Military Intervention in Africa: French and US Approaches Compared

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Recent conflicts in Africa have demonstrated the need for foreign military intervention to prevent violent extremist organizations (VEOs) from expanding their areas of operations and attacking vulnerable states and populations. Since 2013, France has undertaken *direct military intervention*; deploying a force in *Opération Serval* that defeated VEO insurgents in Mali,[1] as well as launching *Opération Barkhane* in the Sahel to monitor and interdict VEOs and armed militants spilling over from Libya's state collapse and Mali's feeble recovery from conflict. In addition, France has trained forces from Chad and other countries that have operated alongside French units in interventions. In contrast, the United States opted for an *indirect military intervention*, establishing the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) in Djibouti in 2002 and spending more than a billion dollars training, equipping, deploying and sustaining African intervention forces mainly for peace enforcement in Somalia in Eastern Africa and training and equipping forces in the Sahel region of West Africa to prevent VEO invasions. The US has also used Special Forces and remotely piloted aircraft (RPAs) to assist in the fight against VEOs without engaging in major combat.

France and the United States have been among the leading countries when it comes to military intervention. This is because of both countries' relatively high level of global interests and high level of military capabilities as well as the willingness of most of their presidents to use military force. However, when context is considered, the nature of French and American military interventions has been quite different, which leads to a number of propositions. First of all, French and US interventions have taken place in different countries where their respective interests have been high. Second, *direct interventions with military force* have occurred in those places where those interests have been attacked or have been judged to be under imminent threat of attack by presidents inclined for various reasons to use force. Direct interventions have not occurred where interests may have been high but where the threat of attack on those interests has been moderate or low. The one exception to this proposition is the US humanitarian intervention in Somalia in 1993; however, the United States has not repeated such an intervention after its 1993 "Black Hawk Down" fiasco in which 18 US service personnel were killed in a mission that was not in the US national interest.[2]

Third, once France or the United States has intervened, other capable countries (including the United States and France) have not intervened but instead have lent support. For instance, France has a base in Djibouti from where it assisted the government of Djibouti in combating rebels in 1999-2001; however, it chose not to intervene in the 2000s to assist in the fight against VEOs in Eastern Africa. Instead, it chose the Sahel, because the threat to its interests there escalated in 2013, placing thousands of French nationals in Mali under threat of capture. It did not intervene in Eastern Africa because its interests there were not under imminent threat of attack and because the United States staged an *indirect military intervention* against VEOs there first by establishing CJTF-HOA in 2002. France instead chose to work through the European Union (EU) to aid the African Union (AU), the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the training of the new Somali military.[3]

The US invested hundreds of millions of dollars in the Pan-Sahel Initiative followed by the Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP), including the training and equipping of the security forces of Mali, Niger, and Mauritania.[4] Therefore, it could have been expected that US forces would have intervened in Mali in 2012 or 2013 to assist the beleaguered national military. However, the United States did not intervene in 2012 when jihadists took control of northern Mali and stood by in 2013, while France - which had greater interests that were under attack - intervened. Instead, the United States provided logistical and other support. Evidently, sunk costs were not a great concern in US calculations.

The US *indirectly intervened militarily* when it established CJTF-HOA in Djibouti at Camp Lemonier—a French military base - in response to the attacks of September 11, 2001 and also because Al Qaeda had attacked US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 and the USS Cole in Yemen in 2000. The declaration of the "Global War on Terror" led to a surge of military activity and to the US Department of Defense (DOD) and US Central Command (CENTCOM) deciding to use CJTF-HOA to work against the Al Qaeda threat to Eastern Africa and the Arabian Peninsula and the growing ties among jihadists. The resources committed to Eastern Africa were smaller than those in Afghanistan - where the 9/11 attacks were planned (and Iraq) - from where attacks were "anticipated". Also, the United States was unwilling to intervene directly in Somalia after the 1993 "Black Hawk Down" fiasco. Instead, the United States first worked with Somali warlords from 2001-2006 against Islamists and from 2006 onwards with Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya against the VEO, Al Shabaab. Even when Al Shabaab was on the verge of taking the Somali capital of Mogadishu from 2007 to 2011, the United States continued to rely upon African forces to save the day.

The timing of intervention is also important to consider. In Africa, France and the United States have intervened only after a crisis has occurred and not with *direct military deployment* to prevent a crisis. France could have intervened in 2012 when jihadists took over northern Mali and prevented them from moving towards the more populated half of the country. However, France only did so in 2013 when the jihadists launched an offensive, moving south towards the capital, Bamako, and threatening French nationals. In comparison, the United States *intervened indirectly* in Eastern Africa and Somalia by setting up CJTF-HOA and sending troops to Djibouti after 9/11 when the Bush administration assumed that Al Qaeda was going to launch more attacks in Eastern Africa and Yemen. When the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) took over most of Somalia in 2006 and became more extreme, the United States indirectly intervened by supporting the Ethiopian invasion in December 2006 and the deployment of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) from 2007 onwards to counter Al Shabaab. In the Sahel, the United States trained and exercised with regional security forces with the aim of preventing a VEO takeover.

France decided to move from modest action to direct military intervention with Serval and, starting in 2014, sustained military action through Barkhane in spite of limited resources. Evidently, there was a change in the calculation of interests in Paris that led to the escalation of military activity. Prior to 2013, France was trying to extricate itself from the business of direct intervention and nation-building in Africa. It was indicative that in 2011, President Nikolas Sarkozy did little after the air campaign in Libya to rebuild the country. In spite of France's determination to draw down and cut costs, it has continued to get sucked into saving some of its former colonies from collapse, with the intervention in Cote d'Ivoire (2002-2014), Mali (2013-2014) and Central African Republic (2014-2016) and the protracted defense of Chad (1986-2014) (*Opération Épervier*). After Serval, France had the chance to resume the process of winding down its military presence in Africa. However, Paris decided to escalate its military intervention in Northwest Africa.[5] France launched Barkhane - an open-ended counter-terrorism mission that covers much of the vast Sahel and Sahara with only 3,500 French Army soldiers backed by French Air Force assets in Ndjamena, Chad and Niamey, Niger. The reversal seems to have occurred because Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the so-called Islamic State (Daesh) increasingly have posed a danger to French interests and to the countries of the Sahel and Maghreb, especially Libya, Niger and Mali. However, France's ambitious counterterrorism (CT) operation holds the danger of mission creep and raises questions about excessive risk-taking.

