



**National University of Political Studies and Public
Administration**

Summary

Great Power Interventionism in Africa after the Cold War:
Legitimacy, Norms, and Change

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State's actions and the understanding of the components which stay at its basis represented and still represents one of the primordial tasks in the field of International Relations. The ideas and theories built along the time have postulated many concepts and processes. Human nature, international structure, survival, the balance of power, and identities are just a few of many more. The process of thinking and innovation stays open and continues.

The present international world has many novel traits. Agility and the character, sometimes, instantaneous of exchanges whether of data, technologies or threats creates more uncertainty within which states have to plan, evaluate options, and take actions.

Understanding the factors which form the basis of state's actions from today's world may very well be a daring endeavor, but also, potentially, a naïve one with little chances of success.

In this paper the ambitions are tempered, the main aim not being the one to offer the key to understanding all the factors that determine state's actions. The author assumes an endeavor which might bring more light upon one process which can be a part from the overwhelming amplitude of the fundamentals of state's actions in international relations.

Legitimacy and legitimation of state's actions represents the central process of academic and analytic concern in this paper. The initial observation states that there is no action conducted by states in a neutral, value free context. It is somehow prosaic to say that the international order is socially constructed.¹ When taking action, states take into account the privileged values, the dominant norms and naturally the other states.

In this paper legitimacy is understood as it was conceptualized by Mark Suchman. According

¹ Catherine Jones, „ Constructing great powers: China's status in a socially constructed plurality”, *International Politics* 51, nr. 5 (2014), p. 597.

to him, legitimacy is a generalized perception or the assumption that the action of a certain entity (in our case a state) is desirable, timely, and optimal in a particular socially built system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions.² The social character of the international system is closely linked with legitimacy. As Reus-Smit once said, legitimacy is a social concept in the most profound way of the concept, being at least oxymoronic the construction ‘auto-legitimacy’.³ Legitimacy is given by the others.

Legitimacy is key for the factors that belong to the fundamentals of state’s actions. This assumption is essential for this paper and more important for the working hypothesis of the thesis. Therefore, the central hypothesis around which converge the research endeavors claims that wide-ranging normative changes at the international level determine the change/transformation of the legitimating principles of the interventions operated by the great powers.

The hypothesis mentioned above opens two new concepts for discussion. First, it can easily be observed that state’s actions which will be researched through international legitimacy are interventions. Second, attention will not fall on all the international interventions, but on great powers interventions in the international system. This complex endeavor will be realized through a constructivist perspective. This approach comes somehow naturally as long as the social components of legitimacy weights so much for this paper.

Interventions will be conceptualized as a practice of coercive interference in the internal affairs of other states, which is not changing the juridical status of the entity that is suffering the action (e.g. annexation or colonization).⁴ The concise nature of the definition is determined by the perspective adopted in the paper, namely that the main concern falls on the process of legitimation.

Great powers will be conceptualized through their material specificities (armies, resources etc.) and their ideal perspective as well. Such a perspective highlights the ontological perspective adopted in this paper in the wider idealism-materialism debate. Great power status consists of

² Mark Suchman, „Managing legitimacy: Strategic and institutional approaches”, *Academy of Management. The Academy of Management Review* 20, nr. 3 (iulie, 1995), p. 574.

³ Christian Reus-Smit, „International Crises of Legitimacy”, *International Politics* 44 (2007), p. 159.

⁴ John MacMillan, „Intervention and the ordering of the modern world” *Review of International Studies* 39, nr. 5 (decembrie, 2013), p. 1041.

material factors and also social elements. Great powers rely not only on military capabilities but also on social recognition by the other states.⁵

Another observation points to the meaning of normative shift at the international level. In this paper, the variation between a pluralist international order and solidarism represents the normative shift with a potential impact on the process of legitimizing interventions. By taking into consideration these two concepts it is reflected the theoretical openness of the paper. The constructivist theoretical coordinates will not be adopted exclusively but they will be used in conjunction with other concepts developed by the English School of International Relations.

