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The C	Between Humanitaria Case Study of French (Non	n Aid and Colonialism -) Intervention in Iraq and	Mali.

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This is the reflection, analysis and opinion of Emin Eminagić, M.A. in Nationalism Studies, Central European University, Budapest, and Viktoria Potapkina, M.A. International Economic and Political Studies, Charles University, Prague, during their internship at the Centre for Security Studies (CSS). These opinions are not expressed on behalf of CSS.

Introduction

Peacekeeping missions in today's public discourse are perceived as agents of neocolonialism, and thus seen as widely unpopular. Although one cannot simply assume that there are no reasons for international interventions in conflict areas, as a real need to protect and help the civilian population might exist, upon scrutinizing the foreign policies of some world powers one can witness elements that are none other than neocolonialist in nature. Nevertheless, it remains a sensitive topic, which depending on the prism of the viewer can be interpreted as neocolonial exploitation of resources and labor force, or, on the other hand, seen as stimulating the local economy and building of local capacities for a functioning state.

This paper is designed as a comparative case study of France's (non) involvement in two regions — Iraq in 2003 and Mali in 2013. The time frame of ten years allows for a retrospective analysis of the possible decisions influencing French politicians to make the decision to not intervene in Iraq. The case of Mali is a rather new event and thus requires immediate attention to understand the underlying reasons for military action. Such a case study presents an intriguing opportunity for comparison. In regards to the case of the intervention in Iraq, France had immediate economic interests in the country, however, it, to this day, remains the most vocal opponent of the intervention, regardless of the fact that a large number of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members participated in one way or another in the Operation Iraqi Freedom. In the case of Mali, France does not have any apparent economic interests in the region; however, it is the only NATO state carrying out the military operation in the country unilaterally as of writing of this paper. However it is not our intention to provide definitive answers on certain points of involvement and

non-intervention, nor mark processes, but rather to provide a grassroot analysis on the the case study of Mali that would potentially best explain particular aspects of theoretical implications.

With the aim of presenting and analyzing two different choices of French foreign policy, this paper will make use of the tools of comparative analysis in order to construct an interpretivist case study. Academic books and articles, direct speeches of involved politicians, various economic statistical data, opinion polls, as well as United Nations (UN) Reports will be used in the analysis. It will look at theoretical ramifications as well as empirical data from relevant research institutions, using data gathered from United Nations Security Council (UNSC) reports regarding peace building in post-conflict zones as an initial starting point.

Communities emerging from conflict mostly face difficulties in maintaining the peace due to lack of capacities. As the Security Council and the Committee for Peace Building (CPB) point out, the identification, development and use of national capacities must be a priority in the aftermath of conflict¹. According to the report, this will help in the development of a sustainable peace.

As will be shown with the example of the French unilateral decision to intervene in the African country of Mali, certain aspects of neocolonial behavior not only on behalf of France but also Mali's neighboring countries exists². There seems to be no apparent interest in building local capacities in Mali. However, it seems that within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) there emerged a general interest in preserving the economic status quo of the region, only after France decided to withdraw its troops from Mali. Despite this fact, this paper will still aim to illustrate the benefits states participating in peacekeeping missions can have, but also the short-comings this

2 See: http://news.ecowas.int/presseshow.php?nb=023&lang=en&annee=2013 (last accessed: May 22, 2013.)

¹ See: UN Security Council Report A/63/881–S/2009/304

phenomenon can face in countries where they are being exercised. It will aim to show the stark difference between the choice to intervene as opposed to stay out of the incidence.

