

# From rivalry to partnership? Critical reflections on Anglo-French cooperation in Africa

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**Abstract.** At the December 1998 Saint-Malo summit, Britain and France promised to set aside past rivalries and work together on African issues. While brief indications were given as to possible areas of bilateral and 'bi-multi' cooperation, the terms and scope of this 'partnership' were not spelt out. Was this to involve only sporadic collaboration? Or was it to be an institutionalised partnership, such as the Franco-German tandem, or perhaps a more intuitive alliance, such as the Anglo-American 'special relationship'? These questions are central to this article, which begins by showing how Anglo-French relations in Africa were largely marked by rivalry from the colonial era to the early post-Cold War period. Drawing upon extensive interviews, it demonstrates how, over the last decade or so, closer linkages have developed between the UK and French administrations and how there has been a greater degree of cooperation in response to the key challenges of Africa. It then uses a neo-classical realist framework to explain the readiness or reluctance of Britain and France to collaborate on Africa. It concludes by suggesting that, while there has been progress in 'deconflictualising' African policies, cooperation has been, and is likely to remain, limited.

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At the December 1998 Saint-Malo summit, the British and French governments sought to draw a line under ‘the history of rivalry, the misunderstandings and pointless competition’ which had long hampered Anglo-French cooperation in Africa.<sup>1</sup> The UK and France signed the Saint-Malo II agreement which committed them to set aside past rivalries and work together to tackle the challenges of Africa. This joint undertaking, which was much less reported upon than the Saint-Malo I declaration on Anglo-French security and defence collaboration, committed Britain and France to engage in joint actions on Africa, either bilaterally or in a ‘bi-multi’ fashion (that is, with London and Paris reaching a common position then bringing in other capitals). But the precise terms and scope of this proposed cooperation were not spelt out. Was this to be simply a marriage of convenience whereby the UK and France would avoid public quarrels and engage in only sporadic collaboration, say, at moments of crisis? Or was the aim to develop a relationship that was more like the Franco-German tandem, which is characterised by a high ‘degree of institutionalisation of communications and exchanges’ between the two governments?<sup>2</sup> Or was it their intention to build a partnership that was akin to the Anglo-American ‘special relationship’ which, although interest-driven, is also more ‘natural’ in that it is rooted in a shared language, culture and history?<sup>3</sup>

Surprisingly perhaps, given the potential importance of this initiative, both for Africa and for the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), there has been no attempt to study this evolving UK-French ‘partnership’ on Africa. This article plugs this gap. It sets out the history of rivalry marking Anglo-French relations from colonial times to the early post-Cold War era. Drawing upon over 150 largely off-the-record interviews with officials and politicians in the British and French Foreign Ministries, the European Council, the European Commission, the UN and African regional and sub-organisations, this study demonstrates how closer linkages have developed between the UK and French administrations and how some degree of collaboration has taken place on shared objectives such as poverty reduction, the promotion of political reforms and the establishment of peace and security.<sup>4</sup> Finally, it seeks to explain the evolution of Anglo-French relations in terms of neo-classical realism.<sup>5</sup> Theorists in this tradition focus first and foremost upon the relative power of states within the international system.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> {<http://www.ambafrance-uk.org/Political-cooperation.html>} accessed on 21 January 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Douglas Webber (ed.), *The Franco-German Relationship in the EU* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> John Baylis (ed.), *Anglo-American Relations since 1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 155.

<sup>4</sup> At the 2004 Anglo-French summit, the final communiqué stressed that: ‘Our joint aim is to reduce poverty in Africa [and] to help build lasting peace and democracy’. {<http://www.ambafrance-uk.org/Franco-British-summit-conclusions.html>} accessed on 23 June 2010.

<sup>5</sup> This term was originally coined by Gideon Rose in a review article entitled ‘Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy’, *World Politics*, 51:1 (1998), p. 146. For an overview of neo-classical realism, see Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Steven E. Lobell, and Norrin M. Ripsman, *Neoclassical Realism, the State and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). The authors contend that there is no single neo-classical realist theory, but a diversity of such theories.

<sup>6</sup> Most major neo-classical realist works are case studies examining the response of great powers to the rise or fall of their relative power. On the US, see Colin Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders: Power, Culture, and Change in American Grand Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006). On the US and China, see Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947–1958* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). On the Soviet Union, see William Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance: Power and Perceptions During the*

But they also go beyond neo-realism,<sup>7</sup> with its emphasis on systemic properties as the core drivers of state behaviour, by including within their foreign policy analysis unit-level material and ideational variables, such as key political actors' perceptions of the national interest as well as state structures and other domestic constraints.<sup>8</sup>

Before proceeding, it is important to sharpen our focus. First, this article does not look at the impact of partnership in terms of policy outcomes; this would be problematic given the multiplicity of factors that affect the success or failure of any joint UK-French action. Second, it does not assume that the British and French states should systematically cooperate on Africa. Such an assumption would require a normative judgement to be made on the basis of imperfect information and would fail to take account of the complexity of foreign policymaking. Third, space constraints do not allow for a detailed analysis of relations between non-state actors, although it is worth noting, for example, that new links have developed, with official encouragement, between the UK and French foreign policy research centres, Chatham House and the Institut Français des Relations Internationales.<sup>9</sup> Instead, the focus here is on state-to-state relations, with emphasis on linkages between government ministers and senior officials. It is these actors, the so-called 'foreign policy executive' or policymaking elites, whose perceptions and ideas are deemed by neo-classical realists to play a key role in interpreting systemic imperatives and choosing between foreign policy options.<sup>10</sup> Thus, as Gideon Rose observes: 'Foreign policy choices are made by actual political leaders and elites, and so it is their perceptions of relative power that matter, not simply relative quantities of physical resources or forces in being.'<sup>11</sup>

Finally, this article does not cover areas of policy where the Anglo-French 'partnership' has been more virtual than real. The fight against international crime is one such area. Here, despite the UK-French Action Plan on transnational crime agreed at the November 2004 Anglo-French summit, 'cooperation on the ground has remained patchy'.<sup>12</sup> The same is true of counterterrorism and intelligence sharing. While it is difficult to secure reliable data, the evidence points to a semi-hostile relationship in this field, with the UK and US sharing intelligence under the 5Is initiative with Canada, Australia and New Zealand, but not France.

*Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993). On the major players in the Second World War, see Randall L. Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest* (Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1998).

<sup>7</sup> See Brian Rathbun, 'A Rose by Any Other Name: Neoclassical Realism as the Logical and Necessary Extension of Structural Realism', *Security Studies*, 17 (2008), pp. 294–321.

<sup>8</sup> The importance of the ideational dimension is recognised by a number of neo-classical realists, see, for example, Rose, 'Neoclassical Realism', p. 168; Rathburn, 'A Rose', p. 16; and Nicholas Kitchen, 'Systemic Pressures and Domestic Ideas: a Neoclassical Realist Model of Grand Strategy Formation', *Review of International Studies*, 36 (2010), pp. 117–43. According to Kitchen (p. 127), 'Neoclassical realism [...] places the impact of ideas alongside the imperatives of material power in the making of foreign policy, rejecting the notion that either ideas or material factors are somehow "most fundamental" and therefore deserving of analytic focus to the exclusion of the other.'

<sup>9</sup> This exchange has led to occasional seminars involving UK and French Foreign Ministry staff discussing issues such as Sudan and the Sahel. However, Chatham House's efforts to host a 'St-Malo ten years on' seminar elicited little interest from either Foreign Ministry; personal communication, Whitehall insider (2009).

<sup>10</sup> Kitchen, 'Systemic Pressures', p. 133. This 'executive' is composed of 'high-ranking bureaucrats' and elected representatives 'charged with the overall conduct of foreign affairs'.

<sup>11</sup> Rose, 'Neoclassical Realism', p. 147.

<sup>12</sup> Personal communication, FCO (2008).

Indeed, 'clear limits' have been imposed on intelligence-sharing, partly at the insistence of the Americans 'who do not like this material to be disseminated more widely'.<sup>13</sup> Similar observations can be made in relation to security sector reform (SSR), where there have been only a handful of instances of collaboration. To illustrate, there has been some limited degree of Anglo-French cooperation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where the UK has concentrated on providing funding and the French on supplying staffing for the EUPOL (police) and EUSEC (army reform) missions. In Guinea-Bissau, too, there were some brief but constructive discussions between the UK and France before the deployment of the ESDP mission in February 2008. Equally, there were, around the same time, a number of reports written, with Department for International Development (DFID) funding and French Foreign Ministry backing, with a view to promoting closer UK-French collaboration on SSR.<sup>14</sup> These reports were, however, subsequently shelved, partly at least to cover up France's embarrassment at being operationally and conceptually, so far behind the UK on SSR.<sup>15</sup>

### A less than cordial entente

Rivalry had been a feature of Anglo-French relations in Africa since the nineteenth century. It peaked in 1898 at Fashoda when the French were compelled by Lord Kitchener's forces to beat a humiliating retreat from Sudan. It was partly assuaged by the 1904 Entente Cordiale, but the relationship continued to be marked by the 'Fashoda syndrome' (France's paranoia about 'Anglo-Saxon' territorial ambitions in francophone Africa) throughout the colonial era.

