



## **Afrika. Supermarkt der Supermächte**

### **Afrika als neuer geostrategischer und geökonomischer Interessenspunkt and where is Germany ?**

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After the partial fall of the French Operation “Turquoise” (1994) aiming at the control of the situation in Central Africa, the American Embassy at Paris on the one side declared officially that ended the period of the French leadership in Black Africa and, on the other side, called the African states to become military and political “partners” of the USA. In 1996, The State Secretary Warren Christopher declared the American support to the “Pan-African” (and at the same time anti-French) movement. And, by July 1997, Washington declared a kind of new “Marshal Plan” for Africa.

The Maghreb region, besides its high importance from the point of view of energy resources, occupies a first stage geostrategic place in the middle of the current geopolitical system: lying between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, the Mahreb’s countries, seen as a whole, constitute a bridge between Europe, Black Africa and the Middle East. The area has been traditionally part of the





European geopolitical sphere of influence as Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania together with the Sahel and most of the West African countries have been former colonies or protectorates of France, with the exception of Libya which has been an Italian colony before the Second World War. During the Cold War period all countries of the area have been independent from their European metropolis but, with the tolerance of not the support of the USA, France continued to exercise its geopolitical influence on them in order to refrain the expansion of the Soviet influence in the whole African continent. Thus, during the Cold War era, France had military assistance agreements with 18 African states, defense agreements with 6 states and military bases on 7 states in the Sahel as well in the Western, the Central and Eastern Africa. The Maghreb countries were out of the French zone of military presence (Algeria and Libya having choose the camp of the non-alignment countries) but Paris was still exercising its economic and political influence on them (with the exception f Libya).

In the post-Cold War era, African geopolitics begun to change rapidly as, on one hand, Washington had no more reasons to tolerate French presence in this continent rich in natural resources (energy, minerals, uranium), and, on the other hand, a new regional geopolitical player appeared, the South African Republic with strong strategic ties with the Anglo-American world. After the partial fall of the French Operation “Turquoise” (1994) aiming at the control of the situation in Central Africa, the American Embassy at Paris on the one side declared officially that ended the period of the French leadership in Black Africa and, on the other side, called the African states to become military and political



“partners” of the USA. In 1996, The State Secretary Warren Christopher declared the American support to the “Pan-African” (and at the same time anti-French) movement. And, by July 1997, Washington declared a kind of new “Marshal Plan” for Africa. After 11 September 2001, the anti-terror war offered to Washington the golden opportunity to approach the Maghreb and the Sahel countries as well, most of which, mainly for reasons of domestic policy, did not hesitate to shift toward the American factor: anti-terror war is viewed also as a good opportunity by Rabat, Algiers and Tripoli regimes to strengthen their political power in the interior of their countries using American political and economic support and, consequently, not to be exclusively submitted to the support of the European countries very sensible in respect to the issue of the human rights almost systematically violated by Maghreb and Sahel governments.

Nevertheless, on the other side, Maghreb countries enjoy of the EU’s Souther Dimension policy launched by the Barcelona Process in the wider frame of the EU’s Neighbouring policy.



The EU's Southern Dimension policy encourages economic development, promotes the rule of law, seeks the protection of human rights and supports the growth of democratic institutions - objectives which are increasingly being recognised as security policies of the EU. The EU actually promoted this project because it believed that its own security and prosperity were intimately bound up with developments on the southern shore of the Mediterranean: problems stemming from political paralysis or repression, domestic or regional strife, and economic stagnation/regression in the South would spill over to the Northern shore of the Mediterranean, and given the elimination of internal barriers within the EU, to the



rest of the continent; if these problems remain unsolved, they would affect EU security [see analytically: I. Loucas, Erarbeiten Fachlicher Grundlagen “Geopolitik”, AGeoBw (AP2), Januar 2006, pp. 93-100]. Military aspects were deliberately excluded from the project’s agenda. First of all due to a broader definition of security which focuses on political and socio-economic causes of instability rather than on “hard” security issues and secondly due to the inter-regional frictions, that did not allow the tackling of hard security issues at a time when the project was established.