The US has been content to take an indirect military approach in Africa. The US has far more military resources than France and could have intervened directly in both Somalia and Mali. However, the administration of President George W. Bush decided in 2001 that the epicenter of the struggle against Al Qaeda was in Southwest Asia and not in Africa. The commitment of more than a hundred thousand troops to Afghanistan and Iraq from 2002 to 2014 significantly diminished the ability of the United States to use military force in Africa. Furthermore, VEOs did not appear as a serious threat in Somalia until 2006 and Mali until 2012. US backing for the Ethiopian invasion in December 2006 and AMISOM in 2007 substituted for direct action, especially at the same time as the United States was launching the surge in Iraq. While the United States thinks that Eastern Africa contains greater threats to US national security interests than Northwest Africa, it has not been as important as Afghanistan or Iraq or more recently Syria and Libya with counter Daesh operations. As for Mali and the Sahel, the United States has not deployed forces but has supported operations Serval and Barkhane with logistics and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR). US Africa Command (AFRICOM) is currently focused on attacking Daesh in Libya.

Methodology

This article analyzes why French and US approaches to military intervention in Africa are different and argues that different strategic cultures and interests provide the explanation. The article also appraises similar features in French and US interventions: (1) *direct interventions with military force* occur in places where interests are high and have been attacked or judged to be under imminent threat of attack; they have not occurred where interests may be high but where the threat of attack on those interests has been moderate or low; (2) direct interventions take place after a crisis has occurred and not to prevent one from happening; (3) *indirect military intervention* takes place in locations where interests are moderate and there is a threat of an *eventual* attack; (4) once France or the United States has intervened, that country plays the lead role and other countries cooperate.

There are two theoretical frameworks—realism and constructivism—that are employed in this article to analyze the propositions. First, realism explains direct and indirect military interventions in terms of levels of interest and threats to those interests and the resources available to counteract threats and maintain the status quo. Accordingly, direct military interventions take place where vital interests are under great threat or under attack; and indirect interventions are launched where the threat is not as high and where action is needed to prevent spillover of a conflict.[6]

The realist perspective is that threats to French interests in Northwest Africa are higher than to those of the United States, which explains direct French military intervention there in spite of less military resources. Conversely, threats to US interests in Eastern Africa are higher than those against French interests, which helps to explain indirect US military intervention there. France has had high interests in Northwest Africa since colonial times, which have been under increasing threat of attack from VEOs. While France has comparatively low military resources and is confronting high costs, it has decided to intervene and sustain the intervention because of the level of interests. The realist view is that US indirect intervention in Eastern Africa has occurred because of VEOs in Somali, Yemen and Kenya that threaten US interests.[7] Also, the United States has more military resources to deal with these areas than does France, which has made it possible for US forces to intervene. However, US interests have not been as high as in Southwest Asia and have not been so under threat that it has found it necessary to directly intervene. If US interests in Eastern Africa were higher, it would have been more willing to directly intervene militarily. For example, if bin Laden had stayed in Sudan and had been harbored by the Bashir regime and planned the 9/11 attacks from Sudan, the United States would have attacked Sudan and not Afghanistan. The epicenter of the war on terror would have been in Eastern Africa. As for Northwest Africa, the higher level of resources enabled the United States to expend considerable resources in an area which is not high in the US national interest.

Second, constructivist theory and more specifically strategic culture play a role in explaining the contrast between the tendency of France to directly intervene in Africa with subordinate partners in spite of a limited budget as against the US pattern of indirectly intervening and seeking partners as surrogates when it has massive military and financial resources. Countries and their leaders hold certain beliefs and assumptions and adhere to a strategic culture in taking military action. Strategic culture plays a role in determining whether military interventions are direct or indirect.[8]

Both France and the United States have constructed respective self-conceptualizations over the years and have formed two distinct "strategic cultures" that play a role in shaping the nature of their interventions. French strategic culture and past operations explain why and how France has intervened in Northwest Africa. France has chosen "ways" of intervention, which have achieved significant effects by employing relatively small, mobile military forces in actions that have carried a good degree of risk. In contrast, the United States has been more risk averse in its choice of "ways", which can be traced back to the "Vietnam syndrome" and the "Powell doctrine" which advocated the deployment of overwhelming force if the ends to be achieved were considered to be in the US national inter-

est. The strategic culture proposition is that the United States and French militaries will continue past behavior unless compelled by higher authority or an external shock to do otherwise.[9]

Therefore, the level of interests, level of resources, and strategic culture all factor into explaining the differences and similarities between France and the United States While both perspectives are necessary for comparison, the argument in this article is that the constructivist (strategic culture) perspective and attitude towards risk is more insightful than the realist perspective in explaining the differences between the French and US approaches.

