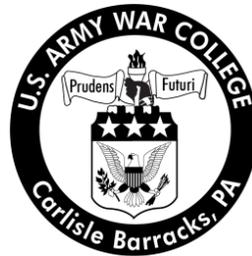


Strategy Research Project International Fellow

Evaluating U.S. and EU Trans Sahel Policies

by

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United States Army War College
Class of 2013

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Abstract

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The importance of Africa has increased significantly over the last decade, for a variety of reasons, to include increased terrorist activities, regional economic concerns, and international migration. Faced with the growing strategic importance of Africa, this paper will examine the strategic policies of both the United States of America and the European Union and determine what are the challenges that will face USA and EU vital interests in the Trans-Sahel for the next ten years. To accomplish this task, this paper will review pertinent USA and EU national strategic policy documents and specific actions in the Trans-Sahel, and identify specific areas where these policies and actions are successful or unsuccessful and determine what common challenges they have to overcome. This paper will conclude with relevant questions for developing effective USA and EU strategic policy and actions in the Trans-Sahel.

Evaluating U.S. and EU Trans Sahel Policies

Over the past decade, the United States and Europe have become increasingly focused on security in the Sahel and Sahara region—defined here as Mauritania, Mali, and Niger, as well as adjacent areas in Algeria and Libya—for fear that the territory could become a new safe haven for extremist groups linked to al-Qaeda. These fears appeared to have been borne out by the 2012 insurgency in northern Mali that saw northern cities fall under the control of two groups closely linked to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM); Ansar Eddine and the Movement for Tawhid and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO).

Faced with the growing strategic importance of Africa, this paper will examine the strategic policies of both the United States of America and the European Union and determine what are the challenges that will threaten USA and EU vital interests in the Trans-Sahel for the next ten years. To accomplish this task, this paper will review pertinent USA and EU national strategic policy documents and specific actions in the Trans-Sahel, identify specific areas where these policies and actions are successful or unsuccessful and determine what common challenges the USA and EU have to overcome. This paper will conclude with relevant questions to a pertinent USA and EU strategic policy and actions in the Trans-Sahel.

The Trans-Sahel Region

The Sahel is a strip of land separating the Sahara Desert in North Africa from the sub-Saharan forest region. It stretches from West Africa to the Red Sea, extending through Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Chad, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Sudan, and Ethiopia. The Sahel countries are named among the “poorest countries in the world, with poverty rates of over 50%, and most are seriously conflict

prone.”¹ The Sahel has experienced long periods of extensive drought, resulting from climate change and the rapid advance of the Sahara desert toward the South. Given the endemic weakness of state structures in the Sahel, both external forces and non-state actors play a critical role in the region’s life and politics.

The former can be divided into ‘regional’ external actors (a category in which Algeria, Libya and Nigeria stand out) and Non-state actors. The latter include indigenous nomadic groups, like the Tuareg, but also terrorist organizations and drug-trafficking networks. Non-state actors interact with each other, and with the various state actors who operate in the region. While this penetration by external forces and non-state actors is the result of a lack of governance structures, it paradoxically constitutes itself a systemic obstacle to the consolidation of state structures. It is through this vicious circle of weak governance structures, external penetration and non-state actors that one must read the region’s specific security and development challenges.

The first section of this paper introduces the main state actors, geostrategic dynamics and non-state actors defining the region and will then focus on the specific security and development challenges that currently impact the region.

Main State Actors and Geostrategic Dynamics

Regional Players

Libya is geographically and historically tied to the dynamics of the Sahel, which has often led to frictions with Algeria. The Qadhafi regime played a strong role in its southern periphery, intervening directly via training, arming and financing activities in Mali, Niger, Chad and Sudan.² Qadhafi has also provided political, financial and operational support to the Polisario front,³ fostered a Mauritanian-Malian rapprochement and used his gas and oil cash reserves to strengthen Libya’s position in Mali.⁴ Relying

on a strategy of controlled chaos, he simultaneously provided financial aid to Bamako as well as money and weapons to Tuareg groupings in the north.

