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Disguise of France Unilateral Policy through European Multilateralism in Mali from Operation Serval to Withdrawal of Barkhane Operation

Mali'de Avrupa Çok Taraflılığı Yoluyla Fransa'nın Tek Taraflı Politikasının Serval Operasyonundan Barkhane Operasyonunun Geri Çekilmesine Kadar Gizlenmesi

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Abstract

On the eve of independence, France signed defense treaties with its former African colonies to maintain its military influence across the continent. Accordingly, it routinely made unilateral interventions as it saw fit for decades. However, in recent years, local communities in Africa are resenting the French military presence on their soil and their paternalistic posture in their affairs which many assimilate to neo-colonialism. As a result, France, still intending to pursue its unilateral interests, changed the format of its intervention for a broader European coloration i.e., multilateralism. It is this shift in policy that this study intends to demonstrate in Mali. The concept of the illegality of military intervention, the Europeanization of French military policy, unilateralism disguised as European multilateralism as well as Africanization will be studied in this article. Based on the resolution of the United Nations made on the Republic of Mali in 2012 it is found that the military intervention is not quite legal. Because the 2085 resolution of the United Nations provided African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA). As well, it was not planned for France to intervene. Although assistance was requested from France, only air support was requested for the Mali militia army. However, both land and air interventions were carried out. Then, in 2014 and 2020, a multilateral military policy began to be followed with European partners on the Barkhane Operation and Task Force Takuba. Takuba. Emmanuel Macron played an important role in the Europeanization of French military policy in Mali and SAHEL.

Keywords: Mali, France, Unilateralism, EU, Multilateralism, Military, Illegality, Africanization, Europeanization.

Öz

Bağımsızlık arifesinde Fransa, kıtadaki askeri nüfuzunu sürdürmek amacıyla eski kolonileriyle askeri alanda anlaşmaları imzalamıştır. Bu anlaşmalara dayanarak uzun süredir tek taraflı olarak askeri müdahalelerde bulunmaktadır. Ancak son yıllarda, Afrika'da Fransa'nın askeri varlığına yönelik yükselen Fransız karşıtı duyguların, Fransa'yı yeni bir politika izlemeye ittiği görülmektedir. Fransa'nın, son on beş yılda askeri müdahalelerini ve politikalarını çoktarafılıştırmaya ve Avrupalılaştırmaya yöneldiğini söylemek mümkündür. Bunun örneği hem Mali Cumhuriyeti'nde hem de Orta Afrika Cumhuriyeti'nde görülmüştür. Ancak bu makalede, Mali Cumhuriyeti örneği ele alınacaktır. Bu makalede, askeri müdahalenin legal olmadığı, Fransız askeri politikasının Avrupalılaştırılması, tek taraflı askeri müdahalelerinin çok taraflı olarak gösterilmesi ve Afrikalılaştırma gibi kavramları incelenecektir. Birleşmiş Milletler' in 2012'de Mali'ye yönelik aldığı karara göre askeri müdahalenin tamamen legal olmadığı tespit edildi. 2085 sayılı bu karar bir Afrika müdahalesini sağlamış olabilir. Bu karar, MISAM (Mali'de Afrika Liderliğinde Uluslararası Destek Misyonu) adı altında bir Afrikalı müdahaleyi öngörmüştü. Yani Fransa'nın müdahale yapması planlanmamıştı. Fransa'dan yardım istense de sadece havadan Mali mili ordusuna destek sağlanması talep edilmişti. Ancak hem karadan hem de havadan müdahale gerçekleştirildi. Ardından 2014 ve 2020 yıllarında Barkhane Operasyonu ve Task Force Takuba üzerinde Avrupalı ortaklarla çok taraflı bir askeri politika izlenmeye başladı. Emmanuel Macron, Mali ve SAHEL bölgesinde Fransız asker politikasının Avrupalılaştırılmasında önemli bir rol oynamıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mali, Fransa, Tek Taraflılık, AB, Çok Taraflılık, Askeri, Yasadışılık, Afrikalılaşma, Avrupalılaşma.