French Military Intervention in Africa

The issue in this section is whether **realism (interests) or constructivism (strategic culture)** provides more of the explanation for why France has launched direct military interventions in Northwest Africa and not in Eastern Africa. A related issue is whether an external shock to French interests or a change in leaders' perspectives caused a change in military intervention from 2013 onwards.[10]

Realism (interests): France has been intervening in Africa since 1830 when it invaded and colonized Algeria. By 1900, it had conquered Northwest Africa, defeating a number of militarily proficient kingdoms in the Sahel. The French established colonial military outposts throughout the Sahel and Sahara and used the Foreign Legion and other forces to put down rebellions against its authority. France created the states of Algeria, Mali, Niger, Chad, Mauritania, and Burkina Faso and considered its colonies to be part of the metropole. French nationals ran the administrations, companies and militaries in its colonies, and this pattern carried over into the post-independence era. From 1960 onwards, France maintained its nationals and companies and military outposts in Northwest Africa, and periodic military interventions in the region in support of regimes were one of the indicators of neo-colonialism. Of particular importance were uranium mining operations in Niger and elsewhere that fueled France's extensive nuclear power industry. France considered Northwest Africa to be in its sphere of influence, and as late as 1994, Paris objected to a visit by a US Secretary of State to Mali.[11]

In Eastern Africa, France established a base in Djibouti in 1894 that provided a way station that connected to French Indochina and to its interests in the Middle East. However, France had little interest in Eastern Africa, except to deter a possible Ethiopian takeover of Djibouti in the 1980s and to help the Djiboutian government counteract attacks by local Djiboutian rebels from 1999 to 2001.

In 1991, France supported the Algerian military when it prevented the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) from taking power after elections. This gave rise to civil war and the eventual emergence of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Alge-

rian violent extremists blamed France for the military coup and attempted to attack French cities and citizens. Thus, AQIM and other VEOs continued to attack French interests into this decade, seizing French citizens in Northwest Africa as hostages for ransom and other actions.[12]

Neo-colonialism finally began to fade away in the late 1990s. Threats to interests were not as great with the end of the Cold War and the containment of Colonel Qadhafi of Libya. In *Opération Turquoise* in 1994, French forces intervened to save a regime that had been responsible for genocide in Rwanda, which gave French neo-colonialism a bad name. In 1997, the death of Michel Foccart, the architect of neo-colonialism and the fall of the French-backed Mobutu regime in Zaire opened the way for a less paternalistic and more multilateral approach. The new French government decided to change course and act more in Africa as part of the European Union (EU). Prime Minister Lionel Jospin undertook the process of transforming France's role in Africa to one of leading EU assistance to Africa and launching a French-led peacekeeping training program - RECAMP.

Even as neo-colonialism faded away, France still was concerned about its interests (citizens and companies) and the sunk costs in its former colonies but chose to act in a more modest and even-handed manner. The 2002 French intervention in Cote d'Ivoire, *Opération Licorne,* did not support the regime of President Laurent Gbagbo but separated the government and rebel forces while a political settlement was being reached over eight years. Also, France led interventions to stop Sudan from taking over Chad in a dispute over war and genocide in Darfur. In 2006, Sudan sent an invasion force of Chadian rebels to seize Ndjamena. France increased the size of its force in Chad and helped the Chadian military fend off the rebels. In 2007, France took the lead in authorizing and leading an EU force (EUROFOR) to provide protection for the regime of President Idriss Déby and tens of thousands of refugees from Darfur.

Strategic culture: While the colonial experience of 1840-1960 helped shape French strategic culture, the Algerian War and massive insurgency of 1954-62 compelled France to formulate and implement a muscular counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy. COIN operations in Algeria included desert and mountain warfare, which required a strategy of "clear and hold" and light mobile forces with extensive ISR and the ability to establish authority after clearing an area. After giving up Algeria in 1962, the struggle in the French defense establishment became one that pitted the "grand strategists" who wanted to make France a major *player* in the Cold War and the "neo-colonials" who wanted to ensure that French forces were capable of defending interests in Africa. Thanks to Colonel Qadhafi of Libya, France was compelled to shape a strategy to defend its former colonies and interests from both irregular and conventional warfare from the late 1970s

until the 1990s. In particular, French interventions in Chad involved a strategy of working with and directing local forces in containing and then rolling back rebel and Libyan invasion forces that operated in some ways like today's VEOs. A series of three operations involved extensive ISR and mobile forces with a large featured role of the French Air Force over a wide desert area, which in many ways laid the groundwork for operations Serval and Barkhane.[13]

In 1978, *Opération Tacaud* was launched with French troops, backed by the French Air Force, supporting the Chadian army and protecting the capital, Ndjamena, from rebel forces. In 1983, France launched its largest intervention since the Algerian war with *Opération Manta* and the dispatch of 3,500 troops to help stop an offensive by forces of an opposition government-in-exile and Libya. French forces imposed a red line which stopped the offensive from advancing beyond the 16th and 15th parallels. In February 1986, Qadhafi launched a new offensive that pushed south of the red line, which led to *Opération Epervier*. The French Air Force attacked the offensive and enemy bases north of the 16th parallel. France sent additional ground forces to create a force of 2,200 that successfully defended Ndjamena and allowed Chadian forces to take back all of its territory, including the Aozou Strip in the far north.[14]

With the end of the Cold War and the fading of the Libyan threat, France decided to maintain the French Air Force base in Ndjamena and a sizable French Army force in Chad. The Ndjamena base became known as its "desert aircraft carrier", and the French Air Force has continued to conduct desert training and exercises from there in cooperation with the French Army and Chadian Army. With the rise of Boko Haram as a threat that was spilling over from Northeastern Nigeria, Ndjamena became a center for the "Lake Chad Initiative" against the VEO which involved France and the bordering states of Chad, Niger and Cameroon.

The principles of prevention and projection helped to define France's strategic culture after the Cold War; prevention was based on the prepositioning of forces and intelligence about unstable situations on the ground.[15] France has been able to achieve projection with rapid reaction forces of 5,000 troops or less in response to flashpoints in Africa. Prepositioning demonstrated that, even as French interests and threats to those interests faded, France's strategic culture became one of continuing to base its forces in Northwest Africa and using them in operations. Thanks to the wars over Chad, Ndjamena became the primary center of French activity in the Sahel and Sahara with *Opération Epervier* continuing until 2014 and being superseded by Barkhane. Prepositioning forces has provided French presidents with the temptation of using them in interventions in which a force of 5,000 troops or less is deemed sufficient, which has often been the case.[16] Prepositioning enabled the projection of forces in defense of the Déby regime in the

face of attacks from rebels from Sudan in 2006 and the launching of Serval and Barkhane. France has prepositioned 1,500 troops in Djibouti from where forces have been deployed outside of Eastern Africa to such places as Côte d'Ivoire and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the exception of the COIN operation in Djibouti. In the rest of Eastern Africa and Somalia, in particular, France decided to act via the EU.

