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Foreign Affairs Committee

The UK's response to extremism and instability in North and West Africa

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Additional written evidence

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The Foreign Affairs Committee

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Written evidence

Written evidence from Alliance for Mali

- The Alliance for Mali welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the Foreign Affairs select committee's enquiry on the *UK's response to extremism and political instability in North and West Africa*. The Alliance for Mali is a coalition of individuals, not for profit organisations and for profit organisations whose work focuses on Mali; Joliba Trust, Jump4Timbuktu, Living Earth Foundation and the Mali Development Group. These organisations have worked in diverse regions across the country and have built up a range of contacts, and knowledge of Mali. As such, this submission focuses on Britain's response to extremism and instability in Mali primarily, but we do also acknowledge and affirm the interdependence of action across the region both having an impact on and reacting to the situation in Mali.
- Britain's role in North West Africa, in particular in Mali should focus on addressing the root causes of the current instability by promoting good governance, social cohesion and economic development and supporting regionally-led programmes to tackle regional issues. Britain is well placed to act as an impartial facilitator and mediator in Mali due to its neutrality in the country, its international standing and its strong presence in the wider sub-region, in particular in Nigeria. There is need for the British government to adopt a strong supportive role to enable Malians to tackle their own problems and to play a role in bringing stability to the region through Mali.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF UK CO-OPERATION WITH FRANCE AND OTHER WESTERN ALLIES TO SECURE UK INTERESTS IN THE REGION, AND LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM THE FRENCH-LED INTERVENTION IN MALI

1. It is clear that Britain's logistical support for the French-led intervention in Mali helped enable a rapid deployment and ongoing flexibility of French forces within Mali.

2. Britain played a leading role within this coalition in the instigation, and ongoing provision of human rights training in Mali for the Malian military forces. The UN resolution 2071¹ stated that it, "Demands that all groups in the north of Mali cease all abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law, including targeted attacks against the civilian population, sexual violence, recruitments of child soldiers and forced displacements, and recalls in this regard all its relevant resolutions on Women, Peace and Security, on Children and armed conflicts and on Protection of civilians in armed conflicts;", giving clear mandate to stop any abuses in Mali, from any armed group, which would include the Malian Army.

3. Despite the work of the UK Government, there have been a range of human rights abuses undertaken by the Malian army both during and since the intervention, many of which the Alliance heard of directly. Many more abuses have been extensively reported in the media and by other organisations,² and cause concern about the long-term prospects in Mali of democratic stability and a functioning cohesive society. There were clear signals from the media, decision makers and communities in Bamako that a clear division was developing and being promoted between Malians in the south and Malians in the North, and between diverse ethnic groups in the North, which threatened retribution on those in Northern Mali, regardless of the extent of their involvement in the crisis. **It is worth questioning whether the British Government's role could have gone beyond training on human rights for soldiers to monitoring the full realisation of human rights in the recapturing of Northern Mali.**

4. Despite the positive role that Britain played in the military intervention, it is important not to overplay the military successes and to recognise the significant challenges that remain. There is an overriding concern, cited by our Malian partners, that "*the French may win their war whilst Mali loses ours*". There is real concern that the withdrawal of troops may be premature; and that human rights abuses may increase in the coming months given the poor levels of discipline in the army. The British government must recognise that to facilitate Mali's transformation into a stable country, its support cannot halt at military intervention. Long-term commitment is required in providing technical support to the army; playing a role in monitoring human rights abuse; and providing support to actions that promote intra-community dialogue and opportunities for reconciliation.

THE FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE POWER OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMISTS IN THE REGION, HOW THEY CAN MOST REALISTICALLY BE DEALT WITH, AND WHETHER THEY AMOUNT TO A SIGNIFICANT THREAT TO UK INTERESTS OR ARE PRIMARILY A REGIONAL CONCERN

5. There are a number of key factors which have contributed to the power of religious extremists in the region. These factors are both historical, as a result of government policy, and a result of previous British policy in the region as noted below. These factors are interlinked; they are numbered below in no particular order.

¹ United Nations, Adopting resolution 2071 (2012), <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs//2012/sc10789.doc.htm>

² Mali conflict: UN "deeply disturbed" by army abuse claims, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-21303447> ; 2 February 2013 ; Human Rights Watch report; <http://www.hrw.org/fr/news/2013/03/26/mali-des-soldats-ont-torture-des-detenus-lere> ; 26th March 2013
AFP: <http://reliefweb.int/report/mali/nord-du-mali-accusations-dexactions-contre-des-noirs-par-des-touareg> ; 5th April 2013

6. The first factor is that of a failure by the Malian Government to effectively implement decentralisation which resulted in weak capacity at local government level in the North; limited government investment in, and support for, basic services and subsequent poor service delivery, and which contributed to a feeling of marginalisation and resentment amongst many groups. It is our opinion that any perspectives from Bamako or the South are unlikely to consider the problems faced by the North of Mali and further expertise and consideration of the whole of Mali should be sought.

7. The second factor is the lack of control mechanisms in place to address the burgeoning drugs trade in the region which provides lucrative profits to those involved and represents an economic opportunity to impoverished people living in the area. In particular revenue from the drugs trade are used by vested interests to maintain and increase their power.

8. The third factor is the lack of economic opportunity for local people which provides a fertile breeding ground for extremism. In particular young people become involved with religious extremist groups due to economic need. This was the case overwhelmingly in Gao where the MUJAO were able to provide stipends to new recruits as a result of their successful links to the lucrative drugs and hostage-taking trades. This lack of economic opportunity has been caused by a lack of investment and the stifling of previously successful income streams, in particular the tourist industry. In particular blanket travel bans, including that imposed by the UK Government on the whole of Northern Mali have had a severely negative impact on the economic activity in the city of Timbuktu whose primary revenue had been tourism.

9. The fourth factor is that of corruption and lack of accountability at the level of the Malian State, which has served to amplify these issues. The policy of centralised accountability and the trend for central political elites to concentrate on self-aggrandisement through activities such as kidnapping and drug trafficking are a key factor behind the strengthening and development of Jihadist networks in Mali and the surrounding region. Extremists and criminals have been able to operate within Mali with relative impunity. The international community should lobby for greater accountability of the political elite, particularly of the new government that may emerge from the forecast elections in July 2013.

10. There have been elements of nationalistic militancy in Mali since independence in the 1960s. This has prospered in the economic situation in Mali where poverty has arisen due to state policies, particularly under Amadou Toumani Touré, and international policies, ie limiting tourism in Northern Mali. It is not the case in Northern Mali that Islam has created militancy: the form of Islam practised in Northern Mali is very tolerant. It is rather that religious extremists have been able to use the strengths of radical Islam, such as introducing a form of effective judiciary and security in the implementation of Sharia to bring a form of order in areas of disorder and create common cause with the disaffected populace.³

11. The factors contributing to the power of religious extremists in the region amount to a threat to UK interests. The regional dimension of terrorist groups has an impact on UK priority countries such as Nigeria and Somalia (there are reported links between Boko Haram, Al Shabab and Islamist training camps in Northern Mali). As many of these groups use drug trading and their operations in this regional to fund actions globally **there is a clear threat to UK interests if little is done to support Mali and help it become a functioning state.**

THE EXTENT TO WHICH GANGSTERISM AND CRIME CONTRIBUTE TO REGIONAL INSTABILITY AND HOW THIS IS BEST TACKLED

12. *‘...It is obvious that the combination of long-standing and deep-seated vulnerabilities and the growing presence of terrorist groups and criminals is creating a crescent of crisis which extends from one ocean to the other, from the African shores of the Atlantic to Somalia.’*⁴ Historic networks and routes established by nomadic families across the Sahel-Sahara region are utilised for the trafficking and transiting of high-profit goods, such as arms, drugs, and cigarettes.⁵ The trafficking of illicit goods provides high-sum revenues for regional terrorist groups, national rebel movements and corrupted government officials.

13. Recent conflicts in West Africa have led to the development of arms trafficking.⁶ Most recently, small arms have been brought into Mali by fighters returning from Libya and through trade from across Africa.⁷ Research in 2007 claimed that there were at least 81,000 Kalashnikovs circulating in the Sahel region.⁸ The number today is likely to be more. In Mali, significant arsenals were found by Operation Serval forces not just in the northern mountainous areas in the AQIM stronghold in the Tighargahr Massif, but also in urban areas such as a cemetery in Timbuktu.⁹ The proliferation of inexpensive, small arms contributes to insecurity in the north of Mali. **It is worth questioning whether the UK considered the potential spillover effect of its intervention in Libya on the wider region. The links between Gaddafi’s regime, Tuareg fighters in Libya**

³ Guichaoua, Yvan. “From Tuareg Nationalism to Jihad: Changing patterns of Militancy in the Sahara”, (2013)

⁴ Ameline, N. “A crescent of Crisis on Europe’s Doorstep. A new North-South Strategic Partnership for the Sahel”, Draft Report, Nato Parliamentary Assembly, Defence and Security Committee, April 2013

⁵ Field Notes from the West African Drugs Trade, Lebovich, Andrew, May 2013

⁶ Security Management in Northern Mali, Sidibe, IDS Research Report no 77, April 2012, <http://www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/RR77.pdf>

⁷ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, cited <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2099549,00.html>

⁸ According to a study by Mouna Izzidine and cited in Security Management in Northern Mali, op cit. 27

⁹ Ameline, N. Op cit

and Northern Mali were widely known and commented upon amongst communities and actors in Mali; the subsequent spillover impact should not have come as a surprise and should have been addressed by a responsible and coherent UK policy for the region. This is an important learning point for UK Government.

14. Cocaine was added to the trafficking network portfolios around 2000. According to the 2013 UNODC Threat Assessment on Transnational Crime, 18 tons of cocaine transits through West Africa per year. This is worth around USD1.25 billion at wholesale in Europe.¹⁰ The UNODC in Dakar calculated that in 2012, around \$500 million of this trade was either laundered or spent in West Africa.¹¹ The real figure, however, is likely to be much higher, given that the amount of cocaine entering Europe has not changed.¹² The trade in contraband tobacco or counterfeit brands is worth around USD 750 million per year'.¹³ Turf wars are common, with AQIM factions competing with each other, with different segments of Tuareg tribes and with corrupt army and government officials. Both AQIM and MUJAO agents offer armed escorts to drug convoys through the North, charging between 10–15% of the value of cocaine—hard currency that they use to buy arms and fund their recruitment program.¹⁴ **The UK should work with the EU to impose regional efforts to combat organised crime, especially as reports have shown that this cannot be solved on a national basis and requires international co-operation. As such consideration should be given to the influence and impact on Mali of national actors outside of ECOWAS, like Algeria, and UK Government's influence on these actors.**¹⁵

15. The monies available from drugs have attracted the interest of government officials. There are plenty of examples of members of the political elite profiting from the trade.¹⁶ This does untold damage to public confidence in public institutions and will present challenges in terms of strengthening a democracy and rule of law that has legitimacy in the eyes of the electorate. **The UK government should support the Malian Government to implement robust monitoring mechanisms of all government department budgets at national, regional and local level. The government should consider aid conditions being attached to the pursuit and punishment of high-profile actors involved in the drugs trade.**

16. Ironically, a significant source of revenues for AQIM and MUJAO comes from the West. Stratfor, an intelligence consultancy, estimates that AQIM has collected at least \$90million (£57million) in ransom payments since 2003.¹⁷ We agree with the UK Policy of not paying ransom demands. **The UK should look for agreement to unanimously to end ransom payments.**

THE UK'S SUPPORT FOR REGIONAL CO-OPERATION BY ECOWAS AND OTHERS

17. While we note the importance of supporting regional institutions including ECOWAS, it is vital to acknowledge the competing interests of the key countries within ECOWAS, particularly with regard to the question of Tuareg independence. ECOWAS should not be viewed as a neutral stakeholder.

18. The British Government should note that as well as in Mali, there is a minority of Tuaregs in many of the nations in the region that make up ECOWAS. As many powerful northern African nations have similar concerns over Tuareg autonomy or independence, similar problems to those which occurred in Mali will continue to be an issue in the region. Any equitable solution should be based on some form of autonomy whereby Tuaregs can determine their own fate. The UK government should acknowledge that any inclusive regional response should ensure that the long-standing grievances and continuing marginalisation of the Tuareg populations are considered and dealt with.

THE RISK OF "BLOWBACK" TO UK INTERESTS IF THE UK TAKES A MORE INTERVENTIONIST FOREIGN POLICY STANCE IN THE REGION;

19. At present a policy that focuses on military support at a time when development funding and projects are cut has a much greater risk of blowback. Any interventionist policy needs to be allied with development aid. It is crucial that this is not just humanitarian aid but is focused to target the long-term root causes as detailed throughout this submission.

20. Given the complex relationship that France has with Mali, as a result of both historical context and its significant business interests in the country, it is vital that the UK has its own clearly defined position which extends beyond simply allying itself to French policy. Whilst there is popular support for the French intervention at the moment, precipitate withdrawal could lead to increased instability which could have a significant impact on Malian public opinion. This risk is further illustrated by emerging reports of the first

¹⁰ https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tocta/West_Africa_TOCTA_2013_EN.pdf

¹¹ cited in Lebovich, A. Mali's Bad Trip http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/03/15/mali_s_bad_trip

¹² UNODC, statement by UNODC head Yury Fedotov, February 2012

¹³ http://www.oecd.org/swac/events/colloque_EN.pdf pg 5

¹⁴ cited in Dreazen J. <http://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/mali-drug-dens-dreazen-welcome-to-cocainebougou>

¹⁵ Keenan, Jeremy, "The Dying Sahara" (2013)

¹⁶ e.g see Lacher, W. *Organised Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region*, 2013

¹⁷ cited <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/al-qaeda/9813685/The-terror-threat-posed-by-al-Qaeda-bandits-controlling-the-Sahara.html>

demonstrations against French military tactics in the North, particularly in relation to Kidal.¹⁸ Should a short and sharp western intervention be followed by a quick withdrawal it is likely that the state of affairs that led to the crisis will be renewed and an apportionment of blame will be attached to the UK Government.

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE UK GOVERNMENT'S LONG-TERM POLICY AIMS OF BUILDING INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACIES, STRENGTHENING THE RULE OF LAW, AND TACKLING EXTREMISM IN THE REGION ARE REALISTIC AND ACHIEVABLE.

21. Firstly lessons need to be learned from the British government's decision to withdraw direct development aid from Mali in 2011. Questions were raised over the methodology of the bi-lateral and multilateral aid review which saw long term development aid cancelled in Mali.¹⁹ Even accepting the methodology there were questions of why, when Mali fit many of the criteria for continuing and even increasing support, and given Mali's vulnerability as a fragile State, the decision to cut aid to this country was taken.²⁰ Increased engagement from the UK alone would not have averted the crisis, but it may have put Britain in a better place to act when the fragile state was toppled last year.

22. Strong engagement with civil society to build resilience is key for the future of Mali as a nation. This can be framed in two particular formats for engagement; economic resilience to allow the country to deal with financial and economic shocks, and democratic engagement, to ensure that decentralisation, can be fully realised and meets the needs of the varying groups in Mali. In particular there is a strong need to focus on addressing the economic vacuum that led to the high level of recruitment of local youths to the extremist movements. There is a need to take a long-term approach to building support for the development of markets, support to youth employment opportunities and youth-focused vocational training in the region. It is essential that UK Government support at this critical juncture works to address development needs of the local population and recognises that a policy of merely providing humanitarian support at this time fails to address the underlying causes of the crisis.

23. There are many parts to an inclusive democracy and with continuing high tensions, the lack of reconciliation and the likelihood that significant proportions of refugees, displaced people and the rural population will not vote,²¹ the timing of the elections seems precipitous. The elections seem to be scheduled for a point which suits political imperatives in France and the United States. Holding elections without full representation and reconciliation after the crisis will result in a newly elected government lacking the legitimacy to enact proper state control and accountability to the people. While the elections cannot be called off, it is imperative that they be as inclusive as possible. The international community and the UK Government have a responsibility to ensure that momentum towards democracy is not lost.

4 June 2013

Written evidence from Dr. Sajjan Gohel, International Security Director, Asia-Pacific Foundation

LIBYA AND THE CYRENAICA BLOWBACK

Dr. Sajjan Gohel is currently, International Security Director for the Asia-Pacific Foundation (APF) which is an independent security and intelligence think-tank based in London. The APF provides analysis on a variety of security and terrorist related issues and is regularly consulted by various government and military departments and media organisations both domestic and foreign including BBC, ITN, Sky News, CNN, ABC, NBC, MSNBC, CTV and CBC. Sajjan is also a regular speaker at international conferences on terrorism and security issues.

Sajjan has been part of the APF team that contributed written testimony and oral evidence for the United Kingdom Foreign Affairs Committee in the House of Commons on topics including "Foreign Policy Aspects Of The War Against Terrorism", "Terrorism in South Asia" and "Global Security: Afghanistan" and "The UK's Foreign Policy Towards Afghanistan And Pakistan."

In March 2005, Sajjan was asked by the United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHCR) to produce an assessment on Lebanon and the security concerns after the killing of prominent Lebanese politician Rafik Hariri.

In 2005, Sajjan formed part of a European Union high-level working group to discuss the terror threat in the region and to produce a working paper for then European Union counter-terrorism chief, Gijs De Vries.

Sajjan serves as a visiting lecturer and teacher to the London School of Economics (LSE); the NATO School in Oberammergau, Germany; the NATO Centre of Excellence Defence Against Terrorism in Ankara, Turkey and the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies.

¹⁸ http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/youth-in-mali-city-of-gao-stage-sit-in-against-frances-tactics-in-the-west-african-country/2013/05/30/e465f5b6-c933-11e2-9cd9-3b9a22a4000a_story.html ; 30th May 2013

¹⁹ "DFID's aid priorities and Africa" Royal African Society (2011) http://www.royalafriansociety.org/sites/default/files/reports/bar_report_draft8_edited%20_2_small.pdf

²⁰ "DFID review" Mali Development Group (2011) <http://www.malidg.org.uk/news-and-activities/dfid-review/>

²¹ Guiffrida, Alessandra. "Longing to go home? A view from Malian Tuareg refugees in Mauritania" (2013) Centre for African Studies, SOAS

Sajjan also part of the “Partnership for Peace Consortium: Combating Terrorism Working Group” organised by the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and NATO. Sajjan is also on the editorial review board for the journal “Combating Terrorism Exchange” (CTX) at the Naval Postgraduate School.

Sajjan, received his BA (Hons) in Politics from Queen Mary, University of London. Sajjan has also obtained a Master’s (MSc) in Comparative Politics from the LSE and a PhD at the LSE entitled, “Insurrection of the Ideologues : The Evolution Of Egyptian Islamist Radical Thought From Hasan al-Banna to Ayman al-Zawahiri.”

