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## **FROM PIVOT TO SYMMETRY? INTEGRATING AFRICA IN THE REBALANCE TO ASIA**

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### **Abstract**

Already not a priority in American strategy, Africa seems bound to suffer from the U.S. pivot to the Asia-Pacific from 2014 onwards. Indeed, the debate still rages to determine whether the focus on Asia will be significantly increased. While broadcasting a rebalance of its diplomatic and military resources, the U.S. administration also assures that American commitment to other regions will not falter. Given present budget constraints, this assertion appears unsustainable. The U.S. necessarily has to prioritize its involvements across the globe in an environment of finite resources. In this regard, the subsequent international leadership void seems particularly striking in Africa. Meanwhile, China has conducted its own pivot towards African resources. Considered as a predation for some analysts or as an alternative development model for others, the interdependency between Beijing and Africa has now reached levels that exceed simple economic relations to enter the realm of grand strategy. Based on non-conditional aid and bilateral agreements, Chinese interactions with African states challenge the United States in terms of interests and values. If the Washington consensus may appear threatened, strategies to contain China in Africa are both illusory and unproductive. On the contrary, identifying Africa's development as the primal center of gravity inevitably leads to a liberal approach which China's current policy clearly dismisses. U.S. liberal objectives must therefore be implemented through a multilateral strategy capitalizing on burden sharing and distributive leadership among allies and African partners, avoiding the pitfalls of bluntly and unilaterally imposed ideals. They also must include China as an enabler, controlled by a web of overt agreements, instead of negating fruitlessly its contributing power.

### **Introduction**

Either defining or dismissing the concept, analysts cannot resist invoking a "new Cold War"<sup>1</sup> between China and the U.S.. The position of Africa in this paradigm remains crucial, as it was during the bipolar era. Realists tend to put it in an ontological perspective: "Evidence that China was expanding its interactions with [...] Africa [...] raised the specter of a new global rivalry for power and influence."<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, avoiding a too simplistic analogy with the USSR, they also underline a unique consequential feature: "But China is dependent on overseas markets and raw materials, unlike the autarkic Soviet Union, which will give it powerful incentives to interfere in many places

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<sup>1</sup> Aaron Friedberg, "The Future of U.S.-China Relations: Is Conflict Inevitable?" *International Security*, Vol. 30/ 2, p.8, [http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/files/is3002\\_pp\\_007-045\\_friedberg.pdf](http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/files/is3002_pp_007-045_friedberg.pdf), (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Friedberg, p. 7.

around the globe”<sup>3</sup>.

For this school of thought, China’s “development will lead to more friction with the United States.” Less euphemistically, although “[a] war between China and America is far from inevitable, [ if ] inexperienced, reckless or over-confident leaders come to power on either side, the danger of war will rise.”<sup>4</sup> The appropriate strategy, in the same vein, encompasses an actualized version of containment, for “America’s most natural and instinctive response to China’s challenge is to push back.”<sup>5</sup>

However, this offensive reaction renders America’s famous pivot to Asia either incompatible or unsustainable. Accordingly, John J. Mearsheimer describes two global containment scenarios that this essay applies in regards to Africa. First, if the pivot to Asia allows “China [to] become a regional hegemon [in this case, in Africa], the U.S. simply may not be able to contain it.”<sup>6</sup> From this declinist point of view, the competition is already lost, as a natural evolution of the global balance of powers. In that case, the American *laissez-faire* attitude that necessarily derives from it contradicts the proactive stance of current American projects for Africa<sup>7</sup>. The second hypothesis assumes that “the Chinese economy will continue to rise but not at such a rapid clip, in which case the U.S. will be in a good position to contain China.”<sup>8</sup> Such a hard power showdown is also self-defeating. Indeed, the success of containment supposes a renewed U.S. commitment in Africa, with strength and will. The former requires massive economic and military resources, which are, by presidential choice and budget constraints, directed towards East Asia. The latter suffers from the fact that, in the economic and diplomatic realm, “[...] the stakes for China in [Africa] will always, in the end, be higher than for America.”<sup>9</sup>

In the face of this strategic dead-end, defensive realists recommend an offshore balancing strategy<sup>10</sup>. This option transforms indeed containment into a cost-effective enterprise compatible with the pivot. However, it assumes the existence of partners in Africa aligned with U.S. interests on the one hand, and simultaneously at odds with Chinese practices on the other hand. Reality presents a different picture. Although the practices of China remain far from being consensual among African countries, the all-out demonization of its involvement is not credible. First, alternative investigations hint that China may be interested in the long term development of Africa.<sup>11</sup> Reciprocally, direct benefits for Africa include “infrastructure, increases in African earnings, fulfillment of unmet African consumer demands, source of business credit and finance, spurring global commercial interest in African resources and markets [and] autonomy in international politics by lessening their dependence on official aid and credit from Western

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<sup>3</sup> Stephen M. Walt, “Dealing With a Chinese Monroe Doctrine,” *New York Times*, 26 August 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2012/05/02/are-we-headed-for-a-cold-war-with-china/dealing-with-a-chinese-monroe-doctrine>, (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Hugh White, *The China Choice: Why America Should Share Power* (Collingwood, Vic.: Black Inc., 2012), p.100.

<sup>6</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, “‘Peaceful rise’ will meet U.S. containment”, *Global Times*, 6 November 2013, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/823045.shtml>, (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>7</sup> Obama, *Presidential Policy Directive, U.S. strategy toward sub-Saharan Africa*, Washington: June 2012, [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/africa\\_strategy\\_2.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/africa_strategy_2.pdf), (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Mearsheimer, “‘Peaceful rise’ will meet U.S. containment”.

<sup>9</sup> Hugh White, p.103.

<sup>10</sup> Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press ; 2007), pp.159-192.