Key Theoretical Concepts

The theoretical part of this paper will begin by looking at definitions of neocolonialism. Neocolonialism is a broad term used by many authors, which generally describes dominant practices of developed countries in social, economic and cultural terms in developing countries. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language describes neocolonialism as a "policy whereby a major power uses economic and political means to perpetuate or extend its influence over underdeveloped nations or areas". Despite the post-World War II decolonization, former colonial powers are continuing to implement existing and past international economic arrangements in the former colonies, thus maintaining control over them⁴. A critique of neocolonialism may contain *de facto* colonialism, as well as a critique of disproportionate involvement of contemporary capitalist business in the economy of a developing country, where multinational corporations exploit the natural resources and people of former colonies. Such economic control is inherently neocolonial and, therefore, similar to imperial and hegemonic colonial control practiced by empires such as Great Britain and France and other European countries between the 16th and 20th centuries.

As this paper deals with Mali, a former colony of France, it is important to provide an explanation of the term *Françafrique*. This term constitutes the continued and close relationship between France and its former African colonies. The term came into use in 1955 when President Felix Houphouet-Boigny, of the Ivory Coast, emphasized positive social cultural and economic Franco-African relations. Later it would be applied by critics of neocolonialism to describe an unequal and unbalanced international relationship. The term is derived from an essay by Francois-Xavier Verschave titled

3 See: *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, Fourth Edition.

⁴ See: Hobsbawm, Eric, J. Globalisation, Democracy and Terrorism.

French Africa: The Longest Scandal of the Republic, published in 1998, which provided a critical analysis of neocolonial policies towards countries of Africa.

Another distinction to be made regards the terms peacekeeping and peacebuilding. The UN's definition of peacebuilding describes it as structures, which promote sustainable peace through addressing root causes of conflict and supporting local capacities for conflict resolution. It covers several exercises and tasks, from disarmaments of factions in conflict to the rebuilding of political and economic, as well as judicial and civil society institutions. Peacekeeping, is defined as the multidimensional preservation of peace, especially through the supervision of international forces in a truce between hostile sides. This paper will use these terms interchangeably, as in this particular case they define the same aspects⁵.

Institutional perceptions of peacekeeping missions

In order to gain a clearer picture of the peacekeeping mission phenomenon, one must look at the perception of peacekeeping missions within institutions such as the United Nations. The Report of the Secretary General of the UN on peacebuilding after immediate conflict⁶ states:

After major violence has ceased, challenges the administration and population are facing are substantial. The situation is fluid, peace is often fragile, and the need for human capacities is larger than anticipated. Threats to peace are numerous during this early stage, but so are chances to start valuable actions in the beginning.⁷

This report also states that peace building is primarily the responsibility of national actors; the international community, however, can have an important role. According to the report, in too many cases this chance has been missed. From time to time, there were successful attempts in giving a response that would yield in tangible results on the ground. Often it took several months to establish

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⁵ For the complete definitions see: http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pbso/pbun.shtml (last accessed: May 20, 2013)

⁶ Security Council Secretary General's Report UN-a A/63/881-S/2009/304

⁷ Ibid.

government functions, or until basic services were available to everyone. In some cases, several years passed until the International Community could consolidate their efforts under a joint strategic vision. Capacities and resources are usually insufficient to cover the mandatory and urgent needs on the ground. Despite the fact that resources are limited and usually insufficient, fight is frequent to focus on the limited resources and the limited set of agreed-upon results, which would increase the commitment to a peaceful future. Within the International Community, the UN plays a significant role in peace building. At the same time, the UN's system is one of the several crucial stakeholders, which works in support of post-conflict countries, and the coherency of a wide international effort is a crucial item in helping to achieve a sustainable peace. Partnerships and coordination between regional and international actors are imperative, as no independent actor possesses all the necessary capacities to cover needs in any of the priority areas in peacekeeping.

