

# Libya as a Collapsed State and Security in the Sahel: More Fuel to the Fire?

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## ملخص:

يسائل هذا المقال العلاقة بين انهيار الدولة في ليبيا والأمن في منطقة الساحل، وهو يزعم أن هذين المتغيرين ليسا مرتبطين سببياً كما يصوره الخطاب السائد. ويستفيد المسعى التحليلي للمقال من الأعمال النظرية التي طورها كل من بوزان و ويفر حول مُركِّبات الأمن الإقليمي وعمليات الأمانة التي يتم من خلالها تعريف تلك المركِّبات؛ إضافة إلى هذه العمليات، سيتم تسليط الضوء على بنية الساحل كمرَّكب للأمن الإقليمي يفتقر للحكم. ويجادل المقال بأن انهيار الدولة في ليبيا تم أمنته كجزء من عملية أوسع تعرضت لها ظاهرة افتقار المنطقة للحكم، في حين أن الحالة على ما يبدو يمكن صياغتها على النحو التالي: إذا كانت هناك أية تهديدات أمنية في المنطقة، فإن الدور الذي يلعبه انهيار الدولة في ليبيا لا يتعدى الزيادة في تكاليفها، لأن تلك التهديدات كانت موجودة أصلاً في المنطقة.

## Abstract :

This article questions the connection between state collapse in Libya and security in the Sahel. It claims that the two variables are not as closely connected as they are being depicted in the dominantly circulating rhetoric. The analytical endeavor of the article takes advantage of Buzan and Wæver's work on Regional Security Complexes and securitization processes they are defined through. In addition to processes, the ungovernable structure of the Sahel region as a Security Complex is highlighted. The article argues that state collapse in Libya has been securitized as part of a larger process of securitizing the ungovernability of the region, while the case seemingly is as follows; if there is any 'serious' *security* threat in the Sahel region, what collapsed Libya does is just to exacerbate its costs, because the threat has already existed.

## Introduction :

Over the past three decades, so many theoretical and empirical studies have contributed to improving our understanding of state failure/collapse in international relations. However, the phenomenon has remained in need to be non-positivistically approached. Such an approach may prove to be helpful to investigate the connection between state failure/collapse and regional security destabilization regardless of its pre-given implications, including security threats regionally trafficking. Critical security studies, particularly Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver's contribution, contend that security is constructed and what appears as an objective security threat could be just a non-security issue that has been intersubjectively *securitized*. Failed/collapsed states, from a traditional perspective, are of serious security implications. Consequently, they require security prescriptions in which security concerns are introduced as superior than development requirements or any priorities of economic capability (re)building.

The regime change that is still taking place in Libya, after Gaddafi's rule fell in 2011, has raged on heated debates on the security threats Libya poses to the Sahel region as it has turned into a failed/collapsed state. Yet, even with the theoretical developments mentioned above, the case of Libya appears to be far from any questioning endeavor, partly due to the fact that the Sahel has been already undergoing the same threats Libya is supposed to bring in by its collapse recently.

This article aims at questioning the very connection between Libya as a collapsed state and security in the Sahel, claiming that the two variables are not as closely connected as they are being depicted in the dominantly circulating rhetoric. It makes use of Buzan and Wæver's work on Regional Security Complexes and the prominent role securitization processes have in defining them. The article begins with a brief argumentation for the claim that Libya has turned into a collapsed more than into a failed state. Thereafter, it proceeds to re-define the Sahel as a Regional Security Complex depending on the work developed by Buzan and Wæver. While doing so, two determining characteristics are to be highlighted, structure and processes. Therefore, the Sahel region will be tested against the basic elements in Buzan and Wæver's definition of Regional Security Complexes, particularly securitization and/or de-securitization

processes by which complexes are characterized. Subsequently in the final section, emphasis is to be put on examining the hypothesis stated as follows, ‘if there is any serious *security* threat in the Sahel region, what collapsed Libya does is just to exacerbate its costs, because the threat has already existed.’ The article concludes with a call for de-securitizing collapsed Libya and the threats it supposedly causes to the region, for the reason that de-securitizing such issues would guide the regionally as well as internationally involved states to de-militarize the aid they offer/receive in order to deal with them.