<sup>11</sup> Deborah Brautigam, *The Dragon’s Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa* (Oxford [England]; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.307.

donor countries.”<sup>12</sup> From an indirect perspective, “China may also represent an alternative locus of global power with which African countries can ally in order to balance their ties with the West, particularly when faced with political conditionalities demanded by Western countries in return for aid, credit, or political cooperation”<sup>13</sup>. It is illusory to believe that an African country would renounce all of these benefits in order to be trapped in a bipolar paradigm again.

Moreover, these considerations only refer to hard power. Yet, China has already become conscious of the necessity to develop a softer side of its involvement abroad: “as a matter of fact, China’s soft power [is] increasing in Asia and other parts of the developing world, particularly after the 2008 global financial crisis.”<sup>14</sup> In Africa, the increase in the number of Confucius Institutes encompasses the emphasis Beijing puts on broadening its influence through cultural outreach, namely a “diplomatic strategy of offensive influence.”<sup>15</sup> The first of these non-profit programs promoting Chinese language and culture throughout the world were created in 2004. The first one opened in Nairobi in 2005. In 2010, 27 Confucius Institutes were teaching Chinese in 19 different African countries.<sup>16</sup> As a former French Joint Chief of Staff noticed, “every time I go to Bamako, I meet my Nigerian interpreter: she also speaks perfect Chinese. A true Chinese Strategy exists, and the Confucius Institutes are an example of it.”<sup>17</sup> President Hu Jintao officially endorsed this endeavor “[to] enhance culture as part of the soft power of our country [...] a factor of growing significance in the competition in overall national strength.”<sup>18</sup> The way to “avoid a U.S.-China cold war”<sup>19</sup> in Africa lies therefore in the ability to transform the sterile hard power controversy between “dragon slashers and panda huggers”<sup>20</sup> through cooperation and the “power [that] springs up among men when they act together.”<sup>21</sup> According to Joseph Nye, “this

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<sup>12</sup> Nicolas Cook, Specialist in African Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division, Congressional Research Service, “Sub-Saharan Africa,” in *China’s foreign Policy and “Soft Power” in South America, Asia and Africa, a Study Prepared for the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate*, Congressional research Service, Library of Congress, April 2008, p. 107, [http://www.fas.org/irp/congress/2008\\_rpt/crs-china.pdf](http://www.fas.org/irp/congress/2008_rpt/crs-china.pdf), (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph S Nye, *The Future of Power* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011), p.86.

<sup>15</sup> French Senate, *L’Afrique est notre avenir*, Rapport d’information n° 104 (2013-2014) de MM. Jeanny Lorgeoux et Jean-Marie Bockel, fait au nom de la commission des affaires étrangères, de la défense et des forces armées, déposé le 29 octobre 2013, p. 295, <http://www.senat.fr/rap/r13-104/r13-1041.pdf>, (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Christian Quesnot, in *Conference ID4D Relations Chine Afrique impact pour le continent africain et perspectives*, Agence Francaise de Developpement, Paris: 8 February 2013, p. 23.

<sup>18</sup> Hu Jintao, 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China Speech, 15 October 2007, in Richard N. Rosecrance (ed.), *Power and Restraint: A Shared Vision for the U.S.-China Relationship*, 1st ed (New York: PublicAffairs, 2009), p.28.

<sup>19</sup> Henry A. Kissinger, “Avoiding a U.S.-China cold war,” *The Washington Post*, 14 January 2011, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/01/13/AR2011011304832.html>, (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>20</sup> Ambassador Winston Lord, *Sino-American Relations: Amour or Les Miserables?* Inaugural Nancy Bernkopf Tucker Memorial Lecture, Wilson Institute, Washington D.C., 18 April 2013, p. 6, <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/inaugural-nancy-bernkopf-tucker-memorial-lecture>. See also [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/winston\\_lord\\_speech.pdf](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/winston_lord_speech.pdf), (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>21</sup> Hannah Arendt and Margaret Canovan, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p.200.

important dimension of a ‘smart power’ strategy for the twenty-first century is not captured by the concept of containment.”<sup>22</sup>

The preceding analysis leads to two correlated theses that will be examined in this paper.

### **Thesis**

1. If the U.S. strategic shift to Asia is to be successful, Africa must be included, given the history, the nature and the extent of China’s own strategy on this continent.
2. In this redefined balance of powers, multilateral and inclusive initiatives are likely to be more successful than realist containment in order to achieve a grand strategy for Africa with the ultimate goal of Africa’s development by and for Africans.

Despite wishful reassurances by the Obama administration, the pivot to Asia-Pacific does look like a zero sum game as far as global U.S. security engagements are concerned. Finite assets and rising budget constraints require a resource reapportionment to support this new priority in U.S. foreign policy. Ironically, the subsequent regional voids may fall to a major competitor and potential adversary which the U.S. is precisely trying to balance in East Asia. The “special relationship” between China and Africa illustrates this dilemma. As a matter of fact, their mutual dependency is based on a dedicated strategy by Beijing. Ultimately, the unregulated predation of African resources could lead to regional hegemony, exercised by China. Therefore, Africa must be included in the U.S. strategic shift to Asia if China’s rise is to be managed.

However, a resort to a symmetric grand strategy may fail if carried out unilaterally. Accepting the leadership of allies and the ownership of African partners provides a way to cope with growing Chinese power in Africa. The entanglement of China in a multilateral and cooperative web is likely to ultimately prevent unilateral action by Beijing to protect its ever-growing interests on African soil.

