# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)

In pursuit of national interests powerful countries have interfered in domestic affairs of other weaker countries and often resorted to military action to meet those ends. These are tall claims and have potentially difficult repercussions for those behind these machinations if proved. Nevertheless, before those responsible for the mayhem are brought to the books in any foreseeable future, it might be necessary to understand under what circumstances such actions may become 'rational' and how these actions are 'rationalised' to those in stupor. This understanding would contextualise such phenomenon to develop an informed opinion on these cases. In this regard, this study may be considered as an exercise to explore the relevant contemporary events to this end.

Consider the recent invasion of Syria by Turkey (Seligman, 2019). It is an action apparently directed against the Islamic State's (ISIL) holdings in the Syrian region bordering Turkey. It aims to create a 'safe-zone' for the refugees which Erdogan threatened to let loose in the Europe. However, concerns have been raised that this action may actually lead to oppression or even ethnic cleansing of the Anti-Turk Kurdish community in that region which so far had soldiered with the coalition against the ISIL (Seligman, 2019). If counter-terrorism has become a pretext to meet other less humanitarian ends then when and how did this practice normalise?

Since, the US and its Anglophone allies have been wary of any large-scale unilateral military action after the debacle of WMDs in Iraq and the long drawn battle in Afghanistan, the only other crucial precedent, in this case, was the overt French involvement in West Africa in general and Mali in particular. So far the French Government has maintained that it had four objectives (Lasconjarias, 2013) behind the intervention in Mali:

1. Halt the advancing terrorist groups;
2. Support the Malian government to retake northern Mali;
3. Enable the deployment of the AFISMA (African-led International Support Mission to Mali);
4. And prevent any further destabilization of the sub-Saharan region.

However, in politics and broader social sciences, such simplifications are in fact a complication which hides the grey picture behind its exaggerated portrayal. So through this French case the obscured dimension of intervention has been explored in economic and political terms. The assumption being that if there is a 'war' on 'terror' then one must remember Clausewitz saying, 'War is nothing but the continuation of policy with other means' (O'Donovan, 1998). To that end, this study has commenced with a literature review based on which the rationale and purpose of the study is determined. To fulfil it, appropriate methodology has been identified and adopted to conduct the study. Finally, the study arrives at a conclusion and the references are listed accordingly to facilitate verification.

## Literature review

The literature on the present political crisis in West Africa is scanty particularly after 2014 and available literature is quite often incoherent and sometimes even influenced. Very few works attempt to apply formal or interpretive frameworks to explain the situation. At best, only oblique references have been made in light of the broad issues of migration and terrorism in Europe and Africa in general.

# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)
Written by Sudarshan Pujari

From the review, Mali emerged as an interesting case as it was the latest state in Africa which had experienced the collapse of state order and subsequent foreign direct intervention in military form after the onset of the Arab Spring. The available political literature concerning French activities in that state could be mainly categorised as left-oriented, security and counter-terrorism oriented and to a lesser extent oriented to development and ecology. In this regard, the following paragraphs discuss the literature on major frames of analysis applicable to this study.

**Securitisation theory**

The securitisation theory focuses on such foreign interventions in fragile and conflict-affected states or FCAS in context of the counter-terrorism narrative that appeared after 9/11 and war on terror (Duffield, 2001). The Copenhagen School (1998) conceptualised it in form of selective exaggeration of a threat by a 'security object' to legitimately justify the use of extraordinary force against the perceived threat. There are three dimensions to this process – speech action, the establishment of a mortal threat and legitimate violence against it (Buzan, Waever and de Wilde, 1998). As Securitisation is relevant to understand the role of politicians both in Africa and in France in bringing about intervention, it is vital to this study.

Thus, the process of securitisation may be considered in some detail. A 'securitising actor' frames such a threat as primary to national security through speeches in mass media to persuade citizens about the unusual need to use lethal force against that framed threat (Eroukhmanoff, 2017). A textbook example is the justification of the invasion of Iraq by the US President George Bush where deliberate action and will to identify and define the common enemy in a manner to legitimise coercive and deadly action is profoundly evident (Howell & Lind, 2009). In this case, M. E. Henke (2017) has identified French Defence Minister Le Drian who pushed for French intervention in Mali.

However, this theorisation has a Eurocentric bias and the domain is broadly vague (Stritzel, 2007). Nevertheless, as this study focuses more on French interventions, it is sufficiently valid. The threat of terrorism is prioritised over issues of material welfare, alt-right and environment which are equally potent threats to human security in the context of France. Such a threat is 'inter-subjective' (Buzan, Waever & de Wilde, 1998) and can be used to justify not only military action but also determine development strategies, climate change action, democratic change and even the territory of the African states so long the actors external to Africa continue to draw the narrative. Consequently, this study has also focused on the implications of the intervention.

**Terrorism and Jihadism**

Terrorism is a long-standing issue in International politics which is difficult to define and periodise (Krueger, 2008) given the lack of consensus, subjectivity and temporally fluid nature of terrorism as a concept itself (Hoffman, 2006, p. 23). However, the terrorism we are concerned with may be characterised as political, planned & symbolic, violent and coercive, and non-statist. Its psychological fallout is usually wide-reaching and beyond the immediate target/victim. It is designed to exact compliance with their political, social and ideological demands (Blomberg, Gaibulloev and Sandler, 2011).

Jihadism is a subset of terrorism that originated from the conflict of Afganistan in 1990 with the emergence of the Mujahideens and subsequently Al-Qaeda (Brachman, 2009). It has undergone an evolution and the Islamic State is the latest strand in its development. Unlike traditional jihad which can be political, personal, military or spiritual (Esposito, 2002), the one referred here is characterised by armed struggle and brutal violence and less by any spiritual non-violent connotations. It is also usually associated with the Salafist or more recently Wahhabist doctrines that reject traditional teachings in favour of 'fundamentalist' reinterpretation of Islam which is a narrow and puritanical version of Sunni conception (Neumann, 2014). In Africa, this conception has also challenged the existing Islamic practices and customs which mainly belong to the Sufi tradition.

Further, this study accepts the operational definition on Jihadism given by Neumann (2014) which is, "a modern revolutionary political ideology mandating the use of violence to defend or promote a particular, very narrow vision of Sunni Islamic understandings." It must be noted that there is no uniform socio-economic profile of such militants (Sageman, 2008), however, in case of West Africa it may be traced from poor pastoralists and unemployed youth in

# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)

Written by Sudarshan Pujari

terms of the rank and file of the organisations (Benjaminsen & Boubacar, 2018).

There is also a growing literature based on 'environmental security' which links the growth of terrorism in the region to geography and deprivation induced by environmental changes, namely desertification. In this literature, there are two main strands of thought where one claims supply-induced scarcity as the cause while the other blames the migration economy born out of the decline in the traditional (agricultural) sources of income (Benjaminsen & Boubacar, 2018). One report even goes on to suggest a nexus between security, migration and development (Venturi, 2017).

In the traditional political discourse, new findings indicate that the west has had a direct role in enabling the rise of this brand of terrorism. It is claimed that they established a push-pull scenario where space for traditional secular Islamic leaders get gradually eroded while the nascent radical groups nourished by the west germinate soon after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Krishnan, 2019). However, Bart Schuurman (2018) has characterised the overall literature on terrorism to have conceptual and methodological issues. The definitional debate has been detrimental to the field's development and there has been disproportionate reliance on secondary sources and the literature review method. Nevertheless, the situation has been improving lately as wider data gathering techniques and the use of primary data has been discernable.

The French intervention in Mali has been driven by the narrative of post 9/11 war on terror. This, however, considers the threat to Europe before determining the instability caused to Africa, resulting in misguided priorities (Boserup & Martinez, 2018). However, there is no singular global Islamic threat and many groups which come within the ambit of this concept often share a competitive relation (Rekawek, 2014). For instance, Boko Haram, one of the major regional terror actors in the Sahel, has been observed to have fluctuations with its affiliations between ISIS and Al-Qaeda (Kassim et al, 2018) which themselves are vying for influence in the region at the cost of another (Crone, 2017). So, this conceptual frame of reference is imperative to understand and verify the veracity of French counter-terrorism credentials concerning West Africa.

**World Systems Analysis**

It 'is a well-established but poorly-defined (interdisciplinary) research tradition in social sciences' which according to its progenitor, Immanuel Wallerstein, is not a theory (Babones, 2015). Moreover, despite his reservations, theoretically, its roots could be traced to the Annales' School, Marxism and Dependency theory. Nevertheless, it can help explain polarisations among nations, particularly between the first and the third world, which is relevant to this study. (Zougris, n.d.)

"A world-system is a social system, one that has boundaries, structures, member groups, rules of legitimation, and coherence. Its life is made up of the conflicting forces which hold it together by tension and tear it apart as each group seeks eternally to re-mold it to its advantage. It has the characteristics of an organism, in that is has a lifespan over which its characteristics change in some respects and remain stable in others… Life within it is largely self-contained, and the dynamics of its development are largely internal" (Wallerstein, 1974).

In the ancient and medieval days, this system was a 'world empire' with a political centre overlooking the constituent units/regions e.g. the Roman Empire and the Mughal Empire. In the modern times the 'world empire' has been replaced by what may be referred as the 'world economy' where units/regions are connected not through a single political centre but through the complex web of markets. Another feature of this setup is that it is characterised by two or more materially interdependent regions and two or more polities that are engaged in a perpetual conflict for domination (Goldfrank, 2000). Similarly, 'Imperial' domination of one unit/region by the other is also replaced by 'hegemonic' influence that is wielded by a 'core' unit or region based on their temporary lead over others.

Consequently, a power hierarchy emerges out of this conflict and there is a relative difference in technological achievement amongst the states in that hierarchy. According to this, the world could be compartmentalised into the rich and powerful 'core' units/regions, the poor and weak 'peripheries', and the intervening 'semi-peripheries'. The peripheral units/regions, however, are structurally conditioned to replicates their subordination to the 'core' (Chase-

# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)

Written by Sudarshan Pujari

Dunn & Grimes, 1995). Through an unequal exchange, there is a systematic transfer of surplus from the semi-proletarian periphery to the high-tech industrial core (Goldfrank, 2000). This differential status is necessary for the sustenance of the system as stronger states maintain and increase the flow of peripheral surplus to the 'core' – Capital Accumulation (Skocpol, 1977).

The relation between the first world France and the third-world West African states may be framed into the construct of a 'world empire' in from the French colonial regime which subsequently endured into the modern age in form of the French sphere of influence in West Africa or *La Françafrique*. So, the world systems analysis is vital to gain a better understanding of the French involvement in the region.

## Foreign Military Intervention

It has been a recurring phenomenon in the sequence of international political events since the emergence of the nation-states. The 1960s onwards, interest in politics of military intervention rekindled with the US involvement in the Vietnam War. The origin of intervention literature could be traced to a definitive collection of essays on foreign intervention published in a volume of Princeton University Press in 1964 concerning international aspects of civil strife (Rosenau, 1964).

Modelski (1964) had argued that if according to Rosneau (1964), external responses to domestic/civil conflicts, like interventions, depends upon the range, extent and nature of the conflict then military intervention would usually occur when the crisis has led to polarisation amongst the belligerents to such an extent that one of the parties is convinced of the mortal threat to its existence and subsequently pleads for external support to alter the status quo. However, in a bipolar system, the state intervening has more incentives to do so than in a balance of power set up (Kaplan, 1964). This has been exemplified in the proxy wars between the USA and the USSR in the cold war.

However, "any action whereby one state has an impact upon the affairs of another", does not qualify to be an intervention. It must qualify as "convention-breaking", "authority-oriented" and must be "finite and temporary" to be considered as such (Rosenau, 1969, p. 153). He further argued that the probability of intervention depends upon three systemic variables apart from the calculus of decision-makers viz. the international system structure, ideological rivalry and stability of states within the system. So according to him, intense ideological fallout in a bipolar system tended to encourage interventions and when the state in question was unstable or destabilised, it allowed for unconventional responses including military involvement. However, note that this does not mean a departure of the states from their realist concerns for national interests. Ideology itself could be used as a means to further national interests.

Additionally, four more categories were discerned to contextualise an investigation viz. the issues with the intervening state, the intervened state, the linkages between the two and issues with the international system itself. The linkages were further sub-categorised as 'transactional' implying military, economic, academic and political links, and 'affective' which connoted ideological, religious and ethnic ties (Mitchell 1970).

This conceptual and theoretical foundation is the basis for a systematic study of contemporary cases on intervention. So far qualitative case studies have been the dominant methodology and have frequently found causes of interventions linked to geopolitics, international system and calculus of decision-makers as Rosenau had hypothesized. However, such enquiries into interventions suffer from limited generalisability, and "raises as many questions as it answers" (Tillema, 1989). This, however, only warrants a further systematic study of issues, particularly those concerning interventions to be wars of 'necessity' or 'choice' (Shea, 2017).

## R2P in Mali

The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), Ottawa first introduced this innovative principle in international politics in its 2001 report *The Responsibility to Protect* (R2P). R2P essentially entails a responsibility of states to 'prevent, react and rebuild' *jus post bellum* (justice after the war), and has a political legal and economic dimension with provisions for incentives and sanctions in the R2P 'toolbox' to achieve them. However,

# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)

Written by Sudarshan Pujari

R2P is not legally binding under International Law (Rudolph, 2014).

Through the efforts of Secretary-General Kofi Annan and his representative on Internally Displaced Persons (IDP), Francis Deng, the UN unanimously endorsed it as a principle to respond to mass atrocities in any country and it marked a significant departure from the scenario observed in the earlier cases of Rwanda (1994) and Kosovo (1998-89). However, despite obvious benefits to the collective security dimension of the UN, its impact on the UN's responses to the crises in the Middle East has been limited. The burgeoning literature on R2P has noted these issues in great detail.