### **Libya: A Failed or a Collapsed State?**

State failure in Post-Gaddafi Libya seems undisputable. The question, however, has become more importantly whether state failure in Post-Gaddafi Libya has turned – or at least has been turning - into state collapse. To Robert Rotberg, a collapsed state represents an extreme version of a failed state, which is a mere geographical expression with a complete vacuum of authority.<sup>1</sup> When dealing with state failure/collapse, two dimensions should be taken into consideration, internal and external. The internal dimension reflects societal instability, particularly institutional inability and a seemingly emerging identity crisis. The external dimension reflects a potential spatial diffusion of security threats, arising from the internal instability, to neighbouring states. The interconnectedness between the two dimensions accounts for the fact that state failure is contagious. Contagiousness exacerbates when state failure develops into state collapse.

It is useful analytically to deal with Libya as an emerging *anarchic* state in the region. The term ‘*anarchic* state’ refers to the absence of an effective central authority that “exercises monopoly of violence” over its territory in the sense of Weber’s traditional view of state. I echo Weber because his notion of state as *the* monopoly-of-violence exerciser proves to be very relevant to understanding post-Gaddafi Libya as a collapsed rather than as a failed state.

Referring to the SFI (State Fragility Index)<sup>2</sup>, four basic categories determine state failure: security, political, economic and

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<sup>1</sup> Rotberg, Robert I. (2002) “The New Nature of Nation-State Failure.” *Washington Quarterly* 25 (3): 85–96.

<sup>2</sup> This is done for analytical purposes. Many reservations could be made about the Index.

social. Each single category is examined using two further variables, effectiveness and legitimacy. For instance, “political effectiveness” measures regime stability, while “political legitimacy” measures regime inclusion/exclusion, i.e. factional/ethnic/religious discrimination and/or salience of the ruling elites.

The current article is not concerned with bringing Post-Gaddafi regime in Libya under SFI’s scrutiny, at least, for two main reasons. First, state failure in post-Gaddafi Libya seems to be, analytically as well as empirically, a presupposition rather than a testable hypothesis. Gaddafi’s dictatorship itself represented an unacknowledged state of state-failure; its collapse has merely exacerbated it. This can be upheld by one of Zartman’s best conceptual theses, that ineffectiveness of democratic institutions in African states are not the key to collapse, since these institutions do not function any better in non-collapsing states in Africa.<sup>3</sup> Second, the recent declaration of Barqa, in Eastern Libya, a “federal union” should be taken more seriously as far as state failure in Libya is concerned. The declaration was made by tribal leaders and militia commanders signifying a challenging move to the National Transitional Council. The newborn intra-state entity is supposed to run its own affairs autonomously through establishing its own parliament, courts and police force. Interestingly, this unexpected move recalls the pre-Gaddafi monarchic regime (1951-1963) which was based on dividing Libya into three regions, Tripolitania in the west, Fezzan in the southwest and Barqa in the east. Yet, the comparison lacks any contextual legitimacy, since taking Libya apart in this way is being done due to structural reasons (an emerging anarchy as a result of the collapsing central authority), not due to merely historical reasons. Here, the fact that Eastern Libya is a semiautonomous *reservoir* of oil might be analytically of a great value.

No stronger argumentation is needed to go along with the idea that Libya has moved from a failing state under Gaddafi’s rule to a failed state by the onset of the uprisings, then swiftly to a collapsed state with the local and regional complications one of which is the increasing vulnerability of Sahel’s transnational security. Significantly, we can briefly consider the following indicators commonly used in the literature, vulnerability to political violence,

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<sup>3</sup> Zartman, William. (1995) *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

security apparatus and/or public services deterioration, vulnerability to external intervention, delegitimization of state, factionalization of elites, group grievance deepening, uneven development increasing, economic decline, arms trade... Beyond these and other indicators, the recent daring as well as challenging self-declaration of an economically vital region to the state's future (re)construction would bear out the claim that Libya is no longer a failed state, it has rather moved *down* to a collapsed state.

