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   Articles in journals: Paulo Gorjão, "Japan's Foreign Policy and East Timor, 1975–2002" (*Asian Survey*, Vol. 42, No. 5, September/October 2002), pp. 754-771.

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Changing Security Dynamics in North Africa and Western Sahel Region

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Mapping Regional Security Dynamics

The Arab uprisings have changed the security dynamics across North Africa and Western Sahel (NAWS) region[1] dramatically. Since December 2010 these revolts have upended the authoritarian status quo by ousting long-reigning dictators in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen. They triggered popular riots in Algeria, Morocco, Oman and Saudi Arabia, while unrest has been harshly repressed in Bahrain and Syria. In this context, the Malian crisis did not come as a surprise. The Malian crisis started as a mutiny led by Captain Amadou Haya Sanogo, and quickly evolved into a full staged coup d'état, toppling the government of Amadou Toumani Touré on 22 March 2012. Indeed, the ingredients of instability have stirred for decades: organized crime, illegal immigration and transnational illicit activities, such as the smuggling of small arms, light weapons, fuel, tobacco, counterfeit medicines and drugs.[2]

Food insecurity and malnutrition is another disaster across the West Sahel that is linked to the negative security context.[3] Severe droughts that started as far back as the 1960s are precursors.[4] Consequently, desertification and the scarcity of resources has exacerbated conflicts among the Tuareg people, between nomadic herders and Bambara sedentary farmers, as well as between these groups and their respective governments in Mali and Niger.[5] The land reform process implemented by the government of Bamako in the aftermath of the independence was seen by the Tuareg as an infringement upon their traditional rural areas and sparked their first insurgency that was met with harsh repression from President Modibo Keïta.

The weakness of national governments in the NAWS region – mainly those of Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad, and Libya – is another piece of this bleak picture. Disproportionate projection of power from capital hubs to international legal boundaries and inadequate territorial organization/management from the center to the periphery illustrate states' limited exercise of jurisdiction and special control. Lacking an effective command over their peripheral areas, states in the NAWS region view their borders over the Saharan hinterland as a potential source of vulnerability for their internal stability and security. Flawed infrastructures, weak governance, and recurring economic underdevelopment are driven by both defective institutionalization and limited state penetration in society. The whole of which is driven from outmoded and unsuited state centrality-security struc-

tural development scheme, which has been in force since the early 1960s. This deficient state's spatial configuration in NAWS region has called into question its system of governance and eroded its legitimacy among indigenous local people, mainly in the unsettled and underdeveloped periphery. For many indigenous people, systems such as tribalism, customary practices and linguistic affiliations transcend international boundaries and, in many cases, their ethnic diversity and religious identity prevails at the expense of existing colonial borders.[6] The range of power control that NAWS states execute over their legal borders versus the level of control non-state actors can perform is a major aspect in regional power dynamics. Rather than hybrid and episodic garrisoned presence over inhospitable geographic remote regions, efficient control is more about the capability for rapid state projection over peripheral zones. The hostile Saharan environment presents both technical restrictions in terms of power projection and asymmetrical territorial organization. These deficiencies reveal how control is an overwhelming challenge as distance grows from the capital nucleus to the state's periphery.

