

The Sahel from the Perspective of the U.S. Energy Security: Securitization of Oil in the Gulf of Guinea

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Summary:

The African Sahel region became the new battlefield in the American global campaign of the war against terrorism after September 11th, 2001. But the U.S. counterterrorism strategy in the region was initially meant to protect the oil flow from the Gulf of Guinea, which has emerged as a vital interest for the American Security Energy.

In this context, this article will address the US. strategic interests in the Gulf of Guinea, highlighting the relationship between terrorism in the Sahel and the oil supplies coming from the West coast of Africa, through the recommendations of “the African Oil Policy Initiative Group”, which recommended the “W. Bush Administration” the militarization of its relations with the African continent, in order to protect this vital resource.

Key words: The Gulf of Guinea, the African Sahel, Oil flow protection, Counter-terrorism, American Energy Security.

ملخص:

أصبحت منطقة الساحل الإفريقي ساحة المعركة الجديدة في ظل الحملة الأمريكية العالمية على الإرهاب بعد هجمات 11 سبتمبر 2001، غير أن الإستراتيجية الأمريكية لمكافحة الإرهاب في المنطقة كانت تهدف منذ البداية إلى حماية تدفق النفط من خليج غينيا، الذي برز كمصلحة حيوية بالنسبة للأمن الطاقوي الأمريكي.

وفي هذا السياق، سيتناول هذا المقال بالدراسة، المصالح الإستراتيجية للولايات المتحدة في خليج غينيا، مبرزاً العلاقة بين إرهاب الساحل وإمدادات غرب إفريقيا، مروراً بتوصيات "مجموعة مبادرة النفط الإفريقي" التي أوصت إدارة "بوش الأب" بعسكرة علاقاتها مع القارة الإفريقية، حماية لهذا المورد الحيوي.

الكلمات الدالة: خليج غينيا، الساحل الإفريقي، حماية تدفق النفط، مكافحة الإرهاب، الأمن الطاقوي الأمريكي.

Résumé:

La région du Sahel est devenue le nouveau champ de bataille dans la campagne mondiale américaine de la guerre contre le terrorisme après le 11 Septembre 2001. Mais cette stratégie de lutte contre le terrorisme dans la région a été initialement conçue pour protéger le flux de pétrole en provenance du Golfe de Guinée, qui s'est révélé être d'un intérêt vital pour la sécurité énergétique américaine.

Dans ce contexte, le présent article abordera les intérêts stratégiques des Etats-Unis dans le Golfe de Guinée, en soulignant la relation entre le terrorisme dans le Sahel et les livraisons de pétrole en provenance de la côte ouest de l'Afrique, à travers les recommandations du « Groupe d'Initiative sur la Politique Pétrolière Africaine » (the African Oil Policy Initiative Group), qui a recommandé à « l'administration de W. Bush » la militarisation de ses relations avec le continent africain dans l'optique de protéger cette ressource vitale.

Mots clefs: La région du Sahel, Golfe de Guinée, Afrique de l'Ouest, Initiative du Groupe Africain du Pétrole, les approvisionnements en pétrole,

Introduction:

Before the events of September 11th, 2001, the African continent was not of big interest to Washington, and that seemed quite clear through the statements of "George W. Bush" during the presidential election campaign of 2000, where

he declared that the priorities of his foreign policy does not include Africa. However, the increasing importance of West African oil, especially the supplies coming from the Gulf of Guinea, have made the African Sahel a geopolitical priority for the United States of America, and the new front of what the W. Bush administration has called “the Global War on Terror”, considering the concerns of this administration about the extension of the Islamic radicalism threat –as it put it- to West Africa, which has become a vital region for the U.S energy security.

According to this matter, this article will address the following problematic:

What is the link between the U.S interest in combating terrorism in the Sahel, and the oil supplies coming from West Africa?

