

France's policy towards Africa within the Security Council from 2007 to 2010: a real multilateral turn?

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Seen from New York, to be more accurate from the Chamber of the Security Council, France's policy towards Africa has apparently taken a multilateral turn with the adoption of numerous Security Council resolutions authorizing French interventions in Africa. France has also expressed its increasing support for regional organizations, such as the European Union (EU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), or the African Union (AU). The aim of this article is to elucidate France's policy towards Africa between 2007 and 2010. It thus presents a summary of the actions and positions of France on all the questions related to Africa considered by the Security Council. Beyond official speeches and public debates on the direction of France's policy towards Africa, this article analyzes the concrete measures adopted at the level of the Security Council and on the ground for situations qualified as threats to international peace and security. Based on the French policy within the Security Council, this article will then present France's vision for Africa, be it multilateral or not.

This article also aims at confirming or invalidating the trends of France's African policy highlighted in the literature. Experts seem to agree on three major trends. First, France is disengaging from Africa. There are several signs of this disengagement: a steady decline in technical assistance, in official development assistance (not including debt forgiveness) and in the military structure on the continent, with France keeping only two bases in Africa: "one on the Atlantic coast and one on the Oriental coast, one or two support units in the Persian Gulf and one in the Indian Ocean"¹. In the same vein, during his hearing in front of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee in 2010, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bernard Kouchner, reported the end of the secret security clauses of the defense

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¹ Livre blanc de la Défense 2008, p. 73 (<http://lesrapports.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/BRP/084000341/0000.pdf>)

agreements signed after the independence of several African States.² Second, France shows an increasing interest in the countries that lie outside its traditional zone of influence. Francophone countries no longer have a preferential treatment and non-francophone countries such as Nigeria and South Africa, because of their influence in Africa, are now important elements within France's African policy. Bernard Kouchner stated during his hearing in front of the Commission, on April 15, 2010, that "France should strengthen its relations with emerging countries, such as Nigeria and South Africa, and engage in areas beyond its traditional zone of influence, as it did during the resolution of the political crises in Kenya and in Zimbabwe."³ Third, France seems to demonstrate the necessary political will to develop its relations with African States within a multilateral framework, a "novelty" a few years ago (Adjovi, 2001, p.427). This multilateral turn implies a stronger collaboration with African regional organizations and an enhanced engagement of the European Union and of the United Nations (UN) in Africa. This article verifies whether France champions African positions within the Security Council and promotes the political engagement of the UN and of the EU. (Châtaigner, 2006) Finally, it also verifies whether the declared desire for enhanced transparency of the French authorities and its focus, in their speeches, on the principles of rule of law and democratic governance are indeed reflected in its policy towards Africa within the Security Council. The aim here is to decipher what this multilateral turn means.

This article presents an overview of the last few years of France's policy towards Africa at the level of the Security Council. It thus does not dwell at length on the concept of multilateralism in international relations. Within the context of France's African policy, the concept of multilateralism can be defined by its opposition to the concept of unilateralism. Multilateralism, broadly understood, is an institutionalized form of cooperation in international relations. It is nonetheless necessary to problematize the notion of multilateral turn. This article remains fundamentally realist in its approach to the extent that it is based on the premise that France will primarily pursue its national interest within the context of its policy towards Africa. But this does not mean that France will not adopt a multilateral approach or cooperate with other States in order to pursue its policy (Meimon, 2007). This article attempts to understand where France is heading after this multilateral turn: multilateralism, but with which partners? With the members of the European Union? With African

² <http://www.temoust.org/politique-africaine-de-la-france,14316>

³ *Ibid.*

States? Or, with the UN? Indeed, the multilateralisation of France's policy towards Africa within the Security Council does not necessarily mean the promotion of the African voices within the Council. Considering the above, how can France's multilateral turn be measured? The establishment of a real dialogue when a resolution is drafted could be one way of doing it. In that case, it is necessary to check who the coauthors of a draft resolution are. The fact that, without France's intervention, many situations would not be considered as a priority by the Security Council should also be taken into account. It is also difficult to establish a distinction between the original impulse behind a specific resolution and long term influence during the consultations before the adoption of resolutions on a specific situation, but the two are usually linked (Ambrosetti, 2009). Finally, from a methodological point of view, it is important to mention here that this article uses primarily UN documents as its sources and thus suffers from the same limitations as these documents, namely an approach that does not put enough emphasis on local dynamics, the initiatives and interactions of local belligerents, an approach often adopted by UN missions themselves.

Africa is at the heart of the work of the Security Council with more than half of its meetings focusing on that continent. The United Nations deploys almost 75 % of its peacekeepers in seven missions in Africa: the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT), the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS), the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO).⁴ An African Union mission, authorized by the Security Council, is also deployed in Somalia. Peacebuilding is also an important aspect of the UN's work in Africa: three integrated peacebuilding offices were established in Guinea-Bissau, Burundi and Sierra Leone. Despite its rhetoric, France has adopted different positions in each situation and has played a different role in each conflict.