R2P has reconceptualised humanitarian intervention. Although cases noting the right to wage a just war and punish tyranny to rescue the oppressed exist since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries predating non-intervention as an attribute of sovereignty, the issue of state sovereignty itself has been highly contested (Gary, 2009).

ICISS recognised this vibrant history of 'humanitarian interventions' but avoided this term. To them, it was not a question of 'right to intervene' but 'responsibility to protect' extended to every state. Regardless, it is a concept that has arguably brought about an all-round improvement to the understanding of 'humanitarian intervention'. Despite shortfalls, it has ignited a vibrant discourse that has led some to infer that this is the R2P era of intervention (Thakur, 2016).

In this regard, the crisis of Mali may be regarded as a textbook case for R2P. The global press had already reported about the brewing conflict in her northern region and the French foreign minister Alain Juppé knew since March 2012 about the risks of 'Afganistanisation' of Mali. However, the international response to it had been less than desirable (Cold-Ravnkilde, 2018).

'Peacekeeping' under Ch. VI of the UN Charter (UN Charter, 1945) is usually applicable when other non-violent measures have been exhausted. In the case of Mali, however, ignorance was followed by military intervention. Moreover, it is argued that R2P is invoked in case of state failure, but the French have maintained that they intervened at the behest of the government in Bamako (Petrasek, 2013). Although the legitimacy of that government is a separate question, by this logic the French claim of R2P would be erroneous. Security Council authorization is usually required to invoke R2P overriding state sovereignty guaranteed in Article 2(7) of the UN Charter (1945). Such authorization, however, may be bypassed if we allow the affected state itself to invoke R2P to seek foreign assistance to quell the domestic insurgency. Thus, one of the most important checks on the misuse of R2P is removed and the example of Syria and Russia qualify this case (Seyedfarshi, 2015).

Nevertheless, the element of mass atrocities is also problematic. Although the rebels imposed Sharia in Northern Mali and their regime was certainly repressive giving a comprehensive record of human rights abuse and a threat to World Heritage Sites especially in Timbuktu, there is little evidence that may be characterised as mass atrocities (Johnson, 2012). This lends support to the idea that R2P can be and is used, particularly in this case, for reasons other than impartial concern for civilian suffering; perhaps as a tool for national security and interests (Patrasek, 2013).

Losing her influence in West Africa, French actions have arguably turned desperate and even unethically violent (Devecioglu, 2020). Wikileaks' (2016) dossier on the leaked emails of Hilary Clinton has given clear insights on the French causes behind the war in Libya – cause of the regional disability – confirming this claim. One email specifically lists five causes behind Sarkozy bombing Gaddafi viz. oil, influence, Sarkozy's domestic reputation, assert French military might and contain Gaddafi's sway over francophone Africa which the latter threatened with his new currency for the region backed by 143 tons of gold and billions in petro-dollars. This new currency would have not merely threatened the CFA Franc but would have also competed with the Euro itself (Asher-Schapiro, 2016). This sounded the alarm in the Elysee which had then resolved that *Carthago delenda est* (Carthage must be destroyed).

Given such profound discrepancies, the following pages would discuss the methodology for analysing the veracity of the claims of this self-styled 'humanitarian intervention'.

# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)
Written by Sudarshan Pujari

## Problem statement and rationale

Most states, particularly the US and France, have disproportionately projected the terror dimension of the crisis in West Africa in general and Mali in particular.  The Malian crisis, however, is a fusion of insurgency, terrorism and democratic failure. This distinction has largely been ignored in the mainstream discourses. Only a few studies have developed substantial arguments on the history of insurgency in Northern Mali, and the flawed state of democracy and economy of the country to explain her present predicament. Moreover, such studies have been quite detached from each other and thus fail to provide a holistic understanding of the issue.

Given this lacuna, it was necessary to conduct a study to understand the upcoming tendencies in the politics of intervention and take stock of what has become of the 'war on terror'. This justification may be better explained by drawing an analogy to a paradox associated with the fall of the USSR. When the Soviet Union fell, hardly anyone saw it coming, but when one went out to find clues about this meltdown, they were everywhere (Taubman, 2017). In other words, this study sought to explore French intervention in Mali to inform the generalisations drawn from this case by extending the necessary understanding.

This chapter concerns itself with the research design, analytical method, and data collection and interpretation while showing value, viability and aptness of this exploration. The purpose of this study is to develop an overview and understanding of the politico-economic dimension of French military intervention in West Africa. Mali was the focus of the study as it was the latest country where France intervened directly which paved the way to perpetuate her military presence in that part of the continent. This research aims to provide scholars of International Relations with a better understanding of contemporary foreign direct interventions in the domestic affairs of a country. To this end, the following research questions guided the process:

The main question is to discern the validity of the counter-terrorism credentials of the French project in West Africa. The subsequent questions concerning this research are as follows:

1. How did the contemporary French military intervention come about?
2.  What are the major strands of narratives and counter-narratives about the French military intervention in the region?
3.  What has been the French strategy and how well has it fared in practice?

## Research Design

This section specifies the design of this research. The research traditions and philosophical foundations that informed the research methods are discussed to specify the basis of methodological choices made in this study. The literature on both qualitative and quantitative research was examined along with major methods and techniques. Qualitative research was selected due to its dominant feature being quality, validity and trustworthiness. However, there are two schools of thought over approaching such research – transactional and transformational. The former emphasises technique and criteria as markers for quality while the latter favours context and ability to effect social change. This study had adopted a mixed approach and the following paragraphs discuss the choices made in this light.

### Enquiry Type

This is a qualitative case study focused on the political economy of military interventions. Any qualitative research usually employs non-statistical techniques and methods to collect data and draw information on recognisable social phenomena or events (McNabb, 2008). The so collected data could be words, pictures, footage, and other such non-numerical material which can provide insights, interpretations and informed analysis of these social events.

Such research rests on, as Creswell (2007) puts it, on five assumptions of ontology, epistemology, axiology, rhetoric and methodology. Ontologically, the reality is assumed to be subjective so evidence must account for this variation. Epistemologically, proximity to the subjects must be developed to collect the aforementioned subjective evidence.

# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)

Written by Sudarshan Pujari

Axiologically, values and biases of the researcher and the evidence must be actively reported. Rhetorically, literary and informal style of writing would complement qualitative research language in an investigation. Methodologically, the study should be inductive, emerging and contextually informed. This study concurs with this methodological assumption.

Hence, qualitative research is subjective, inductive as well as non-positivistic, and is capable of theory generation (McNabb, 2008). Quantitative research, on the other hand, is statistico-numeric, believing in one objective reality and positivistic. Such attributes make quantitative studies more insular from value judgements and thus, more prone to theory testing as it is usually pre-informed by a set hypothesis. This hypothesis is subsequently put to rigorous tests in analysis and its subsequent findings are usually more generalisable with a greater predictive capacity. However, as an exploratory study, the qualitative methodology is sufficient for this venture under the given circumstance.

Nevertheless, McNabb (2008) further identified three categories for qualitative research, viz. explanatory, interpretive and critical research. The former tries to identify the causes of a phenomenon and is simple in understanding and use. Consequently, its critical objective is to build relevant theories having some predictive value. The next category builds upon the limits of explanatory studies to explain the social phenomenon. The investigator, in this case, is expected to formulate subjective interpretations of such social phenomenon holistically by looking at it as they have unfolded and occurred while avoiding any pre-set sequence. The meanings so derived from these social events and facts are important as the reality is constructed from such meanings. Although, Sayer (1992) has cautioned in his discussion of hermeneutics (discipline for interpretation of the meaning) and *verstehen* (approach to understanding human actions) that meanings of a social phenomenon may be complex and not necessarily logical or conceptually coherent. Finally, the latter category seeks to critique a social condition deemed depreciating and/or alienating in order to illuminate on the subject with a view of eradicating those detrimental causes and alleviate the society (McNabb, 2008). One way it is accomplished by making the stakeholders aware of the ramifications of their opinions, attitudes and measures with an object to change them. Indeed, it is presumed that a societal crisis warranting such efforts exists.

As this study is essentially exploratory and aimed to develop an understanding of the scholars of this field, an interpretive enquiry was suitable over the other two options and obviously over the quantitative approach itself. Moreover, this study deals in concepts like state, national interest, policy & strategy. It neither seeks to address the 'why' questions of explanatory research nor to draw out and correct adverse conditions as provided by critical research. Rather, it transcends mere conceptual descriptions and explanations to interpret those concepts to the reader. It also reflects upon the key principles of interpretive studies like the phenomenal context, relation between the researcher and the subject, and the multiple interpretations (McNabb, 2008) that subsequently suggest a hermeneutic circle of understanding a concept from the meanings and relations among the constituent parts of that concept.

*Analytical Strategy*

As we have singled out a qualitative mode of enquiry, the case study method was decided to be the proper strategy of analysis. It implies a deep study of one particular topic (Trochim & Donnelly, 2007) wherein a qualitative framework, an amalgamation of different information sources may be used to explore the case/s (Creswell, 2007).

Further, its flexibility allows the researcher to maintain "the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (Yin, 2009). Two particular issues, however, may be pointed out with case studies. First, academic rigour is apparently discounted by lack of any systematic procedure and susceptibility to biases. Second, its weakness in developing generalisations due to the large amount of unclassified data generated from it. Regardless, it may be cited that quantitative research is equally susceptible and its generalisations are in fact propositions valid for sample sets than whole populations (Yin, 2009). Besides, case studies need not be very intensive or lengthy. A more balanced view would imply a complementary relation where case analysis elaborates on the 'how' and 'why' questions of an experiment and techniques may be used interchangeably to that end. So, to contextually understand a real-life phenomenon, case studies are useful. More specifically, as Yin (2009) states, it is flexible enough to cope with unique multivariate situations where data-points are scanty. Consequently, this also allows data triangulation by

# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)

Written by Sudarshan Pujari

relying on different sources of data. Additionally, this malleability allows it to employ previous theoretical propositions to devise data collection and analyse strategies. In this light, Van Wynsberghe and Khan (2007) have even stated that "case study is a transparadigmatic and transdisciplinary heuristic (not a method or design) that involves the careful delineation of the phenomena for which evidence is being collected." These qualities are suitable to understand the phenomenon considered in this study.

However, compared to other options like ethnography, narrative analysis, phenomenology, and grounded theory, there were specific reasons why the case-study method stood out. For ethnography, it may be said that this was neither a cultural study nor did the circumstances permit a field study to that end. Narrative research, on the other hand, explores an individual's life to relay stories on one's experiences. This study, however, deals with institutions and structures for which case studies are well suited. Similarly, phenomenology describes and shows the experiential effects of a phenomenon on people or respondents (Trochim and Donnelly, 2007).

Correspondingly, this study aims to understand the phenomenon than merely to understanding the experiences itself. Finally, as far as grounded theory is concerned, it must be said that although inductive logic implies a bottom-up theory building, it is different from grounded theory as the particular observations made in the former case are specific for the purpose of detecting patterns (McNabb, 2008). The intent of this study is, as mentioned, to understand concepts than to theorise on respondents' observations. For these purposes, the case study was plausible due to its restricted sample, in-depth focus, contextual consciousness, ability to use and triangulate multiple data sources, awareness of temporal/spatial limits, and the ability to generate working hypothesis and draw inferences (Van Wynsberghe & Khan, 2007).

Since the case study is selected as the analytical strategy, it may be further specified that three formats of case study method are discernable (Creswell, 2007). First is an instrumental case study; it is focused on a single issue and/or has one bonded case. Second is collective or multi-case study; it illustrates one issue with collective or multi-case studies. The third is an intrinsic case study; in this case, the case itself is the concern than a mere illustration. As this study utilises a case to illustrate foreign military intervention, the format used is definitively instrumental.

Further, regarding the choice of Mali, it was found that it satisfied two out of five rationales that Yin (2008) had suggested for selecting a case:

1. It is a typical case of France intervening in its former African colonies.
2. It is a unique case of French intervention under the narrative of 'war on terror' is used for the first time.

Usually, it is sufficient to have one justification. As this case has two ways of aiding this investigation, the crisis in Mali was chosen as a case for analysing the questions concerning the French.

*Collection of Data*

The collected data was a mixture of qualitative and quantitative secondary sources. Secondary data sources were relied upon as Primary data collection from the field was less viable given the risks and costs associated with the process. Evidence is mainly drawn from academic literature by individual scholars and institutions/think tanks, public records of the French Government and the local intuitions of West Africa, and media reports from mainstream sources like the BBC and Al-Jazeera and alternative sources like the Wikileaks.

The academic literature is mostly composed of western scholars; however, the variety in literature is sufficient to triangulate data to construct a balanced view. Most theoretical work done in that literature was generally conducted with universal applications in mind. So, analogies and inferences were drawn based on similarity and dissimilarity of patterns of this study with those discerned in the theory related literature. Inputs in this regard were mostly selected from the 'Search' narrowed and returned by Google Scholar, JSTOR and Taylor and Francis database mainly by the following Boolean function: *French/European/Foreign/Military + Intervention/Involvement + North-Africa/West-Africa/Mali.*

# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)

Written by Sudarshan Pujari

Similarly, the data from media sources were also mostly drawn from the western agencies, however, it was sufficiently reliable to establish chronology and identify primary elements in the study. These reports, in general, provided support to arguments drawn from the above literature. However, it must be noted that there have been significant bouts of media-blackouts during the military operations so certain information may have been filtered by the government. Regardless, the use of multiple media sources has, by and large, kept the reliability of data intact.

Similarly, Government data has been mostly drawn from the French and the transnational organisations in West Africa. These are mostly references on the policy and position statements as well as statistics related to resources, finance and military. However, data which is exclusively available in French or any local African language has been excluded due to the language barrier and unreliable digital translation services. While conducting the study, consciousness about the sources and limitations of the data was maintained to offer a holistic understanding which is largely verifiable.