### **The Sahel as a Regional Security Complex?**

The Sahel region should be redefined through reconsidering traditional geopolitical implications. With the ever-increasing literature on Regional Security Complexes since Buzan and Wæver's publication of *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (2003)<sup>4</sup>, more thoughtful insights can be drawn from understanding the Sahel as a Regional Security Complex rather than as a merely geopolitical space. However, the conception is to be slightly refined for limited analytical purposes.

For Buzan and Wæver, a Regional Security Complex is "a set of units whose major processes of securitization, de-securitization, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another."<sup>5</sup> Although involving securitization and/or de-securitization processes in Regional Security Complexes theory implies a promising constructivist undertaking; neo-realism, through its focus on the structure of Regional Security Complexes and their patterns of power distribution, still inspires its theoretical understanding as well as its empirical usability. This legitimizes, to a certain extent, the claim that Regional Security Complexes theory represents a middle-ground that bridges the gap between neo-realism and constructivism.

A Regional Security Complex is defined by the existence of a high level of intense security interdependence between the units within the complex<sup>6</sup>. Security interdependence includes different

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<sup>4</sup> Buzan, Barry and Wæver, Ole. (2003) *Regions and powers: the structure of international security*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>5</sup> Barry and Wæver, op. cit., p. 44.

<sup>6</sup> In the case of the Sahel, Algeria, Mali, Mauretania and Niger agreed in April 2010 to cooperate to fight terrorism. Later in September 2010, they created a shared anti-terrorism command in Tamanrasset, South of Algeria

processes of constructing security, whether securitizing or de-securitizing threats and/or methods of dealing with them. Threats should be of a focal value, since “most [of them] travel more easily over short distances than over long ones, [and] insecurity is often associated with proximity.”<sup>7</sup> Shared security (mis)perceptions among the Regional Security Complex’s units are of great importance to such processes. Beyond that, the theory suggests that security at the regional level is always influenced by further interactions at the global as well as at the domestic levels. Interestingly, the theory focuses on the ever-complicating interactions between the violence exercised by the state in order to extend its control over its territory from one hand, and the counter-violence exercised by local loyalties that resist such state control on the other hand. Taking account of that, exacerbated by regional implications, state failure should be taken seriously in defining Regional Security Complexes.

In order to analyze the Sahel region as a Regional Security Complex, it will be necessary to make some complementary remarks through which the concept is assumed to work better. Firstly, regional level of analysis is not claimed to be focal and more important than the other two levels, local and global. However, to a certain extent, the local becomes more crucial than the regional in defining the complex. In the case, for instance, of an emerging collapsed state within the complex, it would be unhelpful to keep analyzing at the regional level, because local elements (faction/religious actors, tribal leaders, armed militia...) would become more valuable.

Secondly, security in the Sahelian Regional Security Complex should be seen as a trans-sectorial phenomenon rather than a set of separable security sectors<sup>8</sup> as defined by Buzan, Wæver and De Wilde.<sup>9</sup> Without such a step, it would be puzzling to keep talking separately about the political sector, by which the authors imply that

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for coordinating purposes. Furthermore, they are working on creating a common intervention force in the next year and a half comprising of at least 25.000 soldiers.

<sup>7</sup> Barry and Wæver, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>8</sup> Buzan, Wæver and De Wilde argue that security issues can be analytically separated into political, military, environmental, societal and economic sectors.

<sup>9</sup> Buzan, Barry. Wæver, Ole. and De Wilde, Japp. (1998) *Security: A new Framework of Analysis*. Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

the state's sovereignty, political structures and ideology are threatened<sup>10</sup>, while the state itself undergoes collapse features. Since threats are constructed, targeted sectors are not rigidly fixed.