Algeria is another key actor in the region, with the largest military budget in Africa (\$8,6 billion in 2011).⁵ It is particularly strong in the field of counter-terrorism capabilities but has recently also invested considerable resources in acquiring high-tech conventional weaponry. Although it is wary of taking its military beyond its own borders, even in situations of hot pursuit, Algeria plays a leading role in coordinating the Trans Sahel fight against terrorism.⁶

Furthermore, Algeria primarily follows a defensive approach, seeking to limit the influence of others, but remaining wary about exercising power beyond its own borders. It enjoys strong relations with a number of European countries, particularly Spain and Italy, but also Germany and the UK. It also has a strong relationship with China and Russia – most notably in the defense-industrial field. Most importantly, Algeria has over the past decade become a key partner of the United States. The US is Algeria's top export destination, taking in 25% of Algerian exports. Since 11 September, the US has come to regard Algeria as a key asset in the fight against terrorism in both the Maghreb and Sahel regions and, to that end established a bilateral counterterrorist contact group with Algeria in February 2011.⁷

Nigeria is a third actor who has been increasingly pulled into the region. The rise in activity of Boko Haram in northern Nigeria, a group for which the Sahel offers strategic depth, is likely to increase Nigeria's interest in the region. In addition, increasing stability in northern Mali has become an object of broader regional concern and resulted in the implication of the Economic Community of West African States

(ECOWAS), where Nigeria plays a leading role. With the second largest GDP in Africa (\$414 billion in 2011),⁸ a defense budget of \$2,23 billion⁹ and its large oil and natural gas reserves, Nigeria is an emerging leader in the neighboring West African region and is strongly committed to the fight against Islamist terrorism.

The Role of Non-State Actors

The permanent presence of non-state actors and the destabilizing effects their activities have upon the region's political and economic life are critical security challenges for the Sahel. The non state actors that populate the region can be divided into those groups for whom the Sahel is their only area of action (particularly the Tuareg), those for whom it is a source of strategic depth (such as AQIM whose main target is Algeria or, potentially, Boko Haram) and those for whom it is a transit area into other environments (i.e. drug trafficking networks).

The **Tuareg** are the main indigenous social group inhabiting the Sahel. They share a nomadic lifestyle and are mostly found in the northern parts of Niger and Mali, but also in southern Algeria and Libya and the northern parts of Burkina Faso.¹⁰ They are closer to the main political actors in the region who often offer them economic opportunities, including drug trafficking networks, but are a resilient social group that does not integrate into other structures. It is in Mali where the difficulties for integration are greater and Tuareg rebellions have been more frequent. The *Movement National de Liberation de l'Azawad* (MNLA)¹¹ only represents the latest incarnation of a deeply rooted movement of Tuaregs demanding the political autonomy of their desert lands.

Al Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is a well-established terrorist group¹² that benefits from the region's lack of governance and economic structures and uses drug flows as a critical source for financing its activities.¹³ It also uses economic

assistance to the local population and uses marriages into local tribes as key elements in its strategy of local implantation in the Sahel.¹⁴ AQIM is an evolution of the Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC's French acronym) and its cadres are mainly composed of Algerians. AQIM is divided into two main branches, one based in Algeria and the other in Mali.¹⁵ The Mali branch constitutes a rear base that gives AQIM strategic depth for its operations in Algeria and Mauritania. Mali itself is not a target for AQIM, but is a safe haven, which leads many to wonder whether there is a tacit agreement of 'live and let live' between AQIM and the Malian state.¹⁶

Besides the Touareg there are other non-state actors that, although operating outside the Sahel's 'core', effect and are affected by the region's dynamics. Boko Haram¹⁷ is in this category.

Boko Haram is a Salafist group that operates in north-eastern Nigeria and battles what it perceives to be a Christian-biased and western leaning state.¹⁸ This group formed in 2009 underwent a process of radicalization and has become an increasingly important actor over the last few years. It is animated by the country's ethnic and religious tensions and grounded in the strong Islamist tradition of the country's north-east. While it does not currently have a direct impact upon the Sahel, it operates in southern Niger, which provides it with a source of strategic depth against Nigeria. Its closeness to the region and interaction with a number of Sahel actors leads to the conclusion that Boko Haram's very existence and expansion is likely to impact the Sahel in a number of ways.¹⁹

The Effects of Recent Developments (Arab spring)

The recent changes in the Arab region have ushered in the unquestionable ascendance of governments led by a solid Islamist component.²⁰ Expressing the

European assessment of the Arab awakening, the United States' Ambassador Leon Gross argues that regime changes in the MENA region (Middle East and North Africa) will 'logically' bring Islamists to power in the entire region including the Trans Sahel. This appears to be the common feature of the post-Arab spring upheavals, especially as it seems that neither violent Al Qaeda-like radicals, nor advocates of Iranian-style theocracy, nor hazy Islamist liberals have fared well in the elections held so far. Instead, "the prize is going to groups linked to the centrist Muslim Brotherhood, to evolutionary rather than revolutionary change, and more concerned with questions of Islamic identity and ethics than with imposing rigid God-given rules."²¹