⁴ In 2009, the UN deployed 97 858 troops, police personnel and observers, including 73 212 in Africa. (<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/publications/yir/yir2009.pdf>)

Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Democratic Republic of Congo, host since 1999 to what has become the world's largest peacekeeping operation, surprised the United Nations late in 2009 with a push to phase out the United Nations mission and restore full power in the country to its own military and Government. The Government, arguing that the situation was sufficiently improved after more than a decade of UN help, asked the council in March 2010 to wrap up its peacekeeping mission entirely by August 2011. The Council did not respond favorably to this news and said much remained to be done before a drawdown could be possible “without triggering a relapse into instability.”⁵ The UN heeded the Government’s request withdrawing 2,000 troops by June 2010 and transforming the mission into a stabilization force that will stay in the country until June 2011.

The UN launched its intervention in 1999, a year after the start of a five-year war in Congo that eventually became known as “Africa’s first world war.” Before it ended in 2003, the conflict pulled in nine African nations and numerous militias, both foreign and domestic, driving more than 3 million people from their homes and killing more than 4 million people, in combat, or by starvation and disease. Although the fighting largely subsided after the civil war ended, sporadic violence has continued, particularly in some remote parts of the mineral-rich eastern Congo.

The UN mission, formerly known as MONUC (United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo), has grown over the years to a force of more than 20,000 troops, including 1,000 police officers and 1,500 civilians, and with a \$1.3 billion budget. MONUC has been focusing in recent years on protecting civilians against armed groups terrorizing the east, including the Hutu-dominated Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), whose leaders have been incriminated in the 1994 Rwandan genocide, and the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), a Ugandan rebel group notorious for its brutality -- slaughtering of whole villages and sexual enslavement of women and children. MONUC has worked with Congo's army in trying to hunt down these armed groups, but the fighters of the LRA and of the FDLR – roaming freely between Congo, the Central African Republic and Sudan – have proved elusive enemies. For instance, Human Rights Watch charged in March 2010 that 321 people were massacred in a Resistance Army

⁵ <http://www.un.org/News/fr-press/docs/2010/CS9939.doc.htm>

attack in Congo's remote northeast in December.⁶ MONUC's work has been complicated by a large presence of former rebels accused of human rights violations and war crimes in the Congolese army.

But overall, the situation in Congo improved somewhat with the organization of free and fair elections in 2006, better relations with neighbors that had intervened in the country in the past and greater success in getting some rebel soldiers to put down arms and return to civilian life. Preparation of a responsible exit strategy acceptable to both Congo's Government and the Security Council will be a major challenge for MONUC, now rebaptized MONUSCO as of July 2010, as the UN is well aware that there will be no stability in Central Africa without a stable Congo, and no stability in Congo without a stable Central Africa.

Considering the complexity of the situation in the country, France certainly exerted a strong influence on the actions and the resolutions of the Security Council. French initiatives on the ground reflect its initiatives and position at the level of the Security Council. The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is particularly interesting because of France's strong bilateral relations with the country and of the multiplicity of actors that facilitated France's intervention: the UN and the EU. The only element missing is an African regional organization that could have played a role similar to that of ECOWAS or of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The United Nations played a historic role in the Congo since the independence of the country and the death of the UN Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, in 1961. The UN intervention in the Congo is thus not a surprise. Within the UN, French efforts were aimed at keeping the Security Council focused on the issue. Indeed, despite the size of the mission, among the five permanent members, only the United Kingdom seemed to follow closely the situation in that country. As the table below clearly shows, France was usually the one holding the pen for the resolutions adopted by the Council. Recently, France organized a Security Council visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, on May 14 and 15, 2010, to meet the authorities of the country following their request to withdraw the mission. The French Permanent Representative reported to the Security Council and to the press on the visit. It is worth noting that only the French and British Permanent Representatives participated in the visit to the Congo in May 2010.

⁶ <http://www.hrw.org/fr/news/2010/03/28/rd-congo-un-massacre-perp-tr-par-l-arm-e-de-r-sistance-du-seigneur-fait-321-morts>

Resolutions adopted by the Security Council on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and their sponsors (2007-2010)

Year	Resolution	Sponsor(s)
2010	1925	United States, France, Gabon, Uganda, United Kingdom
2009	1906	France
	1896	France
2008	1857	Belgium, France
	1856	Belgium, France, United Kingdom
	1843	South Africa, Belgium, Costa Rica, Croatia, United States, France, Italy, United Kingdom
	1807	Belgium, Costa Rica, Croatia, United States, France, Italy, United Kingdom
	1799	Security Council
	1797	Security Council
2007	1794	Security Council
	1771	France
	1768	Security Council
	1756	Security Council
	1751	Security Council
	1742	Security Council

The significant role of the EU, promoted by France, sets the situation in the Congo apart. France supported two European operations in the DRC that were deployed to help MONUC at critical times for the transition process from 2003 and 2006: operation *Artemis* authorized under resolution 1484 (2003) and operation EUFOR DRC authorized under resolution 1671 (2006). Operation *Artemis* was the first EU operation in Africa, to be more specific in Ituri from June to August 2003, with France acting as the lead nation. The EU, upon request of the UN, decided to deploy a mission from July to December 2006 to ensure the security of the elections and to support MONUC. France was, with Germany, the main troop contributor to that force. To date, the EU has established a presence in the DRC with two missions aimed at supporting security sector reform, especially for the Congolese army and police.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, France tried above all to legitimize its initiatives by receiving the rubber stamp of the Council. Even though France pursued its policy via different international forums, the EU and the UN, its interest for the biggest francophone country in Africa, also rich in minerals, is unsurprising.

Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire

Large expanses of West Africa, devastated by political disorder and civil wars that spilled over into neighboring countries, have become more stable in recent years with the help of concerted international intervention, military and political reforms and attempts to contain illegal drug trading, arms smuggling and the illicit diversion of valuable resources such as diamonds, lumber and crops. As a result, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Côte d'Ivoire have been able, to varying extents, to start putting conflict and instability behind them.

In Liberia, the wounds of two civil wars that raged from 1989 until 2003, claiming the lives of nearly 250,000 and leaving a million people homeless, are slowly starting to heal. The release in 2004 of the final report of the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which investigated gross human rights violations from 1979 to 2003, should help Liberians to look to the future. The UN Mission in Liberia, which assumed peacekeeping duties in 2003 from the forces of ECOWAS, is gradually drawing down although no end date is in sight. In September 2009, the Security Council extended the mission's mandate for a year and asked the mission to help Liberia with its 2011 presidential and legislative elections. Free and fair elections are a core condition for the mission's departure. The current Government has established a democracy and greatly stepped up efforts to fight the corruption endemic when Charles Taylor was president. He was forced to resign in 2003 and is now on trial on charges of war crimes, in a special tribunal in The Hague. Under President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Liberia has also made important progress in safeguarding its natural resources, the main source of its wealth. But it still faces significant security challenges in battling a continuing illegal trade in arms, timber and diamonds. Its economic challenges remain staggering, given its 85 percent unemployment rate and war-ravaged infrastructure.⁷

⁷ This figure does not account for the informal economy

For decades a beacon of stability in West Africa, Côte d'Ivoire was plunged into protracted civil strife after the death in 1993 of its founding leader, Félix Houphouët-Boigny. The political struggle escalated into civil war in 2002 when rebel soldiers attacked military installations in the official capital, Yamoussoukro, and in Bouaké, ostensibly to protest against their planned demobilization in early 2003, but most likely in an attempted coup. The fighting soon divided the country into a rebel-held north and a Government-controlled south. A UN peacekeeping mission, known by the initials UNOCI, for the French title of UN Operations in Côte d'Ivoire, has since 2004 been working with the West African regional group and French troops stationed in the country to avoid any resumption of conflict, to help return soldiers to civilian life and hold elections. (D'Ersu, 2007) The holding of elections has proved to be the main difficulty since 2002. Elections have repeatedly been scheduled and postponed, leading to a succession of peace deals. The latest accord, reached in 2007 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, tried to address some of the root causes of the civil war, seeking, for example, to improve the conditions of military service and to specify what it means to be an Ivorian citizen in a country with a large and enduring presence of foreign workers. Laurent Gbagbo, who became president in 2000 and remains in power though his term officially ended in 2005, postponed elections once again in February 2010 when he dissolved the Government and the Independent Electoral Commission. The Security Council had, until now, no other choice but to support an election process without elections. But, recently, the final registration list was established and the first round of elections took place on October 31, 2020, with a record turnout of approximately 80%. If the elections, especially the second round that should pit Laurent Gbagbo against Alassane Ouattara, are free and fair, UNOCI should sooner or later withdraw from Côte d'Ivoire.

Despite its stated interest in countries beyond its "pré carré", France kept a low profile for the question on Liberia and Sierra Leone as the table below shows. France restricted itself to supporting the efforts of ECOWAS on the ground and of the United Kingdom and of the United States at the level of the Security Council. It focused its efforts on supporting politically the action of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, given the serious violations of international humanitarian law by Charles Taylor in the country.

Resolutions adopted by the Security Council on the situation in Côte d'Ivoire (CI), Liberia (Lib) and Sierra Leone (SL) and their sponsors (2007-2010)

Year	Resolution	Sponsor(s)
2010	1933 (CI)	France
	1924 (CI)	France
	1911 (CI)	France
2009	1903 (Lib)	United States
	1893 (CI)	France
	1886 (SL)	Security Council
	1885 (Lib)	Security Council
	1880 (CI)	France
	1865 (CI)	France
2008	1854 (Lib)	United States
	1842 (CI)	France
	1836 (Lib)	Security Council
	1829 (SL)	Security Council
	1826 (CI)	South Africa, Belgium, Burkina Faso, France
	1819 (Lib)	Security Council
	1795 (CI)	France
2007	1793 (SL)	United Kingdom
	1792 (Lib)	Security Council
	1782 (CI)	France
	1777 (Lib)	Security Council
	1765 (CI)	Security Council
	1763 (CI)	Security Council
	1761 (CI)	Security Council
	1760 (Lib)	Security Council
	1753 (Lib)	Security Council
	1750 (Lib)	Security Council
	1739 (CI)	France

