

# Political Economy of Colonialism

## I. Proposal's context, positioning and objective(s)

### a. Objectives and research hypothesis

This project first aims at building a new political economy of colonialism in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It will be grounded in the study of the French case yet with other colonial empires (British, Portuguese, Japanese) in mind, mainly in Africa (North and Sub-Saharan) but also in South-East Asia (Indochina). This will mean taking into account different organizations: states, firms, churches; analysing the achievements and interactions of different strategic actors: politicians, military men, civil servants, capitalists and traders, missionaries, autochthonous elites, urban middle classes, poor farmers; and characterizing the institutional designs or the social playing fields that structured these interactions. A dynamic analysis of economic inequality will be a first target to reach, to identify winners and losers (at least in economic terms) of colonialism and of colonial policies at different periods in each place. Networks of political and economic connections will also be investigated in order to better understand the consonance or dissonance of the interests of actors, and the features of strategic interactions or bargains; network analysis will also allow us to consider non-economic interests (social capital, power). Our research hypothesis is here that colonialism was mainly beneficial to a minority of politically and economically influential actors, in metropolitan or local societies. The longevity of colonialism could be explained by the political and economic success of pro-colonial coalitions in the metropolis, the so-called colonial lobbies, which also included a few cooperative agents from the colonized societies. The transformations of colonialism and the changes in colonial policies could also be explained by (partly exogenous) changes in the relevant coalitions.

Given that colonialism was a global phenomenon, its understanding requires considering the 'wider plan' rather than focusing on a single colonized region; metropolitan as well as some colonized agents were clearly involved in, or travelling between, multiple territories, so that plans elaborated for one place were not independent from those made for another. As opportunistic and incremental as it was, colonialism had some imperial consistency; furthermore, colonial states, firms, and missions studied and sometimes copied what others were doing in other imperial spaces. Last, previous analyses of colonialism have not given attention to the role and agency of the colonized, if only the autochthonous elites, however constrained and limited their space of action was. Another important premise of our research is that local contexts mattered for the implementation of colonial plans, and that colonizers had to adapt and find local connections in order to enforce their rule, ensure their investments, or spread their religion; even in the French case, colonial rule always had 'indirect' features.

A second and complementary aim of the project is to examine how the political economy of colonialism survived after its official end and how it helps to understand the present state of the world. Independent states inherited the structures of colonial states that they could only gradually reform, sometimes more radically under Marxist-Leninist regimes. Some colonial firms are still alive and paved the way to new investments from the former metropolis. Networks also had some intergenerational persistence. International migration flows, but also capital flight, are still very much oriented towards the former metropolis. Yet the 'postcolonial tropism' was also contested by new competitors, whether states, firms or churches (USA, Russia, China, tax havens, evangelists...). More generally, economic development and inequality are path dependent, yet postcolonial trajectories were diverse; in particular, countries did not manage the same way the colonial legacy of dualistic structures in the markets for labour, land, credit, or in legal justice. Our research hypothesis here is that idiosyncratic differences in the political economy of the colonial period, as well as in features of decolonization, can account for part of this diversity of postcolonial trajectories. These differences emerged outside of an interaction between precolonial characteristics and the patterns of colonialism itself. For instance, at the turn of independence, Tunisia had a larger skilled labour force

than Algeria; Côte d'Ivoire had a smaller number of skilled civil servants or professionals and higher wage dualism than British Gold Coast (present Ghana). Here again, comparisons among former French colonies, as well as between former colonies of different colonizers, will shed light on factors of differentiation in the ways colonial linkages were preserved or turned down after formal independence. Nationalization of capital and/or land, default on colonial debt, break of the currency peg to the former metropolis, rebuttal of bilateral aid or technical assistance, trade protectionism and import-substitution attempts are policies that were implemented more by some countries and less by others. Conversely, structural adjustment in the mid-1980s and 1990s was another critical juncture when some of these policies were reversed with the privatization and liberalization of economies.

We will try to assess to which extent these series of transformations, combined with the competition of other powers, have resulted in a weakening of the colonial print, in terms of states resources and policies, propriety of capital and inequality.

On the side of concepts and theory, the main scientific challenge will be to elaborate a framework that will allow us to connect the political economy of the metropolis with the one of each individual colony. Fields of action were not identical yet were not separate and displayed some homomorphism, as the colonial state was only semi-autonomous (Steinmetz 2008). Some actors or agents were present in one and not in the other, but some also travelled between the two and/or where *represented* in both (mostly metropolitan ones, but also a few Autochthons). The identification and characterization of these imperial stakeholders will be crucial. The same is true, although under different historical conditions and with different features, for the postcolonial situation.