Anglo-French rivalry persisted during the early post-colonial decades, as Britain and France pursued realpolitik objectives and failed to work together on the challenges of Africa. Poverty reduction was not a priority for the UK, which typically tied around two-fifths of its aid to the purchase of British products and services.<sup>16</sup> Successive French administrations tied an even larger proportion of their development assistance to French goods and accorded even less importance to poverty alleviation, giving less aid to least developed countries (LLDCs) than to upper middle-income African states.<sup>17</sup> The UK and France also adopted a semi-competitive approach towards democracy promotion. They each bequeathed their own models of government to their former African colonies and then turned a blind eye as these countries became one-party states. On African security, here too the approaches diverged, sometimes sharply: in the Nigerian civil war (1967–1970), the UK and France backed different sides. The British had no

<sup>13</sup> Personal communication, FCO (2009). The UK and France nonetheless agreed to create a joint counterterrorism committee that should meet quarterly {[www.nytimes.com/2007/07/20/world/.../20iht-france.4.6757003.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/20/world/.../20iht-france.4.6757003.html)}.

<sup>14</sup> See the unpublished reports by Niagalé Bagayoko (*L'appareil de sécurité de la République centrafricaine* and *Cameroon's Security Apparatus*) and by Niagalé Bagayoko and Jeffrey Isima (*Security Systems in Francophone and Anglophone Africa*).

<sup>15</sup> Personal communications, DFID (2010) and MFA (2009).

<sup>16</sup> The UK tied 44.1 per cent of assistance in 1974–1975 and 41.3 per cent in 1982–1983, see Gordon Cumming, *Aid to Africa* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), p. 90.

<sup>17</sup> France tied 67.5 per cent of aid in 1974–1975 and 46.1 per cent in 1982–1983, Cumming, *Aid to Africa*, pp. 90, 64.

bases, undertook few interventions and offered only small-scale British Military Advisory and Training Teams to former colonies. By contrast, France adopted a 'voluntaristic', unilateral military approach, with pre-positioned forces in ex-colonies and military personnel embedded with African forces under the terms of defence and military cooperation agreements.

A similar lack of Anglo-French cooperation was also apparent over the early post-Cold War period (1990–1997). Thus, while the UK and France both increased support to the poorest African countries (cancelling some debt, untying some aid and targeting some assistance), they did not cooperate on poverty reduction. Britain remained primarily concerned with promoting neo-liberal reform while France continued to provide hard loans and to allocate a fifth of its aid to promoting French cultural concerns. The two countries also began competing more openly for energy resources, consultancy work and other commercial contracts in each other's African sphere of influence. Similarly, while both London and Paris announced in June 1990, that they were linking their bilateral assistance to political progress in developing countries, they remained reluctant to impose aid sanctions on former colonies, as the cases of Uganda and Togo illustrated. Finally, Britain and France did not always see eye-to-eye on military-humanitarian interventions. The UK, for example, lobbied against military intervention in Rwanda in 1994 and, subsequently, used the UN Security Council (UNSC) to limit the scope of France's Operation Turquoise.<sup>18</sup>

Nonetheless, throughout much of this period, the competitive nature of Anglo-French relations was attenuated by three factors. The first was the Cold War context in which the UK and France were required to work alongside one another to keep their former colonies in the Western orbit. The second was Britain's benign neglect of Africa,<sup>19</sup> which prompted one French official to comment: 'We did not really get the impression that the British were rivals, since they were not particularly present [in Africa] before the creation of the Department for International Development'.<sup>20</sup> The third was the emergence of forums in which the UK and France could exchange views on Africa. The UNSC in New York was one such forum, but cooperation was limited here by Britain's tendency to side with the US and France's pretention to a 'non aligned' policy. The European Community provided another channel after the UK joined in 1973, but real differences soon emerged over the Lomé Convention (Europe's aid and trade agreement with its former African, Caribbean and Pacific colonies). The annual Anglo-French summit, which first met in 1978, was the most important forum for bilateral exchanges but it was not used to discuss Africa.

While space constraints will not allow for a detailed neo-classical realist account of the evolution of policies over these years, it is worth noting that while the UK and France 'balanced' with the US in its struggle against the Soviet Union's expansionist threat,<sup>21</sup> by for example maintaining their former African empires

<sup>18</sup> The UK insisted that France show 'clearly demonstrable impartiality' and avoid involvement in the fighting, see Neil Fenton, *Understanding the Security Council* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p. 140.

<sup>19</sup> David Styan, 'Does Britain have an African Policy?', in Centre d'Etudes d'Afrique Noire, *Afrique Politique* (Paris: Karthala, 1996), pp. 261–86.

<sup>20</sup> Personal communication, French Foreign Ministry (2008).

<sup>21</sup> On 'balancing' and 'bandwagoning', see Stephen M. Walt, 'Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power', *International Security*, 9:4 (1985), pp. 4–9.

within the Western sphere of influence,<sup>22</sup> the ‘foreign policy executive’ in both countries saw the pursuit of narrow realist interests through bilateral development programmes, individual debt cancellation initiatives and, in France’s case, unilateral military interventions as the best way of enhancing UK and French prestige, influence and relative power within the international system.

### **Saint-Malo: towards a new framework for partnership?**

As noted earlier, the UK and French governments signed two important agreements in December 1998. The first was the Saint-Malo I accord, which paved the way for ESDP missions to be conducted autonomously of NATO. The second, Saint-Malo II, was a pledge to ‘seek to harmonise their policies towards Africa’. While scant details were provided, it was stated that the UK and France would ‘pursue close cooperation on the ground in Africa’, intensify information exchange, explore the scope for co-location of French/British embassies in Africa and engage in joint ship visits. Such statements were repeated and refined at subsequent summits, notably in 2001, 2004 and 2008.

Saint-Malo I and II served as the catalyst for the development of closer formal and informal or *ad hoc* ties between policymaking elites within the two ‘foreign policy executives’. The formalisation of these linkages can be seen in the inclusion of a distinct ‘Africa chapter’ at Anglo-French summits as well as in the greatly increased ministerial presence (for example, ten ministers plus the Prime Minister and President in 2006) at these gatherings. There are, moreover, now six-monthly meetings between staff from the UK and French Foreign Ministry Africa Directorates. Similarly, meetings are scheduled three to four times a year at a senior level between the DFID and French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) officials working on international development.<sup>23</sup> Equally, there is an exchange programme involving officials from, on the UK side, the Africa Directorates of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the DFID and, on the French side, from the Africa and Globalisation Directorates of the MFA. Similarly, the French and British defence ministries exchanged *chargés de mission* from 2005–2008, stationed reciprocally in the central policymaking department of each ministry. In addition, a French officer is embedded with British forces in Nairobi and a British officer was until 2009 seconded to French forces in Dakar.

Turning to the informal or *ad hoc* links, these have been event-, issue- or personality-driven. They include occasional but symbolically important joint ministerial visits, the first of which involved a trip in March 1999 to Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire by the then UK and French foreign ministers, Robin Cook and Hubert Védrine, and the most recent of which was by the former British Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, and the then French Foreign Minister, Bernard Kouchner, to the DRC in November 2008. Equally, there have been joint

<sup>22</sup> George Ball, American undersecretary of state in the Kennedy administration, recognised Africa as a ‘special European responsibility’, see George Ball, *The Disciples of Power* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1968).

<sup>23</sup> Attendance by the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) is sporadic, due to a turf war with the MFA; personal communication, DFID (2009).

ministerial statements by, for example, the former UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown and French President Nicolas Sarkozy on Sudan/Darfur (March 2008).<sup>24</sup> There is, moreover, now a tendency for newly appointed British and French ambassadors to visit Paris and London respectively before beginning their African postings. There have also been invitations to specific events, with Bernard Kouchner attending as a special guest at the FCO's annual ambassadors' conference in London in March 2009.<sup>25</sup>

Many of the above linkages have been possible partly because particular UK and French ministers and officials have perceived such ties as being in the common interests of Britain and France and consistent with the two countries' shared values and partly because these same elite policymakers have actually 'got on' well together. This was the case with Cook and Védrine and with Miliband and Kouchner. Similarly Lord Malloch-Brown, as UK Minister for Africa, Asia and the UN, also established excellent relations with Bernard Kouchner, his special adviser Eric Chevallier and Africa advisers in the Elysée. Other close links were forged between successive heads of the UK and French Foreign Ministry Africa Directorates (for example, James Bevan and Bruno Joubert) as well as between Africa advisers in Downing Street and the Elysée.

