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Robust Containment:

French and US Security Policies in Africa

Jean-Yves HAINE

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Author

Jean-Yves Haine was Visiting Professor at Trinity College Dublin and at the University of Toronto. He was a Research Fellow in the Government Department at Harvard University, Senior Research Fellow at the European Union Institute for Security Studies, European Security Fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London, and Senior Research Fellow at Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. He was also a Visiting Fellow at the Nobel Institute in Oslo.

Among his recent publications, "The European Crisis of Liberal Internationalism" (*International Journal*, Spring 2009), received the Prix Marcel Cadieux 2010 and his book "*Les États-Unis ont-ils besoin d'alliés? [Does the United States need Allies?]* (Paris, Payot, 2004), received the Prix France-Amérique in 2004.

He studied European and Atlantic security and international strategic issues, as well as the use of force. His last article "A New Gaullist Moment?" was published in *International Affairs*, Vol. 91, No. 5, September 2015, p. 991-1008.

Executive Summary

Although the United States is less active in Africa than France, their security policies on the continent often have shared objectives and are sometimes pursued jointly. While the urgency of humanitarian crises has been at the centre of foreign interventions for a long time, now it tends to give way to the terrorist threat. The emergence and expansion of terrorist groups with a complex character, which are sometimes rivals of each other and claiming to follow radical Islam, has increased significantly in recent decades and now dominates military operations by France and the United States in Africa.

Primarily, it is the internationalisation of terrorist activities which has led France to build its capacities in Africa and to assume the leadership role in the fight against terrorism on the continent. Despite attempts at Europeanisation, its security policy in Africa remains above all national; however co-operation with other military powers ready to commit is very positive, even if France is assuming a large part of the military effort made.

While French interests are long-standing and represent a significant part of the country's power and image on the international stage, the United States' strategic interest is however much more recent. Indeed, due to the absence of a direct security threat, the lack of geographical proximity, and military involvement in other international areas, Africa has never been uppermost among the United States' strategic priorities. The increasing instability, and more specifically the attack on the US consulate in Benghazi in September 2012, has necessarily resulted in greater involvement in African affairs by the Pentagon. Nevertheless, the Obama method consists first and foremost in supporting partners and making the United States' involvement as discreet as possible.

Paris positively welcomes the United States' support, even if their respective efforts are asymmetrical. In their strategy of robust containment, both powers aim to neutralise the leaders and members of terrorist movements by special forces in specific operations. However, experiences in Africa have demonstrated the limitations of this practice. Indeed, military operations may provide short-term results, but they cannot replace the search for long-term political solutions.

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Introduction

The US and French security policies are based around the over-riding principle of fighting against the terrorist threat. This imposes an often black-and-white logic on local and regional realities, which are often much more complex, where actors with different agendas also try to take advantage of the opportunities sometimes blindly offered to them. To this shared perception of the threat in Africa can be added, a similar approach to the terrorist issue, sometimes to the detriment of other issues, such as state corruption, institutional weakness or ethnic rivalries. In the United States, out of choice, and in France, out of necessity, military crisis management has emerged as the preferred method of operation. Certainly, the United States is less active in the field than France is, but tracking down these terrorist leaders and harassing these movements are often shared objectives and are sometimes pursued jointly. From Mali to Somalia or from Cameroon to the Central African Republic, military interventions have a significant impact in the field both in economic, security and humanitarian terms, but the complexity of the radical Islamic movement (AQIM, Daesh, and Boko Haram among others) makes some advances difficult to maintain in the long term at sustainable costs.

Besides a comparable definition of the threat and adopting similar responses, co-operation between Paris and Washington is reflected at the same time by a change in the respective positions of France and the United States within the international system. President Obama has clearly modified his predecessor's strategic priorities: he has favoured domestic growth; ended the expensive commitments in Iraq, and to a lesser extent in Afghanistan; has rebalanced the US strategic posture[1]; redefined its vital strategic interests; and raised the level of potential intervention by its troops. In "defensive realism", he has favoured diplomacy, particularly with Iran, and refocused the fight against terrorism against identified enemies. Militarily, his course of action is characterised by looking for and supporting allies, by *ad hoc* involvement of US military technology (drones, air support, intelligence satellites), and failing that, selective,

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1. In realist jargon, it is referred to as "off-shore balancing." See among others, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, "Security Seeking under Anarchy: Defensive Realism Revisited", *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 3, Winter 2000/2001, p. 128-161.

prudent and detailed engagement by despatching troops and special forces in the context of a limited mission for a set period. These fundamental strategic choices have had an impact on the place and modalities of the US security policy in Africa, which however does not represent a vital strategic interest for Washington.

On the other hand, France has always maintained close economic, cultural and strategic relations with a number of countries in Africa. President Hollande was forced to fulfil a role of "African policeman", firstly because the prospect of a terrorist rear base in Mali and the Sahel was unacceptable, and then because France found itself almost alone in pursuing this objective. Since 2009, the Europeanisation of its security policy on the one hand, and its objectives on the African continent on the other, have been stalled by Brussels. Berlin has not expressed an intention to follow Paris in this field, while London intends to take a strategic pause after an expensive decade in Iraq and Afghanistan[2]. Paris has been obliged to reassess the value of African capacity-building programmes when it is a question of large-scale operations. Only France has the means and above all the strategic culture required[3]. Therefore, Washington found an ally of choice in Paris, capable of conducting dangerous operations and of bearing the costs and financial and human risks of them. De facto partners, the time of competition seems to be over at least for the time being.

Focusing on the respective security policies and the terrorist movement which underpins them, does not necessarily mean ignoring the other components of the African economic and humanitarian landscape. Between 2000 and 2011, Africa experienced real economic progress with a growth of 5 % per year on average. However, while Africa is richer, Africans are less so: currently in sub-Saharan Africa, nearly 47 % of the population still lives in extreme poverty[4]. For 2015 alone, the fall in the price of raw materials, the drought in southern Africa, continuing political instability in many countries, the risks of civil wars, as well as health emergencies, population pressure and religious antagonism, have seriously affected the economies of many countries in Africa. All these elements, separate or combined, may cause humanitarian emergencies and troops to be despatched on the ground: Operation

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2. The attacks of 13 November in Paris have somewhat altered Berlin's position.

3. This does not prevent US assistance or Chadian contribution. Bruno Tertrais, "Leading on the Cheap? French Security Policy in Austerity", *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 3, Summer 2013, p. 47-61.

4. According to the UN definition, the threshold for extreme poverty is $ 1.25 /day. See The United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015*, New York, 2015, p. 15, available at: <www.un.org>.

Sangaris launched in December 2013 sought to stabilise the Central African Republic. The US intervention in Liberia was aimed at fighting the spread of the Ebola virus[5]. But, it must be recognised that for western leaders, the urgency of humanitarian crises now tends to give way to terrorist threats.

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5. More than 3 000 US soldiers from the 101st Airborne were deployed in Liberia and Senegal for 6 months at a cost of around one billion dollars. Eilperin Juliet, "U.S. May Spend Up to $1 Billion Fighting Ebola, Administration Says", *The Washington Post*, 16 September 2014.

Changes in the African strategic landscape

Since the start of the century, the African strategic landscape has changed radically, but it still also remains contrasted. Firstly, it is characterised by real economic growth and an improvement in the main human development indices: life expectancy has increased by more than 6 years, while chronic malnutrition in children has decreased by 5 % and school attendance rates are increasing even if they still remain low. The emergence of China as a partner, consumer, and major investor in African companies and resources, considerably affects the economy of countries like Nigeria or Angola[6]. However, the steady increases in growth, increases in private investments and improvement in competitiveness have failed to significantly improve living conditions for the large majority of the population. The incomplete demographic transition remains a major structural disadvantage[7], while the Chinese slow-down represents a significant economic risk[8].

On the other hand, Africa is experiencing serious disadvantages which continue to destabilise it: weakness of its state institutions, endemic corruption and predation, failure and lack of effective governance, within and between states, ongoing simmering conflicts or open civil wars. In this breeding ground of instability, non-state actors – mafia networks, insurgent groups, private militias, self-defence militia, "road blockers" and terrorist networks – are spreading. Some of them claim to follow Al-Qaeda, others are inspired by it, but all compromise the integrity of the state itself. In view of the weakness of states, the security of Africans remains a burden largely borne by foreign powers, even if progress in terms of African capabilities under the auspices of the African Union has been real. This failure affects states of different development levels and

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6. According to an analyst, "If Africa once again becomes associated with lucrative opportunities, China deserves a substantial amount of the credit." *in* Harry Verhoeven, "Is Beijing's Non-Interference Policy History? How Africa is Changing China", *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 2, Summer 2014, p. 55-70.
7. The increase in poverty due to the population explosion affects more than 100 million additional people compared to 1990. Kathleen Beegle, Luc Christiaensen, Andrew Dabalen and Isis Gaddis, *Poverty in a Rising Africa: Africa Poverty Report*. World Bank, Washington D. C., 2016.
8. Matthew Davies, "Africa's Economic Prospects in 2016: Looking for Silver Linings", *BBC*, 8 January 2016.

sizes across all or a part of their territory. It may affect outlying areas beyond the central government's control – the Sahel and the Great Lakes – but also extend beyond its borders. It may cause the diversion of domestic production to the benefit of individual interests and even compromise the state's institutions. The lack of performance of, or corruption in performing governmental tasks, causes a spread in non-state groups and actors who usually have no other choice than to take charge of their security. The dividing line, both conceptually as well as functionally, is therefore not always simple between groups of insurgents and government actors: in some cases, these groups perform essential tasks related to sovereignty – protection, taxation, and redistribution – while the conduct of some government officials is closer to mafia behaviour (predation, diversion and extortion)[9]. The first are not necessarily criminals and the second sometimes can be.

