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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 24-12-2019	2. REPORT TYPE Final Report	3. DATES COVERED (From - To) 1-Sep-2017 - 31-Aug-2019
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4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Final Report: Student Activism and Religious Movements in Sahelian Universities	5a. CONTRACT NUMBER W911NF-17-1-0470
	5b. GRANT NUMBER
	5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER 611103

6. AUTHORS	5d. PROJECT NUMBER
	5e. TASK NUMBER
	5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAMES AND ADDRESSES University of Florida - Gainesville 219 Grinter Hall PO Box 115500 Gainesville, FL 32611 -5500	8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
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9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS (ES) U.S. Army Research Office P.O. Box 12211 Research Triangle Park, NC 27709-2211	10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) ARO
	11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S) 72267-LS-MRI.1

12. DISTRIBUTION AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.
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13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views, opinions and/or findings contained in this report are those of the author(s) and should not be construed as an official Department of the Army position, policy or decision, unless so designated by other documentation.

14. ABSTRACT

15. SUBJECT TERMS

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:	17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	15. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Leonardo Villalon
a. REPORT UU	b. ABSTRACT UU	c. THIS PAGE UU	19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER 352-392-2131

RPPR Final Report
as of 02-Jan-2020

Agency Code:

Proposal Number: 72267LSMRI

Agreement Number: W911NF-17-1-0470

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DUNS Number: 969663814

EIN: 596002052

Report Date: 30-Nov-2019

Date Received: 24-Dec-2019

Final Report for Period Beginning 01-Sep-2017 and Ending 31-Aug-2019

Title: Student Activism and Religious Movements in Sahelian Universities

Begin Performance Period: 01-Sep-2017

End Performance Period: 31-Aug-2019

Report Term: 0-Other

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Distribution Statement: 1-Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

STEM Degrees: 0

STEM Participants: 0

Major Goals: This project was designed to build on an initial Minerva Research Initiative project (2012-16) which examined the socio-political factors affecting the potential for (in)stability in six African countries—Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Chad—stretching across the arid Sahelian region. Among the least developed on earth, these predominately Muslim countries have raised significant concern in recent years, primarily due to the activities of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and other jihadi groups. Political instability, notably the collapse of Mali's political system in 2012, underlined the salience of questions about the resilience of Sahelian states and their capacity to ensure the social order and effective governance that serves as a bulwark against radical movements. Our initial project sought to understand the complicated relations among varied and myriad factors affecting the prospects for stability. It also sought two major longer-term goals: 1. To institutionalize an on-going university-based research team focused on this crucial region; and 2. To train a new generation of young scholar-practitioners with deep knowledge and expertise on the Sahel.

The Sahel region has been especially marked by dynamic religious change in the past two decades, visible in the proliferation of new religious movements of varying ideologies, and these have emerged as key actors shaping politics in these countries. Over the course of the initial Minerva fieldwork we were struck with the importance of religiously-based student movements on university campuses, a phenomenon that had yet to receive any serious scholarly or analytic attention. These movements, we believe, merited particular attention given their omnipresence in campus life, their fluidity, their impact on shaping the attitudes of emerging elites, and their reflection of broader regional dynamics. The primary goal of this current (add-on) project, then, was to build on the research carried out on our initial Minerva grant via an in-depth comparative examination of the campuses of national universities in all six countries, so as to better understand the extent, form, organization, activities, and likely evolution of religious student movements in the region.

Given other funding support for the project covered by the University of Florida, we requested and were granted a re-budgeting and no-cost extension for an additional year of work (9/1/18 to 8/31/19). The two main goals of this additional period were: 1. To build on the work of the first year by editing and finalizing for publication a book in two versions—French and English—on the topic of student activism and religion on university campuses in the Sahel; and 2. To build directly on this project by establishing the baseline for a longer-term related research project on secularism and the state in the Sahel. The debates about religious movements on university campuses which this project analyzed, as well as about the relationship of religion and education in schools in the region, have been largely framed in terms of the question of the appropriateness of the French conception of secularism known as "laïcité". To address this question we proposed to invite scholars from each Sahelian country to the University of Florida to collaborate on the project, as well as to help organize and participate in an workshop/symposium on the

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topic in Senegal.