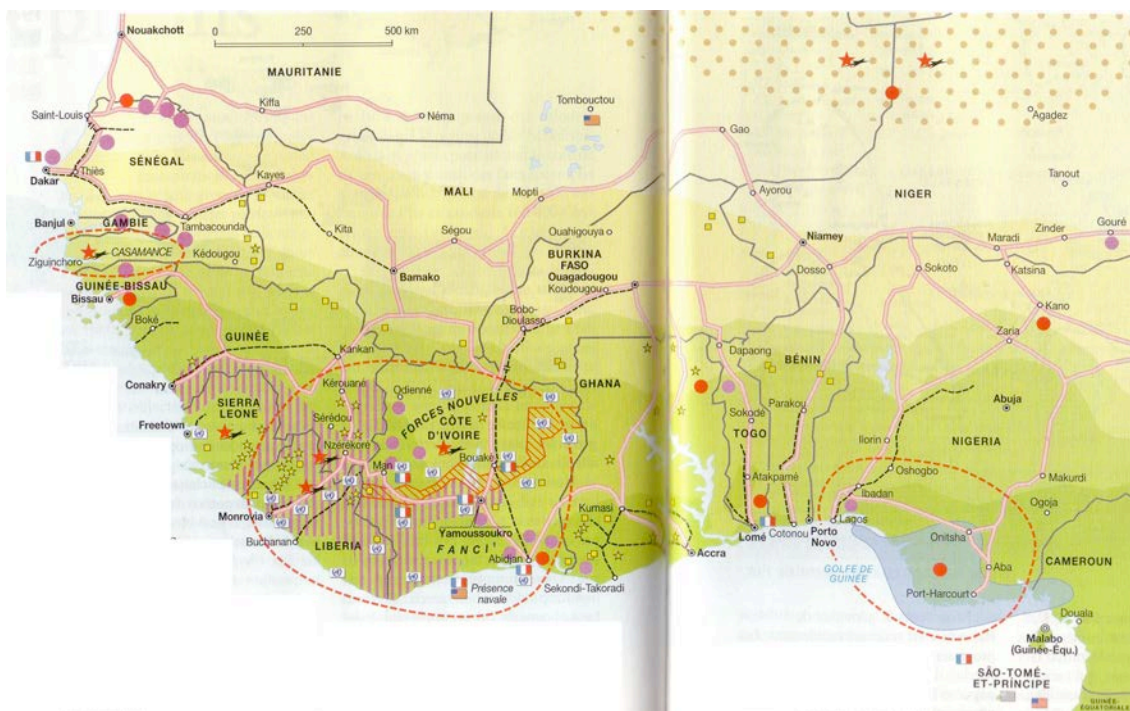
Theoretically the EMP offers a new instrument for collective foreign policy action but, because practically the politics of the Mediterranean are so complex, EU member states still prefer to go it alone. The reality of the most pressing security concerns for Europe emanating from the Mediterranean has led individual EU member states to act in a bilateral rather than a multilateral fashion, in order to secure their own interests (specifically in the area of migration and post-11 September 2001 terrorism). There are clearly varying degrees of threat which EU member states feel emanating from the Mediterranean partners of the Southern Dimension (authoritarian regimes, radical Islamic fundamentalism, demographic growth, economic deterioration, increasing migration pressures and the rising welfare gaps within and around the area). Rather, the project is taken as a framework for all Euro-Mediterranean partners to co-operate to transform economic instability into prosperity. This is but only one type of security reading, which prioritises economics. Thus, although the EU’s Mediterranean framework has managed to bring together countries with historical animosities, the Mediterranean area





represents a case for the failure of the “regionalist thinking”. With individual member states acting on their own through bilateral relations with Mediterranean partners, this strategic thinking (based mostly on reasons of historical relations, that is colonialism, geographic proximity, economic and security influence and interests) on the part of EU member states has further weakened the unity/coherence of the EU, affected the efficiency of its common foreign and security policy and impeded the development of a consistent regional approach.