SUMMARY

- In term of instability in North Africa, Libya will preoccupy the international community in the short-term.
- The legacy of the country’s civil war has led to an exponential growth in weapons-smuggling and a proliferation of irrepressible militias.
- The epicentre of the problems is located in the eastern region of Cyrenaica and its capital Benghazi. What transpires in Benghazi vibrates throughout Libya. Benghazi has long been a bastion of radical militant activity even during the height of Colonel Mu’ammarr Qaddafi’s reign.
- Libya is facing a challenging point in its history and is currently standing at the crossroads with significant security challenges that could have severe ramifications across several countries and regions with potential blowback into western Europe including into the United Kingdom.
- The blowback may not always originate in Libya but could travel indirectly from events in Mali and Algeria. The 23rd April, 2013, bomb blast in Tripoli against the French Embassy is a case in point. The attack is seen as a reprisal by Libyan militants for the decision by Paris to extend its military involvement in Mali.
- The 11th September, 2012, attack on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi, which killed U.S. Ambassador Chris Stevens and 3 other Americans, was an incident waiting to happen and cannot be seen in isolation but as part of a series of attacks in Benghazi that illustrate the wider security problems.
- The desecration of British war graves in a military cemetery and the attack on the British ambassador to Libya’s convoy in Benghazi in 2012 highlights the different outlook that separates Libya’s Islamist militias from secular groups. While mainstream units regard Britain as an ally, thanks to the role that NATO played in the revolution that toppled Qaddafi, some Islamist groups view Britain and the west as the enemy.
- In addition to attacks against diplomats and NGOs, throughout 2012, there were also a series of assassinations in Cyrenaica that targeted army officials who had sometimes held prominent positions under the Qaddafi regime.
- Even though the protesters who initially rose up against Qaddafi in mid-February 2011 originated from Cyrenaica, much of the security apparatus set up in the wake of his ousting ended up being dominated by western militias, based in the Tripolitania region and as a result eastern mistrust of western intentions still lingers.
- The issue of federalism and local autonomy have remained subjects of great sensitivity that will become even more critical when they are discussed in the framework of the country’s draft constitution in December 2013.
- Cyrenaica accounts for nearly 80% of the country’s oil production and armed militias in that part of the country have already illustrated the ability to shut down production as leverage over the central government in Tripoli.
- In Libya, the issues of security and regionalism are also intrinsically linked to the role Islam should play in defining the country’s post-Qaddafi identity. Most Libyans expect and want Islam to play a role in political life, but opinions vary widely as to exactly what this means.
- Some of Cyrenaica’s most notorious Islamists have given up their military struggle and formed political parties instead, thus accepting for now the rules of the democracy. However, some militias are directing unsanctioned security arrangements in some Cyrenaican cities. A few retain affiliation with al-Qa’ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).
- There is a belief that AQIM fighters have obtained weaponry from plundered Libyan military stockpiles. The Algerian, Malian, and Chadian governments continue to express concern about the potential for instability in Libya which could weaken security along Libya’s long borders and allow AQIM operatives and criminal networks to move more freely.
- Despite a significant rise in the number of Islamists across the nation, and particularly in Cyrenaica, religious militancy does not seem to reflect the Libyan people’s wider religious or political objectives. In the July 2012 landmark parliamentary elections, Libyans largely supported moderate parties and candidates, reversing a regional trend in support of Islamists who fared quite poorly.

INTRODUCTION

1. In term of security challenges in North Africa, Libya will most likely preoccupy the international community in the short-term. Despite the success of the country's July 2012 parliamentary elections, which witnessed a high turnout rate and took place relatively peacefully, the legacy of the country's civil war has led to an exponential growth in weapons-smuggling, a proliferation of irrepressible militias and an ever-widening sphere of anarchy and insecurity in its south. All these elements contribute to regional instability.

2. The epicentre of the problems is located in the influential eastern city of Benghazi where militancy is on the rise. Of all the sub-regions in North Africa and the Sahel, the largest potential for blowback into Western Europe is what emanates from Benghazi and the eastern province it is located in, Cyrenaica. The insecurity in this region can have negative repercussions for British interests in North Africa as well as potentially harming national security at home.

3. What transpires in Benghazi vibrates throughout Libya. Stretching from the coastal town of Sirte to Egypt and southward to the Saharan border with Chad, the Cyrenaica region comprises a population of 1.6 million which is less than a third of the Libyan populace.²² Ethnically, the area is divided between a largely urban Arab population spread among towns in the mountainous coastal region and a more rural, black minority tribe, the Tabu, which populates the south. The region is home to several hundred tribes. Nearly every tribe in the east has linkages elsewhere in Libya, to the extent that Cyrenaica is sometimes referred to as a symbol of the entire country.

4. The blowback into western Europe may not always originate in Libya but could travel indirectly from events in Mali. The 23 April bomb blast in Tripoli that destroyed half of the French Embassy is a case in point. The explosion injured two French guards, one critically. The attack is seen as a reprisal by Libyan militants for the decision by Paris to extend its military involvement in Mali.²³ France sent troops there in January 2013 after an uprising in the north started by the ethnic Tuaregs threatened to engulf the entire nation. Although the French operation pushed them out of the northern cities, this inadvertently compounded problems elsewhere as militants dispersed into northern Africa including aligning with cadres in the Cyrenaican cities of Benghazi and Derna.

2012: THE WARNING SIGNS

5. However, the warning signs have been there for a while. The 11th September, 2012, attack on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi, which killed U.S. Ambassador Chris Stevens and 3 other Americans, was potentially an incident waiting to happen.²⁴ It's often a neglected issue that Benghazi is in the heart of Cyrenaica which has long been a bastion of radical militant activity even during the height of Colonel Mu'ammar Qaddafi's reign. The US Consulate attack cannot be seen in isolation but as part of a series of attacks in Benghazi that illustrate that city and its wider area pose a major security concern and challenge.

6. In March 2012, video footage emerged of war graves in a British military cemetery in Libya being destroyed by what appears to be a militia forces. The video, shot by the militia themselves, shows more than 30 armed men kicking down the gravestones of British servicemen while comrades use sledgehammers to break the cenotaph. The cemetery, near Benghazi, holds the remains of more than 100 British and Commonwealth servicemen who fought for Field Marshall Montgomery's Eighth Army in the Second World War. In the video few of the militia make any attempt to disguise their identities, apparently unconcerned about being held to account.²⁵

7. The cemetery attack underlined at the time the different outlook that separates Libya's Islamist militias from secular groups. While mainstream units regard Britain as an ally, thanks to the role that NATO played in the revolution that toppled Qaddafi, Islamist groups view Britain and the west as the enemy. Since then there have been a series of attacks against international organisations, NGOs and foreign government personnel.

8. On 22 May, 2012, a rocket-propelled grenade hit the offices of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Benghazi, leaving a small hole in the side of the building but causing no casualties;²⁶ on 10 April, 2012, a home-made bomb was thrown at a convoy carrying the head of the United Nations mission to Libya but no one was hurt;²⁷ on 11 June, 2012, two British bodyguards were injured in an attack on a convoy in Benghazi carrying the British ambassador to Libya, Dominic Asquith. A rocket-propelled grenade hit the car

²² Frederic Wehrey, "The Struggle for Security in Eastern Libya", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 19th September, 2012.

²³ David D. Kirkpatrick, "Car Explodes Outside French Embassy in Libya", *New York Times*, 24 April, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/24/world/africa/french-embassy-in-libya-is-attacked.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&> [accessed 30 April, 2013]

²⁴ Lateef Mungin, "Benghazi siege: The ambassador's last minutes", *CNN*, 19 December, 2012, <<http://edition.cnn.com/2012/12/19/us/benghazi-what-happened>> [accessed 30 April, 2013]

²⁵ Chris Stephen, "British war graves in Libya desecrated by Islamist militants", *The Observer*, 4 March 2012, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/mar/04/libya-war-graves-desecrated>> [accessed 30 April, 2013]

²⁶ "Red Cross attacked with rockets, grenades in Libya", *Reuters*, 5 August, 2012, <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/08/05/us-libya-cross-idUSBRE8740JN20120805>> [accessed 30 April, 2013]

²⁷ "U.N. convoy targeted in explosion in east Libya", *Reuters*, 10th April, 2012, <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/04/10/us-libya-explosion-idUSBRE8390T220120410>> [accessed 30 April, 2013]

carrying the consular team's security escort.²⁸ The attack came days after the US mission was targeted in Benghazi when a bomb was thrown at the front gate of the US diplomatic mission in the city.²⁹ That incident took place after Washington's announcement of the death of Abu Yahya al-Libi, a Libyan, who was an al-Qa'ida deputy and ideologue in Pakistan. Al-Libi had been killed in a drone strike on 4 June, 2012.³⁰

9. Even though the protesters who initially rose up against Qaddafi in mid-February 2011 originated from Cyrenaica, much of the security apparatus set up in the wake of his ousting ended up being dominated by western militias, based in the Tripolitania region, often distrusted by the inhabitants of Benghazi, Cyrenaica's restless capital. Following the toppling of Qaddafi, temporary political appointments were widely perceived in Benghazi as regional favouritism towards Tripolitania. This changed in October 2012 when the country's Prime Minister, Ali Zeidan, appointed Mohammed Mahmoud Al-Bargati as Defence Minister and Ashur Shwayel as Interior Minister, both from Benghazi. However, eastern mistrust of western intentions still lingers.³¹

10. The issue of federalism and local autonomy have remained subjects of great sensitivity that will become even more critical when they are discussed in the framework of the country's draft constitution in December 2013. Even though there are some militias who reject the legitimacy of central state institutions in their entirety, they do not represent the majority views of Cyrenaica's inhabitants. However, they do form a boisterous and potentially threatening coalition.

11. Therefore, the level of autonomy that will be ceded to Libya's regions in the country's next constitution will play a major role in determining the extent to which central state institutions will have in a security presence at the local level. Questions also remain about the sharing of oil revenues. Oil was and will remain an essential ingredient in the process of political, economic and social transformation in Libya.

12. Cyrenaica accounts for nearly 80% of the country's oil production and armed militias in that part of the country have already illustrated the ability to shut down production as leverage over the central government in Tripoli.³² If there cannot be consensus, then this has the potentiality of problems spilling over violently.

13. In Libya, the issues of security and regionalism are also intrinsically linked to the role Islam should play in defining the country's post-Qaddafi identity. This aspect has especially strong roots in Cyrenaica. Benghazi's poorest districts have also witnessed the rise of militant Islamism over the past decades. Its Laythi neighbourhood, has been dubbed "Little Kandahar", an ironic reference to the conservative city in southern Afghanistan identified as the spiritual centre of the Taliban militia.³³

14. In addition to attacks against NGOs and diplomats, throughout 2012, there were also a series of assassinations and attacks in Cyrenaica that targeted army officials who had sometimes held prominent positions under the Qaddafi regime before hurriedly defecting during Libya's revolution. Mohammad al-Hassi, a former colonel who was in charge of internal security in Derna, and Abdelfattah Younes, Qaddafi's former interior minister who had resigned to become the leader of the rebel resistance in Benghazi, were both assassinated by militants in Cyrenaica. Al-Hassi had been expected to become the head of the Derna branch of the Ministry of Interior's new security force, the Supreme Security Committees (SSCs).³⁴

A HISTORY OF RESISTANCE

15. Historically, Cyrenaica has been the centre of a very particular combination of tribal and Islamic political culture. The ferocious and well-organised guerrilla campaign by the Cyrenaican tribes against Italian colonial rule (1912–1942) led by national hero "Umar al-Mukhtar who fought the Italian colonialists in the 1920s, forms part of a history of resistance and separate identity from the rest of Libya. During the period of the Sanussi monarchy under King Idris (1951–1969) the tribes of Cyrenaica enjoyed to all intents and purposes cultural and political autonomy. This legacy of uniqueness continued to be of influence in the political history of Libya.³⁵

16. Despite the dominance of tribal kinships, Cyrenaican uniqueness has largely urban origins especially in its capital of Benghazi with a steep tradition in education. Added to this is the city's fundamental role in many of the country's defining events. The fabled anti-colonial fighter Umar al-Mukhtar is buried just south of the city in Suluq. The former monarchy had its seat in Benghazi until 1954, and the city is where Qaddafi launched

²⁸ "Libya unrest: UK envoy's convoy attacked in Benghazi", *BBC News*, 10 June, 2012, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-18401792>> [accessed 30 April, 2013]

²⁹ Jomana Karadsheh and Nic Robertson, "U.S. mission in Benghazi attacked to avenge al Qaeda", *CNN*, 7 June, 2012, <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/09/11/us-security-qaeda-idUSBRE88A04L20120911>> [accessed 30 April, 2013]

³⁰ "Al Qaeda confirms death of bin Laden confidant Libi", *Reuters*, 11 September, 2012, <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/09/11/us-security-qaeda-idUSBRE88A04L20120911>> [accessed 30 April, 2013]

³¹ "Libyan PM-elect presents new cabinet", *Saudi Gazette*, 31 October, 2012, <<http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentid=20121031141295>> [accessed 30 April, 2013]

³² Frederic Wehrey, op.cit.

³³ Shashank Bengali and Richard A. Serrano, "Libya official says militia commander led raid on U.S. mission", *Los Angeles Times*, <<http://www.latimes.com/2012/oct/17/world/la-fg-libya-consulate-justice-20121018>> [accessed 30 April, 2013]

³⁴ "Derna security chief assassinated", *Libya Herald*, 2 March, 2012, <<http://www.libyaherald.com/2012/03/02/derna-security-chief-assassinated/>>; "Libyan rebel commander Abdel Fattah Younes killed", *BBC News*, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14336122>> [accessed 30 April, 2013]

³⁵ Emanuela Paoletti, "Libya: Roots of a Civil Conflict", *Mediterranean Politics*, Volume 16, Issue 2, 2011, pp.313–319.

his 1969 revolution. Much of this influence, hails from Benghazi's familial linkages to the rest of the country, particularly in Misrata, Nafusa, Zawiya, Zintan Zuwara, and even in the neighbourhoods in Tripoli of Tajura, Suq al-Juma'a, and Fashlum.³⁶

17. Since Qaddafi seized power in a military coup in 1969, militant Islamists in Libya, like the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya al-Muqatila, or LIFG) portrayed him as an apostate and declared an "all-out jihad" against his regime. A prolonged armed confrontation soon ensued, extracting a high price from both sides.³⁷ This perhaps may seem ironic as Libya itself sponsored left-wing and Marxist terrorist groups in the 1980s.

18. Although some of the prominent officers of the revolution in 1969 like Abd el-Fatah Younis or Suleiman Mahmud Obeidi were from Cyrenaica and became notable figures for the regime, the region always remained volatile and restive. Qaddafi's attempts to co-opt the younger generation as forces of the revolution never fully succeeded. Resistance from tribal, urban and Islamic oppositional movements from the 1980s began in Cyrenaica.

19. By 1987, the potential threat to Qaddafi's regime had started to surface. On 17 February 1987, the Libyan authorities executed nine men, including three soldiers, in Benghazi, for allegedly belonging to radical extremists. They had been accused of treason and plotting bombings and assassinations of Libyan figures and Soviet experts working in the country. Unprecedented was the official acceptance that an Islamist opposition had infiltrated the army. The authorities used televised executions to warn Libyans against disloyalty to Qaddafi's "Green Revolution".³⁸

20. In the summer of 1995, armed clashes broke out between Islamists and security forces in Benghazi. The confrontation escalated when Islamists attacked several police stations, killing several officers. The LIFG lost several members.³⁹

21. More violence erupted in the autumn of 1995 between Islamists and the local authorities in Benghazi, resulting in scores of fatalities. At the same time, in Derna, an industrial port between Benghazi and Tobrouk, there was a growing sense of religiosity which provided fertile ground and an Islamist insurgency was rapidly gaining traction before being ruthlessly crushed by Qaddafi's forces.⁴⁰

22. In its second communiqué of the year, the LIFG implemented a two pronged campaign of propaganda and "jihad operations". It appealed to "every employee of the regime apparatuses" to join its ranks, likening its role to that played by Libya's national hero, "Umar al-Mukhtar. Basing its activities in Cyrenaica, the LIFG declared that "jihad is alive and well in the land of "Umar al-Mukhtar", thereby attempting to utilise the national symbol to attract popular support for their battle "against [the people's] enemy", the Qaddafi regime.⁴¹

23. In April 1996 militants attacked Libyan police guarding the Egyptian consulate in Benghazi, killing two police officers. This time, however, an emerging Islamist group, the Islamic Martyrs Movement (IMM—Harakat al-Shuhada al-Islamiyya), led by Mohammed al-Hami, led the operation. Also in April 1996, the LIFG targeted police stations in Benghazi, and seized weapons from their armoury.⁴²

24. On May 31st 1998, Qaddafi was travelling in east Libya en route to Egypt and was reportedly wounded in a gunfire attack and did not arrive in Cairo as scheduled. The incident occurred near Sidi Khalifa, 30km east of Benghazi, a stronghold of the LIFG.⁴³ In a telephone call to the London-based Arabic daily, al-Hayat, the IMM claimed to have ambushed the Libyan leader. Several days later, however, the LIFG also claimed responsibility for the attack. In the immediate aftermath, the regime pursued a ruthless crackdown on Islamist elements in the Benghazi area, involving some 300 arrests, mostly of university students and staff, physicians and engineers.⁴⁴

THE CYRENAICA MILITIAS

25. Some of Cyrenaica's most notorious Islamists, such as the former leader of the LIFG, Abdel Hakim Belhaj, have given up their military struggle and formed political parties instead, thus accepting for now the rules of the democracy. Belhaj spent time in the notorious Abu Selim Prison, before being freed in 2010 under a "de-radicalisation" drive promoted by Saif al-Islam Qaddafi, the son of the former Libyan dictator, who is now under arrest awaiting trial.

³⁶ Frederic Wehrey, op.cit.

³⁷ Yehudit Ronen, "Qadhafi and Militant Islamism: Unprecedented Conflict", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.38, No.4, October 2002, pp.1–16

³⁸ Ibid.,

³⁹ Reported by a London-based Libyan Islamic group, al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya al-Libiyya, MSANEWS, Internet Publication, 4 July 1995.

⁴⁰ Frederic Wehrey, op.cit.

⁴¹ Yehudit Ronen, op.cit.

⁴² *Al-Hayat*, 23 June 1996.

⁴³ *Al-Hayat*, 14th June 1998.

⁴⁴ *Al-Hayat*, 16th June 1998.

26. Together with an inner-circle of former LIFG fighters, Belhaj has established control over a number of military entities. In December, 2011, it was being alleged that that Belhaj, Abdel-Mehdi al-Harati, was leading a detachment of Libyan fighters supporting Syrian rebels along the border with Turkey.⁴⁵

27. Many more Islamists joined a separate group, the Umma al-Wasat, led by Sami al-Saadi, the LIFG's key ideologue who had once authored an influential anti-democratic treatise. Al-Saadi was joined by another dominant figure in the LIFG, Abd al-Wahhab al-Ghayid, the brother of the late al-Qa'ida deputy Abu Yahya al-Libi, who ran successfully as a candidate in the 2012 elections in southern city of Murzuq.⁴⁶

28. Another key figure is Abd al-Hakim al-Hasadi, who formed the Derna Brigade in the early stages of the revolution, which was later renamed the Abu Salim Martyrs' Brigade. Al-Hasadi was directing unsanctioned security arrangements in Derna, which was home to several dozen Libyan recruits who travelled to Iraq to fight coalition forces.⁴⁷

29. Al-Hasadi was joined by Sufyan bin Qumu, a veteran of the LIFG, who was linked up with Osama bin Laden in Sudan and fought alongside Taliban.⁴⁸ Qumu had a falling out with the group, ostensibly because of his overt ties to al-Qa'ida. Another, individual associated with this faction is Abd al-Basit Azuz, a former mujahedeen of the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan, who fled Libya for Syria in the 1990s, then lived for a period in the United Kingdom before moving to Pakistan in 2009. There is a belief in some quarters that Azuz was personally dispatched by al-Qa'ida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri to Libya in the wake of the 2011 revolts to establish an al-Qa'ida foothold in Derna.⁴⁹

30. As of mid-2012, the Abu Salim Martyrs' Brigade had become a force unto itself in Derna. It began closing down beauty parlours and enforcing strict social behaviours in the city.⁵⁰ In Derna's central court, it hung up a banner proclaiming Shariah law. Outside the city, the group has also been accused of running a training camp for volunteers to fight in Syria against the Assad regime.⁵¹ There are also indications that it is establishing itself through criminal activities such as drug smuggling and illicit weapons trafficking.⁵²

AL-QA'IDA IN THE ISLAMIC MAGHREB

31. On 11 September 2006, the fifth anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, al-Qa'ida Central issued a video statement by its then deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri that the Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat had joined forces with al-Qa'ida. Al-Zawahiri announced a "blessed union" between the groups.⁵³ In January 2007, the group announced that it had changed its name to al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) to reflect its alliance with the al-Qa'ida franchise.⁵⁴

32. At first glance, AQIM remains principally Algerian based on its leadership. In others ways however, it has evolved into a regional insurgency successfully integrating local communities and drug traffickers. The new name not only underlined its submission to the hierarchy and ideological platform laid down by al-Qa'ida, but also served notice of the regional aspirations of what was until then essentially an Algerian group in terms of its makeup, objectives and scope.