### **Regional Focus, Continental Vacuum**

#### **The pivot to Asia: reality beyond rhetoric**

At first glance, a pragmatic approach suggests that in order to be effective, the U.S. rebalance to Asia must be focused on the Western Pacific. To begin with, the President of the United States presents the pivot to Asia as a “deliberate and strategic decision”<sup>23</sup> following a straightforward analysis of the balance of power on the global scale and pushing U.S. interests. Indeed, he argues that Asia embodies the fastest growing region in the world, and that American interests are subsequently at stake as far as global security, prosperity, and human rights are concerned in this region. This new strategy naturally translates into increased economic, diplomatic and military efforts, described by the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense. However, the executive branch remains very realistic when it assesses the means available for this strategic surge. In the wake of Iraq and Afghanistan, “two wars that cost us dearly, in

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<sup>22</sup> Joseph Nye, “Should China be ‘Contained?’” *Project Syndicate* website, July 4, 2011, <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/should-china-be--contained-->, (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>23</sup> President Barack Obama, *Remarks to the Australian Parliament*, Canberra, 17 November 2011, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/17/remarks-president-obama-australian-parliament>, (accessed 16 January 2014).

blood and treasure,”<sup>24</sup> the global financial crisis has further precipitated the capacity of America “into a period of unprecedented budget turmoil at home.”<sup>25</sup> The Secretary of Defense took drastic measures: “At the same time, the United States, like many other nations, is dealing with large debt and large deficits, which has required the Department of Defense to reduce the planning budget by nearly half a trillion dollars or specifically \$487 billion that were directed to be reduced by the Congress in the Budget Control Act over the next decade.”<sup>26</sup> Therefore, the President clearly describes his decision as a prioritization of efforts, making “the Asia Pacific a top priority. As a result, reductions in U.S. defense spending will not -- I repeat, will not -- come at the expense of the Asia Pacific.”<sup>27</sup> And the secretary of Defense acknowledges that while crafting this new strategy requires “choices and priorities [...] we [the United States] have rightly chosen to make this region a priority.”<sup>28</sup>

Thus, American strategy becomes, of necessity, more of a zero-sum game emphasizing its commitment to Asia at the expense of its other global engagements, including Africa. Reassuring stances try to contest this fact, forecasting that the U.S. will maintain its worldwide presence through innovative means: “We will also maintain our presence throughout the world. We will do it with innovative rotational deployments that emphasize creation of new partnerships and new alliances. We will also invest, invest in cyber, invest in space, invest in unnamed systems, and invest in Special Forces operations. We will invest in the newest technology and we will invest in the ability to mobilize quickly if necessary.”<sup>29</sup> However, although the Middle East still consumes much U.S. attention, the dramatic nature of the pivot and the shift away from other regions remains all too present within executive rhetoric, selective engagement and choices of courses of action.

### **Africa, The “Great Forgotten One” Of The Pivot... To Asia**

First, the administration has quickly reacted with a rhetorical move in order to diminish the negative connotation inherent to the word *pivot*. The euphemistic use of *rebalance*, or *refocus* to Asia tries to counter the impression that the U.S. is pivoting *away* from other places. Nonetheless, this effort cannot hide the downgrading of Africa contained in official expressions of U.S. grand strategy since 2011. For instance, the Defense Strategic Guidance of 2011 uses the word “Africa” only once throughout its sixteen pages,<sup>30</sup> compared to twenty-four appearances in the 2010 National Security Strategy.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, symbolically enough, Africa is addressed as the last item on the White House Foreign Policy webpage.<sup>32</sup> The 2012 Presidential Policy Directive on U.S. strategy toward sub-Saharan Africa partly fills this rhetorical gap, but its implementation remains hinged on the same structural contradictions.

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<sup>24</sup> Obama, *Remarks to the Australian Parliament*.

<sup>25</sup> Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, *Remarks to the Malaysian Ministry of Defense*, Malaysian Institute of Defense and Security, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Sunday, 25 August 2013, <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1799>, (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>26</sup> Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, *Remarks to Shangri-La Security Dialogue*, Singapore, 2 June 2012, <http://www.defense.gov/Speeches/Speech.aspx?SpeechID=1681>, (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>27</sup> Obama, *Remarks to the Australian Parliament*.

<sup>28</sup> Panetta, *Remarks to Shangri-La Security Dialogue*.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, January 2012, p.3, [http://www.defense.gov/news/defense\\_strategic\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/news/defense_strategic_guidance.pdf) (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>31</sup> The White House, *National Security Strategy*, 2010, [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss\\_viewer/national\\_security\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf) (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>32</sup> White House website, Foreign Policy head page, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/foreign-policy>, (accessed 16 January 2014).

In fact, the translation of U.S. strategic motives into operational objectives leads to selective engagement, as opposed to a holistic strategy that addresses challenges on the whole African continent. In this vein, the 2013 presidential trip to Africa epitomizes two things. First, it underscores the position of Africa on the American agenda. It is the only appearance of Barak Obama on this continent since 2009, a relative “absence” with political implications: “when we talk about U.S.-Africa policy [...] we trace it back to Bill Clinton, you trace it back to George W. Bush, and very little of President Obama. In that sense, [...] Obama has not been felt in Africa.”<sup>33</sup> Second, by choosing Senegal, South Africa, and Tanzania, the U.S. shows its eagerness to trade with democratic African nations, more than its will to address the root problem of putting illiberal countries and failing states on the road to free market democracy.

