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# THE GREAT POWER STRUGGLE FOR AFRICA

# THE CRISIS IN MALI



INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIC RESEARCH ORGANIZATION  
USAK Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies

Fouad Farhaoui

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# The Great Power Struggle for Africa The Crisis in MALI

USAK Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies

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## **USAK CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN AND AFRICAN STUDIES**

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**FOUAD FARHAOUI:** One of the researchers for USAK Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies. His work and studies concentrate on matters concerning Turkish-Arab relations, the Middle East and Africa, social movements, history and international relations.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Though the French intervention against extremists in northern Mali thrust the crisis in Mali onto the international stage, the conflict itself is the result of long-stewing factors left over from the French colonial period.*

The crisis is an outgrowth of the colonial period which had strained and eventually torn the social fabrics of the region. French colonial policies regarding education, administration, an economics had contributed to a competitive and divisive atmosphere. Now, Mali suffers from widespread ethnic separatism.

The socialist regime of newly-independent Mali failed to reconcile the alienated communities of the northern regions. The peoples of the south, too, were dissatisfied with their oppressive government—something which deepened the young country's political crisis. This environment produced the so-called “Tuareg rebellion”. The fierce clashes in the early stages of the rebellion and the drought in Mali's northern regions led to massive migrations of Tuaregs to neighbouring countries.

The Tuaregs were negatively affected by the regional disputes taking place in the Maghreb region. The Qaddafi regime in Libya used Tuaregs in service of its own ambitious goals in the African and Arab world. Tuaregs were thus integrated into the Libyan security forces where they gained military and political experience—experience which they benefitted from in their Malian rebellion after Qaddafi's overthrow. Meanwhile, Algeria was also placing importance on the crisis in northern Mali due to its geographical proximity and the fact that Algeria's oil-producing lands were mostly inhabited by Tuaregs.

Changes in the regional environment in the 1990s brought new dimensions to the crisis. The Algerian Civil War, the end to the war in Afghanistan, and the Libyan embargo precipitated the spread of terrorism, trafficking, the drug trade, and cross-border criminal networks. Collectively, these phenomena created a new constellation of power in northern Mali.



The international economic crisis and the developments known as the “Arab Spring”, along with shifting geo-strategic dynamics in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, have pushed Africa into an arena for international disputes and rivalries. Mali has been one of the foremost countries to be affected. Transformations at the global level have pressured most governments to defend their traditional interests. Some powers, in contrast, have been scanning for openings and opportunities in the weaknesses of others. BRICS have thus managed to emerge as new powers on the African continent traditionally dominated by France, the U.K., and to a lesser extent, the U.S.

# INTRODUCTION

*Mali witnessed updates that dominated the northern parts of the country and were directly related the Tuareg problem and that contributed the deepening of the political crisis in the country.*

By virtue of the regional and internationalization of the Tuareg issue, the downfall of Muammar Qaddafi's regime in Libya also exported instability to Mali.. Moreover, a close examination shows that there are many factors involved in the problems of northern Mali; some of which have their roots in Mali's colonial period. However, Mali's ethnic composition is also a subject that needs examining. Environmental problems have also exacerbated the crisis, as the difficulties caused by the long and severe drought have forced most of the Tuareg people to emigrate to Libya and the Gulf states. These migrations have led to a greater Tuareg national consciousness and to Tuaregs making historical and legal demands. Tuaregs, and northern Mali have since come to be associated with terrorism and organised crime.

The Mali crisis is not limited to issues about Tuareg identity, separatism, or terrorism. On the contrary, this crisis should be interpreted as an extension of Mali's geographical circumstance. Mali is an important juncture of three geo-strategic regions of the African continent; these three regions influence Mali's domestic conditions and foreign policy. They are:

1. **The Maghreb:** Yet, With the exception of Tunisia, the Maghrebi countries (Algeria, Morocco, Libya, and Mauritania) are able to affect Mali in significant way.
2. **The Sabel:** Extends from Mauritania and Senegal to the Horn of Africa. The now overthrown Qaddafi regime attempted to manipulate the domestic politics of countries throughout the entire region.
3. **The Gulf of Guinea region:** Southern Mali, the country's center of gravity, has developed a strong network of political and economic relations within the Gulf of Guinea region. However, this relationship does not hold for geographically more distant northern Mali.

It should also be added that these three regions are frequently exposed to the interventions of great power. Mali is thus often converted into a crucial area of competition among these powers. The countries surrounding Mali are considered to be within France's historical sphere of influence. In the last decade, however, the U.S. seems to have developed more of an interest in the region. The BRICS states (Brazil, Russia, China, India, and South Africa) have also gradually grown interests in this part of Africa.

In order to gain deeper insight into the crisis, it is essential to take account of the historical and sociological conditions that led to the Tuareg problem and the different instances of post-independence insurgency. Consequently, this study will bring illuminate the strategic environment that led to France's military intervention, as well as the impacts of newly-emerging actors in the African domain. The report is divided into two parts. In the first part the report deals with the root causes of the crisis in Mali and the progress of the insurgency, while its second part will concentrate on the geopolitical and geo-economic aspects of the war in Mali.

# 1

## ROOTS OF THE CRISIS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE INSURGENCY

*The environment in which the Tuaregs' political and social identities were shaped is one of the fundamental causes of the crisis.*

France's colonial policies in West and North Africa damaged most of the balances which had maintained the relationships between various ethnic and cultural groups. The Tuareg insurgency is one such reflection of this disruption. Mali was subject to numerous strategic schemes throughout its years as a French colony. However, all these schemes designed around France's interests damaged the independence movement in Mali. The oppressive nature of the first independent Malian government, in turn, played a paramount role in dragging the Tuaregs into rebellion. Moreover, the crisis was exacerbated by the droughts and their politicisation.

The region's long-term security situation was exacerbated by the Algerian Civil War and the international embargo enacted against Libya, both of which laid the groundwork for terrorism and organised crime to flourish. In this environment of insecurity and rapidly changing regional political conditions, the rebellion gradually became bolder until a French military intervention was seen as necessary.

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France's colonial policies in West and North Africa damaged most of the balances which had maintained the relationships between various ethnic and cultural groups.  
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### A) Historical Origins of the Crisis in Northern Mali

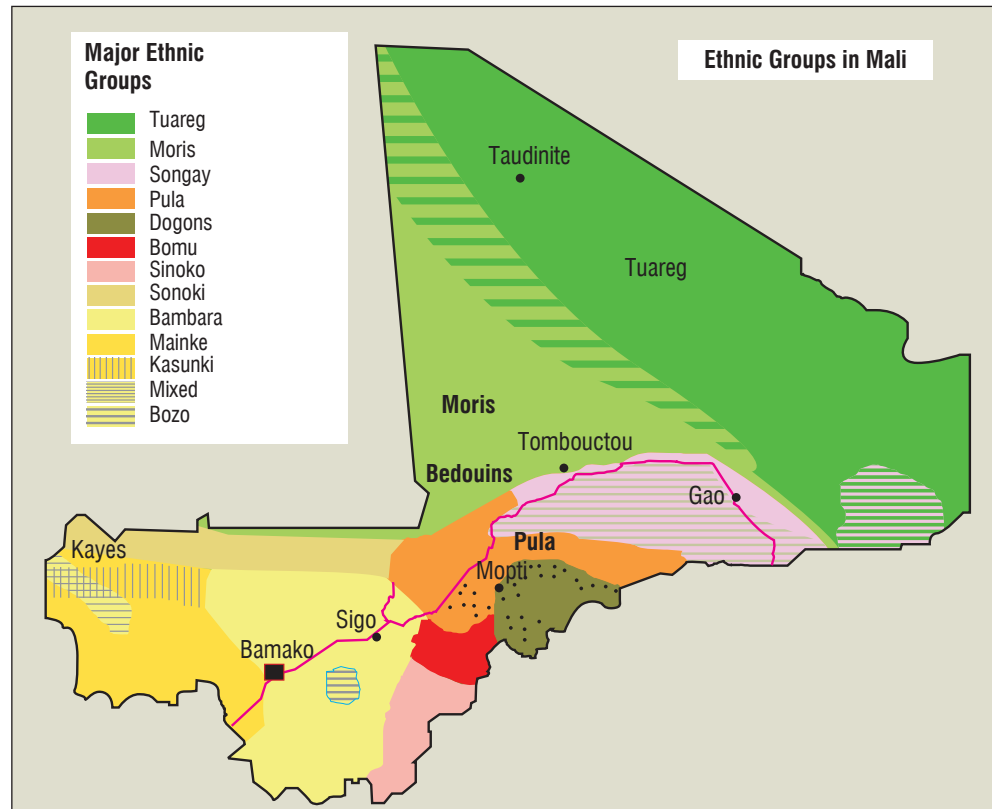
#### 1) A Socio-Historical Introduction

The crisis is most widely associated with the Tuareg people, who represent the majority of the region's inhabitants. Speaking a common dialect of Berber, the Tuareg people are distributed across North Africa's great Sahara desert. Though Black ethnicities also live in Mali's north—like the Songhai—the Tuareg are distinct. The Tuareg are known as followers of the Maliki order of Islam and, as nomadic *beduin*, are primarily engaged in animal husbandry and trade. The Black peoples of the south, on the other hand, live near the river basin and are agriculturalists.

.....  
**The city of Timbuktu, an important cultural centre for the Tuareg people, is considered to be Mali's largest and most celebrated historical centre.**  
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(Map 1). The city of Timbuktu, an important cultural centre for the Tuareg people, is considered to be Mali's largest and most celebrated historical centre. In fact, UNESCO declared Timbuktu to be among its World Heritage Sites. Historically, Timbuktu has played a critical role in the developments in science and civilization that took place in the mid-Sahara and North Africa. The educational institutions of the city were integrated with both the broader Arab and Black African cultures.

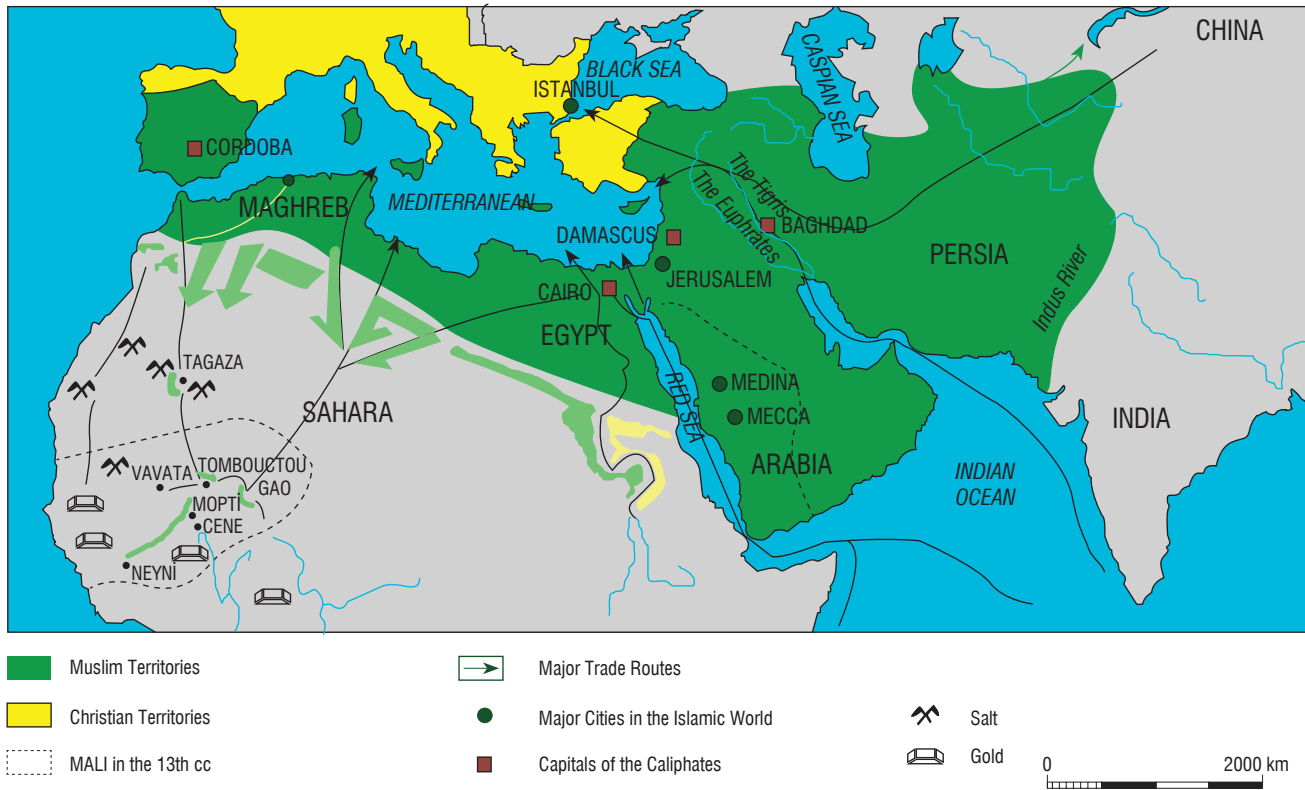
**Map 1. Ethnic Groups in Mali**



Source: <http://www.tfq.ulaval.ca/axl/afrique/mali.htm>

The Tuareg and Arabic tribes of the Sahara played a crucial role connecting the communities north and south of the great desert for centuries before the advent of European colonialism. In the ancient times, goods originating from the Mali Empire and West Africa crossed present-day Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia to reach Europe. Other merchant convoys advanced toward Asia across Egypt (map 2). Following the British, French, and Italian colonial expansion into North Africa, however, the Arab and Tuareg tribes were cut off within the Sahara. The Western blockade affected the Tuareg people's economic and social positions and consequently their political and military position in relation to the people south of the Sahara. In addition, France's colonial policies in Mali focused administrative and educational attention on the Black peoples to the exclusion of the Arabs and Tuaregs.