It is necessary now to look at some of the annual expenses of peacekeeping missions. According to the Institute for International Conflict Research in Heidelberg, Germany (HIIK)⁸, there are currently 369 active armed conflicts in the world, with 114.000 peacekeeping troops, estimated with an expense of 7.23 billion U.S. Dollars of the International Community. The costs for some peacekeeping missions from Burundi to the Democratic Republic of Congo ranged from 330 million USD to 1 billion USD⁹. The peacekeeping mission to Sudan (UNMIS), in 2012, during its maximum capacity, had a spending of 5.76 billion USD, which is six times as much from the first estimate of 1 billion. What is interesting regarding the mission in Sudan is that it counted 2,837 local civil employees during its maximum capacity; this number decreased to 2,803. It is, nevertheless, one of the largest civil operations with the least number of casualties in recent history¹⁰.

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⁸ See: http://www.hiik.de/en/ (last accessed: May 20, 2013)

⁹ Cited in: Cranhan, Michael et al., *Economic Impact of Peacekeeping*. 2006. 10 lbid.

Case Studies

The paper will now turn to its case studies, that of the French intervention in Mali last December, as well as the international intervention in Iraq ten years ago. Currently in Mali, there are no UN Peacekeeping missions, however signs indicate that this can change in the near future. In Iraq, on the other hand, with the withdrawal of US troops, an international peacekeeping mission remains on the ground, providing support to multinational companies, which work on infrastructure. This part of the paper will focus on a short analysis of the situation in Iraq and in Mali. It will attempt to answer the question of whether there is or was a real need for the protection of the population and a need for peace building in these countries, or were these cases of neocolonial practices.

Iraq

Operation Iraqi Freedom, launched on March 20, 2003, managed to succeed in ousting Saddam Hussein from power, but consequently plunged Iraq into a decade of instability. To this day France remains in strong opposition, refusing to participate in the coalition that deployed more than a million soldiers. Furthermore, it has wide support of the population. According to a recent exclusive poll, conducted in March of this year by the YouGov Institute for HuffPost France and Itélé, 46 percent of French respondents see the involvement of their country in the conflict to be "as much as necessary". Only 7 percent see it as insufficient. 27 percent, however, see even the current involvement of France as excessive.¹¹

At the onset of the intervention, Dominique de Villepin, then Foreign Minister of France, gave what became a benchmark speech in international politics at the UN on March 19, 2003. His speech was applauded from all ends of the French political spectrum and gained the very rare full national support, when he declared France's refusal to support the war in Iraq. Villepin stated that,

11Survey Report Barometre Politique Mars 2013. Accessed May 21, 2013.

http://cdn.yougov.com/cumulus_uploads/document/j0f0xbxgq5/Barom%C3%A8tre_Politique_Mars_13.pdf

... for France war can only be the last resort, and collective responsibility, the rule. Whatever our aversion for Saddam Hussein's cruel regime, that holds true for Iraq and for all the crises that we will have to confront together.¹²

Villepin warned those who "choose to use force and think they can resolve the world's complex problems through swift and preventive action," that there is "a need for determined action over time"; he addressed those "who hope to eliminate the dangers of proliferation through armed intervention in Iraq" that France regrets that they are "depriving themselves of a key tool for other crises of the same type"; and finally to those "who think that the scourge of terrorism will be eradicated through the action in Iraq", Villepin rightfully pointed out that "they run the risk of failing in their objective. The irruption of force in this area which is so unstable can only exacerbate the tensions and divisions on which the terrorists feed" France was not only critical of the intervention and its proponents; it was able to propose its own vision in regards to what was to be done. Pointing out that humanitarian assistance was of vital importance, and calling for this imperative to prevail over the differences of the various countries involved, Villepin said that,

Subsequently, it will be necessary to build peace. No country by itself has the means to build Iraq's future. In particular, no State can claim the necessary legitimacy. It is from the United Nations alone that the legal and moral authority can come for such an undertaking. Two principles must guide our action: respect for the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq; and the preservation of her sovereignty.¹⁴

Ten years later, this war is still perceived as a hazardous one. The war in Iraq left 4,000 people dead on the American side and more than 100,000 on the Iraqi side, with the United States hardly deriving any strategic benefits from the war. Not to mention the questionable feasibility of the establishment of a genuine and sustainable democracy in a Middle Eastern country. Furthermore, the French public severely judges the war. Although France did not hesitate to commit troops in other conflicts,

14 Ibid.

^{12 &}quot;Speech by M. Dominique de Villepin, Minister of Foreign Affairs, to the United Nations Security Council, New York 19.03.2003 - France in the United Kingdom - La France Au Royaume-Uni." Accessed May 21, 2013. http://www.ambafrance-uk.org/Speech-by-M-Dominique-de-Villepin,4917.html.