These informal ties have also become a more important feature of Anglo-French relations within multilateral forums. To illustrate, senior UK and French officials, usually from the DFID and the Elysée respectively, have engaged in regular bilateral exchanges in their capacity as G8 Africa special representatives – a grouping established in 2002 and reinvigorated ahead of the G8 summit in 2005. These meetings, coupled with strong political will at the highest level, have helped the UK and France not only to keep Africa high up the G8 agenda, despite America's lack of enthusiasm, but also to ensure strong African representation at G8 summits, notably in Evian (2003) and Gleneagles (2005).<sup>26</sup>

Within the EU, the UK and France have long engaged in informal exchanges between meetings and more formal dialogue within forums such as the Committee on Development Cooperation (CODEV), the Africa Working Group (AWG) and the General Affairs and External Relations Council. Their scope for such consultation has increased over recent years as some meetings have become more frequent (for example, the AWG has been convened weekly rather than monthly since July 2009) and as new forums have emerged. The latter include the ambassador-level Political and Security Committee or PSC, which has, since its creation in 2000, focused on ESDP missions; the *ad hoc* working group on the EU-Africa strategy (set up with strong UK-French backing); and the eight panels (the most important of which are led by the UK or France) established to implement the priority actions agreed in the 2007 Africa-EU Strategic Partnership.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> {<http://www.nytimes.com/auth/login?URI=http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/20/world/europe/20iht-france.4.6757003.html>} accessed on 20 July 2007. Brown and Sarkozy subsequently wrote a joint article published in *The Times* and *Le Monde* (31 August 2007).

<sup>25</sup> Personal communication, FCO official (2009).

<sup>26</sup> African leaders were instrumental in placing Africa on the G8 agenda as from the 2002 Kananaskis summit, see Alex Vines, 'Into Africa', *World Today* (March 2005). Significantly too, the AU Chairperson, Jean Ping, was invited to the G20 summit for the first time by the UK in 2009; personal communication, EU official (2009).

<sup>27</sup> Britain leads on the MDGs and France on Climate Change. While headed up by the EU, the Peace and Security panel is chaired by a French general and heavily influenced by the UK.

Informal and institutional links between the UK and France are most closely intertwined at the UN. As two of the permanent five members of the UNSC, Britain and France are invited – at permanent representative level – to attend informal lunches hosted by the Secretary General.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, Britain, France and the US make up the P3, an informal mechanism, launched in late 1997, which facilitates consultation on UNSC matters. According to one UK official,

Within the P3, we sometimes speak first to the French and other times we speak to the US first. At other times all three speak simultaneously. Sometimes this is purely by chance [...] sometimes it is tactical, notably where Britain and France are more closely aligned with each other than either is with the US.<sup>29</sup>

With two-thirds of UNSC business relating to Africa in recent years, the P3 has been an important arena for Anglo-French cooperation, particularly when the French and British ambassadors to the UN have enjoyed a good relationship. This was the case, at least prior to the Iraq crisis, with Sir Jeremy Greenstock (1998–2003) and Jean-David Levitte (1999–2002), who had been Chirac's diplomatic adviser at Saint-Malo and who favoured cooperation 'in the spirit of Saint-Malo'.<sup>30</sup> It was equally true of relations between Sir Emyr Jones Parry (2003–2007) and French Permanent Representative, Jean-Marc de la Sablière (2002–2007). Thus, when Jones Parry led UNSC missions to seven West African countries in June 2004 and Sudan/Chad in June 2006, he allowed his French counterpart to take the lead in the francophone states visited. This rapport between the UK and French Permanent Representatives was no doubt facilitated by the fact that neither man enjoyed good relations with the truculent US Ambassador, John Bolton.<sup>31</sup> It was indeed regularly the case during the Bush presidency that the P3 initiative would see Anglo-French talks to coordinate positions as a prelude to trying to bring the US on board. The UK-French initiative, launched in late 2008, to improve UN peacekeeping mandates is a good example, with the US now increasingly involved in the discussions along with the other P5 members.

There have, however, been clear limits to Anglo-French efforts to coordinate their positions within existing forums and to build new institutional bridges. There is in fact a near-total absence of 'institutional mechanisms that bring ministers, officials and institutions together'<sup>32</sup> which, as our subsequent theoretical analysis will demonstrate, constitutes a major constraint on closer collaboration south of the Sahara. In this context, it is worth noting that the main bilateral forum for exchange has remained the Franco-British summit, a gathering whose existence predated Saint-Malo by over a decade. It has also taken over ten years for the DFID and the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) to sign, in December 2009, an overarching agreement that focuses mainly on non-contentious sectors, such as health and education. There has, moreover, been no staff exchange between the DFID and the AFD, and there have been delays in filling some positions and cutbacks to some posts, particularly on the British side: the UK stopped sending a *chargé de mission* to the French Defence Ministry in Paris in 2008 and ended its

<sup>28</sup> Personal communications, FCO official (2009).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Personal communications, former UK official in New York (2008).

<sup>31</sup> Personal communications, former UK officials in New York and London (2008).

<sup>32</sup> Personal communication, FCO official (2008).



practice of embedding an officer in French forces in Dakar in July 2009. Furthermore, despite a growing culture of evaluation within the British and French foreign policy establishments, there are still no mechanisms for ensuring that lessons learned by exchange staff are formally recorded. Significantly too, there have also been no joint ship visits and there is no evidence of co-location of French and British embassies in Africa. In fact, in Abidjan, where the UK mission has been closed since April 2005, British officials are more comfortable in the US than in the French embassy.<sup>33</sup>

Clearly this lack of institutional architecture ‘does not mean that cooperation is not taking place’.<sup>34</sup> However, it suggests that ‘there is nothing to fall back on’ and makes collaboration dependent upon officials and ministers actually ‘getting on’ or at least sharing a common appreciation of the benefits of closer cooperation.<sup>35</sup> This has often not been the case. Relations were, for example, difficult between the UK Secretary of State for International Development, Clare Short, and French ‘Development Minister’, Charles Josselin. In personal communications with the authors, Ms Short has commented that she was ‘not aware’ of any cooperation between the UK and France, while Josselin has complained that during their joint visit to Sierra Leone and Guinea in April 2001, Ms Short asked to see Guinean President Lansana Conté ahead of him and seemed to undermine the French position by welcoming rather than condemning Guinean attacks on Sierra Leonean rebels.<sup>36</sup>

In other instances, the ‘partnership’ does not work because of a lack of awareness of its existence or because officials, in London in particular, express uncertainty as to who their interlocutor in Paris should be. This phenomenon is less common in international organisations, but there have been many occasions when policymakers have proven unable to square UK and French positions. Thus while the French did sign up to major aid and debt cancellation commitments at the Gleneagles Summit (2005), they were unhappy about the UK’s attempt to use this forum to sideline the recommendations of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development and impose instead the findings of the Blair Commission on summit participants.<sup>37</sup> More generally, within the EU, the UK does not see France as an obvious partner on African development and is usually closer to the ‘likeminded countries’ (the Nordics and the Dutch). Indeed, on the CODEV, one of Britain’s concerns appears to be to ensure that France and Germany do not exercise their ‘blocking minority vote’.<sup>38</sup> In the UN too, divergent interests have sometimes been hard to conceal, notably at the time of the 2003 Iraq War when Anglo-French relations were strained and when, in the context of the proposed second resolution, competition over the votes of the three African UNSC members (Angola, Cameroon and Guinea) was ferocious.

<sup>33</sup> Personal communication, Whitehall insider (2009).

<sup>34</sup> Personal communication, FCO, London (2009).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Personal communications with Claire Short via email (2008) and with Charles Josselin in Paris (2009).

<sup>37</sup> See Alex Vines and Thomas Cargill, ‘Le monde doit nous juger sur l’Afrique’, *Politique Africaine*, 101 (2006), pp. 132–48.

<sup>38</sup> Most decisions are by qualified majority voting, with votes being a function of contributions to the EDF. France, Germany and Britain have contributed 24.3 per cent, 23.4 per cent and 12.7 per cent respectively, *European Report* (23 February 2005).

**Towards partnership in practice?**

Having demonstrated that there is now a clearer framework for Anglo-French coordination, we will now examine whether Britain and France have actually collaborated on their core priorities for Africa, namely tackling poverty, promoting democracy and building peace.

*Working together to reduce poverty?*

The UK and France have taken tentative steps towards closer cooperation on poverty reduction. They have supported each other's high-profile poverty-reducing initiatives. On health, the UK backed France's UNITAID proposal, which was formally launched in 2006 and aimed at financing vaccinations through a tax on international flights.<sup>39</sup> By the same token, Paris supported the International Finance Facility for Immunisation, a scheme proposed initially by London in January 2003 and subsequently by Britain and France in 2006 as a means of raising capital to support the programmes of the Global Alliance for Vaccination and Immunisation.<sup>40</sup> Anglo-French cooperation on health was then taken further when, in September 2008, the UK and France helped form a High Level Task Force for innovative financing of healthcare.<sup>41</sup>

Similarly, on education, the UK and France made a joint statement in March 2008, with Gordon Brown and Nicolas Sarkozy promising to help get 16 million children into school in Africa by 2010 and every child by 2015.<sup>42</sup> They also undertook to work with others to train an additional 3.8 million teachers; and, in the context of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, pledged support to the One Goal programme to highlight the need for universal education.