I. The U.S Interest in the Gulf of Guinea:

The United States top the list of oil-importing countries, this dependency is due to the strong growth of the U.S. economy. Nevertheless, the American administration does not intend to reduce its consumption, but in contrast, seeking to diversify its supply sources, and according to Dick Cheney report issued in May 2001, it is assumed that within the next twenty years, the U.S. consumption of oil will increase by 33%. The report also stressed the need to reduce the U.S. dependency on the Persian Gulf oil, which represents 20% of the U.S. imports, and as the exploitation in Russia and Central Asia is hindered by several obstacles, were they geopolitical or political and even security problems, Africa, and particularly the Gulf of Guinea has become a priority for Washington.¹

Most importantly, the production and reserves of oil in the Gulf of Guinea have increased dramatically over the past years, thanks to the increasing significant discoveries in the off-shore, especially that of Angola, Nigeria, or Equatorial Guinea, as well as the discovery of new fields in Chad, Ivory Coast and Mauritania. Although Chad started its oil production only in 2003, it has reach the roof of 201 million barrels in 2006, which made it the second largest oil producer in the region after Nigeria, and the proven reserves of Chad has been estimated to 900 million barrels, compared to 100 million barrels for the Ivory Coast, which is the third largest producer in the region, not to mention that the vast majority of its oil wells or the equivalent of 86% are situated off-shore

¹ François Lafargue, “États-Unis, Inde, Chine : Rivalités Pétrolières en Afrique”, In. **Afrique Contemporaine**, Vol.4, N°216, (2005), p.44.

in a shallow area, such as the fields of “Hope” and “Baobab” where began the exploitation operations in 2002 and 2005 respectively.²

Moreover, Angola currently also owns the largest petroleum field in the world “Gerosol” in the off-shore, which can be in the coming years the first oil-producer in Africa. And according to statistics made by “British Petroleum” in June 2005, Angola has the second largest proven reserves in sub-Saharan Africa, estimated to 8.8 billion barrels at the late of 2004, an estimation which could reach up to 12.5 billion barrels, if the Angolan mainland is fully explored, when the war between the Angolan Government and the movement of “the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola”, comes to an end. Meanwhile two-thirds of the country’s production comes from off-shore fields in the province of Cabinda, which are explored since the sixties by Cabinda Gulf Company, an affiliation of the American company “Chevron Texaco”, which was overseeing approximately 75% of the production.³

Aside from this, Mauritania has joined the oil-producers club in February 2006, with proven oil reserves estimated to one billion barrels, making it occupy the second place among the West African countries, which has the largest oil reserves. In addition to Ghana which is considered one of the least oil productive countries in the region. Nevertheless, many independent oil companies expressed interest in obtaining licenses for exploration and production.⁴

The “National Energy Policy” report issued in 2001, noted that the importance of the West African oil sources will increase in the U.S. market, particularly with regard to Nigeria, which has exported 900.000 barrels of oil per day to the United States, from a total production of 2.1 million barrels per day, in the year of 2000, while the United States imported 300.000 barrels of oil per day from Angola, from a total production of 750.000 barrels per day in the same year. Therefore, the report recommended the reactivation and the deepening of the U.S-African oil trade, in order to strengthen the geographical diversification of energy supplies. And to reach this purpose, the United States must improve the security environment to facilitate the flow of investment and technology needed.⁵

2 Atlas de l’Intégration Régionale en Afrique de l’Ouest, Série économique : “ Le Pétrole et Le Gas”, CEDEAO-CSAO/ OCDE, (Avril, 2007), pp.10, 11, 12.

3 Fweley Diangitukwa, **Les Grandes Puissances et le Pétrole Africain : États-Unis-Chine : Une Compétition Larvée pour l’Hégémonie Planétaire**, (France : l’Harmattan, 2009), p.71.

4 Atlas de l’Intégration Régionale en Afrique de l’Ouest, Op.Cit., p.12.

5 Report of the National Energy Policy Development Group, “National Energy Policy : Reliable, Affordable, and Environmentally Sound Energy for America’s Future”, (Washington D.C : May, 2001), chapter 8, p.11.

