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## SOW THE WIND, REAP THE WHIRLWIND

### Geopolitical Consequences of the Libyan War

*By the summer of 2012, the CSDP (Common Security and Defence Policy) - i.e. the operations undertaken by the EU - seemed to have picked up again after a decline since 2008. In June 2012, the decision was made to launch the EUAVSEC mission in South Sudan, while on 16 July 2012, the EU reinforced the ATALANTA maritime control, or more precisely, "piracy hunting" mission with a land pillar in the Horn of Africa, the EUCAP Nestor - Somalia mission. In July, the EU also launched another - at first glance well-disguised - mission in Niger, which runs under the name **EUCAP Sahel Niger**.<sup>1</sup>*

*Below, we will present the broader context of this mission, the geopolitical context of the events in Niger and Mali, and the French interest.<sup>2</sup>*

The EUCAP Sahel Niger mission's official stated objective is to support Nigerien security forces against terrorist networks that have been strengthened in the context of the Libyan war. The EU mission in Niger suggests a kind of "neighborly love", which was less important to the EU in the context of the genocide-stricken Darfur (there is no significant oil reserve there). But in the context of Chad (2008: EUFOR Chad/CAR) - where the corrupt-antidemocratic, but pro-French Déby had to be saved, against not freedom fighters, but "terrorist rebels" - humanitarian sensitivity also came to the fore... So the "good old" terrorism card has come up again, which can always be pulled out when the international justification for an intervention would otherwise be more difficult.

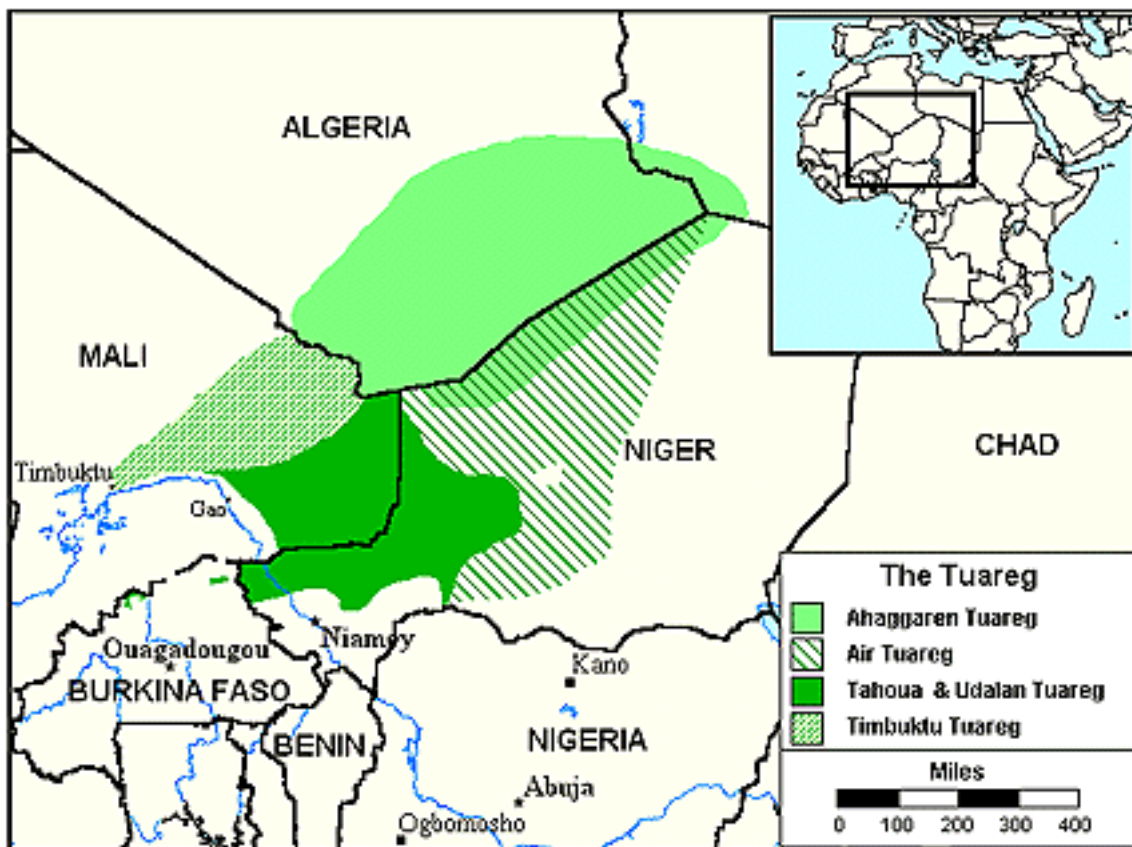
Until then, the story is true that by weakening Libya and Algeria - whose word Sarkozy says we should pay most attention to, it is another matter that he has been politicizing against Algeria's interests all along - as relatively stronger states, Al Qaeda's African wing (AQMI) has become much stronger, especially in the Mali-Niger-Libya region. The AQMI, led by Abu Mussab Abdel Wadoud (or Abdelmalek Droukdel), is strongly linked to the Algerian security services and other Algerian armed movements, which we will not discuss here.