In these shifting sands, with a history of state neglect, different tensions, including longstanding grievances over cultural alienation, political suppression, and a historic lack of development and economic marginalization, have permitted violent radical groups such al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and its affiliates[7] to settle in. This geography is sparsely populated, a place where uncertainty, diversity and complexity of the Saharan milieu is still shaping the local events in a "haze of dust".[8] Like the NAWS states, Islamist militant groups use this space as an area of operations for criminal activity rather than as a sphere of influence and genuine control. The incident in which 32 tourists were taken hostage in February-March 2003 in the Algerian Sahara by the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (French acronym GSPC) is considered the first of multiple waves of armed jihadist groups' breaching the Saharan hinterland, mainly the Azawad desert in northern Mali.[9] Kidnapping ransoms and narco-trafficking have become the main source of revenue for the group, sustaining its spread across the region as a major player within the political, ideological and ethnic landscape. Up until Sanogo's coup, the Touré government enjoyed "juicy profits deriving from a criminal economy, sustained by trans-border trafficking (especially of drugs) and ransoms from Western hostages", which, according to the International Crisis Group, "lined the pockets of northern and Bamako elites, including senior officials in the state administration".[10] This complicity with organized crime destabilized Mali's state institutions and weakened trust in the political system. It also bolstered criminal and insurgent militant groups, mainly AQIM, in the north. It demonstrated that the Malian political model was an "empty shell democracy",[11] which was no more than a "smokescreen for [dirty] business interests".[12] Finally, it undermined the army's cohesion and motivation and precipitated the coup.

The demise of Qaddafi's ideology of stateless society, often called Jamahiriyya or massocracy, as a major player in the region led to the awakening of unresolved conflicts driven by ethnic identity and territorial claims, chief among them the Tuareg issue. The

resurgence of this conflict cannot be understood out of its colonial context and the un-relenting rebellions subsequent to successive uprisings in 1962-1964, 1990-1996, and 2006-2009.[13] Beyond the Tuareg's reassertion of their self-determination, as expressed by the Malian National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), the Malian crisis sheds some light on how relatively trivial groups such AQIM and its associates are able to challenge the established political-territorial order. The Jihadist insurgency flourished within this structural context in which it penetrated the socioeconomic fabric of northern Mali and progressively built a criminal network through social bargains and selective alliances with local tribal groups. Most importantly, the Jihadists exploited the instability in Libya that emerged in the aftermath of Qaddafi's downfall. This was accomplished by accessing sophisticated military weapons, ammunition, surface-to-air missiles, anti-tank rockets, and mines from looted stockpiles. Given the forced retreat of Malian armed forces from the north of the country after the collapse of the central government in Bamako, AQIM and its allies emerged as the main actors in Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu, imposing harsh shari'a law,[14] following the Blitzkrieg victories over the MNLA.

Even though the 2013 French-led military operation in Mali, "Serval", has severely disrupted and disorganized AQIM's military and operational capabilities,[15] due to the organization's decentralized structure and complex networks, it was able to adapt. AQIM sought to facilitate and ultimately expand the scope of its operations beyond Mali towards other countries in the region.

Flexibility and Adaptability of the Militant Fighting Groups

The new politico-military configuration in the aftermath of the French military intervention left AQIM and its associates with little option but to outsource their activities to neighboring countries. Indeed, Algeria experienced the first bloody attack as "Serval" unfolded. The January 2013 hostage crisis at the In Amenas gas field in the southeast of Algeria, which is believed to be masterminded by Mokhtar Belmokhtar's "Signed in-Blood katibat"[16] and in which at least 38 people – mainly foreigners – perished,[17] came as a surprise for most of the observers. One should admit that the surprise is more about the symbolism of the target than the country itself where the attack was executed. Since the inception of the Islamist militant insurgency in Algeria in the early 1990s, energy infrastructure had never been targeted. Hence, the In Amenas attack could mark a major turning point in the nature of operations executed by AQIM and its franchises. Seemingly, AQIM's objective is to disrupt Algeria's economy, which relies on oil and gas more than 90% of the country's revenues. Moreover, the focus on Algeria could be explained by the fact that AQIM was formerly GSPC, which itself was an offshoot of the Armed Islamic Group (French Acronym GIA). The GIA, led by an Algerian leadership and motivated by a national agenda, is primarily an organization that emerged within the context of the (1991-2002) "bloody decade" of Algeria's civil war. Algeria is seen as the epicenter of armed jihad whose goal is to create conditions favorable to the advent of a social and po-

litical order meeting the standards of a reinvented Islamic state.[18] Despite Algeria's tangible achievements in dealing with its own militant insurgency, with "938 attacks since 2001, Algeria continues to be plagued by higher levels of terrorist violence than other countries in either the Maghreb or Sahel".[19]

