such Kenya because the English protectorate from 1895, Uganda up to 1962 and this British presence extended to Tanzania a country created in 1964 with the fusion of Tanganyika and Zanzibar (Ibid: 40) to the above list of countries we can add the following countries from South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Swaziland, Somalia and others.

The implantation of France and Great Britain is at the origin of the quest for position in the continent by other actors which we term new actors.

### 2) New actors

The exceptional growth registered by the world before the crises had many consequences. It permitted African countries to register a growth rate of more than 6% between 2003 and 2008 and even more for countries producing hydrocarbons (Chochez, 2011: 11). This world euphoria brought emerging countries such as China, India and Brazil on

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<sup>40</sup> These are representatives such as embassies, consulates, economic missions, representation of the French development agency, French cultural center, research institutes such as the IRD, advisers and technical assistants

the economic front. This growth provoked sudden increase in the demand of raw materials. In the hypothesis of shortage prices increased and consuming countries wanted to ensure their supplies in Oil, minerals and cereals. Of which Africa south of Sahara is found of the center of an oil boom and we are expecting an increase of production from 5,6 million barrels per day in 2007 to 6,9 million barrels per day in 2015. That's an increase of 23% in the period whereas world production will be limited at 4% (Meierding : 4). This seems to be the reason why oil companies and importing countries deem it necessary to establish access to African oil as a result of this prevision (forecast). Also the waters of the Gulf of Guinea contains one of the three most important hydrocarbons reserves in the world (Cochez, 2004: 12), which could explain the new rush of developed countries and emerging countries.

For behind Great Britain and France are emerging countries such as China, Brazil and India, South Africa, to name but a few, of those who invest in Africa too, the objective being to guarantee their own share of energy resources.

The intervention of China in the Africa continent mostly in the energy sector attracted large attention sometimes alarming.

China is active with African governments in order to transpose their model to the continent. Apart from identified zones as indicated by Martin J Davies executive director of the center for Chinese studies in the University of Stellen Bosh (South Africa) «during the next three years it is nine other zones which would be created with the aid of China Exim Bank» (*Le journal les Afriques*, n°1 Juillet/Aout 2007 : 11). Clearly, China is present in African countries which possess natural wealth this to exchange mines and concessions of exploitation for manufactured products and realizing infrastructures with its own labour force.

China is not the only country to show interest in Africa wealth. For year India has had privileged relations with many African countries such as Mauritius, Kenya and South Africa. Indian enterprises are present in manufacturing and services this is the case for example of the TATA group present in about ten countries in Africa and which envisages to invest about 50 millions of dollars in the continent during the next three years (Ibid: 12). In 2006 and 2007 new projects were initiated in South Africa (ferrochrome telecommunication, automobile) in Uganda (soluble coffee factory) and in Zambia (an electric plant) (Ibid: 12). As such as earmarked by Stephen Gelb, director of edge institute in Johannesburg, the center for independent research on Africa economic policies «What is new since two or three years is that India is also interested in the wealth Africa's sub soil» (Ibid: 13). So Indian group controlled by Lakshmir Mittal is already present in the production of steel through its subsidiaries in Africa and Algeria. In Angola, the other oil giant in the continent, India announces projects of refining.

It is the great geographical and sectorial diversity that characterizes South African investments in the continent: mining sector, housing infrastructure, energy, banking, telecommunications, distributions and others.

Brazil is not left behind in this great reconquest of Africa. Greatly interest in the riches of continent this rising power multiplies declarations of solidarity towards the African continent in order to find a means to participate and consolidate its position vis-a-vis Africa. In fact, the relationship between Brazil and Africa has remained strong. Since the advent to power of Lula Da Silva both political and commercial relations between Brazil and Africa have been amplified. The amount of commercial exchanges between Brazil and Africa has been multiplied by four since 2002 and 12 more embassies have been opened in the region (Lafargue, 2008: 17). As such President Lula underlined that «we reaffirm the links that unites us with all the African continent and disposition to contribute actively so that it develops its enormous potential». The Brazilian agronomical research company Embrapa has opened a laboratory in Ghana in February 2007 in order to transmit to many African states his knowhow in the manufacturing of Ethand from cassava. In total the Brazilian diplomacy aims henceforth to create relationship with all African countries in such a way that Brazil and

Nigeria were at the origin of the first Africa-South America summit which took place in the month of November 2006 in Abuja.