On the side of empirics, the first main challenge will be to construct a database on private firms with a good enough spatial and temporal coverage in order to 'directly' measure the amounts of colonial capital and its returns and to identify individual 'colonial capitalists' for network analysis. Such a 'micro-approach' is very much needed because 'macro' balance of payments between the metropolis and the colonies are not available, with only a few exceptions like Morocco in the 1950s. The second challenge will be to circumscribe the colonial political-economic field and to collect data on other relevant actors like politicians and high-rank civil servants, but also autochthonous elites, to be connected to private capital owners. Here again, crucial will be the identification of central and influential agents who lied at the intersections of public and private, like Edmond Giscard d'Estaing, or metropolitan and local, like Felix Houphouët-Boigny.

Regarding basic outputs, the first part of the project will produce global measurements of public and private investments, of financial flows between the metropolis and each colonial territory, rates of return of colonial capital by sector and period, social accounting matrices and inequality indicators for colonial societies, mappings of networks between board members of firms, politicians, administrators and autochthonous elites.

The second part will produce homogenized statistical series on postcolonial states' structures (taxation and expenditure), a database on the fate of French firms after 1960, migration and capital flows between former colonies and former metropolis, measurements of dualism and of present-day income (and hopefully wealth) inequality.

## b. Position of the project as it relates to the state of the art

Our global times are the heirs of a world system built by Western capitalism, imperialism and colonialism, and by the political movements that opposed them. The migration question in Europe, the Arab Springs, or else the secular responsibilities in climate change, today reactivate the difficulties of the North-South relation and remind us of colonial legacies. In its youth, development economics was constituted around the questions of decolonization and of unequal exchange (e.g., Hirschman 1981); yet, as the discipline became more specialized, its link with history loosened. In economic history, the last important contributions to the political economy of colonialism date back to the mid-1980s (Marseille 1984 on the French Empire; Davis & Huttenback 1986 on the British

Empire); then the imperial era has been mainly studied through the lens of trade (Williamson 2006; Mitchener & Wildenmeier 2008). Today economists search in the distant past the institutional fundamentals accounting for the prosperity of nations (e.g. Acemoglu & Robinson 2012); others propose a less deterministic history of capitalism and of global inequality (Piketty 2014, Beckert 2014). Yet the research on Western (and also Japanese) colonialisms has only recently resumed some progress; likewise a renaissance of the economic history of Africa is not out of reach (Austin & Broadberry 2014; Cogneau 2016).

Thanks to ANR funding 2011-15, the Afristory project has collected a large database on public investment, administration and finance in the French colonial Empire from 1830 to 1962. In comparison with the previous references on which we built our own work, this database has no equivalent in terms of coverage of geographical areas, time periods, and variables (Suret-Canale 1962; Amin 1966 & 1971; Coquery-Vidrovitch 1972; Marseille 1984; Almeida-Topor 1995; Bassino et al. 2000). Works of a similar flavour on the British Empire in Africa (Frankema 2010 & 2011; Gardner 2012; Frankema & Van Waijenburg 2014) or on British, Dutch and French South-East Asia (Booth 2007) also use more limited data. These works all focus on some specific regions, analyse a few dates, or stop short before 1940. In our case data extraction, cleaning and homogenization took years, and analyses involved the construction of many other variables outside of public accounts: demographics, prices, trade, wages, and estimates of aggregate income. French colonial states are shown to combine high fiscal capacity with dualism: they extracted a higher share of national income than many states elsewhere in the world, yet also displayed high civil service wages and biased expenditures, so that their developmental action was limited until after WW2 when international aid dependency emerged (Cogneau, Dupraz & Mesplé-Soms 2018a).

The present project will use this initial investment to make a step further towards a new political economy of colonialism, and explore consequences for the postcolonial institutions and trajectories of former colonies. To achieve this, the data effort and the analysis will be extended in two directions: (1) to firms and private capital; (2) to the post-independence period (after 1962). The landmark references of Marseille (1984) and Davis & Huttenback (1986) mostly focus on the political economy of the metropolis (France or United Kingdom) during the colonial era – the latter even stops short in 1912, whereas our objective is to study jointly colonizers and colonized social spaces and to extend the analysis to the postcolonial times. To some extent, our will to analyse the adaptation of colonial plans to local contexts and to grant consideration to the agency of the colonized will also require some investigation into the precolonial period: structures of states (taxation, spending, and governance), initial patterns of trade, first interactions with Europeans, etc. (see e.g. Jedwab et al. 2018 on Christian missions expansion in Africa, who illustrate well the precolonial factors that commanded the first mission settlements on the coasts, but also the fundamental role of African missionaries for proselytising the hinterlands).