On the contrary, France focused all its efforts within the Security Council on Côte d'Ivoire. It is not necessary to recall here the strong relationship between France and Côte d'Ivoire. One just needs to note that France intervened in 2002 only three days after the beginning of the crisis in the country. There is no need here to go into details of the actions taken by France, but it is worth noting that

France is traditionally the country preparing the resolutions on Côte d'Ivoire. Since the conclusion of the Ouagadougou agreement, France ensures that the Security Council fully supports the political process that should lead to elections that are free, fair, open and transparent. The peacekeeping forces proved to be an interesting mix of ECOWAS forces under UN mandate, the UN forces themselves and the French forces of Operation Licorne with 900 troops deployed in Côte d'Ivoire to support UNOCI. The mandate of UNOCI and of the French forces is renewed twice a year by the Security Council. This burden-sharing seem to highlight a truly multilateral turn in a country where France is quickly accused of unilateralism and neocolonialism. This could indeed be the sign of a political change in France, but could also be considered as a way of pursuing the same policy by using different means.

The situation in Côte d'Ivoire also shows the limits of French and UN policy. France tried more than once to exert pressure on Côte d'Ivoire to make sure the electoral timeline would be respected. The French Permanent Representative took the floor at the Security Council and stated that if the elections were postponed one more time, "everyone should take their responsibilities and the Security Council will act accordingly." In January 2010, talking to the media, the same Representative said, in the same spirit: "We have been waiting for years for elections in Côte d'Ivoire. The Ivorian democracy should function properly and we will not wait forever." A first step was taken on October 31, 2010. But, regardless, French policy towards Côte d'Ivoire, whether unilateral or multilateral, was neither efficient nor effective.

Sudan

Since its independence, Sudan has suffered two civil wars between the central Government and the oil-rich South, each as bloody as today's crisis in the western region of Darfur. The North-South conflict, which killed over 2 million people and left 4.6 million homeless, pitted Christian rebels against the Muslim-dominated central Government in a fight over oil, land and political control (Marchal, 2006, de Waal, 2007). In 2005, a peace agreement was signed promising democratization of Sudan and an equitable distribution of oil revenues between North and South. The UN deployed a peacekeeping mission to support the enforcement of this agreement, provide humanitarian assistance and promote human rights. A crucial milestone falls in January 2011, when the South is scheduled to vote in a referendum on whether to remain a part of Sudan or secede (de Waal, 2010).

The fighting that broke out in Darfur in 2003 between the Government of the Sudan and its allied Janjaweed militias and other armed rebel groups is estimated to have caused the death of 300,000 people and to have left 2.7 million homeless. While the crisis in Darfur has captured the attention of Western activists, that conflict developed partly because of incomplete resolution of the North-South war. Both conflicts arose from the same problem: regional discontent caused by exploitation of people and resources by the central Government in Khartoum. The UN, in partnership with the African Union, deployed a separate mission in Darfur to protect civilians. Nevertheless, widespread atrocities, including killing of civilians and rape of women and girls continue, although they have abated.

Sudan's president, Omar Al-Bashir, was easily re-elected in April 2010 elections, confirming his hold on power despite a warrant for his arrest on charges of war crimes, issued by the International Criminal Court. The elections, held as part of the fulfillment of the 2005 North-South peace agreement, were widely criticized as illegitimate and rife with fraud by both Western observers and Sudanese opposition groups. This does not bode well for the serious challenges still faced by Sudan. Most analysts expect the 2011 vote to bring a decision by the South to secede, creating a significant risk of a new armed conflict.

In Darfur, the odds of reaching a comprehensive peace agreement are higher since the signing in early 2010 of ceasefire agreements between the Government and the region's two main rebel groups. But the Darfur crisis cannot be resolved separately from the more deeply rooted North-South confrontation. With the central Government deeply concerned about the country's possible fragmentation, it is unlikely that any lasting solution will be reached in Darfur if the situation in the South unravels.

The conflict in Darfur also had an impact on the neighboring countries, especially Chad and the Central African Republic. The Security Council established a peacekeeping mission in 2007 to protect thousands of refugees from Darfur, in collaboration with Chadian authorities. Chad, like the Democratic Republic of Congo, requested in January 2010 the withdrawal of the military forces of MINURCAT on its territory asserting that the force had served its purpose and that the Government will bear primary responsibility for the security and protection of civilians and refugees. After protracted negotiations between Chad and the UN that favored a gradual approach, the

military component was reduced by July 15 and the complete withdrawal is scheduled for December 31, 2010, with monthly assessments of the civilian protection situation in eastern Chad.