## The French in West Africa

If there has been a rival equal to the British Empire, it was the French. Together they formed the largest colonial empire ever in recorded history. Both gained substantially from the scramble for Africa and had a privileged place under the Sun. However, like all empires, they also met their demise. Nevertheless, their relations with the former colonies have varied considerably. France, for one, has many disturbing skeletons in her closet.

*History of French Involvement in West Africa*

After the Second World War, the French presence in Africa has been marked by the former's involvement in a series of conflicts throughout North Africa. First, it took the form of preservation of her colonial possessions. In this phase, she dealt with uprisings of Madagascar in 1947-48, Tunisia in 1952-55, Morocco in 1953-56, and Algeria in 1954-62. In the next phase, she took to skirmishing with these newly independent states to protect her interests. This was reflected through her debacle in the 1956 Suez crisis and conflict with Tunisians in 1957 and 1961. However, in the following phase, her interventions in the sovereign states of Africa became commonplace. It commenced with Gabon in 1964, followed by her involvement in the Katanga Wars in 1977-78, the Central African Republic in 1979, and Lebanon in 1982-84. Roughly, forty such instances of coercive military intervention of all kinds by France may be discerned in this period. This interventionist tendency received a renewed impetus after the collapse of the USSR in 1991. She involved herself in Somalia in 1991-92 and again in the Central African Republic (CAR) in 1996 and 2006.

Her military presence on the continent has now become permanent through several ongoing engagements which include Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast) since 2003, CAR once more since 2013, Libya since 2011, Mali since 2013, and the Islamic State since 2014 under *Operation Chammal,* apart from eight other military operations of quasi-unilateral nature (Perier, 2019). These engagements remain even after repeated promises by French presidents to loosen her ties with the continent. This understandably has revived the former's status as the Gendarme de l'Afrique. (Policeman of Africa) (Melly & Darracq, 2013). However, the popular responses within these states vary considerably. The people in Mali who had welcomed the intervention earlier now show dissatisfaction over French presence (France24, 2020). Recently, popular unrest has grown in G5 nations. Yet, this only warrants further investigation to dismantle what appears to be a monolith of humanitarian intervention.

These conflicts, needless to say, are in addition to her commitments in Afghanistan and conflict-ridden areas in the Middle East.  However, the case of Mali is interesting over others as it brings a new narrative of 'war on terror' to the region. As this paper would concentrate on the ongoing conflicts in Mali, this section provides a brief overview of the crisis in the country, the French response to it, and its implications. The profile of the country is provided in the Appendix for reference.

## The emergence of the 'Arc of Instability' Narrative

Post 9/11, President George W. Bush declared that Africa had no strategic importance to the USA. This apparent detachment from Africa became one of his strongest legacies (Lyman and Robinette 2009). However, in place of it,

# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)
## Written by Sudarshan Pujari

came the new 'banana theory' whereby it was believed that Anti-West terrorism originates and thrives in a banana-shaped arc over North Africa. This arc supposedly ran from Somalia in the Eastern Horn of Africa to Mauritania in the West Cost by the Atlantic (Keenan 2009). Consequently, Africa once more became prominent in the global security narrative led by the West and subsequently new security programmes like the Pan Sahel Initiative (PSI), Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP), and the African Peace Facility (APF) came to the fore with France as a key player. Additionally, the US Africa Command (AFRICOM, 2007) emerged as a vital organisation that is both a source of funding and logistical support for any major military operation that falls under this arc (Keenan 2009). As terrorism has regionalised in Northern Africa, all countries engaged in counterterrorism there have more or less relied on this support.

Additionally, note that the geographical division has altered since the postulation of that theory. What connoted North Africa then is now split into North and West Africa. This Western sector includes the G5 Sahel nations as well as the coastal nations towards the Atlantic.

Due to increasing insecurity and economic hardships, a migration economy had emerged in that region as people moved to sustain themselves. Earlier, this was seen by the Europeans as a sign of resilience. However, when the refugee fallout pinched major European countries in the 2010s, they renewed their financial commitment to these security initiatives in order to stem the inflow of people (Schmidt, 2013). Naturally, the ruling elites in the francophone Africa had an inherent preference to France for their security and development as it had always been forthcoming to their assistance in the past. Substantial Malian Diaspora in France also meant that the latter was going to take a keen interest in the developments within the former colony (France Diplomatie, 2020). So, when the rebellion broke out in northern Mali, France had already calculated her chances.

**The Conflict in Mali**

The conflict in Mali developed out of the long-standing tensions between the Northern and Southern regions. The Tuareg and the Arab population of the north have held the central government in the south to be responsible for their marginalization in the country. Tensions arising out of such relations have led to the cycles of violence between them since the 1960s (Chauzal & Damme, 2015). Till date there have been four 'civil wars' and five peace agreements between them and the ongoing conflict is in a way an extension of this tense relation. However, given the geopolitics of the Sahel and the centrality of Mali in it, neighbouring Libya and Algeria have held vested interests. They favoured a weak state there and therefore actively destabilised Mali by locking the parties into permanent tensions. Also due to the disunity among the communities up north and perpetual government neglect and suppression, lasting solutions have largely eluded the peace process (Tran, 2013).

Similar to earlier cases, this conflict also began with an uprising by the Tuareg nomads over these long-standing issues. However, many members of those rebelling communities, who had gone into exile during the earlier conflicts, now returned to Mali. Many of them had fought for the Libyan dictator, Muammar Gaddafi, and were battle-hardened émigrés. On returning home they joined the new uprising and supported it with sophisticated weapons and money (Marsh, 2017). Notably, the war in Libya has been viewed as the destabilising element for many countries in the region (Boserup et al, 2015). When Gaddafi fell, the armouries of his forces were looted. Those very weapons wreaked havoc in Mali.

In Mali, this benefitted the secular National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) which under Bila Ag Cherif as secretary-general of its political wing and Mohamed Ag Najim as head of its military wing had managed to unite the opposition and was leading the offensive for an independent state of Azawad in northern Mali. In this 'blowback' from Libya, the rebels routed government forces from the north. As the regional capitals of Kidal, Timbuktu and Gao in the north fell into rebel hands, Northern Mali was declared the 'liberated' state of Azawad. However, this unnatural alliance was already fracturing. In Timbuktu, the rebels took a radical Islamic bent and hardline Ansar ed-Din (Movement of the Defenders of the Faith led by Lyad ag Ghaly) and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO led by a Mauritanian, Hamada Ould Mohamed Kheirou) came to the fore. These extremist groups were, however, backed by AQIM (Al-Qaida in Islamic Maghreb) and this gave the 'jihadist' essence to the rebellion which would complicate the events later. The secular MNLA that had led the rally so far was by then

# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)
Written by Sudarshan Pujari

sidelined. Another AQIM faction that would also make its presence felt is the Signed-in-Blood Battalion committed to global jihad. It was led by the infamous Mokhtar Belmokhtar and had strong ties with Ansar ed-Din and MUJAO (Economic and Political Weekly, 2013). These radical groups now controlled a region roughly the size of France itself. The disoriented Government in Bamako was replaced by a military junta under Capitaine Sanogo citing the consistent failures to stem the rebel advance. However, this did not alter the overall bleak situation and the defence continued to deteriorate.

**French Military Deployment**

Mali, increasingly helpless, sought French assistance to protect Bamako, the national capital. This was historic as so far it had fended off foreign military presence on her soil (Shukla, 2015). However, the latter's response was initially limited to logistical assistance. Nevertheless, the unanimous UNSC resolution 2085 of 20th December 2012 (in addition to 2056 & 2071) authorised a 3,000-strong 'African-led' mission to Mali in case the negotiated solutions failed to materialise (Deutsche Welle, 2013). The bulk of this force was to be comprised of the Economic Community of the West African States (ECOWAS) members originally under the leadership of Nigeria. However, their mobilisation turned out to be slow and insufficient which made the situation more volatile. The deployment was preponed from September 2013 to January 11, when the rebels actually mounted an assault on Bamako that month as they perceived a window of opportunity. Understandably, Nigeria found her military resources stretched which left France as the only viable alternative having a de-facto lead. France, on the other hand, obliged Bamako by aerial bombardment of the advancing columns, and thus, also dropping her 'no boots on the ground' policy. Approximately 100 French soldiers, 6 Mirage 2000Ds air-to-ground attack aircrafts, 4 Rafale multi-role aircrafts, and ten Gazelle attack helicopters participated in what was called the battle of Diabaly. That mission then became *Operation Serval* as more resources were shipped in from France to protect the Malian government that was then becoming increasingly obligated to the French.

Subsequently, international pressure forced Mali to appoint a civilian government under interim president Dioncounda Traoré – an ally of former president Amadou Traoré aka ATT. However, in the present state of conflict, her institutions had been shattered to such an extent that this change had little meaning. The French, on the other hand, cleared the North of the rebels within six months and had established their control over it with the MNLA, now an ally. However, that area was declared off limits to the Malian government by the MNLA which retained its infrastructure despite the adverse turmoil. Meanwhile, the Islamic Movement for Azawad (IMA) was also formed by the group which separated from Ansar ed-Din under Kidal's Senior group leader Alghabass Ag Intalla. It now claimed to oppose terrorism and violence. This stabalised the situation and peace negotiations soon began. *Operation Serval* (2012-13) was widely dubbed a success as the country returned to relative calm when peace was signed with the Tuaregs in June. Later, Ibrahim Boubakar Keita was elected with 78% votes in July 2013 and the mandate was largely accepted. The operation was set as an exemplar of a short, swift and successful military engagement where clear cut military and political goals were met by a small but agile force (Taylor, 2015). The formation of the UN Peacekeeping operation – MINUSMA – was also set in motion owing to this agreement. This evidently 'internationalised' the issue as 57 countries, including those in the NATO countries contributed to its ranks.

However, in September 2013 the Tuareg withdrew from the June agreement citing non-compliance by the central government (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2013). The following year, French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian declared on Radio Europe-1 that the mission is fulfilled and a force of 3,000 would be kept in to fight the terrorists in the Sahel of which 1,000 troops would be stationed in Mali. On August 2014, the French followed it up with initiation of the *Operation Barkhane,* deploying about 4,500 troops. Subsequently, on 19th February 2015, a ceasefire agreement was reached in Algiers, Algeria which has since been violated countless times.

Nevertheless, this success also led to other fallouts that would come to haunt France. Taking a cue from Piazza and Choi (2018), it may be argued that countries which have engaged in foreign military interventions experience more terror incidents post-deployments (Piazza & Choi, 2018). As French presence in Mali became the symbol of the leading western presence in Africa, she automatically became the target of the radical Islamist groups like IS and Al-Qaida. This was reflected in the series of terrorist attacks on Paris in November 2015. These groups considered the French intervention akin to 'crusader campaigns' and constantly drummed up support against it (Bindner, 2018). As

# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)

Written by Sudarshan Pujari

the fault-lines amongst the Tuareg are still present, they have utilised it to radicalise parts of their communities and mount attacks on government and French installations, particularly those in Bamako (UN News, 2015). Their reach has also spread to the neighbouring states of the Lake Chad Basin (Niger, Nigeria Chad, Cameroon along with Burkina Faso and Benin) with the rise of Boko Haram.

By skirmishing France and its regional allies, they aim to put them in disarray and assert their power against the powerful odds. Through this, their aim is to weaken the state and simultaneously veer away the credibility of the central government of Mali. So far, their strategy seems to have worked by incorporating the French in a long-drawn battle of Mali. Since 2013, French boots have remained on Malian soil. Despite some tactical successes enjoyed by Operation Barkhane, it has largely been characterised by strategic vagueness (Richards, 2019). This has lent credibility to the argument that the solution to the problem in the Sahel is political than military which is to say, so long the French are involved, there is less possibility of a settlement through an intra-regional dialogue as these terror modules consider the Europeans, the French in particular, and everyone associated with them as their mortal enemies whose credentials they would not recognise (Abderrahmane, 2019). This fact has also lent credibility to the idea that 'Afganistanisation of the conflict' is taking place as the crisis seems to be reaching a stalemate (Dickerson, 2014).

**Implications of French Involvement**

The consequence of these developments is that the region is now in a state of perpetual conflict in which all sides are now caught up (Pujol-Mazzini, 2019). There has been a net increase in violence on civilians as well as military personnel in every Sahelian country and organised crime has experienced a boom. This has led to a poor record on human rights and even miserable economic performance. Thus, protests have recently erupted against European Powers, particularly against France in Mali and other states (Reza, 2020). This quagmire has led to analogies being drawn with the experiences in Afghanistan, epitomised by the neologism *Sahelistan* (Laurent 2013) which signifies the regions instability, illegal economy and religious fanaticism. While the mountainous terrain of Northern Mali is compared to Tora-bora in Afghanistan for the militants, the French army is drawing from the experiences in Asia to counter the same (Perier, 2019). Yet, the irony is that though the success of operation *Serval*, as the French Colonel Michel Goya describes it, were based on avoiding the mistakes of the operations in Afghanistan, the failure of the political process was also due to the failure to take cues from Afghanistan. Nevertheless, Benedict Erforth (2020, 78) finds that such analogies are helpful to comprehend the situation and also historically justify the actions taken in that light. Understandably, on both counts, France has been on the forefront, reaping its benefits of this logic.

One significant military outcome of these maneuverings has been that *Operation Barkhane* has replaced several French country-wise local operations in Mali, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger and brought them under the broader framework of counterterrorism. However, its primary base has remained in the Central African Chad which had been vital in supporting the French deployments. To understand this connect in the Sahel, it is necessary to elaborate France's Chad connection.

**Strategic Support from Chad**

In Chad, *Operation Barkhane* had replace*d Operation Épervier* (Sparrowhawk) which began in 1986 to check Libyan expansionism. However, French presence did not terminate with the cessation of hostilities in 1988. In fact, French soldiers remained to prop up the then Chadian president Hissène Habré and later, his opponent, General Idriss Déby who utilised the diverse ethnic mosaic of Chad to oust the president. Rumour has it that when he marched into the presidential palace, an agent of the DGSE (Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure Directorate-General of External Security, French equivalent of the CIA) accompanied him.