It is important to note that Africa is subject of interest in the domain of economy and strategy by emerging countries and developed countries such as the United States.

The geostrategic interest of Africa for the USA is relatively recent. The 2001 terrorist attacks destabilized relations between the United States and the Arab world. The hostilities were aggravated by the invasion of Iraq by the USA in 2003, the growing tensions with Iran has eliminated a potential supplier of oil and the growing antagonistic relations with Hugo Chavez has cooled down the hopes to be able to count on the import from Venezuela. These multiple obstacles make the implantation and exploitation difficult both on economic and political perspective. According to Boyer, assistant director of the foundation for strategic research, the sudden or increasing interest of America is explained by series of reasons amongst which are the presence of raw materials necessary for the American economy, petroleum in particular of which the import for the next ten year surpasses the volume coming from Saudi Arabia (Boyer, 2008). As such the American government has encourage exploiting companies to invest in production of oil against financial advantages, has created closer diplomatic relations and has provided military and to oil rich countries of the region. Concerning the above, the deployment of American power in Africa was observed in the transfer of American Arms in Africa from 1966-1975 and 1976-1980. From 1966-1975 the value of transfers were 361 million dollars with a percentage of 11,5% and from 1976-1980 the value was 830 million dollars (Duignan, 1984: 382). The USA turned to the Gulf of Guinea to ameliorate their security in energy due to the discovery of considerable asserts in the 1990's in the region.

## **II) Sub-Saharan geopolitics to geoeconomy**

### **A) The geopolitical framework**

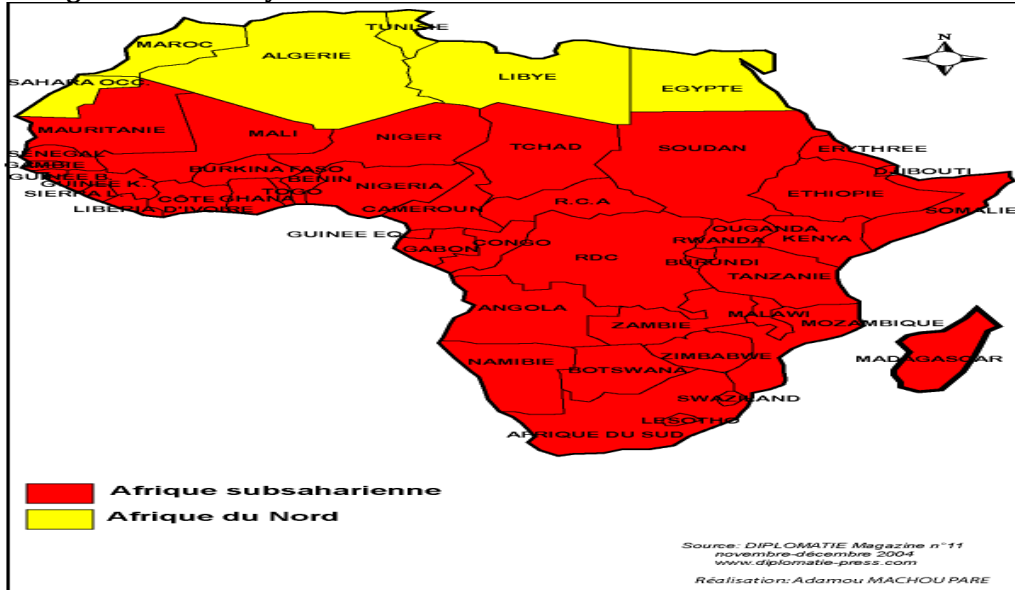
Geopolitics is the discipline that throws light on unending relations between space, time and politics. For Defarges: «geopolitics is all what has to do with power, these is question of power when individuals or groups of individuals compare themselves, evaluate their assets and liabilities and out of these calculations make choices, adopt stance to take and policies. Geopolitics is a question of power which draws inspiration or their source in divers' factors with aim and stakes power and strength» (Defarges, 2008: 11-24).