State failures in Africa are not new. Per se, they do not necessarily result in intervention by foreign powers. At least, three factors may generate this involvement. Firstly, the international community may intervene to address humanitarian disasters created by these state failures. Since the tragedy of Rwanda and the Kosovo crisis, where for the first time, a domestic situation became an international issue falling under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter; the concept of sovereignty has been adapted to encompass responsibilities and duties, particularly vis-à-vis protecting the population which it rules over[10]. In the event of manifest failures by a government, or through inability, or through deliberate intention, the international community may assume a Responsibility to protect (R2P) to quell massive violations of human rights, to prevent potential ethnic cleansing, or to avoid genocides. The development of this new norm has been difficult: even if its principle is recognised, its practical implementation remains contested.

Subsequently, state failures can create situations which present a risk and a threat for the security of its foreign actors. It is not only a question of the inevitable effects of instability – lack of hygiene, population displacement, mass emigration[11] – but also exploitation by terrorist groups and movements of the institutional vacuum left by the failing governments. The control of territories,

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9. Christopher Clapham, "Degrees of Statehood", *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 2, April 1998, p 143-157. Also see Robert H. Bates, *When Things Fell Apart: State Failure in Late-Century Africa*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008.

10. The most well-known manifesto is Kofi Annan's "Two Concepts of Sovereignty", *The Economist*, 18 September 1999. Thinking about the concept of sovereignty was started by Francis Deng, *Sovereignty as Responsibility: Conflict Management in Africa*, Washington D.C., Brookings Institution, 1996.

11. For the Horn of Africa, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees estimates the number of displaced people and refugees at nearly 2 million. Somalia alone has seen a migration wave of 1 105 618, according to an estimate from June 2015, data available at: <www.unhcr.org/pages/49e45a846.html>.

populations, and resources provides them with an advantage and a strategic reserve; the recruitment and training of young jihadist soldiers and the acquisition or theft of weapons give them the means to extend their fight. To this end, the terrorists would be stronger as the state is weak. Since the start of the 1990s, firstly in Algeria, then in Tanzania and in Kenya, and gradually throughout the Horn of Africa and the Sahel, Islamist movements have succeeded and expanded. It took the attacks in France by the Algerian GIA (Armed Islamic Group), and especially on September 11, 2001, for the idea of a failed state to become an international security issue[12]. This link between terrorist threat and state failures became a priority among western intelligence apparatuses. The Afghan situation seemed to confirm this correlation, so the military doctrine of intervention turned to situations of counter-insurgency and anarchy, and the planning of hybrid combat missions and stabilisation and reconstruction operations in the state. However, establishing a close link between terrorism and failing states is not always obvious. For some people, this relationship is too complex and tenuous to enable a true correlation to be made, and for others, this relationship is even counter-intuitive[13]. The attacks of September 11, 2001 against New York were prepared in Hamburg, and those of 13 November 2015 against Paris in Brussels.

Finally, the third element, intervention by the international community may prove to be necessary, precisely because at regional level the military resources and the will to use them are lacking. Since the middle of the 1990s, efforts have materialised in this regard, particularly with the creation of the French *Recamp* programme presented during the Franco-African summit at the Louvre in 1998. The objectives were multiple. It was a question of building capacity in the African countries to assume roles in peacekeeping and humanitarian interventions, and hence to provide African solutions to African problems. Indeed, one of the recurring problems and major criticisms had focused on the implicit neo-colonialism behind foreign

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12. See for example: Robert I. Rotberg, "Failed States in a World of Terror", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 4, July-August 2002, p. 127-140; Susan E. Rice, "The New National Security Strategy: Focus on Failed States", *Brookings Policy Brief*, No. 116, February 2003; and Edward Newman, "Failed States and International Order: Constructing a Post-Westphalian World", *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 30, No. 3, December 2009, p. 421-433.
13. As an analyst observed: "In other words, weak and failing states can provide useful assets to transnational terrorists, but they may be les [*sic*: less] central to their operations than widely believed.", *in* Stewart Patrick, "Weak States and Global Threats: Fact or Fiction?", *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 2, Spring 2006, p. 27-53. See also: Edward Newman, "Weak States, State Failure, and Terrorism", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 19, No. 4, Winter 2007, p. 463-488; James A. Piazza, "Incubators of Terror: Do Failed and Failing States Promote Transnational Terrorism?", *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 3, September 2008, p. 469-488. According to an expert on Somalia: "Terrorist networks, like mafias, appear to flourish where states are governed badly, rather than not at all.", *in* Ken Menkhaus, "Somalia: State Collapse and the Threat of Terrorism", IISS, *Adelphi Paper*, No. 364, 2004, p. 71-75.

interventions, particularly those undertaken by former colonial powers. The good humanitarian intentions and stated neutrality failed to convince the various protagonists in the field. This risk was reduced by helping with equipment, instruction, and training of African forces. In addition, several foreign actors suffered losses, sometimes relatively significant ones, in performing humanitarian, peacekeeping or peacemaking missions. African capacity-building allowed them to avoid such incidents. However, the difficulty remains of quickly generating sufficient forces to deal with humanitarian or security emergencies. Since 2002, the African Union wanted to establish a "peace and security architecture", including the creation of stand-by forces within various regional bodies, each one totalling 6 500 men, soldiers, policemen, and civilian personnel to cover all risks related to humanitarian interventions[14]. The African forces contribute significantly to UN peacekeeping missions, but their actual capability to wage war remains limited and therefore intervention by foreign forces is necessary to counter and destroy the terrorist threat[15].

Therefore whether for humanitarian reasons or for security requirements, the two are not diametrically opposed, state failure in Africa has become an international security issue, a "public threat" that must be contained[16]. Economic crises, failures in governance, ethnic and sectarian violence are in themselves serious grounds for concern, but ultimately, it is the prospect of a terrorist presence or terrorist activity which warrants interventions by foreign powers such as France or the United States. Before turning to the reasons which guide Paris or Washington's choices, it is important to specify the nature and extent of the terrorist threat in Africa.

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14. As two experts on the African forces emphasised: "Unlike the UN, the AU has therefore developed a different peacekeeping doctrine; instead of waiting for a peace to keep, the AU views peacekeeping as an opportunity to establish peace before keeping it.", *in* Arthur Boutellis and Paul D. Williams, *Peace Operations, the African Union and the United Nations: Toward More Effective Partnerships,* New York, International Peace Institute, April 2013, p. 8-9.
15. Tim Murithi, "The African Union and the African Peace and Security Architecture: past, present and future", *Africa Insight*, Vol. 42, No. 3, December 2012, p. 42-52; Alex Vines, "A Decade of African Peace and Security Architecture", *International Affairs* Vol. 89, No. 1, January 2013, p. 89-109.
16. See James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Neo-trusteeship and the Problem of Weak States", *International Security*, Vol. 28, No. 4, Spring 2004, p. 6.

The terrorist threats in Africa

Assertions by terrorist groups claiming to follow radical Islam are relatively long-standing in Africa, but they have now acquired both a permanent, multi-faceted and dangerous character. The emergence of the first wave of the Islamic movement occurred in 1992, with the cancellation of elections by the Algerian government which had confirmed victory to the Islamic Salvation Front. The civil war between the military on the one hand and the Armed Islamic Group on the other resulted in more than 100 000 victims[17]. The extreme violence which characterised this conflict was exported outside the region, with the first wave of terrorist attacks on French soil, which caused several dozen deaths. Losing ground significantly, the GIA began its transformation, then becoming the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) in 1998, and declaring its allegiance to Al-Qaeda in 2007 under the name of AQIM (Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb). This affiliation marked an internationalisation of its activities with an intention of striking western targets and intensifying attacks against the weak links in the region, Mauritania, Mali and Niger. AQIM specialised in the – often highly profitable – kidnapping of western nationals (especially French), assassinations of tourists, and extensive arms and drugs trafficking. The resources generated, estimated at between $ 50 - 65 million, served, among other things, to organise the fight in the more unstable countries, particularly in Mali where an alliance of circumstances was made with the Tuareg tribes in rebellion against Bamako, before ousting them from the conquered areas. The North of the country came under the control of several groups: The predominantly Arab AQIM – Algerian, Mauritanian, and Malian Arabs –; the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), a splinter movement from AQIM which joined the Signatories in Blood or "Mokhtar Belmokhtar's group" in 2013 to form Al-Mourabitoun; and Ansar Eddine, a group established in 2012 which is exclusively Tuareg[18]. Besides Mali, AQIM took advantage of

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17. See Benjamin Stora on this extreme violence, "Ce que dévoile une guerre. Algérie, 1997", *Politique étrangère*, vol. 62, No. 4, Winter 1997/1998, p. 487-497; Stathis N. Kalyvas, "Wanton And Senseless? The Logic of Massacres in Algeria", *Rationality and Society*, Vol. 11, No. 3, August 1999, p. 243-285; and Séverine Labat and Michèle Laske, *Les Islamistes algériens: entre les urnes et le maquis*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1995.
18. See Tobias Koepf, "France and the Fight against Terrorism in the Sahel – The History of a Difficult Leadership Role", *Note de l'Ifri*, June 2013, p. 19-20. See Pham J. Peter on the extent of AQIM, "Foreign Influences and Shifting Horizons: The

the destabilisation in Libya to extend its networks and influence in the Sahel, but as discussed later, it may now face competition from Islamic State.

