

# **Between a Rock and a Hard Place: France and UN and the Mali Peacekeeping Operation**

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## **Abstract**

This research seeks to explain the relationship between France and the UN in Mali. This paper examines the evolution of French and UN cooperation in Mali. The current debates on the Mali peacekeeping operation are conceptualized as continuations of the “War on Terror,” emphasizing a military approach aimed at eliminating terrorist cells. Peacekeeping operations have historically been structured as UN led operations with the goal of promoting liberal democratic institutions, but in the last decade peacekeeping missions have been restructured to include targeted military stabilization and counterterrorism outcomes. This research uses process tracing to analyze three causal mechanisms: engagement of single state actor in the region, the cooperation between state and multilateral actors in executing the mission, and the militarization of the peacekeeping operation. The findings demonstrate that there is a co-dependent relationship between the UN and France. France needs the UN to provide legitimacy for its military intervention, and the UN needs French military support to sustain MINUSMA. The results of this study have both theoretical and policy implications for the peacekeeping literature and for the ongoing peacekeeping operation in Mali. The Mali case may be used to understand how the militarization of peacekeeping has led to the increased prominence of France within the multilateral operations.

**Keywords: Mali Conflict, Peacekeeping, Multilateral Cooperation**

## **1. Introduction**

Mali attracted international attention in 2012, when a coup, and the resulting instability, enabled terrorist groups to take control of northern Mali, a historic part of the Tuareg homeland and an area of high insurgent activity since Mali gained independence from France in 1960.<sup>1</sup> The coup was the catalyst for events that sparked a series of military and peacekeeping operations in Mali in late 2012 and early 2013. While at first halting in its efforts, the international community came to Mali’s aid in 2013, when it became apparent that the capital Bamako was under imminent threat of invasion. Mali as a case exemplifies the broader failures of post-colonial statehood. The security challenges plaguing Mali are unlikely to be resolved without state-building efforts.<sup>2</sup> This paper analyzes the evolution of the joint relationship between the French and the UN operation in Mali. Mali is used as crucial case to understanding how single state actors affect multilateral peacekeeping priorities. Methodologically, process tracing is used to establish a timeline of the joint action between France and the UN, demonstrating how and why the UN and France cooperated in this manner. This paper argues that French/UN cooperation is part of the militarized shift in peacekeeping operations. France is able to legitimize its unilateral national security priorities because of the UN’s need for a competent security force in mixed peacekeeping/counterterrorism operations such as Mali. Building upon this research calls for further examination of single state actors influence in UN peacekeeping operations.

## 2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This study examines and contributes to the scholarly literature of African peacekeeping operations.<sup>3</sup> It examines the broader context surrounding the militarization of peacekeeping and the ability of single state actors, such as France, to use UN peacekeeping operations to serve their own security priorities.<sup>4</sup> Previous studies outline the complex set of peacekeeping operations in Mali,<sup>5</sup> focus on the need to reconsider the incompatible agendas of the actors,<sup>6</sup> and discuss how the conflict has been decontextualized and framed as a part of the war on terror.<sup>7</sup> However, there is a need to examine how France, and French objectives in Mali, shaped the subsequent UN operation. The literature on Mali and peacekeeping highlights the increasing military nature of UN operations, the developing nature of African security governance, and the complexities and shortcomings of African-led peacekeeping. Within the broader peacekeeping framework, the Mali case both reflects and defies existing peacekeeping norms. While it is an example of a security regime complex and the militarization of peacekeeping, Mali demonstrates the current limitations of African-led peacekeeping operations. The literature analyzes the stages of the Mali operation through the mandates of Operation Serval, Operation Barkhane, and the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), arguing that the UN shifted from being an impartial arbiter of conflict to being an actor in counterinsurgency operations.<sup>8</sup>

Mali fits in the body of literature that exemplifies the shift from state building to stabilization and counterterrorism operations. The militarization of the Mali peacekeeping operation is a continuation of this trend.<sup>9</sup> Militarization is a relevant way to examine the shift and development in peacekeeping mandate because it shows the evolving role of France. This body of literature reflects two trends in peacekeeping. First, state building is difficult and has proven elusive. It requires the inclusion and understanding of local parties and host country dynamics. Second, the shift towards stabilization and counterterrorism missions allows interventions to align themselves more closely with authoritarian regimes.<sup>10</sup> This shift is reflected in UN peacekeeping operations, where the UN's legitimacy derives from its role as an impartial actor. In this context, MINUSMA is a UN integrated stabilization mission to extend Malian state authority into areas controlled by terrorist groups, implicating it directly as a participant in the conflict, as it is no longer an impartial arbiter, but a stakeholder. The only reason MINUSMA has yet to take direct military action against the terrorist threat is because its shared mandate with Operation Barkhane offers MINUSMA military security.<sup>11</sup> This body of literature is used to conceptualize the causal mechanism employed in this study that measures the degree of militarization of the peacekeeping operation.