French links to Chad are, however, somewhat deeper than a simple colony-coloniser relation. It is traced back to 1st March 1941 when General Leclerc and his army, comprising many Chadian soldiers, accepted the capitulation of Koufra (Cyrenaica, Libya) from Italians. It was the first time when French Forces were victorious under their own command since their rout from the mainland by Germany. This moment is still celebrated in the famous 'Oath of Koufra' where they pledged on March 3rd not to stop until the French flag fluttered over Metz and Strasbourg. This

# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)
Written by Sudarshan Pujari

return of honour to France has been crucial in the development of the 'Chadian myth' in which she believes to have a "blood debt" to the Chadian people for their contribution to regain her honour and land. Besides, Malraux added: "In heroic days, Chad did not fail France. He can be assured today that France will not fail him" (Congressional Record, 1964). It is on this myth France has developed her relations with Chad.

However, the causes behind France's continued presence in that country since 1960s are profoundly pragmatic and politico-economic. As a consequence of her special relationship with France, Chad became the cornerstone of the French sphere of influence in North Africa. Thus, its preservation, particularly preservation as a French asset, was given priority which led to intervention for protecting her first against Libyan aggression and later from Sudan. This priority attitude is exemplified by the French military readiness vis-a-vis the developments happening in the country. It is reflected in the nomenclature of the base as an 'Operation'. Unlike a base, it implies a level-4 organisation but according to Nicole Fouilleul (2000), its objectives of presence, pre-positioning, protection and possible extraction of nationals led the military organization to maintain all of its operational capacity. This, however, is an arrangement similar to a type-3 set-up (potential war).

Given these priorities, it is not surprising when Chad is referred to as 'France's aircraft carrier in the desert'. So although the country is essentially delinked in geography from West Africa, the French presence there turns it into a Junction by which it can have a prompt response to any development in not only Central Africa but also West Africa.

## Absence of a Reliable Regional Framework for Crisis Resolution

The gamut of transnational organisations in West Africa apparently showcases the emerging partnerships in the continent. However, strategically they are weakened by the absence of key state actors or by conflicts between them. For instance, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) contains neither Chad nor Mauritania and extends to none of the Maghreb countries. On the northern Sahara, the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) is perpetually plagued by the Algeria-Morocco confrontation and skirts security issues like the Arab League does (Daemers, 2014). In fact, the only sub-regional Saharan organisation, the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), excludes Algeria (Daemers, 2014).

Above that, the people in the Sahel carry the notion that local soldiers are responsible for looting and raping. This has inadvertently bred local hostility to regional forces rendering effective action difficult. As a result of this failure in regional collaboration, local states couldn't effectively respond to any regional crisis by themselves let alone Mali. This cleared the way for foreign interventions and France, as a former colonialist happened to be first in line for it (Boserup et al, 2018).

The French have managed to foster what Julien Daemers refers to as '*à la carte*[3] security cooperation in the form of informal and pragmatic fora' exemplified in the organisational acronyms like the G5 (Sahel) and CEMOC (Common Operational Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee). As member countries of these groups couldn't come up with their own strategy and synergy, the French took the initiative and managed to lead the charge (Daemers, 2014). Perhaps one might take a cue from the fact that the G5's permanent secretariat is located just opposite the French Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania (Abderrahmane, 2017).

Such subtle maneuvering portrays a Janus like character of the French policy which prompts us to dig deeper into the altruistic claims of this 'imperialist humanitarian' intervention (Klose, 2014). Today, three main military missions are deployed in Mali: First, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA – established by UN Security Council Resolution 2100 on April 25, 2013, and revision 2295 of June 2016 under Chapter VII on 'Peacekeeping' in the UN Charter) with 15,900 personnel deployed from 57 countries with an annual budget of $1070. Second, the G5 Sahel Joint Force (2017) formed in 2017 with 5000 personnel and an annual budget of $130 million and finally, France's own *Operation Barkhane (2014)* under which around 4500 personnel have been deployed with an annual budget of $797 million (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2019). While the MINUSMA keeps faltering in its mission of protecting civilians and is strategically targeted by terror outfits (Fejerskov et al, 2017) and the G5 suffers from an over-ambitious mandate starved of funds and human resources (Cold-Ravnkilde, 2018), France through her Operational Assistance Liaison Detachments (DLAOs) continues to guide and

# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)
Written by Sudarshan Pujari

train the local forces. Like most pedagogy styles, in this case, as well, the teacher continues to determine the narrative of the instruction meanwhile perfecting its 'country support system' for Mali and Sahel as if in preparation for a long-term stay (Boserup et al, 2018). Thus, to discern complications associated with these interventions, the following chapters would analyse the factors leading up to intervention.

## The Politics of Intervention

Interventions are a complex affair and Elizabeth Schmidt's 'Foreign Intervention in Africa after the Cold War,' (2018) makes a profound observation in this regard. She explains foreign intervention in Africa as an exercise in dominant countries using "force or pressure over a weaker sovereign entity or when a weaker entity requests external assistance to restore order, monitor a peace accord, or end a humanitarian crisis." To that end, per Schmidt (2018), there are three ways to elaborating this tendency in the case of Mali.

First, free-market austerity policy induced "deadly struggles over power and resources in the post-Cold War period". Africa's resources have historically attracted countries that can make good use of it. The 'scramble for Africa' has existed since the colonial era continuing into the Cold War and beyond. In fact, China's growing interest in Africa only confirms this tendency. France, in this sense, is again not an exception.

Second, the war on terrorism led to increased foreign military presence on the continent and new external support for repressive governments. The French presence in Mali is based on the borrowed narrative of the 'global war on terror'. However, Mali itself was then led by a military junta when France decided to get involved. Historically, France is known to have propped up brutal regimes in Africa and this narrative has more or less legitimised her presence in the continent.

Third, though U.S. counter-terrorism initiatives may have ruled the roost, they were not the only foreign interveners in this process. France and to a lesser extent Turkey, have recently bolstered their credentials in this regard. French actions in Mali are particularly crucial as it presents her as a major alternative to the US, Russia and even China for security. As a UNSC P5 and a major EU member, her claim is only made stronger.

However, any conflict could be categorized into three levels, strategic, operational and tactical. It is on the strategic level we align means with the political ends to obtain what is theorised as victory or success. To explain the French intervention, these three propositions would be analysed in this strategic sense.

## Political-Economy of Intervention

In the first case, we consider the trade balance. North Africa accounts for 3% of the French exports supplying petroleum and minerals – gold in Mauritania, oil and natural gas in Algeria and Libya, and Niger's uranium – along with other tropical and agricultural commodities. Markets for key infrastructures – ports, railways, aviation, telecos, freight and finance – of that region have also been cornered by a few French companies. About 240,000 French-nationals live in Africa. In the case of Bamako, there are almost 6000 of them at any given point. French engagement with African states is also vital for her self-preservation as a major global power which is both a cause and result of the support it garners from African states in transnational bodies like the UN. So, anything that has a bearing on these French interests is bound to attract her interest. In this regard, we shall take a look at her economic controls and interests in the region to determine its bearing on the peace process and discern her overall policy.

### French Currency in West Africa

French-African trade relations could hardly be described as a balanced give and take. The CFA Franc – Communauté financière d'Afrique ("Financial Community of Africa") or Communauté Financière Africaine ("African Financial Community") – is one crucial symbol of this imbalance. In the era of decolonization, De Gaulle had sensed that political new wave and realised that a settlement must be reached to retain France's privileged position in the foreign relations of African states. So, when the French colonies in Africa were given independence, this currency was given to them promising stable exchange rates and low inflation as the currency had been underwritten by the

# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)

Written by Sudarshan Pujari

French Treasury and was later pegged to the Euro. Until 2019, African states were supposed to keep half their reserves of this currency in Paris which was to a tune of $500 billion. The other 20% remained in the form of liabilities. Hence, at any given time, they had access only to 30% of their own funds (Keohane, 2019). Whenever in need, the French instead extended to them a line of credit at their fixed interest rates out of those reserves. Further, they also provided 'aid' out of that very reserve to African countries with the condition that it must be invested in French products and services on a priority basis. In 1994, to protect the Euro and maintain her credit ratings, she had devalued the CFA Francs by 50%. This crippled the African CFA economies and the governments had to resort to wage freezes and layoffs which caused widespread unrests. The meltdown of 2008 was also a similar story.

Conversely, if the local countries want to devalue their currencies to improve trade balances, they are deprived of this by the French currency. Although the currency was split between the West and Central African CFA Francs, it made little difference since both were guaranteed by the same guarantor and their combined reserves were kept in Paris thereby retaining their interchangeability. Consequently, these countries were reduced to rely exclusively on export of raw materials and contend with very few value adding sectors. To add insult to injury, past agreements with France ensured first access to French firms to the region's mineral resources and above that Paris regulated the sale of those natural resources in the international markets. These firms not only retained almost monopoly control in Africa through bribes and other nefarious means but even in France they maintained their influence by investing in heavy lobbying of politicians to maintain this status quo. The 1994, oil firm Elf was caught in such a scandal that had revealed the tacit approval of the French government in such practices (Astier, 2003). Deprived of economic independence, the GDPs of CFA states remained low even by African standards. Lack of socio-economic means to control their own economy has consequently rendered their political freedom hollow. Economic roots of many contemporary problems of the region may be traced to this incident. Since then, the unemployed youth have staunchly opposed this currency.

This currency is now renamed as 'eco' and the countries are no longer required to keep the reserves with Paris. These reserves will now be kept with Senegal and be available for distribution to the world globally (Keohane, 2019). However, this does not hide the exploitative nature of the economic relations which France has maintained till date and intends to retain. In 1963, African leaders like Sylvanus Olympius of Togo had been assassinated just two days before floating his new currency (De Lome, 2019) and similar was the fate of others who managed to garner the displeasure of Paris. The previous year, Italy's deputy Prime Minister from the Five Star Movement – Luigi de Maio's (2019) made a comment that France is the cause of the impoverishment of Africa that led to the refugee crisis in Europe (Anakomah, 2019). This prompted France into action to rehash her CFA arrangement. Her protégés like the President of the Ivory Coast, Alassane Ouattarain in West Africa readily agreed to the new 'eco' plan in light of the upcoming elections in his state. This indicates that the change was more of a cosmetic reform under duress. The fact that the new currency would still be pegged to the Euro and Banque de France would continue to guarantee its convertibility backs this claim (Ebrahim, 2017). It therefore, reflects the economic importance of the region to France. Jacques Chirac has perhaps summed this up in his famous statement in 2008 that without Africa, France will slide to a third-rate power.

*Premium on Natural Resources*

Yet branding French intervention as neo-colonial could be crude and reductionist given the complex nature of international trade itself. However, the prolonged presence of French soldiers has symbolic connotations in international relations and may give a heuristic for erecting some sort of a dependency framework. Although it may appear secondary to the analysis of this military intervention, on the strategic level it may give broader insights on the long-term presence of the French in the region. One such obtrusive view would be the protection of the neighbouring states from the destabilising effects of Mali and Libya to protect her resources in those states. The closest threat, for instance, would have been to Niger, the primary source of fissile uranium to France. Areva and EDF (Electricité de France) are the two major power companies which operate 59 nuclear power-plants and depend on the uranium supply from two mines in Niger which also are owned and operated by French concerns. By 2004 alone, out of total 540.6 TWh of total electricity produced, 425.8 TWh (78% approx.) had been derived from nuclear sources. This was not only the cornerstone of her low carbon footprint environment-friendly energy initiative but also made her one of the largest exporters of electricity globally grossing about 3 million Euros per annum. Anything that could have

# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)
Written by Sudarshan Pujari

jeopardised this supply would have had devastating outcomes for her.

Thus, the French would have been pressed to interfere to ensure that their supply remained unhindered and their dominant position in the region was intact. Given her pre-eminence in the region, her European partners also relied on her strength to keep this conduit open. To protect her interests, it was necessary to have conditions conducive enough to keep this relation profitable. However, to usher such conducive case of affairs it need not be necessary to have a stable state apparatus in Africa. A volatile region, as some Marxists have claimed, would, therefore, be an adequate pretext to prolong her presence until a better excuse would be at hand (La Riposte (France), 2013). While to becalm the French public, politicians also securitised public service delivery to the region for itself. In conflict zones like Northern Mali, where the Malian government up until now had been prohibited, it had even taken up the responsibility of rebuilding on a substantial level. This gives the impression that more than counterterrorism; she had essentially replaced the basic government functions where the Malian state had been absent.

However, security analysts are quick to dispute this claim. They cite that the French operations are derived from the American counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine in Afganistan which stipulates a 'clear, hold and build' strategy. Moreover, France has been more than eager to hand over the 'hold and build' part of the mission to any UN authorised task force and other regional actors like Algeria to that end (Boutellis, 2015). Nevertheless, reluctance of Algeria to take up more security responsibility of the region despite French efforts reflect that she has no interest to bear the costs of what she regards as the mess made by the French in the first place.

*Deficient Peace Efforts*

Additionally, the peace processes in which France has involved herself lacks the sensitive understanding of the colonial wrongs, particularly ethnic marginalisation. This has been the cause behind most tensions in the region as quite many of the states there still have not forged a national identity and as a result, religious and other sectarian identities continue to dominate over people there. France, on the other hand, has equated this 'profound mistake' of colonial experience as a 'shared culture' while simultaneously showcasing herself as Africa's greatest ally. French interventions are not a new phenomenon; however, experience has shown that she continues to favour short term solutions to security and migration which puts the bona-fides of her intentions into question and lends credit to the idea that the states in West Africa more or less are agencies of French interest (Megerisi, 2019).