**Map 2. Major Trade Routes of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century**



Source: [http://hist-geo.ac-montpellier.fr/v1/IMG/pdf/5\\_Kankou Moussa Part En Pelerinage 2. pdf](http://hist-geo.ac-montpellier.fr/v1/IMG/pdf/5_Kankou_Moussa_Part_En_Pelerinage_2.pdf)

## 2) Common Organisation of Saharan Regions and the Nuclear Project of France

After World War II, the wave of demands for independence across the African continent caused France to lose Tunisia and Morocco. France's general influence in North Africa was imperiled after losing the war in Indochina, its humiliation (alongside France, Great Britain, and Israel's) in the Suez Crisis, and its invasion of Djibouti (French Somalia). In response to these developments, France established the "Common Organisation of Saharan Regions" (OSRS-L'Organisation Commune Des Régions Sahariennes) project to bring the governments of Algeria, Mauritania, Mali, Chad, and Niger under a common framework on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1957. Some Tuareg and Arab leaders who desired an independent Sahelian state and rejected the idea of being part of a state with other Black communities believed and cooperated with the French, and dealing a blow to the Malian independence movement. However, this organisation was rejected by numerous African political leaders. One of these leaders, Mali's first president, Modibo Keita, articulated his opposition to the initiative by arguing that it threatened Mali's territorial integrity.<sup>1</sup> Sensing Paris's intentions, some skeptical Tuareg and Arab tribal leaders also refused to participate in the organization, thus causing the project to fail. The failure of the project led to the first rebel movement in 1958.

.....  
**Mobido Keita, the first president of Mali, opposed the Common Organisation of the Saharan Regions.**  
 .....

It was clear that the French attempt to establish the Common Organisation of the Saharan Regions, was related to what General Paul Ely called the "Strike Force" (Force de



.....  
**The Tuareg people and other tribes of the Sahara found themselves split between Algeria, Libya, Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso following France's retreat from North Africa, in 1960.**  
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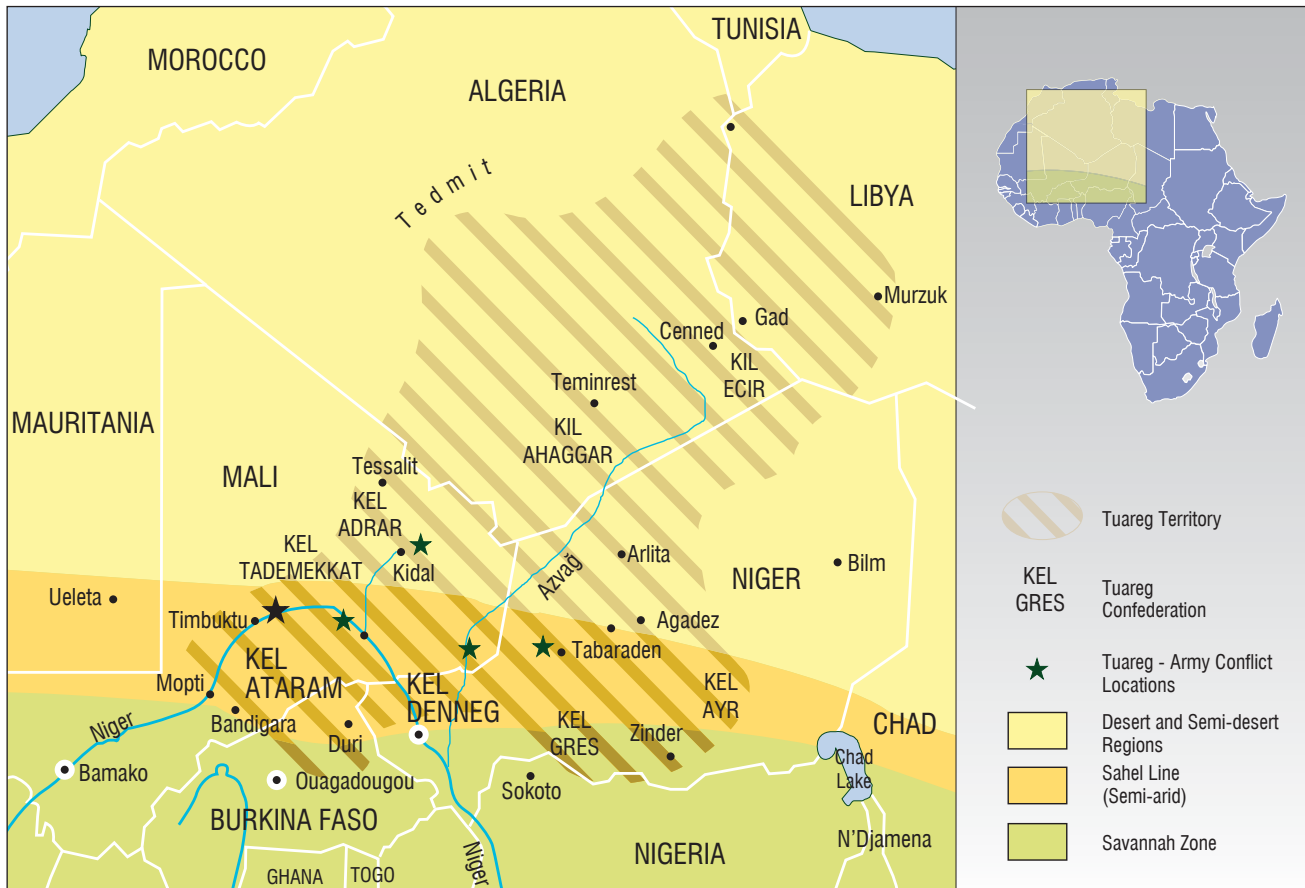
Frappe) which was a strategic milestone in the France's 20<sup>th</sup> century foreign policy. Ely intended for this project to create a French nuclear force with dissuasive capabilities.<sup>2</sup> The most appropriate testing ground for France to realise this project was in the Sahara desert. The first nuclear trial was conducted in 1960 in Al-Rakkan, a territory administratively attached to Algeria. France subsequently moved its experimentation to French Polynesia in 1996. These tests allowed France to become a member of the "Nuclear Club", through which it recovered the position it had lost after WWII.<sup>3</sup>

## **B. Tuareg Insurgencies in Mali: 1962-2009**

### **1) The Modibo Keita Regime and the 1962-3 Insurgency**

The Tuareg people and other tribes of the Sahara found themselves split between Algeria, Libya, Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso following France's retreat from North Africa, in 1960 (Map 3). The first president of Mali had socialist tendencies and allied with the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc and consequently established a state-controlled economy. Modibo Keita adopted public administration policies that simply disregarded the people of the north. The government gathered these people at locations reasonably close to central cities and seized their property. This policy sparked an armed rebellion from 1962 to 1963 under the leadership of the Tuareg people. President Keita responded by planning and personally commanding a military operation in the region. This operation was carried out by a group of veterans of the French armed forces during the Algerian revolution.<sup>4</sup> The Army chased the rebels as far north as the Tamanrasset and In Eker regions, home to the French nuclear base.<sup>5</sup>

**Map 3. Tuareg Homelands (Algeria, Libya, Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso)**



Source: Philippe Rekacewicz, "Le conflit touareg" Journal Le Monde Diplomatique, April 1st, 1995

Towards the end of 1968, Moussa Traoré, a commissioned soldier of the Malian Army, staged a successful coup against President Keita. With Traoré expectations came that a new regime would pursue different policies regarding the country's north. However, Traoré frustrated the public's expectations by choosing to continue with the legacy inherited from the colonial period. From Mali's independence until 1994 the government exerted no effort in enlisting Arabs or Tuaregs in the army.<sup>6</sup>

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**In January 1990,  
 Algeria deported 20-  
 25 thousand Tuareg  
 refugees to Niger**  
 .....

## 2) Rebellion and Efforts to Establish a Democracy in the 1990s

In January 1990, Algeria deported 20-25 thousand Tuareg refugees which only the Nigerian government was willing to accept.<sup>7</sup> After the two governments had reached a reconciliation over the refugees, new security threats emerged in response the government's failures to address unemployment and underdevelopment.

Clashes between certain groups from the Tuareg communities of Mali and Niger and the gendarme forces of both countries occurred with increasing frequency.<sup>8</sup> On January 6<sup>th</sup>, 1991 Algerian mediation succeeded in bringing the opposition forces of the People's Movement of Azawad (MPA-Mouvement Populaire de l'Azawad) and the Arabic Islamic Front of Azawad (FIAA) to agree to the Tamanrasset Accord with the Malian

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**On December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1991, an agreement was signed to establish an inclusive framework for the armed movements of the Azawad territory, producing the Coordination of Unified Movements and Fronts of Azawad (MFUA–Coordination des Mouvements et Fronts Unifiés de l’Azawad).**  
.....

government.<sup>9</sup> According to a study by the Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College, Caliph Keita claims that the agreement called on the Malian government to reduce its military presence in the northern, especially Kidal, region of Mali, to integrate the rebels into the Malian Army, and to establish a decentralised government in the north. In economic terms, 47.3 percent of the total state investments were to be reallocated to the north of Mali, according to Caliph Keita, a commander of the Malian Army.<sup>10</sup>

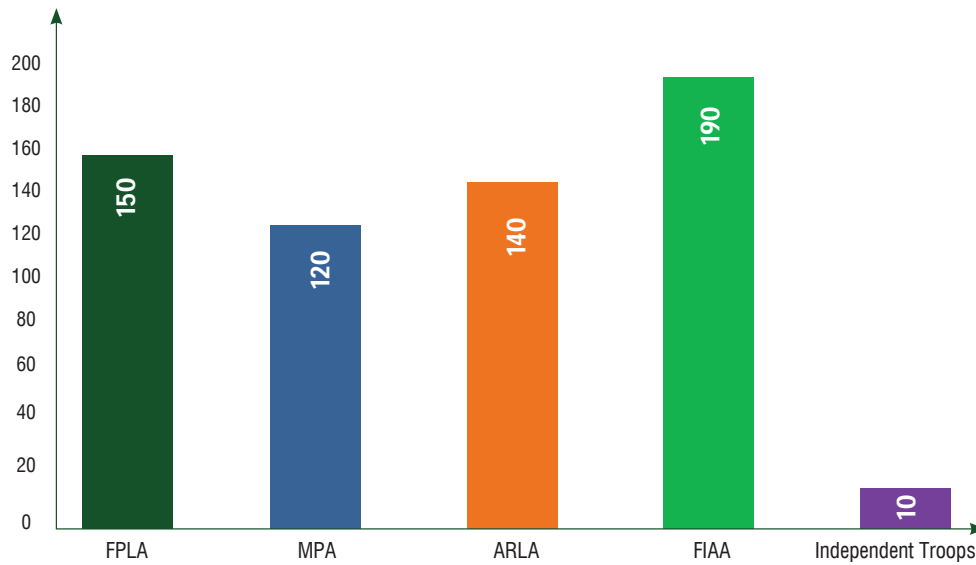
Following the Tamanrest Accord, two major developments occurred that affected the enforcement of this agreement and the related peace negotiations. First and foremost of these was the military coup of Amadou Toumani Touré on March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1991.<sup>11</sup> The Touré coup spurred Mali’s initial transition to democratic rule, raising expectations for the country to be an example to the other states of Sub-Saharan Africa. The second development was the splitting of the People’s Movement of Azawad (MPA), into different groups.<sup>12</sup> Among these groups were:

1. The People’s Movement of Azawad (MPA - Mouvement Populaire de l’Azawad)
2. The Popular Liberation Front of Azawad (FPLA - Front Populaire de Libération de l’Azawad)
3. The Revolutionary Liberation Army of Azawad (ARLA - Armée Revolutionnaire de Libération de l’Azawad)
4. The Arabic Islamic Front of Azawad (FIAA - Front Islamique Arabe de l’Azawad)

However, Algeria’s efforts and pressures on the split groups bore fruit when the parties sat at the table for peace negotiations. On December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1991, an agreement was signed in the town of Goléa, Algeria to establish an inclusive framework for the armed movements of the Azawad territory, producing the Coordination of Unified Movements and Fronts of Azawad (MFUA–Coordination des Mouvements et Fronts Unifiés de l’Azawad). Agreements were also reached on holding negotiations on national unity, Mali’s territorial integrity, and the cessation of violence against civilians, livestock, and crops in Mali’s north and the country as a whole.<sup>13</sup>

The Touré coup, in combination with Mali’s transition to democracy, sparked strong public will—for the first time in the country’s history—to solve the problems of the north through broad discussions. As a matter of fact, all political parties and non-governmental organisations participated in the solution proposals and signed the National Pact. On April 11<sup>th</sup>, 1992, the National Pact was signed for the restitution of peace and security in the north of Mali. This agreement outlined an autonomous administration for the north and determined its share of economic and social development. In other words, all the political powers of Mali unanimously consented to the Algerian-facilitated Tamanrasset Accord.<sup>14</sup> In April 1993, arrangements were made to integrate 610 military divisions of the MFUA into Mali’s official armed forces (Table 1).

