

The growing American role in the African Sahel region and its repercussions on French strategic interests

تنامي الدور الأمريكي بمنطقة الساحل الإفريقي وتداعياته على المصالح الاستراتيجية الفرنسية

Le américain croissant dans la région du Sahel africain et ses répercussions sur les intérêts stratégiques français

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ملخص:

يهدف البحث إلى تسليط الضوء على الموارد التي تزخر بها منطقة الساحل مما جعلها منطقة مهمة في تصورات القوى الكبرى. كما يهدف إلى معرفة صور التنافس بين الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية وفرنسا وانعكاساته على النفوذ التقليدي لفرنسا، بحكم أن جل دول الساحل الإفريقي مستعمرات تقليدية تابعة له. في الجانب المنهجي للبحث تم اعتماد: النهج المقارن، كما تم الاستعانة بالاقتراب الما بعد الكولونيالي قصد تعقب الجوانب التاريخية لفرنسا كقوة استعمارية في منطقة الساحل الإفريقي. خلصت الدراسة إلى أن التنافس الدولي غرضه الحفاظ على الهيمنة وبسط النفوذ عبر ما يسمى بالحرب الشاملة على الإرهاب وإقامة القواعد العسكرية، وتحقيق المصلحة من خلال السيطرة على منابع الطاقة، وهذا ما جعل المنطقة حلبة تنافس خاصة بين فرنسا وأمريكا. **الكلمات المفتاحية:** تنافس دولي؛ ساحل إفريقي؛ نفوذ؛ أمريكا؛ فرنسا.

Abstract:

The research aims to shed light on the resources that abound in the African Sahel region, which made it an important region in the perceptions of the major powers. It also aims to know the forms of competition between the USA and France and its repercussions on the traditional influence of France, being the traditional colonizer of the African Sahel countries. In the methodological aspect of the research, the comparative approach was adopted, and the post-colonial approach was used to track the historical aspects of France as a colonial power in the African Sahel region . The study concluded that international competition aims to maintain hegemony and extend influence through the so-called comprehensive war on terrorism, establishing military bases, and achieving interest through controlling energy sources, and this is what made the region an arena of competition, especially between France and America.

Keywords: international competition; the African Sahel; influence; America; France.

Résumé:

La recherche vise à clarifier les ressources qui abondent dans la région du Sahel, ce qui en a fait une région importante dans les perceptions des superpuissances. Elle vise également à connaître les formes de concurrence entre les États-Unis d'Amérique et la France et ses répercussions sur l'influence traditionnelle de la France, étant donné que la plupart des pays sahéliens africains sont ses colonies traditionnelles. Dans l'aspect méthodologique de la recherche, l'approche comparative a été adoptée et l'approche postcoloniale a été utilisée afin de retracer les aspects historiques de la France en tant que puissance coloniale dans la région du Sahel africain.

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L'étude a conclu que la concurrence internationale vise à maintenir l'hégémonie, à étendre l'influence à travers la soi-disant guerre globale contre le terrorisme, à établir des bases militaires et à susciter l'intérêt en contrôlant les sources d'énergie, et c'est ce qui a fait de la région une arène de compétition particulière entre la France et l'Amérique.

Mots clés: rivalité internationale; Côte africaine; influence; Amérique; France.

Introduction:

The African Sahel region is among the most important regions in international strategies, due to its geopolitical, economic and strategic characteristics and advantages, which qualify it to be of interest to regional and international powers, unlike what it was in the shadow of the Cold War, when it was marginalized by international powers for a long time. However, after the events of September 11, 2001, increased international interest in this region emerged, especially on the part of the United States of America, which produced a new reality that greatly threatened French interests in the region, which for decades had been a traditional sphere of influence for France.

On this basis, this study seeks to dismantle the subject through three main axes, beginning with the conceptual rooting of international competition in the Sahel region; Then he touched on the characteristics and advantages that the Sahel region abounds in, which made it coveted by the major powers. Then presenting American and French economic and security projects in the region in light of the intensifying competition between them to extend influence and hegemony. Finally, aspects of the growing influence of the United States of America in the region and its ability to undermine the French role were addressed.

This leads us to the formulation of the following problematic: To what extent does the French role adapt to the American competition to extend influence in the African Sahel region?

The following sub-questions emerge from the main problematic:

- What is the geopolitical and strategic importance of the countries of the African Sahel region?
- What are the areas and manifestations of American-French competition in the region?
- Has the United States succeeded in succeeding the traditional role of France in the African Sahel region?

To answer the problem with its branches, the following hypothesis was formulated:

The richness of the African Sahel region in natural resources (mainly oil), has made it a space for international competition, especially between the United States of America and France, with the aim of controlling its natural resources.

1. The geopolitical characteristics and strategic advantages of the African Sahel region:

The strategic importance of the African Sahel region lies in the fact that it is the geographical area close to a group of vital regions, where the strip or coast line constitutes an important strategic axis in the African continent, as the importance of the region appears through its strategic location adjacent to the most important regions that have become known for great international competition. at recent days.