The effect of the Arab spring on the region provides a strong example of the Impact of Libyan Returnees on Political Stability.²² The return of Tuareg fighters to their Saharan habitat represents a small part of a much broader trend of population movements instigated by the Libyan conflict. By the end of 2011, the International Organization for Migration registered 209,030 "returnees" from Libya (95,760 in Niger, 82,433 in Chad, 11,230 in Mali and 780 in Mauritania). When combined with unregistered migration, overall figures are estimated to be about twice as high.²³ These returnees are overwhelmingly adult males with low levels of education who provided manual labor in the petrodollar-fuelled Libyan economy.

Furthermore, a recent ECHO situation report estimated the overall number of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in northern Mali alone at over 122,000. With the food crisis in sight, these population movements are set to aggravate an already precarious humanitarian situation. This must be seen in combination with the economic impact that this reversal of labor migration causes. In fact, the remittances

that these workers used to send home represented a major coping mechanism in times of food crises.²⁴ It is also unclear to what extent the post-Qadhafi Libya will return to its policies of investing significant amounts of financial resources into its Sahelian *Hinterland*.²⁵ As a result, it is likely that the increasing population density, water scarcity and loss of income could transform a humanitarian emergency into a full-blown political crisis precipitating more violence.

Such discrepancies have highlighted different approaches in furthering European and US policies in the Trans Sahel region compared to other countries such as the Russia and China.

The European Union Policy

The Sahel region constitutes Europe's southern geopolitical border. Any instability there will eventually find its way into the European neighborhood and Europe itself.²⁶ With the important exception of the implications of the Mali conflict, the EU's Sahel strategic policy accurately identified most of the challenges affecting the region.²⁷ In order to counter such challenges, the strategy adopted by the EU identifies a series of strategic lines of action that set the framework for a number of concrete projects. In fact, the Sahel strategy adopted intensified engagement along four strategic lines of action: (1) development, good governance and internal conflict resolution; (2) political and diplomatic action; (3) security and rule of law; and (4) the fight against violent extremism and radicalization.

Political Progress

The overall trend as identified in the EU Sahel strategy implementation report is that significant progress has been made while challenges remain.²⁸ Positive developments have taken place not only within the region but also with respect to the

overall coherence of EU action. In this category, a high degree of acceptance of the strategy by partner countries, a convergence of threat perceptions and intended policy responses and – perhaps most important – an increasingly cooperative attitude of Algeria should be pointed.²⁹ As recent ministerial level visits indicate, a significant level of ‘quiet diplomacy’ is ongoing.³⁰

The most visible progress, however, relates to the functioning of the EU structure itself. The Sahel strategy is receiving a high degree of political as well as bureaucratic attention. As such, the awareness of the interconnectedness between the security and development domains has increased. One study argues, for example, that the Sahel task force structure is to some extent “forcing actors to work together” and that rather than ‘securitizing development’ the strategy is ‘developing security’.³¹

Project Implementation

Since the adoption of the Sahel strategy, a number of new projects have been set-up and others already in the implementation stage have progressed.

One of these projects is the Counter Terrorism Sahel program, financed through the long-term component of Instrument for Stability (€6,7 million, 2012-2014 period), which aims to strengthen local capacities and improve regional cooperation for fighting terrorism and organized crime. It includes the creation of a virtual Sahel Security College similar to the European Police College for training justice and law enforcement actors and fostering the sharing of information and expertise. The College’s “kick-off” took place in the spring of 2012 and the first courses (e.g. train the trainers) began from September 2012. Within all three countries involved (Mali, Mauritania and Niger) the program also foresees specifically tailored assistance to civilian law enforcement actors.

However, an implicit intention exists to associate military cadres as much as possible, as their exclusion is deemed to be counter-productive.

Another program funded by the Instrument Of Stability (IfS), is the West Africa Police Information System (€2,2 million). This initiative aims to design a platform for police information exchange linking in a first phase the tools of 5 countries (Benin, Ghana, Mali, Mauritania and Niger), ECOWAS and INTERPOL. The European Development Fund also provides financial means (€41 million between 2012 and 2017) for the ECOWAS Peace and Security Project with the twin aims of strengthening institutional capacity and implementing selected thematic components of ECOWAS conflict prevention efforts.