The second broad trend in the literature is the notion of the "security regime complex." It underscores the multifaceted links between international organizations, regional economic communities, and individual states that contribute to African security governance.<sup>12</sup> The African security regime complex highlights the relationship between African and international actors in multilateral African peacekeeping. It argues that they should be analyzed in tandem instead of as separate actors. The system they create is one of interlocking global and regional parts that aim to promote a common goal culminating in the African Peace and Security Architecture.<sup>13</sup> The African security regime complex demonstrates three trends. First, African states have largely stopped long-term peacekeeping operations in favor of interim operations, intended as a prequel to UN operations. Second, the line between regional peacekeeping and bilateral peacekeeping has become obscured in the larger debate on regional and UN peacekeeping. Third, sub-Saharan states have participated in UN-led peacekeeping operations on the African continent instead of leading regional ones.<sup>14</sup> Two of the causal mechanisms for this study were derived from the literature on security regime complex's: measuring the engagement of a single state actor with the region and the cooperation of state and multilateral actors in executing the mission.

The third recurring theme in the literature is the notion of African-led peacekeeping. It is a system designed, when operationalized, to be a series of comprehensive tools in conflict resolution.<sup>15</sup> However, the main shortcoming of African-led peacekeeping is its inability to operationalize the African Peace and Security Architecture. This is due to a lack of African Union generated capacity and funds. The African Union is dependent on external funding to operate. For example, the European Union has financed more than 80% of the AU Commission's program budget.<sup>16</sup> African peacekeeping has been focusing on short-duration, high-intensity, multi-actor stabilization missions that rely on a mix of global and regional actors.<sup>17</sup> The peacekeeping mission in Mali is an example of the failure of African-led peacekeeping due to lack of financial and military resources.

### 3. Methodology

This research project will take the form of a single crucial case study and will use explaining-outcome process tracing to examine the evolution of the French and UN joint peacekeeping operation in Mali. Explaining-outcome process tracing is used instead of theory testing or theory building process tracing to explain the development of the France/UN relationship, because it aims to explain an initially puzzling outcome and does generalize beyond the particular case examined.<sup>18</sup> The puzzle of why the UN and France partnered in this manner has been attributed to France's need to legitimize its intervention in Mali in the eyes of the international community and the inability of the UN to provide for the security of the peacekeeping mission MINUSMA.<sup>19</sup> These explanations makes sense on the surface level, but do not delve into the discrepancy between the France's strategic objectives and the cessation of violence associated with UN peacekeeping. In Mali, each operation needs the other to function, and though they have the same short term aims, they have long term conflicting goals.<sup>20</sup> A more nuanced analysis based on the context of the conflict and the unfolding of the operations is necessary.

Explaining-outcome process tracing is most suited to within case analysis where the researcher is not attempting to test or derive a more generalizable theory but wishes to explain an initially puzzling outcome.<sup>21</sup> The puzzling outcome to be accounted for in this instance is why the French and UN operations evolved together and have become co-dependent even though they have conflicting long term goals. Three main actors become apparent in this puzzle: France, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (P5), and the UN Secretariat. France will be examined through its military and diplomatic role in the process.<sup>22</sup> The P5 will be examined in its public role through the UNSC resolutions on Mali. Eight UNSC resolutions that pertain to the Mali peacekeeping operation are used to do so.<sup>23</sup> The Secretariat will be examined in its public role through the quarterly reports issued by the Secretary-General on the Situation in Mali. Those reports will be analyzed for how the UN depicts the successes and failures of MINUSMA.

The analysis defines the timeline of French and UN intervention in Mali through four crucial points in the Mali operation. Each was a turning point in the evolution of the French and UN relationship in Mali and is examined in the data analysis section to explain why the operation progressed in the way it did. The three causal mechanisms that will be operationalized and examined at each of the four crucial points of the timeline are: engagement of an outside single state actor with the region, degree of militarization of the peacekeeping operation, and cooperation of state and multilateral actors in executing the peacekeeping mission. All three of the causal mechanisms are three scalar stages indicating the intensity. They each line up with each other. For example, *moderate cooperation* between state and multilateral actors is on the same level with *somewhat militarized* peacekeeping operations. This does not mean that they are equivalent to each other but that the intensity of the scale is similar enough to be classified together on the same level. Engagement of an outside single state actor with the region will be operationalized on a scale from *somewhat intense* to *very intense*. The relationship between France and Mali is examined through the peacekeeping mission. It is crucial to explaining causalities in the Mali operation since France's actions are based on its long-term interests in West Africa. For example, movement between a *somewhat intense* to an *intense* engagement of state and multilateral actors would mean that French cooperation would be scaled up from that of concerned geostrategic partner coordinating other African allies to actively engaging foreign policy mechanisms in Mali. The degree of militarization of the peacekeeping operation will be operationalized on a scale from *somewhat militarized* to *very militarized*. In this study, militarization is the degree to which French and UN troops engage in military counterterrorism activities as well as reconquer Malian territory from terrorist cells. This causal mechanism is necessary for examining the Mali operation because the relationship between France and the UN was based on military need. The cooperation of state and multilateral actors in executing the peacekeeping mission will be operationalized on a scale of *moderate cooperation* between state and multilateral actors in executing the peacekeeping missions to *very intense cooperation* between state and multilateral actors in executing the peacekeeping missions. The cooperation between state and multilateral actors is between France and the UN in the executing the French military operations as well as the MINUSMA mandate. The need to examine this causal mechanism stems from the influence France exerts in the UN and in the region. In this case, there has been some cooperation between state and multinational actors since the beginning of the operation.