We can apprehend geopolitics as a method of analyses which seeks to understand the behaviour of states in the international scene on one hand and the other hand to interpret international relations. As written by Francois Thual it is to «identify the actors, analyze their motivation, write their intention, to repeat alliances in gestation or on the contrary alliance that are towards deconstruction be it at local, regional, continental or international» (Thual, 1996: 4) geopolitics takes into consideration all actors present in the international scene be they state men, men of diplomacy, men of army, NGOs or public opinion. But what interest geopolitics is the expansion or contraction of states (Defarges, 2005: 8). The importance that geopolitics gives to space is not doubt at the origin of Lorot's affirmation « geopolitics will and should be the geographic conscience of the state. Its finality is nothing but the study of the great connections vital man to day in today's space. Its finality is the coordination of phenomenon linking the state and space» (Lorot, 1995: 25).

### **1) Spacial study**

Sub-Saharan Africa is also called black Africa because it is mostly populated by individuals of black color contrary to North Africa which populated by whites.

**Figure 1: Boundary between black and white Africa to the south via the Sahel**



Source : <http://www.archives-fr/novo/press.info>, consulted the 12th of March 2018.

It designates the part west of Africa and central south of the Sahara it is also used for the French colonial empire beneath the Maghreb (Demeulenaere 2009: 23).

The use of the adjective “black” implies a racial connotation. This is why modern studies prefer terms such as sub-Saharan Africa or Africa south of Sahara. Sub-Saharan Africa generally subdivided into four sub regions known as West Africa, East Africa, Central Africa and South Africa. West Africa is made up of 15 countries<sup>41</sup> and a population of about 300 million in habitants of which 60% are less 25 years old. The total surface area is more than 5 million km<sup>2</sup> 10 times that of France.

South Africa on its part comprises of all territories situated south of the Africa equatorial forest. Attached to it are the African Islands situated in the south west of the Indian Ocean around Madagascar which is from the Mozambican canal to the Mauritius Island and Reunion and also African Islands south east of the Atlantic Ocean ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)). Primitively occupies by the Khoisan<sup>42</sup> people and later by the Bantous<sup>43</sup>. It forms the entire countries that are South Africa, Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambic, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Central Africa is a region south of the African Sahara comprising, the south of the Sahara, the eastern shield of West Africa and west of the rift valleys. It comprises of countries like Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo), Rwanda, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and the republic of Congo.

The spatial (territorial) study of Africa south of the Sahara brings out with sufficiency the geographical centrality of it and the dynamism of its population. This shows the influence of geopolitics on its position and enormous sociopolitical stakes.

<sup>41</sup>Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Benin, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone,

<sup>42</sup> Khoisan also known as Khoesan or Khoe-san is a name given to two ethnic groups in South Africa who share the same physical and linguistic characteristics as the majority Bantu in the region.

<sup>43</sup> Bantu in the Kongo language means « humans » and refers to a set of people speaking some four hundred related languages known as Bantu. They are present from West to East of Gabon, Comoros and from North to South Sudan to Namibia.



## 2) Socio-political stakes

Apart from the many riches of the subsoil and the soil the space that hosts sub-Saharan Africa has other factors and the population seems to have its own perception of reality.

The awareness of the riches and social realities explain the attachment that Africans have on their land thus, the refusal to pass on their lands to others. The possessive character stimulates a hostility vis-a-vis strangers, predators of Africa and their countenances. In fact, the geopolitical conscience in political scientists its already a factor that can generate conflict for undermining the conscience of geographical reality, resources, the call for an acquaintance from the population at the point of leading them into wars in order to preserve them.

Despite the situation of awareness of their riches in the Africans, Africa in general and sub-Saharan in particular is the continent which is most scrambled for by western countries. They are more than in need of the riches of Africa to remedy the apparent shortage in many sectors of development works. This state of things is no doubt at the origin of the ill feelings observed in sub-Saharan Africa. We have as example Niger where a faction which is rebels in the Niger delta have burnt infrastructures of American petroleum companies. It was the case in Gabon with former president Omar Bongo who permitted the French multinational company ELF (Essences and Lubricants from France) to win markets in the construction of railway infrastructure in Gabon. This was objected by the opposition which decided to Sap the construction of the railway undertaken by ELF which slowed the project. This situation implies on the political plan a certain number of actors and stakes such as the heads of state of sub-Saharan Africa and those of exploiting countries. These persons influence significantly the political domain for they define foreign policies, those which require the signatures of treaties with international organizations. Through the definition of politics by states, they have knowledge of the stakes that have to be given exploitation of this or that resources to one country instead of another for it is clear these is in this relations a counter strategy of western countries vis-à-vis political actions of African presidents. It's the case of Libya which under the reign of Khadafi dispossessed Great Britain of the exploitation of its oil it the benefit of China and local companies' haven acquired the know-how.

