

Security & Insecurity in North Africa

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The article analyses the North African security situation over the last 15 or so years, but especially since the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington, which provided the pre-emptive basis for the launch of Washington's global 'War on Terror'. The article explains how and why the US, in collaboration with its lead ally in the region, Algeria, and with the cognisance of France and other European powers, duplicitously fabricated a new front in the 'war on terror' across the Sahara and Sahel, bringing an entirely new dimension to the nature and meaning of 'terrorism' in North Africa. Far from furthering political stability, security and democracy, as the Bush administration has proclaimed, Washington's attempt to establish itself as the elite power in the region has taken North Africa and most of the Sahel into a dangerous spiral of increased authoritarianism and repression, increased regional instability and insecurity, increased popular resentment of both Washington and the regimes of the region and the increased threat of militant extremism. The article shows how the US has not been able to get its own way willy-nilly in the region, but has instead found itself running up against a whole raft of pressures and conflicts, many of its own making, which reflect both existing and new forms of political opposition and organisation. In focusing on labour and resource issues, especially those connected with oil and gas production, the article highlights the links between abundant oil, rents and the aggrandizement of the authoritarian state at the expense of autonomous civil society. The article concludes by suggesting that the US is unable to maintain its power and position in North Africa as a result of what is turning into a classic case of imperial over-reach.

'Security' is an essentially contested concept,¹ which defies easy definition and analysis.² Indeed, much of the debate about security revolves around two critical questions; namely, whose security and security from whom or what?³

The more traditional 'realist' approach to 'security studies' focused primarily on the security of the 'State', with the main threats to it coming from other states. While realism or neo-realism is still the dominant theoretical approach to international or global security studies, 'security studies' are becoming increasingly less state-centric, directing their attention both 'upwards' and 'downwards' from the national level. At the international level, and especially in the wake of the 11 September 2001 (9/11) attacks on New York and Washington, security studies are focusing increasingly on global issues such as terrorism and organised crime. Other system issues, such as climatic change and pandemics are also rising higher on agenda. At the other end of the scale, more attention is being focused on social elements below the level of the State, such as nations, communities and increasingly the individual.

In this article, I look at North Africa's security at all three of these levels – global, national and individual – over a period of time. The time-span is a little arbitrary, but roughly from the late 1980s and early 1990s to the present. The reason for taking this specific period is that its beginning, albeit over the span of a few years, marks the beginning of the closure of much of North Africa and the Sahel to the outside world and a clear deterioration in the overall level of security throughout much of the region. In Algeria, civil disturbances which began in 1988 led ultimately to the emergence of the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) as the country's dominant political party and the military's annulment of the second and final round of the elections in January 1992 that would have brought to power the first ever democratically elected Islamist government. This in turn led to the onset of several years of prolonged violence between what was generally regarded as an array of armed Islamic groups, now referred to as 'terrorists', and the country's security forces.

In Libya, the early 1990s saw the effective isolation of the country from the rest of the world as both the UN and EU added their own sanctions to those of the USA. The stalemate in the Western Saharan dispute made much of that region, including parts of southern Morocco and northern Mauritania, a 'no-go' area, while the onset of Tuareg rebellions in both Niger and Mali, and Tubu rebellions in Chad and Niger turned much of the Sahel into a conflict zone.

Although these particular issues and conflicts were marginal to the remaining three North African states, Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt, they nevertheless had implications for their authoritarian regimes and their security. The net result of these various 'security situations' was that much of North Africa and the Sahel became effectively isolated from the outside world for much of the 1990s.

The first question that any reappraisal of North Africa's security might be expected to ask is whether its overall security situation has improved or deteriorated since the 1990s. Given the contested nature of what we mean by 'security' and how it might be measured, that it is as much a product of psychology as geo-politics and that it is fraught with subjectivity, my views, based largely on the age-old anthropological practice of participant observation, probably have only marginally more methodological merit than the US Department of Homeland Security's 'intelligence-based' colour-coded security advisory system!⁴ To say that the security threat has gone from 'blue' to 'green' or from 'red' to 'orange' tells us nothing about the nature of the security threat, the intelligence on which it is based, or how it has been measured. Nevertheless and notwithstanding the methodological shortcomings, I could have made a case for saying that North Africa's overall security situation had improved if I had had to answer that question between the end of 1999 and the end of 2002. By that time, the level of violence in Algeria's crisis (civil war), although not resolved, had fallen from an estimated 200,000 killings in the 1990s to around 200 per month; foreign tourism, which had plummeted to zero, was trickling back, while the country's new president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, seemed to be talking seriously about an amnesty and national conciliation. Libya was also beginning to open up; in Mali, the 1996 Timbuktu Peace Accord appeared to have taken root, while in Niger the last Tuareg rebels had thrown their arms onto a 'Fire of Peace' in Agades in 2000. There were even signs of movement in the Western Sahara.

In spite of those indisputable 'improvements', one can no longer proffer such an optimistic answer. Even though the number of killings in Algeria has declined substantially from the frenetic butchery of the mid-1990s, a detailed analysis of developments across the whole of North Africa over the course of the last decade

suggests that the region's overall security situation has revolved in that time through almost 360 degrees and that the signs of 'desecuritisation' in the period 1999-2002 were nothing more than a blip. In the oft-quoted words of Frantz Fanon, who was horribly familiar with the torture and other sufferings of pre-independent Algeria, the conclusion of such an analysis is very much a case of *plus ça change*.

This article reveals and explains why it is that the security situation throughout North Africa has, after the blip mentioned above, reverted to type. All North African states are characterised by the lack of any meaningful democracy, authoritarianism and strong security establishments. 'Power', as John Entelis recently remarked with specific reference to the Maghreb, 'is in the hands of the unaccountable few governing the unrepresented many.'⁵ These 'few' are effectively those who control the security establishment, the *mukhabarat* as it is known in Arabic. In this article, I show how America's post 9/11 involvement in North Africa, notably its 'War on Terror', is having the precise opposite effect to the Bush administration's stated objective of bringing democracy to the region.⁶ Washington's military support⁷ for the regimes of the region, especially its lead-ally, Algeria, combined with the huge surge in oil and gas revenues, has had the counterproductive effect of 'making the *mukhabarat* State more robust and thus less inclined to accede to societal demands for greater democracy'.⁸

The Bush administration's duplicitous post-9/11 intervention in North Africa has further polarised this balance of political forces in such a way as to both heighten and sharpen the lines of this fundamental cleavage between the ruling elites, protected by their security establishments, and the 'unrepresented many'. It has also tended to have exacerbated and become beset by the many and varied conflicts within and from outside the region. Indeed, the complexity of this array of political forces and local-regional conflicts – in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Western Sahara, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad and Sudan – is such that the US has not been able entirely to get its own way across the region. On the contrary, by strengthening, at least initially, the elites and their security establishments behind which they shelter, the US intervention has injected the existing lines of cleavage and conflicts with a new dynamic between the international level, represented predominantly by the US, the national elites and their security structures and the local level where a complex array of social movements – civic associations, Islamists, trade unions and other worker organisations, ethnic-tribal organisations, women's organisations and others – are prepared increasingly, so it seems, to challenge the existing balance of political forces – and perhaps in even more extremist ways.

Thus, far from furthering political stability, security and democracy, Washington's ill-conceived policy has taken North Africa and much of the Sahel – a region which is considerably larger than the entire USA – into a dangerous spiral of increased authoritarianism and repression, increased regional instability and insecurity, increased popular resentment of both Washington (anti-Americanism) and their own regimes and the increased threat of militant extremism.

Levels of Security

In terms of the three levels of security mentioned above – the 'global', the 'national' and the 'individual' – my main interest, possibly because of my anthropological bent, but also because of the light that it throws on the post 9/11 global security situation, is in exploring the links and interstices between the 'global' and the 'individual'. It is also because 'global security', as much as North African – or any

other – regional security, is essentially about perceptions and competing ‘truths’. And, by circumventing, as it were, the national level, whose agencies are the primary source of ‘disinformation’, we get closest to those ‘other truths’ through which the US administration’s ‘War on Terror’, as this essay indicates, is most advantageously explored and hence understood.

A conventional realist or neo-realist analysis of the ‘middle’ or ‘national’ level indicates that the lines of potential national cleavage in North Africa, namely those between Algeria and Morocco, Egypt and Israel and Libya and Chad, have changed only little over the last decade or two, and that their analysis throws little illumination on the overall state of regional security. Developments in the Western Sahara dispute are unlikely to throw more than a small spanner in the works, while any future developments in sub-imperial competition between Libya and Algeria, North Africa’s two main oil producing states, are more likely to be better understood within the overall context of US imperialism than any historical lines of cleavage between the two states.

The deterioration in North Africa’s security situation, or what I have described as its ‘reversion to type’, over the course of the last 3-4 years is seen most conspicuously in the complex way in which the global issues of ‘terrorism’, or what are now generally subsumed within the broad ambit of the ‘War on Terror’, itself fast becoming a euphemism for US imperialism, while precipitating certain ‘national’ responses, have impregnated almost all social levels below that of the state. This is felt most acutely at the level of the individual who, at almost every social level and in almost every community, is now conscious of the more overt, arrogant and even more authoritarian repression of the security establishment.

While militant Islamic extremism and the repressive excesses of the security establishment have long been part of North African life, especially in Algeria, the global ‘War on Terror’, as prosecuted by the US in the wake of 9/11, has brought an entirely new dimension to the nature and meaning of ‘terrorism’ in North Africa (and elsewhere in the world), whether practiced by armed Islamic groups, the State or other third parties.

This new international intervention in the region, led and directed by Washington, also raises the question of the role that France, the former colonial and the ‘sub-imperial’ power in much of the region, has played in these proceedings.

Fabricating North Africa’s ‘War on Terror’⁹

There are a number of clear incidents and dates which, in the perceptions of most people in the region, especially in those regions of the Sahara-Sahel most affected by the launch of America’s ‘War on Terror’ in North Africa, mark the launch and progress of this ‘war’.