In this context, the majors U.S. oil companies has become more active in Africa, thus the African oil exports to the United States has exceeded 85 billion dollars, for example “Exxon Mobil” has become the second largest international oil producer company in Africa, and over a decade, the U.S. investments in the continent have doubled, rising from 9% in 2000, to 22% in 2004, to reach 21% In 2008, and currently, the African oil represents 29% of the Exxon Mobil’s production.⁶

And according to the report of the latter, issued in 2013, the oil will remain the first source of energy by 2040, and that less than half of the world’s crude oil has been produced. However, the energy sources will keep on evolving, thanks to the ability of the majors, such as Exxon Mobil, to develop the technology needed in order to explore new fields, particularly the drilling technology used in deep water, especially in Nigeria and Angola, which gives it an increasingly important role in the global energy map.⁷

It should be noted in this context, that from a historical point of view, the European companies are considered the most active ones in the black continent, such as the French company “Total” which is the first oil producer in Africa; Thus, competing with the American company “Exxon Mobil”. On the other hand, the African oil arena has witnessed a strong entry of the Asian oil companies, among them the Malaysian “Petronas”, and the Chinese “Petrochina”, which increases the United States concerns.⁸ That has -under the pretext of combating terrorism in the Sahel region- intensified its military presence, aimed, at first and foremost, to protect the flow of African oil.

II. Terrorism in the Sahel as a Threat to the West African Supplies:

The term “African Sahel” is of an Arabic origin, which means the coast or southern edge of the Sahara, whereas geographically, the African Sahel stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to the red sea, between latitudes 12 and 20 degrees north of the equator, it is a semi- arid region separating North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa.⁹ In the context of this study, we will rely on the geopolitical definition, without excluding the geographic considerations, thus, the arc of

6 Honoré Le Leuch, “Le Pétrole et Le Gaz Naturel en Afrique : Une Part Croissante Dans l’Approvisionnement Énergétique Mondial”, *Géostratégiques*, N°25, (Octobre : 2009), p.39.

7 Report of ExxonMobil, “The Outlook For Energy : A View To 2040”, (Texas : ExxonMobil Corporation, 2013), pp.38, 39.

8 Report of ExxonMobil, *Op.Cit.*, p.39.

9 Carlos Buontempo et al., “The Climate of the Sahel”, In. **OECD, Global Security Risks and West Africa : Development Challenges**, OECD Publishing, 2010, p.58.

crisis -as it is called- extends between Sudan and Mauritania, including: Nigeria -for geo-economics reasons- Niger, Mali, Southern Algeria and Morocco up to the Atlantic Ocean.¹⁰ And this definition corresponds better with the objectives of this study, namely to identify the causes behind the U.S. commitment to fight the armed groups in the Sahel, given to the strategic importance gained by the West African region in the U.S. energy policy.

Since the emergence of oil in the Gulf of Guinea as a vital interest, African Sahel has become a new front in what the W. Bush administration called “Global War on Terror”, which constitutes the basis of U.S. policies in West Africa, ranging from military cooperation with the local governments against the phenomenon of terrorism, and strengthening democracy by focusing on legal reforms and pressures to liberalize energy markets in general, and oil markets in particular.¹¹

We note in this regard, that there are several definitions of the Gulf of Guinea; historically, it is the “Slave Coast”, which covers the coastal areas of what is known today as the Ivory Coast, Ghana, Benin and Togo, as well as the Niger Delta. Whereas geographically, it is the Atlantic Coast, which stretches from Senegal to Angola. And we will rely in the context of this article on the institutional definition, that includes members of “the Gulf of Guinea Commision”, which was created in 1999 including 8 countries: Nigeria, Angola, Cameroon, Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sao Tome and Principe. And obviously, most of them are oil-producing countries, especially Nigeria which is included in the African Sahel, and which is the largest oil producer in the region, and the first supplier to the United States of America.

Although West Africa did not experience the same intensity of violence witnessed by the north and east of the continent, however, due to political instability, poverty, governmental and socio-economical crises faced by the region, the latter became involved and exposed to be infiltrated by armed groups. Thus, the United States responded to this threat that threatens the vital energy facilities in West Africa, by doubling its military spending between 2002 and 2005, in order to protect strategic oil reserves in the region, through military

10 Mehdi Taje, “Sécurité et Stabilité dans le Sahel Africain”, In. **NDC Occasional Paper**, Academic Research Branch, (Rome, December, 2006), p.6.

11 Cédric Jourde, “The Role of the United States in Western Africa : Tying Terrorism to Electoral Democracy and Strategic Resources”, In. Charles-Phillippe David and David Groudin (Eds), **Hegemony or Empire ? : The Redefinition of US Power Under George W. Bush**, (English : Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), p.183.

programs such as Pan-Sahel Initiative in 2002, followed by Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Initiative in 2005.