In this frame, France follows its own geopolitical road, continuing to view as a vital area for its strategic interests the regions of Maghreb, Sahel and Western Africa, where, however, American presence is fast growing. The latter, being so far rather discrete in the ethnic conflicts and civil wars area of Western Africa, where French troops are constantly



deployed, has already been much more important in the Sahel area with a clear tendency of expansion Northward, toward the Maghreb, through the



Pan Sahel Initiative project (2002-2005) replaced by the Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Initiative (2005).

In October 2002 a group of US State-representatives, visited Chad, Niger, Mauritania and Mali, briefing host nations on the Washington's Pan Sahel Initiative (PSI), a program designed to protect borders, track



movement of people, combat terrorism, and enhance regional cooperation and stability by detecting and responding to suspicious movement of people and goods across and within their borders through training, equipment and cooperation. Its goal was supposed to be the support of two US national security interests in Africa: waging the war on terrorism and enhancing regional peace and security.



In the frame of PSI, during next years technical assessments had taken place in each country aiming to assist participating countries to counter known terrorist operations and border incursions, as well as trafficking of people, illicit materials, and other goods.

Accompanying the training and material support was a program to bring military and civilian officials from the four countries together to encourage greater cooperation and information exchange within and among the governments of the region on counterterrorism and border security issues.

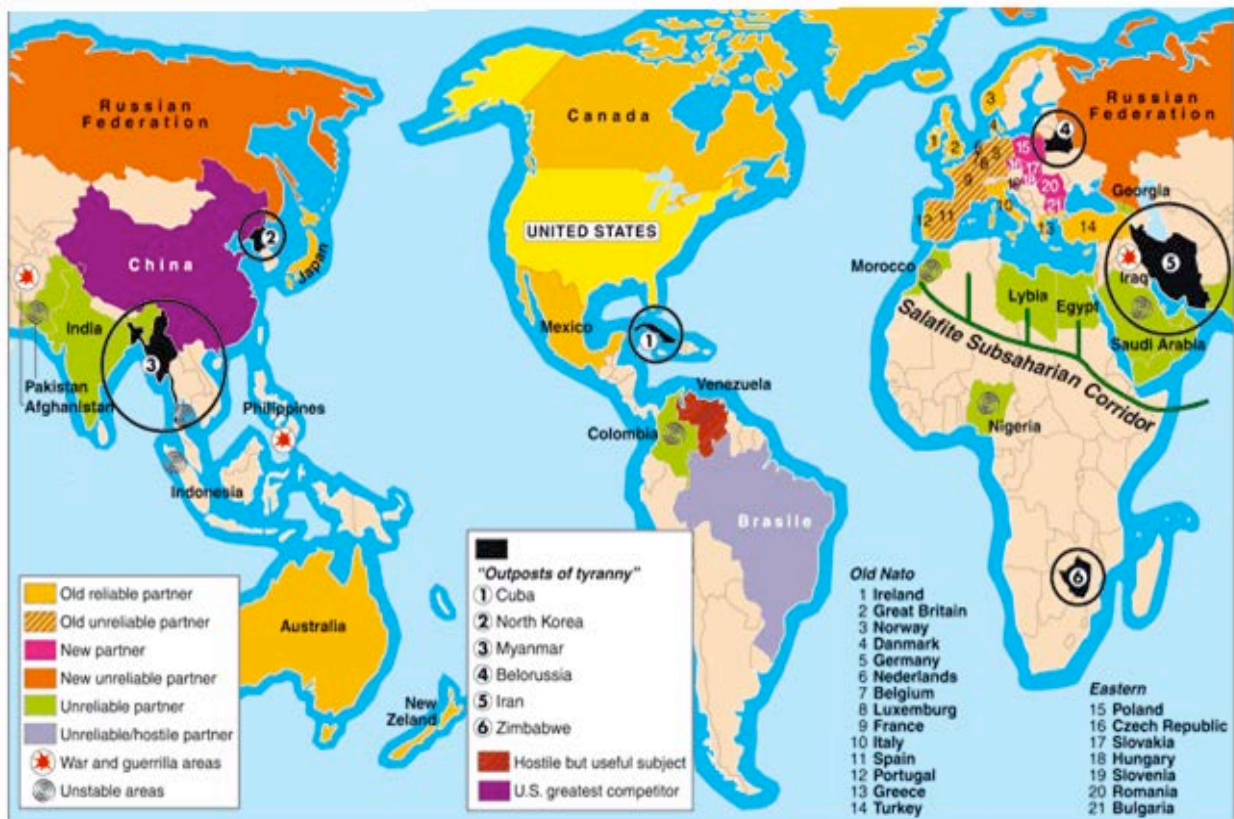
In 2004, US Marine Corps Gen. [James Jones](#), the Commander of US European Command, which covers most of Africa, said that shortly after he took command of [NATO](#) in January 2002, a six-month analysis of US force structure within European Command concluded that the United States likely would face a number of security challenges in Africa over the next 10 to 15 years and that a more robust engagement was needed: “Late last year, soldiers from the 10<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group began training military forces in Mali, Mauritania, Chad and Niger under the Pan-Sahel Initiative, a \$7 million State Department program designed to help the security forces of those impoverished nations defend against terrorists. That effort follows the establishment of Task Force Horn of Africa, where more than 1.200 Marines and special-operations soldiers are heading up anti-terror training and operations in eastern Africa from a base in Djibouti”. The Pan-Sahel Initiative has been conceived as the newest front in the “American campaign against [terrorism](#) ... in a region that military officials fear could become the next base for [Al Qaeda](#) - the largely ungoverned swath of territory stretching from the [Horn of Africa](#)