The landmark incident was the hostage-taking of 32 European tourists in the Algerian Sahara in February-March 2003 by some 60 members of the *Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat* (GSPC), Algeria’s most active ‘terrorist’ organisation at that time, under the leadership of a certain *El Para*. The name *El Para* was merely the most popular of some dozen pseudonyms of an individual whose identity is still not absolutely certain. There are many ‘truths’ about *El Para*. The version promulgated by Washington and its Algerian allies, is that *El Para* was second-in-command or, as claimed on occasion by Algeria’s intelligence services, even leader of the GSPC. He

was al-Qaeda's representative – bin Laden's man – in the Sahel, charged, amongst other things, with establishing al-Qaeda bases throughout the Sahel and turning the Tibesti mountains of Chad into what certain US military commanders have described, in their over-hyping of the situation, as the Sahara's Tora Bora. Not surprisingly, he was high on Washington's list of the world's most-wanted terrorists, being declared a 'Specially Designated Global Terrorist', a classification shared by bin Laden and his senior commanders.

The 'War on Terror' across the Sahara is associated with this hostage-taking and its long and complex aftermath through 2003-05, during which time *El Para's* men established themselves in Mali, where they were reportedly involved in several engagements with Algerian and Malian forces before being driven by what has been presented to the world at large as a combined military operation involving the armed forces of Algeria, Mali, Niger and Chad, with US military communications and aerial surveillance support, across Niger and into Chad. There, thanks to US aerial and satellite surveillance, they were attacked and largely wiped out by Chad's regular forces. *El Para*, however, reportedly escaped the carnage only to fall into the hands of the small rebel *Mouvement pour La Democratie et la Justice au Tchad* (MDJT), who held him captive before handing him over to the Algerian authorities under mysterious circumstances seven months later (October 2004). In May 2005, he was tried in an Algerian court *in absentia*, in spite of allegedly being in the hands of Algeria's military authorities, and gaoled for life.

Such terrorism in North Africa was not new. Nor was it particularly grotesque in the context of the atrocities that had been committed by both Islamic extremists and the state during Algeria's 'Dirty War' of the 1990s, the actions of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and its two offshoots, Jamaat al-Islamiyya and Egyptian Islamic Jihad, and more recent incidents such as the bombing of the synagogue in Tunisia in 2002 and the suicide bombings in Casablanca in 2003. In terms of loss of civilian life, *El Para's* campaign across the Sahara and Sahel during 2003-04 was almost insignificant in comparison.

The singularity of *El Para's* campaign, however, was that it was completely out of all known or anticipated contexts. First, it was most untimely: terrorism in Algeria had been on the wane since about 1998. Indeed, the reasons why the Bush administration had been able to prevaricate and delay over its promised supply of military assistance to Algeria throughout most of 2001 and 2002 was because Algeria appeared to be in no great need of such assistance. For the first time since the outbreak of violence some ten years earlier, the Algerian military appeared to be on top of the situation, having effectively eliminated the *Group(s) Islamique(s) Armé(s)* (GIA) and largely confined the GSPC to their mountainous retreats in the northeast of the country. Indeed, from around the time of Bouteflika's election as President in 1999 until the time of *El Para's* arrival on the scene in early 2003, there had been an increasing air of optimism, not only in Algeria, but also in many other parts of North Africa and especially its Saharan and Sahelian regions. Second, the Sahara and Sahel had been effectively 'terrorist-free' zones, being politically, socially and geographically unsuited to such terrorism.¹⁰ Finally, *El Para's* modus operandi was not in keeping with any of the 'terrorist' groups thought to be operative in the region at that time.¹¹

For many reasons, therefore, the hostage-taking and *El Para's* subsequent escapade across the Sahara and Sahel came as a surprise, especially to the region's local populations, 'Sahara-watchers' and those few security analysts who actually had

some familiarity with the region. Indeed, amongst many of these people there were suspicions from the outset as to who was behind the hostage-taking and its sequel of GSPC activities across the Sahel.

Detailed and continuous investigations over the course of the last three years have revealed an increasing amount of evidence to indicate that the hostage-taking and the subsequent GSPC activity across the Sahel was not in fact the work of the GSPC, but was orchestrated by Algerian and US military intelligence services, and that *El Para* himself was not merely an agent of Algeria's secret military intelligence service, the *Direction des Renseignements et de la Sécurité (DRS)*, but may even have been trained in the 1990s as a Green Beret by the US Special Forces at Fort Bragg in North Carolina.¹²

The stark conclusion reached by these findings is not merely that this 'new front in the war on terrorism'¹³ was based on a mixture of bad intelligence, dissemblment, imagination and disinformation, but that almost every alleged 'terrorist' incident in the Sahara and Sahel regions since the launch of this front in 2002-03 was either a fiction, in that it did not happen, or, that it was fabricated by the US-Algerian intelligence services.¹⁴

Understanding US Duplicity

The launch in 2002-3 of America's new front in the 'War on Terror' across the Sahelian counties of Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Chad, under the auspices of Washington's Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI), later renamed and upgraded to the Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI) to include Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Nigeria and Senegal, was a monumental deception. It was designed primarily to create the ideological conditions for Washington's 'invasion' of Africa, its militarisation and the securing of US strategic national resources, notably, but not exclusively, oil.

This 'invasion' of Africa, as many local people refer to it, was to be legitimised through what I have referred to elsewhere as Washington's 'banana theory' of global terrorism.¹⁵ In the wake of the US invasion of Afghanistan, Washington's 'philosophers' began to formulate seriously their 'banana' theory of world terrorism – especially as it impacted on, or might be used ideologically in, both Africa and Europe. Washington 'groupthink' was that as terrorists were supposedly uprooted by the US military from Afghanistan and neighbouring Central Asia and Middle Eastern regions, they dispersed into the Horn of Africa, from where they spread across the Sudan and Sahel to the western Saharan regions of Mauritania and the countries of the Maghreb. The Sahel was perceived as the key zone of conduit – the major part of the bend in a banana-shaped curve from Afghanistan and Central Asia to the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts of the Maghreb – through which 'terrorists' dislodged from Central Asia and the Middle East would move westwards before fanning out northwards into the Maghreb and hence Europe and southwards into the strategic oil producing countries of West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea. It was not lost on US intelligence services that oil-rich Nigeria, with its 60 per cent Muslim population, might become a theatre of al-Qaeda operations, as bin Laden had allegedly threatened. Typical of this 'groupthink' was the statement of EUCOM's Maj. Gen. Jeff Kohler:

As terrorist cells were uprooted from Afghanistan and elsewhere by US Central Command,... they shifted to ... the wide-open, relatively desolate areas of Africa,... an easy back door into Europe through Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia.¹⁶

As one of his colleagues elaborated:

If you squeeze the terrorists in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and other places, they will find new places to operate, and one of those places is the Sahel/Maghreb.¹⁷

Although there was minimal intelligence to support this view,¹⁸ it was beginning to be seen in Washington as the ideological lynchpin both for justifying the militarisation and securitisation of much of Africa and also for keeping Europe 'under threat' and thus 'on board' in America's contentious global 'War on Terror'.

During the course of 2002, and in the wake of its invasion of Afghanistan, the US began to give serious attention to the Sahel, a region of the world in which it had hitherto shown little interest and, from the intelligence point of view, had comparatively little knowledge. By the end of the year, State Department officials had already briefed the Sahelian governments on Washington's proposed PSI, while the CIA, working on highly questionable intelligence, had undertaken a deep helicopter reconnaissance mission into the Saharan regions of Northern Mali in the belief that it was in that desolate region that 'terrorists' might establish their bases.

For their part, Algeria's military intelligence services were fully aware of both US interests and activities in the Sahel, and its 'banana theory'. They were also aware that there was a gap of some two thousand kilometres in terms of any proven terrorist links between the Sahel and the Maghreb. In fact, the problem, from a US perspective was even worse than that: not only were there no proven links across the Sahara between either Islamic organisations (*salafistes*) or traffickers operating in the Sahel and terrorist organisations in the Maghreb, but there had been no acts of terrorism, in the conventional sense of the term, in the Sahel.

If this 'banana' notion of world terrorism was to gain any credence, it needed concrete, tangible evidence of active terrorist links not only east-west across the Sahel but, more importantly, north-south across the Sahara. Thus, having conjured up the 'theory', it was merely a matter of finding or fabricating enough 'facts' to make it stick. And, as Algeria's intelligence services were fully aware, this meant seizing on almost any story that supported Washington's construction of the Sahelian Sahara as a 'terror zone'. As we now know, *El Para* provided the missing link. He was the living proof that al-Qaeda had not only spread across the Sahel, as the Americans believed, but now spanned the Sahara. The banana was in place. As US-EUCOMs top commanders were quick to point out,

al-Qaeda, through the actions of the GSPC, threatened to turn Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia into 'another Afghanistan'.¹⁹

Understanding Algeria's Complicity

Whether the hostage-taking was initiated by the Algerians or the US, or as a joint initiative, will probably never be known. What is known, however, is that the two countries' intelligence services were in high-level meetings in Algiers immediately before the commencement of the operation and that they worked increasingly closely together during the course of *El Para's* escapade across the Sahara and through the Sahel.²⁰

Algeria's motives for its post-9/11 alliance with the US and in helping the US fabricate a new Saharan-Sahelian front in the 'War on Terror' are rooted in its own 'Dirty War' of the 1990s. As the violence of Algeria's 'civil war' intensified and the role of Algeria's army and its various militia groups in civilian massacres and other atrocities became more evident, so western countries kept their distance, with both the US and EU countries being reluctant to sell arms to Algeria for fear of Islamist reprisals and criticism from human rights groups. A consequence of this pariah status was that Algeria's army became progressively under-equipped. Therefore, and especially as the war de-escalated, Algeria's army became increasingly preoccupied with acquiring modern, high-tec weapon systems, notably night vision devices, sophisticated radar systems, an integrated surveillance system, tactical communications equipment and certain lethal weapon systems.