As described by **Mali's** Country Strategy Paper (CSP) and National Indicative Program (NIP), “the inadequacy of the infrastructure and the costs of energy and transport are the main factors holding back the country’s development”, whilst critical levels of poverty (affecting 73% of the rural population), lack of health and education blight much of the population. Moreover a long term plan focusing on north-south road infrastructure is settled to decentralize and implement the Strategic Framework for Poverty Reduction.

In addition this plan is tied in closely to the government’s Strategy Framework for Growth and Poverty Reduction, dividing its €533 million funding into four main tranches: governance (11%), economic development of the North and Niger delta (50%), reform in the education, health and transport sectors (28%) and other support for productive sectors under Economic Partnership Agreements (11%). The Sahel strategy makes clear that the PSPSDN³² remains an objective by which to combat insecurity and

terrorism in northern Mali; alongside targeting drug trafficking. Mali will direct its €50 million 'Sahel envelope' along 5 main sectors, reflecting the administrative and security themes of its PSPSDN: Justice (€20 million); Decentralization (€15 million); Security (€8 million); Conflict Prevention/ Resolution (€6,5 million); Political/Diplomatic Support (€0.5 million). It should be noted that many of these programs are currently on hold as a result of the Tuareg rebellion.

On the other hand, **Mauritania's** CSP/NIP³³ identifies two focal sectors of the funding given by EU of €156 million: Governance (€47 million) and regional integration and transport (€56 million). In addition, general budget support for poverty alleviation (€40 million) is envisaged alongside 'activities outside the focal sectors' (€13 million). In this context we will notice that Mauritania's comprehensive national strategy to fight terrorism identifies five components: doctrinal and religious; cultural and academic; communication; political; justice, defense and security.

Moreover, Mauritania will spend its €8,4 million 'Sahel envelope' on these internal components. This includes, for instance, a major border security project financed through the short-term component of the IfS.

The **Niger's** CSP/NIP has two objectives: first, supporting the National Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy and the practical application of ownership; and second, aligning and harmonizing the results-based management. Given the strong imbalance between its demographic growth and its economic growth, Niger will spend its €458 million in boosting rural growth and improving regional integration and good governance. For Niger, the EU Sahel strategy identifies the current action plan for judicial reform (via the Superior Court of Niger dealing with terrorism and

trafficking), and the need for a specific strategy to fight insecurity and terrorism. Niger will thus divide its €91,6 million 'Sahel envelope' between administrative improvements (judiciary reforms) and alleviating the ongoing food crisis (2011 saw the EU release €12 million to address the food crisis). Additional short term IfS support (€9,1 million) has been made available to help Niger cope with the reintegration of the Libyan returnees.

All of these examples demonstrate that EU engagements with the Sahel region is significant and on the increase; is this true of US policy towards the region?

United States of America's Policy for the Region

Since 11 September 2001, the war on terror has drawn the United States into both the Maghreb and the Sahel as part of a US effort to fight terrorism at its source. The first engagement, starting in 2002; was the 'Pan Sahel Initiative', which aimed at protecting borders against arms trade, drug trade and terrorist movements.³⁴ As a result of the Pan Sahel Initiative, the U.S. employed 150-strong Special Forces units that have subsequently engaged in counter-terrorism training and assistance in Mali, Niger, Mauritania and Chad.³⁵ Furthermore, the Pan Sahel Initiative was upgraded in 2005 into the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCTI), which reached out to other countries, including Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Senegal and Nigeria and, eventually Burkina Faso and Libya.

U.S policy has not been solely focused on military cooperation; it includes also action by USAID to foster education, the U.S. State Department to enhance airport security and the U.S. Treasury Department to assist the region's macroeconomic policies. A large number of military exercises have been conducted since 2005 under the framework of the TSCTI in order to improve coordination among the partners in the field of counter terrorism. Apart from these multilateral initiatives, the U.S. has also

placed special emphasis on developing bilateral ties with Algeria, which has become a key US partner since the latter's renewed engagement in the region following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. In addition to Algeria, the U.S. has also sought to continue its strong security cooperation with Morocco, with whom it has engaged in a number of bilateral counter terrorism exercises.³⁶ The approach of the US to the region is characterized by a counter-terrorism mindset and provision of financial and development aid to build up indigenous anti-terrorist capabilities.