1-1 Definition of international competition:

Many thinkers believe that the term competition has solid economic origins, similar to those concepts that were derived from it such as free economic competition, international

competitiveness, and others, as it moved from the field of economic sciences to the field of political science, specifically within the studies of political economy and international economic relations.

The radical transformations that affected the post-Cold War world and the resulting increase in the economic factor had a great impact on the increasing importance of the phenomenon, as the economy became the most important factor determining and driving the foreign policies of countries, which created an atmosphere of economic competition through diplomatic mechanisms supported by technology and culture. (Mehrez, 1994, p. 154)

There are many definitions that have been presented regarding international competition or competition in international relations. It can be said that international competition refers to imbalances in the international community, which are imbalances that amplify and take the form of conflict if they are not addressed. Countries seek to maximize their gains according to the concept of national interest in a way that may contradict the interests of other countries, which may generate a state of competition, and competition may include a specific field and may expand to include many areas such as economic, political and civilizational competition; Especially if the countries whose competitive relations are distinguished are ideologically different or differ in the economic and political approaches of each.

He also defines competition as a political concept that refers to a state of disagreement between countries that does not reach the stage of conflict, and takes economic and political dimensions to achieve interests and status in the international or regional framework.

Competition is also defined as a situation in which two or more parties disagree over incompatible goals, whether those goals are real or imagined, or over limited resources.

It is also defined as a specific situation in which each of the interacting parties is aware of the incompatibility in possible future situations, and each of them is forced to take a position that is not compatible with the perceived interests of the other party. (BEDOUI, 1997, p. 36)

1.2 A Geopolitical Approach to the African Sahel (coast):

The term "Sahel" has traditionally been derived from the word beach or the southern edge of the Sahara (Taje, décembre 2006, p. 6); From a geographical point of view, the Sahel (coast):is known as the dividing line between North (white) Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, thus forming the Sahel (coast) as an ecological zone, as the rains are not abundant and not moderate and fall during a wet season followed by a dry season that lasts for many months.

Perhaps the vastness of the geographical area of the African Sahel region created a kind of disagreement about which of the countries belongs to this field, as the African Sahel region covers the arc extending from Sudan to Mauritania to include three pivotal countries: Mali, Niger and Chad; These countries meet in specific characteristics, related to the fact that they are desert countries and a large area (OUED ABAH, February 2008). There is another view of the geographical determination of the African Sahel region, according to the Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the African Sahel (CILSS), which was established in 1971, and which identifies the countries of the Sahel region in nine countries: Cape Verde Islands, Guinea-Bissau, Gambia, Burkina Faso, Mali Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Chad, which have a combined area of 25,344,000 square kilometers. (Taje, décembre 2006, p. 6)

While the Sahel region is known geopolitically, to denote that arc that includes Sudan, Mali, Niger, Chad, southern Algeria and the Atlantic points in the far west. (Taje, décembre 2006, p. 6).

As for the military geographical definition: the African Sahel region includes the countries of North Africa and the Sahel countries, Sudan, Mali, Niger, Chad, Mauritania, in addition to Senegal. (BEN MESFER, 2006, p. 5)

The African Sahel region consists of: Mauritania, Mali and Niger as main countries, in addition to parts of some neighboring countries such as northern Burkina Faso, northern Chad, Nigeria, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal and Sudan.

The definitions of the African Sahel region vary with the diversity of perceptions through which this region is viewed. Sometimes the geographical perception that defines the Sahel region depends on the lands that come directly after the Sahara desert. Or by looking at the map of internal unrest, where the coast is known as the arc of crises, starting from the intractable ethnic crises in southern Sudan, Darfur and Chad, all the way to the internal cracks and security threats that Niger, Mali and Mauritania know. It is also expected that the circle of these crises and security threats will expand due to many reasons, the most important of which are:

a. The fragmented social nature is ethnically, tribally, and ethnically, which made the level of social cohesion weak and the dynamics of community integration difficult, especially with the absence of a unified national political culture, which results in crises such as: Darfur in Sudan, the Touareg in Mali and Niger, ethnic unrest in Mauritania, ethnic clashes, and even tribalism in Chad; As the Sahel region is considered one of the most regions in terms of ethnic diversity, as it represents a meeting point for different races and religions, as they live within different lifestyles (nomadic shepherders, urban shepherds, farmers...); The region can be divided into two parts, a southern part inhabited by blacks, and a northern part inhabited by whites.