33. The name change and the content of communiqués released appeared to signal a change in direction in the agenda and modus operandi of the Algerian terrorist group. Al-Qa'ida had added to its ranks a powerful, resilient, organisation that would eventually prioritise attacks on western targets within and beyond North Africa. This prediction seems to now be confirmed by a series of attacks undertaken by the group against western interests and nationals throughout North Africa and The Sahel.

34. On November 3, 2007, a new video from al-Qa'ida media production house as-Sahab was circulated on jihadi forums. Entitled "Unity of the Ranks," the video featured senior al-Qa'ida leaders Ayman al-Zawahiri and Abu Laith al-Libi.⁵⁵ This video marked the announcement of the long anticipated merger between al-Qa'ida and the LIFG. The LIFG has been in existence since the mid-1990s and has long been loosely affiliated with al-Qa'ida through various collaborations.

⁴⁵ Edith Bouvier, "Des Libyens épaulent les insurgés syriens" (Libyans shoulder Syrian insurgents), *Le Figaro*, 23 December, 2012.

⁴⁶ Frederic Wehrey, op.cit.

⁴⁷ Christopher M. Blanchard, "Libya: Transition and U.S. Policy", *Congressional Research Service*, 25 October, 2011, p.26

⁴⁸ Charles Levinson, "Ex-Mujahedeen Help Lead Libyan Rebels," *Wall Street Journal*, 2 April, 2011.

⁴⁹ Nic Robertson and Paul Cruickshank, "Source: Al Qaeda Leader Sends Veteran Jihadists to Establish Presence in Libya," *CNN*, 30 December, 2011 <<http://edition.cnn.com/2011/12/29/world/meast/libya-jihadists>>[accessed 30 April, 2013]; and Nic Robertson, Paul Cruickshank and Tim Lister, "Growing Concern Over Jihadist 'Safe Haven' in Eastern Libya," *CNN*, 15 May, 2012. <<http://security.blogs.cnn.com/2012/05/15/growing-concern-over-jihadist-safe-haven-in-eastern-libya/>>[accessed 30 April, 2013]

⁵⁰ Frederic Wehrey, op.cit.

⁵¹ See the Abu Salim Martyrs' Brigade's "shari'a session" at <www.youtube.com/watch?v=LYIF74yCRxw&feature=related>. [accessed 30 April, 2013]

⁵² Frederic Wehrey, op.cit.

⁵³ Ricardo René Larémont, "Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: Terrorism and Counterterrorism in the Sahel", *African Security*, 4:4, pp.242-268.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ "Al Qaeda Claims Link With Libya Terrorists", 11 February, 2009, *CBS News*, <http://www.cbsnews.com/2100-224_162-3448621.html> [accessed 30 April, 2013]

35. In addition to Abu Layth al-Libi and Abu Yahya al-Libi who both played a prominent role within al-Qa'ida, documents captured by US forces in Iraq in 2007, known as the Sinjar Records, that were recovered in 2007, showed that the most violent acts in Iraq were carried out by foreign fighters, and Libyans comprised the second-to-highest number of foreign fighters to enter Iraq to fight coalition forces.⁵⁶

36. The Algerian, Malian, and Chadian governments continue to express concern about the potential for instability in Libya to weaken security along Libya's long borders, which could allow AQIM operatives and criminal networks that provide support to AQIM to move more freely.

37. There is a belief that AQIM fighters have obtained weaponry from plundered Libyan military stockpiles, including surface-to-air missiles. On 16 April, 2012, London-based pan-Arab newspaper al-Hayat published an email interview with an AQIM member, Salah Abu Muhammad, who stated that AQIM cooperated with al-Hasadi and so-called "emirates" in several Cyrenaican cities. A 17 March, 2012, statement attributed to AQIM leader Abdelmalik Droukdel addressed Libyan rebels and sought to associate the Libyan uprising with al-Qa'ida campaign against Arab and Western governments.⁵⁷

38. Despite making its southern border a "restricted military area" in December 2012, Libya was nonetheless host to the AQIM faction that was responsible for the In Aménas hostage crisis of January 2013 in Algeria where close to 800 people were taken hostage including 107 foreigners.⁵⁸ The In Aménas Gas complex is close to the Libyan border.

THE 2012 ELECTIONS

39. Despite a significant rise in the number of Islamists across the nation, and particularly in Cyrenaica, religious militancy does not seem to reflect the Libyan people's wider religious or political objectives. In the July 2012 landmark parliamentary elections, Libyans went to the polls to elect a 200-member General National Congress which will form an interim government, oversee the writing of a constitution, and supervise polls for an elected government based on the new constitution. The elections were the first to involve political parties since 1952 and were widely hailed as an extraordinary achievement.

40. In generally free and fair elections, the voter turnout of around 1.8 million Libyans or 65% of registered voters produced the landslide victory of the National Forces Alliance (NFA) which is a coalition of around 60 political parties, some with a very small membership, and around 200 civil society groups.⁵⁹ Indeed, the election results were a surprise to many observers as Libyan voters largely supported moderate parties and candidates, reversing a regional trend in support of Islamists who fared quite poorly. Abdel Hakim Belhaj's al-Watan party didn't win any seats in the General National Congress (GNC) despite its leader's strong reputation as a resistance fighter against the Qaddafi regime.

41. The NFA presented itself as a moderate Islamic movement that recognised a limited role for Islam in political life. It was a strong supporter of decentralisation, supporting local council control of areas like education, healthcare and transport, however, it steered away from support for federalism. The NFA, took 39 of the 80 seats available to political parties, more than twice as many as the 17 seats won by its nearest rival.⁶⁰

42. The Justice and Construction Party (JCP), led by Mohammed Sawan, a former political prisoner under Qaddafi, is the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood. It was the largest and best organised of the political parties. Presenting itself as a moderate, progressive religious party, it argued a parliamentary system was best suited to Libya, supported decentralisation, but like the NFA opposed federalism.⁶¹ While it may have expected to receive a boost in the polls following regional trends in which Islamist parties took power in both Egypt and Tunisia, the JCP emphasized its independence from Muslim Brotherhood groups elsewhere in the region.

43. Several factors can explain why the JCP and other Islamist parties failed to do better in the elections. Unlike in other North African countries, the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood had reached a political accommodation with the Qaddafi regime which was criticised by many Libyans. Related to this point, there was concern among many Libyans that Islamic parties like the JCP and the Nation Party were under the influence of some Gulf Emirates. Based on these issues, women voters, in particular, strongly supported the NFA.⁶²

⁵⁶ Joseph Felter and Brian Fishman, "Al Qa'ida's Foreign Fighters in Iraq: A First Look at the Sinjar Records", *Harmony Project, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*, 2007, <<http://tarpley.net/docs/CTCForeignFighter.19.Dec07.pdf>> [accessed 30 April, 2013], p.7

⁵⁷ Christopher M. Blanchard, op.cit., p.27

⁵⁸ Lee Ferran, "Algeria Hostage Crisis: The Libya Connection", *ABC News*, <<http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/headlines/2013/01/algeria-hostage-crisis-the-libya-connection/>> [accessed 30 April, 2013]

⁵⁹ Ronald Bruce St John, "Libyan Election Breaks Arab Spring Pattern", *The International Spectator: Italian Journal of International Affairs*, Volume 47, Issue 3, 2012, pp. 13-19

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

 CONCLUSION

44. Libya's modern history has been influenced by the continuous undercurrents of ideology, religion, tribalism and oil. After 42 years in power Qaddafi was killed at the hands of revolutionaries and the final chapter of his dictatorial reign was concluded. With direct and decisive support from NATO countries like the United Kingdom, and some Arab governments, the revolution was successfully led by the National Transitional Council and militias in many Libyan cities. However, there needs to be a sustained focus by the west on developments inside Libya and not just when there is an attack against western interests inside the country.

45. Libya is facing a challenging point in its history and is currently standing at the crossroads. In addition, the North African sub-continent is also confronted with significant security challenges that could have severe ramifications across several countries and regions with potential blowback into western Europe and especially into the United Kingdom. Attacks against western interests in Libya point to a trajectory that could spread beyond the confines of North Africa. This cannot be ignored.

46. Libya is a potential economic and political giant of North Africa, so a weakened and fragmenting nation is the last thing that this region needs nor the international community, as it would almost certainly upset the positive trends that have emerged from this part of Africa over the last few years. Libya could become the hegemon in Africa, but only if it can solve its domestic political problems.

47. Regional clashes over identity, power, and resources continue unabated in Libya, straining the capacity of the weak government, deterring foreign investment, diluting the emergence of strong democratic institutions. The most pressing of these problems is in Libya's eastern region of Cyrenaica, where Benghazi is located is fuelled by longstanding neglect and religious militancy. The tribes have proven to be the strongest counterbalance to the militias in the east encouraging them into local councils and incorporate their brigades into the national governmental bodies. And their voices carry influence. They don't need western encouragement or support which could actually be counter-productive.

48. Undoubtedly, religion has remained a central component of the cultural composition and the definition of Libyan identity. Despite the attempt of Qaddafi's suppression of Islamic orientations not sanctioned by him and to substitute them with the ideology of the Green Book in its place, Islam remained basic and essential to the value structure of Libyan society and the primary formative element of the social system itself.

49. The Libyan people have never shown any real attraction to the more extreme, radical religious strains. Moreover, the general public over the two years has shown little interest in an Islamist alternative to the non-ideological revolution against Qaddafi. Most Libyans expect and want Islam to play a role in political life, but opinions vary widely as to exactly what this means. Most Libyans agree that the new constitution should draw on Shariah law, but there is no consensus as to whether the constitution should be based solely on Shariah law or whether it should only be an important reference among others.

50. Qaddafi destroyed the concept of state and institutions and made war on society and its political and civil organisations and upsetting the components of its political culture. Therefore, establishing an effective constitution and formalising the security sector are the best ways to address the sources of Cyrenaican instability in the short-term. The constitution must carefully strike a balance between the central government and local administration. To help suppress violence and restore Cyrenaican confidence in the state, the government must discharge and disarm the country's numerous revolutionary and Islamist militias and strengthen the national army and police.

51. Not all Libyans who went to Iraq or those who eventually returned, were indoctrinated by al-Qa'ida's ideology. However, many will have attained military skills that could be used against their home government as well as linking up with groups that pursue a more trans-national agenda.

52. For the time being, it appears that AQIM has chosen to benefit from the Libyan unrest by seizing weapons, including thousands of small arms and man-portable anti-aircraft missiles that were believed to have been looted from military armouries during the revolution.⁶³ However, AQIM have remained unconcerned in safe havens in northern Mali and Algeria. The In Aménas hostage crisis, which was near the Libyan border, illustrates the group still has the infrastructure and resources to plan large operations. This does not appear to have diminished even though several of its leaders have been killed.

53. The British diplomat, Ian Martin, who is the head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), has advocated a strategy to help enhance and strengthen Libya's fragile political institutions and rule of law. It is a noteworthy goal and with merit but it is critical that the lead actors in delivering them are the Libyan people themselves. Libya's future has to be directed with Libyan characteristics and not with outside influence and that will be the only ways that the extremists will be unable to develop their own infrastructure inside the country and use it as a launch pad to plot and plan operations beyond the borders of Libya thus averting the potential blowback to the United Kingdom.

30 April 2013

⁶³ Lee Ferran, op.cit.

**Written evidence from Dr Claire Spencer, Head, Middle East & North Africa Programme,
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1. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- The UK’s initial reaction to the dramatic attack on the Tiguentourine gas facility near In Amenas in southern Algeria in mid-January 2013 has clearly situated it in the context of the threat to the UK of extremism in the Sahel region. Policy considerations that follow on from this attach particular importance to the emergence of al-Qaeda (AQ) affiliates and related groups, and their potential links as far afield as the Boko Haram movement of northern Nigeria and al-Shabaab of Somalia.
- In operational terms, these links may be exaggerated, where AQ is not only fragmenting,⁶⁴ but Islamist groups other than AQ “sub-franchises” are emerging across the region, who may be considered rivals of the original AQ model and its *modus operandi*. Rather than constituting a coordinated “arc of terror”, the shifting array of alliances and influences on these groups make their objectives and ideological rationale circumstantial and opportunistic rather than enduring or narrowly focused on specific targets or types of terrorism.
- While the UK’s counter-terrorism (CT) response has initially been appropriate, there are clear limits in terms of the commitments and resources the UK can devote to the broader region. The total of the UK’s budget dedicated to the region (whether the £13 million in aid pledged to Mali bilaterally, or the £110 million for all countries eligible to receive aid under the Arab Partnership Fund⁶⁵) is small relative to the estimated US \$35 million accumulated over the past 5–6 years by Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) from smuggling, and above all kidnappings for ransom. The question facing HMG is where to find the leverage to make a difference.
- The UK is likely to act primarily as part of EU initiatives, or in support of French and/or US interests in the region. If this entails too close an alignment with combatting AQ activism in the region, there may be future risks to UK interests if policy is not carefully balanced with locally-identified priorities for security and stability.
- Given the multi-agency approach of HMG’s counter-terrorism strategy CONTEST⁶⁶, the UK should continue to focus its relatively limited resources on UK-specific objectives. These primarily remain the security of British nationals employed in the oil industry, the regional investments of British companies active in the region (such as BP and British Gas), followed by the risk of regionally-based extremism spreading to the UK. The latter concern is currently remote, but cannot be discarded without a sustained focus on the trans-national links of groups and movements originating in North and West Africa.
- HMG should also influence EU colleagues and the US to deploy collective resources towards reshaping the enabling environment that has allowed for radical jihadists and terrorists to emerge. Above all this means breaking the bonds of economic subjection that have deprived local populations of both alternative options and the means to combat the parasitical dominance of regional smuggling and criminal networks by Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in the Sahel in recent years.
- No remedy to the long-standing and endemic weaknesses of state structures in the Sahel region will be swift. An internationally-coordinated development approach that takes the needs of local populations into account is more likely to succeed in the medium-term than a reliance on previously failing and failed local governments to promote their citizens’ interests and security over their own quest for survival.
- This caution applies as much to the new alliances the UK is building in the region, above all with Algeria, which may become subject to a succession crisis in advance of, or at the time of, presidential elections set for the spring of 2014.

PERSONAL BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

2. I welcome this opportunity to submit evidence on a region close to my professional interests, which I have pursued in over 25 years’ experience of analysing and commenting on political and economic developments in North Africa. This was firstly at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London in the late 1980s, then as Head of the Mediterranean Security Programme at the Centre for Defence Studies, King’s College, University of London from 1995–2001. I subsequently served as Director of the Algeria Project for the International Crisis Group from 2001–02 and am currently the Head of the Middle East and North Africa Programme at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House.

3. In this post, which I have held since November 2005, I have been engaged in confidential security briefings on Algeria as well as publishing analyses of Algerian politics, most recently in the form of “expert comments” published on the Chatham House web-site and in a report on Algeria’s defence and security policy

⁶⁴ As Foreign Secretary William Hague has indicated; see Footnote 66 below.

⁶⁵ Figures taken from the Foreign Secretary’s speech, as Footnote 66 below.

⁶⁶ See Foreign Secretary William Hague’s speech “Countering terrorism overseas” given at the Royal United Services Institute on February 14 2013: “CONTEST (,) combines a full range of international and domestic responses, ranging from the overt to the covert, from security to development, through to working with our communities at home” <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/countering-terrorism-overseas>

for the *World Politics Review* (*Strategic Posture Review: Algeria*, July 2012⁶⁷). I also appeared as an expert witness for the defence at a recent Deportation Appeals hearing in the Special Immigration Appeals Commission on behalf of eight Algerian defendants (December 2012-January 2013). I have also read, and concur with the evidence already submitted to you by my colleague and Associate Fellow at Chatham House, Jon Marks. I will thus endeavour to address issues here that have not already been covered in depth by him.

4. I would also like to thank the Committee for providing this opportunity to focus on an area that has divided academic as well as policy attention for too long. By this I mean an almost literal division, where academic and policy expertise on the largely Arab states and societies of North Africa (or “Maghreb”, meaning the westernmost region of the Arab world, linking it closely to the wider Middle East) rarely combines with specialisms in the Sub-Saharan regions to its south.

5. To understand the full dynamics of the current situation in the Sahel, it is highly advisable to consult beyond security studies and regional studies experts to cultural anthropologists and historians of the wider region. Too heavy a reliance on security assessments, in a region that has traditionally suffered from poor or politically-motivated intelligence runs the risk of making the UK’s contribution liable to accusations of interference, “neo-imperialism” or complicity with others (above all France and the US) whose strategic intentions across the Sahel have often been locally perceived as highly self-interested.

FRANCE, MALI AND NIGER

6. For now, the French military intervention in Mali in January 2013 is widely seen as having saved northern Mali from the depredations inflicted on its peoples by AQIM, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and Ansar Eddine—namely, the alliance of jihadist groups (now all listed as terrorist groups at the United Nations) that until early 2013 occupied the Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal triangle in northern Mali. In July 2013, the French mission will hand responsibility over to the newly sanctioned United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), which “*will comprise up to 11,200 military personnel, including reserve battalions capable of deploying rapidly within the country as and when required, and 1,440 police personnel*” according to UN Security Council Resolution establishing it⁶⁸.

7. This peace-keeping and stabilisation mission will replace the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA), comprising ECOWAS and African Union (AU) forces, temporarily set up in the aftermath of the French military operation in Mali. Welcomed by the Foreign Office Minister for Africa, Mark Simmonds, MINUSMA will doubtless be a focus for the Inquiry as it develops. However, in noting that it will absorb the c.6,000 African forces already operating in Mali, combined with 1,000 French forces remaining from the French military intervention force, it is not yet clear who will contribute the remaining 4,640 military and police personnel.

8. Despite a wide-ranging mandate, the BBC correspondent Alex Duval Smith based in Mali’s capital, Bamako, observed on April 25th 2013 that “*the UN force will stretch the definition of peacekeeping to new limits, as there is no peace agreement for it to enforce in Mali*”. The BBC’s West Africa correspondent Thomas Fessy amplified as follows: “*The UN is deploying a force in a country where there is still no peace to keep. The blue helmets are tasked with securing the main cities and roads but they will not be in Mali to engage jihadist fighters. This is left to a 1,000-strong French force, which will continue to “chase terrorists” whenever needed.*”⁶⁹

9. The Mission’s envisaged division of labour, while perhaps reflecting different levels of expertise, risks emphasising the primary concern of France (and by association the UK, as a member of the P-5) with the CT component of its mandate at the expense of its local security and stabilisation dimensions. It is also not yet clear whether “chasing terrorists” will allow the French component (but not other nationalities?) to cross regional borders at will—above all into Niger where France has a critical national interest in safeguarding the Areva uranium plants which supply 20% or more of French nuclear energy generation needs.

10. French security forces have secured the Areva plants in Niger since January 2013, but they provide an obvious target for future terrorist attacks. Over the short-term, AQIM and its offshoots are on the retreat and the element of surprise that wrong-footed the Algerian authorities in the January 2013 In Amenas attack has now been lost. In 2010, 7 employees of Areva and an associated company were kidnapped by AQIM, of which four still remain in captivity. The French authorities have been widely suspected of paying up to \$17 million in ransoms for captives in the past, a position that while not acknowledging past practice, the Hollande presidency declared in March 2013 does not now apply. When a French hostage, Philippe Verdon, kidnapped in a separate incident in November 2011 in northern Mali, was reported to have been executed on 10 March 2013, there were renewed appeals from the families of the Areva hostages for the French government to act to secure their release.