The United States strategy with sub-Saharan African countries aims to pursue the following interdependent and mutually reinforcing objectives: (1) strengthen democratic institutions; (2) spur economic growth, trade, and investment; (3) advance peace and security; and (4) promote opportunity and development.

1. Strengthen Democratic Institutions

As the President said in Ghana in 2009, "Africa doesn't need strong men, it needs strong institutions." The US is working to advance democracy by strengthening institutions at every level, supporting and building upon the aspirations of Africans for more open and accountable governance, promoting human rights and the rule of law, and challenging leaders whose actions threaten the credibility of democratic processes.

As the National Security Strategy states,³⁷ the support for democracy is critical to U.S. interests and is a fundamental component of American leadership abroad. In fact, the US is working on Promoting Accountable, Transparent, and Responsive Governance, by expanding efforts to support and empower key reformers and institutions of government at all levels to promote the rule of law, strengthen checks on executive power, and incorporate responsive governance practices.

Moreover, the United States recognizes that Africans must forge lasting solutions, and build their own democracies. To this end, US is supporting those leaders and actors who are creating vibrant democratic models, including elected leaders as well as young Africans who are leaders in civil society and entrepreneurship.

Protecting Human Rights, Civil Society, and Independent Media is another concern for US strategy. In this case, the US is amplifying and supporting voices calling for respect for human rights, rule of law, accountability and transitional justice mechanisms, and independent media. Further, US continue to focus on empowering women and marginalized populations, and opposing discrimination based on disability, gender, or sexual orientation.

2. Spur Economic Growth, Trade, and Investment

To accelerate inclusive economic growth, the United States pursue many actions, including through trade and investment such as promoting an enabling environment for trade and investment.³⁸

US also helps to build the public sector's capacity to provide services and improve protections against illicit financial activity is effective. In turn, strong public financial management helps increase transparency and effectiveness in government operations and broadens the revenue base.

Promoting Regional Integration is another example of US economic strategy towards the region. US is working on increased African regional integration to create larger markets, improve economies of scale, and reduce transaction costs for local, regional, and global trade. This is evident in US work with regional economic communities, including through the U.S.-East African Community Trade and Investment

Initiative and bilateral effort to reduce the barriers to trade and investment flows across the continent.

3. Advance Peace and Security

Although African states are showing increasing capacity to take the lead on security issues on the continent, international and domestic conflict and the inability of some governments to meet the basic security needs of their people continue to be key obstacles to effective democratic governance, economic growth, trade and investment, and human development. US strategy towards that purpose established that only Africa's governments and people can sustainably resolve the security challenges and internal divisions that have plagued the continent. Recognizing this fact, the United States pursues many actions such as:

- Counter al-Qa'ida³⁹ and Other Terrorist Groups⁴⁰
- Advance Regional Security Cooperation and Security Sector Reform
- Prevent Transnational Criminal Threats⁴¹
- Prevent Conflict and, Where Necessary, Mitigate Mass Atrocities and Hold Perpetrators Accountable
- Support Initiatives to Promote Peace and Security.⁴²

4. Promote Opportunity and Development

The Presidential Policy Directive on Global Development has charted a new approach that focuses on sustainable development outcomes and a new operational model for U.S. development assistance towards the Trans Sahel Region.⁴³ Many actions have been pursued to further accelerate development progress such as:

- Address Constraints to Growth and Promote Poverty Reduction;

- Promote Food Security;
- Transform Africa's Public Health;
- Increase Opportunities for Women and Youth;
- Respond to Humanitarian Crises While Promoting Resilience;
- Promote Low-emissions Growth and Sustainable Development, and Build Resilience to Climate Change.⁴⁴

Challenges for U.S and EU Policies.

Robert FOWLER, former United Nations diplomat said: "Al-Qaida never owned Afghanistan, they own northern Mali".⁴⁵

The current situation in Mali challenges U.S. and EU goals of promoting stability, democracy, civilian control of the military, and effectively countering terrorist threats in the Trans Sahel. It also raises questions regarding the strategic design and effectiveness of previous U.S. and EU efforts in the region.