¹³ Ibid.

specifically in Libya, Cote d'Ivoire and Mali, over the past ten years, a striking 45 percent of respondents of the YouGov poll support the French military strategy, despite the dangerous and threats posed to the lives of French soldiers. ¹⁵

Military interventions and peacekeeping missions pose a moral dilemma for modern states. On the one hand, engaging in the higher cause of building a better world for citizens of other countries, and ensuring their safety and development of the country's social and economic aspects provides a better global future. However, should a country be willing to risk the lives of their own citizens while seeking the protection of others? How can the state leaders justify an intervention to their own citizens and voters? There indeed needs to be some degree of justifiable gain from their actions. From this regard, one cannot but ask – was the conflict in Iraq uninteresting to France from the economic or political perspective? To understand this, it is necessary to take a look at some pre-intervention economic figures.

Before 2003 France controlled over 22.5 percent of Iraq's imports, with total trade under the Oil-For-Food program totaling 3.1 billion US dollars since 1996. According to the UN, it is the third largest trading partner of Iraq. France became Iraq's largest European trading partner in 2001, with approximately 60 French companies doing an estimated 1.5 billion US dollars in trade with Baghdad that year. Total Fina Elf, France's largest oil company, had negotiated an extensive oil contract to develop oil fields in southern Iraq, which contain an estimated 25 percent of the country's oil reserves, which approximates to about 26 billion barrels of oil. In 2002, the non-war price per barrel of oil amounted to 25 US dollars, making the gross return almost 650 billion US dollars. Another French company, Alcatel, a major telecommunications firm, was at the time negotiating a 76 million US dollar contract to rehabilitates Iraq's telephone system, while Renault SA, a French automobile

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¹⁵ Survey Report Barometre Politique Mars 2013. Accessed May 21, 2013. http://cdn.yougov.com/cumulus_uploads/document/j0f0xbxgq5/Barom%C3%A8tre_Politique_Mars_13.pdf

company, sold farming equipment worth 75 million US dollars to Iraq in 2001. France was also the country that received the most objections lodged against its export contracts within the Oil-For-Food program. Additionally, French companies were involved in signing contracts worth more than 150 million US dollars that were suspected of being linked to military operations. Examples of such would be refrigerated trucks that can be used as storage facilities and mobile laboratories for biological weapons, detailed in UN documents. Furthermore, Iraq owed France approximately 6 billion US dollars in foreign debt, accumulated from arms sales in the 1970s and 1980s. According to estimates made by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), France was responsible for more than 13 percent of Iraq's arms imports in the years between 1981 and 2001. ¹⁶

An alternative, political, motive can be viewed in this regard as well. A popular Europeanist, or perhaps even neo-Gaulist ideology exists amongst the French political elites. They see the globalizing world becoming largely Americanized and being drawn under the American hegemony. To avoid the entire world being subject to the American mentality, customs and power, Europe must remain multicultural, multipolar and multilingual, providing France with a key position to act as the leading, alternative pole. This easily translates into a form of opposition to policies of the United States that have an imperial air about it. Over the course of development of the intervention and missions in Iraq, France has firmly held its stance, and supported only joint UN decisions and actions in this regard, playing its much anticipated role of the power with an alternative, citizens-friendly, humanitarian character.