Perhaps surprisingly, we are still very much ignorant about the amount of capital invested in the French colonial Empire. Marseille (1984) argued that the deficits incurred by colonies in their trade with France meant that they had received large capital transfers, both of public and private origin. Unfortunately balances of payments were not produced between territories belonging to the franc zone (and the one exhibited by Marseille for 1953 is entirely wrong). Thanks to direct measurement, our recent works tell that public capital transfers were limited, the dominant share being military current expenditure (Huillery 2014 on French West Africa; Cogneau, Dupraz & Mesplé-Soms 2018a&b for the whole French Empire and a comparison with British colonies in West Africa). Outside of the state-guaranteed loans of colonial governments (with private bond holders), private capital flows are unknown. For Sub-Saharan Africa the last estimates date back to 1938 and again focus on British colonies, with only a few tentative figures for the French colonies (Frankel 1938). As for French North Africa, the recent work of Saul (2016) only covers 1945-1962. Aggregate estimates of assets owned abroad by Piketty (2014) do not isolate colonies from other countries like Argentina or Russia. Rather than inferring them from trade imbalances like Marseille (1984) did, the Afristory project measured directly public capital transfers to individual colonies by combining data on subsidies paid by metropolitan ministries (of Colonies and of War), on public loans, and on transfers

received by colonial administrations. In the case of private capital, direct measurement implies collecting individual firms' data, which will also allow us to estimate profit rates and returns. Distributional implications of colonialism have likewise barely been explored, both in the metropolis and in colonial territories. Income tax data collected by Banerjee & Piketty (2005) then Alvaredo, Bergeron & Cassan (2017) for colonial India, Alvaredo & Atkinson (2007) and Atkinson (2017) for British colonies in Africa, last Alvaredo, Cogneau & Piketty (2018) for French colonies (Algeria, Cameroon, Indochina and Tunisia) allowed some progress. Analyses reveal high income inequality at the top, yet decreasing after the Great Depression and WW2; European settlers were not too rich when compared to metropolitan top-incomes, and inequality among them was limited, while inequality among Autochthons was high, especially in Asia. These data can be combined with social tables, like the ones devised by Amin (1966) for Maghreb; Cogneau, Dupraz & Mesplé-Somps (2018a) propose a first estimation of the distribution of the tax burden. Additional work should provide more detailed social accounting matrices, isolating the top rich among settlers, minorities (Jewish, Lebanese, Chinese, Indian) and Autochthons, and most importantly including in the picture metropolitan investors who received part of the profits of colonial enterprises.

All these elements will also allow us to understand better the politics of colonialism. Anti-colonial positions surged sporadically in times of crisis, when conquest wars encountered resistance, when colonial violence scandalized the opinion, or with liberation wars (Liauzu 2007). However, for the most part, it seems that colonial lobbies and conservative settlers managed to oppose any radical reformation at least until WW2. Who were these lobbies, what private interests did they represent, and to which extent did top public officials and colonial administrators collude with them? Who allowed concessions for mines or infrastructures to which entrepreneurs or firms and at what price? The historical literature to date does not provide a synthetic view of the network of colonial interests and bargains, as it has studied each kind of actors in almost complete isolation. First, we find studies on the doctrines and the most influential thinkers or actors of the so-called "colonial party" under the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Republic, starting with Brunschwig (1959) and Ageron (1978), the last opus being from d'Andurain (2017); then, for the 5<sup>th</sup> Republic and after the independences, a large number of references look at the networks of French and African politicians known as the "Françafrique", drawing in particular from the recently disclosed "Foccart papers" (e.g. Bat 2012). A second kind of works is monographies on the most famous colonial firms and banks, and on networks of entrepreneurs and capitalists (e.g. Bonin 1987; Bonin, Hodeir & Klein 2008). Third, we have studies of colonial governors and administrators (Cohen 1971; Collectif 2000; El Mechat 2009; most recently Chambru & Viallet-Thévenin 2017 on the French case, Xu 2018 on the British case). Fourth, a last strand looks at local elites: Europeans in settlement colonies (e.g. Lambert 2009; Michel 2018); educated, westernized and sometimes mixed race Autochthons as intermediaries of the colonial system and/or as the first unionists and nationalists (Pervillé 1997; Brocheux & Hémerly 1997; Vermeren 2002; Agnikin 2010); the very few Africans who managed their way to the top of the French administrative or political system like Blaise Diagne, Léopold Sédar-Senghor or Félix Houphouët-Boigny. Our ambition is precisely to merge the four kinds of sources and construct large-size qualitative/quantitative data on these networks, and analyse the change in imperial political-economic connections.

On the postcolonial period, we are already building a database of public finance for the former French colonies of Africa 1960-2018, extending the database of the Afristory project. We started from the revenue side and compiled, critically compared and homogenized data from various sources (see below). First analyses look at the critical junctures of independence, socialist experiments and structural adjustment programs (Cogneau, Dupraz, Knebelmann & Mesplé-Somps 2018). African independent states retained some colonial features, like the gatekeeper characteristic emphasized by Cooper (2002). Continuity in structures partly stems from continuity in actors: in the 1960s, 75% of ministers in former British or French West Africa had formerly served in colonial civil service or legislature (Ricard-Huguet 2017); many European administrators also had a second career as advisors through technical assistance or as managers of foreign aid (e.g. Dimier 2014 on EU development aid). First, we find no discontinuity in tax revenue collection at the turn of independence, even if a few