The time period examined starts with the establishment UN interest in the Mali situation as exemplified by the publication of UN Security Council Resolution 2085. The start date is UN focused for methodological reasons. France's security interests regarding counterterrorism in North and West Africa began in the 1990s when terrorism arose as a threat in the region.<sup>24</sup> The timeline will begin with the publication of the first UN Security Council resolution on the situation in Mali, Resolution 2056 on 5 July 2012. There was one other plausible state date. The 22<sup>nd</sup> of March 2012 saw a coup d'état in Mali, which was the first in the series of destabilizing events leading up to international

intervention, but France, the P5, and the UN Secretariat did not act immediately following the coup but intervened when the security situation in Mali deteriorated in the following months. Since French and UN involvement in Mali is still ongoing, it is necessary to set an end date for research purposes. This study will only consider documentation up to 7 January 2018, the date of the latest UN report to the Secretary General on the situation in Mali.

#### 4. Data Analysis and Findings

The analysis begins with establishing a causal timeline of French and UN action in Mali. Four turning points are isolated where France and the UN made critical decisions regarding the progression of the operation. Each is marked by a shift in international strategy concerning Mali. Thus, a timeline of French and UN interaction allows the examination of causality at these crucial points. It is then possible to isolate and analyze what pushed the French and UN response to the Mali operation using the causal mechanisms established in the literature review and methodology section. The findings section then explains the evolution of the joint relationship between the French and the UN operation in Mali and demonstrates how the militarization of the Mali operation constitutes a shift in peacekeeping operations.