Moreover, the military component of American engagement in Africa seems also trapped in a strategic “catch-22”. Indeed, AFRICOM has had to face existential dilemmas since its creation in 2008. A spin-off from EUCOM, sharing the continent with CENTCOM (which maintains its “traditional relationship”<sup>34</sup> with Egypt), its autonomy has always faced difficulties. Symbolically, the location of AFRICOM’s headquarters in Stuttgart followed a controversy about its implantation on the African continent,<sup>35</sup> hampering its credibility. Operationally, it has been heavily dependent on other commands (notably EUCOM and CENTCOM) and has faced subsequent difficulties when leading Operation Odyssey Dawn over Libya.<sup>36</sup> In times of financial constraints, the idea of AFRICOM’s dissolution has even surfaced within a broader realignment of the COCOMs.<sup>37</sup> These rumors have seen no concretization yet. In fact, some analysts even characterize an American “surge in Africa” in 2013:<sup>38</sup> special operations have taken place in Somalia and Libya, and the U.S. increases its mentoring of African troops for counter-terrorism.<sup>39</sup> However, the same analysts worry that the emphasis of U.S. Africa policy tends to focus on military actions, thereby narrowing the grand design of a U.S. Africa strategy. Indeed, if only the military part of the 2012 U.S. Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa is being implemented, this focus on hard power appears inadequate in comparison to China’s broad approach of its African affairs.

## “Chinafrica”? Interdependent Strategies For Global Issues

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<sup>33</sup> Mwangi Kimenyi, director of the Africa Growth Initiative at the Brookings Institution, in Gwen Ifill, *Assessing the Substance and Symbolism of Obama’s Africa Trip and Outreach*, 2 July 2013, [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/africa/july-dec13/africa2\\_07-02.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/africa/july-dec13/africa2_07-02.html), (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>34</sup> AFRICOM website. <http://www.africom.mil/Map>. (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>35</sup> Stephen Burgess, “U.S. Africa Command, Changing Security Dynamics and Perceptions of U.S. Africa Policy,” U.S. Air Force Academy, Institute for National Security Studies, Colorado Springs, 2008. <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a539969.pdf>, (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>36</sup> Joe Quartararo, and others, “Libya’s Operation Odyssey Dawn: Command and Control”, *Prism*, Vol 3 no 2, March 2012, pp.141-156.

<sup>37</sup> Marcus Weisgerber, “DoD Weighs Major COCOM Realignment”, *Defense News*, 11 August 2013, <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20130811/DEFREG02/308110001/DoD-Weighs-Major-COCOM-Realignment>. (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>38</sup> John Vandiver, “Is the U.S. ‘pivoting’ toward Africa?”, *Stars and Stripes*, 17 October 2013. <http://www.stripes.com/news/an-increasing-us-focus-on-africa-but-is-it-a-pivot-1.247488>, (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>39</sup> Eric Schmitt, “U.S. Army Hones Antiterror Strategy for Africa, in Kansas”, *New York Times* website, 18 October 2013, [http://mobile.nytimes.com/2013/10/19/world/africa/us-prepares-to-train-african-forces-to-fight-terror.html?hp=&\\_r=0](http://mobile.nytimes.com/2013/10/19/world/africa/us-prepares-to-train-african-forces-to-fight-terror.html?hp=&_r=0), (accessed 16 January 2014).

## **A Chinese Pivot *On* Rather Than *To* Africa**

China has long operated a focus on Africa, which has evolved in time and scope. While Chinese economic, military and political support to African liberation movements existed during the Cold War, it was undermined by bipolar opposition, given China's relative weakness.<sup>40</sup> Coinciding with the fall of the U.S.S.R, China's rise during the nineties has fostered a renewed relationship with the African continent. It has developed a strong and exclusive interdependency, based on Chinese appetite for resources to sustain its galloping growth and Africa's desperate need for economic investment. Economically speaking, China has become the major competitor for the U.S. in Africa. A RAND survey shows that "securing access to natural resources remains the primary driver for both countries in Africa. In 2011, 80 percent of Chinese imports from Africa and 84 percent of U.S. imports consisted of oil, minerals and other natural resources. Similarly, more than half of each country's investment in Africa is concentrated in mining and extractive industries."<sup>41</sup> Although, the same study argues that China and the U.S. remain far from a strategic conflict in Africa, a closer look at the nature of these resources and the amount in which they are imported reveal that economic competition is sliding toward a more serious, threatening strategic paradigm. In relative terms, China's African oil consumption rose from one quarter to one third of its oil imports between 2004 and 2013.<sup>42</sup> From the other side of the lens, this exchange accounts for two third of Africa's exports to China. Meanwhile, U.S. African oil imports have doubled since 2002, from 15% to 22% between 2004 and 2006. However, these figures should stall with the implementation of fracking techniques. In absolute terms, China's dependency on African resources remains striking. For instance, China imports 85% of its cobalt from the Democratic Republic of Congo and neighboring Zambia, a strategic mineral for computer industries and metallurgy. Similarly, Beijing takes over 96% of African wood exported to Asia. The size of investments also thrusts China's financial involvement into the strategic realm: Chinese foreign direct investments in Africa have soared from \$100 million in 2003 to \$12 billion in 2011.<sup>43</sup>

The scale of these numbers indicates that China's economic interests in Africa engage the entire spectrum of its DIMÉ-C. Though still debated,<sup>44</sup> the existence of a Chinese grand strategy dedicated to Africa is manifested through official ways and non-official means, and is hinged on the following political objectives.<sup>45</sup> First, Africa offers strategic resources such as rare minerals and oil. Second, Africa is a maritime node for Chinese economic flows between Asia, Europe and the Americas. Third, the rallying of African countries strengthens diplomatic power in multilateral arenas. Africa counts for a third of the votes in the United Nations General Assembly and a fifth of the votes in the Security Council. This latter argument seems especially important when possible reforms of the Security Council envisage an