The purpose of the research is to accurately capture the context in which change took place. Change in international relations gets the front row. The hypothesis emphasizes the prevalence of change as a process for this paper. But, which kind of change is assumed, what are its main features?

Change in international relations can be constituted by the preoccupation of the main actors, specifically great powers, by humanitarian crisis happening within states or other process and actors that threaten even state survival. In the first part of the paper, as it will be seen, interventions occur because of systematic neglect of humanitarian principles and values, whereas in the second part, interventions are mainly triggered by threats to order and state survival. Great powers intervene to maintain state institutions mainly because of the terrorist phenomena.

Taking into consideration these theoretical and conceptual coordinates the paper will analyze in a dynamic manner the concept of legitimacy in international relations. Incorporating the main constructivist concepts, legitimacy will be understood as intersubjective and dynamic, rather than a process with permanent features as realism in international relation tries to assert in some cases. Legitimacy is a shifting process, the volatility of perceptions and beliefs have a great influence on it. What was considered legitimate in the past might probably not be considered in the present.

The volatile and intersubjective nature of legitimacy in international relations obliges one to take a longer timespan into consideration in order to strongly test the working hypothesis. In this vain, the temporal arc of the case studies will be wide. It begins with the US intervention in Somalia (1992) and ends with France's counter-terrorist intervention in Africa, Barkhane (2016).

⁵ Catherine Jones, „Constructing great powers: China's status in a socially constructed plurality” *International Politics* 51, nr. 5, p. 599.

Along the past 24 years there have taken place many great power interventions that can give one some information and conceptual framework about legitimacy and its many facets in international relations. In this paper, six interventions will be analyzed, all of them initiated by great powers.

In a world that is rapidly changing, a static perspective can make an academic endeavor less accurate and profound. A different perspective, which takes into account the shifting and changing nature of the international relations can be more rigorous and useful. Norms, values, and international rules are in a constant change that influences state's actions, and also the legitimacy of interventions.⁶

The paper takes into account only the interventions operated by the great powers in Africa. Great powers' interventions are a regular behavior marking in profound ways the history and system of international relations. Both, the time and space taken into account in the paper are analyzed through the major changes that have been taking place at the level of legitimacy of great powers interventions. Even though great powers' interventions are a constant feature of the international relations, the axiological background that builds the legitimacy of these interventions is in constant flux.

The African continent, as the other continents, has faced multiple challenges throughout the time. Over time, great powers have intervened in Africa, for different reasons and invoking different motivations. Throughout the paper, the African states are considered important actors at the international level, exerting significant influence political, as well as economical and many other types.

Beginning with the end of the Cold War until present, Africa has had to deal with many challenges as well as opportunities and promising periods of time. The African continent and the period of time analyzed offer rich instances of dynamic legitimating features of great powers' interventions.

The dynamic of great powers' interventions in Africa provide us with relevant cases that reveal how the legitimacy of those interventions change overtime. The first great powers' interventions, beginning with the 90's until the 2000's clearly show the prevalence of the

⁶ Martha Finnemore și Kathryn Sikkink, „International Norm Dynamics and Political Change”, *International Organization* 52, nr. 4 (septembrie, 1998), pp. 894-896.

solidarist principles in legitimating interventions. Values and principles as human rights, democratizations and humanitarianism are at the center of legitimizing great powers' interventions.

After 9/11 a visible change occurs. The pluralist logic of legitimizing great power's interventions becomes dominant. The great powers of the international system are more and more concerned about the fight against terrorism and defending the state and sovereignty against terrorism. The principles privileged at the systemic level determine the way great powers' interventions are legitimized.

Therefore, the paper emphasizes a dynamic and transitional situation of the international interventions. The variation takes places between humanitarian interventions that include human rights and democratization and interventions that put in front the for order. An essential meaning of the concept of intervention which is developed in the paper is "the will to order".⁷ Interventions represent ordering practices in international relations, processes which sustain international order.⁸

Reflecting a dynamic process requires necessarily the adoption of long term case studies. From this particular reason the paper will analyze cases that have taken place on a wide timespan. In this vain a contextualization is a must in order to understand how change has taken place and how great powers' interventions have been legitimized.