According to official estimates, AQMI has 300-400 members, but their exact number is difficult to estimate because they are constantly recruiting mainly from the young (even teenage) male population in the Sahel region and their area of operations extends from Senegal through Mauritania, Mali, Algeria and Niger.

<sup>1</sup> The CSDP operations CERPESC database is located here : [https://europavarietas.org/csdp\\_new/index.php/csdp-operations/](https://europavarietas.org/csdp_new/index.php/csdp-operations/)

<sup>2</sup> « Sow the wind, reap the whirlwind » (Holy Bible / Hosea 8.7)

According to local experts, at least There are currently about 1,000 members, mostly from Mauritania, who are also in tension with their Algerian counterparts. It is a widespread but relatively small organization, which is rejected by the vast majority of the local population.



Tuaregs' area of distribution - Source: <https://www.prayway.com/unreached/peoplegroups/36.html>

The African wing of Al-Qaeda differs from its parent organization in one important aspect: it engages in kidnapping on an industrial scale - targeting Western tourists - and increasingly professionally. In 2003, they collected ransoms of 5 million euros, and this has now reached the order of 100 million euros. (Nota bene, the "official" French part of the Libyan intervention cost 300 million euros.)

In addition, they also have the technical background at their disposal, i.e. machines with which they can check the authenticity of banknotes. In their area of operation, many local residents work as intermediaries between the kidnappers and representatives of Western states in exchange for a completely "decent" income. The losses are much more significant for the tourism of the states in the region: the Dakar Rally has been moved from the continent<sup>3</sup>, and e.g. Tourism has also completely ceased in Mali. It is therefore clear that by eliminating elements that, although corrupt and dictatorial, still have some kind of state-organizing functions, AQMI is only growing stronger in the region.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Türke A. I.: « A Dakar Rally biztonsági kockázatai Afrikában » < Dakar Rally security risks in Africa >, *EuVI Elemzések*, Vol II. N° 4., April 25, 2010., <https://europavarietas.org/files/turkedakar.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Bouazza, Nadera - Cherruau, Pierre: « AQMI et ses rançons à 100 millions d'euros », *Slate.fr*, February 1, 2012. <https://www.slateafrique.com/83421/aqmi-et-ses-rancons-100-millions-deuros-mali-touareg>

### Sarkozy: "one of AQMI's best agents"

Just as the French research institute IRIS wrote about Bush a few years ago as “Al-Qaeda's best agent”<sup>5</sup>, former French President Nicolas Sarkozy can be considered (one of) AQMI's best patrons, since AQMI benefits at least as much from the weakening of Libya as Al-Qaeda from post-Saddam Iraq.

The removal of Gaddafi (who according to the signs /allegations/ financed Sarkozy's 2007 presidential campaign with significant sums of money) essentially turned off a strong state factor in the region, and Libya broke up into several parts and embarked on a path of disintegration. AQMI benefited most from this in the southwestern part of the country, which acquired a significant stockpile of weapons and surface-to-air missiles in the chaos, which it was able to smuggle mainly to Mali. As a "bonus", Algeria has also faced continuous problems due to the increased military and smuggling activity on its southeastern border, and in vain has it asked the West to handle the situation more sensibly...

Of course, the secession process in the region is not unique and has not started recently. It is enough to refer to the Western Sahara (POLISARIO)-Morocco or the Sudan (Khartoum)-South Sudan (Juba) secessions.



AQMI's areas of activity - Source: <https://www.algerie1.com/actualite/sahel-lalgerie-et-le-niger-decides-a-combattre-ensemble-le-terrorisme>

<sup>5</sup> Boniface, Pascal: « Premières leçons de la guerre d'Irak » In: Boniface, Pascal (dir.) : *L'Année stratégique 2005*. Paris: IRIS, 2005. 31.

### **The Tuareg issue in the region**

The French policy of Sarkozy (and its Western allies) has not only done AQMI a great favor, but also the Tuareg and their allies. The Tuareg network is almost as wide as the AQMI network, but here it is a different and much more ancient ethnic group.