If Africa is a continent with geopolitical variables, its main assert remains its geoeconomical situation.

### **B) The geoeconomic framework: the preponderance of oil.**

The geoeconomy acquired a place of choice in the interpretation of international fact in the aftermath of the cold war. Economy has become a factor of power in the international scene. The strength or power of a state results from its economic might this is what seems to justify the sayings of Pascal Lorot: «with the end of the cold war the military might of developed state constitute no more the main factor of their power in the international scene. The period of frontal military opposition between industrialized states is over. The economic might of a country is what is used to judge the power of a state» (Lorot, 1999: 111).

Geoeconomy was developed in the USA by Eduard Luttwark<sup>44</sup> and in France by Pascal Lorot<sup>45</sup>. It is apprehended as the analyses of economic strategies notably commercial decided

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<sup>44</sup> Cantor of the first geoeconomy, he announced in the early 90s, the advent of a new international order where the economic weapon replaced the military weapon as an instrument at the service of the states in their will power and assertion on the international scene « military threats and alliances have lost their importance with the pacification of international trade. On, economic priorities are no longer overshadowed and come to the fore. In the future, it is perhaps the fear of economic consequences that will regulate litigation, and certainly more political interventions motivated by powerful strategic reasons. And if i twill still need an external threat to ensure the unity and internal cohesion of nationals and countries, this threat will now be economic or more exactly geo-economic ». In Edward Luttwak, *The Endangered American dream*, quoted by Pascal Lorot, p.110

<sup>45</sup> In 1997 he created the quarterly geo-economic magazine published by Choiseul. It shows the limits of the « first geoeconomy» which seems to him too narrow, even somewhat dated, to effectively reflect the economic and strategic

in the framework of policies aiming to protect their national economies or to protect it from certain countries, to help their national enterprises to acquire the mastery of technology and to conquer certain segments of the world market in relation to the production of commercialization of a product or a group of product, of which their possession or control confers to the holder, state or national enterprise, an element of power which reinforces its economic potentials and social potential (Lorot: 114). Just like geopolitics, geoeconomics is not the control of territories it is to acquire technological and commercial supremacy. From this inexhaustive definition of geoeconomy, Africa in general and sub-Saharan Africa in particular constitute a hegemony in terms of riches of its subsoil and soil and its influence and its weight will be considerable in world commerce.

### 1) Mineral resource

Nature has greatly gratified Africa with resources even though this does not give rise to a veritable human and economic development. But the Berlin conference which consecrated the partition of Africa created a new scramble for Africa and its resources increasing the appetite of world powers.

Sub-Saharan Africa is potentially very rich. As resources we have gold which we can find in many countries such as South Africa, Zambia, Congo, Ghana, Niger and Equatorial Guinea, to name but a few. Thereafter, we also have precious stones in Rwanda, Burundi, Sierra Léon, Central African Republic, Botswana and South Africa. Furthermore, we also have timber and the greatest producer of cacao in the world is from sub-Saharan Africa. It's Côte d'Ivoire which is the main supplier of western countries. Coffee, cotton and many other agricultural products of export like groundnut are produced in many countries amongst which are Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe and Sudan (Lemarchand, 2006 : 84) etc. Mineral exploitation constitutes one of the oldest forms of industries dating back from antiquity. We can find different types of minerals in Africa south of the Sahara which are: Minerals energy (coal, uranium), minerals metal and other like (iron, molybdenum and titanium), precious metals (gold, platinum and silver) and common metals (bauxite, cobalt, copper, lead, zinc and nickel). We also have further nonmetallic minerals like construction minerals (cement, clay, granulates, sand and gravel) and precious stones such as diamond. These minerals produce many manufactured products.

