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Volume 3, Number 6, 22 November, 2017

## **Macron ruptures with Hollande's Africa policy; focuses on collective diplomacy**

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Former French Presidents Nicolas Sarkozy and Francois Hollande both chose Senegal as venue for their first 'African policy' speeches. In contrast to his predecessors, President Emmanuel Macron chose Mali for his first visit to Africa (honoring French troops stationed there), and Burkina Faso for his first African address, delivered on November 27, 2017. French Ambassador to Burkina Faso Xavier Lapeyre de Cabanes explained that "Ouagadougou is the capital where [political] transition took place three years ago, from a regime that characterized itself as democratic towards real democracy, in an almost complete peaceful manner."<sup>1</sup>. But what does Macron's choice indicate in terms of redefining France's African policies?

### **Hollande's security legacy**

Three axes have dominated France's Africa policies recent years: security (including migration), good governance, and economy. But Francois Hollande emphasized primarily the security/military front. His decision to hold his last (January 2017) France-Africa summit in Bamako, the capital of Mali, instead of Abidjan, the economic capital of Ivory Coast, reflected this priority, highlighting France's military engagement in West Africa against radical Islam.

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<sup>1</sup> "Macron choisit de venir au Burkina Faso car c'est un exemple de démocratie en Afrique", **Radio Oméga**, 20 September 2017, Accessed: 1 November 2017. <http://www.omegabf.net/politique/macron-choisit-de-venir-au-burkina-faso-car-cest-un-exemple-de-democratie-en-afrique/>

It is important to remember that France intervened in the Mali civil war in January 2013, with the aim of protecting regional stability and avoiding Afghanistan-like scenarios in Mali and in neighboring countries. Since the end of the “Serval” military operation,” approximately 4,000 French combat soldiers have been stationed in the north of Mali, as part of the successor regional military operation, “Barkhane.” In addition, in 2013, France deployed some 1,000 troops in the Central African Republic (CAR) in the framework of operation “Sangaris, to maintain peace and security after the military coup. Most of the French troops left CAR by 2016, after transferring peacekeeping responsibilities to UN forces.

### **Macron breaks away from Hollande’s discourse**

Like Hollande, security concerns are a big part of Macron’s public political rhetoric, attempting to provide reassurance to French citizens in a world confronted by Jihadism. Yet budgetary difficulties coupled with a very different diplomatic-economic worldview have led Macron to reduce France’s military presence in Africa. France will continue championing counter-terrorism and counter-trafficking in Africa, but not by maintaining a large number of combat troops on the ground. The number of French soldiers in Africa will gradually diminish, in favor of medium-term and long-term defense and security cooperation programs. Most importantly, France will encourage regional alliances; or, in other words, France will encourage Africans to engage in different peacekeeping missions on the continent. The French security volume would hence also include threats to public health, such as the 2014-2016 Ebola outbreak in West Africa.

In an interview with French daily *Le Monde* on April 2017 (about a month before the second presidential election round), Macron said that he wished to “open a new page in French-African relations.” Disengaging from his predecessor’s legacy, Macron said that operation Serval was a success, but that in the long run a French military presence in the region should not constitute a goal in itself. “I wish to double our financing for gender equality projects. Actually, I wish to relaunch our bilateral assistance to Africa, and turn it into a development tool. I wish to mobilize more funds, both public and private, to finance African infrastructure and small-and medium

companies, which create jobs...I think it is essential for France to listen better and close to the civil society and the African youth.”<sup>2</sup>

During his first three months in office, Macron took several concrete steps in designing his future African policy. At the July 2017 G5 summit, uniting Sahel leaders of Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Chad, and Niger, Macron launched the “Alliance for the Sahel” initiative, intended to facilitate financial interventions by international players.<sup>3</sup> President Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel are pushing for simplified, red-tape cutting, quick-impact projects in sensitive and conflict areas.

Macron’s African policy is based on two principles. The first is guaranteeing the sustainability of French security efforts on the African continent. The second is a comprehensive approach, where migration, education, and economic development represent a set of interdependent goals..

### **Migration meets education and development**

On August 29, in Paris, Macron convened a Euro-Africa mini-summit uniting France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the European Union, Niger, Chad, and Libya to confront the issue of African immigration and discuss an action plan.<sup>4</sup> Talking on the same day at the annual French ambassadors’ conference, Macron also announced the creation of a “Presidential Council for Africa” (CPA). Its mission, he explained, would be to supplement the president’s African policies with new ideas, mainly from civil society and the private investment community.

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<sup>2</sup> Laurence Caramel, "Interview with Candidate Emmanuel Macron: Emmanuel Macron, son programme Afrique : « Je veux mobiliser plus de financements pour les PME locales »", **Le Monde**, 12 April 2017, Accessed: 1 November 2017. [http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2017/04/12/emmanuel-macron-son-programme-afrique-je-veux-mobiliser-plus-de-financements-pour-les-pme-locales\\_5110340\\_3212.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2017/04/12/emmanuel-macron-son-programme-afrique-je-veux-mobiliser-plus-de-financements-pour-les-pme-locales_5110340_3212.html)

<sup>3</sup> President Emmanuel Macron’s press conference at the G5 summit, "Conférence de presse commune du président de la République française et du président du Mali G5 Sahel", **Elysée**, 3 July 2017, Accessed: 1 November 2017. <http://www.elysee.fr/conferences-de-presse/article/conference-de-presse-commune-du-president-de-la-republique-francaise-et-du-president-du-mali-g5-sahel/>