11. Areva also faces more international competition over uranium mining, where it has previously operated a quasi-monopoly in Niger. Besides increased Chinese investment since 2009, Iranian President Ahmedinejad

⁶⁷ Claire Spencer “Strategic Posture Review: Algeria” *World Politics Review*, 25 July 2012 http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Research/Middle%20East/0712wpr_spencer.pdf

⁶⁸ See UNSC Resolution 2100 adopted by the UNSC on 25 April 2013: http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/minusma/documents/mali%20_2100_E_.pdf

⁶⁹ BBC News Africa “Un approves new peacekeeping force” April 25th 2013 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-22296705>.

recently visited Niger, where the Nigerien government is also interested in diversifying away from an exclusive relationship with France.⁷⁰

12. The sum of these concerns mean that where France had no critical commercial interests to defend in Mali, it may well be drawn in to any future escalation of tensions or incidents arising in Niger, especially if anti-French sentiment among what a growing number of Nigeriens see as French exploitation of their natural resources were to increase. UK policy-makers will be aware of the risks, but they need to be ring-fenced from UK actions in Mali, and any role played alongside, or in support of, French security personnel in MINUSMA.

THE US AND THE SAHEL REGION

13. The US has long been involved in CT initiatives in the Sahel region, dating back to the Pan-Sahel Initiative of 2002 (involving Mali, Chad, Niger and Mauritania), to the Transaharan Counter-Terrorism Initiative in 2005 (expanded to encompass Algeria, Burkina Faso, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal), which was brought under the United States Africa Command (better known as AFRICOM) in 2008. The main aim of these and subsequent initiatives has been to train and assist in coordinating national militaries to respond to suspicious movements across the Saharan region connecting West to North Africa, above all in combatting the criminal networks that have fed the rise of AQIM and other terrorist networks.

14. The results have not been impressive: according to Anouar Boukhas, in addition to the more than 18,000 African forces trained by France from 1997 to 2007, *“the US has spent millions of dollars training Malian soldiers only to see many of them flee or defect to the rebels’ side”*.⁷¹ AFRICOM’s most recent efforts to coordinate regional security responses from an Algerian-led joint military command centre (CEMOC: *Comité d’Etat-Major opérationnel conjoint*) established in 2009 at Tamanrasset in southern Algeria proved to be insignificant when it came to the In Amenas crisis, which was managed entirely as a national Algerian affair.

15. This raises questions about the advisability of re-inventing policies based on strengthening national military capacities and regional security cooperation under the MINUSMA mandate. The political will of regional governments to professionalise and reward their own armies and combine forces across national borders has proven to be consistently weak after more than 15 years of external interventions. Wolfram Lacher, writing prior to the culmination of the recent crises, points to the complicity of political elites across the Sahel region in the trans-Saharan smuggling and criminal networks that have become enmeshed in the funding and opportunistic exploitation of bad regional governance by AQIM and other jihadist groups.⁷²

16. The UK currently supports the European Union Training Mission (EUTM) in Mali, which aims to train four battalions of 1,800 troops over 15 months. HMG should supplement this by promoting initiatives derived from a clearer sense of local dynamics and security needs, rather than the assurances of weak and self-interested national governments. National reconciliation efforts in Mali are in their infancy and the general elections foreseen for July 2013 are unlikely to resolve Bamako’s long-standing neglect of northern Mali which prompted the insurgencies there of early 2012.

NEW DIMENSIONS OF REGIONAL SECURITY THREATS

17. UK interests were directly and critically affected by the attack on the In Amenas plant, jointly operated by BP, the Norwegian oil major Statoil, and the Algerian national oil company Sonatrach. Three British nationals and a UK resident died, and the security of British-employed personnel has been paramount in the subsequent stepping up of local security measures in the larger hydrocarbon complex of Hassi Messaoud to the north of In Amenas. Rumours of planned car-bombs, kidnappings of internationals and further attacks persist, making it essential that HMG coordinate directly with British companies operating in Algeria, Tunisia and the wider region, along with the Algerian authorities who retain a jealous control over national security.

18. The French military push-back in northern Mali may, for now, have cleared Mali of AQ-linked jihadist groups, but there are various hypotheses about where they have withdrawn to as their strongholds in the Adrar Ifoghas mountains become less secure. Libya—or the frontier areas of Algeria/Niger/Libya—is one possibility, not least since this is the hub of the trafficking routes through which most heavy weaponry to groups active in the Sahel have passed. Southern Tunisia, not well-secured by the transition government, is another option; there are also rumours of links into Saharawi camps at Tindouf in south-eastern Algeria by MUJAO, which unlike the Algerian-dominated AQIM, draws most of its support from the Sahel states.

19. Less clear is what the fragmentation and regrouping of groups means in terms of their future plans and targets; MUJAO is said to be “eyeing up” Niger next, but most recently (April 1st 2013) nine terrorists belonging to MUJAO (Libyan, Nigerien, Burkinabe, and Malian nationals) were reported trying to enter Algerian territory in two four-by-fours at the border triangle between Algeria, Mali, and Mauritania. They were

⁷⁰ See Reuters, April 15th 2013 “Ahmadinejad to Visit Uranium Producer Niger” <http://www.voanews.com/content/ahmadinejad-to-visit-uranium-producer-niger/1641527.html>

⁷¹ See Anouar Boukhas “The Mali Conflict: avoiding past mistakes” FRIDE Policy Brief 28 February 2013, p.5 <http://www.fride.org/publication/1105/the-mali-conflict-avoiding-past-mistakes>

⁷² Wolfram Lacher “Organised Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Paper, 13 September 2013 <http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/09/13/organized-crime-and-conflict-in-sahel-sahara-region/dtjm>

killed by the Algerian army after an hour with helicopter reinforcements, in a counter-attack Algerian media reported to have been based on Algerian intelligence.

20. In reporting these incidents, the Algerian authorities are trying to maintain a semblance of control over events, but President Abdelaziz Bouteflika is not well, and has not travelled abroad on official business for 16 months. Most recently he was reported as having been taken to hospital in Paris suffering from a minor stroke. This has limited the amount of high level regional coordination that has been possible without sending proxies to represent the presidency. The ruling FLN party is also in the midst of a leadership crisis, meaning that there is no clear successor to President Bouteflika should he not stand, as seems increasingly likely, in next year's presidential elections. In security terms, no one is under any illusion that the security effort in southern is controlled semi-autonomously by the Algerian military and the DRS (Algerian military intelligence) at arm's length from the presidency.

21. In terms of the impact on local populations of the terrorist attack on In Amenas, a new southern Algerian protest movement, the National Coordinating Committee for the Defence of the Unemployed, has staged a number of demonstrations and protests about Algier's neglect of the southern provinces—but its coordinators have rebuffed AQIM advances. While not originally a political movement, their recent demonstrations have highlighted constitutional articles in defence of their political rights. This is so far small scale, but a significant development for the UK to watch, given the need to strengthen local capacities and goodwill in CT initiatives.

22. As for AQIM itself, its appeal amongst Algerians has never been strong, and one theory is that developments over the past couple of years, in the ratcheting-up of AQIM's activism in Mali, and the In Amenas incident, undertaken supposedly by AQIM dissidents—has been to refocus international attention back from the Arab Spring to jihadism, which was excluded from initial uprisings and risked becoming irrelevant. The strategy would now appear to one of drawing international actors into the region, the better to recruit more local activists to fight foreign incursions.

THE DIVERSIFICATION OF JIHADIST MOVEMENTS

23. This has not so far appeared to have succeeded, for a number of reasons. Within the dynamics of cross-regional developments since 2011, two schools of thought within the region's wider salafist and jihadist movements seem to have emerged:

- (a) The first is to continue the violent pursuit of jihadist goals and intensify attacks against foreign interests and their foreign client governments (including Algeria). It is notable in this respect that MUJAO has attacked Algerian targets more consistently than have the branches of AQIM based in Mali in recent years; it also seems apparent from reporting of the In Amenas attack that AQIM offshoots or related groups are demonstrating differences of opinion over the choices of targets and local strategies to pursue.
- (b) The second approach has been to gain more ground regionally through what might be termed the "Ansar al-Sharia" model (present, and growing in Tunisia and Benghazi in Libya as the AST and ASB, respectively). This incremental approach to recruiting new adherents is based on the philosophy of "dawa" (or the "call"), which focuses primarily on community-based missionary work, and the provision of goods and services neglected by the state.

Lessons appear to have been learnt from Hamas, Hezbollah and the Muslim Brotherhood in seeking to implement *sharia* (Islamic law) through gradual means, rather than terrorism (if not occasional violence)—which has enjoyed considerable success in Tunisia, if still limited in overall numbers. AST is estimated to have anywhere between 10,000 to an exaggerated 90,000 members. Armed violence remains an option, but the reference points for these groups go beyond "AQ Central", whose current Emir, Ayman al-Zawahiri, appears increasingly wrong-footed by these movements.

24. New influences have also appeared on the scene to influence the direction these "AQ rivals" take, dating back to the discrediting of the excesses committed in the name of AQ by Abu Musab al-Zarkawi in Iraq in 2006–7. The Jordanian Sheikh Abu Mohammed al-Maqdisi (currently in prison in Jordan) has education and "dawa" at the core of his philosophy, having built up an on-line library of resources to back a gradualist approach. Another on-line influence is the Mauritanian preacher Abu Mundhir Shanqeeti who delivers regular sermons on the *minbar al tawheed & jihad* (pulpit for unity and struggle) site. Other formative influences on the transnational rise of Ansar al-Sharia groups have been the Libyan Abu Yahia al-Libi (killed in a US airstrike in Pakistan in December 2009) and the Yemeni Anwar al-Awlaki (killed in a US drone attack in Yemen in September 2011).

25. There is no evidence of this "dawa" approach making headway within Algeria, but the AST in Tunisia was formed in April 2011 when jihadists were released from prison or came back from exile. Its leader, Abu Iyadh al-Tunisi (born in 1970) has followed a typical trajectory of having come under the influence of Abu Qatada whilst in exile in London, before setting up a group of "Tunisian Fighting Forces" in Afghanistan. A similar model applies to the ASB, founded in February 2012 and which came to prominence after the death of the US Ambassador in the attack on the US consulate in Benghazi attributed to ASB. While not fully accepting responsibility, the ASB leadership now claims the Ambassador's death was unforeseen and unplanned. Violence is not the whole story of ASB, however: like the AST, they too provide local services, including having being

called back by the Libyan government to resume the much-reported security detail their operatives have provided to the main hospital in Benghazi.

CONCLUSION

26. This background is important for HMG to consider in terms of assessing the fate of AQIM and other terrorist groups in the Sahel; even though the Ansar al-Sharia trend is seen as an offshoot, or development of AQ thinking, including that condoned by Zawahiri, it represents a diversification of that model and offers more choices to would-be jihadists. In Tunisia, for example, the philosophy of Abu Iyad is based on “missionary work at home; jihadism abroad”.⁷³ This means that young disenchanting Tunisians who want to fight go outside Tunisia to do so: 11 Tunisians were among the terrorists at In Amenas and an estimated 150–230 are active in Syria with the forces of Jabhat al-Nusra. In February 2013 alone, the highest number of foreigners who died in Syria were 26 Tunisians, followed by 11 Jordanians.

27. These developments have resulted in rivalry between AQIM and Jabhat al-Nusra to attract fighters to replenish their ranks; a number of recently detained Tunisians were found to be carrying leaflets exhorting them to stay and pursue the fight in northern Mali and southern Algeria against western interests and infidel governments; Jabhat al-Nusra was openly blamed for taking them in. On April 6th 2013, Ayman al-Zawahiri broadcast a message to Maghreb youth to “support the umma” in North Africa, and AQIM has also just launched a Twitter account in an attempt to raise its profile. An intelligent HMG strategy would be to follow these developments and seek to influence the demise of AQIM, which as the former Foreign Minister of Mauritania has recently observed, lacks the ideological depth of its new rivals.⁷⁴

1 May 2013

Written evidence from Mr Philip Fletcher CBE, Chair of the Church of England’s Mission and Public Affairs Council

1. The Foreign Affairs Committee’s decision to hold an inquiry into the UK’s response to extremism and political instability in North and West Africa is one the Mission and Public Affairs Council very much supports.

2. The Council is the representative body responsible for taking forward policy and research on behalf of the wider Church of England. It is acutely aware that there is sometimes a strong religious dimension to the rising levels of political instability in North and West Africa. This letter draws on the expert insights of various Church of England stakeholders, including Lambeth Palace, to outline our observations on this perceived trend.

3. The links between the Church of England and the wider Anglican Communion, as well as the work of its mission and development agencies on the ground, makes the Council conscious that context is all important. North Africa is not West Africa. Egypt is not Tunisia. Nigeria is not Mali. The boundaries between countries, especially in West Africa, are porous, which makes it all the more important to understand the resilience of each country to withstand political shocks and economic stresses and its propensity for social violence.

4. Our experience is that listening and learning in order to reassess the drivers of instability lying behind the shifting reality on the ground is crucial. This approach is hungry of diplomatic (and no doubt other resources), but given the geo-political issues at stake merits the investment. Otherwise the risk exists that policies are solely driven by short term responses to crises, rather than considered and sustained policies to strengthen the resilience of those same communities to manage and accommodate the presenting risks.

5. We hold that the need for thorough investigation and sensitive understanding is especially necessary when grappling with the religious dimension of social violence. The rise of jihadism in the region is not simply an unwelcome fall out from the region’s Arab Spring (Libya and Tunisia are often cited as conduits for the heavy weaponry now being deployed by armed Islamists groups across the Sahel). It is probably part of the explanation of how armed groups in Northern Mali were able to consolidate their position, but to conflate Boko Haram, and other such groups in North East Nigeria, with Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb is misleading at best and damaging at worst.

6. Actors such as Boko Haram may well have informal relationships with wider regional and international terrorist groups, but they remain largely Nigerian and any policy response needs to be nuanced to reflect the country’s specific complexities. If similarities exist between Mali and Nigeria they are perhaps to be found in the weakness of state institutions to provide for the welfare and security of all its citizens.

7. In the case of Mali this manifested itself in the inability of state institutions, not least its army, to respond to the subjugation of its citizens in the North. In Nigeria, the growth of Boko Haram cannot be attributed solely to socio-economic factors, though it is no coincidence that Boko Haram emerged from Nigeria’s most impoverished region. Despite Nigeria’s impressive economic growth in recent years, policies of the central government have meant the benefits have not been widely shared. The strength of state institutions in Nigeria

⁷³ See Aaron Zelin “Know your Ansar al-Sharia”, Foreign Policy, 21 September 2012 http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/09/21/know_your_ansar_al_sharia

⁷⁴ Mohammad Mahmoud Ould Mohammedou “AQIM: Maghreb to Mali and back”, Open Democracy, 19 April 2012 <http://www.opendemocracy.net/mohammad-mahmoud-ould-mohamedou/aqim-maghreb-to-mali-and-back>

is such, however, that unlike Mali, the challenge posed by agents of instability falls short of an existential challenge to the nation.

8. Our expectation is that religion is set to become more of a marker of identity than it currently is. The political transitions in Egypt and Tunisia will not be short lived and the probability is of a kaleidoscope of shifting governments, factions and ideologies for the foreseeable future. The process of economic development in West Africa will continue to disrupt traditional lifestyles and reawaken ethnic divisions. Our experience of West Africa suggests that at times of competition for scarce resources, such as access to water, the probability is that communities will divide on religious lines unless strong countervailing pressures are brought to bear.

9. We believe that developing a prosperous and stable North and West Africa is morally right as well as being in the UK's longer interests. The region is Europe's near neighbour. The levels of interdependence between the region and Europe are such that instability in any one country in the region can be felt far beyond the northern shores of the Mediterranean.

10. We welcome the vision underpinning the Government's Building Stability Overseas Strategy (July 2011). It is ambitious and compelling. It is encouraging that the strategy places such a heavy emphasis on building inclusive democracies, strengthening the rule of law and ensuring basic needs are met and opportunities for development are open to all.

11. We recognise, however, that translating this all-encompassing strategy into realizable country programmes will not be easy given the growing pressures on resources. The UK will need to ration its diplomatic, foreign aid and military resources with great care, but never hesitate to use them when there is a clear need that serves the government's strategic interest or meets vital humanitarian needs.

12. In taking forward this strategy we suspect that too much attention to date has focused on engaging with governments in capitals that are all too often distant from their people, while at the same time falling foul of different regional political calculations and rivalries. State building is a desirable long term goal, but without strong and secure foundations at a local and communal level the prospects for long term stability are diminished.

13. We suggest that the Committee as part of its inquiry should consider whether the Government's support to central state authorities could be tailored to encourage their engagement and involvement of local leadership. Such a strategy, especially in northern Nigeria, could help local authorities and traditional leaders regain some much needed credibility with their own constituents.

14. Within this mix, we also suggest that the Committee looks creatively at how the Government might better harness the resources and social capital of faith communities here in the UK and their overseas networks to help foster more resilient community relations in those areas prone to instability and social violence. The ongoing work of the Diocese of Coventry in Nigeria and the institutional dialogue between the Anglican Communion and Al Azhar Al Sharif in Egypt are but two examples of this type of engagement. Gaining the trust of communities and their leaders might prove profitable in both understanding and containing the threat of social violence in many of the countries in question.

15. This engagement is already taking place in some places, but we believe that the more that Britain and the rest of Europe can open up and build social ties between its people and the people of North and West Africa then the greater the chance that it will help to build a culture of democracy and tolerance in those same countries. Such engagement might also help to influence attitudes in the UK and Europe to a more open minded of its neighbours to the South which can only be beneficial to both.

22 April 2013

**Written evidence from Professor Alice Hills, School of Government and International Studies,
Durham University**

SUMMARY

This submission addresses the UK's ability to achieve its long-term policy goals of building inclusive democracies, strengthening the rule of law and tackling extremism in West Africa. Based on the UK's record of providing assistance and support to police forces in Anglophone countries such as Nigeria, it finds that:

- Current goals are neither realistic nor achievable.
- The UK's ability to influence fundamentally the African police forces expected to identify signs of extremism, manage political instability and address development-related challenges is minimal. The recipients of UK projects typically welcome technical assistance on operational issues such as cyber-crime, but accept development-oriented projects only because of the resources they represent. The impact of UK projects is at best local, superficial and temporary.

- Tensions exist between technical assistance designed to improve operational capacity and political goals such as building inclusive democracies. Even so, the UK's short-to medium-term interests are best served by projects promoted in terms of professional knowledge (as in "modern" policing) and material interests (eg management skills), rather than norms and values, important aspects of which clash with the region's police cultures and political interests.
- The UK's miscellaneous and *ad hoc* approach to the international deployment of UK police officers has limited its influence on UN- and international projects in the region. The Stabilisation Unit and ACPO International should address international deployment strategically and systematically, and the appointment of police attaches should be considered.
- The UK over-estimates the contribution of transnational organised crime—or, more accurately, illicit business—to regional instability. The result of such activities may be problematic for the UK and EU member states, but it is not a major issue in West Africa where trafficking is a business opportunity, rather than a source of instability.
- A more realistic assessment of what the UK can or cannot change should be developed.

AUTHOR

Alice Hills is professor of conflict studies at Durham University where she specialises in the evolution of police forces and what explains their interaction with governments, militaries and societies in sub-Saharan Africa. She has published extensively on the Nigeria Police Force (including its management of metropolitan Kano) and on Somalia's three regional police forces and their assessment of stabilisation and development. She was a founder member of the UNDPKO's International Police Advisory Council (2006-) and the civilian police expert responsible for assessing the UNDP's Rule of Law Programme in Somalia (2011).

FACTUAL INFORMATION

1. I cannot comment on the effectiveness of the UK's diplomatic resources or co-operation with France and other Western allies, but I suggest that the UK's assistance and education projects to the region's Anglophone police forces offer insight into what can realistically be achieved vis-à-vis extremism and political instability. This submission therefore focuses on police-related issues.

2. The UK has for some years used police assistance and reform as a tool for achieving its long-term goals of building inclusive democracies based on the rule of law and, increasingly, tackling extremism in West Africa. Between 2002 and 2009 alone, some £37 million was channelled to reforming or improving the security and justice sector of Nigeria, a key anchor state for UK policies in sub-Saharan Africa. Although the Inquiry is not looking specifically at such programmes, their results are indicative of the challenges the UK will face if it seeks to become more deeply involved in the region.