Those programs were set to train the African Security Forces, to protect the borders, detect and arrest the armed insurgents. Therefore, the initiative of 2002 trained troops in Mali, Mauritania, Chad and Niger, while the initiative of 2005 was expanded to include Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco. In addition to those programs, we may mention “the African Crisis Response Initiative”, which became known as “the African Contingency Operations Training Assistance” (ACOTA), an Initiative intended to provide training on peacekeeping operations and military tactics by U.S. Special Forces, as well as training the African troops to use the American military equipment. This program included countries such as: Malawi, Mali, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Benin, Kenya, Senegal, and Uganda.¹²

It is, therefore, not surprising that U.S. administration seeks to establish military bases in the African countries that fall within the important oil-producing areas, such as Senegal and Sao Tome and Principe, as well as signing military agreements with Gabon, Mauritania, and Guinea. The George W. Bush administration also acquired the freedom to use the airports of Senegal, Uganda, Ghana, Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Zambia, Namibia, Nigeria, Benin, Ivory Coast. Moreover, based on the logic of combating terrorism in the African Sahel, the U.S. Department of Defense announced the creation of the new U.S. military command for Africa “Africom”, aiming at securing oil exports, in areas that become of strategic importance.¹³

These security concerns drive the logic of integrating the African Sahel in the so called “Global War on Terror”, and it should be noted that this military approach pursued by the U.S. administration under the leadership of “George W. Bush” in African Sahel in general, and West Africa in particular, have been affected by several factors and was designed by certain parties, as we will address it below.

III. The Recommendations of the “African Oil Initiative Group” (AOPIG):

The control of natural resources in general and oil in particular, is one of the main reasons behind the U.S. military involvement anywhere in the world. And in addition to the war on Iraq in 2003, some argued that the purpose of the

12 Claire Woodside, “West Africa : America’s Foreign Policy Post 9-11 and the Resource Curse, A Head on Collision”, In. **Journal of Military and Strategic Studies**, Vol.9, Issue 4, (Summer, 2007), pp.4, 5.

13 Claire Woodside, **Op.Cit**, p. 6.

war in Afghanistan was also in order to control the natural resources. That is because of the paramount role of Afghanistan in getting the oil of Central Asia and the Caspian Sea. And by mentioning this latter, some considered the NATO intervention in Kosovo in 1999, was also for the purpose of securing the Caspian Sea oil.

Jeremy Keenan added that the same situation is applied to the goal of the U.S. military presence in West Africa, because of the George W. Bush administration's endeavor in reducing U.S. dependence on Middle Eastern oil, an endeavor stressed by "the African Oil Initiative Group" (AOPIG), supported by "the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies" (IASPS).¹⁴

Although the proven oil reserves in West Africa, are not comparable to those in the Gulf, nevertheless, it is enough to maintain the stability of the markets, in case of disruption of supplies from other unstable regions. In other words West Africa is considered as an alternative option. As a result, this latter has become a region of fierce competition, and an international target to diversify oil supplies. And it was noted in the AOPIG report, that this region offers the safest and least complicated opportunities, to avoid supply disruptions and price volatility and try to reduce the U.S. dependence on Middle Eastern oil.¹⁵

The answer to the question of how did West Africa in general and the Gulf of Guinea in particular, become of vital interest to the United States of America, could start with the campaign promoted by "Paul Wihbey" since 1998, which contributed to put pressures on Washington, in order to increase the U.S. military commitment in the Gulf of Guinea and its environs, calling for the establishment of a major port in the Gulf of Guinea calling for the establishment of a major port in the Gulf of Guinea to the U.S. Navy, proposing to have it in the islands of Sao Tome and Principe.

On January 25th, 2002, four months after the events of September 11th, 2001, and with the support of the (IASPS), Wihbey organized a symposium in Washington, about the strategic importance of the increasing oil flow from Africa to the United States of America. The meeting resulted in the formation of the (AOPIG) which included officials from the W. Bush administration, representatives of the Congress, and others of the major oil companies, investment companies, and international consultants. This was followed by the (AOPIG) report, in which it recommended the need for strategic commitment of the United States in the region, including the establishment of a new regional

14 Toby Archer and Tihomir Popovic, "The Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Initiative : The US War on Terrorism in Northwest Africa", **FIIA Report 16**, (2007), pp.47, 48.