A second radical movement has emerged in West Africa since 1998, when fighters claiming to follow Al-Qaeda struck US interests in Tanzania and Kenya. In the wake of September 11, the Horn of Africa was considered as a hotbed of terrorism, in particular Somalia and Kenya[19]. But there as well, it would seem that Al-Qaeda's initial activities were mainly directed towards lucrative operations, trafficking, and kidnapping. The majority of the Somali jihadists actually only had national ambitions: support for the Islamic courts which gave them access to significant resources, training camps and territories in the South. The US campaign against these Islamic courts which supported the Ethiopian invasion, turned Al-Shabaab into an Islamic resistance movement against the foreign invader[20]. This guaranteed it widespread support in the population and a series of military successes, including the capture of the port of Kismaayo. The establishment of a transition government in 2009; the ongoing presence of Amisom under the auspices of the African Union, funded by Great Britain and the United States; and the Kenyan invasion in 2011 have been equally occasions when Al-Shabaab has reinvented itself; remobilised itself; expanded its base and finances; extended its influence; and conducted attacks against the foreigner– that of Westgate Mall in Nairobi which resulted in 67 deaths in September 2013[21] – up to integrating, at least formally, in Al-Qaeda's fold. Weakened in recent years, the group continues to conduct an asymmetrical war against Amisom contingents considered as occupation forces.

A third, more recent area has been occupied by the group Boko Haram, especially rife in Nigeria and which has now extended its influence into Chad, Cameroon and Niger. Boko Haram has its origins in the Salafist movement, Izalah, whose objective was the spread of sharia and opposition to any form of western

Ongoing Evolution of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb", *Orbis*, Vol. 55, No. 2, Spring 2011, p. 240-254.

19. Since 2002, a combined group (*Combined Joint Task Force–Horn of Africa*) of 2 000 US soldiers has been stationed in Djibouti. For some people, "Al Qaeda has used the region less to foment terrorism than to protect and expand its finances, a challenge for the organization since the U.S. campaign against it went into high gear after September 11.", *in* Princeton N. Lyman and J. Stephen Morrison, "The Terrorist Threat in Africa", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 1, January/February 2004, p. 83.

20. See Roland Marchal on this point, "The Rise of a Jihadi Movement in a Country at War: Harakat Al-Shabaab Al Mujaheddin in Somalia", *SciencesPo/CERI*, March 2011, p. 16.

21. Al-Shabaab in its claim for the attack emphasised that it was retribution for the 2011 invasion and that the shopping centre belonged to Israelis. See International Crisis Group, "Kenya: Al-Shabaab: Closer to Home", *Africa Briefing*, No. 102, 25 September 2014, p. 4.

values threatening traditional Islam. The founder of the movement, Mohammed Yusuf, who was killed in clashes with the police in July 2009, pursued the ideal of a Nigeria purified of foreign influences, a long-standing ambition expressed by religious leaders since the 19th century[22]. In its current incarnation, this Islamic militancy is also planning to join the AQIM movement, and participate in the fight in Mali, Cameroon, and Somalia[23]. Despite its regional ambitions, the group's members are mainly Kanuri from the north-eastern region of the country. Firstly, solely confined to the Nigerian theatre of operations, now the group is more like an insurrection whose demands go beyond the simple religious dimension in a region, the North of the country, which has experienced sectarian and ethnic violence of old, but also to problems related to the socio-economic conditions and corruption of the central government[24]. The latter has very quickly demonstrated its shortcomings in the fight against Boko Haram, particularly after the kidnapping of several hundred young schoolgirls.

The loose conglomeration of terrorist groups claiming to follow radical Islam is therefore particularly broad. Firstly, there are the affiliated groups, which have espoused Al-Qaeda's ideology, pledging allegiance to its central leadership and fighting in its name: Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and Al-Shabaab belong to this category. These groups have a very strong local base and remain independent while claiming to follow Al-Qaeda. Then, there are followers or associates who share all or some of Al-Qaeda's ideology and use it to engage in terrorism. MUJAO and Mokhtar Belmokhtar's group Al-Mourabitoun, which are very active in Mali, belong to this category. Relations between the centre and these peripheral groups are not always easy and opposition arises. Finally, there are allied groups, which according to their interests, strengths, and weaknesses, frequently ally with Al-Qaeda's activities or are inspired by them. Such

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22. Boko Haram may be translated by "Western education forbidden." The objective is to return to an ancestral and Islamic Nigeria. As its leader stated: "Our land was an Islamic state before the colonial masters turned it to a kafir (infidel) land. The current system is contrary to true Islamic reliefs.", *in* Daniel E. Agbiboa, "Peace at Daggers Drawn? Boko Haram and the State of Emergency in Nigeria", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 2014, p. 55.
23. Since the announcement of Mohamed Yusuf's death, AQIM stated: "We are ready to train your people in weapons and give you whatever support we can in men, arms and munitions to enable you to defend our people in Nigeria.", *in* John Azumah, "Boko Haram in Retrospect", *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations*, Vol. 26, No. 1, p. 41. See also Jérôme Pigné, *Islamic Extremism in the Sahel: Why Boko Haram's Expansion Is Critical for the Region*, Institut Thomas More, July 2013.
24. Abeeb Olufemi Salaam, "Boko Haram: Beyond Religious Fanaticism", *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*, Vol. 7, No. 2, October 2012, p. 147-162.

as Boko Haram in Nigeria, whose agendas and demands remain broadly national[25].

Without tracing Al-Qaeda's origins and developments, it should however be recalled that strategically, the group's stated objective is to establish a caliphate in increasingly extensive territories. Hence, its current leader, Ayman Al-Zawahiri, specified the necessary steps to achieve this in 2003. After the "initial awakening", on September 11, the declaration of the caliphate and general mobilisation of troops scheduled between 2013-2016, confrontation and total war against the non-believers up to 2020 were mentioned, and then the final victory and establishment of a global caliphate[26]. This propaganda is sufficiently general to be used and to fit into local conflicts. It gives meaning to the deprived and victims of injustice, a feeling of solidarity, and a theological justification for the terrorist operations and suicide missions, which are the usual methods of operation for asymmetrical war.[27]

Clearly, Al-Qaeda's pyramid structure has changed and relations between Al-Qaeda Central and the peripheral groups are sometimes tense, with ambition and personal rivalries playing their role[28]. Thus, the Algerian jihadist chief, Mokhtar Belmokhtar, who founded his own group Al-Mourabitoun, was responsible for the attacks against the oil installations at In Amenas in southern Algeria in January 2013; those against the Radisson Blu hotel at Bamako in December 2015; and recently against the Splendid Hotel in Ougadougou in January 2016. He seems to act by response and positioning in relation to other movements than by strategic logic[29]. Hence, the rivalry within the loose conglomeration of Al-Qaeda may drive groups to attract as much attention as possible, and to commit increasingly spectacular and deadly acts.

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25. Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, "Du Nigeria au Maghreb: le chaînon manquant entre Boko Haram et Al-Qaïda", *Maghreb-Machrek*, No. 222, 2014/4, p. 109-122. Boko Haram moved closer to Daesh in March 2015.
26. Martin Rudner, "Al Qaeda's Twenty-Year Strategic Plan: The Current Phase of Global Terror", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 36, No. 12, p. 953-980, December 2013, p. 959.
27. Olivier Roy, *L'Islam mondialisé*, Paris, Le Seuil, 2004. See Assaf Moghadam for the suicide attacks, "Motives for Martyrdom: Al-Qaida, Salafi Jihad, and the Spread of Suicide Attacks", *International Security*, Vol. 33, No. 3, Winter 2008/2009, p. 46-78; Robert Pape, *Dying to Win, The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism,* New York, Random House, 2005; Daniel Byman, "Fighting Salafi-Jihadist Insurgencies: How Much Does Religion Really Matter?", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 36, No. 5, 2013, p. 353-371.
28. Al-Qaeda is similar to a "flexible hierarchy" where the chains of command are not obvious. See Leah Farrall, "How Al Qaeda Works", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 90, No. 2, March-April 2011, p. 133.
29. Jean-Paul Rouiller, Director of the Geneva Center for Training and Analysis of Terrorism, compares this rivalry to a domestic row between spouses, each one wanting to have the last word: "They accused him of not doing something. His response was: 'I'll show you what I can do'.", *in* Rukmini Callimachi, "Rise of Al-Qaida Sahara terrorist", *Associated Press*, 29 May 2013.