The Clinton administration distanced itself from Algeria.²¹ However, US Vice President Dick Cheney, while president of Halliburton, had developed close relations with Bouteflika and in July 2001, only two months after the publication of the Cheney Report,²² President Bouteflika was invited to Washington, where he told President Bush that his country was seeking specific equipment that would enable it to maintain peace, security and stability.²³ This visit was followed almost immediately by a visit by Algerian army chief of staff, General Lamari, to US military HQ Stuttgart at which he sought further support for the army's modernisation effort.

The 9/11 attacks heralded a new era in US-Algerian military relations. Bouteflika made two more visits to Washington in relatively quick succession at which he stressed that Algeria's struggle against Islamic militants was comparable to America's own war against al-Qaeda, hoping that such emphasis on their two countries' common predicament would make the US administration more inclined to sell lethal weaponry to Algeria. However, even though 2002 did see a marked increase in military collaboration between the two countries, with the US announcing that it was planning to expand military and security aid to Algeria through the transfer of equipment, including the sale of much-needed night vision military systems, and accelerated training, the assistance remained mostly symbolic in the form of frequent visits to Algiers by senior US officials,²⁴ regular visits by US naval ships and a doubling of the International Military Education and Training Program (IMET).²⁵

And so, by the end of 2002, around the same time as US State Department officials were promoting the PSI to the Sahelian governments and the US intelligence services were reconnoitring deep inside the Malian Sahara,²⁶ US-Algerian relations became a little tetchy, with Algeria publicly admonishing the US for its failure to actually deliver the promised military equipment. The reasons for the US prevarication over this delivery was its reluctance to further provoke the human rights lobby by providing such equipment to the Algerian regime and the fear of inciting Islamist reactions. Perhaps more significantly, Washington's political caution was finding justification in the fact that Algeria's military now appeared to have got well on top of the country's 'terrorist' problem, effectively limiting their much-reduced activity to remote regions in the north-east of the country. Cautious US politicians were consequently able to argue that Algeria was no longer in need of such sophisticated equipment.

Thus, from Algeria's perspective, the hostage-taking and *El Para's* subsequent activities in the Sahel were stark proof that 'terrorism' was not only far from eradicated in Algeria, but that militant Islamists ('terrorists') had now established

themselves in the hitherto tranquil Sahara and Sahel. And, even though US military intelligence knew it to be untrue, Algeria made much ado, for the benefit of politicians in Washington, that the long time spent in finding and securing the release of the hostages was because its army lacked the sophisticated equipment that it had been seeking from the Americans. *El Para's* 'terrorist' escapades across the Sahara and Sahel were thus mutually beneficial to both countries. From an Algerian perspective they eased Washington's political reticence on the transfer of military equipment to Algeria, while Algeria's closer alliance with the US has done much to help it overcome its pariah status and re-establish the country's position and reputation in international affairs, especially in relation to NATO, the EU and the rest of the African continent.

For the US, *El Para* provided the missing link in its 'banana' worldview of terrorism. In so doing, he gave new impetus to the Bush administration's attempts to demonstrate the global threat of terrorism, especially at a time when it was trying to justify its invasion of Iraq in terms of Saddam Hussein's (as yet unproven) links to al-Qaeda and associated terrorist networks, and to legitimise the 'globalisation' of its 'War on Terror'. Particularly important in this regard was that Washington could now take its 'War on Terror' into Africa. This 'proof' of al-Qaeda in the Sahara justified the PSI and the TSCTI and gave US-EUCOM's commander, General James Jones, all the legitimacy he required to pursue his mission of acquiring basing rights and establishing what he referred to as a 'family of bases' across the continent.²⁷ General Jones was now able to talk with confidence of 'threats to the southern rim of the Mediterranean', from

*large uncontrolled, ungoverned areas across Africa (vast swathes of the Sahara, from Mauritania ... to Sudan) that are clearly the routes of narco-trafficking, terrorist training and hotbeds of instability, and which are going to be potential havens for that kind of activity.*²⁸

As for its concerns for the securitisation of Africa's oil resources, the US has succeeded, through the TSCTI, in linking the two oil-rich states of Algeria and Nigeria, the two sides of the Sahara, in a complex of security arrangements whose architecture is American.²⁹

France's Hidden Hand

One of the mysteries of the US 'War on Terror' across North Africa and the Sahel is how the Americans appear to have been able to trample more or less all over the region, with the blessing of the regimes involved, but without an apparent 'beep' from France, which was not only the former colonial power across much of North and West Africa but has retained considerable 'sub-imperial' influence across the region.

At the time of the hostage-taking in 2003, some surprise was expressed by those directly associated with the drama, including officials in the foreign services of some of the countries involved, at France's reticence on the incident. France's continued 'silence' on both the hostage-taking and subsequent events in the region, as well as France's apparent acceptance of America's intervention in the region, has been explained by three reasons. The first is that France would be reluctant to involve itself in any way that might provoke or incite extremist reprisal actions from the 5 million or more Muslims, mostly Algerians, amongst its domestic population. The second is that the relative weakness of France's economy is that it is unable to provide the economic support and investments that it might like to provide to

Algeria and its other former colonial territories in the region and has no choice but to play second fiddle to America's far greater economic might. The third reason is that France, in keeping with its public portrayal of acrimony towards the US over the latter's invasion of Iraq, has remained detached from and uncommitted to America's North African 'invasion' – as some locals have called it – on the assumption that it will end in tears and that France will be able to step in eventually and pick up the pieces.

None of these reasons is entirely convincing. Indeed, there have been increasing suspicions about France's role in this entire affair since its outset. France's deafening silence over the hostage affair was almost as if it had something to hide. Equally suspicious were the occasional, albeit unverified, reports of field assistance being afforded to the Algerian and US intelligence services by French agents, as, for example, in clearing inquisitive Libyan agents out of Mali prior to the hostages' transfer there.³⁰ Further suspicions were raised by both France's failure to intervene in the Tuareg-Niger amnesty negotiations of 2005³¹ and by allegations of France's involvement in the Bush administration's 'extraordinary rendition' programme.

The mystery of France's silence was solved in 2005 by the *Washington Post* (WP), which published a detailed report on US-Franco intelligence relations.³² The WP revealed that the US and France had set up a top secret intelligence centre in Paris, code-named *Alliance Base* (the 'Base'), in 2002 (at the time of the PSI planning and shortly before the hostage-taking) that was largely funded by the CIA's Counterterrorist Center, but headed by a French general assigned from the *Direction Generale de la Sécurité Exterieur* (DGSE). The WP revealed that the 'Base' is multinational, having case officers from Britain, France, Germany, Canada, Australia and the USA and that it actually plans operations (such as extraordinary renditions?) rather than simply sharing information.

France's main contribution to the 'Base' is that it 'brings its harsh laws, surveillance of radical Muslim groups and their networks in Arab states, and its intelligence links to its former colonies.'³³ This includes France's very close relationship with Algeria's military intelligence services, notably the *DRS*, headed by General Mohamed Mediène and General Smaïn Lamari, head of its Counter-insurgency Unit. Not only does this relationship go back a long way, but there is now an increasing amount of evidence to indicate that the Algerian and French secret intelligence services collaborated in a number of 'dirty tricks' during Algeria's 'Dirty War'. For example, in 1993, in an attempt to make the French government and its public more supportive of the Algerian military's war (the 'eradication') against Islamist opposition, the *DRS* leadership in collaboration with Jean-Charles Marchiana, advisor to France's right-wing interior minister, Charles Pasqua, arranged the suspicious kidnapping of three officials from the French embassy in Algiers. Algerian secret services successfully mounted a phoney operation to convince public opinion they had freed the French hostages from 'Islamist terrorists'.³⁴ Several other 'terrorist incidents' directed against France are now thought to have been conducted by the *DRS* as part of the Algerian regime's attempt to discredit the Islamists in the eyes of French and world opinion.³⁵ It is inconceivable that the *DGSE* was unaware of this involvement. The same intelligence officers who were behind the *DRS*'s involvement in these incidents in the 'Dirty War' are still at the helm of Algeria's *DRS* and were responsible for the management and orchestration of the 'El Para affair'.

The *Washington Post's* exposé of the *Alliance Base* almost certainly confirms what this and other research has indicated; namely, that the relationship between the US and Algerian intelligence services is not a simple one-on-one relationship, but part of a triangle which includes France's *DGSE*. Indeed, given the WP's reported timing of the launch of the 'Base' (2002), it is almost impossible to believe that French intelligence services were not fully aware of the 'El Para affair' and the subsequent phases of the US 'War on Terror' across the region, especially in Algeria, Mauritania and the rest of the Sahel. Thus, given the pivotal role that the *DGSE* may well have played in this entire operation – if only through its knowledge of what was taking place between the US and Algerian intelligence services, France's reverberating silence is quite understandable. In addition, the existence of 'the Base' and its inevitable involvement in the US 'War on Terror' across North Africa and the Sahel raises serious questions about the complicity of the Base's other 'partners', especially Britain and Germany, who have also both been remarkably reticent on this subject.³⁶

The Outcomes & Implications of America's North African Policy

US support for the regimes of North Africa and the Sahel, with the possible exception of Libya, both militarily and through various economic relations, most notably investment in the hydrocarbons and mining sectors, has had profound impacts on and implications for the region's overall security. The US would like to argue that its presence in the region, notably through its war against terrorism, has brought security, stability and democracy to the region, in line with its 'Broader Middle East Initiative'. These are laudable aims. Unfortunately, on all three of these counts, the opposite is true.

In terms of security, and with questionable semantics, this has only been increased to the extent that the security establishments of most of the states in the region have been strengthened. That, however, has merely further prolonged, and perhaps even entrenched, the power and authoritarianism of fundamentally undemocratic regimes at the expense of weakening, or delaying, both the development of an autonomous civil society and the security of the individual. Indeed, in all the countries in which the US presence and its 'War on Terror' have been prevalent over the last 3-4 years, the level of State repression has increased. In that sense, North Africa, after a brief sense of optimism that its retarded democratic transitions might no longer be entirely imaginary, which prevailed across much of the region – especially Algeria – around the turn of the millennium, has reverted to type.