Thirdly, security interactions within the Sahelian Regional Security Complex tend to occur in a high level of irregularity which makes sense of the *complex* in dealing with it as a Security Complex. Two cases might be noteworthy here. First, except for Algeria, Mali and Niger, other states' securitizing dynamics play a fundamentally de-regularizing role. Libya under the rule of Muammar Gaddafi, for instance, tended to fuel Tuareg rebellious ambitions towards building a trans-border empire that would encompass Tuareg communities from different states; despite that, the fall of Gaddafi's rule in Libya does not seem to offer different consequences, due to the assumption that state collapse in Libya, where local Tuareg tribes might be nationalized, will just exacerbate the danger of such claims. Besides, Morocco, though geographically less engaged in the Complex and very less influenced by security dynamics in the complex as well, tends to create its own securitization processes through, for example, indicting Western Saharaian refugees camps in Algeria for offering recruiting and training sites to terrorist groups in the region. If we consider the orthodox Regional Security Complex literature, this would seem irrelevant. However, we should rethink the Complex thoroughly in order to overcome such analytical irregularity, because interdependently de-securitizing issues among the complex's units ought to be more significant than how they are securitized. Next, the Sahel will be further defined through elaborating on the two determining characteristics of Regional Security Complexes, its structure and its processes as well.

### **Defining the Complex's Structure: the Sahel as an Unstructured/Ungoverned Complex**

There is difficulty with how to define the Sahel region even geographically. For this reason and others, emphasis in this article will be put on structural rather than geographical determinants. Algeria, for instance, is generally excluded from the geographical definition of the region. Literature tend to adopt CILSS' definition (Permanent Interstate Committee for drought control in the Sahel, in French "*Comité permanente Inter-États de Lutte contre la Sécheresse au*

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 142.

*Sahel*”), in which seven countries are included, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Chad. Still, climate and nature conditions are inadequate for the analytical purposes of this article; at a certain point they may become analytically misleading.

Structural features, that are assumed to be constantly changing, should be analytically more crucial than pre-given geographical characteristics. By the second half of the 2000s for instance, the rise of *Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb* (AQIM) and later the spread of its activities southwards have structurally involved Algeria in the region more than ever and simultaneously marginalized states, such as Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia and Guinea-Bissau from the most relevant debates. Accordingly, for analytical purposes, the Sahelian Regional Security Complex will include Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad, in addition to Algeria and Libya. At specific points of analysis, Morocco will be involved too, through its several relevant interactions respecting Moroccan-Algerian dispute over Western Saharaian issue.

In theory, Regional Security Complexes typology consists of five types, hegemonic, collective security, power restraining, concert, and unstructured.<sup>11</sup> Seeking analytical relevance, focus is to be put on the first as well as the last type.

A *hegemonic* Regional Security Complex “implies that one state has such a preponderance of structural strength that it is capable of creating and maintaining ‘essential rules, norms, and modes of operation for various dimensions of the international system’.”<sup>12</sup> Does the Sahel region represent a hegemonic Regional Security Complex?

In fact, none of the Sahel states has demonstrated such attitudes towards the regional system<sup>13</sup>. Algeria, which had been

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<sup>11</sup> Derrick Frazier and Robert Stewart-Ingersoll, (2010) “Regional powers and security: A framework for understanding order within regional security complexes,” *European Journal of International Relations*. 16 (4) 731–753, pp. 735-737.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 735.

<sup>13</sup> Some literatures argue that before Libya collapsed, the region had witnessed *limited* features of competition between Libya and Algeria seeking hegemony over the region. They both avoided any spread of Tuareg conflict, in Northern Mali, to Tuareg populations on their own territories. Algeria, for instance, tends to keep mediating diplomatically in the conflict and,



assumed to show some exception, has behaved since the inception of uprisings in Libya in a way that confirms the absence of an ambitious regional power to take hegemony over the Complex. Apparently, it kept *carrying out* a non-interventionist stance in an intra-state war with regional consequences, besides the fact that the military operations against Gaddafi's falling regime at the time were essentially interventionist and internationally-legitimized as well. However, by the collapse of Gaddafi's regime and its serious security outcomes in the region, particularly westwards to Algerian borders, Algeria has become invited more and more immediately to deal with the current unstable situation in post-Gaddafi Libya, *at least* to secure its already vulnerable borders against arms and terrorist groups' traffic.

