

External Interests in West Africa

Martin Pabst

The sub-region of West Africa has many resources to offer. The vast array of resources include items such as agricultural products, tropical wood, fish, gold, diamonds, copper, iron ore, tin, phosphates, bauxite, limestone, uranium ore, oil, and natural gas. Guinea is the world's third largest producer of bauxite, Niger is the fourth largest producer of uranium ore (with the second largest reserves), and Ghana is the eighth largest producer of diamonds and the ninth largest producer of gold.¹ In the African continent alone there is estimated to be 9.4% of the world's oil reserves, Nigeria shares 3% and ranks eleventh in the world's oil production. Furthermore, 7.8% of the world's natural gas reserves are estimated to be in Africa (Nigeria has a total share of 2.8%).² The concentrated zones of oil and natural gas are in the Gulf of Guinea and North Africa.

It is no wonder the sub-region was integrated into the emerging global economy as early as the 15th century. The Sub-Saharan sub-region has the longest tradition of contact with Europe and America. Ancient European names point to ruthless exploitation, such as; Pepper Coast (modern Liberia), Ivory Coast, Gold Coast (modern Ghana), and the Slave Coast (modern Togo, Benin, Western Nigeria). The so-called triangular trade between Europe, America and Africa produced high profits up until the 19th century. Ships transported guns, gunpowder, iron, liquor, textiles and knickknacks from Europe to West Africa. From West Africa, slaves, gold and ivory were sent to America. And tropical products

¹ Der Fischer Weltalmanach 2006. Zahlen. Daten. Fakten, Frankfurt a.M. 2005, p. 628-9, 656 (reference year 2003).

² British Petroleum: Putting energy in the spotlight: BP Statistical Review of World Energy June 2005, p. 4, 6, 20 (reference year 2004).

like rum and sugar together with African products were shipped to Europe.³

The Europeans first came to Africa as traders, hunters, and missionaries, over the course of time they became colonial masters. The dominating powers in West Africa were Portugal, Great Britain and France.

Colonial Penetration of West and Central Africa⁴

Portugal	1445 Arguin Island (off the Mauritanian coast) 1460 Cape Verde Islands 1482 El Mina (Ghana) 1485 São Tomé and Príncipe Islands
Netherlands Kurland Sweden Denmark Brandenburg-Prussia	17th century – temporarily
Great Britain	1661 Gambia 1787 Sierra Leone 1861 Lagos (Nigeria)
France	1659 St. Louis (Senegal) 1849 Libreville (Gabon) 1893 Ivory Coast
Spain	1778 Fernando Poo (Equatorial Guinea)
(USA)	1822 Liberia (independence 1847)
Germany	1884 Togo (until 1918) 1884 Cameroon (until 1918)

³ Joseph Ki-Zerbo, *Die Geschichte Schwarz-Afrikas*, Wuppertal²1981, p. 217-227.

⁴ Dates according to John Iliffe, *Geschichte Afrikas*, Munich 1995; date referring to Fernando Po according to J. D. Fage with William Tordoff, *A History of Africa*, London/New York⁴2002, p. 347-8; dates referring to Cape Coast and date referring to Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe according to Roderich Ptak, ed., *Portugals Wirken in Übersee: Atlantik, Afrika, Asien*, Bammental/Heidelberg 1985, p. 61, 78.

After the decolonisation of West Africa (1957-75), former colonial powers such as France and Great Britain still commanded considerable influence, Portugal and Spain also, yet to a lesser degree. Recently the influential forces have been joined by the United States of America. Today's external interests are not much different from the colonial and pre-colonial era: resources and markets, strategic considerations, crime prevention, and humanitarian goals.

Exploitation remains the driving force for external powers. Products like tropical wood, fruit or gold are still in demand. World attention, however, has shifted to oil and natural gas. The West African emerging economies like Nigeria and the Ivory Coast have become profitable markets and zones of investment. New external players like China, India, Malaysia and Brazil are now competing with the traditional actors.

In the past external strategic interests focused on the control of naval bases along the sea route to India via the Cape of Good Hope, for the protection of trade routes into central Africa, and on territorial extension of national influence. Today the United States seeks to control land, sea, space and information, in their global fight against terrorism. The European Union faces the additional problem of illegal immigration from West Africa to Europe. The number of immigrants trying to reach the EU has dramatically increased, for example in Morocco the quantity of immigrants has risen from 2,000 persons in 2000 to more than 20,000 in 2005.⁵ Illegal immigration is handled by criminal networks that have long experience in smuggling activities. Both the US and the EU are interested in the political and socio-economic stabilisation of West Africa. This aim, however, cannot be achieved by colonial administration any more, it can only be achieved by interaction with politically independent states. Economic dependence is used as an instrument to enforce strategic interests.

Crime prevention remains a priority for external powers in West Africa. Mother countries have the obligation to protect their citizens worldwide.

⁵ Reuters AlertNet, Africa, EU urged to cooperate to stem migration, 21 Jan 2006, <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L11341135.htm> (14 March 2006).

16,000 Europeans (most of them UK citizens) are living in Nigeria.⁶ Before the outbreak of the civil war in 2002 more than 20,000 French citizens were living in Ivory Coast, controlling many of the utility businesses including, electricity, water and telecommunications. The sub-region has always been noted for piracy, robbery and high-jacking. Piracy, sabotage and oil theft are estimated to drain one to four billion USD out of West African oil production per year.⁷ A country like Nigeria can be a hub of organised international crime (money laundering; trafficking of arms, illegal drugs and human beings).

The pursuit of humanitarian goals has a long tradition in West Africa. The slave trade was admittedly not a humanitarian endeavour; however in the first half of the 19th century well organised antislavery movements were founded in England and North America which put pressure on their respective governments to act against slavery and slave-trade. They were predecessors of modern Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO). The spread of the Christian belief and the fight against hunger, poverty and disease were other humanitarian goals of the colonial era that are still pursued by multilateral organisations, governments, churches and NGOs. The example of the antislavery movement shows that humanitarian concerns cannot be clearly separated from economic concerns: Slavery and the slave trade became obstacles to the industrialised market economy and were abolished not only because of humanitarian concerns but also because of economic concerns.

External interests are imposed by force, blackmail, negotiation, persuasion, co-option, and inducement. The actors are not only governments, but also multinational and national companies, organisations and individuals. This paper focuses on national interests of these actors, in particular France and the US.

As it is indicated by more than two dozen military interventions in West and Central Africa (1960-2006), France still plays a dominant role in her

⁶ Der Fischer Weltalmanach (see note 1), p. 338.

⁷ International Crisis Group, Islamist terrorism in the Sahel: Fact of Fiction?, Africa Report No. 92, Brussels, 31.3.2005, p. 26.

“*pré carré*” (front yard).⁸ By comparison: the UK intervened only once, namely in Sierra Leone from 2000-02.

West and Central Africa once formed the centre of French colonial possessions. The special political, economic and military relationship with this sub-region serves to legitimise the claim to remain one of the world’s great powers. A powerful “Africa lobby” looks after its interests in French government policy. Furthermore, tens of thousands of French citizens living in West Africa have to be protected. Recent threats have focussed the attention even more on this sub-region: the threat of illegal immigration to Europe, the threat of global terrorism and militant Islam.