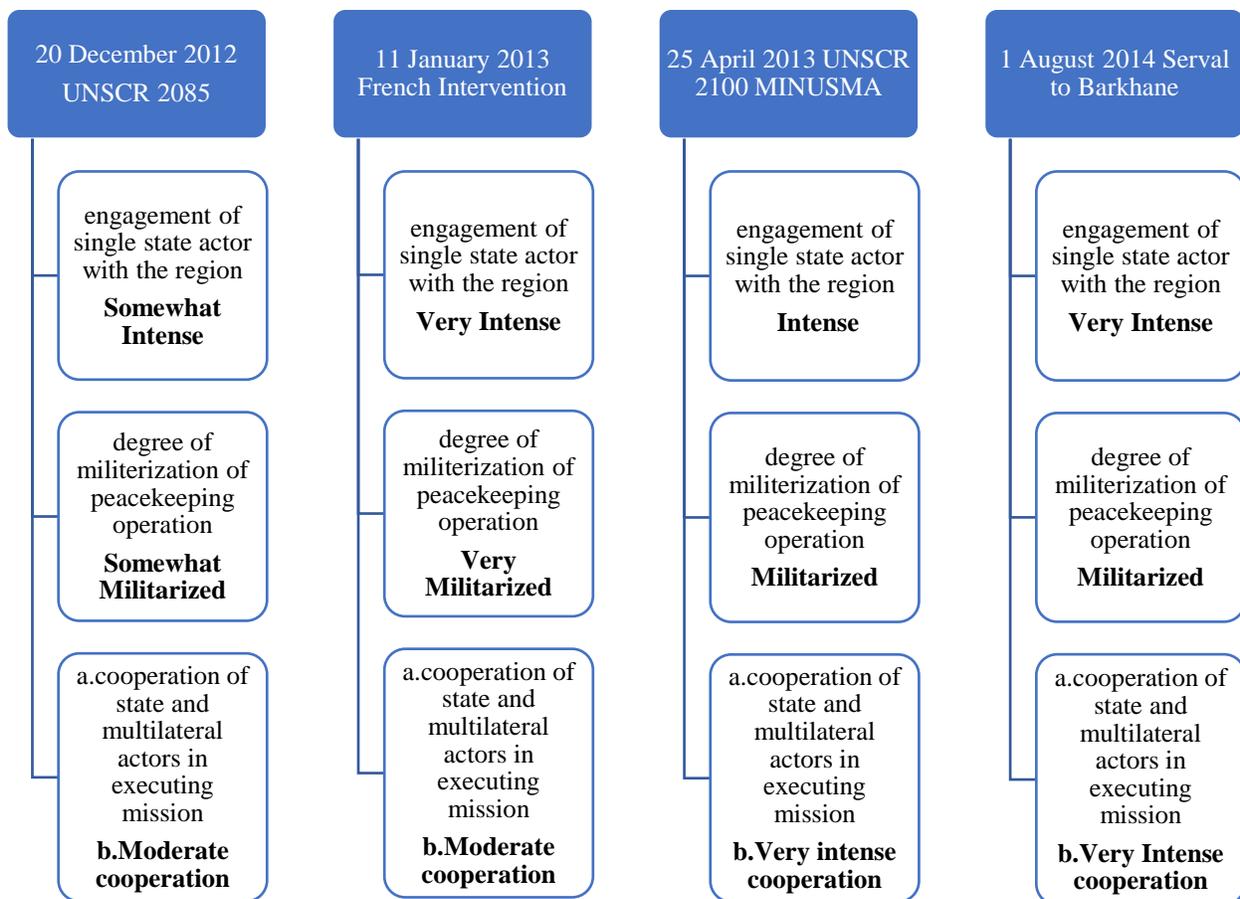


Figure 1. Summary of Timeline and Findings

The timeline begins on 20 December 2012 and ends on 1 August 2014. It encompasses the shift in the Mali operation from a regional to an international peacekeeping mission including: France's Operation Serval, the transition to a UN led peacekeeping operation, and the evolution of Operation Serval to Operation Barkhane. December 20, 2012 marks the passage of UNSCR 2085. Prior to UNSCR 2085, the deteriorating security situation in Mali had been addressed by local and regional actors. This resolution marked the transition of the Mali situation from a regional conflict to

international conflict. Specifically, articles 13 and 14 called for the UN Member States to contribute troops as well as coordinated military and financial support to the Mali operation. The UN unambiguously called for EU action and the Mali situation was recognized as an international conflict.<sup>25</sup>

The second crucial point in the timeline is 11 January 2013, the day the French committed troops to Mali. Mali was deteriorating rapidly in the beginning of January 2013. The jihadi groups which had taken over vast territory in northern Mali and had descended on the Niger valley basin and now threatened Bamako, Mali's capital. France was asked by the interim Malian government to uphold the existence of the Malian state. By the end of January, French foreign minister Le Drian stated France's objectives as "the total reconquest of Mali."<sup>26</sup> The entrance of the French military in Mali marked the beginning of the military element of the intervention. The operation to bring peace to Mali thus began with an intensive counterinsurgency campaign.

The third crucial point in the timeline is UNSCR 2100 authorizing and defining the mandate of MINUSMA and defining its mandate. UNSCR 2100 is crucial for the development of the peacekeeping operation in two ways. First, it defines the mission priority as stabilization.<sup>27</sup> The emphasis on the stabilization of the state opens a discussion regarding the militarization of the operation. Second, Article 18 of UNSCR 2100 authorizes France to continue its military mission in Mali.<sup>28</sup> The French military is thus institutionalized as part of MINUSMA's mandate. The UN adopts France's military and strategic priorities as France by authorizing them to continue their mission.

The fourth crucial point is 1 August 2014 when the Operation Serval transitioned into Operation Barkhane. This marked a change in French military strategy from a short-term offensive operation to a longer-term counterterrorism strategy. According to an Operation Barkhane press release, Operation Serval put a stop to the immanent terrorist threat in the north of Mali and allowed for the transfer of the stabilization mission to the UN and the Malian authorities. France is concerned about the transnational nature of the terrorist threats. Consequently, Operation Barkhane was designed with a broader operating mission. It moved away from an approach that only targeted Mali to a Sahelian one with broader counterterrorism aims. Since UNSCR 2100 refers to French troops and not a particular military operation, Operation Barkhane took over the role of Operation Serval played and continues to play in MINUSMA.

To answer the question of what explains the evolution of the joint relationship between the French and the UN operation in Mali it was necessary to break down the operation into four crucial points and examine the causal relationships that led to those points. These four crucial points: the transition from a regional to a global operation, the deployment of French troops to Mali, the beginning of an UN operation, and the transition from Operation Serval to Operation Barkhane constitute a timeline of important events in the evolution of the joint relationship between the French and the UN operation in Mali. The turning points isolated above are analyzed using the three causal mechanisms outlined in the methodology section to determine how each of these three mechanisms leads into the outcome characterized by the turning point. It is important to keep in mind that each of the turning points builds on previous outcomes and decisions and so it is impossible to analyze them individually, without taking into consideration previous decisions and events.

The first crucial point on the timeline is, the passage of UNSCR 2085, which marks the beginning of UN support to Mali through the authorization of the African-led peacekeeping operation AFISMA. Contributing to the passage of UNSC 2085 are the *somewhat intense* engagement of a single state actor (France) within the region, the *somewhat militarized* degree of the peacekeeping operation, and the *moderate cooperation* between state and multilateral actors in executing the peacekeeping mission. France is the single state actor that is the most active in West Africa and is the main actor in bringing the situation in Mali to the attention of the United Nations. France's historical relationship with Mali has been complicated due to colonialism. The engagement of France within the region at this point can be characterized as *somewhat intense* due to the French policy of "leading from behind."<sup>29</sup> While France was engaging the terrorist threat in Mali, they were attempting to do it indirectly by playing a key facilitating role, both to avoid entangling ground troops and to evade the appearance of neo-colonial intervention. France committed to making the conflict in Mali one of its foreign policy priorities, but the onus remains on the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) and the African Union to implement operation.<sup>30</sup> France showed its commitment to Mali by pushing for international intervention at the UN. As a P5 member it was able to persuade the US to push through UNSCR 2085, despite the US' hesitation on the ground that the operation was not viable, and that the "West African Force" supposed to carry out the operation was not capable of countering the terrorist threat effectively.<sup>31</sup> However, it is clear at this point that France is unwilling to take more direct or unilateral action in Mali.