Furthermore, parallels can be drawn between the In Amenas attack and other attacks on high-profile Algerian military installations in recent years. In August 2011, a double-suicide bombing attack targeted the prestigious military Academy of Cherchell, located 60 miles west of Algiers.[20] Although this assault did not receive much coverage by Algerian media outlets, the death toll of 18 soldiers – among them two Syrian officers and a Tunisian officer – attending training in this internationally known military educational institution, raise legitimate questions about safety measures taken to secure such important military facilities. One should point out that Cherchell Military Academy includes the Command and Staff College attended by the elite officers of the Algerian People's National Army (APNA) as well as those from foreign countries, and is often visited by foreign military delegations, including American and European ones. In all likelihood, AQIM's attack on the military core of excellence and expertise of the Algerian army was an effort to tarnish the military's international image. This would show that despite Algiers' claims of counterinsurgency skills in an overwhelming Islamist insurgency, the country is still unable to provide efficient protection to its military foreign hosts just as they were unable to protect their foreign workers at In Amenas gas plant two years later. The choice of major targets proves that AQIM's activities are not in decline. The flimsy security environment in the NAWS region has enabled the group to target countries that contributed to the French military effort in Mali and that represent France's major strategic economic interests in the Sahel. Niger seems a perfect target that combines the two aforementioned parameters. On 23 May 2013, a coordinated double suicide bombing hit a French-owned uranium plant in Arlit and a military base in Agadez, killing 20 soldiers and 5 bombers. The attack was claimed by Belmokhtar's spokesman as a joint operation planned and executed by both "Signed in-Blood katibat" and the Movement for Jihad and Oneness in West Africa (MUJAO). As reported by AFP, the group's threatened, "We will make them [African countries involved in "Serval" operation in Mali] taste the taste of death".[21] Beyond the fact that Niger was listed by AQIM's associates as a target of choice, it goes without saying that the country is facing three main security challenges:

• Increasing instability in Libya caused by the fragmentation of power that negatively impacted the country's periphery in terms of border security and control.

• Rising security concerns in Mali, which are a serious challenge for its neighbors as the stabilization process, including reestablishing and nurturing legitimacy across the entire territory, is a long and uncertain process, especially if it continues to be punctuated by a protracted insurgency.

- A growing and increasingly diffused insecurity in Nigeria, a country with which Niger not only shares more than 900 miles of porous border, but also a country struggling against Boko Haram. Boko Haram not only calls for the creation of an Islamic state in the northern Nigeria, but it seemingly seeks to consolidate its operational relationship with al-Shabaab in Somalia in terms of exchanging lethal expertise. Thanks to its geographic location, Niger is seen as a bridge linking the two militant groups.

The new front that AQIM and its associates seem to be exploring is further north of the Sahara in the Tunisian-Algerian borderland. At the end of April 2013, Tunisian armed forces discovered a whole clandestine sophisticated insurgency infrastructure of training camps in the Chaambi upland, 150 miles southwest of Tunis, beside the Algerian border. These camps are probably used by katibat Uqba Ibn Nafaʿa, an affiliation of AQIM.[22] The group ostensibly used improvised explosive devices (IEDs), made of plastic and ammonium nitrate, against security and military personnel as a tactic to prevent access to Mount Chaambi.[23] Under the pressure of the Tunisian military, the group started relying more on antipersonnel as well as antitank landmines obtained from the Libyan arsenal. At the end of July, during the holy month of Ramadan, a military patrol made of one officer and 7 non-commissioned officers and enlisted soldiers were killed in an ambush in the Chaambi area bordering Algeria. The tactics used by the group appear inspired by those of AQIM employed against Algerian security forces: after being murdered, the soldiers were stripped from their uniforms and equipment and their throats were slit.