The emergence of Islamic State in the Middle East undeniably adds a new dimension to this loose terrorist conglomeration. It has one major difference compared to Al-Qaeda: it has made rapid progress and directly initiated the foundation of the caliphate. If Al-Qaeda still represents the ideological foundation for global jihad, Daesh is now the strong and advanced arm in this fight. Moreover, the control of its territory in Syria and Iraq gives it a distinct strategic position. IS is a sort of proto-state with its taxes, communication lines, military capabilities and its own army estimated at 30 000 soldiers. Al-Qaeda has none of this. As Ashraf Ghani, the Afghan President summed it up, "If Al-Qaeda is Windows 1.0, then Daesh is Windows 7.0[30]". However, the influence of IS on the Islamist movement in Africa is unclear. On the one hand, this rivalry may encourage one-upmanship between the two groups. The recent, particularly bloody attacks launched by Islamic State, ranging from Istanbul to Jakarta via Paris, may be involved in this ideological battle[31]. On the other hand, rivalry with Daesh could signify greater co-operation between groups active in North Africa and the Sahel, while the western services are focusing on Syria and Iraq[32]. Either way, the terrorist risk is higher and more complex.

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30. Cited by Eric Schmitt and David E. Sanger, "As U.S. Focuses on ISIS and the Taliban, Al Qaeda Re-emerges", *The New York Times*, 29 December 2015. Also see Audrey Kurth Cronin, "ISIS Is Not a Terrorist Group: Why Counterterrorism Won't Stop the Latest Jihadist Thread", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 94, No. 2, March-April 2015, p. 87-98.

31. Peter Neumann calls this, "the propaganda of the deed, a kind of violence as performance that was also used by 19th century anarchists. The goal is "to inspire overreaction, inspiration and retaliation, to provoke violence from governments that radicalizes more people and deepens the pool of recruits." Cited by Anne Barnard and Neil Macfarquhar, "Paris and Mali Attacks Expose Lethal Qaeda-ISIS Rivalry", *The New York Times,* 20 November 2015. Furthermore, ISIS manages over 70 000 Twitter and Facebook accounts, nearly 90 000 text messages per day with hundreds of thousands of followers.

32. According to General Rodriguez, the Head of Africom, "Terrorists with allegiances to multiple groups are expanding their collaboration in recruitment, financing, training and operations, both within Africa and transregionally.", *in* Carlotta Gall, "Jihadists Deepen Collaboration in North Africa", *The New York Times*, 1 January 2016.

The French presence reasserted

French interests in Africa are long-standing and represent a significant part of France's power and image in the world. Diplomatically, it is essential that a certain number of African countries remain partners of France and vice versa, both for its influence in the UN, as for its cultural influence throughout French-speaking countries, and for its own security requirements. Militarily, Africa remains the continent where France can conspicuously assert its power, but the nature of the challenges, the changing threat, and the size of the theatres of operation show both the weakness of its methods, and the increasing mismatch between its strategic objectives and its military capabilities[33]. As an official summed up, "Without Africa, France is a country of medium powerlessness. Any withdrawal from Africa would be a defeat[34]." The influence has a cost and security has a price. Economically, Africa remains a major supplier of some raw materials, including uranium from Niger and oil in the Gulf of Guinea, but it only accounts for almost 3 % of French exports. In the 14 countries which use the CFA franc, French companies are competing almost equally with China for a market share of around 17 %, while more than 40 % of French bilateral assistance is allocated to sub-Saharan Africa[35]. Relations are therefore more horizontal and interdependent than is suggested by the colonial heritage.

Since independence in the 1960s, each presidency has wanted more or less to reform, modernise, and smooth the relations that Paris has with its former African colonies, brought together under the pejorative term "Françafrique". President Sarkozy announced the reduction of the French military presence, but at the same time he acknowledged the limitations of the Europeanisation of the French security policy in Africa initiated by his predecessor. Since 1999, under the *leadership* of London and Paris, the Common Defence and Security Policy (CDSP) indeed had the stated objective of conducting

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33. French troops in Africa number around 9 000 men, including ongoing operations, i.e. a significant part of the ground forces of the two combined brigades of 15 000 men as specified by the White Paper.
34. Cited by Aline Leboeuf and Hélène Quénot-Suarez, "La politique africaine de la France sous François Hollande: renouvellement et impensé stratégique", *Les Études de l'Ifri*, Paris, Ifri, 2014, p. 48.
35. However public development assistance, which should reach 0.7 % of its GDP, only amounts to 0.36 % today. France is only tenth in Europe. Figures cited by Christophe Boisbouvier, *Hollande l'Africain*, Paris, La Découverte, 2014, p. 270.

humanitarian operations and low-intensity military peacekeeping missions, particularly in the African theatre of operations. The first stage of this new "entente cordiale" was demonstrated in Operation Artemis in 2003, where French, but also Swedish troops, under the European flag, restored order and stability in Ituri in the East of the DRC to allow UN peacekeeping forces to continue their mission. President Chirac wanted firstly to show the Americans and then the Europeans that Europe had the capability to act independently to defend its interests and ideals[36]. But the hesitation of France's European partners, as well as their reluctance to risk their soldier's lives without specific strategic interests than in their engagement in theatres of operation deemed priorities by NATO, such as Afghanistan, rapidly rendered the CDSP meaningless and irrelevant for France. For many Europeans, France was trying to coerce them in missions which only protected Paris' interests[37]. The EUFOR mission in Chad in 2008 desired and supported by Foreign Minister Kouchner for humanitarian reasons in Darfur also spelled the end of French hopes in this matter[38]. Moreover, French and European efforts to support African military capabilities seemed to mark their limit.

Therefore, France was relatively alone at a time when security imperatives were forced on a President who nevertheless had other priorities: saving the Chadian regime, special operations in Niger and Mali to try to save hostages, and in Côte d'Ivoire to ensure a transition of power. Above all, the President initiated a military intervention in Libya with Great Britain and the United States in the name of humanitarian duty that conferred the responsibility to protect, which at least implicitly was translated into UN Security Council Resolution 1973 in March 2011. Although this operation led to a regime change (indeed how can a crime against humanity be condemned without punishing the criminal), the instability which followed destabilised the region and continues to provide, as we have seen, both a refuge and an area of competition for different jihadist factions.

Like all his predecessors, President Hollande said that the time of "Françafrique", the adjective used to describe the relationship

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36. See Tony Chafer and Gordon Cumming on this aspect of the CDSP, "Beyond Fashoda: Anglo-French security cooperation", *International Affairs,* Vol. 86, No. 5, September 2010, p. 1129-1147; Catherine Gegout, "Causes and Consequences of the EU's Military Intervention in the Democratic Republic of Congo: A Realist Explanation", *European Foreign Affairs Review*, Vol. 10, No. 3, September 2005, p. 427-443.
37. As a French diplomat acknowledged: "We forced the hand of our fellow Europeans. The countries which took part feel they were manipulated. That feeling continues to traumatize our European partners even now.", *in* Gordon Cumming, "Nicolas Sarkozy's Africa Policy: Change, Continuity or Confusion?", *French Politics*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2011, p. 31.
38. See Jean-Yves Haine, "The Failure of European Strategic Culture: EUFOR Chad, the Last of its Kind", *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 32, No.3, December 2011, p. 582-603.

between France and its former colonies, was over. Before coming to power, his African experience was limited, but he intended to impose several normalisations: reinstating the decision-making process in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; diplomatic relations from now had to be based on equality, transparency, and democracy; an Africa for Africans that would allow a lightening of the French burden in times of austerity. Without challenging his commitments, the Malian crisis was forced on the new President. Since the coup d'état in March 2012, Paris' choice was to delegate the greater part of the crisis to ECOWAS, even if Algeria and Mauritania were not members. The initial efforts, bilateral and UN, therefore focused on the establishment, support and backing of an African support force in Mali, MISMA, which originally consisted of 3 000 men[39]. However, this indirect approach stalled both because of limited African military capabilities, but also because of the Algerian and Malian governments' diplomatic ambivalence.