The 'War on Terror' has been used, without exception, by every regime in the region to repress and silence legitimate political opposition by labelling it or linking it with 'terrorism', 'putative terrorism' (to use a favourite Americanism for smearing such organisations) or 'incipient' terrorism, to use another fairly meaningless colloquialism, 'Islamic extremists' (a euphemism for 'terrorists') and the suchlike. Even Cold War rhetoric has found its way back into the offensive with elements of America's religious right referring to the present-day Polisario as 'Communists'! The most extreme example of North Africa's authoritarian regimes taking advantage of the 'War on Terror' to eliminate popular opposition has been in Mauritania where the dictatorial President, Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya, used his strong support from the US and his role as a 'frontline' ally in the War on Terror to crack down and gaoil an ever increasing number of Islamists and a widening and legitimate popular opposition on the basis that they were either members of or linked in some way to the

'terrorist' Algerian GSPC. Such actions, when reported quite uncritically in the US and world media, merely confirmed the appropriateness of America's support for the 'War on Terror' in the region. However, as we now know, not only is the GSPC heavily infiltrated by Algeria's counter-terrorism services, but many of the incidents attributed to it are either fictitious or have been orchestrated by the US and Algerian intelligence services. Indeed, the popular perception of the GSPC across much of North Africa, especially in its Saharan-Sahelian regions, is that its maintenance by the DRS is essential in that it provides the main justification for the US involvement in the region. It was not surprising that Ould Taya was finally ousted in a coup mounted by his own security forces in August 2005. Nor, with other Sahelian and North African states currying favour from the US by using the 'war on terror' as a pretext to crack down on legitimate opposition, will it be surprising if this remains the only regime to experience this fate.

The 'War on Terror' has also been useful to states such as Libya, which have not been so closely allied to the US as, say, Algeria or Mauritania. Alison Pargeter has described how a Libyan *jihadist* movement calling itself the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), which first emerged in Libya in the 1980s and was more or less wiped out during the Libyan regime's mass arrests of suspected Islamist opponents in 1989, re-emerged again in the 1990s, largely as a result of the experience gained by those Libyans who had fought the Soviets in Afghanistan.³⁷ On discovering the existence of the LIFG in 1995,

*Qadhafi launched a brutal and repressive campaign to liquidate his militant opponents as well as the more moderate strands of underground Islamist opposition that had also developed across the country. By 1998 the regime had succeeded in more-or-less wiping out the LIFG as well as other Islamist groups.*³⁸

As in all other North African countries, the 'War on Terror' has enabled the Libyan regime to increase its domestic security apparatus and to justify crackdowns on internal opposition in the name of fighting international terrorism.³⁹ As Pargeter has noted, the Libyan regime has been assisted in its bid to prevent a Libyan Islamist opposition from re-emerging by the willingness of western governments, namely the US and the UK, to designate the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) as a terrorist organisation and to open the way for suspected members of the organisation to be returned to Tripoli.⁴⁰

In the Sahel, where there was no terrorism⁴¹ in the conventional meaning of the term prior to *El Para's* arrival, the brunt of the attempts to turn the region into a 'terror zone', other than for the fabricated incidents associated with *El Para's* insertion into the region, has fallen largely on the already marginalised minority populations, notably the Tuareg. While there have been incidents of 'ethnic provocation' in all the Sahelian states, these have been most serious in Niger, generally recognised as the world's poorest country, the PSI country most in need of American largesse and the Sahelian country that has been least able to excite the Americans with any significant increase in Islamist activity.⁴²

The Niger government's attempt to provoke the Tuareg into actions which could be portrayed to the Americans as 'former rebels turning to terrorism', began in February 2004 when Rhissa ag Boula, the Minister of Tourism and Crafts and the former leader of the rebel *Front de Libération de l'Azawak et de l'Air (FLAA)* and its signatory to the 1955 Peace Accord that marked the formal end of the Tuareg rebellion in Niger, was arrested and taken into detention in connection with the murder of a young

party worker in the President's Nassara party. It is widely believed that the move was designed to provoke the Tuareg into taking up arms so that the government could secure more military and financial aid from the US administration, which had launched its PSI less than a month previously. The move succeeded in increasing the political tension in the northern mountains of Air, a traditional Tuareg stronghold, and escalating banditry, for which Rhissa's brother, Mohamed ag Boula, reportedly claimed responsibility. In September (2004), the Niger government sent some 150 troops into Air in a move that many thought would ignite a new Tuareg rebellion. However, the troops, recently trained by the US as part of its PSI, were ambushed by the Tuareg, with at least one soldier killed, four wounded and four taken hostage. RFI (*Radio France Internationale*) subsequently carried an interview in which Rhissa's brother said he was leading a 200-strong group which was fighting to defend the rights of the Tuareg, Tubu and Semori nomadic populations of northern Niger, and that he was personally responsible for the attack.

Rhissa was finally released from gaol in March 2005 without any charges being brought against him. He immediately sought to negotiate an amnesty for those Tuareg who had taken up arms. However, much to the surprise of the negotiators, the talks became blocked as a result of the intervention of what the negotiators referred to as 'American advisors' whom, they believed, were angling for a further show of force against the rebels to validate the TSCTI and to prove to the outside world that the region really was a 'terrorist zone'. The amnesty was finally negotiated in mid-summer thanks to the intervention of Colonel Ghadafi's good offices. It was noticeable that the French, who had hitherto always assisted the Tuareg in such negotiations, played no part in the proceedings. The Tuareg negotiators believe that this was because France was becoming increasingly anxious about the public exposure and labour unrest associated with the activities of two of its biggest companies, namely COGEMA (*Compagnie générale des matières nucléaires*) of the AREVA group, and Veolia Environment, formerly known as Vivendi Environment, the world's largest water company. These companies might well come to appreciate Niger's increased militarisation resulting from the PSI and TSCTI, which is currently seeing a 150 per cent expansion of its army from 4,000 to 10,000 soldiers and a 100 per cent expansion of its paramilitary police force from 2,000 to 4,000.⁴³

Algeria & Democratisation

The North African regime that has made most effort over the last 3-4 years in trying to convince both its domestic and international audiences that it is moving towards democratisation is Algeria. This is for two interrelated reasons. First, Algeria is trying to overcome its international pariah status in the wake of its military's annulment of the 1992 elections and its subsequent 'Dirty War'. Second, as Washington's key ally in launching the North African front in its 'War on Terror', it is in Algeria's interests to help Washington try and salvage something from its failing 'Broader Middle East Initiative' by showing that US intervention in the region, and Algeria especially, is leading to a greater liberalisation and democratisation. Indeed, up until the visit of the US Secretary of Defence to Algiers in February 2006, where he (Donald Rumsfeld) gave a memorable (but thoroughly honest) appraisal of US regional interests to the assembled media by confirming the region's role in Washington's security-terrorist agenda, but with absolutely no reference to his administration's hitherto alleged concerns for such things as the furtherance of democracy, improved governance and the betterment of civil society, such an image

had been portrayed with a reasonable level of success to the international community. In spite of Rumsfeld's highly pertinent but typically undiplomatic 'clarification' of US interests in the region, it is fair to say that most of the international community is still under the illusion that Algeria has made progress towards greater liberalisation and democratisation in the last few years. This image, however, has been based almost entirely on a massive PR exercise of propaganda and disinformation, most notably what Lahouari Addi has described as the country's 'fictitious multipartyism'.⁴⁴

The reality of Algeria is that civil society – its trade unions, political parties, associations, newspapers, other media, etc., have been subjected over the last 3-4 years to an ever more stringent supervision by the security services – the *mukhabarat*, which, as I shall explain below, is directly related to the country's *rentier* economy, its increased level of oil and gas flows and revenues (which have played a pivotal role in strengthening the interests of the ruling elites and encouraging the procrastination of much-needed economic reforms),⁴⁵ and the security establishment's close alliance with the US military and intelligence services.

While both the Americans (apart from Rumsfeld who forgot to mention it!) and the Algerian government are happy to talk about a new level of democratisation in the country, the truth is very different. Even in the most remote corners of the country, far from the eyes and ears of the news media, grassroots expressions of democracy have been quite brazenly crushed. For example, civil unrest has been put down in almost every major Saharan town at some time or another over the last two years. The most recent, in Tamanrasset in July 2005, was actually egged on by the state's *agents provocateurs*. Evidence of the state's involvement in the riots was eventually brought before the court and some sixty 'rioters', mostly Tuareg youths, were freed. Others were not so lucky: members of the *Mouvement des citoyens du Sud pour la Justice*, for example, have been gaoled, while another citizens' association, Tamanrasset's *Association de Quartiers* has been crushed by court edict with its organisers, who could not be found to have broken any laws, being subject to more or less continual state harassment.

A notable feature of Algeria's security establishment over the last few years has been its increased brazenness and public visibility. Local citizens say that the increased confidence, arrogance and bullying of civilians by the security establishment comes from the support and strength given to it by the American presence. For example, in February 2005, an Algerian academic, seconded officially to a French university, was assaulted by security police in broad daylight in the middle of Tamanrasset's high street. Dozens of onlookers watched aghast as he was grabbed and assaulted in the street by three men, bundled under a tarpaulin and stowed into the boot of a police Toyota. He was taken to a 'house' on the edge of town and interrogated for two days before being released without charge. The comment made by many of the onlookers was that 'the security police would never have dared to act so publicly before the Americans came'.⁴⁵

A few citizens have tried to use the much-publicised multiparty system to 'change the system from within'. Their strategy has been to stand for election to parliament as independent candidates. In all known cases, however, the state has managed to block this tactic by raising the number of signatures required to register as a candidate, and, where that has failed, to use false character references, even down to driving licence offences, to block the candidate's registration. Citizens who have

attempted this strategy have also been subjected to severe harassment and intimidation by the security forces.