On 30 August, Tunisian national TV aired recorded "confessions" of two operatives involved in the Chaambi events. The first suspect admitted being part of the ambush against the military and asserted that the katibat was composed of 30 fighters, among them 15 Algerians, 2 Nigerians, 2 Mauritanians and 11 young Tunisians. The leader of the group is an Algerian. The main objective of the group is the implementation of shariʿa law in Tunisia. According to the confessions, recruits receive training in use of the AK-47 assault rifle as well as in manufacturing handmade explosives. In addition to the military training, they are submitted to an intensive indoctrination against the Tunisian state, its security forces, the politicians and members of civil society who are portrayed as Tawagheet (tyrants), "colonizing" the country. Hence they must liberate the country from these enemies. The second suspect acknowledged that he was in charge of the logistical support, mainly the food provided to Uqba Ibn Nafaʿa group. In return he received €100 per delivery.

Three days before releasing these "confessions" Tunisia's Islamist Prime Minister Ali Larayedh stated that his government had sufficient proof to declare Ansar al-Shariʿa (Supporters of Shariʿa) "as a terrorist group".[24] The group is led by Saif Allah bin Hussein Mokni, alias Abu Iyadh al-Tunsi. Al Tunsi is head of the Slafiyya Jihadiyya in Tunisia, was released from prison in Tunisia after the fall of the Tunisian autocratic ruler, and has been hunted by police since September 2012, after having been charged of instigating the

attack on the U.S. Embassy in Tunis.[25] Tunisian authorities also suspect that he facilitated recruitment of Tunisian youth to fight in Syria with Jabhat al-Nusra and its affiliates.

On 28 August, Tunisia's Interior Ministry claimed that Ansar al-Shari'a, in close coordination with the Uqba group, was involved in the assassination of two leftist secular politicians, which happened in February and July, as well as the attack against the military patrol in Mount Chaambi. He pointed out that katibat Uqba is the link between AQIM and Ansar al-Shari'a. During the press conference, a senior official with the Interior Ministry declared that Abu Iyadh's group "was collecting large quantities of weapons, planned to spread chaos and create a security vacuum through assassinations, before seizing power and establishing the first Islamic emirate in North Africa".[26] Furthermore, the ministry affirmed that Ansar al-Shari'a had planned a series of attacks on chemical factories and other targets in Tunisia. The department stressed the regional nature of Abu Iyadh's group by pointing out the financial assets that Ansar al-Shari'a received from other groups based in Yemen, Mali and Libya.[27] The rejuvenation of an Islamist insurgency, after having been harshly repressed in 2007, has increased criticism against the interim government for leniency towards extremist groups. Like in Egypt, ideological struggle and spread of violence further polarized the division within the Tunisian society between Islamists and the so-called secular-liberals over the political identity of the country.

Meanwhile, on 3 July a military coup in Egypt ousted President Mohamed Morsi. This coup seemingly offers a golden opportunity for AQIM's franchises to expand activities across the Nile. A little over a month after the coup, Belmokhtar's "Signed in-Blood katibat" and MUJAO have merged into a new alliance called "Mourabitun". This new organization seeks "to confront the Zionist campaign against Islam and Muslims" in order to unify Islamist militant groups across North Africa from the Nile to the Atlantic.[28] Perhaps in the future, division within the Muslim Brotherhood will arise and emerging factions may reach the conclusion that neither domestic nor regional or international actors will allow them to govern through the ballot. The Muslim Brotherhood was banned from the Egyptian political arena and depicted as a terrorist organization by the military-backed government, dissenters among the mid and low-level Brotherhood leaders may start resorting to the bullet by relying on violent militant groups. Sinai has the perfect geography for such an endeavor, and, since 1956, a succession of Egyptian governments have failed to implement a coherent policy to address socioeconomic, tribal, political, and identity challenges there. The marginalization of Sinai combined with the full oppression of its local population under Mubarak's regime was exacerbated under both the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) and President Morsi, which further paved the way to greater instability. Therefore, the peninsula fell to "the mercy of armed groups, intelligence operations, and organized crime [groups], while its inhabitants drowned in state repression".[29] Indeed, violence and radicalism often flourish in socioeconomically impoverished terrains where citizens feel alienated because political elite have failed to settle disputes and reach consensus on key issues.