In Mauritania, we find the Maures tribes, in addition to the Negroes and the Berber Arabs; In Mali, there are 23 ethnicities, divided into five groups: Mandingue, Peuls, Songhai, Voltaic, and Sahrawis, the latter including Arabs with 1.9% of the population, and Touareg with 7.4%. % of the population load,(BEN MESFER, 2006, p. 5). In Niger, there are the Djerma tribes with a rate of 22% of the population, and in Chad we find the Burko ethnicity, the pastoral and semi-urban Arabs from the Doza, the Bilial and the Tedato, as for religion, 94% of the population in Mali profess Islam, and 2% of them are pagans; As for 4%, they are Christians. In Niger, 95% are Muslims, and the rest are Christians and pagans. As for Chad, Muslims are concentrated in the north and Christians in the south. What can be seen is that the countries of the African Sahel region are multi-ethnic and religious, and are considered hotbeds of tensions and ethnic conflicts, which are employed internally and externally by parties and powers that have vital interests in the region.

b. The failure of the new states, which inherited political borders without taking into account the anthropological nature of the local communities in the processes of political building of states, especially with the presence of forms of ethnic or regional hegemony over political life in many Sahel countries; The state in the African Sahel region is witnessing an institutional, political and civil crisis, as dictatorial and authoritarian regimes dominate political life in the Sahel countries, in a way that has created a struggle for power through the practice of all forms of violence, either through military coups, political assassinations or civil wars. (BEN MESFER, 2006, p. 8)

In addition to the crisis of political legitimacy, the Sahel countries suffer from the problem of lack of control and the absence of governance, which means the inability of the state with its available capabilities to impose law and order in all its regions. The Sahel region also knows many

crises and disasters at the economic, environmental and humanitarian levels, as poverty rates are high in the countries of the region due to economic impotence and weak distributive justice. 80% of Chad's population lives below the level of one US dollar per day. In addition, it suffers from indebtedness, economic dependence, and a decline in growth rates as a result of these countries' dependence on rentier economies. The countries of the region are also suffering from a crisis of national integration, and this crisis appears through the inability of the political systems to build the national state and unify sub-national loyalties towards it, which has created conflicts and widespread waves of political violence.

The state in the Sahel is going through a deep crisis. The security threat emanating from the rift in the state's buildings and institutions has led to negativity in job performance, which perpetuates the concept of "state failure", which has been attached to the Sahel countries and Africa. Failed states are states that are unable to perform and impose their political and military power in the required manner. This was put forward by Barry Buzan in 1991, when he emphasized the necessity of distinguishing between the State and Power, as the assessment of strength or weakness depends on the capabilities of the political system in the military and economic field, and it is related, on the other hand, according to Buzan, degree of political consistency (HAMDI, 1997, p. 9). The failure of the state model has encouraged the rise of actors acting without the state, trying to fill the security, economic and even social vacuum left by the central authority in areas extending from Algeria to Mali and Niger in a chain that extends to Central Africa, where they have become areas for the movement of illegal actors such as organized crime groups, terrorist movements, secret waves of debauchery, and other types of informal trade of a cross-border nature.

1-3 The strategic features of the African Sahel region:

a- The oil capabilities of the African Sahel region:

The countries of the African Sahel region have large oil reserves, so they have become the focus of global attention because of their growing geopolitical, strategic, and economic importance. Today, the coast offers a strong alternative to oil resources in the Middle East, which has led to an intensification of international competition over African oil and natural resources in general, which is expected to take a new turn in the coming years, as oil has taken hold in the coastal region in addition to some neighboring countries such as Nigeria and Libya. , Algeria, and Guinea-Bissau, especially when we know that Africa as a continent occupies an important position on the global oil map. Oil production is concentrated in the West African region, and Nigeria comes at the forefront, as it is considered the tenth country in the global classification of oil-producing countries, as its production reached 3 million barrels per day in 2008. In addition to Algeria, which ranks fifteenth with proven reserve reserves estimated at more than 12 billion barrels.

Based on the preceding, it can be said that the strategic importance of the Sahel region is mainly linked to the areas of neighboring countries such as Nigeria, Algeria, and Libya, which geographically intersect with the African Sahel region. Philip Lopes believes that the region of West Africa and the Sahara desert, all the way to Sudan, is the focus of great competition between the big countries, as it reaches 70% of the percentage of African reserves in Nigeria compared to the member states of the Organization of Petroleum Producing Countries (OPEC), and it also possesses 189 trillion cubic meters of gas reserves in addition to oil; On the other hand, Nigeria sought to raise its stockpile to 40 billion barrels and seeks to raise its production capacity by 2020 to 740 thousand barrels per day (Kambil, Lizbenborx, & others, 2004, p. 76).