The Tuareg (Amazigh or Berber from an ethno-linguistic point of view) are a nomadic-migratory, very heterogeneous horse-riding people, consisting of approximately 1.5 million people. Of these, 550,000 live in Mali, 800,000 in Niger, 50,000 in Algeria, and the rest in Burkina Faso and Libya.

Just as the artificial borders of the colonial system do not respect ethnic relations, so this constantly migrating people - living in constant conflict with farmers - do not respect borders either. This is the zone where the Arab Maghreb meets the black ethnic group of Sub-Saharan Africa: Mauritania - Mali (and Azawad) - Niger - Sudan - South Sudan...

The Tuaregs are, on the one hand, surrounded by a kind of mythical respect in the Western world, and on the other hand, even the colonizers were able to exploit their alliance with them against the former empires they had been fighting for centuries. In the 20th century, the Tuareg uprisings of 1916-1917 (Niger), 1962-63 (Mali) and 1990-1995 (Mali and Niger) were the most significant. In the 21st century, in 2006-2009, Tuareg secessionist movements intensified again in the two countries, contributing to the further weakening of the central administration.

### **The second domino also falls: the disintegration of Mali**

This spark ignited in April 2012, but before I get to that, we would like to point out that in 2011 it was already expected that the Tuareg uprising could break out again due to the above factors, if someone takes the lead again.

The Tuaregs demand the independence of North-Eastern Mali (Azawad region: Timbuktu, Kidal and Gao districts), while they are essentially not the only ethnic group in the region, and according to some, they are not even in the majority. Mali, with a population of 15 million, has only 1.122 million inhabitants living in the region, but of these, only 500-700,000 are estimated to be Tuareg, although there are mixed marriages. The structure of Tuareg society (caste system) is fundamentally different from the others. It says a lot about the image of the Tuareg in the region that the people living with them simply call them "the cattle thieves".

Between 2002 and 2004, President Amadou Toumani Touré (nicknamed ATT) appointed a Tuareg as Prime Minister of Mali (Ahmed Mohamed Ag Hamani) but this only made the situation worse: the majority grumbled, and the Tuareg considered Ag Hamani to be a simple traitor.<sup>6</sup>

Related to this is the general problem of the region, the half-to-third implementation of DDR/DDRRR (i.e. resettlement and disarmament of fighters) projects. In other words, in 1992, 1996, and 2006, the "reintegration" of the defeated Tuareg elements simply meant that they were included in the army. This made the army completely heterogeneous and unreliable - the result of which was evident in the defense of Northern Mali. The leaders of the Tuareg uprising were unable to accept that they were only conscripted into the army at a lower rank (as corporal), and on the other hand, the "veterans" looked askance at the

<sup>6</sup> Vianney, Jean-Marie: « Le Mali et les ficelles du diable », *ACP Congo*, August 2, 2012, <https://acpcongo.com/>

extraordinary advancement of some Tuaregs, who were not even able to master the French command language.

Here we must make a brief digression into the history of Mali. We have already mentioned above that for centuries the smaller and larger settled civilizations of the region had been opposed to the horse-nomadic Tuareg population. French colonialism established the Upper Senegal-Niger colony in the region at the end of the 19th century, and then within French West Africa (AOF) that was born in 1902, Mali became known as French Sudan by 1920.<sup>7</sup>

When the AOF was being transformed, the supporters of the federation (French Sudan, Mali, Senegal, Burkina Faso: then Upper Volta, and Benin: then Dahomey) initially only came into disagreement with the rich Ivory Coast. French politics began its disruptive activities in the background, since an excessively strong grouping, desiring excessive independence, would not have served its interests in the region.

On the other hand, the distrust of each other among the colonies that had gained more and more sovereignty since 1945, and especially since 1956, also grew. Mainly due to the latter, Mali did not count (there) and still does not count as a primary interest of French politics in the region.

In the first months of the short-lived Mali Federation (1959-1960), Upper Volta and Dahomey seceded - with some French encouragement. But by 1960, the soured relationship between Senegal and Mali also led to a break.

Between 1960 and 1968, the new, independent Republic of Mali followed the path of socialism - alongside a "non-aligned foreign policy". French garrisons were gradually expelled from the country, and relations with France became completely sour. Until 1968, when Moussa Traoré (1968-1991), who overthrew President Modibo Keita, tacitly enjoyed the support of French Africa policy, while the latter became a "silent partner" in financing French election costs.<sup>8</sup>

From 1992 onwards, the country began a more intensive than average democratization - strictly speaking only in comparison with the region. For example, President Konaré not jockeyed as well as his Nigerien colleague. He really resigned after 2 presidential terms - which is a rare exception in the history of African politics.