Events on the ground, including the capture of Konna by the rebels and the need to protect Sévaré airport, forced the President's hand, who nevertheless was not in favour of military intervention[40]. Validated by the UN and supported by a large majority of African leaders, the legitimacy of Operation Serval was not challenged[41]. The resources deployed were important and showed the benefit of maintaining pre-positioned forces in Africa: attack helicopters from Burkina Faso attacked the jihadist columns; *Mirages 2000s* which took off from N'Djamena in Chad bombed their rear bases; armoured units detached from Operation Unicorn in Côte d'Ivoire arrived at Bamako in less than 24 hours; special forces based in Ougadougou were the first in the Malian theatre of operation, at Diabali and at Konna, to prevent Sévaré airport being captured[42]. The African contributions were significant, particularly those of the Chadian forces, which at the height of their intervention, were 2 250 men and 300 vehicles, of which 100 were armoured. US and British support,

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39. The UN Security Council Resolution was voted for on 20 December 2012. This vote occurred relatively late in the process, mainly because the United States and Great Britain did not believe in the feasibility of Afisma. The European Union remained reluctant to set up a support and training mission for the Malian army. See Paul Melly and Vincent Darracq, *A New Way to Engage? French Policy in Africa from Sarkozy to Hollande*, Chatham House, May 2013, p. 8.
40. Vincent Jauvert, "Histoire secrète d'une guerre surprise", *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 7 February 2013. The African leaders, Traoré, Ouattara, Issoufou and Sall, hung in the balance. The rallying cry from General Puga and the submissions of J.-Y. Le Drian, Minister for Defence and close to President Hollande, also played a part. See Christophe Boisbouvier, *op. cit.*
41. See Xenia Avezov and Timo Smit, "The Consensus on Mali and International Conflict Management in a Multipolar World", *SIPRI Brief*, Stockholm, SIPRI, September 2014, p. 3.
42. The National Assembly's report estimates that "pre-positioning of forces in Africa is doubtlessly the decisive factor which explains the extreme reactivity of the French intervention." Assemblée nationale, Commission de la Défense Nationale et des Forces Armées, *Rapport d'information sur l'Opération Serval au Mali*, No. 1288, 18 July 2013, p. 37.

particularly in terms of intelligence and air support was also essential. The operation, which firstly intended to protect Bamako, even if it was never really in danger, rapidly spread to tracking jihadist networks in the North: capturing Gao and then Timbuktu airport allowed forces to be deployed to the jihadists' safe haven in the North of the country, in the Adrar des Ifoghas massif, where training bases were destroyed and several hundred fighters were neutralised. However, out of the 1 200 jihadist fighters estimated to be present in this region, nearly two-thirds seemed to have managed to have escaped to neighbouring countries or have returned to civilian life[43].

Operation Serval occurred at the time when Hollande's presidency was working hard to redefine France's strategic landscape and to draft its White Paper on defence. Several conclusions emerged. Despite efforts at Africanisation and Europeanisation, the security policy in Africa remained prominently national, when serious threats could destabilise governments and states. On the other hand, co-operation with military powers ready to commit, the United States and Great Britain, remained very positive as long as France assumed a large part of the effort. Hence, the relocation and closure of some French bases was no longer on the agenda. Then, when the North of Mali appeared like a benchmark for jihadist group operations, the terrorist threat took on both a more complex and extensive character. As Jean-Yves Le Drian, the Minister for Defence, emphasised before a National Assembly committee, "the scale of the arsenals that we discovered, particularly in the North, shows that there was a real intention to export terrorism beyond Mali's borders, and that if we had not intervened, attacks would certainly have been committed in France." The fear of a "Sahelistan", combining traffickers, rebels, hostage-takers and jihadists, and which had guided the choice of Operation Serval, proved to be well-founded[44]. The Sahel became "the southern border of French territory." The link was now established between a risky, but distant situation, and national security on French soil. The White Paper summarised this generic and premonitory definition[45]. The formalisation of the terrorist threat

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43. Numbers cited by Michael Shurkin, *France's War in Mali, Lessons for an Expeditionary Army*, Santa Monica, Rand Corporation, 2014, p. 24.
44. Aline Leboeuf and Hélène Quénot-Suarez, *op.cit*. Also see François Heisbourg for Sahelistan, "A Surprising Little War: First Lessons of Mali", *Survival*, Vol. 55, No. 2, April-May 2013, p. 10; Bruno Tertrais, "Leading on the Cheap? French Security Policy in Austerity", *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 3, Summer 2013, p. 53. Even experts on Africa, often critical vis-à-vis French military intervention conceded that the terrorist threat was real. See Jean-François Bayart, "Mali: le choix raisonné de la France", *Le Monde*, 22 January 2013.
45. "Against the background of fragile or failed states, terrorist groups are rife in previously unaffected areas where they interfere with local conflicts that they try to radicalise: the Sahel-Saharan area, but also northern Nigeria, Somalia, Syria, Iraq, Arabian peninsula, and the Afghan-Pakistan region. Claiming to follow Al-Qaeda, they have an independent operational capability and seek to have a global impact by directly targeting western interests. They may encourage radicalised individuals on our territory to take action and combine their activities with them." Présidence de la

and its geographical expansion led to Operation Serval being extended both in time and area. Operation Barkhane which has now replaced it is significantly larger: it extends over five countries Mali, Niger, Chad, Mauritania and Burkina Faso, with a regional headquarters in N'Djamena and regional bases in Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Gabon and Senegal. There are also four bases for the operation at N'Djamena, Niamey, Gao and Ougadougou, as well as pre-positioned special forces in Burkina Faso and pre-positioned air forces and drones in Niamey and Atar, and advanced bases at Tessalit and Timbuktu in Mali, at Madama in Niger, and Faya-Largeau in Chad. In total, Operation Barkhane has mobilised 3 000 men, 20 helicopters, 200 armoured vehicles, 10 transport aircraft, 6 fighter jets and 3 drones. The French military footprint is therefore relatively heavy.

Operation Barkhane: three thousand men for five countries
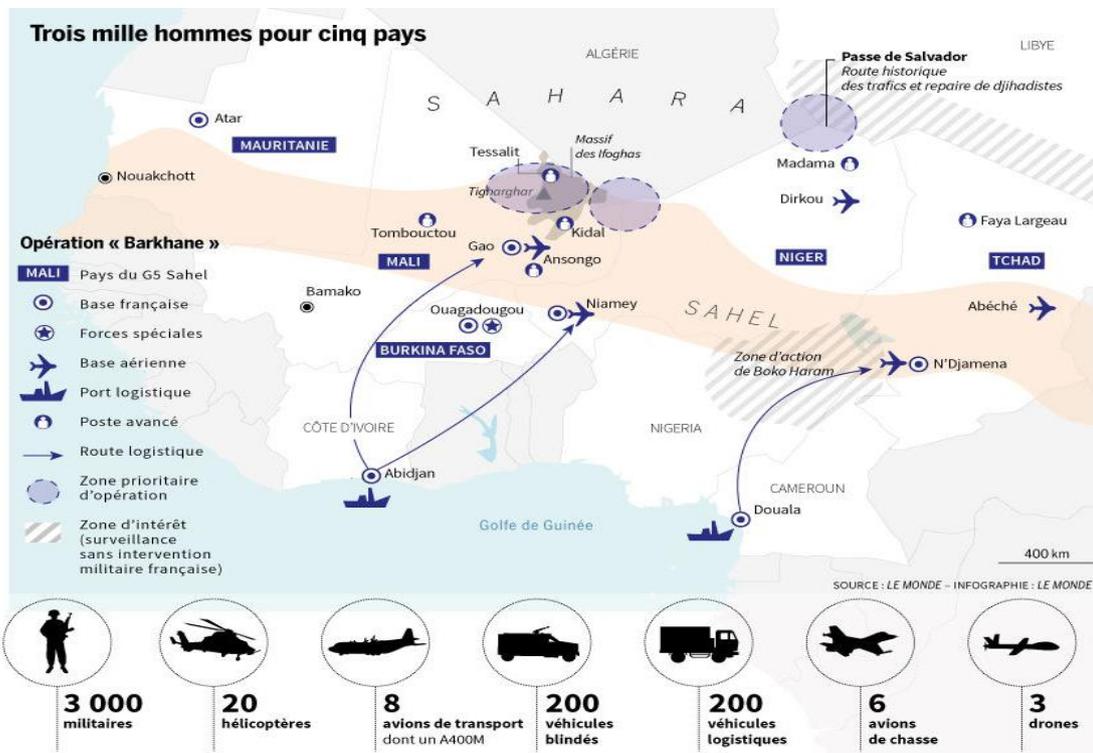
Source: *Le Monde*, 23 October 2014.

République, *Livre Blanc*, Défense et Sécurité Nationale 2013, p. 44, available at <www.defense.gouv.fr>.

US power brought under control

The humanitarian aspect has accounted for the bulk of the US efforts in Africa since the end of the Cold War, while the strategic interests there were considered "non-existent[46]." The traumatic episode in Mogadishu in October 1993 made an impact, and humanitarian efforts relying on the military apparatus were largely abandoned for the benefit of development assistance, which was quadrupled during the first decade in the 2000s reaching $ 8 billion in 2010[47]. Neither the 1998 attacks in Tanzania, nor even the attacks of September 11 fundamentally changed this assistance[48]. With an administration largely absorbed by the war against terrorism in Afghanistan and the Middle East, Africa only received limited attention, which was concentrated firstly on the Horn of Africa with the deployment from 2002 of a combined combat group of nearly 2000 men in Djibouti, and secondly on the Sahel with the launch of the Pan-Sahel Initiative by the Department of State, whose objective was to strengthen border security and build counter-terrorism capacities in Mali, Chad, Niger and Mauritania[49]. Although the war in Iraq diverted all the attention of the Bush administration for years, changes in terrorist movements within the Al-Qaeda sphere, particularly in Somalia and Yemen, spurred the Pentagon on to become more involved in this region. The results were not very convincing, and as mentioned above, they further enhanced the legitimacy and influence of Al-Shabaab in Somalia and in the region. In the same spirit, the Bush administration planned the establishment of a specific regional command for Africa in 2007. An approach which in "the global war on terror"

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46. Lauren Ploch, *Africa Command: U.S. Strategic Interests and the Role of the U.S. Military in Africa*, Washington, Congressional Research Service (CRS), July 2011, p. 11. See also Jennifer G. Cooke, "De Clinton à Obama. Les États-Unis et l'Afrique", *Politique étrangère*, n° 2/2013, p. 67-79.
47. The aid allocation for Africa increased by 600 % under George Bush. The creation of programmes, such as Pepfar, primarily spent on assistance for Aids (President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief), has allowed for more than $ 50 billion dollars to be allocated since its foundation in 2004.
48. A. Lake and C. Whitman, *More Than Humanitarianism: A Strategic US Approach Toward Africa*, Council on Foreign Relations, Report of an Independent Task Force, No. 56, New York, 2005, p. 60.
49. In 2005, this initiative became the *Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership* with a military component transferred under the banner of Operation *Enduring Freedom*. See Princeton N. Lyman and J. Stephen Morrison, "The Terrorist Threat in Africa", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 1, January-February 2004, p. 78.

suggested an increasing militarisation of the continent[50]. Africom became operational in October 2008, focusing on the Horn of Africa and the Sahel.