15 Deekana Tipchanta, "The Scramble for Africa's Oil : A Blessing or a Curse for African States ?", (Ph.D thesis), University of Nottingham, July 2012, p.19.

command, and increasing the military aid to the “Economic Community of West African States” (ECOWAS), which is a regional organization, dominated by Nigeria.¹⁶

The (AOPIG) report also stressed the fact that the American administration should deal with the U.S. energy security through a coherent strategy, using West Africa as a way to diversify and stabilize prices in the global energy market, especially after the emergence of the Gulf of Guinea as a vital interest and the new energy center of the United States of America.¹⁷ While “Ed Royce” -the representative of the Sub-Committee on Africa in the U.S. House of Representatives- argued that the importance of the U.S. oil production in the Gulf of Guinea, refers to the need to develop a strategy to protect the production from the armed groups; and that is what brings up the important role of the U.S. military presence in the region, and its relationship with African forces.

The (AOPIG) report also commented the new organization of the U.S. global military commands, which has been announced by the U.S. Department of Defense in April 14th, 2002, where the coordination responsibility for military issues with African countries was still divided between the Central Command CENTCOM –which covers the Middle East, and South West Asia- and EUCOM -which covers the European continent, Russia, the Atlantic Ocean and most of the African continent, including South and West Africa- as well as the Pacific Command PACOM. But this is not enough to strengthen U.S. military presence in Sub-Saharan Africa, and that the absence of a regional command dedicated to ensure a rapid U.S. intervention, is a glaring omission that may increase the risks that threaten U.S. interests in West Africa in the coming years.

We note in this regards, that the “African Oil Policy Initiative Groups” (AOPIG) leads the “Oil Lobby” in the United States, which is a U.S-Zionist lobby, featuring Zionist lobbyists and American oil companies -Majors- that put pressures on the U.S. government to renew its relations with oil-producing countries in Africa, in order to facilitate trade and investment regardless of the rampant corruption in the governments of these countries.

And to achieve this purpose, the United States renewed its diplomatic relations with Equatorial Guinea and Libya; and although the W. Bush administration justified this action by arguing that it was a reward for Libya, as a result of its cooperation in the war on terror, but the truth is that the American

16 Paul M. Lubeck et al., “Convergent Interests : US Energy Security and the ‘Security’ of Nigeria Democracy”, the Center for International Policy Report, (February : 2007), p.12.

17 Barry Schutz and Paul Michael Wihbey, “African Oil : A Priority for US National Security and African Development”, African Oil Policy Initiative Group, (2002), pp.6, 8.

oil companies pressured Washington to renew these relations and remove Libya from the U.S. list of terrorist countries, because that was hampering their business, as well as the fear of American oil companies from China, that may take advantage of the severance of diplomatic relations, between the United States and Libya, to acquire the exploitation licenses.

It could be argued that the same situation is applicable to Equatorial Guinea, where the W. Bush administration reopened the U.S. embassy under pressures from the oil lobby in the United States, despite protests from human rights groups.

IV. George W. Bush Administration Policy Towards West Africa:

During the presidential election campaign in 2000, the governor of the State of Texas “George W. Bush”, criticized both the Democratic president “Bill Clinton”, and vice president “Al Gore”, on what he considered a waste of U.S. armed forces on humanitarian missions around the world, including the African continent, and throughout his election campaign, he did not refer to West Africa as region of vital interest for the United States.¹⁸ That is because since the end of the Cold War, Africa did not constitute -through successive U.S. administrations- a major source of threats, nor an arena with important opportunities for exploitation. But this view has changed after the events of September 11th, 2001, therefore, the U.S. decision-makers acquire the certainty that oil-producing countries in West Africa, are exposed to the threat of armed groups deployed in the Sahel region of Africa, particularly Nigeria and Angola, the major oil-producing countries in West Africa, on which the United States rely in its strategy to diversify its supplies.