In this regard, the proliferation of all kinds of weapons from Libya – where the government failed to restore law and order and protect its citizens from the reckless behavior of competing warlords and militias – is a major asset for the armed militant groups operating across the region. An April 2013 UN report asserted that "illicit flows from [Libya] are fuelling existing conflicts in Africa and the Levant and enriching the arsenals of a range of non-State actors, including terrorist groups". It stressed that "trafficking from Libya to Egypt represents a challenge primarily for Egypt's internal security, in particular in relation to armed groups in the Sinai". Interestingly, the report affirms that weapons from Libya are smuggled into Mali via southern Tunisia, southern Algeria and northern Mali. However, some arms never get to their final destination and are stored and used in these countries of transit by local groups.[30] Weaker law enforcement combined with increasing political instability in Egypt, Libya, Mali, and Tunisia has boosted this wave of illicit activity that may move the NAWS region into lawlessness and further uncertainties.

What are the implications of the NAWS region for U.S. Policy?
The dynamic outcomes of the Arab uprisings and their regional ramifications created a fluid but entirely different political context within which the United States needs to reassess its policy towards the following countries:

1. Mali

• Redefining military-to-military relationships in terms of revising the training curriculum offered by the U.S. military educational institutions to African officers. This will require taking into consideration the sociopolitical complexities of their African context. Though Captain Sanogo himself benefited from six training missions in the United States, it did not prevent him from staging a military coup. Indeed, the concept of loyalty among junior officers should be taught to African officers by emphasizing the moral and legal implications of the oath of office prior to commissioning. In this regard, case studies where officers are torn between their loyalty to their comrades and to the state institutions should be stressed in the curriculum. Unfortunately, the promotion of Sanogo to the rank of General was a wrong signal to potential military coup plotters across Africa.[31]

• Improving accountability and transparency from the Malian military. There exist legitimate doubts about the usefulness of U.S. military training and equipment programs, including the Pan Sahel Initiative (PSI) and the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership Initiative (TSCTI), as the Malian Army collapsed during its first contact with the militant groups. The reason: corruption among high-ranking officers, who seemingly used the money for their own benefit. It is difficult to expect integrity and honesty from a junior officer in the absence of role model senior officers.

- Investing in more border posts, demarcation systems, mobile patrols, Command, Control, Communications, and Intelligence (C3I) system as well as new surveillance technology in order to strengthen what are currently little more than lines in the sand.

- Restructuring the Malian armed forces for ongoing combat through constant assessment of trained troops on operations by constantly exposing them to possible real-life scenarios.

- Considering the human rights violations committed in operations by members of the Malian armed forces, the United States should require its Malian counterparts teach the principals of international human rights law at all levels of the Malian armed forces as a prerequisite in the process of Security Sector Reform.

- Demilitarizing the police, as the country needs civil law enforcement capable of dealing with the challenges related to thwarting criminal activities, social unrest and transborder trafficking. The difference in missions between the military and the police makes the latter better prepared to deal with the aforementioned challenges.

- Assisting the Malian government in responding positively to the demands raised by the northern communities for better infrastructure. These communities were part of the peace agreement reached in 2006. The most important challenge facing the newly elected President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta is the equitable distribution of US$ 5.9 billion in relief across the country, to which international donors are committed. Contrary to his predecessors, Keïta has to act as president of all Malians. To this end, the new leader has to consolidate his legitimacy through inclusiveness and responsiveness to all citizens, which implies both overcoming clientelism used by the former regimes to control the north of the country and expediting state resources transfer to local authorities as a prerequisite for peace building, responsible governance and substantial socioeconomic development.[32]

- Facilitating reconciliation and regaining stability by engaging legitimate actors at the local level in assuming key functions of local security as a prerequisite for state building.