In view of his origins and because of his liberal positions, the election of President Obama raised many hopes in Africa and a lot of expectations among supporters of a more pronounced human rights policy. Several factors have helped to disappoint all their expectations. The most decisive was the presidential intention to redefine the United States' position in a world which was evolving significantly towards a multi-polar configuration[51]. The development of multi-polarity in an era of austerity therefore forced the Obama administration to make choices and focus on the essentials – restoring economic growth and ensuring the security of Americans. In foreign policy, this was reflected firstly in the withdrawal from Iraq, and the gradual decrease in commitment in Afghanistan[52]. This "retrenchment", as some people could call this strategic positioning, was aimed at reducing the human, economic, and strategic losses that represented the bottomless pit of Iraq. It also meant the end of large military expeditions with vague and generic missions, and the return to a force structure with light and temporary footprints, as well as detailed and selective engagements[53].

Africa illustrates this new presidential approach. The first crisis which took place was an extraordinary surprise: the Arab spring, which very quickly raised serious dilemmas for the president. Although Barack Obama has never had the least problem in lecturing African leaders publicly and privately for their democratic deficits or their human rights violations, using force to oust a dictator in a region without strategic interest for Washington was a challenge that the US president was very reluctant to meet. Even if the responsibility to protect was at stake – the threat of a massacre in Benghazi was real – the decision to intervene militarily was not taken easily. Despite

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50. Peter J. Pham, "Next Front? Evolving U.S.-African Strategic Relations in the 'War on Terrorism' and Beyond", *Comparative Strategy*, 26, No. 1, 2007, p. 39-54.

51. As G. Rose notes: "Obama is actually best understood as an ideological liberal with a conservative temperament, somebody who felt that after a period of reckless overexpansion and belligerent unilateralism, the country's long-term foreign policy goals could best be furthered by short-term retrenchment.", *in* Gideon Rose, "What Obama Gets Right: Keep Calm and Carry the Liberal Order On", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 94, No. 5, September-October 2015, p. 2.

52. As Obama does not fail to remind us: "Globally, we have moved beyond the large ground wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that defined so much of American foreign policy over the past decade. Compared to the nearly 180,000 troops we had in Iraq and Afghanistan when I took office, we now have fewer than 15,000 deployed in those countries.", *in* The White House, *National Security Strategy*, February 2015.

53. "As we look beyond Iraq and Afghanistan, – a*nd the end of long-term nation-building with large military footprints –*, we will be able to ensure our security with smaller conventional ground forces": Press Conference given by President Obama at the Pentagon (a new event), 5 January 2012. Cited by Fred Kaplan, *The Insurgents, David Petraus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War*, Simon & Schuster, 2014, p. 358. The italics were added by the author.

pressure from some of his advisors and officials, the readiness of Susan Rice and Samantha Power on the one hand, and the warnings of Robert Gates on the other, the option chosen – support without *leadership* and action in co-operation – reflected the President's natural conservatism and instinctive caution[54]. The mixed success of the Libyan operation, and in particular, the instability which has since spread throughout the Sahel region, has reinforced President Obama's choice not to intervene militarily in Africa and to keep the number of US soldiers on African soil to the lowest possible level[55]. At the same time, the administration considers that despite progress in a large part of the continent, poor governance, corruption and poverty are factors that contribute to the emergence of the terrorist threat[56]. The increase in African countries in the top 10 countries which have been receiving US aid for some years reflects this concern, particularly with regard to Nigeria, which moved in front of Iraq in 2014, as well as Kenya and Tanzania. Hence, the finding is very similar to that of the French White Paper. However, Africa does not have either the same priority for or the same proximity to Washington. In fact, direct attacks on the security of US interests in Africa are rare. The attack on the US consulate in Benghazi in September 2012, which killed the ambassador, nevertheless prompted the Pentagon to set up a Marines emergency intervention force, and to establish a specific command with three brigades within Africom.

Whether the issues be humanitarian or strategic, the Obama method initially is to look for and support local, regional, or international partners. In its strategy vis-à-vis sub-Saharan Africa in June 2012, the Obama administration welcomed the progress made in the area of security by the African states. It envisages the role of the United States as an additional support, even if sometimes it is crucial[57].In its fight against terrorism, it therefore acknowledged the

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54. Libya cost the US taxpayer between $ 1 and 3 million per day. Afghanistan amounted to $ 300 million per day. See James Mann on these respective positions, *The Obamians, The Struggle inside the White House to Redefine American Power*, London, Penguins Book, 2012, p. 284-291.
55. "The president […] embraced quick in-and-out military engagement, such as by drones, combined with building up partner capacity. Somalia, Yemen and Mali have featured such limited operations", *in* Vanda Felbab-Brown, "Obama's State of the Union Speech and the Seductiveness of Limited Intervention" *Brookings UpFront*, 29 January 2014.
56. As Susan Rice noted after September 11, a large part of Africa became a "veritable incubator" for terrorist soldiers. She added: "These are the *swamps* we must drain [...] to do otherwise, is to place our security at further and more permanent risk.", *in* Kofi Nsia-Pepra, "Militarization of US Foreign Policy in Africa: Strategic Gain or Backlash?", *Military Review*, Vol. 94, No 1, January-February 2014, p. 52. The italics were added by the author.
57. "African states are showing increasing capacity to take the lead on security issues on the continent… Only Africa's governments and people can sustainably resolve the security challenges and internal divisions that have plagued the continent but the United States can make a positive difference.", *in* The White House, *U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa*, Washington, June 2012, p. 4, available at: <www.state.gov/documents/organization/209377.pdf>.

need to develop an indirect but realistic strategy: military assistance (training and equipment) and considerable aid (a total of $ 5 billion) in a partnership against terrorism and a fund mainly for Somalia, Mali, Libya, and Yemen, but conditional upon good governance[58]. For peacekeeping operations, the administration participated substantially in African capacity building, particularly in the considerable efforts made by the UN peacekeeping force in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which however is scarcely a deterrent and often a corrupt force. Each year, the United States spends between $ 650 million and $ 1 billion on humanitarian assistance in Congo and on assistance for Monusco[59]. Similarly, since 2007, Washington has spent $ 512 million on Amisom. It should cover nearly 30 % of its budget this year[60]. Working with partners which Washington can rely on is therefore the first step for the Obama administration. Although this approach is far from guaranteeing the effectiveness of the operations carried out, at the very least it ensures their legitimacy.

The second characteristic is to only leave a minimal footprint when US forces must go into action. If the African partners are not able to engage against a threat that Washington deems serious, then the intervention should be more direct, even if it remains limited. To lighten the US footprint as much as possible, the Pentagon prefers two tools: the use of drones, both for intelligence and for destruction, and the use of special forces. As stated in the 2014 *Quadrennial Defense Review*, it is a question of maximising the impact of a relatively modest military presence in Africa. Primacy is therefore given to the fleet of drones and the opening of bases to host them: the base in Djibouti (Lemonnier camp) has had a new runway to enable coverage of the Horn of Africa. Since February 2013, a surveillance drone base was set up at Niamey in Niger – it acted as support for Serval – others are in service at Entebbe airport in Uganda, at Ougadougou in Burkina Faso, and since last October in Cameroon[61]. As for the special forces, they have two main roles:

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58. "A Counter-terrorism Partnerships Fund would enable the United States to more effectively partner with countries where terrorist networks seek a foothold.", *in* Schmitt Eric, "U.S. Training Elite Antiterror Troops in Four African Countries", *New York Times*, 26 May 2014.

59. Under pressure from Russ Feingold, the US envoy for the Great Lakes region, the UN expanded the mandate for part of Monusco, creating an intervention brigade against the M23 rebels, supported by Rwanda up until now. See Nicolas van de Walle, "Obama and Africa Lots of Hope, Not Much Change", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 94, No. 5, September-October 2015, p. 59-60. This was granted on an exceptional basis: the UN is not an organisation supposed to wage war. See UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon on this development, *The Future of United Nations Peace Operations: Implementation of the Recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations*, United Nations Security Council General Assembly, 2 September 2015, available at: <www.un.org>.

60. Bronwyn Bruton and Paul D. Williams, "The Hidden Costs Of Outsourcing The "War On Terrorism" In Africa", in *La Stratégie américaine en Afrique*, p. 70.