The United Kingdom (UK) has considerable economic stakes especially in Nigeria, Ghana and Sierra Leone. Furthermore there are close cultural links with English-speaking West African countries. However, West Africa was not the political or economic centre of the former British Empire. The strategic importance of West Africa as part of the sea route to India decreased with the end of British rule in India (1947). The UK is also less affected by illegal trans-Sahara immigration than continental countries like France, Spain and Italy are. After decolonisation West Africa became a second priority in UK foreign politics. Relations predominantly fall into an extra-political sphere and are dealt with by companies, churches and NGO’s. There are no UK military bases in the sub-region. UK policy towards West Africa tends to be more multilateral than the French policy.

With the Labour victory in 1997, a humanitarian dimension was included into UK foreign policy. Sub-Saharan Africa received more significance than ever before. The UK pursues a multidimensional approach in close cooperation with its allies, the EU, the UN and the World Bank. In 1997 the Overseas Development Administration (ODA) was replaced by the Department for International Development (DFID),

⁸ Victor T. Le Vine: *Politics in Francophone Africa*, London 2004, p. 380-1; Shaun Gregory: *The French Military in Africa: Past and Present*, *African Affairs* (2000) 99, pp. 437. It was tried to eliminate discrepancies between these two sources by consulting further sources.

headed by a state-secretary. In 2001 the “Africa Conflict Prevention Pool” (ACPP) was established to bring a holistic approach to conflict prevention and resolution. The UK supports African peacekeeping missions, training for peace support operations, building of institutions, regional conflict management capacity through ECOWAS and security sector reform.⁹ During the presidency of the G8 group in 2005, Prime Minister Tony Blair tried to secure a deal for increased aid for Sub-Saharan Africa, but he failed to extract significant concessions from Japan and the US. The focus on Africa enables the British foreign policy a profile independent of its partner USA. Strategic and commercial objectives are brought in by Prime Minister Tony Blair and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.¹⁰

The Commonwealth of Nations serves as a common bond between the UK and West African countries. English speaking Commonwealth countries like Canada are also present in the sub-region, which makes former British colonies less dependent on London.

The US share historic and economic links with Liberia. However in the past West Africa did not play a significant role in US strategy. Only recently the sub-region has become an emerging priority. The Gulf of Guinea with its huge oil and natural gas reserves has been identified as an alternative supplier of oil and natural gas. West Africa, a region full of disease, war, poverty, corruption, mismanagement, authoritarian regimes and organised crime, furthermore a region with a considerable Muslim population, could become a breeding ground or “safe haven” for terrorism if it is not stabilised. The US have therefore developed various assistance programs in the economic, political and military field and are negotiating “access points” for quick military reaction in emergencies. US industry is placing considerable investments mainly in the energy sector in West Africa.

⁹ Africa Conflict Prevention Pool, The UK Sub-Saharan Strategy for Conflict Prevention, <http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/UK%20Sub-Saharan%20Strategy%20for%20Conflict%20Prevention.pdf> (14 March 2006).

¹⁰ Tom Porteous, British government policy in sub-Saharan Africa under New Labour, *International Affairs* 81 (2005) 2, p. 281-298.

Russia had strong ties with West African states in the cold war, especially with Benin, Guinea and the Republic of Congo. In the Gorbachev and Jeltsin era the Russian engagement in the African continent was downscaled. There are indications of change under the rule of Vladimir Putin. When Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov took over office in 2001, he pledged to revive relations with Africa.¹¹ Recent years have seen a growth in the number of delegations. The “Russian University of Peoples Friendship” in Moscow continues to educate students from African countries. Russian Africa policy is characterised by reluctance to Western initiated programs like NEPAD. It tends to follow a strategy of “selective diplomacy”; high levels of trade and economic relations with low priority African countries. Russian arms exports to West Africa are increasing, but generally speaking, the Russian business community does not show much interest in Africa.

Competing external actors like China, India, Malaysia, Brazil, and Venezuela are emerging. China can build on historic relations with a number of African countries dating back to the 1960s.¹² China-Africa trade reached 35 billion USD in 2005, after growth rates of more than 50 percent in 2003/04. In West Africa the state-owned *China National Offshore Oil Corporation* (CNOOC) is active in Angola, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Nigeria. China imports strategic resources like oil, natural gas, and minerals as well as wood from the sub-region, while they export manufactured goods to West Africa. 28 percent of China’s total oil imports came from the African continent in 2005, mostly from Sudan, Angola, the Republic of Congo, and Nigeria. Considerable investment was placed in West Africa, and Chinese businessmen are visible in a number of countries. The Chinese policy follows the strategy “political power by economic strength”. China looks for alternative partners to the Western world, which lend support in international bodies.

¹¹ Russia Pledges to Revive Relations with Africa, People’s Daily Online, 20 Dec 2001, http://english.people.com.cn/200112/20/eng20011220_87095.shtml

¹² Denis M. Tull, *Die Afrikapolitik der Volksrepublik China*, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik: SWP-Studie S 20, Berlin, August 2005; David L. Goldwyn and J. Stephen Morrison, *A Strategic U.S. Approach to Governance and Security: A Report of the CSIS Task Force on Gulf of Guinea Security*, July 2005, p. 25-27 (CSIS = Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington D.C.).

Peking accepts authoritarian regimes in Africa and does not hesitate to promote anti-Western solidarity. This policy may trigger conflicts with the US and the European Union in the future. Although China did not involve itself militarily in West Africa yet, it is an active arms exporter to the sub-region and shows a growing presence in peace-keeping operations.

In the 1970s Brazil started to place importance on establishing relations with African countries after it was hard hit by the oil crisis.¹³ It imported oil from West African countries which in exchange bought Brazilian manufactured goods. Between 1972 and 1974, Brazilian exports to Africa increased fivefold, while Brazilian imports increased fourfold. Until the 1990s the Brazilian government granted privileges to undertakings on the African market. Brazil is well represented on the African continent by embassies, cultural institutes and research centres. It established close relations with the lusophone African Countries (Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe), bilaterally and through the “Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa” (CPLP; Community of lusophone countries; founded in 1996). In 2003, accompanied by more than 100 businessmen, Brazilian President Luiz Inacia Lula da Silva visited five African countries (Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, São Tomé and Príncipe, South Africa).

Venezuela launched a diplomatic African offensive in 2006.¹⁴ The South American oil producing country intends to open embassies in twelve African countries and to invest in oil operations there. It also announced plans to set up health and education projects in Africa together with Cuba, which had established close relations with several African countries in the Cold War including military interventions in Angola (1975-91) and Ethiopia (1977-89). Venezuela’s President Hugo Chavez is building South-South alliances against Western dominance and seeks African support for its bid to gain a seat on the UN Security Council.

¹³ Ivo de Santana, *Relações econômicas Brasil-África: a Câmara de Comércio Afro-Brasileira e a intermediação de negócios no mercado africano*, Estudos Afro-Asiáticos, Rio de Janeiro 25 (2003) 3, p. 517-555.

¹⁴ Greg Morsbach, *Venezuela pushes ties with Africa*, BBC News, 17.3.2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/4816478.stm> (18 March 2006).

In the following chapters the two main national actors France and USA will be discussed more specifically.