- Promoting multilevel governance, challenging the centrality of the state based on the principles of pragmatism, bargaining, flexibility, and intermediary authorities that are more in line with the rule of law and democratic governance than the top-down style command inherited from the Jacobin state model.

2. Libya

- Assisting in the process of rehabilitation and organization of existing security and intelligence agencies, seeking to empower the state's monopoly on the legitimate use of force.

- Providing international expertise in establishing appropriate control over the country's international borders and secure protection of government installations and key country's infrastructures.

- Providing training abroad to special teams from the Libyan armed forces and internal security forces, seeking to perform stabilizing missions in areas of endemic urban violence and across the country in remote areas.

- Assisting Libyan authorities in the process of regaining the countless security and intelligence facilities from militias groups.

- Supporting Libyan authorities in building new security institutions by implementing a very difficult and complex process of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR). In the process of integration of former rebels with military-security forces, the new military-security structures should not be dominated by the existing military-security cultures or personnel. The new structure should be able to integrate former soldiers and rebels without allowing any one of them to impose its culture and savoir-faire on the new structure and organization. Creativity, inclusiveness, coherence, and compromise have to govern the new non-partisan security paradigm. The latter must represent all segments of Libyan society, regardless of localism, tribalism, and regionalism. Doing so will allow a new culture of selflessness and integrity to take root.

- Helping Libyan authorities in drafting a white paper prioritizing the country's areas of security, taking into account respect for human rights and rule of law. This guideline will help Libyan counterparts in dealing with the short and mid-term challenges by accomplishing a synchronized effort of different security organizations – military, police, intelligence, border and coast guards, customs and diplomacy – in overcoming new threats such as transnational crime, drugs, human and arms trafficking, and terrorism.

- Investing in Libyan military personnel through the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program. This should bring Libyan militaries into prolonged contact with U.S. military performance standards. Experience has shown that militaries with established ties to the U.S. military (with some exceptions such as Bahrain, Egypt or

Yemen where military acted as defenders of the status quo) were more professional in their response towards social unrest compared to those who lacked these ties and whose response was often brutal.

• Exerting leverage over the Libyan authorities to ensure that efficient law enforcement and legal protection can be provided to every Libyan citizen, including women and former members of the fallen regime. The cultural rights of minorities within the country including Tuareg, Amazigh, Tebu and displaced population such as Tawarghans have to be acknowledged and protected.

• Helping upgrade the Libyan judiciary system in order to allow different ethnic, religious, regional, local, tribal, and political elements to enjoy equal treatment before the law. The United States can provide training to Libyan judges abroad seeking to empower the efficiency, and impartiality of the judicial power.

• Assisting economic inclusion and opportunities for youth by revamping the educational system to ensure that future graduates have the appropriate skills that match market needs.

• Helping the Libyan people regardless of gender, religion, race, social status, and political leanings to focus on reconciliation, forgiveness, and tolerance in order to build a better future and transcend the legacy of autocratic rule.

• Refraining from putting boots on Libyan ground or seeking any military presence in the country. However, working with all segments of the Libyan society, even the most conservative ones with a counter-democratic agenda, is strongly recommended.