France and the United States in Northwest Africa and the "War on Terror": After 9/11, France acquiesced to large-scale US security cooperation programs (PSI and TSCTP) in US security assistance to its former colonies in the Sahel. However, the United States was careful not to tread too heavily in what was considered to be the French sphere of influence. In 2008, President Sarkozy began cutting the defense budget and initiated the process of reducing France's bases in Africa. The plan was to maintain two bases in Dakar, Senegal and Djibouti and to close bases in Ndjamena, Chad and Libreville, Gabon and Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. However, these plans stalled because of the 2011 war in Libya and the spillover of the conflict into the Sahel and continuing civil strife in Côte d'Ivoire and Central African Republic. Thus, until recently, France has been torn between cutting its presence in Africa versus defending what it had played a large part in building. However, the spillover from Libya and VEO takeover of most of Mali has led France to reverse its position and launch Serval and Barkhane.[17]

Interests and Timing: France did not intervene in 2012, because there was no imminent threat to French interests in southern Mali. Also President Francois Hollande was new to office and was weighing options in regard to the use of force. With the VEO offensive in January 2013, President Hollande wanted to lift his public opinion polls by appearing decisive. The French people have traditionally been willing to let its president use force when they have been convinced that that it is necessary. They have not been highly concerned about casualties and have been willing to accept risk if they can be convinced that national interests are at stake. French leaders believed that the VEOs would overrun Bamako, the capital of Mali; take some 5,000 French nationals hostage; and use Mali as a launching ground for attacks against the homeland.[18] Furthermore, France had forces available in its prepositioned sites that could be quickly deployed. The perception of a French sphere of influence backed by military forces is one of the reasons why the United States expected France to intervene in Mali in 2013.[19]

Strategic culture and Barkhane: France's strategic culture has helped to define the operation. France is faced with threats to the homeland and interests in Northwest Africa and wants to contain AQIM and Daesh and interdict them. Barkhane's mission is twofold: support African armed forces in fighting VEOs and help prevent the re-establishment of their sanctuaries and strongholds. French

strategy today focuses on counterterrorism with light forces that combine ISR, strike forces and air power. France avoids nation-building, which it leaves to the UN and other entities. Barkhane features the comprehensive approach involving the United Nations (UN), EU and the AU, which are all supporting the French effort and are involved in the security process, with training and peacekeeping missions. France has also worked closely with its G5 Sahel partners (Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso) through its "Enlarged Partnership" process; the G5 is the main body for nations of the Sahel to coordinate their fight against violent extremism. Therefore, French strategic culture is much more multilateral than it was three decades ago, though France still asserts a leading role.[20]

Conclusion: The constructivist perspective explains why France's strategic culture of prevention and projection with prepositioned forces enables it to launch direct military interventions in Northwest Africa when no other country will. France has experience and good ISR in the region and is able to calculate risk and avoid large-scale casualties. In contrast, the realist perspective on French intervention explains *when* France intervenes. The VEO offensive in Mali and threats to French interests led France to launch Serval. The threats to French interests in the Sahel and the homeland caused by state collapse in Libya led France to mount Barkhane. France's strategic culture today is such that Paris is less inclined to intervene than three decades ago and only after threats to its interests have reached the severe level. However, shocks to French interests stemming from the collapse of Libya caused French leaders to reverse course and order a surge of military intervention from 2013 onwards.

US Military Intervention in Africa

This section deals with the extent to which a constructivist perspective on US strategic culture is important in explaining US indirect military intervention in Africa as opposed to a realist approach that focuses on the level of US interests and threats to those interests.

Realism (interests): Threats to US interests since the Cold War rose with the activities of Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda in Sudan from 1991-1996, the 1998 embassy bombings, the 2000 USS Cole bombing and 9/11. As stated earlier, if bin Laden and Al Qaeda had been allowed to stay in Sudan, been harbored by the Bashir regime, and planned the 9/11 attacks from there, the United States would have attacked Sudan and not Afghanistan. The epicenter of threats against US interests and the war on terror would have been in Africa. However, bin Laden and Al Qaeda were forced to move to Afghanistan, and threats to US interests came from Southwest Asia, with Africa as a secondary theater. Since September 11, 2001, defeating Al Qaeda and Daesh and protecting Saudi Arabia and other

Middle East allies have been in US interests, which has led the United States to try to contain the spread of VEO activity in Northwest Africa and to neutralize it in Eastern Africa.[21]

US strategic culture over the past three decades has been defined by the "Powell Doctrine", which defined US interventions as requiring overwhelming force when and where the US national interest was under severe threat. The US direct intervention in Somalia in 1993 unfolded with overwhelming force but without compelling interests, and mission creep led to "Black Hawk Down". The fiasco led to even more risk-averse strategic culture, enshrined in Presidential Decision Directive 25, which effectively ended US participation in UN peace operations in Africa. US risk aversion after Somalia led to the failure to respond to genocide in Rwanda in 1994. Subsequently, the United States apologized for not acting and pledged that it would work to stop future genocide. The failure to stop the genocide in Rwanda and PDD 25 led to the US strategy of developing the "African solutions to African problems" approach in which the United States would lead in training African peacekeeping forces and building partnership capacity (BPC) but would not directly intervene militarily.

