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Between bilateralism and multilateralism:  
French foreign policy in the light of the Malian crisis  
(2012-2013)

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## List of abbreviations

|                           |                                                                              |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>AFISMA</b>             | African-led International Support Mission to Mali                            |
| <b>AQIM</b>               | Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb                                              |
| <b>AU</b>                 | the African Union                                                            |
| <b>ECOWAS</b>             | the Economic Community of West African States                                |
| <b>EEAS</b>               | the European Union External Service                                          |
| <b>EUFOR<br/>Chad/CAR</b> | the European Union mission in Chad and the Central African Republic          |
| <b>EUTM</b>               | the European Training Mission in Mali                                        |
| <b>HRW</b>                | Human Rights Watch                                                           |
| <b>MINUSMA</b>            | the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali |
| <b>MUJWA</b>              | the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa                              |
| <b>NMLA</b>               | the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad                           |
| <b>OECD</b>               | the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development                    |
| <b>RPR</b>                | Rassemblement Pour la République                                             |
| <b>UNIDO</b>              | the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation                       |
| <b>UNSC</b>               | the United Nations Security Council                                          |

## Introduction

On the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of December 2013 a summit about peace and security in Africa took place in Paris at the *Palais de l'Elysee* which embodies somehow all the contradictions and the tensions of French policy in Africa. Such a summit ended a very specific year which started with a French intervention in Mali and will finish with another engagement in Central African Republic. Eighteen months after the election of François Hollande, the French president sent troops for a second time to Africa and to a former colony. In both cases, the political discourse justifies the intervention by the need to manage an urgent crisis with serious consequences for regional stability. French officials want to insist on the “French-African dimension” and on the collective organisation but this summit seems to be part of a long history between France and its former colonies. Since the first event in 1973 under the presidency of Georges Pompidou, this is the 26<sup>th</sup> French African summit and the last one took place in 2010 in Nice under Nicolas Sarkozy. Such meetings were a symbol of the *Françafrique*, “a multi-tiered combination of presidential dominance over policy and a complex matrix of other state and non-state actors with a stake in African policy”.<sup>1</sup> The objectives of the 2013 *Elysee* Summit aim at improving the possibility for Africa to manage itself the questions of security and peace. France should only intervene in order to help and support African forces. If François Hollande is proud of the “beginning of a new era”, journalists like Charlotte Bozonnet and Yves-Michel Riols consider that Francophone African states are still coming to Paris when crises occur in their region. If the official political discourse insists on the need to change the relationship between France and Africa, Paris, *de facto*, is continuing to play the role of policeman on the only continent where, aside from Europe, it exerts a real influence.

Nevertheless, with more than forty African heads of state and the presence of EU or UN officials, François Hollande obviously wants to avoid a “Franco-African” confrontation and consequently a possible charge of neo-colonialism. This explains why French diplomats have to take into account multilateralism and at least three concepts: “Africanisation” or the need to consider the role and responsibility of African states and regional or continental organisations;

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<sup>1</sup> Tony Chafer, “From confidence to confusion: Franco-African Relations in the Era of Globalisation”, in: *France on the World Stage. Nation State Strategies in the Global Era*, ed. by Mairi MacLean, Joseph Szarka (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p.41.

“internationalisation” or the respect of the United Nations principles and art of functioning; “Europeanisation” or the efforts to communicate, cooperate and work with the European partners. With the interstate conflict in the Central African Republic, the Malian crisis is the second reason that justifies the organisation of such a summit and the case the author would like to tackle in order to have a better idea of the French foreign policy which seems to hesitate between a traditional bilateral *modus operandi* and the growing influence of multilateralism.

France, as a middle-range power, still wants to embody a voice and a vision that matters beyond the national or European borders because, from Charles de Gaulle to François Mitterrand, the foreign policy follows a *gaullo-mitterrandienne* position or line which is transcending the right/left divide. After one year under the presidency of the socialist François Hollande, it might be interesting to consider the continuities and disruptions of such a policy. Beyond the possible changes between Nicolas Sarkozy and the new French president, French foreign policy faced a triple questioning linked to three big challenges: the end of the Cold War, decolonisation and the beginning of the European Community. With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the progressive collapse of the U.S.S.R., France has lost its unique position in the international system, one forged during Charles de Gaulle’s presidency. Secondly, and this point is a direct consequence of the last change: the French Republic has to deal with decolonisation and was not able to play the role of “the Western policeman in Africa” which aimed at preventing the advance of communism. Finally, significant steps in the construction and enlargement of the European Union have forced France to take its partners’ interests into account and to deal with very different opinions and visions. On this issue, the 2004 enlargement of the EU was particularly dramatic for French foreign policy due to the adhesion of former Soviet Union states, which were often strong supporters of a US-driven policy and arguably less interested in being part of an independent European power, directly inspired by the French concept of *Europe Puissance* (Europe as a power). Thus, according to the former French Minister of Foreign Affairs Hubert Védrine, the European Union has become “*une mutualisation des impuissances*” (a political union of powerless states) because of a clear refusal to define a strong project of common foreign and security policy.

## Research Project

The current crisis in Mali may be a good opportunity to study the very nature of France's foreign policy. Because of the triple challenge mentioned previously, France has to change and re-think its foreign policy. More than any other region in the world, Western Africa is a symbol of the French *pré carré*, namely: the heart of the French ex-colonies in Africa where Paris has played a central role, even after a wave of independence movements in the 1960s, thanks to a system of informal networks mixing business and politics, that some journalists and researchers refer to as *Françafrique*. Mali, a former French colony, represents a double dilemma for the *Elysee* and the *Quai d'Orsay*: Firstly, France could choose to ignore the timely conflict in Mali and let the country or the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) manage the current crisis, there is however the risk that this will have a negative effect on public opinions in France as well as in Africa. Secondly, if France decides to intervene, directly or indirectly in Mali in order to restore the state of law and its territorial integrity, this could be viewed as a neo-colonialist or imperialist intervention.

After the question of intervention or non-intervention, it is necessary to understand the way French Foreign policy makers will go about dealing with this crisis. The French Republic is used to bilateral relationships, from head of State to head of State, especially as far as the African former colonies are concerned. French heads of State have strived to create and show strong and personal ties with African presidents. The documentary "*Françafrique, 50 années dans le sillage du secret*"<sup>2</sup> underlines the importance of personal relationships under the Fifth Republic. The opening scene clearly shows the presence of most French officials during the funeral of Omar Bongo, the former president of the Republic of Gabon. Nevertheless, French diplomacy has changed in a particular way and has decided to embrace the principle of multilateralism.

**Is it reasonable to suggest that a transition from traditional bilateralism to multilateralism has occurred as far as French foreign policy in the current Malian crisis is concerned?**

This main question about the tension between two major notions of international relations is deeply linked to several sub-questions: How does the French State understand the notion of

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<sup>2</sup> *Françafrique, 50 années dans le sillage du secret*, dir. by Patrick Benquet (Compagnie des Phares et Balises, 2010).

multilateralism and its application? Is it possible to adapt national interests with international or global issues? How is France managing a delicate in-between position towards a former colony but a nowadays friend nation? Why is France acting more or less alone in the Malian case and running the risk of an intervention with the charge of neo-colonialism? How a middle-range power such as France can manage in international politics today?

In response to the questions raised, two hypotheses are suggested regarding the functioning of French policy in Africa. The first hypothesis is that France wants to remain a major player in Africa and especially in the Sub-Saharan region because of economic reasons and geopolitical interests. Under the presidency of Charles De Gaulle, France made the choice of energy independence by developing the nuclear sector through constructing a network of nuclear power stations. Uranium is a key resource for this sector and this is why the French company Areva has decided to massively invest in the acquisition of licenses in order to exploit uranium mines in Niger and more precisely in Imouraren. Thus, some prospecting programs in Northern Mali have revealed a great potential for this region<sup>3</sup>. Laurent Fabius, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs has firmly underlined the priority given to economic diplomacy and the energy issue is undoubtedly a major aspect of such a diplomacy. The geopolitical interests of France should not be neglected with the existence of several military bases in Western (Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire and Gabon), Central (Chad) and Eastern Africa (Djibouti). In a context of budgetary restraint and competition between the different ministries, the Ministry of Defense wants to underline the role of deploying operational troops on the ground. France wants to remain a "voice that matters" and to be able to talk about any international or global issue; therefore the Republic acts in accordance with this aim, a seemingly French obsession over the last decades. The author defines this first hypothesis as a realist or neo-realist approach, characterized by France's desire to be a stable nation-state in an unstable or anarchic international area. The second hypothesis considers that France is supporting a multilateral approach for economic, financial and legal reasons. Considering that the French Republic still has the third largest diplomatic network<sup>4</sup>, it seems that the country is facing growing difficulties in maintaining a meaningful presence in most of the states and/or most of the international organizations. The concepts of "international community" or "international opinion" give rise to a new way of understanding international politics. In this context, the importance of having legal backing in international relations, for example through UN Security Council resolution as well as popular

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<sup>3</sup> See Figure 4 in Appendix.

<sup>4</sup> After the United States and People's Republic of China.

support at home is particularly important. To sum up, the global system has changed and France has to adapt its foreign policy to a new diplomatic environment. This second hypothesis follows an institutionalist approach where multilateralism “really matters” as indicated by John Ruggie in 1993. The author is aware of the dialectic aspect of such hypotheses but the objective is to study the tensions, contradictions and sometimes complementarities of this situation between national interests and multilateral issues.

The objective of this thesis is to understand the way French foreign policy works during a specific, current but complex situation: the Malian crisis. Under the term “Malian crisis”, the author refers to the period between the *Coup* of the 22nd March 2012 committed by a group of Malian petty officers led by the Captain Amadou Haya Sanogo until the decision of the French President François Hollande to directly intervene in Mali on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2013. The specific aim of the present work is not to tackle the “why” of the French intervention but the “how” of its diplomatic activity. The Coup against the regime of the President-In-Office Amadou Toumani Touré (ATT) is linked to several long-, middle- and short-term issues. The 11<sup>th</sup> January 2013 is certainly a turning point, marking the beginning of the French President’s decision to intervene directly in Mali. Secondly, it is necessary to identify the precise geographical aspects of this issue. The Malian Republic<sup>5</sup> within its borders from 1960 is already a huge territory covering approximately 1 241 239 km<sup>2</sup>, more than twice the size of France. The highly disputed part of the Republic is located in the North, and more precisely in the three regions of Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal. From the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea, the Sahel is a geographic zone of transition between the Sahara desert and the Sudanian Savanna. This area is considered to be one of the most underdeveloped zones in the world with some deep problems as poverty, access to food, climate change, smuggling and trafficking. Tackling the fragility of Sahel is a top priority for the European Union which has created in 2011 a “Strategy for Security and Development in Sahel”.

A master’s thesis is far too short to fully examine the different issues raised, therefore the author will avoid the purely military aspects of the French intervention and rather focus only on the diplomatic issue and the way in which France deals with the tensions between bilateral/multilateral diplomacy. Similarly, if the Malian crisis is a really complex one with social, economic, religious, humanitarian, military and political aspects, it will be difficult to underline every detail, therefore the main topics must be presented in order to have a general idea of the

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<sup>5</sup> See Figure 1 in Appendix.

situation. The overriding purpose is to understand French foreign policy-making regarding a crisis in a former colony state.

## *Methods and Sources*

The author has decided to follow a qualitative approach in order to understand the functioning of the official French foreign policy-making and its ability to persuade its international allies and partners. Due to the complexity of the Malian crisis and the lack of information provided by French officials, the author has chosen to conduct expert interviews. An expert, in the context of this thesis, is a person who is responsible for the development, implementation or control of solutions, strategies and policies. An expert may even be someone with privileged access to information about certain groups or decision-making processes. The first expert was a researcher in political science and gave invaluable access to a network of professors and researchers in different areas of the social sciences such as: political science, sociology, anthropology and contemporary history. Although access to this network was extremely beneficial, it was nevertheless, important to consider other points of view on the issue of French diplomacy in the Malian crisis, particularly with those directly involved in the decision-making process. Thus, the author conducted an interview with a French Ambassador-In-Office, former director of the “*Direction Afrique et Océan Indien*” in the French Foreign Ministry and a consultant for the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), who had just returned from a mission in Mali. A guideline with the main questions was sent to the six interviewees prior to the interview to allow time to prepare. All the interviewees were provided with the same core questions, nevertheless a few questions tailored to specific areas were also included. This format allowed to compare the different points of view, arguments and analyses, easily and immediately. The expert interviews were the primary sources of this master’s thesis.

Naturally, another key source was the official French position, or the “official voice” of the Republic in the form of statements made by the French President François Hollande at the *Palais de l’Elysee* and the French Minister of Foreign Affairs Laurent Fabius at the *Quai d’Orsay* by means of a content analysis of official documents. In addition to these statements, records of the Parliamentary debates and some reports made by senators or former officials have been considered. Furthermore, the United Nations Organization has produced a lot of relevant material on this issue. Beyond the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions, it is important to consider the letters exchanged between the Secretary-General and the President

of the Security Council, the Presidential statements, the Reports of the Secretary General and the Meetings records as well. This may give a good overview of the French multilateral activity and the way in which French officials have put Mali on the top of the UN Agenda. The French and wider international press is also a key source in understanding the conflict. The reading of some Belgian newspapers offers an interesting alternative to a purely Parisian or French point of view. Some press from Mali or other parts of West and North Africa provide different arguments and clarifications in some cases. Finally, a growing number of journalists give their statement with the help of online articles or blogs which should not be underestimated.

The secondary sources consist of general or specialized literature. As the Malian crisis is a relatively recent development, it was more difficult to find books tackling the subject specifically. Nevertheless, two books were particularly helpful: the first one was written by two journalists of *Le Figaro*, Isabelle Lasserre and Thierry Oberlé, and details the military and geopolitical aspects of the French intervention. The second one is a collective work edited by Michel Galy providing a detailed analysis of the crisis and its complexities. French foreign policy has been well-researched by many specialists in the field of contemporary history (Alfred Grosser, Samy Cohen, Maurice Vaïsse, Frédéric Bozo) or political science (Bertrand Badie, Frédéric Charillon, Marie-Christine Kessler, Guillaume Devin). The question of African policy is often a burning issue when a new president is elected, the common discourse is to underline the necessity to put an end to the traditional and highly contested methods linked to the French presence or influence in Africa. The economist François-Xavier Verschave was one of the first to tackle the question of “*Françafrique*” as a system of hidden and unofficial relationships between French politicians, businessmen and African heads of State in order to defend French interests and influence. This issue has to be researched with the use of modern analyses (Yves Gounin, Samuel Foutoyet) or by the point of view of African researchers (Joseph Wouako Tchaleu). Although the literature in this field is clearly dominated by the French or Francophone community, some interesting works are available in English too (Mairi MacLean and Joseph Szarka). The concept of multilateralism is and has for a long time been an important topic in international relations. The fundamental and pioneering work of John Ruggie is nowadays completed with new collected works such as those by William I. Zartman, James P Muldoon Jr, Frank Petiteville and Delphine Placidi-Frot, Bertrand Badie and Guillaume Devin. The emergence of regional organisations, which are articulated by the United Nations and encouraged by it to take part in governance sharing something covered later in the chapter on ECOWAS. This organisation played a major role in the Malian crisis, keen to show its capacity in managing a political and military crisis.

A great number of articles, essays and publications were available via direct online access or in public or academic libraries were consulted. It is necessary to have a large overview of the issues and questions concerned, the author therefore decided to read specialized reviews that were related to very different topics such as Africa (*Africa Portal*, *Afrique Contemporaine*), Security (*Security Dialogue*, *Stability*), International Relations (*Politique Internationale*, *European Journal of International Relations*), European security and defence ( *Cahiers de Chaillot*, *CEPS*), French politics (*Modern and Contemporary France*, *Politique Etrangère*), Global studies (*Global Society*) or Geopolitics (*Hérodote*) and to compare them with a more generalist approach given by national or regional newspapers and online analyses. Finally, other media forms were consulted such as radio programmes, documentaries and television interviews.

## *Structure*

In order to answer the main research question and its various sub-elements, the author has adopted a three-part structure. First, it is necessary to explain and discuss the main theories, principles and notions of international relations presented in the work. The dialectic between bilateralism and multilateralism is at the core of this subject and represents the major debate. The author will start with a realist approach to understand the bilateral dimension of French Foreign Policy related to protecting or increasing the French interests or positions in the Malian state and in particular the Sahel region. Following on from this, multilateralism in all its complexity and sometimes contradictions will be analysed: how the existence of international organisations like the United Nations, or regional institutions like the European Union and ECOWAS have changed the understanding of international relations and the actions of states like France, otherwise known as an institutionalist approach. Finally, French policy in Africa embodies a very specific and contested part of French foreign affairs. Africa has been a priority for the projection of French power during the colonization process and, even after a wave of independence movements in the 1960's and the beginning of a post-colonial era, the French Republic has developed a foreign policy which is specific to Africa and defines the French-African relationship. This first part will give the opportunity to understand the main theories, concepts and notions to use in the two following parts.

The second and third parts represent the empirical dimension of this study and an analysis of the Malian crisis. In order to better comprehend such a complex topic, the author has decided to consider the first phase of the crisis, more precisely from the Coup of 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2012 committed by a group of Malian petty officers leaded by the Captain Amadou Haya Sanogo

until the decision of the French President François Hollande to directly intervene in Mali on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2013. This phase is characterized by an intense French political and diplomatic effort in order to find a solution for Mali, considered as a friendly nation because of the long shared history with France. A second phase begins in mid-January 2013 with the official French decision to participate in the conflict with the Malian and other African forces. If the military dimension dominates, diplomacy is always present for ensuring at least political support to Paris and sometimes a logistical and technical help. Besides, France has to cooperate with its African, UN and European partners in order to prepare the post-conflict period. This second phase ends in summer 2013 with free, fair and democratic elections of a new president and therefore the restauration of a Malian state. For each part, the author will consider the role of France in relation to three main partners: Africa, the United States and the European Union, in each time, the concepts chosen in the theoretical part will be used in order to analyse the French foreign policy during the Malian crisis.

# **I. Bilateralism, multilateralism and French policy in Africa: a theoretical consideration**

## **A) Bilateralism: a realist and neo-realist approach to international relations**

### *1/ A realist view of international politics*

This first part represents an excellent opportunity to describe, analyze and understand the main notions and concepts borrowed from political studies and used throughout the entire thesis. Before attempting to examine whether France consistently adopts a traditional bilateral approach or is indeed about to consider multilateralism as the right method, the author obviously has to explain these notions and illustrate them with the example of French policy in Africa. For the time being, a first simple observation will oppose a realist view of international relations combining nation-state to nation-state dialogue with the defence of geopolitical interest to an institutionalist view in which the mere existence of international organizations (i.e. the United Nations) in connection to regional institutions (i.e. The European Union, ECOWAS) modifies the rules of global politics. This observation will be divided into two chapters in order to underline the tensions or contradictions between these two theories of political studies. A third and last chapter will more particularly tackle the very complexity of French foreign policy in Africa with the help of a historical overview and a thematic approach.

First of all, the author will briefly outline the development of several aspects associated with a realist and neo-realist approach in order to generate a more profound understanding of the theoretical context of this work. Among many others, the following two books are particularly significant in the history of a classical realist analysis of international relations: *The Twenty Years' Crisis* by E.H. Carr and *Politics among Nations* by Hans Morgenthau in which the core of international politics is deeply related to a preeminence of the struggle for power. The priority is to understand the explanation of the world "out there" and what states could reasonably hope to achieve or not in the competitive world of international politics. The definition of realism represents a difficulty because such a word may characterise a philosophical point of view or a

sociological theory, thus it is necessary to underline some premises with the help of several realist thinkers who highlight human selfishness (egoism), the absence of international government (anarchy) and the primacy of power and security in all political life, that is sometimes referred to as “high politics”. Robert Keohane adds two principles to be considered: rationality and state-centrism.<sup>6</sup> In other words, states are the central actors in an anarchic international system that is mainly dominated by a struggle for power and security. In such a system, the autonomy of the political sphere remains another key principle. International relations are about states pursuing interests defined in terms of power, admittedly not regarded as the only actors but certainly as the most significant. In order to illustrate this theoretical point, the author needs to underline the major role played by non-state actors in the Malian crisis such as the nationalist movement by the name of NMLA<sup>7</sup>, which is to be considered as a key element in this case study due to the erosion of all institutional authorities in Sahelian Mali.

There is no a single realist approach in international relations but several variances. Kenneth Waltz represents a neo-realist point of view and develops the concept of “structural realism” in his *Magnum Opus: Theory of International Politics*.<sup>8</sup> Waltz wonders why the political constellation was stable during the Cold War and how it is possible to explain a hegemonic decline of the USA in the 1970s. The US-American scholar provides a systemic theory of international politics without assumptions on state behaviour. He considers that the structure imposes itself on state-specific behaviour. According to him, the structural realism may be defined as: “*an abstraction from every attribute of states except their capabilities*”.<sup>9</sup> As a matter of fact, Waltz underlines the impact of anarchy and the distribution of power. Contrary to a traditional realist analysis, neo-realism à la Waltz considers the relativity of power that requires states to “*be more concerned with relative strength than with absolute advantage*”. The necessity to preserve a rank is a reality for every nation: “*The first concern of states is [...] to maintain their positions in the system*”<sup>10</sup> and the priority of protecting their sovereignty, autonomy and independence. Waltz’s definition and the different principles connected to it are particularly relevant as the second chapter on the constitution of French foreign policy during the Fifth Republic will underline how crucial it is to possess a particular rank and to maintain a high position in the international system.

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<sup>6</sup> Robert Keohane, *Neorealism and Its Critics* (Columbia University Press, 1986).

<sup>7</sup> The *National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad*: a secular nationalist movement fighting for the independence of northern Mali founded in 2011. It is the latest incarnation of Tuareg nationalist rebel movements which have been active since the 1960s.

<sup>8</sup> Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1979).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

Realism and neo-realism embody a traditional denigration of variables such as institutions, norms and identities. The mentioning of just a couple of realist is sufficient to note such an approach: *The False promise of International Institutions*<sup>11</sup> or *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy*.<sup>12</sup> The role of international organisations is reducible to the material interest of powerful states. Realists consider that international institutions primarily serve national rather than international interests. For example, Susan Strange does not hesitate to qualify an international organization as an instrument of national policy: “*International organization is above all a tool of national government, an instrument for the pursuit of national interest by other means*”.<sup>13</sup> Institutions may have weak or strong effects but only if the states behind them decide to act in a powerful or weak manner. Kenneth Waltz goes further and uses a metaphoric image in order to describe the relationship between nation states and international institutions: “*The effects that international institutions may have on national decisions are but one step removed from the capabilities and intentions of the major state or states that gave them birth and sustain them*”.<sup>14</sup> John Mearsheimer advocates the same position when he mentions the very nature of international institutions as creation of powerful states. This is not a question of independence: Such institutions were created to maintain a share of world power and even increase it so as not to challenge the traditional international order. Most of the outcomes on the international stage are mainly a function of “balance of power” and institutions are just “intervening variables”.

Robert Gilpin offers a new analysis of international politics in his work *War and Change in World Politics*.<sup>15</sup> The focus is less on stability but rather on change; less on security but rather on political economy, less on structures but rather on actors with their preferences and interests within a hierarchical division of labour. Gilpin develops an international system with three main components: the existence of different units, namely the states, which interact regularly under the condition of some form of control. If the focus is clearly on the interest of power and the actor, it is necessary to consider the ideas that shape international policy as well. Furthermore,

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<sup>11</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions,” *International Security*, 19:3, 1994, pp. 5-49.

<sup>12</sup> Stephen Krasner, *Sovereignty: organised hypocrisy* (Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1999).

<sup>13</sup> Susan Strange, *The Retreat of the State* (Cambridge: University Press: 1996), p. xiv.

<sup>14</sup> Kenneth Waltz, “Structural Realism after the Cold War”, in: *International Security*, 25: 1, 2000, pp. 5-41.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge University Press: 1981).

the study of history is at the core of Gilpin's approach for two reasons: First, the dialectic tension between continuity and change is a major one in the field of international relations and second, it is important to see and understand the process and patterns of behaviour to be identified in the present world.<sup>16</sup>

The first dialectic tension is a key factor as far as the shaping of the present relationship between France and Africa is concerned. "The weight of history" determines the behaviour and perception of French and African actors, for example when the French President François Hollande decided to intervene directly in Mali in January 2013. French heads of state and diplomats have always considered Africa and more precisely Francophone Africa as their *pré carré* or exclusive sphere of influence due to an enduring historical relationship. In this regard, Bruno Charbonneau, in his book: *France and the New Imperialism. Security Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa*<sup>17</sup>, attempts to re-examine the discourse and policy of the French security state in Sub-Saharan Africa. Adopting quite a radical and polemical tense, he maintains that: "*the civilizing mission might have changed its name and its image, but to this day it remains implicit when not explicit in France's African policy*".<sup>18</sup> This "civilizing mission" was one of the main arguments of Jules Ferry in a memorable debate with Georges Clemenceau at the French Chamber of Deputies in July 1885. Nevertheless, if the historical legacy and the status of old colonial power for France should be taken into account, the very definition of the relationship between the French nation and foreign states should be questioned as well in order to understand the tension between bilateralism and multilateralism.

## *2/ Foreign policy, bilateralism and the example of the French Fifth Republic*

The realist and neo-realist schools of thought have a state-centric approach of international relations. The state can be defined as a territorially based political unit characterised by a central decision-making and enforcement machinery (a government and an administration) that is legally sovereign. Therefore, a state is free to define its relationship to other political units by shaping a foreign policy. The distinction between domestic and foreign policy is a very important

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Bruno Charbonneau, *France and the New Imperialism. Security Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Aldershot, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

one for realism because: *“in foreign policy [...], outcomes are the product of interdependent decision-making. The state cannot expect that other states will respect its authority, because in an anarchical system no state possesses authority, and whether or not the state has the means to get its way is a contingent matter”*.<sup>19</sup> In the absence of a superior or dominant authority, states must define their own interests and negotiate or fight for imposing them.

Having defined the main actor (the state) and the framework (the foreign policy), the author has to expose the principal characteristics of such a policy. In a comparative essay on several foreign policies, Frederic Charillon explains how the realist school conceives such a policy as an “expression and confrontation of different national interests” (Henry Kissinger, Hans Morgenthau, Raymond Aron). The foreign policy is part of a high policy and is almost exclusively associated with the heads of state’s decisions. As a monolithic policy, it is represented by a rational and unequivocal decision-making process. Quoting a famous term coined by Raymond Aron, foreign policy is “diplomats’ and soldiers’ business”.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, the official French process made up of a mix of diplomacy and military intervention in order to solve the Malian crisis seems to be part of this realist conception. Beyond the art of creating foreign policy, it is necessary to define a method. Logically, the best way here has much more to do with bilateralism or a state-to-state dialogue. Such a method aims at improving the efficiency of interstate relations where a head of state or a foreign minister embodies its nation with the help of special advisers.

The French international relations historian Thomas Gomart defends the specificity of such a topic among political history.<sup>21</sup> He tries to define the notion of “bilateral relationship” by insisting on three dimensions (diplomatic, historic and epistemological). First of all, a bilateral relationship is a diplomatic practice, among many others, even if it is quite often defined as the elementary form of the diplomatic game. Heads of state make use of such a method in order to conduct foreign policy. Secondly, bilateral relationships are an object of research for any international relations historian who wants to understand diplomatic practices. Thirdly, a bilateral relationship is a particular way of perceiving, conceptualizing and representing reality. In summary, bilateralism falls within a historical context and can be considered as a particular

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<sup>19</sup> Chris Brown, *Understanding international relations* (Basingstoke [u.a.] : Palgrave, 2001), p.73.

<sup>20</sup> Frédéric Charillon, *Les politiques étrangères : ruptures et continuités* (Paris : La Documentation Française, 2001).

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Gomart, « La relation bilatérale : un genre de l'histoire des relations internationales », *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps*, N° 65-66, 2002, pp. 65-68.

diplomatic manner as well as a more general view on reality. In this work, the author would like to focus on the second aspect of bilateralism without underestimating the two other dimensions as they can indeed provide valuable information about the motives and goals of the French foreign policy during the Malian crisis.

The Fifth Republic, which officially commenced on October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1958, is a semi-presidential regime and consequently provides a considerable amount of power to the President of the Republic, particularly as far as the foreign policy is concerned. The President has the responsibility to accept, or sometimes to refuse, the signature and logically entry into force of a treaty. At the same time, he has to ensure the compliance of such treaties. The President is the Commander-In-Chief of the Army and may call upon armed forces. To summarize, he is preeminent in shaping French foreign policy. The General Secretary of the Presidency at the *Palais de l'Elysee* embodies a political-administrative unit with special advisers and technical collaborators. Until 2007, the President always nominated a “special unit for African policy” regarding the importance of the African continent for the French Republic.

Despite this strong presidential figure, the role of the Prime Minister as chief of the government and responsible for its policies should not be underestimated. He may sometimes embody the French State during an official visit or a participation in an international conference. The Prime Minister has a privileged access to the information, especially to all the directives of the President. It is necessary here to make a short statement about the “*système de cohabitation*”. If, during parliamentary elections, the party of the President were to lose the majority among the National Assembly, then the President would have to nominate the leader of the victorious party as Prime Minister. For example, between 1986 and 1988, President François Mitterrand, leader of the Socialist Party (PS) had to choose Jacques Chirac, leader of the *Rassemblement Pour la République* (RPR) at the head of a new government. This period was referred to as the “*première cohabitation de la Cinquième République*”. Subsequent to the figure of the Prime Minister, it is necessary to mention the position of the Minister of Foreign Affairs who represents the voice of France on the international stage as its foreign ministry, better known as *Quai d'Orsay*. This ministry includes all the ambassadors, consuls and other officials who are responsible for French foreign policy. Finally, the Parliament has the capacity to debate on the internal or external policies of the government and to question its responsibility. This last paragraph brings some nuance to the vision of an “almighty power” of the French President as far as foreign policy is concerned. Nevertheless, if some safeguards exist, the author has to go beyond the law and the spirit of the Fifth Republic and analyse the concrete practice of power.

As first president of the Fifth Republic between 1959 and 1969, Charles de Gaulle described the key principles of French foreign policy and the way he would manage them. De Gaulle wanted to be the incarnation and the voice of France, aiming for this specific policy to be “*le domaine réservé*” (political areas in which the French President has preeminence) with the need to control it with the help of the *Elysee* agents and special advisers in order to oversee the work of the government and the respect of the directives and sometimes to delegate some secondary missions. Such a functioning of foreign policy is not anchored in the Constitution of the Fifth Republic but is strongly associated with the way Charles de Gaulle and the next heads of state have exercised their power. In summary, the president defines the direction, the impulse and the spirit of a policy, while the government and the *Quai d’Orsay* are responsible for executing the presidential decision with more or less flexibility.

Considering the theories of international politics, Charles de Gaulle embodies a realist approach with the nation-state as the central actor of international relations and the struggle between different or contrasting national interests as a motor. De Gaulle has always prioritized state-to-state or bilateral dialogue and was extremely distrustful of the United Nations’ multilateralism and European integration. In other words, he was convinced that the principles of national sovereignty and independence were at the core of French politics. Priority was given to “*la grandeur et le rang*”. Maurice Vaïsse, international relations historian, describes clearly this principle of « *grandeur* » in his book about De Gaulle’s foreign policy<sup>22</sup>. With the help of French officials and diplomats, the Republic must defend a certain rank and a prestige among the great nations. This “*grandeur*” consists of an unchallenged and respected national independence for France and the will to change the international *status quo*. National independence was a cornerstone of De Gaulle’s policy supported by particular tools, namely a strong state along with a solid constitution. This principle is the political translation of the legal principle of sovereignty, *a sine qua non* condition for existing on an international stage. Such a principle explains the French President’s distrust of international organisations like the UN or a supranational entity like the European Union. The “*grandeur*” may be considered as a sort of intellectual or rhetorical device or trick used by the President of the French Republic in order to hide a material absence of power.<sup>23</sup> The French President made a clear choice between bilateralism and multilateralism, between a direct state-to-state dialogue and influence thanks to international institutions. Nevertheless, this classical conception of international relations may refer to an illusion: the illusion of power. Thomas Gomart highlights this idea in the

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<sup>22</sup> Maurice Vaïsse, *la Grandeur. Politique étrangère du général de Gaulle 1958-1969* (Paris : Fayard, 1998).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

following sentence: « *As diplomatic practice, a bilateral relationship creates and maintains the illusion of power; it creates the impression that France, through General De Gaulle's voice, speaks with the great powers on equal terms* »<sup>24</sup>. All in all, if France cannot pretend to be a great power anymore, French officials and diplomats will certainly speak and act as if it were, to give the illusion.