**Table 1: Segmentation of the mining industry in Sub-Saharan Africa**

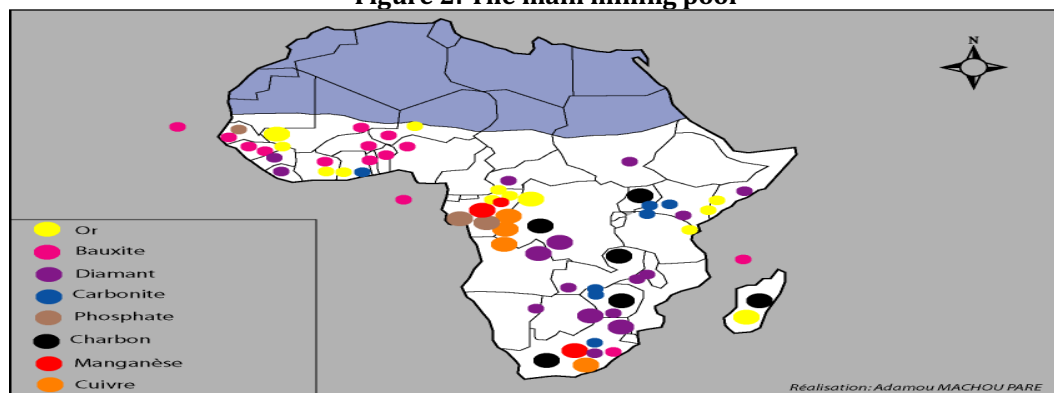
<i>Minéraux</i>							
	<b>Minéraux Énergétiques</b>	<b>Minéraux métalliques</b>			<b>Minéraux non métalliques</b>		
		<b>Métaux ferreux</b>	<b>Métaux précieux</b>	<b>Métaux communs</b>	<b>Minéraux de construction</b>	<b>Minéraux industriels</b>	<b>Pierres précieuses</b>
<i>Minéraux</i>	Charbon, Uranium	Minéral de fer, niobium, tantale, titane	Or, Platine, argent	Bauxite, cobalt, Cuivre, plomb, magnésium, molybdène, nickel, zinc	Briques de pierres de construction, ciment, argile, granulats, gypse, sable et gravier, ardoise	Bentonite, carbonates industriels, kaolin, magnésie, potasse de sel, silice, soufre	Diamant, pierres
<i>Utilisation finale</i>	Electricité, produits chimiques, organiques combustible industriels	Activités aérospatiales, construction, électroniques, ingénierie, secteur manufacturier, sidérurgie	Joaillerie, fabrication de monnaie, industrie	Construction, électricité électronique, ingénierie, secteur manufacturier	Construction	Céramique, chimie, fonderie, moulage, pigments, combustible, gaz, sidérurgie, traitement des eaux	Joaillerie, industrie

Source : [http://www.africa-segmentation-de-industrie-minièrre/.../index\\_fr.htm](http://www.africa-segmentation-de-industrie-minièrre/.../index_fr.htm), Viewed on 09/11/2017

reality of the end of the 20th century. Not only does it limit the scope of this new mode of interpreting power rivalries to western nations alone, but it also assigns the state exclusivity in the formulation of geo-economic policies.

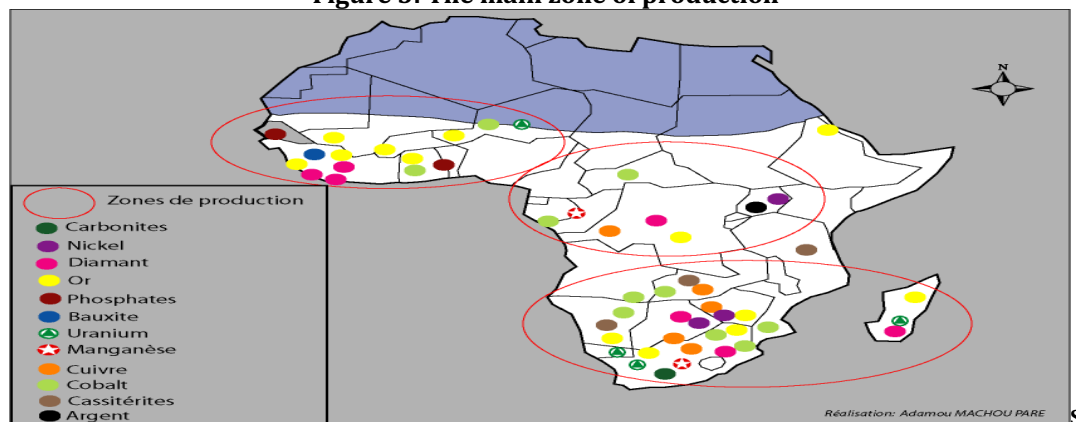
The mining sector was essentially exported by state enterprises but with the effect of globalization, the mining industry has face profound changes amongst which the liberalization of the sector in fact sub-Saharan is a zone with a soil rich in mineral resources beside Canada and Australia. The exploitation of mines is a preponderant activity which is the first sector of export of most African countries. The mining riches of the sub-soil is estimated at 46200 billion dollars us<sup>46</sup> and these exist many mines and many zones of production in sub-Saharan Africa.