On January 11, 2013, France launched military air strikes and ground operations against insurgent targets in northern Mali after Islamist fighters, following months of stalemate, suddenly advanced toward the south and defeated Malian military forces in the town of Konna. The United States is sharing information with French forces and is also providing logistics and surveillance. The United Kingdom and other European states are also providing support.⁴⁶ French President François Hollande has justified the intervention based on the Malian government's request for assistance, portraying the intervention as necessary to prevent the Malian capital from falling into terrorist hands, and additional French deployments in Bamako as helping to protect some 6,000 French citizens.⁴⁷

Prior to French intervention, regional and Western leaders had warned of a rising threat to international security associated with an expansion of AQIM's influence and scope of operations in Mali, a possible spread of violent extremist ideology, and state fragmentation.

The French operation marks a major shift in the context of international responses to the situation in the Trans Sahel, and raises a challenging issue for US and EU in the region. In a radio interview, Oumar Ould Hamaha, a Malian insurgent commander who has been associated with all three main Islamist extremist groups in the north, threatened France with "A trap which is much more dangerous than Iraq, Afghanistan, or Somalia."⁴⁸

Challenges

The challenges for US and EU are at four levels:

Development, Governance And Conflict Resolution

The remote and isolated character of this sensitive region and the difficulties faced by the Sahel countries in providing protection, assistance, development and public services to local populations align with insufficiently decentralized rational decision making and the inequitable sharing of revenues of capital-intensive economic activities pose serious challenges. Lack of education and employment opportunities for young people contributes to tensions and makes them prone to cooperate with AQIM or organized crime for financial reasons or to be radicalized and recruited by AQIM. Weak governance, in particular in the area of justice, social exclusion and a still insufficient level of development, together with remaining internal conflicts and recurrent rebellions in regions affected by insecurity, render the Sahel countries and their populations vulnerable to the activities of AQIM and organized crime networks. The desert regions

of all the countries in the Trans Sahel have a history of de facto autonomy which makes government control hard to exert. Corruption also hinders the effectiveness in the fight against AQIM and the development of an effective security sector. Carrying out development assistance projects has also become more dangerous.

Challenges of Coordination in Regional and Political Level

The security threats in the Sahel – as well as their solution - are of a transnational nature; yet differ in intensity from one country to another. The sometimes differing perception of the threats and solutions by the three Sahel States and their three Maghreb neighbors (Algeria, Libya and Morocco) and the absence of a sub-regional organization encompassing all the Sahel and Maghreb states, lead to unilateral or poorly coordinated action and hamper credible and effective regional initiatives. At the level of the international community, including the US and EU, coherent and systematic action linking political, security and development aspects is also insufficient.

The Rule of Law and Security

The states of the Trans Sahel have insufficient operational and strategic capacities in the wider security, law enforcement and judicial sectors (military, police, justice, border management, customs) to control the territory, to ensure human security, to prevent and to respond to the various security threats, and to enforce the law (conduct investigations, trials etc.) with due respect to human rights. This is notably noticed in the insufficiency of legal frameworks and law enforcement capacity at all levels, ineffective border management (state control of the desert regions in the North of Mali and Niger is fragile), lack of modern investigation techniques and methods of gathering, transmitting and exchanging information, as well as obsolete or inexistent

equipment and infrastructure (available resources are insufficiently used to target terrorism and illegal activities).

Prevention and Fight against Violent Extremism and Radicalization

The simultaneous interaction in the Trans Sahel region between various factors such as poverty, social exclusion, unmet economic needs and radical preaching bears the risk of development of extremism. Mauritania and Mali's situations are particularly worrying in terms of risks of radicalization and recruitment of youth by AQIM.

To improve the security and development situation in the Trans Sahel, mutual interests are clear and longstanding both for the countries of the regions and for the US and EU in reducing insecurity and improving development in the Sahel region. Strengthening governance and stability within the Sahel countries through the promotion of the rule of law and human rights as well as socio-economic development, in particular for the benefit of the vulnerable local populations of these countries, is crucial.

Furthermore, a recent priority is to prevent terrorists' attacks in the Sahel region and its potential to carry out attacks on western territory, to reduce and contain drug and other criminal trafficking destined especially for Europe, to secure lawful trade and communication links such as roads and pipelines across the Sahel, North-South and East-West, and to protect existing economic interests and create the basis for trade and both US and EU investments.

Building security and development in the Trans Sahel has an obvious and direct impact on protecting western citizens and interests. Therefore, it is important to ensure and strengthen coherence and complementarity between internal and external aspects of US and EU security.

Conclusion

Considered as one of the poorest regions of the world, the Trans Sahel faces simultaneously the challenges of extreme poverty, the effects of climate change, frequent food crises, corruption, unresolved internal tensions, rapid population growth, fragile governance, the risk of violent extremism and radicalization, illicit trafficking and terrorist-linked security threats.