to the Western Sahara's Atlantic coast". In this frame, the vast and arid Sahel region has been viewed as a new [Afghanistan](#), with well-financed bands of Islamic militants recruiting, training and arming themselves. According to PSI staff, terrorist attacks like the one on 11 March 2004 in Madrid that killed 191 people seem to have a North African link and may presage others in Europe. Thus, having learned from missteps in Afghanistan and [Iraq](#), the American officers have been willing pursuing this battle with a new approach: instead of planning on a heavy American military presence, they preferred dispatching Special Operations forces to countries like Mali and Mauritania in West Africa to train soldiers and outfit them with pickup trucks, radios and global-positioning equipment.

According to Washington's geopolitical conception, the Sahel region is of primary strategic importance as the so-called Salafite Sub-Saharan





Corridor links between them the Atlantic Ocean with the Indian Ocean, establishing a bridge between American capability of transportation from the USA to the Western African coast and American military presence at the Horn of Africa. This Corridor is in-between a number of African and Middle East states considered by Washington as of primary geopolitical importance in one hand, and as “unreliable partners” on the other: Nigeria in the South and Morocco, Libya, Egypt and the Arab Gulf states in the North. But, of course, the optimum geopolitical option of Washington should be the expansion of US control on the whole area in both sides of the Corridor.

Thus, in May 2004, Washington decided to expand PSI including Senegal and possibly other countries and the U.S. European Command asked for \$125 million for the region over five years. Next month, a group of 30 Marines and Sailors from US Marine Corps Forces, Europe, Atlantic, and Second Marine Expeditionary Force, was formed up to take part in the PSI. Its goal was to train African units in basic individual infantry skills up to company-level tactics, increasing their capabilities to stem the flow of illicit arms, goods, and people into their nations in order these nations to be able to stifle any attempts of terrorists seeking and establishing sanctuaries in the region. The Marines focused their efforts specifically on the countries of Chad and Niger for eight weeks each during the summer of 2004.

In 2005, the PSI was replaced by The Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI) expanded to include more countries. The TSCTI has been supposed to increase assistance with detection and response to the migration of asymmetric threats throughout the region. US officials claim



that the initiative will also help these nations maintain security by building the capacity to prevent conflict at its inception as TSCTI seeks to maximize the return on investment by implementing reforms to help nations become more self-reliant. Operation Enduring Freedom – Trans Sahara (OEF-TS) is the US military component of TSCTI. EUCOM executes OEF-TS through a series of military-to-military engagements and exercises designed to strengthen the ability of regional governments to police the large expanses of remote terrain in the trans-Sahara.