Similar to the degree of French engagement, the degree of militarization of the peacekeeping operation can be characterized as *somewhat militarized*. UNSCR 2085 called the international community to provide troops and coordinated military support. Since the AU operation (AFISMA) was ultimately not deployed, the degree of militarization can only reflect the degree of intended militarization. UNSCR 2085 calls for the contribution of troops and military support from the international community to AFISMA,<sup>32</sup> and the intends a military component. AFISMA was not ultimately operationalized and deployed due to the advancement of jihadi troops that necessitated a direct

French military intervention. The intended militarization of peacekeeping operations is relevant however, as operations became militarized in Mali in the coming years and months.

The cooperation between state and multilateral actors in executing the peacekeeping mission is characterized by *moderate cooperation* when France led the call for international support to Mali and the EU agreed to finance a portion of the operation. ECOWAS and the AU also cooperated in their attempts to operationalize AFISMA. The operation was indicative of *moderate cooperation* because while the international community was willing to support the African-led mission AFISMA it was not willing to commit ground troops. Similarly, the EU's pledged financial support of the operation contributed to the *moderate cooperation* between Mali and multilateral actors.<sup>33</sup> While the international community, the African Union, and Mali were showing signs of cooperation in operationalizing and funding AFISMA, the unfolding of events in Mali soon necessitated much more intense cooperation.

France's and the broader international community's strategy of "Leading from Behind" characterized the first crucial point on the timeline. In providing broader international support for the Mali peacekeeping through the regional peacekeeping operation AFISMA, the international community recognized the necessity for a viable international operation in Mali. The persistent lack of funding, and ECOWAS and AU organizational incapability, led the situation in Mali to escalate and made an African-led solution to the Mali crisis impossible.<sup>34</sup> French national security interests soon provided the impetus for more aggressive action to resolve the Mali conflict.

The second crucial point in the timeline, 11 January 2013, is the beginning of Operation Serval. In January 2013, the jihadists posed a credible threat to the security of southern Mali, particularly Bamako. At this point France took unilateral action, albeit blessed by the UN, to intervene militarily in the Mali conflict. Once invited to intervene by Mali, France deployed troops, retook territory starting at the Niger River Basin, and advanced northward. This period of the operation is characterized by France's *very intense* engagement in the region through a massive operational scale-up from France's previous engagement and an abandonment of the strategy of "leading from behind." Launching Operation Serval was a turning point in France's intervention in the Mali conflict. It was very effective at eliminating the jihadist threat and turned the conflict in the favor of the Malian army.<sup>35</sup> Operation Serval's objectives were, to quote the French foreign minister, "First, stop the terrorist advance with air-power. Second, bomb the jihadists' rear bases to smithereens. Third, keep Bamako safe and secure. Fourth, help the Malian forces reconstitute themselves so that they might defend their own country against the jihadist scourge."<sup>36</sup> This policy of *very intense* military engagement reversed the terrorist advance and allowed Mali to regain its territorial integrity in its recognized international borders.

As Operation Serval continued, the focus of international efforts in Mali became deeply militarized. Thus the degree of militarization of the peacekeeping operation at the second crucial point can be characterized as *very militarized*. As the operation at this point was a military one with general future peacekeeping objectives. The main focus of Operation Serval was eradicating the jihadist threat through military means that "made it possible to stop the jihadist offensive which threatened Bamako, put an end to the industrial organization of the terrorism which had developed in the desert of North Mali, and to transfer the mission of stabilizing Mali to the Malian partners as well as to the UN forces."<sup>37</sup> The operation at this time transforms into an entirely military phenomenon.

The cooperation of state and multilateral actors at this second crucial point is characterized by *moderate cooperation*. Operation Serval would not have been possible without very close cooperation between France and Mali, as well as the blessing of the UN. While Operation Serval was a French military operation, France and Mali were cooperating to execute Operation Serval with the UN's blessing through UNSCR 2100. Operation Serval demonstrated the shortcoming of AFISMA to mobilize the necessity of French unilateral intervention. Thus exemplifying the shortcoming of multilateral peacekeeping operations broadly and African-led peacekeeping operations generally, this intervention exemplifies a different type of multilateral response, one driven by the interests of a single state but endorsed by multilateral institutions.<sup>38</sup> This can be characterized by *moderate cooperation* since Operation Serval was a unilateral operation operating with the consent of multilateral institutions such as the UN, AU, and ECOWAS.