3. Despite decades of international support for police capacity building and re-education, there is little evidence to support the assumption that the skills, technologies and procedures associated with Western policing can act as an effective channel for the transmission of democratic values. For example, the UK has provided assistance and support to Nigeria, the regional hegemon, over five decades. Yet despite being one of Nigeria's major creditors, and despite the significant sums of Nigerian money held in London's banks, the UK seems to have limited leverage to change Nigeria's corrupt, repressive and ineffective policing practices.⁷⁵

4. Skills transfer is a relatively straightforward process, and recipients always find offers of technical assistance and equipment more attractive than projects promoting values such as accountability and equality. In 2009, for example, Nigeria's police accepted British support for projects promoting the notion of service, but it is probable that North Korea's offer of training in unarmed combat, and the provision by the French national police of a training course on cyber-crime in the same year were more welcome.

5. It is noteworthy that the most successful police projects are practical, small scale and focused on what officers or local people want today, rather than in an ideal future. What police want can be seen from the value mid-ranking Nigerian officers operating in the Delta region attach to attendance at the European Gendarmerie Force's headquarters in Vincenza, Italy. Similarly, the British Council's Maigatari project in northern Nigeria's Jigawa State provided security patrols at Africa's largest livestock market with the observation towers and binoculars needed to protect traders carrying large sums of cash.⁷⁶ The project also had the potential to increase security by providing information about movement in a strategically significant area towards the Niger border. Indeed, the Maigatari project is an excellent example of the improvements that can take place when the UK works with local communities, government representatives, civil society and the private sector to address practical problems. But even successful projects must be followed up or their impact is temporary.

6. This suggests that the UK needs to reassess its goals, assumptions and time frame. Addressing structural violence and injustice may be necessary for enhancing a society's long-term capacity to reduce or prevent inequality or extremism, but most people want immediate results to today's security problems. Hence the

⁷⁵ See Alice Hills, 2012. "Lost in translation: Why Nigerian police don't implement democratic reforms". *International Affairs* 88 (4), 739–755.

⁷⁶ DFID/British Council, 2010. "Maigatari Market Project: Jigawa State". www.j4a-nigeria.org/joomdocs/Maigatari.pdf

popularity in Nigeria of paramilitary-style police operations targeting armed robbers.⁷⁷ Hence too the lynching by local people of a suicide bomber targeting the Emir of Kano's mosque on 17 April 2013.

7. The UK focuses more on the perceived value of what is being transmitted than the way in which it is received. In contrast, recipients filter security-related training and resources through local interests and dispositions, and even when the process of change and/or reform is accepted, the political will required to ensure its effective implementation is not. The real reason why elites publicly welcome many reforms (eg community policing) is that it does not affect their lifestyle. This will matter if, as seems probable, certain politicians extract personal or political advantage from the crime and extremism that the UK wishes to address.

8. The UK's wish to transform the way the region's police do business is further limited by there being five Anglophone states in West Africa (Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and, arguably, Liberia) but nine Francophone countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Togo) in which UK-style security sector reform has little traction. Anglophone and Francophone countries follow different police philosophies and practices regarding, for example, police-military relations, bureaucratic structures, and terminology. The existence of Lusophone Cape Verde, Guinéa-Bissau and São Tomé & Príncipe adds an additional complication.

9. The UK's influence is further limited by its neglect of UN- and international policing. It has distanced itself from UN policing and the work of the UNDPKO police division, its contribution to the UN's West Coast Initiative is minimal, and its overall contribution to UN policing in the region is to all intents and purposes non-existent.

10. The Stabilisation Unit and ACPO International have yet to address the issue of UK international deployment strategically or systematically. Although the creation of a UK career structure incorporating (or encouraging) overseas deployment is unlikely, other measures should be considered. The appointment of police attaches deserves serious consideration.

11. It is usual to claim that gangsterism and crime contribute to regional instability, but this is debatable for four main reasons:

- Although the UK is concerned by West Africa's role as a transit point for illicit drugs intended for EU member states, its fears are not shared in the region where trafficking is seen as a business opportunity, rather than a source of instability.
- Contrary to the Stabilisation Unit's definition, stability has more to do with predictability than democratisation. Its meaning is better conveyed by Herman Kahn, an American Cold War analyst who defined stability as a situation when "stresses or shocks do not tend to produce large, irreversible changes. This does not mean the system does not react when subjected to stress or shock ... Stability means that the reaction is one of a limited, and perhaps predictable nature and that the changes are not reversible or lead to a new balance not essentially different from the original".⁷⁸ Understood in this sense, "crime" supports, rather than undermines regional stability, and is a source of profit to the region's power brokers.
- There is a long-running debate as to whether Africa has been criminalised or has in fact developed an alternative approach to governance. The evidence suggests many in the region pursue rationalities and causalities that cannot be easily aligned with those of the UK.
- Regional co-operation means little when the most serious security threats affecting West Africa's political elites are internal (eg coups). Consequently, threat perception is location- and person specific, and coherence is to be found in personal relationships, rather than in international goals.

12. The lack of urgency and the inadequate resources devoted to building effective police forces by West Africa's regimes suggests that crime (including extremism) is not regarded as a major threat. Indeed, the approach of most elites has more in common with risk management or entrepreneurialism. Some regimes are supported by crime and corruption while others benefit from it, but most would be threatened by effective or tenacious Western-style policing.

13. West Africa challenges the UK's orthodoxy in other ways too. For example, police are of secondary status, and domestic and regional policing concerns working relationships and co-existence, rather than partnership or conflict prevention. In Nigeria it is rumoured that the January 2012 bombings in Kano were made possible by collusion between Boko Haram and senior police and military officers who had held power in Sani Abacha's junta.⁷⁹ Whatever the case, the effectiveness of the working relationships achieved is evident from an al Jazeera video showing the involvement of police and military officers in extra-judicial executions in 2010.⁸⁰

14. There is a risk of adverse publicity and/or unintended consequences if the UK takes a more interventionist approach in the region. This may not be on the scale associated with Afghanistan or Syria, but the bombing of

⁷⁷ For Operation Yaki (i.e. Terror) in Kaduna and Kano see Alice Hills, 2010. "A plurality of worlds: The Nigeria police in metropolitan Kano", *African Affairs*, 109:1, 53, 58–59.

⁷⁸ Herman Kahn, 1965. *On escalation: metaphors and scenarios* (Praeger), 38.

⁷⁹ *Africa Confidential*, 2012. "Abacha's ghost and Boko Haram", 53: 6, 1.

⁸⁰ Al Jazeera, 2010. "Video shows Nigerian 'executions'", 9 February <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2010/02/2010298114949112.html>.

the French embassy in Libya on 23 April 2013 indicates one possible outcome, as does the kidnapping and killing in northern Nigeria of British nationals Chris McManus and Brendan Vaughan. Kidnapping is a strategy employed regularly by Islamist militants in northern Nigeria, and the risk of it being used against British nationals elsewhere in the region will be intensified if, as seems likely, Boko Haram's various factions are developing an international agenda, are training in Mali, and are increasingly using kidnapping as retaliation for the West's military involvement in countries such as Mali and Somalia. Ansaru's activities in northern Nigeria since 2012 are evidence of this. Blowback is a risk, too, as is the presence in London of a significant number of Nigerians.

15. The UK's interests/goals are best served by a pragmatic assessment of its secondary role and limited influence in the region, and by a more realistic assessment of what can be changed (eg professional skills and resources) and what is resistant to change (eg the use of state resources for personal benefit). Influencing developments in a region characterised by opaque decision-making, illicit business and inequality is best achieved via professional standards and practical projects, rather than overly ambitious goals and ambiguous norms, important aspects of which clash with local political interests and police culture (though norms and values may be embedded in technical skills).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The UK should assess realistically its ability to influence fundamentally West Africa's police and political elites.
- The UK's goals are best—and most credibly—promoted in terms of technical knowledge and practical projects that address today's concerns, rather than overly ambitious and future-oriented goals.
- The Stabilisation Unit and ACPO International should address the issue of international deployment in a strategic, realistic and systematic manner.
- The appointment of police attaches should be considered.

29 April 2013

Written evidence from Guy Lankester, Director, From Here 2 Timbuktu Ltd

1. SUMMARY

- (a) I will argue that:
- The UK's foreign policy in the region of North and West Africa over the past decade has helped create the "extremism and political instability" which has led to France's intervention in Mali.
 - The UK's growing strategic and natural resource interests in the region have gone in parallel with the growth of extremism and political instability. The "interests" on the one hand and the "extremism" and political instability on the other are inseparable and mutually dependant.
- (b) If this inquiry is about whether the UK's foreign policy best serves the British self-interest in the region, there is little for me to add or detract: the policy has served its purpose as the UK's presence militarily in Mali and the virtual Afghanisation of the country can only help its longer term influence and interests.
- (c) However, if this inquiry and British foreign policy has a moral dimension or is looking forwards for real lessons on ways to avoid allowing Al Qaeda type "extremism" to take root, grow and produce the political instability that has rocked a nation, created 100,000's of refugees, created regional instability, destroyed a hitherto reasonably stable democracy, induced racial and ethnic tensions, conflict and murder, then there is much to learn.

2. INTRODUCTION

- (a) I am the sole director of From Here 2 Timbuktu Ltd, a travel company specialising in the Sahara and West Africa. Since 2004 I have been travelling and running tours in the region in question. Mali has been my main destination and I have spent part of every year since 2006 in the country. I have a close relationship with Tuareg communities in the north of the country.
- (b) My relationship with the north of Mali has coincided with the growth of a so-called Al Qaeda presence in the region. I have watched from very close by as a threat that at first only seemed to exist in the offices of western government foreign departments began to establish itself, become active and slowly grow to the point of being capable of taking over half a country. All under the watchful gaze of US and French troops based in the region.
- (c) In December 2009 I narrowly escaped being kidnapped, along with my 2 clients, by Al Qaeda In The Islamic Magreb (AQMI). Despite the fact that we were reported as missing to and by British and German intelligence services before we were actually taken (and so were alerted to our danger), nobody has ever contacted me about this incident to find out what happened.
- (d) Following this incident, and because of the nature of my business, I have taken a close interest in the security situation in the north of Mali and in the wider region.

I have no relationship or affiliation with any political or military group either in the UK or abroad.

3. RESPONSES TO THE COMMITTEE'S THEMES

1. *The effectiveness of UK co-operation with France and other Western allies to secure UK interests in the region, and lessons to be learned from the French-led intervention in Mali*
 - (a) There is a suggestion here that UK co-operation with the French led intervention was always about “securing interests” of the UK and no suggestion that the interests of Mali or of simply destroying the Al Qaeda affiliated groups that have created the political instability were factors that came into the calculation.
 - (b) What was the effect of the much acclaimed French intervention?

With the so called “Islamist” forces tempted out of the main towns of Timbuktu and Gao, and in the open around the small town of Konna, and with French planes dominating the air unchallenged (as the much talked of anti-aircraft artillery that the Islamists were supposed to possess failing to materialise), a turkey shoot and a swift conclusion to the campaign was on the cards at the outset of the intervention.
 - (c) However the most wanted man, Iyad Ag Ghali, was able to retreat back to his fiefdom of Kidal with a convoy of his best troops unchallenged, a journey of well over 1000kms. This journey includes the crossing of the river Niger at some point on one of only 2 bridges and 2 extremely slow car ferries on its entire Malian stretch. If these crossing points had been put out of action, the fight against Al Qaeda in Mali would have been over in days. But somehow Iyad Ag Ghali was able get from Konna, cross the river Niger and then travel through flat and open desert back to Kidal.
 - (d) Since the French intervention and “liberation” of the north of Mali, refugees have been pouring into the refugee camps in Burkina Faso and Mauritania for one main reason: the Malian military have been left behind the French advance to manage the “liberation” in the regions of Timbuktu and Gao.
 - (e) This is the same military that that the MNLA rebelled against at the beginning of January 2012, the same military who abandoned Timbuktu and Gao after their own coup d’etat in Bamako in March 2012, leaving the northern population to the mercy of first the MNLA rebels and then the Islamists terrorist groups.
 - (f) This is the military that have historically always performed exactions against the northern population after and during any rebellion. This is the military that fought amongst itself in Bamako, beat up the interim president, forced the resignation of the interim prime minister as he was trying to find a negotiated solution in the lead up to the French intervention.
 - (g) This is the military who have been responsible, since retaking the regions of Timbuktu and Gao and the Gourma, for murder, kidnap, hostage taking and ransom demands against the light skinned population (Tamashek and Arab). I know all of this because I have been witnessing firsthand accounts of these exactions from the Burkina Faso refugee camps.
 - (h) It is the inexplicable policy of leaving the Malian military in control of the northern regions that the French have liberated that has led to the greatest political and ethnic instability since the commencement of the crisis in January 2012. A common refrain in the refugee camps is that the Islamists imposed their sharia law on the population but the military have been killing them. The French intervention has caused far more refugees than even the Islamist occupation. What sort of liberation is this?
 - (i) Like the rest of Mali, the northern population welcomed the French intervention with desperate and open arms. They now see the French intervention as the most disastrous event in the many traumatic events of 2012–13.
2. *The factors contributing to the power of religious extremists in the region, how they can most realistically be dealt with, and whether they amount to a significant threat to UK interests or are primarily a regional concern*
 - (a)
 - The main factor contributing to the “power of religious extremists” has been their support from the Algerian and Malian states. Without this, they could not have existed. Their existence in the Tuareg desert helped both governments manage their Tuareg issues, and allowed them to paint the Tuareg as Islamist sympathisers.
 - This can only be dealt with on an inter-governmental level, but the UK government have shown no interest in pressurising its Algerian ally.
 - In terms of “religious extremism” there has been very little anti-western rhetoric, kidnappings have been about money rather than promoting ideology so the threat to UK interests at home is negligible and is much more of a regional concern.
 - (b) In the north of Mali, the Tamsheq (Tuareg) community practise a very tolerant Islam that is diametrically opposed to the ideology of Al Qaeda. Their women go open faced, their music is very important to them and women have their own form of music in “Tinde”, they believe strongly in gri gri (the power and wearing of good luck charms), and pretty much everyone, including women,

chews tobacco. There is little within the Tuareg society for extreme Islam to key into. Those that are involved are more likely to be seduced by money than ideology.

- (c) Over the past 9 years I have travelled extensively across north and West Africa. I have never heard an extremist viewpoint. I have come within a hair breadth of being kidnapped by these “extremists”. I was saved by Tuareg friends who could have earned more money than they will ever see in their lives by selling me on.
- (d) From 2007–2010 I was travelling extensively in the Kidal region of Mali. Again here, amongst the Tuareg, I never heard an extremist viewpoint—indeed people, including rebel fighters, went out of their way to ensure me of my safety amongst them and talking of the how alien islamic extremist ideology was to them.
- (e) In West Africa and Mali in particular, if there is extremist ideology it is very hidden away and is not something that sits comfortably with the tolerant Islam that the region has always displayed. I have never felt that extremism would take off in West Africa as it has nothing in the society to key into. If anything one sees more signs of fundamentalist Islam in Bamako than in the north, but again this is religious and not ideological. AQMI have been attempting to sensitise the local population of the north towards its ideology for years but have had very little success.
- (f) The plain truth is that Al Qaeda type extremism was introduced to the region from outside, and even up to today , most of the die hard ideologues- and there aren't many among the ranks of drug dealers, cigarette smugglers and kidnappers of hostages for ransom—are foreigners to Mali.
- (g) AQMI ranks have grown since AQMI was first allowed (by the Malian president Amadou Toumani Traore) to camp up in the Tigharragh mountains under the watchful eye of US and French militaries, on the ground in Mali. These troops were supposedly in the region to help train the Malian military in counter terrorism. The growth of AQMI and the events of 2012 suggest this observation and training was either a catastrophic failure or a great success, depending on what these “interests” that we are talking about are.
- (h) Factors contributing to religious extremism:

As is well known, AQMI's local *raison d'être* and its source of finance is drugs running, cigarettes smuggling and, more recently, hostage taking for ransom. All of these things are obviously haram in Islam. Its rank and file are much more likely to have been recruited for work in the smuggling than for reasons of ideology. Western focus on the religious extremism rather than the criminality can only increase the appeal of these groups to vulnerable and unemployed youth.

COMMENTS ON UK POLICY

- (i) Possibly the main factor was the destruction of the tourist industry. The main factor contributing to this was western government travel warnings that have written off the northern half of the country for 4–5 years.
 - (ii) I have been arguing with the UK FCO for years that their policy of blanket and generalised warnings about “terrorism” in the north of Mali did more to contribute to the ranks of AQMI than anything else. If you are a young man seeking to provide for your family and your work as a guide or a driver in the tourism industry, which was the main source of outside income for the region, is taken away, what are you to do when AQMI turn up and offer you €300 a month to drive for them?
 - (iii) The FCO argue that their policy is focussed solely upon protecting British citizens travelling in the region. As a British citizen travelling in the region over the past 10 years I can say that this policy has greatly increased the danger for all travellers, as cutting off the tourism industry is the best way of filling the ranks of extremist groups.
 - (iv) Over use of the term “islamist” is another contributing factor as it alienates people. For example, today, as these groups are being broken up by the French campaign and as their rank and file are deserting in droves, we are now told that “islamist terrorists” are filtering back into the community ready to attack from within. This is just not true. I have met these people. They are ordinary people caught up and press ganged into joining one militia or another. Many are now refugees. And it is statements like this that have given the Malian military its excuse to enter into these communities on the pretext of looking for these “islamsists”, whom they identify solely by the colour of their skin. These “terrorists” then just disappear, or turn up in shallow graves or are even ransomed back into the community. If you are described as an islamist, attacked as an islamist, you might as well move over to islamist ranks for protection.
 - (v) The UK policy that has most protected me has been the policy not to pay ransoms to hostage takers. I wholeheartedly agree with this, and it could well be argued that British citizens travelling in Mali have over the past 4 years been more secure than their European counterparts because of this policy. Since Edwin Dyer who was in one of the first groups kidnapped and was the only hostage to have been executed by AQMI, no British citizen has been taken hostage.
3. *The extent to which gangsterism and crime contribute to regional instability and how this is best tackled*

Gangsterism and crime are inseparable from the extremism talked about earlier. As is well known in the region and within intelligence circles, AQMI's main source of income came from drugs and cigarettes smuggling and from the ransom money from hostage taking.

It is impossible to effectively tackle gangsterism and crime in the region without looking at regional government and military complicity.

If we take the drugs routes alone. It is well known that the cocaine comes over in planes and boats from South America, is then transported right across West Africa and the Sahara before finding its way into Europe, a journey that may include crossing between three and seven borders. There is no way this merchandise could travel across all these states and borders without authorities being involved. Until western governments face this reality head on there seems no point in even attempting to combat this trade.

4. *The UK's support for regional co-operation by ECOWAS and others*

ECOWAS offered no effective support for the people of Mali throughout the 2012 -13 crisis and came up with no workable solution to the problems. All ECOWAS states have the same underlying issues, principally majority ethnicities dominating minorities, and so their interests are aligned. What west Africa and the rest of the continent is desperately in need of is a body that represents the interests of the people, and especially minority ethnicities, and not just the interests of the states.