As for the North African region, there are two OPEC member states, Libya and Algeria. In Central Africa, we find (Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo), whose oil is characterized by these two countries with an advantage, high quality, and recent discovery, as it began to produce in July 2002 from the Doba Basin in the south, and production amounted to 225,000 barrels, according to 2006 estimates (Abd Elfettah, p. 115). Survey studies of the oil wealth in the countries of the African Sahel region see that the latter represents the focus of international and strategic competition, by virtue of the natural, underground and untapped resources; And we find among them:

Niger: The State of Niger has large oil reserves, especially in the areas of "Ogadim" north of Nigerian Lake Chad and the "Djado" region. In 2008, the Nigerien government granted usufruct in the Ogadim region, where Niger announced that the Chinese company would construct wells, and 11 wells were opened until 2012, with a production capacity of 200,000 barrels per day. Niger has oil reserves estimated at 324 million barrels that were recently discovered in the Niger desert, especially in the regions of "Tenere" and the "Bilma" oasis. However, the oil production process remains below the required level, given that this country has recently discovered oil, and a group of American companies such as "Hant Oil" and the oil exploration and exploration companies "Exxon Mobile" and "Petronze" seek to exploit it. However, the exploration did not go beyond the scouting stages due to the agricultural nature of the population of Niger, and it should be noted here that oil and oil resources represented a feeding factor for the conflict, as the Niger Delta region witnessed armed confrontations between the tribes.

Chad: Oil in Chad became the first source of income in Chadian exports before cotton and other agricultural crops, as production began in Chad in July 2003 from the Doba basin in the south of the country (Abd Elfettah, p. 118). In 2004, Chad achieved 67.5 billion CFA francs, equivalent to 103 million euros, with an estimated production of 200,000 barrels per day (Aouda, 2006, p. 9). Although it is considered weak compared to Nigeria, it raised the level of the Chadian economy, especially in the construction and public works sectors, as the World Bank signed an agreement obligating the Chadian government to spend 85% of oil profits on its development projects to alleviate poverty and raise the level of education. The United States of America is seeking to establish a site for itself in the region to secure the Nashad-Cameroon pipeline, which pumps 250,000 barrels of oil per day. And 65 million dollars have been allocated to carry out military training at the level of the Mali-Niger-Chad-Mauritania line to protect its oil companies, and Washington seeks to impose security in the strategic strip of the African coast and the Horn of Africa (Aouda, 2006, p. 14). However, the operation of the oil fields and the pipeline from Chad to Cameroon led to human rights violations and harassment of poor farmers in the region, and they were prevented from accessing the pipeline, especially Exxon Mobil and Petronas, as they abdicated their responsibility towards human rights through its alliance with the political regimes in the two countries. ExxonMobil has also refused to compensate farmers and return their distressed lands, in addition to preventing some villages from obtaining some of the only clean water sources available to them (Tharwat Fahmi, 2006, p. 24).

Sudan: This country is characterized by being a region rich in natural resources, and oil is one of its most important exports and one of the most important causes of conflict between the north and the south, as this oil wealth is concentrated in the "Nuer" and "Dinka" regions. The oil exploration

process began with the American company "Chevron" in 1974, then it was followed by agreements with multinational companies, especially French and Canadian. The total oil production in Sudan until 1998 was in the range of 3 million barrels; Among the most prominent oil wells, we find the well of "Abu Jabra" and "Sharif" and the well of "Adarihlo Megligh" (Tharwat Fahmi, 2006, p. 26).

Mauritania: Most of those interested in the economy of the modern Mauritanian state unanimously agreed that this country has a distinguished geostrategic location on land and sea, which contains varieties of mineral materials, it cannot be devoid of black gold, especially after the results of exploration appear, where it can be in the ranks of producing countries with Nigeria Chad for black gold and gas; The first well was discovered in 2001, which is the "Chinguetti" well, with a reserve of 120 million barrels, with an average daily production capacity of 75,000 barrels per day. Estimates indicate that Mauritania is currently among the countries that possess proven oil, estimated at 100 million barrels, and is ranked 67 in the world, according to 2011 statistics..(Hanafi Ali, 2007, p. 91)

b- Mineral and agricultural resources:

Numerous reports indicated the existence of large quantities of gold, uranium and coal reserves in the strategic strip of the African Sahel region, without excluding any country, whether it is in the belt or the areas adjacent to the strip. Niger's uranium remains one of the most important natural resources it possesses, as it enjoys large returns in the 1960s and 1970s as a result of uranium exploration, especially after the discovery of two large uranium mines near the city of "Northern Arlit". As for gold, it is located between the Niger River and areas adjacent to Burkina Faso (Hanafi Ali, 2007, p. 96), where in 2004 President Tangimamadou announced the opening of a gold mine in the province of Tanz, and this moment was described as historic in the history of Contemporary Niger as the first gold mine. In addition to the high-quality coal concentrated in the south and west of the country, specifically in the city of "Agadiz", the "Liptako" mining company expects gold and coal discoveries in the next six years, that is, until 2018.

In addition to the oil revenues in Chad and its vital location, which is mediated by Central Africa to the south, East Central Africa, and North Africa; The latter is considered one of the new oil-producing countries in Africa (Heinrigs, 2007, p. 11). However, there is French-American competition for oil and other mineral resources, especially in the field of exploration, drilling, and searching for mines since Chad's independence in 1960; This country also witnessed tribal and religious conflicts between the Christians themselves over positioning and distribution, in addition to other ethnic wars due to the exclusion and marginalization of some ethnicities from the bounties of this country (Heinrigs, 2007, p. 14) .Chad is also a country less desertified than Niger and Mali, as it has huge crops in the agricultural sector, such as sugar and oils, in addition to animal products and petrochemical industries, and there is tremendous development in the field of electric and solar energy.