An external shock (9/11) and US strategic culture of indirect military intervention in Africa led to CJTF-HOA in Eastern Africa and PSI/TSCTP in Northwest Africa. The US has assisted partners in nation-building in Somalia and the Sahel and has trained and equipped African forces to conduct counter-insurgency operations (COIN). 9/11 and the experience in Afghanistan led to the introduction of US special operations forces (SOF). Today the United States has 700 or so SOF engaged in the struggle against VEOs and building partnerships with African forces.[22] The US has been more willing to use force in Afghanistan from where it was attacked and Iraq from where it assumed that an attack was coming and where forces became embroiled in nation-building. Higher authority in the United States was consumed by the struggle in Southwest Asia and less so in Africa. However, the creation of AFRICOM in 2008 led to a more focused counter-VEO strategy and operations in Africa.

US Strategy and Operations in Eastern Africa: After September 11, 2001, the United States directed more power towards countering VEOs and the ungoverned spaces in and around Somalia. The Bush administration decided that VEOs in Somalia and Eastern Africa posed more of a threat to its interests than did the Sahel and Sahara. The establishment of CJTF-HOA in Djibouti by DOD and CENTCOM enabled US Special Operations Command to undertake operations against Al Qaeda and other extremists in the region. CENTCOM selected Djibouti because of its strategic location between the ungoverned spaces of Somalia and Eastern Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. Also, Djibouti was chosen because

of the receptivity of the government, which had hosted French forces since independence. Before 2002, the United States had never established a base in Africa, which stands in contrast to more than a century of French bases.

Before 2006, the VEO threat in Somalia and Eastern Africa was not as severe as had been anticipated. Thus, CJTF-HOA shifted its approach and adopted a more indirect and bottom-up "hearts and minds" campaign, which centered on the drilling of wells for Somali pastoralists living in areas adjacent to Somalia, especially in Kenya and Ethiopia.[23] The campaign scored some initial successes but experienced serious setbacks in Ethiopia in 2007 and Kenya in 2009. Also, mistakes were made, including drilling boreholes in areas that caused conflict between clans. CJTF-HOA was forced to reformulate the campaign, which became less focused on Somali pastoralists and relatively less effective in helping to achieve US security goals in the ungoverned spaces of Eastern Africa.[24]

In 2004, the United States began to support the "Transitional Federal Government" of Somalia in the hope of reconstituting the Republic of Somalia, which would eventually be able to counter VEOs and reestablish sovereignty and territoriality. In 2005, the new Assistant Secretary of State for Africa assumed a leading role in the Horn of Africa policy, introducing a more robust strategy of combating violent extremism and reestablishing Somali governance by backing the development of the transitional government into a governing and military force. After the surging Islamic Courts Union (ICU) defeated the US-backed warlords and united South-Central Somalia under its rule and began threatening Ethiopia's Ogaden region, the Bush administration acquiesced to the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia in December 2006, and the United States increased military assistance to Ethiopia. The Bush administration also backed the plan of the African Union (AU) to send a peace enforcement force, led by Uganda, to Somalia.

The US Department of State (DOS) led the way in arranging the training and equipping of Ugandan and Burundian African Union forces and the new Somali National Armed Force (SNAF). The DOS Political-Military Affairs office, its Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program, and security cooperation officials in embassies in Kampala, Bujumbura, Addis Ababa, and Nairobi engaged with African Union and Somali forces.[25] They organized the training and equipping of Ugandan and Burundian and the SNAF and arranged assistance for their operations in Mogadishu.[26]

The Obama administration continued the peace enforcement and state-building policy for Somalia. By 2011, AMISOM and Somali forces strengthened and scored successes against Al Shabaab. Of particular significance were the August 2011 liberation of Mogadishu and the 2012 Kenyan intervention in Somalia that led to the takeover of the Al Shabaab stronghold of Kismayo and much of the

surrounding province of Jubaland.[27] In 2012, the Federal Republic of Somalia was reconstituted.

The US has spent over a hundred million dollars a year since 2007 on the security enterprise for Somalia and continues to spend over a hundred million dollars each year.[28] Most of the funds have been channeled through the State Department's program for training, equipping and supporting Ugandan and Burundian forces that became the core of AMISOM.[29] The DOD and AFRICOM provided support, with combined exercises and help in training. CJTF-HOA arranged intelligence sharing with AMISOM for defensive purposes. Finally, in April 2013, with the lifting of the arms embargo on Somalia, the United States began arms shipments to the new Somali army.

In sum, the United States and its partners have made considerable progress in rolling back Al Shabaab and securing the ungoverned spaces of Eastern Africa. African Union forces have risen in size from 6,000 in 2010 to over 22,000 today. On a negative note, the Republic of Somalia government of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud started out well, but it soon sank into the same morass of corruption as had previous Somali interim governments. Therefore, the goal of Somali self-sufficiency in security is still years away. Al Shabaab still mounts attacks inside Mogadishu and against AMISOM and Somali forces and is still a major security threat.

US Strategy and Operations in Northwest Africa: In the ungoverned space of the Sahara, US strategy has been more about containing and preventing the southward flow of extremism and has been less coherent and focused than in Eastern Africa. DOD and United States European Command (EUCOM) devised the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI) in 2002 in the wake of 9/11 and the Bush administration's concern about ungoverned spaces and weak and failing states and the threats they posed to the United States and its allies in the Global War on Terror.[30] Saharan and Sahelian states were under similar pressures from VEOs as Eastern African states. In particular, the Sahel was vulnerable to militant groups, especially Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.

The Bush administration proceeded first with the idea that building military counter-terrorism capacity would be the best places to start in defending the Sahara and Sahel from VEOs; protecting US and EU interests in Algeria, Nigeria and other states; and rolling back militant groups. In the Sahel, it was expected that weak states would be able to develop capabilities to contain threats. Therefore, the United States began funding programs in the Sahel states in 2002 to help build their ability to exercise sovereignty and territoriality and control their borders. From 2002–2004, the US military trained and equipped one rapid-reaction company of about 150 soldiers each, in Mauritania, Mali, Niger, and Chad to

enhance border capabilities against arms smuggling, drug trafficking, and the movement of trans-national VEOs. US Special Forces and EUCOM took the lead in training and exercises. In regard to building capacity to establish governance in the Sahara, the strategy was unclear. For example, Toyota Land Cruisers were provided to Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad in the hope that it would strengthen border control in the vast Saharan Desert. However, there was insufficient follow-up to ensure that the aid had been effective.