Conclusion

The power vacuum subsequent to the demise of the Qaddafi era triggered the Malian crisis and further inflamed other states and societies across NAWS region. However, the systematic socio-economic discrimination and political alienation experienced by the Tuareg from the government of Bamako since the early 1960s made these "Masters of the Desert" more inclined to positively respond to the Brother Leader's attempts of co-optation and manipulation. Furthermore, the dangerous liaison that a relatively small fringe of these "Desert Warriors" entertained with AQIM and its affiliates negatively threatened the broader region stability and challenged the existing colonial territorial order. Importantly, the failure of the new elite in Libya, Egypt, and to some degree in Tunisia – in the post-Arab uprisings – to thwart the violence can be imputed to an elusive conventional wisdom that most of the inherited problems from the authoritarian regimes would disappear overnight once accountable and democratic governments had replaced the ruthless mukhabarat states. Instead, the region seems to be drowning in a deep sec-

tarian, ethnic and tribal chaos likely to provide the ingredients for dramatic instability. As long as new leadership are unable to conceive a global vision of a post-authoritarian state based on pluralism, inclusiveness, tolerance, partnership, and diversity, which are the founding elements of a genuine citizenship, the Sahel-Sahara region security fatigue cannot be overcome only by hard security arrangements and stability may prove as difficult to build, nurture, and consolidate.

(Endnotes)

1   Sahel is the southern rim of the Sahara desert and which stretches from Senegal on the Atlantic Ocean to Eritrea on the Red Sea. In contrast, Western Sahel is the geographic area that encompasses six West African countries – Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Chad. While North Africa is the geographic space covering six countries including Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, and a disputed territory Western Sahara.
2   United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Transnational Trafficking and the Rule of Law in West Africa: A Threat Assessment* (July 2009).
3   United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Mid-Year Review of Sahel Regional Strategy* (July 2013).
4   Steff Gaulter, "Analysis: Understanding the Sahel drought" (*Aljazeera.com*, 22 June 2012).
5   Muna A. Abdalla, *Understanding of the Natural Resource Conflict Dynamics: The Case of Tuareg in North Africa and the Sahel*, (ISS Paper, No. 194, August 2009), pp. 1–12.
6   Judith Scheele, *Smugglers and Saints of the Sahara: Regional Connectivity in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
7   Ansar al-Deen ("Supporters of the Faith"), and the Movement for Jihad and Oneness in West Africa (MUJWA, aka MUJAO according to its French acronym) are the main allies of AQIM in the Sahel-Sahara region. The region shelters Mokhtar Belmokhtar aka Khalid Abu al-Abbas senior commander of "Signed in-Blood *katibat*"; several militants of the Nigerian violent group Boko Haram as well as its offshoot *Jama' atu Ansarul Musilimina Fi Biladi Sudan* (henceforth, *JAMBS*) ("Vanguards for the Protection of Muslims in Black Africa"); Malian Arab tribal armed groups; and armed smugglers and traffickers. Complicating the Islamist insurgent landscape are the notorious Ganda Koy ("Masters of the Land") and Ganda Iso ("Sons of the Land"), reactivated Songhai and Fulani militias, which were trained and funded by the Malian army in the 1990s. Successor to the Ganda Koy, Ganda Iso was infamous for orchestrating terrorist campaigns targeting Tuareg aka "white nomads" in the mid-1990s. Malian government has historically manipulated proxy militias like the Ganda Koy to contain and suppress Tuareg rebellions in the northern part of the country.
8   Baz Lecocq and Paul Schrijver, "The War on Terror in a Haze of Dust: Potholes and Pitfalls on the Saharan Front" (*Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, Vol. 25, No.1, January 2007), pp. 141–66.
9   Mohammed Mahmoud Abu al-Ma'li, *Al-Qaeda and its allies in the Sahel and the Sahara* (Doha: Aljazeera Center for Studies, 1 May 2012).