Introduction

Pre- and post-Cold War eras were marked by recurrent French military presence and incursions in its former African colonies. These interventions are part of France's great game in West Africa since the colonial period. This great strategic game of France continues to maintain its influence in these former colonies in the face of other powers like the U.S., China, Russia... (Don, 2021). During the first years of independence, defense agreements were signed between France and its former colonies, including Mali. According to French decision-makers, the French military presence in its former colonies is a part of development. For them, development is linked to security (Luckham, 2022). These agreements contained technical military assistance and even the positioning of French soldiers in the former colonies (Sénat.fr, 1960). France, through its agreements and its pre-positioned soldiers, intervened unilaterally. And this has long given legitimacy to French interventions. implications of the French army in

genocides like in Rwanda and the repetitive interventions, namely in Ivory Coast (2011), in Mali (2013), and in the Central African Republic, earned France widespread riposte from civil societies in old colonies of France. As to contain this growing anti-French political sentiment in Africa, French authorities operated a paradigm shift in their foreign policy as they gradually disguised their unilateral goals and interventions within a broader international approach i.e., multilateralism.

Mali, where France is progressively substituting its military presence with an international Force under the European banner, is the perfect example of the policy shift we mentioned. French President Emmanuel Macron said officially Operation Barkhane take an end. (Tony, ve Gordon, 2020). Barkhane operation was launched in August 2014 which was Serval Operation continuity. This operation was carried out within the multilateral peacekeeping framework established by the French decision-makers. Emmanuel Macron even went so far as to say that the French operation Barkhane is a complement to United Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). While it is a unilateral operation conducted by France as part of its strategy in Mali and the Sahel. According to Benedikt Erforth, *“the commitment to multilateralism and burden sharing is there to support France’s strategic objective”* in the Sahel and Mali (Benedikt, 2020).

The end of Barkhane Operation’s discourse is just a strategic change to prepare for presidential elections and disguise unilateral military policies in Mali and Sahel region. Our study aims to put under the spotlight this French duplicity in the realm of international relations. To have such an analysis, we have studied available materials like the documents from the United Nations along with the reports of the French Senate and Parliament on the issue. Other analysts study this new strategy of France under the angle of a quote from Peter Drucker, a management consultant. *“If you want to do something new, you have to stop doing something old,”* said Drucker. The questioning of actions and military commitments (old practices) in Mali and the Sahel, precisely in the former colonies of France, has pushed France to change its strategy and move towards multilateralism to disguise its unilateralism. The quote of Peter Drucker can help us to understand France’s new multilateral military strategy in Mali (Tony and Gordon, 2020).

Disguising Unilateralism with European Multilateralism

One of the main foundations of the security policy of France towards its former colonies is multilateralism, which is implemented by the Elysée

during the crisis in French former colonies. Under Jacques Chirac a strong discourse on the Europeanization of French military policy in its former colonies (Tobias, 2012). In a report published by the French senate in 2006, French decision-makers emphasized the participation of the European partners in its military operations in former colonies. According to them, the involvement of European partners is essential for France in Africa (Seant.fr, 2005). Nicolas Sarkozy during this discourse in South Africa in 2008 said: *“My last aims to make Europe a major partner for Africa in terms of peace and security. This is the meaning of the partnership concluded between our two continents in Lisbon last December”* (Vie-publique.fr, 2008). In 2008 France continued to act in Africa through Europe. With France’s initiative, the EUFOR Tchad/Republic of Centre Africa operation was launched in March 2008. According to France decision-makers the involvement of the European Union in the management of African crises constituted an opportunity to develop the Europe of defense, as a key element of its concept of Europe Power (Tobias, 2012).

This multilateralist option is seen as a quest to expand France’s influence on the international scene as De Gaulle wanted. Even with this multilateralism initiative, France had never given up its unilateral interventionism. The unilateral military intervention in Côte d’Ivoire in 2011 has been shown as multilateral by the French authorities. They have said that they do not act alone but within the international community. But “French policy is disguised in the rhetoric and politics of multilateralism for French interests think Bruno Charbonneau. As we will see in the case of Mali, France for its unilateral interests has multilateralized the crisis in Côte d’Ivoire through the United Nations as a permanent member (Bruno, 2008). According to Benedikt Erforth, *“French military intervention abroad embedded in the Western liberal tradition of interventionism is usually conducted with multilateral approval from United Nations or regional bodies”*: like European Union (Benedikt, 2020).