Alongside these strategic policy announcements, London and Paris have engaged in a three-way dialogue with the African Development Bank and agreed to coordinate their support to this organisation, notably on the issue of debt sustainability.<sup>43</sup> Equally, Britain and France have collaborated at the programmatic level, with for example a 'silent partnership' (where one donor funds and another agency implements a programme) on education. This scheme arose partly out of the joint visit to Niger and Zambia by UK Secretary of State for Development, Hilary Benn, and French Development Minister, Xavier Darcos, in February 2005 and partly out of talks held in London a few months later between the heads of DFID African offices and a team from the French Foreign Ministry's Development Directorate. With no diplomatic representation in Niger, the DFID provided 7 million euros to the AFD to promote primary education through the Fast Track Initiative.

<sup>39</sup> Initially conceived by the French and Brazilian Presidents in 2003, UNITAID was subsequently launched by France, Britain, Brazil, Chile and Norway. It now enjoys support from Spain, Luxembourg and 22 developing countries, {<http://www.unitaid.eu/en/UNITAID-donors.html>} accessed 23 June 2010.

<sup>40</sup> OECD, *Peer Review: France* (Paris: OECD, 2008), p. 40.

<sup>41</sup> This culminated in a UN conference at which the UK contributed £400 million to a 5.3 billion US dollar pool to improve global health care, see *M2 PressWIRE* (23 September 2009).

<sup>42</sup> {<http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2008/mar/27/sarkozy.brown.france.statevisit>}.

<sup>43</sup> Personal communication, FCO official (2008).

Ultimately, however, Anglo-French collaboration on poverty reduction has remained limited. Thus, although London and Paris both espouse the MDGs, policymaking elites in the UK and France do not attach the same priority to these goals, either as objectives in themselves or as a means to demonstrate the ‘capacity’ of the state to resolve intractable problems such as chronic poverty. While the DFID appears at the time of writing to be moving away from a more-or-less exclusive focus on the MDGs towards a more growth – and results-oriented approach, it has, since 1997, consistently made poverty reduction central to its aid programme, enshrining it in legislation (International Development Act, 2002) and White Papers, providing unprecedented levels of aid (all untied), and channelling a high percentage of assistance to LLDCs.<sup>44</sup>

By contrast, the French government did not sign up to any overarching poverty reduction targets until the UN Millennium Summit in 2000, and was not, initially at least, on the (UK-led) European panel on the MDGs that arose out of the 2007 EU-Africa Strategic Partnership.<sup>45</sup> Policymaking elites within the French administration have, moreover, remained sceptical about poverty reduction targets which they see as unrealistic, overly technocratic and, at best, only part of the solution. They contend that donors, by promoting trade and growth, will create the conditions in which African countries can fund their own social programmes.<sup>46</sup> In line with this thinking, the French administration has retained policies that sit uncomfortably with the MDGs, not least aid tying and the allocation of a decreasing share of aid to LLDCs.<sup>47</sup> The French Foreign Ministry for its part has continued to prioritise French cultural projects, while the AFD, which has taken over many of the Foreign Ministry’s overseas aid-related functions, has retained a banking culture and a strong emphasis on hard loans, the productive sector and profitable investments.

Against this backdrop, it is unsurprising that joint initiatives on poverty reduction have not always been followed up. Thus, while the UK backed France’s UNITAID proposal, it did not introduce this tax itself but confined its support to a budgetary contribution. Furthermore, while France promised to match Britain’s commitment on school places, it has only provided £50 million for one year compared to the DFID’s commitment of £500 million over three years.<sup>48</sup>

At the same time, Anglo-French cooperation has remained weak at the programmatic level: the UK contribution to the education scheme in Niger is paltry when it is considered how large the DFID budget is (£5.7 billion in 2008–2009) and how much scope there is for a cash-rich agency such as DFID to use the French aid administration in silent partnerships.<sup>49</sup> That this has not happened comes down to an issue of trust. UK officials had initially expected the French to follow up on the UK’s funding of the Niger scheme by stumping up the cash for a DFID-run education project in Rwanda. But this fell through when the French ambassador was expelled from Kigali in November 2006. France was then invited to suggest an alternative country yet failed to do so. This turn of

<sup>44</sup> OECD, *Peer Review: The United Kingdom* (Paris: OECD, 2006).

<sup>45</sup> {<http://www.eubusiness.com/topics/social/millennium-development-eu/>} accessed on 23 June 2010.

<sup>46</sup> Personal communications, MFA, Paris (2008).

<sup>47</sup> OECD, *Peer Review: France*, p. 15.

<sup>48</sup> Personal communications, MFA and DFID officials (2009).

<sup>49</sup> DFID, *Annual Report and Resource Accounts 2008–09*, Volume I (London: DFID, 2009), p. 9.

events has created suspicion in the DFID that the French are seeking to take credit for UK aid monies, as well as a feeling that the French government does not deliver on its rhetoric. There is, equally, concern in France that the UK might seek to expose its failure to deliver on aid promises.<sup>50</sup>

*Promoting political reform: towards a common approach?*

Over the last decade or so, the UK and France have also taken hesitant steps towards closer cooperation on the promotion of democracy and human rights. The key forum for Anglo-French exchanges has been the EU, particularly through the work of the AWG, the CODEV and more recently the Africa-EU Panel on Democratic Governance and Human Rights, on which Britain and France are both represented. In line with the EU Common Position of 25 May 1998 on human rights, democratic principles, the rule of law and good governance, the British and French have cooperated on a number of African cases. In Kenya, for example, there was 'good, close cooperation' between Britain and France in the aftermath of the troubled elections of 27 December 2007. Standing in as the EU Presidency on behalf of Slovenia, which had no representation in Nairobi, the French were able to ensure that the UK channelled its response to the Kenyan crisis through the EU rather than adopting a more unilateral stance or collaborating solely with the US.<sup>51</sup> The UK and France have also liaised regularly on Zimbabwe, particularly since 2004 when London and Paris effectively struck a deal whereby France backs UK efforts on Zimbabwe, particularly within the EU, while the British support France on Côte d'Ivoire, particularly in the UNSC. This arrangement has made it easier for Britain to have EU-wide sanctions, which began in February 2002, rolled over annually. French support has been essential for several reasons. First, several EU member states have harboured reservations about the harshness of the position propounded by London.<sup>52</sup> Second, British influence over Mugabe has been virtually non-existent ever since UK ministers stepped up their rhetoric and allowed the Zimbabwean leader to portray the dispute to other Africans as 'a post-colonial struggle over land'.<sup>53</sup> Finally, UK leverage within the Commonwealth and Southern African Development Community (SADC) has been reduced by 'the reluctance of African elites to take a hard line against a [...] veteran of the struggle for independence'.<sup>54</sup>

Alongside policy coordination within the EU, there has also been Anglo-French cooperation at a programmatic level. The clearest example is a four-year silent partnership ('Media for Democracy and Good Governance') in the DRC (2007–2011) aimed at promoting political freedom via the media. The DFID has allocated £10 million to what is its largest media project in Africa, while France Coopération

<sup>50</sup> France promised, at the 2002 Monterrey Conference, to increase aid to 0.5 per cent of GNP in 2007 and 0.7 per cent by 2012. However, France did not meet its 2007 target and has postponed the 0.7 per cent commitment to 2015, see OECD, *Peer Review: France*, p. 39.

<sup>51</sup> Personal communications, FCO (2009) and MFA (2008).

<sup>52</sup> Personal communication, FCO (2009).

<sup>53</sup> Tom Porteous, 'British government policy in sub-Saharan Africa under New Labour', *International Affairs*, 81:2 (2005), p. 293.

<sup>54</sup> Porteous, 'British government', p. 293.