10   International Crisis Group, *Mali: Avoiding Escalation* (Brussels: Crisis Group Africa Report, No. 189, 18 July 2012), p. 7.
11   Jacques Delcroze, "The Malian model falls apart" (*Le Monde Diplomatique*, September 2012).
12   Joe Penney, "US in Mali: Disintegration of a State" (*Al Akhbar English*, 10 June 2012).
13   Jean Sebastian Lecocq, *Disputed Desert: Decolonization, Competing Nationalisms and Tuareg Rebellions in Northern Mali* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).
14   Adam Nossiter, "Islamists' Harsh Justice is on the Rise in North Mali" (*The New York Times*, 27 December 2012).
15   On 25 February 2013, AQIM lost one of its "hawks" a devoted field commander to its jihadist cause. The Emir of the Sahara Emirate, Amor Mohamed Ghedeir aka Abdelhamid Abou Zeid – Belmokhtar's rival – head of Tarek ibn Ziad katibat was notorious for kidnapping several Western citizens and claimed responsibility for the execution of Edwin Dyer, a British national, in 2009, and Michel Germaneau, a French citizen, in 2010. He was reported killed by Chadian troops during the French expedition in Ifoghas Mountains in northern Mali.
16   Katibat is the Arabic literal translation of the word battalion. However, the size of katibat within Islamist insurgent groups is far less than those battalions of modern armed forces. Normally, the number of militants belonging to one *katibat* varies between less than 100 to no more than 150 fighters.
17   For further details about In Amenas attack, see "Algeria hostage crisis: the full story of the kidnapping in the desert" (*The Guardian*, 25 January 2013).
18   Noureddine Jebnoun, "Is the Maghreb the 'Next Afghanistan'? Mapping the Radicalization of the Salafi Jihadist Movement" (*Occasional Papers Series*, Center for Contemporary Arab Studies-Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Services, Georgetown University, December 2007).
19   Laurence Aïda Ammour, "Regional Security Cooperation in the Maghreb and Sahel: Algeria's Pivotal Ambivalence" (*Africa Security Brief*, No. 18, February 2012), p. 4.
20   "Algeria suicide bomb attack hits military academy" (*BBC*, 28 August 2011).
21   Afua Hirsch, "Niger suicide bombings reported to be work of Mokhtar Belmokhtar" (*The Guardian*, 24 May 2013).
22   Noureddine Jebnoun, "Tunisia's Security Syndrome" (*IPRIS Viewpoints*, No. 123, May 2013).
23   *Ibid*.
24   Tarek Amara and Tom Heneghan, "Tunisia PM says state must stay strong amid jihadi threat" (*Reuters*, 27 August 2013).
25   Abu Iyadh spent most of his time in United Kingdom, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia. In March 2003, he was arrested in Turkey and handed over to Ben Ali regime.
26   Tarek Amara, "Tunisian Islamist radicals planned other murders, Islamic state: ministry" (*Reuters*, 28 August 2013).
27   *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* (28 August 2013).

28   Seemingly the name of the new alliance between the "Signed in-Blood katibat" and MUJAO was cautiously selected by the leaders of these groups. "Al-Murabitun" literally meaning "one who is ready for battle at a fortress" is related to the Almoravids Berber dynasty who founded a powerful kingdom in the mid 11 century that run over Western North Africa and Andalusia and played a vital role in avoiding the fall of Andalusia to the Iberian Christian kingdom. See "Belmokhtar joins forces with African jihadists and vows attacks in Egypt" (*The Guardian*, 22 August 2013).
29   Abdel Rahman Youssef and Muhammad al-Arabi, "The State of Sinai (I): Surviving on Its Own" (*Al Akhbar English*, 21 August 2012).
30   Michelle Nichols, "Libya arms fueling conflicts in Syria, Mali and beyond: U.N. experts," (*Reuters*, 9 April 2013).
31   On 27 November 2013, Sanogo, the junta leader who orchestrated the March 2012 coup, was arrested and charged for torturing and murdering his rivals within the Malian army, mainly soldiers among the red beret presidential guard who were in charge of protecting the fallen President Touré.
32   International Crisis Group, *Mali: réformer ou rechuter* (Brussels: Crisis Group Africa Report, No. 210, 10 January 2014).