### *3/ Bilateral process and national interests*

To begin with, the author will briefly sum up the two concepts he has chosen in order to qualify a bilateral method according to a realist or neo-realist approach. Such concepts will be useful in understanding French foreign policy during the Mali crisis from January 2012 through August 2013. The first concept is referred to as the “bilateral process” and aims at describing bilateralism as a traditional diplomatic method, the second one is referred to as a “priority to national interests” and examines the way France defends its behavior by using a specific political discourse.

Bilateralism should be understood as the will to forge a direct dialogue between two states. The idea is to prioritize one specific partner. To this point, John Ruggie underlines the fact that a bilateralist form “*differentiates relations case-by-case based precisely on a priori particularistic grounds or situational exigencies*”<sup>25</sup>. The chosen framework here is the specific, the particular in opposition to a multilateral approach in which the partners are equal or should at least be treated as such. The realist school of thought highlights this state-centrism and this form of privileged dialogue between powers in an anarchical world. The Constitution of the Fifth Republic and the way in which De Gaulle interpreted it in order to conduct French foreign policy, can be considered as an application of the realist approach. In his doctoral thesis about the concept of national interest during the Kosovo crisis, David Morin evokes: « *“However, France, which has a long Westphalian and Colbertist tradition, continues to favour a classical conception of sovereignty within the framework of an almost exclusively interstate dialogue*».<sup>26</sup> France has

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<sup>24</sup> Gomart, *la relation bilatérale*, p.66.

<sup>25</sup> John Ruggie, “Multilateralism: the anatomy of an institution”, *International Organization*, 46: 3, 1992, pp. 561-598, p. 571.

<sup>26</sup> David Morin, *Au-delà de l'intérêt national ? Une étude sociologique des politiques étrangères française et canadienne dans la crise du Kosovo*, (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Montreal, Quebec, 2008), p.66.

a strong state-centrist conception of sovereignty due to an enduring Westphalian and Colbertist tradition and, to a certain point, this conception defines its external behaviour as well with the will to manage conflicts and crises in a pure interstate dialogue.

To sum up, among the primary and secondary sources, the author must pay attention to the extent to which France favours a direct state-to-state dialogue rather than a “multilateral process” in order to contribute to resolving the Malian crisis. It is necessary to specify that bilateralism concerns the relationship of the French Republic with Mali in particular but all relationships with other states as well. For example, if the French efforts to build a coalition for a military intervention are considered, it seems that bilateralism was a decisive diplomatic method for winning the support of several European partners (Great Britain, Germany, Spain) or of the United States.

The second concept in order to qualify bilateralism is the clear priority given to French national or geopolitical interests. The author is aware of the danger of using a concept such as national interest because it was and is still highly debated and criticized among the academic world. Beyond the fact that the analytical value of such a concept is questionable, the pretension to use this type of topic may raise the question of the originality of this research. Nevertheless, two arguments should be mentioned in order to justify such a decision: Firstly, primary and secondary sources contain explicit references to “French or national or geopolitical interests”. Several official statements aim at rejecting the existence of any specific interest for the French Republic in the Malian intervention. This “obsession” of claiming the absence of interest should be analyzed because it shows that this burning issue is a part of the debate on the French motives in the Sahel conflict. Secondly, if the concept of national interest is questioned, the fact of the matter is that it still remains, not only in a realist framework. Obviously, France as a nation state is inclined to defend a certain position in the international system, in other words, a rank among the international community. This rank is directly connected to several interests that represent a guideline for foreign policy. According to Hans Morgenthau, the concept of national interest is the be-all and the end-all for every foreign policy: *“And, above all, remember always that it is not only a political necessity, but also a moral duty for a nation to always follow in its dealings with other nations but one guiding star, one standard for thought, one rule for action:*

*The National Interest*".<sup>27</sup> Such a position demonstrates the preeminence of national interests in the definition and the justification of a foreign policy.

To sum up and to clarify the position concerning the concept of national interest, it is necessary to refer, once again, to the work of David Morin and especially to his conclusion in which he underlines the fact that, if it is hard to define precisely what the interests of a state like France are, it is nevertheless relevant to claim that the idea of national interest exists as a core concept of the foreign policy's discourse and practice. Claiming to defend a national interest is a rhetoric element of the political discourse and a powerful instrument of legitimating. Furthermore, claiming with insistence that France has no specific interests to defend in Mali and in Western Africa raises several questions the author would like to tackle in the course of his masters' thesis.

## **B)The institutionalist school of thought and the priority given to multilateralism**

In the second chapter, the author will focus on another approach concerning theories of international relations. Subsequent to an overview of the realist and neo-realist school and its significant tendency to consider and adopt unilateralism or bilateralism, the consideration of an institutionalist point of view related to the multilateralism should be fully understood.

### *1/ Why "multilateralism matters"*

As a school of thought within international relations, institutionalism refers to the way several national or international actors cooperate within international institutions. If the

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<sup>27</sup> Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Thompson, *Politics Among Nations*, 6th edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985), p.241-242.

anarchical world remains a concept with a realist or neo-realist state of mind, institutionalists strongly believe in common principles, norms and rules for determining peaceful relationships. The main difference between the neo-realist and institutionalist school remains in the evaluation of the influence of international institutions on global stability. For realists, international institutions are the reflection of existing power conditions and represent the dominance of states' interests while the institutionalists make the assumption that international institutions influence the behaviour of states. With the help of such institutions, states defer their interests in the benefits of cooperation in order to: reduce insecurity, share symmetric and trustable information for all the partners and lower transaction costs<sup>28</sup>. Kenneth Waltz resumes the institutionalist view by tackling the fact that institutions are hard to create and hard to set in motion, but once created, they may take on something of a life of their own and act with a measure of autonomy in order to be less dependent on the will of their sponsors.

In the collective work entitled "*Multilateralism matters*", John Ruggie introduces a strong argument on the new role dedicated to the international organisations by underlining a paradox. Ruggie describes a certain "rebirth" of the United Nations observable during the 1990s with a significant utility in international conflict management (i.e. in Afghanistan, Namibia, Cambodia and Western Sahara) and the determinate attitude of the UNSC towards the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The role played by normative constraints and institutions in the described international transformation has not translated into an increase of studies and interests among the academic world. Norms and institutions are still considered as "by-products" or "phenomena of less importance".<sup>29</sup>

To begin with, it is necessary to pinpoint a definition of the very concept of multilateralism. In his study, the author will focus on multilateralism as a diplomatic practice and a form of international arrangements or consultations. To this point, Robert Keohane refers to "*the practice of coordinating national policies in groups of three or more states*".<sup>30</sup> The author has always had the notion of diplomatic practice, of coordination with a specific number and a type of actors: "three or more states". State remains the central actor but must communicate with a minimum of two other states, which would necessarily change the rules of a basic and traditional

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<sup>28</sup> Heinz Gärtner, *Internationale Sicherheit : Definitionen von A – Z*, (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2008).

<sup>29</sup> John Ruggie, *Multilateralism Matters: The Theory and Praxis of an Institutional Form* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

<sup>30</sup> Robert Keohane, "Multilateralism: An Agenda for Research", *International Journal*, 45, 1990, pp. 731-764, p. 731.

bilateral diplomacy. Nevertheless, John Ruggie invites to go beyond this quantitative and nominal definition of multilateralism because such a phenomenon reveals a qualitative dimension as well, so that multilateralism is an institutional fact and the basis of certain principles of ordering relations among states:

*An institutional form that coordinates relations among three or more states on the basis of generalized principles of conduct: that is, principles which specify appropriate conducts for a class of actions, without regard to the particularistic interests of the parties or the strategic exigencies that may exist in specific concurrence.*<sup>31</sup>

Here, this is a quite different logic compared to a realist approach in which the states are individualist, fight each other and act in terms of national interest and defence of power. The institutionalist theory insists more on these “generalized principles of conduct”, norms and other concepts that directly or indirectly bind the states together. Ruggie underlines the “demanding organizational form” of multilateralism which, for example, requires to renounce to temporary advantages and to refuse the temptation of defining the states’ interests narrowly in terms of pure national interests.

John Ruggie maintains that multilateralism has a concrete role to play in the context of the collapse of the Soviet East European Empire and the attendant end of the Cold War insofar as multilateral norms and institutions have helped to stabilize the international consequences of such events. As an example, Ruggie quotes the case of Europe with at least 15 multilateral groupings, which aim at ensuring the continent’s collective destiny, despite the fact that there were some limited successes in the global security realm. If coordination is fundamental in every multilateral approach, the author stresses the condition behind such an approach that functions “on the basis of certain principles of ordering relations among other states”. He continues by identifying a generic form of multilateralism: “*Historically, the generic form of multilateralism can be found in institutional arrangements to define and stabilize the international property rights of states, to manage coordination problems and to resolve collaboration problems*”.<sup>32</sup> In addition to this generic form, Ruggie highlights adaptive and reproductive forms of institutional arrangements and justifies with this argument why “multilateralism matters”: because of its capability to stabilize the world in the international transformation of the 1990s.

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<sup>31</sup> Ruggie, *Multilateralism Matters*, p.11.

<sup>32</sup> Ruggie, *Multilateralism: the anatomy*, p. 567.

If multilateralism consists of coordinating relations among three or more states in accordance with certain organizing principles, the American political analyst does not forget the historical alliance of bilateralism, its resilience and its adaptability. John Ruggie warns that the word “international” is not synonym with “multilateral”. In order to illustrate this idea, he integrates the example of a pure form of bilateralism into a systemic organizing principle: the German (Nazi) International Trade Regime. Such a regime aimed at creating a dependency between Germany and its foreign partners. In contrast, Ruggie provides the example of an arrangement that embodies a multilateral principle: the collective security system. The idea behind this principle is to consider peace as indivisible and the war against one state as a war against all of them. If the partners observe some act of abuse of aggression, they can choose between a progressive and a variant panel of reactions from diplomatic and economic sanction to a collective use of force. This case illustrates the coordination of security among three or more states in accordance with generalized organizing principles.

In order to complete the ideas of John Ruggie, it is necessary to highlight the work of James Caporaso on the international relations’ theory during the same period (1992). In a famous article, the professor of political science wonders why it is so difficult to find academic works on multilateralism and what could explain this disdain and reluctance to tackle such a field. According to Caporaso, multilateralism is not extensively employed as a theoretical category and rarely used as an explanatory concept. A term with “ism” refers to a belief or an ideology of an era, namely the Cold War, where international relations specialists debated concepts such as ideology and power in the struggle between the two blocks. Multilateralism is an architectural form and a deep organizing principle of international life. Such an organizing principle has to be seen as a coherent ensemble rather than indicators and is associated with three properties. First, the principle of indivisibility or “the scope (geographic and functional) over which costs and benefits are spread, given an action initiated in or among component units”<sup>33</sup>. Then, generalized principles of conduct, namely “norms exhorting general if not universal modes of relating to other states, rather than differentiating relations case-by-case on the basis of individual preferences, situational exigencies or a priori particularistic grounds”. Finally, a diffuse reciprocity that “adjusts the utilitarian lenses for the long view, emphasizing that actors expect to benefit in the long run and over many issues rather than every time on every issue”. In addition to these three properties, Caporaso invites to be careful with the use

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<sup>33</sup> James Caporaso, “International relations theory and multilateralism: the search for foundations”, *International Organization*, 46:3, 1992, pp.599-632.

of the multilateral concept and he underlines the need to observe a distinction between multilateral institutions and the institution of multilateralism. Besides the organizational question, there is also a particular conception of the world: *“Bilateral, imperial hierarchy and multilateralism are alternative conception of how the world might be organized; they are not just different types of concrete organization”*.<sup>34</sup> To summarize, it seems the adjective “multilateral” may refer to an organizing principle, an organization/institution and an activity. Any type of action is multilateral as long as it involves cooperative activity among many countries, whereas multilateralism is an ideology designed to promote multilateral activity and, to that point, a combination of normative principles, advocacy and existential beliefs.

In another paragraph of Caporaso’s article, the scholar monitors three different routes to multilateralism of which the author would like to describe the first one, namely the “individualist paradigm”, as this interpretation is at the core of his current research question. This paradigm considers that states and their interests are central. They are interesting in terms of multilateralism and “enter into” contractual relations with other states in a rational self-interested manner. The main question is to identify the capabilities and strategies by which to interact with others. This paradigm definitively reminds of the realist approach in international relations and may explain a certain social behaviour of the states because they operate as individual actors thinking in terms of preferences, capabilities and strategic environment. The individualist paradigm describes states as *“goal-seeking agents pursuing their interests within an external environment characterized by anarchy and the powers of other states”*.<sup>35</sup> When such a paradigm is considered, it is clear that multilateralism is merely an alternative to unilateral or bilateral behaviour which fails for different reasons. Thus, a multilateral approach will be extremely uncertain and inefficient due to a necessary problem of conflict between different state interests.

Multilateralism is a highly debated concept, especially as far as its operating system is concerned. Miles Kahler precisely analyses this issue in his article entitled *Multilateralism with small and large numbers*. First, it is worth noting that multilateralism was deeply and continually challenged after World War II and was often reduced to *“minilateralism”* or a cooperation *a minima* (with a lower degree of constraining rules) with a small numbers of partners in order to better dissimulate the persistence of bilateralism:

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p.602.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p.605.

*Although minilateral cooperation supported multilateral norms in most cases, multilateralism was also circumscribed by a large number of persistent derogations from its injunctions: its rivals, discriminatory and bilateral forms of organization, were far from vanquished in the decades following World War II.<sup>36</sup>*

This quotation reveals the contested nature of multilateralism and the ability to reduce, manipulate or amend it. The tendency towards *minilateralism* probably illustrates the will to solve a traditional contradiction as concerns multilateralism, namely the contrast between efficiency and legitimacy. Cooperation with “large numbers” is the ideal way to reinforce the legitimacy of policy-making but this raises the question of an efficient way to act. A small diagram may clearly represent the contradiction between “small and large numbers”

|                |                   |                                 |
|----------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| Bilateral -    | - small numbers - | - efficiency in decision-making |
| Multilateral - | - large numbers - | - legitimacy                    |

This gap between representation and efficiency may be tackled by several tools such as: voting systems, representation, delegation and reduction in numbers. Miles Kahler underlines the case of a voting system in order to reveal the sheer complexity of a multilateral arrangement. According to several academic studies, such systems are superfluous while neo-realists emphasize the weight of great power and the threat of an exit or veto.

## *2/ Critics, evolution and new studies*

After a first range of important publications in the 1990s, it is time now to mention the existence of several collective works in the second half of the 2000s. There is a certain continuity with the pioneering work of Ruggie which is easily illustrated by the title of Esther Barbé’s article: *“Multilateralism Matters More than Ever”*.<sup>37</sup> As a matter of fact, Barbé mentions the need to defend a multilateralist approach and to admit some multilateral evolutions within international relations. Nevertheless and before tackling the very content of this article, Barbé underlines a useful discrepancy between maximalist and minimalist interpretations of multilateralism. On

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<sup>36</sup> Miles Kahler, “Multilateralism with small and large numbers”, *International Organization*, 46:3, 1992, pp 681-708, p. 686.

<sup>37</sup> Esther Barbé, “Multilateralism Matters More than Ever”, *Global Society*, 23:2, 2009, pp.191-203.

the one hand, a maximalist interpretation consists of stressing the importance of certain principles that govern every multilateral interaction. To choose multilateralism refers to a normative path and a preference not only for a policy but also the result of a normative choice for multilateralism, especially for the UN. Multilateralism appears as the most legitimate and effective way to deal with international issues. On the other hand, a minimalist interpretation should be mentioned as well, namely the fact to consider multilateralism in a purely instrumental approach. The states retain a certain degree of national sovereignty when they act multilaterally, thus seeing multilateralism as one option among others for foreign policies. This tension between maximalist and minimalist interpretation of multilateralism has to be kept in mind throughout this work.

The question of the evolution of multilateralism in the academic field of international Relations is at the core of a very recent collective work entitled: *“Systematic Change, International Organizations and the Evolution of Multilateralism”*.<sup>38</sup> Michael Schechter precisely evaluates the changing form of multilateralism and a revision of its conventional understanding. Nowadays, for instance, it is possible to consider a dialogue among government representatives as a multilateral act. Therefore, the author notes the already mentioned relation between multilateral and inefficiency: *“While a bilateral relationship between many countries is clearly entered into in order to produce some direct, tangible, military, economic or cultural gain, the benefits to be gained from a state’s participation in multilateral arrangements are often less obvious”*.<sup>39</sup> Bilateralism is related to more profitable results for the participating state in the sense that bilateral arrangements tend to produce direct and tangible gains or benefits whereas multilateralism remains a synonym for protraction and uncertainty.

If, according to Esther Barbé, *“multilateralism matters even more”*, other scholars describe a multilateralism under challenge or in crisis.<sup>40</sup> The objective of this second collective book is to analyse the interaction between structural change and the potential of multilateralism. For the various authors, multilateralism is not only related to institutions but reveals itself in specific

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<sup>38</sup> James Muldoon, JoAnn Fagot Aviel, Richard Reitano, Earl Sullivan (Eds.), *The New Dynamics of Multilateralism Diplomacy, International Organizations, and Global Governance* (Westview Press, 2010).

<sup>39</sup> Michael Schechter, *“Systematic Change, International Organizations and the Evolution of Multilateralism”*, in: James P. Muldoon, Jr., JoAnn Fagot Aviel, Richard Reitano, Earl Sullivan (Eds.), *The New Dynamics of Multilateralism Diplomacy, International Organizations, and Global Governance* (Westview Press, 2010) pp.23-43, p. 23.

<sup>40</sup> Edward Newman, Ramesh Thakur and John Tirman (eds.), *Multilateralism under Challenge: Power, International Order and Structural Change* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2006).

values and they wonder whether both values and institutions are just under challenge or deeply in crisis. There is a decline of multilateralism by means of a lack of effectiveness. . A first group of authors underlines the indispensability of multilateralism in the contemporary world. Shashi Taroor examines the United States as a “global symbol of embodiment for multilateralism” and the “mirror of the world” with divisions and disagreements. The role of multilateralism in confronting normative change in world politics is obvious. Amitav Acharya suggests an evolution between the post-World War Two period and the contemporary era. After the Second World War, multilateralism clearly helped to define and legitimise a set of sovereign norms such as territorial integrity, equality of states and non-intervention. Today, the scholar recognizes a key role for multilateralism to facilitate normative change. Thus, a remaining problem for multilateralism is mentioned in an article by Robert Keohane: the lack of legitimacy<sup>41</sup>. He quotes two sources of legitimacy: First, “the output legitimacy”, or “the achievement of substantive results according to the purposes of the organisation”; secondly, the “input legitimacy” connected with decision-making processes, dealing with the question of how accountable and transparent those processes are. In his article, Keohane arrives at the overall consideration that values and institutions of current multilateralism are deficient. Edward Newman evokes the same idea but he points out that, if the fundamental principle of multilateralism is not in crisis, its values and institutions are under serious challenge due to a lack of legitimacy related to questionable accountability and representation, plus deficient performances. Finally, such a collective work offers the possibility to understand the nature and extent to which limitations of multilateralism are demonstrated in many issues. The most contested point seems to be a required reform of multilateral values and institutions and the question of whether and how the multilateral system can evolve in order to comply with contemporary needs.

A last book should be mentioned in order to quote the work of French scholars on multilateralism. “*Multilatéralisme. Nouvelles formes de l’action internationale*”<sup>42</sup> was edited in order to provide an overview of the most recent studies on this highly debated issue. The book follows John Ruggie’s conception of multilateralism as an institutional form. Multilateralism is neither “meta-sovereign” (according to an idealist view), nor simply international (according to a realist approach). The various contributors want to tackle a phenomenon that interacts in the international arena with or through the diplomatic game. One of the two editors, Bertrand Badie,

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<sup>41</sup> Keohane, *Multilateralism: An Agenda*.

<sup>42</sup> Bertrand Badie and Guillaume Devin (eds.), *Le Multilatéralisme. Nouvelles formes de l’action internationale* (Paris: Editions La Découverte, 2007).

suggests a typology of multilateralism by stressing three main forms associated with different adjectives: “limited, unbalanced and selective”. A limited multilateralism appears to be inherent to the constitution of the United Nations’ system that legalizes the powers’ position through the veto in the UN Security Council. A second form is referred to as “unbalanced” and describes a later movement, principally in the 1960s and the 1970s as a result of decolonisation and the Third World’s claim to challenge the traditional multilateral system. Finally, a selective multilateralism appears at the end of the Cold War in a world with variable geometry. This last form aims at undermining historic institutions like the United Nations and creating all kinds of alternatives such as a global *North Atlantic Treaty Organization* (NATO), coalitions of the willing, “mini-lateralism” and its diplomacy of clubs (G7,G8,...). Beyond this short typology, Badie confronts the principle of multilateralism with the concept of power in international relations and considers that multilateralism can be a “power multiplier” of middle powers such as France. To a certain extent, this last argument may explain why France absolutely wanted to put Mali at the top of the UN agenda.

The question of the functionality of multilateralism is another key topic and Guillaume Devin considers in his article<sup>43</sup> how multilateralism could manage current challenges in the international arena. He underlines a regulatory role vis-à-vis the powers in the international system. Nevertheless, in accordance with the argument already raised by Robert Keohane, multilateralism faces a double challenge with a poor performance and a lack of legitimacy deeply linked to a “delicate balance between input (procedures) and output (performance) legitimacy”.<sup>44</sup> There is an increased need for the states to institutionalize their behaviour or, in other words, to follow adapted procedures with the aim of realizing some shared objectives. In this sense, multilateralism summarizes a major tendency of organized governmental action and stands not only for an instrument of diplomacy but for a pure conception of general policy. Every multilateral organisation has some functions, meaning activities and finalities. The reasons of multilateralism and its authority are strongly dependant on its functional role. Devin considers that there are “designed functions” rather than *a priori* ones because the actors who participate in a multilateral game look for profitable strategies. A multilateral involvement is always ambivalent. To a certain extent, multilateralism is a balance between what cooperation requires and what sovereignty holds. The actors engaged in a multilateral diplomacy may naturally

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<sup>43</sup> Guillaume Devin, « Le multilatéralisme est-il fonctionnel? », in : Bertrand Badie and Guillaume Devin (ed.), *Le Multilatéralisme. Nouvelles formes de l’action internationale* (Paris: Editions La Découverte, 2007), pp.147-166.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

defend their national interests in the name of objectives raised to the rank of general causes such as the right of people to self-determination, peace, human rights or the fight against terrorism. In the course of his article, Devin tackles a reciprocal relationship between an independent state and a multilateral organization, namely the need to serve in order to be helped or served in return. Such a “self-serving multilateralism” can be identified when studying the behaviour of the USA after World War II in terms of the Marshall Plan. Nevertheless, if a multilateral involvement can serve nation’s self-interests, the multilateral way is a transformative one because the state needs to redefine its own interests in order to make them compatible with the fact of serving principles and to reach by the same occasion a greater legitimacy. Such legitimacy aims at providing more authority and influence to a “multilateral entrepreneur”. To sum up, a state should serve the interest of multilateralism in order to gain as a state itself.<sup>45</sup>

Multilateralism can be regarded as a new possibility within the field of “new diplomacies” available for a foreign policy. Guillaume Devin develops a short overview of the history of multilateralism in order to underline a gap between its original project and its application.<sup>46</sup> As a new diplomatic instrument, multilateralism was supported by the United States after 1945 in a specific context in which a liberal conception of the international order was predominant with the models of democracy and free trade. Nevertheless, at this time, multilateralism was merely a “minilateral cooperation” between Western powers. A further step is the development of an “omnilateralism” which included almost all states of the international system. This stage is characterized by the politicization of multilateralism with a large panel of “techniques” such as unilateral withdrawal, coalitions *ad hoc*, bargaining etc. According to Guillaume Devin, the way John Ruggie considered multilateralism as “a demanding form of organisation” is more an idealist view than a description of a real art of functioning.<sup>47</sup> Multilateralism has much to do with interests, power, fear and routine. A multilateral framework should be useful for governments as well as for non-State actors. Multilateralism represents a diplomatic technique which is located in the field of the “new diplomacy” or “total diplomacy”, in other words: an entanglement of different methods and uses, sometimes complementary and sometimes competitive.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p. 151.

<sup>46</sup> Guillaume Devin, « Les diplomaties de la politique étrangère », in : Frédéric Charillon (ed.), *Politique Etrangère : nouveaux regards* (Paris : Presses de Sciences Po, 2002), pp. 215-243.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, p. 232.

### 3/ Multilateral process and global norms

Thanks to the liberal institutionalist school of thought, it was possible to generate a more profound understanding and visualize the idea of multilateralism. Nevertheless and in a similar vein as in the first sub-part, the author wants to underline two concepts in order to identify the use of multilateralism by means of examining of the primary and secondary sources as far as the role of the French foreign policy in the Malian crisis is concerned.

In opposition to the concept of “bilateral process”, the author would like to emphasize the significance of a “multilateral process”. Multilateralism is understood as a diplomatic practice and a form of international arrangement or consultation. To this point, Keohane underlines “*the practice of coordinating national policies in groups of three or more states*”<sup>48</sup>. This definition should be completed with the help of the academic work of Ruggie and his insistence on a “demanding organizational form”. France has to cooperate with several states, international organisations and institutions as well as Non-Governmental Organisations and must negotiate in order to enable a compromise or to forge a majority that will be susceptible to providing a better legitimacy for a French decision. This point can be illustrated by a vote for a UN resolution or an EU decision to support the action of the French Republic. Furthermore, Caporaso underlines that a number of “*generalized principles of conduct, namely norms exhorting general if not universal modes of relating to other states, are more relevant than differentiating relations case-by-case on the basis of individual preferences, situational exigencies or a priori particularistic grounds*”<sup>49</sup>. Any type of action is multilateral as long as it involves cooperative activity among many countries, whereas multilateralism is an ideology designed to promote multilateral activity and, to that point, a combination of normative principles, advocacy and existential beliefs. France has to adopt a different attitude towards a single European state or towards the entire European Union, i.e. in representation of the European Commission or the Council, even if a bilateral dialogue may lead to a multilateral practice like the will to create a military coalition in order to intervene in Northern Mali. Then, an international or interstate cooperation does not guarantee a good multilateral practice. On this topic, Miles Kahler employs the term of “minilateralism”: a cooperation *a minima* or with a

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<sup>48</sup> Keohane, *Multilateralism: An Agenda*, p. 731.

<sup>49</sup> Caporaso, *International relations*, p. 602.

lower degree of constraining rules, which aims at working with a small number of partners in order to better dissimulate the persistence of bilateralism<sup>50</sup>. These last examples demonstrate how many incomplete or different forms the principle of multilateralism is associated with.

In his second and third part, the author will pay attention to the number of actors the French Republic negotiates with, the quality of the cooperation and the way France respects these general principles of conduct Ruggie and Caporaso thematised in their work. This first concept will help to understand the way French diplomacy works.

A second concept for identifying multilateralism is the capacity for French officials and diplomats to mobilize the defense of global norms or principles. Such a concept is at the core of the way institutionalists consider the functioning of international relations. Contrary to an analysis “à la Morgenthau”, for whom the concept of national interest is the most important factor, Ruggie invites the reader to refuse a narrowed definition of states’ interests in terms of pure national interests. In a multilateral logic, a state has to forge its foreign policy far beyond the national sphere and a simple short-term analysis. In his article on multilateralism, Ruggie insists on the example of collective security in order to represent what a global principle could be. The state has to consider itself not as an impassable reality but as a part of a whole that is threatened by a transnational problem such as terrorism. The idea behind this principle is to consider peace as indivisible and war against one state as war against all of them. If the global norm of collective security is applied to the French intervention in Mali, it is possible to justify the use of military force in Northern Mali by the will to participate in European security. In other words, French troops act in the name of the French state, but at the same time, they defend the collective security of the European Union. The concept of global norms or principles should be used to better analyse the political discourse and also to understand the diplomatic or military choice made by French officials.

The work of Guillaume Devin about the functionality of multilateralism may provide with some help in order to study the tension between bilateralism and multilateralism, sovereignty and cooperation. According to Devin, the actors engaged in a multilateral diplomacy may naturally defend their national interests in the name of objectives raised to the rank of general causes such as the right of people to self-determination, peace, human rights, the battle against terrorism etc. To a certain extent, they support multilateralism because they believe that, in return, multilateralism can serve their objectives. In order to illustrate this point, the functioning of the French diplomacy at the UN stage can be observed. First of all, France uses a proactive

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<sup>50</sup> Kahler, *Multilateralism*.

diplomacy for putting the Malian crisis on the agenda, preparing several resolutions and more generally mobilizing the “international community”. Secondly, France counts on the political, moral and maybe financial support of the UN during the intervention in Mali. France serves the UN in order to receive more extensive support. Consequently Guillaume Devin underlines the existence of a “self-interested multilateral engagement” that obliges the participating states to adapt or change their national interests by replacing them with global or superior interests. Thus, the multilateral practice is a transformative one that tends to reconfigure a traditional “grammar of power”.

The concept of “global norms” associated with this transformative capability of the multilateral practice will help to better analyze the French political discourse as well as the practice.

## **C)The specificities of the French foreign policy in Africa**

In a third chapter, it will be necessary to explain the specificities of the French foreign policy in Africa or the French state’s agenda in Africa in general and with its former colonies in particular. Usually referred to as *politique africaine*, such a policy must be comprehended in order to be able to better analyze the Malian crisis. For one thing, the French African policy will be described in terms of genesis, nature and principles in order to identify why it is so different from relationships with other states and continents. Additionally, some critical interpretations will underline a necessary evolution and the difficulties to reform the “French-African complex”. A last development will more precisely tackle one of the most controversial illustrations of the French policy in Africa: the *Françafrique*.

### *1/ Genesis and principles of the French African policy*

To begin with, it will be useful to briefly summarise the history of the French-African relationship after the decolonization process and the wave of independences during the 1960s. After a difficult and violent phase represented by two conflicts, first in Indochina (1946-1954)

and then in Algeria (1954-1962), French officials in general and Charles De Gaulle in particular decided to change their perception about decolonization and to redefine the French policy towards its former colonies or administrated territories. Therefore, De Gaulle and some collaborators imagined a new project of great community with autonomy and internal government for the African colonies. Nevertheless, France wanted to maintain control over essential areas such as defence, foreign affairs and several economic, monetary and strategic policies. Former colonies had to choose between this cooperation with France or a total independence. First, the project met a clear success among the African territories because, except for the country of Guinea lead by Ahmed Sékou Touré, there was extensive support for the project of Franco-African community in the September referendum of 1958. However, an irreversible will of freedom and independence turned De Gaulle's great community into a failure because after the demand of the Mali federation (Senegal and Mali) to leave the "*communauté franco-africaine*" in June 1960, almost all former French colonies ended up following the tendency by August 1960. Therefore, France opted for a peaceful transfer of power and a wish for a progressive decolonization rather than a revolutionary break with the past. Key values such as moderation and compromise represented a guideline for such a process of transition from colonization to cooperation. This very idea of cooperation led to the creation of a special ministry entitled "*le ministère de la Coopération*", which was referred to as "the ministry of Africa". The priority was given to comprehensive bilateral agreements between France and every francophone African state in several key areas. In summary, France designed a progressive institutionalization of the French-African relationship with the objective of maintaining strong ties and dependency as well.