5. *The extent to which the UK Government's long-term policy aims of building inclusive democracies, strengthening the rule of law, and tackling extremism in the region are realistic and achievable*

- (a) The current situation in Mali gives the UK government its best chance to make this policy of building inclusive democracies "realistic and achievable". But sadly we seem intent on throwing this opportunity away by our support for the US position of pushing for general elections in Mali in July before the country is at peace and before it has had a chance to reflect on a new constitution.
- (b) The fundamental and underlying problem in Mali's hitherto peaceful and successful democracy was its lack of inclusivity. The northern population has always felt dis-enfranchised and "colonised" by the Bamabara dominated south. This has been the cause of all the rebellions since independence.
- (c) The fact that there is not even a tarmac road to Timbuktu, Mali's primary tourist attraction and a town that is better known internationally than the country itself is indication of how "inclusivity" has never been part of the Mali government's policy towards the north. We could talk also about the lack of schools, and hospitals in the north of the country, not to mention a university even in the city that produced the world's first ever university—Timbuktu.
- (d) Now is the moment for the international community to give Mali the opportunity to rebuild its democracy, its constitution and its civil society so that the aims of "strengthening the rule of law and tackling extremism in the region" can be fulfilled. Unless the relationship between the north and the south is given constitutional support, the rebellions of the past and the events of 2012 are sure to return.
- (e) But the headlong rush to push Mali towards elections in July whilst the country is still effectively at war and the northern population are exiled outside the country will mean this opportunity is lost. The elections are being pursued not for Mali's domestic interests, but for the interests of the US and the EU, so that they can re-establish their aid links with the country and thus begin to reassert their control.
- (f) If the UK government is serious about this question of "re-building inclusive democracies" it should oppose the imposition of early elections. Furthermore it should work towards providing Mali with a "Truth and reconciliation" forum and an internationally hosted round table talks with all ethnicities represented to discuss a new constitution.
- (g) Mali's unity, in my opinion, would best be solidified for long term prosperity and peace with a federal system of government, giving the north and the south, which are very distinct entities, powers to run their own affairs and receive their own development resources.

30 April 2013

Written evidence from the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)

The following is a small sample of recent articles and papers published on key issues facing Mali at present. The paper is submitted by the Mali Programme at the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). The Mali Programme has recently been developed by IIED with the view to contributing to UK and international thought on a resolution to the current Malian crisis in the context of wider instability in the Sahel, and the subsequent reconstruction of the Malian State.

The articles below are intended to highlight the following issues:

1. Human Rights Abuses
2. Commission for National Dialogue and Reconciliation
3. Drug trafficking

4. Elections

1. HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

<http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/05/07/mali-all-sides-must-abide-laws-war>
Human Rights Watch—07.05.13

In accordance with the 1949 Geneva Conventions and international humanitarian law, the Malian government is obligated to ensure that human rights laws are upheld by all sides in the current conflict. Since the conflict began in early 2012 abuses have been widespread on all sides:

- Rebel groups have committed violence against the Malian army.
- The MNLA has been reported to have committed acts of sexual violence and pillaging.
- Fundamentalists committed severe human rights abuses against civilians during their occupation of the north.
- The Malian army has committed numerous violent acts of reprisal including summary executions, torture and disappearances.

The majority of these incidents are yet to be investigated and the Malian soldiers in question have yet to be held accountable for their actions. Human Rights Watch (HRW) proposes that the Malian government immediately respond by ensuring sufficient numbers of gendarmes to police the areas of conflict, questioning detainees and responding to human rights abuses by soldiers. HRW also proposes a staffed 24 hour hot-line to facilitate receiving and monitoring reports of abuse. It is vital that these issues are responded to immediately, in order to minimise further abuses which risk exacerbating ethnic tensions in an already disparate population.

2. COMMISSION FOR NATIONAL DIALOGUE AND RECONCILIATION

<http://www.opendemocracy.net/opensecurity/timoth%C3%A9e-labelle/malis-reconciliation-attempt>
Timothée Labelle, openDemocracy—29.04.13

Such Commissions based on the Truth and Reconciliation models (TRCs) have the potential to ensure a longer lasting peace in conflict ridden countries such as Mali. In order for this to be achieved in Mali, the following issues should be taken into consideration:

1. The Commission has been established whilst conflict is still occurring and IDPs and refugees are still in their host communities/countries. If the refugees return after the reconciliation process has taken place, it is likely to destabilise the situation once again. In order to reach long-lasting reconciliation therefore, the TRC must extend the boundaries of their enquiries to include all Malians in the surrounding regions.
2. UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) published two reports in late February 2013, which highlighted the severe destabilisation of children's education in Mali since the conflict began and the issue of gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and child recruitment. When looked at in the context of increasing food insecurity throughout the Sahel, there is a vital need to protect women and children.
3. The Commission could grant impunity for small offenses. However, the guidelines for offences dealt with by the Commission and those to be dealt with externally in the judicial system must be laid out clearly and coherently.
4. All fundamentalists captured must remain part of the reconciliation process to ensure the Commission is as inclusive as possible at all times.
5. The Commission must remain independent from the Malian government to avoid politicisation. It would be useful to have other safeguards in this respect, perhaps the UN PeaceBuilding Commission could act as a monitor.
6. The Commission should address the root issues of the conflict, rather than simply the human right violations which stem from it. There is a danger of recurrent violence if the dissatisfaction of the Tuareg population and intense poverty of the Malian people is not addressed.
7. It is vitally important that the international community aid and support the activities of the Commission to prevent and monitor any reprisal violence which occurs as a result of testimonies.
8. The Commission must work as part of the wider political process in Mali. If successful, it would reinforce and provide much needed stability for the Malian government, particularly in the northern region.

3. DRUG TRAFFICKING

- (i) Cocaine flows through Sahara as al-Qaida cashes in on lawlessness

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/may/02/cocaine-flows-through-sahara-al-qaida>
Afua Hirsch, the Guardian—02.05.13

Over the last decade the geographical nature of the Sahel and its lax border controls have allowed Islamic fundamentalism and cocaine trafficking to flourish. Alongside what appears to have been a deeply corrupted

previous government, high levels of youth unemployment and poverty, the drug trafficking industry has become a fundamental part of the Malian economy. The traffickers have developed ways and means of ensuring their loot reaches the other side undetected and thus vast networks have developed throughout Mali and the Sahel. It is evident that drug traffickers living in Timbuktu are widely known and their identities are no secret. The root causes for Malians risking their lives to traffic cocaine must be addressed in order to put an end to the route through Mali.

(ii) Drugs: the new alternative economy of West Africa

<http://mondediplo.com/2013/02/03drugs>

Anne Frintz, Le Monde Diplomatique—February 2013

The geographic position of West Africa has made the region a vital hub for the trafficking of drugs between South America and Europe. Criminal networks are taking advantage of the corruption, instability and poverty rife in the region. It has become apparent that the drugs trade forms a major part of the economics of West Africa and particularly the state of Mali. After the Boeing 727 incident, it is evident that corruption is endemic throughout Mali's government. The drugs trade has created links in Mali between criminals, militants and government officials who all receive a cut of the profits in return for their compliance. It is particularly associated with the pre-coup government of former President Amadou Toumani Toure, who would instruct army officials to turn a blind eye to the traffickers. Toure had used drugs money to combat the threat of Tuareg separatists by financially supporting Tuareg opposition groups. However, this strategy failed when Tuareg elements returned from Libya along with an influx of arms after the fall of the Gaddafi regime.

West Africa controls between 12% and 25% of European demand for drugs. With porous borders, regional instability, cheap logistical costs and corruption at almost all levels, it forms a considerable portion of the economics of the region. Criminals take advantage of the ethnic and cultural networks across the Sahel in order to ferry the drugs in many forms across the region. When AQIM and MUJAO took control of almost all of northern Mali, they were able to demand their own share of the profits either by taking toll money or by supplying protection.

A weak state is certainly necessary for trafficking the level of drugs which pass through West Africa. Equally, without a reliable network of government officials there to allow you safe passage, the trafficking would be extremely difficult. High level alliances are vital to the survival of the trade. For example, after the coup in April 2012, the trade went fairly quiet due to the chaos and disorder resulting from the putsch.

4. ELECTIONS—JULY 2013

(i) Mali's July Elections: Between democracy and war

<http://www.polity.org.za/article/malis-july-elections-between-democracy-and-war-2013-03-27>

Kutloano Tshabala, Consultancy Africa Intelligence—27.03.13

Since the coup d'état of 2012 and the subsequent outbreak of conflict, Mali's democratic credentials once held in esteem by the international community have come under severe scrutiny. In this paper, the author posits that Mali was never a true democracy and so, in attempting to "restore" democracy now, it is unlikely to bring about peace and unification.

Despite having the characteristics of a democratic state, Mali lacked the implementation of certain key features; whilst there was economic growth, the country gradually lost sight of its democratic values and disillusionment spread with the distribution of political power across the country. Former President Amadou Toumani Toure used coercion and corruption in politics to restrict the formation of a legitimate opposition and elections were characterised by boycotts, low turnout and lack of credibility. It is hard to therefore state that Mali has been truly democratic in the past.

The international community, particularly the African Union and ECOWAS have split their Malian objectives into two phases: firstly to regain control of the northern territory by military force in order to unify the State, and secondly to begin democratic elections in July 2013. The international community has put great emphasis on holding democratic elections as a way of restoring political stability, legitimacy and peace. The debate within the interim government, Malian people and international community over the timing of elections serves to reinforce the question over whether elections should take place as early as July, when there is such little consensus.

Currently, the main issues surrounding the elections are: relationships between political parties, the limited electoral register, refugees and the illiteracy amongst many of the communities in Mali. According to the author, the following three conditions must be met in post-conflict countries prior to the commencement of an electoral process:

1. Security, to include progress in rebuilding the army and police force.
2. Adequate administrative and communication infrastructures.
3. A functioning and legitimate justice system and police force to provide accountability.

As such, Mali partially fulfils the first but remains distinctly behind on the second and third.

There are two issues here:

- The power struggle could simply be perpetuated as the election fails to address the root causes of all previous Tuareg rebellions.
- The inadequate time allowed for establishing the necessary institutions and electoral mechanisms.

The international community and interim Malian government must address the following issues in order for the July elections to fulfil their objectives:

1. The securitisation and unification of the Malian State.
 2. Consolidation of existing mechanisms despite their inadequacy.
 3. Ensure the process is as inclusive as possible.
 4. Educate the public in the political process.
- (ii) Mali's coup, one year on

<http://bridgesfrombamako.com/>

Bruce Whitehouse, *Bridges from Bamako Blog*—22.03.13

The Malian fall from democratic grace in March 2012 is, in hindsight, less of a surprise when the situation is examined in greater detail. Consider the following warning signs:

- Voter turnout was consistently the lowest in West Africa since the democratic process began in 1992. There appeared little representation of the Malian population throughout the country in the officials who were elected and according to surveys conducted, dissatisfaction with the idea of democracy was increasing as a result.
- The growth of criminality and subsequent lack of trust in the ability of Malian police and authorities to provide safety and justice.
- The Tuareg rebellion has historically been a concern in Mali with its root causes stemming further back than the fall of Gaddafi and the returning Tuareg population.
- If President Toure had continued with elections as previewed in 2012, a new government might have been able to survive the difficulties it faced at the time and thus prevent the military coup.

If these signs had been noticed, the events of the past year may even have been avoided.

In a poll taken in Bamako last month most Malians feel not only unrepresented but also alienated from the political process. In a recent interview with Radio Deutsche Welle, the ringleader of the 2012 coup Captain Amadou Sonogo categorically states he will not stand in the forthcoming elections, but adds that if he were to stand, his popularity amongst Malians would certainly make him favourite. It is hard to believe that whatever the outcome, Sanogo will take a back seat.

If the elections are to have a chance at success, it is vital that the interim government and international community understand that they must first address the root causes of the March 2012 coup in order to ensure history does not repeat itself.

- (iii) Azawad trumps Mali elections

<http://www.dw.de/azawad-trumps-mali-elections/a-16697552>

DW—26.03.13

The reporter speaks to several Tuareg citizens who fled to the South Mentao refugee camp in northern Burkina Faso after the coup last year. The first is a mother of three who explains that as she sees it, to be part of a Tuareg clan is to be part of the MNLA; they are one and the same. She says that if Bamako was to strike a deal with the MNLA, she would return home immediately (it is clear that the deal she is referring to is independence and formation of a State of Azawad). In Bamako many Tuareg have distanced themselves from the MNLA aware of the intensifying racial discrimination taking place in the north; it is unclear who the MNLA actually represent.

Speaking to Oumar ag Sidi, spokesman for the refugees at the camp, many Tuareg still hold out hope of an independent Azawad. He is sceptical of the impact of elections in July, explaining that for people like him they will not make a difference. He says he speaks for many like him who do not believe in a unified State of Mali and do not wish to be part of it. He explains that violence and discrimination suffered by many in Mali have meant that they feel alienated from an electoral process which they do not wish to be part of. He does not care who is elected, since he is not a Malian citizen, but a citizen of Azawad. For the mother of three, at this time when basic needs are not accounted for, elections are not a high priority.

5. MALI: WHAT WE MUST GET RIGHT BEFORE WORLD'S ATTENTION FALLS ELSEWHERE

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters/2013/feb/19/mali-worlds-attention-elsewhere>
Jeremy Konyndyk, Poverty Matters Blog—19.02.13

In January/February the French intervention in Mali was covered comprehensively by the international media. However the focus has now shifted and Mali is descending back into media darkness. The challenges represented in Mali have deep roots and cannot be overcome by military means alone. It is important that these issues are faced before the international focus moves away from Mali and the Sahel:

1. **Access.** The conflict has allowed little movement between north and south, so it is vital that the access routes are open in order to unify the communities on each side.
2. **Aid.** The role of aid must be reconsidered in Mali with emphasis to be placed on “resilience”. In a region hit by considerable droughts and economic fluctuations, the international community must be prepared to invest in building resilience in such vulnerable countries. Traditional development aid has not been able to overcome the root causes of the issues faced over the last couple of decades across the Sahel. International donors are currently piloting a reliance-orientated aid approach which attempts to build countries capability to anticipate and deal with shocks.
3. **UN Peacekeeping mission.** Often Stabilisation is contingent on effective governance and in Mali, the government is notably weak and holds little authority. The majority of AFISMA countries who have contributed troops to Mali have little or no experience in Peacekeeping missions. Dialogue between northern communities and the interim government must be paired with local peace-building initiatives in order to build trust. Grass-roots peace-building and effective resilience will be key to overcoming the challenges faced in Mali and must be addressed immediately whilst Mali is still high on the international agenda.

Please find news from sources living in Mali. For security reasons the information has been edited to ensure the anonymity of the sources and people it describes.

Update from a Field office in Mali—29 March 2013 and 22 April 2013

- Drugs/conflict funding is not even beginning to be sorted and remains a major issue despite French claims they have redirected some of this.
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder following the conflict is extremely prevalent. The hospitals in Bamako are asking for help from a Psychiatrist with how to deal with this. Women who have had their children taken by Jihadists are suffering from terrible trauma.
- The child soldiers remain in detention in Mopti. This will not be helping their rehabilitation to normal life again when they are finally released. We don't know what conditions they are in, but they may be very bad. The boy interviewed by Lindsey Hilsum (Channel 4 News) is still being held and has become an icon for state injustice amongst young people including in the south
- People involved in the fighting are finding it hard to get back to normal, and some are now involved in violent robberies.
- Pilot radio/mobile phone/media programme “Getting Back to Normal in Konna” is getting underway. The programme will initially focus on traumatised children and the collection of small arms.
- In Mopti things are calm at the moment. A lot of the French are leaving but they have made a base in Kidal (the Malian army are not allowed to go there at the moment, but they may go to help recover MNLA arms). The major problems seem to be mines which have been planted by MUJAO, Ansar Dine and AQIM which are causing a lot of problems One exploded in Douentza in the field office's area and killed someone. With Mali being so vast, and with a mobile population, the mine problem is worrying.
- **24 April 2013**
- We have heard from a Tuareg source living in the Timbuktu region that people are feeling “trop fatigués maintenant”. They comment that the situation has reached serious proportions; many in the community have died through a combination of starvation and illness.
- Timbuktu is still with only one out of four power companies in operation and that very sporadically, partly due to the continuing scarcity and price of diesel. There are huge fears there that insurgents will be able to enter the city with impunity under the cover and security of darkness.

9 May 2013

Written evidence from Joliba Trust UK

SUBMITTERS

Christina Anderson is an advocacy specialist, working out of Geneva. She has supported African and UK NGOs in the development of advocacy strategies and research. She has researched issues of peace and democracy in Mali, the impact of war on children (for Tearfund UK) and the trafficking of illicit goods in Mali (for Joliba Trust UK).

Comments were added by Violet Diallo, and Caroline Hart for the Joliba Trust.

SUMMARY

The heart of the current crisis affecting Mali and West Africa is illicit trade—mainly in drugs and tobacco. Illicit trade funds criminality, terrorism, and corrupts government and security sectors.

We must prioritise interventions that tackle illicit trade if we want a stable region. Any other interventions are like pruning the leaves of a weed, and leaving the roots untouched.

1. Drug Trafficking and Financing of Terror

1.1 A key driver of insecurity in the region is organised crime, especially the trafficking of illicit drugs. It finances terrorist networks and corrupts democratic structures and governments. A *Wikileaks* cable, published in *The Telegraph* on February 4 2011, quoted the FCO West African Team Leader as saying that narcotics trafficking was “*the biggest threat to regional stability in West Africa*”⁸¹ with specific regard to the possibility of increased terrorist funding in the Sahel and gang-style activity as seen in the Caribbean.

1.2 Since c.2000, West Africa has been steadily transformed into a major hub for smuggling Latin American cocaine into Europe,⁸² as well as the centre for logistics, command and control for Latin American drug cartels.⁸³ The porous Sahelian national borders, the absence of state controls, and the historic networks and routes established by nomadic families across the Sahel-Sahara region provide the perfect conditions for trafficking illicit goods.

1.3 According to the 2013 UNODC Threat Assessment on Transnational Crime, the amount of cocaine transiting through West Africa has dropped to around 18 tons per year (versus its peak of 47 tons in 2007). This is worth around USD1.25 billion at wholesale in Europe, which provides substantial income to the people who facilitate its transit⁸⁴. The UNODC in Dakar calculated that in 2012, around \$500 million of this trade was either laundered or spent in West Africa.⁸⁵ According to the UK’s Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) a significant amount of the 25–30 tonnes of cocaine imported into the UK each year is conveyed by maritime vessels and air cargo couriers who transit via West Africa;⁸⁶ northwest Mali is a key transit point for drugs heading to Europe.

1.4 Both Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) raise significant resources from the trafficking of illicit goods. US Drug Enforcement Administration says there is evidence that Latin American traffickers are collaborating with AQIM.⁸⁷ They also allegedly receive funding from Qatari and Saudi businessmen.

1.5 In the past, AQIM simply charged traffickers for passing through territory it controlled. Western and Malian defence officials say that now, AQIM agents have notched up their engagement and offer armed escorts to drug convoys through the north, charging between 10–15% of the value of cocaine—hard currency that they use to buy arms and fund their recruitment program.⁸⁸

1.6 Though it is clear that military intervention has disrupted drug transiting in northern Mali,⁸⁹ the Islamists have used their time to forge close ties to many of the region’s drug lords. They have also gained valuable lessons on how to ship illicit goods around the globe undetected. This, according to some analysts, could be applied to large arms or nuclear material at some future point.⁹⁰

1.7 Trafficking routes are flexible and adapt in response to law enforcement efforts and changing political environments. According to French criminologist Xavier Raufer “*Since the first rumours of battle in Mali, drug logisticians have been thinking about new routes, have modified their journeys through the north of the country. New routes are already opening in Angola, DRC, the Great Lakes and Libya. The profits linked to cocaine trafficking are so big that longer routes and higher transport prices are not a problem.*”⁹¹ This applies to criminal groups as much as AQIM and MUJAO, who are active across the Maghreb and can quickly put down roots in neighbouring Niger and Mauritania.