French Interests in West Africa

In 1960 most French colonies in Africa became formally independent. However a closely woven network of political, military, monetary, economic, social, cultural, linguistic, technical and personal links have remained in place.¹⁵ Defendants of « la Franceafrique » highlight the generous economic aid to Francophone Africa and its political stability. Critics like François-Xavier Verschave denounce the system as thinly disguised neo-colonialism.¹⁶

French policy towards Africa pursues political, economic and cultural objectives. Politically, the “special relationship” with its former African colonies – a euphemism for continuing hegemony – lends « grandeur » to France: “With Francophone Africa, France was always more than a middle-sized European state.” (Shaun Gregory)¹⁷ De Gaulle built France’s role as a post-war world power on three pillars: its hegemony over Francophone Africa, its strong ties with the Arab world and its independent nuclear arsenal. This explains why France has been reluctant to cooperate with the US or the UK in African affairs, although Paris now concedes the need of “complementary”¹⁸ policies. Economically, the French policy towards Africa seeks to maintain privileged post-colonial control on mineral and commercial interests. Culturally, West and Central Africa are cornerstones in the French policy to protect and promote the worldwide use of the French language. Moreover, cultural hegemony serves to reinforce African political and economic dependence on France. Francophile West African leaders like the Senegalese

¹⁵ V.T. Le Vine (see note 8); Philippe Vasset: *The Myth of Military Aid: The Case of French Military Cooperation in Africa*, SAIS Review, 17 (Summer-Fall 1997) 2, p. 165-180; S. Gregory (see note 8), p. 435-448.

¹⁶ François-Xavier Verschave: *La Françafrique*, Paris 1998.

¹⁷ S. Gregory (see note 8), p. 436.

¹⁸ Asteris C. Huliaras, *The ‘anglosaxon conspiracy’: French perceptions of the Great Lakes crisis*, *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 36 (1998) 4, p. 609.

President Léopold Sédar Senghor (« négritude ») and the Ivorian President Félix Houphouët-Boigny formulated and propagated concepts of Franco-African symbioses.

Political links include regular Franco-African summits and regular consultations on lower levels. As the example of Togo illustrates, France honours loyalty more than democratic standards. Important decisions on West and Central Africa are frequently taken by the French President himself without consultation of the responsible ministers. He relies on the Office of the President and informal channels like the « Réseau Foccard ». The late Jacques Foccard (Secretary-General for African and Malagasy affairs in the Elysee Palace from 1960-74) served State Presidents from Charles de Gaulle to Jacques Chirac as counsellor on Africa and established his private political-economic African network, excellent contacts with the diplomatic and intelligence sector included. An economic “Africa lobby” projects its interest on French policy towards Africa.

Personal links play an important role in the French relationship with its former colonies. In 1993 there were more French citizens living in Francophone Africa than before independence (about 100,000).¹⁹ They are working as teachers, officials, business-men, technicians, officers and advisors. Some of these expatriates belong to the influential group of « Messieurs Afrique », who mediate between local elites and metropolitan interests. An example of this would be in oil-rich Gabon where Foccard installed the « clan de Gabonais » who commanded the security forces and safeguarded French economic interests.²⁰ According to Philippe Leymarie, “ambassadors, acting more or less like secret agents in Chad, in the Central African Republic or in Gabon, virtually shaped these countries’ internal politics.”²¹ African elites have turned out willing partners. French policy takes advantage of a lack of African identity and a lack of interest of African leaders in their continent, which is pre-

¹⁹ George Ayittei: „Set Africa Free, France“, The Free Africa Foundation, <http://freeafrica.org/commentaries5.html>

²⁰ V. L. Le Vine (see note 8), p. 314.

²¹ quoted in V. L. Le Vine (see note 8), p. 345.

vailing in spite of Thabo Mbeki's call for an "African Renaissance" (1997) and the foundation of an "African Union" (2002).

In 1945 France established the « *Franc des Colonies Françaises d'Afrique* » (FCFA). The colonial abbreviation has remained until today, but now stands for « *Franc de la Communauté Financière Africaine* » in West Africa and « *Franc de la Coopération Financière en Afrique Centrale* » in Central Africa.²² The CFA Franc has a fixed rate compared to the Euro (formerly to the French Franc). This system allows free convertibility of the CFA Franc, almost free capital transfer and balance of payments guaranteed by the French treasury. Inflation has remained comparatively low in the *Zone Franc CFA*; inter-state trade grew higher than between Francophone and Anglophone West African countries. The arrangement, however, includes serious disadvantages for the African partners. Without a federal structure, the advantages of a monetary union are limited. The 14 member states of the *Zone Franc CFA*²³ have to accept a monetary policy dictated from outside. 65 percent of foreign exchange reserves of the CFA countries are deposited in the French treasury. Almost free capital transfer favours capital flight. West and Central Africa became privileged export markets for French companies, which were able to sell overpriced commodities there. Only the ruling African elites profited from the exchange rate when they went shopping in Europe with a comparatively strong Franc CFA. In 2000 four Anglophone West African countries (Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone) and Guinea agreed to establish a *West African Monetary Zone* (WAMZ); it is planned to introduce a common currency, the ECO, in 2009. Although the unification of both currencies is said to be a common goal, the monetary division will probably remain for a long time.

In 1994 France backed the inauguration of the *Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine* (UEMOA), now comprising Benin, Burkina

²² Dirk Kohnert, *Kooperation auf französisch: Was die frankophone westafrikanische Wirtschaft (noch) zusammenhält, der überblick* (2004) 1, p. 50-54.

²³ In 2006 member states were Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Republic of Congo, Equatorial-Guinea, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Togo. With Equatorial-Guinea and Guinea-Bissau, two non-Francophone states have joined.

Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo, with a central bank in Dakar. It replaced the two organisations *Union monétaire ouest-africaine* (UMOA; founded in 1962) and *Communauté économique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest* (CEAO; founded in 1973). The UEMOA promotes regional integration and development. This organisation is competing with the broader *Economic Community of West African States* (ECOWAS), which also includes the non-Francophone West African countries. The foundation of UEMOA aimed at bolstering Ivory Coast and Senegal at the expense of the regional powerhouse Nigeria. ECOWAS had to acknowledge UEMOA's role in the sub-region.

When ECOWAS was founded in 1975, the same rivalry had been in place.²⁴ Six Francophone West African countries (Benin, Ivory Coast, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal) joined ECOWAS, yet at the same time were also members of the competing economic community CEAO. The rules of both organisations were not fully compatible. CEAO initiatives were supported by France and supposed to counterbalance Nigeria's dominant economic position. For decades it has been discussed that CEAO respectively UEMOA should melt into the structures of ECOWAS, but no agreement has yet been reached on that issue.

Main French import products from West Africa are oil (Gabon), natural gas, uranium ore (Niger), phosphates, bauxite, aluminium, cocoa (Ivory Coast), coffee, peanuts, cotton, tropical fruits, tropical wood, and fish. French investment focuses on strategic sectors like energy, communications, and transport.

Resource interests in the French African policy is illustrated by the case studies of Gabon and Congo Brazzaville.²⁵ When President Léon Mba of the oil producing country Gabon was removed by a coup d'état in February 1964, French troops immediately intervened and put him back into office. In August 1963 President Abbé Fulbert Youlou of the Republic

²⁴ Manfred Hedrich and Klaus Frhr. von der Ropp, Chancen regionaler Integration in Westafrika, Aussenpolitik: Zeitschrift für internationale Fragen, Hamburg 29 (1978) 1, p. 84-97.

²⁵ G. Ayittei (see note 19).

of Congo (then not yet an oil producer) was also overthrown. In this case France did not intervene.