The US-American scholar Guy Martin addresses the French-African relations by means of three main characteristics: "exclusivity, stability and continuity"<sup>51</sup>. The principle of "exclusivity" refers to a system of legal instruments that are mainly associated with a set of binding documents such as cooperation agreements on specific areas (defence, economy, assistance) and a number of multilateral agencies like the franc zone or Franco-African summits which are quite representative of the sometimes familial nature of the French-African relationship. This exclusive character is directly linked to the special role played by France during the Cold War. The idea here is to underline a certain ideology made up of presupposed historical links as well as geographical and cultural proximity with Africa viewed as a "natural French reserve". A second principle is the astonishing political stability of such structures, despite a rapidly changing

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<sup>51</sup> Guy Martin, "France's African policy in transition: disengagement and redeployment", *Colección*, 2, 2001, pp.97-119.

international system and fundamentally different domestic situations. This resilience has a lot to do with an enduring and strong relationship embodied by close, intimate and sometimes familial ties. The last principle insists on the continuity of the “French-African system” despite various presidencies and political conceptions, from 1958 to the 2000s. To this extent, Martin underlines that: *“There is no doubt that an autonomous and permanent policy exists, transcending the traditional political cleavages, the various regimes and individual political leaders”*<sup>52</sup>. Thus, the French policy towards Africa represents a very specific case study in which a certain spirit of reform meets a decisive capability to resist to a changing environment.

By studying the “special relationship” between France and Africa, the author evokes a sometimes highly debated and passionate topic where history meets identity and where public and private spheres cross. The ties between Paris and various African capitals were symbolized by personal relations between heads of state, elites and decision-makers. A first point worth mentioning is related to a history of perception and representation as well as to the question of how France represents itself in the international arena. What role could Africa play according to this self-perception? Why does France have to build and maintain privileged ties with Africa? As a matter of fact, France, as an old nation-state and the land of Revolution and Enlightenment, considers itself as a special actor. For example, Charles De Gaulle and François Mitterrand always stressed France’s particular destiny and the simple fact that France had this international role because it is France. A national ideology has been developed with reference to the universalism of the French Republic’s values as the legacy of a long and turbulent history. This special role constituted a strong argument for those who advocate the colonial adventure: Jules Ferry believed in a French colonial *“mission civilisatrice”* (civilizing mission) and, according to Tony Chafer, such an idea continues to influence French policy in Africa. The continent was a key pillar of France’s status as a world power. The British scholar focuses his analysis on the Sub-Saharan Africa because it was the right terrain for the projection of French power and the dissemination of France’s universalist values of the Fifth Republic. To support his argument, Chafer quotes a famous speech by Louis de Guiringaud who was Foreign Minister under the presidency of Valéry Giscard D’Estaing: *“Africa south of the Sahara is a group of countries that is manageable in size for France: neither the size of the population nor the means that France is able to devote to a prolonged action outside her own frontiers”*<sup>53</sup>. Such a point of view explains quite well why

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p. 101.

<sup>53</sup> Chafer, *From Confidence*, p. 39.

France considered West Africa and countries like Cote d'Ivoire or Senegal as "a showcase" (*vitrine*) of the French influence in Africa.

In his recent book, Yves Gounin underlines the remarkable resilience of a political and economic system until the end of the 20th century which remains a key instrument for bringing Africa and France closely together<sup>54</sup>. The objectives were to foster a peaceful process of independence and to maintain "*l'indépendance dans l'interdépendance*"<sup>55</sup>. Furthermore, he suggests that such a system was, and probably is not a monolithic block. The title of his work mentions a "*combat entre les Anciens et les Modernes*" (a struggle between the Ancients and the Moderns). It is necessary to be specific about the nature and place of this struggle. It opposes two conceptions of the French African policy and maybe two conceptions of international relations as a whole. A conservative conception considers that Africa is still a privileged area for the projection of French power and the defence of its interests and that, consequently, the policy should remain exceptional and strategic. Such an analysis is clearly associated with a realist approach of the French international role. Nevertheless, a more liberal and modern conception advocates a normalization of the African policy and the end of old and contested principles connected to this policy like personal relations, indirect or direct intervention and bilateral connections. This permanent struggle can explain the great continuity of the French policy and a certain schizophrenic nature as far as the behaviour of France towards several African countries is concerned.

Why is France staying in Africa? The question of the justification of this "French African complex" is a highly debated topic as well and Yves Gounin provides four main arguments in a synthetic approach:

- France has a long common history with its former colonies and could not just neglect the destiny of a continent which was shaped by French presence for a long time
- France needs Africa in order to justify its international status. Thanks to Africa, France is still a power that matters

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<sup>54</sup> Yves Gounin, *La France en Afrique. Le combat des Anciens et des Modernes* (Bruxelles : De Boeck, 2009).

<sup>55</sup> This excellent expression of the former President of the Council Edgar Faure represents all the ambiguity and the contradiction of the African policy, namely: the fact to recognize a unanimous desire of independence among the French colonies in Sub-Saharan Africa but the will to maintain strong links between the former colonial power and the colonies (interdependency).

- Africa is a strategic area for French economic interests, especially regarding natural resources and emerging market
- France has to control migration between the former colonies and the *metropole*

The author suggests that these arguments are pre-conceived notions and stereotypes and thus advocates for the need to see the French African policy from a new perspective. Consequently, it seems wise to analyse the evolution of the relationship between France and Africa in a second chapter.

## 2/ *A difficult and contested modernization*

The French policy towards Africa represents a complex, contradictory and strategic question. There is a gap between a declamatory attitude about the need to adapt the African policy to a changing world and the persistence of old traditions and habits. Jean-Marc Châtaignier attempts to understand this discrepancy between the principles and the realities of France's African policy<sup>56</sup>. First of all, he highlights the fundamental aspect of this policy because Africa is still supposed to be a privileged field for the French influence and the specific nature of a domain with its own ministry (*ministère de la Coopération*) and a special cell at the *Elysee*. Since the second half of the 1990s, a double change occurred, both in the principles and the means of intervention. Concerning principles, and with the programme defined during the summit of La Baule in 1990 by François Mitterrand, France will submit aid under the conditionality of democratization and consequently end its support to despotic regimes. France will promote global principles of action such as the defence of territorial integrity and sovereignty, the support to legal and elected authorities or the promotion of human rights. By the same means, the French state will end unilateral interventions and direct intrusion in African affairs, assist regional organizations (The African Union, ECOWAS) in "Africanizing" the French policy and will work through international avenues (EU, UN) for a better multilateralization.

The evolution of the French policy towards Africa is absolutely necessary because of several changes in France as well as in Africa, in international and in domestic policy. The global context has undergone significant changes since the end of the Cold War, resulting in globalisation and consequently increasing competition. This new international context puts the traditional role of

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<sup>56</sup> Jean-Marc Châtaignier, « Principes et réalités de la politique africaine de la France », *Afrique contemporaine*, 220:4, 2006, pp. 247-261.

France in Africa as “policeman of Western interests” into question and the French influence is contested by the desires of the United States and particularly of emerging states like China or India. A second major evolution occurred on a regional scale with the building of Europe and the progress of European integration with a necessary “*banalisation*” and normalisation of the African policy. The domestic context both in France and in Africa should not be underestimated: France expressed a clear lack of interest for Africa and, simultaneously, a tendency towards an “Afro-pessimism” with a negative perception of African people, especially through the prism of migration, whereas African elites are more oriented towards the United States. New generations came to power and seemed less prone to accept old and traditional practices. All these changes represent a reality in the field of French-African relationships but several divergent interpretations highlight the difficulty of the reform of African policy. Jean-Marc Châtaignier opposes two main approaches. On the one hand, it is possible to assume such a policy to enter a new phase with a veritable French withdrawal in Africa. Such a tendency is related to less concern and perhaps a certain indifference regarding the current situation in Africa. The normalization of the French-African complex participates in a logic of lower expenditures and a modernisation of the French engagement. This first interpretation is systematically contradicted by several officials and analysts. On the other hand, some specialists observe a political will to maintain the status quo in relations with Africa. If some adjustments are obvious, as the re-orientation towards Anglophone Africa, it seems difficult to speak of a great reform and a clear questioning of the whole French-African relationship. A realist and conservative approach is dominant with a traditional bilateralism in order to support allied regimes, even if they are not legally elected, for a better safeguarding of French national interests. Jean-Marc Châtaignier criticizes these two interpretations because they represent a backward-looking and fixed vision about France’s African policy. Besides, none of these approaches take multilateralism into account. Bilateralism is ever predominant for historical and sometimes personal reasons and when French officials use a multilateral way, it is only as the last resort or for disguising a purely national agenda.

Under the presidency of Jacques Chirac (1995-2007), the continuity of the African policy is obvious for the man who created the *Rassemblement Pour la République* (RPR) in 1976 in order to embody the legacy of Gaullism in the French political landscape. Africa remains the *pré carré* of the French influence and a pillar for the French presence on the international stage. Chirac was personally attached to the African continent on the grounds of a passion for primitive arts and intimate links with African officials, so that the French president was referred to as “*Chirac l’Africain*”. A quite classical relationship with Africa dominates Chirac’s era until the

dissolution of the *Assemblée Nationale* in 1997 and the nomination of Lionel Jospin as Prime Minister. A dissolution is a specific but not exceptional situation under the Fifth Republic. The consequences of foreign policy are quite interesting because the Prime Minister is strong enough to suggest his own policy or at least the policy of his political formation (for Jospin, the Socialist Party). The socialist Prime Minister wanted to put an end to the old and questionable habits of the French-African complex and advocates a “*ni ingérence, ni indifférence*” doctrine; in other words, the need for France to stop direct or indirect intervention in Africa without neglecting the evolution of the continent. This phrase can be completed by another one: “to do less but to do better”. Furthermore, Lionel Jospin decides to reform a strategic ministry, namely *le ministère de la Coopération* which was created under the presidency of Charles De Gaulle in order to maintain a strong interdependency between the old colonial power and the former colonies. This minister is incorporated to the Foreign Ministry and represents the symbolic end of exceptionalism of African policy.

In the wake of the Rwanda genocide, there is a serious reassessment of the French African policy. Tony Chafer refuses to speak of a clear disengagement from Africa or a normalisation of the African policy but nevertheless, he wants to stress a reorientation and a modernization of the French African policy in order to better serve French interests<sup>57</sup>. To this point, various steps were taken to move away from the traditional French unilateral approach to Africa but, if there was a rhetoric of “soft power”, in practice there is a continuation of instruments of “hard power”. As an example, Chafer quotes the role of France in the Cote d’Ivoire’s crisis (2002-2007) during which French intervention was labelled as “France’s little Iraq”. The French attitude showed that there was no possibility for France to abandon its traditional unilateral approach to Africa. The French credibility was deeply called into question and the crisis created a new wave of anti-French sentiment in its *pré carré*.

Nevertheless, the relative disengagement of France in Africa is only perceptible under a short-term period for two main reasons. Firstly, Jacques Chirac wanted to avoid the marginalisation of Africa in a context of globalisation and acted as the spokesperson for the whole continent towards international organisations. Such an attitude is not without ulterior motive because the French state counted on the support of the African countries as far as key topics were concerned. Therefore, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Dominique de Villepin

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<sup>57</sup> Tony Chafer, “Franco-African relations: No longer so exceptional?” in: *African Affairs*, 2002, Vol. 101(404), pp.343-363, p. 362.

embodied this political will to “go back to Africa” and to intervene in order to protect national interests. However, the context has deeply changed due to dynamic international context, African and French opinions and domestic situations: Yves Gounin describes a “new partnership” between France and Africa under new principles of equality, respect, conciliation and multilateralism. The quotation mentions the end of an era in which France was able to shape the course of African history by means of a contingent of 500 men. At the core of the new French approach, it is possible to find the necessity for legitimacy directly connected to two levels: the dialogue with African governments and the agreement of multilateral institutions.

The traditional view of France as the “policeman” of Africa is progressively called into question. The new French strategy on the continent illustrates this mutation. France wants to define a new role related to different functions for its forces. If the main objective remains the defence of French interests, then this may lead to an intervention, France refuses to act in a unilateral way and prefers to cooperate with regional organisations (ECOWAS, AU) and with its European partners. French forces have to adopt a new strategy and sometimes reconsider the old bilateral military agreements between themselves and the former colonies. The reduction of military presence is a strong symbol of a certain normalisation as regards French African relations. The forces are concentrated in three main bases: Djibouti (2800), Senegal (1200) and Gabon (800) and completed by special forces for short-term missions. Thus, France is progressively abandoning the idea of unilateralism and reconsidering the “principles and means” of its policy in Africa. A first change is directly related to a process of “Africanisation” and the will to find African solutions to African problems. The recognition of functioning regional organisations such as ECOWAS or the African Union and the necessity of collaborating with them is a first step. If any intervention is necessary, then the multilateral framework must be preferred. This second evolution in the French-African relations is referred to as “multilateralization” and aims at finding a stronger legitimacy for potential French interventions and sharing political risks that the old colonial power cannot assume alone anymore<sup>58</sup>. Consequently, the United Nations are playing a central role in the new French diplomacy due to a double function of legal authority and sometimes military actor. On a different level, France is trying to develop the presence and the influence of the European Union in Africa but this conception is facing a lack of interest or sometimes a polite refusal of several member states. A French proactive attitude as regards the making of a true African policy among the European partners reveals the will to “share a heavy burden” and to give the opportunity for a common policy to avoid a purely Franco-French approach. Such a movement is noticeable towards

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<sup>58</sup> Gounin, *La France en Afrique*.

multilateralism due to clearly evident political support to ECOWAS or to the intervention of the European Union and the United Nations, but such a tendency ends up completing the ancient logic more than replacing it. The modernization of the French foreign policy in Africa primarily concerns a political approach on the basis of three principles of partnership, Africanisation and regionalization (in a European sense). As Gounin, Jean- Marc Châtaignier underlines the will for France to share a financial and human burden<sup>59</sup>.

According to Bruno Charbonneau, the concept of multilateralism should be criticized because it is not inherently more legitimate. In his paper about the new form of interventionism, Charbonneau aims at examining the way France is instrumentalizing the ongoing Europeanisation of French military intervention for its own purposes. There is a tacit agreement between France and the European Union to consider multilateralism as “*the locus of interactions for both their respective and joint practices of global governance, for a new liberal interventionism*”<sup>60</sup>. To Europeanize the French military intervention is not necessarily a radical transformation but it provides a better legitimacy.

Other studies suggest a critical approach to multilateralism. The use of a multilateral framework seems to be a good reason for France to “do business as usual”, namely to continue with direct intervention. Because the multilateral approach appears to be just as legitimate, the question of its efficiency is another problem. When a task is not completed, France sometimes does not hesitate to directly intervene or to “subcontract” the mission to an allied or friend nation in a traditional way. In order to share a financial and economic burden and to avoid a suspicion of neo-colonialism, France has no choice but to integrate its action in a European, African or UN framework<sup>61</sup>. That is why, for the authors, the «new French African policy » is still working as usual without any respect for multilateral rules or principles. The objective is only to have a benediction and the consent of the international community. The intervention in Cote d’Ivoire by means of the Licorne operation represents a French tendency to confuse bilateral and multilateral issues. The French troops acted under a UN mandate but, at the same time, were under French command and as such, engaged alone against Ivorian forces which was a very confusing and troubling situation. To sum up, Richard Banégas, Roland Marchal and Julien

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<sup>59</sup> Châtaignier, *Principes et réalités*.

<sup>60</sup> Bruno Charbonneau, “Dreams of Empire: France, Europe and the New Interventionism in Africa”, *Modern & Contemporary France*, 16:3, 2008, pp. 279-295, p. 280.

<sup>61</sup> Richard Banégas, Roland Marchal et Julien Meimon, « La fin du pacte colonial? », *Politique Africaine*, n°105, 2007, pp.1-20.

Meimon stress a kind of schizophrenic aspect for the “new French policy” in Africa based on the desires to first acquire a multilateral or regional legitimacy and then to get away from it in order to take directly in charge the operations or to subcontract them to a loyal ally.

### *3/ Françafrique or the “French-African complex”*

The French-African relations embody difficult, complex and sometimes contradictory links which still exist between the French *metropole* and its former colonies. Nevertheless, a privileged knowledge of the continent, a shared history, a common language and therefore culture cannot stop the emergence of new political elites with modern points of view and a changing international order mainly driven by the concept of globalisation. The extraordinary resilience of a strong French influence in Africa has to be examined under the light of the principle of “*Françafrique*” as probably the ultimate avatar of a “French-African complex”.

To begin with, it is necessary to clearly understand the genesis of the expression “*Françafrique*”. In a recent work, Joseph Wouako Tchaleu underlines that the first connotation is positive and aims at describing a close and fraternal relationship between France and Africa. It was formulated by Félix Houphouët Boigny (1905-1993), a former member of the French *Assemblée Nationale* and first president of the Cote d’Ivoire after gaining independence<sup>62</sup>. It is worth noting that the very principle of « *Françafrique* » is contradictory inasmuch as most of the French African colonies express their desire for independence whereas they want to maintain a strong and privileged relationship with the colonial power. At this point, the author speaks of the programme mentioned by Edgar Faure: “*l’indépendance dans l’interdépendance*”. Charles de Gaulle was absolutely aware of this point, thus he wanted to complete his project of “*Communauté Française*” (French community) successfully. This being said, the name of Jacques Foccart (1913-1997), the most powerful and controversial incarnation of the “*Françafrique*”, has to be mentioned. Foccart was De Gaulle’s special adviser on Africa and the director of the African cell at the *Elysee*. His objective was to maintain Africa under a strict French control for three main reasons. The first motivation was a political one with the need for France to count on a maximal number of “state-clients” in order to maintain its rank on the international stage and,

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<sup>62</sup> Joseph Tchaleu Wouako, *François Hollande et la Françafrique. Les défis de la rupture* (Paris : l’Harmattan, 2012).

at the same time, its permanent seat at the UNSC. The second reason has a lot to do with economics and aimed at ensuring access to strategic primary resources (including uranium and oil). Thirdly, the huge profits made by French companies and especially Elf, the biggest public company at this time, are diverting in order to finance the Gaullist political party. The journalist François-Xavier Verschave was first to cover this controversial attitude of the French and African officials in the 1990s: “François-Xavier Verschave coined the term *la Françafrique* to describe this multi-tiered combination of presidential dominance over policy and a complex matrix of other state and non-state actors with a stake in African policy”<sup>63</sup>. Political and economic interests represent the core of the “French-African complex” in the context of the Cold War during which France had the task to defend the Western banner.

In a very recent article, Maja Bovcon provides a theoretical analysis of the “*Françafrique*”. The aim of the paper is to understand to what extent France and Africa formed a specific regime in the field of international relations. To begin with, Bovcon highlights the exceptional links between France and its former African colonies. This “exceptionalism” led to multiple scandals like direct or indirect support to autocratic regimes or clandestine financing of French political parties. France wanted to defend its sphere of influence or “*pré carré*” with a primary concern for national interests more than for ethical principles. Basically, the main idea was to maintain a hierarchical order of an otherwise anarchical international system<sup>64</sup>. This theory is strongly related to the policy of “*grandeur*” defined by Charles De Gaulle after the Second World War, namely the vital necessity to restore the international image and status of France. Finally, the “*Françafrique*” appears to be a complex system made up of rules and decision-making procedures on institutional, semi-institutional and informal levels and directed by the “African cell”, namely the President of the French Republic and his closest advisers. If the salience of informal components should not be underestimated, the “*Françafrique*” is first and foremost embodied by highly personalized and family-like relations. In this respect, the French-African diplomacy was more a part of the domestic policy than formal inter-state relations.

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<sup>63</sup> Tony Chafer, *From confidence*, p. 41.

<sup>64</sup> Maja Bovcon, “*Françafrique* and regime theory”, *European Journal of International Relations*, 19:1, 2013, pp.5-26.

#### *4/ Exceptionalism and Normalization*

In this last sub-part, the idea was to understand the specificities of French foreign policy towards Africa in general and the former colonies in particular. Such a policy is represented through a tension between “exceptionalism” and “normalization” and it seems wise to insist on this central point in the course of this last sub-chapter. The work of Yves Gounin on the fight between the Ancients and the Moderns<sup>65</sup> has to be mentioned.

The concept of exceptionalism stands for a traditional and conservative conception of the relationship between France and Africa which considers the second one as a privileged area for the projection of power and influence of the first one. Africa has to be treated by a cell of special advisers very close to French authorities and especially to the President because the Republic defends strategic and geopolitical interests in order to maintain its international rank of global power. This clearly portrays a realist analysis of the French role in the area of international relations. Such a system was extraordinarily resilient until the end of the 20th century and brought former African colonies and France closely together. The objectives were to foster a peaceful process of independence and to maintain “l’indépendance *dans l’interdépendance*”; in other words: to ensure the French control over its ex-empire.

Guy Martin analyses the very principles of the French policy in Africa by stressing three main points. Firstly, the idea of “exclusivity” which refers to a system of legal instruments combined to a set of binding documents such as cooperation agreements about specific areas (defence, economy, assistance) and some institutional rituals, i.e. Franco-African summits. Secondly, France has to maintain the “stability” of such a system in order to defend its interests, even if the international context is changing. This resilience has a lot to do with a strong and enduring relationship embodied by close, intimate and sometimes familial ties. French political and economic elites pay close attention to the importance of maintaining positive relations with their African counterparts. Thirdly, Guy Martin insists on the continuity of the “French-African system” despite various presidencies and political conceptions from the 1950s until this very day. The African policy is indeed a special one among the ensemble of French policies due to its

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<sup>65</sup> Gounin, *La France en Afrique*.

autonomous and permanent character providing such a policy with a “transcendent capability”<sup>66</sup>.

Finally, the concept of exceptionalism defines an ancient and realist way of conceiving the French foreign policy in Africa. A clear priority is given to former colonies and the *pré carré* in order to defend national interests while French influence by privileging bilateralism is considered to be the better diplomatic method.

The concept of “normalisation” complies with the conception of the Moderns who advocate the banalisation of the African policy and the end of old and contested principles connected to it like personal relations, indirect or direct intervention and bilateral connections. This interpretation underlines the changes in the history of the French-African relationship and the will to reform and rethink such a framework. For example, La Baule’s speech from 1990, in which François Mitterrand wanted to submit aid under the conditionality of democratization and to follow through on ending its support to despotic regimes, may illustrate a modern concept of France’s policy in Africa. The concept of normalisation is strongly connected to the process of multilateralization by which France promotes global principles of action such as the defence of territorial integrity and sovereignty, the support to legal and elected authorities or the promotion of human rights. The idea is to put an end to French unilateral interventions and direct intrusion in African affairs for working with international organisations (UN) and regional formations (AU, ECOWAS). To sum up, internationalisation and Africanisation participate in the same process of multilateralization.

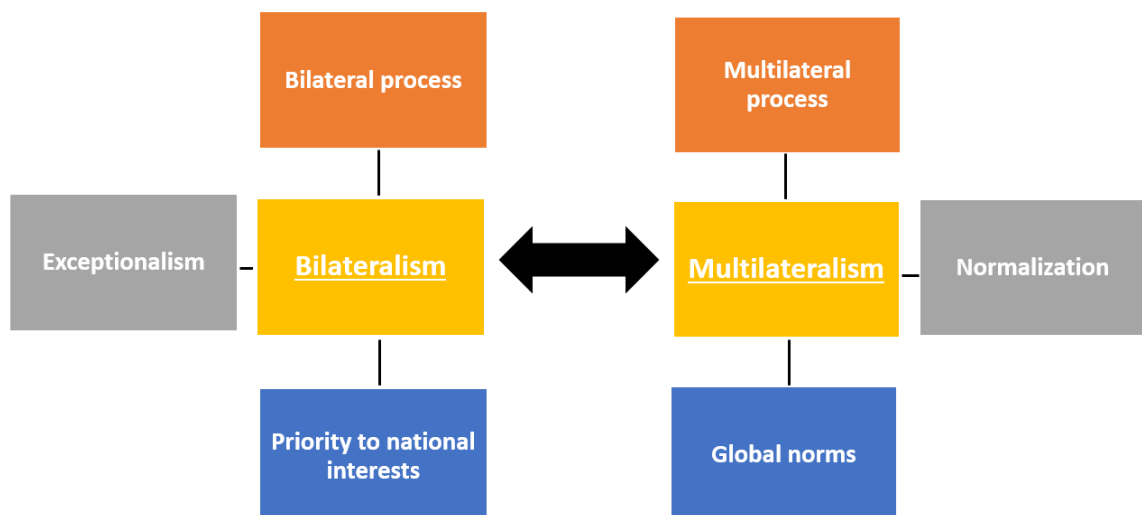
A second process is playing a decisive role as regards the normalisation of the French policy in Africa, namely the Europeanization. The building of Europe and the progress of European integration will have several impacts on the traditional functioning of the African policy. France has to cooperate and negotiate more with its European partners more extensively in order to justify its behaviour towards Africa and to gain political, moral as well as financial support. This idea is particularly relevant after 1994 and the impact of the Rwandan genocide on the French African policy. Tony Chafer highlights a general reassessment and the will to share the costs and risks of French interventionism in Africa with other European states with or without colonial experience. The process of Europeanization can be seen as the modernization of French policy as well as the current financial difficulties inherent to the French state.

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<sup>66</sup> Martin, *France's African policy*.

Therefore, it is possible to read the different primary and secondary sources by considering to what extent France attempts to normalise its African policy. Such a concept is closely linked to three main processes, namely efforts to work with African states and not only former French colonies (Africanisation), to engage the responsibility of the European partners (Europeanisation) and to intervene with the help of international organisations (internationalisation). This last concept is highly connected to the idea of multilateralism as the best method to deal with African problems like the Malian crisis.

Before starting the empirical part, the author would like to redefine the method selected in order to find some evidences for confirming or refuting his two main hypotheses. At the end of each sub-section of his theoretical part, the author has underlined six different concepts which are relevant for identifying a more bilateral (bilateral process / national interests / exceptionalism) or multilateral approach (multilateral process / global norms / normalisation) as far as the French diplomacy during the Malian crisis is concerned.



#### **Bilateralism and Multilateralism**

## **II. The first phase of the Malian crisis (March 2012-mid-January 2013)**

Different types of evidence will be analysed, starting with the official French statement, namely communiqués and speeches published by the Presidency (*Palais de l'Elysee*) and the Foreign Office (*Quai d'Orsay*) as well as UN and EU statements during official meetings; then, various reports written by members of the National Assembly and Senate but sometimes by special advisors; francophone press or specialized articles and finally the six experts' interviews conducted in 2013. The idea is to receive a sound picture of the official French attitude as well as a response to the question of whether or not it wishes to cooperate or not with several international (UN, EU and regional organisations (AU, ECOWAS) as well as several key State or non-State actors (NMLA).

In this part, the author will attempt to comprehend the French diplomacy during the first phase of the Malian crisis which commenced with the Coup of March 2012 and terminated in the French direct military intervention in mid-January 2013. The crisis in Mali is linked to a complex set of long-, middle- and short-term political, socio-economic and geopolitical factors which, for practical reasons, will not be tackled in this second part. The *Coup d'Etat* in Bamako, which is directly linked to the heavy losses and defeats of the Malian army, opens a new chapter in a country which was considered a role model for democracy all over Africa. As a member of the UN Security Council, a member of the European Union and a former colonial power with specific relations, France decided to support Mali and to find a solution to this complex and perilous situation. Moreover, several reasons contribute to the fact that France is in a less than ideal position to support Mali. First of all, France's colonial past entails shared history, culture, language, interests and consequently a possible and understandable accusation of neo-colonialism. A second idea is linked to the existence of eight French hostages in the Sahel and the Damocles sword that hangs over their heads if ever the state decided to intervene in this region. Thirdly, proponents of a concept entitled "normalisation" are advocating for a reform of French policy in Africa. In order to change a contested relationship between Africa and France,

represented by the climax of “*Françafrique*”, President François Hollande is aiming to start a new era by underlining the principles of “democracy, development, security and africanisation”<sup>67</sup>. The last of the aforementioned terms aims at giving full responsibility to the African states for managing their own security. In summary, these three main reasons could explain why France, in this first phase, is disinterested in managing the Malian crisis from the frontline or as the main actor and prefers to play the card of multilateralism by providing its support to the African organisations (Africanisation), the United Nations (Internationalisation) or the European Union (Europeanisation). According to the sources and concepts, it is reasonable to speak of a priority given to multilateralism?

## **A)The relationship between France and Africa**

### *1/ Africanisation: some good will but several limits*

First of all, it is obvious that France seeks a multilateral approach as far as the Malian crisis is concerned. As emphasized in the first part, the multilateral process may take on various forms under respectively varying levels of intensity and the author would like to stress the form entitled “Africanisation” which aims at giving the responsibility of African affairs to the African officials and populations. On May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012, the French president François Hollande hosted the president of Benin Thomas Boni Yayi who currently represents the African Union (AU). Hollande is in favor of the AU and ECOWAS officially calling for UN support thanks to a new meeting of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on the situation in Mali and Sahel<sup>68</sup>. In June 2012, François Hollande met his partner Blaise Compaoré, president of the Burkina Faso, and major actor as regards the ECOWAS mediation with Mali. With the same idea of African responsibility, the French president promised to “mobilize France’s diplomatic means in order to promote the process of political stabilization in Bamako and to help for the deployment of an inter-Africa

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<sup>67</sup> « Conférence de presse conjointe de M. le Président de la République et de M. Mahamadou ISSOUFOU, président de la République du Niger », Palais de L’Elysée, 11 June 2012, accessed on 10/03/2013, URL : <http://www.elysee.fr/conferences-de-presse/article/conference-de-presse-conjointe-de-m-le-president-de-la-republique-et-de-m-mahamadou-issoufou-president-de-la-republique-du-niger/>.

<sup>68</sup> „Paris demande aux Africains de saisir l’ONU sur le Mali“, *Le Monde.fr* 29 May 2012, URL : [http://abonnes.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2012/05/29/paris-demande-aux-africains-de-saisir-l-onu-sur-le-mali\\_1709079\\_3212.html?xtmc=mali&xtcr=26](http://abonnes.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2012/05/29/paris-demande-aux-africains-de-saisir-l-onu-sur-le-mali_1709079_3212.html?xtmc=mali&xtcr=26), [accessed 13/12/12].

military force”<sup>69</sup>. In other words, there is no question for France to directly intervene in Mali but the priority is clearly given to diplomatic efforts and Africanisation. In September 2012, the French delegation is attended a UN high level meeting in New York on the security in the Sahel region. This constituted a new opportunity to advocate for the French proactive diplomacy in order to convince the UN partners to consider the Mali as an issue to be prioritized. Nevertheless, should France ever intervene in this case, it will be indirectly and by aid of logistical support.<sup>70</sup> In December 2012, the president of Cote d’Ivoire Alassane Ouattara visited Paris for the Malian case and the French head of state underlined the mission for the future inter-African force to fight with and support the Malian army. Besides, France completely agreed with Cote d’Ivoire regarding a multilateral process, namely the need to have a UNSC resolution under Chapter VII for the deployment of an African force and an EU formation and financial support.<sup>71</sup> ECOWAS, as a legitimate and regional organization with experience in managing military crises (Sierra Leone, Liberia), was ready to forge such an African force and to cooperate with the UN and the AU on the issue of regional security. The Economic Community of West African States clearly benefited of this first phase of the Malian crisis during which diplomacy and political dialogue were clearly prioritized by the decisive role played by other countries such as Algeria. Through the voice of its Minister of Defense Jean-Yves Le Drian, France wishes “to stay behind”<sup>72</sup> and resume the French engagement to support in the domain of logistics, intelligence, observation and formation<sup>73</sup>. There seems to be no doubt that the multilateral nature of the political process at hand represents a meaningful priority for French foreign policy.