The determination of Algeria's ruling elites to prevent the development of an autonomous civil society has even extended to the establishment of a massive NGO (technically an intergovernmental organisation) to meet the requirements of the World Bank and UN agencies, in this case the UNDP, that recipient/partner countries meet their requirements of good governance and that local communities and civil society participate in all stages of projects that they fund. In Algeria's case, the World Bank, through its Global Environmental Fund (GEF), and UNDP have been involved in the financing of Algeria's US\$22.3 million Biodiversity Plan for the Algerian Sahara. In order to prevent the consultation and participation of local communities and organisations in the project, and to divert the funds into projects for which they were not intended, Algeria's Minister of the Environment created the *Fondation Deserts du Monde – World Deserts Foundation (WDF)*. While claiming to the World Bank and UNDP that the WDF enabled the peoples of the desert 'to speak with one voice', the WDF ensured that the four civil society organisations that represented those peoples most directly affected by the project were excluded from the consultations with the UNDP.

In this particular instance, Algeria was not unlike a number of Third World countries that were determined not to miss out on the new GEF revenue stream. Algeria's WDF was not unlike many other such governmental NGOs in Third World countries that were established to serve as conduits for the receipt of international funds that are not meant to be received by public institutions. And, in the implementation phase of development projects, they provide a well organised and articulate civil society partner that saves international organisations, in this case the World Bank and UNDP, from having to look for other such partners. They are, in fact, the mechanisms which government elites use to block civil society participation.⁴⁷

Threats to Morocco's Stability⁴⁸

Morocco's political stability and internal security is being threatened by two parallel, and perhaps merging, strands of discontent. One is associated with the country's 'Islamist problem'; the other comes from the growing upsurge of discontent associated with Saharawi nationalism and stalled progress in resolving the Western Sahara situation.⁴⁹

It is difficult to assess precisely the extent of Morocco's Islamist problem and the sort of threat that it poses to the country, as it tends to be exaggerated or played down by different interests groups. Moroccan terrorism hit the headlines in May 2003 when the *Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group* was thought to be behind five bombings in Casablanca (12 suicide bombers) that killed 33 people. Moroccans were also found responsible for the bombings at Madrid's Atocha Station on 11 March 2004, which left 191 dead and 1,500 wounded. Since then at least 13 Moroccans have been arrested in France as alleged members of Islamic terrorists, while most terror suspects apprehended in Belgium and the Netherlands, including the murderers of the Dutch filmmaker, Theo van Gogh, have been Moroccans.

The Moroccan government's response to the realisation that it was perhaps facing an extremist onslaught was to crack down swiftly on suspected militants and to

accelerate political reforms and other measures to eradicate the country's grinding poverty. The official view is that 'all extremist groups have been dismantled' and that fears of a terrorist onslaught have passed. That may be the case, or it may be that the country is experiencing a lull, for it is debatable whether any of these moves have been successful. Analysts believe that Morocco's poverty, its lack of full democracy, and the lure of Islamist ideas, still provide a combustible mix.

Morocco suffers from serious underdevelopment. Urban unemployment is well over 20 per cent, with one-third of the burgeoning population of young men jobless. For many, their only hope is to make it to Europe. While government attempts to ease poverty are laudable, it is debatable whether they are doing more than 'playing catch-up'. These attempts are also being complicated by a marked revival in the Islamic faith, especially its more conservative strands, which is running hand-in-hand with a sense of alienation that is found amongst many Maghrebians, whether living at home or in Europe. Modernity, fuelled in Morocco by attempts to modernise the economy and especially its tourism industry, is increasingly visible and yet, for many, increasingly unattainable. The same is true for most Moroccans who have made it to Europe.

Signs of conservative Islamic values, such as the use of the veil, calls for *sharia* (Islamic law) and other fundamentalist values, are growing, with more 'fundamentalist-oriented' groups, such as *Justice and Spirituality* becoming increasingly connected with the poor by providing material help and support where the government has been ineffective in doing so. And it is amongst the more poverty-ridden and alienated members of Morocco's fragmented society that extremist ideas are most likely to take root.

A key feature of this increased support for Islamist groups, not merely in Morocco but across most of the region, which the Bush administration prefers to ignore, is that it is not merely a response by a significant portion of the population to the frustration at their lack of meaningful citizenship, alienation and exclusion from established political institutions and parties, but it is also a response to US imperialism. In a sense, therefore, we can talk about this increased support for the various strands of fundamentalist Islam as a nationalist response without the elites, with its more extremist elements being fuelled by the most extreme manifestation of US imperialism, namely its 'War on Terror' itself. The perceived duplicity of the Americans in fabricating this 'War on Terror' across the Sahara and Sahel has led to widespread resentment and anger. It is already leading to 'blowback', as US strategists call it. In Morocco, this 'blowback' may be more extreme: many of the people who have been picked up in the post-Casablanca (2003) Islamist crack-down, gaoled and tortured (officially denied), are innocent. Their release may well lead to a dangerous backlash. In addition, the continuous news reports of US behaviour in Iraq, Guantanamo and elsewhere have fermented a growing anger towards the US and, by association, the Moroccan regime's alliance with it.

If that were not enough, Moroccan society now also has to contend with the upsurge of discontent associated with growing sympathy and support for the Saharawi situation. The new *intifadah* of the Western Sahara's Saharawi population in May-June (2005) was not only well organised but also explicitly political and has severely embarrassed Morocco. This is for a number of reasons. First, the demonstrations and the reactions of the Moroccans were closely monitored by Saharawi Civil Society, whose reaction to and management of the situation was constrained and carefully managed for political purposes. In contrast, the reaction of the Moroccan authorities

was a heavy-handed knee-jerk, which backfired totally by attracting journalists into the region. They, in turn, saw what was happening and reported the 'truth', which simply generated even more pro-Polisario demonstrations.

Second, Saharawi discontent and politicisation is not confined to the occupied territory of the Western Sahara, but is now being experienced throughout southern Morocco itself, especially in the region between the Atlas and the Western Sahara border which contains a large Saharawi population. The town of Assa (Ait Oussa), for example, has traditionally been aligned with Morocco. However, its younger generation, as throughout much of the region, has become much more radical and supportive of the Saharawis. This spread of unrest from the Western Sahara into Morocco has now become widespread, with demonstrations in many southern Moroccan towns being characterised by Moroccans themselves waving Polisario flags and daubing pro-Polisario and pro-Saharawi slogans. Violent pro-Saharawi demonstrations have even been held in the main cities of Casablanca, Rabat and Agadir University.

The spread of Saharawi unrest into Morocco is a serious challenge to the country's 'internal' borders and its whole social-political fabric, as it is generating another strand of discontent. At present, there do not seem to be strong links between the emergence of Saharawi nationalism and Morocco's Islamist dissidents. However, that may be small comfort to the Moroccan authorities for whom the possibility of merger between these two strands of discontent is self-evident.

Political Opposition & Organisation in North Africa

North Africa can be likened to a pressure cooker. The problem for the security analyst is trying to ascertain which part(s) of a rotting seal will burst first. The most obvious starting point in such an exercise is Algeria – the largest, richest, most repressive, least capable of reform⁵⁰ and the North African state in which the US has the greatest political investment. Algeria probably holds the key to much of the rest of the region's future security.

However, while Algeria is potentially the most cataclysmic state in the region in terms of both potential political opposition and unrest, any analysis of the region must also take cognisance of the fact that US policy towards North Africa and the Sahel, at least at the ideological level, has seen a noticeable shift since late 2005. The most obvious sign of this shift is in the Pentagon's new emphasis on societal development as distinct from a more purely militaristic approach to counter-terrorism. Related to this is that senior US commanders in the field are now downplaying the threat of terrorism, at least in terms of their public pronouncements and media relations.

There are three main reasons for this shift in US policy. The first, as I have already explained, is because Washington fabricated and grossly exaggerated the terrorist threat in the region in order to legitimise the launch, for ideological reasons, of a new, African front in the 'War on Terror'. In short, much of the information coming from US military sources was nothing more than disinformation, as epitomised in the hyperbolic language of US military commanders in relation to the whole range of incidents and narratives surrounding *El Para* and the launch of the 'War on Terror' across the region. One difficulty for the US military is that it is now literally 'tripping over its own disinformation'. In short, as much of this narrative was fiction, there never was such a great need for military intervention in the region as Washington

and its military commanders in the field first proclaimed. That is why the US has actually expended comparatively little on serious military training and development in the region.

The second reason is Washington's attempt at 'damage limitation': the US is aware of the massive unpopularity generated by its intervention in the region and its actions elsewhere. In September 2005, for example, a Congressionally mandated advisory panel, citing polling that found that large majorities in Egypt, Morocco and Saudi Arabia 'view George W. Bush as a greater threat to the world order than Osama bin Laden', warned the State Department that 'America's image and reputation abroad could hardly be worse.'⁵¹ The Pentagon's current inclusion of education and other such societal developments in its TSCTI, although showing little manifestation on the ground, is an attempt to 'soften both the American presence and image'. It also falls within the populist 'Bush-Blair' line on Africa that terrorism has its roots in poverty, although without quite managing to explain why poverty has not hitherto given rise to terrorism, or, for that matter, that there is remarkably little evidence to show that people living in poverty turn to terrorism. But that is another matter.

Washington's slightly less militaristic and abrasive tone over the last few months also reflects the third reason, namely a shift in international concerns that are now beginning to view narco- and people trafficking as North Africa's main threats to EU security in particular. The US is therefore placing more emphasis on controlling these activities, which it dubs, with a remarkable lack of understanding of what is actually happening on the ground, as 'putative terrorism'.