Mali

Different from the situation in Iraq, France decided to intervene in Mali after soldiers, under the leadership of Captain Amadou Sanogo, instigated a coup d'état against President Amadou Toumani

^{16 &}quot;Facts on Who Benefits From Keeping Saddam Hussein In Power." Accessed May 21, 2013. http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2003/02/facts-on-who-benefits-from-keeping-saddam-hussein-in-power.

Toure on March 21, 2012, six weeks after the presidential elections. The constitution was suspended, and rebels took over the Malian capital, Bamako. The insurrection was preceded by several citizens' protests against the lack of government intervention regarding Touareg attacks in the north of the country, as well as the lack of military equipment. Two days after the battle between soldiers loyal to the government and the presidential guard on one side and the rebels on the other, the latter have taken over Bamako. After these events, French President Francois Hollande, on January 11th 2013, stated that France would intervene in the conflict in Mali. Shortly after, this action became the target of public criticism. Stephen Smith states in his text¹⁷ that this was disappointing as Francafrique is the subject of self-loathing of France in the last decade. Furthermore, he points out that France was one of the most vocal opponents to the 'war on terror'. This opens a new question after all recriminations – can the French be considered neocolonial? Ten years ago France clearly addressed the UN Security Council opposing the invasion of Iraq. Dominique de Villepin said:

Let us draw lessons from a decade of lost wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya. In Mali we will fight blindly for lack of clear war goals. We shall fight alone for lack of a Malian counterpart. Their president was ousted last March, their Prime Minister last December, the divided Malian army has fallen apart, who do we rely on?¹⁸

The Villepin doctrine came true. French troops started operations with areal bombardments of Islamist forts in the north of Mali, a desert twice the size of the United Kingdom. One helicopter pilot, 26 year- old Caporal Cedric Charenton was killed in Pamiers on March 11, 2013; he was deployed since January 25, 2013. This event ended France's zero-dead streak, like in the Libyan intervention in 2011.

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¹⁷ Stephen W. Smith on the French intervention in. "In Search of Monsters." *London Review of Books*, February 7, 2013.

¹⁸ Villepin cited in Stephen W. Smith on the French intervention in Mali. "In Search of Monsters." *London Review of Books,* February 7, 2013.

In contrast to Libya, the situation in Mali requires sending in ground units. French soldiers were flown into Bamako – at first 750, followed by an additional 2,500 soldiers. They were then transported 700km north-east towards their first confrontation, where they defeated the Islamists in Konna. However, in the evening of January 16, 2013, al-Mulathameen ('the masked brigade'- an Islamist katiba or combat unit based in Mali, and which has decided to respond and maybe even signalize other Jihadist groups that it is involved) has taken over one of the greater gas production sites at the Algerian-Libyan border. When the Algerian army refused to negotiate, and instead attacked the facility, 29 Islamists and at least 38 hostages were killed, all but one of which were foreigners. For France this meant that Hollande could sharpen his defense. Last October, he clearly stated that assistance for Mali in it's struggle against the Islamists would not exceed logistical support, and was very vocal on not sending troops into the conflict. However a question arises, why the change of opinion? According to a higher military attaché the situation in Mali is worsening with the 'speed of light', as UN's West African intervention forces failed to be established as planned by September 2013. The temporary Malian government established last March, negotiated with the Touaregs, in Burkina Faso, trying to encourage an alliance between the groups in order to battle two Jihadist factions active in the north of the country, from which one is West African, and the other a partner of al-Qaeda. Negotiations continued on December 4, 2012, but only after a month the ceasefire broke, and the Islamist Touaregs continued the fight together with the foreign Jihadists. After the Jihadists decided to take over the airport close to Mopti, which would provide them with logistical support, France unilaterally decided to intervene.