**Figure 2: The main mining pool**



**Source:** *Journal les Afriques* available in [www.performancesconsulting.com](http://www.performancesconsulting.com), viewed on 02-12-2017

**Figure 3: The main zone of production**



**Source:** *Journal les Afriques* available in [www.performancesconsulting.com](http://www.performancesconsulting.com), viewed on 02-03-2018

With the implicit encouragement of the world bank, south Saharan African state which still maintained exclusive control of the mining sector have opened to foreign investors. It is with Ghana which at the beginning of the 80s was the first African state to liberalize their sector to foster its development.

Mining exploitation in south Sahara Africa is oriented towards economic development for mining legislations in Africa are based on the principle that mineral resources are the property of the state and are applied equitably to all investors whether it's the public sector, private, national or foreign<sup>47</sup>.

<sup>46</sup> *Journal les Afriques*, available in [www.performancesconsulting.com](http://www.performancesconsulting.com), viewed on 02-02-2018.

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.africahistory.net/imf.htm>, viewed on 25.02.2018.

Africa disposes of one third of mineral resources in the world, but the 2008 financial crisis impacted the production of resources like gold, diamond, irons. As such the production of classical resources such as gold and diamond oscillates between 20% and 50% of world production ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)). In west Africa for example the crisis favored the production of gold (Mali, Ghana) while extraction project of iron were abandoned in Senegal and Guinea. In central Africa on the contrary, we witnessed the restructuring of the mining sector with the revision of mining codes and exploiting licenses attributed, with Congo notably and the rival of exploiting activities in mining like in Cameroon and Gabon.

Paradoxically Africa in general and Sub-Sahara in particular which disposes of a great part of mineral wealth remains the poorest continent. The impact of mineral industries in Africa is limited by insufficiencies, opacity mismanagement in the governance of the sector. The outcome expected from mineral exploitation on the economies of African countries and its population is less perceptible due to bad governance and corruption and the fact that the resources from mining exploitation are sometimes swindled for personal benefits. Central African Republic is a perfect example where a recent report<sup>48</sup> denounced financial mismanagement in the mining sector. This is the consequence of the weakness of the legal framework of the majority of these countries, thus the necessity for this fruitful sector to rationalize the management for the great interest of their nations which is a vector of development. Sub-Saharan Africa is also reputed for the greatness of its oil reserves which is found in many parts of West Africa.

## **2) Petroleum products**

Petroleum is a strategic product by excellence, it is the most important source of energy and it is at the base of many manufactured goods which are: fuel, solvents, gasoil, liquefied gas (propane and butane), lubricant etc. In addition, petroleum provide too a variety of raw materials for chemical industry like petrochemistry from which comes 90% of products that surrounds us which are: medicine, plastics and others. Michel Kounou defines petroleum as being a natural resource lying which gains an active value, we decide to extract it from the depth of the earth or waters (Kounou, 2006: 27).