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<sup>40</sup> Richard J. Payne and Cassandra R. Veney, "China's Post-Cold War African Policy," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 38, No. 9, September 1998, University of California Press, p.867, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2645623> (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>41</sup> Larry Hanauer and Lyle Morris, *Agreeing to Disagree about Africa*, RAND website, 5 June 2013, <http://www.rand.org/blog/2013/06/agreeing-to-disagree-about-africa.html> (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>42</sup>David H. Shinn, *Africa, China, the United States, and Oil*, Center for Strategic and International Studies website, 24 November 2013, <https://csis.org/story/africa-china-united-states-and-oil> (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>43</sup> Dambisa Moyo, "Beijing, a Boon for Africa," *New York Times* website, 27 June, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/28/opinion/beijing-a-boon-for-africa.html> (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>44</sup>Agence Française de Développement, *Conférence ID4D Relations Chine Afrique Impact pour le Continent Africain et Perspectives*, Paris: 8 February 2013, [http://www.afd.fr/webdav/shared/PORTAILS/EVENEMENTS/Conference\\_ID4D\\_Relations\\_Chine\\_Afrique\\_AFD.pdf](http://www.afd.fr/webdav/shared/PORTAILS/EVENEMENTS/Conference_ID4D_Relations_Chine_Afrique_AFD.pdf) (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>45</sup> Marie Bal, Laura Valentin, *La Stratégie de puissance de la Chine en Afrique*, ed. Christian Harbulot, Intelligence économique, June 2008, p.13, [http://www.infoguerre.fr/documents/La%20strategie%20de%20puissance%20de%20la%20Chine%20en%20Afrique\\_Infoguerre.pdf](http://www.infoguerre.fr/documents/La%20strategie%20de%20puissance%20de%20la%20Chine%20en%20Afrique_Infoguerre.pdf) (accessed 16 January 2014).

inclusion of Japan, China's historical rival, or a permanent representation of Africa.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, "China's current political efforts to foster allies among Africa's many states are motivated by its perennial and increasingly successful efforts to internationally isolate Taiwan and efforts to curry African votes within

U.N. and other international forums in order to achieve diverse policy goals."<sup>47</sup> The fourth and subsequent political goal of China lies in the opportunity to indirectly oppose or circumvent other foreign powers in Africa, notably the U.S..<sup>48</sup> In order to sustain these strategic goals, Beijing's policy aims at African ruling elites through non-conditional aid and loans. The Forum on China Africa Cooperation, a ministerial conference of Chinese and African officials, embodies this endeavor to build bridges at the highest level, without any Western interference. It has gained in size and momentum since its creation in 2000: Chinese loan announcements doubled between 2006 and 2009.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, a common action plan for 2013-2015<sup>50</sup> agreed on the following topics: cooperation consolidation, peace and regional security, convergences in international affairs, and development through aid, investment and technical and human exchanges. These subjects encompass a strategy that goes indeed far beyond economic maneuvers.

### **Illiberal thorn, illegal wounds**

The rise of a Sino-African axis poses several challenges to American policy. The most apparent one lies in the direct competition for resources and markets described above. Economically speaking, although the U.S., France and other Western powers exercise indirect regional hegemony through the IMF, the World Bank and "conditionality,"<sup>51</sup> China overtook the U.S. as Africa's principal trading partner in 2009.<sup>52</sup> Analysts note that "the U.S.'s lack of attention to Africa's commercial opportunity comes at a time when the region is poised for an economic takeoff."<sup>53</sup> However, Chinese ways and means in Africa

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<sup>46</sup> *Security Council Reform*, Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations in New York website, <http://www.franceonu.org/france-at-the-united-nations/thematic-files/un-reform/security-council-reform/france-at-the-united-nations/thematic-files/un-reform/security-council-reform/article/security-council-reform>, (accessed January 28, 2014).

<sup>47</sup> Nicolas Cook, Specialist in African Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division, Congressional Research Service, "Sub-Saharan Africa," in *China's foreign Policy and "Soft Power" in South America* Service, Library of Congress, April 2008, p. 106, [http://www.fas.org/irp/congress/2008\\_rpt/crs-china.pdf](http://www.fas.org/irp/congress/2008_rpt/crs-china.pdf), (accessed 16 January 2014)., *Asia and Africa, a Study Prepared for the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate*, Congressional research

<sup>48</sup> Valérie Niquet, "la Stratégie Africaine de la Chine," *Politique Etrangère*, Institut Français des Relations Internationales, Paris: IFRI, Summer 2006/2, p. 363, <http://www.cairn.info/revue-politique-etrangere-2006-2-page-361.htm> (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>49</sup> Marie Helene Pozzar, *L'aide chinoise à l'Afrique : la difficulté à penser la notion d'aide publique au développement*, UQAM, Montréal, 2009, p.21, [http://www.ieim.uqam.ca/IMG/pdf/L\\_aide\\_chinoise\\_a\\_l\\_Afrique.pdf](http://www.ieim.uqam.ca/IMG/pdf/L_aide_chinoise_a_l_Afrique.pdf) (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>50</sup> Agence Française de Développement, *Conférence ID4D Relations Chine Afrique Impact pour le Continent Africain et Perspectives*, p. 2 and p.10.

<sup>51</sup> i.e. better governance in exchanges for loans.

<sup>52</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Africa's Trade Partners," *OECD Factbook 2011 Economic, Environmental and Social Statistics* (Paris [France]; Bristol [Eng.]: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development ; University Presses Marketing, 2011), December 2011, <http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/factbook-2011-en/04/01/05/index.html?itemId=/content/chapter/factbook-2011-37-en>, (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>53</sup> Witney Schneidman, "Transforming the U.S.-Africa Commercial Relationship," in *Top five reasons why Africa should be a priority for the United States*, Brookings, 2013, p.11,



also overshadow the non-economic approach of the presidential guidance for sub-Saharan Africa and related AFRICOM core missions. Undoubtedly, the non-conditional *realpolitik* of China is rooted in an intractable belief: the absolute right of state sovereignty and the advocacy of non-interference in internal affairs. Indeed, this “approach [...] represents a fundamental challenge to U.S. interests in promoting democracy, good governance and sustainable development in Africa.”<sup>54</sup> In that sense, China has contributed to the support of “rogue” regimes such as Mugabe’s in Zimbabwe and Beshir’s in Sudan, with terrible records of human rights abuses against their own population and devastating rule of their countries. The combination of the unfiltered and munificent characteristics of Chinese aid has implications in terms of regional security.