The new program is better funded - it receives about \$100 million a year for five years - and have a wider scope, adding Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Senegal and Nigeria to the original four countries included in the Pan Sahel Initiative. And unlike the program it replaced, the TSCTI





introduced a more comprehensive approach to security: the Defense Department continues to focus on military operations, expanding its scope from the company to the battalion level, but other US government agencies also become active players in the program. The US Agency for International Development, for example, addresses educational initiatives; the State Department, airport security; and the Department of Treasury, efforts to tighten up money-handling controls in the region.

According to US official statements, “It becomes a broader package approach. We are not just developing one muscle in the body, we are developing the whole body. While providing an interagency approach to the region, the United States will continue efforts to get participating nations to think regionally about their mutual security concerns. If we revert to bilateral, stovepipe programs, we simply won’t be as effective as if we can maintain a multilateral effort”. Thus, the new initiative is supposed to represent an important step in the US’ effort to address and fight global terror, with an emphasis on prevention rather than reaction. By building African nation’s ability to counter terrorism within their borders, Washington hopes that can help prevent the region from becoming a safe haven where terrorists can train, organize and plan their operations in cooperation with human traffickers and drugs smugglers: “This is an excellent example of getting ahead of the power curve and not being behind it and having to try to catch up. And we are getting ahead of the power curve by building the capacity of our friends. The notion that the United States is capable of confronting the threat of global terrorism alone is just a physical impossibility. So you have to build the capacity of



like-minded states to be able to help you confront the threat. And that's what the Trans Saharan Counterterrorism Initiative represents".

It is a matter of fact that, viewed globally, anti-terror war is strongly linked to the international organized crime activities among which human trafficking is one of the major reasons of the illegal immigration's growing flu from Africa to the western countries. All three major anti-terror wars of nowadays (namely the Washington's war against Al Qaeda, the Moscow's war in Chechnya and the Beijing's war against the separatist Muslim movement of the Xing Yang western province of the country) are viewed by the American, Russian and Chinese governments as wars against Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism. On a world wide scale, terrorist organizations use mainly two logistics networks connected with mafia and other international crime organizations:





One of these networks is controlled by Russian, Caucasian and Balkan mafias, strongly implemented not only in Europe but in the US as well. The other, is controlled by the salafite terrorism of Sub-Sahara region connected Eastward with the Central and South-East Asian crime organizations.



The decision to replace the PSI, aiming only the military training of the Sub-Saharan states' security forces, with the TSCTI, aiming the US military involvement in the Sub-Saharan region and in Maghred as well, came after the success of TSI, in cooperation with the Chadian forces, to capture Abderrazak al-Para, a key figure in the extremist Salafist Group for Call and Combat, who was turned over to the Algerian government in 2004, permitting thus the strategic articulation of the anti-terror war on the issues of human trafficking and drugs smuggling in the North and Western Africa; and, thereby, justifying the direct military involvement of the USA in the geopolitics of the area which, until then, was almost monopolized military by France.

The “El Para affair” begun in 2003, when the Algerian government launched a major diplomatic offensive to obtain financial and military support from Washington. Its efforts were given an enormous boost by Abderrazak El Para, a former Algerian special forces officer who had gone over to the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC). On 4 January, the day before a high-level United States military delegation arrived in Algiers to discuss the resumption of arms sales to Algeria as part of the fight against terrorism, El Para's group attacked a military convoy near Batna, killing 43 soldiers. On the basis of a video recording (considered by many analysts as a forgery) the Algerian army's secret service, the all-powerful Department of Intelligence and Security (DRS, formerly Military Security), tried to persuade public opinion that El Para was a lieutenant of Osama Bin Laden in charge of establishing Al Qaeda in the Sahel region. Shortly after, the US eased the arms embargo on Algeria and announced the sale of anti-terrorist equipment to it. William Burns, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, had already



declared in Algiers in 2002 that “Washington has much to learn from Algeria on ways to fight terrorism”.

Another El Para operation speeded the rapprochement between Algiers and Washington. Between 22 February and 23 March 2003, 32 tourists (16 Germans, 10 Austrians, four Swiss, a Swede and a Dutchman) were abducted in the Illizi region of the Algerian Sahara. After secret negotiations, of which no details ever leaked out, they were released in two stages: the first group in May 2003 and the second in August 2003. A female German hostage died in the desert and was buried there.