North Africa's Trafficking Businesses

Without going into the details of the various trans-Saharan trafficking businesses, two aspects of them should be noted. The first is that much of this trafficking – people, cigarettes, hard drugs and arms – is not run by 'putative terrorists' as US intelligence services are inclined to believe, but in most of these countries, notably Algeria, by agents of the state. The 'mafia-bosses', as they are generally known, tend to work in close protective relationships with the top, corrupted echelons of the security establishment – military, intelligence services, police, customs, etc., who in turn benefit substantially from a business estimated at some \$1 billion a year. One consequence of this relationship is that much of the data on trafficking, as for example on 'illegal' migrants, and on which European countries base much of their analyses and policies, is highly suspect.⁵² For example, the expulsions/repatriations of illegal migrants through Tamanrasset, one of the main gateways across the Sahara, have been systematically over-invoiced by the regional governor (*wali*) as merely one dimension of the widespread, systematic embezzlement of state funds by state officials. More importantly, as far as the region's security is concerned, is that a significant proportion of the narco- and arms trafficking that is attributed by the security services to the *GSPC* appears, in fact, to be run by agents of the *DRS*. This conforms closely to the widespread perception of many local people that the *GSPC* is not only heavily infiltrated by the *DRS*, but also that one of the *DRS*'s objectives is to ensure a certain ongoing level of *GSPC* activity, as the functioning of the *GSPC* as a 'terrorist organisation' provides the US administration with its sole justification for its involvement in the region.

The second important aspect of the trafficking businesses is that they provide livelihoods to an increasing proportion of the region's population, especially in the

Sahara where America's 'War on Terror' has decimated the labour-intensive tourism industry, at least for the time being, and where the massive development of the oil and gas industry, and other forms of mineral extraction, provide relatively few or largely disliked (e.g. uranium mining) labour opportunities.

These newly perceived security threats – narco-trafficking and migration – are, I believe, both exaggerated and misunderstood and are more reflective of a Eurocentric than internal security perspective. More important from an internal regional security perspective, and especially as far as individuals within the region are concerned, are the causes of and the ways in which political opposition and organisation is developing within the region. This is best understood from at least five different but closely related levels of analysis.

The first, as I have already mentioned, is the extremely dangerous spiral of increased authoritarianism and repression, increased regional instability and insecurity, increased popular resentment of both Washington (anti-Americanism) and their own regimes and the increased threat of militant extremism, that has been set in motion by Washington's post-9/11 involvement in the region. This, in turn, is related to the link between oil, repression and the lack of democracy, which, opens up for analysis four specific dimensions of oil-based *rentier* states: namely, the link between oil and gas rents, control and repression; between the *rentier* state and unemployment; between the *rentier* state and corruption; and finally, between resource exploitation, the environment and indigenous rights. All four dimensions are the sites of political opposition and organisation.

Hydrocarbons, Control & Repression

The major resource exploitation in the region is hydrocarbons (oil and gas). Global energy shortages, combined with the high price of both oil and gas, have galvanised a frenetic surge in the exploration for and exploitation of oil and gas throughout almost all of North Africa and the Sahel, as in almost every other country on the Continent. In Libya, for example, over 60 foreign oil and gas companies won concession bids in 2005, while in Algeria, where the industry is more consolidated, some two dozen major foreign oil and gas companies are now operating.⁵³ Mauritania became an oil producer in February 2006, while all the other Sahelian countries (Mali, Niger, Chad and Sudan) now have several foreign oil companies operating in them.

A particularly important aspect of this expansion of the hydrocarbons sector in these countries, along with the accompanying high price of oil and gas, is that it has not only increased the level of security required in ring fencing and securitising what are effectively 'offshore' zones, but the marked increase in foreign exchange earnings, especially in Algeria, as in so many oil-based states, along with Washington's increased military assistance, has enabled a substantial aggrandizement of the security establishment and its systems of control and repression.

Hydrocarbons, Labour & Unemployment

A key feature of the hydrocarbons industry is that it is highly labour intensive requiring comparatively little local labour to supplement a small, predominantly expatriot and highly skilled labour force. Indeed, it is this particular feature of the labour requirements of the oil industry that explains the compatibility between

foreign oil production and repressive dictatorships, there being no necessity to ensure the reproduction and well-being of a local labour force.

Dependency on the hydrocarbons sector impacts negatively on the economy in other ways. Not only does it contribute only marginally to employment creation, comprising something around 5 per cent or perhaps even less of Algeria's employment, but a characteristic of oil-dependent *rentier* states is that there is little economic necessity or other motivation to promote alternative sources of foreign exchange, such as tourism, or to diversify into and develop other domestic economic activities, such as import-substituting manufacturing, agriculture and agricultural processing, tourism etc., all of which are more labour intensive than the hydrocarbons sector. In Algeria, for example (unlike Morocco and Tunisia which have few oil resources, but have instead developed big tourism industries and more efficient agricultural sectors), a neglected agricultural sector has made the country heavily dependent on imported foodstuffs. As for its almost non-existent tourism sector, Algeria's 'Dirty War' and subsequent 'War on Terror' have been convenient excuses for an influential section of *le pouvoir*, which for cultural-ideological reasons (and the fear of private sector initiatives that it cannot so easily control) does not want to see the development of a tourism industry, to block initiatives in that direction. Indeed, in the southern Saharan regions, where tourism is the main 'industry' of the indigenous Tuareg population, the government's blockage of local tourism initiatives has done much to fuel local political opposition. It is therefore not entirely surprising that Algeria, the richest oil state in the Mediterranean region, has its highest rate of unemployment.⁵⁴

Although official statistics on unemployment in Algeria are suspect, unemployment is probably higher in its Saharan regions (excluding the securitised oil-gas zones). This is not simply because the state has made little effort to diversify the economy, but because unemployment is 'exported' into the south from the northern regions. This is done by *walis* (regional governors) in the Saharan regions ensuring that public works contracts are given to employers (and their workforces) from the north. For example, local contractors in Tamanrasset, the regional capital of the extreme south, are frequently prevented physically from submitting tenders for public works contracts, which are given instead to contractors from the north. Such practices lead to massive political resentment and unrest. However, the regime remains confident that unrest in the desert towns can be more easily contained than in the populous and more politically sensitive northern regions. So far its calculations have proven correct: an almost continuous series of riots in almost every major desert town over the last 2-3 years has been contained by a seemingly ever-expanding security apparatus. Indeed, in some of these instances, such as the Tamanrasset riots in July 2005 (see above), the confidence of the state in being able to suppress civil unrest is such that state security agents have actually acted as agents provocateurs. Their reason for doing so in Tamanrasset was to direct the rioters to attack and burn down certain government offices, which contained archival evidence of much of the administration's embezzlement of central government funds, prior to an inspection from the procurator-fiscal's office!

Algeria's chronic unemployment problem, which is an outcome of the country's narrow, capital intensive economic base, is a reflection of and is compounded by the narrow class interests of the country's political and military elites who, as Lahouari has remarked, use and perpetuate the worst features of their *rentier* economy, as they have used violence, to maintain themselves in power.⁵⁵

Hydrocarbons & Corruption

While Algeria's high unemployment is an outcome of its dependency on the hydrocarbons sector, it is not actually the cause of that unemployment. It does not necessarily follow that because a country earns much of its foreign exchange from such rents it should suffer high unemployment. The link between oil and unemployment is not that oil is labour intensive, but that its exploitation has been used by the country's political and military elites for their narrow self-interests. To blame oil *per se* is to present a distorted perspective of Algeria's ills and one that is not shared by the majority of its citizens. On the contrary, from almost 50 years experience of oil exploration and production in the country's Saharan regions, Algerians know only too well that oil and gas production are capital intensive industries that create revenue streams rather than employment.

The question asked by most Algerians is why so many of them live in such relative poverty while the country, in terms of its foreign exchange earnings and reserves, is comparatively wealthy. In the Saharan regions of the country, the same question has a more localised twist in that it asks why oil revenues are not benefiting the regions from which the oil/gas has been extracted. This is not such an issue in Libya where oil revenues are seen to be funding such massive national infrastructural schemes as the Man-Made River and, since 2005, public housing. In Algeria, however, where corruption is so endemic as to be a major impediment to the country's future economic development, the question is usually put in an even less nuanced manner. Quite simply: where have the revenues gone?

Algeria's economy is almost totally dependent on its hydrocarbons industry: it provides more than 35 per cent of the country's GNP and 98 per cent of its incoming revenue. With the oil price in excess of \$60 a barrel, the country's financial surplus in 2005 was estimated at \$61.01 billion,⁵⁶ making it one of the world's richest countries in terms of foreign exchange surpluses. Although the regime talks much about 'economic reform' and a \$50 billion programme of public infrastructure to 'relaunch the economy', there are few overt signs of expenditure beyond the obvious strengthening of the country's military and security forces upon whom the ruling elites – the hidden forces (*le pouvoir*) – base themselves. There are few signs of expenditure on much-needed economic reforms, other than contracts given largely to foreign firms involved in some of the 'stop-start' infrastructural projects.⁵⁷ Indeed, many of these appear to be 'on hold' as the regime prefers to squander the country's financial resources on what Lahouari describes as non-wealth creating consumption and a sprinkling of largesse designed to patch up and hide the deprivations of the population as a whole.⁵⁸ While the government boasts colossal foreign exchange reserves, the masses simply ask how much is being siphoned off by the 'hidden forces' of the regime – the political and military elites – into their own pockets and the proverbial Swiss bank accounts.

How much longer such political discontent can be contained is debatable. Much will depend on the future price of oil. At present, buoyant oil and gas prices are enabling the state to fund a massively increased security establishment. If and when international oil and gas prices retrace to much lower levels, Algeria could face an even more acute re-run of the crisis that overwhelmed the country in the late 1980s.

Resource Exploitation, the Environment & Indigenous Rights

Two other fronts of emerging political opposition in relation to resource exploitation concern the increasing awareness of environmental degradation and fraud and the abuse of indigenous rights. The environmental factor should not be underestimated, especially where oil producing areas overrun what are perceived as traditional 'indigenous' lands – notably those of the Tuareg, but also other Saharan-dwellers. Amongst a small, but seemingly rapidly growing proportion of these people, political resentment and opposition is being directed, largely through lack of alternative channels, towards the consideration of 'indigenous rights', especially those relating to the exploitation of the land and labour and the degradation of environmental resources.