**Table 1. First Insurgent Integration (April 1993)**

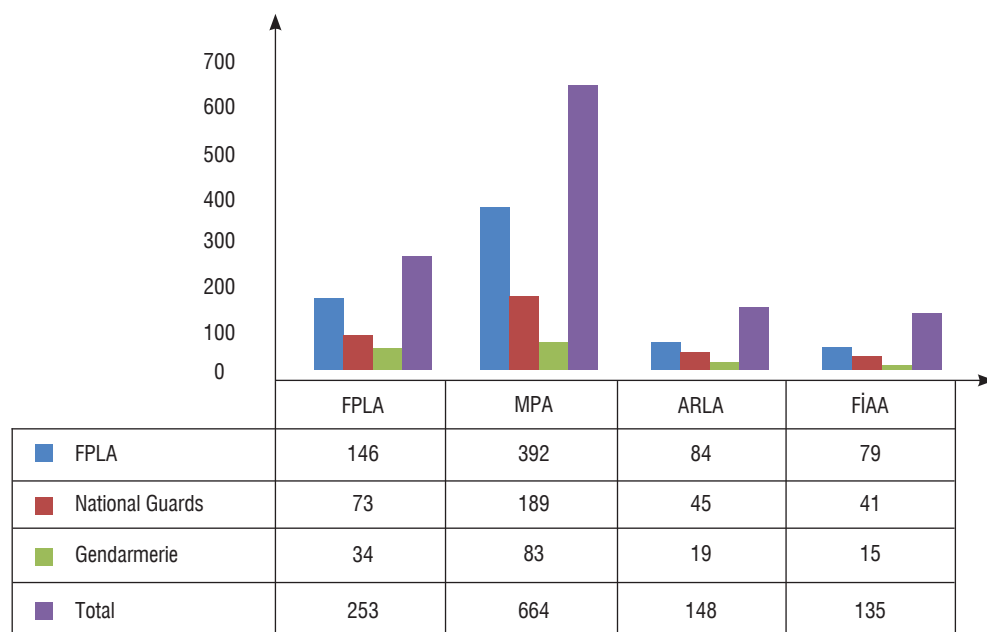


**Source:** Kalifa Keita, Conflict and conflict resolution in the Sahel: The Tuareg insurgency in Mali, U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) report, May 1, 1998, p:33. <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/pub200.pdf>

While discussions on the National Pact were underway, a new movement called the “Patriotic Movement of Ganda Koy” (MPGK) emerged from the Black Songhai community. The movement deemed the Tuaregs and Arabs to be roadside bandits and called for a general struggle to resist them.

This movement called for a legitimate force (militias) to counter the threats posed by armed men of other ethnic groups in Azawad.<sup>15</sup> Some Tuareg suspected that the Malian regime was behind the movement, in an effort to weaken and divide the people of Azawad. In 1994, armed clashes broke out between the Tuareg people and the MPGK militia,<sup>16</sup> which led to broader armed clashes, even including the Malian army.<sup>17</sup> Near the end of 1996, negotiations achieved an agreement on armed groups disarming and integrating into the military, and on the development of the northern regions (Table 2).

**Table 2. Second Insurgent Integration (Oct. 1996)**



**Source:** Kalifa Keita, , Conflict and conflict resolution in the Sahel: The Tuareg insurgency in Mali, U.S. Army war college, Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) report, May 1, 1998, p:33. <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/pub200.pdf>

### 3) Algeria Accord and the Rebellion of 2006-2009

Reconciliation efforts started with the succession of President Alfa Oumar Konare in the early 1990s seemed to have overcome the northern crisis. In fact, the democratic legitimacy of President Konore positively contributed to the political steps taken to resolve the crisis and end the corrupt practices of the previous military administration. The insistence of neighbouring states and other international pressures played an important part in smoothing over the remaining resistance to reconciliation.

Despite all the efforts spent on reconciliation throughout the 1990s, new groups that rejected all the previous agreements popped in 2006, reviving the crisis in the north. Most prominent of the rejectors was Hasan Fagaga. Fagaga attacked the Malian military bases in the northeast of the country on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2006. Fagaga and his fighters succeeded in taking control over Kidal and Menaka in just two days. In the meantime, another organisation under the name “Democratic Coalition for Change” arose under the leadership of Ahmad Agbibi. This group signed the Algeria Accord to prevent a new uprising against the Malian authorities. The Accord stipulated that the rebels withdraw their demands for an autonomous region in the north of the country and disarm; in return Bamako would reduce the military presence in the north and employ Tuaregs as civil servants.

Despite accusing the Malian authorities of not having fulfilled their obligations to their communities, the rebels, under pressure from Algeria, ended up signing the Algeria Accord and waiving their demands for an autonomous administration. However,

six months after signing the agreement Ibrahim Ag Bahanga formed and led another insurgent group. In a TV interview with Al-Jazeera, Bahanga justified his reasons for resigning from his office in the Malian Government with the following words: “*Rather than fulfill the mutually-agreed-upon terms of the Algeria Accord, in particular the provision shrinking the government’s military presence in Mali’s north, the government has chosen to reinforce its military forces, followed by tight control measures, racist moves, and other adverse actions, all of which are a breach of the Algeria Accord.*”<sup>18</sup>

From 2007 until the beginning of 2008 Algerian mediators failed to persuade Ibrahim Ag Bahanga to re-implement the Algeria Accord. Moreover, the Malian authorities chose to use militias to deal with the dispute. At this point, Elhaji Ag Gamou of the Tuareg nomads and Muhammed Ould Meydou, an Arab of the north came onto the stage. In June of 2008, Elhaji’s militia attacked Ibrahim Ag Bahanga’s base in the Tin Assalaq region. The Malian authorities’ strategy to support Elhaji’s militia exploited the historical, social and economic divisions of the nomadic tribes of the Sahara region, echoing the method France applied during its encroachment into the Sahara in the 19th century. It should also be noted that Elhaji represents Imghihad, a clan that fought with their enemies from within the Tuareg community in 1994. The real reason of this clash was a power struggle between the People’s Movement of Azawad (MPA) and the Revolutionary Liberation Army of Azawad (ARLA).<sup>19</sup> Dissension was also present within the Arabic community. For instance, Muhammed Ould Mido from the Tilmisi region clashed with the traditional leaders of Kunta.<sup>20</sup>

Looking at the big picture, the failure of the Algeria Accord led Ibrahim Ag Bahanga to form a new coalition of Tuareg militants. With his Alliance of Tuaregs of Northern Mali for Change (ATNMC) Bahanga entered into open war with the Malian Armed Forces. The Democratic Alliance for Change (ADC) also appeared as a new actor among the Tuaregs of northern Mali.<sup>21</sup>

Libya joined the effort to resolve the situation after the Bahanga uprising and endeavoured to have the peace negotiations resumed. On October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008, the Democratic Alliance for Change (ADC) was officially invited to Libya for negotiations. Bahanga, however, refused to negotiate with Mali, and claimed that only his Alliance had the right to negotiate on behalf of the Tuaregs.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, Libya was able to coerce Bahanga’s Alliance to cease their attacks in February 2009. Meanwhile, militants from other communities began to integrate with the Malian army, which at one point commanded over 2,000 such converts. Bahanga, however, maintained his stance.<sup>23</sup>

.....  
**The Malian authorities’ strategy to support Elhaji’s militia exploited the historical, social and economic divisions of the nomadic tribes of the Sahara region, echoing the method France applied during its encroachment into the Sahara in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.**  
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## C. Factors Exacerbating the Crisis in Northern Mali

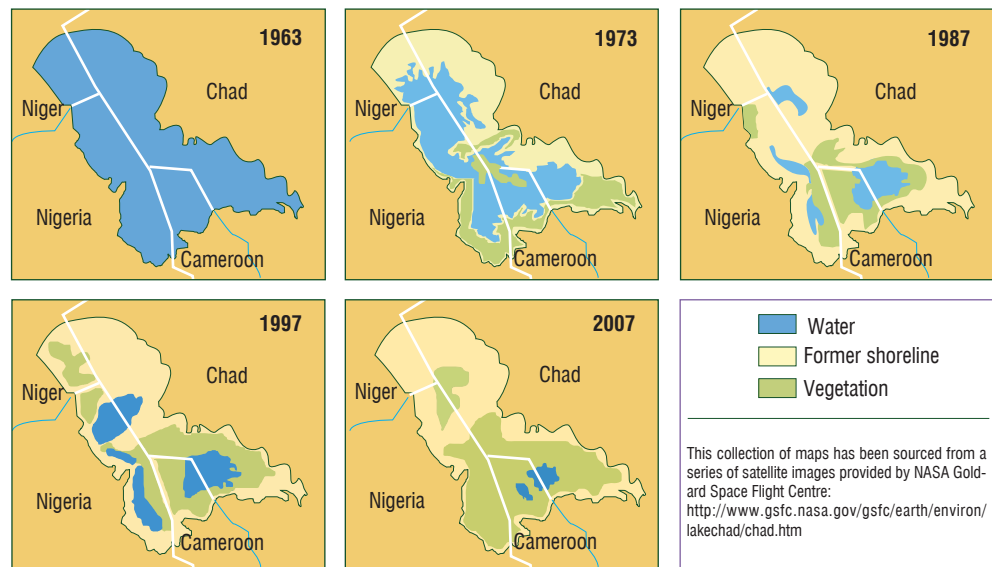
### 1) The Drought and its Politicisation

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In other words, the shrinking Lake Chad directly affects the mobility of the Tuareg tribes in Niger, which translates into amplified political and social oppression and tensions all over the region.  
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Between the years of 1970-1974 the Sahel and Northwest Africa region experienced a severe famine due to drought. The UN was sensitive to the issue and in 1977 held an international conference in Nairobi in to draw up a solution.<sup>24</sup> A new wave of drought affected the region between 1984 and 1985, which led many people engaged in stock-breeding and farming to emigrate. During the post-drought 1985-1986 period, the region witnessed border battles between countries like Mali and Burkina Faso and Nigeria and Cameroon.<sup>25</sup>

The blockade of Lake Chad gave rise to the border dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria and affected northern Mali as well.<sup>26</sup> This lake is divided between Chad, Niger, Nigeria, and Cameroon and feeds the streams around which the Tuareg people of Niger live. In other words, the Lake Chad's shrinkage directly affected the mobility of the Tuareg tribes in Niger, which translated into amplified political and social oppression and tensions all over the territory (Map 4).

**Map 4. Lake Chad Shrinkage (1963-2007)**



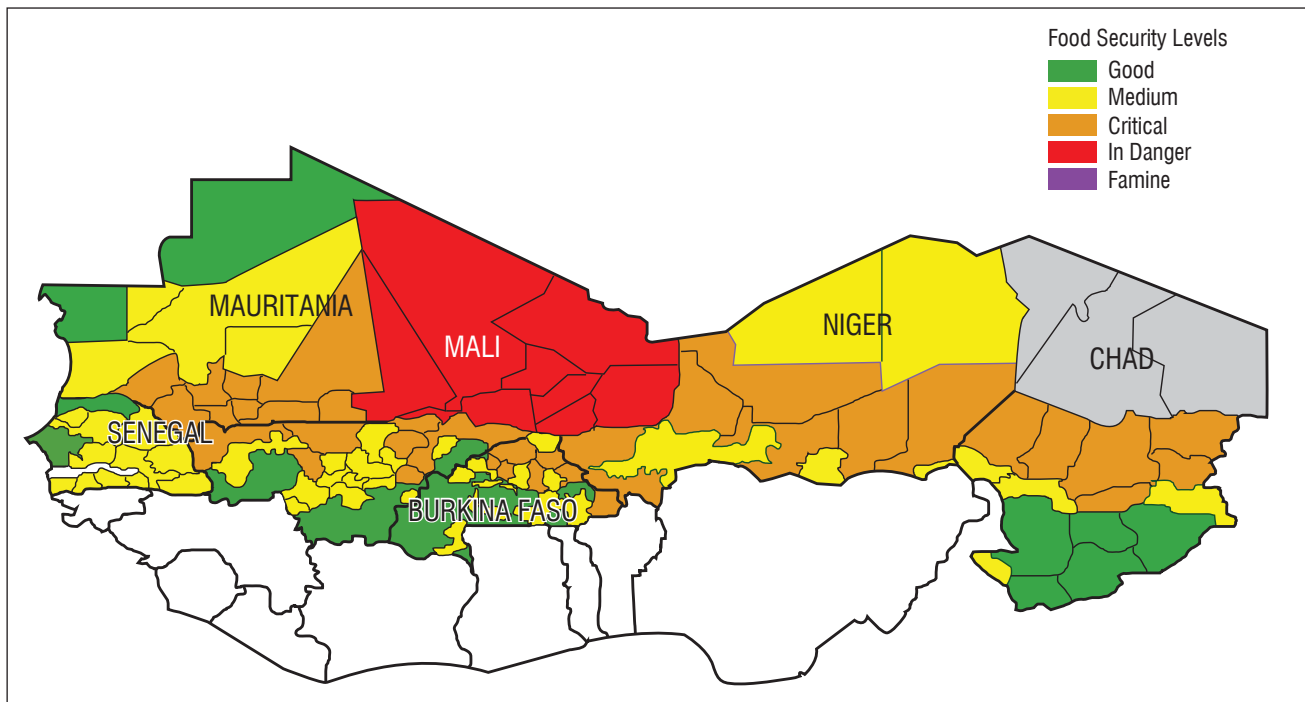
**Source:** M. Jean Glavany, La géopolitique de l'eau, rapport d'information Assemblée Nationale de France, N°: 3000, P:50. <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/13/pdf/rap-info/i4070.pdf>

Due to the impacts of recent climatic changes on geo-strategy, the French National Council formed up a special committee on October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010, to investigate how the region is affected by changes in climate. This committee's report determined that the ground waters of the Iullemeden region located between Mali, Niger, and Nigeria were experiencing a low tide; the report went on to enumerate the risks of this situation.<sup>27</sup> According to different studies, the already low water levels will continue to fall, probably until it hits a minimum level in 2025.<sup>28</sup> These climate change and lowering water levels in spring suggest that the Sahel region might face new wars and tensions.