Other states, such as Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Chad, have been undergoing several complicated problems since their independence and seem very less concerned about seeking hegemony over the region. Two remarks are noteworthy concerning the position(s) of these states within the region. First, these states are undergoing very sustainable problems among which identity crisis remains irresolvable, a crisis that still fuels Tuareg rebellious acts throughout much of the region. Nomadic Tuareg tribes rebelling against their national governments have always represented a common source of security threat for these states. Second, and more problematically, the governments of these states are actually unqualified to engage in serious counterterrorism efforts, neither locally nor regionally framed. In fact, involved states' behavior as incapable of participating in such efforts to eradicate terrorism, as an existential threat, refutes the notion that Sahel region tends to represent a hegemonic Complex.

The second type of Regional Security Complexes to be examined is unstructured complexes. An unstructured complex is characterized by the "lack of a consistent means for managing regional security."<sup>14</sup> Buzan and Wæver describe a region as unstructured, "first, where local states have such low capability that *their power does not project much, if at all, beyond their own boundaries*; and, second, where *geographical insulation makes*

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moreover, to show the willingness to undertake heavier financial burdens to maintain stability in the region.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 737.

*interaction difficult* (for example, islands separated by large expanses of ocean).”<sup>15</sup> Buzan and Wæver, as said by Frazier and Stewart-ingersoll, “do not actually designate such areas as security complexes because the lack of interaction within such regions is insufficient for security interdependence.”<sup>16</sup> Unstructuredness in a region, the Sahel as a case, refers to the absence of a well-defined regional structure. However, to define a security structure by focusing on the main units, among which power relations and roles performance take specific patterns, over neglects non-structuralist perspective. Interactions, forming processes, should be worthy of attention and much more concentration<sup>17</sup>.

*Unstructured* complexes will be considered as synonymous to *ungoverned* territories partly in the sense used by Angel Rabasa et al. (2007)<sup>18</sup>. According to Rabasa et al., the term is used to refer to territories that are vulnerable to a “hierarchy of threats.” They may be considered so because they “harbor terrorists affiliated, associated, or inspired by al Qaeda;” or they may not harbor terrorists, but they “can produce humanitarian crises, refugees, epidemics, and famine...”<sup>19</sup> Humanitarian crises very often tend to be of complicated regional consequences. On another hand, Rabasa et al. use a set of variables “to describe the extent to which territories are ungoverned: the level of state penetration of society; the extent to which the state has a monopoly on the use of force; the extent to which the state can control its borders; and whether the state is subject to external intervention by other states.”<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the authors suggest that some of the more

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<sup>15</sup> Buzan and Wæver, op. cit., p. 62. (emphasis added.)

<sup>16</sup> Derrick Frazier and Robert Stewart-ingersoll, op. cit., p. 737.

<sup>17</sup> The debate on to what extent Regional Security Complexes theory might come in useful to bridge the constructivist-neorealist gap is certainly so relevant here.

<sup>18</sup> Rabasa, Angel et al. (2007) *Ungoverned Territories: Understanding and Reducing Terrorism Risks*. United States: RAND Corporation.

<sup>19</sup> The authors mention a third type of threats. They define ungoverned territories “areas containing terrorists, insurgent forces, or criminal networks that, while not part of the global jihadist movement, nevertheless threaten U.S. regional interests and the security of U.S. friends and allies.” Rabasa et al. op. cit., p. 2. We should bear in mind that the authors’ report essentially addresses U.S. policy makers. That is why the current article quotes the report just partly.

<sup>20</sup> Rabasa et al. op. cit., p. 3.

complex variables should be broken down into a number of sub-indicators referred to as “indicators of ungovernability.” The state penetration of society indicator, for instance, “can be measured in terms of the presence or absence of state institutions, the state of the physical infrastructure, the prevalence of an informal or shadow economy, and social and cultural resistance to state penetration.”<sup>21</sup>

Hence, the article argues that Sahel region self-introduces as an *unstructured* Regional Security Complex as well as an *ungoverned* territory. The two conceptions are relevant and, moreover, necessarily indispensable to understanding the case of the Sahel.

