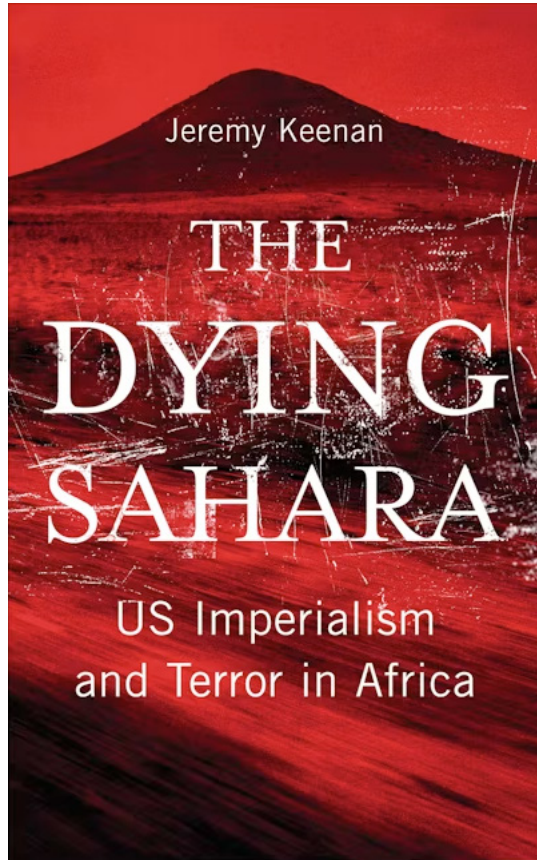


THE DYING SAHARA
US IMPERIALISM AND TERROR IN AFRICA

JEREMY KEENAN

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REVIEW BY: AYOUB EL ALAOUİ

PHD STUDENT, UNIVERSITY OF PÉCS, HUNGARY

E-MAIL: ELALAOUI.AYOUB@PTE.HU



The Sahel region is a desert belt in Africa stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea, crossing or including parts of Mauritania, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad, and Sudan. The region is facing numerous issues ranging from climate change, desertification, widespread conflict, to food security. The regional Sahel Alliance aimed to tackle these issues; however, a series of military coups combined with rising terrorist activities led to the creation of another alliance, the Alliance of Sahel States (ASS), in 2023, including Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. The Sahel region is marked by a historical struggle with colonization, regional conflicts, and terrorism, and stands as a focal point of intricate challenges. Despite their seemingly disparate nature, a closer examination reveals the interconnectedness of these issues, stemming from either natural developments or deliberate actions. In his comprehensive work, “The Dying Sahara: US Imperialism and Terror in Africa” (Keenan, 2013), the author delves into a detailed exploration of terrorism in the Sahel region, aiming to unveil concealed truths derived from his research. Keenan’s analysis explicitly delineates how certain countries orchestrate terrorism in the region as a means of securing economic and military dominance.

“The Dying Sahara: US Imperialism and Terror in Africa” addresses the ongoing turbulent tensions in the Sahel region. Keenan divides the book into 20 chapters, each dedicated to a specific theme, conundrum, or perspective. Despite addressing different aspects, the chapters are interconnected and cohesive, contributing to the author’s overall message. By organizing the book into multiple chapters and sub-chapters, Keenan effectively addresses the specificities of each issue without losing the overarching narrative. Additionally, the chapters appear to follow a chronological order, guiding the reader through the timeline of the relevant and crucial conundrums that have impacted the Sahel region. While the book predominantly focuses on external interference from the US and, to a lesser extent, Europe, a significant portion of the content is dedicated to the African nations themselves that form part of the Sahel puzzle.

Although European countries are not directly implicated, Keenan’s emphasis predominantly rests on the United States, shedding light on the multifaceted reasons underpinning its presence in the region. Nevertheless, France, as a primary and key player in the overall situation of most African states, is also addressed in relation to Uranium, its monopoly, and its goals in the region. The chapters dedicated to France’s involvement remain relevant, as tensions between Niger and France persist due to the latter’s greed for Uranium.

Jeremy Keenan, in “The Dying Sahara: US Imperialism and Terror in Africa,” compares the situation with El Para to the Bay of Pigs incident in Cuba (p. 5). On page 92 of the same book, Keenan explains the ongoing Tuareg rebellions and sheds light on the connection between these rebellions and the infinite exploitation of Uranium in Niger and Mali by international companies, including French companies (p. 92).

Within the pages of the book, the author skillfully presents a tapestry of evidence, claims, and statements that collectively suggest the fabrication of terrorism in the region, ostensibly geared toward achieving economic and military hegemony.

While the focus primarily centers on the US and the Bush administration as central figures, Algeria emerges as a significant player in this intricate geopolitical landscape. Moreover, Keenan meticulously weaves together the threads of Tuareg rebellions, tourist kidnappings, and widespread acts of terror, establishing links to these two nations. Despite occasional concerns about the overstated nature of the evidence, it is important to note that the author relies on the art of connecting the dots rather than providing substantial presentations. On a positive note, Keenan's exploration extends beyond a mere temporal snapshot from the 1980s to contemporary times. Through an examination of various rebellions in the Sahel region and the corresponding responses of different governments, the author successfully paints a comprehensive picture, offering a nuanced understanding of the prevailing themes in the region. Keenan further focuses heavily on Algeria and its secret services, relating those to AQIM and providing valuable information about the orchestrated terrorism pushed by the US and assisted by Algeria.

The author highlights a series of events, managing to relate them to Algeria's aspirations in the Sahel and its international goals. Although Libya, under Muammar Gaddafi, was also keen on gaining leverage over the Sahel region, it is only mentioned as a counterpart to Algeria or a country that managed to threaten Algerian ambitions. Algeria's alleged orchestrated terrorism, the fabrication of El Para's death, the creation of AQIM, and its efforts to destabilize neighboring countries for the goal of having the upper hand mirror the situation with the Polisario Front and the relationship with the other non-Sahel region neighbor, Morocco.

Additionally, the book addresses the rebellious situation in Mali as part of this sequence of events in the Sahel. Keenan notes the Economic Community of West African States' (ECOWAS) willingness to seek the UN and intervene militarily in Mali. However, this would be an infringement of international law, as the organization would need to be invited by the country in question to intervene militarily – a condition not met. Although the African Union (AU) does include an article enabling other member countries to intervene should the need arise in any of the other member countries, Keenan fails to point out the necessary legal framework governing this dilemma (p. 247).

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The book is a masterpiece. The author successfully incorporates crucial details, important information, and relevant factors concerning a series of multi-layered and multi-faceted issues affecting the Sahel region. The author's ability to address the numerous Tuareg rebellions, the coup d'état in Mali, and the agendas of the US, France, Algeria, and Libya, while providing comprehensive value, is impressive.

However, this publication is not without its shortcomings. One might argue that all chapters somehow relate to the US agenda, and the evidence provided is a mere fabrication of the mind. While it is true that some information is not clearly proven but rather referred to as exclusive insights obtained by the author, Keenan still manages to present a series of undisputed pieces of evidence supporting many of his arguments. Additionally, a notable drawback is the frequent reference to the first volume, Keenan, J. (2009) "The Dark Sahara: America's War on Terror in Africa," without sufficient elucidation (Tarrosy, 2014). This presents a challenge for readers seeking a standalone comprehension, as the main ideas are often intertwined with the prior volume. In several chapters, the book seems to lean heavily on its predecessor, lacking the autonomy to stand alone and provide a self-contained narrative.

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