Using the example of Sudan, China continuously opposed binding resolutions in the Security Council during the Darfur crisis. Also, China’s arms sales to this country dramatically increased in the nineties, which coincided with the first investment of CNPC (China National Petroleum Corporation) in Sudan’s GNPOC (Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company).<sup>55</sup> One security corollary has been the trafficking of Chinese arms in West Africa.<sup>56</sup> In fact, Sudanese weapons including those produced in China represent the majority of illegal arms traffic in Africa: “today, most come from Eastern Chad and the Darfur region in Sudan. Sudanese weapons and ammunition have been detected in Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea and Mali.” More important, while “[...] most of the assault rifles detected are of the Kalashnikov variety, today, though, the newer ones are mostly of Chinese manufacture (Norinco Type 56). Similarly, the light machine guns encountered today are mostly PK-pattern, such as the Norinco Type 80.” And “much of this ammunition originates from Iran, Sudan, or China.” Moreover, the same report indicates another major security issue linking Asia and Africa: drug trafficking. First, Chinese crime syndicates introduced methamphetamine production via South Africa in the 2000s.<sup>57</sup> While local consumption keeps on rising, the major destination of African methamphetamine remains the East Asian “high value methamphetamine markets such as Japan, South Korea, [...] but also including China [...]”<sup>58</sup> Second, China represents the first of the top 5 exporters of counterfeit medicine, with a study confirming the Asian origin of fraudulent medicines detected in Africa.<sup>59</sup>

The broad spectrum of potential threats appears to require a grand strategic scheme more than the narrow scope witnessed in the latest manifestations of U.S. policy toward Africa.

## **The Concentric Arenas Of Cooperation**

### **The Long Term Development Of African Countries As A Center Of Excellence**

A smart power strategy towards Africa is more likely to be successful if the first arena of continuous cooperation focuses on African countries. True, “Sino-African bilateral investment agreements are the focus of criticism because they often fuse business, political, aid, and sometimes

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[http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Research/Files/Reports/2013/04/africa%20priority%20united%20states/04\\_africa\\_priority\\_united\\_states.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Research/Files/Reports/2013/04/africa%20priority%20united%20states/04_africa_priority_united_states.pdf) (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>54</sup> Lesley Ann Warner, “Advancing Peace and Security in Africa,” in *Top Five Reasons why Africa should be a Priority for the United States*, Brookings, 2013, p.6.

<sup>55</sup> J.-P. Thompson, “Le Grand jeu de la Chine en Afrique”, *Journal Alternatives*, 2007, Vol.14, 02.

<sup>56</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Transnational Organized Crime in West Africa: A Threat Assessment*, (Vienna: UNODC, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2013).  
<https://www.unodc.org/toc/en/reports/TOCTAWestAfrica.html>, (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

military considerations. These allow China to offer integrated ‘package’ deals.”<sup>60</sup> But the highest critique they get remains also their biggest advantage: “in parts of the developing world, the so-called Beijing consensus on authoritarian government plus a successful market economy has become more popular than the previously dominant Washington consensus of liberal market economics with democratic government.”<sup>61</sup> One has therefore to analyze what these packages do not provide in order to turn this competitive advantage into a comparative dynamic, which will ultimately benefit all Africans. Indeed, American efforts to “strengthen democratic institutions and boost broad-based economic growth [...] through trade and investment”<sup>62</sup> represent an endeavor strikingly absent from Chinese policy in Africa. Moreover, Chinese aid is aimed directly at the leadership level through corruption or official means and benefits seem unevenly shared: “China, which is not a member of the OECD, is operating under rules that the West has largely abandoned. It mixes aid and business in secret government-to-government agreements.”<sup>63</sup> Therefore, the support to lower social strata and projects appears as an alternative way of orienting financial and institutional investments in Africa. This indirect approach avoids the pitfall of conflicting ideologies on the same ground, which dispossesses African countries of their own strategic ownership. Thus, African ownership of reforms remains the only way to transform Chinese and American strategies from rival models into a complementary dynamic, allowing Africans to get the best of both worlds.

### **Acknowledging Rising Leadership Within The Circle Of Traditional Allies**

Cooperation with non-African allies offers another cost-effective option, especially with those with strong historical and cooperation ties with the continent. For instance, France has renewed its African policy, operating a strategic “pivot” epitomized in its 2013 White Paper on Defense and National Security. It acknowledges two facts. First, the head of the French Joint Chief of Staff Admiral Edouard Guillaud recognizes that the previous document of 2008 lacked a dedicated African Strategy, dubbing it “the great forgotten continent.”<sup>64</sup> As declared in the 2012 presidential address on African Policy before the Senegalese Parliament, these security objectives remain included in a holistic political will to both depart from the paternalistic “Françafrique” system<sup>65</sup> and start a new form of non-intrusive cooperation, “far from setting an example, or imposing a model or teaching a lesson.”<sup>66</sup> It insists that Franco-African partnership must not be limited to state to state relationships “that ignore people and societies”<sup>67</sup> but shall

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<sup>60</sup> Nicolas Cook, *China’s foreign Policy and “Soft Power” in South America, Asia and Africa, a Study Prepared for the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate*, p. 107.

<sup>61</sup> Nye, *Future of Power*, p.86.