countries go through an air pocket due to temporary disorganization. This is quite striking in the case of North African countries who by 1965 had lost almost all European settlers (as well as Jews), who made the great majority of top-income earners and who according to our estimates contributed from 33% (Morocco) to 55% (Algeria) to total tax revenue. Second, we find that socialist regimes did no better in collecting taxes (Algeria, Congo) and often did worse (Benin, Guinea, Madagascar); future work will look at how they managed nationalized enterprises. Third, in line with Cagé & Gadenne (2018), we also find that trade liberalization between 1985 and 1995 decreased state resources on average, as custom duties collapsed and were not entirely compensated by increases in domestic taxation. The literature on state capacity largely disregards that independent states did not start from scratch: Besley & Persson (2011) draw their empirical evidence from fiscal and legal decisions taken within independent countries; Chambas (1994) on tax systems in Sub-Saharan Africa barely mentions colonial legacies. Aside to connecting colonial and postcolonial states, we wish to extend the database towards not only taxation but also expenditure, as “extractive efficiency” cannot be analysed separately from “productive efficiency” (Besley & Persson 2011). This, and the fact that we will use first hand data, will differentiate our work from existing work focusing mostly on tax revenue.

Of course, analysing the transition from the colonial to the postcolonial economy also requires looking at the private sector, if only (and narrowly) to understand the evolution of the tax base. For instance, the already mentioned puzzling continuity in North African tax revenue (and also GDP) after the departure of settlers is most likely explained by the takeover of French capital and land by skilled Autochthons (even if an increase in tax rates is also part of the explanation). This issue has to our knowledge never been explored. In the same spirit, Bertazzini (2018) finds that the removal of Italian farmers from Libyan Cyrenaica in 1942 did not cause a drop in the production of traditional cereal crops (barley and wheat); it seems that the “human capital shock” had minimal impact while the takeover of capital (irrigation infrastructure in particular) and land by autochthonous Libyans mattered most. More generally, we know very little of the fate of French firms after decolonization, even outside of settlement colonies: did capital ownership and management change substantially, if so how, why and when? We want to assess the impact of the waves of nationalizations (1960-70s) then of privatizations (1990s), as well as of the recent foreign investment trends, and shed light on the property of capital in former French colonies, by sector, type of asset (land, mines, industry, housing) and type of owners (state, private domestic, foreign). This research will link with present works on capital flight (Boyce & Ndikumana 2010; Cogneau & Rouanet 2015; Alstadsæte, Johannesen & Zucman 2018). Following Kenya, Egypt and Zimbabwe, former French colonies like Senegal, Togo, Côte d’Ivoire, Congo, Morocco and Madagascar rank quite high with regards to ratios of wealth in tax havens to GDP, according to estimates from assets held in Swiss banks, from shell companies at Mossack-Fonseca (Panama papers) or from HSBC Geneva (Swissleak).

Economic and political inequalities are intertwined with both state capacity and patterns of capital and land ownership (Besley & Persson 2011). Wage and employment dualism, a salient feature of colonial states (Cogneau, Dupraz & Mesplé-Somps 2018a), is still very present in present day inequalities (Cogneau 2008; Cogneau, Czajka & Hounbedji 2017 for Côte d’Ivoire). Postcolonial bureaucracies had to deal with highly unequal wage schedules, and more generally unit costs set at high (metropolitan) standards with regards to domestic income, while facing high demand for service provision. Not all countries followed the same path, some preserved high wages and high quality infrastructure like Côte d’Ivoire, while others opted instead to extend public employment and decentralize infrastructure at lowered wages and costs (Bossuroy & Cogneau 2013; Simson 2017). A higher level of dualism is usually associated with higher income inequality, lower social mobility and higher inequality of opportunity for income, education or health, and former French colonies seem to display higher dualism than former British colonies (e.g. Cogneau & Mesplé-Somps 2008). The three Maghreb countries shared similarities, with Egypt as well, yet did not reach the same “Arab Spring” until now (Mouhoud 2012). Despite its high level of poverty, Africa displays perhaps the highest level of inequality in the world (World Bank, 2006, Cogneau 2008), yet very little is known about its determinants and available data is still shaky (e.g. Beegle et al. 2016). For the time being, the World

Inequality Database (<https://wid.world/world-inequality-lab/>) only includes two African countries with post-1970 inequality figures: South Africa and Côte d'Ivoire.

### c. Methodology and risk management

For the sake of simplicity, we adopted a work programme's breakdown into six tasks clustered in two parts, the three first tasks (1 to 3) covering the colonial period, the next three the postcolonial period (4 to 6). We do not separate data collection, analysis and publication. Each task corresponds to one topic which associates specific data sources, collection protocols and analytical methods, a selected set of researchers among the team (see allocation in page 1), and one or two research articles as final outputs (aside to the deliverable databases). Two tasks have mainly to do with firms' data and capital flows (1 and 5), two others with the measurement of inequality (2 and 6). Among the remaining two, one is focused on the network analysis of colonial lobbies (task 3), and another on the structure of postcolonial states, as the most direct follow-up of the previous ANR-funded Afristory project (task 4, see above). Most data collection efforts will run in parallel, starting in end-2019 or beginning 2020 (see Gantt chart), excepting the one on French firms in the postcolonial period (task 5) which will rather follow the collection on the colonial period (task 2) for obvious reasons and also because the DFIH database is still incomplete for years after 1960 and will gradually improve its coverage until 1975 in the meantime (i.e. until 2021).