In Sudan and in Chad, the same burden-sharing pattern can be found as in West Africa: the United Kingdom and the United States speaking on behalf of Liberia and Sierra Leone, and France focusing on Côte d'Ivoire. France claims to support the UN and AU efforts to solve the crisis in Darfur. It was among the cosponsors of resolution 1769 (2007) establishing the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur. In 2005, France also favored the referral of the situation in Darfur to the International Criminal Court by voting in favor of Security Council resolution 1593 (2005). It stated that there was no justice without peace and no peace without justice and that the fight against impunity was one of the conditions for a lasting peace. Moreover, France stated it was ready to support financially and technically the organization of the referendum in 2011. But these principled positions run against the decisions taken at the national level, most notably the decision to grant asylum to one of the main leaders of a rebel group, Mr. Abdel Wahid al-Nour, who refuses to take part in the political process. Finally, France, just like the rest of the European Union, disagreed with the African Union about resolution 1828 (2008) in which the Council recognized that due process must follow its course with regards to the indictment of President Al-Bashir by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. France and the Council took note of the request by the African union to “defer the process initiated by the International Criminal Court”, even though it did not have any impact on the resolution itself.

It is above all in the neighboring countries, Chad and the Central African Republic, its traditional allies, that France took some initiatives as the table below shows.

Resolutions adopted by the Security Council on the situation in Sudan (S), Central Africa Republic and Chad (CAT) and their sponsors (2007-2010)

Year	Resolution	Sponsor(s)
2010	1935 (S)	United Kingdom
	1923 (CAT)	France
	1922 (CAT)	France
	1919 (S)	United States
	1913 (CAT)	Austria, Brazil, United States, France, Gabon, Japan, Lebanon, Mexico, Nigeria, United Kingdom
2009	1891 (S)	United States
	1881 (S)	United Kingdom
	1870 (S)	United States
	1861 (CAT)	France
2008	1841 (S)	United States
	1834 (CAT)	Belgium, Costa Rica, Croatia, United States, France, Libya
	1828 (S)	United Kingdom (abstention of the US, referral to ICC)
	1812 (S)	Belgium, Costa Rica, Croatia, United States, France, Italy, United Kingdom
2007	1784 (S)	Belgium, United States, France, Italy, United Kingdom
	1779 (S)	United States, United Kingdom
	1778 (CAT)	Security Council
	1769 (S)	Belgium, Congo, France, Italy, Peru, United Kingdom, Slovakia
	1755 (S)	United States

France favored the adoption of resolution 1778 (2007) that authorized the deployment of MINURCAT supported by a military component under EU leadership: EUFOR Chad/CAR. This mission's objective was to restore the security conditions necessary for the safe returns of displaced persons in this region at the borders of Chad, the Central African Republic and Sudan. A UN mission took over the responsibilities of EUFOR on March 15, 2010. Twenty-three EU member States and three associated countries (Albania, Croatia and Russia) participated in the EUFOR Chad/CAR mission. France was EUFOR's lead troop contributor with 1,650 troops out of a total of 3,000 deployed. It facilitated the deployment of the European force in Chad thanks to the logistics component of its Operation Epervier. It was the lead nation for logistics, making sure that the Force had everything it needed to perform its duties on a daily basis, most notably in terms of logistics

(maintenance of equipment, aviation and intelligence assets). The 1,000 troops strong Operation Epervier, deployed since 1986, was maintained to provide support to MINURCAT.

A similar pattern as in Côte d'Ivoire can be found in Chad and the Central African Republic with French troops (Operation Licorne or Epervier) intervening in coordination with a regional organization, be it ECOWAS or the EU, and under a UN mandate. In this case, priority is given to peacekeeping and the protection of civilians and France was cautious and refused to intervene in the internal affairs of the host country. Indeed, France condemned the activities of rebel armed groups on June 11, 2009 in the eastern part of the country aimed at seizing power via a coup d'état. But it clearly stated that there would no unilateral intervention by the French troops there and insisted on the fact that EUFOR was deployed only to protect the population, which it did.

Somalia and the Horn of Africa

Somalia -- a pirate haven devastated by factional fighting and without a functioning central Government since 1991 -- remains mired in violence, and international efforts to improve the situation fail repeatedly. A traumatic intervention by Washington in 1993 in the capital, Mogadishu, which led to US casualties in the Black Hawk Down affair, left the entire international community -- including the UN -- extremely reluctant to intervene there. In 2009, the Security Council "expressed its intent" to deploy peacekeepers but never did so. The situation is complex with several countries, near and far, interfering and feeding tensions and mistrust. Among those intervening have been Ethiopia, which withdrew from Somalia in early 2009 after invading it with US backing to battle Islamist forces, and Eritrea, which also was widely reported to have funneled arms and troops into Somalia in support of the Islamists. Their confrontation on Somali territory could almost be seen as a proxy war between these two neighbors, who fought a deadly three-year war beginning in 1998, sparked by a border dispute. The Security Council in December 2009 imposed an arms embargo on Eritrea; a UN weapons ban has been in place on Somalia since 1992.

The internationally recognized central Government representing Somalia's major clans has a very weak hold on power and is challenged primarily by Islamist insurgents known as Al-Shabaab. The African Union in 2007 deployed to Somalia its small African Union Mission, composed for the most part of Burundian and Ugandan troops, to monitor the security situation and help provide

humanitarian assistance. The UN provides the mission with arms and logistical support, but no money. Overall, the mission remains small, is confined largely to Mogadishu, and has failed to end the fighting.