After the end of the Cold War, the rules and the privileged norms from the international system have faced major changes. The 9/11 represents another flexion point that changed the way interventions have been legitimized by the great powers. The two moments, the end of the Cold War and the 9/11 show that interventions change in the way they are legitimized throughout the time.

The present paper aims at bringing two new elements in the wide field of international relations. The first one is clear through the hypothesis of the paper and the empirical endeavor. The dynamic of the great powers' interventions and the legitimizing process on wide timespan characterized by systemic principles and values in a changing process represents a new endeavor.

⁷ George Lawson și Luca Tardelli, „The past, present, and future of intervention” *Review of International Studies* 39, nr. 5 (decembrie, 2013), p. 1235.

⁸ Christian Reus-Smit, „Power, Legitimacy, and Order” *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 2014, p. 348.

Of course, in the study of international relations some concepts and processes have been researched tangentially but not in this particular manner that is adopted in the present paper. In the first chapter of the paper these traits will be more closely discussed and analyzed.

Even though not explicitly mentioned, the second element of novelty is revealed by the method of analysis and argumentation adopted throughout the paper. The argument of the paper underlines the importance of change regarding legitimacy in international actions. Acting within a social world, states have to take into account the other states and the institutions they are part of. Therefore, the states are in a constant and consistent process of legitimization of their own actions. The suggested method consists of focusing on the actions of legitimating states' actions.

Another important task accomplished through this paper consists of finalizing a research project started many years ago through the dissertation thesis for the Master Degree. The conceptual and theoretical elements discussed in the dissertation have been more deeply analyzed and developed.

The dissertation thesis has focused on the interaction between hegemony and sovereignty. The primordial assumption emphasized that states that reach hegemony exert their own power in different ways, depending on the values and principles underpinning the particular relation they have with a particular state. The dynamic of sovereignty and its meaning depends on the way a hegemon defines itself or how it exerts its hegemony in the interaction with a particular state.

The dissertation focused on the study of great powers and in particular of hegemons and how these special status states influence the sovereignty of the other states being part of the international system. In this particular vein, there were used two logics of actions that define the actions of the hegemons in relation with the sovereignty of other states. On one side, it was discussed the logic of appropriateness which conceived action as a product of norms, identities and rules, and on the other side the logic of rational action privileges negotiation and pragmatic calculation of interests of rational actors.⁹

Taking into account the elements emphasized above it has been argued that hegemony has a different character when a logic of appropriateness is dominant and a different one when the logic of rational action is prevalent. A rational action logic reveals a more unilateral hegemony with a

⁹ James March și Johan P. Olsen. „The Institutional Dynamics of International Political Orders.” *International Organization* 52, nr. 4 (1998), pp. 949-951.

rigid hierarchy where imperial practices may be present. On the other side, the hegemony constituted by a logic of appropriateness widens the meaning of hegemony making it dependent on a particular relation of the hegemon with another state.

The account of the first chapter is mainly theoretic. The main aim is to clarify and define the theoretical coordinates adopted in the paper in order to develop the working hypothesis. Before presenting the main theoretical account, which is constructivism, the first chapter brings forward arguments on why other theoretical alternatives have not been considered. This endeavor has emphasized the advantages and disadvantages of the main theories of international relations in arguing the hypothesis of the paper.

The ideal and social sides of legitimacy in international relations are not compatible with material and parsimonious features of neo-realism. This particular argument has been validated by analyzing the main theoretical endeavors in international relations of Kenneth Waltz and Robert Gilpin. This analysis has not left out other theorizing efforts like the ones of Henry Kissinger and Robert Keohane.

Materialistic and rationalistic approaches in international relations reveal some patterns in how they research legitimacy. One of the most visible features consists of conceiving legitimacy as a cover for interests and power.¹⁰

After considering alternative theoretical venues of research and also their advantages and disadvantages the theoretical discussion moves forward towards the constructivist approach. Being a wide and heterogeneous approach a discussion is needed in order to make clear which approach will be adopted throughout the paper.