Since top French companies are parastatals or were state-owned until recently (as in the case of Elf Aquitaine), French political and economic interests in West and Central Africa are closely interwoven. Large companies enjoy extraordinary privileges in African states. The goodwill of West and Central African ruling elites as well as French governing parties were secured by kickbacks, as a series of scandals revealed. In the case of Gabon it is estimated that the money channelled to the ruling Bongo family amounts to about 8.5 percent of the national budget.²⁶ The example of President Giscard d'Estaing shows the intermingling of personal and national interests; his family had built up considerable stakes in a French company which was engaged in Central Africa. During his term of office the President forged a close personal relationship with the dictator of the Central African Republic Jean-Bedel Bokassa and pursued his family's economic interests.²⁷

The "Francophonie" unites all francophone states and offers numerous programs of cooperation. Although not restricted to France, the motherland plays a dominating role. The cultural orientation of West and Central African elites is still directed towards France. Nearly all schoolbooks still come from there.

Military arrangements guarantee French hegemony.²⁸ In 1990 there were defence pacts with seven African states and agreements on military cooperation with 25 African states. These arrangements include secret clauses. 8,300 French soldiers were permanently stationed in Africa in 1990. 15 common exercises and 250 French naval visits to the sub-

²⁶ V. T. Le Vine (see note 8), p. 315.

²⁷ Jos Havermans, Central African Republic: Ethnic Strife in a Democratic Setting. In: European Centre for Conflict Prevention: Searching for Peace, 2000, <http://www.conflict-prevention.net/page.php?id=40&formid=73&action=show&surveyid=61#> (14 March 2006).

²⁸ P. Vasset (see note 15), p. 165-180; S. Gregory (see note 8), p. 435-448; Philippe Leymarie, Die Kolonialmacht kehrt zurück, *Le Monde diplomatique*, 15 Nov 2002.

region take place per year. Many West and Central African armies and police forces are “functionally dependent on France”.²⁹

French military does not only suppress coup d’etats, but also stages them if it suits national interests. When “Emperor” Bokassa’s regime became an obstacle, his cousin David Dacko was installed President by the French military in 1979 (“Operation Barracuda”). Even Dacko’s first speech is said to have been written by French officials.³⁰

In the 1960s a “French Monroe doctrine” or rather a “De Gaulle doctrine” was formulated for West and Central Africa; no rival power is allowed to interfere in this French sphere of interest. French policy has been dominated by a perceived “Anglo-Saxon conspiracy” dating back to the days of Fashoda, when in 1898 the British forced a French expeditionary force to withdraw from Sudan.³¹ Formerly the British, now the US are seen as rivals trying to weaken the French political, economic and cultural position. On his visit to the oil-rich Gabon in 1997, President Chirac attacked “the Anglo-Saxons [who] dream of pushing France out of its position in Africa without paying a price.”³² This school of thinking, which is most prominent in traditional inner circles and the “Africa lobby”, regards Nigeria and even South Africa as Anglo-Saxon proxies in the sub-region.

During the Biafra war (1967-70) Paris secretly delivered weapons to the secessionists, whereas London and Washington supported the central government. When Pascal Lissouba, President of the Republic of Congo, signed a deal with the US-based multinational Occidental Petroleum (oxy) in 1993, France saw its national interests endangered.³³ It supported Lissouba’s civil war opponents and contributed to the restoration of President Denis Sassou-Nguesso in 1997. In Rwanda and Zaïre France supported the Habyarimana and Mobutu governments. It interpreted the US-sponsored take-over of Paul Kagame in Rwanda (1994)

²⁹ S. Gregory (see note 8), p. 438.

³⁰ J. Havermans (see note 27).

³¹ A. C. Huliaras (see note 18), p. 593-609.

³² End of an affair?, *The Economist*, 12 Aug 1995, p. 37.

³³ A. C. Huliaras, (see note 18), p. 601.

and Laurent-Désiré Kabila in Zaïre (1997) as challenges to its hegemony in West and Central Africa. French politicians were alarmed, when the US managed to replace Francophile UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali by the Anglophone West African Kofi Annan (1996). Furthermore, they were alarmed when in the same year Herman Cohen, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, argued that the African market should give equal access to everyone.³⁴

In 1996 the US announced their support for an “African Crisis Response Force” (ACRF) amounting to 10,000 to 25,000 soldiers. The project was disrupted by France.³⁵ French-speaking African countries turned out unwilling to commit themselves. The US had to scale down their ambitions and launched a much more modest “African Crisis Response Initiative” (ACRI) in 1997, followed by the successor program “Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance” (ACOTA) in 2002, which includes peace-enforcement training. France started its own program “Renforcement des Capacités Africaines de Maintien de la Paix” (RECAMP) in 1996. The program provides two year training sessions under the auspices of the UN and in conjunction with the OAU.

Reduction of economic interdependence, the debacle of the French Rwanda policy, and well publicized scandals and financial constraints led to a gradual modification of French policy towards West and Central Africa in the 1990s. In June 1990 at the Franco-African Summit at La Baule State President François Mitterand called upon the African heads of state to democratise their political structures. In 1993 Gaullist Prime Minister Eduard Balladour enforced a devaluation of the CFA Franc by 50 percent. He forced African governments to sign stabilisation agreements with the IMF and repeated the call for democratisation. In November 1994 at the Franco-African Summit at Biarritz President Mitterand declared: “The time has come for Africans themselves to resolve their conflicts and organize their own security”.³⁶

³⁴ A. C. Huliaras, (see note 18), p. 603.

³⁵ G. Ayittei (see note 19).

³⁶ Quoted in G. Ayittei (see note 19).

A more radical deviation came in 1997 with the new Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin.³⁷ “Neither intervention nor indifference” was his slogan. Troop levels were reduced from 8,500 to 5,500. A policy of non-intervention was introduced. When General Robert Guei replaced the elected Ivorian President Henri Konan Bedie by coup d’etat in 1999, France did not act. Development aid for West and Central Africa, which to a great extent used to be channelled into the coffers of the ruling elites, was considerably reduced, and the powerful Ministry of Cooperation was integrated into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Relations with Anglophone counties like Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa were intensified.

When “cohabitation” ended in 2002, President Jacques Chirac and his new Gaullist Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin returned to a more traditional African policy. The new slogan was “Co-development”. Development aid was increased, and West and Central Africa became priorities in French foreign policy again. The outbreak of civil war in the Ivory Coast (2002), however, endangered French economic assets and the personal security of approx. 20,000 French nationals living there. France resorted to military intervention. The French force “Licorne” in the Ivory Coast was later mandated by the UN Security Council and supplemented by a UN Mission.

This indicated a more multilateral approach in French security policy towards West and Central Africa. The “Operation Artemis” in the Democratic Republic of Congo followed this pattern; in summer 2003 France led a multinational mission (2,500 soldiers) in the Ituri district before the advance of a more robust UN mission. “Operation Artemis” gave a threefold message; a French commitment to multilateral cooperation, the willingness to compensate the Rwandan debacle and a demonstration of European capability to act in Africa without US support. In May 2004 the first RECAP cycle was launched in an Anglophone West African country (Ghana).

³⁷ Philippe Leymarie, Plötzlich war Gott kein Franzose mehr: Die besondere Beziehung zwischen Frankreich und Afrika, der überblick (2004) 1, p. 14-20.