Chaos and lawlessness has spread to the sea. Somali pirates have attacked dozens of vessels with some including hijackings. Most attacks occur in the Gulf of Aden but the Somali pirates have extended their range and have attacked ships in waters as far south as Kenya in the Indian Ocean. Despite international efforts, ransom demands were estimated to cost shippers \$90 million in 2009, demonstrating the futility of a solely sea-based approach. To help with the capture of the pirates, the Security Council asked the Secretary-General to present a report on possible options to further the aim of prosecuting and imprisoning persons responsible for acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea off the coast of Somalia, at the national, regional or international level (S/2010/394). In the meantime, the European Union with Operation Atalanta, NATO, the United States and other individual countries (China, India, South Republic of Korea and Russia, among others) are patrolling the Gulf of Aden and carry out arrests thanks to a UN mandate allowing them to exercise their right of pursuit in Somali territorial waters.

The UN appears cautiously optimistic about Somalia these days. “The country is moving from being a failed state to being a fragile state,” Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, the secretary-general's special representative for Somalia, told the Security Council in January 2010 (S/PV.6259, p.3). But Ramtane Lamamra, the African Union's commissioner for peace and security, pointed out that Somalia is still “seen through the lens of the trauma of its past experiences” (S/PV.6259, p.6). In the absence of a concrete commitment and a determined international policy toward Somalia and its leadership, significant progress is unlikely. In the absence of decisive UN action and with humanitarian financing on the decline, the burden seems to rest squarely on the African Union and its mission, which is already spread too thin.

While keenly interested in the situation in Somalia and present in the area with its troops in Djibouti, France viewed the situation through the prism of the fight against piracy. Within the Security Council, it played a key role to make sure that the Council would take up this matter.

Like many others countries at the Council, in particular the United Kingdom that regularly drafted the resolutions on Somalia (see table below), France did not push the United Nations to deploy a

peacekeeping operation. France stated in December 2008 that “a conventional peacekeeping operation would not be realistic in Somalia today. There would have to be tens of thousands of troops equipped and trained in specific urban combat techniques, totally self-sustaining, with very heavy military equipment. Above all, however, the encouraging progress of the political process has not yet been concretely reflected on the ground, and thus security conditions have not improved today.” (S/PV.6046, p.12) It however welcomed the deployment of AMISOM and contributed to this effort by training a battalion of 500 Somali soldiers. Other countries, in particular Uganda and Djibouti, did the same. The European Union, Somalia’s first donor, trained for its part 2 000 Somali soldiers in Uganda, in close cooperation with AMISOM and other international partners and with the participation of French soldiers.

Once again, there is a multilateral mechanism bringing together several actors: the United Nations, an African regional organization and the European Union to deal with the situation in Somalia. In this case, France’s contribution stopped at providing support to AMISOM and promoting the engagement of the EU.

When it comes to the fight against piracy off the coast of Somalia, France played a more important role. France was the first country, in November 2007, to ensure the security of the ships of the World Food Programme (WFP) providing humanitarian aid to Somalia. France also participated in the International Contact Group on piracy established in January 2009 to strengthen the coordination between the numerous States and organizations involved in the fight against piracy. France is also participating in Operation Atalanta of the European Union with the deployment of a frigate and a marine patrol aircraft based in Djibouti. The French base in Djibouti is also used as a logistics hub by the Operation. Thanks to Operation Atalanta, 290 000 tons of food assistance were provided by the WFP to Somalia between December 2008 and November 2009. French forces had to intervene three times to protect French nationals kidnapped by pirates (Ponant, Carré d’As, Tanit). Since January 1, 2009, they arrested 86 pirates during eight operations and 75 of them were handed over to regional authorities to be prosecuted.⁸ The French Permanent Representative expressed his satisfaction at the actions taken by the Security Council: “Just 15 days after the call by the President of the Republic, Nicolas Sarkozy, to the United Nations, France welcomes the resolution unanimously adopted and presented by France with more than 15 States from all regions

⁸ <http://www.franceonu.org/spip.php?article3819>

of the world and in particular all the large maritime powers, that is calling for the end of piracy, but also for concrete actions to be taken, including the use of force, if necessary.”⁹ It is however worth noting that France was not acting alone and that the Security Council must now find a way to prosecute the pirates. For instance, the European Union signed an agreement with the Seychelles allowing the prosecution of the pirates arrested by Operation Atalanta.

While France’s central role in this issue should not be overstated, it did play and continues to play a key role in cooperation with the EU. It is somewhat difficult to assess the impact this initiative has on the overall African policy, as the issue of piracy and legal instruments that need to be deployed to fight against it are truly global in nature. It is finally worth noting that the operations in the Gulf of Aden highlighted the importance of a base situated on the eastern façade of Africa.