<sup>4</sup> Declaration of French President Emmanuel Macron on the occasion of the Euro-Africa mini summit, "Déclaration d'Emmanuel Macron lors du Mini-sommet euro-africain avec les chefs d'état et de gouvernement", **Elysée**, 29 August 2017, Accessed: 1 November 2017. <http://www.elysee.fr/declarations/article/declaration-d-emmanuel-macron-lors-du-mini-sommet-euro-africain-avec-les-chefs-d-etat-et-de-gouvernement/>

The concept of “cross-mobility” is a major component of Macron’s development policy on issues of migration, education, and economy, simplifying movement from Africa to France and back. Already in July 2017, Paris announced that it was facilitating the conditions for ‘Circulation Visas’ for Senegal, allowing visa holders three-month stays in France every six months for a period of five years. This was designed to prevent tourists or students from having to stay illegally in France, for fear of not obtaining second-stay permits once leaving the country. Measures of this sort were also intended to facilitate commercial exchange, enabling local-African business people and professionals to travel back and forth with ease. It should also encourage student exchange, there are currently about 150,000 African students in France, compared to only a few thousand French students in African countries.

Macron’s government also intends to further invest in education programs, with an emphasis on spreading educating young women. The Macron team views promoting education as essential for guaranteeing political stability and attracting investments.

On the economic front, Macron’s team has developed tools that were put in place during the Hollande era, but with much greater ambition. The way Paris perceives it, the Chinese ‘economic take-over’ of Africa has peaked, and Chinese infrastructure projects are no longer necessarily the most cost-effective. France had made headway in recent years with strong financial tools, which include low credit rates, investment funds, and convenient public loan structures. Another tool put in place by Hollande’s government was increasing the AFD (French Development Bank) annual revenues from €8 billion to €12.5 billion by 2020, and mandating that the AFD also support France’s economic diplomacy. These public and private tools had already enabled France to win big infrastructure tenders, such as the financing of the Kenyan barrage Ruiru 2, the new Peugeot plant in Kenya, a regional railway in Senegal and the metro to be constructed in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. Paris intends to continue in this spirit, encouraging the French private sector to follow in the footsteps of the Kenya-Peugeot example (where cars are assembled on-site).

## **Sustainability of French actions: Will France-Africa be replaced by EU-Africa?**

As demonstrated during the Euro-Africa mini summit, Macron's comprehensive approach champions collective diplomacy. In order to guarantee the sustainability of French actions in Africa, Paris seeks to anchor its policies in three guiding principles: International legitimacy, multilateralism/Europeanism, and regionalization of military interventions by creating all-African coalitions.

The principle of international legitimacy already characterized France's military interventions during the Hollande years (seeking the UN's endorsement before launching operations in Mali and in the Central African Republic). Macron intends to reinforce this approach. For him, France is not Africa's gendarme.

On migration, Macron continued where Hollande left off. In 2015, the European Union held in a Malta a summit dedicated to migration; the EU pledged €1.8 billion in the form of an emergency development trust fund for Africa,<sup>5</sup> in addition to other development funds. This trust fund was to promote economic and equal opportunities, strengthen the resilience of vulnerable people, and enhance security and development projects; all issues dear to the Macron government.

Macron's European approach to Africa was already present during his first meeting with Angela Merkel following his election, with Macron raising the challenges faced by the Sahel region during the discussion with the German chancellor. Visiting French troops in Gao, Mali, just days after that meeting (May 19), Macron reiterated the need for European cooperation in the fields of security and development, and specifically German-French cooperation, stating that sustainable peace in Mali could only be achieved through cooperation "with our partners."<sup>6</sup> In August 2017, German Defense Minister Ursula Von Der Leyen and French Defense Minister Florence Parly, jointly visited Niger, where Germany is building its own military base. Both ministers

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<sup>5</sup> European Commission: EU Emergency Trust Fund - Strategic Orientation Document, "The European union emergency trust fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa – strategic orientation document", **European Commission**, 16 February 2016, Accessed: 1 November 2017. [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/eu-emergency-trust-fund-strategic-orientation-document\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/eu-emergency-trust-fund-strategic-orientation-document_en)

<sup>6</sup> Speech by President Emmanuel Macron, "Discours sur la base Barkhane", **Elysé**, 19 May 2017, Accessed: 1 November 2017. <http://www.elysee.fr/declarations/article/discours-sur-la-base-barkhane/>

expressed their support for the multilateral military force initiative in the Sahel. Such a force would combine the G5 Sahel force with the 4,000 French troops already present in the region.

These sentiments were also reinforced by French diplomat Anne Gueguen, speaking at an August 15 UN Security Council meeting on the issue of the Joint Sahel Counter-terrorism Force. Gueguen said that the French deployment of 4,000 soldiers in the Sahel, and its commitment to contribute \$10 million a year, demonstrated the priority France accorded to Sahel issues.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> United Nations, Meeting Coverage, Security Council 8024th Meeting, "Success of Joint Sahel Counter-terrorism Force Hinges on Cooperation, Funding to Fill Capacity Gaps, Key Peacekeeping Official Tells Security Council", **Security Council**, 15 August 2017, Accessed: 1 November 2017.  
<https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc12956.doc.htm>