In fact, the major tendency in international energy geopolitics which pushes external states and their companies to intervene in sub-Sahara Africa comes from the increase in world demands. But who could believe this bouncing back of Africa through its resources? Regarding the actual expectation and future ones of industrialized powers in relation to petroleum in sub-Sahara Africa in general and the Gulf of Guinea in particular, we will be right to question the validity of the analyses which at the beginning of the 1990 which supported the idea that Africa had lost its strategic interest for great powers (Jeune Afrique Economie, 1999: 17) with the end of the cold war. Hereupon, as such we are witnessing the strategic redeployment of western powers in the continent. It is notably the case with the USA which after the September 2001 events adopted a more prudent relation with its energy partners like those in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia in order to reconsider its energy policies. Hereof, their new policies finds solutions in Africa and particularly in the gulf of guinea. So this redeployment of great industrial powers in Africa is no more based on the model that was the case during the cold war. The new Franco-American dynamics in Africa (Pondi, 2000: 49-54) symbolizes the orientation taken by this redeployment just like the entry into scene of China.

Sub-Sahara Africa in general and the region of the Gulf of Guinea<sup>49</sup> in particular are presently the zones considered as richest in petroleum with off share zones where the cost of exploitation is relatively low due to the proximity with the coast permitting the exploiters to

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<sup>48</sup> Report of the l'ITIE (Extractive Industries for Transparency Initiative). International standard for companies to publish how much they pay and governments to disclose their revenues. In this report, it is clearly indicated that the missing sum amounts to 573.804.1529 CFA (Franc of the French Colonies of Africa), this sum which should be paid by the mining companies of the Central African Republic State has been diverted.

<sup>49</sup> This zone refers to the zone from the Niger Delta to the Congo Basin.

more without supplementary transport fair their products from Africa. Besides, Sub-Sahara Africa accounts for 68% (<http://www.ceri-sciencespo.com>) of the production of petroleum in Africa and many exploiters rush for exploitation. In effect, this part of Africa is covered by 154 oil wells situated in a sedimentary basin (Tedom, 2008). In fact, sub-Saharan Africa is one of the regions that attract particular attention today. This interest is as a result of a series of discoveries of petroleum fields in the Gulf of Guinea. More than that, at the end of the 1990s the Gulf of Guinea became one of the pivot regions in the game of petroleum geopolitics of the start of this 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Africa was declared as have one of the greatest petroleum reserves in the world as demonstrated by 2001<sup>50</sup> statistics which place Africa in the third place. The reserves of Africa are centralized in two précised zones: North Africa with countries such as Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Tunisia and the Gulf of Guinea with Nigeria, Angola, Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, and Cameroon to name but a few. In 2003 the reserves of these two groups of countries were evaluated at 77 billion barrels. 42 billion barrels for North Africa and 34 billion barrels for sub-Saharan Africa (Favennec and Copinschi, 2003, cited by Kounou : 33). Sub-Saharan Africa and particularly the Gulf of Guinea is one of the rare regions in the world still having vast reserves of light grade oil.

However, between 2006 and 2008 the world consumption of petroleum increased from 76 million barrels to 86 million barrels per day. In parallel, prices increased to a record high of 147 US dollars a barrels in 2008 (Meierding, 2022 :2). This what explains the rush of western countries with the objective of creating and safeguarding goods relations with oil producing countries in sub-Saharan Africa. If it is true the Africa in general and sub-Saharan Africa in particular has many petroleum resources, it is not less true that beyond of its participation in the development of this zone, it is source of conflict which can attain disturbing proportions. This is what Michel Kounou seems to reveal concerning the zone around the Gulf of Guinea when attests that:

«The dramatic political repercussions of the exploitation of petroleum in the gulf of guinea is the orchestration of civil wars which are devastating. In this perspective, the Biafran war and that two bloody civil wars in Congo Brazzaville just like the war in Chad, in Angola and Sudan, are grievous historical fact pertinent permitting the establishment of a correlation of phenomenons of petroleum exploitation and the militarization to the society, permanent degradation of social factors and political fragility, in sub-Sahara Africa» (Kounou: 123).

Such a situation can be favored by the absence of a democratic management of resources (petroleum) by the African political elites which only care about the egoistic interest and especially their stay in power. It can also be linked it the fact of collusion of interest which exist between political leaders in Africa and multi-national petroleum firms with strategic objectives which can intervene in the local management of questions of petroleum (Tchetchoua Tchokonte, 2010: 4).