The holistic constructivism will be the main approach taken into consideration. This theoretical option has the merit to encompass change as an important feature of the international relations. It also emphasizes the reciprocal conditioning between agents and structures, an important element which enables an optimal analysis of legitimacy in international relations.

The constitutive relation between international social order and states is a defining point of

¹⁰ Stacie E. Goddard și Ronald R. Krebs, „Rhetoric, Legitimation, and Grand Strategy” *Security Studies* 24, nr. 1 (2015), p. 6.

holistic constructivism.¹¹ Other features of this approach like the ideal perspective, the constitution of states' interests, reciprocal influence between identities and interests and reciprocal constitution between agents and structures are part of generic characteristics of constructivism.

As already mentioned, constructivism will not be adopted in isolation to other perspectives. Theoretical components from the English School of International Relations will be assimilated in a coherent manner in order to analyze in a thorough way legitimacy and great powers' interventions. The concepts of pluralist and solidarist orders are analyzed and used in the wider argumentative framework.

The theoretical chapter also takes into account the perspectives on concepts like legitimacy, great powers and international interventions. After carefully observing the theoretical nuances a more comprehensive discussion will be made on the holistic constructivism.

The methodological chapter is structured in three major parts. First part is dedicated to the presentations of the main methodological and epistemological debates in international relations.

The second section will aim at discussing the main methodological and epistemological initiatives regarding the concept of legitimacy. Such an endeavor reveals that legitimacy is not a marginal concept in international relations but one of particular importance. The analysis will be directed towards the main works on legitimacy and its methodological and epistemological features. The works of Mlada Bukovansky, Martha Finnemore and Nicholas Wheeler will have a special place in the analysis.

The last section of the methodological chapter emphasizes the ontological, methodological and epistemological parameters adopted in the argumentative framework of the paper. At the ontological level the paper takes into account three essential components: the relation between ideal and material factors, the social nature of international relation and agent/structure relation.

At the epistemological level, the paper postulates a link between ontological parameters, the dominant perspective being an interpretative one. In strict accordance with the Weberian tradition, finding the meaning which actors offer to the international context and to the other actors will be of particular relevance.

¹¹ Christian Reus-Smit, „Constructivismul” în *Teorii ale relațiilor internaționale*, Scott Burchill, Andrew Linklater, Richard Devetak...(Iași: Institutul European, 2008), p. 220.

At the methodological level will be offered the definition of the central terms used in the paper among which one could mention: legitimacy, great powers, interventions, norms and legitimating principles. Last but not least, a discussion will be taken into account the structure of the case studies, the sources, and some elements about eurocentrism and ethical debates.

The third chapter prepares the discussion and understanding of the case studies by analyzing in synthetically the international context in which the interventions under analysis have been taking place. Moreover, in discussing the international context, of particular relevance will be the aim to emphasize the changing process and how it has manifested in some areas like interventions and legitimacy of such processes. A short portrayal of how the international relations changed axiologically after the Cold War will be sketched in order to bring more clarity on the particular issue of interventions and how they were legitimized by the great powers.

This section is followed by the very important analysis of how the 9/11 and the changes it has brought. After this shock, the great powers have initiated a profound redefinition of how they conceived interventions and how a legitimate intervention should look like. Even though the new security strategies of the great powers were firmly emphasizing the utmost importance of democracy and human rights, gradually the focus moved towards terrorist threats coming from weak or failed states.

The next four chapters are completely dedicated to analyzing the case studies. Each case study consists of great powers' interventions in Africa. The central aim of this endeavor is to observe and analyze the changing process underpinning legitimacy and legitimating principles of great powers' interventions.

The first case study underlines the growing importance of humanitarian and multilateral principles in legitimating international interventions. United States' intervention in Somalia (1992-1993) and Great Britain's intervention in Sierra Leone (2000) are key cases that reveal the dominant model of legitimating interventions after the Cold War. Humanitarianism, multilateralism, democratization and also human rights have been reference points in legitimating interventions.