Thus, the W. Bush administration brought the war on terror to the Black continent, for fear of eventual attacks from armed groups to U.S. interests in West Africa. And that led to the increase of U.S. military cooperation with Petro-States in this latter; a new feature in the U.S-African relations, which are focused on the strategic importance of African oil.¹⁹

For his part, “George W. Bush” expressed practically his interest in the AOPIG recommendations, by inviting 11 heads of State from West Africa, to

18 Peter A. Dumbuya, “A Historical Review of the United States-African Relations During the Presidency of George W. Bush”, In. Abdul Bangura (Ed), **Assessing George W. Bush’s Africa Policy and Suggestions for Barack Obama and African Leaders**, (Washington D.C : the African Studies and Research Forum, 2009), p.1.

19 Robert D. Grey, “Africa”, In. Mary Buckley and Robert Singh (Eds), **The Bush Doctrine and the War on Terrorism : Global Responses, Global Consequences**, (London : Routledge, 2006), pp.121, 122.

the white house in the mid 2002; while “Colin Powell” -U.S. Secretary of State from 2001 to 2005- visited Angola and Gabon.²⁰ Followed by “George W. Bush” trip to Africa in July 2003, for 6 days, during which he visited 5 African countries, including: Senegal, Nigeria; to be, therefore, the first Republican president, and the fourth U.S. president to visit the continent, and he declared on the eve of his return trip to the continent on February 2008, at the fourth summit of the “Corporate Council for Africa”, that the United States is convinced by the huge potential of Africa; knowing that he visited 5 other countries during this trip, including: Ghana, and Liberia, which means that he had visited 10 African countries during his terms, a period during which he met 25 African heads of States.²¹

“Pierre Abromovici” argued in *Le Monde Diplomatique* that the United States is moving in order to protect supplies and vital pipelines, and that the purpose behind the military measures and security efforts in the African Sahel, lies not in enhancing security or preserving peace in the region as a part of the war on terrorism, but it’s rather a part of the new scramble witnessed in West Africa.²²

Thus, the U.S. investments in energy sector will keep on increasing in West Africa, in favor of diversification of oil supplies in the United States, by reducing its heavy reliance on the Middle Eastern oil, especially since the oil strategy that underlies the American Energy Policy in West Africa, is based on a combination of factors, we’ll mention the most important ones below:

1) That the most oil production in West Africa is located in the off-shore fields, which facilitate its transportation across the Atlantic Ocean to the United States. Moreover, the off-shore fields are isolated and far from any political upheavals, and this makes the drilling operations easy.

2) That the West African oil contains a small percentage of sulfur, which is favored by U.S. refineries, that operate under strict environmental laws.

3) That radical Islam is not widespread in West Africa, according to the American point of view, and that this region is not a scene of competing ideologies such as communism. And in this context, the State Department economist “Robert Murphy” noted in January 2002, that

20 Okbazghi Yohannes, “America’s New Frontier : Oil in the Gulf of Guinea”, In. **The Black Scholar**, Vol.33, N°2, (2003), p.11.

21 Peter A. Dumbuya, **Op.Cit.**, p.2.

22 Robert D. Grey, **Op.Cit.**, p.131.

“political discord or dispute in African oil states is unlikely to take on regional or ideological tone that would result in a joint embargo.”²³

We note that the military expenditures for Sub-Saharan Africa, was relatively insignificant, compared to the U.S. military expenditures directed to Europe, Asia and the Middle East. Nevertheless, the Growing American dependence on African oil led to the increase of U.S. military activities in the region since “George W. Bush” took office, due to the instability of security environment and the threat coming from the African Sahel. And although this military presence may be seen modest compared with similar activities, in other places, but it has been increasing gradually and continuously, and the establishment of a new U.S. military command for Africa by the U.S. Defense Department, is the best evidence.²⁴

Thus, the new administration of “Barack Obama” inherited from its predecessor, a significant increase of the U.S. military interventions in the continent, including the programs to combat terrorism, and a massive expansion of the American peace operations, as well as the launch of “Africom”.²⁵ In this context, the Obama administration made efforts to maintain strong ties with African oil states, such as the visit of “Hilary Clinton” in August 2009, to Nigeria and Angola.²⁶ Where she provided U.S. military aid, stating that the Obama administration will do everything in its power to fulfill its obligations, and that in case the Nigerian government requests more military equipments in order to protect the Niger Delta region in particular, the United States would be ready to provide that.