Generally speaking, this project is about constructing new facts on issues that have barely been explored, at least quantitatively. Data exist, yet have to be extracted, cleaned and analysed. So that risk lies mostly in the quantity of work needed to extract the data and make it exploitable, and in our evaluation being overoptimistic. From the experience of the previous Afristory project, fall-back options are then of two complementary kinds: (i) first deal with incomplete data, and restrict the analysis to shorter periods or more limited geographical areas; (ii) then extend data collection after the end of ANR funding with internal resources and hence at a slower pace, then reach more complete data and more representative analysis in the end.

Two additional tasks are listed. Task 0 corresponds to coordination, workshops and participation in economic history conferences. Task 7 corresponds to the building of a web platform on French colonialism, which will allow us to release data to the public, to advertise our work, and possibly to collect new data or ideas from generous contributors (see also part III on this aspect).

#### Task 0: Workshops and Conferences

Three workshops will gather all the participants of the project, one at kick-off in the last quarter of 2019, one at mid-term in the first semester of 2021, with the preparation of the World Economic History Congress (WEHC August 2021) in view, and the third and last in first semester of 2023 with a few external guests invited. WEHC 2021 will take place in Paris at the Campus Condorcet and will provide an excellent opportunity to advertise our project and our results in one or two dedicated sessions. The former Afristory project also used WEHC Kyoto (2015) and Boston (2018) for the same purposes. The European Historical Economics Society Conference (EHESC) 2019 will take place at the Paris School of Economics and a first version of task 4 paper (on postcolonial taxation) will be presented there; other editions of EHESC will be in 2021 and in 2023 and will also be used.

#### Task 1: Colonial Capital

*Data:* This task will consist in putting together two sources: (1) the data on colonial states and economies from the Afristory project; (2) the data on all listed French firms collected by the Equipex DFIH (*Données Financières Historiques; Data for Financial History*) at PSE: stock exchange values, balance sheets, board composition, earnings and total return, from 1850 to 1962 (Ducros et al. 2018). A new Website (<https://dfih.fr/>) presents the DFIH database and already gives access to some open data.

The DFIH database allows us to identify companies or subsidiary companies whose main activity is located in the French colonies. Its coverage can be confronted to alternative directories of colonial firms, in particular the one available on the Web, called “Les entreprises coloniales” (<http://entreprises-coloniales.fr/>, gathered by Alain Léger). We will thoroughly check that we are not missing important large firms whose activity is known from the historical literature (for instance Saul 2016 for North Africa).

A master student at PSE is already extracting and analysing the DFIH data for the firms operating in French Western and Central Africa (AOF and AEF) and in Madagascar, for his master dissertation (under joint supervision of D. Cogneau and P.-C. Hautcoeur); this student is also preparing a PhD research project on the topic. His work provides a first feasibility test for this part of the project. We were already able to identify some 150 companies between 1900 and 1959.

Task	Aug. 2019	II-2019	I-2020	II-2020	I-2021	Aug. 2021	II-2021	I-2022	II-2022	I-2023
<b>0</b>	<b>Workshops and conferences</b>									
	EHESC	Workshop 1			Workshop2	WEHC				Workshop3
<b>1</b>	<b>Colonial Capital</b>	Database of main individual firms from 3 complementary sources								
				Colonial firms: profitability and financing (micro-analysis)						
						<b>Colonial firms in the French Empire</b>				
				Capital flows between metropolis and colonies (public & private)						
						<b>Capital in the French Empire</b>				
<b>2</b>	<b>Colonial Lobbies</b>	Database of board members in colonial firms / Matching with political and administrative officials								
				Network analysis. Parliamentary votes						
						<b>Colonial lobbies and networks</b>				
<b>3</b>	<b>Colonial Inequality</b>	Additional data collection (censuses, surveys, tax tabulations)								
				Social accounting						
						<b>Inequality in the French Empire</b>				
<b>4</b>	<b>Postcolonial States</b>	Collection on expenditure side (1970-2015)								
				Public finance analysis						
		<b>Taxation in former French Africa 1890-2015</b>					<b>Postcolonial States: Capacity and Action</b>			
<b>5</b>	<b>Postcolonial Capital and States</b>	French firms trajectories								
						Country case studies: state policies and firms trajectories				
						<b>French Capital in Africa</b>				
<b>6</b>	<b>Postcolonial Inequalities</b>	Compilation of data on inequality patterns (income tax, dualism, capital flight, migration). Joint with World Ineq. Database								
						Country case studies: structures of inequality today				
						<b>Inequality in former French Africa</b>				
<b>7</b>	<b>Web Platform on French Colonialism</b>									
	Data release 1		<b>Public finance and other var. 1830-1970</b>				<b>Public finance and other var. 1970-2010</b>			
	Data release 2					<b>French colonial firms</b>		<b>French postcolonial firms</b>		
	Data release 3					<b>Detailed social accounting</b>		<b>Inequality (with WID)</b>		
<b>Legend:</b>	<b>Data</b>	<b>Analysis</b>	<b>Paper</b>	<b>Database</b>	<b>Conference</b>	<b>Workshops</b>				