The chapter concerning United States intervention in Somalia opens a discussion on what the legitimating components of the intervention materialized through the Operation Restore Hope (1992) are. In order to emphasize the sizable shift in the strategic perspective of the United States

after the Cold War a comparative study has been adopted. Therefore, in a Memorandum to the General Brent Scowcroft (1974) there is emphasized the strategic thinking behind United States action in the Horn of Africa. According to the Memo: “The primary U.S. interest in the Horn is to prevent control of this strategic area from passing to unfriendly powers, a development which would result in the outflanking of our interests in the Arabian Peninsula.”¹²

All of these strategic coordinates have been replaced with a set of new principles after the Cold War. In a speech in front of the General Assembly of the United Nations from September 21, 1992, George H. W. Bush stated that the United States wants to overcome the artificial divisions deepened throughout the Cold War, emphasizing his preference for an order in which disputes are settled through peaceful means, and human rights and democracy are the values that prevail.¹³

On December 4th 1992, president Bush has announced the entire American nation about the decision to intervene in Somalia. He declared the following: “After consulting with my advisers, with world leaders, and the congressional leadership, I have today told Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali that America will answer the call. I have given the order to Secretary Cheney to move a substantial American force into Somalia. As I speak, a Marine amphibious ready group, which we maintain at sea, is offshore Mogadishu...Let me be very clear: Our mission is humanitarian, but we will not tolerate armed gangs ripping off their own people, condemning them to death by starvation.”¹⁴

Moreover, the American president has underlined the multilateral character of the Operation and the wide consensus within the international system to initiate the intervention. According to George H. W. Bush: “We will not, however, be acting alone. I expect forces from about a dozen countries to join us in this mission.”¹⁵

The reactions to the American initiative have been largely positive. Washington has sent on December 9th 1992 approximately 28000 soldiers from the total of 37000 that have participated in

¹² „Memorandum From the Executive Secretary of State (Springsteen) to the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Scowcroft), Washington, September 4, 1974”, *Department of State*, 4 septembrie, 1974, data accesării: 28/07/2016,

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/static.history.state.gov/frus/frus1969-76ve06/pdf/d111.pdf>, p. 2.

¹³ „Address to the United Nations General Assembly by President George H.W. Bush”, *Department of State*, 21 septembrie, 1992, data accesării: 04/08/2016, <http://www.state.gov/p/io/potusunga/207267.htm>.

¹⁴ „Address to the Nation on the Situation in Somalia”, *George Bush Presidential Library and Museum*, 4 decembrie, 1992, data accesării: 04/08/2016, <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/archives/public-papers/5100>.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

the Operation.

In Somalia, the United States has legitimated its intervention in strict accordance with the wider normatively and value framework present at the international level. The intervention in Somalia was one of the biggest initiated in that particular period. In contrast with the Operation Desert Shield, the Operation Restore Hope had essentially a humanitarian reasoning not a military or an economic one. Somalia had a small strategic significance for the United States in that period of time.¹⁶

In the case of the British intervention in Sierra Leone we can witness a similar situation with the one in Somalia. Concerning the Great Britain, one could say the Labour led by Tony Blair had an important impact on the development of Britain's foreign policy. Starting with 1997, once Tony Blair came to power, the policies towards Africa have been widely redefined in comparison with the conservative administration.¹⁷

Tony Blair's speech in Chicago was the first conceptualization of the international community doctrine, a moment having a significant weight for Britain's foreign policy. The promotion of democracy and human rights were the central pillars of the doctrine that guided for years Britain's foreign policy.

Great Britain was trying to add to its actions within international relation, especially in Africa an ethical dimension. Such a dimension was articulated by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Robin Cook who wanted to prove the greater importance Great Britain was attaching to human rights when interacting with the other states of the system.¹⁸

Great Britain's intervention in Sierra Leone was in accordance with the principles supported by the Labour since they came to power in 1997. These principles have been discussed exhaustively in the first part of the chapter. However, it is important to emphasize that an essential part was played by the Labour government, especially Tony Blair and Robin Cook.

¹⁶ Susan Page, „MISSION TO SOMALIA U.S. aim: Save the innocents”, *Newsday*, 5 decembrie, 1992, data accesării 11/08/2016, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/278572385?accountid=136549>.