Thereby, the oil securitization was always the key goal behind these visits.²⁷ And this leads us to say that the Obama administration pursues on the same path traced by the George W. Bush administration.

Conclusion:

23 J. Anyu Ndumbe, “West African Oil, US Energy Policy, and Africa’s Development Strategies”, In. **Mediterranean Quarterly**, (Winter : 2009), p.101.

24 Michael T. Klare and Daniel Volman, “The African ‘Oil Rush’ and US National Security”, In. **Third World Quarterly**, Vol.27, N°4, (2006), p.615.

25 William Mark Bellamy, “Making Better Sense of US Security Engagement in Africa”, In. Jennifer G. Cooke and J.Stephen Morrison (Eds), **Beyond the Bush Years : Critical Challenges for the Obama Administration**, (Washington DC : Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2009), p.12.

26 Laura White, “What Kind of Change for Africa ? : US Policy in Africa Under the Obama Administration”, **Les Notes de l’Iris**, (Avril, 2010), pp.10, 11, 14.

27 Stephen Chan, Daniel Volman and Jeremy Keenan, “The Origins of AFRICOM : The Obama Administration, the Sahara-Sahel and US Militarization of Africa”, In. **ACAS Concerned Africa Scholars**, US Militarization of the Sahara-Sahel : Security, Space and Imperialism, Bulletin N°85, (Spring, 2010), p.88.

This paper addressed the overlapping of the U.S. military policy with energy issues, which gained a paramount importance since the election of “George W. Bush”, as such, this article will be concluded by a set of results as followed:

The factor of oil is the main reason behind the U.S. interest in the African Sahel after the events of September 11th, 2001, because the activity of the armed groups in this latter, does not reach the point to make it a dangerous global threat as the United States want to cast it, especially if all the major regional powers gathered their efforts, then they will succeed to contain security threats in the Sahel, which does not threaten the national security of the United States of America, as far as threatening the oil interests of the latter in the region and its environs, especially after the Gulf of Guinea became a region of U.S. vital interest, through the strategy to diversify sources of supply, led by George W. Bush administration, in order to reduce U.S. dependence on Middle Eastern oil.

The U.S. endeavor to increase its military presence in Africa, under the pretext of the fight against terrorist groups deployed in the Sahel, requires in-depth analysis, given the risks facing the African states, because it deepens the African regimes dependence on oil revenues, rather than following broader strategies for economic development.

Moreover, the U.S. military intervention often leads to exacerbate internal political conflicts regarding the distribution of oil revenues issue, especially when the ruling regime monopolize these revenues, while depriving other groups from them. Which leads to political turmoil, that often turns into armed violence, as the only way to gain a bigger share of the profits, as is the case in Nigeria.

The scenario of the 2003 Iraq war, could very well be repeated in Nigeria, as the largest oil producer in West Africa and the first African supplier to the United States of America, which means that Nigeria is on the edge of a new war that is supposed to be against the armed groups, but the goal will be the protection of the Niger Delta region, and securing the flow of oil from it; so it is no surprise to hear that Nigeria is facing the Islamic extremism threat, as the W. Bush administration stated during the tensions witnessed in the country in that period, and the escalation of clashes between the muslim majority, and the Christian minority, and maybe this is the fact the United States wants to believe or rather to exploit.

The U.S. administration, whether the previous one, the current or the upcoming one, Democratic or Republican, will continue to seek to control all the sources of energy in the world, to maintain its position as a superpower. And

after the Middle East and the Persian Gulf; the Caspian Sea region and Central Asia countries, came the turn of the African continent, and the U.S. objective is to ensure the free flow of energy -oil in particular- and the cheap price of this latter.

Finally, history shows that the U.S. military forces when stationed in such strategic areas, will remain indefinitely. As a result, those areas has passed through dark periods -especially the Middle East- because of the American interventions, which has always tended towards dividing the region and inciting regimes to each other, spreading the seeds of chronic conflicts, initiating bloody wars, under the pretext of achieving and maintaining security and stability in these areas, and if the African countries won't awake to this threat, the history will be repeating itself.