These water shortages have caused mass migrations of the Tuareg communities of Mali's north. Some have left for Algeria and Libya, others for Saudi Arabia. Ideological thought started to form among Tuareg expatriots; many were influenced by the revolutionary ideas of Muammer Qaddafi. Others, particularly those who migrated to Saudi Arabia, were influenced by Salafi beliefs. Qaddafi took advantage of the vacancy caused by the death of Gamal Abdel Nasser and started to manipulate the Tuaregs for his own regional and international interests. He used some Tuareg fighters when he fought Chad and sent some others to fight in Lebanon under the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, led by Ahmad Jibril. Among them included was Iyad Ag Ghali, the current leader of the Ansar-ud Din (Assistants of Faith) community.<sup>29</sup> The Tuareg insurgency of 2012 has been connected with another wave of droughts and conditions of scarcity in the Sahel region—especially northern Mali. In fact, 825,380 individuals in the region are currently dependent on the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAO) food programs (Map 5).<sup>30</sup>

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**These water shortages have caused mass migrations from the Tuareg communities of Mali's north. Some have left for Algeria and Libya, others for Saudi Arabia.**  
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**Map 5. Food Security in West Africa, March 2012**



**Source:** La crise alimentaire et nutritionnelle du Sahel: L'urgence d'appuyer la résilience des populations vulnérables- Cadre stratégique de réponse régionale Burkina Faso, Gambie, Mali, Mauritanie, Niger, Tchad, et Sénégal, Rapport de FAO, Avril 2012, P:7. [http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/sahel/docs/DocProg%20FAO%20SAHEL%20FR%20abr%C3%A9g%C3%A9.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/sahel/docs/DocProg%20FAO%20SAHEL%20FR%20abr%C3%A9g%C3%A9.pdf)

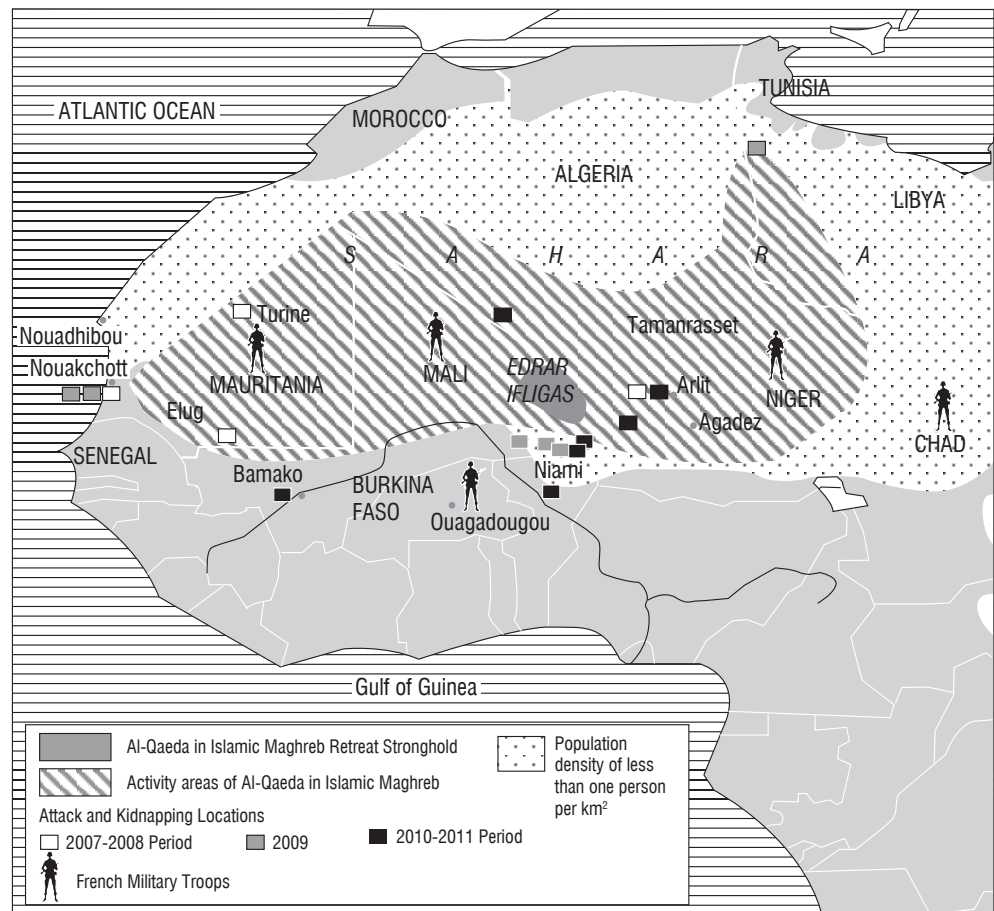
## 2) The Algerian Civil War and the Emergence of Terrorism

After the collapse of the former Soviet Union, international pressures and non-governmental organizations successfully pressured some African states to attempt democratisation. Accordingly, in 1991, when political reforms were initialised in Algeria, parliamentary elections were held. However, the Algerian army invalidated the elections, after they were won by the Islamic Liberation Front.<sup>31</sup> Following the army's invalidation of

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**Beyond just founding an Islamic government in Algeria, the mission of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb is to create an Islamic Emirate in North Africa that encompasses the Saharan region, extending from Mauritania, through northern Mali, parts of Algeria, all the way to Chad.**  
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the elections armed clashes between the Islamic Liberation Army and the official armed forces took place throughout the country. Additionally, the Armed Islamic Group (GAI) entered the scene, demanding the establishment of an Islamic state in Algeria. In 1998, after dissolution of the GAI, a new group was formed under the name Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC). Founded in 1998, the GSPC became famous in 2003 when it kidnapped a group of European travellers in the south of Algeria. Following the dissolution of the GSPC, some members formed a new community called Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQMI). Soon after its foundation, the leader of the group declared it was connected with Osama Bin Laden and that it was part of the “Global Jihad”. Beyond just founding an Islamic government in Algeria, the mission of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb is to create an Islamic Emirate in North Africa that encompasses the Saharan region, extending from Mauritania, through northern Mali, parts of Algeria, all the way to Chad (Map 6).<sup>32</sup>

**Map 6. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb**



**Source:** André Bourgeot, “Sahara de tous les enjeux”, Revue Hérodote, n° 142, 3e trimestre 2011, P :58

Incidents of tourist kidnappings have increased as they have been a lucrative source of income for Al-Qaeda. European governments and the Malian government have asked some leaders in northern Mali to help them secure the smooth release of victims. It was thus that Tuareg leader Iyad Ag Ghali, the later leader of the Ansar-Ud Din community, first emerged as an important figure. Likewise, some other leading personalities rose through the ranks of armed militias and later came to control the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA). Rather than cooperating, these personalities reportedly competed with each other over political and commercial interests. This fact has become more apparent, especially during the elections of 2009, as some mediators and militia leaders were candidates in elections.<sup>33</sup>

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**The UN embargo imposed on Libya after the Lockerbie bombing led to an increase in smuggling activities -mostly in the Tuareg- inhabited territories of the south of the country.**  
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### 3) The Libyan Embargo and the Spread of Smuggling

The UN embargo imposed on Libya after the Lockerbie bombing led to an increase in smuggling activities—mostly in the Tuareg-inhabited territories of the south of the country. At first smuggling operations were limited to cigarettes and consumer goods not subject to custom clearance procedures. Qaddafi then established multiple competing ministries to perform border checks. Also, all border stations were restructured to operate as independent entities directly attached to Qaddafi. In doing so Qaddafi was trying to prevent the army from becoming a power capable of threatening him. As a matter of fact, salary cuts in the army led personnel to get increasingly involved in smuggling or seek a way to benefit from it. On the other hand, Qaddafi’s army was able to benefit from this smuggling in terms of gear, training, and wages. What’s more, the Qaddafi regime relied upon Tuaregs and Arabs of Sahara, in order to enhance its influence against the army.<sup>34</sup>

Both Libyan government officials and local people were able to profit from smuggling activities during the embargo period. Civil servants very close to Qaddafi were able to transfer between various governmental bodies in the Tuareg and Toubou territories of southern Libya to profit from smuggling-related graft. Naturally, the tribes themselves were the main link of smuggling operations. Additionally, social ties between members of these two tribes throughout Algeria, Chad, Mali, and Mauritania grew stronger with time.<sup>35</sup>

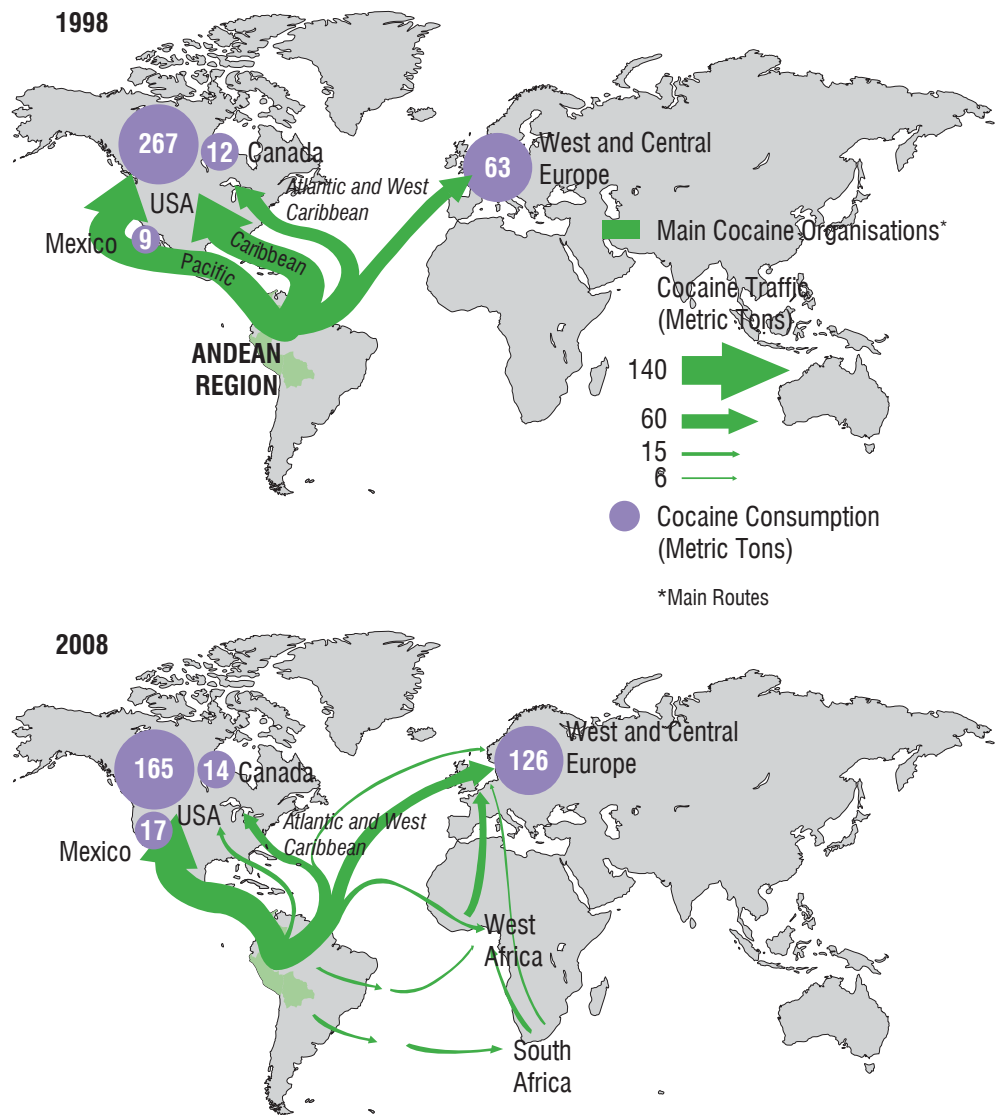
### 4) Influence of Cross-border Organised Crime

In the 1990s, conflicts in Niger, Mali, and Algeria led to the region transforming into a centre for the arms trade. Criminal networks that had traditionally smuggled goods entered the arms trade. The lack of tight customs measures in most countries of the region rendered business easier for these networks.<sup>36</sup> This smuggling economy grew over North African countries to incorporate European markets, with a proliferation in networks expert at smuggling over rough terrain.