By early 2013, in Brussels during the summit aimed at reconstructing through foreign investments and donations war-torn Mali, France, with its European partners initiated the Serval Operation (Fabrice, 2014). This summit which later led to the creation of the Bureau of European Investors in Bamako had the three-dimensional approach to reconstruct Mali. On those the French decision-makers will argue that the intervention was in line with a multilateral strategy (Benedikt, 2020). the French decision-makers and French media supported and promoted this thesis of multilateral intervention. However, all conditions weren’t gathered to define the intervention as legal. (Senat.fr, 2013). First, it aimed at setting

up democratically elected authorities through presidential elections. Second, it sought at revitalizing the country's economy through foreign European investment. Finally, it had a military component aimed at recovering the nation's territorial integrity. This last component had two sub-sections i.e., waging war through Serval and training the Malian military through the European Union Training Mission (EUTM-Mali) (Benedikt, 2020).

Despite European country's reluctance to make this commitment because of the unilateralist interventions of the French in Africa in the past but also because of the policy of the French in these former colonies considered neocolonialist, EUTM Mali was created (Senat.fr, 2022). The creation of EUTM was done on the initiative of France through diplomacy led by its minister of defense at the time. The propaganda about a supposed threat to Europe by terrorism launched by the French authorities is part of the reasons for the European commitments. While behind this propaganda are hidden the French national interests in the former colonies (Benedikt, 2020). Long before the EUTM-MALI there was an illustration of this unilateral policy disguised as multilateralism in Chad, the Central African Republic, and the Democratic Republic of Congo during which French soldiers were in command (Antoine, 2011). Until the request for the departure of Barkhane by the interim government this supposedly European scheme gave in this period France complete control over the political and military fate of Mali no matter the political forces in place. After Ibrahim Boubacar Keita officially took office, the French, unsurprisingly, took over the leadership of EUTM with General Lecointre at its head. In short, they were in a capacity to seek their unilateral vision through a multilateral apparatus whose legitimacy was assured by the European Union.

France and Africanization of Resolution of Crisis

In 2012, the United Nations planned an Africanization policy for the resolution of the conflict in Mali. Resolutions 2056, 2071, and 2085 set the framework for this Africanization to resolve the Malian crisis. based on these resolutions the deployment of a mission was decided. It was the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA), created in January 2013 (Erforth, 2020, pp. 9-10). Countries like Australia and Luxembourg see that African forces under the AFISMA banner are essential to halt the extremist advance from the north of Mali (Ranconi, 2013, p. 83). Until December 2012, French decision-makers supported this initiative of Africanization of the Malian crisis. decision-makers

seemed reluctant to deploy French forces. this reluctance was due to the costs of a possible military intervention. but with the support of partners like the French decision-makers finally changed their position by launching operation serval. France waited for the support of partners to put the Africanization that was planned for the resolution of the crisis in the background (Erforth, 2020, pp. 9-10). From the start, operation serval was launched within the framework of multilateralism. French decision-makers have from the beginning preferred Europeanization to the Africanization of the Malian crisis. the objection to replacing Africanization with Europeanization was to protect European citizens in Mali and to conceal French unilateralism. French decision-makers also opted for Europeanization to avoid the discourse of French neo-colonialism in Africa. More generally, from a French point of view, Europeanization, like Africanization, is about burden-sharing: sharing the risks, and costs, of military operations in Africa with other EU member states (Chafer, 2016, p. 129). This initiative would reduce the interference of great powers like France in African affairs.

Europeanisation of France’s Military Strategy and “Task Force Takuba”

Europeanization remains the main axis of France’s military strategy in its former colonies since the De Gaulle era. In Mali, this Europeanization is illustrated by the establishment of EUTM Mali, specified above. “Task Force Takuba” is the continuation of this illustration under the Emmanuel Macron Government. The implantation of a policy of strategic autonomy has been underway since 2008 under Sarkozy’s power and continued under François Hollande Government (Direction de l’information Légale et Administrative, 2013, p. 88). But this strategic autonomy policy was reinforced under Emmanuel Macron Government with many initiatives with European counties. Task Takuba Force is one of the illustrations of European Strategic autonomies advocated by Emmanuel Macron (Weber, 2021). One of the main axes of Macron’s security policy was and still is to implement the autonomy of French and European military strategy. According to French decision-makers, strategic autonomy will allow France to take the initiative to carry out military operations to protect France’s interests inside and outside its borders (Direction de l’Information Légale et Administrative, 2013, p. 88).

Macron will bet on the military presence of France in Mali to increase the process of strategic autonomy of France and Europe. A part of the process of increasing the policy of strategic autonomy in Mali and SAHEL President Emmanuel Macron summoned the Heads of State of

the countries (Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Tchad, Mauritania) concerned in January 2020 (Weber, 2021). Following the summit organized in Pau in January 2020, Emmanuel Macron confirms his commitment to the implementation of multilateral military action which would be led by the European Task Force Takuba synonymous with a start for strategic autonomy. The main objective of Task Force Takuba is to support France's strategic military autonomy in Mali and the SAHEL through Barkhane Operation (Weber, 2021).