The Tuareg separatist movement had been growing stronger since the 1960s. President Touré, who had experimented with a Tuareg prime minister, was removed from power in a coup on March 22, 2012 - just a month before the elections. With the election of ATT in 2007, French relations with the former French colony were again severely curtailed, primarily with relations with China, the United States and the states of the Arabian Peninsula coming to the fore.

And this coup gave the final push to the Tuareg separatist movement, which by then had two main allies, the MNLA and Ansar Dine. The movement - which had been accelerating again since the beginning of 2012 and was attacking cities and military garrisons in the northern region - declared on April 6, 2012 (in the midst of complete internal political chaos) the independence of the Islamic Republic of Azawad. (Capital: Gao, 1,295,000 inhabitants, area 822,000 km<sup>2</sup>, i.e. about 1.5 the size of France). However, this was not recognized by any international actor.

The Bamako coup plotters led by Amadou Haya Sanogo are not in a much better position. They are somewhat strangely recognized by the international community (and especially the local unity organization, CEDAO) as the legitimate power at the head of Mali. (Captain Sanogo was very easily persuaded to hand over power.) However, all this only on the condition that Cheick Modibo Diarra (Prime Minister since April

<sup>7</sup> Until 1921 with Burkina Faso

<sup>8</sup> Mali, Université Laval, <https://www.tlfg.ulaval.ca/> (Accessed: January 9, 2012)

12, 2012, previously President of Parliament, President of Microsoft Africa) forms a popular front-type unity government with the main parties of the Malian political scene by August 1. (The fact that the parties do not recognize each other has not bothered many diplomats so far.)<sup>9</sup> Interim President Dioncounda Traoré and Prime Minister Diarra are in no position to rush seriously to protect the northern territories. In exchange for the "popular front government", ECOWAS in addition to international recognition promised the putschists the pacification of the northern areas (!)...

They first imagined implementing this with a 600-strong contingent (MICEMA) against the professionally equipped AQMI and Tuareg units... In August 2012, the bid was for 3,300 people, with French logistical support. However, they cannot move without UN Security Council authorization. The authorization has been delayed since April, and it seems that the great powers are trying to take advantage of the situation "in other ways". For our part, we do not expect much good from the poorly equipped and corrupt ECOWAS units. It is not by chance that they called - or rather decoded - their ECOMOG contingent in connection with their intervention in Liberia as "Every Car or Moving Object Gone".<sup>10</sup>

Another interesting factor is that, completely ignoring the Brahimi principles, ECOWAS would recruit military units from rival and neighboring countries, despite the protests of the Malian opposition. The Nigerian opposition, for example, protests because their military units are proving insufficient to establish stability in their own country.

Before we turn to the maneuvering of the great powers, we need to clarify the situation in the "new country", Azawad.

### **Azawad: Will it follow the example of Western Sahara or South Sudan?**

The MNLA (*Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad: National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad*) is therefore the most important military-political factor in North-Eastern Mali. On the one hand, it is made up of old Tuareg fighters who returned from Libya, and on the other hand, fighters from the Tuareg independence movements of Northern Mali.

The MNLA is divided into two parts:

- The MNA (People's Movement of Azawad) is a political group created in November 2010, which "peacefully" seeks to assert the historical rights of the "Azawad people".
- The MTNM (Tuareg Movement of Northern Mali), which was the main leader of the Tuareg uprisings of 2006-2009.

The two movements merged under the name MNLA on October 16, 2011, and the main goal was the independence of the Azawad region (Timbuktu, Kidai and Gao districts), while the Tuaregs are only in the majority on the northern side of the Niger River. From the beginning of 2012, they gradually intensified their attacks, and on March 31, 2012, the central government effectively ceded the area to the rebels. Timbuktu, the last Malian city, fell on April 1.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The deadline passed, ECOWAS gave another 10 days.

<sup>10</sup> « La Force en attente de la Cédéao prépare son déploiement au Mali », RFI, June 13, 2012. <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20120613-force-attente-cedeao-prepare-son-deploiement-mali>

<sup>11</sup> Yidir, Plantade: « "La nouvelle géopolitique post-Kadhafi explique les problèmes actuels" au Mali Entretien avec Bernard Lugan, historien spécialiste de l'Afrique. », *Le Monde*, March 12, 2012. [https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2012/03/12/la-nouvelle-geopolitique-post-kadhafi-explique-les-problemes-actuels-au-mali\\_1652756\\_3212.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2012/03/12/la-nouvelle-geopolitique-post-kadhafi-explique-les-problemes-actuels-au-mali_1652756_3212.html)

The nomadic MNLA would be unable to organize a new state on its own. However, it could find a solution to this problem through its allies: The movement's main partner is the radical Islamist movement called Ançar dine ("Defenders of the Faith"), which is also led by a Tuareg, Iagh Agh Ali, the leader of the Tuareg uprisings of the 1990s. The cross-border movement (Mali, Algeria, Nigeria) is based on the Ifora tribe and is based in the southern Tuareg territories.