Such an avenue of political protest is problematic in that none of the many international agreements and conventions on indigenous rights is recognised or has been ratified by any of these states. This provides foreign oil, mining and water companies with a certain legal freedom of abuse. But emerging local political organisations are likely in the near future to appeal over the heads of their own governments to international organisations, such as the UN, and the governments of the foreign companies concerned in an attempt to achieve compliance with both internationally recognised conventions and the relevant laws and standards operative in the countries in which these companies are head-quartered.

Alongside a growing awareness of international 'indigenous rights' conventions and legislation, local populations – thanks largely to satellite TV and the internet – are becoming far better informed about national struggles, the struggles of labour in neighbouring states and also the importance of challenging corporations in their own countries. For example, workers in Niger have recently begun to organise against the appalling working conditions of the uranium mines, which are controlled by *COGEMA* (*Compagnie générale des matières nucléaires*), a subsidiary of France's huge *AREVA* group, while many more of the country's citizens have demonstrated against the huge hikes in water costs that have stemmed from the actions of another French company, *Veolia Environment*, formerly known as *Vivendi Environment*, the world's largest water company, which has taken a 51 per cent stake in a 100 per cent privatisation of the country's water supply. There is also a small but growing awareness and fear that such multinational companies, having seen the success of Libya's Man-Made River, may have designs on acquiring and exporting the hundreds of thousands of cubic kilometres of 'fossilised' water contained in the Sahara's deep aquifers.

Yet the region's greatest potential environmental threat from such resource exploitation is almost certainly in Chad-Cameroon. There site plans indicate that ExxonMobil has failed to insert the internationally required safety valves into the 1,100 km pipeline that takes Chad's oil to the Atlantic coast. While this may have provided a cost-saving of up to US\$500 million to the ExxonMobil-led oil consortium,⁵⁹ the discovery of this fraud, currently veiled by President Déby's revocation of his government's agreement with the World Bank and the latter's dereliction of its oversight duties, is likely to lead to a further escalation of the political instability, increased repression and violence that has already spilled over from Chad into the Darfur region of Sudan and which is now threatening to engulf Chad itself as 'rebels' seek to disrupt an already tainted electoral process designed to grant Déby a third term of office and thus become what is, in effect, 'president for life'.

Can the US Maintain its Power & Position in North Africa?

Far from furthering the democratisation of North Africa, the US, through its post-9/11 intervention in the region, has presided over its stalled transition. Moreover, the disinformation that has surrounded this intervention has been so disingenuous and so pervasive that any designation of future policy for the region is beset by two related but gigantic problems. The first is that it is now extremely difficult for policy makers to know what is true and what is false. Even the US military and senior members of the administration are tripping over their own lies, as they have to contend increasingly with no longer knowing what is true and what is not. Secondly, impartial analyses of the region, often written by respected academics, are based unwittingly on so many of these untruths that they read more like *Alice in Wonderland*.⁶⁰ To give some measure of the scale of this problem, the half dozen or so articles listed here (Note 7), plus a small number of articles – notably in *Le Monde Diplomatique* – and a handful of radio broadcasts, are counterbalanced by an estimated 3,000 or so articles and broadcasts that are based or draw heavily on disinformation emanating from Washington and/or Algiers.

While we may deplore such mendacity, it has been, in terms of its objective, a stunning success. In creating and then overcoming terror in a region in which terror did not exist, the Bush administration succeeded in creating the ideological conditions for its militarisation and securitisation of much of the African continent. While that is no mean feat, it does raise as many questions about the media and academe as about Washington's disinformation services.

As far as events in North Africa are concerned, Washington is beginning to be embarrassed by the increasingly obvious failure of its stated policies in the region. Its support for the authoritarian regimes of the region and, through them, its launch of a duplicitous 'War on Terror' – for reasons that had more to do with US imperial designs and the militarisation and securitisation of other parts of the continent than the security and well-being of the region and its peoples – have done nothing to further security and democratisation in North Africa. And, lest we forget that America's militarisation of Africa is as much about resources as 'terrorism', 'the connection between abundant oil, rents and the aggrandizement of the authoritarian state, at the expense of an autonomous civil society,' as John Entelis commented, 'cannot be overemphasised'.⁶¹ Rather, the US has unleashed and has found itself running up against a whole raft of pressures and conflicts, ranging from increasing hatred for Washington and its imperial presence to the forms of opposition and organisation outlined above. There is also reason to believe that Washington is becoming increasingly anxious about the implications of its sponsorship of state terrorism in the region, as has been revealed through this journal's regular reports on the launch, progress and implications of its 'War on Terror' in the region.⁶²

However, the US intervention in North Africa over the past four years or so cannot be seen in isolation from events elsewhere in the world, notably the failure of US policy in Afghanistan, in Iraq especially, in other countries of the Middle East and in its attempts elsewhere to globalise its 'War on Terror'. It is the changing dynamics of US policy towards and intervention in these regions, as well as increasing tensions and conflicts within the US administration itself, exacerbated by likely changes in the balance and alignment of political forces within the US, as much as events and pressure from within the North African-Saharan region, that are currently leading to a perceptible change in US rhetoric on the region.

Washington's rhetoric on North Africa, in the face of a fast-failing, lame duck presidency (and an embattled Secretary of Defence), is noticeably less vociferous than it was a year or more ago. The threat of terrorism and the need for military intervention, perhaps not surprisingly in the light of what has now been revealed about North Africa's 'terrorism', is no longer being trumpeted so loudly. However, whether the US can maintain its elite power in the region and its position there now seems increasingly unlikely. In spite of the increasingly recognised foreign policy failures of the Bush-Cheney regime, Washington does not appear either prepared or able to make the sort of policy changes necessary to avoid what looks like becoming a classic case of imperial over-reach.

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Endnotes

1. Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, 2nd ed., Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner, 1991, p. 7. Buzan draws upon W. B. Gallie's 'Essentially Contested Concepts', in Max Black (ed.), *The Importance of Language*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1962, pp. 121-46.

2. Patrick M. Morgan, 'Safeguarding Security Studies', *Arms Control*, 13 (3), December 1992, p. 466.

3. T. Terriff, S. Croft, L. James & P.M. Morgan, *Security Studies Today* (see Introduction), Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 1999.

4. Green (low), blue (guarded), yellow (elevated), orange (high), red (severe).

5. John P. Entelis, 'The Democratic Imperative vs. the Authoritarian Impulse: The Maghreb State between Transition and Terrorism', Note 2, in *Strategic Insights*, Vol. IV, Issue 6 (June 2005). (available online at: <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2005/Jun/entelisJun05.asp>).

6. This aim, which also covers the remainder of the Arab world, is contained in Washington's Broader Middle East Initiative.

7. Military assistance takes several forms. Algeria, as America's lead regional ally in the 'war on terror' has received a dramatic increase in funding for US-based training of its military officers under the IMET (International Military Education and Training) program, with almost \$600,000 being provided in 2003 compared to only \$30,000 in 2002 (Note 5). In addition, Algeria's military has also benefited considerably from the PSI-TSCTI initiative, the construction of a huge new military air base at Tamanrasset and the provision of essential high-tec military needs as night-vision, surveillance and communications equipment, etc. In addition, as a classic rentier state, the high oil and gas prices over the last couple of years have enabled a massive reinforcement of the state's coercive structures.

8. Note 5.

9. The details of this 'War on Terror', as it has unfolded, have been published in a number of articles: Mustafa Barth, 'Sand-castles in the Sahara: US military basing in Algeria', *ROAPE* Vol. 30, No. 98, 2003, pp. 679-685; J. Keenan, 'Americans & "Bad People" in the Sahara-Sahel', *ROAPE* Vol. 31, No. 99, 2004, pp. 130-139; J. Keenan, 'Terror in the Sahara: the Implications of US imperialism for North and West Africa', *ROAPE* Vol. 31, No. 101, 2004, pp. 475-496; J. Keenan, 'Political Destabilisation and "Blowback" in the Sahel', *ROAPE* Vol. 31, No. 102, December 2004, pp. 691-698; J. Keenan, 'Waging war on terror: the implications of America's 'New Imperialism' for Saharan peoples.' *Journal of North African Studies*, Special Issue. The Sahara: Past, Present and Future, Vol. 10, Nos. 3-4 (Autumn-Winter) 2005, pp. 610-638. The full details of the US 'War on Terror' in North Africa, based on six years continuous 'field research' into North African, Saharan and

Sahelian security are to be published in Jeremy Keenan, *Alice in the Sahara: Moving Mirrors and the USA's War on Terror in the Sahara*, forthcoming, Pluto Press 2007.

10. An ICG report confirmed that the Sahel, contrary to US government assertions, was 'not a hotbed of terrorist activity'; see *Islamic Terrorism in the Sahel: Fact or Fiction?* International Crisis Group, Africa Report No. 92, 31 March 2005. Further evidence in support of the ICG Report and the reasons why southern Algeria was so politically, socially and geographically unsuited to this sort of terrorism are detailed in J. Keenan, *Alice in the Sahara ...* (Note 9).

11. For details of these modus operandi, etc., see *Alice in the Sahara ...* (Note 9).

12. Note 9, especially *Alice in the Sahara ...*

13. This was how the US military referred increasingly to their presence and activities in the Sahara-Sahel (see ICG report, Note 10).

14 This conclusion excludes the specific actions of certain Egyptian and Maghreb-based terrorist groups, the bombing of the synagogue in Tunisia in 2002 and the suicide bombings in Casablanca in 2003. It also excludes the related actions by Morocco's shadowy Islamic Combatant Group, their likely involvement in the bombings of Madrid's Atocha Station in 2004, and the continuing 'low-level' actions of the GSPC in Algeria and further afield. An example of the later, although more likely a 'vendetta' between certain trafficking groups and the Algerian customs services, was possibly the killing of 13 customs agents and the wounding of eight others by gunmen near Ghardaia on 8 April 2006.

15. J. Keenan, 'Waging war on terror: the implications of America's 'New Imperialism' for Saharan peoples.' *Journal of North African Studies*, Special Issue, The Sahara: Past, Present and Future. Vol. 10, Nos. 3-4 (Autumn-Winter) 2005, pp. 610-638.