In such ventures, she has also discovered an ally in Chad which had provided her with wholesale support in clearing Northern Mali of rebels and in the fight against Boko Haram. Moreover, she has become a pivotal partner in the French planning of the G5 Joint force. This in return has allowed Chad to exact concessions from both France and the EU, which include requesting airstrikes not just out of pure need but to show the world the strength of her relations with France (Frenk, 2019) – to prove that France would respond if president Déby is threatened. So long as he takes care of the French interests, the French would take care of his; a classic quid-pro-quo. It is widely believed that Bozzie's (President of the Central African Republic) removal was signed when he agreed to a pact of supplying Uranium to China (Megerisi & Lebovich, 2019). This is intriguing because when Bozzie was threatened with a rebellion similar to Mali, France had refused to intervene.

*Neo–Françafrique*?

These notions of subjugated sovereignty, economic dependence and fragility may give an impression of Françafrique Redux (Haski, 2013) – a conceptualisation by a French intellectual François-Xavier Verschave which essentially means 'France's Africa' implying an exclusive French sphere of influence. It represented a policy which had weaned the sovereignty of the former French colonies after their independence through an elaborate web of military, diplomatic, ideological and economic relations that kept them on their knees in front of France giving an impression that it is Paris's *pré carré* (own backyard).  However, not all such partners are necessarily sovereign states. Border militias and irregulars are often a part of her programme. However, the downside is that they are like political entrepreneurs to whom the 'war' against 'jihad' is outsourced. With no law governing them, these groups often perpetrate human rights abuses which France tends to ignore as a necessary evil.

# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)

Written by Sudarshan Pujari

One such heavyweight auxiliary is Field Marshal, Khalifa Haftar and his Libyan National Army (LNA), which France has propped up both diplomatically and in weaponry despite publicly backing the UN-sponsored political process in the country (Taylor, 2019). Although indicted by the International Criminal Court for human rights abuse, he controls the northern region of Libya which is rich in oil. This oil he can export in contravention to the UN embargo. Moreover, his exploits down South to expel 'foreign militias' from Libyan soil has a narrative more in tune with that of Chad and France that have a tendency to make the whole crisis look regional than local. Interestingly, Haftar's advances coincide with the decline of Sahel's migration economy. This has subsequently sparked interest in the foreign powers – former colonialists like the UK and Belgium and newcomers like Turkey – that are willing to provide support to such armed groups to achieve similar aims in light of the refugee crisis (Lokongo, 2014).

However, this notion of domination is at best contested. The reality is that France increasingly relies on auxiliary partners for the upkeep of even small military detachments of 2-3,000, not to mention that there is also a substantial financial commitment, as such deployments cost above 700 million Euros annually. This is a far cry from the 600,000 soldiers that were stationed earlier. Moreover, even though the CFA Franc is a substantially large market and a couple of French companies do dominate certain sectors, it actually measures up to only 1% of the total French Foreign Trade. Moreover, the new bureaucracy of France is also akin to the IMF and EU 'technocracy' which is largely free of fantastic notions of 'l'Afrique de Papa[4]' and are working to reset the French-African relations (Gounin, 2010). Thus, questions may now be raised on the efficacy of the African governments themselves and blaming the French for all woes may be looked at with a healthy dose of scepticism since China has emerged as the largest trading partner of the region and Russia is also expanding its security footprint. There is little that France may gain materially which would justify such substantial deployments.

Similarly, one may also question the viability of a French exit in light of the chaos which may follow after that. This argument suggests a 'damned if we do, damned if we don't' paradox which seems to have broadly characterised the schizophrenia of the love-hate relation between France and Africa (Gounin, 2010). This puts the entire dependency argument into disarray as it is essentially based on the existence of material transfers, something which could not be established by the available data.

Nevertheless, what may be established is that her present strategy may prove to be detrimental to the broader French stabilisation goals as it threatens the region into more chaos. The jihadist violence in Mali and Burkina Faso has been worsening; militancy and trafficking in Northern Niger are on increase; rebellions threaten Northern Chad; now fresh violence has erupted in South Libya; in these circumstances, propping up authoritarian regimes would only aggravate the situation. Without properly accommodating the issue of marginalisation which is at the heart of every conflict, any resolution would merely be a temporary and an artificial construct (Nelson, 2016).

**War on Terror as Casus Belli**

Subsequently, this brings us to our next issue, which is terrorism. So far, the Sahel has remained a 'forgotten frontier' of the war on terror (Clarke, 2013). However, with the decline of IS and rise of Boko Haram in that region, it is natural that attention would gradually shift to West Africa and with it, the French activities are bound to get highlighted. A wide range of literature exists over the case of religion bred terrorism in Africa. In this paper, we shall focus on how it has affected the French policy.

*Supportive French Public Opinion*

The 'sheer scale, inaccessibility and geopolitical complexity' of the Sahel is a fertile breeding ground for terror outfits and consequently an important theatre in counterterrorism. Despite setbacks, France has remained steadfast in her military commitments in the region mainly in the context of the 'global war on terror'. Having suffered numerous terror attacks herself since 2013, there has been securitisation of Islamic terrorism in the political discourse of France, particularly in elections. As a result, it has been easier to link the problem of the fundamentalist threat to Mali with the threat to the mainland. So now even if the politicians be 'Gaullist' interventionists or 'Atlanticist' isolationists, the French public would stand behind her involvement in the continent so long as they are led to believe that such activities are aimed to curtail the radical fundamentalist groups which pose any threat to them. This has been

# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)
Written by Sudarshan Pujari

reflected in the gusto with which the French forces were cheered both by the French and surprisingly even by Malians themselves when they first landed in that landlocked country (Hirsch, 2013).

So far, no French president's approval ratings have suffered because of these projects (Beardsley, 2013). Moreover, they have received support from the US as well as the UK for such programmes due to their interlocking narratives on terror.

Similarly, the popular reaction registered in this case is quite the opposite of what was observed about her involvement in CAR under *Operation Sangaris,* which soon ran into difficulties and eventually led to her withdrawal in 2016. It has further reinforced the idea that premature departure from the region would only precipitate this jihadist issue by facilitating the unfettered growth of international terror organisations.

Nevertheless, speaking of misguided priorities, it is not a case of protecting Africans first but an exercise in self-preservation. The main fear of the Europeans is the linking up of the terror groups in Libya with those in the Sahel. If they manage to link up and consolidate their holdings, they would then be in a position to directly threaten the European continent. (FATF, 2016) So France has carefully avoided the term elimination of terrorism. Rather it only seeks 'disruption' of this link-up between north-south terror groups. Consequently, she is into harass-warfare limited to disrupting supply lines of terror groups across the broad front of Sahel. To this end, she has been building bases and airstrips for drones across the region to facilitate a rather endless streak. (Cold-Ravnkilde ispi, 2019)

However, this might not only go against French interests but would also threaten their number one security priority, the French citizens in both the mainland and Africa. In the latter case particularly, experience has shown that ransom money has become one of the major sources of income for these organisations (Taylor, 2019). This income, together with money raised from trafficking, has in fact, become so potent that it even competes with the funds available with the government in certain regions (Clingendael, 2015) particularly due to rampant corruption and low mutation of Foreign aid (Chauzul, 2015).

*Politician Selling the Intervention to the French Leadership*

Of the many responsible, M. E. Henke's (2017) singles out the French Defence Minister Le Drian who pushed for Malian intervention against the advice given by the Foreign Office repeating, "If we don't fight today in Mali, we will fight tomorrow in Marseille" (Lasserre and Oberlé, 2013). He was skeptical of any multilateral solution to the Malian conflict and particularly snarled at ECOWAS' capabilities. He believed that French forces are best suited to deal with this problem and they act best when operating alone. The slow and insufficient mobilisation by ECOWAS states fulfilled his prophesies and the time appeared right to him to fulfill his main political objective of re-establishing the abilities of the French to act unilaterally. Internally, he also wanted to regain the power lost to Élysée. The Defence Chief of Staff, a military officer attached to the president, had been delegated control of key issue areas previously under the control of the Defence Minister by two executive orders. On assuming office, he had initiated reforms which had already clipped the wings of senior defence officers, and such an intervention would have restored decision-making back to his control and pacified the handicapped officers (Lasserre and Oberlé, 2013). So, as Henke (2017) notes, he changed the wording from rebels to 'jihadist groups' to 'jihadist terrorist groups' ("groups djihadistes terroristes) to highlight that the threat is intense. He also reintroduced the term 'war' into the French defence vocabulary which had been in disuse since the Algerian war (1954-62). So instead of an 'intervention', it was to be a 'war' against 'jihadist terrorist groups'. To top it off he was, as Henke noted, actively involved in disputing any multilateral solution which was suggested in place of a French-led intervention. Through the media, particularly his 'unofficial' news briefings based of drone footages, he created such public support that in the February polls of 2013, 63% were in favour of the intervention (Chivvis, 2016).

Planning of Operation Serval was then put into action after a high-level meeting on October 31st, 2012 and assets were mobilised to plan out the deployment. A list of 'pretexts', like execution of a French hostage, was prepared to look for a 'window of opportunity' to strike. By January 8th, such information was relayed that Dioncounda Traoré's government was about to fall as the rebels were in contact with coup leader Capitaine Sanogo and together they could threaten the capital both from the rebels as well as with another coup d'état. On 10th January 2013, Le Drian

# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)
Written by Sudarshan Pujari

met Hollande who under the French constitution could unilaterally declare war without parliamentary approval. Hollande, a socialist president, obliged as Le Drian was his best man in the cabinet (Chivvis, 2016) and the latter may have convinced the former that it was the ripe moment to project a strong president (Bergamaschi and Diawara 2014; Chivvis, 2016). French allies in West Africa accepted, rather argued for an immediate military response. Mahamadou Issoufou (Niger) pleaded to save his country from the terror contagion and presidents Macky Sall (Senegal) and Alpha Condé (Guinea) supported Le Drian's solution (Charbonneau and Sears 2014).

In light of this narrative France has distanced itself from the sticky and complex political issues of the host country which, as we discussed earlier, has dropped any possibility of lasting reconciliation. This perhaps may also indicate that the status quo is in favour of her at present and there is no need to disturb this fine balance. On the other hand, she has also 'regionalised' this issue by making it cross-national through *Operation Barkhane*. This has allowed her substantial freedom of action and an enormous force which is available at call in the entire region of French influence. Ironically, however, militant activities and violence has increased post-intervention despite the efforts to the contrary.

However, this argument is valid so long as it is maintained that the crisis of Mali had been brewing before Monsieur Le Drian envisaged his plan. The issue in this argument is that it reduces the whole business of intervention to such an extent that only the whims of a person and his abilities to give effect to them remain an independent variable. The historic, economic and other broad political factors which enabled this situation in the first place are suitably relegated to the background. Although tenable in a laboratory environment, in real life it is constrained by the possibility of similar tacticians being pitted against him/his agenda or even for the same agenda but from a separate vantage point. One such missing link is the fact that president Traoré had gone to Élysée on 9th January and it was already clear that NATO would not be coming forward. Thus, even if we accept this as one of the reasons behind the French involvement, we could never be sure of the proportion to which he was responsible. Hence, it may be apt to say that Le Drian actively supported intervention, but to claim that he is singularly responsible would be argumentum ad hominem precisely due to the lack of proportionality and embeddedness.

Theoretically, it highlights the limits of the securitisation argument as it fails to identify the gatekeepers who ultimately decide whether the decision would sail through. In this case, Hollande may be considered that linchpin through whom the whole argument on the Defence minister falls in place. So deductively it may appear that by the rule, he was the cause giving effect to intervention but abductively there would be equally plausible explanations, rather individual stories, to what may have given effect to this cause by this rule. Similarly, looking at it inductively, multiple inferences may be drawn from this cause-effect relation including the one concerning neo-colonialism. This is evident from the variety in the literature that was mentioned in the literature review.

However, what may be established so far is that *Operation Serval and Barkhane* have played a key role in re-legitimising her presence in the region and opening to her a new ring of military bases in West Africa at her disposal that also bolster her security credentials on the international fora which so far had looked up only to the USA and to a lesser extent Russia in this regard (Francophone, 2016). Consequently, this brings us to the third issue about the French ambition to become an alternative security power.

*Need for a New Narrative*

France is widely presumed to be complicit in the Rwandan genocide for providing military support to the Habyarimana regime that was responsible for the massacres. So, to refurbish her bona-fides in Africa, it initially turned to the EU and the UK (1998 Franco-British summit, Saint-Malo) on African issues promising to share the costs and minimise the political-risks of its military activities there. However, since the French-inspired EU operation in Chad and CAR (EUFOR Chad & CAR 2008-9), the EU members, namely Germany, Poland and the Nordic countries, have been wary of French adventures in Africa. They fear that she would use the EU's resources and use her as a political cover to meet her own agenda (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2019). Nevertheless, Spain and Italy show some interest in lieu of stemming refugee flows. So, under the Common Security and Defence policy of the EU, a very small force of just about 600 personnel was deployed strictly for military training under the EU Training Mission in Mali (2013) with a meagre budget of $34 million P/A. In 2015, the EU provided an additional 140 personnel and another $38 million P/A. But again, it restricted it to only civilian capacity-building projects, i.e. police

# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)
## Written by Sudarshan Pujari

and gendarmerie, and the National Guard. On the other hand, rest of the EU member nations only extended a tacit acceptance for such deployments as a cost of restricting migration into Europe (Venturi, 2017). Thus, there was a definite need to justify her return to the continent of Africa and return she did with a bang with the 'jihadist' narrative.