Nevertheless, every process has some limits, as does the wish to “Africanize” the management of the Malian crisis as well. In early April 2012, ECOWAS was about to deploy some troops in Mali; however, this option was hardly capable of gaining the support of French diplomats who, in the French newspaper *Le Monde*, declared that “they are skeptical towards

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<sup>69</sup> Thomas Hofnung, « Le dilemme sahélien de Paris », *Libération.fr* 11 July 2012, accessed on 11/11/2012, URL : [http://www.liberation.fr/monde/2012/07/11/le-dilemme-sahelien-de-paris\\_832762](http://www.liberation.fr/monde/2012/07/11/le-dilemme-sahelien-de-paris_832762).

<sup>70</sup> François Hollande, « Conférence de presse de M. le Président de la République à la suite de l’événement de haut niveau des Nations Unies sur le Sahel », New York 26 September 2012, accessed on 10/03/2013, URL : <http://www.elysee.fr/conferences-de-presse/article/conference-de-presse-de-m-le-president-de-la-republique-a-la-suite-de-l-evenement-de-haut-niveau-des-nations-unies-sur-le-sahel/>.

<sup>71</sup> François Hollande, « Déclaration du Président de la République à l’issue du Conseil restreint de défense », Paris : 12 January 2013, accessed on 12/03/2013, URL : <http://www.elysee.fr/declarations/article/declaration-du-president-de-la-republique-a-l-issue-du-conseil-restreint-de-defense/>.

<sup>72</sup> This French official statement invites us to draw a parallel with the American doctrine mentioned by President Obama as far as the US foreign policy is concerned: “leading from behind”.

<sup>73</sup> Jean-Yves Le Drian, “L’intégrité du Mali est essentielle pour la sécurité de l’Europe”, *La Croix*, 24 December and 25 December 2012, pp.6-7.

ECOWAS operational capabilities".<sup>74</sup> Besides, the official objectives were not clearly defined: to remove the junta from Bamako? To reconquer the North? Should France be officially continuing to support the ECOWAS approach, there is perceptible embarrassment. In another article from the newspaper *Libération*, the journalist Thomas Hofnung underlines the limits of Africanisation by describing the difficulties of ECOWAS to raise and coordinate troops and, in the end, to deploy an army due to a lack of intelligence and transport capabilities.<sup>75</sup> Thus, if Niger and Burkina Faso may participate to the reconquest of northern Mali, Senegal and Mauritania have refused. Cote d'Ivoire, which is currently presiding ECOWAS, currently faces a serious domestic situation, and is consequently unable to assist. Finally, the main military power of the Sahelian region, Algeria, refuses any foreign interference in what is considered as its backyard. Concerning ECOWAS, only the Chadian troops have the experience and capability to mobilize a contingent. Roland Marchal evokes the limits of the ECOWAS solution by stressing the inexperience of ECOWAS troops in such an environment and the nefarious reputation of several forces in this particular region.<sup>76</sup>

In a different logic, the wish to use a multilateral process through Africanisation may lead to a diplomatic coalition in order to put pressure on, for instance, the United Nations. Ban Ki Moon did not entirely agree with the notion of a necessity for a military intervention in Mali and therefore was not inclining to let the UN work in this direction because an offensive could give rise to more instability and political deadlock. In response, France decided to organize a "diplomatic counter-offensive"<sup>77</sup> with its African partners in order to call for the UN green light. François Hollande met his counterpart president Alassane Ouattara and they both expressed their belief of a UNSC authorization thanks to a resolution for the deployment of an African force. The qualified regional organisations (AU, ECOWAS) intervened in the same way and demonstrated their support for Paris. This "French-African diplomatic coalition" is highly perceptible thanks to a UNSC Meeting Report<sup>78</sup> in which most of the participants are supporting the French initiative and that all these countries are members of French-speaking Africa: Mali, Cote d'Ivoire, Niger, Benin, Chad and Senegal, with the exception of Nigeria. With the support

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<sup>74</sup> Christophe Châtelot, „La France embarrassée par la crise malienne“, *Le Monde.fr* 05 April 2012, accessed on 13/11/12, URL: [http://abonnes.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2012/04/05/la-france-embarrassee-par-la-crise-malienne\\_1680991\\_3212.html?xtmc=mali&xtcr=116](http://abonnes.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2012/04/05/la-france-embarrassee-par-la-crise-malienne_1680991_3212.html?xtmc=mali&xtcr=116).

<sup>75</sup> Thomas Hofnung, « Cédéo : la difficile intervention », *Libération* 20 September 2012, p.7.

<sup>76</sup> Roland Marchal, "Il faut assortir l'engagement militaire de réformes économiques", *Le Monde* 26 October 2012, p.20.

<sup>77</sup> Rosa Moussaoui, « Au Nord Mali, la prudence de l'ONU agace Paris », *L'Humanité.fr* 6 December 2012, accessed on 06/01/2013, URL : <http://www.humanite.fr/monde/au-nord-mali-la-prudence-de-l-onu-agace-paris-510382>.

<sup>78</sup> UN Security Council Meeting Report 6905(2013), UN doc., S/PV.6905, Thursday, Tuesday, 22 January 2013.

of all these countries, the French voice at the UN stage is stronger and more legitimate. This example provides a sound illustration of the functionalist analysis of multilateralism by Guillaume Devin, in which he states that: “to serve multilateralism is also to expect that it can serve”.<sup>79</sup> In other words, the French diplomacy is functioning thanks to a multilateral process in order to have an international legitimacy and consequently a rightful authority to intervene in Mali. Without such a “UN seal”, the role of France in the Malian crisis could raise several embarrassing questions about neo-colonialism or unilateralism for example.

Apart from the process itself, it is necessary to understand the way France justifies its approach and how the diplomacy elaborates on certain topics, simultaneously deciding to evade other issues. In particular, the following sub-chapter analyse the political discourse and the arguments mentioned by French officials.

## *2/ Between the will to help Mali and the need to preserve hostages*

Multilateralism is entitled to take into account different common norms highly considered by the international community and under the authority of international law. French political discourse mostly emphasizes the collective security, stability, sovereignty and territorial integrity. Nevertheless, the French Republic has important national interests of different kinds in this area and it is sometimes quite difficult to combine both logics.

The author already mentioned that France was particularly embarrassed by the Malian crisis due to the existence of French hostages in the region. The release of these nationals and more generally the protection of French citizens is a major national interest for the Republic. The journalist Thomas Hofnung underlines this embarrassment with the headline “*le dilemme sahélien de Paris*”, in which the risk of terrorist attacks against “our nationals and our interests in the region”<sup>80</sup> is mentioned. In a second article, this time from September 2012, the same journalist made his point even clearer by quoting the French president François Hollande and the risk of a French military intervention whereas six hostages are still under the control of AQIM.<sup>81</sup> Antoine Glaser, journalist and renowned specialist on Africa, evokes this very idea of tension between national interests and common norms: “*The main difficulty for François*

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<sup>79</sup> Guillaume Devin, *Le multilatéralisme est-il fonctionnel?*, p.151.

<sup>80</sup> Thomas Hofnung, « Le dilemme sahélien de Paris », *Libération.fr* 11 July 2012, accessed on 11/11/2012, URL : <http://www.liberation.fr/monde/2012/07/11/le-dilemme-sahelien-de-paris> 832762.

<sup>81</sup> Thomas Hofnung, « Cédéao : la difficile intervention », *Libération* 20 September 2012, p.7.

*Hollande to switch between a universalist discourse and the need to defend strategic and economic interests of France*".<sup>82</sup> The geopolitical situation of Western Africa was indeed very disturbing for France during the summer 2012 as the risk of a major terrorist attack against French nationals or interests continued to increase as Jihadists were observed to consolidate their positions in Northern Mali. The foreign Minister Laurent Fabius was caught between preoccupations of security and the will to preserve his allies in the region. In an official press conference, François Hollande attempted to combine and not oppose national interests (the release of hostages) and global norms (the sovereignty of Mali). The French president refused to make the question of hostages a condition for the need to help Mali. There are two different objectives: first, a national one, namely the release of hostages; secondly, an international one, namely the need to reshape Mali's sovereignty.<sup>83</sup> Along the lines of the same approach but by stressing other global norms, France's Defence minister Jean-Yves Le Drian emphasized the importance of protecting the life of national interests but without neglecting the importance of Malian territorial integrity which "is essential for the security of this country, of France and of Europe".<sup>84</sup> In order to avoid a possible controversy and right after the decision to directly intervene, the French president affirmed that: France has no specific interest to defend with this operation [Serval Operation] and the French army is only engaged on the ground to help a friend state and to fight against terrorism.<sup>85</sup> This official statement, which is respectful of common norms, explains why the French action is supported by the entire international community and welcomed by all African states. Nevertheless, a few days after, Laurent Fabius declared that: "several essential interests were at stake for us [France], for Africa, for Europe and for the whole international community and that is why we needed to act".<sup>86</sup> This statement is clearly in contradiction to François Hollande's presidential speech because it implied that France has

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<sup>82</sup> Armin Arefi, "Hollande moins "africain" que Sarkozy", *Le Point.fr*, 11 October 2012, accessed on 05/12/13, URL : [http://www.lepoint.fr/monde/hollande-moins-africain-que-sarkozy-11-10-2012-1515974\\_24.php](http://www.lepoint.fr/monde/hollande-moins-africain-que-sarkozy-11-10-2012-1515974_24.php).

<sup>83</sup> François Hollande, « Conférence de presse de M. le Président de la République à la suite de l'événement de haut niveau des Nations Unies sur le Sahel », New York 26 September 2012, accessed on 10/03/2013, URL : <http://www.elysee.fr/conferences-de-presse/article/conference-de-presse-de-m-le-president-de-la-republique-a-la-suite-de-l-evenement-de-haut-niveau-des-nations-unies-sur-le-sahel/>.

<sup>84</sup> Jean-Yves Le Drian, "L'intégrité du Mali est essentielle pour la sécurité de l'Europe", *La Croix*, 24 December and 25 December 2012, pp.6-7.

<sup>85</sup> François Hollande, « Déclaration du Président de la République à l'issue du Conseil restreint de défense », Paris 12 January 2013, accessed on 12/03/2013, URL : <http://www.elysee.fr/declarations/article/declaration-du-president-de-la-republique-a-l-issue-du-conseil-restreint-de-defense/>.

<sup>86</sup> Laurent Fabius, « Conférence de presse de Laurent Fabius », Paris 14 January 2013, accessed on 13/03/2013, URL: <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/les-ministres-et-le-ministere/l-equipe-ministerielle/laurent-fabius/discours-21591/article/mali-conference-de-presse-de>.

major interests, even if multilateralism is evoked with the implication of Africa, Europe and the whole international community.

Secondly, it seems important to specify the nature and importance of French nationals in Mali and in the region. In April 2013, the Senate compiled an information report<sup>87</sup> about Mali and provided a thorough overview of the French citizens who are living in this region: there are about 6000 French residents in Mali, 35 000 Frenchmen in the Sahel-Sahara belt, 80 000 in West Africa<sup>88</sup> and 220 000 in Africa as a whole. Besides, many French companies operate there. On the other hand, about 100 000 Malians currently live in France. To sum up, the senators underline the fact that, without the intervention of the French army, the whole country [Mali] would be vulnerable to terrorist attacks. In the same spirit, another report from 2006 is clearly justified the presence of French military bases by the existence of “French national interests, especially the protection of French nationals and those from third states”.<sup>89</sup> The defence of national interests is maintained and mostly linked to the security of nationals.

In a press conference<sup>90</sup>, François Hollande and his counterpart Mahamadou Issoufou answer to the journalist’s questions, one of them regarding the French company Areva which has remarkable interests in Niger, namely the uranium mine in Imouraren, displaying a significant part of the production for national nuclear activity. Without making a clear link between these economic interests and the French direct intervention in Mali, it makes sense to believe that the defence of strategic economic interests in a context of stagnation for France is highly necessary, inasmuch as French foreign policy has designed the economic diplomacy as a priority. A Belgian newspaper provides further information on this very question of economic interests by revealing the fact that French special forces will be sent to Niger in order to protect the uranium mines and to ensure stability.<sup>91</sup> This deployment is the sign of the existence of strong national interests. If the Malian underground remains mostly unexplored *“the country is the neighbour of the rich Niger where the French economic and energetic interests are*

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<sup>87</sup> Jean-Pierre Chevènement et Gérard Larcher, rapport d’information n° 513 « Mali : comment gagner la paix ? », 16 April 2013, accessed on 24/04/13, URL : <http://www.senat.fr/notice-rapport/2012/r12-513-notice.html>.

<sup>88</sup> See Figure 3 in Appendix.

<sup>89</sup> André Dulait, Robert Hue, Yves Pozzo di Borgo et Didier BOULAUD, Rapport d'information n° 450 (2005-2006), 3 July 2006, accessed on 17/12/2013, URL : <http://www.senat.fr/rap/r05-450/r05-450.html>.

<sup>90</sup> « Conférence de presse conjointe de M. le Président de la République et de M. Mahamadou ISSOUFOU, président de la République du Niger », Palais de L’Elysée, 11 June 2012, accessed on 10/03/2013, URL : <http://www.elysee.fr/conferences-de-presse/article/conference-de-presse-conjointe-de-m-le-president-de-la-republique-et-de-m-mahamadou-issoufou-president-de-la-republique-du-niger/>.

<sup>91</sup> Philippe Régnier, "L'armée défendra l'uranium d'Areva", Le Soir 25 January 2013, p.9.

*considerable*".<sup>92</sup> For Areva as the second-largest world uranium producer, Niger is strategic. Therefore, France was forced to intervene in order to protect its interests in the entire region.

The journalist Yves Bourdillon considers that Mali is not currently at stake as far as its strategic resources are concerned.<sup>93</sup> The basin of Taoudenni<sup>94</sup> between Niger, Mali, Algeria and Mauritania may be a future must but for the time being, the economist Paul Derreumaux presumes that the real topic at stake here is regional stability. In terms of its geographic location, Mali is at the crossroad between major countries like Niger (uranium), Mauritania, Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Senegal. Adept of kidnapping, the terrorist groups from northern Mali are threatening the regional human and business flows and consequently the French intervention has a strong "antiterrorist colour".

### *3/ The Malian crisis as a new test for a contradictory French African policy*

In this chapter, the author will tackle more precisely the French policy towards Africa in the light of the Malian crisis. Today, such a policy remains highly problematic because it has been moulded by the post-colonial and independent area for Africa but with the French will to keep a strong influence in its older *pré carré*. Consequently, there exists a strong tension between the resilience of "old habits" and a lack of democratisation ("exceptionalism"), and a reformist current which aims at transforming the French-African relationship with the help of new principles such as transparency, equality and partnership.

To begin with, it may be interesting to quote some parts of François Hollande's speech in front of the National Assembly in Dakar from October 2012<sup>95</sup> because it announces a type of program for a new African policy. First, the main idea is to proceed to a "new start for a new relationship" in the political context of democracy defined by several principles: pluralism, transparency, good governance and equality. Secondly, France and Africa will start a new relationship based on "respect, clarity, solidarity and transparency" which entails the end of the decried "*Françafrique*" or a complex and obscure network of official and unofficial connections

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<sup>92</sup> See Figure 3 in Appendix.

<sup>93</sup> Yves Bourdillon, "Des enjeux stratégiques plutôt qu'économiques à l'intervention", *Les Echos*, 15 January 2013, p.8.

<sup>94</sup> See Figure 4 in Appendix.

<sup>95</sup> François Hollande, "Discours de M. le Président de la République, Assemblée Nationale", Dakar 12 October 2012, pp.1-9.

in order to preserve the political, military and economic interests of French and African elites. The method is summarized with the phrase: “*sans ingérence mais avec exigence*” (without interference but with exigency).<sup>96</sup> The French president aims to deconstruct the “*Françafrique*” and to build a partnership between France and Africa, a state-to-state relationship without emissaries, intermediaries and secret cells. Antoine Glaser, a specialist of African policy, is clearly using the word “normalisation” when he draws a parallel between Nicolas Sarkozy’s behaviour and François Hollande’s decision to reshape such a problematic policy. One symbol of this “normalisation” is the extended responsibility of the *Quai d’Orsay* and the Economic Development Agency instead of a special adviser for Africa as far as the French policy in Africa is concerned. Besides, François Hollande appears to be less *africanophile* than Nicolas Sarkozy who fostered close ties with several African officials (Omar Bongo for example)<sup>97</sup>; nevertheless, the current French president is continuing the tradition of a special relationship with Africa by welcoming African heads of state with full honours at the *Palais de l’Elysee*, especially the son of Omar Bongo in July 2012.<sup>98</sup> Antoine Glaser does not want to evoke a “rebirth of *Françafrique*” because François Hollande has no personal ties with its counterparts and, due to globalisation, France has no choice but to manage every burning issue in Africa. It seems that we assist to the emergence of the “*Afrique-France*”.

In three different articles from *Le Monde*, Christophe Châtelot underlines an effort for normalisation but its limits at the same time. Despite a will of change with new principles and a new relationship, Africa remains a special continent for France because of a long-term shared history. The right word to use here is *lucidity*.<sup>99</sup> In other words, François Hollande has to adopt lucidity concerning a common past and present, a special relationship but with full respect of democracy, human rights and good governance. France will never have “a normal relationship” with Africa in the light of its colonial past, so the French state has to develop multilateralism as a diplomatic method and as an art to avoid “sometimes incestuous bilateral relationships with Africa”.<sup>100</sup> The will to “Africanise” African policy is an important way to improve the responsibility of African political and economic elites and regional organisations (AU, ECOWAS).

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<sup>96</sup> This sentence is directly inspired from the reformist will of the former Prime Minister Lionel Jospin (1997-2002) who talked about “ni ingerence, ni indifférence” (no ingerence, no indifferency)

<sup>97</sup> According to several French newspapers, Omar Bongo, former president of Gabon, would have funded Nicolas Sarkozy electoral campaign in 2005.

<sup>98</sup> Armin Arefi, “Hollande moins “africain” que Sarkozy”, *Le Point.fr*, 11 October 2012, accessed on 05/12/13, URL : [http://www.lepoint.fr/monde/hollande-moins-africain-que-sarkozy-11-10-2012-1515974\\_24.php](http://www.lepoint.fr/monde/hollande-moins-africain-que-sarkozy-11-10-2012-1515974_24.php).

<sup>99</sup> Christophe Châtelot, “François Hollande et l’Afrique: le temps de la lucidité”, *Le Monde*, 12 October 2012, pp.1-3.

<sup>100</sup> Christophe Châtelot, “France-Afrique Un nouveau départ”, *Le Monde Supplément Géo & Politique* 28 January 2013, p.4-5.

However, it also constitutes an opportunity for French foreign policy to share risks and benefits in equal measure and to find an accommodation with this problematic tension between normalisation and exceptionalism.

For the political analyst Michel Galy, there is no question that the French foreign policy's involvement in the Malian crisis is in the greatest tradition of the special relationship with Africa and more precisely in its darkest form: la *Françafrique*. Galy maintains that French diplomacy has imagined a specific strategy in order to mobilise ECOWAS, the African Union, and the UN in a brilliant mix of demands, statements and resolutions and thanks to the help of "friendly regimes" for legitimizing the military intervention. Additionally, the specialist criticizes the "legal makeup" of the intervention which is not convincing as far as the UNO or the legitimacy of the Malian interim president are concerned. The relationship between France and Africa is still unclear and confusing and the resilience of exceptionalism seems to be obvious.<sup>101</sup>

Between the Coup form March 2012 in Bamako and the decision for the French state to directly intervene, there is an obvious effort to work naturally with the Malian state as well as with its neighbouring countries, ECOWAS and the AU. The idea is to make Africanisation a reality and to put an end to a traditional bilateralism. Even if Paris has difficulties to evoke the question of national interests and to reform its old relationship with Africa, multilateralism understood as a true and better cooperation with African states and regional organisations is generally respected. Now, it is time to analyse the relationship between France and the United Nations in order to confirm or refute this multilateral trend.

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<sup>101</sup> Michel Galy, "Un nouvel avatar de la Françafrique", *Le Monde*, 21 January 2013, p.21.

## **B)The relationship between France and the United Nations**

The cooperation between the French diplomacy and the United Nations Organisation (UN) illustrates another pan of multilateralism, namely the internationalization. The UN stage is particularly important for France because the Republic is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and belongs to the highly closed club of P5: USA, Russian Federation, China, Great-Britain and France. This permanent seat is a central dimension with regards to the global influence of France and its capability to act directly or indirectly. Consequently, the author wants to analyze the role of France among and with the UNSC and more precisely its influence on the UN agenda. However, the international organization cannot be reduced to the Security Council and the French participation in the General Assembly and during several High Level Meeting has to be observed. The author will be using a method already introduced and applied in the course of this paper, namely the analysis of the method (bilateral or multilateral process), the justification (national interests or global norms) and finally the political configuration of the French-African relationship in the UN framework (exceptionalism or normalization).

### *1/ Proactive diplomacy as an illustrator of the French leadership in the Malian case*

It seems strange to ask the question of multilateralism as regards the relationship of France with the UN in the light of the Malian crisis because such an international organization is the very representation of the wish to cooperate with more than two states in order to fix a problem, nevertheless, in reality, the situation is a bit more complicated because the P5 may be considered as an *espace de puissance* (area of power) at the heart of a multilateralism which has its origins in the fight against the abuse of power.<sup>102</sup> In order to better understand the complexity of the UN mode of functioning, it is necessary to briefly refer back to a theoretical analysis by means of giving credit to two specialized articles. Furthermore, the author will stress the

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<sup>102</sup> Badie, Devin, *Le Multilatéralisme*.

proactive role of France among the UN for the resolution of the Malian crisis and try to perceive some limits to the multilateral process.

In a recent article, Helene Gandois studied the specificity of French African policy in the UNSC between 2007 and 2010, thus questioning the expression of “*multilateral turn*”.<sup>103</sup> This article aims at examining several conflicts in Africa in order to evaluate the role of France in both international organizations (UN, EU) and within these different countries where France is intervening as well. This comparison between diplomatic negotiations at the UN and military interventions on the ground is particularly interesting because there is a genuine wish to cooperate with international and regional organizations and to respect the multilateral process and the UN legitimation but associated with a will to act independently and quite freely on the ground. In other words, France seeks to act under a UN mandate without renouncing to the freedom of decision. Helene Gandois defines the multilateralism as “an institutionalized form of cooperation among international relations”, nevertheless she is quoting Julien Meimon who considers, by means of a realist approach, that France is following its national interests in the framework of the African policy and such a point is not incompatible with a multilateral approach for cooperating with other states in order to achieve its ends.<sup>104</sup> Gandois underlines that “*multilateralism à la française*” is associated with a realist theory of International Relations and that the use of a multilateral process is, *in fine*, a tool for serving its national interests.

It is necessary to mention another key article, written by David Ambrosetti and Mélanie Cathelin about the concept of “leadership” among the UNSC.<sup>105</sup> The authors want to understand how, why and when a member can take the leadership in a UN new case. As in the precedent article, they observe a resilience of the balance of power but within a multilateral framework made up of negotiation, cooperation and adaptation. This “leadership” is a highly political and politicized role despite its unofficial status and it is traditionally given to France as far as French speaking Africa is concerned. Although Helene Gandois, David Ambrosetti and Mélanie Cathelin consider that the balance of power is never absent and the P5 may be seen as a “*relais*” to serve the interests of the most powerful states, they do not refrain from underlining the fact that multilateral decisions lead to inflexions and adaptations of such interests. That being said, this

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<sup>103</sup> Gandois Hélène, « La politique africaine de la France au Conseil de sécurité de 2007 à 2010 : un virage multilatéral confirmé? » *Dynamiques Internationales* 4, 2011, pp. 1-46.

<sup>104</sup> Julien Meimon, « Que reste-t-il de la coopération française? », *Politique africaine*, 105: 1, 2007, pp. 27-53.

<sup>105</sup> David Ambrosetti, Mélanie Cathelin, « Les enjeux du leadership au Conseil de sécurité : responsabiliser ou contrôler les opérations de paix de l'ONU ? », *Revue internationale et stratégique* 68, 2007, p. 69-77, accessed on 18/04/2014, URL : [www.cairn.info/revue-internationale-et-strategie-2007-4-page-69.htm](http://www.cairn.info/revue-internationale-et-strategie-2007-4-page-69.htm).

“leadership position” can be explained as a position recognized by its peers to a delegation on a specific case. If such a role is not official, the leader has a special relationship with the UN Secretariat in New York, during the negotiation of UNSC orientations and it can pretend to diverse diplomatic, logistic and material support from the UN partners. The claim for the leadership could be identified from the inclusion in the UNSC agenda of a new case because such a case is more important for this delegation than for its partners. Once the UNSC has decided to accept a new case, the “leader delegation” plays a central role during the discussions, for example by taking the floor in the first position or by writing draft resolutions and diffusing them to the other members. Later, the leader delegation has a strong influence upon the nomination of the responsible party for the operation. In case of emergency, the delegation can mobilize the UNSC by placing the topic at the top of the agenda or by organizing meetings and public debates in order to maintain a strong media interests.

Another chapter of David Ambrosetti and Mélanie Cathelin’s article tackles the allocation of responsibilities according to the spheres of influence of the most powerful member states. Until the mid-1990’s, France was systematically responsible for French-speaking Africa. The recognition of this French exclusiveness on this particular part of Africa ended with the controversial role played by the French Republic between 1990 and 1994 in Rwanda, nevertheless such a principle of “allocation of responsibilities” remains valid for permanent member states. A leadership seems to be a kind of “win-win agreement” because the other UN member states have the assurance that the case will be between trustful hands whereas the “leader delegation” can take the decision to choose one type of conflict resolution that is helping its interests. As far as French-speaking Africa is concerned, Paris was a credible actor because of the strong relationship with African heads of State and the capability to engage military and financial means in order to support negotiations. The engagement and the mobilization of a “leader delegation” could lead to additional resources for managing the case: material help (peacekeeping forces or humanitarian organizations) or symbolic support (the legitimacy associated to a UN mandate). Such a concept of “leadership” must certainly not be neglected as far as the role of France in the Malian crisis is concerned.

France is highly preoccupied with the Malian case and it seems that the UN French delegation wants to take the lead on this issue for several reasons. First of all, as member of the UNSC, France is clearly taking the initiative when the Security Council adopts unanimously a presidential statement which condemns the 21<sup>st</sup> of March Coup in Bamako. The journalist

Christophe Châtelot mentions: “the intense diplomatic activity of Paris”<sup>106</sup> and highlights the fact that France is in the first line as far as the crisis in Mali is concerned. The leadership is linked to the capability of a delegation to mobilize the media and public opinion. To this regard, François Hollande decided to organize a High Level Meeting on the Security in Sahel and underlined his engagement in order to ask for a UNSC meeting, as soon as possible, for launching the process of a stabilization force under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter.<sup>107</sup> In September 2012, the newspaper *Le Monde* affirmed that Mali accepts to call for UN assistance and this important step is supported “at arm’s length” by France.<sup>108</sup> Likewise, the French decision to call a summit about Sahel on the fringe of the General Assembly of the United Nations shows that the respect of a multilateral process by mobilizing the UN stage is obvious. The French proactive diplomacy is mentioned as well when Christophe Châtelot describes France on the first line for the Malian case when the Republic is acting as the spokesman of African regional organizations’ arguments or sometimes when it is inspiring them.<sup>109</sup> The examination of the different UN official documents is a good opportunity to illustrate this French multilateral engagement. On Friday, October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2012, Mr Bamba, spokesman of Cote d’Ivoire, evokes this High Level Meeting on the Security in Sahel and precisely uses the term “leadership” for characterizing the action of the French president François Hollande, thus evoking “a resolute action to stop the crisis in Mali”:

*Before elaborating any further, let me seize this opportunity to express the satisfaction and gratitude of ECOWAS towards the international community for the tremendous political support generated by the 26 September High-level Meeting on the Sahel, and we would like to underscore in particular the leadership demonstrated in that regard by the French President, His Excellency François Hollande, and his Government, whose strong and unequivocal commitment to resolute action to stop the crisis in Mali is highly commendable.*<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Christophe Châtelot, „La France embarrassée par la crise malienne“, *Le Monde.fr*, 05 April 2012, accessed on 13/11/12, URL: [http://abonnes.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2012/04/05/la-france-embarrassee-par-la-crise-malienne\\_1680991\\_3212.html?xtmc=mali&xtcr=116](http://abonnes.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2012/04/05/la-france-embarrassee-par-la-crise-malienne_1680991_3212.html?xtmc=mali&xtcr=116).

<sup>107</sup> François Hollande, « Intervention du Président de la République à l'événement de haut niveau des Nations Unies sur le Sahel », New York : 26 September 2012, accessed on 05/03/2013, URL : <http://www.elysee.fr/declarations/article/intervention-du-president-de-la-republique-a-l-evenement-de-haut-niveau-des-nations-unies-sur-le-sahel/>.

<sup>108</sup> Nathalie Nougayrède, Christophe Châtelot, "Le Mali en appelle à l'ONU pour reconquérir le Nord", *Le Monde*, 26 September 2012, p.3

<sup>109</sup> Christophe Châtelot, "Mr Hollande en quête d'une politique africaine", *Le Monde*, 12 October 2012, p.3.

<sup>110</sup> UN Security Council Meeting Report 6846 (2012), UN doc., S/PV.6846, Friday, 12 October 2012, p.2.

In another meeting, Mr Coulibali, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali, underlines the particular role played by France as a precursor about the Malian case and a proactive member state with strong efforts in order to mobilize the Security Council:

*I would in particular like to thank France, its people, President and Government, who very early on understood that the presence in northern Mali of heavily armed AQMI, MUJAO and affiliated extremists and terrorists posed an immediate threat to international peace and security. France spared no effort in ensuring that the Security Council assumed its responsibilities.<sup>111</sup>*

Along the lines of such commentaries, the Malian and Ivoirian delegations clearly demonstrate France's specific role as regards the crisis in Bamako and the concept of "leadership" used by David Ambrossetti and Mélanie Cathelin in their article is applicable to this case study because the French delegation wants to mobilize the UNSC and the medias as quickly as possible thanks to a complete and proactive diplomacy. The will to cooperate with the UN, as far as French foreign policy in Africa is concerned, is explicitly formulated in an official Senate's report from April 2013, in which the senators Jean-Pierre Chevènement and Gérard Larcher highlight the official French statement aiming at collaborating with the UN as well as African regional organisations within a multilateral framework.<sup>112</sup> Nevertheless, if the multilateral process seems to be a new standard for the functioning of the French foreign policy in Africa, a certain number of limits inherent in this multilateral approach should be mentioned.

On October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2012, François Hollande gave an interview<sup>113</sup> on TV5 Monde in order to justify the French statement regarding the Malian crisis. The French president stated wanting to act as quickly as possible as time is pressing and the narco-terrorists are progressing in the direction of Bamako. Nevertheless, the UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon was less determined and highlighted the grave consequences of a military intervention in Sahel and the need to maintain negotiation despite the problematic situation in Northern Mali. In his report, Ban Ki

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<sup>111</sup> UN Security Council Meeting Report 6898(2012), UN doc., S/PV.6898, Thursday, 20 December 2012, p.3.

<sup>112</sup> Jean-Pierre Chevènement et Gérard Larcher, rapport d'information n° 513 « Mali : comment gagner la paix ? », 16 April 2013, accessed on 24/04/13, URL : <http://www.senat.fr/notice-rapport/2012/r12-513-notice.html>.

<sup>113</sup> François Hollande, « Interview du Président de la République par FRANCE 24, TV5MONDE ET RFI », Paris : 11 October 2012, accessed on 10/03/2013, URL : <http://www.elysee.fr/interviews/article/interview-du-president-de-la-republique-par-france-24-tv5monde-et-rfi/>.