<sup>62</sup> President Barack Obama, Foreword, *Presidential Policy Directive, U.S. strategy toward sub-Saharan Africa*, Washington: June 2012, [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/africa\\_strategy\\_2.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/africa_strategy_2.pdf) (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>63</sup> Sharon LaFraniere and John Grobler, “China Spreads Aid in Africa, with a Catch,” *New York Times*, 21 September 2009, [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/22/world/africa/22namibia.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/22/world/africa/22namibia.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0) (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>64</sup> Admiral Edouard Guillaud, Minutes of Universités de la Defense, Brest: 11 September 2012, [http://www.universite-defense.org/fr/system/files/actes\\_mars\\_x\\_seance\\_pleniere.pdf](http://www.universite-defense.org/fr/system/files/actes_mars_x_seance_pleniere.pdf) (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>65</sup> Francois Hollande, *Discours Politique africaine - Discours du président de la République, M. François Hollande, devant l'Assemblée nationale de la République du Sénégal*, Dakar: 12 October 2012, <http://basedoc.diplomatie.gouv.fr/exl-doc/EPJ00089801.pdf> (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

be extended to NGOs, communities, and local entrepreneurs.<sup>68</sup> With a strong emphasis on transparency and governance, this speech shows converging ideals with the U.S. policy toward sub-Saharan Africa. Second, the 2013 paper itself takes the U.S. rebalance to Asia into account: “The United States is cutting back on military spending and partly refocusing their military efforts on the Asia-Pacific region. Consequently, our U.S. allies are likely to become more selective with regard to their foreign commitments,”<sup>69</sup> with “this lower military priority also [extending] to the Mediterranean and to Africa.”<sup>70</sup> France is also receptive to “United States interests in the area” and subsequent American concerns “that the Europeans must play a greater role in its security, since they are more directly concerned by its stability and have the resources needed to take on this responsibility.”<sup>71</sup> In fact, recent operations in Libya, Mali, and the Central African Republic have all shown the concretization of this renewed involvement, with France “in the first line but not alone.”<sup>72</sup> The U.S. Department of State recently acknowledged this leadership in the CAR.<sup>73</sup>

### **Open Partnerships And The End Of Hegemons In Africa**

Ultimately, the widest scope of U.S. cooperation would involve working African issues with African partners and European allies but also with China itself. Indeed, even from the French point of view, the “new investors such as [the BRIC] are a good thing for Africa [...] as long as transparency, social and environmental responsibilities improve.”<sup>74</sup> To that extent, the inclusion of the Sino-U.S. dialogue within multilateral forums offers a double advantage. First, Chinese contributions within multinational efforts broaden burden-sharing and encourage transparency. China’s participation in the IMF and World Bank promises to make its action in Africa more transparent through mechanisms of funding and engagement in multilateral development programs. Furthermore, integrating instead of ostracizing China in global initiatives may also regulate its formidable investments in Africa. For instance, more and more African countries are participating in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), either as members (e.g. Cameroon, Ghana, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria) or candidates (e.g. Chad, Guinea). China has become increasingly aware through its experience with EITI members that “access to international markets depends in part on cultivating a positive public perception.”<sup>75</sup> China has considered a possible membership, although prudently: “Chinese companies will most likely need to first

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> French White Paper on Defense and Security Policy, 2013, p. 9, <http://www.defense.gouv.fr/content/download/215253/2394121/file/White%20paper%20on%20defense%20%202013.pdf> (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p.29.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Francois Hollande, *Presidential address to the press*, Paris: 16 January 2013, <http://basedoc.diplomatie.gouv.fr/exl-doc/EPJ00130401.pdf> (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>73</sup> “the United States commends yesterday’s actions by French military forces, in coordination with regional forces, to begin the process of restoring security to the people of the Central African Republic. We believe that France’s strong leadership in committing 800 additional troops and their support to the African Union-led stabilization mission in the CAR (MISCA) sends a forceful message to all parties that the violence must end.” Marie Harf, *U.S. Support of French Military Actions in the Central African Republic*, press statement, Deputy Department Spokesperson, Office of the Spokesperson, Washington, DC, 6 December 2013, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/218470.htm> (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>74</sup> Ministre délégué chargé du Développement auprès du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Interview by France Info Radio, Paris, 13 October, 2012, <http://basedoc.diplomatie.gouv.fr/exl-doc/EPJ00089801.pdf> (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>75</sup>, *The Chinese Experience in EITI*, grant project, Revenue Watch Institute website, <http://www.revenuwatch.org/grants/chinese-experience-eiti> (accessed 16 January 2014).

join as observing members before they are able to actively participate in them”.<sup>76</sup> *De facto*, China’s entanglement in a multilateral web also assures that the leadership remains distributed and diluted among partners, denying Beijing the status of a regional hegemon in Africa. One has also to accept that it necessarily forbids the same hegemonic status to France or to the U.S.. In fact, at the center of these concentric arenas of cooperation, “Africa, the African Union and the sub-regional organizations have thus become players in the security of the continent, making a major contribution towards peace and international security.”<sup>77</sup>

## Conclusion

The U.S. pivot to Asia Pacific threatens to lessen American involvement in Africa, which paradoxically benefits China’s growing influence in the region. If China still emphasizes security through cooperation for the moment, it could nonetheless develop a tougher strategy to protect its interests if directly threatened by chronic African instability, or hampered by foreign interventions of any nature (economic, diplomatic, military) in Africa. Instead of losing energy in an impossible containment of Chinese economic power in the region, the U.S. and its allies might be better served by focusing on Kantian policies<sup>78</sup> which China is unwilling, if not unable, to offer to African societies. Two strategic compromises would arise. First, combining both sides’ soft power in a multilateral environment would acknowledge Chinese investments in Africa while moving towards regulating them. Second, distributing the leadership of hard power interventions appears the best way to ultimately hand the operations over to the Africans through coalitions and partnerships, while keeping China away from the temptation of any unilateral move.