At the end of this data compilation process, we should be in possession of a database of large and medium-size French firms operating in all sectors and all colonies. These data will be used for two kinds of analyses, one more micro on the profitability and financing of colonial firms, another more macro on capital flows between the metropolis and the colonies.

*Paper 1: Colonial firms in the French Empire.*

This first analysis will compare colonial firms to a sample of firms operating in France and created during the same period and in the same sector, on a variety of indicators: survival and growth (capital increases), stock prices, internal rates of return. We will ask whether colonial firms displayed higher profitability than metropolitan comparators, in which sector and which period. We will also try to account for the variations in colonial firms' performance across time and across space, in relation with developments in commodity prices (mineral products and cash crops), public investments (railways and construction), fiscal policies, and political events (World Wars, liberation wars). One challenge will probably be to select the sample of metropolitan comparators, if only because some colonial firms produce tropical goods (mineral or agricultural) that have no equivalents in France mainland. A parallel research project, from Oskar Broberg and Klas Rönnbäck at University of Gothenburg, looks at companies listed at the London Stock Exchange operating in Sub-Saharan Africa. Their results will provide us with another benchmark for comparison: were French colonial firms more or less profitable than British ones? We will explore a potential collaboration with these colleagues (who are like us part of the African Economic History Network, <https://www.aehnetwork.org/>) in order to push this comparison further in a second stage (explain differences between British and French colonial companies).

*Researchers:* D. Cogneau, P.-C. Hautcoeur, E. Grandi, A. Riva

*Paper 2: Capital in the French Empire*

A second analysis will use the colonial firms' database to compute estimates of the aggregate flows of private colonial investments and repatriated profits by period and by colony. These estimates will be compared to the ones of Frankel for 1938 Sub-Saharan Africa (Frankel 1938). We will combine them with the Afristory estimates of public capital flows and of current expenditures and transfers (military spending, grants, loans), to reconstruct balance of payments between the metropolis and its colonies. This will allow us to identify what financial flows came to finance the trade deficits incurred by most of the French colonies (with the exception of Indochina who ran surpluses), and assess the thesis of Jacques Marseille (1984) according to whom French colonies received generous capital transfers both private and public. Our own calculations already tell us that public capital transfers were limited, and that trade deficits were actually covered by military current expenditures (paid by the metropolis). The knowledge of private flows will provide us with a more complete and precise picture. It is in particular possible that current account surpluses were the rule, so that some kind of 'colonial drain' applied, like in the case of Dutch Indonesia studied by van den Erg (1998), or, although to a lesser extent, in the case of India and Pakistan studied by Maddison (1971).

*Researchers:* D. Cogneau, E. Huillery, S. Mesplé-Somps

### Task 2: Colonial Lobbies and Networks.

*Data:* A by-product of the database constructed by task1 on French colonial firms will be a dynamic network of their board members and directors. The next step will be to collect data on these members' social identities and biographies from various sources. Then we will look at the intersection of this set of board members with the set of ministers and parliamentarians (available at <http://archives.assemblee-nationale.fr/>), with the database of 600 colonial governors from Chambru & Viallet-Thévenin (2017), and with extended directories of colonial administrators. We will also identify other connections between individuals than same board or parliamentary group membership: same cohort of the same elite school, same military regiment, same masonic lodge, or being family relatives. The "Tables nominatives des interventions", from the Assemblée Nationale archives, should allow us to count the number of times that a given deputy or senator intervened about colonies; positions taken in debates around colonial conquest (Morocco 1912 and Rif War

1924 for the latest dates), public loans (1920s and 1930s), military conscription (1920s), the reformation of the political structure of the Empire under the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic (Cooper 2014), and liberation wars (1950s) will also be informative. Of course, the role of deputies representing colonial territories will deserve specific attention (Binoche-Guedra 1988).