### **Defining the Complex’s Processes: Securitization of Collapsed Libya**

Interestingly, the combination between *unstructuredness* and *ungovernability* evidently reflects the combination between *structure* and *processes* that was mentioned earlier in the previous section. However, while unstructuredness implies the absence of a security structure, at least in its neorealist version, ungovernability does not literally imply the absence of security governance; in the words of Rabasa et al., “a territory may in fact be governable, but the states’ apparatus may not be equal to the task.” Therefore, what is referred to as ungovernability is states’ inability or even unwillingness to perform security governance over certain territory(ies), because some groups (like Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka) have shown significant ability to “establish para-statal institutions that are often better organized than those of the formal government.” Ungovernability, moreover, exacerbates when the dissent groups “seek to establish a ‘counter-state’ in the areas under their control.”<sup>22</sup> A similar move in the Sahel has been fueled by continuous organized exclusion of numerous tribes in the north of countries such as Mali and Niger from traditional land use, which makes them tend to fight the government(s), demanding more access to resources.

In Azawad region, particularly Northern Mali<sup>23</sup>, the situation is more serious with Tuaregs’ rebellious movement seeking separationist

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> Tuareg tribes occupy vast regions of Sahel, from Libya, through northern Niger, southern Algeria and northern Mali to Burkina Faso. Still, the largest numbers of them live in northern Mali.

claims. More recently, the collapse of Gaddafi's regime in Libya has led many Tuaregs, who had previously fought in the Libyan army, to establish the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (October 2011), a military organization that includes many Tuareg trans-tribal organizations sharing the same ambition. The movement is taking advantage of its links to Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, the increasing affiliation of highly-trained elements who fought in *Gaddafi's battalions* and more importantly the ever-increasing vulnerability of the ungoverned region to arms and militants traffic.

The particularity of Mali comes from two main factors. First, the greatest bulk of Tuareg populations live inside Malian territories; therefore, Mali is more affected by the rebellious movements with separationist claims than any other neighboring country. Second, Mali, one of the most underdeveloped countries in the world, seems to be the weakest link in any effort to maintain stability in the region. During the last fifty years, it has experienced at least three major rebellious struggles, 1962-1964, 1990-1995 and 2007-2009. Unsurprisingly, Mali and even other Sahel states have been completely ineffective as participants in counter-terrorism efforts, such as Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCTI)<sup>24</sup>.

Another image that should be brought in mind is the non-security destabilizing factors in these states, such as political corruption, economic and financial instability, social violence, organized crime, failing state apparatuses... It is very important to consider that such factors are more destabilizing than security concerns. The latter are just outcomes of the first. This causal combination between the two can adequately explain the poverty of the recent initiatives to fight terrorism in the region. While a poorly-rooted organization, such as AQIM, is being depicted as the most destabilizing factor; attention should be re-drawn to the actual conditions that provide haven to such terrorist organizations.

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<sup>24</sup> The Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCTI) is a United States government Initiative that aims at combating terrorism in Trans-Saharan Africa, through assisting local governments to better control their territories and to prevent huge tracts of largely deserted African territory from becoming a safe haven for terrorist groups." Its membership includes eleven member states: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal.

Besides, more attention has to be paid to the increasing interconnectedness between terrorism in the region and the already active trafficking and smuggling networks of all kinds (drugs, arms, munitions...), and to illegal immigration networks as well. As noted by Annette Lohmann, “the boundaries between organized crime and terrorism become increasingly blurred.”<sup>25</sup> Such networks, in fact, are still gaining more and more existence space due to the dangerously growing unstructuredness/ungovernability of the region. Therefore, indicating digressively the *great* threat caused by AQIM’s access to arsenals coming from Libya, after the collapse of Gaddafi’s regime, seems not to be that *so bad news* as it has been presented so far, since the vulnerability of the region comes primarily from its lack of any basic features of structuredness/governability.

The story how AQIM showed up in the region’s complex lacks some consistency. Literatures tell the story that AQIM is rooted in Algeria, specifically in what is called the *Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat* (GSPC), or even the larger *Groupe Islamiste Armée* (GIA) which had been founded just after the cancellation of 1992’s legislative elections in Algeria. Before AQIM was officially declared as part of Al Qaida International in 2007, the Sahel region had been already in need for established traditions of governance against trafficking and smuggling networks. AQIM did not set the scene for such networks<sup>26</sup>; it is just taking advantage of them. Interestingly, the link between the rise of AQIM and internationalizing security threats in the region has to be adequately problematized. Why AQIM, and then terrorism, is being overstated continuously as an existential threat to states while its actual activities remain almost limited to kidnapping international hostages and bargaining for ransom?