The cities of Gao in northern Mali and Agadez in Niger have become major smuggling stations for routes over Algeria to either Morocco or Libya.<sup>37</sup> In recent years, drug trafficking has arisen as a regional phenomenon. According to reports from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, West Africa has become one of the new main routes for cocaine trafficked from Caribbean and Latin American countries to Europe (Map 7).<sup>38</sup>

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**Map 7. Cocaine Trafficking Routes (1998-2008)**

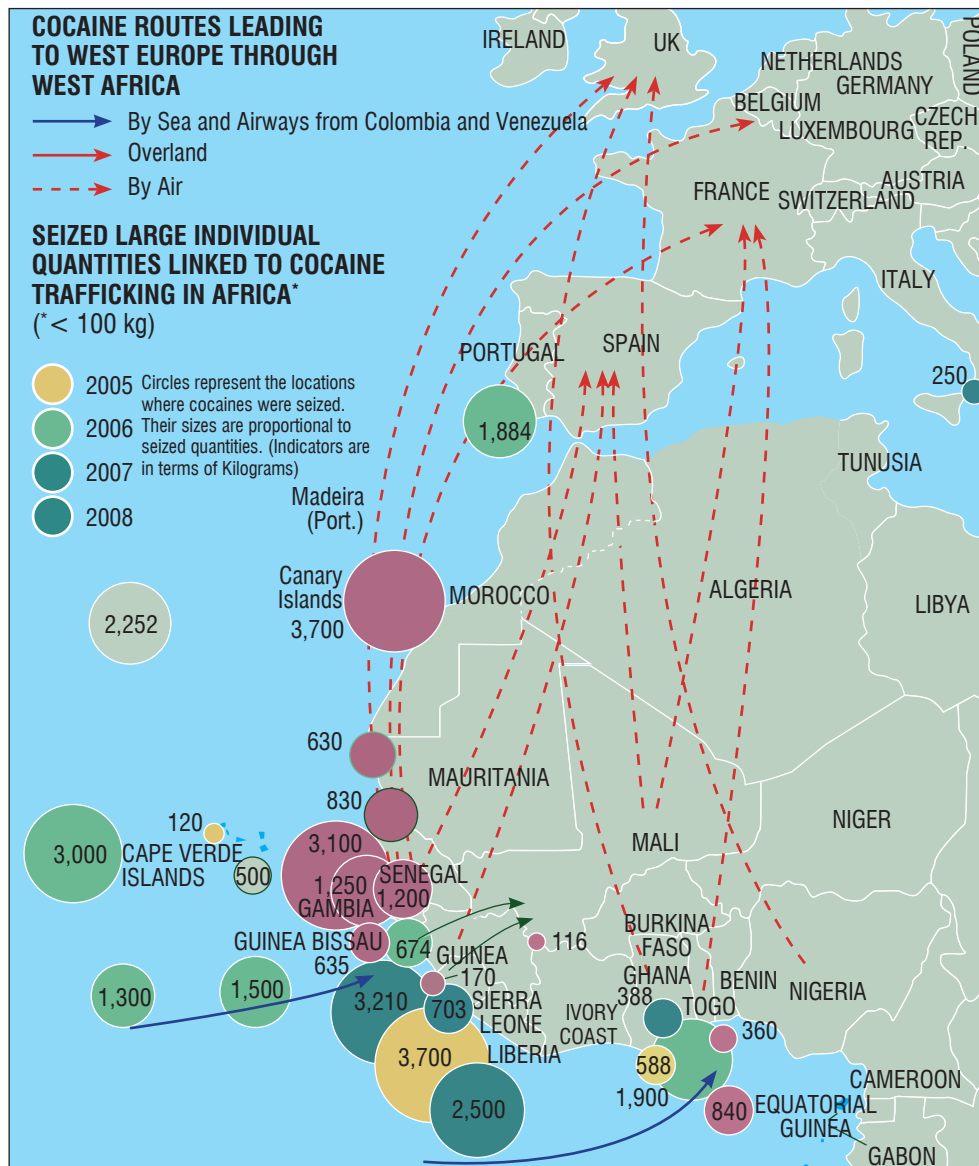


Source: UNODC /world drug report 2011

As shown on the map above, cocaine was trafficked to Europe over Caribbean and Latin American countries in 1998, but new transport routes moving through West and South Africa were observed in 2008. There are currently two chief routes through Africa to Europe. The first route takes drug cargoes first to West Africa and then to Europe by sea or by air. In the second route, drug cargoes head first to South Africa before making their way northward to Europe. Thus, West Africa's function is to distribute trafficking routes to Europe.

UN reports indicate that airways are one of the most important means for West Africa-Europe cocaine smuggling. Cocaine is reportedly shipped overland to Mali from Guinea Bissau through the Mali-Guinea border. The cocaine is then able to reach Spain and France from air routes originating in the Azawad territory of northern Mali (Map 8).

**Map 8. West Africa-Europe Cocaine Trafficking Routes**



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**Source:** Georges Berghezian, Panorama du trafic de cocaïne en Afrique de l'Ouest, Groupe de recherche et d'information sur la paix et la sécurité (GRIP), Bruxelles, Belgique, Rapport 6-2006, P:7. [http://www.grip.org/sites/grip.org/files/RAP-PORTS/2012/Rapport\\_2012-6.pdf](http://www.grip.org/sites/grip.org/files/RAP-PORTS/2012/Rapport_2012-6.pdf)

Networks involved in the drug trade have been able to leverage their contacts with powerful people in decision-making bodies to garner political power. This, in turn, severely threatens order and stability in most West African states, such as Ivory Coast and Liberia. In the case of Mali, disagreements over the division of West African drug income have precipitated severe clashes. The burning of a cocaine-laden Boeing 727 aircraft in northern Mali in December of 2009 is just one example. The street value of the 10 tons of drugs carried onboard was approximately \$580 million.<sup>40</sup>

Muhammad Mahmoud Vedadi, a former Mauritanian diplomat, identified the cause of the 2006 uprising of Tuareg army officers to be disputes between drug traffickers and clashes between trafficking networks and armed groups wanting to collect kickbacks at

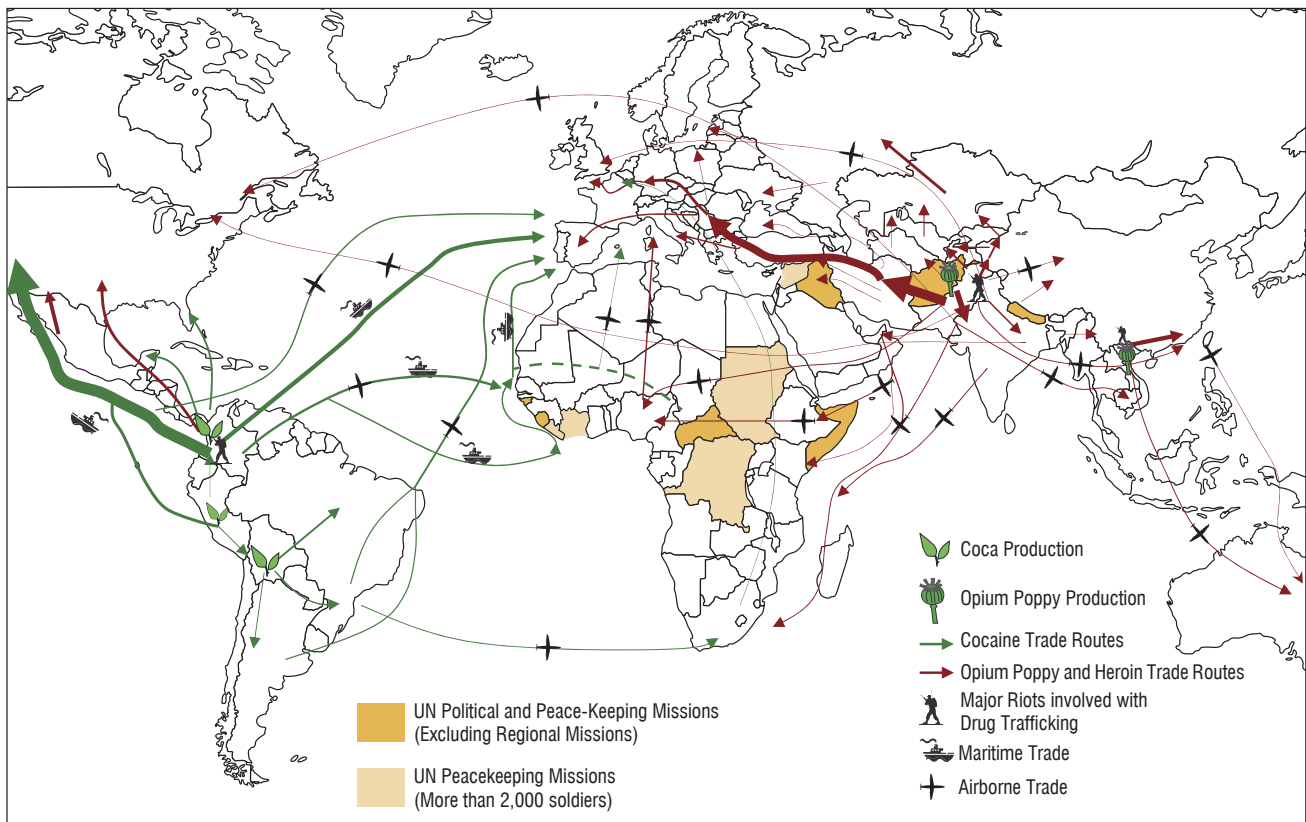


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**Conflicts revolving around dividing proceeds from the drug trade even affected the administrative division that took place in Mali just before the 2012 insurgency.**  
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border crossings. During the uprising the government leveraged certain tribes to counter the rebels and retain control of the northern region.<sup>41</sup> Conflicts revolving around dividing proceeds from the drug trade even affected the administrative division that took place in Mali just before the 2012 insurgency. The leaders of the al-Barabis tribe who were involved in drug trafficking pressured the Malian Government to set up an autonomous administrative district in Toudenni in the Timbuktu region.<sup>42</sup>

It should be noted that Latin America isn't the only source of drugs coming to West Africa. West Africa, and particularly Nigeria, has become a route for heroin and opium traffic originating in Asia—especially Afghanistan—and destined for Europe (Map 9).

**Map 9. Global Cocaine and Heroin Trafficking Routes**



Source: World Drug Report 2009, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2009,P:186

## D. 2012 Insurgency: The Mali Crisis and a New Era in West Africa

### 1) The Founding of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad

Most close followers of the latest crisis in Mali highlight the role of terrorist groups and Tuareg people returning from Libya after Qaddafi's ouster. However, the series of events that took place right before the insurgency of 2012 should not be disregarded; for these events may contribute to a better understanding of the magnitude of the crisis. On November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010, in Timbuktu the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad was founded and declared that it represented all Azawad people in their work to liberate Azawad. The organization's philosophy was also revealed: "*This movement... is a political organisation... It represents a peaceful approach to achieving its goals and reclaiming all of its historical rights.*" The new movement accused the government of "*cooperating with groups that are rejected both across Azawad and at the international level and whitewashing their crimes against people of Azawad.*" The statement highlighted that "*warning had been given that contracts signed with all companies on matters that directly relate to the Malian government and Azawad territory should be reviewed and revised, for the latter were made without obtaining the preliminary consent of the landlords, despite what is required under international law.*"<sup>43</sup>

There are two facts which stand out about the founding of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad. The first is that the movement was founded about one month before the outbreak of the Arab Spring. This means that the reactions to the crisis in Mali were not related to the collapse of the Qaddafi regime and of the start of weapons flowing into Mali. The second fact is that international corporations and organisations were called to review the contracts they signed with the Malian government on assets located in the Azawad region. This call from the National Liberation Movement of Azawad's may stem from general opposition to oil and mine exploration companies active in the region. Alternatively the intent might have been to reassure locals afraid of their interests being endangered by independence possible secession. It's also possible that the movement might have wanted to announce its negotiating authority to other corporations which stabilise newly-independent countries.

### 2) The Impact of the Arab Spring on the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad

The collapse of the Libyan regime as a result of the Arab Spring not only shook the regional balance, but also affected the Tuareg people as well. A group of Tuaregs emerged in opposition to the MNLA and upset the military and political power balance. When Qaddafi was prosecuting a war against his own people, groups led by Ibrahim Ag Bahanga that had rejected the Algeria Accord of 2006 smuggled arms to Mali. In the meanwhile, Ibrahim Ag Bahanga was preparing for an extensive campaign against the Malian government. Bahanga was killed mysteriously, however, leading his men to harden their resolve to wage war on the Bamako government.<sup>44</sup> In the meantime, cooperations nego-

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tiations were started between the MNLA and the May 23rd Coalition for the Tuaregs of Niger and Mali, who had previously been led by Ibrahim Ag Bahanga. Negotiations concluded with an agreement on October 16th, 2011. The Paris-based World Amazigh Congress played an important role in the signing and implementation of an agreement, and even became a media sponsor for the MNLA.<sup>45</sup>

After these two movements unified, preparations were underway for a new Tuareg rebellion. During a December 2011 meeting, a decisive event happened which would affect the MNLA powerfully in the future. The promotion of Iyad Ag Ghali, a former diplomat, to the position of secretary general of the movement was challenged by some commanders. The naysayers based their opposition on Ghali's alleged link with Al-Qaeda and rejected the idea of his appointment due to his signing a couple of agreements with the Bamako government—agreements which had ultimately failed following the previous Tuareg rebellion.<sup>46</sup> In reaction to this development, Iyad Ag Ghali decided to establish a new organisation in northern Mali called Ansar-ud Din (Assistants of Faith) in 2011.<sup>47</sup>

### 3) The Insurgency Starts and Azawad Proclaims Independence

The MNLA commenced its first series of attacks against the Malian army on January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2012. Those who led these attacks were allegedly members of Ibrahim Ag Bahanga's military wing.<sup>48</sup> Iyad Ag Ghali, for his part, chose to bring Ansar-ud Din into a coalition with Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb when he failed to reach an agreement with the MNLA.. Ghali became a key mediator between the Malian government and Europeans on kidnapped foreigners, and also for trade relations between Al-Qaeda and the coalition and release of foreigners who were abducted by Al-Qaeda.<sup>49</sup>

In October 2011, amidst preparations for the uprising, another group calling themselves the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa became visible through their efforts to recruit Tuareg leaders to their cause.. Some of the commanders of this movement are closely related to Al-Qaeda. Others are affiliated in one way or another with the drug trade in the Gao region.<sup>50</sup>

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**All these differences taken together with the criminal networks and the involvement of political and tribal leaders in northern and southern Mali, the political scene grew tangled, rendering any ideological classification of actors nearly impossible.**  
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Although there were multifarious disagreements between these organisations, in between attacks on the Malian forces they achieved a consensus for coordination . Along with military victories came intensified participation from rebel factions. On March 19<sup>th</sup> 2012, Two months after the start of the rebellion,a large portion of the Tuareg representatives holding government positions resigned. Military commanders were among them. Thus the major actors in the Azawad area during the first months of the rebellion were limited to five groups: resigning appointees and elected officials from the Malian government, the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad, the Ansar-ud Din Movement, the Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, and the Movement For Unity and Jihad In West Africa.

While the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad has secular leanings, the Ansar-ud Din, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa have fanatic Salafist tendencies. The different characteristics between these organisations brought about different approaches. Moreover, inter-tribal relations

and the traditional problems with central authority played fundamental roles in interactions between these movements. All these differences taken together with the criminal networks and the involvement of political and tribal leaders in northern and southern Mali, the political scene grew tangled, rendering any ideological classification of actors nearly impossible.