Moon insisted on the risk incurred, especially as far as the humanitarian situation and the respect of human rights are concerned. The same prudence is easily visible in the speech of Romani Prodi, the former Italian President of Council and UN special envoy to Sahel, who pinpointed September 2013 as the earliest possible date regarding the mobilization of an international military support for helping the Malian army to recover the national territory. Such prudence contrasts the French proactive diplomacy in order to convince the UNSC to authorize a military intervention. In this case, the multilateral process is a synonym for delays and deadlocks whereas the French government wants to act quickly and firmly.<sup>114</sup> In late January 2013<sup>115</sup>, the UN remained hesitant with regards to the question of stronger engagement. If the political support for France is absolutely clear, a concrete UN financial and logistical support is by no means evident and the Secretary General does not mention any further UN engagement alongside French and African troops whereas France is precisely urging for such an action.

## *2/ The urgent need to fight against terrorism and preserve collective security*

At this point in time, French officials clearly wanted to associate the intervention in Mali with a set of international norms and laws, especially the concept of collective security. The French president insisted on this concept in the wake of the High Level Meeting on Security in Sahel.<sup>116</sup> For one thing, the situation in Mali is seen as an internal crisis but such a threat will have implications for West Africa, Maghreb and ultimately the whole international community. François Hollande highlighted the risk of a new terrorist sanctuary at the door of the European Union and thus called for a global reaction in order to respect the very concept of collective security. In doing so, he was by no means hesitant to point out the “passivity of several nations” which are facing terrorism and letting it grow and consolidate its positions and traffics.<sup>117</sup> In other words, there is a “responsibility to act” and to help Malian authorities to recover

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<sup>114</sup> Alexandra Geneste, "L'ONU circonspecte quant à une intervention au Mali", *Le Monde*, 30 Novembre 2012, p.5.

<sup>115</sup> Alexandra Geneste, "L'ONU hésite sur son degré d'engagement", *Le Monde*, 26 January 2013, p.4.

<sup>116</sup> François Hollande, « Intervention du Président de la République à l'événement de haut niveau des Nations Unies sur le Sahel », New York : 26 September 2012, accessed on 05/03/2013, URL : <http://www.elysee.fr/declarations/article/intervention-du-president-de-la-republique-a-l-evenement-de-haut-niveau-des-nations-unies-sur-le-sahel/>.

<sup>117</sup> François Hollande, « Adoption par le Conseil de sécurité de la résolution 2071 », Paris, 14 October 2012, accessed on 18/03/2013, URL : <http://www.elysee.fr/communiqués-de-presse/article/adoption-par-le-conseil-de-securite-de-la-resolution-2071/>.

institutions and territorial integrity, but at the same time, there is a necessity to put an end to this new threat for the benefits of regional stability. Mr. Coulibali, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali, agrees with that point of view when he mentions the presence of extremists and terrorists in Northern Mali as “an immediate threat to international peace and security”.<sup>118</sup> The intervention in Mali will ensure peace, stability and security in this highly disputed area and France urges the UN Member States to take their responsibilities and to respond to the demand of the Malian authorities.

While French authorities underline the priority given to diplomacy and multilateralism, some journalists decide to stress another dimension of a possible intervention in Northern Mali: the threat against national interests and more precisely the security of French citizens. Nathalie Guibert considers AQIM to have been a direct threat since 2010, when the military confrontation was harder after several attacks and hostage taking<sup>119</sup> as France has been identified as a priority target. The journalist reminds her readers that six French citizens were still held hostage at this time. The question of hostages is a central one inasmuch as AQMI is apparently exerting an increasing amount of pressure on the French government, particularly by means of a video available as of September, the 8<sup>th</sup>, 2012 on the Mauritanian website Sahara Medias. This video shows four hostages: Pierre Legrand, Marc Féret, Thierry Dole and Dalien Larribe who are urging the government and the mining companies they were working for to intervene.<sup>120</sup> These hostages are a key topic in order to understand the French hesitation to act directly and on the frontline. Nevertheless, in another article, the author Fabrice Rousselot illustrates the tension between the common principle of territorial integrity and the national interest for French authorities to protect their citizens. On one hand, François Hollande insisted on the need to rescue French hostages but, on the other hand, he refused to neglect the principle of territorial integrity for Mali.<sup>121</sup> Nathalie Nougayrède and Christophe Châtelot underline that “the terrorist risk against French interests in Sahel is maximal”<sup>122</sup> and explain why France does not want to be at the head of a direct military intervention as far as the situation in Mali is concerned. In fact, there is a double threat against French hostages and against French military forces if ever such a decision is taken. Beyond the principle of territorial integrity and the responsibility to protect

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<sup>118</sup> UN Security Council Meeting Report 6898(2012), UN doc., S/PV.6898, Thursday, 20 December 2012.

<sup>119</sup> Nathalie Guibert, “la France juge une intervention au Mali inéluctable”, *Le Monde*, 08 August 2012, p.4.

<sup>120</sup> Isabelle Mandraud, “AQMI fait pression sur Paris en diffusant une vidéo de quatre otages au Nord-Mali”, *Le Monde*, 11 Septembre 2012, p.4.

<sup>121</sup> Fabrice Rousselot, „A l’ONU, Hollande plaide l’action“, *Libération*, 25 September 2012, P.7.

<sup>122</sup> Nathalie Nougayrède, Christophe Châtelot, “Le Mali en appelle à l’ONU pour reconquérir le Nord”, *Le Monde*, 26 September 2012, p.3.

the Malian population, it is important to bear in mind the presence of 6000 French citizens<sup>123</sup> which represents an ultimate national interest for Paris.

The tension between multilateralism and bilateralism is quite discernible during the period between September and December 2012 because Paris wants to take the initiative and to put the Malian case at the top of the UN priorities with a proactive diplomacy. Nevertheless, the UN Secretary General showed signs of reticence when it came down to preparing an international intervention in Northern Mali whereas François Hollande maintained that: “*France will do whatever it takes in order to liberate its citizens*”.<sup>124</sup> The special summit on Sahel was a good opportunity for France to take the lead and to start forging a coalition for a probable military intervention. However, for doing so, the country was in need of a UN vote for a new resolution and, according to the French officials, this vote had to happen before the end of the month. The UN Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations Hervé Ladsous, who happens to be French, fully understood the imperatives of French foreign policy, namely the duty to protect nationals but such imperatives cannot prevail over the principles of the UN Charter<sup>125</sup> and this is not the time for a military and political process for Northern Mali. This example clearly shows that it seems complicated for French foreign policy to comply with global norms or values when the lives of French citizens are at stake.

### *3/ The will to end the Françafrique and to modernize the French-African relationship*

Through the voices of several officials, the French Republic has chosen to maintain the end of a traditional African policy also referred to as “*Françafrique*” and to claim that the normalization of such a policy is now at work. Since the genocide in Rwanda during the 1990s, the French State has been writing a new narrative about the relationship between the former *metropole* and its colonies. The intervention in Mali is part of this effort to modernize the French policy in Africa far from old habits and hidden agenda. The two MEPs Christophe Guilloteau and Philippe Nauche insist on the context of the Serval operation in their official report<sup>126</sup>, the main

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<sup>123</sup> Thomas Hofnung, "Mali: le président Hollande s'en-va-t-en guerre", *Libération*, 12 January 2013, p.6.

<sup>124</sup> Alexandra Geneste and Isabelle Mandraud, "Le volontarisme de Paris sur le Mali se heurte à des réticences à l'ONU", *Le Monde*, 28 Septembre 2012, p.5.

<sup>125</sup> Alexandra Geneste, "Multiplication d'obstacles pour une opération au Mali", *Le Monde*, 07 December 2012, p6.

<sup>126</sup> Christophe GUILLOTEAU et Philippe NAUCHE, « rapport d'information n° 1288 sur l'opération Serval au Mali, 18 July 2013, accessed on 12/12/2013, URL : <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/14/rap-info/i1288.asp>.

components being a letter written by the Malian president and addressed to the UNSC along with the UN decision to act militarily in order to protect Mali's sovereignty, population and territorial integrity. In this regard, it seems difficult to blame France for neocolonialism or an abusive power policy, especially in this part of Africa which was the French privileged sphere of influence. Undoubtedly, there is an effort to respect multilateralism and its rules and principles. The former ambassador and Minister of Foreign Affairs Dominique de Villepin is moving in this direction when he urges France not to act alone in – for instance – a purely bilateral agreement between Paris and Bamako, but to develop a true and fair partnership under the auspices of regional organizations; in this case, ECOWAS. According to Dominique de Villepin, this is the right time to forge a new African policy with new principles such as Africanisation, regionalization and Europeanisation. The idea is to put an end to French solo intervention with a high responsibility given to military command. France should work with African regional organizations and states, the UNSC and the European Union and stop considering Africa and particularly West Africa as a sanctuary for French direct or indirect intervention. The will to develop a closer cooperation with regional actors is fully understood by French officials. Stéphane Gompertz, former director of Africa for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs between 2010 and 2012, does not consider that this way to act is new or associated to François Hollande's presidency because it was already the case under Nicolas Sarkozy who played the multinational card with a combined effort between France and the EU, the UN and several African organizations with a sub-regional (ECOWAS) or continental (African Union) aura.<sup>127</sup> Taking such institutions into account is a key aspect of the multilateralization of French diplomacy because if multilateralism is supposing internationalization by working with the United Nations or Europeanisation by means of common decision-making processes, it is worth noting a third expression of multilateralism, namely regionalization.

Additionally, this effort to shape a new African policy with less bilateralism, personal implications and power policy, has to be qualified. Roland Marchal, senior research fellow at the National Centre for Scientific Research and based at the Centre for International Studies and Researches (CERI/Sciences-Po, Paris), speaks about a growing gap between France and Africa, and more precisely between Paris and its former colonies. Some African leaders mention contradictions between the way the French State continues to act and a supposed normalization of the French African relationship.<sup>128</sup> They insist on the point that despite the independence of

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<sup>127</sup> Interview with Stéphane Gompertz (Vienna, 17/06/2013).

<sup>128</sup> Interview with Roland Marchal (Paris, 11/01/2013).

African states, France is always present through military bases, companies or political advisors and is keeping a kind of neo-colonial link alive but at the same time, Paris is refusing to cooperate with African authorities in important areas such as providing visas for African citizens who would like to work in France. In substance, they assume that the French Republic is seeking to keep them under trusteeship without assuming the consequences of such a matter of fact. Then, the French African relationship has difficulties to cope with the current evolution of international relations and of the French Nation-State. In other words, military interventions are increasingly challenged and, more generally, the art of exerting influence has changed. France is directly concerned by such an evolution because Paris, along with London, constitutes the last Western power to still believe in the benefits of direct military intervention, while nations like the United States or Germany are helping local governments with money, intelligence service or logistical support. The French presence in Africa was and is still associated with military bases and direct interventions and even though the political discourse has changed and is promoting global norms, the current French policy in Africa may be seen as an art of perpetuating a traditional power policy. Such a point of view is mentioned by another specialist of Franco-African relations as well in a recent article. Tony Chafer diagnoses a “*serious reassessment*” of the French African policy after the Rwanda genocide. Nevertheless, Chafer is not talking about a disengagement or a normalisation but instead reorientation and a modernization in order to better serve French interests. This evolution is highly visible under the Prime Minister Lionel Jospin (1997-2002) who wanted “to do less but to do better” and thus decided to take different steps in order to change the traditional unilateral approach as far as relations with Africa are concerned. Such a modernization aimed at multinationalizing support for Africa and sharing the burden and risks of such a support. While the rhetoric claimed soft power was to be prioritized, in practice the instruments of hard power remained.

If France has clearly expressed its will to work with the UN and under the legitimacy of the UNSC, the European Union also had a massive impact on the way French diplomacy is functioning. This evolution fully concerns the French policy in Africa, as there is a complementarity between multilateralism understood as a stronger UN cooperation and multilateralism seen as a better collaboration among the European states.

## **C)The relationship between France and the European Union**

In a third subchapter, the author wants to analyze and understand the relationship between France and another key actor as far as the French foreign policy is concerned: the European Union. Multilateralism within a European context may occur in two manners: First of all, it means the need for a member state like France to work with the EU understood as an actor who is thinking, speaking or acting as such. However, it is important to bear in mind that France may also interact with an EU member state which is thinking, acting and speaking alone as a nation state.

In the following chapters, the author will observe the way France is cooperating with the EU and/or the individual member states and whether or not the French Republic is respecting a multilateral process. Furthermore, it is worth noting the analysis of the political discourse used by French authorities in order to confirm or refute the priority given to global norms. Finally, the French-African relationship will be considered in the light of Europeanisation.

### *1/ The gap between European solidarity and concrete military engagement*

Multilateralism may also be understood as an effort to improve European integration or “Europeanization” and this point is particularly at stake in French foreign affairs. As one of the founding states of the European Union and a country with an international foreign policy, France obviously wants its European partners to take on their responsibilities, especially for a mission in West Africa. Nathalie Guibert insists on the fact that François Hollande is, for one thing, prioritizing diplomacy, political dialogue and multilateralism whereas the European Union has created a new mission entitled “EUCAP Sahel Niger” on July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2012 in order to train Malian military troops.<sup>129</sup> The French Defense minister Jean-Yves Le Drian underlines the will to work with the EU and to develop a proactive diplomacy among the EU partners for creating a new

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<sup>129</sup> Nathalie Guibert, "la France juge une intervention au Mali inéluctable", *Le Monde*, 08 August 2012, p.4.

mission in Mali.<sup>130</sup> Besides, it is important to notice the French efforts in order to promote the concept of European defense which means defense abiding by a simple NATO framework. This idea of “*Europe puissance*” is a tradition in the French pattern of thought which considers the EU as a “*multiplicateur de puissance*” (power multiplier effect) for the French influence and the Malian case is in fact a convenient opportunity to relaunch such a concept. The mission aims at sending 400 officers and soldiers in order to train the Malian army for recovering territorial sovereignty. The European contingent will not be engaged in combat but it will form, train and organize the local troops. Beyond the example of a common EU mission, there is a clear expression of a European solidarity with the French decision to act in Sahel. The minister for Foreign Affairs Laurent Fabius is very thankful for the support of European partners and he does not hesitate to highlight a “unanimous support” and agreement with the French decision. Such a verbal or political support is extremely important for Paris because it represents a confirmation of the French point of view and a legitimization by the European Union as a political entity and as a collaboration between 27 member states. Multilateralism respects the way France cooperates and communicates with a plurality of actors rather than acting alone or in a face-to-face with Mali.

An extraordinary meeting in Brussels on January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013, was in part considered to constitute a favorable opportunity to understand the limits of the *Europe puissance*. This meeting with EU foreign ministers reveals a strong sense of solidarity with the French decision to intervene in Mali. Catherine Ashton, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security underlined that France is not alone and that several countries are ready to support Paris with military means as well. Behind this unanimity, EU member states seem to be divided between those who want to help France in concrete terms and those who are in favour of providing purely political support. Finally, the European Union simply gave its green light for a training and formation mission of the Malian troops (EUTM).<sup>131</sup> The Belgian former Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt brings up the issue of joint European defence when he compares the fact to convene an extraordinary summit whereas the French troops engage in combat on the ground. In other words, there is a gap between the EU official support and the absence of concrete military engagement. In a special feature, Anne Bauer, Thibault Madelin and Alain Ruello tackled this question of European defence in the light of the Malian crisis, insisting on

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<sup>130</sup> Jean-Yves Le Drian, "L'intégrité du Mali est essentielle pour la sécurité de l'Europe", *La Croix*, 24 December and 25 December 2012, pp.6-7.

<sup>131</sup> Jean-Pierre Stroobants, "L'UE se contente d'une mission de formation", *Le Monde*, 19 January 2013, p.4.

Germany's reaction.<sup>132</sup> Along with Paris and London, Berlin constitutes the third military power in Europe nonetheless, if Angela Merkel considers that the French operation is justified, there is no question of engaging Germany and the support will be political, logistical and humanitarian. The journalists underline that fifty years after the *Elysee* Treaty ratified by Charles De Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer, the military cooperation between France and Germany is once again challenged and François Hollande seems to have a better relationship with London and Washington as far as military cooperation is concerned. The political analyst Dominique Moïsi points out the fact that, except for Great-Britain, the European Union refuses to follow through on a direct intervention, especially in Africa, and embodies even more "*une puissance civile*"<sup>133</sup> (a civilian power). According to Moïsi, the French loneliness is hard to imagine, considering that Mali is not so far from Europe and that the EU will be in front position if terrorism thrives in this region.

The military cooperation has more to do with bilateralism when the European Union, as a political entity, wants to limit its support to military formation and logistics. Nevertheless, Jacques Hubert-Rodier insists on the French will to improve the European defence through bilateral agreement and especially thanks to the 2010 Lancaster House Treaties ratified by David Cameron and Nicolas Sarkozy.<sup>134</sup> These treaties may be a model for France to develop the European defence but the chosen method is the bilateral one. In the same direction, the French newspaper *Libération* underlines an incomplete multilateral process when the EU provides strong political support but no military assistance to Paris.<sup>135</sup> The Malian crisis and the French decision to intervene give rise to strong debates in the German Bundestag, whose president Norbert Lammert wonders whether the French intervention in Mali is purely a Franco-French issue or a European problem<sup>136</sup>. In this case, even a bilateral cooperation seems to be a highly debated sensitive issue. Nathalie Guibert analyses in detail the military support for the French operation, which consisted of two aircrafts for troop transport (Great-Britain), two aircrafts for troop transport and two helicopters (Belgium) as well as one aircraft for troop transport (Denmark).<sup>137</sup> Spain has provided aircrafts after intense negotiations. This overview shows how

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<sup>132</sup> Anne Bauer, Thibault Madelin, Alain Ruello, "La guerre au Mali souligne l'inconstance de l'Europe de la défense", *Les Echos* 15 January 2013, p. 8.

<sup>133</sup> Dominique Moïsi, "L'intervention française au Mali: une guerre de nécessité", *Les Echos*, 28 January 2013, p.10.

<sup>134</sup> Jacques Hubert-Rodier, "Le Mali, un nouveau test pour l'Europe de la défense", *Les Echos*, 9 November 2012, p.16.

<sup>135</sup> Marc Semo avec Sonia Delesalle-Stolper and Nathalie Versieux, "L'Union Européenne brave, mais pas téméraire", *Libération*, 18 January 2013, p.5.

<sup>136</sup> Lilian Alemagna, "En Allemagne, honni soit qui Mali pense", *Libération*, 23 January 2013, p.11.

<sup>137</sup> Nathalie Guibert, "L'appui de l'UE à l'opération au Mali reste limité", *Le Monde*, 24 January 2013, p.2.

difficult it was to forge a coalition for Mali. To sum up, if the European Union has played a role and has shown its solidarity as concerns the Malian crisis, this was only made possible through a bilateral support with countries like Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, the Netherlands and Great-Britain. At this point, the limits to multilateralism are clearly revealed, particularly when a member state asks for military support. If France obviously wants to respect a multilateral process, French authorities have chosen the bilateral option in order to find solutions and to fill existing gaps.

## *2/ To work for European security and for the defence of French interests*

Aiming to be persuasive in the dialogue with its European partners, France maintains that the situation in Mali is a common threat for all EU member states. During a press conference, Laurent Fabius underlines the geopolitical issue at stake in the Sahelian crisis by first identifying a regional chaos and rapidly growing threat against Europe because Mali is a gateway to the Mediterranean Sea. Besides, Paris is calling for an international – particularly European - support seeing that France is acting as a member state as well as a representative for the European Union. The French minister for Foreign Affairs maintains that his country has neither economic, nor financial interests and the French intervention aims at protecting Mali and its population, Africa, Europe and “ *une certaine idée de l’union internationale*”<sup>138</sup> (a particular idea of the international union).

By engaging its troops on the ground, the Republic is taking on its responsibility and participating in a global fight against terrorism. In return, the *Quai d’Orsay* expects a clear and precise support and the expression of European solidarity. According to French officials, a common threat to the European Union requires a common reaction. Beyond official statements, other international actors point out the danger for European security. For example, the NGO Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that the different terrorist groups represent a threat, not only for the region but for the European countries as well. In the case of international intervention, France would be in a forefront position in this conflict, especially because of the six hostages detained in Northern Mali. This last point reveals the existence of French priorities

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<sup>138</sup> Laurent Fabius, « Conférence de presse du ministre des affaires étrangères, M. Laurent Fabius », Bruxelles, 17 January 2013.

in the Malian crisis and invites to think about the real motives behind the official political discourse.

The tension between multilateralism and bilateralism reaches its peak when the study tackles the question of national French interests. If terrorism is a common threat against the European Union, France wants above all to protect the life of national hostages and to avoid new attacks against French citizens. AQIM has never hidden its determination to target French positions or people in the entire region, consequently the French authorities' utmost priority was to protect the life of nationals, but also to prevent the formation of a terrorist sanctuary where AQIM and its allies would be able to attack France in the whole West African region and within French territory as well.<sup>139</sup> Besides, Thomas Hoffnung affirms that Paris has substantial economic interests in the region, the most strategic one probably being the uranium which is currently feeding a third of EDF (*Electricité de France*) nuclear power plants. In this regard, the philosopher and jurist Jean-Baptiste Jeangène Vilmer considers that François Hollande has no reason to feel ashamed because the Republic is protecting its interests in Mali. Vilmer underlines two reasons for France to intervene, namely indirect economic interests – taking into consideration the fact that strategic resources are located in neighbouring countries (Niger) - and security interests with the need to protect French citizens. According to the jurist, the French government is clearly mistaken when it refuses to evoke the existence of national interests because then several partners absolutely want to find a hidden agenda. In addition, to maintain that France has no interests at all may bring the matter of neo-colonialism back on the table. It seems wiser to affirm that it is in France's interest to intervene in Mali in order to defend the life of French nationals, the existence of indirect economic positions but regional and global security in a spirit of "international responsibility".<sup>140</sup>

The contradiction between national interests and global norms is not necessarily new, considering the recent history of French policy in Africa at the age of the European Union. In late 2007, The European Union authorized a mission in Chad and the Central African Republic: the EUFOR Chad/CAR with the following objectives:

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<sup>139</sup> Thomas Hofnung, "Mali: Paris appuie ses frappes", *Libération*, 14 January 2013, pp.2-4.

<sup>140</sup> Jean-Baptiste Jeangène Vilmer, « La France n'a pas à rougir de défendre ses intérêts au Mali », *Le Monde.fr*, 24 January 2013, accessed on the 05/02/13, URL : [http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2013/01/24/la-france-n-a-pas-a-rougir-de-defendre-ses-interets-au-mali\\_1822124\\_3232.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2013/01/24/la-france-n-a-pas-a-rougir-de-defendre-ses-interets-au-mali_1822124_3232.html).

- to contribute to protecting civilians in danger, particularly refugees and displaced persons
- to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid and the free movement of humanitarian personnel by helping to improve security in the area of operations
- to contribute to protecting UN personnel, facilities, installations and equipment and to ensuring the security and freedom of movement of its own staff, UN and associated personnel<sup>141</sup>

France constituted the most meaningful actor of EUFOR; at the same time, former president Nicolas Sarkozy and the minister for Foreign Affairs at that time, Bernard Kouchner had their own reasons to intervene in Chad, thus aiming to support the Chadian president Idriss Déby against a rebellion. After one year in Chad and CAR, European partners engaged in this mission and maintained that France had a hidden agenda which aimed at protecting a loyal and faithful servant of the French policy in this part of Africa. In addition, Déby never followed through on the reforms he had promised in order to improve modernization and democracy in his country. In conclusion, the European forces who were directly engaged in this mission have not completely forgiven Paris for using the EUFOR not as a neutral actor but as a support for the current Chadian president. To this very day, France continues to pay for this episode and the European partners are extremely sceptical towards a French operation with a multilateral ambition because they assume France to have its own strategy, not wanting to share it with its European colleagues and merely seeking to mutualize the costs and probable risks of such an intervention.<sup>142</sup> After several interviews or talks with EU diplomats, Roland Marchal confirms that the EUFOR Chad/CAR has created an exceedingly negative precedent and that French diplomats still have difficulties to clearly communicate with their European counterparts. These are two reasons for the existence of limits of the French political discourse in order to persuade other member states. Such limits are present in official information reports from the *Assemblée Nationale*. Christophe Guilloteau and Philippe Nauche, for instance, have interviewed the French general Patrick De Rouziers who has insisted on the suspicious attitude of several EU military officials about French intentions in the context of the Malian intervention.<sup>143</sup> This

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<sup>141</sup> [http://www.eeas.europa.eu/csdp/missions-and-operations/eufor-tchad-rca/mission-description/index\\_en.htm](http://www.eeas.europa.eu/csdp/missions-and-operations/eufor-tchad-rca/mission-description/index_en.htm).

<sup>142</sup> Interview with Roland Marchal in Paris (11/01/2013).

<sup>143</sup> Christophe GUILLOTEAU et Philippe NAUCHE, « rapport d'information n° 1288 sur l'opération Serval au Mali, 18 July 2013, accessed on 12/12/2013, URL : <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/14/rap-info/i1288.asp>.

example illustrates the consequences of the Chadian mission on the collaboration between France and its EU partners.

### *3/ From mistrust to indifference: the uncertainties of a European African policy*

To begin with, the author analyses the Malian case as a good opportunity for France to « normalize » its African policy which has been strongly criticised and singled out. The cooperation with EU partners is certainly the best way to appease the growing protest against the French influence in Africa. Right after the French decision to intervene, Jean-François Bayart underlines “the rational choice of France in Mali”<sup>144</sup> and confirms a new approach for French interventionism, in the sense that the work of the diplomacy and the efforts to multilateralise are far from the traditional unilateralism of the Elysée hidden under multilateral cosmetics. The former Prime Minister Lionel Jospin was already the incarnation of this new doctrine: “*ni ingérence, ni indifférence*” and was calling for a new method in order to put an end to the *Françafrique*. Nevertheless, the respect of a multilateral process and the will to engage the European partners are a difficult task due to several different reasons. According to Bayart, the European Union is not really concerned with the security in Africa and has other priorities whereas the African countries are still suspicious as far as the *ex-metropole’s* policy on the continent is concerned. Dominique Moïsi agrees when he maintains that breaking the negative image associated with *Françafrique* and going beyond the colonial past were probably the best reasons for Paris to start a new intervention in Mali. Paradoxically, this new intervention, following the immediate post-conflict attitude may be the beginning of a new era for the French African policy without unilateral interventions and relationship of domination. The normalisation of such a policy is highly desirable and closely linked to the French will to develop a true European defence policy, instead of merely formal European support for the French initiative. The Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian particularly insists on this point because if the European Union is helping France, the other EU member states want Paris to be the “*nation cadre*” (leading nation) as concerns the Malian mission and to assume financial, military and political costs, ultimately leaving France in a position hardly compatible with the concept of normalization.

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<sup>144</sup> Jean-François Bayart, "Mali: le choix raisonné de la France", *Le Monde*, 23 January 2013, p.19.

The contradiction between the political and verbal support of the European Union and the limited engagement on the ground raises several questions about a possible Europeanisation of the French Policy in Africa. First of all, several French senators<sup>145</sup> underline with reason the historical relationship between France and Africa as an advantage and a handicap at the same time: an advantage in that France possesses great knowledge and know-how in case of times of crises, but a handicap when the other member states deem Paris to be manipulating them in order to share the financial and political costs of missions in Africa. Besides, the European partners are convinced of France's poor communication with regards to its African policy which may lead to the suspicion of a hidden agenda. French senators admit this point and explain that French policy in Africa is currently evolving but they consider as well that several EU partners are acting hypocritically because if France continues to be engaged in several missions in Africa, it is because of the European states' lack of implication. Another official report highlights the very contradiction of a new French policy in Africa. Jean-Louis Christ and Jacques Remiller<sup>146</sup> consider that France has to play a role in Africa and therefore to maintain its influence on the continent which aims clearly at reinforcing the concept of exceptionalism but, at the same time, such a policy must evolve and change according to the principle of modernization. Tradition and evolution seem to be the two pillars of the French policy in Africa. The two rapporteurs mentions a possible Europeanisation thanks to the help of European partners who are concerned by the situation in Africa but such a process is clearly limited because, again, they invite French officials to go beyond their European engagement and to preserve a national strategy related to the French history, experience and know-how in Africa. To this point, the exceptionalism of the African policy serves as objective evidence and must not be questioned, especially when several European member states does not consider Africa as a priority for EU security and foreign policy. The possibility of a French direct intervention in Mali and all the problems it raises demonstrates the very contradiction of a "new old African policy" or the difficulties to modernize or normalize French-African relations.

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<sup>145</sup> André Dulait, Robert Hue, Yves Pozzo di Borgo et Didier Boulaud, Rapport d'information n° 450 (2005-2006), 3 July 2006, accessed on 17/12/2013, URL : <http://www.senat.fr/rap/r05-450/r05-450.html>.

<sup>146</sup> Jean-Louis Christ et Jacques Remiller, rapport d'information n° 1332 sur « la politique de la France en Afrique », 17 December 2008, accessed on 13/12/2013, URL : <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/13/rap-info/i1332.asp>.

This second part ends with a contradictory conclusion as far as a multilateral transition of the French diplomacy in the Malian case is concerned: considering the relationship between France and Africa, there is obviously an effort to promote Africanisation understood as a better cooperation with African states and African regional organisations, plus the will to give more responsibility to Africa and the war in Mali illustrates more precisely the security area. Nevertheless, Paris has to admit several limits to the regionalization, especially with a lack of military and financial capabilities for ECOWAS. François Hollande's goal is to embody a "new start" and a "new vision" of the French policy in Africa by stressing the need to move from a relationship to a partnership.

The cooperation with the United Nations Organisation cannot be neglected, when the study analyses how extensively French diplomats develop a proactive attitude, a will to put the Malian case at the top of the UN agenda by organising a High Level Meeting on the Security in Sahel. This effort can also be read in the light of the article on the leadership at the UNSC.<sup>147</sup> To this point, the author has to nuance the multilateralization of French foreign policy because Paris' strategy is above all associated with its permanent seat and its status of leader in most of African cases. The justification of a possible French intervention meets a clear tension between the need to protect Mali with global norms of territorial integrity, sovereignty and responsibility to protect and the will to rescue French hostages.

Finally, the relationship between France and the European Union illustrates a contradiction about the French ambition to develop a true European defence associated with the concept of "*Europe puissance*" and a lack of interest for many EU member states. When denying a political support and a certain degree of European solidarity, it has to be noted that French diplomacy is indeed working better thanks to bilateralism in order to forge a coalition. EU partners seem to be quite distrusting as far as French strategy in Africa is concerned and the EUFOR CHAD/CAR mission underlines the limited Europeanisation of the French Policy in Africa.

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<sup>147</sup> Ambrosetti, Cathelin, *Les enjeux du leadership*.

### **III. The second phase of the Malian crisis (mid-January 2013-August 2013)**

The third and last section will analyse the French foreign policy from mid-January to August 2013. As of January 11<sup>th</sup>, President François Hollande has decided to directly engage French forces on the ground in Northern Mali. This decision represents a double break in the government's attitude because firstly, the priority was given to diplomacy, political dialogue and negotiations with the help of international and regional organisations; secondly, Paris has always refused to directly take part in this conflict. It is worth noting the consequences of this double break on French policy. Now that French soldiers are fighting on the ground, the military operations will not be directly tackled but it seems relevant to pay attention to the political and diplomatic dimension of such operations. For example, the art of forging a coalition, the nature of French allies and the question of withdrawal remain key aspects. The analysis will end in August 2013 and therefore the will for France to make the transition to the new, legally and democratically elected Malian president.

The author will apply the same method as in the second part; in other words, he will consider French official statements and confront them with press as well as specialized articles and expert interviews in order to understand the functioning mode of French foreign policy, especially how France is attempting to find a balance between bilateralism and multilateralism and if French policy in Africa is evolving.