Resolutions adopted by the Security Council on the situation in Somalia (S), between Eritrea and Ethiopia (EE) and on piracy (P) and their sponsors (2007-2010)

Year	Resolution	Sponsor(s)
2010	1918 (P)	Russia
	1916 (S)	United Kingdom
	1910 (S)	United States, France, Uganda, United Kingdom, Turkey
2009	1897 (P)	Germany, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Spain, United States, France, Greece, Marshall Islands, Italy, Liberia, Luxembourg, Norway, Panama, Netherlands, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, United Kingdom, Russia, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine
	1872 (S)	United Kingdom
	1863 (S)	Burkina Faso, Burundi, United States, Italy, Libya, Uganda, Turkey
	1853 (S)	United Kingdom
2008	1851 (P)	Belgium, Croatia, Spain, United States, France, Greece, Liberia, Panama, Republic of Korea
	1846 (P)	Autriche, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, Spain, United States, France, Greece, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Norway, Netherlands, Portugal, Republic of Korea, United Kingdom, Singapore, Ukraine

⁹ Interview with Radio France International of Ambassador Jean-Maurice Ripert following the adoption of resolution 1838 (2008) on piracy in Somalia, <http://www.franceonu.org/spip.php?article2585>

	1844 (S)	United Kingdom
	1838 (P)	Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, Spain, United States, France, Greece, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Malaysia, Norway, Panama, Netherlands, Peru, Republic of Korea, United Kingdom, Singapore
	1831 (S)	Security Council
	1827 (EE)	Belgium
	1816 (P)	Australia, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, Spain, United States, France, Greece, Italy, Japan, Norway, Panama, Netherlands, Republic of Korea, United Kingdom
	1814 (S)	Security Council
	1811 (S)	United Kingdom
	1801 (S)	United Kingdom
	1798 (EE)	Belgium
2007	1772 (S)	Security Council
	1767 (EE)	Security Council
	1766 (S)	United Kingdom
	1744 (S)	South Africa, Congo, United States, Ghana, Panama, United Kingdom, Slovakia
	1741 (EE)	Security Council

Other crisis

It is also worth noting that some crises situations are not considered by the Security Council and are however followed closely by France: the crises in Guinea, Zimbabwe and Madagascar.

The situation in Guinea never led to the adoption of a Security Council resolution, but France nevertheless tried to draw the attention of the Council on this crisis, most notably since the incidents of September 28, 2009, when the army bloodily suppressed a protest by the opposition to the regime. The Council held consultations on September 30 to consider the situation in Guinea. At the end of the meeting, the Presidency of the Council issued a statement condemning human rights violations in Guinea and calling on the authorities to put an end to violence. The Council also recalled its support for the African Union and for ECOWAS, including its call for the launch of an international inquiry on the incidents in Guinea. France and the United States also called for the creation of an international panel inquiry on the September incidents. When this was announced,

France made sure to mention that this call was made “upon the request of our African friends.”¹⁰ The Council later held consultations at the request of France following the issue of the panel report. This report noted that crimes against humanity were committed by military and paramilitary groups against peaceful demonstrators. At the time, France mentioned that the perpetrators of those crimes should be prosecuted by the International Criminal Court. However, France did not go through the Security Council that has the power to refer or not a case to the ICC. In the end, despite France’s efforts and the establishment of an international contact group on Guinea, the Council merely adopted, at the initiative of France, a presidential statement on February 16, 2010, according to which the Security Council welcomes the recent positive developments in Guinea, while remaining concerned by the situation. Furthermore, the ICC Prosecutor decided in February 2010 to review the situation in Guinea. But this preliminary review does not mean that an investigation will be opened.

In Zimbabwe, the June 27, 2008 ballot led to the reelection of Robert Mugabe with 85% of the votes, results denounced by most of the electoral observers invited by the Zimbabwean authorities (SADC, AU, Panafrican Parliament) who considered the outcome did not reflect the will of the people. Considering the worsening of the situation, the Security Council adopted a presidential statement on June 23, 2008 (S/PRST/2008/23) condemning the campaign of violence against the political opposition that have made it impossible for a free and fair election to take place on June 27 and condemning the suspension by the Government of Zimbabwe of the operations of humanitarian organizations. In July 2008, the Security Council examined a draft resolution proposing sanctions against the Zimbabwean regime prepared by Australia, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, France, Italy, Liberia, New-Zealand, the Netherlands, Sierra Leone, the United Kingdom and the United States that contained a weapons embargo against Zimbabwe and individual sanctions against 14 individual and entities, including the head of State. This draft resolution was vetoed by Russia and China. South Africa also voted against it. The Security has, since then, never examined the situation in Zimbabwe.

Madagascar was in the throes of a dire political crisis following violent riots in Antananarivo in January 2009 and a coup d’état by Andy Rajoelina in March 2009. The Security Council merely called

¹⁰ Press briefing of Mr. Gérard Araud, Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, October 28, 2009.

for a rapid return to constitutional order thanks to an inclusive process leading to elections. The mediation process was led by African regional organizations: the African Union that established a mediation team tasked to act as facilitators for the negotiations and SADC that called for a vote in September 2009 at the General Assembly of the United Nations forbidding the President of the High Transition Authority, M. Rajoelina, from participating in the opening debate of the 64th session. Interestingly, France decided to remain in background even though this crisis erupted in a country that was traditionally part of its *pré carré*. The fact that this situation was never on the agenda of the Security Council can be attributed to the fact that France disagreed with SADC and the African Union about the situation in Madagascar, with the African entities being reluctant about a greater UN involvement. In this regard, the example of Zimbabwe speaks volumes. The United Kingdom, as the former colonizer of Zimbabwe, led the efforts at the level of the Security Council and tabled a vote on sanctions. This draft resolution was clearly rejected by South Africa, in line with the SADC and AU position. It is also worth noting that Russia and China voted against the sanctions, probably because they thought that it constituted an interference in the internal affairs of a State and they both referred back to the position of the African States that should be respected.