As justified this reason might seem, one needs to take a step back and analyze what implications this has for France, and whether the situation is indeed an example of neocolonial behavior for economic gain. This still remains a very cloudy picture, as shortly

after France's intervention, ECOWAS issued several reports on the situation¹⁹, stating reasons for economic stability for a coherent consolidation of the countries in the region. This in turn might lead one to argue that an international peace effort could be necessary in order to control the situation in the post-conflict period, as not to prevent the occurrence of dominance driven practices from other countries in the region. This is not only important in avoiding the afore mentioned, but also serves in stabilizing the country in a joint effort, with international aid. But still the question remains, why the unilateral decision in intervening? Stephen Smith provides an insight into understanding the situation:

In the days when France was a staunchly Gaullist country, observers tended to explain whatever internationally jarring decisions were taken in Paris in terms of delusions of grandeur. They were not always wrong. But they rarely commented on the 'Franco-African state' (a term coined by the anthropologist Jean-Pierre Dozon), which then existed in all but name as a result of the slow-motion decolonisation orchestrated by Paris and African elites. In France, most people viewed the African 'protectorate' as a safeguard for their nation's ranking in a world now regrettably dominated by Anglo-Saxons. Other Western countries, given the broader Cold War rivalry, were happy to outsource Francophone Africa, then the least important part of a continent of minor strategic importance, to a willing if occasionally overzealous 'gendarme'. Depending on what counts as military intervention, France changed the course of history by force in sub-Saharan Africa about thirty times between 1945 and 1990. It monopolised nearly two-thirds of the trade with Francophone Africa while its worldwide market share stood at 7 per cent. Former Belgian colonies included, Paris claimed to speak for as many as twenty African states, which in turn voted for France en bloc at the UN. 20

According to Smith, towards the end of the Cold War, the preconditions to create a new French-African state, would actually allow France, a mid-level power at that time, to override commercial interests of other Western powers. If this was related to the French intervention in Mali, Hollande (as Smith describes him the 'big man in power in Bamako'), in turn could secretly end up financing the Socialist Party of France, providing a good living for thousands

19 For the complete report see: http://www.comm.ecowas.int/sec/index.php?id=about_a&lang=en (last accessed: May 22, 2013.)

²⁰ Stephen W. Smith on the French intervention in. "In Search of Monsters." *London Review of Books*, February 7, 2013.

of French expatriates in Mali, securing the country's mineral and agricultural resources which would be in the possession of French companies, with diplomatic practices falling in line to a French lead.

However, this is far from the truth, as there has not been anyone in Bamako who had 'deep pockets' since 1991, when an uprising for democracy ousted General Moussa Traore. Secondly, six thousand foreigners in Mali are dual nationals, mostly Franco-Malian. Finally, what natural resources remain (mostly cotton and gold), are not in French possession. The country's budget, of which foreign donors fund nearly half, roughly estimates funding for a European town with a population of a few hundred thousand, whereas Mali's population counts only 16 million. This leads us back to the initial question, on why France intervened into this conflict, despite the fact that there were no clear economic benefits as in Iraq. As the conflict in Mali continues, further developments occur, as France intends to keep 1000 troops in the region for counter-terrorist activities, as the UN continues to debate the possibility of an international peace effort.

Concluding Remarks

Peacekeeping as such is an extremely multidimensional issue, one, which a large array of authors have written upon. Various perspectives exist, approaching the topic from many angles and schools of thought. The analysis presented in this paper approaches the topic from a very particular and, perhaps, controversial angle. It, however, in no way claims to be the only one. What the paper humbly intended to achieve was to propose to look at the issues at hand from yet another perspective. It aimed to open the debate on the issues and encourage further works on the topic to broaden and expand the analysis of the situation. The missions in Iraq and Mali as such are controversial affairs. French (non) involvement and foreign policy can be seen as a dense and

intricate topic, with many views on its rightness. The operation in Iraq provides a retrospective insight, ten years down the line. The operation in Mali, a very recent case, needs much more data and analysis, which is not yet fully available, and perhaps will not be for another couple years. This paper hopes to have opened up a discussion in the academic and professional spheres on the topic of peacekeeping interventions.

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