Task Force Takuba was imagined by Emmanuel Macron to make the world believe that it is a European action while it is a continuation of France's military strategy in the SAHEL (TF1 Info.fr, 2021). For Emmanuel Macron where France engages, Europe also engages. Macron's efforts were at all costs to Europeanize the French military engagement in Mali and the SAHEL with Task Force Takuba. For this reason, Macron called on Europeans to commit to the SAHEL region (Garcia, 2022). Europeanization has been a major element of France's African policy for more than twenty years because it makes it possible to reduce the economic and political cost of the French presence in Africa. but Macron accelerated the process with Task Force Takuba initiative at the Pau Summit on January 13, 2020, and at the N'djamena Summit on February 15, 2021 (Garcia, 2022).

The force is composed of French, Belgian, Danish, Estonian, Italian, Dutch, Portuguese, Romanian, Swedish, Hungarian and Czech. Presented like a multilateral action, "Task Force Takuba" reinforced the French strategy in its ancient colonial empire and Sahel region. Whereas in essence this operation cannot be considered multilateral but sooner unilateral since it is mainly composed of French soldiers (Laurent ve Elie, 2022). In this context and following an awareness policy led by Emmanuel Macron, 60 soldiers made up of French and Estonian soldiers were deployed in July 2020 (Weber, 2021). For French President Emmanuel Macron, the Task Force Takuba is also the beginning of the European special intervention force (Euronews.com, 2020). Emmanuel Macron has planned for this European Task Force Takuba to be led by France itself. This is how in February 2021 Emmanuel Macron announced an increase in the number (2000) of Task Force Takuba soldiers, including 500 French soldiers (Weber, 2021).

"Task Force Takuba" is again an attempt to pursue unilateral French interests under the European banner in response to increasing hostilities to sole French military holdings like Barkhane (Senat.fr, 2013). While

announcing Takuba, the French President, Emmanuel Macron, said that “with our European partners of EUTM we will initiate a profound transformation of our presence in the Sahel. He led a very strong diplomacy to mobilize the Europeans to join the task force Takuba which will play the French strategy in these former colonies. Macron’s goal is to reach 2000 men for the task force Takuba for the SAHEL region. In the same way, France is still mobilizing its European partners for the alliance for the Sahel (Eyes on Europe. eu, 2021). As part of this mobilization of its European partners for their commitments in Mali and Sahel François Hollande in one of his speeches announced that the security of the region was the security of Europe. In the same framework, Hollande said that the Malian crisis represents a threat to the security of Europe. This initiative set up by France for strategic reasons will be supported by Germany and the European Union (Vie Publique.fr, 2014). The different propagandistic statements by the French authorities about the jihadist security situation in Mali were intended to rally Europe to the French initiative in Mali and the Sahel. The French authorities put forward the “*European Defense Policy*” during this propaganda policy for the engagement of Europe on their side. Finally, the French authorities have convinced their European partners of their vision: to guarantee the security of Europe with a military engagement in the Sahel (Benedikt, 2020). Still in the same posture to intensify its influence on the Sahel and its former colonies, France launches again the project international coalition for the Sahel following the Pau Summit on January 13, 2020. The launch of the coalition was accompanied by the increase in the number of soldiers within Barkhane by providing 600 French soldiers as a way of mobilization for European countries (Enzo, 2021).

The Barkhane and task force Takuba are the main axes for this coalition. While the Barkhane and task force Takuba are initiated by France and composed mostly of French soldiers, this coalition will be under French command as a multilateralism that disguises French unilateralism (Ministère de l’Europe et des Affaires Etrangères, 2021). Despite the mobilization of Europeans around the French strategy in Mali and the Sahel, the results remain mixed in terms of security (Eyes on Europe. eu, 2021). All of this transformation will not be the end of operation Barkhane but rather a change in French military strategy in Mali.” In short, France will keep on taking advantage of multilateralism for its sole interests as Emmanuel Macron noted clearly in his speech that the French Army would be the spinal column of the task Force Takuba. That means that the 5100 French soldiers deployed in support of Barkhane will operate under Takuba Force (Patrick, 2021).