1.8 The UNODC reported in 2012 that there are perhaps 2.3 million cocaine users in West and Central Africa. The UNODC has raised concerns that the region’s role—particularly in processing cocaine—may be growing; evidenced by seizures of processing equipment for cocaine, ecstasy and methamphetamine.⁹²

⁸¹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/wikileaks-files/london-wikileaks/8304757/WEST-AFRICA-UK-PRIORITIES-COUNTER-NARCOTICS-AND-ELECTIONS.html>

⁸² West Africa Club: The security development Nexus—regional challenges: no 6, September 2012

⁸³ from international organised crime: the African experience. *Drug Smuggling*, Andrew Cuming, SOCA Liaison Officer to Italy / Malta, Dec 2010

⁸⁴ https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tocta/West_Africa_TOCTA_2013_EN.pdf

⁸⁵ cited in Lebovich, A. Mali’s Bad Trip http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/03/15/mali_s_bad_trip

⁸⁶ <http://www.soca.gov.uk/threats/drugs>

⁸⁷ cited in Quarterly Americas, *The Brazil-Africa Narco Nexus*, Nov 2011

⁸⁸ cited in Dreazen J. <http://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/mali-drug-dens-dreazen-welcome-to-cocainebououg>

⁸⁹ Jeuneafrique.com : Le conflit malien perturbe le trafic de cocaïne vers l’Europe <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/DEPAFP20130310112035/>

⁹⁰ Joelle Burbank, *Trans-Saharan Trafficking: A Growing Source of Terrorist Financing*, Centre for the Study of Threat Convergence, Sept 2010

⁹¹ Jeuneafrique.com : Le conflit malien perturbe le trafic de cocaïne vers l’Europe | Jeuneafrique.com—le premier site d’information et d’actualité sur l’Afrique <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/DEPAFP20130310112035/>

⁹² UNODC, Regional Programme West Africa 2010–2014

2. *Contraband Tobacco*

2.1 As relevant legal frameworks are inadequate or non-existent, transiting contraband tobacco to North Africa is easy low-risk work and has been practised much longer than transiting drugs. The UNODC calls it a “real goldmine, worth around USD 750 million per year”.⁹³

2.2 Based on WHO figures, the UNODC estimated that in 2007, 21 billion illicit cigarettes were smoked in North Africa and 11 billion in West Africa. These are either branded cigarettes that are smuggled to avoid taxes in African countries or they are counterfeit cigarettes, made in China and Vietnam.⁹⁴

2.3 A principal route to North Africa is via islands off Guinea, then northwards through Mali by road or by boat on the Niger river. Another important hub is Mauritania, which serves as a distribution point for Senegal, Morocco and Algeria.

2.4 AQIM also has links to transiting in tobacco, commanding a “tax” for the safe passage of cigarettes. Turf wars are as fierce as those over drugs, as AQIM factions compete with each other, with Tuareg tribes and with corrupt army and government officials. The cigarette smuggler with the moniker of “Mr Marlboro”—Mokhtar Benmokhtar—masterminded the attack on the Algerian gas plant. He was a commander in Mali-based AQIM (reportedly killed in March 2013 by Chadian troops).

3. *Trafficking and corrosion of democracy*

3.1 In a straightforward case of greed or weakness in the face of vast sums of easy money, figures within government and the security sector have sought personal gain from active involvement in the drugs trade.

3.1 (a) Eg in 2007, lieutenant Colonel Lamana Ould Bou, a military intelligence officer with Mali’s Direction Generale de la Security Exterieur (DGSE) and a former member of the Front Islamique Arabe de l’Azawad (an Arab rebel movement in northern Mali) brokered the return of a cocaine shipment in exchange for cash.⁹⁵

3.1 (b) Eg in 2009, the charred remains of a 727 aircraft bound from Venezuela were found on a remote private airstrip in Tarkint, northern Mali. Traces of cocaine were found and it was thought that 10 tons were offloaded before being set alight when it couldn’t take off. Tarkint’s mayor was widely suspected of involvement with drugs trafficking, to having close ties to both terrorists and government. It was he who negotiated the release of the UN diplomat kidnapped by Benmokhtar in 2008, who President Touré called “*Mon Bandite*.”⁹⁶

3.1 (c) Eg evidence has emerged of the narcotics trade being re-routed through the Kayes region, following current military intervention. This is a region near the Mauritania border that has remained under government control and is therefore more stable. One Western expert stated that it was hard to imagine this happening without government acquiescence⁹⁷. As it says in the UNODC report “smuggling is often accomplished not by stealth, but by corruption.”⁹⁸

3.1 (d) Eg Malian soldiers were (allegedly) directly involved or complicit in at least two cocaine flights that landed in Mali during 2009 and 2010.⁹⁹

3.2 The government has also allowed trafficking/transiting of illicit goods to take place in its territory as part of its security strategy. It has enabled them to “buy” political allegiance and militia support from groups who will manage Tuareg separatist insurgencies on its behalf or alongside Malian government troops.

3.2 (a) Eg the Mali government released people involved in the “Air Cocaine” debacle without charge: a French pilot, a convicted Spanish drug trafficker and the notorious northern Arab businessman Mohamed Ould Aiwanatt who—in exchange for his freedom—trained Arab militiamen to fight Tuaregs during the early 2012 unrest.

3.2 (b) Eg groups responsible for drug smuggling, lobbied the government for administrative control over ethnic groups: the Lamhar in the Gao region and the Berabiche in Timbuktu.¹⁰⁰

3.2 (c) Eg Arab businessmen from Timbuktu and Gao who were active in the trade of illicit goods, established their own militias, financed by Dina Ould Daya and Ouma Ould Ahmed. These were temporarily headed up by staff from the Malian army: Colonel Mohamed Ould Meydou and Lieutenant Colonel Bou.¹⁰¹

⁹³ http://www.oecd.org/swac/events/colloque_EN.pdf pg 5

⁹⁴ http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Studies/West_Africa_Report_2009.pdf pgs. 29, 30

⁹⁵ Lacher, W. <http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/09/13/organized-crime-and-conflict-in-sahel-sahara-region/dtjm#>

⁹⁶ Lebovich, A.

⁹⁷ Lebovich, A.

⁹⁸ http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tocta/West_Africa_TOCTA_2013_EN.pdf, cited in A. Lebovich

⁹⁹ Lebovich, A. NB. These were made from a journalist with connections to Algerian security. Any comments from Algeria must be seen in the context of their own political agenda regarding AQIM and regional security.

¹⁰⁰ www.issafrica.org/uploads/No39Sahel_14Mar2013V2.pdf

¹⁰¹ Interviews, Berabiche and Tuareg leaders, Nouakchott, July 2012; “Prominent Tuareg’s View of Arab Militias, Rebellion, and AQIM,” Diplomatic Cable, U.S. Embassy, Bamako, March 18, 2009, www.wikileaks.org/cable/2009/03/09BAMAKO163.html. Cited in Lacher, W.

3.2 (d) US, French and Algerian diplomats have complained openly about the Mali's government's inaction on AQIM since 2006. Mali has been the recipient of millions of dollars in military aid from the US and EU to combat terrorism, but has little to show in the way of concrete action taken against AQIM.¹⁰²

3.3 Collusion between political/security structures and organised crime shows how skin-deep Mali's democracy is. Such collusion and corruption have eroded the government's legitimacy at community level, and will make construction of legitimate democratic processes and systems difficult.

3.4 State complicity with organised crime enabled AQIM to grow and was a main driver of conflict in the north.¹⁰³ Conflicts between competing smuggling networks have proliferated with the rise of drug transiting, which have fuelled intra-and inter-community tensions.¹⁰⁴ Government rule depended on collaboration with criminal networks who became better armed, organised and powerful, and eventually tried to bite the hand that fed them.

4. Military intervention

4.1 The French are planning a gradual exit of 75% of their troops by the end of 2013. The Chadian President Idriss Deby has recalled 2000 Chadian troops, who provided critical expertise in fighting in the remote desert and mountainous regions, and who have suffered the highest number of military casualties (30 soldiers). The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) 7,000-strong AFISMA contingent that is working alongside the French force will likely be expanded into the fully-fledged UN stabilisation mission of 11,000 troops.

4.2 Analysts warn that cracks in the "peace" are accelerating. Speaking at UN Security Council in April, Mali's U.N. ambassador, Oumar Daou, warned that "*not all of Mali's territory has been retaken from extremist armed groups and that they are resorting to new tactics, including laying landmines and conducting suicide and car bombs, in an effort to counter offensive by French and Malian forces.*"

4.3 Key to establishing peace in Mali is the Political Process. Though the Malian interim government is meant to be following both political and military tracks to re-establish democracy, they—and international actors—have prioritised the military track in the push to restore territorial integrity.

4.4 A political process must address historic marginalisation of northern Malians from the political power and economic development enjoyed by the south. Northern Mali covers almost 70% of national territory, and is home to 10% of the Malian population. Soil fertility is poor, rainfall is low, water access is restricted and the region is prone to droughts. Agricultural GDP per capita is the lowest in Africa¹⁰⁵. Despite gains from increased investment in the 1990s (some from government sources, most from private, NGO, and religious actors), it lags behind the south in terms of education, water and sanitation systems, road infrastructure and healthcare. Many livelihoods depended on tourism¹⁰⁶, which halted following the insurgency.

4.5 With this degree of marginalisation AQIM and other terrorist groups can fulfil the state's role and "win hearts and minds" through offering economic and social support.

A Mayor of a town near Timbuktu says:

"Here AQIM is not a jackal that is about to devour the nomads' herds. AQIM does not pose a threat to the population and it has become a major force in the region. Its people have means. They get involved on behalf of the population in projects such as building wells and providing health care for nomads in the region. Many nomads think that AQIM and fraud are legal activities"¹⁰⁷

4.6 According to the UN Office of the high Commissioner for Human Rights AQIM pays up to \$600, plus a monthly stipend, to parents for enlisting their children—some as young as nine—into their armies.¹⁰⁸

4.7 The sums for funding the AFISMA military intervention from the EU (50 million euros) and Mali's own military budget (153 million USD)¹⁰⁹ are dwarfed by the monies gained through trafficking of illicit goods.

¹⁰² Andy Morgan, The Causes of the Uprising in Northern Mali, Think Africa Press, Article 6, Feb 2012 citing US high level and Embassy cables leaked on Wikileaks.

¹⁰³ <http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/09/13/organized-crime-and-conflict-in-sahel-sahara-region/dtjm>

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-challenges-of-retaking-northern-mali>

¹⁰⁵ Van Vliet, M. From Combatting Terrorism Centre at West point, CTC Sentinel *The challenges of retaking Northern Mali*, Nov 28 2012

¹⁰⁶ In 2004, jobs directly and indirectly linked to tourism were estimated at 13,000 and contributed to the livelihoods of more than 60000 people. Between 2004 and 2010, Mali's tourism revenues doubled, in 2010, tourists spend 240 million euros in Mali, and figures were expected to grow. From: *The Security-Development Nexus Regional Challenges*, no 06, September 2012, pg. 14

¹⁰⁷ Ethnic Touareg power to the sancturisation of AQIM and statements from the State in the Saharan-Sahelian Malian space" 2011, Naffet Keita, cited in West African Challenges, no 6, September 2012, pg. 4

¹⁰⁸ cited in D Lewis and A Diara, Reuters special report: in the land of gangster-jihadists, Reuters, 25 October 2012, www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/25/us-mali-crisis-crime-idusbre89o07y20121025

¹⁰⁹ http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex_database

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Drug smuggling in West Africa needs to be shifted from a marginal issue, to be recognised as a major security threat to UK and all other European nations and projects to combat it should be funded accordingly.

5.2 Greatly increase financial support to African-led initiatives that seek regional solutions to the problems and avoid problem displacement from one country to another

eg the ECOWAS Regional Action Plan, the UN West Africa Coast Initiative (WACI) and expansion of its Transnational Crime Units beyond Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone

eg the Kofi Annan Foundation and the West Africa Commission on Drugs

eg the UNODC National Integrated Programmes for all the ECOWAS countries.

5.3 Expand SOCA (the UK's Serious Organised Crime Agency) presence in West Africa to support law enforcement against traffickers.

5.4 Information exchange programmes between Central America and West Africa should be funded. After visits from Mexican officials to Ghana in 2009, with photos of the havoc that drug-cartels wreaks, Ghanaian authorities started to co-operate with international law-enforcement agencies.

5.5 UK should sign the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco, opened for signature in January 2013 and encourage West African states to do likewise. It should spearhead the development of international laws that oblige cigarette companies to monitor and trace product distribution and oblige them to deal with reputable agents from production to market.

5.6 The Political Process to reform in Mali must be scrutinised by the EU. DfID's and EU's Sahel strategies must ensure that aid is targeted towards programs in the north of Mali to stimulate development and economic growth and reclaim space taken by terrorist groups such as AQIM. Programs to strengthen civil society participation and community-level participation in anti-corruption programs and to generate income should also be funded and developed, in order to build a "bottom up" culture against corruption.

5.7 Recognise the impact and extent of organised crime on government and security sectors. Accompany the focus on strengthening the judicial and security sector with efforts to deal with criminal networks and to expose the corrosive links to government and military. The EU Training Mission (EUTM) and British military input should focus on this, as well as logistics and training.

5.8 Tie EU, DfID, UN development aid, capacity building support and military assistance to conditions of commitment from government and other stakeholders to combat crime.

30 April 2013

Written evidence from Dr Benjamin Zala and Anna Alissa Hitzemann, Oxford Research Group

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Oxford Research Group (ORG) welcomes the Foreign Affairs Select Committee inquiry into the UK's response to extremism and political instability in North and West Africa. Due to the current crisis in Mali, UK foreign policy is increasing focus on the whole North and West African region and this is an important time to think through the UK's response to political violence and instability in light of the experience in other parts of the world over the last decade or more.

1.2 Much of ORG's work focuses on conflict analysis (including in North and West Africa) and analysis of Western policy responses. Given the importance of recent events in Mali and what this signals for the UK's response to the region more widely, this submission will focus on both the underlying drivers of the current crisis in Mali and the response of the UK and its allies. We argue strongly that a military-dominated approach that does not tackle the root causes of instability and conflict, will at best be unsuccessful, and at worse counterproductive.

1.3 The Western-led military intervention in Mali is only one of many in a growing list of attempts to control outbreaks of political violence and religious extremism with military means. From the UK's involvement in interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq to the wider US-led attempts to control Islamist-inspired political violence in Yemen, Nigeria and Somalia, the resort to military force has singularly failed to achieve the aims set for it. Common to all of these examples is the reluctance to match military operations with serious, long-term efforts to address the factors that trigger the feelings of resentment and marginalisation that drive such conflicts.

1.4 Fighting continues in Mali and suicide attacks are on the rise. France and Chad have started to withdraw their troops, the UN Security Council decided to send in a peacekeeping force and British troops are now on the ground as part of an EU military training mission.

1.5 News commentary on the early military successes of France, and its other Western and African allies, has turned to reports of the suicide attacks in the country's north, the deadly attack on the Algerian gas plant In Amenas, the kidnapping of French tourists in Cameroon and the recent bombing of the French embassy in Tripoli, as well as on-going concerns about the threat of a terrorist attack in Paris.

1.6 The majority of commentary and debate about recent events in Mali have focused on the military dimension. However, the continued insecurity in spite of the military intervention highlights the need to go further and examine the political, socio-economic and cultural divisions that have sparked the instability.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE NORTHERN UPRISING

2.1 The factors that led to the current Malian crisis are complex but can broadly be attributed to the continued failure to resolve tensions with the Tuareg population in the north coupled with the unintended consequences of the global “war on terror” and the Western intervention against Gaddafi’s regime in Libya.

2.2 It is clear that the 2011 crisis in Libya, followed by NATO’s military involvement, and the consequent fall of Gaddafi’s regime, had a crucial role to play. After losing the war in Libya, hundreds of Malian mercenaries, many of whom had been recruited from former Tuareg rebels, returned “home” to the north of Mali. They brought with them an arsenal of weapons, ammunition and fighting experience, and were confronted with the realities of living on the economic, political and social margins of a weak and corrupt state—a state that had been hailed as a development “success” by many in the West

2.3 These soldiers from Libya played a key role in the formation of the largely Tuareg-led secular MNLA (Azawad National Liberation Movement), which in a matter of months, took over several key towns in the north of Mali, declaring an independent Azawad state.

2.4 The situation in the north led to widespread frustration within the military over the government’s incompetence or unwillingness to deal with the issue and reclaim their territory. Ultimately, it led to the April 2012 military coup by Capt. Amadou Sanogo against Mali’s elected government and President. Interestingly enough, Capt. Sanogo himself had received extensive training by the USA as part of the roughly US\$520–600 million spent by the US government in the region, of which the majority went to efforts to train militaries to combat Islamic militancy.¹¹⁰

2.5 The actions of the separatist MNLA group and the consequent military coup, and inability of the Malian government and military forces to control the situation, led to a violent conflict in Mali’s north which includes several key actors such as MNLA, AQIM (Al-Qaida of the Islamic Maghreb), Ansar Dine and MUJAO (Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa), as well as numerous splinter groups and ethnic militias.

2.6 The UK’s strategy to fight extremism and political instability needs to, among other things:

- Understand the international links that make it possible for terrorist groups to receive financial support.
- Help increase and provide economic opportunities for the majority of populations living on the margins.

2.7 The rise of Islamism in the West and North African region is not solely, perhaps not even mainly, linked to religious fundamentalism. Increasingly, networks such as AQIM and Boko Haram tap into social grievances and present themselves as champions of mainstream causes such as unemployment, health care and education, in order to attract followers.

2.8 In order to effectively fight extremism and political instability, the UK must seriously help governments in the region to develop strong political institutions and offer social and economic opportunities to their citizens.

3. THE TUAREG REBELLION AND THE PATHS NOT TAKEN

3.1 The formation of the Tuareg-led MNLA movement and its desire for an independent Azawad state has deep roots and a history going back to the first Tuareg rebellions (in Mali and Niger) of 1960s. Tuaregs led significant armed struggle and resistant movements against colonisation by the French and later the central government.

3.2 Long-term sustainable security and stability for Mali will not be possible without seriously addressing the long-standing and deep-seated grievances that stem from the marginalisation of the northern territories and their peoples. With the effects of climate change, increasing desertification and the government’s reluctance to implement meaningful development programmes, Tuareg and other nomadic communities, as well as agriculturalists, see no viable future and feel abandoned by the state.

3.3 Grievances also stem from past brutal repressions of Tuareg movements, as well as the state’s failure to adhere to the promises of former peace agreements between rebels and the government (increased autonomy, political representation and economic development of marginalised communities). Even after the Tuareg rebellions of the early to mid-1990s, the Malian government still remained unwilling or unable to implement the education programmes and development projects that were promised and are necessary to alleviate poverty and a deep sense of disenfranchisement in the north.

¹¹⁰ Adam Nossiter, Eric Schmitt and Mark Mazzetti, “French Strikes in Mali Supplant Caution of U.S.”, New York Times, 13 January 2013, available at: < <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/14/world/africa/french-jets-strike-deep-inside-islamist-held-mali.html?ref=europe>>. see also Walter Pincus, “Mali Insurgency Followed 10 Years of U.S. Counterterrorism Programs”, Washington Post, 17 January 2013, available at: < http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/mali-insurgency-followed-10-years-of-us-counterterrorism-programs/2013/01/16/a43f2d32-601e-11e2-a389-ee565c81c565_story.html>.

3.4 It would have been wise for the central government in Bamako to negotiate and come to an agreement with the MNLA at the early stages of the current crisis. Both Burkina Faso and Algeria, as well as other West African countries, pushed for a diplomatic solution to the Malian crisis instead of military intervention.

3.5 We welcome the recent decision by the Malian transitional government to establish a national commission for dialogue and reconciliation. The UK should support all efforts and activities that build trust between the stakeholders (government, military, armed and marginalised groups) in order for the dialogue to be successful.

3.6 The UK needs to:

- Support sustained efforts of institution and capacity building at the state and regional level
- Invest in the development of education and health initiatives
- Assist Mali in developing and implementing economic development plans
- Encourage political processes that are inclusive of historically marginalised groups

3.7 The UK should lead by example and support conflict prevention methods rather than military intervention. While military intervention may seem expedient in the short-term, over the longer-term, it is highly unlikely to be an effective way of achieving our stated aims of ensuring Mali does not become a haven for criminality and terrorism.

4. LESSONS LEARNED: BALANCING PREVENTION AND REACTION

4.1 The central lesson of the western interventions and small-scale military operations (including Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia and elsewhere) of the post-9–11 era, has been that reacting to the symptoms of insecurity once they are deeply manifested is a fundamentally flawed strategy for global security. This means that in Mali for example, a serious commitment to assisting the Malian government to go much further in addressing the marginalisation of the north will be crucial.