France has been forced to adapt to changing economic and political circumstances. Although certain companies still draw enormous profits from West and Central Africa, the degree of economic interdependence has decreased. In 1975 two-thirds of total French direct financial investment was placed in Sub-Saharan Africa, in 1987 it was only one third.³⁸ The budget for foreign missions and troop stationing had to be cut by one third between 1998 and 2002. A new generation of African leaders, who do not share the same affiliation with France as their predecessors, has emerged. Some of them, like Nicéphore Soglu in Benin and Alassane Ouattara in the Ivory Coast, were trained in the US.³⁹ A similar development takes place in France; a new generation of officials, who are less influenced by traditional policies, are promoted into higher positions. The Ivory Coast intervention also illustrated the political risks of classical interventions. The French troops, which followed a peace-keeping agenda and remained neutral, soon took the blame from both sides. France had to realise that a former colonial power faces a problem of acceptance when it tries to behave as a peace-keeping or stabilisation force. It would probably have been easier to support the government, as it was in the old days. Furthermore, the Ivory Coast demonstrates the effects of startling social disintegration. Fanaticised urban youth are running out of control.

In October 2005 France announced a restructuring of its security policy in Sub-Saharan Africa.⁴⁰ Its military bases in Ivory Coast and Chad will be closed, leaving three bases in Senegal, Gabon and Djibouti as partners of the respective sub-regional African organisations (ECOWAS, CEEAC, IGAD). They will support the future African stand-by brigades in the areas of training, logistics and equipment. The French military base on the Département d'outre mer Réunion could cooperate with SADC. France also announced the "Europeanisation" of its security policy; its policy would be harmonised with the EU Common Foreign and

³⁸ D. Kohnert (see note 22), *der überblick* (2004) 1, p. 51.

³⁹ A. C. Huliaras (see note 18), p. 601.

⁴⁰ Denis M. Tull, *France's Africa Policy at a Turning Point*, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, SWP Comments 45, Berlin, October 2005.

Security Policy, and its military structures in Africa opened up to EU partners.

This announcement by a Gaullist government reflects the loss of French legitimacy and influence in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is questionable if it means a tactical adjustment or a strategic reorientation. As long as the military agreements with African states are not rewritten, French security policy will not fundamentally change.

Berlin-based Political analyst Denis M. Tull sees a tactical adjustment for the short time, but admits the possibility of a long-term strategic reorientation: “France will take up the cause of multilateralism in order to demonstrate its capacity to act in Africa and to protect its interests, while at the same time spreading the political and financial burden among the EU member states. Nevertheless, the restructuring of French security policy in Africa suggests that the reform-orientated forces within the French administration are on the rise.”⁴¹

US Interests in West Africa

Until a few years ago, Sub-Saharan Africa did not play a prominent role in US strategy. During the Cold War the US only reacted when the Eastern bloc tried to expand its influence, as was the case in Angola and Ethiopia. The US either remained passive or encouraged European powers to look after their former colonial possessions.

Liberia was a special case.⁴² In 1821 the “American Colonization Society” acquired a territory for the resettlement of liberated slaves in West Africa. In 1847 “Liberia” was declared an independent republic. Its institutions were modelled after the example of the US; the political and economic relationship remained close. When a Liberian army was established, it was first commanded by black officers seconded from the US

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² John-Peter Pham, *Liberia: Portrait of a failed State*, New York 1980, p. 5-12, 37-43, 78.

army (1912-22). In 1926 the US company Firestone was granted a large concession area for the establishment of rubber plantations, which soon employed 10,000 workers under a harsh recruiting system.⁴³ In 1942 Liberia declared war on the Axis powers and concluded a Defence Areas Agreement with the US, which granted the right to build, maintain, and defend military installations. In 1959, Liberia signed a mutual defence pact with the US; in 1961 US President John F. Kennedy initiated a military assistance program. The U.S. government built two sophisticated communications facilities there; the US Coast Guard erected an Omega navigational station guiding shipping traffic. In the 1980s Liberia served as a key CIA base for covert operations against Libya.

After the end of the Cold War West Africa enjoyed less importance than ever. Washington perceived it as strategically irrelevant and economically uninteresting. In 1995 a Department of Defence document declared that the US had “very little traditional strategic interest in Africa”.⁴⁴ This was also George Bush’s message in his election campaign in 2000. He dismissed Sub-Saharan Africa as a place that “doesn’t fit into the national strategic interests as far as I can see them.”⁴⁵ Only Afro-American voters paid attention to West Africa, the home of their ancestors.

The year 2001 transformed US policy towards Sub-Saharan Africa. In May, 2001, the Cheney report on energy security named the Gulf of Guinea a strategic supplier for US energy imports. Months later the September 11th attacks provoked a global war against terrorism. Sub-Saharan Africa became a strategic priority for the US. This was illustrated in July 2003 when President Bush visited five African States (Botswana, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and Uganda), two of them situated in West Africa. In this sub-region the following measures were taken:

⁴³ Reed Kramer, Liberia: A Casualty of the Cold War's End, Africa News Service, Durham 1 July 1995. Internet Document: <http://allafrica.com/stories/200101090216.html> (3 April 2006).

⁴⁴ quoted in A. C. Huliaras (see note 18), p. 597.

⁴⁵ Lisa Hoffman, U.S. troops may be headed for Africa, Scripps Howard News Service, 13 June 2003, <http://www.capitolhillblue.com/cgi-bin/artman/exec/view.cgi?archive=18&num=2377&printer=1> (14 March 2006).

- reopening of embassies,
- enlarging of embassy staff,
- placing of intelligence personnel on the ground,
- support of peace-keeping capabilities,
- training sessions for national armies and police forces,
- accompanying USAID programmes,
- strategic investment of US companies,
- orchestrated public-private initiatives in the social and economic field.

The report on “National Energy Policy”⁴⁶ indicated that in 2020 US oil consumption will have increased by 33 percent, US natural gas consumption by well over 50 percent. US oil production, however, will have decreased and US natural gas production increased by 14 percent only.⁴⁷ Therefore, the US is becoming even more dependent on foreign energy supplies. West Africa was identified as a strategic energy supplier:

“Sub-Saharan Africa holds 7 percent of world oil reserves and comprises 11 percent of world oil production. Along with Latin America, West Africa is expected to be one of fastest-growing sources of oil and gas for the American market. African oil tends to be of high quality and low in sulfur, making it suitable for stringent refined product requirements, and giving it a growing market share for refining centers on the East Coast of the United States.”⁴⁸

The report recommended to “deepen bilateral and multilateral engagement to promote a more receptive environment for U.S. oil and gas trade, investment, and operations” and “to support more transparent, accountable, and responsible use of oil resources in African producer countries to enhance the stability and security of trade and investment environments”.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ National Energy Policy: Report of the National Energy Policy Development Group, Washington D.C., May 2001. Internet Document: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/energy> (14 March 2006).

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. X.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 8-11.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 8-11, 8-12.

During recent years new oil and natural gas reserves have been confirmed or are being exploited in the Gulf of Guinea. US oil imports from West Africa are projected to increase from 15 percent of total US imports in 2005 to 25 percent by 2015.⁵⁰ A figure of 30 percent is forecasted in the long term.⁵¹ The Gulf of Guinea is said to have the potential to overtake the Middle East which supplied 24 percent of total US oil imports in 2000.⁵²

The top five's oil production at the Gulf of Guinea 2005/2030 (barrels per day)⁵³

Country	2005	2030 (prognosis)
Nigeria	2,719,000	4,422,000
Angola	1,098,000	3,288,000
Equatorial Guinea	313,000	724,000
Republic of Congo	285,000	327,000
Gabon	303,000	269,000
Total Africa	9,936,000	16,242,000

US companies plan to invest 50 billion USD in the Gulf of Guinea energy sector within the next ten years. In 2001 an international consortium which included US companies began investing 3.5 billion USD in the Chad-Cameroon pipeline, the largest infrastructure project in Africa today. It will allow Chad to export up to 250,000 barrels of oil per day.