By 2005, the Bush administration altered the strategy and launched the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP), deciding that building state capacity and government capabilities and winning hearts and minds would be a better way of defending the Sahel from militant groups and preventing the spread of extremism. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the State Department were given the lead, with EUCOM supporting. The United States funded the TSCTP with $500 million from 2005 to 2010, and funding was extended from 2010 onwards.[31] At the same time, EUCOM and Special Operations Command (SOCOM) launched Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans-Sahara (OEF-TS) to train African forces to counter VEOs. EUCOM also continued to mount Operation Flintlock to jointly exercise US forces with regional forces. In 2008, EUCOM passed control of OEF-TS to AFRICOM.

Under the Obama Administration, it was made clear that development and diplomacy were under the purview of the State Department and USAID and that the TSCTP was primarily their program.[32] The program provided regional university students with useful work skills to better prepare them for the transition between school and the workplace, as well as provide rehabilitation and training opportunities for disenfranchised youth and vulnerable populations. However, there still was no measure to gauge the reduction of extremism.[33]

In 2011, a USAID-sponsored survey found that USAID-funded TSCTP programs in Chad, Niger and Mauritania had diminished the underlying conditions that were leaving at-risk populations vulnerable to extremism. The programs included youth development, former combatant reintegration, and education, as well as rural radio and media programs, peacebuilding and conflict management, and small-scale infrastructure projects like drilling wells and constructing schools. In particular, USAID civic youth programs and TSCTP "peace and tolerance" radio programs were found to significantly reduce youth extremism.[34] Furthermore, it was found that the programs had built local government capacity and the ability to communicate with the youth of the Sahel and implemented the type of capacity and programs necessary to lessen extremism. It has been noted that the types of programs and projects that have been instituted are not complex and could be sustained once the US footprint is lessened.

While the TSCTP was found to help reduce support for violent extremism among youth in the Sahel, this was not the case in the ungoverned spaces of the Sahara (for example, among the Tuareg). Thus, the partnership can be considered a limited success, especially since most of the population lives in Sahel and not in the Sahara. It could be concluded that the TSCTP helped to prevent the southward spread of extremism and that a firewall had been built against extremism in the most populated areas of Sahel. The problem was in the northern Sahel and southern Sahara and how to change attitudes there and roll back extremism. It was problematic for US programs to reach those ungoverned spaces.

The US strategy produced disappointing results in Mali.[35] The relative success of Tuareg and extremist insurgencies showed that the tens of millions of dollars spent had not helped Mali defend itself and exercise territorial control over its northern spaces. He found that in Niger, VEOs remained a threat. In Nigeria, Boko Haram was continuing to conduct frequent mass attacks, which US programs have done little to help stop. In Mauritania, Burkina Faso, and Chad, US efforts produced greater capabilities; merged US security and development specialties; and enhanced US security interests to some extent.[36] This was partly due to the relative strength of the regimes and professionalism of the security forces.

In sum, the United States and its partners have made mixed progress in the Sahel and not much progress in the Sahara and suffered severe setbacks with the collapse of the Libyan state and the VEO invasion of Mali.[37] The mixed record is due to a combination of ungoverned spaces in the Sahara and effectiveness of VEOs, as well as Sahelian states' weakness and security forces' limitations. There is a debate over the future of the TSCTP. Some think it should be enhanced with a Joint Task Force-Western Africa. Others think TSCTP should be tightened and more focused on Mali, Niger and Nigeria, especially in countering Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and Boko Haram.[38]

Comparing US Strategy in Eastern Africa and Northwest Africa: A more assertive strategy of indirect intervention supporting offensive forces and attacking militant group leaders partially succeeded in securing an ungoverned space and curbing a violent extremist organization in Eastern Africa, in contrast to the partial failure of a containment approach in the Sahara, which focused on counterterrorism training for regional security forces and countering extremist ideology. In the Sahara, the US containment strategy of supporting regional regimes and providing programs for youth led to some progress in curbing extremism in the Sahel but very limited success in countering militant groups and other violent non-state actors in the Sahara and failure in preventing militant groups from taking over northern Mali in 2012. Since then, VEOs have expanded their activities to other parts of the region. The more assertive strategy in Eastern Africa

led to the expulsion of Al Shabaab from ungoverned urban and some rural spaces and enabled the formation of a Somali government. Also, US forces launched occasional counterterrorist attacks that degraded Al Shabaab's leadership. Thus, the US strategy of neutralization in Somalia and Eastern Africa has achieved greater results than containment in Northwest Africa.

The US strategy of supporting Uganda and the AMISOM and using US counterterrorism attacks reaped a partial victory but did not neutralize Al Shabaab. While the United States has scored successes in Somalia, the Al Qaeda-linked militant group has not been eliminated; it has merely been curbed. Therefore, the assertive approach had an impact but did not achieve victory. Given the failure of US strategy in both Eastern Africa and Sahara to decisively defeat militant groups, it must be concluded that geopolitics, in the form of ungoverned spaces that cannot be controlled by weak regimes, provides a significant part of the explanation. Neither an assertive nor a containment strategy is likely to bring success in decisively countering violent non-state actors in ungoverned spaces. This fits the pattern established in the war against Al Qaeda Central in Pakistan and Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula in Yemen.

The vast size of the Sahara makes it difficult for all eight regional regimes, backed by the US and France, to control. Therefore, it is questionable if the more assertive strategy applied in Somalia and Eastern Africa could work in Mali and the Sahara. The Sahara is a bigger ungoverned space than Eastern Africa and appears to be a more dangerous place, where VEOs and other violent non-state actors can sustain themselves and avoid interdiction. However, it is difficult to definitively conclude that the larger and more ungoverned the space where such actors choose to operate, the more sustainable a dangerous place will be and the more difficult it will be to pacify. One can only conclude that ungoverned spaces create an advantageous condition for such actors to make dangerous places.