The first chapter poses an excellent opportunity to consider the cooperation between France and Africa from mid-January to August 2013. Paris is apparently affected by the return of its old demons because the president has decided to intervene directly in the Malian conflict and the relative French loneliness may raise several questions. In any case, the Serval operation reveals the difficulties for regional organisations to act properly and the necessity for France to engage its forces in an ex-colony.

## A)The relationship between France and Africa

### *1/ France at the head of an African coalition with the strong support of Chad*

After promising for months that France will not intervene directly in Mali, François Hollande ended up deciding to engage French troops on the ground. If a priority is given to the military dimension, diplomacy is still playing a major role in order to forge a coalition, to make it last and to prepare the transition from the conflict to post-conflict and peace-keeping operations. In this regard, multilateralism has a strategic dimension for France because it prevents charges of neo-colonialism and power policy. During an official meeting with the Malian president Dioncounda Traoré, François Hollande underlined that the French army has the support of the Malian population, the African community, the European partners and the international community.<sup>148</sup> Similarly, the journalist Marie-France Cros insists on an international operation with the help of Bamako, ECOWAS and their Western allies (The European Union, France, the United States) and remembers that this intervention is strictly defined by the UNSC resolution.<sup>149</sup> The multilateral aspect of the French intervention is obvious and the proactive diplomacy with the African partners seems to be successful inasmuch as several countries like Togo, Benin or Cote d'Ivoire will send troops as well.<sup>150</sup> This is an illustration of the "*capacité d'entraînement*" or the French diplomatic capability to convince regional partners to intervene and reconquest Northern Mali. An African coalition under French leadership is a safeguard against neo-colonialism and goes in the direction of improving Africanisation, even though African forces need several weeks to be operational.

The gap between the will to improve Africanisation and the political, financial and logistical difficulties is an important point. In a long article<sup>151</sup>, Olivier Monnier focuses on several

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<sup>148</sup> François Hollande, « Discours de M. Dioncounda Traoré, Président de la République du Mali, et du Président de la République française », Bamako : 02 February 2013, accessed on 15/03/2013, URL : <http://www.elysee.fr/declarations/article/discours-de-m-dioncounda-traore-president-de-la-republique-du-mali-et-du-president-de-la-republique-francaise/>.

<sup>149</sup> Marie-France Cros, "L'armée française contre les Djihadistes", *La Libre Belgique*, 12 and 13 January 2013, pp.20-21.

<sup>150</sup> Thomas Hofnung, "Mali: Paris appuie ses frappes", *Libération*, 14 January 2013, pp.2-4.

<sup>151</sup> Olivier Monnier, "L'Afrique cherche des soutiens financiers pour intervenir au Mali", *La Croix*, 21 January 2013, p.3.

problems whereas France uses a proactive diplomacy in order to mobilize the African community. A timely ECOWAS extraordinary summit in Abidjan illustrated the financial limits for Africanisation. The AFISMA (African-led International Support Mission to Mali) forces were to deploy about 5000 soldiers, most of them from Western Africa or from Chad. According to African officials, about 2000 soldiers would be engaged by the end of January 2013 and the two biggest contributors were Nigeria and Chad with 1200 and 2000 men respectively. Nathalie Guibert insists on a double effort for Western African countries inasmuch as it is difficult to pay for and organise thousands of soldiers; besides, they can be under a certain risk due to a fragile geopolitical context.<sup>152</sup> These different data help to understand why the implication of a multilateral African force is not that easy and may lead to a greater destabilization in a region already characterized by geopolitical tensions.

The author would like to insist on the participation of Chad for several reasons. First of all, it is not a member of ECOWAS, the regional organisation to which Mali belongs and that is “in charge” of the current crisis. This evidence was mentioned by the representative of Senegal during a UN Security Council Meeting in January 2013:

*I would like here to welcome the decision taken by Chad, a brotherly country that, although it is not a member of ECOWAS, wanted to share this heavy burden by deploying a large contingent. That is irrefutable proof of the growing international solidarity being shown in support of this crusade against international terrorism*<sup>153</sup>

The second relevant bit of information is the deployment of a “large contingent”, namely about 2000 soldiers deployed to fight for the protection of Mali and to represent the second largest contributor after Nigeria. Jean-Philippe Rémy’s article from March 2013<sup>154</sup> provides further important elements: According to Rémy, the Chadian President Idriss Déby has engaged his own son in order to take part in the Serval operation in general and in the battle of Amettetaï in particular, where Chadian forces suffered significant losses: 26 dead and 63 wounded. What can explain such a strong engagement? Jean-Philippe Rémy answers partially to this question by quoting the 2008 attack by rebels against N’Djamena and the decisive French intervention for protecting Idriss Déby. This episode has already been mentioned in this work in order to

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<sup>152</sup> Nathalie Guibert, „Pour les pays d’Afrique de l’Ouest, un effort militaire lourd de conséquences », *Le Monde.fr*, 05 February 2013, accessed on 07/02/13, URL : [http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2013/02/04/pour-les-pays-d-afrique-de-l-ouest-un-effort-militaire-lourd-de-consequences\\_1826700\\_3212.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2013/02/04/pour-les-pays-d-afrique-de-l-ouest-un-effort-militaire-lourd-de-consequences_1826700_3212.html).

<sup>153</sup> UN Security Council Meeting Report 6905(2013), UN doc., S/PV.6905, Thursday, Tuesday, 22 January 2013, p.11.

<sup>154</sup> Jean-Philippe Rémy, "L'appui crucial des Tchadiens", *Le Monde* 8 March 2013.

illustrate the mistrust of several EU partners and shows that France prefers the bilateral approach by means of collaborating with an old and loyal ally like Chad instead of respecting the general principles of multilateralism. This point is particularly accurate when the author insists on the fact that Chad is not even a member of ECOWAS, but ultimately one of the most prominent contributor. The Chadian president is highly contested both among the African countries and in Europe as well but the crisis in Mali and the apparently strength of his army have made him indispensable and essential for a bilateral cooperation with the French Armed Forces.<sup>155</sup>

If a clear priority is given to bilateralism for the Serval operation, French diplomacy is never absent from the UNSC meetings and discussions about the essential and highly political question of withdrawal. The 3 500 French soldiers deployed in Mali cannot leave the country at once in one single manoeuvre and it is in France's interest to ensure a smooth transition with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). To this point, the representative for Cote d'Ivoire insists on the fact that:

*It was indispensable that the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) be provided as soon as possible with all necessary financial and material resources for its further upscaling and upgrading, in order to enable it to take over from the French forces, which are scheduled to withdraw in the near future.*<sup>156</sup>

From the beginning of the Serval Operation, François Hollande has underlined that France will not stay in Mali forever and that a quick and efficient intervention is the best solution for Mali and for France as well. Nevertheless, the AFISMA and the MINUSMA ended up needing more time to become operational and France would stay longer than initially expected, because more than two months later, Hervé Ladsous, the Under-Secretary for Peacekeeping Operations, mentioned that: *"a technical arrangement with France that will define the modalities to be used by the United Nations and by France for the provision of support by the latter to MINUSMA"*.<sup>157</sup> Such a remark illustrates that France is deeply engaged with the UN authorities as far as the post-conflict and peace-keeping phase is concerned.

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<sup>155</sup> Thomas Hofnung, "L'infréquentable Idriss Déby devenu incontournable", Libération 22 January 2014, p.6.

<sup>156</sup> UN Security Council Meeting Report 6944 (2013), UN doc., S/PV.6944, Thursday, Wednesday, 3 April 2013.

<sup>157</sup> UN Security Council Meeting Report 6985 (2013), UN doc., S/PV.6985, Thursday, Tuesday, 25 June 2013.

## *2/ Kidal or the symbol of a French contradictory political discourse*

The political discourse after the French direct intervention aims at drawing a continuity with the diplomatic phase, except that France, because its army is almost acting alone and has the leadership in Mali, has difficulty to tackle the question of national interests. To this point, a press conference in Bamako by François Hollande is a telling example because the French president evokes, in the same speech, the presence of French nationals who are in Mali in order to defend *“our interests here, I mean economic interests”*<sup>158</sup> and insists a bit further on the fact that: *“we, here, have no interest to defend”*. Such a mistake represents this official hesitation to assume the existence of French interests in Mali and in neighbouring countries.

First and foremost, the leitmotiv of French authorities is the fight against terrorism and the risk of a wider destabilization in the entire region. François Hollande evoked the threat posed by Boko Haram with the Nigerian President Jonathan Goodluck and thus aiming to prevent an improved interconnectedness between the different terrorist movements in Western Africa.<sup>159</sup> This engagement for common security and stabilisation was also mentioned by the representative for Burkina Faso during a UN Security Council: *“Burkina Faso welcomes the courageous decision of French President François Hollande to provide prompt and critical support for the restoration of peace and stability in Mali and therefore throughout the entire region”*.<sup>160</sup> French Defence minister Jean-Yves Le Drian then insisted on the Serval Operation’s objectives: the liberation of the Malian territory in order to allow the state to recover its sovereignty. The minister adds that these objectives are nothing more than the implementation of UNSC resolutions. There is no question of French national interests or hidden strategy in Mali or in Western Africa.

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<sup>158</sup> François Hollande, « Conférence de presse du Président de la République à Bamako », Bamako 02 February 2013, accessed on 13/03/2013, URL : <http://www.elysee.fr/conferences-de-presse/article/conference-de-presse-du-president-de-la-republique-a-bamako/>.

<sup>159</sup> François Hollande, « Point de presse conjoint du Président de la République avec Son Excellence M. Goodluck Ebele JONATHAN, Président de la République du Nigéria », Paris 11 February 2013, accessed on 10/03/2013, URL : <http://www.elysee.fr/conferences-de-presse/article/point-de-presse-conjoint-du-president-de-la-republique-avec-son-excellence-m-goodluck-ebele-jonathan-president-de-la-republique-du-nigeria/>.

<sup>160</sup> UN Security Council Meeting Report 6905(2013), UN doc., S/PV.6905, Thursday, Tuesday, 22 January 2013.

The analysis of several journalists or academicians nuances the official statement and allows for tackling more precisely the question of French interests.<sup>161</sup> According to François Heisbourg, there is practically no economic interest for Paris. The main reason for a strong engagement is the will to avoid the creation of a terrorist sanctuary in Mali. Besides, France wants to stop a possible alliance between the jihadist movements in Northern Mali like the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA) or AQIM and Boko Haram in Nigeria. Such an alliance may be extremely dangerous for the whole region and, *in fine*, for Europe. Anna Eveno, Nathalie Guibert and Gilles Paris highlight the terrorist attack from a jihadist commando against one of the Areva uranium mines in Niger on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2013.<sup>162</sup> Such an attack poses the question of securization of a strategic site for France. The journalists remember that Areva operates two mines near Arlit in Northern Niger with Nigerian, Japanese and Spanish partners via two companies by the names of Cominak and Somaïr, jointly supplying 3600 tonnes of uranium to Areva, thus a third of its total world production. When considering the priority given to economic diplomacy by the minister for Foreign Affairs Laurent Fabius, it seems absolutely crucial for France to preserve Areva's activities and to terminate possible attacks against strategic sites.

The tensions between bilateralism and multilateralism are symbolized by a city in Northern Mali: Kidal<sup>163</sup> which is the capital of the Tuareg independence movement NMLA as opposed to Bamako and the Malian army. From the beginning of the Serval Operation, the NMLA forces have decided to cooperate with Paris and to fight against jihadist bands but they categorically refused to accept any Malian soldier in Kidal and its local area. This last point is problematic because France insisted on the global norm of territorial integrity but Kidal is not concerned. Paris sought to play the role of arbiter between the NMLA and the Malian transitory government, nevertheless it seems very complicated to respect the norm of territorial integrity and to give pledges to the Tuareg movement with a control over Kidal and its region at the same time.<sup>164</sup> This situation is a direct consequence of the Serval operation because, if the French troops have freed the Malian territory from the jihadist threat and have fought with Malian forces in Gao and Timbuktu, they have provided the NMLA with the opportunity to return to

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<sup>161</sup> See Figure 3 in Appendix.

<sup>162</sup> Anne Eveno, Nathalie Guibert and Gilles Paris, "l'approvisionnement français en uranium affaibli par l'attaque d'Arlit", *Le Monde*, 25 May 2013, p.2.

<sup>163</sup> See Figure 2 in Appendix.

<sup>164</sup> Matthieu Pellerin, « Sauvegarder la paix au Mali: la dernière mission de la France? », *Le Huffington Post*, 06 May 2013, accessed on 26/11/2013, URL : [http://www.huffingtonpost.fr/matthieu-pellerin/sauvegarder-paix-mali\\_b\\_3389673.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.fr/matthieu-pellerin/sauvegarder-paix-mali_b_3389673.html).

Kidal at the same time. Matthieu Pelerin explains the need to preserve a good relationship between France and the Tuareg movement as a guarantee for a successful implementation of the Serval Operation. According to a local source in Mali, this special relationship between Paris and the NMLA is associated with the French will to rescue hostages.<sup>165</sup> Indeed, Tuaregs have contact with several jihadist movements and they know the area well. The priority given to national interests seems to outweigh the respect of global norms. NMLA's strong engagement and military effort in order to fight against terrorism are a great advantage for the success of the Serval operation but they will make the political solution more complex because it seems that the NMLA expects pertinent support from Paris in return<sup>166</sup>. The Tuareg movement is claiming for the auto-determination and independence for the Azawad, namely the regions of Kidal, Timbuktu and Gao.<sup>167</sup> Stephane Gompertz, former French Ambassador in Vienna and director of the Africa department at the *Quai d'Orsay*, has met several pro-NMLA Malian parliamentarians and insists on the fact that the French diplomacy has never supported such a demand because of the global norm of Malian territorial integrity.<sup>168</sup> However, at the same time, Bamako should understand the Tuaregs' arguments and work hard in order to find an arrangement.

### *3/ Efforts to normalize incapable of hiding the resilience of old traditions*

To begin with, the author admits the efforts made by France in order to provide assistance to Mali while Bamako is an ex-colony and consequently such a status may raise some difficulties and/or charges of neo-colonialism. Nevertheless, several African countries and organisations mention the respect of a legitimate process by Paris; for example, the representative of Benin Mr. Zinsou mentions France as *"historically Mali's closest partner through beyond the continent"*<sup>169</sup> and reminds that: *"At the decisive moment, France, through a robust intervention, came to the assistance of the Malian State, at the request of its legitimate authorities"*. In other words, France is now acting as a "partner" which is a sign of the normalisation praised by François Hollande who wants to develop "a new partnership" with

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<sup>165</sup> Fabien Offner, "Le Mali confronté au casse-tête de Kidal", *Libération*, 23 May 2013, p.6.

<sup>166</sup> Jacques Follorou, "L'avenir du Mali suspendu à la question touareg", *Le Monde*, 15 August 2013, p.2.

<sup>167</sup> See Figure 1 in Appendix.

<sup>168</sup> Interview with Stéphane Gompertz, (Vienna, 17/06/2013).

<sup>169</sup> UN Security Council Meeting Report 6905(2013), UN doc., S/PV.6905, Thursday, Tuesday, 22 January 2013.

Africa. Besides, there is a respect of Malian request formulated by legitimate authorities. Normalisation means a better collaboration with states that are not directly associated with the Francophone area, which is why the French president has decided to invite the Nigerian President Jonathan Goodluck in February 2013. Nigeria is the biggest country in this region and is confronted with terrorism in the form of attacks launched by groups such as Boko Haram. Logically, François Hollande wishes to work with Nigeria, even if “*we are not speaking the same language*”.<sup>170</sup> Such a quotation explains that France aims at working with new African partners who have nothing to do with the old French *pré carré* but that are concerned by a common threat. Finally, the senators Jeanny Lorgeoux and Jean-Marie Bockel summarize in an official report the characteristics of the new discourse about Africa and the need to find a balance between the remembrance of a special relationship linked to a common history over the past two centuries and the importance of distancing one’s self from a supposed “French vocation” in Africa or a special “French responsibility towards Africa”.<sup>171</sup> France is no longer a privileged actor in Africa and the new French policy in Africa has to comply with legitimacy, respect, democracy and equity.

Michel Galy offers a totally different point of view by stressing a new figure of *Françafrique*, as far as the French intervention in Mali is concerned. Galy insists on a French strategy for mobilizing ECOWAS, the African Union and the United Nations in order to legitimate a military intervention that had already been prepared for a long time.<sup>172</sup> According to him, France is not complying with the UNSC resolutions and the request of Malian legitimate authorities is legally problematic because Dioncounda Traoré is only an interim president for a country that has no defence agreement with France. Galy points out the return to unilateralism behind a cosmetic multilateralism that reveals the French difficulties to clarify relations with Africa. To this point, another important dimension is the participation of Chad. First of all, this country is not a member of ECOWAS which is the legitimate organisation for Western Africa. Secondly, the Chadian president Idriss Deby sent the biggest contingent of about 2000 men with his own son at the head of Chadian forces. A non-member of ECOWAS making such a substantial

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<sup>170</sup> François Hollande, « Point de presse conjoint du Président de la République avec Son Excellence M. Goodluck Ebele JONATHAN, Président de la République du Nigéria », Paris 11 February 2013, accessed on 10/03/2013, URL : <http://www.elysee.fr/conferences-de-presse/article/point-de-presse-conjoint-du-president-de-la-republique-avec-son-excellence-m-goodluck-ebele-jonathan-president-de-la-republique-du-nigeria/>.

<sup>171</sup> Jeanny Lorgeoux et Jean-Marie Bockel, « L’Afrique est notre avenir », rapport d’informations N° 104 (2013-2014), 29 October 2013, accessed on 17/12/2013, URL : <http://www.senat.fr/notice-rapport/2013/r13-104-notice.html>.

<sup>172</sup> Michel Galy, “Un nouvel avatar de la Françafrique”, *Le Monde*, 18 January 2013, p.21.

contribution indeed appears to be strange. The Belgian journalist Colette Braeckman insists on the role of Chad as well and considers that Déby wants his country to be the regional power in Western and Central Africa thanks to oil income and a strong army.<sup>173</sup> In return of his strong engagement and heavy losses, the Chadian president claims for a non-permanent seat in the Security Council and more responsibility in Africa. The relationship between Paris and N'Djamena in Northern Mali reminds of old French habits which are clearly associated with exceptionalism and the will to maintain traditional alliances with contestable regimes in order to serve military objectives.

Frédéric Lejeal offers a sound synthesis in his article: *"France-Afrique: la rupture inachevée du pacte colonial"*<sup>174</sup> and evokes several dimensions already mentioned in this thesis. For one thing, he wants to highlight an effort to "normalise the French African relationship" step by step. For example, Lejeal evokes a semantic shift in the official discourse that will organise not *"un sommet France-Afrique ou Afrique-France"* (a French-African or African-French summit) but *"un sommet de l'Elysée pour la paix et la sécurité en Afrique"* (The Elysée Summit for Peace and Security in Africa) in December 2013. The *Quai D'Orsay* has decided to give responsibilities to new diplomats who are more in tune with Anglophone countries like Nigeria or South-Africa. The government insists on the principle of transparency and encourages the Parliament to foster a better cooperation as far as the French policy in Africa is concerned. These efforts are welcome but, according to Lejeal, they have to face a strong resilience related to fifty years of French activism and interventionism in Africa. The journalist mentions the permanence of African presidents's visits after the election of François Hollande or the organisation of the summit between France and Africa no matter what name the official discourse uses. This resilience of exceptionalism is strongly linked to the power and influence of the army in Africa which stands for the Western or European policeman with several military bases and contingents plus special forces. Lejeal underlines the central role played by French forces in Northern Mali in comparison to the peripheral action of African, UN or European partners, except the Chadian specific support.

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<sup>173</sup> Colette Braeckman, "Le Tchad, allié ambigu des Français", *Le Soir*, 18 December 2013, p.13.

<sup>174</sup> Frédéric Lejeal, "France-Afrique: la rupture inachevée du pacte colonial", *Libération*, 6 December 2013, p.25.

## **B)The relationship between France and the United Nations**

### *1/ French diplomacy's challenges at the UN stage: legitimacy, legality, withdrawal*

In the second part, the author has noticed a constant French proactive diplomacy at the United Nations in order to put the Malian crisis at the top of the international priorities. After François Hollande's decision to intervene militarily, such an effort is still perceptible because France does not want to run the risk of pure unilateralism and later the charge of an "occupation army". Defense minister Jean-Yves Le Drian insisted on a temporary presence of French troops and the necessity to quickly make the transition from a military mission to a peace-keeping operation. During his first official visit to Mali after the beginning of the Serval operation, François Hollande underlines the support of the international community (which stands as a synonym for the UN) and therefore the benediction of an international legitimacy. Besides, he confirms his Defence minister's speech by describing a peacekeeping mission that will progressively replace the military intervention.<sup>175</sup> The respect of a multilateral process is clearly mentioned in the UNSC Resolution 2100:

*Welcoming the swift action by the French forces, at the request of the transitional authorities of Mali, to stop the offensive of terrorist, extremist and armed groups towards the South of Mali and commending the efforts to restore the territorial integrity of Mali by the Malian Defence and Security Forces, with the support of French forces and the troops of the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA).*<sup>176</sup>

Paris has engaged its forces "at the request of the transitional authorities of Mali" and this point is the cornerstone of the French political discourse. Besides, France was "a support" to the Malian Defence and Security Forces which refutes a French forefront position or unilateralism. To this point, the 2013 French White Paper on Defence and National Security maintains a clear statement about the importance of multilateralism and especially of the UN in the French strategy: "*The UN, as well as other regional and sub-regional organisations, will be called upon to play an increasing role in the legitimisation and strategic conduct of external operations. In*

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<sup>175</sup> François Hollande, « Conférence de presse du Président de la République à Bamako », Bamako 02 February 2013, accessed on 13/03/2013, URL : <http://www.elysee.fr/conferences-de-presse/article/conference-de-presse-du-president-de-la-republique-a-bamako/>.

<sup>176</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 2100 (2013), UN doc., S/RES/2100 (2013), 25 April 2013.

*this regard, the success of the operation is often partly linked to the legitimacy of the institution that promotes it*”.<sup>177</sup> This statement shows how important the legitimacy of a multilateral institution like the UN is. In his interview, the former French ambassador in Austria, Stéphane Gompertz, analyses the quality of the international support. He quotes the Western, European and African partners but particularly insists on the role played by the Russian Federation and People’s Republic of China (PRC). Indeed, they are both members of the Security Council and the intervention of Libya, where France was already engaged, was clearly a negative precedent for Russian and Chinese diplomats. Similarly, the South-African President Jacob Zuma has given his agreement despite his strong opposition to the French intervention in Cote d’Ivoire (*Operation Licorne*) and in Libya (*Operation Harmattan*). This extensive political support provides France with an international legitimacy which is necessary for the acceptance and the success of the Serval operation.

In order to nuance this « new UN credo » for France, it is necessary to quote a valuable article written by Natalie Nougayrède in *Le Monde* in January 2013.<sup>178</sup> First of all, the journalist reminds of the doctrine of François Hollande on foreign policy from August 2012: “*France will not participate in peace-keeping or civilian protecting operations without a UN mandate or a UNSC resolution*”. However, France is far from such a doctrine as concerns the Malian intervention because the UNSC resolution 2085 is not explicitly authorizing the French operation inasmuch as there is question of an African international force and certainly not of a unilateral French operation. Natalie Nougayrède evokes a confusion among French officials who sometimes talk about “an intervention in the context or in the framework of the UNSC resolution” and sometimes about an “international legality” which is vague but incontestable. According to the journalist, such a confusion explains why France sought to achieve extensive political support at the UN and among the Security Council. Thanks to the crucial support of African regional organisations, the UN statements have legitimized the French army’s action, at least to a certain extent, which is not equivalent to legality. In other words, the French intervention is legally contestable but the strong political support forged by the French proactive diplomacy imposes a consensus which is difficult to question.

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<sup>177</sup> French White Paper on Defence and National Security (2013), 29 April 2013, p.24, accessed on 30/04/13, URL: <http://www.defense.gouv.fr/actualites/articles/livre-blanc-2013>.

<sup>178</sup> Natalie Nougayrède, “La lettre du président malien, base légale de l’intervention française”, *Le Monde.fr*, 26 January 2013, accessed on 02/02/2013, URL: [http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2013/01/25/la-base-legale-de-l-action-francaise-une-lettre-de-m-traore\\_1822493\\_3212.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2013/01/25/la-base-legale-de-l-action-francaise-une-lettre-de-m-traore_1822493_3212.html).

The need to cooperate closely with the UN and to respect the general principles of multilateralism has a lot to do with the topic of the French withdrawal. If Paris was already reluctant to intervene directly and on the front line in Northern Mali, there is no question to stay longer and to be affected by more losses and a political and social context that may evolve in a negative way. Consequently, the French government has decided to call for a new UNSC meeting on the Malian crisis in order to study the “feasibility” of a UN peace-keeping operation. According to the French representative Gérard Araud, UN troops will replace MISMA forces “*as soon as the security conditions permit*”.<sup>179</sup> Such a transfer of authority will take two months, a period in which Paris will progressively proceed to a withdrawal, according to the security situation. Nevertheless, such a scenario is only possible if a new UNSC resolution for a peace-keeping operation is voted for and if the Malian authorities formulate an official demand. Thomas Hofnung insists on the point that three months after the start of the Serval operation, the French army considers that the main objectives have been reached, except the saving of hostages. If Paris has evoked a total withdrawal, it seems that “a French parallel force” will remain in Northern Mali in order to support the future UN operation.<sup>180</sup> Moreover, France has decided to directly take part in the MINUSMA with 150 troops. The transition from the military operation to the peace-keeping mission is in the hands of the UN and France has to respect a certain number of rules, even if its permanent seat at the Security Council may be an asset for taking the leadership on the Malian case and allowing Paris to submit draft resolutions and to forge a dynamic.

## *2/ Regional destabilisation: a global threat and a risk for French interests*

The second phase of the Malian crisis and the French official decision to directly engage its forces on the ground invite to consider the validity of the political discourse. The main argument remains the fight against terrorism as a common threat for the international community. François Hollande insisted on this point in particular while hosting the Nigerian president Jonathan Goodluck. The French head of state made very clear he was in favour of continuing to cooperate with Western Africa as a whole and with the European as well as with

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<sup>179</sup> Alexandra Geneste, "L'ONU sollicitée pour l'envoi de casques bleus", *Le Monde*, 1 March 2013, p.3.

<sup>180</sup> Thomas Hofnung, "Mali: un premier retrait sur la pointe des pieds", *Libération*, 11 April 2013, p.6.

France's European partners in order to combat terrorism<sup>181</sup>. By underlining this point, François Hollande evoked the danger of Boko Haram in Nigeria and, in addition, revealed the risk of a possible alliance between different terrorist movements in Mali, Niger and Nigeria for example. Such a justification aims at mobilizing the United Nations and especially the United States where the terrorist threat symbolises the greatest security challenge since 9/11 and it reminds of the official speech used by the Bush administration and inspired by the Neo-Conservatives.

Several specialists confirm the official speech's validity and the article written by Daniel Bastien in *Les Echos* may help to understand the strategic dimension of the Sahel.<sup>182</sup> To begin with, the whole region is an energetic hub with important resources in Niger and probably Northern Mali, and the movement of people and goods takes various forms through trade routes, licit or illicit trafficking, and migratory flows. Beyond the stabilization in Northern Mali, the problem of insecurity concerns the entire area and the political scientist Frédéric Deycard insists on the Sahel that could be seen as an area whose instability may be a threat for global security. The former French ambassador in Austria Stéphane Gompertz analyses the reasons of the French decision to directly intervene in Northern Mali which are closely associated with the risk of destabilisation in Western Africa. First of all, AQIM, Ansar Eddine and the MUJWA were ready to attack Bamako and seize the capital which would give them enough power, weapons and means to spread chaos in countries like Niger, Mauritania and Senegal. Furthermore, and thanks to the creation of a "new Afghanistan"<sup>183</sup>, terrorist bands could support Boko Haram in Nigeria and threaten the largest country in Western Africa. Also, the ambassador mentions the presence of uranium mines in Niger but, according to him, this is not the main component in the French decision. The anthropologist André Bourgeot agrees with this point of view but he gives more details about extractive resources, especially in Mali.<sup>184</sup> In the northern region, Bourgeot mentions a promising site which is called Taoudenni and may be rich in oil and gas.<sup>185</sup> Some uranium has been discovered in the Adar next to the Niger site of Imouraren. Moreover, Mali has resources in gold, manganese and phosphate. This overview of resources in Mali associated with the French strategic positions in Niger's uranium mines remember the importance of

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<sup>181</sup> François Hollande, « Point de presse conjoint du Président de la République avec Son Excellence M. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, Président de la République du Nigéria », Paris 11 February 2013, accessed on 10/03/2013, URL : <http://www.elysee.fr/conferences-de-presse/article/point-de-presse-conjoint-du-president-de-la-republique-avec-son-excellence-m-goodluck-ebele-jonathan-president-de-la-republique-du-nigeria/>.

<sup>182</sup> Daniel Bastien, "Le Sahel, ce "ventre mou" devenu si stratégique", *Les Echos*, 12 February 2013, p.11.

<sup>183</sup> Interview with Stéphane Gompertz, (Vienna, 17/06/2013).

<sup>184</sup> See Figure 4 in Appendix.

<sup>185</sup> Interview with André Bourgeot, (Paris, 15/01/2013).

economic interests for Paris, even if such interests are not the key argument that may explain the Serval operation.

Finally, it seems that the French foreign policy is trying to defend national interests by means of multilateralism. Thierry Soret who belongs to the foundation Jean Jaurès, a think tank for the French Socialist Party (PS), evokes the need for France to relaunch a multilateral policy without neglecting national interests.<sup>186</sup> The idea is to promote cooperation and collective action with several countries and/or international organisations by forging majorities of opinion in order to defend French interests. Soret's contribution urges France to adopt a pro-multilateral engagement by organizing meetings and summits, the initiative in propositions and the defence of the UN system. Thierry Soret considers that Paris is a central actor of the multilateral scene and has a certain responsibility inherent to its role.

### *3/ French African policy: the limits of multilateralism*

The Serval operation in the light of the French policy in Africa reveals the will to respect the UNSC resolution 2085 and therefore it is legitimate in the eyes of the international community. The problem concerns the difficulties for France to forge a coalition and to find allies ready to engage their forces on the ground. Secondly, among African partners, the biggest contingent is that of Chad. André Bourgeot underlines this double weakness as far as the French intervention in Northern Mali is concerned.<sup>187</sup> In terms of geopolitical analysis, Chad is an emerging power in Central Africa with an influence in the Western region and the president Idriss Déby has decided to cooperate with a strong contingent of 2 000 soldiers in order to defend French local interests. Such a cooperation highlights the difficulties associated with the process of Africanisation with a regional organization, ECOWAS, unable to quickly deploy and coordinate military forces. Besides, the need for France to mobilize Chadian forces can be read as the impossibility for the French Republic to put an end to a relationship with a highly contested ally such as Idriss Déby and, *in fine*, to maintain a strategic bilateralism behind a cosmetic multilateralism. Michel Galy, as a specialist on African policy, leans in a similar direction, though advocating a more radical point of view<sup>188</sup> because he considers that France

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<sup>186</sup> Thierry Soret, « Relancer la politique multilatérale de la France », *Fondation Jean Jaurès*, Note n° 123, 13 March 2012.

<sup>187</sup> Interview with André Bourgeot (Paris, 5/01/2013).

<sup>188</sup> Michel Galy, "Un nouvel avatar de la Françafrique", *Le Monde*, 18 January 2013, p.21.

wanted to intervene despite the official discourse in the first phase of the Malian crisis and the French diplomacy consisted of mobilizing “allied regimes”, ECOWAS, the African Union and finally the United Nations by a crescendo of demands, resolutions and meetings in order to legitimate a future intervention. According to Michel Galy, all the French efforts to cooperate with its African partners, the UN and the EU were only made in order to justify an unavoidable intervention. Furthermore, Galy criticizes the way Paris has disguised the Serval operation with an unconvincing legal status because, firstly, the different UNSC resolution never mentioned the possibility for France to directly engage its troops and secondly, Mali has no defence agreement with Paris and was represented by an interim president without uncontested legitimacy. According to Galy, France has never changed its behavior in Africa and continues to think and operate in the light of the exceptionalist theory.