As for Mauritania, it is characterized by the diversity of its mineral wealth, including iron, copper and phosphates. However, agricultural activity remains one of the most important economic activities, as the percentage of workers in the sector exceeds about 55%, according to 2010 human development estimates and statistics. In Mali, the percentage of workers in the agricultural sector exceeds 75% of the same indicator. It also produces many types of agricultural, leather and animal products, as well as the textile and foodstuff industry. The government has also tried to encourage

investments in this field, especially in cotton, which is considered the first economic crop for export, especially to West African countries (Heinrigs, 2007, p. 15).

These natural resources increased the geopolitical importance of the African Sahel region, which intensified its political and economic challenges and the high level of international and foreign competition over it. France considers the countries of the African Sahel region a vital area of influence, given that the Sahel countries were among its former colonies. On the other hand, the presence of French special forces is not in order to protect its nationals, but to protect its strategic interests, such as protecting, for example, the Areva company, which is invested in the energy field in Niger to exploit uranium, and other companies; In addition to the state of Mali, which a group of studies indicates is an oil state, as it abounds with huge natural resources that have not yet been discovered, such as uranium, oil and gas, and it is among the most important elements of attraction by the major powers, and the main goal is to control energy sources; Here, the security realism theory emerges to show that interest is the main driver of the counter-terrorism strategy.

2. Areas of competition and manifestations of the decline of the French role, and the growing American role in the African Sahel region:

In this part of the study, we will discuss the starting points and motives of the French-American interest in the African Sahel region, and the mechanisms and areas of competition and penetration in the region within the framework of Western-West competition. And reviewing the manifestations of the decline of the French role in exchange for the growing American role in the region, which has reached the point of the United States of America's succession to France following its withdrawal from Mali, especially in the framework of its comprehensive war on terrorism.

2-1 Areas of American-French economic competition in the region:

Within the framework of the competition between the major powers for positioning in this region, Paris and Washington are rushing to protect their interests in the face of the major international companies in the region, as the region is witnessing international competition for investment in the mining sector, especially after the increase in investment in oil, uranium and phosphates. We can review the Italian company that discovered oil, uranium and phosphates in northern Mali in 2010; In the field of oil, the government of former Malian President Amadou Toumani Toure awarded exploration contracts to various foreign companies, namely the American Chevron, Exxon Mobil, and the French ELF; We also find the northern part of the Taoudenni Basin, which is located in Mauritania and extends eastward towards Mali. It enjoys the interest of a number of companies, led by the Italian company ENI, in cooperation with the Algerian company Sonatrach, which are excavating in the two areas specified by the Malian government. This is in addition to China, which is investing in oil exploration in Mali. The Russian Gazprom company is present in Mauritania and Niger, which has found influence in the region through Algeria and Nigeria, where it signed an agreement with Niger in 2011 to search for and exploit uranium (Ibrahim Kanti, 2013, p. 21).

Thus, the economic factor is considered an important attraction for American-French interests in the West African region, as the region, in addition to its oil wealth discovered in recent years, is rich and full of mineral wealth such as gold, uranium, and phosphates, as the stability of the Sahel and Sahara region, in general, means the stability of Western and European interests

represented in energy sources, and uranium. Mauritania represents an important stockpile of iron, which is important for the steel industry in Europe, and Niger ranks fourth in the world in uranium production, accounting for 8.7% of global production, and covers 12% of the needs of the European Union. Studies also indicate that the subsoil of the Sahel region (Chad, Mauritania, Niger) represents an important oil wealth. (Benjamin Augé, 2010).

2-2 American-French military competition in the region:

a- The United States of America: Political and military interest in Africa began to increase since the end of the Cold War and the announcement of the birth of a new world order. The United States provided initiatives and training operations for the forces of African countries and provided them with equipment, but they were not launched with the aim of combating terrorism, but were mostly related to peacekeeping operations, conflict prevention, fighting internal rebellion, and protecting oil sources (group, 2005, p. 28).

As a result of the destruction of the American embassies in Tanzania and Kenya in 1998, the United States expanded its cooperation to combat terrorism with Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia and Uganda, a cooperation that expanded to include most African countries after the events of September 11, as several partnerships were established with African countries to enhance security and combat terrorism. . However, this American interest was concentrated initially in East Africa, especially the West Africa region, and collided with the presence of the Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat activity in the Sahara region, which later turned into Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and carried out terrorist operations and its activities were not limited to Algeria (More than humanitarianism, a strategic US approach toward Africa, 2006). As it extends to Mauritania, Mali, Chad and Niger; Indeed, the possibility of linking it to ties with extremist, fundamentalist or separatist groups throughout the region has made the Sahel region number two in the war on terrorism with regard to Africa, as the United States has intensified its support and cooperation with the Sahel and Maghreb countries to contain extremist groups and prevent them from forming bases to organize, train and recruit (More than humanitarianism, a strategic US approach toward Africa, 2006).

