

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: University of Portsmouth
Unit of Assessment: 27 Area Studies
Title of case study: French and British Africa policy. Enhancing Understanding, Improving cooperation (UOP27POLICY)
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Political instability and insecurity in Africa have become increasingly salient issues since the 1990s. For historical reasons the UK and France are the two EU member states with long-standing commitments in Africa. Chafer's research has had an impact in three main ways: by providing research-based evidence that has informed decision-making, by providing policy recommendations regarding opportunities for cooperation and by sustaining 'institutional memory' concerning the Saint-Malo process, which promised enhanced Anglo-French cooperation on Africa policy. In these ways it has made a significant contribution to enhancing peace and security on the continent.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Since 1998 Chafer has built a body of highly regarded research on Franco-African relations and Francophone Africa that is unique in the UK. His 2002 book <i>The End of Empire</i> (Ref 1) demonstrated how and why sub-Saharan Africa became a key foreign policy priority for France after World War 2 and has remained so to the present day. Building on this work, his 2002 and 2005 articles (Refs 2, 3) showed that French policy was moving away from an exclusive focus on its traditional sphere of influence in Francophone West and Central Africa towards engagement with the whole of the continent. In the context of this case study key findings of the research were that the French government wanted to shed its reputation as the 'gendarme of Africa', move away from a unilateral approach to Africa and work with other external actors to share the costs and risks, of its engagement with the continent. This new approach opened up possibilities for Britain to cooperate with France on issues of mutual interest.</p> <p>In 2007 Professor Chafer was awarded a British Academy grant as PI (in collaboration with Professor Cumming, Cardiff, who is a specialist notably on aid policy) for a three-year research project: 'Towards a new policy partnership? France and Britain in Africa since Saint-Malo', during which over 160 interviews were conducted, in Europe, at the United Nations and in Africa. This practitioner-focused research remains unique, as the only externally funded research project on Anglo-French relations in Africa since the Saint Malo Franco-British summit in 1998, when the two countries agreed to cooperate on African issues. The project took as its starting-point the shortcomings of conventional unilateral and multilateral approaches in dealing with many of the challenges facing African societies, particularly those of insecurity, poverty and governance. A central issue addressed was the extent to which 'bilateral' cooperation between two external actors, such as that proposed by the UK and France at Saint Malo, can serve as a useful complement to other approaches.</p> <p>The project advanced understanding in two ways. First, it plugged important empirical gaps by explaining why cooperation is more advanced in certain fields (eg. peace and security) than others (eg. poverty reduction, development aid) and by producing the first systematic study of Anglo-French cooperation in crisis management in Africa. In so doing, this research showed how and explained why policy discourse on cooperation was not always followed through in terms of actual practice on the ground. Chafer's specific contribution in this respect was in the field of security cooperation (Refs. 4, 5, 6). Second, it provided an understanding of how the two governments came to their decision to move from rivalry to cooperation in Africa and explained why Anglo-French coordination often lacked substance. In particular, it showed the importance of enhancing policy coherence by deconflictualising positions and identified policy synergies and opportunities for cooperation in areas such as peace and security, poverty reduction, human rights promotion and governance. This has informed the policy-making process, notably by explaining the background to, and rationale for, UK and French positions on key issues and indicating areas of convergence where cooperation may be possible.</p>
<p>3. References to the research</p> <p>1) Monograph: 2002 <i>The End of Empire in French West Africa. France's Successful Decolonisation?</i> (Oxford: Berg). 'Chafer brings out beautifully a complex web of actors</p>

that shaped French West Africa's path to decolonization and independence . . . the clarity of argument and wealth of detailed information in this balanced and attractive account deserve a large audience of lay readers and specialists alike' (Professor Mamadou Diouf, Ann Arbor University, *Journal of African History*, 45[1], 2004). 'Tony Chafer's fine survey of *The End of Empire in French West Africa* questions much of the [hitherto] received picture of French decolonization in Africa' (review article, 'Recent Studies of Imperialism and Decolonization', Professor Stephen Howe, Bristol University, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 40[3], 2005). 'How I wish I had had this valuable study as a text to offer to my students on the transfer of power in Africa a decade ago!' (Professor Kirk-Greene, Oxford University, *African Affairs*, 103[412], 2004). Available on request.