In summary, with a production of 4 million barrels per day of which the essential comes from the Gulf of Guinea, sub-Sahara Africa has a production capacity of 6% of world production (Ibid: 5). These numerous riches of the subsoil or soil of Africa in general and sub-Sahara Africa in particular has given Africa a new face and new consideration and an impact in the relations between Africa and the external world in various plans.

### **C) The influence of these factors between Sub-Sahara Africa and the external world**

Africa presents a less splendid image in the international community. This affirmation stems from the weak role that Africa plays in the international community like UN (United

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<sup>50</sup> The near-middle East with 66,4% of world crude oil reserves, South America with 9,2%, Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa with 7,2%, Eastern Europe with 5,7%, North America and Mexico with 5,3%, the Far East with 4,2% and Western Europe with 1,6%.

Nation), IMF (International Monetary Fund), WB (World Bank) of its absence in international conferences that treat great contemporary problems, or still in information of media an action imprecise entity. Of which owing to its diversity (54 states) possessing enormous natural resources and a population estimated at 1 billion, one would be expecting a great representation. Despite all these potentials Africa is still at the margin of the international community. This can be observing in the institutions of the international community like the UN where the African continent has a good representation in the general assembly without influence. In fact while studying the various decisions issued by the Security Council or the general assembly, one notices that very few are initiated by Africans. It is the same with the other international institutions of the international community like the world bank, IMF which are institutions aiming to preserve a certain ideology by the emission of decision or action for all countries of the world.

However there exist in the continent certain entity which from their new status in the world occupy more and more important positions in the international community. We can talk here of south Africa, Egypt, Nigeria, Angola which due to their structured national potentials and their major role in the continent such as initiators of development programs in the continent NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development) are considered as dynamic actors in the international community. They are invited to participate in big international economic fora, to give their position on political problems of the times such as the place given to South Africa in the G20 conference held in 2009 at Pittsburg on the international financial crisis. The conjunction of all these factors has repercussions on relation between Africa and the rest of the world. It is materialized by the importance of the cooperation which is manifested through public aid for development, exchanges and sustainable development to name just these. In fact if cooperation between Africa south of Sahara and the world is particularly important, it is marked by some hidden agenda which hides the real intentions of western countries which weakens African countries. This is manifested by the control of political regimes in Africa by western powers.

### **Conclusion**

If conflict is found at the center of international relations, the dialectic of peace and war can be considered as a permanent stake in international relations. After the cold war, relations between states are entering a new period of turbulence and impetuosity. Ethnic and tribal antagonism breakout in many regions. These conflicts reveal the artificial and complex nature of international relations. The ethnocentric and tribal dimensions of post-cold war conflict exposes the inconsistency in the education of relations between states in two different worlds with incompatible interests: The club of developed countries and those that are less developed. It is the period of the rush for interest and the quest for power designing *stricto-sensu* new causes of conflicts: The quest for natural resources, factor generating power has as consequences, the conflicts in gray zones and the resurgence of new actors in the international scene. The problematic of gray zones at the center of the management of states reveals a certain difficulty. This management creates problems as gray zones find themselves in situation of unending conflicts. As a matter of fact, the inability to perform states regalia duties in most sub-Sahara African countries is at the origin of instability in gray zones. Given that, one of the characteristics of gray zone is the natural resources it has, states have to be vigilant against threats be they at the borders or internal threats. Many regions have become gray zones in Africa south of Sahara like Bakassi between Cameroon and Nigeria, the Island of Mbanié between Gabon and Guinea, the presence of terrorist groups in countries such as Mali, Nigeria, or Cameroon taking the control of vast territories at the detriment of the above mentioned states, giving rise to bloody conflicts between stats and sometime between states and terrorist groups like Boko haram. According to political scientist, geopolitical factor are vectors of conflicts. Also edifying is the geo-economics factor which brings out the unavoidable character of conflict. An so it was necessary to put in evidence the asserts and

riches of the subsoil and soil of Africa marked by the preponderance of oil notably the discovery of oil wells in the Gulf of Guinea. Given the fact that the economic health of a country is used to determine its power, great powers of the world have turned to Africa to ensure their security in terms of energy. Not without negative consequences on Africa, this geostrategical race on Africa's natural resources and that Sub-Sahara Africa in particular revealed to be a factor of division and conflict of all type which are at the origin of gray zones.

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