The “PAN SAHEL” initiative for the year 2003 is considered the first American initiative in the region, and \$ 6.2 million was allocated for it; Its stated goal is to train the forces of the participating countries (Mauritania, Chad, Mali and Niger), and help them protect their territorial soil from attacks and infiltration by terrorist groups operating in the region. However, the vastness of the map of this desert makes it clear that this goal is difficult to achieve with the weakness of these trained forces. That is why the United States expanded it in its new “Trans-Saharan Counter Terrorism Initiative”, which now includes Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Senegal and Nigeria as observers, in addition to The four countries involved in the "PAN SAHEL" initiative, and the budget for the new initiative has been raised to between 120 and 132 million dollars for the year 2005, and between 350 and 400 million dollars to cover the five years after 2005, which means the possibility of training a larger number of forces and providing Monitoring and guarding means and equipment (group, 2005, p. 26).

This new initiative is characterized by its development of a multi-dimensional and multi-faceted strategy aimed at defeating terrorist groups, by strengthening regional capabilities to combat terrorism and increasing cooperation between the American forces and the forces of these countries.

It also aims to support economic development, education, and free and democratic institutions (group, 2005, p. 6).

The United States carried out joint military maneuvers with the countries of the region, starting from June 6, 2005, over a period of three weeks, as the goal was to train against terrorism; This operation was called Flintlock 2005, and it included five Arab and African countries: Mali, Niger, Chad, Mauritania and Algeria; It coincided with other maneuvers that included four countries: Senegal, Morocco, Tunisia and Nigeria(Henry).

The United States participated indirectly, in March 2004, in a military operation carried out by four countries of the Sahel (Mali, Niger, Chad, and Algeria) against a terrorist group. Despite the importance of these operations, they are considered a catalyst for increasing the number of recruits and volunteers in the ranks of terrorist movements, under the pretext of fighting the colonial crusaders, who are re-invading North Africa and the Muslim countries of the Sahel. This necessitates that the countries of the region unite their efforts in their war on terrorism, away from the direct interference of Western countries, to eradicate the elimination of these terrorist groups, as this must be done within the framework of a comprehensive and multidimensional approach that takes into account all the causes and causes of the phenomenon (Wars of extermination in deserts and seas, 2005).

b- France: France led ten major military operations in Africa during the period 2006-2020, and some of these operations fall within the framework of international initiatives, such as: “Sangaris” (in Central Africa), or “Harmtan” in Libya (part of the operation international military forces to protect Libyan civilians from attacks by the forces of the late President Colonel Muammar Gaddafi); Others are French initiatives, including the Corimbe mission in the Gulf of Guinea, aimed at supporting Guinean military operations in the face of maritime piracy (Wars of extermination in deserts and seas, 2005).

French military force "Serval": This French military force was deployed at the request of the Bamako government, to confront the aggravation of the crisis in Mali, following the military coup in March 2012, as part of a mission to help the Malian army forces stop the advance of armed groups from the northern region of the country, and ensure the safety of civilians, and to liquidate the rebels allied at that time with extremist organizations. In this context, the French army mobilized its special forces stationed in the African Sahel region, affiliated with the "land, air, and sea armies", and after the battles ended in April 2014, the number of "Serval" soldiers, who reached approximately four thousand soldiers, was gradually reduced, to be replaced by the UN mission, which changed its name from “MISCA” to “MINUSMA”. Serval's missions ended in August 2014, which in turn succeeded Operation Ebervier, opening the way for Operation Barkhane.

Sangaris: Operation Sangaris was launched in December 2013 in Central Africa in the context of the sectarian crisis, by decision of former French President Francois Hollande, and with the approval of the United Nations. According to the UN resolution issued in this regard, the mission of this operation includes “supporting the UN Mission in Central Africa (MISCA) in carrying out its tasks”, wich means that the French operation is charged with protecting civilians, restoring security and order, achieving stability in the country, and restoring state authority over all of its territory, in addition to creating appropriate conditions for providing humanitarian aid to those in need (Anatolia Agency).

Barkhan: This military operation took place on August 1, 2014, to justify France's strategic interests in the African Sahel region and the threats the region faces, foremost of which is the fight against terrorism. This military operation covers five African countries, namely: Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad, based on the "logic of partnership." between these countries; This operation includes about three thousand five hundred soldiers, who are assigned to hunt down terrorist groups operating in the African Sahel region, and they were distributed to five advanced temporary bases, three permanent support points and other locations, especially in the Burkinabe capital (Ouagadougou) and Attar, Mauritania (Anatolia Agency).