Furthermore, deteriorating security conditions pose a challenge for both US and EU policies to develop cooperation and especially do not restrict the delivery of humanitarian assistance and development aid, which will in turn exacerbate the vulnerability of the region and its population.

The European Union

The EU's development policy in the Sahel, drawn up in partnership with the countries concerned, is geared towards tackling the root causes of the extreme poverty and towards creating the grass-root conditions for economic opportunity and human development to flourish. But it will be hard for this policy to achieve a high impact unless security challenges are also tackled. The problems in the Trans Sahel are cross-border and closely intertwined. Only a regional, integrated and holistic strategy will enable EU to make progress on any of the specific problems. A reinforced security and law enforcement capacity must go hand-in-hand with more robust public institutions and more accountable governments, capable of providing basic development services to the populations and of appeasing internal tensions. Development processes, promotion of good governance and improvement of the security situation need to be carried out in appropriate sequence and in a coordinated manner in order to create sustainable stability in the region.

Building on work done up to now, the EU policy should work on number of specific actions that could be taken such as: education, health, infrastructure...etc; drawing on all the instruments that the EU has at its disposal.⁴⁹ It should also encourage participation by all EU Member States and other partners with similar interests in the region.

Another issue to be considered by the EU is the impact on neighboring countries, including Algeria, Libya, Morocco and even Nigeria, whose engagement is necessary to help resolve the region's problems. Also, the EU must consider the latest political developments in the Maghreb which have direct consequences on the situation in the Sahel, taking into account the close relations between the countries of the two regions, a significant presence of citizens of Sahel countries in the Maghreb and the risks that arise from the proliferation of arms in the region.

United States of America

The evaluation of the threat posed by AQIM and affiliated groups may well be a key factor driving a new U.S. approach to the Trans Sahel. This region has historically been seen as peripheral to core U.S. interests, although U.S. security engagement has grown over the past decade, and concerns have grown in light of ongoing political change and uncertainty in North Africa.

With regard to the regional presence of AQIM and other violent extremist groups, U.S. policymakers should examine the extent to which these groups pose a threat to U.S. targets and interests. Mali's situation can also be examined in the context of ongoing efforts to measure the effectiveness of U.S. policies and aid programs⁵⁰ aimed at enhancing regional stability,⁵¹ good governance, and counterterrorism capacity in Africa and beyond.

As a result, the following emerging questions must be answered as the US reforms its policy towards the Trans Sahel:

- What is the relative importance of the situation in the Trans Sahel compared to other U.S. policy priorities and national security concerns?
- Do AQIM and loosely allied extremist groups in the Trans Sahel primarily pose a threat to regional security, or do they pose a more direct threat to the United States?
- What are the likely scope and duration of international operations in Trans Sahel, and what end-state do these operations seek?
- To what extent are any security gains likely to be durable in the Trans Sahel?
- What budgetary and other resources are available for the various courses of U.S. action?
- What are the policies and funding lessons learned from U.S. supported, African-led military operations elsewhere on the continent, including in Somalia, Darfur, and Liberia?
- What are the likely repercussions of the ongoing military operations for regional security and humanitarian conditions?

It is clear that US and EU engagements with the Sahel region are significant and on the increase, but there are important shortfalls in realizing a truly comprehensive approach.

For the EU policy, key issues include the sharing of information on development money spending, the lack of a detailed compilation of all EU engagement across the different lines of action, and a lack of explanation about how the different stepping-

stones identified on the lines of action are linked to concrete actions that can realistically deliver the desired effect.

For the US policy, the biggest issue is the misunderstanding between the Department of Defense and the State Department on how to deal with issues in Trans Sahel, more than actions on the ground. Vicki Huddleston, the top Africa policy official in the Pentagon, said that the U.S. government never overcame divisions over how aggressively it should respond to the emergence of al-Qaeda's North African affiliate. The Pentagon was often too eager to take direct military action, she added, while the State Department was too willing to tolerate al-Qaeda's presence. "The issue has come up again and again," said Huddleston, who retired from the Pentagon at the end of 2011. "The Defense Department wanted to help the countries in the region to confront the threat, and State wanted to contain."⁵²

Therefore, the US and EU policies should be synchronized and more integrated to create a new common approach, that works politically, economically and militarily to ensure coherence and long-term impact in the region. The U.S and EU have to build on and support the existing political and operational initiatives for security and development in the Sahel, both at national and regional levels, and take into account other planned initiatives of the international community.