The level of success in Eastern Africa can be explained by the level of US national interest and weight of effort, as well as the relatively small ungoverned space. The level of threat to US interests against violent extremism was greater in Eastern Africa than in the Sahara and Sahel. Also, the high degree of salience of Ugandan leaders and the capability of Ugandan forces, backed by other Eastern African forces, was greater than leaders and forces from Sahelian and other West African countries.[39] Comparison of US strategy in Eastern Africa and Sahara demonstrate that the United States is more likely to assertively attack militant groups if those actors are committed to attacking US interests, especially in the Arabian Peninsula, and less likely when they might attack the interests of a less important country or region. The more concentrated threat to US interests and absence of a state in Somalia influenced decision-making regarding Eastern Af-

rica, which led to CJTF-HOA and support for AMISOM, while the more dispersed threat and weak states in the Sahara led to a less intensive approach, which resulted in the PSI and then the TSCTP. The United States was unwilling to intervene in Mali in 2012, because the threat to US interests was low and because the Obama administration was less-inclined to use force than the Bush administration had been.

Conclusion: Constructivism and strategic culture (the Powell Doctrine and casualty aversion) have determined how the United States indirectly intervenes militarily (i.e., establishing a well-defended base and building partnership capacity). Realism and interests have determined the scale of intervention. In Eastern Africa, the threat from Al Shabaab in Somalia and Kenya has led to a large US military presence and CJTF-HOA in Djibouti. However, the threat is not so great as to invite direct military intervention. In contrast, the lower level of threat and the French sphere of influence in Northwestern Africa led the United States to launch PSI and TSCTP but no US military bases. Threats to US interests are greater in Somalia which led to efforts to neutralize Al Shabaab, in contrast to efforts in Northwest Africa to merely contain AQIM, Boko Haram and other VEOs.

Conclusion

The level of interests, level of resources, and strategic culture all factor into explaining the differences and similarities between France and the United States. While both constructivist and realist perspectives are necessary for comparative analysis, the argument in this article is that strategic culture and attitudes towards risk are more insightful than the realist perspective in explaining the different ways that France and the United States chose to intervene in Africa. The Powell Doctrine and casualty and risk aversion explain why the United States is less willing to intervene directly militarily in Africa; however, the relatively lower level of US interests in Africa as compared with Southwest Asia must also be taken into account. Also, the US military has an organizational culture of winning, while the French military is accustomed to messy outcomes, which also explains the differences in interventionism. Prepositioning of French forces in Northwest Africa increases the likelihood that they will be used in operations such as Serval and Barkhane. The prepositioning of US Forces in CJTF-HOA has not led to direct military intervention in Somalia, even as the capital and country were on the verge of falling to Al Shabaab.

In regard to realism, external shocks and spikes in threats to interests determine when both the United States and France intervene. The level of interests explains the similar features in French and US interventions: (1) *direct interventions with military force* occur in places where interests are high and have been attacked as in the case of French interests in Mali. US interests in Mali were not as high as French interests. US interests and threats to their interests have been higher in Somalia and Libya which has led to indirect military intervention and limited intervention by SOF. (2) Direct interventions take place after attacks on vital interests have occurred and not to prevent one from happening. The French doctrine of prevention and projection and the prepositioning of forces still did not lead to a deployment of forces to Mali, even when VEOs had taken over the northern half of the country. However, Barkhane can be considered both a counterterrorist operation and a preventive one. (3) *Indirect military intervention* takes place in locations where interests are moderate and there is a threat of an *eventual* attack on vital interests; this is the case of US military intervention in Eastern Africa. (4) French intervention in Mali and the Sahel and Sahara was not superseded by US intervention; instead, the United States supported France in Serval and Barkhane. The US intervention in Eastern Africa was followed by France leading in EU assistance to AMISOM and the new Somali government.

External shocks to interests caused changes in French and US military interventionism. The collapse of Libya and the VEO invasion of Mali caused France to reverse course from winding down its presence in Northwest Africa to mounting Serval and a protracted counterterrorism intervention in the form of Barkhane. Black Hawk Down caused the United States to abandon direct military intervention in Africa, while the Rwandan genocide led to indirect military intervention. Al Qaeda attacks led to CJTF-HOA, while the threat of attacks from Algerian VEOs who allied with Al Qaeda led to TSCTP.

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Notes

1. François Heisbourg, "A Surprising Little War: First Lessons of Mali" *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 55, no. 2 (2013): 7-18.

2. A less significant exception was in August 2003, when the United States sent the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit to Liberia for a month in support of the Economic Community of West African States force that was overseeing the removal of Charles Taylor from power.

3. Major General (Ret) Maurice de Langlois, *The comprehensive approach and the European Union: a case study of the Horn of Africa*, Note de recherche stratégique (IRSEM, 2014), 10. See also "EEAS - European External Action Service - European Commission," EEAS - European External Action Service, accessed 19 February 2016, https://eeas.europa.eu/, and "Peace and Security | The Africa-EU Partnership," accessed 19 February 2016, http://www.africa-eu-partnership.org/.

4. In contrast to the hundreds of millions of dollars that the United States spent to secure the Sahel, France gave Mali a million dollars to build its police force before 2012.

5. In this article, Northwest Africa refers to an expansive area extending from Central African Republic to Morocco and Libya to Côte d'Ivoire.

6. Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, "Anarchy: Defensive Realism Revisited," *International Security* 25, no. 3 (2001): 128-161.