The members of the AD grow long beards and wave black and white flags. However, their goal is somewhat different from the Tuaregs: they set themselves the goal of re-Islamizing the whole of Mali according to a strict interpretation of sharia. Not even Azawad independence was among their goals and the April 6 declaration of independence was rejected at the time. Being an opportunistic organization, they have reconciled themselves with the status quo for the time being. The birth of Azawad ultimately helps them to radically reform the region, so they sided with the MNLA. So far, they have banned video games, bars, music and football. It is also good to know that this organization is responsible for the brutal (with guns and pickaxes) destruction of the sacred Sufi tombs in Timbuktu, which are part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site.

There are significant differences in the assessment of the strength of the movement. Some tend to overestimate their role, while others believe that their strength lies in their ability to integrate other tribes that are sympathetic to the northern goals but not to the MNLA.

The fraternization between the MNLA and the AD reached the point that on May 26, 2012, they declared their merger, their own dissolution and the creation of the Transitional Council of the Islamic State of Azawad. But the MNLA quickly retreated and fighting began. On July 27, 2012, there were already reports that the AD and other allies had captured cities from the MNLA. The new unity of the "new state" therefore seems very fragile...<sup>12</sup>

There is another issue to discuss here. A communication war has essentially begun between the parties (Bamako versus MNLA). They can clearly see that the West is willing to move towards the side that can be least labeled as terrorism, at least in public. Bamako accuses both the MNLA and Ansar Dine of having close ties with AQMI. An alliance due to a current shared interest (arms trade, etc.) would undoubtedly be conceivable, but the MNLA denies this in every way in order to open up to the international community.

Moreover, according to the Tuareg statement in early August, it is the central Malian government or administration (before the coup and now) that has been quietly assisting the strengthening of AQMI and MUJAO<sup>13</sup> in the region for 10 years, as a "silent partner" due to the benefits of cooperation in the drug trade.

<sup>12</sup> « Mali: le MNLA et Ansar Dine fusionnent », *RFI*, May 27, 2012., <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20120527-mali-mnla-ansar-dine-charia-azawad-coran>

<sup>13</sup> Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest; See Giraud, Grégory: « Que se passe-t-il dans le nord du Mali ? » *Survie.org*, July 4, 2012. <https://survie.org/billets-d-afrique/2012/213-mai-2012/article/que-se-passe-t-il-dans-le-nord-du>

### Manoeuvres of the Great Powers: Double Standards or Double Vision?

The great powers are also manoeuvring. The Americans aim to gain a foothold in the Sahel region and attack AQMI bases from there with UCAVs. Mali, however, has been increasingly resistant to this since the attack on Libya, while under the banner of the anti-terrorism alliance in the region (TSCTI and TSCTP<sup>14</sup>), the Americans have provided significant logistical and training assistance for the modernization of the Malian army.

However, the Obama administration underestimated the anti-Americanism in the region, which has flared up again especially since the Libyan war. The USA, NATO, and the French, significantly underestimated the respect of the Muslim Gaddafi in this Muslim region. The Libyan dictator's investments have also created numerous job opportunities in Mali. Therefore, he enjoyed almost undivided popularity and the Malian people stood by him in the Libyan war, even if they did not agree with him ideologically. After his death, prayers were offered in mosques for his spiritual well-being.

Gaddafi's investments are visible throughout Mali. In the capital, LAAICO (Libyan Arab African Investment Company) investments, three of the most luxurious hotels, and the \$120 million development of the administrative district, Libya invested \$180 million in the modernization of rice cultivation. Among other things, they dredged the silting-up Timbuktu canal and built the Ségou mosque. Mali, one of the 5 most underdeveloped countries in the world, has good reason to fear that the fall of Gaddafi has ended its development.<sup>15</sup>

While both former French President Sarkozy and current President Hollande have done so, it is hypocritical for French big politics to proclaim that France is less involved in African affairs. The French political elite has a significant source base in the area, which they like to use to launder their campaign expenses (see Sarkozy's Libyan campaign financing case). France cannot do without the effects of the French military presence and the CFA (formerly the economic area tied to the French franc, currently the euro) zone on the French economy, the capital transfers and laundering through large corporations and EU or national African capital aid funds.