Accomplishments: For the first initial phase of this grant on religious movements on university campuses, we assembled a research team including a university-based consulting scholar from each country, drawing on our strong network of scholars and collaborators across the region. An initial workshop brought the entire team (P.I. Villalón, project coordinator Bodian, and the country specialist consulting scholars) together at the West African Research Center (WARC) in Dakar, Senegal in October 2017. Complementing this workshop, we were able to collectively carry out field visits to the Université Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar, and several religious sites relevant to research. We were also able to exchange with colleagues at the Center for the Study of Religions of the Université Gaston Berger in St. Louis, Senegal, at a one-day conference at which our team presented their country cases. Overall the first workshop allowed us to elaborate a detailed research protocol and a template for the in-depth analytic research reports on the dynamics of religious student movements in each country.

Following the visits, project coordinator M. Bodian (based in Senegal) visited all five of the other project countries. In each he visited the universities and other research sites, and worked closely with the consulting scholars on their respective reports, to ensure comparability and high quality for the final outputs.

The resulting reports were then presented at a conference and workshop held at the University of Florida in April 2018. This included both a public conference at which each team member presented the drafts of papers that had been previously submitted, and a closed workshop for purposes of giving feedback and suggestions for revisions before the submission of final drafts. Although one participant was unable to attend in person due to illness, he was able to participate via Skype. The entire conference/workshop very successfully met our goals.

In the second phase of the project (made possible by the change of scope and no-cost extension), the papers were significantly revised and fully edited for publication. For various reasons the chapter contribution on Chad presented special challenges, and we were able to recruit a colleague from a Francophone university to join our initially recruited colleague from an Arabophone university to finalize this chapter, very successfully. The book has been contracted for publication and the French version has been submitted. The English translation for the entire book is nearing completion and we anticipate that the editing will be finalized and the manuscript submitted in the next few months.

The second goal of the no-cost extension phase of the project—namely to establish the bases for a collaborative research project on the politics of debates about secularism in the region—was also successfully completed. In May 2019, we brought together scholars from all six Sahelian countries for a weeklong workshop followed by a public symposium at the University of Florida. Subsequently, and in collaboration with the West African Research as well as the Center for the Study of Religions of the Université Gaston Berger, the team met again along with four other University of Florida members of the Sahel Research group in Dakar, Senegal, for a follow up workshop to plan the project and publications on the topic. These efforts are currently in progress.

Training Opportunities: While this project was not designed to specifically include a training component, in fact the activities carried out have had significant training impact in two ways:

1. Our West African colleagues in both phases have benefitted in terms of professional development and research capacity-building thanks to the very hands-on workshops and mentoring by scholars from the UF Sahel Research Group
2. Our workshops and symposia were all intentionally designed so as to include participation by younger scholars, notably graduate students affiliated with the University of Florida Sahel Research Group as well as graduate students from the Université Gaston Berger for the Dakar workshops.

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Results Dissemination: The primary format for disseminating the specific results of this project will be the forthcoming book, in two versions:

Villalón, Leonardo A. and Mamadou Bodian, eds. *Entre le Savoir et le Culte : Activisme et mouvements religieux dans les universités du Sahel*. Amalion publishers, Dakar, Senegal. Forthcoming 2020.

Villalón, Leonardo A. and Mamadou Bodian, eds. *Between Learning and Piety: Student Activism and Religious Movements in Sahelian Universities*. Amalion publishers, Dakar, Senegal. Forthcoming 2020.

Project results were also directly disseminated in the public symposia organized both at the University of Florida and in Senegal at the West African Research Center in Dakar as well as the Centre d'études des religions of the Université Gaston Berger in St. Louis, Senegal.

More broadly, this research, building on the initial Minerva Initiative grant, continues to inform a wide range of scholarly and policy publications, as well as talks and lectures in both academic and government and policy venues, by both the PI and by the other research team members. The three core researchers of the initial Minerva grant, all of whom remained involved to varying degrees in the extended project, have completed their PhD degrees and are working in important policy-related settings directly related to the Sahel. Mamadou Bodian is senior researcher for the Sahel at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in Sweden; Ibrahim Yahaya Ibrahim is senior analyst for the Sahel at the International Crisis Group; and Daniel Eizenga is a Research Fellow working on the Sahel for the Africa Center for Strategic Studies of the US National Defense University. The Minerva Initiative grant and the follow-on Army Research Office grant have been, we believe, highly effective in their most fundamental goals of building a pool of deep expertise on a crucially important but little understood region of the world, and to disseminate that knowledge to both academic and to government and policy circles.