*Counterterrorism as Pretext for Intervention*

By 2010 onwards, France assumed a participant role in the international struggle against terror and in turn, re-legitimised her presence and activities as a humanitarian interventionist at least in front of her Western Allies. This, amongst other things, ensured logistical and intelligence support from the US. In return when Libya boiled and the US was reluctant to directly intervene, France was foremost to lead the bombing campaigns which received complete American support. In this quid-pro-quo when Mali called for help due to the threat posed to the capital by the fundamentalist rebels, France had both the inclination and ability, thanks to AFRICOM to alter the outcome. The abilities of the rebel groups were clearly overstated to persuade the West that it faced a substantial terror threat (Marchal, 2012) while a few days before Operation Serval was launched, the capital had witnessed large military parades to dissuade the demand for *concertations nationales* (national consultations) as the credibility of the government itself was doubtful. France knew well that the local defence apparatus of the region was ill-prepared to deal with this issue and fearing the fallout, the presidents of Niger (Mahamadou Issoufou) and Senegal (Macky Sall) had already submitted their requests for intervention, offering to even commit troops if needed. Thus, the intervention became a question of 'when' than 'if' as all parties simply waited for the peace process to conclude without resolution. The existing Malian government acted further to frame this narrative of an 'inevitable' intervention for global consumption (Annis, 2013).

*French and Western Support to Terror Groups*

It is argued that the rebel faction MNLA received preferential treatment from the French (Shukla, 2015). Despite the intel, occupation of Northern Mali would not have been possible without the absence of an early intervention. In the French media, they are painted as the 'romanticised rebels' and their leaders are frequently interviewed over France24 on this subject. In short, they are made into stakeholders of post-conflict Mali in return for acting as a militant protégé to protect French interests. Thus, it is hardly a surprise to find that the rebel groups in North, whose ranks and files are made up mainly of Arabs, have Tuaregs as leaders who don't even form a majority in the North. France could have successfully utilised the Tuaregs because of the simple fact that it is possible.

In a paper published on July 22, 2011, researchers at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute arrived at the findings that if 10% of the population firmly holds to a belief, it would be quickly adopted by the majority (Xie et al, 2011). One of the key inferences drawn was that the percentage of committed opinion holders needed to shift the majority opinion remained uniform regardless of the origin or network system. This outcome was also confirmed in the cases of Tunisia and Egypt while analysing the Arab Spring. The takeaway for us, however, lies in the experiments conducted to confirm this hypothesis. Apart from hypothesis validation, their success had also proved that such opinions may be artificially formed and sustained. The French were quite plausibly not unaware of this study and a minority community would have been adequately manageable for such a purpose. To a lesser extent, Le Drian's case may also be considered valid in this new light as he also did not need to satisfy everyone to get what he wanted. However, the issue of proportionality in this claim remains lingering.

Furthermore, the 'banana arc' discussed earlier perhaps might also be a self-fulfilling prophesy. The groups proximate to al-Qaeda but fighting with the western coalition in the past were labeled 'moderate' and their similarities with the latter was 'played down'. Through this partnership, advanced weaponry was passed on to these groups which sooner or later were used in myriad terror activities. Back in the west, the entire Jihadist business was painted in light of a mafia group as if it had a command and control structure that could be defeated in regular warfare. However, although publicity from 9/11 boosted the al-Qaeda and made it the dominant jihadist ideology, a formalized structure amongst its operative groups has not been quite discernable. Nevertheless, this gave the West a way to highlight their successes as they branded those pinned down as 'head of operations' and like. However, it also meant that the death of Osama bin Laden and other 'commanders' had little effect on the Jihadist expansion even if they were portrayed as the linchpins of Jihadist terrorism (Cockburn, 2015).

# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)
Written by Sudarshan Pujari

However, according to the Kennan (2017), unlike the above case, the terror groups menacing Mali today were deliberately nourished and propped up by the US and Algeria in the 2000s to create an arms market in an otherwise impoverished region where want and hunger has been a greater killer than terrorism (Grundy, 2013). The AQIM was created out of the 'Dirty Wars' in Algeria and was used to keep the neighbourhood destabilised enough to maintain her pre-eminence. The Tuareg of Mali, after the collapse of the tourism-based economy of the region due to extremism, have been a steady source of radical youth to give fodder to this programme for propping up fundamentalists. On at least five occasions, Mali, Nigeria and Algeria were responsible for provoking these Tuareg for taking up arms to justify an increase in the 'terror rent' they received from Washington. But when these Tuareg rebelled in Northern Mali under the secular MNLA in October 2011, Algeria was weary and caught off guard. To quell their influence, the latter simultaneously mobilised the AQIM and other fundamentalist assets in the region which were successful at overshadowing the MNLA's influence as discussed earlier. However, this caused destruction of catastrophic proportions and France was poised to intervene. This was a threat to Algerian pre-eminence and consequently, she opposed any foreign intervention. After the UNSC October 12th Resolution, Algeria tried to 'rein in its dogs' and engineer a peaceful political solution. However, the situation had by then already 'gone to the dogs' (Keenan, 2017).

One key takeaway from the strong narratives on terror and counter-terror that has emerged is that France itself cannot detract from the penalties on the action that come with it. This is mainly evident from the fact that she was obligated to install a civilian government in Mali, albeit of limited effectiveness. However, the real test of her humanitarian commitment is yet to happen and any pronouncement as such would be premature and misguiding. Nevertheless, it may be argued that although French actions are no longer like the 'Gendarme of Africa' as they once have been, they are far from being compassionate and philanthropic either.

With these three arguments in place, we may induce that by engaging with the narrative of global terror and failed state development narrative (Boserup & Martinez, 2018), France has gained materially as well as in the abstract sense of International Relations. Thus, it is natural to presume that to maintain this gain; her presence in the region would remain for a substantial period in the near future.

**Conclusion**

When the cost of acquiring and possessing knowledge outweigh the benefits of its possession, then ignorance becomes rational. The case of French presence in West Africa is an example of such motivated ignorance at multiple levels. Improper comprehension of domestic needs lead to distorted national interest priorities. Similarly, lack of regional understanding concocts such a mix of action and inaction that policies have sequentially pushed countries into a bottomless vortex of death, destruction and violence. One may draw endless inferences and can even dispute a few of them. However, in this section, we shall take stock of what could be established through this study.

In this regard, France has been following an overt military strategy for counter terrorism where it has received support from not only the Sahelian countries but also from the boarder international community. However, despite the 'military traffic jam' (Cold-Ravnkilde, 2019) in Sahel, such counter-terrorism initiatives have been plagued with mismanagement, strategic vagueness and lack of sufficient funds to give effect to their ambitious mandates of deployment. It also goes without saying that the 'rebuilding' efforts consequently have been only cosmetic at best as much investment has gone into constructing and maintaining military bases while just to repair water pumps, one has to send a whole detachment in protection (DICOD, 2013). Thus in practice, this strategy has stepped up deadly violence in the region and led to disproportionate increase in the defence funding by the African states including Mali despite their limited GDPs and intact economic restrictions from Paris. Unsurprisingly, protests have erupted against French presence in the region (Reza, 2020).

Similarly, while the French have maintained that 'war' on 'jihadism', particularly against the global kind, has been their motivation throughout the deployment, critics have punched holes in this narrative at different places. In this regard, Nye (2019) aptly sums it up stating that history continues to inspire and justify present actions in international relations. The Tuareg rebelled due to their long-standing grievances of marginalisation by Bamako and subsequently externalised the crisis by linking up with transnational terrorist groups. However, the long-standing nature of the

# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)

Written by Sudarshan Pujari

grievances can be linked to the political and economic nature of French policy for the region itself since independence. Further, this fact can be looked through different perspectives. One perspective holds that the neo-colonial practices of controlling the polity and economy of the African states to appropriate surplus made conditions ripe for terrorism. The other view contends that deliberate ignorance of minority communities, particularly the Muslims and Arabs, by France and its supported regional authorities radicalised those communities. Yet another view interprets the crisis as an outcome of domestic politics and aspirations of France, and the sequence of international events to which the French state accordingly responded. In these narratives, although institutional action has been widely discerned, in certain cases individual actors have also been viewed as pivotal to orchestrate certain outcomes. However, it is difficult to determine the proportionality of these factors and would require further quantitative studies on every factor individually to determine their actual impact.

Consequently, the French military intervention becomes a complex business where the answer to determining how the intervention came about changes when the timeframe in question is altered. In short, the French intervened at the request of the Malian government. Going back a little further, this argument becomes untenable as the legitimacy of the interim government itself becomes questionable. It would be more apt to state that as the perceived jihadist threat from rebel groups increased, western and particularly French intervention became inevitable. However, going yet further, the Libyan link to the instability would become clear and with it the French realpolitik that rationalised intervention. Finally, the historic and economic factors would come to the fore which traces its origin to the colonial times through the neo-liberal world order and the Cold War. In short, each temporal level would lead to a different inference and from a public policy perspective this complicates interaction amongst actors and brings into question the basis of decision-making itself.

Thus, evidence examined so far does not dispute that France is fighting the terrorists in Sahel. Deaths of French personnel in combat highlight this fact. However, French interests continue to underline all her actions. Nevertheless, their interpretations are no longer as drastic as it used to be in the heydays of Françafrique. However, it is also true that "France wields a level of influence in sub-Saharan Africa that it cannot command anywhere else in the world. In crisis situations, it is still seen as a key source of diplomatic, military or even financial pressure on – or support for – the countries in the region" (Melly & Darracq, 2013). So, we can safely situate French actions in a continuum that varies from containing militancy that threatens its interest on one hand, to blatant neocolonial scenario planning on the other, with continuum emphasising the variability.

With this understanding, we can now develop somewhat informed opinions about the very recent developments in this regard like the decision to increase the French troop levels to 5,100 (Kelly, 2020) or question if setting up a new regional task force 'Takuba' or sabre (Al Jazeera, 2020) is essentially a duplication of efforts. To conclude, it is necessary to learn from such conflicts sooner than later, as these wars do not end; like the previous French incursions, they just fade away from memory.

## Abbreviations

1. AFISMA – African-led International Support Mission to Mali.
2. AFRICOM – The US Africa Command.
3. AMU – Arab Maghreb Union.
4. APF – African Peace Facility
5. AQIM – Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.
6. ATT – President Amadou Toumani Touré, Mali (2002-12)
7. CAR – Central African Republic.
8. CDSP – Common Security and Defence Policy.
9. CEMOC – Common Operational Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee.
10. CEN-SAD – Communauté des Etats Sahélo-Sahariens or Community of Sahel–Saharan States.
11. CFA – Communauté financière d'Afrique ("Financial Community of Africa") or Communauté Financière Africaine ("African Financial Community")
12. COIN – Counter Insurgency.
13. DGSE – Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure (Directorate-General of External Security, France)

14. DLAO – Détachement de Liason et d'Appui Opérationnel or operational liaison and support detachment.
15. ECOWAS – Economic Community of West African States.
16. EDF – Electricité de France or French Electricity co.
17. EU – European Union.
18. FCAS – Fragile and Conflict Affected States.
19. G5 – Sahelian Institutional framework for coordination of regional cooperation in development policies and security matters in West Africa.
20. GDP – Gross Domestic Product.
21. ICISS – International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty.
22. IDP – Internally Displace Persons.
23. IMA – Islamic Movement for Azawad.
24. IMF – International Monetary Fund.
25. ISIS – Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.
26. LNA – Libyan National Army.
27. MENA – Middle East and North Africa region.
28. MINUSMA – United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.
29. MNLA – Mouvement National pour la Libération de l'Azawad or National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad.
30. MUJAO – Mouvement pour l'Unification et le Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest or Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa.
31. NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.
32. P5 – UNSC Permanent Five Veto Power Nations.
33. PSI – Pan Sahel Initiative
34. R2P – Responsibility to Protect.
35. TSCTP – Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Partnership
36. TWh – Terawatt Hour; 1TWh = 10^12 Watt.
37. UNSC – United Nations Security Council.
38. WMD – Weapons of Mass Destruction.

## References

Abderrahmane, A. (2017, February 2). The Sahel G5: France's Foothold in the Sahel. Retrieved April 28, 2020, from https://www.thebrokeronline.eu/the-sahel-g5-france-s-foothold-in-the-sahel/

Abderrahmane, A. (2019, June 18). A dangerous ideological battle in Africa's Sahel arena. Retrieved from https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/north-africa-west-asia/dangerous-ideological-battle-africas-sahel-arena/

Africa Center for Strategic Studies. (2019, March 4). A Review of Major Regional Security Efforts in the Sahel. Retrieved April 28, 2020, from https://africacenter.org/spotlight/review-regional-security-efforts-sahel/

Africa Center for Strategic Studies. (2019, March 4). A Review of Major Regional Security Efforts in the Sahel. Retrieved April 28, 2020, from https://africacenter.org/spotlight/review-regional-security-efforts-sahel/

Al Jazeera. (2020, March 28). France and allies establish new task force in Sahel. Retrieved from https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/03/france-allies-establish-task-force-sahel-200328075257444.html

Ankomah, B. (2019, November 7). Lessons from Italy Deputy PM rebuke of France's stranglehold on its former colonies. Retrieved April 28, 2020, from https://newafricanmagazine.com/18269/

Annis, R. (2013, March 6). France's Invasion of Mali: A Carefully Planned Military Intervention. Retrieved April 28, 2020, from https://www.globalresearch.ca/frances-invasion-of-mali-a-carefully-planned-military-intervention/5325454

Anti-French sentiment on the rise in the Sahel. (2020, January 14). Retrieved from

# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)

Written by Sudarshan Pujari

https://www.france24.com/en/video/20200114-anti-french-sentiment-on-the-rise-in-the-sahel

Asher-Schapiro, A. (2016, January 12). Libyan Oil, Gold, and Qaddafi: The Strange Email Sidney Blumenthal Sent Hillary Clinton In 2011. Retrieved from https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/gy9d49/libyan-oil-gold-and-qaddafi-the-strange-email-sidney-blumenthal-sent-hillary-clinton-in-2011

Astier, H. (2003, March 19). BBC NEWS | Europe | Elf was "secret arm of French policy." Retrieved from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2862257.stm

Babones, S. (2015). What is world-systems analysis? Distinguishing theory from perspective. *Thesis Eleven*, *127*(1), 3–20. doi: 10.1177/0725513615575324

Beardsley, E. (2013, December 15). Why French Troops Are Intervening In Africa – Again. Retrieved April 28, 2020, from https://www.npr.org/2013/12/15/251171604/once-again-french-troops-intervene-in-africa

Benjaminsen, T. A., & Ba, B. (2018). Why do pastoralists in Mali join jihadist groups? A political ecological explanation. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, *46*(1), 1–20. doi: 10.1080/03066150.2018.1474457

Bergamaschi, I. and Diawara, M., 2014. The French military intervention in Mali: not exactly francafrique but definitely postcolonial. In: B. Charbonneau and T. Chafer, eds. Peace operations in the francophone world: global governance meets post-colonialism. London: Routledge, 137–152.