If France has decided to directly intervene in Mali, its diplomacy is always active in order to preserve a strong political support at the UN stage for a question of legitimacy and, in fine, for the need to proceed to the French withdrawal and the transition with the MINUSMA forces. Multilateralism matters in the eyes of the French diplomacy but the priority given to the fight against terrorism cannot hide other geopolitical or economic aspects associated with national interests.

## **C)The relationship between France and the European Union**

In a last sub-chapter, the author will tackle the cooperation between the French state and the European Union during the second phase of the Malian crisis. While European partners were unanimously behind Paris and have expressed a political support, a concrete military effort and engagement on the ground was not a priority. Nevertheless, Catherine Asthon and the European External Service have promised to rapidly launch the European Training Mission in Mali (EUTM), to realize the process of Europeanization and take a first step towards the concept of European Defence.

## *1/ A limited European defence: the example of the EUTM in Mali*

In February 2013, François Hollande met with the president of the European Parliament in order to move forward on the Malian case in general, and the Europeanization of the French intervention in particular.<sup>189</sup> François Hollande wanted his European counterparts to own up to their responsibilities because several experts and officials have mentioned the absence of the EU during the first diplomatic and military phase. For example, the former Prime Minister Alain Juppé claimed that the EU has been bad in this case inasmuch as the European solidarity was strictly limited to a political support in principle. Hollande lists the European responsibilities: first, to form the Malian and the African troops unified in the AFISMA; secondly, to promote Mali's process of recovery by means of financial and technical aid. If the French president insists on "the French intervention in Mali – the intervention of only France" and recognizes that the European Defence appears to be a wishful thinking, he does not want to blame his European partners because, according to him, France was the only country in Europe to be able to intervene so quickly and thanks to the military bases and forces in Africa. During a meeting in Warsaw, François Hollande continued to thank the European for their material and human support and underlined that *"History will record that this operation, which has been carried through by France in the name of the international community and with the European support, was a very important step in the fight against terrorism"*.<sup>190</sup> Such a quotation is a great illustration of the French multilateral process which combined a French operation with the moral support of the international community and European support in particular.

The 2013 French White Paper on Defence and National Security goes in the same direction and is univocal as far as the Europeanization of the French defence is concerned.<sup>191</sup> The report considers that *"building a European approach to defence and security is a priority"*

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<sup>189</sup> François Hollande, « Conférence de presse conjointe avec M. Martin SCHULZ, Président du Parlement européen », Strasbourg, 06 February 2013, accessed on 10/03/2013, URL : <http://www.elysee.fr/conferences-de-presse/article/conference-de-presse-conjointe-avec-m-martin-schulz-president-du-parlement-europeen/>.

<sup>190</sup> François Hollande, « Conférence de presse de M. le président de la République à Varsovie », Warsaw 06 March 2013, accessed on 10/03/2013, URL : <http://www.elysee.fr/conferences-de-presse/article/conference-de-presse-de-m-le-president-de-la-republique-a-varsovie/>.

<sup>191</sup> French White Paper on Defence and National Security (2013), 29 April 2013, accessed on 30/04/13, URL: <http://www.defense.gouv.fr/actualites/articles/livre-blanc-2013>.

and the authors are convinced that “*a European response would be greater than the sum of national responses*”. This mentioning of an Europeanization as a power multiplier can be considered absolutely typical of the French political and intellectual elites. To this respect, the French White Paper is calling for “*an external action service playing a stronger role, notably in crisis management*”. This point directly evokes the Malian crisis, in which European solidarity was existent but not sufficiently pragmatic.

A pragmatic realization of the European defence and foreign policy could be the EUTM (the European Training Mission in Mali) mentioned in several articles. Olivier Le Bussy remembers the unanimous support of European partners to the Serval operation in Mali.<sup>192</sup> France had or will receive logistical help, especially from Belgium which sent two military transport aircrafts C-130 soon to be imitated by other European countries. Moreover, several EU partners expressed their will to take part in the EUTM: Belgium, Spain, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom, Poland, Slovenia, Estonia, Hungary and Cyprus. This mission is headed by the French general François Lecointre and will count about 450 soldiers including 200 instructors with a French majority. The objectives of the EUTM aim at improving the capability for the Malian forces to defend the national territory, but not a single European soldier will be directly involved in combat. Furthermore, the European Union wants to provide financial and logistical support to the AFISMA and to increase humanitarian aid. Thomas Hofnung underlines in an article dated from the April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2013<sup>193</sup> that the EUTM has finally commenced in a military camp located in the North of Bamako in order to form about four battalions in fifteen months. The implementation of such a mission represents an important improvement as concerns the process of Europeanization and shows that the French ambition to engage its European partners and to give them a responsibility in the management of the Malian crisis was not a pure abstraction.

The trend towards Europeanization has some limits, especially as far as France’s policy in Africa is concerned. In a public report entitled: “*Africa is our future*”, Jeanny Lorgeoux and Jean-Marie Bockel underline a discrepancy between such a trend and the reality of French interventions which remain associated with bilateralism.<sup>194</sup> The two senators insist on the need to renegotiate bilateral defence agreements and to rethink the French implementation in Africa

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<sup>192</sup> Olivier Le Bussy, "Les Vingt-sept veulent accélérer le processus de stabilisation du Mali", *La Libre Belgique*, 18 January 2013, p.21.

<sup>193</sup> Thomas Hofnung, "Mali: un premier retrait sur la pointe des pieds", *Libération*, 11 April 2013, p.6.

<sup>194</sup> Jeanny Lorgeoux et Jean-Marie Bockel, « L’Afrique est notre avenir », rapport d’informations N° 104 (2013-2014), 29 October 2013, accessed on 17/12/2013, URL : <http://www.senat.fr/notice-rapport/2013/r13-104-notice.html>.

even if the Malian crisis has succeeded in providing a new level of a usefulness and legitimacy for French action. Stéphane Gompertz makes a strong observation about the European engagement in the Malian crisis<sup>195</sup>: First, France has produced most of the military effort because European means are clearly limited in the defence area. According to him, the European Union has the capacity to act as a soft power with a training mission, for example in Somalia. The European Training Mission in Mali will start in order to form Malian soldiers but when there is a need for quick interventions, only France and Great-Britain can intervene. Second, the former French ambassador considers that several member states do not see the Malian crisis as a priority for the European Union External Service and this is a lack of global strategy. If the EU has expressed its solidarity with a political support, logistical and material support, France does most of the work. The political analyst François Heisbourg is very pessimistic about the role of the European Union in the Malian crisis because he remembers that the Union has developed a new concept of intervention six years ago, namely the “battleground” which is a group of 1500 soldiers ready to intervene at any time. For the time being, this battleground is a mix of French, German and Polish forces and, according to Heisbourg, the Malian crisis was a good opportunity to make use of it and to demonstrate the European solidarity.<sup>196</sup> However, this remains problematic and, on the eve of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Elysee* Treaty, the battleground remains wishful thinking. The political analyst underlines an area where national egoisms are stronger than the European cooperation and which is bound to promote Euroscepticism.

## *2/ An intervention for European or purely French priorities?*

If the intervention in Mali was a decision made by the French state, François Hollande wanted to demonstrate that the Serval operation takes place in the respect of several global norms, especially territorial integrity, stability and sovereignty. Moreover, the French president insists on the fact that this intervention is a convenient opportunity for Europe to act for peace and security in this part of Africa<sup>197</sup>, thus inviting Europe to defend its values and consequently

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<sup>195</sup> Interview with Stéphane Gompertz, (Vienna, 17/06/2013).

<sup>196</sup> François Heisbourg, "Le Mali était l'occasion de manifester la solidarité européenne", *La Croix*, 21 January 2013, p.3.

<sup>197</sup> François Hollande, « Intervention du Président de la République devant le Parlement européen », Strasbourg : 05 February 2013, accessed on 15/03/2013, URL : <http://www.elysee.fr/declarations/article/intervention-du-president-de-la-republique-devant-le-parlement-europeen/>.

to think about a new strategy for developing a true European and common external policy which is directly related to the concept of European defence. François Hollande regrets that most of the initiatives are uncoordinated and lead to a weak statement on the international stage. This insistence on common values for the EU is new in comparison to the permanent mention of the fight against terrorism. In Warsaw, the French president reaffirmed this idea in thanking his partners for material and human support, but also highlighted the prominent role played by France.<sup>198</sup> The terrorist threat is confirmed by recent surveys and especially by a report published by the OECD (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)<sup>199</sup> that underlines the importance of the Sahel's geopolitics in order to tackle Mediterranean strategic issues because this space is a hinge region between the Mediterranean and Sub-Saharan Africa.

The 2013 French White Paper on Defence and National Security evokes the importance of Sahel for the French strategy: *"The Sahel, from Mauritania to the Horn of Africa, together with part of sub-Saharan Africa, are also regions of priority interest for France due to a common history, the presence of French nationals, the issues at stake and the threats confronting them"* (p.54).<sup>200</sup> Beyond this status of "region of vital importance for the French defence and security", the report invites the European Union to pay more attention to the possible threats emerging there, which is apparently not obvious for several EU partners because the White Paper underlines the fact that: *"Not all our partners and allies give the same weight to the strategic importance, for Europe, of its eastern neighbours, the Mediterranean and the part of Africa from the Sahel to Equatorial Africa"* (p.55). The official French will to integrate the European Union into its African strategy is limited by a disagreement about the priorities of the European External Service and, what is not mentioned right now, the negative precedent created by several operations where France and its European partners were engaged in order to serve a French hidden agenda or traditional allies like in Chad.

A recent article provides a good synthesis of the discrepancy between French priorities and European engagement. Mette Eilstrup-Sangiovanni analyses the EU's Common Security and Defense Policy in the light of the Malian crisis and affirms that the situation in Mali was a good

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<sup>198</sup> François Hollande, « Conférence de presse de M. le président de la République à Varsovie », Warsaw 06 March 2013, accessed on 10 March 2013, URL : <http://www.elysee.fr/conferences-de-presse/article/conference-de-presse-de-m-le-president-de-la-republique-a-varsovie/>.

<sup>199</sup> Daniel Bastien, "Le Sahel, ce "ventre moux" devenu si stratégique", *Les Echos*, 12 February 2013, p.11.

<sup>200</sup> French White Paper on Defence and National Security (2013), 29 April 2013, accessed on 30/04/13, URL: <http://www.defense.gouv.fr/actualites/articles/livre-blanc-2013>.

opportunity for Europe to show its solidarity and its capability to find and defend common goals as far as European foreign and security policy is concerned.<sup>201</sup> The author points out that Mali is a part of Europe's "broader neighborhood" and consequently represents a strategic issue. Indeed, the threat of a terrorist sanctuary less than 1200 km from the Mediterranean should not be underestimated by EU heads of state and governments. Mette Eilstrup-Sangiovanni remembers the existence of a French-German-Polish battlegroup of about 1500 embattled soldiers, nevertheless François Hollande never tackled this issue, rather focusing on his African partners or traditional allies like Chad. To conclude, the article affirms that: *"The clear lesson from the first decade of CSDP missions is that, despite a string of lofty treaty declarations, Europeans are not prepared to stand side-by-side in defence of regional and overseas interests. Mali has served to reinforce this conclusion"*.<sup>202</sup> If French diplomacy has insisted on the need to defend European values, the strategy, the definition of objectives and the intervention were identified and carried through under French responsibility.

### *3/ Europeanization as a solution for French exceptionalism?*

In front of the European Parliament, François Hollande described the French intervention as the engagement of a European country for an African one and added that such an operation does not aim at re-opening past scars but has been decided in order to bring dignity to the Malian people who did the same thing for France during the Second World War.<sup>203</sup> By mentioning this historical debt, the French president recognizes the exceptional relation between Bamako and Paris, clearly wanting to normalize it: This becomes particularly apparent when he draws the image of an engagement simply between Europe and Africa and not necessary between France and Mali. Moreover, he does not tackle the colonial period but only World War Two, maybe in order to shape a new start for the relationship between Bamako and

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<sup>201</sup> Mette Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, "The EU's Common Security and Defense Policy and the Mali Crisis ", E-International Relations, 2013, accessed on 03/03/2014, URL : <http://www.e-ir.info/2013/08/16/the-eus-common-security-and-defense-policy-and-the-mali-crisis/>.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> François Hollande, « Intervention du Président de la République devant le Parlement européen », Strasbourg : 05 February 2013, accessed on 15/03/2013, URL : <http://www.elysee.fr/declarations/article/intervention-du-president-de-la-republique-devant-le-parlement-europeen/>.

Paris. In summary, exceptionalism is taken into account in order to jump-start a normalization of the French Policy in Africa.

The journalist and specialist of International Relations Bernard Guetta agrees with the official statement when he analyses French return in Africa.<sup>204</sup> The Serval operation is not only a military success but also a very positive intervention in terms of French perception in Africa. According to Bernard Guetta, Paris was seen as a neo-colonial power only worried about the protection of its *pré carré* by all means including the interference in African domestic policy. Now, France embodies a trustful partner for African stability and security. Besides, Africa may be a field of experiment for a new and ambitious French diplomacy that is ready to cooperate with emerging countries and middle-range powers. Bernard Guetta points out the capability to “reset” the relationship with Africa, which means with former French colonies and non-francophone Africa as well, whereas many African countries are asking for a true and fair partnership with the European Union and consequently former colonial powers like France, Belgium or Italy.

In 2011, Martin Rempe tackled the relations between France and Africa and the way the European integration may impact on the French African policy in his article “Decolonization by Europeanization”.<sup>205</sup> Rempe wants to challenge a traditional “neo-colonial narrative” and to insist on the transformative power of Europe. If the French engagement for the European integration was imagined as a new instrument to strengthen the French influence in Africa and despite the dominant role of Paris in the definition of the EU African policy, Martin Rempe strongly maintains that the process of Europeanisation has an impact on French-African relations and may assist in decolonizing metropolitan France. He considers that the European integration affects the colonial trade structures and developments approaches, even if there are persistent features of French-African relations in numerous areas. Rempe describes Europeanization as “a striking dynamic factor in the decolonisation process of metropolitan France” and confirms the importance of such a factor for the normalization of the French policy in Africa.

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<sup>204</sup> Bernard Guetta, "Quand la France se réinvestit en Afrique", *Libération*, 4 December 2013, p.23.

<sup>205</sup> Martin Rempe, “Decolonization by Europeanization? The Early EEC and the Transformation of French-African Relations”, KFG Working Paper Series 27, 2011, pp.1-21.

If Europeanisation has some benefits as far as the French policy in Africa is concerned, several limits exist. The senators Jeanny Lorgeoux and Jean-Marie Bockel evoke precisely the weakness of the European integration and a kind of mistrust between Paris and its European partners.<sup>206</sup> The rapporteurs underline the French will to finance a hidden agenda of a contestable African policy and they directly mention the 2008 Epervier operation in Chad and the French strategy which aimed at supporting the President Idriss Deby. This *mea culpa* reveals that French officials are aware of the need to change at least the mode of communication and to cooperate with their European partners. Finally, the senators point out an in-between situation where France is trying to find a balance between the development of a European policy for Africa which is today at its embryonic form, and the permanence of a French specificity in Africa. In other words, there is no concrete move from exceptionalism towards normalization but rather a right mix of the two concepts.

Mette Eilstrup-Sangiovanni tackles the question of exceptionalism as far as French policy in Africa is concerned but from a different perspective<sup>207</sup>: First of all, she admits that France has a specific relationship with the countries in question thanks to its colonial past, geographical proximity to North Africa and strong commercial links to the Sahel region. This specificity may explain why French governments maintain military bases and the fact that the French Republic has militarily intervened in African countries more than 30 times since 1960. Nevertheless, there is no European unanimity about the priority of acting for security in Sahel. The author evokes "Germany which does not perceive an acute threat from unrest in North Africa". Southern EU members like Spain or Italy are more preoccupied but they somehow consider that France will address the Mali crisis. The author illustrates this topic by remembering the crisis in Chad in 2008 and the strong French contribution: "55% of the 3.300 troops (90% if one counts direct support for EUFOR by the French Epervier force in Chad)".<sup>208</sup> According to the author, the Europeanization of such a mission "was rather undermined by political discord and reluctant participation from other member states" and France was not particularly to blame in this case. In absence of a true European engagement and solidarity, France has to intervene by default and it seems that Paris does not assume its special relationship with Africa anymore.

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<sup>206</sup> Jeanny Lorgeoux et Jean-Marie Bockel, « L'Afrique est notre avenir », rapport d'informations N° 104 (2013-2014), 29 October 2013, accessed on 17/12/2013, URL : <http://www.senat.fr/notice-rapport/2013/r13-104-notice.html>.

<sup>207</sup> Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, *The EU's Common Security*.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

## Conclusion

The past weeks may represent the end of several years of turmoil for the Malian Republic. Many problems that led to a grave and long-lasting crisis still remain unsolved. As a matter of fact, the narco-terrorist groups mainly associated with AQIM, Ansar Eddine or MUJWA, the rebellion movement embodied by the NMLA but linked to various forms of Tuareg irredentism and finally the socio-economic tensions were and continue to be the very elements of a complex and disastrous equation. Nevertheless, there is room for hope with the happening of free, fair and democratic elections. Such an event was hard to imagine a couple of months ago and should be precisely analysed in order to understand the present situation in Mali.

The presidential elections held on July 28<sup>th</sup> and August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2013 posed a great challenge for several reasons: First of all, the current security remains highly problematic, especially in the Northern regions (Tombouctou, Kidal, Gao)<sup>209</sup> where several armed gangs are hidden among the populations and sometimes probably with a local support. Secondly, a presidential election requires a whole process including the use of voting rooms, qualified personnel, equipment and controls which are all very costly and depend largely on logistical prerequisites in a country still undermined by the experience of war and deeply disorganized. Some geographical (the coming rainy season) and human topics (many thousands of refugees or displaced people) complete a quick overview of the situation.

The elections in Mali were strictly observed and therefore controlled by external experts, especially by qualified personnel dispatched by the European Union. Most of the comments or critics pointed out some minor problems and imprecision but there is a common agreement on the very nature of these elections which may be considered as fair, free and democratic. According to several official sources, about 49, 8 % of the Malian population has voted during the first round on the 28<sup>th</sup> of July and 45, 78 % for the second round<sup>210</sup>. The two candidates, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (also known as "IBK") and Soumaila Cissé, were both well-experienced politicians.

The role played by the French State is central for several reasons. President François Hollande was extraordinarily firm about the agenda and wanted Mali to hold elections

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<sup>209</sup> See Figure 1 in Appendix.

<sup>210</sup> « Au Mali, "IBK" élu officiellement avec 77,61 % des voix », *Le Monde*, 15.08.13, accessed on 16/08/13, URL: [http://abonnes.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2013/08/15/au-mali-ibk-termine-avec-77-61-des-voix\\_3462068\\_3212.html](http://abonnes.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2013/08/15/au-mali-ibk-termine-avec-77-61-des-voix_3462068_3212.html).

absolutely before the end of July 2013. The French head of State pointed out a progressive but necessary transfer of responsibility from the French ex-colonial power to the Malian State embodied by a democratically elected president. The wish to re-place a legitimate and strong political authority at the head of the Mali should not mask another major point for France: the multiple problems linked to a long stay in Mali and surely the will to avoid the trap of the passage from a liberating to an occupying army. France consistently has troops engaged in Afghanistan and is therefore fully aware of the risks encountered by the coalition forces, from critics to terrorist attacks. Nevertheless, France maintains approximatively 3200 soldiers in order to find the right balance between neo-colonialist paternalism and a neutral support to the Malian population. The official statements of the French Presidency underline “*a great achievement for peace and democracy*” but strongly believe that “*all must be done for the end of the transition, the dialogue and development in Mali*”.<sup>211</sup> Thus the *Elysee* staff considers that the important participation has shown the Malian people’s attachment to the very principle of democracy, this question is directly linked to the overwhelming victory of Ibrahim Boubacar Keita which gives him the needed legitimacy to lead Mali. Despite some imperfections and a presumably questionable timetable, the presidential elections are a strong symbol of the return of a legitimate State and the end of a chaotic and troubled period. “France will stay near the democratic Mali”<sup>212</sup> but to what extend?

Thanks to this master’s thesis, the author would like to understand how the French foreign policy is currently working in the light of the Malian crisis. The first hypothesis was directly inspired by realist or neo-realist theories which consider that the state is the principal actor in international relations and has to fight in order to protect or improve its national interests and to preserve its rank in an anarchical world. To this point, France is giving a clear priority to a traditional bilateralism from state to state in order to serve its strategy and to remain a voice that matters. The second hypothesis was associated with institutionalism which gives a central role to the “international community” or the “international opinion” represented by international, continental or regional organisations. Multilateralism not only stands for a diplomatic option but for “*an institutional form which coordinates relations among three or more states on the basis of generalized principles of conduct [...]*”.<sup>213</sup> A state like France has to

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<sup>211</sup> « Élection présidentielle au Mali », 13.08.2013, accessed on 14/06/2013, URL: <http://www.elysee.fr/communiqués-de-presse/article/election-presidentielle-au-mali-2/>.

<sup>212</sup> « Résultat officiel de l’élection présidentielle au Mali », 15.08.2013, accessed on 16/08/2013, URL : <http://www.elysee.fr/communiqués-de-presse/article/resultat-officiel-de-l-election-presidentielle-au-mali/>.

<sup>213</sup> John Ruggie, *Multilateralism: the anatomy*, p. 571.

respect a multilateral process with a plurality of states and with international organisations and needs to cooperate, communicate and work for global norms such as security, stability or sovereignty. If this opposition between bilateralism and multilateralism is purely dialectic, the idea was to point out the tensions, contradictions and sometimes complementarities as far as the French foreign policy in Mali is concerned.

Before providing a comprising presentation of the results, it is necessary to remember the main and sub-research questions:

**Is it reasonable to suggest that a transition from traditional bilateralism to multilateralism has occurred as far as French foreign policy in the current Malian crisis is concerned?**

This main question about the tension between two major notions of international relations is deeply linked to several sub-questions: How does the French State understand the notion of multilateralism and its application? Is it possible to adapt national interests with international or global issues? How is France managing a delicate in-between position towards a former colony but a nowadays friend nation? Why is France acting more or less alone in the Malian case and running the risk of an intervention with the charge of neo-colonialism? How a middle-range power such as France can manage in international politics today?

The author has decided to follow the main structure and therefore to present the relationship France/Africa, France/United Nations and France/European Union according to the six concepts associated in three pairs: bilateral/multilateral process, national interests/global norms and exceptionalism/normalisation. The crisis in Mali has been divided into two periods: from March 2012 until mid-January 2013 and then from mid-January to August 2013. For each actor, set of concepts and period, the author will exemplarily choose element that is particularly relevant and provide some elements towards a response to the main and sub research questions.

## *France and Africa*

In the light of the Malian crisis, French diplomacy is working on three main levels: Africa / UN / EU thanks to three processes that are affecting French foreign policy in Africa:

Africanisation, internationalisation and Europeanisation. The relationship France / Africa is analysed through the cooperation between Paris and regional or continental organisations, namely ECOWAS and the African Union, but also between the French Republic and one or several African states.

### **Bilateral / multilateral process**

The Malian crisis was a good opportunity to reconsider a highly problematic relationship between France and Africa. Considering the first couple of concepts, namely “bilateral/multilateral process”, there is a clear effort, especially during the first phase of the study, to improve multilateralism thanks to the process of Africanisation. This became particularly obvious when François Hollande collaborated with a continental organisation like the African Union embodied by Thomas Yayi Boni, the president of Benin or with a regional organisation like ECOWAS represented by Blaise Compaoré, president of Burkina Faso and key actor as concerns the mediation with Mali. To acknowledge such organisations and to host their representatives are a first move in the direction of multilateralism. Beyond its traditional allies in Western Africa, France has decided to cooperate with non-francophone countries that are emerging powers and/or regional actors like Nigeria with Jonathan Goodluck or South-Africa with Jakob Zuma. This opening to Anglophone Africa and the end of considering only Africa through the spectrum of French ex-colonies is something new and noticeable.

However, the second phase reveals a discrepancy between political principles and concrete engagement on the ground. If France wanted to mobilize Western Africa thanks to ECOWAS, it must be noted that such a regional organisation has financial and logistical limits and that it was quite difficult for the member states to raise troops, organise and deploy them in Northern Mali. This contradiction is illustrated by the fact that, after France, the main contributor to the international force engaged in Mali was Chad, which is precisely not a member of ECOWAS. François Hollande has strongly maintained that France would not intervene directly and would let Africa control its own problems, namely security and stability in Mali but, finally, France was on the ground with an old ally, the Chadian army with almost 2000 soldiers and the son of President Idriss Deby at its head. If the forces engaged in Northern Mali represent an African coalition, the main contributor is the French army and the military staff has chosen Chad as a strategic partner. This point goes in the direction of a bilateral partnership between France and Chad for logistical, strategic and practical reasons.

### **Global norms / national interests**

The analysis of the political discourse during the diplomatic phase leaves no doubts as far as the French engagement in the Malian case is concerned. French officials and journalists insist on three main global norms: territorial integrity, sovereignty and stability. Since the coup in March 2012 and the attacks of AQIM, Ansar Eddine, MUJWA and the NMLA, Bamako has lost the control over its territory and therefore a clear and total expression of its sovereignty. The third norm is a direct consequence of these losses for Mali but it can concern Western Africa as whole. French diplomats point out the risk of a spreading destabilisation for countries at risk like Niger, Nigeria, Mauritania or Senegal. When French officials are considering the possibility of a direct intervention, the objectives are precisely the return of territorial integrity, sovereignty and stability in Mali.

After having taken the decision to intervene in January 2013, the French state has respected its engagement only partially. Considering Northern Mali and particularly Kidal and its region, it is difficult to talk about a full recovery of territorial integrity and this has evident consequences on the principle of a Malian sovereignty as well. The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad has refused the presence of Malian soldiers in Kidal because this city represents the headquarters of the movement and is a political symbol of the Tuareg struggle for independence. The justification for such a matter of fact insists on the need to maintain a good relationship with the Tuareg community because they are experienced soldiers exhibiting invaluable knowledge of the field. The French military staff wanted to secure tangible support. Besides, several journalists and analysts highlight the will to rescue French hostages. Because the NMLA has contact with AQIM, Ansar Eddine and MUJWA, it was important to preserve a good relationship with the Tuareg movement with the prospect of negotiations or operations in order to free hostages. The particular status of Kidal is in contradiction to the common norm of territorial integrity and conveys the idea that France wants to focus on its national interests, namely the wish to protect French citizens.

### **Normalisation / exceptionalism**

The French policy in Africa is a very specific topic because of the common and complicated past that France and its ex-colonies undoubtedly share. To this point, François Hollande and Laurent Fabius insist on the French decision to help a friendly nation and certainly not to intervene once again in the French *pré carré*. The Malian case is referred to as a “new start” as far as the relationship between France and Africa is concerned and the French government insists on certain key principles such as transparency, solidarity and respect. A

transparent policy means a better cooperation with the Parliament, the *Quai d'Orsay* and the *Palais de l'Élysée* because French African policy was only controlled by the president, his staff and special advisers for a long time. Solidarity illustrates the need for France to help Africa in its development and its modernization. Respect may represent multilateralism with efforts for cooperating with the African partners and rather than imposing a French unilateral vision. All these principles stand for the normalisation of French African policy.

The author has already mentioned the prominent role played by the Chadian army with more than 2000 soldiers under the command of Idriss Déby's own son. Such a fact remembers old habits of the French African policy which are clearly associated with exceptionalism because Paris is more likely to maintain traditional alliances with contestable regimes like Déby's than to proceed to a "new start". In return of his strong engagement and heavy losses, the Chadian president is claiming for a non-permanent seat in the Security Council and more responsibility in Africa. This kind of patronage between a contestable but strong and stable African regime, and a European *metropole* which is in need of extensive military local support remembers the system of *Françafrique* and is referred to as a "*multi-tiered combination of presidential dominance over policy and a complex matrix of other state and non-state actors with a stake in African policy*".<sup>214</sup>

## *France and the United Nations*

The UN stage marks the second meaningful level: France has been a member of this intergovernmental organization consisting of 193 states since 1945 but the French Republic has a very special role thanks to its permanent seat in the Security Council and the capability to veto any substantive resolution. Furthermore, such a permanent seat provides the opportunity of taking the leadership in a pertinent case and to mobilize the international community with the help of the UN legitimation.

### **Multilateral / bilateral process**

It is worth noting a clear proactive French diplomacy on the UN stage. From the beginning of the Malian crisis, Paris mobilized the international community by placing the topic at the top of the agenda and by organizing meetings or debates in order to maintain a strong interest by mass media and the opinion. For example, François Hollande organised a High Level

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<sup>214</sup> Chafer, *From confidence*, p. 41.

Meeting on the Security in Sahel in order to capture attention. This capability to organise and to mobilize is clearly associated with the concept of leadership among the United Nations Security Council defined by David Ambrosetti and Mélanie Cathelin. This is an influential position recognized by its peers to a delegation on a specific case and the “leader delegation” plays a central role during the discussions, for instance, by taking the floor in the first position or by writing draft resolutions and diffusing them to the other members. Apparently, France has taken this leadership for the Malian crisis and this point will nuance the multilateral process adopted by French officials. Indeed, the leadership is given to a permanent member of the Security Council and allowed a prominent role and position. In this case, it is difficult to talk about a multilateral process and maybe it is more accurate to evoke a “minilateralism” where France has first and foremost to convince the other four permanent members in order to reach the leadership and impulse its own dynamic in the Malian case.

The respect of the United Nations and the need to multilateralize the French engagement is obvious, considering the doctrine of François Hollande in 2012: *“France will not participate in peace-keeping or civilian protecting operations without a UN mandate or a UNSC resolution”*. In the first phase of the Malian crisis, France has decided to play a prominent diplomatic role but in the second phase and according to several journalists and analysts, the direct military intervention is problematic because the UNSC resolution 2085 did not explicitly authorize the French operation inasmuch as there is question of an African international force and certainly not of a French operation. French diplomats underline an intervention in the context or in the framework of the UNSC resolution and insist on the international legality which is vague but incontestable. The journalist Nathalie Nougayrède makes a clear difference between the legality conferred by a UNSC resolution and the legitimacy of the large political support for the French intervention. According to her, the legal basis for the Serval operation is the official request sent by the Malian president and not the UNSC statements that are a way to legitimate the French decision.

### **Global norms / national interests**

In front of the UN Assembly, François Holland insists on the concept of collective security in order to describe the gravity of the situation in Northern Mali and consequently the need for the international community to act. The president underlines that terrorist bands are occupying a territory as big as France and want to create a rear operating base for launching attacks against other states in the region and that such a threat concerns the whole world. Since 9/11, terrorism

is clearly identified as the main challenge for global security and this argument remains hard to contest. The French president does not hesitate to point out the “passivity of several nations” which – in his opinion – are not fighting hard enough against terrorism. After the “*droit d’ingérence*” and the “responsibility to protect”, François Hollande seems to point out a new concept, namely “the responsibility to act” when a threat is growing and when states are not taking the right measures in order to stop it.