16. *Stars and Stripes*, 15 January 2004 (European edition, 12 January 2004).

17. Jim Fisher-Thompson, 'US-African partnership helps counter terrorists in Sahel region', Washington File, US Department of State Information Service (undated. believed to be 24. March 2004).

18. Details of this intelligence or, more appropriately, the lack of it are analysed in *Alice in the Sahara ...* (Note 9).

19. See Note 16.

20. Details of these meetings are given in *Alice in the Sahara ...*(see Note 9). It is not clear whether the Americans were aware that there had been an earlier attempt to take four European tourists hostage in the Algerian Sahara some four months earlier. The attempt was botched. In a classic 'right hand left hand' operation, the *gendarmierie nationale* succeeded in tracking and capturing the 'terrorists', only for higher military authority to order their release! Further evidence of Algeria's planning and orchestration of *El Para's* hostage-taking was that within a few weeks of the Arak incident, local nomads notified the military authorities at Illizi that they had sold meat to and observed a group of heavily armed, bearded strangers, preparing hideouts in the gorges of the Tamelrik mountains. The military authorities, not surprisingly, took no action then or later to investigate the nomads' report. These were the hideouts that would be used only a few weeks later by *El Para's* men to hold 15 of the 32 European hostages captive for some three months before they were taken to Mali.

21. Military relations were not cut altogether. In 1997 the US delivered 6 Gulf Stream carriers to Algeria. In 1998 America's Vice-Admiral Joseph Lopez, second-in-command of NATO's southern European flank, visited Algiers. A visit to Algiers in February 1999 by US Admirals Abbot (deputy commander US forces in Europe) and Daniel Murphy (US Sixth Fleet) preceded joint naval manoeuvres in 2000 between the small Algerian navy and warships and aircraft from the US Sixth Fleet. Moreover, according to the *MAOL (Mouvement Algerien des Officiers Libres)*, a CIA agent (named) worked closely with Algerian military intelligence throughout this period. Other such ties are also now coming to light.

22. Dick Cheney was Chairman of the National Energy Policy Group whose report entitled *National Energy Policy*, was published in May 2001, four months before 9/11 (electronic version at <http://>

www.whitehouse.gov). The report highlighted America's energy shortages and focused attention on the importance of Africa as a future source of US oil supplies.

23. *World Tribune*, 16 July 2001.

24. Notably EUCOM's Supreme Allied Commander, General Ralston (General Jones's predecessor).

25. This was from a modest \$121,000 in 2001 to \$200,000 in 2002 (and to \$550,000 in 2003).

26. Information on US intelligence service activity in the region provided by local informants in Bamako, Gao and the Tessalit and Taoudeni regions.

27. See Mustafa Barth (Note 9) for discussion of US military basing in Algeria, and Jeremy Keenan, 'Americans and "Bad People" ...' (Note 9) for clarification of America's new concept of basing rights in Africa.

28. *World Tribune*, 6 May 2003; *New York Times*, 4 July 2003.

29. Stephen Ellis, 'The Pan-Sahel Initiative', *African Affairs*, Vol. 103, No. 412, pp. 459-464.

30. Further suspicion has been aroused by US references to assistance from French intelligence agents in specific field locations when there were no French, but only DRS agents, in the locations cited. This data is from my own field research in the areas specified.

31. The negotiators believed that this was at the request of the US, which is believed to have wanted a military showdown (personal communication from the negotiators).

32. Dana Priest, 'Help from France Key in Covert Operations', *Washington Post*, 3 July 2005.

33. Ibid. There is now emerging evidence of French troops stationed in its former Sahelian colonies serving as a proxy army for US interests. For example, it now appears that French troops in Chad played a far greater role than initially reported in thwarting the attack on the Chad capital of N'Djamena in April 2006 by rebels trying to overthrow President Déby. The US has been supportive of the Déby regime through its PSI and in supporting ExxonMobil's lead role in developing the country's oil resources. While the French state that their military presence and intervention was purely to protect French citizens and interests, reports from N'Djamena now indicate that the US encouraged France to assist Déby's forces.

34. See: Lounis Aggoun & Jean-Baptiste Rivoire, *Françalgérie, crimes et mensonges d'Etats (France-Algeria, state crimes and lies)*, *La Découverte*, Paris, 2004; Salima Mellah & Jean-Baptiste Rivoire, 'Who Staged the tourist kidnappings?' *Le Monde Diplomatique*, February 2005.

35. These include the hijacking of an Air France Airbus in 1994, the bombings of Paris's public transport in 1995 and the kidnapping and murder of the Tibhirine monks in 1996.

36. The death of a German subject while in *El Para's* hands raises legal questions which, under the circumstances, the German state might prefer not to have to consider. In this context it should be noted that the German authorities have placed considerable pressure on the former hostages to remain silent.

37. Alison Pargeter, 'Libya: Reforming the Impossible', *ROAPE*, Vol. 33, No. 108, 2006.

38. Ibid.

39. 'In April 2005, for example, Qadhafi gave the police military powers in order to better tackle terrorist infiltrators' (Note 37).

40. Note 37.

41. There are many definitions of terrorism. By 'conventional', I mean that terrorism is the threatened or employed use of violence against civilian targets for political objectives. Jonathan Barker, paraphrasing Boaz Ganor, elaborates, saying: 'This applies to governments (and their agencies and proxies) as well as to non-governmental groups and individuals. It excludes non-violent political actions such as protests, strikes, demonstrations, tax revolts and civil disobedience. It also excludes violent actions against military and police forces'; Jonathan Barker, *The No-Nonsense Guide to Terrorism*, Between the Lines, Canada & New Internationalist Publications, Oxford, 2003; Boaz Ganor, 'Defining Terrorism: Is One Man's Terrorist Another Man's Freedom Fighter?' *The International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism*, 23 September 1998 (<http://www.ict.org.il/>). 'Terrorism' does not include such fairly

normal Saharan pursuits as smuggling (now termed trafficking), acts of political rebellion (often referred to by the governments concerned as banditry and criminality) or the many forms of resistance of civil society towards the corrupt and authoritarian regimes which hold sway over most of this part of Africa.

42. There has been some increase in *salafiste* activity in parts of the Sahel in recent years. The most widely publicised has been that of the *Tablighi Jama'at* movement in Mali, especially around Kidal.

43. The expansion of the security forces was planned in 2004 and is due to be complete by 2008. On 6th April 2006, the government announced the creation of two new army battalions, one to fight terrorism and the other to work on ECOWAS missions.

44. Lahouari Addi, 'The Political Contradictions of the Algerian Economic Reforms', *ROAPE*, Vol. 33, No. 108, 2006.

45. *Ibid.*

46. The author was in Tamanrasset at the time and interviewed onlookers.

47. There is a particular irony in this case in that the funds appear, at least in part, to have been diverted to the financing of *El Para's* 'terrorist' activities in the region. We therefore have the ironic situation of the World Bank's new President, Paul Wolfowitz, a key architect of the Iraq war, making much ado about stamping out corruption, when his institute, albeit before his term of office, was almost certainly part-financing US-orchestrated state terrorism in the Sahara!

48. See Thomas Omestad, 'The Casbah Connection', *US News*, 9 May 2005.

49. See Jacob Mundy, 'Autonomy and *Intifadah*: New Horizons in Western Saharan Nationalism', *ROAPE*, Vol. 33, No. 108, 2006.

50. See Lahouari Addi. Note 44.

51. Glenn Kessler and Robin Wright, 'U.S. Image in Bad Shape', *Washington Post*, 24 September 2005.

52. For details of North Africa's migration, see Martin Baldwin-Edwards, 'Between a Rock and a Hard Place: North Africa as a region of emigration, immigration and transit migration.' *ROAPE* Vol. 33, No. 108, 2006.

53. A number of sources have recently reported that Algeria is purchasing a massive \$7.5 billion arms package from Russia, on top of a \$4.7 billion outstanding debt on previous Russian arms sales. Algeria will account for 20 per cent of Russian arm sales. Reports indicate that Algeria will pay for these arms by giving Russian companies access to oil and gas rich regions. Russia is the number one gas exporter to Europe, with about 26 per cent of the market. By coordinating its export policies in a 'Kasparov-like' move with number three exporter Algeria (about 10 per cent of the European market), 'Russia may be able to increase its leverage within Europe, complicate the EU's efforts to diversify its sources of supply, and leverage that improved position into greater participation in and influence over Europe's pipeline projects' (*Defense Industry Daily*, 15 March 2006).

54. The official rate in 2005 was 22.5 per cent. However, the 'real' rate is generally considered to be in excess of 30 per cent, while youth unemployment (age 20-26) is around 40 per cent in several regions.

55. Note 44.

56. Note 44.

57. These include an east-west motorway, railways redevelopment, urban transport, social housing, water distribution, etc. (see Note 44).

58. *Ibid.*

59. Jeremy Keenan, 'Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline: World Bank and ExxonMobil in Last Chance Saloon', *ROAPE*, Vol. 32, No. 104/5, June-September 2005, pp. 395-405.

60. It would be unfair to single out any one article by way of illustration as they run into hundreds.

61. Note 5.

62. Note 9.

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'New Imperialism' for Saharan peoples', *Journal of North African Studies*, Special Issue: The Sahara: Past, Present and Future, Vol. 10, Nos. 3-4 (Autumn-Winter), pp. 610-638; (2005), 'Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline: World Bank & Exxon Mobil in Last Chance Saloon', *ROAPE*, Vol. 32, No. 104/5, June-September, pp. 395-405; (forthcoming/2007), *Alice in the Sahara: Moving Mirrors and the USA's War on Terror in the Sahara*, London: Pluto Press.

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STOP PRESS**Tuareg Take Up Arms in Mali**

Dozens, possibly hundreds of Tuareg, took up arms and overran two army bases at Kidal and Menaka in NE Mali on 23 May. Summary details of the attack, its background and implications for wider Saharan unrest are given in a Briefing, page 267.