As a target of Al Qaeda, Algeria was of course a natural ally of the US. For some strategic analysts, just as the hunt for Bin Laden was used to justify the occupation of Afghanistan and the establishment of military bases in the strategically important region of central Asia, El Para was to serve as a minor bogeyman justifying a US military presence in the Sahel, alleged to be a potential rear base for Al Qaeda.

In March 2004 General Charles Wald, Deputy Commander of the US European Command (Eucom), claimed that members of Al Qaeda were trying to establish themselves “in the Northern part of Africa, in the Sahel and the Maghreb. They are looking for sanctuary as they did in Afghanistan when the Taliban were in power. They need a stable place in which to equip themselves, organise and recruit new members”.

The Bush administration seemed in no hurry to get hold of “Bin Laden’s right-hand man in the Sahel”. The cynical explanation is probably the correct one: after the 9/11 attacks the US had every interest in a rapprochement with the Algerian regime. Announcing the sale of anti-terrorist equipment to Algeria in 2003, Washington declared it “the most



democratic country” in the Arab world. The main US objective was to gain military footholds in the Maghreb and the Sahel. Its pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI) had already begun as part of a plan to restructure US military bases throughout the world, replacing large structures that were costly and inflexible with a network of small operational bases requiring limited personnel.

Northern and Western Africa are central to this project because of their oil reserves, which currently cover 17% of US needs and will probably account for 25% of US imports over the next 10 years. The international map of energy supply shows clearly that, in the frame of the current



competition for the world’s energy sources, Maghreb and West Africa



constitute main areas of geopolitical interest. Algeria's "Sonatrach" plays a major role, as the largest company in Africa, with an estimated turnover of \$32 billion in 2004. The US has already stationed a contingent of 2.000 troops in Djibouti, which has been a French military base since the colonial period, and it plans to establish another dozen bases in the region: in Senegal, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Chad, Ghana, Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria, all countries of TSCTI project. There have been Algerian media reports of the existence of an US military outpost with 400 special forces not far from Tamanrasset in the South of Algeria. Washington apparently now sees Algeria as a pivotal state, vital for its future military deployment in the region, in accordance with the geostrategic concept of a Greater Middle East.

The high budget of TSCTI which replaced the PSI in 2005, should allow it to increase arms sales to the region. The US offensive is encroaching on France's traditional zones of influence, as US firms begin to target the French strongholds of Chad, Angola and Gabon. The US administration is also bent on marginalising France's military role in the region. Despite its support for the Algerian military regime throughout the years of "total war", France is clearly worried that it will be pushed aside by the world's greatest power, which is advancing on all fronts - in arms supplies, oil prospecting and exploitation contracts, and trade agreements. A prime example is the Eizenstat plan to establish a US-Middle East free-trade area in opposition to the Euro-Mediterranean free-trade area planned for 2010: a free-trade agreement has already been concluded with Morocco.





With the Barcelona Process' Southern Dimension at a standstill, the French government has concentrated on bilateral relations with Algeria. President Jacques Chirac's visit in 2003, culminating in the Algiers Declaration of 2 March, was intended to lead to a treaty of friendship in 2005 and the establishment of an exceptional partnership in economic, cultural, scientific and military matters. It has been followed by many ministerial visits in both directions. Faced with the reluctance of French firms to invest in Algeria, Paris drew up a global agreement on investment in the country and even envisaged a defence agreement with Algeria. But to France's great disappointment, Algeria failed to join the International Organisation of the French-Speaking World (OIF) at the summit in Ouagadougou in November 2004.

French strategic analysts claim that the Algerian regime cleverly exploited the fallout from the 9/11 attacks: understanding that the US was trying to establish a position in North Africa, it probably sponsored a local Bin Laden, or at least allowed him to operate. His capture by the Chadian rebels was not part of the programme. Nevertheless, Algerian press is now hyping up a new terrorist: the authorities' sights are on Mokhtar Belmokhtar, a bandit chief who has long been accused of links with the GSPC and is also strongly involved in human and weapons trafficking in the broader area of Maghreb and Sahel.