

POSITION PAPER

MALI



" Our voice will express the wisdom, realism and dignity of our people, it will not be at the service of the West or the East, it will be at the service of justice and truth for the triumph of peace and friendship among peoples." This is how the father of Mali's independence, Modibo KEITA, expressed himself in September 1961 at the Belgrade conference which saw the birth of the Non-Aligned Movement. Faced with the geopolitical upheavals caused by the war in Ukraine, the authorities of the Malian transition have decided to follow the logic of non-alignment advocated 62 years ago by President Modibo KEITA, by abstaining in the vote on the UN resolution condemning the Russian intervention in Ukraine. This position is quite logical when we take into account the rather complex context in which Mali currently finds itself.

Indeed, Mali seems to have adopted a non-aligned, neutral position in relation to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. All this is evidenced by Mali's abstention in the vote on the UN resolution condemning the Russian intervention in Ukraine. By choosing not to choose, Mali, far from supporting the war, intends to preserve a depolarized foreign policy, interacting on poles of multiple power, whether Western, Russian or even Chinese. Anything suggested by the Malian Minister of Defense since September 2021 in these terms, reported by AFP, "Mali now intends to diversify its relations to ensure the security of the country."

Apart from the history of Mali, several things can justify this state of affairs. This is due both to the extreme dependence of Mali and the African Continent in general on the external environment, the fragility of bilateral relations – like those of Mali and France – and the instability of the international system.

Thus, in response to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany who asked Mali to break off its relations with Russia, his counterpart Abdoulaye DIOP replied: "We must not confuse things. Mali is not involved in what is happening in Ukraine, but I think that we should not mix up too much: the situation in Mali is the situation in Mali and we hope that each Mali partner will also respect Mali's choices". This choice is in particular that of neutrality.

The priority of Mali's transition authorities is not to take part in a strategic positioning conflict. Their priority is to defeat terrorism in order to regain the territorial integrity of Mali and to move towards deep reforms for the establishment of strong institutions capable of organizing free, credible and transparent elections. Mali therefore did not wish to remain in a logic of subordination forcing it to choose one power over another.

In fine, we must recognize that in the face of the geopolitical upheavals caused by the war in Ukraine, Mali cannot remain in a subordination logic that forces it to choose one power over another. Mali must contribute to the emergence of an African foreign policy.

The stakes are high and are first of all about security. A real sovereignty policy on security and defence must be built at the national and African level. At the African level, this requires a reassessment of existing tools at the levels of the African Union (African Architecture for Peace and Security) and the Regional Economic Communities.