During a National Assembly meeting, Mayor General Eric Vidaux pointed that, *“The objective of the Takuba Task Force is to accompany the Malian forces towards operational autonomy and task force Takuba will allow Barkhane’s units to focus their efforts elsewhere”* (Assemblée Nationale. fr, 2021). A deeper analysis of the preceding quote shows us Takuba is nothing more than a mere extension of Barkhane. It is important to note that the task force Takuba is made up of 5100 soldiers deployed in the Barkhane framework. Enzo noted that *“This direct involvement of European nations in Operation Barkhane in ad-hoc formations and, more specifically, to Task Force Takuba illustrates some contemporary underlying trends within European armies”* According to we can remark that Takuba is just a disguise unilateralism operation (Enzo, 2021).

“Our goal is to reach 2,000 men on Takuba, with a French pillar of around 500 men,” Macron said, that means Barkhane will not end but be reorganized (Nicolas, 2021). As Takuba’s commander put it, *“The task force Takuba is a new component of operation Barkhane”* (Ministère des Armées, 2021). This means that task force Takuba is under the command of Barkhane. In a nutshell, the former is an integral part of the latter. It is due time to recall that Barkhane itself was an expansion of the Serval Operation. Let’s recall that task force Takuba was set in motion during the Pau summit—organized to redefine the French new strategy in Mali and Sahel—on January 13, 2020.

The disguise of French unilateralism was predefined in the military partnership agreement signed between Mali and France in 2014. France had planned its project of multilateralism in military cooperation signed in 2014. It is specified in the article that France can invite its European partners. According to this article, France called its Europeans to engage in Mali and SAHEL (Sénat, 2015, p. 1). Mali was under French and international pressure after the military coup during this period and the government of Mali has complied with French military strategic conditions of France. France informs the international community that France’s security is at stake in Mali. In this way, Jean-François Copé affirms that *“Intervention in Mali is just and necessary because it is the security of France which is at stake”* (Carayol, 2022). France defined the conditions and objectives in the general principles of the cooperation. Conscious of the huge costs and legal concerns it may lead to, France included the European Union as cover as it compels Malian authorities to withdraw the defense apparel to French supervision and control as stipulated in the 2014 Defense Treaty that gives France the possibility to bring in new partners of its choice. Mali, the field of this military

intervention was denied this privilege which in itself is a violation of the latter's sovereignty. That was a way to impose the French will on Mali (Senat.fr, 2014).

With the deterioration of Franco-Malian relations in 2020 the French military presence is no longer accepted by the military in power. The military in power has said no to the disguised multilateralism of France in Mali. Precisely Task Force Takuba was targeted by the military. The junta denounced the presence of Danish in Mali and even said that Danish soldiers were not welcome in Mali. In Bamako, Mali's transitional Prime Minister Choguel Kokalla Maïga did a declaration about Danish soldiers. He said, *"No one will come to Mali by proxy anymore. Before, that was done. Today, it's over."* (Africanews, 2022).

What are The Reasons for Disguising Unilateralism?

Several reasons can justify the shift in French military interventions overseas such as the failure of France's military policy in Africa, the controversial past of its military involvement in Africa, the cost of interventions, and the legality of its enterprises. Unilateral French intervention or actions had lost its legitimacy (Tobias, 2012). In the eyes of many observers, as proven by the United Nations Security Council Resolution (2056 and 2085), the French intervention in Mali was illegal. Illegal because resolution 2085 had provided for a regional intervention of ECOWAS, not a French intervention (Shuurman and Boeke, 2015, pp. 9-11). resolution 2085 provided for the deployment of AFISMA and not for French intervention (Conseil de sécurité des Nations Unies Résolution 2056, 2012). the interim government had also requested air support, but France intervened on the ground in violation of the interim president's request (France2, 2016).

The interim president had indeed invited France to support the Malian army in the air, but France had modified the letter and made an intervention on the ground which was not demanded by the interim president (Franceinfo, 2013). The Malian Prime Minister of the time, Diango Cissoko, in her evaluations after the intervention, used the statement *"We did not need an intervoention on land, the Malian army can overcome the jihadists on land"* (France2, 2016). It's possible to say that people of the countries that have undergone the French interventions haven't any trust toward French military policy. Malian people who applauded French intervention in 2013, hate French military presence today. There are many questions about the legitimacy of the French military intervention in Africa and Mali. The French soldiers are accused

of brutalities that claimed the lives of 22 Malian civilians in Bounty City on January 3, 2021 (Vincent ve Curil, 2021). Due to all those issues France wants to invent new sources of legitimacy for these interventions like the case of the Republic of Mali.