USAID provided technical assistance in support of a West Africa Power Pool and an associated pipeline project involving a number of U.S. oil companies. This project will enable Ghana and Nigeria to become major exporters of natural gas and electricity. The Gas Pipeline is being built

⁵⁰ Adam M. Smith, *At Last unto the Breach: The Logic of a U.S. Military Command in West Africa*, Orbis (2004) Spring, p. 309.

⁵¹ Charles Snyder, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, quoted in *International Crisis Group* (see note 7), p. 25.

⁵² *National Energy Policy* (see note 46), p. 8-4.

⁵³ Quoted in Lutz Neumann: *Öl und Gas am Golf von Guinea. Konsequenzen für die deutsche Afrika- und Außenwirtschaftspolitik*, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Diskussionspapier der FG 6, 2003/04, Berlin, December 2003, p. 15.

by a consortium of companies and includes financing by the U.S. Export-Import Bank.

West and Central African oil and natural gas will decrease US dependence on the politically sensitive Gulf region. Furthermore, there is no danger of cartelisation. Nigeria is the only OPEC member left in the sub-region; however it has a record of cheating OPEC regulations. Another advantage is the comparatively short distance between the main Louisiana offshore oil port and the oil terminals at the Gulf of Guinea, which will cut short transport risks and costs. Many proven reserves in the sub-region are off-shore and therefore isolated from potential political turmoil or terrorist attacks. (Present onshore oil installations are affected by thefts, attacks and hijacking of workers, as the Niger delta shows.)

Security concerns focus the attention on Sub-Saharan Africa also. In September 2002 “The National Security Strategy of the United States” came to the conclusion that “America is now threatened less by conquering states than [...] by failing ones”.⁵⁴ Therefore, Sub-Saharan Africa was declared a priority:

“In Africa, promise and opportunity sit side by side with disease, war, and desperate poverty. This threatens both a core value of the United States – preserving human dignity – and our strategic priority – combating global terror. American interests and American principles, therefore, lead in the same direction: we will work with others for an African continent that lives in liberty, peace, and growing prosperity. Together with our European allies, we must help strengthen Africa’s fragile states, help build indigenous capability to secure porous borders, and help build up the law enforcement and intelligence infrastructure to deny havens for terrorists. An ever more lethal environment exists in Africa as local civil wars spread beyond borders to create regional war zones. Forming coalitions of the willing and cooperative security arrangements are key to confronting these emerging trans-national threats.”⁵⁵

US foreign and security policy identifies a double threat emanating from failed states; firstly, oppression, corruption, hunger, poverty, disease,

⁵⁴ The National Security Strategy of the United States, Washington D.C., September 2002, p. 1, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf> (14 March 2006).

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 10-1.

and lack of state services may breed violent dissent or political-religious fanaticism. Secondly, external terrorist groups may use weak states as “safe havens” or operational theatres. The worst-case would be both scenarios coming together. US strategists point to a number of incidents, which allegedly confirm a growing terrorist risk in West Africa:

- One of the first major al-Qaida attacks happened in Africa (the bombing of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania; 1997).
- Al-Qaida financed its terrorist operations partly by trading illegal diamonds from Liberia and Sierra Leone.⁵⁶
- Lebanese citizens living in West Africa have established support networks for Hezbollah.⁵⁷
- Saudi-Arabian agencies are said to radicalise the traditionally tolerant Muslims in West Africa.⁵⁸
- After September 11th, 2001, riots supporting the attacks were held in Kano, Northern Nigeria.⁵⁹
- In February 2003 al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden mentioned Nigeria as potential theatre of operations in a taped message.⁶⁰
- In 2003 a total of 32 Western tourists were abducted in the Algerian Sahara allegedly by the “Groupe salafiste pour la prédication et le combat” (GSPC), which is said to operate in a vast area stretching from Mauritania to Chad and to have links with al-Qaida.⁶¹
- In September 2004 militant Islamists calling themselves the “Nigerian Taliban” raided police stations in North-eastern Nigeria and killed policemen and hostages.⁶²
- In June 2005 the Mauritanian army base at Lemghity was attacked and 18 soldiers killed, possibly by the Algerian GSPC.⁶³

⁵⁶ International Crisis Group (see note 7), p. 26.

⁵⁷ Sandra T. Barnes, *Global Flows: Terror, Oil, and Strategic Philanthropy*, *African Studies Review* 48 (2005) 1 (April), p. 6.

⁵⁸ A. M. Smith (see note 50), p. 318.

⁵⁹ A. M. Smith (see note 50), p. 310.

⁶⁰ Jeremy Keenan, *Terror in the Sahara: The Implications of US imperialism for North & West Africa*, *Review of African Political Economy* (2004) 101, p. 491.

⁶¹ International Crisis Group (see note 7), p. 1.

⁶² International Crisis Group (see note 7), p. 26.

The US European Command (USEUCOM) in Stuttgart launched special programs and initiatives for North and West Africa, which supplement global US military programs like ACOTA and JMET. USEUCOM's area of responsibility covers most of Africa with the exception of Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, the Seychelles, Somalia and Sudan which fall under Central Command (USCENTCOM), while Comoros, Madagascar, and Mauritius are covered by US Pacific Command (USPACOM). In October 2002 a two-year "Pan Sahel Initiative" (PSI) was launched with the following aims: protecting borders; monitoring of the movement of persons and goods; fighting terrorism; and strengthening of regional cooperation.⁶⁴ Chad, Mauritania, Mali, and Niger were given military equipment and military training by US forces and private contractors. In each of these four countries at least one rapid-reaction company was trained. There are unconfirmed reports that the US established a military surveillance base at Tamanrasset in Southern Algeria.⁶⁵ Algeria, Chad, Niger and Nigeria were encouraged to sign a "Convention against terrorism" in July 2003.⁶⁶ Military chiefs from North and West Africa were brought together at USEUCOM in order to promote sub-regional cooperation.⁶⁷

In 2004 USEUCOM launched a coastal security program "Gulf of Guinea Guard" with the aim of enhancing capabilities and interoperability of naval forces along the underpoliced coastline comprising 2000 nautical-miles. In October 2004 USEUCOM invited Gulf of Guinea Chiefs of Naval Operations for a Coastal Security Conference in Naples.⁶⁸ The US is providing additional naval vessels, radar and com-

⁶³ 18 soldiers killed in attack against a military base in north Mauritania, Arabic news, 6.6.2005, <http://www.arabicnews.com/ansub/Daily/Day/050606/2005060616.html> (13 March 2006).

⁶⁴ Sigrid Faath, US-Engagement im Sahel-Sahararaum: Terrorismusbekämpfung als Vorwand oder Notwendigkeit?, DOI-Focus (2005) 18 (January), p. 7-15; GlobalSecurity, Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCTI), <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/tscti.htm> (14 March 2006).

⁶⁵ S. T. Barnes (see note 57), African Studies Review 48 (2005) 1 (April), p. 7.