Therefore, the exclusion of regions, which is latent in the pivot geometry, finds itself measured here against a “triple inclusion”:

- the inclusion of Africa in any U.S. and allied strategy toward China
- the inclusion of allies and African partners in any African strategy,
- the inclusion of China as a contributor to multilateral African development in any strategy dedicated to controlling Beijing activities in Africa

This “non-Manichean” approach, preferred to the revival of a Cold War, would foster win-win dynamics for global benefit. In sum, despite regional pivots, Africa matters symmetrically to all continents.

The Malian experience of 2013 offers a convincing example that such a strategy has a reasonable chance of success. Indeed, armed jihadist groups of northern Mali sought to extend their rule to the entire country in early 2013. At the request of the president of Mali, and following UN Security Council Resolution 2085, France launched operation “Serval”. In fact, this operation encompasses the three concentric arenas of cooperation depicted above, paving the way for renewed conditions for intervention in Africa. Indeed, this operation’s early strategic aim focused on African interests, threatened by this national crisis and regional spillovers: France intervened to “support the Malian armed forces against the

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<sup>76</sup> Dr Guo Peiyuan, *SynTao* General Manager, “How to engage Chinese companies in EITI”, based on Dr Peiyuan presentation at the EITI Global Conference, Global Witness website, 21 June 2013, <http://www.globalwitness.org/library/how-engage-chinese-companies-eiti> (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>77</sup> French White Paper on Defense and Security Policy, 2013, p. 24, <http://www.defense.gouv.fr/content/download/215253/2394121/file/White%20paper%20on%20defense%20%202013.pdf> (accessed January 16), 2014.

<sup>78</sup> Promotion of democracy, economic interdependence, and international law and organizations. See Bruce Russett, John R. Oneal and David R. Davis, “The Third Leg of the Kantian Tripod for Peace: International Organizations and Militarized Disputes, 1950-85”, *International Organization*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (Summer 1998), p.441.

terrorist threat that threatens all Western Africa.”<sup>79</sup> In this regard, the French commitment remains temporary, “preparing the deployment of an African Intervention Force, in order to allow Mali to recover its territorial integrity, as stated in the Security Council Resolution.”<sup>80</sup> The Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) was involved in diplomatic and military efforts supporting this operation. ECOWAS engagement in the UN during November 2012 negotiations, the actual troop contributions from its member states to the operation, and its close coordination with the African Union show the maturation of African multilateral institutions. Furthermore, this operation outlines the existence of a strong political will in Africa capable of handling their own security issues if technically enabled in critical domains. To that extent, American support to the operation, providing logistics and ISR, proves that the U.S. is concerned by African issues but also ready to accept its allies’ regional leadership to defend common liberal interests. Lastly, China has been included from the start of this process. Indeed, Beijing voted in favor of the UNSCR 2085 allowing the use of force under Chapter VII. Its participation to the global effort now culminates with the deployment of Chinese blue helmets in the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)<sup>81</sup>.

Two questions remain, though, in the wake of this success story. First, is this cooperation model replicable in the rest of Africa? The author thinks so, as a combination of necessity and opportunity demonstrated in this paper. Second, is this analysis applicable in other parts of the world, such as South East Asia? True, security issues present similarities, such as piracy and illegal trade. Yet, analogy can be a disastrous endeavor, ignoring the fact that “strategy needs continual definition.”<sup>82</sup> In the end, implementing a blunt strategic symmetry on Africa and Asia could be worse than any kind of pivot.

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Lieutenant Colonel Pierre Gaudilliere is assigned to the Office of the Chief of Staff, French Air Force. A French Air Force fighter pilot, he graduated from the French Air Force Academy (*Ecole de l’Air*) in 1999 with a masters of aeronautical science, and from the Paris Institute of Political Studies (*Institut d’Etudes Politiques de Paris*) in 2010 with a masters of international affairs-international security. He has nearly 2,500 flying hours mostly in the Mirage F1 and Rafale. He has flown 138 combat sorties over Chad, Darfur, Republic of Central Africa, but also Afghanistan in 2007 and more recently flying the multirole Rafale over Libya in 2011 and Mali in 2013. As the commander of the 1/91 Fighter Squadron, he led more than 200 airmen across all the spectrum of the air force combat missions. He also served as Attaché-Assistant to the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations in New York in 2009.

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<sup>79</sup> President Francois Hollande, *Déclaration Mali - Déclaration du président de la République, M. François Hollande, à l’issue du Conseil restreint de défense*, Paris, 12 January 2013, [http://basedoc.diplomatie.gouv.fr/exl-php/cadcgp.php?CMD=CHERCHE&QUERY=1&MODELE=vues/mae\\_internet\\_recherche\\_avancee/home.html&VUE=mae\\_internet\\_recherche\\_avancee&NOM=cadic\\_anonyme&FROM\\_LOGIN=1](http://basedoc.diplomatie.gouv.fr/exl-php/cadcgp.php?CMD=CHERCHE&QUERY=1&MODELE=vues/mae_internet_recherche_avancee/home.html&VUE=mae_internet_recherche_avancee&NOM=cadic_anonyme&FROM_LOGIN=1) (accessed February 12, 2014).

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> United Nations, *Mali: with terrorists regrouping, Security Council urges full deployment of ‘blue helmets’*, United Nations News Center, 23 January 2014, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp/www.unama-afg.org/news/pc/english/2008/html/www.iaea.org/html/story.asp?NewsID=46990&Cr=+mali+&Cr1=> (accessed February 3, 2014).

<sup>82</sup> Michael Howard, “The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs*, vol.57, nr. 5 (Summer 1979), p. 975.

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