As for France, it essentially watched with *schadenfreude* as

1.) Bamako and the Malian government army collapsed, since on the one hand the Bamako-Algiers axis worked against French interests, and on the other hand one of Mali's most important allies within the TSCTI - as we have seen - is the United States. Thus, it essentially became clear how great the actual value of US aid in the region is. (Here we can refer to the strong French military intervention in nearby Ivory Coast in favor of Ouattara, as a counterpoint.<sup>16</sup>)

2.) The fall of ATT also filled Sarkozy's circle with satisfaction. On the one hand, because ATT openly supported Gbagbo and Gaddafi in Ivory Coast, despite the French position and expectations. On the other hand, because the fallen president had previously resisted Sarkozy's request to establish a French military

<sup>14</sup> Trans Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP), Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCTI), more details: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/tscti.htm>

<sup>15</sup> Védrières, Ambroise: « Quand le Mali aimait follement Kadhafi », *Maliweb.net*, October 20, 2012. <https://www.maliweb.net/international/quand-le-mali-aimait-follement-kadhafi-100567.html>

<sup>16</sup> Türke A. I.: « Ki az úr Elefántcsontparton? Elemzés a Gbagbo-Ouattara ellentétéről », < Political situation in Ivory Coast with geopolitical issues >, *Globoport.hu*, April 20, 2011. <https://www.globoport.hu/97204/ki-az-ur-elefantcsontparton-elemzes-a-gbagbo-ouattara-ellentetrol/>

base in Sévaré (5th region, Central Mali, 200 km from the Burkinabe border) and an intelligence center in northern Mali.<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, ATT refused to sign the agreement by which France would have obliged its country to readmit Malian immigrants expelled from its territory. (However the agreement was signed by 8 African countries.) It is equally unproven, but it is not ruled out, that General Sanogo's coup was supported by the former French president; in any case, it is strange that the coup plotters were immediately recognized as negotiating partners by CEDEAO (ECOWAS) and France.<sup>18</sup>

France's "joy" is not complete, however, because even if it were in its interest, it cannot officially support the independence aspirations of northern Mali for several reasons: France is trying not to openly contradict the position of the Francophone ECOWAS, and on the other hand, fears Mauritania and the strategically important Niger (see below).

Sarkozy's diplomacy has always followed the "usual logic". The official French position considered it important to preserve the territorial integrity of the Malian state, with greater Tuareg autonomy, with some distance. In February 2012, Foreign Minister Alain Juppé called for an immediate ceasefire in order to discuss the Tuareg issue.

In April, Foreign Minister Juppé essentially legitimized the MNLA (which had been accused of AQMI ties until then) and thus the independence of Azawad.

Sarkozy's diplomacy followed the "usual logic". The official French position, with some prudence, considered it important to preserve the territorial integrity of the Malian state, with greater Tuareg autonomy. In February 2012, Foreign Minister Alain Juppé called for an immediate ceasefire in order to negotiate the Tuareg issue. In April, Juppé essentially legitimized the MNLA (which had previously been accused of having AQMI ties) and thus essentially the independence of Azawad.<sup>19</sup>

Despite the strangeness of the move, it is understandable, because neither the Bamako junta, which came to power in a coup (but legitimized by ECOWAS), nor AQMI can be suitable negotiating partners in the region for the French. The MNLA first approached the *Quai d'Orsay* "secretly", offering to be an ally in the fight against terrorism in exchange for recognition (and presumably some financial support). (It should be noted that AQMI was holding 6 French citizens captive at the time.) Juppé mentioned assistance but explicitly ruled out military intervention. (Mali has no military assistance agreement with France.) In any case, they promised to help with logistics. In fact, France entrusted the solution of the situation to ECOWAS and the Malians. Here it called on the rebels to negotiate with the authorities, while in Libya and Syria it banned this French diplomacy, who knows why...

With the coming to power of the Socialists, some elements of French Africa policy went awry. A 45-year-old woman, Helène Le Gal, became responsible for African affairs. As a former French consul in Canada, she was to be appointed ambassador to Rwanda at the end of 2011, but Rwanda strongly objected to this. According to Hollande, the only reason for this was that the appointment was initiated by Alain Juppé, who was *persona non grata* in the eyes of the locals in connection with the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

<sup>17</sup> Dao, Ben: « Dessous du soutien de la France à la rébellion: Pourquoi Sarkozy veut la tête d'ATT », *Maliweb.net*, February 9, 2012. <https://www.maliweb.net/politique/dessous-du-soutien-de-la-france-a-la-rebellion-pourquoi-sarkozy-veut-la-tete-datt-46732.html>

<sup>18</sup> The situation is at least eerily reminiscent of the circumstances surrounding the rise to power of Nigerien President Ibrahim Baré Maïnassara (-1999), who came to power in a coup with French assistance in 1996.