⁶⁶ J. Keenan (see note 60), p. 491.

⁶⁷ Quoted from Craig S. Smith, U.S. Antiterrorism Campaign Opens a New Front in Africa, The New York Times/Süddeutsche Zeitung, 24 May 2004.

⁶⁸ D. L. Goldwyn and J. S. Morrison (see note 12), p. 20.

munications equipment, coastguard training and co-ordination, Nigeria for example, received four Coast Guard cutters and four helicopters.⁶⁹ USEUCOM seeks to establish a radar surveillance system, a maritime control center and interdiction-capable forces.⁷⁰ USS “Emory S. Land” participated in the 2005 Gulf of Guinea Deployment, which included naval officers from Ghana, Gabon, Benin as well as São Tomé and Príncipe.⁷¹

In 2005 the five-year “Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Initiative” (TSCTI) was launched.⁷² With about 100 million USD a year it will be better funded than its predecessor PSI and accompanied by interlocking development programs. TSCTI was geographically extended to North Africa as well as to West Africa, where Senegal was included as full member and Nigeria with observer status. Greater emphasis will be placed on information sharing and operational planning between regional states. In June 2005 the first exercise “Flintlock 2005” brought together Algeria, Tunisia, Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad, USA, EU and NATO partners in order to build capabilities against illegal trafficking of weapons, goods and human beings. “Flintlock 2005” is said to have been the biggest exercise in Africa since World War II.⁷³

Perceived scenarios of terrorist activities are attacks on energy installations (with an attack on a future plant of liquefaction of natural gas as worst-case scenario), attacks on or abductions of American and European citizens, ship-based attacks against tankers, delivery of weapons of mass destruction by cargo ships to US cities.⁷⁴

At the Horn of Africa a “Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa” was established in Djibouti in 2002. It supports the Operation “Enduring

⁶⁹ S. T. Barnes (see note 57), p. 6.

⁷⁰ D. L. Goldwyn and J. S. Morrison (see note 12), p. 20.

⁷¹ Global Security.org, Gulf of Guinea Guard, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/guinea-guard.htm> (14 March 2006).

⁷² Global Security.org (see note 64).

⁷³ Catherine Fellows, US targets Sahara ‘terrorist haven’, BBC News, 8 Aug 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4749357.stm>

⁷⁴ A. M. Smith (see note 50), p. 310-1.

Freedom” where 2,000 US soldiers are stationed there on a permanent basis. From Djibouti the Iwo Jima marine task force was sent to Liberia when fighting intensified in the capital Monrovia in mid-2003.⁷⁵ West and Central Africa are the US sources of oil with the longest distance from nearest US military forces (Nigeria approx. 2.500 km, Angola approx. 3.500 km).⁷⁶ The US, however, do not seek permanent military bases in Sub-Saharan Africa, but rather a flexible network of “access points”⁷⁷. They could possibly be supported by the positioning of a US aircraft carrier battle group off Africa's West coast. Deputy USEUCOM commander General Charles Wald referred to “low-maintenance bases at airports or remote camps”,⁷⁸ where about 200 troops were stationed temporarily. These ad-hoc bases would be able to accommodate up to 5,000 troops each in case of emergencies.

According to Lieutenant Colonel Powl Smith, then chief of counterterrorism plans at USEUCOM, the US want to be preventative, so that they do not have to station troops permanently. By assisting North and West African countries the US try to avoid becoming “a lightning rod for popular anger that radicals can capitalize on.”⁷⁹ Agreements allowing the use of military facilities and installations have been concluded. These ad-hoc bases will serve the following goals:

- protection of naval transport routes against piracy and terrorist attacks;
- military training and logistical support to national armies;
- maintenance of the sub-regional military balance;
- stabilisation of weak states in case of internal threats;
- support in case of humanitarian disasters;
- evacuation of US/Western citizens in crisis scenarios;
- collection and sharing of military and political intelligence.

⁷⁵ A. M. Smith (see note 50), p. 308.

⁷⁶ A. M. Smith (see note 50), p. 310.

⁷⁷ S. T. Barnes (see note 57), p. 7.

⁷⁸ Reed Kramer, Liberia: A Casualty of the Cold War's End, Africa News Service, Durham 1 July 1995. Internet Document: <http://allafrica.com/stories/200101090216.html> (3 April 2006).

⁷⁹ Quoted in C. S. Smith (see note 67).

General James Jones, Commander of USEUCOM, made the new strategy public by a number of statements. In 2003 he referred to “large uncontrolled, ungoverned areas across Africa (vast swathes of the Sahara; from Mauritania [...] to Sudan) that are clearly the routes of narco-trafficking, terrorist training and hotbeds of instability”.⁸⁰ In the same year he commented on West Africa: “The carrier battle groups of the future and the expeditionary strike groups of the future may not spend six months in the Mediterranean Sea, but I’ll bet they’ll spend half the time going down the West Coast of Africa.”⁸¹

“The National Security Strategy of the United States” recommends a bilateral rather than a multilateral approach in Sub-Saharan Africa: “Africa’s great size and diversity requires a security strategy that focuses on bilateral engagement and builds coalitions of the willing. [...] countries with major impact on their neighbourhood such as South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, and Ethiopia are anchors for regional engagement and require focused attention.”⁸² In addition, coordination with European allies and international institutions as well as the strengthening of sub-regional organisations are recommended.

Nigeria is considered the key partner in West Africa. With a size of 924,000 km² and 136 million inhabitants (2003), it is the largest political, economic and military power in the region and dominates the sub-regional organisation ECOWAS. In 2000 Nigeria was the 5th largest US supplier of oil (10 percent of total US imports; behind Canada, Saudi-Arabia, Venezuela, and Mexico).⁸³ In 2004 US investments in Nigeria had exceeded 8 billion USD.⁸⁴ Nigerian armed forces numbered 78,500 in 2002.⁸⁵ By July 2003, the US had trained five Nigerian battalions.⁸⁶

⁸⁰ Quoted in J. Keenan (see note 60), p. 483.

⁸¹ Quoted in Africa Unification Front, NATO is planning to occupy the African Union, 5 May 2003, <http://www.africanfront.com/2003-b.php> (14 March 2006).

⁸² The National Security Strategy (see note 54), p. 11.

⁸³ National Energy Policy (see note 46), p. 8-4.

⁸⁴ A. M. Smith (see note 50), p. 309.

⁸⁵ Encyclopaedia of the Nations: Nigeria. Internet Document: <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Africa/Nigeria.html> (14 March 2006).

Nigeria's governments have always been pro-American. It is also the country with the largest Muslim population in the sub-region (45% of the total population). US policy regards it strategically important to prevent the Nigerian Muslims from being radicalised.

Nigeria, however, is an ambivalent power, comparable to South Africa in the Southern African sub-region. With its political, economic and military strength and its reform efforts it may provide leadership and foster stability in the sub-region. At the same time Nigeria is an inherently fragile state and has the potential to destabilise the sub-region. Organised crime, armed militias, corruption, ethno-religious divisions, separatism and weak internal security capacities pose numerous risks. US policy can not only take advantage of Nigeria's strengths, but must at the same time support the country to overcome its structural weaknesses.

In addition to their partnership with Nigeria, US policy concentrates on two microstates. Equatorial Guinea and São Tomé and Príncipe possess promising energy resources. Consisting partly (Equatorial Guinea)⁸⁷ or fully (São Tomé and Príncipe) of islands, they offer a valuable strategic location and are somewhat isolated from disturbances in neighbouring states. Furthermore, they can easily be dominated, since the influence of former colonial powers (Spain respectively Portugal) is comparatively weak.