*Paper:* The statistical analysis of networks of board members and directors will measure the interlocking and concentration of colonial economic interests and their evolution across time, in comparison with a control group sample of non-colonial companies (e.g. Battiston & Catanzaro 2004). We will also assess whether the owners of colonial capital were more often of middle or low background, like the colonial governors analyzed by Chambru & Viallet-Thévenin (2017) or like many of the settlers in North Africa (Alvaredo, Cogneau & Piketty 2018); or else, as shown in Davis & Huttenback (1986) for the British Empire before WW1, whether they more often from London upper classes or the gentry. And across time, do we observe a “democratization” of colonial investment or rather the opposite? Then, connections between colonial investors and politicians will be investigated; in particular the frequency of revolving door careers (“*pantouflage*”). Finally we will characterize political and legal lobbying in favor of colonial interests, measure its intensity and its variation in time.

*Researchers:* D. Cogneau, P.-C. Hautcoeur, E. Grandi, A. Riva, C. Chambru, S. Viallet-Thévenin

### Task 3: Colonial Inequality

*Data:* First-hand data collection should be limited in this task. The main challenge will be to define a relevant and tractable stratification of colonial societies, put together the many pieces of existing data on the income and wealth of agents (from censuses, surveys, income tax tabulations), while maximizing consistency with macroeconomic aggregates (GDP estimates, external trade data). In colonies, top-income earners among settlers and Autochthons will be distinguished, drawing from income tax tabulations and more qualitative sources about economically successful individuals. A specific attention will be given to land distribution, not only between settlers and Autochthons but also among the latter, in order to document and study the eventual emergence of landed elites in rural and urban areas (K. Hounbedji). On the side of the metropolis, Piketty, Postel-Vinay and Rosenthal (2018) will allow us to document the presence of colonial assets in the top wealth owners’ portfolio from mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to the 1950s.

*Paper:* We wish to construct social accounting matrices describing the formation and distribution of income in the French colonies across time. A bounding approach will be followed to take into account the (likely large) uncertainty affecting some estimates; quantification difficulties, like for instance the valuation of forced labour, will be discussed carefully. The observed changes in the distribution of income or assets will be referred to demographic changes in the composition of colonizers’ and colonized populations, to political events and conflicts, and to variations in trade and in the prices of exported commodities. Their exogenous part will help to explain changes in the orientation of colonial policies. The analysis will leave room to non-pecuniary aspects of inequality, in particular access to justice and disputes resolution (K. Marazyan).

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### Task 4: Postcolonial States: Capacity and Action

*Data:* We will establish reliable and consistent data series on the public finances of colonial states and their postcolonial successors. The project will continue the data collection started in Cogneau et al. (2018a) that produced data on colonial public finances in the French empire, and Cogneau et al. (2018b) that gathered data on taxation and public revenue in former French colonies after independence. This new data collection will focus on the expenditure side of the budgets, from 1960 to 2010. The aim is to establish consistent series on 1/ total public expenditure (including expenditure financed by external sources); 2/ the functional and sectoral allocation of public expenditure; 3/ public wages and the size of the civil service. Moreover, this information will be complemented with development outcomes like school enrolment, health services and other public

amenities like electrification or roads, at a subnational level. This task is quite challenging because postcolonial sources are typically much less detailed than colonial sources. We will investigate different sources of data from Government Finance Statistics (IMF), to Public expenditure reviews (World Bank), to Articles IV (IMF Executive Board Consultation), to archives of each country's Public finance department, to grey literature and administrative reports from international development agencies. The main risk of this task is failing to find reliable primary sources. The fall-back solution will be to restrict the data collection to countries with the most reliable sources.

*Paper:* While state capacity is often approached from the side of taxation and fiscal capacity, it is fruitful to approach the African independent states also from the side of expenditure. Indeed, for "growing public" (Lindert 2004), the efficiency and sectoral allocation of public expenditure are as important as the level and structure of taxes, i.e. "extractive efficiency". Cogneau et al. (2018a) show that colonial public expenditure was biased – as it had to serve first the interests of French settlers and capitalists – and costly – as it had to rely on expensive French civil servants and army men. To which extent did the independences induce discontinuities of these patterns? What was the role played by French experts and technical assistance in policy making? Did socialist regimes target less public expenditure towards urban elites? To which extent did structural adjustment programs redefine the scope of the African states?

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#### Task 5: Postcolonial capital and states

*Data:* The DFIH database will extend its data collection on listed firms until the year 1975. For after 1975, more standard firm data can be obtained from the French Statistical Institute (Insee), but also from dedicated surveys of the *Direction des Relations Economiques Extérieures* of the Ministry of Economics and Finance on French companies in Africa, and from the employers' union CIAN (*Conseil français des investisseurs en Afrique*) which claims to cover 80% of French economic activity in Africa.

*Paper:* In close connection with our analysis of the structures of postcolonial states (task 4), this work will focus on the relationship between French capital and independent African states. First, we will try to evaluate the present share of French capital in the total capital stock of former French colonies of Africa, and what share of the French capital can be traced back to firms that were already present before decolonization. Second, we will analyze the trajectories of French colonial firms through the decolonization period, nationalization and privatization waves, until today. We will ask in particular to which extent French interests have been better preserved in the countries that belonged to the CFA zone, and if socialist experiments significantly and durably diminished the weight of French capital in the economy, or if the privatization wave of the 1990s allowed a "come back" of French capital despite increased international competition.