61. The base in Ethiopia was shut at the same time. John Hudson and Siobhán O'Grady, "As New Threats Emerge, U.S. Closes Drone Base in Ethiopia", *Foreign Policy*, 4 January 2016.

neutralisation of leaders of terrorist groups and training, supporting, and co-operating with the local armed forces[62]. Africom's transformation is reflected in this development[63]. Its budget has been reduced by nearly 10 %, while crises in the Sahel or in the Horn of Africa remain worrying, and the backing and support missions outweigh direct intervention. The combination of these two elements: partnership and minimal footprint has become the *modus operandi* of the US security policy in Africa. So, Africom's posture has evolved reflecting these changes: prevention takes precedence over intervention

In view of the shared analysis of the terrorist threat in Africa and the complementarity of the respective strategic postures, co-operation between France and the United States could only grow and develop. The time of Cold War competition and rivalry at the UN in 2003 is well and truly over. Aware of its weaknesses – without US aerial refuelling, everything would be a lot more complicated – Paris warmly welcomed increased support from the United States, even in its African backyard. Washington cannot hide its satisfaction at seeing France assume the *leadership* role in the Sahel and does not baulk at working jointly with Paris. A properly understood division of labour provides the basis for this "new alliance[64]." For Admiral William McRaven, former commander of the US special forces, co-operation – intelligence, logistics, joint sharing of experiences – is mutually beneficial[65]. However, it remains uneven: although for Paris the southern border of its strategic perimeter starts in the Sahel, Africa is only a marginal interest for Washington. An asymmetry in vulnerabilities can be added to this difference in challenges. The threats incurred are significant for France and they remain marginal for the United States. Military crisis management related to terrorism has emerged in France, which is the only country in Europe that is able and willing to assume the risks. It is only a subsidiary choice for the United States.

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62. Michael A. Sheehan and Geoff D. Porter, "The Future Role of U.S. Counter-terrorism Operations in Africa", *CTC Sentinel*, Vol. 7, No. 2, February 2014, p. 2.
63. The official mission is now as follows: "U.S. Africa Command, with national and international partners, disrupts transnational threats, protects U.S. personnel and facilities, prevents and mitigates conflict, and builds defense capabilities in order to promote regional stability and prosperity.", *in* "United States, Africa Command 2015 Posture Statement", *U.S. Africa Command's Formal Report to the U.S. House & Senate Armed Services Committees*, 2015, available at: <www.africom.mil/>.
64. Barack Obama and François Hollande, "France and the U.S. Enjoy a Renewed Alliance", *The Washington Post,* 10 February 2014.
65. France has acquired US drones, which should further facilitate co-operation between the intelligence services. In Niamey, the hangars of the US and French *Reaper* surveillance drones adjoin one another. See Maya Kandel (dir.), "La stratégie américaine en Afrique", *Étude de l'IRSEM*, No. 36, December 2014, p. 23.

Limitations and dilemmas of military action

If for the terrorists, kidnappings and attacks against civilian targets and attacks against regular troops, both national and international are part of a strategic design, for political leaders, the responses must be made in an emergency, in an emotional state, and are sometimes improvised. In the current period of short-term media, the spectacular often prevails over the rational, and diplomacy gives way to military action, and security dominates humanitarian issues.

The decision-making process lies at the heart of these problems and complexities. Its first stage is probably the most basic: defining the battle and knowing your enemy. Considering such or such attack as an act of war rather than a crime and describing those who perpetuate them as terrorists has significant implications. From a political point of view, the temptation is great to impose the terrorist label on situations which in reality are much more complex. In fact, this allows the event to be securitised, so the defined act now depends on national defence, and as such, it becomes a priority compared to other similar events or other alternative policies, development assistance, trade policy, or support for democratisation. Moreover in France, this securitisation process makes it possible for the President to exercise his prerogative in this reserved domain, shielded from the national representatives and the media mob. Although this qualification is politically beneficial, it is strategically problematic. It confers visibility, status and legitimacy on the terrorists, which provides them with an influence that their deeds did not warrant[66]. Foreign intervention provides a sounding board, and in doing so, it risks perpetuating and accentuating the battle, precisely what the terrorists were seeking to achieve. It ends in creating the threat it was supposed to stave off. In Somalia and Mali, some observers have detected the reinforcement and expansion of Islamist movements that the interventions were supposed to eliminate[67]. The

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66. Michael Howard, "What's in a Name?", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 1, January-February 2002, p. 8-13.
67. In Somalia, we have noted even indirect effects of US intervention on Al-Shabaab. See Roland Marchal on these origins, "Warlordism and Terrorism: How to Obscure an Already Confusing Crisis? The Case of Somalia", *International Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 6, November 2007, p. 1091-1106. For Mali, some people considered in 2010 that "By dramatizing the danger of the Islamist armed struggle in the Sahel, for now very limited, the Americans and French run the risk of cementing the mercantile

reification of the terrorist category tends to include insurgents, traffickers, plain criminals, and practising Muslims indiscriminately. Anyone can become one if they become the indiscriminate or collateral victim of foreign intervention. Confusion between Islamist and terrorist is common: additionally Islamism is long-standing in Africa and it sometimes provides shelter and protection against segregation, as well as persecution by governments and dictators. The religious veneer assumed and proclaimed by often illiterate or recently converted terrorists barely conceals more political or lucrative ambitions. Mistaking terrorists, Islamists, and insurgents, shows a confusion of intentions and ambiguous objectives[68]. Finally, reification tends to predetermine the consequences of reasoning: if they are terrorists, we must wage war on them. The formula of "war against terrorism" certainly has the merit of simplicity, but it implies an inevitability of response – only war is possible in the face of terrorism – while other aspects of the fight against terrorism are perhaps more appropriate and effective. The militarisation of crisis management in Africa contributes to this logic. *A priori*, the military response may seem obvious and inevitable; however *a posteriori*, we can measure the limitations and contradictions of this better.

In any strategic reasoning, it is important to imagine possible alternatives and potential options. The first of these can be summarised briefly: do nothing. This option is often dismissed for political reasons and grounds related to prestige and reputation. Whenever national interests have been affected or when red lines have been crossed, military action becomes a demonstration of strength, ability to react, and credibility. The media and political pressure drives decision-makers to act rapidly: any passivity resembles impunity and any reflection resembles hesitation. The debate about the strategy to adopt vis-à-vis Daesh in Syria and Iraq illustrates this dilemma[69]. However, an action for an action hardly solves the problems and it even tends to make them worse. The militarisation of the fight against terrorism may provide short-term results, but rarely long-term solutions[70]. Additionally, military

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relationship and the economic alliance between the Algerian groups that Al-Qaeda has "franchised" and the Tuaregs, under the banner of a common ideology," *in* Jean-François Bayart, "Le piège de la lutte anti-terroriste en Afrique de l'Ouest", *MédiaPart Blog*, 28 July 2010, available at: <https://blogs.mediapart.fr>.

68. As R. Marchal noted about Mali: "The very loose use of certain words – "Jihadist", "Islamist", and "terrorist" often being used interchangeably –, and the shifting aims of the war – "Malian sovereignty", "repelling armed Islamists and Jihadists", "eradicating terrorism" –, reflects more than mere bad communication skills on the part of the current government in Paris. More substantial lessons regarding the importance of a clear and commonly held set of achievable targets and an exit strategy may have been missed.", *in* Roland Marchal, "Briefing Military (Mis)Adventures In Mali", *African Affairs*, Vol. 112, No. 448, 2013, p. 490.

69. For example, see Kori Schake, "The Consequences of Obama's Dithering", *The New York Times*, 2 September 2014 and Stephen M. Walt, "What Should We Do if the Islamic State Wins? Live with it", *Foreign Policy*, 10 June 2015.

70. The question may deserve a separate study. See among others Audrey Kurth Cronin, "How Al-Qaeda Ends: The Decline and Demise of Terrorist Groups",

intervention is often the option that terrorists are seeking: the terrorist action aims to provoke intervention by the opponent, leading them into an area that is more unfavourable to them, and force them to conduct a long and expensive war. Above all, the action of foreign troops may help to radicalise the population which they are supposed to protect or liberate; it increases sympathy and local or regional support for the terrorist groups; and it represents the realisation of all their predictions, the ultimate justification of their approaches and call to arms. Although some people thought that the militarisation of French action in Africa presented such risks, it seems that for now this pitfall has been avoided. Hence in Mali, the political process has reasserted its rights and legitimacy[71]. Therefore, inaction may be the ideal strategic choice; however in the field of violence, our liberal societies are not immune to the appeal of revenge, the seduction of war, and the "temptation of passions to the detriment of interests[72]."