Bindner, L. (2018). (Rep.). International Centre for Counter-Terrorism. Retrieved April 27, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/resrep17482

Blomberg, B. S., Gaibulloev, K. and Sandler, T., 2011. Terrorist Groups Survival: Ideology, Tactic and Base of Operations. CREATE Published Articles and Papers, 149, 31p.

Boserup, R., & Martinez, L. (2018). *EUROPE AND THE SAHEL-MAGHREB CRISIS* (pp. 7-14, Rep.). Danish Institute for International Studies. Retrieved April 28, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/resrep17370.4

Boserup, R., Martinez, L., Lucht, H., & Cold-Ravnkilde, S. (2015). (Rep.). Danish Institute for International Studies. Retrieved April 27, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/resrep13238

Boutellis, A. (2015). Can the UN Stabilize Mali? Towards a UN Stabilization Doctrine?*Stability: International Journal of Security & Development*, *4*(1). doi: 10.5334/sta.fz

Brachman, J. M., 2009. Global Jihadism: Theory and Practice. London and New York: Routledge, 210p.

Buzan, B., O. Waever & J. de Wilde, (1998). Security: A New Framework for Analysis. Boulder: Lynn Reiner.

Charbonneau, B. and Sears, J.M., 2014. Fighting for liberal peace in Mali? The limits of international military intervention. Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding, 8 (2-3), 192–213.

Chase-Dunn, Christopher and Peter Grimes. 1995. "World-Systems Analysis." Annual Review of Sociology. Vol. 21 p. 387-417.

Chauzal, G., & Damme, T. van. (2015, March). Rebellion and fragmentation in northern Mali. Retrieved from https://www.clingendael.org/pub/2015/the_roots_of_malis_conflict/2_rebellion_and_fragmentation_in_northern_mali/

Chauzal, G. (2015). (Rep.). Clingendael Institute. Retrieved April 27, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/resrep05306

# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)
Written by Sudarshan Pujari

Chivvis, C.S., 2016. The French war on Al Qa'ida in Africa. New York: Cambridge University Press

Chomsky, N. (2018, February 14). Noam Chomsky on 'Humanitarian Intervention' and Imperialism. Telesurtv.net. Retrieved from https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/Noam-Chomsky-Humanitarian-Intervention-US-Imperialism-20180214-0028.html

Clarke, M. 2013. "Responses to Sahel terrorism: music to jihadist ears." RUSI Analysis. London: Royal United Services Institute. January 22nd.

Clingendael's Conflict Research Unit (CRU). (2015). (Rep.). Clingendael Institute. Retrieved April 27, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/resrep05352

Cockburn, P. (2015, June 29). How the War on Terror Created the World's Most Powerful Terror Group. Retrieved from https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/how-war-terror-created-worlds-most-powerful-terror-group/

Cold-Ravnkilde, S. M. C.-R. (2019, September 9). Providing Security in the Sahel: A 'Traffic Jam' of Military. Retrieved from https://www.ispionline.it/en/pubblicazione/providing-security-sahel-traffic-jam-military-interventions-23852

Cold-Ravnkilde, S. (2018). (Rep.). Danish Institute for International Studies. doi:10.2307/resrep21356

Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates of the Congress, Volume 110, Part 1. (1964, January 9). Congressional Record.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Crone, M. (2017). Islamic State's Incursion into North Africa and Sahel: A Threat to al-Qaeda? Connections, 16(1), 63-76. Retrieved April 28, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/26326471

Daemers, J. (2014). *Re-mapping the Sahel: Transnational security challenges and international responses* (pp. 51-58, Rep.) (Barrios C. &Koepf T., Eds.). European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS). Retrieved April 27, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/resrep07094.9

Deutsche Welle. (2013, January 15). UN Security Council backs French intervention in Mali: DW: 15.01.2013. Retrieved from https://www.dw.com/en/un-security-council-backs-french-intervention-in-mali/a-16521496

Devecioglu, K. (2020, January 31). ANALYSIS – France tries new tactics after losing influence in West Africa. Retrieved from https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/analysis-france-tries-new-tactics-after-losing-influence-in-west-africa/1720306

De Lome, K. (2019, January 21). Opinion: Sylvanus Olympio's assassination two days before he withdrew Togo from the CFA franc zone | Face2Face Africa. Retrieved from https://face2faceafrica.com/article/opinion-sylvanus-olympios-assassination-two-days-before-he-withdrew-togo-from-the-cfa-franc-zone

Dickerson, D. (2014, September 3). Is Africa The Next Afghanistan? The IACSP's Counter-Terrorism Journal V19N2. Retrieved from https://issuu.com/fusteros/docs/iacsp_magazine_v19n2

DICOD Ministère des Armées. (2013, July 5). Situation update on Serval Force operations in Mali, 4 July. Retrieved from https://www.defense.gouv.fr/english/actualites/operations/situation-update-on-serval-force-operations-in-mali-4-july

Dowd, C., & Raleigh, C. (2013). *The myth of global Islamic terrorism and local conflict in Mali and the Sahel. African*

# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)
Written by Sudarshan Pujari

*Affairs, 112(448), 498–509.* doi:10.1093/afraf/adt039

Duffield, M. (2001). Global Governance and the new wars: the merging of development and security. London: Zed Books.

Ebrahim, S. (2020, January 17). West Africa casts off last vestige of French colonialism. Retrieved April 28, 2020, from https://www.iol.co.za/news/opinion/west-africa-casts-off-last-vestige-of-french-colonialism-40722866

Economic and Political Weekly, Turmoil in Mali : (2013, February 15). Retrieved April 28, 2020, from https://www.epw.in/journal/2013/08/editorials/turmoil-mali.html

Erforth, B. (2019). Contemporary French Security Policy in Africa. New York, United States: Springer Publishing.

Eroukhmanoff, C. (2017). 'Securitisation Theory' in Mcglinchey, S., R. Walters & C. Scheinpflug (ed.) International Relations Theory. Bristol: E-IR, pp. 104-110.

Esposito, J. L., 2002. Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam. New York: Oxford University Press, 197p

Financial Action Task Force (FATF), Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA), & Task Force on Money Laundering in Central Africa (Groupe d'Action contre le blanchiment d'Argent en Afrique Centrale (GABAC). (2016). TERRORIST FINANCING IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA (October). Retrieved from https://www.fatf-gafi.org/media/fatf/documents/reports/Terrorist-Financing-West-Central-Africa.pdf

Fejerskov, A., Cold-Ravnkilde, S., & Albrecht, P. (2017). *REGIONAL INTERESTS IN AFRICAN PEACE OPERATIONS*(pp. 41-59, Rep.). Danish Institute for International Studies. Retrieved April 27, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/resrep17378.8

Fouilleul , N. (2000). The condition of the combatant in peacekeeping operations. The Champs de Mars , 7 (1), 19-28. doi: 10.3917 / lcdm1.007.0019.

Francophone, U. P. (2016, April 20). The French military in Africa: successes, challenges ahead? Retrieved April 28, 2020, from http://francophone.port.ac.uk/?p=1051

Frankowski, P. (2019). Why Europe Intervenes in Africa: Security, Prestige and Legacy of Colonialism, by C.Gegout (London: Hurst & Company, 2017, ISBN 9781849046930400); xiii 400pp., £35.00 pb.*JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, *57*(1), 181–182. doi: 10.1111/jcms.12859

Frenk, C. (2019, February 7). Invité Afrique – Rebelles de l'UFR frappé par la France: "Pourquoiaucune force arméetchadienne ne les a arrêtés?". Retrieved April 28, 2020, from http://www.rfi.fr/fr/emission/20190207-raid-francais-contre-ufr-aucune-force-armee-tchadienne-as-arretes-pourquoi

Gary J. Bass, Freedom's battle: the origins of humanitarian intervention (New York: Vintage Books, 2009)

Goldfrank, Walter L. 2000. "Paradigm Regained? The Rules of Wallerstein's WorldSystem Method. Journal of World-Systems Research. Vol. 6. N. 2 pp. 150-195

Gounin, Y. (2010, July 13). Not Your Father's Françafrique. Retrieved April 28, 2020, from https://foreignpolicy.com/2010/07/13/not-your-fathers-francafrique-2/

Grundy, C. (2013, February 13). Is Terrorism the Main Threat to Human Security in Northern Africa? Retrieved from https://www.e-ir.info/2013/02/13/is-terrorism-the-main-threat-to-human-security-in-northern-africa-2/

Haski, P. (2013, July 21). The Return of Françafrique. Retrieved April 28, 2020, from

# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)

Written by Sudarshan Pujari

https://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/22/opinion/global/the-return-of-francafrique.html

Henke, M. E. (2017). Why did France intervene in Mali in 2013? Examining the role of Intervention Entrepreneurs. *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal*, *23*(3), 307–323. doi: 10.1080/11926422.2017.1352004

Hirsch, A. (2013, January 16). Why Malians are welcoming French intervention with open arms | Afua Hirsch. Retrieved April 28, 2020, from https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jan/16/malians-welcome-french-intervention

Hoffman, B., 2006. Inside Terrorism. New York: Columbia University press, 432 p

Johnson, C. (2012, August 14). Mali: Sharia Law Imposed in North. Retrieved from https://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/mali-sharia-law-imposed-in-north/

Howell, J. & J. Lind. (2009). Counterterrorism, Aid and Civil Society Before and After the War on Terror. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kassim, A., Pearson, E., Barkindo, A., Hassan, I., Pieri, Z., & Mahmoud, O. (2018). Boko Haram Beyond the Headlines: Analyses of Africa's Enduring Insurgency (pp. 115-133, Rep.) (Zenn J., Ed.). Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point. doi:10.2307/resrep21483.10

Keenan, J. (2017, July 5). How Washington helped foster the Islamist uprising in Mali. Retrieved April 28, 2020, from https://newint.org/features/2012/12/01/us-terrorism-sahara/

Kelly, F. (2020, April 1). France boosts Barkhane force to 5,100 troops to further focus on Mali-Burkina Faso-Niger tri-border area. Retrieved from https://www.thedefensepost.com/2020/02/02/france-boosts-barkhane-5100-troops-sahel-mali-burkina-faso-niger/

Keohane, D. (2019, December 22). France loosens supervision of 'colonial' west African currency. Retrieved April 28, 2020, from https://www.ft.com/content/fc57e998-24a5-11ea-9a4f-963f0ec7e134

Klose, F. (2014, January 13). France in Africa – Imperialist Humanitarian? Retrieved April 28, 2020, from https://hhr.hypotheses.org/264

Krieger, T., Meierrieks, D., 2010. What causes Terrorism? Public Choice, 148, pp.3-27.

Krishnan, R. (2019). How the West backed radical Islam and unleashed global terror. *Business Title*. Retrieved from https://www.businesstoday.in/opinion/columns/radical-islam-west-backed-global-terror-us-europe-britain-jehad-west-funded-terrorism/story/365139.html

Krueger, A. B., 2007. What Makes a Terrorist: Economics and the Roots of Terrorism.

Krueger, A.B., Laitin, D.D., 2007. KtoKogo? : A Cross-Country Study of the origins and Targets of Terrorism. In: Keefer, P., Loayza, N. eds. Terrorism, Economic Development and Political Openness. 2008, New York: Cambridge University Press, pp.148-173.

Krueger, A.B., Maleckova, J., 2003. Education, Poverty and Terrorism: Is there a Causalv Connection? Journal of Economic Perspectives, 17(4), pp.119-144.

La Riposte (France). (2013, January 24). Imperialist intervention in Mali. Retrieved April 28, 2020, from https://www.marxist.com/imperialist-intervention-in-mali.htm

Lasconjarias, G. (2013). Understanding the Median Crisis from a Euro-Atlantic Perspective. *Nato Defence College*.

# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)
Written by Sudarshan Pujari

Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep10289

Lasserre, I. and Oberlé, T., 2013. Notre guerre secrète au Mali. Les nouvelles menaces contre la France. Paris: Fayard.

Lokongo, A. R. (2014, January 16). French complicity in the crisis in Central African Republic: Pambazuka News. Retrieved April 28, 2020, from https://www.pambazuka.org/governance/french-complicity-crisis-central-african-republic

Laurent, Samuel. 2013. Sahelistan: De la Libye au Mali, au coeur du nouvel jihad. Paris: Seuil.

Marchal, R (2012). Is a military intervention in Mali unavoidable?. Oslo: Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre. Available at http://www.peacebuilding.no/Regions/Africa/Publications/Is-a-military-intervention-in-Mali-unavoidable.

MARSH, N. (2017). Brothers Came Back with Weapons: The Effects of Arms Proliferation from Libya. *PRISM, 6*(4), 78-97. Retrieved April 27, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/26470483

Martínez-Vela, C.A. (2001). World Systems Theory.

McNabb, D. E. (2008). Research methods in public administration and nonprofit management: Quantitative and qualitative approaches. (2nd ed.). Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

Megerisi, T., &Lebovich, A. (2019, March 8). France's strongman strategy in the Sahel. Retrieved April 28, 2020, from https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_frances_strongman_strategy_in_the_sahel

Melly , P., &Darracq, V. (2013, May). A New Way to Engage? French Policy in Africa from Sarkozy to Hollande. Retrieved from https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Research/Africa/0513pp_franceafrica.pdf

Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères. (2020). Mali. Retrieved from https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/mali/

Mitchell, C. R. 1970. "Civil Strife and the Involvement of External Parties." International Studies Quarterly 14(2): 166-194.