Support for the joint force of the Group of Five for the Sahel region: It was established in 2017 in Bamako, as evidence of the keenness of the countries of the region to take charge of their security and coordinate their actions in cross-border areas, the tasks of the joint force include combating terrorism, transnational organized crime and human trafficking in the territories of the G5 countries of the Sahel region, this force has received great international support, especially the great French support, which enabled it to achieve some achievements and carry out some operations, some of which were coordinated with the Barkhane military operation, which provides it with a lot of necessary support to continue to accomplish its tasks (Mouhi Eddine, 2020).

Partnership for Security and Stability in the Sahel Region: Burkina Faso called on the United Nations and members of the Security Council to establish an international coalition against terrorism for the Sahel region, on May 16, 2019, provided that this alliance is similar to the international coalition against terrorism in Iraq and Syria, and the international reaction came during the G7 Biarritz summit held in August 2019, where it was announced The President of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron, and the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, accompanied by the President of Burkina Faso, Mr. Roch Kabore - who is the current president of the Group of Five for the Sahel region - establishing the partnership for security and stability in the Sahel region; This partnership aims to enhance the effectiveness of the efforts exerted in the fields of defense and internal security, and to improve ways of coordinating international support and to support the necessary powers in these two fields. France is currently working on establishing a new operation under the name "Takuba", which includes special forces from about ten European countries (Mouhi Eddine, 2020).

Takuba strength: In January 2020, France and a number of its allies in Europe announced their intention to form a new military force called "Takuba", which consists of a number of special forces, along with the armies of Mali and Niger, to combat terrorism and armed groups in the Sahel region. And the word Takuba means sword, which is famous for its use in the Sahel region, especially by the Touareg and other groups such as the Hausa and the Fulani. Some reports issued in January 2020 stated that France faced great difficulties in persuading some European allies - such as Germany - to be part of the "Takuba" military force, and representatives of 13 countries (France, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, issued Germany, Mali, Netherlands, Niger, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, United Kingdom) issued a statement on March 27, 2020, in which they pledged to do more to combat terrorism in the region (Mouhi Eddine, 2020).

2-3 Manifestations of the decline of the French role in contrast to the growing American role:

a- Withdrawal of French military forces from Mali:

The French decision announced on February 17, 2022, to withdraw from Mali, was not surprising, as President Emmanuel Macron had previously threatened to do so after the military

coup in Mali in May 2021 (Oued Abd Elmalek). However, the decision led to an unprecedented diplomatic crisis between the two countries. France, the former colonial power that considers Mali and the Sahel region a geopolitical arena for it, Paris justified its decision to withdraw based on two arguments: its refusal to deal with a military authority seeking to remain in power, and its objection to the presence of the Russian Wagner forces (Roger, 2022). Both arguments raise a lot of doubts, because France does not find anything wrong with supporting similar governments in the Sahel region that had come to power in the same way, for example Chad and Burkina Faso (Tchad : le Comité militaire de transition sera soutenu par la France, 2021).

France's military intervention in Mali dates back to January 2013, under the pretext of restoring the main cities in the north of the country, which had fallen into the hands of armed groups allied with the Touareg movements. France has been keen to obtain African and international support for its decision to intervene, by internationalizing the crisis, in connection with which Security Council Resolution No. 2085 of December 20, 2012 was issued, providing for the establishment of an international force for financial support (Mali : Paris obtient le soutien de l'ONU, 2013). Based on this, France sent military forces within the framework of Operation Serval, to crush extremist groups and restore northern cities such as Timbuktu and Kidal, goals that were achieved in less than a month, but the French President at the time, François Hollande, who visited Mali to celebrate the victory, he stated that his country's forces would remain in the country because "the threat is real," and because France's mission was "not finished yet" in driving armed groups out of liberated cities (Carayol, 2013).

In the summer of 2013, Mali managed to organize presidential elections, which brought Ibrahim Boubacar Keita to power, then he was re-elected in the summer of 2018; However, his election for the second time sparked disapproving reactions from the opposition parties and civil forces, as a result of which the troubles of President Keita and France began together. Which was deepened by terrorist attacks that included the capital, Bamako, in addition to the deterioration of the economic and social conditions of the people, which prompted protests that escalated after the legislative elections in the spring of 2020. All these developments prompted opposition parties, civil society, and Islamic bodies to form a coalition "the June 5 Movement - The gathering of national forces in Mali" (Al djazzar, 2020), which led demonstrations calling for the dissolution of parliament and the resignation of the president, and provided the appropriate environment for the August 18, 2020 coup, which was followed by a second coup on May 24, 2021; Which remarkably precipitated the collapse of the French military presence, and ended with the decision to withdraw French forces from Mali, as previously mentioned, to redeploy them in the Sahel region, in light of the increasing influence of other international powers, such as the United States of America and even Russia and China.

b-The growing role of the United States of America in the field of combating terrorism after the French withdrawal from the region:

Washington held the "Flintlock" maneuvers of the United States annual training program for African forces during the period (20-28 February 2022), which is considered one of the largest annual military exercises, and more than 400 American soldiers participate in it, which reflects the United States' interest in combating the expansion of extremist militants in this region of Africa, as it includes several Western and African armies, the first part of which includes African countries, namely Cameroon, Niger, Ivory Coast and Ghana, and the second part includes Britain, France, the

Netherlands and Norway, Canada and Austria, in addition to the United States of America (Kasber, 2022).