Internationale (FCI) – a state-funded ‘interest group’ created in 2002 to export French international development expertise – has carried out the project.<sup>55</sup>

While UK and French discourse on democracy promotion has been more closely aligned ever since the appointment of the ‘very human rights-oriented’ Bernard Kouchner as Foreign Minister, the fact remains that active collaboration on democracy and human rights has been patchy.<sup>56</sup> To illustrate, in 1999–2000, the UK was pushing for EU aid sanctions against Liberia, whose president, Charles Taylor, was supplying arms to Sierra Leonean rebels (the Revolutionary United Front) in their civil war against the democratically elected government of Tejan Kabbah. However, France – perhaps influenced by forestry interests in Liberia – ignored UK demands and only lent support when Taylor subsequently supported rebel forces in Côte d’Ivoire and began destabilising France’s wider sphere of influence in West Africa.<sup>57</sup> Subsequently, in February 2003, the limits of Anglo-French coordination on Zimbabwe were laid bare. France invited Mugabe to a Franco-African summit on the day European sanctions expired against this dictator. The UK, which had been lobbying for tougher measures, had to acquiesce in exchange for a promise of French support to prolong European sanctions after the summit. In February 2007, the French did not invite Mugabe to the Franco-African summit in Cannes, but the trade-off was, allegedly, that Tony Blair agreed not to block the Zimbabwean leader’s attendance at the May 2007 Africa-EU summit in Lisbon. This pledge was later honoured by Gordon Brown, thereby satisfying the demands of some African leaders that Mugabe should be invited and enabling the summit to go ahead. It was noticeable nonetheless that France was not one of the four European countries (Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark and Germany) to speak out publicly against the Zimbabwean regime at Lisbon.<sup>58</sup>

More recently, differences have arisen over the response to be taken to military or ‘constitutional’ coups in francophone countries such as Mauritania in 2008; Niger, Guinea, and Madagascar in 2009; and Niger again in 2010. While the UK has been openly critical of such insurgencies, the French have taken a more softly-softly approach. The case of Madagascar is particularly revealing. Here the UK adopted a robust stance, with Lord Malloch-Brown becoming the only European minister publicly to condemn the coup from the outset. Yet Britain had closed its embassy in 2005 and was thus at a disadvantage compared to the French who had retained their diplomatic presence there and ‘initially took an even softer line than the African Union (AU)’.<sup>59</sup>

The reasons for this relative lack of cooperation will be discussed more fully in our theoretical section. Here it should suffice to point to what Fareed Zakaria refers to as ‘systemic, domestic and other influences’ that have constrained closer coordination on democracy promotion.<sup>60</sup> At the ‘systemic’ level, bilateral cooperation between the UK and France within the EU has inevitably been limited by

<sup>55</sup> The initial figure was US \$8 million, see {<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications/DRC-countryplan08-10%5B1%5D.pdf>}; accessed on 12 February 2010.

<sup>56</sup> Personal communication, MFA official (2009).

<sup>57</sup> Personal communication, former UK official in New York (2009).

<sup>58</sup> *European Report* (11 December 2007).

<sup>59</sup> Personal communication, former UK Minister (2009).

<sup>60</sup> Fareed Zakaria, ‘Realism and Domestic Politics: A Review Essay’, *International Security*, 17:1 (1992), p. 198.

the need to take into account the views of 25 other countries plus the European Commission. Significantly too, divergent interests have further restricted the scope for a better coordinated Anglo-French approach, as Britain has tended to adopt a less forthright stance on political freedom towards allies in the War on Terror (for example, Ethiopia) and towards countries in its 'sphere of influence' (for example, Rwanda), while France has typically adopted a softly-softly approach towards its former colonies, notably in West Africa.<sup>61</sup>

Turning to 'domestic influences', coordination has been further hampered by internal wrangling within the UK and French systems. In Britain, the main problem has been competition between the DFID and FCO which has led to parallel African policies, allegations by the DFID that the FCO is prioritising strategic and commercial interests over developmental needs, and accusations by the FCO that the DFID gives priority to economic development concerns over questions of political freedom.<sup>62</sup> In France, there have also been divisions, with the Elysée typically being less forthright on human rights than the Foreign Ministry. This distinction was much less clear when Bruno Joubert was second-in-command in the Elysée Africa service and when the French 'Development Minister' Jean-Marie Bockel was leading the charge on human rights. However, the moving of André Parant into Joubert's role and the sacking of Bockel and his replacement with Alain Joyandet, all seemingly pointed to a downgrading of human rights concerns.<sup>63</sup> This has in turn led UK policymaking elites to question whether they are only dealing with the more enlightened parts of the French political establishment, whilst other French actors are still acting in ways that are underhand and reminiscent of '*la Françafrique*'.<sup>64</sup>

As regards 'other influences', these include ideational factors, not least the fact that British and French policymaking elites have a different understanding of key concepts such as human rights and governance. To illustrate, the British emphasise civil and political liberties, with particular reference to women's rights, whereas the French stress the economic and social rights of all citizens, alongside civil and political liberties. Furthermore, the UK sees governance in economic and technical terms as a way of ensuring a streamlined central state that is economically well managed, whereas the French prefer to prefix governance with the label 'democratic' and to view this concept in political terms as a means of promoting robust local and central state structures that are legitimate and that provide an effective legal framework (an *État de droit*).

### *Co-constructing peace and security?*

While there has been little Anglo-French collaboration on 'soft' policy issues, such as poverty reduction and democracy promotion, there has been greater

<sup>61</sup> See Richard Youngs, *Is European Democracy Promotion on the Wane?*, CEPS Working Document No. 292 (2008).

<sup>62</sup> Porteous, 'British government', p. 286.

<sup>63</sup> Personal communication, MFA, Paris (2009). Bockel's dismissal came about after his outspoken stance on human rights provoked protests by Omar Bongo, the former President of oil-rich Gabon.

<sup>64</sup> The Angolagate arms-for-oil scandal which came to court in 2008 is an example of this. See also, 'Entre Paris et Dakar', *Le Monde* (12 June 2010).

coordination on 'hard' security questions. There have been two main forms of security collaboration: ESDP military missions and the training of African peacekeepers.<sup>65</sup>

To begin with *ESDP missions*, it is worth remembering that the UK and France have been instrumental in establishing the institutional framework within which European peacekeeping operations have been launched. Thus, the UK and France were the key players in the establishment of the PSC, the EU Military Committee (the supreme military body within the European Council) and the European rapid reaction force (initially proposed at the Saint-Malo summit).<sup>66</sup>

Equally, Britain and France have collaborated in actual ESDP missions in Africa. They cooperated actively on Operation Artemis (DRC, June–September 2003), which aimed to stabilise the humanitarian situation in Bunia (eastern DRC) following the withdrawal of Ugandan forces. This was the first 'autonomous' EU military operation (that is, without recourse to NATO assets) and the first ESDP operation outside Europe. The UK sent 100 engineers, who played a key role, resurfacing the runway at Bunia and thereby enabling supplies to be flown in. Britain also persuaded a reluctant Ugandan government to offer airport facilities at Entebbe.<sup>67</sup> France was the 'framework nation', providing the operational headquarters and the majority – 90 per cent – of the 1400-strong force for this operation.

Anglo-French cooperation was less obvious in the second mission, EUFOR DRC, July–November 2006, which aimed to support the UN in supervising the 2006 Congolese elections. In this case, the French provided, together with Germany the largest number of troops and were driven by a need to demonstrate their European credentials following the French rejection of the EU Constitutional Treaty. The British, by contrast, did not send combat troops, partly due to concerns about military overstretch and partly because they were already providing the largest bilateral contribution (50 million euros) to the cost of the elections.

The third mission, EUFOR Chad/Central African Republic (CAR), January 2008–March 2009, was designed to 'help create the security conditions necessary for reconstruction' in Chad and the CAR before handing over to a UN force, MINURCAT II, which it did in March 2009. France was the largest contributor (2500 out of 3700 troops), and the operational HQ was in Paris, although the force commander was Irish. Initially, Britain's Ministry of Defence (MOD) refused to participate and blocked European funding, suspecting France of using the ESDP/UN to shore up its influence in Chad and the CAR. Britain also believed that 'in straitened budgetary circumstances, African peacekeeping operations needed to be prioritised', and that the situation in Chad/CAR constituted a lower priority than crises in the DRC and Somalia.<sup>68</sup>

In the end, however, the UK co-sponsored the UN Resolution (1778) authorising the mission. London also sent two staff officers to the operational HQ

<sup>65</sup> For further details of UK-French security cooperation, see Tony Chafer and Gordon D. Cumming, 'Beyond Fashoda: Anglo-French Security Cooperation in Africa since Saint-Malo', *International Affairs* 86:5 (2010), pp. 1129–47.

<sup>66</sup> Full agreement was only reached on this force, with German support, in 2001.

<sup>67</sup> Niagalé Bagayoko, 'Les politiques européennes de prévention', *Les Champs de Mars*, second semester (2004), p. 103.

<sup>68</sup> Personal communication, former UK Minister (2009).

in Paris and two to the field HQ in Chad, as well as later unblocking the money for the operation. There were various reasons for this policy reversal, most of which were interest-driven, although policymakers were also conscious that the killings in Darfur were being widely reported in the UK media and that British NGOs were pressing for 'humanitarian intervention'. The first reason was that the US supported the operation. The second was that the French President is said to have applied pressure, raising the issue during a phone call to the then UK Prime Minister, Gordon Brown.<sup>69</sup> The third was that the UK had managed to restrict the mandate of the mission.