The main argument of French diplomacy in order to justify the intervention in Mali is the risk of regional destabilisation which may be *in fine* a threat for global security. The geopolitical dimension of the Sahel region should not be underestimated because of an energetic hub, particularly in Northern Mali and Niger, but with the existence of trade routes, licit or illicit trafficking and migratory flows as well. Terrorism represented by AQIM, MUJWA, Ansar Eddine and a probable alliance with Boko Haram will spread chaos in the whole region and considerably challenge all these activities. Important extractive resources in Mali and in Niger<sup>215</sup> may explain the French reaction and the need to protect highly strategic positions like Areva’s uranium mines. If several analysts and diplomats refuse to put this topic at the top of Paris ‘priorities, such an important resource is playing a role in the French decision-making process. Therefore, a socialist think-tank like the *Fondation Jean-Jaurès* invites the government to adapt the political discourse in order to convince a plurality of states and international organisations, namely to use multilateralism without neglecting French national interests.

### **Normalisation / exceptionalism**

The effort to respect multilateralism, its rules and principles is already a first illustration of an inclination towards normalization. The United Nations insist on the need to better take the process of regionalization into account; in other words, to give more responsibility and respect to the various regional organisations. According to the former French foreign minister Dominique de Villepin, this point is extremely important for France because it will put an end to a pure bilateralism between Paris and its ex-colonies and to a military solo intervention with a great amount of power given to military command. The impact of UN multilateralism over the French African policy will oblige France to stop considering Africa and particularly West Africa as a sanctuary for French exceptionalism. Some specialists like Tony Chafer point out a serious reassessment of the relationship between the *metropole* and its ex-colonies but he underlines a reorientation or a modernization rather than disengagement or normalisation.

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<sup>215</sup> See figure 4 in Appendix.

When French officials and diplomats are facing the UN reluctance to authorize the deployment of an African international force, they decide to organize a “diplomatic counter-offensive” in order to put pressure on the Secretary General and his staff. Ban-Ki Moon still wants to prioritize political dialogue and a diplomatic dimension whereas France underlines the urgency of the situation. The solution here is to mobilize African allies or to use a *capacité d’entraînement* that will bring several countries under a French leadership for serving a strategy. All these countries are former French colonies: Mali, Cote d’Ivoire, Niger, Benin and Chad. The only exception is Nigeria, thanks to whose support the French voice at the UN stage is stronger and more legitimate. This example illustrates quite well the resilience of a strong solidarity between France and its former African colonies because of a common history, in other words: the exceptional relationship which is related to a common history. The author comes across this fact in the light of the work of Guillaume Devin when he insists on the process characterized by the catchphrase: “*to serve multilateralism is also to expect it can serve*”.<sup>216</sup> If France is helping African countries thanks to its permanent seat in the UNSC, the Republic is expecting that African partners will support its strategy.

## *France and the European Union*

The third and last diplomatic level is the European Union: Since entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, the European External Action Service (EEAS) is the new avatar of the European foreign policy and represents an important dimension of the French policy. The European Union should be considered as a political union directly related to the EEAS or a sum of national states with their own foreign policy.

### **Multilateral / bilateral process**

If France is deploying a proactive diplomacy at the UN stage and is assuming the leadership as far as the Malian case is concerned, the work in and with the European Union should be mentioned as well. From the very beginning of the crisis in Northern Mali, French officials warned their European counterparts about the growing threat against Bamako and, *in*

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<sup>216</sup> Guillaume Devin, *Le multilatéralisme est-il fonctionnel?*, p.151.

*fine*, the whole region. France obviously wants its European partners to take on their responsibilities and the French Minister for Foreign Affairs Laurent Fabius does not hesitate to underline a unanimous support of the European partners. The manifestation of the European solidarity is characterized by the positive attitude of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security, Catherine Ashton, who has organized an extraordinary meeting on the situation in Mali. Such a verbal and political support is eminently important for France because a legitimization by the European Union is a strong guarantee against any suspicion of unilateralism or neo-colonialism in this specific area of Africa.

Nevertheless, if the European solidarity is a reality, the concrete engagement of the European Union is an entirely different question and, in order to build a coalition or at least to find some military support, France has used a bilateral canal. A quick overview of the help provided to France shows that only Great-Britain, Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Spain and the Netherlands have decided to lend some aircrafts for troop transport and sometimes only after intense debates like in Germany. As far as Great-Britain is concerned, a good military cooperation has been observable thanks to bilateral treaties and especially the 2010 Lancaster House Treaties ratified by David Cameron and Nicolas Sarkozy. Such a bilateral cooperation stands for a model and the more efficient way for France to find and create concrete support in order to ensure an appropriate military intervention in Mali.

### **Global norms / national interests**

The main argument raised by the French diplomacy in order to persuade the European countries is related to the need to pursue European integration by improving the security and defence policy. Several analysts do not hesitate to confirm the official narrative and insist on the risk of destabilisation which will concern the European Union sooner or later. The main area concerned here is the Mediterranean region and consequently most South European countries. Moreover, if ever some narco-terrorist bands take control over the Mali and its infrastructures, forge an alliance with other extremist groups like Boko Haram in Nigeria and build a “sanctuary for terrorism”, the consequences for the European Union will be serious. The French Minister for Defence, Jean-Yves Le Drian, evokes the crisis in Mali as a good opportunity for the member states of the European Union to improve an embryonic European defence. This idea to create a true capacity for military action is a tradition among the French political and military elites that is deeply rooted in the concept of “*Europe puissance*” and the possibility for the EU to be more than a simple normative and civilian power.

The lack of concrete European military cooperation in the Malian crisis reveals the existence of different geopolitical priorities. The former French ambassador in Austria, Stéphane Gompertz, points out a lack of global strategy for several EU member states or a priority given to other critical regions like Ukraine for Eastern Europe. If the EU has expressed its solidarity by means of granting political support, logistical and material support, France does most of the work. French diplomats have faced serious difficulties to convince their European counterparts because, for some of them, there is no will to directly intervene or they simply do not possess the capability to project their forces, and for others, France is defending its own interests and there is no question to serve purely national interests. Beyond the question of French hostages, several journalists and specialists mention the question of extractive resources. The French energy company Areva is operating uranium mines in several sites in Niger and Mali may have a promising site for oil and gas in Taoudenni plus resources in gold, manganese and phosphate<sup>217</sup>. If these strategic resources do not seem to be the most important argument for explaining the French intervention in Mali, they may nevertheless justify why several EU partners qualify the intervention in Mali as a French, and not as a European priority.

### **Normalisation / exceptionalism**

European integration may be an important lever for the normalisation of the French African policy. The author has already mentioned the expression of an EU solidarity by means of a logistical, material and technical help from member states like Germany, Great-Britain or Belgium. Nevertheless, this European engagement *a minima* and the absence of European troops on the ground raises several questions. According to French diplomats and analysts, the consequences of the European Union mission in Chad and the Central African Republic (EUFOR Chad/CAR) in 2008, which aimed at protecting civilians, UN personnel and facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid, has created a negative precedent inasmuch as the EU partners associated with this mission have considered that France had a hidden agenda and wanted to protect the contestable Chadian president Idriss Déby. In other words, France has followed its own strategy in order to help a loyal and faithful servant of the French policy in this part of Africa and such an attitude clearly evokes the resilience of exceptionalism. After the EUFOR Chad/CAR mission, the European partners were extremely wary of French motives and insisted on the need for Paris to mutualize the financial and political costs of such an intervention without sharing any information or analyses.

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<sup>217</sup> See figure 4 in Appendix.

If the EUFOR Chad/CAR operation has left a bitter taste, it is important to evoke the EUTM Mali which is an expression of the Europeanisation of the French policy in Africa. A large number of EU member states (Belgium, Spain, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom, Poland, Slovenia, Estonia, Hungary and Cyprus) have expressed their wish to participate in this mission with 450 soldiers including 200 instructors and under the command of the French general François Lecointre. The objectives of the EUTM aim at improving the capability for the Malian forces to defend the national territory but not a European soldier will be directly involved in combat. Even if France remains the main contributor and the leading nation, this represents an important improvement as concerns the process of Europeanization and above and beyond demonstrates that France wants to engage its European partners and to give them a responsibility in the management of the Malian crisis. To sum up, there is no concrete move from exceptionalism towards normalization but rather a subtle mix between two concepts. Today, French officials consider that the Republic has to admit the existence of a specific relationship, a common and complicated history, a shared culture between France and Africa but in order to create a new partnership with the help of the European Union.

### *From Mali to the Central African Republic*

The French foreign policy in the light of the Malian crisis does not suggest a clear transition from bilateralism to multilateralism but rather a complementarity between the two processes. For example, in the wake of a proactive multilateral diplomacy at the United Nations in order to provide the French intervention with “an international legitimization”, François Hollande is forging a Franco-African diplomatic counter-offensive for putting pressure on the UN Secretary General Ban-Ki Moon. In the same way, Paris wanted to be sure of an EU strong multilateral support before preferring a bilateral channel with countries like Great-Britain, Germany, Spain or Belgium for a more concrete military support. At the end of the operation Serval in which France has taken over the leadership considering decision-making and strategies, French officials decided to resort to multilateralism for ensuring a progressive French withdrawal and a transition to the MINUSMA forces and to the EUTM mission.

As far as the couple “national interests/global norms” is concerned, the official political justification aimed at convincing the various partners by mobilizing different concepts: the threat of destabilisation for Africa, the fight against terrorism for the UN and the European security for the EU. France was serving its own interests as well because the stability of Western

Africa and the need to preserve security are key topics for the French republic which have strong geopolitical, economical and human stakes in the whole region. Nevertheless, the correlation between national interests and global norms was not always adequate, especially when French troops declared that one of their objectives aimed at restoring territorial integrity whereas Kidal and its region remained free from Malian troops and consequently far from any form of Malian complete sovereignty.

The tension between “normalization” and “exceptionalism” is still a burning issue. Almost fifty years after the African independencies, the ex-colonial power has difficulties to reinstate transparent, equal and fair relations. If Paris has avoided a dangerous face to face with its ex-colony and has cooperated with non-Francophone countries like Niger or South-Africa and continental or regional organisations, there is always a temptation to work with traditional allied regimes like Idriss Déby’s Chad and once again to create confusion among EU or UN partners who do not understand why France is cooperating so closely with a contestable state which in addition happens to be lacking member status of the regional organisation deeply concerned by such a crisis.

Finally, the author would like to quote one last sentence of François Hollande which fully reveals the French attitude during the Malian crisis:

*L’Histoire retiendra que cette opération qui a été faite par la France au nom de la Communauté internationale et avec l’Europe en soutien a été, je pense, une étape très importante dans la lutte contre le terrorisme.*<sup>218</sup>

In other words, the French president underlines an operation assumed by France, in the name of the international community, and with the support of the European Union which was a very important step in the fight against terrorism.

Right after the end of the Serval operation and the organisation of free, fair and democratic elections in Mali during the summer 2013, another former French colony plunged into chaos, namely the Central African Republic. The journalist Cyril Bensimon mentions in his article that “*Paris is ready to militarily intervene*”<sup>219</sup> in order to restore state of law and to improve the humanitarian situation. The French army is already present in Bangui and some reinforcements will help to increase patrols. Such an intervention will occur thanks to a new

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<sup>218</sup> Hollande, *Conférence de presse à Varsovie*.

<sup>219</sup> Cyril Bensimon, « Centrafrique: Paris est prêt à intervenir militairement », *Le Monde*, Saturday 23 November 2013, p.4.

UNSC resolution and will help the 3600 soldiers of the African Union. This international force should put an end to the violence and the fight between the ex-rebels of the “Séléka”, mostly Muslim, who effectively took power on March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2013, and the villager militias by the name of “anti-Balaka”, mostly Christian. Paris fosters a proactive diplomacy towards African heads of state and the African Union in order to neutralize any ambiguity about the French role in a former colony. Laurent Fabius describes a “state at the edge of genocide” and argues in favour of a quick and decisive intervention. This brief overview of the crisis in CAR invites to draw a parallel with the Malian case. Obviously, there are two different situations because this new conflict is taking place in another region, Central Africa, with a strong religious dimension and a struggle between Muslim and Christian factions under extreme violence. Nevertheless, some similarities exist: First of all, the CAR is a former French colony on which Paris exerted very strong influence, especially on the local political process. The *Quai d’Orsay* is trying to mobilize the international community by underlining “a pre-genocidal situation” and wants to cooperate with the African and European Union but French officials have a clear preference for a strong and quick military intervention. And, once again, the official political discourse is hesitant about the objectives of such a mission: If a priority is given to the humanitarian situation, several analysts consider that Paris would like to put an end to chaos and violence in order to allow new elections and to proceed to a change of regime.

After the interventions in Libya, Mali and now the Central African Republic, is it possible to observe a new French interventionism in Africa and the beginning of a new African policy where *multilateralism really matters* despite the specificity of the French-African relationship?

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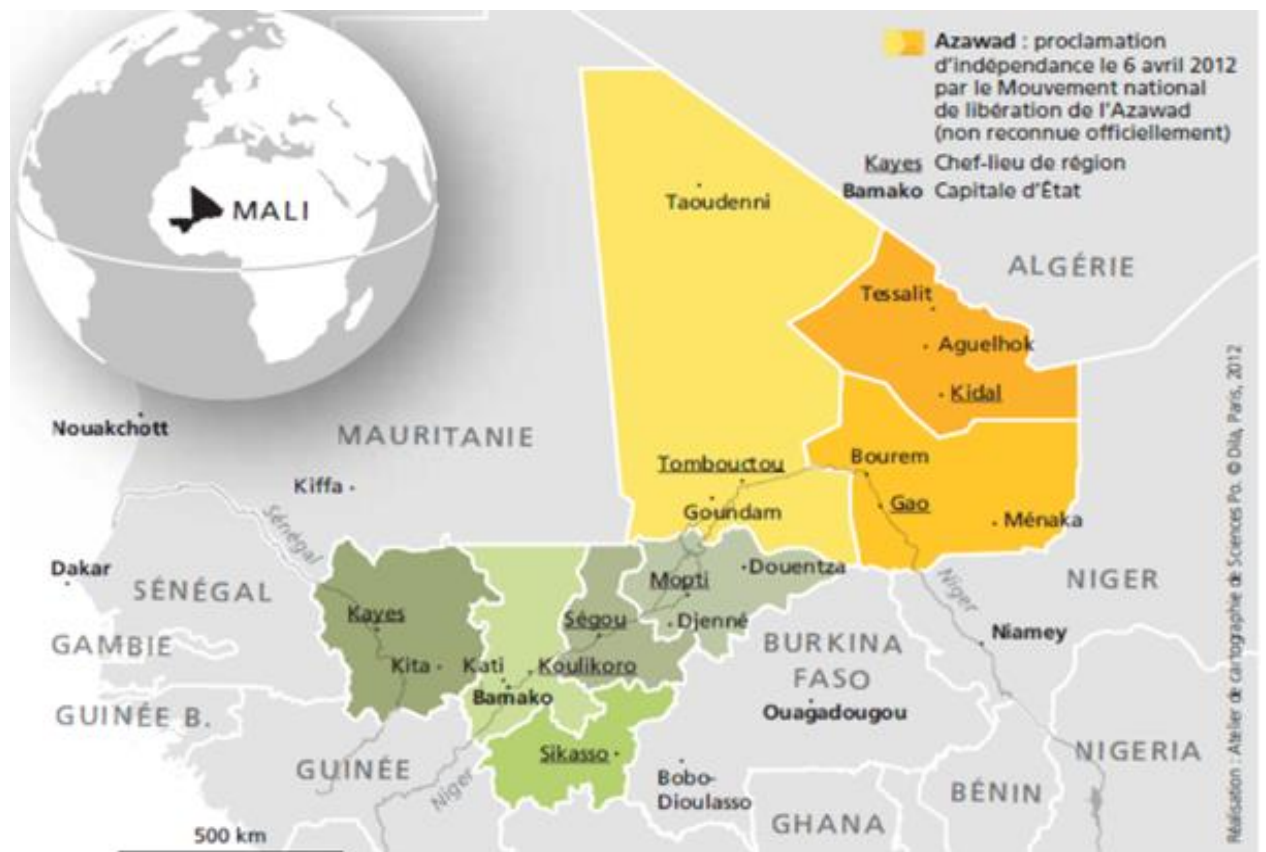
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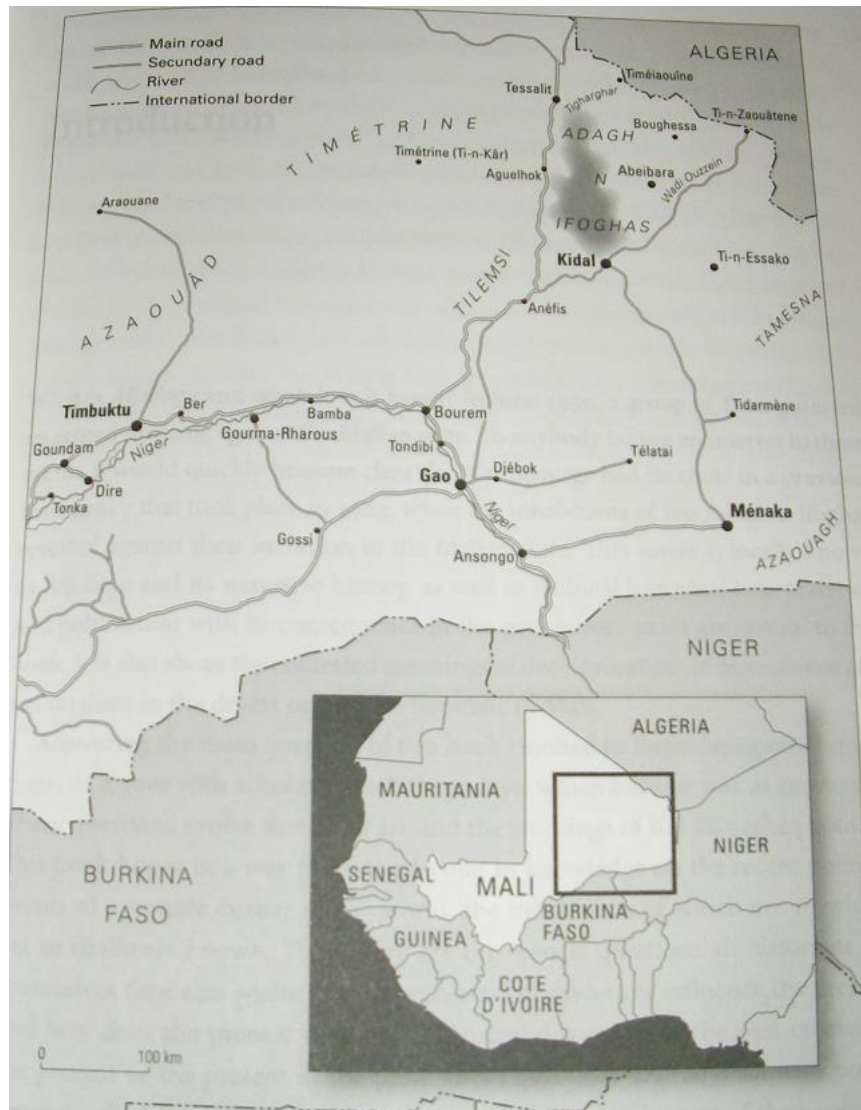
## Appendix

Figure 1: the Malian Republic



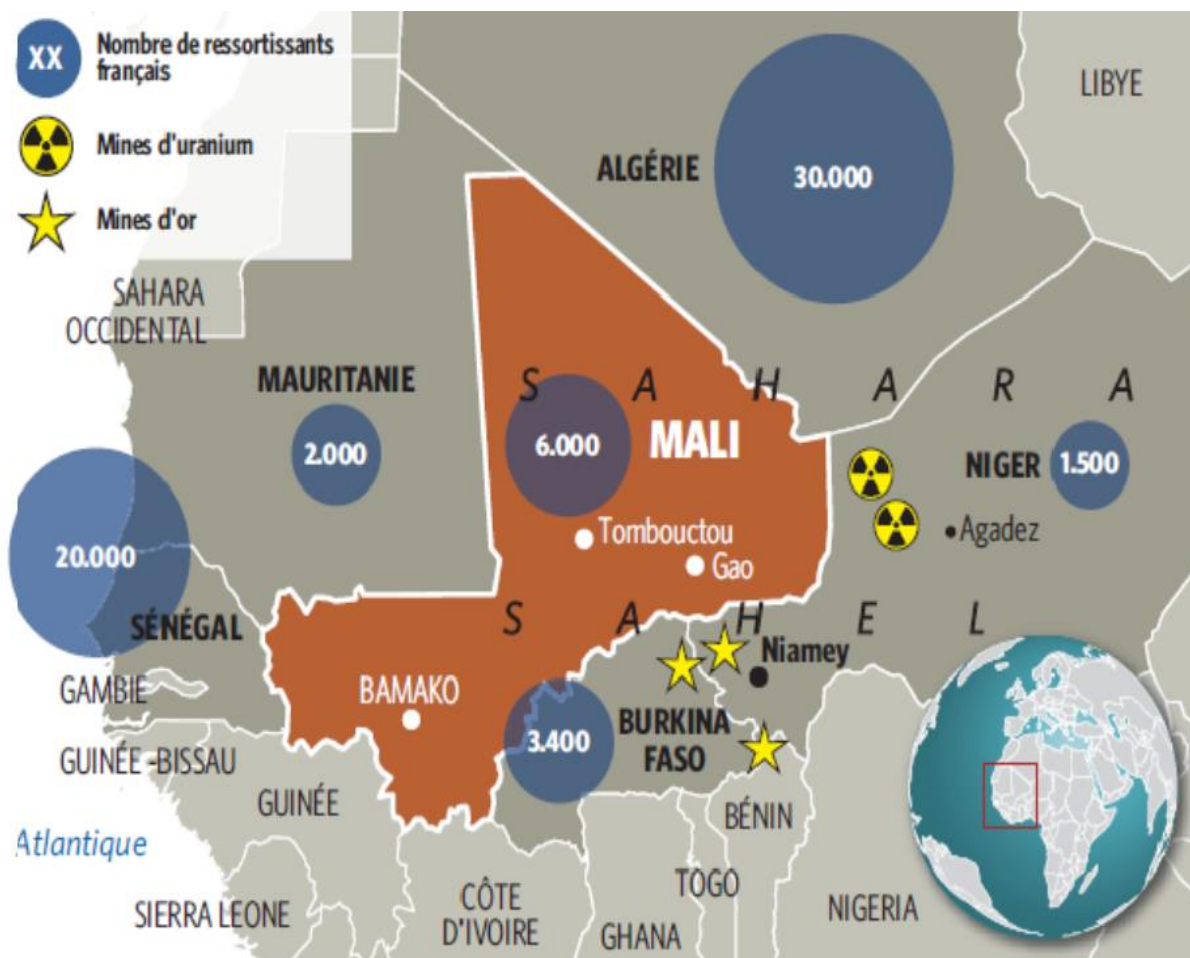
Source: « Le Sahel en crise », *Questions internationales*, n°5 Novembre-Décembre 2012 (Paris : La Documentation Française), p.87.

**Figure 2: Map of Northern Mali**



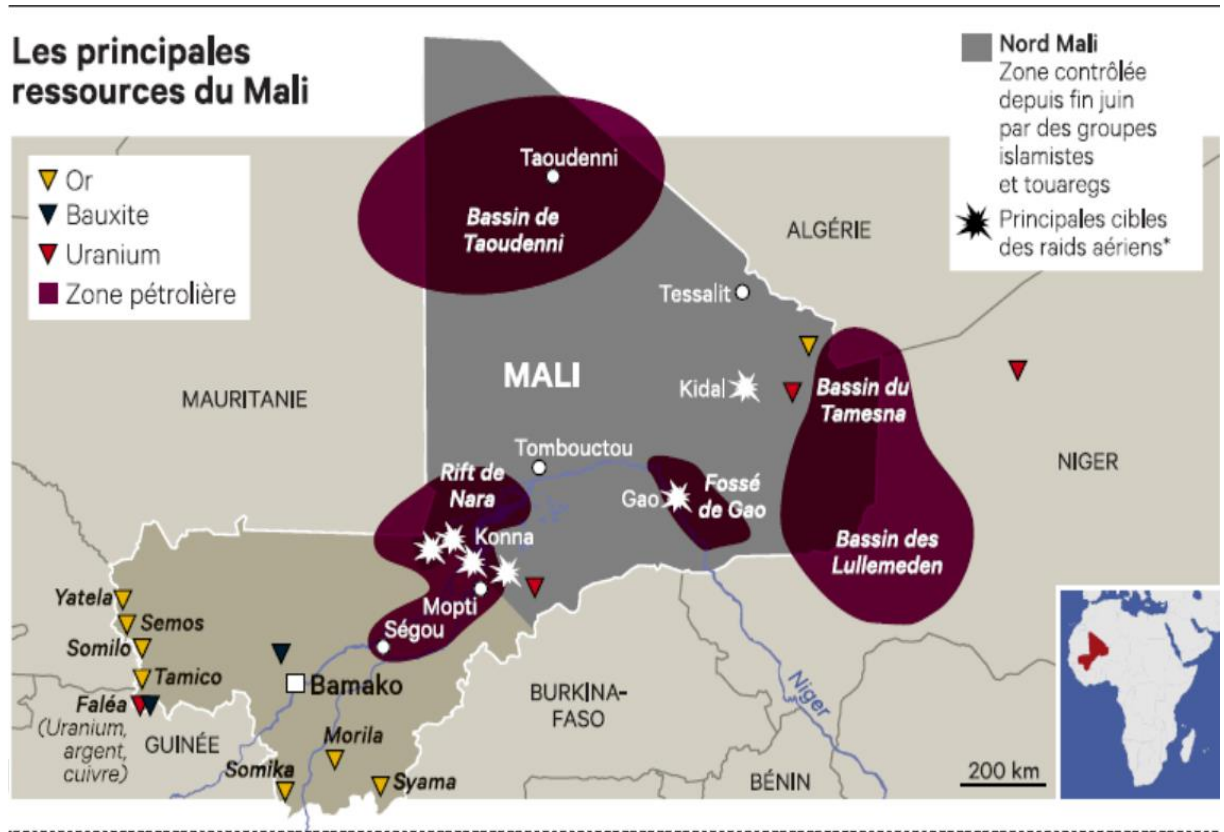
**Source:** Lecoq Baz, *Disputed Desert. Decolonisation, Competing nationalism and Tuareg rebellions in Northern Mali* (Brill: Leiden, Boston, 2010), p. XXXIII.

**Figure 3: French interests in Western Africa**



Source: *Le Soir*, 25 January 2015, p. 9.

Figure 4 : Main natural resources in Mali



Source : *Les Echos*, 15 January 2013, p.8.

## Abstract (English)

In the light of the Malian crisis (2012-2013), this paper seeks to examine the functioning of French foreign policy in Africa and more precisely in the West African region; once the heart of the French colonial empire. The main research question seeks to clarify France's official position through two hypotheses: firstly, a realist or neo-realist approach which considers that bilateralism remains the principal *modus operandi* concerning French diplomacy in Mali and secondly, a liberal institutionalist approach where "multilateralism matters" by means of international or regional organizations.

The theoretical part underlines the debate existing among the field of International Relations between realism/neo-realism and institutionalism as far as state foreign policy is concerned. Moreover, the specificities of France's policy in Africa are evoked because they reveal several contradictions about François Hollande's intervention in Mali. Through this part, the author will largely rely on six concepts serving as a guideline for the more empirical section: three concepts define more multilateralism (multilateral process / priority given to national interests / exceptionalism) whereas the three others qualify a bilateral engagement (bilateral process / global norms / normalization).

The empirical part examines the Malian crisis, adopts a chronological and thematic approach and features the analysis of expert interviews, official discourses and press reviews. The first phase of the Malian crisis (March 2012 – mid-January 2013) reveals a wish for France to cooperate with African states, regional organizations as well as the United Nations and the European Union, which suggests that Paris respects a multilateral engagement. However, the second phase of the crisis (mid-January 2013-August 2013) and the French decision to militarily intervene on the ground with its traditional ally Chad indicate a "bilateral turn" that is legitimised through a UN resolution and respects European political solidarity.

Rather than favouring bilateralism over multilateralism, France has tried to find a balance between the two regarding its foreign policy in Africa, it has assumed a special relationship with its former colonies which needs to be, if not normalized, at least modernized. The Malian crisis underlines the various multilateral options available to France: to work with international and regional organisations in line with a true multilateral engagement, to take the leadership within the UNSC, to forge a diplomatic counter-offensive with former African colonies, or to work with a small number of bilateral partners in order to create a coalition. Bilateral and multilateral approaches are not always complementary, indeed sometimes they lead to deadlocks, for instance in the case of Kidal where global norms and French national interests are not compatible.

**Keywords:** French foreign policy in Africa / Malian crisis / bilateralism / multilateralism / Africanisation / internationalisation / Europeanisation

## Abstract (German)

Angesichts der malischen Krise (2012-2013) analysiert diese Masterarbeit die Funktionsweise der französischen Außenpolitik in Afrika, präziser in Westafrika als einstiges Zentrum des französischen Kolonialreichs. Die Hauptforschungsfrage versucht anhand von zwei Hypothesen die offizielle Position Frankreichs zu erläutern: Einerseits ein realistischer beziehungsweise neo-realistischer Ansatz, der den Bilateralismus als prinzipielle Vorgehensweise in Bezug auf die französische Diplomatie in Mali betrachtet; andererseits ein liberaler institutionalistischer Ansatz, bei dem Multilateralismus durch internationale oder regionale Organisationen von Bedeutung ist.

Die französische Außenpolitik betreffend betont der theoretische Teil die intensive Debatte im Feld der internationalen Beziehungen zwischen Realismus/Neo-Realismus und Institutionalismus. Ferner wird an die Besonderheiten der französischen Außenpolitik in Afrika erinnert, da sie dazu in der Lage sind, einige Widersprüche der Intervention François Hollandes in Mali zu erklären. Am Ende dieses theoretischen Teils werden sechs Konzepte als Leitfaden für den empirischen Teil eingesetzt: drei Konzepte orientieren sich am Multilateralismus (multilateral process / priority given to national interests / exceptionalism), während sich die anderen drei auf ein bilaterales Engagement beziehen (bilateral process / global norms / normalization).

Anhand der Analyse von Experteninterviews, offiziellen Reden und Pressespiegeln beschreibt der empirische Teil die malische Krise aus einer chronologischen und thematischen Perspektive. Die erste Phase der malischen Krise (März 2012 – Mitte Januar 2013) zeigt den französischen Wunsch, mit Staaten wie regionalen Organisationen in Afrika, der UNO sowie der Europäischen Union zu kooperieren und suggeriert damit, dass Paris ein multilaterales Engagement respektiert. Auf der anderen Seite verdeutlichen die zweite Phase der Krise (Mitte Januar 2013 – August 2013) und die französische Entscheidung der militärischen Intervention vor Ort mit seinem Alliierten Tschad eine „bilaterale Wende“, welche durch UN-Resolution legitimiert ist und die politische Solidarität Europas respektiert.

Anstatt entweder Bilateralismus oder Multilateralismus zu begünstigen, hat Frankreich hinsichtlich der Außenpolitik in Afrika versucht, einen Ausgleich zwischen den beiden zu finden. Eine besondere Beziehung mit den ehemaligen Kolonien wird gepflegt, welche, wenn schon nicht normalisiert, zumindest modernisiert wird. Die malische Krise illustriert die mehreren verfügbaren multilateralen Möglichkeiten der französischen Diplomatie: Das Arbeiten mit internationalen oder regionalen Organisationen, das Übernehmen der Führung innerhalb der UNSC, das Mobilisieren ehemaliger afrikanischer Kolonien, um eine diplomatische Gegenoffensive zu schaffen oder das Kooperieren mit einer kleinen Anzahl von bilateralen Partnern, um eine Koalition zu bilden. Bilaterale und multilaterale Ansätze sind nicht immer komplementär, tatsächlich führen sie manchmal zu Blockierungen, wie im Falle Kidals, wo globale Normen und französische Staatsinteressen nicht kompatibel waren.

**Schlagwörter:** französische Außenpolitik in Afrika / malische Krise / Bilateralismus / Multilateralismus / Afrikanisierung / Internationalisierung / Europäisierung

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