Honors and Awards: Nothing to Report

Protocol Activity Status:

Technology Transfer: Nothing to Report

PARTICIPANTS:

Participant Type: PD/PI

Participant: Leonardo Alfonso Villalon

Person Months Worked: 12.00

Project Contribution:

International Collaboration:

International Travel:

National Academy Member: N

Other Collaborators:

Funding Support:

Participant Type: Co-Investigator

Participant: Mamadou Bodian

Person Months Worked: 12.00

Project Contribution:

International Collaboration:

International Travel:

National Academy Member: N

Other Collaborators:

Funding Support:

Participant Type: Co-Investigator

Participant: Magloire Somé

Person Months Worked: 10.00

Project Contribution:

Funding Support:

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International Collaboration:
International Travel:
National Academy Member: N
Other Collaborators:

Participant Type: Co-Investigator
Participant: Koudbi Desiré Kaboré
Person Months Worked: 10.00
Project Contribution:
International Collaboration:
International Travel:
National Academy Member: N
Other Collaborators:

Funding Support:

Participant Type: Co-Investigator
Participant: Mamadou Lamine Dembele
Person Months Worked: 10.00
Project Contribution:
International Collaboration:
International Travel:
National Academy Member: N
Other Collaborators:

Funding Support:

Participant Type: Co-Investigator
Participant: Mamadou Ballo
Person Months Worked: 6.00
Project Contribution:
International Collaboration:
International Travel:
National Academy Member: N
Other Collaborators:

Funding Support:

Participant Type: Co-Investigator
Participant: Elemine ould Mohamed Baba Moutapha
Person Months Worked: 10.00
Project Contribution:
International Collaboration:
International Travel:
National Academy Member: N
Other Collaborators:

Funding Support:

Participant Type: Co-Investigator
Participant: Abdoulaye Sounaye
Person Months Worked: 10.00
Project Contribution:
International Collaboration:
International Travel:
National Academy Member: N
Other Collaborators:

Funding Support:

Participant Type: Co-Investigator
Participant: Abakar Modou Walar
Person Months Worked: 10.00

Funding Support:

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Project Contribution:
International Collaboration:
International Travel:
National Academy Member: N
Other Collaborators:

Participant Type: Co-Investigator

Participant: Ladiba Gondeu

Person Months Worked: 10.00

Funding Support:

Project Contribution:
International Collaboration:
International Travel:
National Academy Member: N
Other Collaborators:

Participant Type: Co-Investigator

Participant: Bakary Sangaré

Person Months Worked: 6.00

Funding Support:

Project Contribution:
International Collaboration:
International Travel:
National Academy Member: N
Other Collaborators:

Participant Type: Co-Investigator

Participant: Benjamin Soares 2731536

Person Months Worked: 12.00

Funding Support:

Project Contribution:
International Collaboration:
International Travel:
National Academy Member: N
Other Collaborators:

Participant Type: Co-Investigator

Participant: Abdourahmane Idrissa

Person Months Worked: 6.00

Funding Support:

Project Contribution:
International Collaboration:
International Travel:
National Academy Member: N
Other Collaborators:

Participant Type: Co-Investigator

Participant: Remadji Hoinathy

Person Months Worked: 6.00

Funding Support:

Project Contribution:
International Collaboration:
International Travel:
National Academy Member: N
Other Collaborators:

Participant Type: Co-Investigator

Participant: Abdourahmane Seck

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Person Months Worked: 6.00

Project Contribution:
International Collaboration:
International Travel:
National Academy Member: N
Other Collaborators:

Funding Support:

Participant Type: Co-Investigator

Participant: Fiona Mc Laughlin 2731536

Person Months Worked: 6.00

Project Contribution:
International Collaboration:
International Travel:
National Academy Member: N
Other Collaborators:

Funding Support:

Participant Type: Co-Investigator

Participant: Frederick Madore

Person Months Worked: 6.00

Project Contribution:
International Collaboration:
International Travel:
National Academy Member: N
Other Collaborators:

Funding Support:

Participant Type: Co-Investigator

Participant: Alioune Sow 2731536

Person Months Worked: 6.00

Project Contribution:
International Collaboration:
International Travel:
National Academy Member: N
Other Collaborators:

Funding Support:

"Nothing to report in the uploaded pdf (see accomplishments)"