The second crucial point sees a scale up of the operations vis-à-vis the first with the exception of degree of cooperation between state and multilateral actors in executing the mission objectives. France's role in Mali grows rapidly in conjunction with the deployment of the military operation. Thus, the engagement of a single state actor within the region and the degree of militarization scale up from *somewhat intense* and *somewhat militarized* to *very intense* and *very militarized*. However, the degree of cooperation between state and multilateral actors remained steady at the level of *moderate cooperation*, indicating that the while multilateral institutions have given their permission for the intervention, the UN has yet to intervene directly in any military or peacekeeping capacity.

The third crucial point in the timeline is when UNSCR 2100 was passed authorizing the MINUSMA. The establishment of MINUSMA was an effort by the international community to further legitimize the French intervention and for France to abdicate sole responsibility for Mali's security situation. France's engagement with the region, shifts from *very intense* to *intense* in the third crucial point. The level of intensity drops because France is no

longer acting unilaterally in Mali. MINUSMA's mandate articulates that the UN's mission in Mali is the "stabilization of key population centers and support for the reestablishment of State authority throughout the country."<sup>39</sup> However, France remained active in Mali was applauded by the UN. For example UNSC Resolution 2100 demonstrates the necessity of France UN action in Mali. The UN blessed the French intervention in Mali because it was necessary to stop the "terrorist, extremist and armed groups towards the south of Mali." Though UN acknowledgment and action, France went from a unilateral actor in the conflict to one of many actors. Thus while the intensity of the operation increased, France's direct engagement with the region decreased.

The peacekeeping operation can be characterized as *militarized*. The main reason for the change in the degree of militarization of the peacekeeping operation between this crucial point and the previous one is that though Operation Serval remained active, MINUSMA's goals expanded beyond the military reconquest of Mali. For example, UNSCR 2100 includes the "promotion and protection of human rights ... support for humanitarian assistance ... support for cultural preservation ... support for national and international justice" as part of the mission mandates. The inclusion of these provisions demonstrates that the UN is first and foremost a multilateral organization. The support of Operation Serval, and the creation of MINUSMA establish a shift towards a UN that is more military focused. Unlike the strict military objectives of Operation Serval, the UN pays lip service to the humanitarian casualties of the Mali conflict. MINUSMA, while validating Operation Serval, has broader peacekeeping and humanitarian goals that imply state building elements. Thus the third crucial point is not less militarized due to scaled down military involvement, but because MINUSMA's mandate went beyond the strictly military goals of France in Operation Serval.

The cooperation between state and multilateral actors in executing the peacekeeping mission in the third crucial point can be characterized as *very intense*. The UN and France cooperated extensively, and played to each other's strengths. France brought military might while the UN brought international legitimacy. The *very intense* cooperation between Operation Serval and MINUSMA is then largely due to the co-dependent nature of the operation. MINUSMA was, and is, dependent upon the French army for security. UN security forces could not stand up to a jihadi incursion. Indeed, article 18 of UNSC Resolution 2100 demonstrates how contingent the UN was (and still is) on the French military for security.<sup>40</sup> The UN's request that France intervene to protect the security of MINUSMA when necessary is indicative of how unprepared and unable the UN was to militarily defend itself. The necessity of the French army for the implementation of MINUSMA indicates the *very intense* cooperation between state and multilateral actors needed to execute the peacekeeping operation.

In contrast to the relationship seen in the first and second crucial points where the level of engagement between the France and the region as well as the degree of militarization increased, a comparison between the second and third crucial points demonstrate that the level of intensity of the above two causal mechanisms decreased. Due to a more direct involvement of the UN in the form of Operation MINUSMA, France's engagement and the degree of militarization of the operation decreased. In contrast, the more intense engagement of the UN allowed for a closer degree of multilateral cooperation, especially between the UN and France but also between the UN and Mali.

The fourth and last crucial point is when France transitioned Operation Serval into Operation Barkhane. This marked a shift in French commitment from a short-term emergency operation (Operation Serval) to a mission which reflects long-term French national interest in the Sahel (Operation Barkhane). In transitioning to Operation Barkhane, France made a more lasting commitment to the region. France's engagement with Mali and the broader Sahel region escalates from *intense* to *very intense* because of the long term commitment of Operation Barkhane. Through Operation Barkhane, France articulates a broader security strategy for the Sahel. This is seen in the primary objectives of Operation Barkhane. The mission objectives, notably those regarding capacity building in the Malian and regional armed forces and the maintenance of security and state order, imply long term French commitments.<sup>41</sup> These commitments indicate a French strategy dedicated to maintaining a military presence in Mali and the Sahel for the foreseeable future. Similarly long term, is the French mission objective to support international forces and actions.

The degree of militarization of the peacekeeping operation remains *militarized* through the transition from Operation Serval to Operation Barkhane. The change in operations does not mean a shift away from a military approach to counterinsurgency. MINUSMA is still dependent upon French military support. The relationship between the French military and MINUSMA continues. Subsequent UNSC resolutions, such as UNSCR 2164, authorize the French forces to "intervene in support of elements of MINUSMA" using the exact same language used previously in UNSCR 2100.<sup>42</sup> UNSCR 2164 and all subsequent UNSC resolutions regarding the situation in Mali also include a clause "Welcoming the continued action by the French forces, at the request of the Malian authorities, to deter the terrorist threat in the North of Mali."<sup>43</sup> This demonstrates that French involvement and subsequent militarization of MINUSMA continues. Thus, as the French military presence remains constant so does the *militarized* level of the operation.