The term ‘existential threat’ represents part of securitization theory, an analytical tool that can help explain the question. Buzan and Wæver define securitization as “the discursive process through which an intersubjective understanding is constructed within a political community to treat something as an existential threat to a

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<sup>25</sup> Annette Lohmann, “Who Owns the Sahara? Old Conflicts, New Menaces: Mali and the Central Sahara between the Tuareg, Al Qaida and Organized Crime.” Nigeria: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Regional Office Abuja, 2011, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> The common discourse has been recently focusing on the threat of AQIM obtaining *sophisticated* weapons pieces and systems as well.

valued referent object, and to enable a call for urgent and exceptional measures to deal with the threat.”<sup>27</sup> The concept is based on two moves. The first one is to transform, through processes of social construction, a normal issue into a security existential threat in order to legitimize ‘urgent and exceptional measures’ to deal with it, and this is the second move that consists securitization. The call for ‘urgent and exceptional measures’ to deal with the *securitized* issue is to be enabled because merely routine measures are supposed to be used to deal with the issue before being securitized. The two moves are politically and socially interlinked to the extent that tracing their boundaries apart becomes more and more difficult as securitization process progresses. As it has been shown earlier, understanding securitization processes is crucial to defining Regional Security Complexes<sup>28</sup> and *vice versa*. This importance comes from the role such regionally interlinked processes play in making the Regional Security Complex *complex*.

In the case of the Sahel, the external besides the internal securitizing dynamics have made the region double-securitized. It is obviously that kidnapping tourists issues have constantly been the access-door for international powers to the region. By July 2010, France, for instance, announced that it would intensify its military support to some Sahelian governments after its failed attempt in collaboration with the Mauritanian army to free a French hostage. So far, France has placed military forces in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. On an another hand, the United States, while still putting pressures to officially place AFRICOM<sup>29</sup> in the region, is already involved through supervising a Malian military training centre in Gao, Northern Mali and many other combat units. Moreover, the United States keeps considerable level of *soft* involvement in the region through The Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCTI) and its ancestor, the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI), an initiative that aimed at strengthening the Sahelian states’ capacity to fight terrorist

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<sup>27</sup> Buzan and Wæver, op. cit., p. 491.

<sup>28</sup> See Barry and Wæver, op. cit., p. 44.

<sup>29</sup> The United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) is one of nine Unified Combatant Commands of the United States Armed Forces, headquartered at Stuttgart, Germany; it is responsible for U.S. military operations and military relations with many African states.

organizations and preventing terrorist groups from establishing bases in the region like those Al Qaida had established in Afghanistan.<sup>30</sup>

However, while securitizing the region and making it part of the allegedly ‘global war on terror’, a rhetoric that has lost much of its luster, there seems to be other noteworthy underlying sources of international interest in it. Beyond overstating security destabilization in the Sahel as a serious threat to ‘international security’, the region seems promising of vital sources worthy of engagement, as a future alternative to Russia for Europe, and to Middle East for the United States as well. The United States, France, China and other Asian countries, as well as Algeria, have been recently trying to control the natural resources in the region “without making much noise about it.”<sup>31</sup> Yet, for Algeria and other African states, it might be of their vital interest for the region to remain destabilized. Interestingly, they would never been enabled to receive international aid, whether in economic or military forms. For Algeria, the United States at least should not provide any further support to Morocco regarding the Western Sahara issue. Besides, military cooperation through counter-terrorism initiatives in the Sahel seems the only good opportunity available so far to remain an alley of the United States<sup>32</sup>. For Morocco, on the other hand, though not closely affected by terrorist threats coming from the Sahel, it tends to take advantage of securitizing terrorism in the Sahel, through employing the rhetoric that Western Saharain refugees’ camps in Algeria are used as recruiting and training sites to terrorist militants.