7. Christopher S. Chivvis, *The French War on Al Qa'ida in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

8. Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998). Christoph O. Meyer, *The Quest for a European Strategic Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). Constructivist theory would explain that France is driven by its civilian and military leadership's self-conceptualization as the guardian of Northwest Africa which is within in its sphere of influence. Strategic culture is defined as the beliefs and assumptions that frame decisions to take military action, as well as preferences for offensive, expansionist or defensive modes of warfare and levels of wartime casualties that would be acceptable.

9. Jan Bachmann, "'Kick down the Door, Clean up the Mess, and Rebuild the House' –The Africa Command and Transformation of the US Military," *Geopolitics* 15, no. 3 (2010): 564-585. More than $300 million a year has been spent on United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) since it became operational in October 2008 in order to a large extent to focus on combating violent extremists in Eastern Africa. In 2011, AFRICOM generated the first of its campaign plans – the "East Africa Campaign Plan" - to deal with Eastern Africa. A West Africa Campaign Plan emerged soon afterwards and dealt with the Sahel. Also, there are proposals to establish a US Joint Task Force West Africa, modeled on CJTF-HOA, which is also funded with more than $300 million per year.

10. Shaun Gregory, "The French Military in Africa: Past and Present," *African Affairs* 99, no. 396 (2000): 435-448.

11. Ibid., 437-438.

12. Frank Foley, *Countering Terrorism in Britain and France: Institutions, Norms and the Shadow of the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 25-27.

13. Rachel Utley, "The Sacred Union? French intervention in Lebanon and Chad under François Mitterrand," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 10, no. 3 (1999): 10-17.

14. Ibid.

15. Gregory, "The French Military in Africa," 445-447.

16. Ibid., 446.

17. Chivvis, *The French War on Al Qa'ida in Africa*, 44.

18. Michael Shurkin, *France's War in Mali: Lessons for an Expeditionary Army* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2014).

19. Chivvis, *The French War on Al Qa'ida in Africa*, 44-45.

20. Interactions with and briefings by French military officers, Libreville, Gabon and Yaoundé, Cameroon, March 2015.

21. Interviews with US officials, US Embassy, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and US Embassy, Nairobi, Kenya, June 2012. Interactions with US officials in Uganda and Tanzania, March 2013; Mali, Burkina Faso, and Ghana, March 2014; Cameroon, Gabon and Ethiopia, March 2015; and Rwanda, Kenya and Ethiopia, March 2016.

22. Eliza Griswold, "Can General Linder's Special Operations Forces Stop the Next Terrorist Threat?" *The New York Times*, 13 June 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/; and Bill Knarr, "Matching the Footprint of Governance to the Footprint of Sovereignty," in *The Role of the Global SOF Network in a Resource Constrained Environment*, ed. Chuck Ricks (MacDill AFB: Joint Special Operations University Press, November 2013), 31-40. The role of Special Forces (SOF) has been instrumental in combating violent extremists, especially in Somalia and the Sahara, and will continue to be so if the United States wants to intervene more assertively in resource-constrained environments. In both Eastern Africa and Sahara, good intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) are required to manage the dangerous places.

23. Karsten Friis, "Peacekeeping and Counter-Insurgency: Two of a Kind?" *International Peacekeeping* 17, no. 1 (March 2010): 49-66. This shift happened at a time in which US experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan were leading to adoption of stability operations, which focused on engaging from the bottom-up with local populations in order to mitigate violent extremism.

24. Interviews with US defense officials, US Embassy, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and US Embassy, Nairobi, Kenya, June 2012.

25. Interview with US Somalia expert, US Embassy, Nairobi, Kenya, 12 June 2012.

26. Interviews with Somalia experts at US AFRICOM headquarters, Stuttgart, Germany, 30 May 2012.

27. Ken Menkhaus, "After the Kenyan Intervention," (Washington, DC: Enough Project, January 2012), 1-15. http://www.enoughproject.org/.

28. "Transcript: General Carter Ham Discusses Security Challenges, Opportunities at George Washington University", US Africa Command, 3 December 2012, http://www.africom.mil/.

29. "Senior State Department Official Previewing Conference on Somalia," U.S. Department of State, accessed 20 February 2016, https://2009-2017.state.gov/. From 2008-2011, the United States spent $385 million supporting the African Union Mission.

30. William F. S. Miles, "Deploying Development to Counter Terrorism: Post-9/11 Transformation of US Foreign Aid to Africa," *African Studies Review* 55, no. 3 (December 2012): 27-60.

31. Government Accountability Office, *Combating Terrorism: Actions Needed to Enhance Implementation on Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP)*, Report to the Ranking Member, Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives (Washington DC: Government Accountability Office, July 2008), https://www.gao.gov/. The GAO report found that there was no discernible effect on militant groups and a lack of focus and coherence; these problems have persisted.

32. "Programs and Initiatives," US Department of State, Bureau of Counter-terrorism, https://www.state.gov/.

33. United States Agency for International Development, "Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership," US Foreign Assistance Performance Publication, Fiscal Year 2009, www.state.gov.

34. United States Agency for International Development, *Midterm Evaluation of USAID's Counter-extremism Programming in Africa* (Washington, DC: USAID, 1 Feb 2011), 1-47. www.hsdl.org/?view&did=691725.

35. Miles, 27-60.

36. Ibid.

37. Heisbourg, "A Surprising Little War: First Lessons of Mali," 7-18.

38. Research data collected from meetings during the US Air War College Regional and Cultural Studies program field visit to Mali, Burkina Faso and Ghana, 2-13 March 2014. For certain US officials, the TSCTP is "an accounting line" and is rarely mentioned. However, regionally focused USAID officials believe that TSCTP is being taken more seriously, especially since the Al Shabaab attack on the Westgate Mall in

Nairobi, Kenya. One US official commented that the TSCTP is now being accepted as a regional strategy for the Sahara and Sahel.

39. Matt Freear and Cedric de Coning, "Lessons from the African Union Mission for Somalia (AMISOM) for Peace Operations in Mali," *Stability: International Journal of Stability and Development* 2, no. 2 (2013): 1-11, https://www.stabilityjournal.org/.