The Art of Legitimizing the Non-Legal

France has intervened unilaterally at least 30 times in its former colonies. These unilateral interventions were accompanied by self-legitimation practices. To carry out its gendarme strategy in its former colonies, France was obliged to abound its unilateral interventionist policy. Due to criticisms, France opted for a new interventionist policy that disguises its unilateralism and secures the support of international bodies such as the United Nations and the European Union. For these interventions, France must have the approval of the United Nations and partners like the European Union. even with the new multilateral method under the shadow of the United Nations and the European Union the French interventions remain unilateral looking at the facts in Mali (2013) in Ivory Coast (2011). Because Operation Serval has never been authorized in unanimity by the United Nations. With the help of his permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council, France has self-mandated. The Republic of Mali is an example of France's self-empowerment and this new interventionism (Tony ve Gordon, 2020). To intervene in Mali, France compelled local authorities, with a letter dictating French terms, and inviting them to accept the current format of his intervention i.e., sending ground forces. According to the facts French military intervention in Mali under Operation Serval in 2013 is not legitimate. It will be highlighted in the next line through the United Nations resolution on Mali. By deviating from the Security Council Resolution, Operation Serval was collectively led by the EU and France. All the resolutions passed concerning the Republic of Mali before the military operation were piloted by France without consultations with Malians.

Non-Illegal Military Policy

Resolution 2056 adopted on July 5, 2012, which is placed under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, doesn't authorize the deployment of French forces. Resolution 2056 orders only the deployment of an African Force (Conseil de sécurité des Nations Unies Résolution 2056, 2012). The resolution 2085 also provided for an African mission (International Support Mission in Mali under African leadership) for the Malian crisis. In resolution 2085, article 9 was clear about the African mission's

deployment and never talk about French intervention (Conseil de sécurité des Nations Unies Résolution 2056, 2012). But France with its status in UN Security Council and its influence in ECOWAS has planned its strategy. France showed to international bodies the weakness and incapacity of ECOWAS to lead any intervention at times. France used its allies within ECOWAS to be successful in this process. France prepared European Union for the intervention in the Republic of Mali. Before France called its European partners to act in Mali (Senat.fr, 2013). Benedikt Erforth analyzes French multilateralism according to which French decision-makers want to legitimize their unilateral interventions and reduce the costs of interventions with the help of their European partners.

The Minister of Defense Jean Yves Le Drian will go so far as to say that protecting French sovereignty is protecting the sovereignty of Europe (Benedikt, 2020). In August 2012 European Union launched a mission (EUCAP Sahel Niger) for the Sahel in Niger on the border with Mali, and this mission would ultimately be in Bamako. To be officially accompanied in Mali on the military level, France initiated in April 2012 a discussion for European Training Mission in Mali which would later be named EUTM Mali. The EUTM Mali commander confirmed in 2013 that strategic documents had been drawn up well with European partners before the 2013 intervention (Senat.fr, 2013). François Lecointre, a French general, was the first commander of EUTM. This appointment shows the influence of France within EUTM (Eyes on Europe. eu, 2021). All of those shows that France planned the disguise of unilateralism with its partners in Europe from the beginning. According to Bruno Charbonneau, multilateralism is only a façade because the European Union and the United Nations depend on the French army (Bruno, 2008). EUTM and Task Force Takuba carries the European flag, but the military means of this Force are mainly French. This shows once again that French unilateralism is disguised by European multilateralism (Euronews.com, 2022).

France has legitimized its unilateral intervention by inserting an international coalition composed of the United Nations and its European partners. In its new multilateral approach, France is supported by a unilateral military policy. France's upstream multilateralist policy with the European Union accompanies its neocolonialist policy in Mali from Operation Serval through Operation Barkhane to Operation Force Takuba. Despite the reluctance of some European Union members, the Minister of Defense of France conducted negotiations with his European counterparts not only to disguise his unilateralism but also to lower the

operational costs through those partners.