¹⁷ Paul D. Williams, „Britain and Africa in the Twenty-First Century” în Jack Mangala (ed.), *Africa and the new world era: from humanitarianism to a strategic view* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 37; Julia Gallagher, *BRITAIN AND AFRICA UNDER BLAIR: In pursuit of the good state* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), p. 4.

¹⁸ „Robin Cook's speech on the government's ethical foreign policy”, *The Guardian*, 12 mai 1997, data accesării: 01/05/2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/1997/may/12/indonesia.ethicalforeignpolicy>.

According to a statement made in the House of Commons, Tony Blair underlined that “it is important to do what we can responsibly to save democracy in Sierra Leone. This state has played a key role in the last years to keep this regime and we have to continue.”¹⁹

In his memoirs, Tony Blair describes the intervention in Sierra Leone as a moment he is proud of.²⁰ Moreover he was considering that through Britain’s intervention in Sierra Leone “democracy has been saved and secured.”²¹ The Foreign Minister, Robin Cook has underlined in the same way with Tony Blair that Great Britain has defended democracy in Sierra Leone.²²

The next case studies analyse a changing dynamic of how interventions are legitimized between humanitarian/democratic principles and the pluralist ones which concern defending the state against terrorist threat which becomes more and more important in legitimizing interventions. Great powers’ interventions in Libya and Central African Republic are the epitome of the transition of legitimizing principles used to justify interventions.

This section discussed a transitional situation of the legitimization of great powers’ interventions in Africa. Therefore, an analysis has been carried on into the great powers’ interventions in Libya (2011) and the French intervention in Central African Republic in 2013, L’opération Sangaris. The focus will be on the growing importance of the pluralist principles in front of the solidarist principles, more exactly the fight against terrorism prevails.

Libyan intervention starts with a legitimizing set of principles characteristic to solidarism, but soon after the intervention started, this set of principles eroded. Even though the great powers still privileged values and principles like human rights, humanitarianism and democratization, they were not operable at the level of intervention legitimization.

For example, referring to Libyan intervention, president Obama has criticized the two leaders of Great Britain and France, David Cameron and Nicolas Sarkozy.²³ President Obama considered that the European engagement formed from France and Great Britain was too fragile. The

¹⁹ „Britain balks at plea to bring peace to Sierra Leone”, *The Scotsman*, 11 mai, 2000, data accesării: 02/09/2016, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/326862612?accountid=136549>.

²⁰ Tony Blair, *A Journey* (Londra: Random House, 2010), p. 253.

²¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 254, 395.

²² Paul Williams, „Fighting for freetown: British military intervention in Sierra Leone”, *Contemporary Security Policy* 22, nr. 3 (2001), p. 157.

²³ „Obama blasts Cameron, Sarkozy for Libya ‘mess’”, *France 24*, 11 martie, 2016, data accesării: 22/09/2016, <http://www.france24.com/en/20160311-obama-cameron-sarkozy-libya-mess-gaddafi-france-uk>.

situation in Libya was requesting a stronger engagement, on medium and long term. The intervention functioned on short term, an aspect observed by president Obama. According to the American president “we had and UN mandate, we have built a coalition, the military expenses were low...however the intervention in Libya was a failure.”²⁴

The intervention in Central African Republic was assumed as a humanitarian one, associated with a solidarist perspective, however the transitory element can be observed clearly as the French moved towards an approach aiming a state building endeavour and fighting against terrorism.

The last case studies discuss how the pluralist principles of state consolidation, fight against terrorism takes precedence against other principles. In this vain the two case studies which will be analysed are the French intervention in Mali and the multi-national operation Barkhane.

From the perspective of the present paper, the two interventions reveal the new facet of great powers’ intervention legitimation. The humanitarian principles, democracy and human rights remain important, but the state centric pluralist perspective and the associated fight against terrorism prevails.

On 11 January 2013, the French president Francois Hollande, decided to send 4000 soldiers joined by another 2000 soldiers of Chad in Mali.²⁵ The main aim of the intervention was to destroy the terrorist threat which was menacing the entire state.