Modelski, George. 1964. "The International Relations of Internal War." In International Aspects of Civil Strife, ed. James N. Rosenau. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Nelson, E. (2016, October 5). French Intervention in Africa Reflects its National Politics: Retrieved April 28, 2020, from https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2016/10/10/french-intervention-in-africa-reflects-its-national-politics/

Neumann, P. R., 2014. The New Jihadism: Global Snapshot. London: The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (ICSR), 24p

Nye, J. S. (2019). The rise and fall of American hegemony from Wilson to Trump. International Affairs, 95(1), 63–80. doi: 10.1093/ia/iiy212

O'Donovan, O. (1998). War by Other Means. Some Corner of a Foreign Field, 87–98. doi: 10.1007/978-1-349-14443-3_9

Perier, M. (2019, September 3). What is French Security Policy in Africa Today? An interview with BenediktErforth. Retrieved from http://www.sciencespo.fr/ceri/en/content/what-french-security-policy-africa-today-interview-benedikt-erforth

# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)
Written by Sudarshan Pujari

Petrasek, D. (2013, February 11). Misinterpreting Mali: The Uses and Abuses of R2P. Retrieved from https://www.cips-cepi.ca/2013/02/11/misinterpreting-mali-the-uses-and-abuses-of-r2p/

Piazza, J. A., & Choi, S.-W. (2018, August 2). International Military Interventions and Transnational Terrorist Backlash. Retrieved from https://academic.oup.com/isq/article-abstract/62/3/686/5063844?redirectedFrom=fulltext

Princeton: Princeton University press, 194p. Krueger, A.B., Laitin, D.D., 2007. KtoKogo? : A Cross-Country Study of the origins andv Targets of Terrorism. In: Keefer, P., Loayza, N. eds. Terrorism, Economic Development and Political Openness. 2008, New York: Cambridge University Press, pp.148-173.

Pujol-Mazzini, A. (2019, January 29). How Mali Is Pursuing Justice for a War That Never Really Ended. Retrieved from https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/insights/27306/is-justice-possible-in-the-unending-malian-conflict

Reza, A. (2020, February 20). Why are French soldiers in the Sahel? Protesters have an answer | Alexandra Reza. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/feb/20/france-soldiers-sahel-emmanuel-macron-protest

Rekawek, K. (2014). *Re-mapping the Sahel: Transnational security challenges and international responses* (pp. 19-24, Rep.) (Barrios C. &Koepf T., Eds.). European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS). Retrieved April 27, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/resrep07094.5

Richards, H. (2019, August 14). Assessment of French Intervention in the Sahel Region, 2013-2019. Retrieved from https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2019/08/14/assessment_of_french_intervention_in_the_sahel_region_2013-2019_114664.html

Rosenau, James N., ed. 1964. International Aspects of Civil Strife. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Rosenau, James N. 1969. "Intervention as a Scientific Concept." Journal of Conflict Resolution 13(2):149-171.

Rudolph , J. P. (2014, February 24). Intervention in Mali: Does R2P Apply? Retrieved from https://justiceinconflict.org/2012/09/27/intervention-in-mali-does-r2p-apply/

Sageman, M., 2008. Leaderless Jihad: Terror networks in the twenty-first century. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 197p.

Sayer, A. (1992). Method in social science: A realist approach. New York, NY: Routledge.

Schmidt, Elizabeth. 2013. Foreign Intervention in Africa: From the Cold War to the War on Terror. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schmidt, E. (2018). Foreign Intervention in Africa after the Cold War (Knowledge Unlatched (KU) ed.). Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press.

Schuurman, B. (2018). Research on Terrorism, 2007–2016: A Review of Data, Methods, and Authorship.*Terrorism and Political Violence*, 1–16. doi: 10.1080/09546553.2018.1439023

Seyedfarshi, A. (2015, April 13). French Interventionism in the Age of R2P: A Critical Examination of the Case of Mali. Retrieved from https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2592852

Seligman, L. (2019, December 19). Greenlighted by Trump, Turkey Invades Syria. Retrieved from https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/12/21/turkey-syria-kurds-invasion-trump/

SHEA, J., BALFOUR, R., & BRYZA, M. (2017). TRANSATLANTIC FRAGMENTATIONS AND POLICY

# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)
Written by Sudarshan Pujari

ADAPTATION: The Security of Europe in 2025 (pp. 17-21, Rep.). German Marshall Fund of the United States. Retrieved April 28, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/resrep18959.6

Shukla, A. (2015, November 21). Mali attacks and France's agenda. Retrieved from https://www.newsbred.com/article/mali-attacks-and-frances-agenda

Skocpol, Theda. 1977. "Wallerstein's World Capitalist System: A Theoretical and Historical Critique." American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 82. N. 5. 1075-1090

Stritzel, H. (2007). Towards a Theory of Securitization: Copenhagen and Beyond. European Journal of International Relations, 13(3), 357–383. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066107080128

Submit documents to WikiLeaks. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://wikileaks.org/clinton-emails/?q=Sarkozy+libya&mfrom=&mto=&title=¬itle&date_from=&date_to=&nofrom=¬o&count=50&sort=0

Taubman, W. [Wellesley C. R. D. (2017, April 25). Why did the Soviet Union Collapse? [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eKb87H2g6CM

Taylor, A. (2015, November 20). What Mali means to France. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/11/20/what-mali-means-to-france/

Taylor, P. (2019, April 17). France's double game in Libya. Retrieved April 28, 2020, from https://www.politico.eu/article/frances-double-game-in-libya-nato-un-khalifa-haftar/

Thakur, Ramesh. 2016. Review article: The Responsibility to Protect at 15.

Thomson Reuters Foundation. (2013, September 26). Mali Tuareg separatists suspend participation in peace proce. Retrieved from https://news.trust.org/item/20130927071806-0qx16/?source=dpagehead

Tillema, Herbert K. 1989. "Foreign Overt Military Intervention in the Nuclear Age." Journal of Peace Research 26(2): 179-195.

Tran, M. (2013, January 16). Mali: a guide to the conflict. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jan/16/mali-guide-to-the-conflict

Trochim W. M., & Donnelly J. P. (2007). Research methods knowledge base. (3rd ed.). Mason, OH: Thomson Custom Publishing.

UN Charter (full text). (1945, June 26). Retrieved from https://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/un-charter-full-text/

UN News. (2015, March 10). Deploring ongoing violence, UN rights expert urges Malian parties to work together towards lasting peace | UN News. Retrieved from https://news.un.org/en/story/2015/03/493062#.VQE-cPnF9Fw

Venturi, B. (2017). (Rep.). IstitutoAffariInternazionali (IAI). Retrieved April 27, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/resrep17523

Venturi, B. (2017). The EU and the Sahel: A Laboratory of Experimentation for the Security—Migration—Development Nexus. *IstitutoAffariInternazionali (IAI)*. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep17523?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

VanWynsberghe, R., & Khan, S. (2007). Redefining case study. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 6, 1-10. Retrieved from http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/6_2/vanwynsberghe.htm

# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)
Written by Sudarshan Pujari

Wallace, D. R. (1986). The untamed garden and other personal essays. Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press.

Wallerstein, Immanuel. 1974. The modern World System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century. New York: Academic Press.

WikiLeaks. (2016, March 16). Retrieved from https://wikileaks.org/clinton-emails/q=Sarkozy+libya&mfrom=&mto=&title=¬itle&date_from=&date_to=&nofrom=¬o&count=50&sort=0

Xie, J., Sreenivasan, S., Korniss, G., Zhang, W., Lim, C., & Szymanski, B. K. (2011). Social consensus through the influence of committed minorities. Physical Review E, 84(1). \https://doi.org/10.1103/physreve.84.011130

Yin, R. K. (2009). Case study research: design and methods. (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Zougris, K. (n.d.). An Application of World Systems Theory. A Theoretical and Empirical Inquiry for Spatial Inequalities at a County Level. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/7567225/An_Application_of_World_Systems_Theory._A_Theoretical_and_Empirical_Inquiry_for_Spatial_Inequalities_at_a_County_Level.

## Bibliography

Aynaou, R. (2015). (Rep.). NATO Defense College. Retrieved April 30, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/resrep10252

Andersson, R., and; Weigand, F. (2015). "Intervention at Risk: The Vicious Cycle of Distance and Danger in Mali and Afghanistan". *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 9(4), 519–541. doi: 10.1080/17502977.2015.1054655

Benedikter, R., and; Ouedraogo, I. (2018). "Saving West Africa from the Rise of Terrorism: Burkina Faso's 'Emergency Program for the Sahel' and the need for a Multidimensional Strategy". *Global Change, Peace and Security,* 31(1), 113–119. doi: 10.1080/14781158.2018.1449101

Boeke, S., and ; Tisseron, A. (2014). Malis Long Road Ahead. *The RUSI Journal*, 159(5), 32–40. doi: 10.1080/03071847.2014.969942

Butchard, P. M. (2019). Digest of state practice: 1 July – 31 December 2018.*Journal on the Use of Force and International Law*, 6(1), 113–170. doi: 10.1080/20531702.2019.1602368

Chafer, T. (2013). "The UK and France in West Africa: Toward Convergence?" *African Security,* 6(3-4), 234–256. doi: 10.1080/19392206.2013.853583

Charbonneau, B. (2017). "Intervention in Mali: building peace between peacekeeping and counterterrorism".*Journal of Contemporary African Studies,* 35(4), 415–431. doi: 10.1080/02589001.2017.1363383

Charbonneau, B. (2019). "Intervention as counter-insurgency politics". *Conflict, Security and Development,* 19(3), 309–314. doi: 10.1080/14678802.2019.1608017

Craven-Matthews, C., and; Englebert, P. (2018). A Potemkin state in the Sahel? The empirical and the fictional in Malian state reconstruction. African Security, 11(1), 1–31. doi 10.1080/19392206.2017.1419634

Diallo, O. A. (2017). "Ethnic Clashes, Jihad, and Insecurity in Central Mali". *Peace Review,* 29(3),299–306. doi: 10.1080/10402659.2017.1344529

Griffin, C. (2016). "Operation Barkhane and Boko Haram: French Counterterrorism and Military Cooperation in the Sahel". *Small Wars and Insurgencies,* 27(5), 896–913. doi: 10.1080/09592318.2016.1208283

# French Intervention in West Africa: Interests and Strategies (2013–2020)
Written by Sudarshan Pujari

Harmon, S. (2015). "Securitization Initiatives in the Sahara-Sahel Region in the Twenty-first Century". *African Security*, 8(4), 227–248. doi: 10.1080/19392206.2015.1100503

Hellmuth, D. (2015). "Countering Jihadi Terrorists and Radicals the French Way". *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 38(12), 979–997. doi: 10.1080/1057610x.2015.1076277

Karlsrud, J. (2017). "Towards UN counter-terrorism operations?" *Third World Quarterly,* 38(6), 1215–1231. doi: 10.1080/01436597.2016.1268907

Leonard, D. K. (2008). The US, France and military roles in the African 'gap.' *Review of International Political Economy,* 15(2), 314–331. doi: 10.1080/09692290701869803

Neiberg, M. S. (2017). "No More Elsewhere": France Faces the New Wave of Terrorism. *The Washington Quarterly*, 40(1), 21–38. doi: 10.1080/0163660x.2017.1302736

Olsen, G. R. (2018). "Transatlantic cooperation on terrorism and Islamist radicalisation in Africa: the Franco-American axis". *European Security,* 27(1), 41–57. doi: 10.1080/09662839.2017.1420059

Powell, N. K. (2016). "Battling Instability? The Recurring Logic of French Military Interventions in Africa". *African Security,* 10(1), 47–72. doi: 10.1080/19392206.2016.1270141

Pulwer, R. (2017). Christopher S. Chivvis: "The French War on Al Qa'ida in Africa". *Democracy and Security,* 13(1), 96–97. doi: 10.1080/17419166.2016.1271096

Santo, E. D., and; Heide, E. J. V. D. (2018). "Escalating Complexity in Regional Conflicts: Connecting Geopolitics to Individual Pathways to Terrorism in Mali". *African Security,* 11(3), 274–291. doi: 10.1080/19392206.2018.1505232

Sun, D., and; Zoubir, Y. (2011). Sentry Box in the Backyard: Analysis of French Military Bases in Africa *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies* (in Asia), 5(3), 82–104. doi: 10.1080/19370679.2011.12023186

Tardy, T. (2016). France: the unlikely return to UN peacekeeping. *International Peacekeeping,* 23(5), 610–629. doi: 10.1080/13533312.2016.1235091

Taylor, I. (2019). "France à fric: The CFA zone in Africa and neocolonialism" *Third World Quarterly,* 40(6), 1064–1088. doi: 10.1080/01436597.2019.1585183

Wing, S. D. (2016). French intervention in Mali: strategic alliances, long-term regional presence? Small Wars and Insurgencies, 27(1), 59–80. doi: 10.1080/09592318.2016.1123433

Wyss, M. (2017). France and the economic community of West African states: peacekeeping partnership in theory and practice. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies,* 35(4), 487 505. doi: 10.1080/02589001.2017.1348600

Yates, D. A. (2018). Paradoxes of Predation in Francophone Africa. *International Journal of Political Economy*, 47(2), 130–150. doi: 10.1080/08911916.2018.1497505

**Notes**

[1]17-300-1-02-0159, Semester VI.

[2]The Head of the Department.

[3] The literal meaning of the French phrase is "by the card," although it's used in both languages to mean "according to the menu." The opposite of a la carte is a table d'hôte, or "meal served at a fixed price."

[4] Daddy's Africa.

[5] Case, justification or occasion of War

*Written at: St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Kolkata*
*Written for: Prof. Dr. Farhat Bano*
*Date written: March 2020*