4.2 During the Chilcott Inquiry, Lieutenant General Sir Robert Fry (Deputy Chief of Joint Operations 2002–3) was asked about the kind of warnings about blowback to the military occupation in Iraq that were being considered in the run-up to the invasion. Sir Robert Answered that:

4.3 “We thought we would be talking about the immediate outcome of battle—so displaced people, no water supplies, lots of casualties, these sorts of things that might be a significant challenge but would be non-enduring. What we didn’t see was the—you know, these huge tectonic political events that subsequently took place. And I think that one of the most egregious mistakes of the entire enterprise was not seeing that that would happen.”¹¹¹

4.4 Not only did we fail to anticipate and plan for the potential blowback of the military campaign in Iraq, even when faced with such a situation, the major focus of the UK’s response was to meet force with force. As Sir John Sawers (who was at the time the UK government’s Special Representative in Baghdad) told the Inquiry:

4.5 “In the months after the fall of Saddam, we saw the re-emergence of former elements of the regime, Ba’athist groups, former members of the special forces and so on, who started to organise and cause difficulties. We saw, with the assassination of Sergio de Mello, the arrival of Al-Qaeda in Iraq and their growing presence... both the former regime elements and the Jihadists under the broad umbrella of Al-Qaeda... were becoming more potent, more violent and it was sometimes difficult to tell which was responsible for which atrocity or which attack, but they were both clearly present.

4.6 And on the Shia side there was also growing militia capability led primarily by supporters of Moqtadr Al Sadr... So we saw these three various elements combining to aggravate and worsen the security situation, and our response to that was a series of military steps... to accelerate and achieve a higher level of Iraqi security capability, primarily in the army but also in the police and other agencies.”¹¹²

4.7 The problem with placing overwhelming emphasis on the use of military force in responding to insurgency and political violence is that the presence of troops introduces certain cultures and logics. One of the most comprehensive and honest reflections of the UK’s recent experience in responding to extremist violence in Iraq and Afghanistan is Frank Ledwidge’s 2011 book *Losing Small Wars*. In the book Ledwidge, an experienced military intelligence officer who has served in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan, observes that:

4.8 “There is also a more rarely mentioned cultural issue: soldiers want to fight. This is in no way palatable to the cosseted civilian, but the bare reality is that fighting and killing is what infantrymen do. Young men join the army for action and, as in any contentious profession, generally speaking they feel a great desire to test themselves against opponents.”¹¹³

¹¹¹ Lt Gen Sir Robert Fry, Evidence to The Iraq Inquiry, London, 16 December 2009, transcript available at: <<http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/41894/20091216amfry-final.pdf>>, p.53

¹¹² Sir John Sawers, Evidence to The Iraq Inquiry, London, 16 December 2009, transcript available at: <<http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/45005/20091216pm-sheinwald-sawers-bowen2-final.pdf>>, pp.36–37

¹¹³ Frank Ledwidge, *Losing Small Wars: British Military Failure in Iraq and Afghanistan*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, p. 180.

4.9 Ledwidge makes the crucial point that “In an environment that requires finesse and judgement, and sometimes where “doing nothing” is, in every possible sense of the word, the most courageous option, the prevailing ethos of the army remains one of combat, and the prevailing culture remains aggressive and “decisive”, with the concept of “cracking on” at its core.”¹¹⁴

4.10 The importance of this lesson from Afghanistan and Iraq for the Committee’s inquiry is that it raises the question of how far a military-focused approach to extremism and political instability in North and West Africa is likely to create more problems than it will solve. Currently the UK is focusing on a “tough security response” with specific efforts including:

- Assisting French efforts through logistical and surveillance support and the sharing of intelligence.
- Support to the European Union Training Mission in Mali, which launched on 18 February 2013. The UK will deploy an infantry team and a mortar and artillery team to train the Malian Armed Forces.
- Support to English speaking AFISMA (African-led International Support Mission to Mali) nations. The UK has provided logistical support to enable a Ghanaian company to deploy to Bamako, and are using UK air assets to assist the Nigerians.
- The UK has pledged £5 million to two new UN funds to support the strengthening of security in Mali. £3 million of this would be directed to AFISMA and £2 million to activity in Mali that would help support political processes and build stability.¹¹⁵

4.11 This is also matched by an impressive aid commitment including assistance to refugees and IDPs and providing emergency healthcare.¹¹⁶ However all of this is still fundamentally reacting to a crisis. What is now needed is a similarly detailed plan on how the UK aims to support “an effective, inclusive and sustainable political process that leads towards elections and the restoration of full democratic rule in Mali.”¹¹⁷ While the rhetoric is encouraging, there appears to be little in the way of concrete evidence as to how the UK intends to back people “in their search for a job and a voice” and work “to resolve long-standing grievances.”¹¹⁸ We encourage the Committee to seek clarification from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on precisely how the “tough security response” is being “matched by an intelligent political response.”¹¹⁹

4.12 Conflict prevention is not done with battalions of troops or armed drones hovering in the sky but with diplomacy, development and building sustainable political institutions. One of the central reasons the Islamist rebels in Mali were able to make the gains that they did is that early on they joined with the ethnic Tuareg separatists who were fighting the Malian government after years of neglect and marginalisation.¹²⁰ While many Tuaregs subsequently split with the Islamists, it was by then too late and AQIM, Ansar Dine and others were able to make considerable gains. The education, economic and social investments in the Tuareg communities of the north were not made by the Malian government or its Western backers. Instead the serious resources were channelled into the Malian army (some of who ended up defecting to the Islamist rebels). As a recent report by International Alert has pointed out, “the governance deficits in Mali were overlooked over time by the international community and corruption and inequitable economic development were not sufficiently challenged. This is partly because Mali ostensibly provided an African example of somewhat successful democratisation and at the same time showed good aid absorption—factors which made Mali a so-called “donor-darling.” In addition, security interests pushed by the international community to a large extent distorted and drove the Malian government’s approaches in the north following 9/11.”¹²¹ In terms of anything other than rhetoric, there appears to be little appreciation of the need to reflect carefully on the role of outside forces in relation to Mali’s recent history and what the lessons are for our approach to the North and West Africa more generally.

4.13 While bringing to justice the leaders of terrorist groups may be a legitimate tactic, the longer-term strategy must be to remove the incentives to join such groups in the first place. From Mali to Nigeria to Somalia to Zanzibar, the al-Qaeda franchise still holds considerable appeal to a cohort of angry young men. Ignoring the reasons why this is so failed in Afghanistan and Iraq, is still failing in parts of Pakistan, Yemen and Syria and it will undoubtedly fail in Africa.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

¹¹⁵ Ministry of Defence, “Top Level Messages April 2013”, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/183382/tlm_april2013.pdf>, p. 4.

¹¹⁶ See Department for International Development, “Overview of UK Aid for the Crisis in Mali and the Sahel Region”, 18 February 2013, available at: <<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/overview-of-uk-aid-for-the-crisis-in-mali-and-the-sahel-region>>.

¹¹⁷ Ministry of Defence, “Top Level Messages April 2013”, p. 4.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ As Peter Pham from the Atlantic Council has observed, “it must be recognised that the Malian crisis has its roots in politics, or rather, the failure of politics... A military intervention that shores up the current Malian regime without pushing it to focus on moving towards a restoration of constitutional order will be very limited in what it can achieve.” J. Peter Pham, “Mali: No Way to Go to a War Going Nowhere”, *The Atlanticist*, 14 January 2013, available at: <http://www.acus.org/new_atlanticist/mali-no-way-go-war-going-nowhere>.

¹²¹ Katrine Høye, “Crisis in Mali: A Peacebuilding Approach”, *Peace Focus* March 2013, London: International Alert, available at: <http://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/publications/Mali_2013_PeaceFocus_EN.pdf>, p. 3.

4.14 If the intervention in Mali really is the beginning of the next chapter in the “war on terror” it is time for a radically different approach to political violence if we are to avoid repeating the failures of the last eleven years.

30 April 2013

Written evidence from Dr Oz Hassan & Dr Elizabeth Iskander Monier, Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Warwick

SUMMARY

1. The Arab Partnership, the UK government’s long-term strategic response to the Arab Spring, is problematic in its conception and programme activity, and is both unlikely to secure UK interests or have a lasting impact on the region if it is not enhanced.

2. Democracy promotion initiatives must be credible by being seen as unbiased and as tailored to the needs of each specific state. Any initiatives that are perceived as serving external interests will be counter-productive. The UK position should be strong and clear in order to achieve respect and therefore impact.

3. The Arab Partnership needs to connect multilaterally beyond the G8 Deauville Partnership and supplement it with a digitised strategy. This would allow it to better follow lessons learned over the last decade of US democracy promotion through initiatives such as *the Forum for the Future* and web 2.0 *movemnets.org*.

4. Religious extremism is first and foremost a domestic challenge for Middle Eastern states but as diasporas grow and electronic media develops and becomes more accessible, the influence of extremism is becoming less and less tied to borders or even to formal networks.

5. Adopting a more multilateral and digital strategy would not only align UK policy more closely with the “smart power” of our transatlantic partners, but would offer the UK better value for money, allow a more sustainable strategy to emerge, prove to be more effective at the regional and domestic level, and therefore allow UK policy to secure its goals of promoting long-term positive change in the region.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

6. Dr Oz Hassan is an Assistant Professor in The University of Warwick’s Politics and International Studies Department. He is author of the monograph *America’s Freedom Agenda for the Middle East and North Africa*, and numerous articles of US and EU policy towards the MENA region. He is currently working on the ESRC funded Future Research Leaders project *Transatlantic Interests and Democratic Possibility in a Transforming Middle East*, and is part of the Compagnia di San Paolo funded *EUSPRING project* looking at how US and EU democracy promotion strategies address differing conceptions of citizenship in North Africa. He has interviewed hundreds of NGOs about receiving foreign programme assistance and witnessed first hand events in Tahrir Square 2011. He is also a visiting scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and a British Council Fellow at the Library of Congress in Washington DC.

7. Dr Elizabeth Iskander Monier is a Research Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation at Warwick University where she researches Middle East politics and society and an Associate Research Fellow at the German Institute for Global and Area Studies. She specialises in Egyptian affairs and identity politics in the Middle East. She writes for political risk organisations, the media and academic journals and has published a book on sectarianism in Egypt.

INFORMATION FOR THE COMMITTEE

8. Religious extremism does not emerge only from contemporary socio-political circumstances or from a single set of causes. Factors which influence the development of the succession of extremist movements include religious, social, political and economic factors, intersected by local, regional and international events. All of this contributes to the complexity of the problem and belies the development of a one-size-fits-all solution. Solutions must be locally developed and implemented.

9. Religious extremism is an entrenched problem because religion has been a tool of, and a motivation for, political movements and conflicts for centuries. The involvement of social and religious reform movements in political change have a strong tradition, for example the Wahhabi movement that originated in Saudi Arabia in the eighteenth century began as a revivalist movement with a specific vision for reforming religious practices. It became a movement that shaped the development of a state and an ideology that affects the region, and indeed the world. In the absence of a strong and authentic secular framework for social and political activism, religious symbolism and ideology is the go-to language for movements that seek to address local social and political problems.

10. Regardless of whether these movements adopt violent methods to pursue their cause, conservative and extreme religious movements are by their nature exclusive; they clearly define an “us” and a “them”. Such simplification of “right” and “wrong” and an “us” and “them”, as well as the potentially strong sense of

belonging to a community and to a cause imbued with religious legitimacy, can all become attractive in times of political upheaval and socio-economic difficulty.

11. The power of religious extremism then comes from three sources. First the strength of religious symbolism, which holds out both legitimate purpose and strong belonging to a community not limited to the local but linked to a transnational network. Both of these aspects offer an individual a clear identity and security in belonging.

12. Second, religious extremism comes from the lack of strong political alternatives. The idea that secularism is anti-Islamic is very strong and often leads to an automatic rejection of new political models. The challenge is to create an alternative political discourse that is authentic but at the same time inclusive. Many in the region point to the Turkish model and the enthusiasm for this model was evident in the reception received by Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan from the Egyptian public on a visit to Cairo in September 2011. However, Erdogan's subsequent emphasis on secularism as key to the Turkish model led to a lessening in enthusiasm among the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.

13. Third, the power of religious extremists feeds on poverty, ignorance and illiteracy. While those in higher ranks in extremist movements can come from diverse backgrounds are often motivated by ideology and the desire to change society according to the specific vision espoused by that ideology, the "masses" that support such movements, whether actively or passively, often do so for a combination of social and economic reasons and/or loyalty to a sense of religious belonging which appears to be threatened by "others" or outsiders.

14. Although counter-intuitive, giving radical religious groups access to political spaces can expose and fragment them. However, given that it is often easier to oppose the political process, than be part of it, bringing them into the legitimate political system can be problematic. In cases where bringing them into the political system has been successful, dissatisfaction with Islamist groups has reduced their popular political support among the public. For example, in Egypt, the Salafist bloc and even the Muslim Brotherhood have faced increasing challenges from their former constituencies. Similarly, the July 2012 election results in Libya indicate that given the hope of a robust political system, religious groups will become less attractive and less trusted to provide the democratic reforms demanded by many revolutionaries.

15. Radical religious groups should be welcomed and assisted within the new political spaces to naturalise them within emerging democracies. However, extremist groups that resort to violence should not be, as without giving up arms they fail to play within the democratic "rules of the game". Within such a context disarmament and counter-radicalisation strategies should be adopted, whilst also seeking to construct a milieu where broader civil society organisations oppose and are willing to tackle such groups. Such a strategy proved effective in 1997, after the Luxor massacre of tourists. Egyptian society as a whole turned against the radical Islamist groups such as *al-Jamiah al-Islamiyah* because of the devastating impact on tourism and therefore the livelihoods of a large number of Egyptians. This contributed to the state's ability to eventually overcome these groups.

16. Trans-regional extremist organisations, such as Al Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM), represent a more distinct threat than state based extremist groups. Such groups have taken advantage of weak states, and growing power vacuums left by the 2011 revolutions, and have the ability to cross ill-protected borders and target Western interests. Within such circumstances there is a direct need for the UK government to support regional security governance and regional command structures akin to those originally conceived under the 2009 Tamanrasset Framework between Algeria, Mali, Niger, Mauritania and, with the intent of expanding the agreement, Libya. This had the specific remit of tackling the growing threat of regional terrorism and specifically AQIM, by disrupting terrorist logistics, training and supply bases along borders. The 2011 revolutions have stymied such a strategy leaving a regional security vacuum that the UK government should seek to repair.

17. Whilst the 2011 revolutions represent a challenge to UK interests in North Africa, they also represent an opportunity that has been poorly seized by the establishment of the Arab Partnership fund. This fund was initially conceived to be a UK version of the United States initiated Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), but failed to be placed with in the same strategy adopted by the US, and shares many of the problems that MEPI has sort to overcome. Research with numerous foreign assistance fund recipients in the region have highlighted problems of access, problems with continuity of funds once projects have ended, and in many interviews with recipients there is a self-declared rejection of the aims that the fund is supposed to support and the activities being undertaken. As an example of a recurrent tend, when interviewing one recipient they were asked about the prospects of the grant aiding democracy and helping sustainable economic growth, and the interviewers were met with bafflement and a response of "that's not really what we do here".

18. Evidently, the North African region is struggling with developing new solutions to regional and national conflict, create functioning economies that meet the needs of their young demographics, and develop authentic democratic cultures. However, with the UK government committing only £110 million to the Arab Partnership fund from 2011–2015, it is unlikely that this will have any significant and sustainable impact. Within such circumstances the UK should look to supplement this by helping to reinforce dialogue and interregional connections. Powerful examples of such practice already exist in the *Forum for the Future*.

19. In tandem with ensuring domestic stability and security against the possibility of violent tactics undertaken by extremists, the solution to extremism must be recognised as being long-term. Cultural and educational solutions are important in supporting any political and legal reforms that aim to establish social justice, the rule of law and equality. This can be achieved through supporting the education system, discourse transformation through the media and by supporting the growth of a strong civil society.

20. It is crucial to maintain comprehensive initiatives that prioritise democracy and the rule of law. Any initiatives or policies that seek to emphasise the importance of democratic principles must be seen as credible in order to have an impact and to enhance the soft power of the UK in the region. If a policy is seen as biased or as supporting the interests of the UK and not the local interests, this will have the opposite impact and not only de-legitimise the UK's status but also weaken those working internally to promote authentic and inclusive democratic culture.

21. There is a strong case to be made for increasingly "digitizing" the UK strategy. This has been a strategy adopted, with some success, by the Obama administration as part of Secretary Clinton's "smart power" strategy. Focusing on establishing virtual sites such as *movements.org* has proved effective because users regard it as a "less colonial approach" to foreign assistance, whilst it builds regional and global connections for promoting best practice. Moreover, there is a level of self-empowerment by spreading skills that promote open dialogue and independence. Such "How-to guides" include: *How to Protect your Security in Cyber Cafes*; *How to use Facebook/Twitter App for your activism Campaign*; *Use Facebook to raise Money*; *How to Organise and Communicate a Non-Violent Protest Using the Protest4 App*; *How to Use Blackberry Messaging (BBM) to organise nonviolent Action*; *Creating Grassroots Movements for Change: A Field Manual* and *How to Bypass Internet Censorship* amongst others. *Movements.org* currently has sponsorship from organisations such as Pepsi, MTV, YouTube and Facebook, not only making it more appealing but lowering the cost of running the site.

22. Part of this digital strategy should also be to promote the use of Mass Online Open Courses (MOOCs). A significant failure in North Africa is the lack of education and production of vital skills amongst the regions young demographic. Such a strategy, although not a substitute for university education and the benefits this provides, could help contribute to the cultivation of a more educated milieu in the region. This in turn could be supported by exchange programmes, which have proved a successful feature of MEPI. Such a strategy in and of itself does not solve the regions problems, but it should be aimed at cultivating an international class that the UK can engage with.

23. Within the context of any digitised strategy it must be recognised that religious extremism is first and foremost a local problem that must be tackled through the regions education system, the mosque and the media. However, with increasing numbers of extremists turning to sources online to feed their ideology, the UK can ill afford to leave cyber-space as a locale for radicalisation in North Africa or domestically. As diasporas grow and electronic media develops and becomes more accessible, the influence of extremism is becoming less tied to borders or even to formal networks, which leads to the conclusion that extremism in North Africa today has the potential to challenge UK interests at home and abroad in the future.

24. Enhancing the Arab Partnership recognises that tackling extremism is complex and requires long term solutions. While external actors can support local efforts, religious extremism within the region must be treated with solutions that emerge from the local contexts. As such, a more empowering approach needs to be adopted, which overcomes the problems local recipients of funds highlight and contributes to helping individuals strengthen their own civil societies in the region. In turn, regional governments need to be pushed to allow these political spaces to open up, encouraging a more inclusive political system that gives citizens a sense of agency, adopt laws that guarantee equality to all, regardless of religious faith, and enforce them justly. A litmus test for this is whether the inequalities on the basis of religion in legislation, as well as the unofficial ways that minorities suffer unequal treatment, can be eradicated and whether there is indeed the will to do this.

SUMMARY

25. The issues of democracy, rule of law and tackling extremism are interconnected and the solutions must also be interconnected. Including civil society partners along with judicial and political actors from all parts of the political spectrum would help to ensure that solutions emerge from, and are directed to, society as a whole. The UK must be clear, firm and consistent in its policies on these issues if it is to secure soft power in the region. The UK can support these goals but they are only realistically achievable in the long term and by the regional states themselves.

26. The UK should seek to rebuild regional security governance structures that have been disrupted by the revolutions of 2011, if it is to tackle the growing threat of AQIM and disrupt terrorist logistics, training and supply bases along North African borders.

27. The UK needs to enhance the Arab Partnership to contribute to what funding recipients believe is a "less colonial approach" to foreign policy. Digital technology is proving to be one particular method of this, along with increasing space for open dialogue and partnership. Within such a context, the democracy assistance lessons, learned by the US over the past decade of engagement in the region provide an excellent platform that the UK government can appropriate and build upon. Such an approach may not only prove more effective on

the ground at contributing to our long term aims, but represents a relatively low cost-high value approach in a time of austerity.

30 April 2013