President Hollande had a press conference in which he underlined the main directions of action: “Mali is faced with a terrorist aggression...In the name of France I have answered positively to the president of Mali to help this state. The French armed forces will support the Malian army to fight against terrorism.”²⁶

As can be observed, the French president has initiated the intervention in Mali on the basis of some essential legitimating components at international, regional and state level. The terrorist threat represented the central element which determined France’s willingness to intervene.

²⁴ Jeffrey Goldberg, „The Obama Doctrine,” *The Atlantic*, aprilie, 2016, data accesării: 25/09/2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525/>.

²⁵ Tony Chafer, „Hollande and Africa Policy”, *Modern & Contemporary France* 22, nr. 4 (2014), p. 521.

²⁶ „Déclaration de M. François Hollande, Président de la République, sur l'intervention militaire au Mali, à Paris le 11 janvier 2013”, *Vie Publique*, 11 ianuarie 2013, data accesării: 11/10/2016, <http://discours.vie-publique.fr/notices/137000058.html>.

After 2012, Mali was a fragile state politically and economically, and the terrorist threat was growing at the point of making Mali a state just by its name. Terrorist groups like Ansar Dine, Al-Qaida au Maghreb islamique and al-Morabitoune led by Mokhtar Belmokhtar were becoming a clear threat for the state and the region.

A report of the UN Secretary General warned about the worsening security situation in Mali. It was underlined the lack of essential state institution and also the threatening terrorist presence. According to the Report, the socio-economic challenges as well as humanitarian and political one combine together with a growing terrorist threat from the north of Mali.²⁷

The succession of the counter-terrorist intervention was completed by the French operation called Barkhane. It can be said that it comes next to Serval operation but it has a greater amplitude. Moreover, this external operation is one of the biggest France has carried on after the Second World War.²⁸

Barkhane was launched on 1st of August 2014 and according to the French Defence Ministry, it had two central coordinates: support for the armies in Sahel in the fight against terrorism and prevention of new terrorist groups.²⁹

The aim of the intervention is to support the counter-terrorist efforts and to prevent other terrorist groups to exist. The main terrorist groups targeted by the intervention were: al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), al-Murabitoun (AMB), the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), the Macina Liberation Front (MLF), and Ansar al- Dine (AAD).³⁰ Barkhane was not a mission tailored only for Mali. It was made for many other states like Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad.³¹

²⁷ „Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali”, *UN Security Council*, 29 noiembrie 2012, data accesării: 15/10/2016, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2012/894, pp. 1-3.

²⁸ Derek Henry Flood, „France tackles jihadists in Sahara-Sahel region”, *Jane's Intelligence Review* 28, nr. 2 (1 feb. 2016), <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1761201219?accountid=136549>.

²⁹ „Opération Barkhane”, *Ministère de la Défense*, 10 august 2016, data accesării: 15/10/2016, <http://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/sahel/dossier-de-presentations-de-l-operation-barkhane/operation-barkhane>.

³⁰ „Country Reports on Terrorism 2015”, *United States Department of State*, iunie 2016, data accesării: 23/10/2016, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/2016-State-Department-Country-Report-on-Terrorism.pdf>, p. 34.

³¹ Jean-Yves HAINE, „L'engagement renforcé: Les politiques de sécurité de la France et des États-Unis en Afrique”, *l'Institut français des relations internationales (Ifri)*, februarie 2016, data accesării: 22/10/2016, https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/note_jyh_ocppc-ifri_fr.pdf, p. 7.

Studying all the interventions operated by the great powers in Africa one can observe the changing dynamic from the legitimating solidarist principles like human rights and a morality that is not ending at the borders of the state to a pluralist framework characterized by an association of multiple political authorities based on sovereign equality, territorial integrity and non-intervention. Pluralism and solidarism are not antithetical but the nature of divergence rests within the potentiality of norms, rules and institutions to be shared within the states system.

In this vain, the legitimation of interventions can be understood in an optimal manner offering in the same time the instrument to understand great powers interventions. The paper does not want to close the problem of international interventions. The legitimation of great powers' interventions remains an open case which can face new openings in the future.

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