European Union accompanied France in its illegitimate operation. General Grégoire de Saint-Quentin commander of Operation Serval in Bamako in 2013 said that the European Union's commitment was instrumental in the success of Operation Serval. The disguise of French unilateralism during Operation Serval is the interest of both France and the European Union in Mali and the Sahel region. The Sahelo-Saharan basin is a strategic area in terms of oil and energy sources for France and European countries. Nigerian uranium and unexploited oil sources in the basin of Taoudeni (North of Mali) are interested in both France and its partners. The Republic of Mali, due to its geographical location is a strategically significant country for French interests. Strategists who have prepared French military presence in Mali declared their views in a book (*Livre Blanc 2013*). They put forward the theory of terrorism and the failed state to achieve the predefined objective which was to establish a military presence in the Sahelo-Saharan basin through the Republic of Mali (Senat.fr, 2013).

When we look at that scenario, it is easier to realize that France has an important responsibility for the weakness of the Malian state. The French authorities have never singled out the Tuareg rebellion in Mali and never condemn this rebellion. It is possible to say that France approves of this rebellion's independence ambitions. Not surprisingly during the intervention France collaborated with Tuareg rebels to the detriment of the Malian army. To intervene, France let the continuation of disorder in Mali since 2012 and never condemn Tuareg rebels. France started pushing for military intervention without designing an agenda aimed at eradicating the Tuareg rebellion which remains an actor of insurrection in the Malian conflict. This shows that France had its agenda (Sybille, 2013). France's military strategy has been one of substitution. Instead of training the Malian and Sahelian armies, the Serval and Barkhane operations have been substituted. As a result, these operations are an opportunity for France's military strategy in the Sahel. France has brought its European partners and even the Sahelian countries into its military strategy. This strategy is treated today as occupationist and neo-colonialist on the other. This French strategy challenges the legitimacy of local armies and Sahelian states.

This has created frustration among certain peoples and authorities in place, as in Mali, where the transitional government is opting for a rereading of the defense agreements that bind the two countries. The

objective is to find another partner that will not call into question the legitimacy of the country. Another side some countries of the SAHEL region thought that operation wasn't a success (Michael, 2021).

Lack of Positive Outcome of Operations

Looking at the history of relations between France and its former colonies at the military level, the defense agreements have never led to positive issues. The defense agreements have most of the time protected the African leaders who defended French interests in former colonies (Luckham, 2022). Even if French President Emmanuel Macron denies the negative results of the Barkhane operation, it is obvious that this operation has not been a success. Given the security situation in recent years, it is difficult to confirm the success of the operations (RFI.fr, 2022). Mali's army spokesman Souleymane Demebele even supported this lack of success of the French operation. He said that the presence of this operation did not prevent the militarization of the armed groups. He also added that he believes that there has been no military solution and that in his opinion terrorism has engulfed the whole country (Parstoday.com, 2022). Despite the 6 years of Barkhane, it is known that the groups are well organized.

The 5,100 soldiers of Barkhane have not prepared the return of the Malian state in the northern region where there is insecurity. The northern areas are still under the control of armed groups (Aceled. Data, 2020). This is costing civilians dearly, with 6000 civilians killed in 2020 alone (Don. M, 2021). The 6 years of Operation Barkhane have neither reduced insecurity nor prevented attacks targeting civilians. In January 2021 a UN report indicate that Operation Barkhane strike in Mali targeted civilians in Bounty village (Franceinfo, 2021). Also during the Serval Operation civilians were killed by French soldiers. Abdoulaye Maiga, a Malian farmer lost their two children during Serval Operation (France2, 2013). While the armed groups were far from the Malian capital at the arrival of Barkhane with the presence of Barkhane the insurgents are today 100 km or less from the capital of Mali. The blunders undergone by the civilians confirms on the one hand the lack of positive result of the Barkhane operation. These blunders have created frustrations within Malian civil society. The human rights section of MINUSMA (United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali) has thoroughly investigated and confirmed the blunder that targeted a wedding ceremony Bounty. Although Barkhane was announced to support the local armies, its six years of operation, and local armies are

still helpless and weak, and insecurity increases. despite the presence of Barkhane, more than 2000 civilians were killed in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger in 2020 (Voaafrigue, 2022). The training provided has not been up to par and the local armies have remained subordinate to the French soldiers (MINUSMA, 2021).

Share The Intervention's Costs

On financial and material levels, it would have been difficult to intervene alone in 2013 Mali. According to Tony Chafer and Gordon D. Cumming's analysis, France lacked substantial financial and human resource capabilities to carry alone an intervention. Therefore, it needed to share the cost. The process of the operation shows us that France was not able to come to terms with financial and human costs (Tony ve Gordon, 2020). According to Michel Goya, a French military officer, French operations in Mali and the Sahel cost 1 billion euros per year. He admits that financially they are very expensive in France (Tellerreport.com, 2022).