Guinea, Mali and Burkina Faso do not participate in the "Flintlock" maneuvers due to recent terrorist attacks, in addition to the frequent occurrence of military coups since 2020. These maneuvers come after France announced the withdrawal of the "European Takuba Special Combat Units" group from Mali, to redeploy it to other countries in the region, especially Niger. It is noteworthy that 900 French soldiers are stationed in the Ivorian capital, Abidjan, and among their main tasks is securing logistical affairs for its soldiers involved in Operation Barkhane against armed extremists in Mali, Chad and Niger (Kasber, 2022).

3. The results and outcome of the competition and intersection of interests between France and America over the African Sahel region:

The most prominent results reached after studying and analyzing the current situation in the Sahel region centered on the fact that the African Sahel region has been marginalized for many decades, but today it is witnessing increasing interest on the part of the major powers, and a fierce competition to gain a foothold in it. The United States of America, France, and even other major countries such as China and Russia, and if our study is limited to the United States of America and France as they are the most prominent actors in the region, they compete in the region that has many resources and treasures that make it coveted by others, and from it the following can be concluded:

- The effects of security threats in the African Sahel region should not be underestimated, and at the same time the security situation in the Sahel region should not be exaggerated.
- Everything that happens in the Sahel is linked to the intersection of energy and security issues, that is, the extension of "Al Qaeda" in the African Sahel region should not be exaggerated, as there are many actors that benefit from the chaos in the region, and AlQaeda may be just a tool in order to feed the ambitions of other actors.
- Proving the existence of a causal relationship between the failed states in the Sahel region and the spread of security threats -especially terrorism, organized crime and illegal immigration- still needs a lot of study and analysis in order to have a good and deep understanding of the nature of these networks of all kinds, with an analysis of the organizational space of these movements, and a study of the diversity in the strategies and objectives that they adopt; And if failed states really play an important role within a chain link in the production of the phenomenon of terrorism and the spread of all dangerous phenomena, terrorist networks also need technological, financial and qualified human resources.
- Today, the West is caught between a dual dialectic based on: "security and development", as the view of the southern countries as their guard police is unacceptable; Rather, another role must be played, represented in the necessity of securing the region by intensifying comprehensive development programs, so that it monitors financial envelopes, exports industrial technology, and sends expertise and highly experienced hands in order to create economic opportunities that work to create a kind of economic and social empowerment for the societies of these countries. Consequently, ensuring its security and stability, in addition to providing logistical security assistance as Algeria calls for it to securitize the region without allowing these countries to interfere in its internal affairs.

- The relationship between Washington and Paris on the one hand, and the regimes of the countries of the African Sahel region on the other, is based on exploitation and plundering of wealth, through alliance with corrupt political regimes and Westernized elites that are created and supported by major external powers.
- Whatever the nature of this strategic competition between the United States of America and France -whether it is competition, agreement, or struggle-, it must be put to an end, because it is not in the interest of the countries of the African Sahel region.

4- Conclusion:

In light of the problems of the African Sahel region, stability will not be achieved in the long term except in countries that have a real awareness of the internal security and development challenges. Therefore, the local actors in the Sahel countries must design their strategy that addresses the causes of instability, and define their priorities, especially the countries that suffer a threat to their national security, and then the regional and international partners can support these priorities through joint coordination, because these same dynamics were exploited by France through In order to reposition itself strategically, by carefully rearranging its priorities, taking into account its limited economic capabilities to exist everywhere, and the growing role of the Americans in the first place, the Russians and the Chinese, militarily and economically; In addition to the growing state of local hostility against the military presence of France as a former colonial power, considerations that are undoubtedly behind the redefinition of what it considers its vital interests in the region; This makes it appear as if it is interacting positively with local trends that reject it, while it is a new strategy to fortify its traditional influence and reposition.

The essential result that was drawn from the motives and determinants of the American-French competition over the Sahel region, which has reached its extent, lies in:

Preserving the principle of the dominant state, extending influence and achieving interest by establishing military bases and bringing the African Sahel region to its knees -on the one hand; And controlling energy sources and ensuring its energy supplies and needs on the other hand, and this is what made the region a special competition arena between France and America.

5- Recommendations:

- The need to form approaches against the security strategies and projects of the major countries to prevent the depletion of the revolutions and resources of the African continent; And stand up to any attempt that would bring the countries of the continent into a cycle of underdevelopment, poverty and dependence, or at least try to find a specific formula that would make it possible to benefit from these wealth in the development process, and push towards a fair partnership in an increasingly complex, complex and intertwined world.
- Establishing a political current against the Anglo-American trend, under which all countries wishing to limit foreign domination gather, by employing their various economic and cultural tools, and establishing networks of cooperation to support development in African countries.

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