### **De-securitizing Collapsed Libya?**

Again, the rhetoric claiming that Libya as a collapsed state poses a security threat in the region is supposed to be approachable in the same way above. The hypothesis apparently is as follows, ‘if there is any serious *security* threat in the Sahel region, what post-Gaddafi’s Libya does is just to exacerbate its costs, because the threat has

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<sup>30</sup> Zoubir, Yahia H. (2009) “The United States and Maghreb-Sahel Security.” *International Affairs*. Vol. 85, No. 5, September: 977-995. p. 989.

<sup>31</sup> Lohmann, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>32</sup> In January 2011, the United States president, Barak Obama sent a letter to the Algerian president Abdelaziz Bouteflika renewing the United States’ partnership with Algeria. Interestingly, the latter focused basically on the United States support for the Algerian fight against terror in the Sahel.

already existed. Next, three arguments will be developed in order to defend the correctness of the hypothesis above.

First, Libya under the rule of Gaddafi played a tension-creating role through its historical support for Tuareg's ambition to found their promised Great Tuareg Empire, an empire that would encompass Tuareg communities from different Sahelian states. However, the fall of Gaddafi's rule is not leading to different consequences, which means that there is no clear causal relationship between the two variables, the Tuareg's destabilizing role in the region on the one hand and the Libyan support on the other hand. Apparently, the Tuareg's destabilizing role in the region has not diminished with the absence of Gaddafi's regime.

Second, Algeria's security perceptions as regards the recent uprisings in Libya do not give the impression that it has behaved as if state failure in its very neighborhood might pose a security threat to its southern borders. Maintaining a non-interventionist stance in an intra-state crisis with allegedly regional consequences cannot give a good reason for the rhetoric. Even after Gaddafi's regime began inevitably falling, Algeria had not initiated into any precautionary measures in close cooperation with the rising new regime *vis-à-vis* the future security threats. Surprisingly, Algeria had gone on constantly with this careless stance even after the TNC officially established in Tripoli (2011). The argument made here is that, if collapsed Libya truly brings in *new* security threats to the region, Algeria was supposedly recommended to act swiftly to secure its borders against them, at least to share the burdensome costs of governing the rising insecurity on common borders. Analytically, the Algerian stance is the most significant one in the region in comparison to other Sahelian states; since Algeria is more geopolitically threatened and more mightily competent to act.

Finally, there seems to be much deliberate confusion in respect of setting clear boundaries between the societal and security destabilization caused by state collapse in Libya, on regional level. The involved states should rethink the rising problems in the region in isolation from what is taking place in Libya, because the problems have already existed. As argued elsewhere in this article, they are just exacerbating. The involved states should refrain from securitizing the issue and focus more and more on the deepest societal destabilizing dynamics. What was referred to, earlier in this article, as security



ungovernability of the Sahel should be perceived in a more comprehensive way, casting more light on its societal dimensions. For instance, migrant workers returning home from Libya to neighboring states should be dealt with as an unemployed working force that must be integrated in development endeavors more than as likely recruitment sources for the activities of AQIM. In fact, de-securitizing such a phenomenon, just to exemplify, would guide the involved states to de-militarize the aid they offer/receive in order to fight terrorism in the region.

### **Conclusion :**

The purpose of this article has been to rethink the rhetoric that post-Gaddafi's Libya poses new security threats to the Sahel region, even with its turning to a dramatically collapsed state. It started by making an argument for analyzing Libya as a collapsed rather than as a failed state, a case (state failure) that seemed to be evident even under Gaddafi's rule. Then, the article moved to suggest that synthesizing the contributions made by Buzan and Wæver on the one hand and Rabasa et al. on the other hand can help understand the region as an ungoverned Regional Security Complex, which can prove again to be helpful in constructing analytical linkage between state-collapse and exacerbating the ungovernability of the Complex. While the Complex's structure has been argued to be characterized by 'unstructuredness', what Rabasa et al. refer to as 'ungovernability'; the Complex's processes interestingly, as it has been argued for, consist mainly of an intensive securitization of the region's unstructuredness and, thereby, of collapsed Libya, since the latter just increases the former. Seemingly, securitizing collapsed Libya has not been such a new *speech act*; rather, it is just an extension of an old one, securitizing the entire poorly-governed Sahel.

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