The cooperation between state and multilateral actors in executing the peacekeeping mission remains *very intense*. Operation Barkhane stresses partnership as a foundational principle of operation. Multilateral partners remain central in the transition from Operation Serval to Operation Barkhane. MINUSMA "is for France a privileged partner."<sup>44</sup>

Operation Barkhane is built around partnerships with MINUSMA the central partner in that grouping. France is authorized by UNSC Resolutions to “intervene on behalf of MINUSMA in the case of serious threat in Mali and more generally in the Sahel.”<sup>45</sup> Thus the relationship that has been built between France and MINUSMA remains and is reinforced and reinvigorated in the transition from Operation Serval to Operation Barkhane.

## 5. Conclusions

France is entrenched in Mali and will continue to pursue its long-term security priorities in tandem with Operation Barkhane. The French army is the one of the only western armed forces to have combat readiness in desert environments.<sup>46</sup> As the UN begins to take on an active peacemaking rather than a peacekeeping role, the presence and influence of states with effective military capabilities becomes more pronounced. Indeed, AFISMA was unable to be operationalized and failed because of ECOWAS’ and the AU’s inability to muster sufficient troops and resources. This demonstrates that the failures of African-led peacekeeping are due in part to a lack of financial resources. African peacekeeping operations rely on cooperation with France and other European armed forces for counterinsurgency/peacekeeping operations.<sup>47</sup> The military nature of such peacekeeping and the continued inability for the UN to provide sufficient military support for these operations means that single state actors with military capabilities, such as France, have bargaining power and can shape the unfolding conflict to suit their own geo-political strategic priorities.

Single state actors are also likely to be more active in pursuing their strategic priorities within the framework of multilateral operations. The co-dependent relationship between France and the UN in Mali points to a broader framework of cooperation. As the UN employs integrated stabilization operations, it will need unilateral state actors to support the more militarized aspects of the operation. This gives actors such as France the ability to shape the priorities of such operations. Further research is warranted on how and why this operation in Mali is militarized. The fighting in Mali continues despite the intervention. Just prior to the submission of this paper, the *New York Times* ran an article on the continued carnage in northern Mali.<sup>48</sup> The increasingly militarized nature of this operation has not led to peace and it is crucial to keep asking why.

By applying process tracing to break down the Mali peacekeeping operation into its crucial turning points, it became evident that the success and failure of the operation is judged according to what outcome is prioritized. In one way, the French military mission in Mali is a resounding success, eliminating the Al Qaida safe haven in northern Mali, dealing a blow to terrorist organizations operating with Al Qaida, and restoring Mali’s territorial integrity while being relatively cost effective.<sup>49</sup> However the military operation did not deal with any of the underlying problems in Mali that gave way to the Tuareg rebellion or to Malian state’s fragility. Mali’s post-colonial history underlies many of the country’s current difficulties and there is little attempt to link the current peacekeeping mission to the underlying issues that necessitated it.<sup>50</sup> This risks separating the causes of the conflict from its solutions. Peace in Mali is still proving illusive. The conflict is at its roots historical and cannot be summarily dealt with through military means. A permanent solution must involve a conversation between all the Malian people.<sup>51</sup>

## 6. Endnotes

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22 While relying on primary interview sources is best, it was necessary to draw from secondary sources due to lack of access. Primary document sources will be the official press releases for Operation Serval and Operation Barkhane as well as speeches by French officials.

23 They are UNSC Resolution 2085, UNSC Resolution 2071, UNSC Resolution 2100, UNSC Resolution 2164, UNSC Resolution 2227, UNSC Resolution 2295, UNSC Resolution 2364, UNSC Resolution 2374, UNSC Resolution 2391, and UNSC Resolution 2423.

24 Sergei Boeke and Bart Schuurman, “Operation ‘Serval’: A Strategic Analysis of the French Intervention in Mali, 2013–2014,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 38, no. 6 (September 19, 2015): 807, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2015.1045494>.

25 UNSCR 2085 “welcomes the willingness of the European Union to provide such financial support to AFISMA through the mobilization of the African Peace facility” UN Security Council, *Security Council resolution 2085 (2012) [on authorization of the deployment of an African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) for an initial period of one year]*, 20 December 2012, S/RES/2085 (2012), available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/50ed391f2.html> (Accessed 26 March 2019).

26 Le Drian quoted in Chivvis (2016, 110).

27 Specifically the “stabilization of key population centers and support for the reestablishment of State authority throughout the county.” UN Security Council, *Security Council resolution 2100 (2013) [on establishment of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)]*, 25 April 2013, S/RES/2100 (2013), available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/519dffbe4.html> (Accessed 26 March 2019).