The fourth mission was EU NAVFOR Operation Atalanta, which began in December 2008 and which seeks to prevent piracy off the Somali coast. With 1200 personnel and 16 ships, Atalanta is the first ESDP naval operation and the first mission to be led by the UK, with Northwood as Command HQ. Britain has, however, only committed one destroyer and has continued to believe that piracy 'is really a symptom of a wider problem on the mainland'.<sup>70</sup> Britain appears to have become involved, partly due to pressure on the MOD from the UK's diplomatic mission in Brussels, anxious that Britain had not participated militarily in any previous operation; and partly because of private sector lobbying for UK engagement: London is a major international hub for commercial shipping and hosts the International Maritime Organisation.

It follows that there has been meaningful Anglo-French cooperation on ESDP missions. This has been facilitated by the fact that the European Council, rather than the Commission, is increasingly playing the lead role in EU African policy, as it is the Council, often pressed by France and with UK support or acquiescence, that is tasked with planning and conducting missions. That said, collaboration did not begin in earnest until 2003. This should be clear from the fact that the UK's operation in Sierra Leone in 2000 and France's initial intervention in Côte d'Ivoire in 2002 were both largely unilateral,<sup>71</sup> despite coming after Saint-Malo and being only partly driven by interests.<sup>72</sup> In fact, even after Operation Artemis in 2003, Anglo-French collaboration has often continued to be more about the coincidence of agendas than any genuine need to work together on African crises. There have, moreover, still been divergences, with the UK tending to look first to work with the UN on peacekeeping operations in Africa and France looking in the first instance to the EU.<sup>73</sup> There have, equally, been instances where neither Britain nor France has deemed it to be in their interests to mobilise a European force. This was the case in the DRC in late 2008, when Kouchner's enthusiasm for intervention was curbed by the Elysée and by the refusal of both Britain and Germany to

<sup>69</sup> Personal communication, UK official (December 2009).

<sup>70</sup> Personal communication, FCO official (2009).

<sup>71</sup> France nonetheless offered diplomatic support to the British intervention in Sierra Leone. The UK also backed France's request for UN peacekeepers in Côte d'Ivoire, see Sébastien Loisel, 'Entente cordiale ou moteur européen?', *Le Champs de Mars*, first semester (2004), p. 52.

<sup>72</sup> The UK's intervention in Sierra Leone in 2000, initially to shore up a UN peacekeeping mission and then to stabilise the elected regime, is hailed by Tim Dunne as an operation to uphold 'the humanitarian values embodied in the UN Charter', see "'When the Shooting Starts": Atlanticism in British Security Strategy', *International Affairs*, 80:5 (2004), p. 906. France's large-scale intervention in Côte d'Ivoire after the failed 2002 coup is better understood in terms of France's realpolitik concerns to shore up a country that is pivotal to its African sphere of influence, see Christine Gray, 'Peacekeeping and enforcement action in Africa', *Review of International Studies*, 31 (2005), p. 216.

<sup>73</sup> J. H. Matlary, *EU Security Dynamics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 101–2.



commit battlegroups. Here, the UK was already heavily committed to military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq and, in neo-classical realist terms, saw 'balancing' with the US and supporting US/NATO-led missions as a more effective way to enhance Britain's relative power within the international system. France for its part was reluctant to take the lead on this very risky and potentially costly European mission.

Turning to the issue of *training African peacekeepers*, here too there has been increased Anglo-French cooperation. By the late 1990s, the UK, France and, indeed, the US, working within the P3, had recognised the need to harmonise their capacity-building programmes in Africa. In this context, they established in West Africa a regional network of training centres that would reduce duplication. Thus, the focus of the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre in Accra, for which the UK provided substantial start-up funding, is on operational level training; the Ecole de Maintien de la Paix in Bamako undertakes tactical-level training (the UK is represented on the School board); and the National Defence College in Abuja undertakes strategic-level training. Significantly too, the UK and France have cooperated on military training exercises in Tanzania (2001) as well as in Ghana and Benin (2004).

At the same time, the UK and France have also provided support to regional and subregional organisations, such as the AU and the Economic Community of West African states (ECOWAS). They have, for example, provided support for AU missions in Sudan and elsewhere, with funding from the Africa Peace Facility (a mechanism financed by the European Development Fund (EDF) and established with strong UK and French support in 2004). They have also backed AU efforts to create its own institutional framework, the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). While their support has hitherto been relatively uncoordinated, the creation of the EU Special Representative's Office (EUSR) in Addis Ababa is intended to ensure closer and more coherent EU liaison with the AU. The establishment of EURORECAMP in Paris in 2008 – with France as the 'framework nation', a French general as its director and a British officer as its deputy director – is also expected to ensure a better coordinated EU approach to training AU peacekeepers.

Ultimately, however, there have been limits to Anglo-French coordination on training, as the UK and France have each sought to enhance their own influence by channelling support unilaterally to African recipient states. In this context, it is worth noting for example that the creation of the EUSR office has not so far led to any increase in formal Anglo-French cooperation in Addis, despite the fact that, the 2007 Africa-EU Strategic Partnership accorded priority to its chapter on peace and security (which was largely written by Britain and France) and to the need to develop African regional peacekeeping organisations. Furthermore, while the UK did replace its initial African training programme with a joined-up mechanism, known as the Africa Conflict Prevention Pool (ACPP) – where the FCO, DFID and MOD pooled their conflict prevention budgets – this scheme has continued to function unilaterally and without linking up with other powers on conflict management. Similarly, France has carried on doing a great deal of training on its own via its fourteen regional military training schools, all of which are based in francophone countries and use French as the language of instruction. With pre-positioned forces, totalling some 9000 personnel, in Dakar, Libreville, Djibouti

and La Réunion, France has also been more inclined than Britain to undertake capacity-building initiatives on its own. To illustrate, the UK initially took the lead in developing the East African brigade (EASBRIG) of the African Standby Force, the operational arm of the APSA. However, this lead was not acknowledged by the French who, in 2007, provided a secure LAN for EASBRIG without even discussing it with the British.<sup>74</sup>

### A neo-classical realist perspective

How then is this important yet ultimately limited evolution in UK-French relations in Africa to be understood in terms of neo-classical realism? According to Gideon Rose:

Neoclassical realism argues that the scope and ambition of a country's foreign policy is driven first and foremost by the country's relative material power. Yet [...] the impact of power capabilities [...] is indirect [...] because systemic pressures must be translated through intervening unit-level variables, such as decision-makers' perceptions and state structure.<sup>75</sup>

Clearly neo-classical realist theorists draw on the neo-realist assumption that states are driven by systemic imperatives, notably a concern over their relative power within the international system. But they also go beyond neo-realism with its focus on recurrent patterns of outcomes of state interactions and on the determinative structure of the international system. They assume, rather, that states, or more specifically policymaking elites within states, have some capacity for choice. Equally, they assert that foreign policy analysis should include a wide range of unit-level variables that act as an 'opaque filter' between systemic imperatives and the actual implementation of foreign policy.<sup>76</sup> Space constraints do not allow for a detailed consideration of this plethora of intervening variables.<sup>77</sup> The focus here is instead on the above-mentioned categories identified by Gideon Rose, namely 'decision-makers' perceptions', in particular of the national interest; and 'state structures', which are taken here to refer both to institutional constraints and to the extractive capacity of the British and French domestic polities.

The role of these second-order unit-level variables in constraining closer UK-French cooperation south of the Sahara will be discussed later. For now, it is important to focus on the drivers behind collaboration, particularly the core systemic imperative of enhancing the state's relative power within the international order. Few would question that France's African policy has been primarily driven by a quest to enhance its ranking in the international hierarchy. On the face of it, this key neo-classical realist assumption might appear to be at odds with claims by

<sup>74</sup> Personal communication, FCO official (2009).

<sup>75</sup> Rose, 'Neoclassical realism', p. 146.

<sup>76</sup> Jennifer Sterling-Folker, 'Realist Environment, Liberal Process, and Domestic-Level Variables', *International Studies Quarterly*, 41:1 (1997), p. 19.

<sup>77</sup> For a discussion of these intervening variables, see Taliaferro et al., 'Neoclassical Realism', pp. 1–41. As noted earlier, Zakaria ('Realism and Domestic Politics', p. 198) includes 'domestic and other influences'. Kitchen ('Systemic Pressures', p. 118) identifies 'domestic politics, state power and processes, leaders' perceptions and the impact of ideas', while Sterling-Folker ('Realist Environment', pp. 19–20) highlights the 'identities, interests and behaviors' of bureaucrats.

recent UK governments (1997–2010) to be pursuing a value-driven and ethically aware approach towards the world's poorest continent. In reality, however, neo-classical realism does take account of this 'idealism' and sees it as a useful means of mobilising public support behind a policy (aid rises in the midst of global recession) that might not seem intrinsically appealing; a way of garnering votes from a younger and more engaged public; and a mechanism for demonstrating the capacity of the British state to get things done in Africa.<sup>78</sup>

### *Drivers behind enhanced cooperation*

So what drivers were pushing the UK and France to cooperate on Africa in the late 1990s? In Britain's case, the election of a reformist Labour government and its creation of the DFID in 1997 signalled a new readiness to engage with Africa. British policymakers soon realised, however, that they could only help to stabilise the continent and make progress on the MDGs if they became more active in francophone Africa and engaged more effectively with France, as the only other European power with the ability and will to intervene south of the Sahara. British politicians also came to realise that Africa, particularly on security matters, represented a propitious domain for cooperation with the French and a possible stepping stone towards achieving Tony Blair's promise to make Britain 'a leading partner in Europe', despite its failure to join the euro.<sup>79</sup>

At the same time, France, under the modernising socialist government of Lionel Jospin (1997–2002), was anxious to scale down its presence, at least in some francophone African countries, and keen to realign its diplomatic and military efforts to its key commercial interests, which were increasingly in anglophone African countries, such as South Africa and Nigeria (its largest trading partners). After the debacle of its involvement in Rwanda, France was also anxious to shake off its image as 'gendarme of Africa', reduce its military presence and ensure that its future operations took place within a UN or EU framework.