Equatorial Guinea has been named "African Kuwait". Recently it became the third largest producer of oil in the Gulf of Guinea after Nigeria and Angola. US companies invested approximately 5 billion USD there between 1996 and 2003.⁸⁸ The quasi-public "Overseas Private Investment Corporation" granted almost 400 million USD in loans to Equatorial Guinea.⁸⁹ Up to 3,000 US expatriate workers are based in Equatorial

⁸⁶ Timothy Othieno, *Oil in Africa: The US' New Continental Enterprise – Blessing or Curse?*, Global Insight, (2005) 43 (January), p. 7-8.

⁸⁷ The capital Malabo is situated on the island of Bioko (formerly Fernando Poo).

⁸⁸ L. Neumann (see note 53), p. 10.

⁸⁹ A. M. Smith (see note 50), p. 309.

Guinea.⁹⁰ The Pentagon licensed the private security company “Military Professional Resources Inc.”, (MPRI) to advise on the establishment of a protective coast guard.⁹¹ Contrary to Nigeria and São Tomé and Príncipe, Equatorial Guinea did not wage any democratic experiments, but has experienced one of the most oppressive regimes since the granting of independence in 1968.

In São Tomé and Príncipe commencement of oil production has been scheduled for 2006.⁹² Six maritime oil blocks have been demarcated in a “Joint Development Zone” shared with Nigeria. Producing rights for the first block were given to a consortium, consisting of ChevronTexaco (51%), ExxonMobil (40%) and Energy Equity Resources (9%). São Tomé and Príncipe have a brilliant strategic location approx. 250 km off the Gabonese coast and approx. 400 km off the Nigerian coast. In July 2002 then Deputy Commander of USEUCOM, General Carlton W. Fulford jr. (now director of the Africa Center for Strategic Studies in Washington, D.C.) paid a visit to the island. The US was explicitly offered a permanent naval base by President Fradique de Menezes. (Equatorial Guinea and the Gambia are said to have discreetly offered military bases, too.)⁹³

There are supporters and critiques of President Bush’s West Africa policy. Conservative politicians, advisors and think tanks like the “African Oil Policy Initiative Group” (AOPIC) are lobbying for a unified US African Command and permanent military bases in the sub-region.⁹⁴ There is an ongoing discussion about whether US engagement in the sub-region should be intensified.

Critiques state that US policy towards Western Africa overreacts and only serves the interests of the oil lobby. They argue that West African Islam has always been moderate and does not endanger US interests. It

⁹⁰ Jędrzej George Frynas, *The Oil Boom in Equatorial Guinea*, *African Affairs* 103 (2004) 413, p. 527.

⁹¹ T. Othieno (see note 86), p. 6.

⁹² L. Neumann (see note 53), p. 14-5.

⁹³ A. M. Smith (see note 50), p. 319, footnote 42.

⁹⁴ cf. A. M. Smith (see note 50), p. 305-319.

is conceded that the region is politically unstable, but it is stressed that violence is usually directed against national governments or groups within a country, not against the US or the Western world. It is furthermore stressed that West Africa does not provide the environment for terrorist activities like sophisticated urban centres. In the past dissident West African groups had therefore resorted to military coups or to guerilla warfare in rural areas.⁹⁵

It is also doubted that global terrorist movements like al-Qaida have links with West African dissident groups. Such allegations are denounced as wishful thinking or bad intelligence, as in the case of the false allegation that Saddam Hussein had tried to buy 500 tones of uranium ore from Niger in 1999.

Jeremy Keenan, Senior Research Fellow and Director of the Sahara Studies Programme at the University of East Anglia, even states in a well-documented article that the abduction of foreign tourists in the Algerian desert in February/March 2003 was probably staged by elements within the Algerian military establishment in order to justify ongoing external military support:⁹⁶ “There is an increasing amount of evidence to support the suggestion [...] that the hostage-taking was initiated and orchestrated by elements within the Algerian military establishment, and that this may have been condoned by the US. [...] This high profile ‘terrorist act’ was absolutely pivotal in enabling America to take its ‘War on terror’ into Africa, and so legitimise its ‘political-military’ interest in Africa as a whole.”⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Christopher Clapham, *Terrorism in Africa: Problems of Definition, History and Development*, *South African Journal of International Affairs* 10 (2003) 2 (Winter/Spring), p. 13-28.

⁹⁶ J. Keenan (see note 60), p. 475-496.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 483-4. – Keenan refers to the ignorance of the local population of terrorist activities, to the shadowy background of the “Groupe salafiste” and its leader “el Para” (a former member of the Algerian security forces), to contradicting statements about the liberation of the hostages and to the fact, that the hostage takers could not have made a 3,000 km journey to Mali without the knowledge and support of the Algerian army.

Keegan warns that anti-US sentiment in the Sahel region is not aroused by (hardly existing) militant Islamist cells, but by the heavy presence of some 1,000 US Special forces, marines and contractors, which the local population regarded as a “US invasion”. US support could enable authoritarian governments to persecute political opponents or minorities under the pretext of the “fight against terrorism”. Thus problems would rather be generated than solved.

Others warn that the US sponsored oil boom at the Gulf of Guinea will strengthen authoritarian regimes, perpetuate corruption, increase indebtedness and provoke coup d’etats.⁹⁸ Jędrzej George Frynas writes: “Indeed, it is no coincidence that Africa’s leading petro-states have some of the continent’s longest serving heads of state, including Bongo in Gabon, Dos Santos in Angola and Gadaffi in Libya. [...] Rather than leading to a better economic climate, the oil riches have fostered economic underdevelopment and political mismanagement.”⁹⁹

Critiques of US policy warn that the focus on military solutions will neglect the roots of terrorism: oppression, corruption, poverty, HIV/Aids, insufficient state services, and insufficient access to world markets. It is acknowledged that US strategists like General Carlton W. Fulford jr. emphasize “the holistic nature of counter terrorism”,¹⁰⁰ which should include non-military instruments. US initiatives like the trade protocol “African Growth and Opportunity Act” (AGOA), the “Millenium Challenge Corporation” (MCC) and the “Emergency AIDS Relief” are, however, regarded insufficient. In her empirical study of AGOA Carol B. Thompson (Northern Arizona University) comes to the conclusion that positive impacts on Sub-Saharan African countries have been “narrow”, “ephemeral” and “inequitable”¹⁰¹ up to now.

⁹⁸ Coup d’etats were attempted in the boom countries Equatorial Guinea (2004) and São Tomé and Príncipe (2003).

⁹⁹ J. G. Frynas (see note 90), p. 339, 341.

¹⁰⁰ International Crisis Group (see note 7), p. 27.

¹⁰¹ Carol B. Thompson, US Trade with Africa: African Growth & Opportunity?, Review of African Political Economy (2004) 101, p. 472.

Referring to the US activities in the Sahel zone, the Brussels-based International Crisis Group writes: “A misconceived and heavy handed approach could tip the scale the wrong way; serious, balanced, and long-term engagement with the four countries should keep the region peaceful. An effective counter-terrorism policy there needs to address the threat in the broadest terms, with more development than military aid and greater U.S.-European collaboration.”¹⁰²

¹⁰² International Crisis Group (see note 7), p. i.