If action is required, several options are possible. Without tracing the overall picture of the fight against terrorism here, three generic options can be briefly outlined: deter, contain, or destroy the opponent. Deterrence is a tricky strategic choice whenever identification of terrorist groups is difficult, and their real strength is their unwavering commitment to fight for their cause, including to the death. The prospect of punishment hardly affects their choices. Although it is possible to change the state environment which the terrorists evolve in and influence the map of their foreign support, deterrence quickly resembles prevention and protection[73]. The second option, containment, is aimed at maintaining the level of threat at acceptable levels without seeking to destroy the opponent. Like the first one, this strategy is deemed obsolete and ineffective when it is a question of a terrorist threat, mainly because it is dangerous to leave the initiative to an opponent which intends to spread terror. However, this policy seems to be finding some followers, particularly in the United States where the experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan have borne fruit, not only in military institutions, but above all in the White House[74]. To sum up, a containment policy

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International Security, Vol. 31, No. 1, Summer 2006, p. 7-48; Jonathan Stevenson, "Demilitarising the War on Terror", *Survival*, Vol. 48, No. 2, 2006, p. 37-54; and Audrey Kurth Cronin, "The "War on Terrorism": What Does it Mean to Win?", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 2, 2014, p. 174-197.

71. See International Crisis Group, "Mali: la venue d'en bas?", *Crisis Group Briefing Afrique*, No. 115, December 2015.

72. The phrase is of course Raymond Aron, cited by Pierre Hassner, *La Revanche des Passions. Métamorphoses de la violence et crises du politique*, Paris, Fayard, 2015, p. 50. See also Chris Hedges, *War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning*, London, Public Affairs, 2002.

73. See Robert F. Trager and Dessislava P. Zagorcheva, "Deterring Terrorism It Can Be Done", *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 3, Winter 2005/2006, p. 87-123. Gregory D. Miller, "Terrorist Decision Making and the Deterrence Problem", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 2013, p. 132-151.

74. "For the foreseeable future, the most direct threat to America at home and abroad remains terrorism. But a strategy that involves invading every country that harbors terrorist networks is naïve and unsustainable." Comments made by President Obama

pursues several objectives. Firstly, it is being vigilant, avoiding the excess of the aforementioned passions, escaping the inflation of endless war and of getting lost by continuing the myth of absolute security[75]. It also preserves its resources and looks for partners. President Obama was, and remains, very sensitive to this threat, and the Iraqi and Afghan fiascos have served to guide him on other issues, including Syria, but also the terrorist threat in Africa. The containment strategy cannot be reduced to passivity with regard to the opponent. It consists as far as possible in preventing the opponent from expanding their territory, in restricting their cross-border movements, in thwarting sources of funding, and in neutralising their chain of command. Although it cannot be reduced to this, it implies a limited use of force. Some people criticise these "small step" dynamics, because among other things, it allows the opponent time and space to adapt and reorganise. Containment also involves a diplomatic dimension which leads to the political dimension of the threat being considered. With some minor differences, such a specification more or less corresponds to the objectives of Operation Barkhane. In Mali, politics now seems to have taken precedence over the military. Finally, this strategy is based on a long-term objective and approach. It assumes that the very nature of the terrorist movement can only evolve in the long term, either towards its own destruction, or towards its transformation into a political movement that can be negotiated with. Al-Qaeda seems to be headed for the second route, particularly because it is now rooted in local realities rather than in its global ambitions[76].

The last option is to destroy the enemy. When it comes to terrorists, acting in a failed state, it means engaging in both a hybrid and asymmetrical conflict: hybrid because each of the actors – insurgents, criminals, and terrorists – is conducting their own battle with different objectives in a weak state context and a polarised social environment[77]; asymmetrical because this diversity of objectives is

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on Commencement Day at the West Point Military Academy in New York on 28 May 2014, available at: <www.whitehouse.gov>.

75. Caution and restraint are required because *in fine*: "AlQaeda's capacity to hurt America is less than America's capacity to hurt itself.", *in* Patrick Porter, "Long Wars and Long Telegrams: Containing Al Qaeda", *International Affairs*, Vol. 85, No. 2, March 2009, p. 303.

76. President Obama seems to espouse this approach: "[…] the need for a new strategy reflects the fact that today's principal threat no longer comes from a centralized al Qaeda leadership. Instead, it comes from decentralized al Qaeda affiliates and extremists, many with agendas focused in countries where they operate." Available at: <www.whitehouse.gov>. See also Caitriona Dowd and Clionadh Raleigh, "The Myth Of Global Islamic Terrorism and Local Conflict in Mali and The Sahel", *African Affairs*, Vol. 112, No. 448, 2013, p. 498–509 and Bruce Hoffman, "Al Qaeda's Uncertain Future", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 36, No. 8, 2013, p. 635-653.

77. Emile Simpson, *War from the Ground Up, Twenty-First-Century Combat as Politics*, London, Hurst & Company, 2012, p. 32. See also Josef Schroefl and Stuart J. Kaufman, "Hybrid Actors, Tactical Variety: Rethinking Asymmetric and Hybrid War", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 37, No. 10, 2014, p. 862-880.

however reflected by a similarity of methods – attacks, explosives, suicide attacks, and guerrilla warfare. Although it seems that holding territory has an impact on the choice of weapons (guerrilla warfare and suicide attacks are preferred) from the foreign actor's perspective, it is very difficult to distinguish the sources and reasons for the violence[78]. Against this background of irregular warfare, the strength of terrorist movements is merging into a population that can accommodate and protect them, resorting to a type of violence which makes western technology ineffective, and accepting that the risks and losses will always be higher that the opponent's. So in these conditions, the temptation was great to massively occupy territories which could accommodate and protect terrorist activities. However, the Iraqi and Afghan experiences have shown both the human, strategic, and economic limitations of this choice. To avoid the pitfalls of occupation, and when it is as large a theatre of operations as the Sahel or the Horn of Africa, destroying the enemy mainly consists in neutralising its members and leaders of the movements by light and mobile special forces in targeted and quick operations. France out of necessity and the United States out of choice, are now conducting this type of operation in the fight against terrorism in Africa. The French system adopted around Operation Barkhane reflects this development: from a posture inherited from decolonisation with large installations and a very visible footprint in the field, it is seeking to establish "the formation of plots geared towards the fight against terrorism[79]." The role of the US special forces is essentially the same. This destruction of the enemy with a light footprint naturally raises significant logistical problems. Regarding an operation which took place in November 2015 to neutralise a notorious trafficking area between Mali and Niger, its commander admitted the difficulties related to this type of tracking down: "It's a gigantic naval battle over 40 000 km^2, an area as big as Holland, for 300 men[80]." We now better understand how important the support of local actors is for intelligence and mobility. The tracking down and neutralising of terrorist leaders is not without controversy, some people criticise the

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78. Marc Hecker, "De Marighella à Ben Laden, Passerelles stratégiques entre guérilleros et djihadistes", *Politique Etrangère*, No. 2/2006, p. 385-396. See also Luis de la Calle & Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca, "How Armed Groups Fight: Territorial Control and Violent Tactics", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 38, No. 10, 2015, p. 795-813; James Khalil, "Know Your Enemy: On the Futility of Distinguishing Between Terrorists and Insurgents", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism,* Vol. 36, No. 5, 2013, p. 419-430. See Robert Pape for suicide attacks, *Dying to Win. The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, New York, Random House, 2005.
79. Olivier Fourt and Véronique Barral, "La France réarticule son dispositif militaire au Sahel", *RFI*, 8 January 2014, *in* Aline Leboeuf and Hélène Quénot-Suarez, "La politique africaine de la France", *op-cit.*, p. 36.
80. For Lt. Col. Étienne du Peyroux, who commanded the operation: "We try to find them [terrorist groups], to block, to constrain, to work out how they will be channeled by a particular piece of terrain. We want them to abandon the fight, until they cannot do it anymore or until the effort is too great.", *in* Carlotta Gall, "Jihadists Deepen Collaboration in North Africa", *The New York Times*, 1 January 2016.

quick methods used by France[81], while neutralising leaders remains a problematic approach faced with the objective of disintegrating or dissolving a terrorist group[82].

The tracking down of terrorist units with a light military footprint is therefore at the heart of French and US security policy. For Paris, this footprint remains proportionally heavier than for Washington, but in both cases, there is the tricky question of withdrawing from the military management of these crises. Neutralising terrorist leaders is no substitute for the pursuit of political solutions and the involvement of international forces to support and consolidate it[83]. However, if you really want to believe that the French and US military action resembles robust containment in reality, the long duration is an inherent part of its eventual success. However, clearly duration is the last resource of terrorists and faced with this determination, democracies marked by regular elections often lack this. Such is the heart of the dilemma, and such are the inherent limitations of even robust containment strategy.

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81. A former diplomat was harsh about the methods used: "The fight against terrorism cannot be restricted to the elimination of alleged leaders. Executing alleged terrorists without any form of trial, is killing in the name of our values, which is exactly what we accuse our opponents of.", *in* Lauren Bigot, "L'opération Barkhane, un "permis de tuer" au Sahel", *Le Monde*, 2 November 2015.
82. See Daniel Byman on the role of beheading, "Do Targeted Killings Work?", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 85, No. 2, March-April 2006; Bryan C. Price, "Targeting Top Terrorists How Leadership Decapitation Contributes to Counterterrorism", *International Security*, Vol. 36, No. 4, Spring 2012, p. 9-46 and Jenna Jordan; and "When Heads Roll: Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Decapitation", *Security Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 4, October-December. 2009, p. 719-755.
83. See Etienne de Durand, "Does France Have an Exit Strategy in Mali? Striking a Balance between Occupation and Withdrawal", *Foreign Affairs Snapshot*, 20 February 2013, available at <www.foreignaffairs.com>.