The UK and France also had a number of common interests that were pushing them to cooperate. As middle-sized powers, they had become increasingly aware of their inability to cope with the scale of Africa's crises and were facing growing challenges to their privileged positions within the UNSC, IMF and the World Bank. By working together, they could secure a number of mutual benefits. They could, for example, garner a majority of the votes on the Security Council simply by drawing on 'a set of contacts and influences globally which were very complementary'.<sup>80</sup> Second, by cooperating within the EU, the UK and France could swing votes within the PCS and the AWG, as well as exerting greater control over the spending priorities of the Africa Peace Facility. Third, by presenting a united front, Britain and France could restrict the capacity of African regimes to

<sup>78</sup> Julia Gallagher, 'Healing The Scar?', *African Affairs*, 108:432 (2009), pp. 435–51.

<sup>79</sup> Speech by Tony Blair, Lord Mayor's Banquet (1 November 1997). Blair also stressed, however, that he still saw Britain as a global player given its position in the UNSC, Commonwealth and G8.

<sup>80</sup> Personal communication, former UK official, New York (2008). The threat to their P5 status is longstanding. More recently, China pressed at the G20 (Pittsburgh) to have UK and French voting rights on the IMF Board reduced, see *Lettre du Continent*, no. 1429 (23 October 2009). Unlike the UK, France's status is also at risk within the World Bank.

play them off against each other; avoid tripping each other up in their attempts to resolve crises in former colonies such as Zimbabwe and Côte d'Ivoire; and cut down on reporting. According to a UK official, formerly in the UK mission in New York, failure to agree with the French leads to a requirement to write to London to explain. This lowering of transaction costs is particularly important in the case of the FCO, which has suffered over recent years from the closure of a number of African embassies, the loss of 20 per cent of its staff working on Africa and the fact that all desk officers in London now deal with several African countries.<sup>81</sup> It is also useful for the French administration, which lost African expertise when the Development Ministry was absorbed by the MFA (1999) and when the Development Directorate was subsequently merged into a Directorate for Global Affairs (2009). Fourth, by joining forces, Paris and London can – significantly in an age of satellite media broadcasting – better respond to threats arising from Africa, whether from illegal immigration, terrorism, piracy, AIDS, drugs trafficking, money laundering or the risk of genocide in fragile states. Finally and most importantly, by pooling their resources, the UK and France can seek to enhance their relative power and projective capacity as well as compensating for the fact that they have become a smaller part of African foreign relations, not least since the rise over the last decade of dynamic new suitors, such as China, India, Japan and the Middle East countries. According to a former UK Minister: 'If we use our history cleverly, one plus one equals three. But that is still in a world where you need ten to score on a lot of problems.'<sup>82</sup>

The comparative advantages of closer Anglo-French cooperation south of the Sahara have come to the fore particularly at moments of crisis. Thus, after the *Al-Qaeda* attacks of 11 September 2001, the UK and France placed increased emphasis on security in EU African policy and on the need for a more proactive Anglo-French stance on Africa, lest it become a breeding ground for terrorism. Subsequently, at the time of the 2003 Iraq War, UK and French leaders and officials were keen to find common ground in Africa as a way of overcoming the deep divisions caused by this conflict. French President Chirac's comment, at the February 2003 Franco-British summit, that there was 'complete consensus' on Africa should be viewed in this light.<sup>83</sup> More recently still, in the context of the current global financial crisis, the benefits of closer collaboration and the prospect of financial savings that this offers have not been lost on British and French policymakers, as will be demonstrated in our conclusion.

### *Constraints on cooperation*

It follows from the above that systemic imperatives, primarily the quest to improve their ranking in the international hierarchy, appear to have been pushing the UK and France to work together towards common goals south of the Sahara. Yet these systemic pressures have not always translated into actual collaboration, especially

<sup>81</sup> *The Observer* (9 January 2005).

<sup>82</sup> Personal communication, former UK Minister (2009).

<sup>83</sup> Loisel, 'Entente', p. 56 and {[www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/pdf5/beu\\_ukfr\\_nov03\\_defence](http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/pdf5/beu_ukfr_nov03_defence)} accessed on 5 December 2009.

outside the security field. The explanation would appear to lie in the fact that British and French leaders have had to take account of unit-level variables, not least the perception by parts of the 'foreign policy executive' in both countries of divergent national interests; institutional constraints; and the limited capacity of the UK and French states to act.

To begin with *decision-makers' perceptions*, it is clear that there is no 'elite consensus' in either the UK or France on the necessity of prioritising cooperation in Africa.<sup>84</sup> One of the most important Anglo-French divergences has been over ESDP missions in Africa and their implications for NATO. The UK for its part views ESDP operations as complementary to NATO and consistent with the maintenance of strong transatlantic security links, whereas policymaking elites in France have traditionally seen such missions ultimately as a way of working towards an autonomous European security identity (beyond even 'Berlin Plus'). These entrenched views have been at least partly challenged by President Sarkozy's decision in March 2009 to reintegrate France into NATO's high command and by the emergence of a 'spatial differentiation' between ESDP and NATO missions, whereby Europe operates in sub-Saharan Africa and NATO is active in more geo-strategically important zones.<sup>85</sup>

A second divergence lies in the different relative importance that policymaking elites in London and Paris attach to Africa, which, in turn, affects their readiness to collaborate on African policy. For France, Africa plays a crucial role in enhancing its rank in the international pecking order, while for the UK, Africa is much more centrally a development issue. Alongside these core differences, there have also been instances where UK and French policymakers have simply decided to go it alone and pose as the sole champion of Africa's interests. In this context, the Blair government launched the publication of the Commission for Africa report on Red Nose Day (a nationwide UK-specific event), then sought to impose its recommendations on the G8 at Gleneagles in 2005.<sup>86</sup> In a similar vein, the French President announced in January 2009 the 'Sarkozy Plan', a unilateral initiative aimed at unlocking the dispute between Rwanda and the DRC over resources and border security. On other occasions, policymaking elites have given priority to preserving British or French interests in a specific African country, particularly former colonies, where the African country concerned is a major source of trading opportunities (for example, South Africa), oil (for example, Nigeria), or minerals, such as uranium (for example, Niger). This trend towards shoring up interests is particularly clear across francophone Africa where France feels, according to Hubert Védrine, that there is 'a need to preserve French influence'<sup>87</sup> and where there is anxiety that Britain's new interest in Africa has come at a time when France is said by some commentators to have 'lost Africa'.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>84</sup> 'Elite consensus' is one of four intervening variables said to affect the capacity of elites to extract the societal resources needed to execute their preferred foreign policy, see Randall L. Schweller, 'Unanswered Threats: A Neoclassical Realist Theory of Underbalancing', *International Security*, 29:2 (2004), pp. 159–201.

<sup>85</sup> Tom Dyson, 'Convergence and Divergence in Post-Cold War British, French, and German Military Reforms', *Security Studies*, 17:4 (2008), pp. 725–74.

<sup>86</sup> Vines and Cargill, 'Le monde', p. 135.

<sup>87</sup> Personal communication, Paris (2009).

<sup>88</sup> See Antoine Glaser and Stephen Smith, *Comment la France a perdu l'Afrique* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 2005).