Conclusion

The above summary of the French activities to manage crises on the African continent at the level of the Security Council and on the ground allows us to reexamine the three trends of France's policy towards Africa outlined in the introduction: disengagement, an increasing interest in the countries that lie outside its traditional zone of influence and a multilateral turn.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, France intervened on the ground through the EU. It also strove to draw the attention of the Council on the situation. In Liberia and Sierra Leone, France remained in the background, contrary to Côte d'Ivoire, where it intervened individually, in cooperation with ECOWAS and the UN, but without the European Union. In Sudan, France merely supported the African Union and its initiative to deploy the first AU-UN hybrid operation. On the other hand, in Chad and in the Central African Republic, France intervened by sending its own troops, and through the UE, before the operation was rehatted by the UN. In Somalia, France again supported the intervention of the African Union and trained AMISOM contingents.

All this indeed seems to illustrate the relative disengagement of France (Berman and Sams, 1998), or even a reengagement (Serequeberhan, 2005). In reality, it seems to denote a new type of engagement and an adaptation to the reality in Africa with the greater role played by African regional organizations and the European Union, with the development of its Common Foreign and Security Policy. With regards the second trend, France clearly gave higher priority to Francophone countries, be it Côte d'Ivoire, Chad, the Central African Republic or the Democratic Republic of the Congo. When it comes to countries outside its *pré carré* like Sierra Leone, Liberia, Zimbabwe and Sudan, France remained in the background at the level of the Security Council. The United Kingdom or the United States were in charge of drafting the Security Council resolutions, with the support of France. It is however worth noting that France collaborated closely with South Africa and Nigeria during the time of their membership at the Security Council.

While France does remain engaged in Africa, its tools have changed. During his hearing in front of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, Bernard Kouchner stated that Africans bore the primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security on the African continent. France therefore should support the initiatives of African regional organizations, especially when it comes to the management of national and regional crises. Here, the example of Guinea is interesting as ECOWAS and the AU intervened and called for the establishment of an international inquiry on the incident of September 28, 2009, request supported by France; so is the example of Madagascar with SADC taking the lead of the negotiations and France remaining in the background. But this cooperation with African regional organizations is neither simple nor systematic. Indeed, while France indeed fell into step with African organizations in the cases of Guinea and Niger, some divergence in opinions remain about the crisis in Madagascar. On other occasions, France and the Security Council went directly against the wishes of African regional organizations. In Sudan, the African Union had, in essence, asked the Security Council not to allow the indictment of President Al-Bashir by the International Criminal Court, but the Council decided to ignore that appeal. In Zimbabwe, the United Kingdom tried to impose sanctions against the wishes of SADC and the African Union. While the draft resolution was ultimately defeated thanks to the Russian and Chinese vetoes, France had nevertheless supported the draft resolution, against the wishes of African States.

The cooperation of France with African regional organizations thus varies according to the circumstances on the ground. In a way, France's approach is predominantly pragmatic. In general, France focused on capacity-building in the field of security for African regional organizations, specifically the AU and ECOWAS. When a crisis erupts in a region where an African organization has the necessary capabilities to deploy a peacekeeping operation or to act as a mediator, such as ECOWAS, SADC or the AU, France supports their intervention and plays a greater or smaller role depending on whether the country in crisis lies within its traditional zone of influence. As a consequence, since Southern Africa does not belong to the traditional *pré carré* of France, it follows SADC's leadership.

This desire to multilateralize its African policy also means that France has been encouraging the European Union to intervene in Africa. The UE has indeed played an increasingly important role in the continent, from a financial perspective with the African Peace Facility, but also on the ground with intervention in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Chad and in the Central African Republic. The EU Commission laid out in 2005 a European strategy for Africa with a specific focus on capacity-building for African institutions, such as the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme for the African Union.¹¹ France seems to welcome this multiplicity of actors that could possibly intervene in Africa. France has also encouraged a greater involvement of the EU.

While France's multilateral turn in Africa is indeed real, it is only one element of its overall vision of its role in Africa. (Vaïsse, 2009) France has not stopped intervening in Africa. But, from a gendarme, it now wants to be an adviser and a trainer to African regional organizations and to the EU, probably for two reasons: a desire to transfer the responsibility and the human and financial burden of crisis management and a desire to legitimize its action by receiving the seal of approval of the UN and the EU. The French Permanent representative noted for instance in July 2008 that the EU cannot take unilateral actions because it is composed of 27 member States. This is telltale: France apparently wants to obtain the same results, while reducing its costs. But, in the process, French representatives are forced to establish partnerships with African regional organizations and to come to a compromise with its European partners which could, in the long run, fundamentally change its foreign policy.

¹¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=SEC:2005:1255:FIN:EN:HTML>

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