The support of its partner, namely Canada and the United States, was needed during the first days of intervention. As the intervention went on, the European Union's support was secured as well. The United States and Canada provided drones and enormous airborne logistics along with intelligence. The United States alone contribution was estimated at around \$50 million in the early days of the intervention. Many European Union members such as Germany, Belgium, Spain, Denmark, and the Netherlands supported Operation Serval logistically (helicopters, and transport planes offered by Belgium) and militarily. Germany sent 150 troops in support of Operation Serval. Collectively, European Union members have supported Operation Serval under the name of EUTM Mali. According to a report from the National Assembly, the Spanish, Italian, and Belgian support was decisive (Assemblée Nationale, 2013). In 2013 the costs of EUTM amounted to 12.3 million euros (Eyes on Europe. eu, 2021). Whether it is with Serval, Barkhane, or Takuba human and financial costs of the operations would be a heavy strain for France without the partners' support. When it was created in 2013, the EUTM Mali has 547 staff in Mali. In 2011 the European Union has already supported actions under the auspices of France by releasing a budget of 663 million euros for Mali and its two neighbors (Mauritania and Niger).

With 53%, a sum of around 358 million euros, Mali was the first beneficiary of the credits allocated by the European Union. According to the report of the National Assembly among these allocations, the construction of

the site which houses the French soldiers of Operation Serval and the European contingents cost more than 23 million and a half euros. Due to these allocations, European Union support France to impose the election of Malians in 2013. According to the Minister of Armed Forces Florence Parly, financially speaking, France plans on taking advantage of the European Defense's 8 billion euros fund; thus, making the case of the French incapacity to cover by themselves the cost of their intervention in Mali. In this respect, multilateralism becomes an alternative to the French financial debacle (Ministère des Armées, 2021). As was the case with the serval, since 2018 European countries such as England and Spain have provided material support to Operation Barkhane. the USA has also provided logistical support (Eyes on Europe. eu, 2021). according to Enzo, the Takuba force initiative is a way for France to lighten the burden of its military commitment to the SAHEL. This European commitment will allow France to share certain responsibilities with its European partners (Enzo, 2021).

Conclusion

Tony Chafer and Gordon D. Cumming said that France is pursuing a multilateral policy in the Sahel. Seeing the developments and facts in France's military policy in Mali and Sahel Chafer and Gordon said true. I want to add that this multilateralism is to disguise his unilateralism. The bases of this multilateralism were rooted in the Operation Serval process. The Franco-European Union force called Force Takuba is nothing more than a disguise for Operation Serval (2013) and Operation Barkhane (2014). Because the soldiers deployed during these two operations (Serval and Barkhane) constitute the European multilateral Force Takuba and the command will be under France's authority. 5100 troops of Barkhane joined the Force Takuba. An Africanization had been planned for the resolution of the crisis but France favored a European multilateral policy that will evolve under its command. France continues to maintain its unilateral influence under the cover of European multilateralism.

The preparations for the elections in France pushed the French decision-makers to speak of the withdrawal of the French troops and that this hole would be filled by the European force Takuba. But it should be noted that France intervened to settle militarily in Mali to reinforce its military presence in the region and also to watch over these interests in this region. With the military withdrawal dominantly, France does not intend to lose its influence in Mali and the Sahel region.

On the other side, despite several attempts at cooperation in matters of

security on the African continent with European partners, the France multilateralist initiative remains to fail. This is why in recent years we have seen French unilateral interventions in Africa such as in Côte d'Ivoire (2011) and Mali (2013). But after France always tried to involve its European partners in its operations as we saw in the case of Force Task Takuba in Mali. But involvement is still problematic. *"We are convinced that we will not solve the military problem"* declared Czech Foreign Minister Tomas Petricek. Such a statement shows the lack of results of European multilateralism imposed by France for its strategic interest (Youssef, 2020). in addition to Europeanizing its military strategy in the SAHEL, France is trying to implement the autonomy of the European strategy through Operation Barkhane and the Task Force Takuba in the Sahel. During his term as President of the European Union, Macron tried to highlight the autonomy of the French and European strategy. For this, he has sensitized the leaders of the SAHEL countries for the establishment of a European force in the SAHEL. By engaging its European partners alongside you in its military policy, France wants to display its greatness in its former colonies and within the European Union and International area.

Declaration

In all processes of the article, TESAM's research and publication ethics principles were followed.

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