The ethnic and tribal diversity among the rebel movements became more plainly visible as conflict with the Malian forces progressed. For example, the Ansar-ud Din Community was able to dominate the Kidal region by virtue of its leader, Iyad Ag Ghali, being a member of the Tuareg Ifoghas tribe. In another example, the Timbuktu region, a district mostly inhabited by Arabs, was held by Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb due to the massive Arab presence within the organisation. The Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa took the city of Gao, mostly inhabited by the Black Songhai community. The Movement was able to take the city so quickly because its leader, Sultan Ould Badi, is a member of the Arabic Amhara tribe that is densely settled within the city. The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad declared the independence of the Azawad territory in April 2012, but was summarily expelled from the territory by other groups after the Malian army's retreat from the North. The Movement survived in the information, political, and diplomatic domains—especially in Belgium and France—thanks to the support of the World Amazigh Congress.<sup>51</sup>

#### 4) The Fall of the North, the Coup, and the International Intervention

The weapons of insurgents coming from Libya gave them a great advantage against Malian army attacks. However, the rapid defeat of the Malian army is not only a result of the insurgents' weapons, but also of rampant corruption, the pursuit of personal gain at low ranks, and its commanders being accused of embezzling humanitarian aid.<sup>52</sup> Following their defeat against insurgents in the north, and as a response to years of corruption and poor management soldiers staged a military coup on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2012. The resulting junta repealed the existing constitution and dissolved all government agencies. The coup was the main contributing factor of the government collapsing in the northern regions, which summarily fell to armed groups.<sup>53</sup>

Member states of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) refused to recognise the State of Azawad that the MNLA declared, mainly because it would encourage separatism in other countries. Other West African countries rejected the coup due to the region's fragile politics, worrying that this situation would lead to more military coups; another military coup had taken place in Guinea Bissau on April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2012. West African states took action on Mali both militarily and politically. Politically, a call was issued for a diplomatic solution, and Burkina Faso pioneered mediation efforts. Militarily, ECOWAS decided to send 3,000 soldiers to Mali, should a peaceful solution be refused by the insurgents.<sup>54</sup> The mediation efforts had to deal with political turmoil resulting from the military coup. In the end the international community pressured the junta into surrendering the authority to manage the transition, to confront the crisis in the north, and to prepare for upcoming elections back to civilians.

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**Following Ansar-ud  
Din attacks outside  
of Azawad, French  
troops, with the  
assistance of West  
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the armed groups.**  
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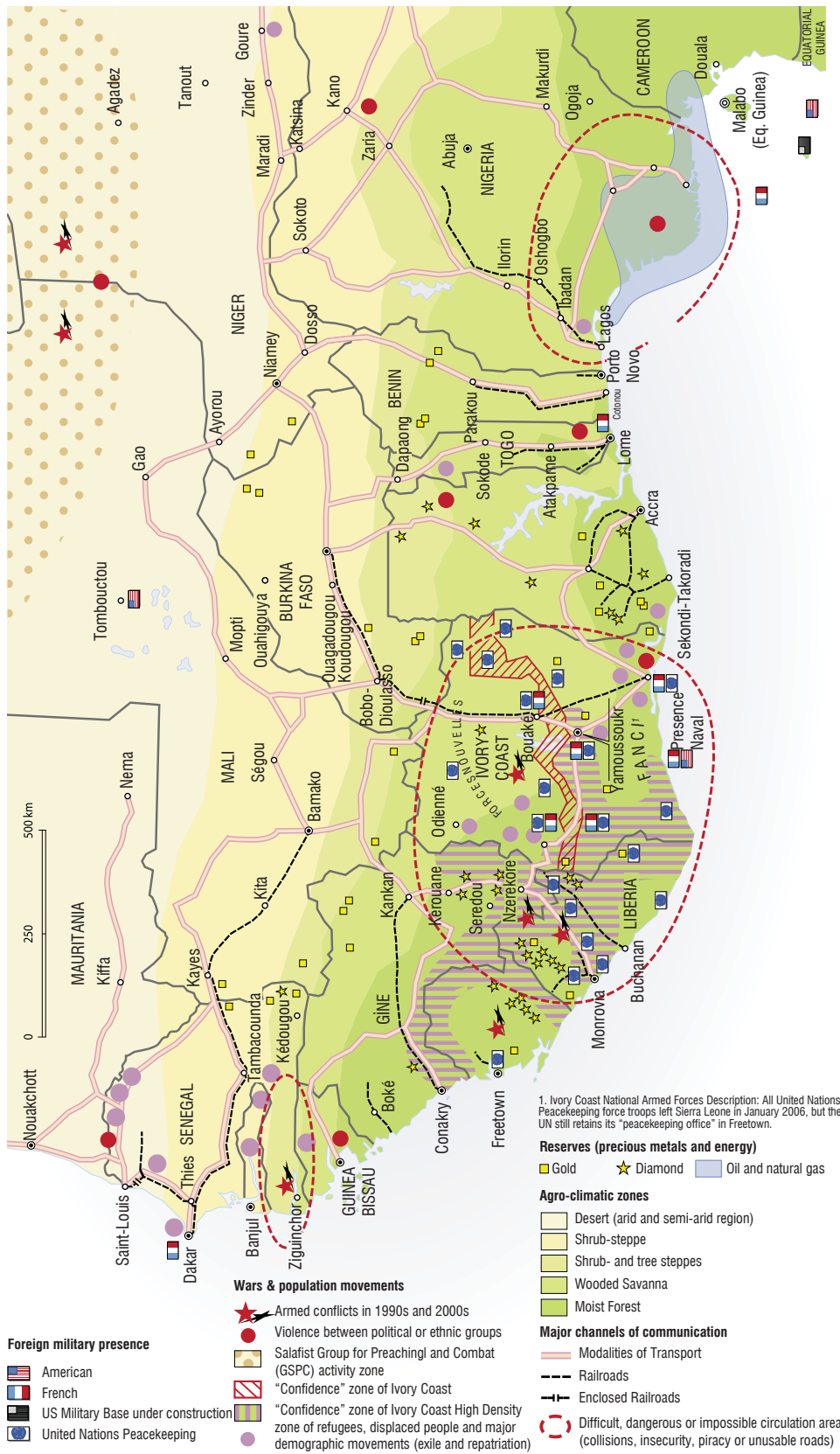
After the Security Council refused a proposal to separate northern Mali from the south, the UN passed Resolution 2071/2012, calling for support for the political process and national reconciliation. The UN's efforts were intended to expand its advisory role in and broaden institutional reforms, especially those related to state security forces.<sup>55</sup> The UN gave consultative support to the African Union and ECOWAS countries. Meanwhile, African leaders started to consider possible security and military steps to resolve the crisis in Mali, as well as debate whether it would be appropriate to send African forces in support of the UN.<sup>56</sup>

In December 2012 the Security Council passed Resolution 2085/2012, referencing article seven of the UN Charter and authorising the yearlong deployment of an international force under African command of Africa.<sup>57</sup> One of the matters addressed in the resolution was containing the threats emanating from terrorist organisations like Al-Qaeda and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa. Notably missing, however, were references to Ansar-ud Din or cross-border organised crime. In fact, the preceding UN resolutions and Security Council meetings addressed and discussed this matter. This infuriated some leaders of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad.

Following the Ansar-ud Din attacks outside of Azawad, French troops, with the assistance of West African states, began to mobilize against the armed groups. Algeria was among the nations that forcefully resisted the French military intervention. Experts relate this to Algerian concerns over a potential Tuareg insurgency in the south. Yet, Algeria also has investments in the oil industry in Northern Mali.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, when Algeria opened its airspace to French warplanes; it was interpreted as an outcome not of a principled policy but rather exigency. Morocco, on the other hand, supported French military intervention in order to protect the territorial integrity of Mali. Rabat wanted to suppress any moral support for the separatist Polisario Front in the south of Morocco. Additionally, Rabat had investments in the banking, communication, and other sectors in Mali.<sup>59</sup> It merits mention that Morocco's concerns about the Malian problem have a cultural aspect, as well. Morocco considers itself the source of African Sufism, and thus sees spread of Salafist movements as a threat to the country's religious influence over West Africa. Mauritania, despite its initial eagerness to act militarily according to its geographical location, finally bowed to the sensitivities of its Black communities. The ethnic aspect of the Mali crisis could threaten intercommunal in Mauritania. Senegal was another supporter of the military operation, fearing that if Azawad gained independence, greater attention might be drawn to separatist ambitions in its Casamance region. Other African states were also concerned about a disintegrating Mali sparking civil wars and security problems in the region (Map 10).



**Map 10. Conflicts in West Africa**



**Sources:** Haut-Commissariat des Nations unies pour les réfugiés (UNHCR); World Refugee Survey 2004 and 2005, United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI); Programme des Nations unies pour le développement (PNUD); ministère français des affaires étrangères; ministère français de la défense; la Croix-Rouge; Norwegian Refugee Council, Genève; Bureau de coordination des Nations unies pour les affaires humanitaires (Unocha)





# 2

## GEOPOLITICAL AND GEOECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF THE MALI CRISIS

*African crises since the end of the Cold War have posed great challenges for France.*

Most of the African leaders who were loyal to French interests during the Cold War are no longer in power, which has caused Paris to lose much of its influence on the continent. The United States, on the other hand, has become much more interested in Africa since the turn of the century. What’s more, other powers, like BRICS countries, are developing their economic presences in Africa. The traditional Western powers in Africa, France especially, feel their African interests to be increasingly vulnerable.

In addition to patterns of poor governance, weak central authority, ethnic rifts, and spreading terrorism, the crisis in Mali is also a reflection of international competition over the African continent. The conflict is strongly connected to other geopolitical and geo-economic interactions in other parts of the world like the Indian Ocean and the Asia-Pacific region. Rising powers also plan to include African countries in their military strategies due to the widespread strategic natural resources—like oil and uranium—on the continent. Great powers are building military bases and establishing sea routes in order to acquire these natural resources, safely transport them to their own economies, and head off any disruptive threats.

### A. France Warily Eyes the Increasing U.S. Presence in Africa

#### 1) The U.S. Economic Presence in France’s Sphere of Influence

The United States has started to enlarge the legal framework for its economic relations with African states in recent years. Congress adopted the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) in 2000, the main purpose of which was to gradually lift customs restrictions on African goods.<sup>60</sup> The U.S. further initiated negotiations with Angola, Nigeria, and South Africa, among others for the Trade and Investment Framework Agreements (TIFAs). Bilateral investment treaties were also signed with Cameroon and Senegal.<sup>61</sup> American efforts to create free-trade regimes with Sub-Saharan African countries have thus far been unsuccessful, despite serious overtures to South Africa.<sup>62</sup> However, in

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**In line with the growth in US economic relations with countries under influence of France in Africa, the US started to strengthen its military presence in these countries, as well.**  
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2004 such an agreement was reached with Morocco. In the meantime, the U.S. set up a fund under the name “Millennium Challenge Corporation”, through which it provided economic support for several projects in African states. Most West African states have made use of this fund; Mali, for instance, has thus far benefitted to the tune of \$461 million.<sup>63</sup>

These agreements and programs—a number of which fall within France’s traditional sphere of influence— have raised concerns in Paris. A French minister revealed this apprehension when he remarked that “Morocco should choose between the U.S. and Europe” at the beginning of negotiations on the U.S.-Morocco Free Trade Agreement. But the problem lies in that the U.S. calibrates these treaties with African states according to its own trade criteria. These criteria are then used against U.S. rivals like China and European countries within the World Trade Organisation.

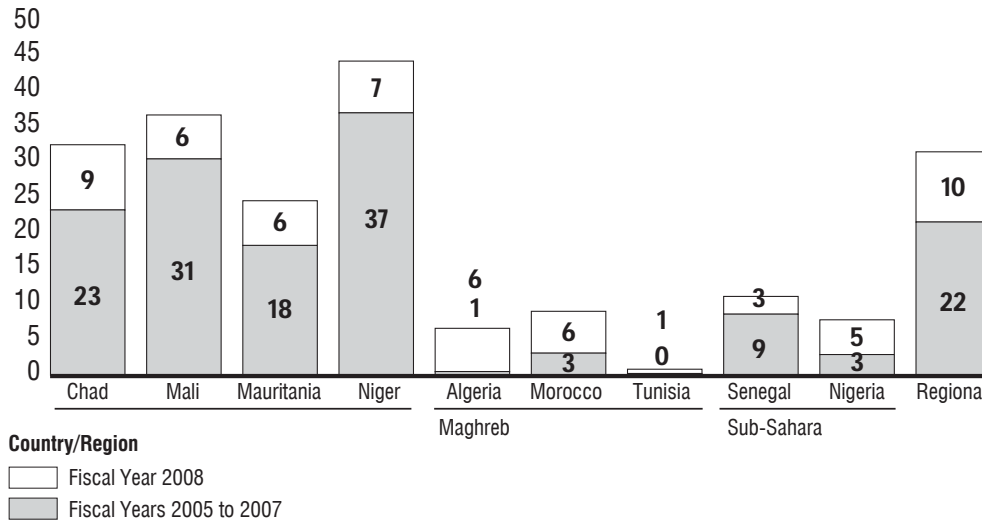
## **2) The U.S. Military Presence within France’s Sphere of Influence**

An American military presence has accompanied expanding economic relations in African countries. In 2002 Washington initiated the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI), the first U.S. project on African soil in the 21st century. The purpose of this initiative is to help the governments of Mauritania, Mali, Niger, and Chad protect their borders while provide assistance on regional security concerns.<sup>64</sup> The U.S. also started its “Sahara Regional Initiative” and integrated it into another initiative called the “Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Initiative” (TSCTI), in 2005.<sup>65</sup>