Moreover, the US and EU should establish a short and long term strategy for the region. The short term strategy should deal with enhancing political stability, security, good governance, social cohesion in the Sahel states and economic and education opportunities, thus setting the conditions for local and national sustainable development

so that the Sahel region can prosper and will no longer be a potential safe haven for AQIM and criminal networks.

In pursuing these objectives, the US and EU will need to promote and encourage active African responsibility and ownership, particularly of the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This will demonstrate focus, urgency, pragmatism and political engagement, along with flexibility and a requirement to coordinate with other players, such as the Arab League and the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), as well as other bilateral and multilateral partners with an interest in the region, including the UN, Canada, China, Japan and the individual countries in the Maghreb.

Endnotes

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⁷ Chena 2011.

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¹⁰ cf. Bourgeot 1990, Lohmann 2011, Kaplan 2012.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Kennedy-Boudali, Senate Testimony, 3.

¹³ Lopez Blanco 2011a: 11.

¹⁴ Chena 2011: 115.

¹⁵ Straus, *Mali and its Sahelian Neighbors*, 4.

¹⁶ Ibid., 5.

¹⁷ Ibid,6.

¹⁸ Johnson 2011; cf. Onuoha 2010.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ almanaralink.com, May 29, 2012.¹⁷ International Crisis Group, *Islamist Terrorism*

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²⁵ The hinterland is German word which describes the land or district behind a coast or the shoreline of a river, In also describes the part of a country where there are only a few people and where the infrastructure is underdeveloped. cf. Cristiani 2011.

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²⁹ See the European Union External Action Service Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel, (For the Maghreb countries, the advanced political dialogue and legal structures existing between these partners and the EU in the framework of European Neighborhood, example of the Roadmap for Algeria).

³⁰ cf. Gros-Verheyde 2011.

³¹ Lopez Lucia 2012.

³² le programme spécial pour la paix, la sécurité et le développement au nord mali, to combat insecurity and terrorism in northern Mali.

³³ The Country Strategy Paper established by the European Commission for The Development of Mauritania.

³⁴ Ellis 2004.

³⁵ Tisseron 2011.

³⁶ Chena 2011: 115.

³⁷ Contemporary Security Policy Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/fcsp20> Been There, Already Doing That: America's Ongoing Security Engagement in Africa J. Peter Pham Version of record first published: 03 Apr 2009.

³⁸ See the example of the US Partnership for Growth and New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition, and Open Government Partnership and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative.

³⁹ Lianne Kennedy-Boudali, —The GSPC: Newest Franchise in al-Qa'ida's Global Jihad,|| The Combating Terrorism Center, United States Military Academy, West Point, April 2007, 2.

⁴⁰ Hank Crumpton, Senate Testimony, 2006, quoted in Andrew Hanson and Lauren Vriens, Backgrounder: Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, Council of Foreign Relations,|| July 21, 2009, <http://www.cfr.org/north-africa/al-qaeda-islamic-maghred-aqim/p12717> (accessed March 15, 2010).

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⁴⁸ Steven Erlanger, Alan Cowell, and Adam Nossiter, "Malian Town Falls to Islamist Rebels, France Says, The New York Times, January 14, 2013.

⁴⁹ The EU has been advocating a comprehensive security and development approach to respond to the complexity of the challenges in the Sahel since 2008. A joint paper (14361/10) on the security and development in the Sahel was drafted by the Commission and the Council Secretariat General, following the options paper (COREU SEC 750/09 of 7 April 2009), and joint fact finding missions to Mauritania, Mali and Niger, at the political and technical level. Following the rapid and serious deterioration of the security situation in the Sahel and notably the kidnapping of European nationals, the Foreign Affairs Council of 25 October 2010 invited the High Representative to draw up, in association with the Commission, a strategy on the Sahel, in response to which a Joint Communication by the Commission and the HR was presented on 08 March 2011 (COM (2011)331).

⁵⁰ U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Mali—Humanitarian Update #5, January 3, 2013.

⁵¹ State Department, Statement by Victoria Nuland, Spokesperson, October 12, 2012; State Department daily news briefing, December 12, 2012.

⁵² US Counterterrorism Effort in Africa Defined by a Decade of Missteps, By Craig Whitlock, Published on The Washington Post: February 6, 2013.