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#### Task 6: Postcolonial inequality

*Data:* In a joint effort with the World Inequality Lab at PSE, the project will improve the measurement of inequality in former French African countries, by making the best use of various sources. In the case of Côte d'Ivoire, income tax data was combined with household surveys to generate a more accurate measurement of income inequality (Cogneau, Czajka & Hounbedji 2018). In the case of Senegal, in collaboration with the Senegalese tax administration, we have been able to collect individual firm data on the income tax withheld on wages, individual declarations on non-wage (often housing) income, and wage distribution data for civil servants. We hope to make some progress on the front of the disclosing of income tax data in other countries like Benin and Tunisia. We will also put together data on skilled emigration to high income OECD countries, new data on bank deposits or housing in France (Cogneau & Rouanet 2005), or assets held in Swiss banks (Alstadsæte, Johannesen & Zucman 2018).

*Paper:* Our main objective will be to analyze the changing patterns of inequality from colonial times (task 3) to present, in a selected set of countries based on data availability. Like in Simson

(2017) for East African former British colonies, we will in particular examine the evolution of the relative position of high-rank bureaucrats compared to businessmen at the top of the income distribution.

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#### Task 7: Web-platform on French Colonialism

A web-platform will be created to advertise our research and to release the deliverable datasets to the public. As soon as the first paper using Afristory data will receive green light for publication – hopefully by the end of 2019, a first batch of data will be put on line, covering the 1830-1970 period. Data from task 4 on postcolonial public finance will then follow in 2021. Then would come the dataset of French colonial firms until 1960, followed by their trajectories after 1960. Detailed raw data basing our estimates of colonial inequality then of postcolonial inequality will also be released. We also envision that this web platform will stimulate debate around French colonialism, and even help us to receive smart unexpected contributions to our research endeavours!

## II. Impact and benefits of the project

European colonialism is still a contentious issue in the political and socio-cultural fields. In Europe, the recent ‘migrant crises’, the long-lasting discrimination and segregation of citizens with ascendance from former colonies, and the resurgence of white supremacist movements directly resonate with colonial memory. In France, it is not long ago (2005) that some deputies at the National Assembly had a law passed that urged historical textbooks to advocate the goods of French colonialism (the law was finally abrogated by president Jacques Chirac); conversely, during the last presidential election of 2018, Emmanuel Macron was criticized for having described colonialism as a crime against humanity, in an interview given in Algiers. In Africa, foreign aid is still seen by some as reparation for damages caused by slavery and colonialism<sup>1</sup>, and the colonial print on boundaries, currencies or international relations is very hotly debated; the colonial past is also often politically manipulated, like in Europe. Yet, at the same time, the emergence of non-Western powers is gradually ‘de-centring’ Europe and perhaps putting an end to a post-, or neo-, colonial era.

The participants in this project believe that cold-minded factual knowledge is still lacking on many aspects of colonialism and post-colonialism, and that science can help to combat caricatures, conspiracy theories, or fake history; and help to write better historical textbooks for Europe and for Africa. This is why we hope the dissemination of our results through a dedicated web platform could have some impact in the general public.

Even within the academic field, strong critical and apologetic viewpoints still oppose. On the one hand, revisionist approaches praise the qualities of “Anglobalization” (Ferguson 2004) or make the case for colonialism<sup>2</sup>; on the other hand, a “new history of capitalism” seeks to unveil its dark colonial origins (e.g. Beckert 2014). We are well aware that too positivist approaches to ‘historical facts’ should be considered with caution. Many postcolonial studies provide very useful safeguards against Eurocentrism and naïve trust in colonial sources; yet most of them are more commenting about the consequences of colonial history than they are contributing to its production (Cooper 2005). We favour a balanced and transparent enough approach of the colonial archive, with a critical evaluation step based on consistency checks and the confrontation of plural voices (administrative, medical, military etc.), followed by a positive constructivist step with the elaboration of factual scenarios.

Further, we do not think that doing the political economy, or economic history, of colonialism should ultimately lead to making a case either for or against it. Our objective is rather to offer

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2017/11/10/reparations-as-philanthropy-radically-rethinking-giving-in-africa\\_5213130\\_3212.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2017/11/10/reparations-as-philanthropy-radically-rethinking-giving-in-africa_5213130_3212.html)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.nas.org/articles/the\\_case\\_for\\_colonialism](https://www.nas.org/articles/the_case_for_colonialism)

intellectual tools and a plurality of viewpoints to understand better the political economy of colonialism and the historical processes at work in colonial societies. It is likely that both the rosier and the darkest scenarios will be invalidated by investigation, and that some “ambiguity” will remain (e.g. Brocheux & Hémerly 2007). Yet this ambiguity will be more the reflection of some axiological neutrality than a value judgment on the goods or the bads of colonialism.

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