\$230 million was allocated to the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCTI) for the period between 2005 and 2007, with Mauritania, Niger, Mali and Chad receiving 74% of the funds. This demonstrates the priority given to Sahelian countries within American military strategy for the Sub-Saharan Africa (Table 1).<sup>66</sup> An important transformation was observed in U.S.-Africa military relations in 2006. Then U.S. president George W. Bush announced the U.S. military’s new Africa Command (AFRICOM), was being formed out of Central Command (CENTCOM) and European Command (EUCOM). The struggle against terrorism and the strategic importance of the continent’s rich energy and mineral resources were the chief reasons behind the founding of AFRICOM.<sup>67</sup>

**Table 3. Distribution of TSCTP Funds by Country and Region (2005-2008)**

Dollars in Millions

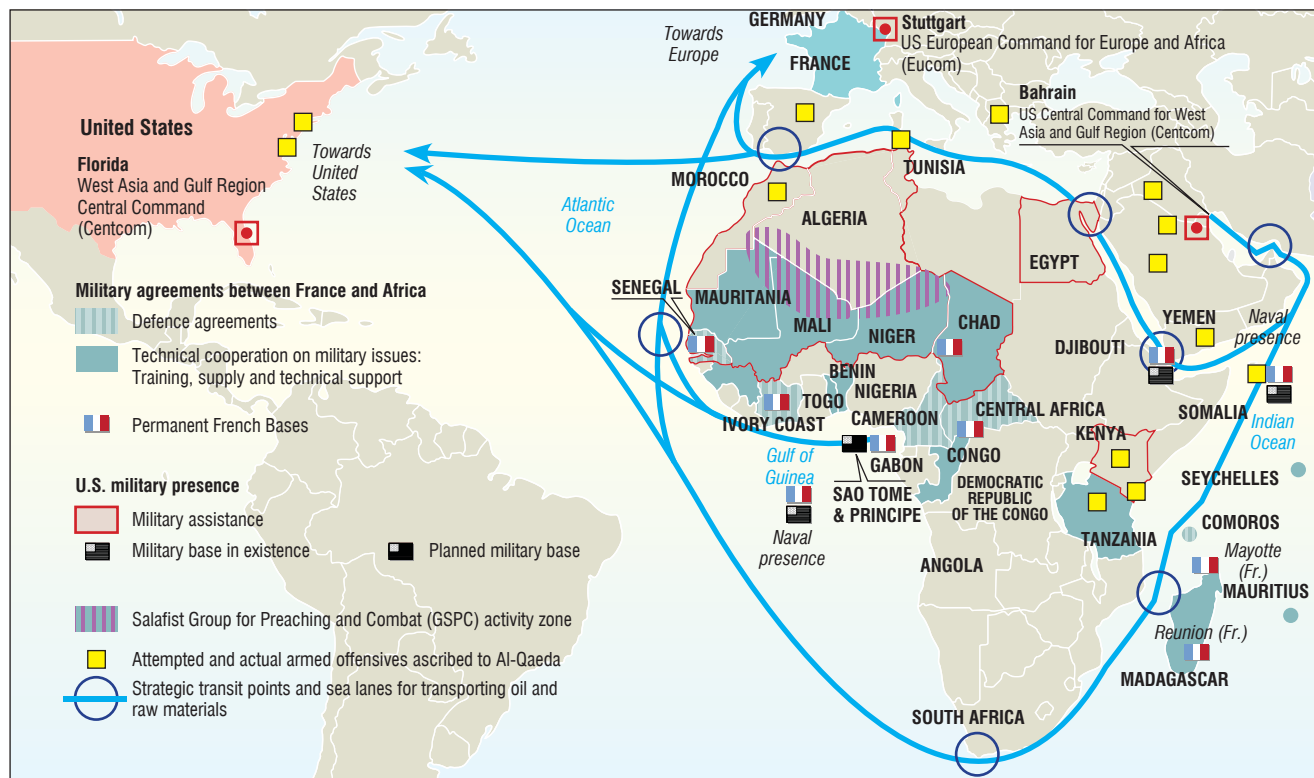


**Description:** Figures promised for 2008 have been derived from State, USAID and DDD forecasts as of June 2008.

**Source:** Combating Terrorism -Actions Needed to Enhance Implementation of Trans-Sahara Counter-terrorism Partnership, United States Government Accountability Office (GAO), Report to the Ranking Member, Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, July 2008,P:11. <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d08860.pdf>

The U.S. military presence in the Sahel has seriously upset the French . Most, if not all, the countries maintaining security and military relations with France are included in American strategic calculations (Map 11). Congress’s private session following the outbreak of the crisis in Mali was the first time in its history that it discussed the problem of the Tuareg people. During the meeting Johnnie Garson, the Assistant Manager of Africa Affairs of the U.S. Secretary of State declared that U.S. policy was to strengthen democracy and security in Mali and help develop relations with countries neighbouring Mali.<sup>68</sup> In a report titled *Security Status of the Countries of Sahel Region*, which was submitted to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the French National Assembly on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2012, an overall increase was noticed in the activities of U.S. Armed Forces especially during the recent months. The report also addressed the Flintlock military exercises that the U.S. had been performing with several regional countries since 2005 and another exercise that was performed in Senegal in February of 2011. Finally, the report drew attention to the military exercise in Mali that had been planned for March 2012 and was only deferred due to the crisis.<sup>69</sup>

**Map 11. The U.S. and France's Military Presence in Africa**



Source: Pierre Abramovici, "Activisme militaire de Washington en Afrique", Journal Le Monde Diplomatique, Juillet 2004, P:14-15

## B. Tension over the Rise of the BRICS in Africa

### 1) Mineral Resource Conflicts in the Sahel and the Gulf of Guinea

One of the drivers of the Mali Crisis is the international competition over mineral resources—especially uranium—in the Sahel. In fact, the Tuareg-inhabited regions of Mali and Niger are rich in natural resources. The French corporation Areva has enjoyed a monopoly on the extraction of uranium ore in these countries since their independence. Niger is considered to have the world's fourth largest uranium reserves. The demand for Nigerian uranium has been climbing steadily in light of nuclear power plant construction projects in India, China, Russia, and the U.S. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) expects that 450 new nuclear reactors will be constructed by 2030. 100 of these reactors will be built in China, 40 in Russia, and 30 between India and South Africa.<sup>70</sup> France worries that the Tuareg insurgency may spread to Niger and affect Areva's ability to export.<sup>71</sup> As a matter of fact, before the outbreak of the crisis some, French workers were kidnapped while they extracted uranium in one of Areva's new operation zones. The incident was enough to stop all work in the region.

Besides, France is concerned that Areva's agreement with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on nuclear power plant construction, the so-called "deal of the century" will be negatively affected by the crisis in Mali.<sup>72</sup> For this reason, the French president François Hollande paid a visit to the UAE immediately after France's military operations in Mali.

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**One of the drivers of the Mali Crisis is the international competition over mineral resources -especially uranium- in the Sahel.**  
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It's possible that the French President's request for assistance from the UAE can be attributed to his concerns about the nuclear plant construction project.

Paris's anxieties about the safety of French investments in the Sahel are not only related to complications associated with the Tuareg crisis, but are also closely related to new competitors in the uranium industry, as well. The fact that Mamadou Tandja, the former President of Niger, raised China as an alternative during the price negotiations with Areva seemed to justify French concerns. Areva then asked President Sarkozy to stop China and Niger from signing agreements on uranium extraction. Paris also worries that the uranium it obtains from Niger for nuclear power generation in France may be at risk. France's dependency on Nigerien uranium is anticipated to rise 50% by 2015, assuming that the remaining half of demand would be met through imports from Canada and Kazakhstan.<sup>73</sup>

Tandja has been the target of accusations of corruption and improper practices in most of the agreements concluded regarding mineral resources. Questions raised by the President's son, Osman Tandja, being appointed Commercial Attaché at the Chinese Embassy in Niger; and the government's refusal of a committee to supervise mining agreements, was considered implicit proof of corrupt practices. Some observers believe that this political tension in the country was the root cause of the military coup on February 18th, 2010.<sup>74</sup>

In terms of natural resources, Mali produces gold in addition to uranium, and also very low quantities of diamonds, and bauxite. Furthermore, in the city of Gao of the predominately Tuareg-inhabited northern territories, there is a project to extract phosphate in an area with a diameter of 150 kilometres. An additional 19 new zones are rumored to be considered for future production. The nine mining operations currently active in Mali are run by eight corporations, seven of which are of international origin. These international corporations are from Australia, UK, South Africa, Canada and Germany<sup>75</sup> (Table 4).<sup>76</sup> Mali has a rich variety of minerals and is ranked fourth in gold production worldwide. France remarkably has not yet obtained a license for extracting gold in Mali. France is now trying to compensate for this missed opportunity by taking full advantage of the mining and oil sectors in the Tuareg-dominated north.

Paris also worries that the uranium it obtains from Niger for nuclear power generation in France may be at risk. France's dependency on Nigerien uranium is anticipated to rise 50% by 2015, assuming that the remaining half of demand would be met through imports from Canada and Kazakhstan.

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**Table 4. Internationally-Operated Mines in Mali**

Region	Corporation Name	Corporation Nationality	Corporation Share Percentage	Government Share Percentage
Goukoto et	RandGold	United Kingdom	80%	20%
Kalana	Avnel Gold Mining	Guernsey	80%	20%
Kodiéran	Wassoul’or	Mali	55%	20%
	Pearl Gold AG	Germany	25%	
Morila	Anglogold Ashanti	South Africa	40%	20%
	RandGold	United Kingdom	40%	
Sadiola	Anglogold Ashanti	South Africa	41%	18%
	IAM Gold	Canada	41%	
Segala Tabakoto	Endeavour Mining	Canada	80%	20%
Syama	Resolute Mining	Australia	80%	20%
Yatela	Anglogold Ashanti	South Africa	40%	20%
	IAM Gold	Canada	40%	

**Source:** Damien Deltenre, “Gestion des ressources minérales et conflits au Mali et au Niger”, Note d’Analyse du Groupe de recherche et d’information sur la paix et la sécurité (GRIP), 12 décembre 2012, Bruxelles,P:3. [http://www.grip.org/sites/grip.org/files/NOTES\\_ANALYSE/2012/Photos/na\\_2012-12-12\\_fr\\_d-deltenre.pdf](http://www.grip.org/sites/grip.org/files/NOTES_ANALYSE/2012/Photos/na_2012-12-12_fr_d-deltenre.pdf)

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**The Gulf of Guinea is a major source of mineral resources like iron, copper, uranium, etc., for industrialised states. However, this region’s chief mineral is columbit-tantalite, in which it ranks second in world production.**  
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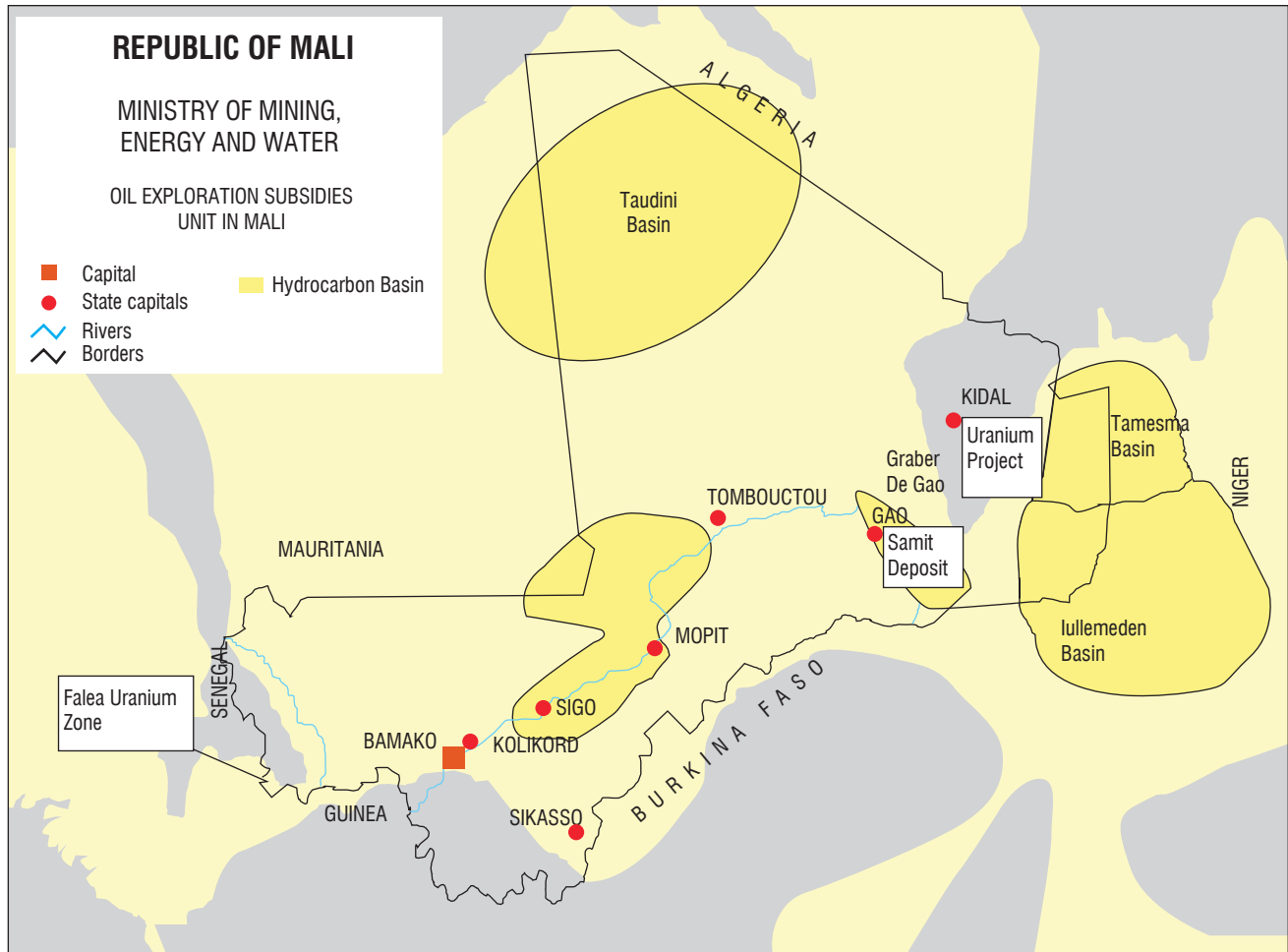
The Gulf of Guinea is a major source of mineral resources like iron, copper, uranium, etc., for industrialised states. However, this region’s chief mineral is columbit-tantalite, in which it ranks second in world production. This mineral is mostly used in manufacturing cellular phones, satellites, computers, and other high-tech equipment.<sup>77</sup> The importance of columbite-tantalite for technology-dependent economies and American military industries has pushed the U.S. to adopt a more sensitive approach to the region.<sup>78</sup> Accordingly, this is one of the most prominent reasons why the U.S. wants to maintain a military presence in the region.