<sup>19</sup> « La France et le Mali divergent sur Aqmi et la rébellion touareg (3/3) » (interview with Serge Daniel), *Slateafrique.com*, June 7, 2012. <https://www.slateafrique.com/83567/aqmi-france-mali-touareg-al-qaida>

Le Gal has 23 years of experience in foreign affairs, having worked as an envoy in Burkina Faso in the 1990s. Between 2005 and 2009, he was responsible for the East and Central Africa section at the Foreign Ministry. And he was a political advisor to Charles Josselin, mentioned below...

Hollande continues the Sarkozy line through Syria. But for example, in Gabon (June 8-9) and Togo (June 15), where, essentially like the events in Syria, popular resistance movements emerged against the significantly more anti-democratic and corrupt regimes of Assad, the Hollande administration assured the president of its support for the existing regimes (Togo: Al Gamba - Gamba - Gomba). Incidentally: just like the USA. Ali Bongo was personally received by Hollande on July 5.

With Hollande's presidency, the French position also became more nuanced from the Malian perspective. On July 18, 2012, Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius supported the ECOWAS position (if he did not name the MNLA) but stated that "there are terrorists" in the north of Mali who threaten the security of the entire country. Therefore, France is (now) ready to mobilize "its own forces, including financial means, to come to the aid of a friendly people."

France also accuses Bamako of collaborating with AQMI, although the number of AQMI members of Malian origin is negligible. In 2003, Bamako stopped negotiating with the terrorists regarding the release of German hostages. This is the main thorn in the side of the West and the French - or rather, an excellent excuse - against Bamako.

### **Niger: the third domino? French interests behind the guise of the EU?**

French diplomacy is therefore not concerned about Mali, but rather supports and promotes the EUCAP Sahel Niger operation because of Mali, the launch of which de facto means the indirect protection of French interests.

The resolution of this seeming discrepancy is that since the Arab (Maghreb) - black (sub-Saharan region) fault line runs through this region (see Sudan-South Sudan, Mali-Azawad, etc.), with the legalization of independence movements, the next element of the domino could easily be neighboring Niger. And the strengthening of independence movements in northern Niger, the separatist aspirations here could easily endanger AREVA's interests and its long-term uranium mining plans.

To understand this, and the French intervention in Niger, we need to go back a little in history.

In Niger, the French left and right interests were once completely aligned between 1996 and 1999, when the Nigerien democratization process that had begun in 1989-1993 had to be stopped because of French interests. France (President Chirac - right wing / Senator Charles Josselin (PS) and Prime Minister Lionel Jospin (PS) on behalf of the left-wing government) essentially supported the coup of Ibrahim Baré Maïnassara, and then in 1996 provided expert and technical assistance to falsify the election results so that Baré could win.

In 1999, Baré was overthrown by a coup. This event, as well as the subsequent genuine democratic transformation process, was seen by France as the end of the country's democratization - in contrast to the Scandinavian countries, Germany and Canada. In any case, the French managed to prevent the country from receiving EU funds for 6 months.

The elections (1999) were won by Mamadou Tandja (President of Niger from 1999 to 2010), which was initially not the most optimal outcome for French diplomacy. In 2007, through AREVA (a French state-

owned company dealing with nuclear affairs, producing 6,000 tons of uranium per year in 2009), they essentially supported/financed the Tuareg uprising against Tandja in the north-west of the country.<sup>20</sup>

The Tuaregs in Niger are demanding more rights and a fairer distribution of uranium and oil resources, especially against the ruling Djerma-Kanuri (capital and surrounding areas of Niamey) and Hausza (Zinger: 2nd largest city and surrounding areas) tribes. As a result, a state of emergency has been declared in the Agadez region (where AREVA is present), and the French company has essentially become the master of the situation. The French certainly do not want Agadez to experience a similar turn of events to Azawad. (And certainly not that a large Tuareg state might be created over AREVA's mining areas by uniting Azawad and Agadez.)

However, in 2009, Tandja, who was behaving increasingly dictatorially, completely deviated from the "democratic path". He dissolved the Constitutional Court and the parliament because they did not want to assist him in amending the constitution that would have allowed him to run for a third term. At that time, France and Niger again began to grow closer, which made it possible for Sarkozy to conclude new uranium contracts in 2009.

During the Sarkozy era, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Niger became the two most important supply bases for French nuclear policy. The latest contracts for AREVA were signed with the DRC on March 26, 2009, and with Niger on March 27. The Niger contract was described as a "*fair, environmentally friendly deal*," but its novelty is somewhat overstated, as AREVA has been extracting uranium from the country for 40 years. The extraction is carried out under "*environmentally friendly*" conditions: Uranium mining is extremely water-intensive, so the local rivers, which were otherwise illegally tapped without a permit, have been almost completely dried up. The fact that this has practically eliminated the supply of water suitable for human consumption in the area, is not really of interest to the company.