Alongside divergent interests, there have been *institutional constraints* (or, more specifically, different bureaucratic set-ups, ‘national policy styles’ and institutional approaches) on closer Anglo-French cooperation. There is, for example, no exact counterpart of a Foreign Office Minister for Africa in France, and there is a greater tendency for the MFA to be left out of the loop by the Elysée than there is for the FCO to be excluded, at least on African policy, by Downing Street. Furthermore, the MOD in Britain is more centralised and has greater input into defence policy than the Defence Ministry in France which often plays second fiddle to the President’s and Prime Minister’s offices. The greatest problem is for the DFID which, with a cabinet seat and a massive aid budget, does not have any clear counterpart in France. Indeed, there is no longer a French Development Ministry or even a Development Directorate within the MFA, and the AFD feels closer to the German aid agencies, GTZ and KfW, than to the DFID.<sup>89</sup>

These problems have been exacerbated by different ‘national policy styles’. Thus, policymaking elites within the Foreign Office, with its deliberate approach to decision-making, were anxious not to be dragged into unplanned initiatives proposed by France’s spontaneous and energetic ex-Foreign Minister, Bernard Kouchner.<sup>90</sup> Similarly the French ‘foreign policy executive’ has been keen not to be sucked into the quantitative, announcement-driven approach used by Downing Street and DFID over recent years, lest it should be locked into commitments that it cannot afford. Equally, there have been, as discussed earlier, issues of trust, with the UK in particular remaining sceptical about France’s readiness to deliver on its rhetorical promises and break with neo-colonial practices. Bearing in mind that the UK and France have both promised to set aside past rivalries and work together, the fact that one state is perceived as not keeping its side of the bargain might suggest that it is trying to increase its ranking in the international hierarchy at the expense of, rather than in conjunction with, the other state.

There have, moreover, been differences in institutional approaches, particularly on the development front. According to a senior DFID official:

One [problem] is that we are in different countries and a lot of what we do is at country level. So we just don’t bump into each other that much. And DFID has a much tighter focus: France have 55 focus countries; we have about 20. Where we have our big offices, our countries are mainly anglophone, except Rwanda, DRC and Mozambique. We aren’t involved directly in francophone countries. They are involved in anglophone countries, though usually have small [aid] programmes (as in Zambia).<sup>91</sup>

On top of the above, the UK and France tend to prioritise different sectors. Thus, Britain’s emphasis on primary education and budgetary aid are not matched in France, which attaches greater importance to tertiary education and prefers more visible project work.<sup>92</sup> In addition, France’s focus on infrastructure and cultural promotion finds little or no echo in the DFID. Furthermore, although it has a large bilateral aid programme, the DFID likes to think of itself as having a multilateralist outlook and a strong strategic focus, which facilitates cooperation

<sup>89</sup> Personal communications, AFD, Paris (2009).

<sup>90</sup> Personal communication, former UK Minister (2009).

<sup>91</sup> Personal communication, London (2009).

<sup>92</sup> To illustrate, in 2006, France allocated 151 million US dollars to basic schooling compared to 1.2 billion dollars for tertiary education, OECD, *Peer Review: France*, p. 15.

with the 'like-minded countries'. By contrast, the French aid administration lacks strategic direction and is more oriented towards bilateral assistance.

Turning to the final constraint on cooperation, *extractive capacity*, this refers to the ability of states, or rather of policy-making elites, to mobilise, often in consultation with societal and other domestic actors, the resources required to execute foreign policy. In the UK, these elites seem, since 1997, to have had little difficulty in securing high levels of aid, including three-year budget allocations from the Treasury, given strong public, cross-party and NGO support for the state's development and humanitarian assistance efforts. This does not, however, usually translate into cooperation with the French since UK government departments must meet Public Service Agreement targets and must be satisfied that assistance will be delivered effectively by partners such as France. This is by no means guaranteed, since despite recent improvements in the effectiveness of French aid through the introduction of results-based management tools and the reinforcement of evaluation units, France is simply not as focused on economic development matters as the UK and does not, in practice, take its commitments to the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness and donor harmonisation anywhere near as seriously as the DFID. This is clearly a constraint on collaboration, as is the fact that the French government has enormous difficulty freeing up enough bilateral aid to be a credible partner on development. The French state's extractive capacity has clearly been limited by membership of the 1997 European Stability Pact, by internal spending cuts agreed under the 2001 Loi organique relative aux Lois de Finances and by commitments to the EDF.

Conversely, UK policymakers find it much harder than their French counterparts to mobilise troops for ESDP missions. There are several reasons for this. First, Britain's small professional army, with its heavy commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan, is more overstretched than the French armed forces. Second, the UK government has to seek parliamentary approval for such missions, and the Conservative Party in particular is generally sceptical about autonomous ESDP operations that might undermine NATO. The situation is different in France where the French President finds it comparatively easy to approve military operations, particularly ESDP missions, not least since France has prepositioned forces in Africa and its parliament and civil society have little say in such decisions.

### **Conclusion: less rivalry but still no partnership**

This study has shown how Britain and France have increased, to a significant but ultimately limited extent, their collaboration on Africa since Saint-Malo. It has demonstrated how formal and informal ties have developed between politicians and parts of the 'foreign policy executive' in each country and how policy cooperation has been enhanced, particularly on security issues, though less so on poverty reduction and democracy promotion.

The UK and France have developed more constructive ties and have wherever possible sought to 'deconflictualise' – an approach which can often be achieved without actual joint working. But Britain and France cannot lay claim to a new partnership on Africa. Their relationship falls well short of the kind of instinctive

rapport enjoyed by the UK and US. It is, moreover, less firmly rooted and less institutionalised than the Franco-German tandem. Significantly too, it is simply not underpinned by the same level of security interests as the ‘special relationship’ or the same key economic considerations as the Franco-German alliance.

It follows that the UK-French connection is a long way from the ‘entente formidable’ or even the ‘entente amicale’ that Gordon Brown and Nicolas Sarkozy, respectively, hailed in March 2008.<sup>93</sup> It is instead a pragmatic arrangement whereby, according to one FCO official, ‘We cooperate with the French on Africa where it is useful to do so. It is a loose framework and one of many we work in.’ The relationship is said to be ‘uneven, often very personality-driven and event – and political interest-driven’, with cooperation being most likely on high profile issues and major crises, particularly in parts of Africa where the UK and France have few interests or historical ties.

Needless to say, the patchy and complex nature of the Anglo-French relationship helped to inform the choice of theoretical framework for this study, namely neo-classical realism, whose fusion of systemic pressures with subordinate unit-level variables offers ‘a richer portrait of foreign policy-making’.<sup>94</sup> It would appear, from a neo-classical realist perspective, that elements within the UK and French foreign policy executives have recognised that by working together in Africa, Britain and France can better pursue common interests and increase their relative power within the international system. However, systemic pressures for closer cooperation have not translated automatically into joint action, given that UK and French efforts in pursuit of enhanced relative power are filtered through, and often constrained by, the perceptions of policymaking elites, institutional structures and the domestic politics of the two states.

The future of Anglo-French relations in Africa is hard to predict. Clearly the current governments in both countries are facing tight fiscal and financial constraints, which may push them towards increased burden-sharing in certain situations. Moreover, the creation of the European External Action Service will increase pressure for policy coordination as its role increases and member states seek to cut the costs of individual diplomatic missions.

These issues aside, and notwithstanding the announcement of enhanced Anglo-French cooperation in the defence field in November 2010,<sup>95</sup> there are a number of reasons for thinking that the UK and France may not develop significantly closer relations on Africa. First, the prospects of any enhanced collaboration are reduced by the fact the UK does not view Africa as significant in geopolitical terms, while France’s policymaking elites remain divided on the strategic importance attached to Africa. In this context, it is worth recalling that Saint-Malo was always less about the strategic value or, for that matter, the needs of Africa *per se* and more about bringing the UK and France closer, helping them to punch at least in line with their combined weight in the international arena and, at the same time, enabling them to exert more decisive influence over European African policy. Second, the decision to collaborate on Africa was ultimately taken

<sup>93</sup> *Federal News Service* (27 March 2008).

<sup>94</sup> Norrin Ripsman, ‘Neoclassical realism and domestic interest groups’, in Taliaferro et al., *Neoclassical Realism*, p. 192.

<sup>95</sup> {<http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/speeches-and-transcripts/2010/11/uk-france-summit-press-conference-56551>} accessed on 15 November 2011.



by default and in the absence of other credible alternative partners. Thus Britain's preferred ally in most foreign policy situations, the US, was too 'unpredictable' on Africa and too uninterested in its developmental needs.<sup>96</sup> Similarly, France's ideal partner, Germany, was too reluctant to intervene militarily and too quick to block funding for European initiatives south of the Sahara. Third, the recently elected UK Conservative-led government is unlikely, given that party's anti-European credentials and its longstanding Atlanticist tendencies, to be attracted to a strong partnership with France on African issues particularly, if it is seen as likely to mean an increase in the number of autonomous ESDP missions and the possibility of a permanent European HQ to run such operations.<sup>97</sup> If, as a result, the Anglo-French motor behind Europe's African policy should run out of steam, the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership, in which the UK and France are key players, could become more about words than deeds, as other EU powers that are not intrinsically interested in Africa seek to direct Europe's focus more towards the east and the south, particularly the European Neighbourhood. In such a scenario, both the UK and France would almost certainly lose out in Africa, in the face of unrelenting competition from China and other G20 states.

<sup>96</sup> Porteous 'British government', p. 293.

<sup>97</sup> The Conservative Party was said by Bernard Kouchner to be ready to collaborate bilaterally with the French but less inclined to cooperate within a European framework, *Agence France-Presse* (7 April 2010).