- 2) Article: Chafer, Tony. (2002). 'Franco-African relations: no longer so exceptional?', *African Affairs*, 101(404), Jan, pp. 343-63. ISSN 0258-9001 DOI: [10.1093/afraf/101.404.343](https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/101.404.343).
- 3) Article: Chafer, Tony. (2005). 'Chirac and la Françafrique: no longer a family affair', *Modern & Contemporary France*, 13(1), pp.7-23. ISSN 0963-9489 DOI: [10.1080/0963948052000341196](https://doi.org/10.1080/0963948052000341196). This article has, since its publication, been one of the journal's most downloaded articles. In 2012 it was still the journal's most downloaded article and, as a result, Chafer was invited to give a podcast interview updating the article's key findings. It remains the journal's second most downloaded article in 2013 (podcast available at: <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/cmcf20/current>).
- 4) Article: Chafer, Tony and Cumming, G. (2010). 'Beyond Fashoda: Anglo-French Security Cooperation in Africa since Saint-Malo', *International Affairs*, 86(5), pp.1129-1147. ISSN 1468-2346. DOI: [10.1111/j.1468-2346.2010.00932.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2010.00932.x).
- 5) Article: Chafer, Tony. (2011). 'The AU: a new arena for Anglo-French cooperation in Africa?', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 49(1), pp.55-82. ISSN 0022-278X DOI: [10.1017/S0022278X10000650](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X10000650).
- 6) Book: Chafer, Tony and Cumming, G., eds. (2011). *From Rivalry to Partnership? New Approaches to the Challenges of Africa*. Farnham: Ashgate. ISBN 9781409405177. '[The authors] evidently had excellent access to informed sources . . . Policy-makers in both London and Paris would profit from paying close attention to the analysis . . . in this book' (Sir Emyr Jones Parry, former UK Permanent Representative to the UN, Preface, p. 1). 'This is an important book on Anglo-French cooperation in Africa' (*African Affairs*, 125 [448], 2013. Available on request.

Refs. 4, 5 and 6 represented three of the outputs from a British Academy-funded Large Research Grant (£74,046), undertaken from 2007-10 (see above).

4. Details of the impact

This research has had impact on UK and French policy and on peace and security in Africa. Following the 9/11 attacks on the US, the Saint-Malo process was relaunched and Chafer was invited to act as a Foreign Office consultant, briefing outgoing UK ambassadors to Paris and to Francophone Africa on French Africa policy. Building upon this established record, Chafer's research has, since 2008, had an impact on both the policy-making process and decision-making. Four different types of impact have resulted from the research:

Policy-making impact In September 2009, at the request of the FCO, Chafer and Cumming produced a private report ('France and Britain in Africa since Saint Malo') for its Africa Strategy Group, which was reviewing its representation in West Africa. It stressed the importance of engaging with francophone countries in West Africa: 'we got a lot from the meeting' which 'fed usefully into the analysis' and provided 'key insights into the francophone piece we're examining as part of the West Africa project' (email, 23.11.09, Strategic Policy Adviser, FCO, source I). Following this review the UK decided against closing some African missions, in Mali for example, which would have negatively impacted on HMG's ability to engage in the country in 2013. Subsequently, on 3 November 2010, hours after a groundbreaking UK-French defence agreement, Professor Chafer was invited to brief Henry Bellingham, FCO Minister of State, on ways of improving UK-

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French cooperation in Africa ahead of his visit to Paris for discussions with his French counterpart. 'Mr Bellingham found the meeting very useful and interesting' (source VI). 'Your research project on French and British Africa policy: understanding and improving cooperation' was very timely. It helped underpin the policy decision to burden-share with the French the response to the crises in the Sahel and North Africa, each contributing their respective strengths in the area in a coordinated way. Your meeting with the Africa Minister in late 2010 was very helpful in setting the context for this, as well as pointing out the imbalance between French and British resources given to ECOWAS . . . You followed this up with a well-received presentation in late 2012 in Chatham House for senior FCO and MOD staff on the opportunities for security co-operation with France' (source II).

Changing practice In November 2011, Chafer was invited to give a briefing to MoD, FCO and DfID officials on the research project's key findings and specifically to look at opportunities for improving HMG's engagement with the francophone countries in ECOWAS. As a result of this briefing, the FCO undertook to get a full time senior diplomat posted to Abuja to lead on ECOWAS issues: 'Your contribution was thought provoking, and I am pleased that we are already acting on getting a full time senior diplomat posted to Abuja to lead on ECOWAS issues. I will definitely be making enquiries about getting a fluent French speaker in that role'. This advice was subsequently taken up and a French speaker appointed to this new post in Abuja (source V).

Policy legitimising impact: The research described here has had an impact by providing a solid evidence base for policy decisions that were being taken. For example, in September 2012, Chafer was invited to present the research findings to the influential France-UK Defence Forum, which for the first time included a session on military cooperation in Africa: 'British and French government officials have looked into areas of convergence where security cooperation might be possible and your research has been very useful in serving to confirm and clarify thinking that was already being formulated with regard to cooperation, particularly on security issues in Africa – as confirmed by the French intervention in Mali and the support provided by the UK' (source IV).