The French money paid for uranium extraction disappears in the notoriously corrupt administration system in the capital (Niamey). Niger has the second largest uranium reserves in the world and ranks third in terms of extraction. In addition to all this, it is one of the poorest countries in the world (UN list: 179/174th place), where every second person lives on 1 dollar a day. Mining also creates social tensions, destroying the natural habitat and nomadic culture of the northern Tuareg people. The human rights and environmental aspects that Sarkozy has so strongly emphasized on other occasions have somehow been pushed into the background in this case as well.

After 18 months of negotiations, the most important contract, initialed in January 2009 and "confirmed" with Sarkozy's personal visit on March 27, concerned the Imouraren uranium field in northern Niger. This is the most important uranium field in Africa, while it ranks second in the world. With this investment, AREVA was going to create the world's largest uranium mine, and thus become the world's most important uranium producer. AREVA acquired a 66.65% share, while Niger remained with 33.35%. The capital ratio is 70:30%. Production is scheduled to begin in 2012, employing 1,400 people, with an investment volume of 1.2 billion euros. The 35-year contract allows for the extraction of 5,000 tons of uranium per year. (So with the Niger deal alone, AREVA will almost double its previous uranium production.)<sup>21</sup>

**In Mali, just a few hundred kilometers from AREVA's Niger interests, a new, unknown state formation was established on April 6, 2012. Its fighting units also pose a threat in Niger due to the**

<sup>20</sup> The local head of AREVA was expelled from the country in July 2007 because he had developed closer ties with one of the local rebel political groups (MNJ: Tuaregs).

<sup>21</sup> More on this: T.A.I.: « Franciaország régi-új Afrika-politikája (2007-2010) », < France's old-new Africa policy (2007-2010 > *Afrika Tanulmányok*, Vol. V, No. 1, March 2011, 5-10.

**serious differences in tribal and state borders. Even if AREVA maintains good relations with the Tuareg in principle. It is therefore understandable that the events in Mali, near the border and the Agadez region in Azawad, are of deep concern to French politicians.** In addition, AQMI is also present and is hunting AREVA employees in Niger. The French companies AREVA and Vinci have already been forced to pay 90-100 million euros to the terrorists for their kidnapped employees, as the French state - at least openly - did not dare to take on this responsibility.

In 2011, things started to turn in France's favor, with the new president finally becoming the pro-French Mahamadou Issoufou, which meant two things:

1. The Hollande administration entered the picture: Issoufou had already held open negotiations with Hollande in March 2012 (i.e. before the French presidential election), and had already openly committed himself to Hollande against Sarkozy.<sup>22</sup>

2. The French restoration can enjoy its renaissance in full force (AREVA) Through M.I., the open invitation (June 2012) officially reached the EU (but really to France) for external (civilian) military intervention in the country's territory.

Mahamadou Issoufou, as an allied president, must therefore be stabilized mainly because of the AREVA concessions. Instead, the immediate threat to him could be posed by the Tuareg rebels-separatists, AQMI, who may cross over from Mali or who may be (re)radicalized due to the events in Mali, and Ansar Dine, who are also present in Niger.

In addition to the reasons described below, AREVA is also under a tight noose because, by European standards, locals are forced to work in inhumane conditions. All this should also draw the attention of Madame l'Afrique, who is supposedly sensitive to human rights: on April 25, 2012 (2 weeks after the Azawad events), workers in the newest plant in Imouraren held a 7-day warning strike because of the 12-hour shifts without a break (in a uranium mine!) - not to mention the continuous protests of the population due to the environmental pollution of the plants...

So France can most effectively support AREVA and MI in a difficult situation diplomatically, according to the "Chad scenario", behind an EU operation. Which is of course led by a Spaniard, although the military advisor of the mission is French...

The solution to the situation in the region could be the strong governments (Mauritania, Mali, Algeria, Niger, etc.) and their cooperation in new anti-terrorist alliances that go beyond the current pseudo-alliances. But it seems that this is not in the interest of either the American or the French side. Not even under the banner of the war on terrorism. With the support of separatist movements (Libya, Mali, Sudan-South Sudan), regression and chaos have been encoded in the region for a long time.

*Cui prodest?*

<sup>22</sup> « Issoufou, Biya et les socialistes français », *Survie.org*, April 10, 2012. <https://survie.org/billets-d-afrique/2012/212-avril-2012/article/issoufou-biya-et-les-socialistes>

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p. 1. The Intensity of the Gaze... (海翰章)

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p. 15. Silhouette people riding camels in desert... (Yuliia / AI)

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