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28 UNSCR 2100 “Authorizes French troops, within the limits of their capacities and areas of deployment, to use all necessary means, from the commencement of the activities of MINUSMA until the end of MINUSMA’s mandate as authorized in this resolution, to intervene in support of elements of MINUSMA when under imminent and serious threat upon the request of the Secretary-General” Ibid, 9.

29 Chivvis, *The French War on Al Qa’ida in Africa*, 81.

30 François Hollande, “Déclaration de M. François Hollande, Président de la République, sur les défis et priorités de la politique étrangère de la France, à Paris le 27 août 2012.,” text, August 27, 2012, <http://discours.vie-publique.fr/notices/127001575.html>.

Translated by author from the original French text.

31 Chivvis, *The French War on Al Qa’ida in Africa*, 83. In hindsight, US concerns proved true, the force proposed by UNSCR 2085 was unable to carry out the mandate of the resolution, ultimately necessitating French intervention.

32 UNSCR 2085 “Calls upon Member States, including from the Sahel region, to contribute troops to AFISMA in order to enable AFISMA to achieve its mandate .... Urges Member States, regional and international organizations to provide coordinated support to AFISMA, including military training, provision of equipment, intelligence, logistical support and any necessary assistance in efforts to reduce the threat posed by terrorist organization, including AQUIM, MUJWA and associated extremist groups” UN Security Council, *Security Council resolution 2085 (2012)*.

33 Specifically, UNSCR 2085 “Calls upon Member States and international organizations, to provide financial support and contributions in kind to AFISMA to enable its deployment and implementation of its mandate and welcomes the willingness of the European Union to provide such financial support to AFISMA through the mobilization of the African Peace Facility.” UN Security Council, *Security Council resolution 2085 (2012)*.

34 Théroux-Bénoni, “The Long Path to MINUSMA: Assessing the International Response to the Crisis in Mali,” 182.

35 Bere, “Armed Rebellion, Violent Extremism, and the Challenges of International Intervention in Mali,” 64.

36 Chivvis, *The French War on Al Qa’ida in Africa*, 111.

37 Dossier de Presse Opération Barkhane, Ministère des Armées, <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/english/actualites/operations/dossier-de-presse-barkhane-1-an-d-operations>, (Accessed 26 March 2019), 3. Translated from French to English by author.

38 Théroux-Bénoni, “The Long Path to MINUSMA: Assessing the International Response to the Crisis in Mali,” 177.

39 According to UNSCR 2100 the UN: “Welcoming the swift action by the French forces, at the transitional authorities of Mali, to stop the offensive of terrorist, extremist and armed groups towards the south of Mali and commending the efforts to restore the territorial integrity of Mali by the Malian Defense and Security Forces, with the support of the French forces and the troops of the African-led International Support Mission in Mali.” UN Security Council, *Security Council resolution 2100 (2013)*.

40 According to UNSCR 2100 the UN: “Authorizes French troops, within the limits of their capacities and areas of deployment, to use all necessary means, from the commencement of the activities of MINUSMA until the end of MINUSMA’s mandate as authorized in this resolution, to intervene in support of elements of MINUSMA when under imminent and serious threat upon request of the Secretary-General” Ibid.

41 Specifically, “France’s strategy in the Sahel vis-à-vis partner states aims to ensure that the those partners acquire the capacity to ensure their own security independently of France. This strategy is based on a global approach (involving politics, security, and development) whose military component is carried out by Operation Barkhane, led by the French army. In the current context, Barkhane’s effort is focused on the direct fight against the terrorist threat, accompanying partner forces, and supporting the international forces and actions to help the local population so as to allow a return to normalcy in the areas where State authority was in question.”<sup>41</sup> Dossier de Presse: Operation Barkhane, 7.

42 UN Security Council, *Security Council resolution 2164 (2014) [on extension the mandate of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) until 30 June 2015]*, 25 June 2014, S/RES/2164 (2014), available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/53b3d6340.html> (accessed 8 April 2019).

43 UN Security Council, *Security Council resolution 2164 (2014)*. The subsequent UNSC resolutions include UNSCR 2227, UNSC 2295R, UNSCR 2364, UNSCR 2374, UNSCR 2391, and UNSCR 2423.

44 Dossier de Presse: Operation Barkhane, 5.

45 Ibid., 5.

46 Chivvis, *The French War on Al Qa’ida in Africa*.

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47 In the Mali Operation, EUTM (European Union Training Mission in Mali) has been operating in Mali since February 2013 with troops from 22 EU nations and 5 non-EU member states. [http://eutmmali.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/190106-EUTM\\_Mission\\_Factsheet\\_JAN19\\_EN-website-1.pdf](http://eutmmali.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/190106-EUTM_Mission_Factsheet_JAN19_EN-website-1.pdf)

48 Reuters, “More Than 100 Killed Amid Escalating Violence in Mali,” *The New York Times*, March 24, 2019, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/23/world/africa/mali-dozens-killed.html>.

49 Chivvis, *The French War on Al Qa’ida in Africa*, 12.

50 Fawole (2018) being the notable exception.

51 *Ibid.*, 132–34.