Institutional memory: The research project has served to sustain the momentum of the Saint-Malo process, in a context in which officials move posts every 3-4 years, with the result that institutional memory, particularly at middle and lower levels of government bureaucracy, relating to commitments made, lessons learned and opportunities identified, is often uneven and patchy. These exchanges refreshed and sustained institutional memory about the Saint Malo process, provided opportunities to discuss areas of Anglo-French convergence and ensured that UK and French officials were better aware of who they needed to talk to on the French and UK side respectively, something which is not always clear because of the different institutional set-ups for Africa policymaking in the two countries. The impact of the research was to contribute to embedding the practice of collaboration, particularly between middle-ranking French and UK officials 'on the ground' in Africa thereby saving time, as officials did not have to constantly 'reinvent the wheel', and reducing possibilities for misunderstanding.

Its *significance* can only be understood with reference to past Anglo-French rivalry in Africa. The two governments' decision to move from rivalry to cooperation in Africa represented a paradigm shift in policy. They now recognized that Anglo-French cooperation was vital for security and believed that, by working together, the UK and France could better tackle the challenges facing Africa while providing better value for money. However, they did not sufficiently understand the other country's outlook, approach, agendas and priorities, obstacles which this research has helped to overcome. By undertaking over 160 interviews with highly placed officials and decision makers and disseminating the key findings of the research widely through academic publications, policy briefings and high-level presentations to international thinktanks (also published in open access on their websites, sources VIII-X), the project contributed to officials' understanding of each other's policy agendas and priorities by identifying obstacles to enhanced cooperation. In so doing it helped to build trust and provided research-based policy recommendations that fed into debates that were taking place between policymakers about how and in what policy areas to collaborate. It thus formed part of the underpinning for these policy decisions.

The *reach* of its impact is national and international. This may be gauged from the fact that the presentations of the research findings were attended by officials from the FCO (including Research Analysts and Strategy Unit), MoD (International Policy and Planning), DfID, the French Ministry for

Foreign Affairs (including the Director of the 'Pôle politique européen de développement'), the Agence Française de Développement (including the Head of its Fragile States Unit), as well as officials in Brussels, development practitioners and journalists. Chafer also briefed the Foreign Office Minister for Africa, Henry Bellingham, and Lord Chidgey, identifying areas of convergence and opportunities for cooperation and putting forward parliamentary questions for Lord Chidgey to ask in the House (source VII). 'Your research has been most helpful in serving to confirm, shape and clarify the thinking that is beginning to be formulated in government circles with regard to cooperation . . . a number of the recommendations from your research were subsequently taken up by HMG'.(source III).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- I. Email from Strategic Policy Adviser, West Africa Strategy Group, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), 23.11.09, confirming input into the West Africa Strategy Group.
- II. Letter from Senior Principal Research Officer, Africa Directorate, FCO, 21.10.2013, confirming impact of this research on the Africa Directorate in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office with regard to improving Anglo-French understanding and identifying opportunities for enhanced cooperation.
- III. Letter from special adviser to Lord Chidgey, Liberal Democrat Spokesperson, Foreign Policy on Africa, House of Lords, 18.10.2013, confirming impact on policy-makers, specifically with regard to opportunities for, and obstacles to, cooperation.
- IV. Letter from International Security Research Analyst, Chatham House, 3.10.2013, confirming impact on French and British government officials' thinking on Anglo-French security cooperation in Africa.
- V. Email from FCO Desk Officer, Regional Issues, Nigeria & Central Africa Section (with responsibility for relations with ECOWAS), 28.11.2011, confirming input into ECOWAS strategy meeting. This was followed up by an email, dated 5.11.13, confirming that a French speaker was subsequently appointed to the post.
- VI. Email from special adviser to FCO Minister for Africa, Henry Bellingham, 08/11/2010, relating to briefing of the Minister.
- VII. Parliamentary questions regarding opportunities for enhanced Anglo-French cooperation asked by Lord Chidgey, provided by Professor Chafer 2011, 2012, including two on Saint-Malo: Hansard, HL 7157, 2 March 2011, c354WA and .HL 1855, 22 August 2012.
- VIII. Presentation: *Punching Below Their Weight? Critical Reflections on Anglo-French Cooperation in Africa* (with Gordon Cumming), given at Chatham House, June 2010, report available on the Chatham House website at www.chathamhouse.org/events/view/156591
- IX. Presentation: *La coopération entre la France et le Royaume-Uni en Afrique : Des capacités sous-utilisées*, given at the Institut Francais des Relations Internationales (IFRI) Paris, November 2010, report available on the IFRI website at <http://www.ifri.org/?page=detail-contribution&id=6247#>. [French version of report above]
- X. Presentation; *La coopération franco-britannique en Afrique. une façon de renforcer ou de contourner l'UE?*, hosted by the European Commission and given at IFRI Brussels, Nov 2010, available on the IFRI Brussels website at http://www.ifri.org/?page=detail-contribution&id=6282&id_provenance=79