As for Russia, Mikhail Margelov, Special Representative of the President of Russia for Africa, wrote an article for the Nezavisimaya newspaper where he mentioned Mali’s importance in mineral extraction and made the following statement: “Given its rich reserves and resources, Mali is considered a likely field for future wars”. Concerning uranium, the Russian representative pointed out that there are still untapped reserves in northern Mali.<sup>79</sup> In response to the crisis, Russia provided the Malian Government with security and military support to help it establish control over the country’s north. The Russian representative noted that this support was intended to help solve the problems in Mali—something in the best interests of Russia. This Russian interest in Mali stems from Russia’s assessment of the “Crisis in Mali” as a turning point for Russia on the African continent. However, rather than viewing Africa from the geopolitical perspective of the Cold War, Russia now approaches Africa from a geo-economic perspective.<sup>80</sup>

## 2) Conflict over Oil Reserves in the Sahel and Gulf of Guinea

Oil exploration and extraction activities have made significant progress in the Sahel over the last decade. Drilling activities have gradually increased in the region due to the rise in oil prices, and oil exploration efforts have covered Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad, and Sudan.<sup>81</sup> Since 2005, oil companies from Algeria, France, Qatar, Tunisia, and Italy have been partaking in oil exploration efforts at the Taoudenni Basin, which is geographically divided between Algeria, Mauritania, and Mali (Map 12). Mauritania issued an oil exploration licence to the French company Total, while Mali issued an oil exploration licence to the Sonatrach corporation from Algeria.<sup>82</sup> The British Sipex Company has oil drilling operations in Niger.<sup>83</sup> Libya, on the other hand, has not been directly involved in oil exploration activities in the Sahel and Sahara regions. However, the Libyan Oil Holding company (LOHL) has acquired the Morocco, Tunisia, and Niger distribution services of the U.S.-based ExxonMobil corporation in 2007. In 2008 the same Libyan company then acquired the services of U.S. corporations in Senegal. LOHL thus took control of 3,000 energy distribution locations across Africa by the end of 2011.<sup>84</sup>

**Map 12. Oil and Uranium Reserves in Mali**

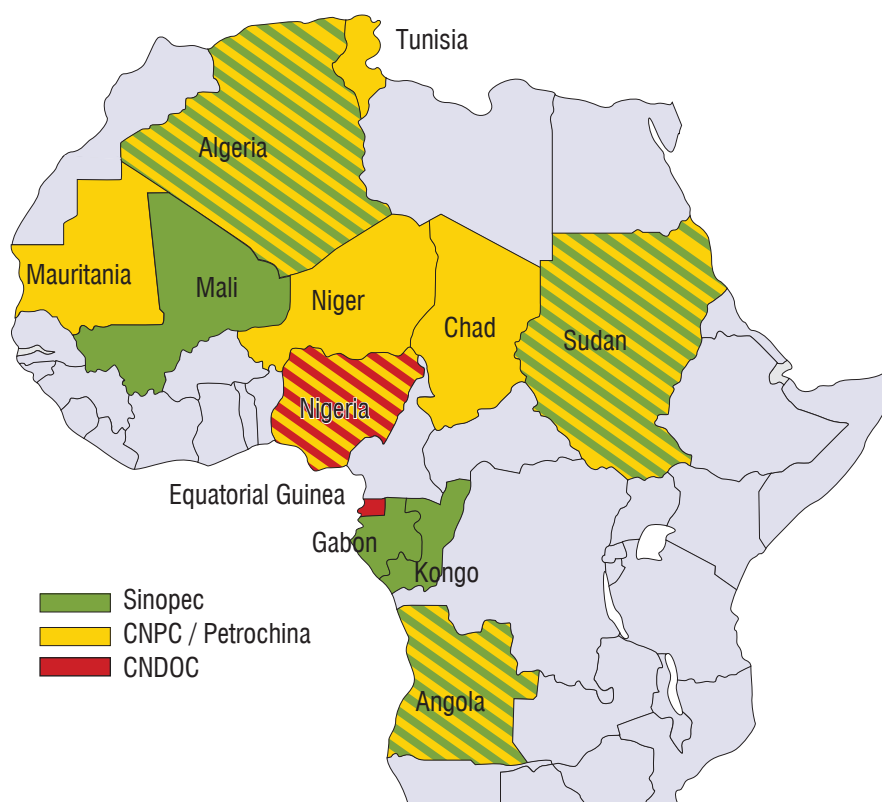


Source: <http://hibbs.armscontrolwonk.com/archive/1427/uranium-in-saharan-sands>



China has also thrown its hat in the Sahelian oil exploration ring. In 2003, the Chinese Petroleum Company (CNPC) started oil exploration activities in the Ténéré region of Niger and oil drilling in Chad. In 2005, China commenced oil exploration in an area adjacent to the Mauritanian-Senegal border (Map 13).<sup>85</sup> As for Mali, in 2004 the Chinese SINOPEC company was able to obtain two drilling licences for five different zones located in the two northern cities of Timbuktu and Gao.<sup>86</sup>

**Map 13. Chinese Oil Company Investments in Africa (1995-2006)**



**Source:** Africa and China, Atlas on regional integration in west Africa, The Economic Community Of West African States -Sahel and West Africa Club, December 2006, P:12. <http://www.oecd.org/swac/publications/38409391.pdf>

Responding to the increasing Chinese presence in the energy sector in the Sahel, Western countries have pressured Sahelian governments to provide more transparency in their contracts. Chad, in particular, was exposed to considerable pressure from the World Bank.<sup>87</sup> Several African governments were intimidated by Western states, and they looked to China as a balancing power. But by 2012, relations between Chad and China started to suffer as a result of a disagreement on the management of the country's oil refinery China chose to support the armed movements rebelling against these governments in order to continue its investments across the region. Contributing to the danger posed by a disgruntled China are the three Chinese light-arms production plants in Africa, namely, Mali, Sudan, and the DRC.<sup>88</sup> Mali has the potential of becoming a source of Chinese weaponry in a West Africa already plagued by militias and armed rebellions. Sudan may also potentially become a source for these weapons for the Horn of Africa. As a matter of fact, when the crisis in Darfur first emerged, China initially supported armed rebels against the Chadian government, through Sudanese

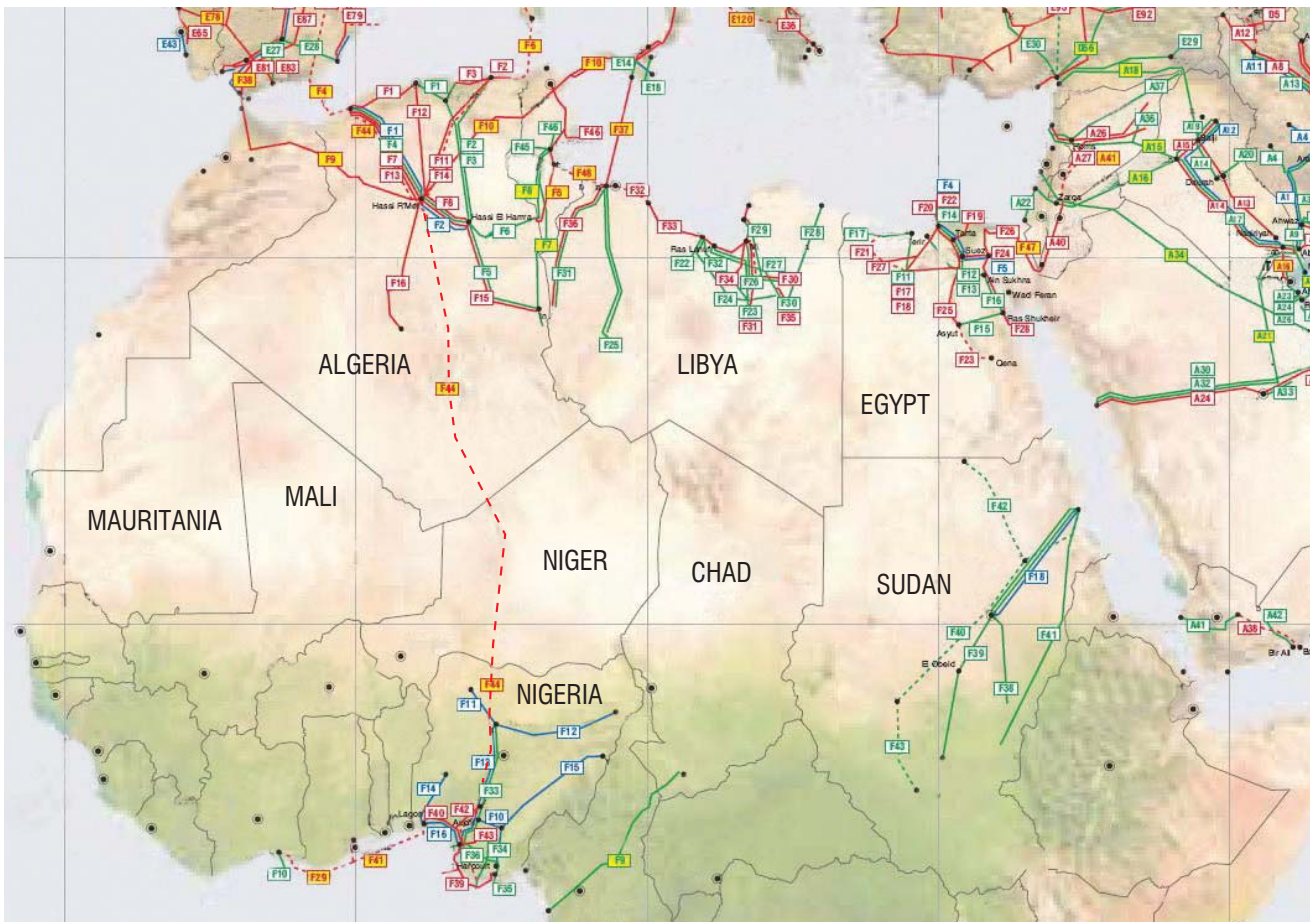
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**The increasing Chinese presence in Sahelian energy production exposed the region's governments to Western pressures.**  
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channels.<sup>89</sup> However, when Chad withdrew its formal recognition of Taiwan, China obtained some investment privileges in Chad's mining and oil industries. Oil exportation is problematic for the landlocked countries of the Sahel and Sahara like Mali, Chad, and Niger. Responding to this challenge, Exxon Mobile has started constructing a 1,070 km-long oil pipeline in the Doba region in order to transport Chadian oil to the Gulf of Guinea through Port Kribi.<sup>90</sup> The French company Total, which runs oil drills close to the Mauritania-Mali border at Toudenni, needs an 800 km-long pipeline to reach the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>91</sup> France is worried that the discovery of many new wells in the area will lead to China becoming involved somehow with the pipeline. The underlying reason for France's concerns is that China plays a crucial role in building Mauritanian infrastructure—the enlargement of the Port of Friendship in Nouakchott, which has special compartments for oil storage, is a prime example.

In the meantime came the announcement of the Trans-Saharan Gas Pipeline project planned to transport natural gas from Nigeria through Niger and up to Algeria before exporting it to Europe (Map 14).<sup>92</sup> The Malian government assigned the Canadian firm ERCO Worldwide to draw up a feasibility study on its potential participation in the project. Afterwards in 2009, the Malian government officially applied to join the project.<sup>93</sup> Due to the project's link to Europe's energy security, European corporations like the French company Total, Italian Eni, and Spanish Gas Natural and Repsol showed great interest in realising the Trans-Saharan Gas Pipeline project.<sup>94</sup> American and Asian companies, on the other hand, were not particularly interested in this project. Russia came up with the idea of establishing a natural gas partnership with Nigeria due to its concern that this pipeline would pose a threat to its exports to Europe. In June 2009, the Nigerian National Oil Corporation of Nigeria created a joint venture with Russia's Gazprom.<sup>95</sup>

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**The Trans-Saharan  
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**Map 14. Existing Natural Gas Pipelines and the Planned Nigeria-Algeria Trans-Saharan Natural Gas Pipeline Project**



- Oil pipeline
- Gas pipeline
- Product pipeline
- - - Future oil pipeline
- - - Future gas pipeline
- - - Future product pipeline

Source: [http://www.theodora.com/pipelines/africa\\_pipelines\\_map.jpg](http://www.theodora.com/pipelines/africa_pipelines_map.jpg)

Washington has grown more interested in oil and natural gas reserves located in the Gulf of Guinea. During a speech in 2006, former U.S. President George W. Bush declared his intention to reduce the American dependency on Middle Eastern oil by 75% by 2025.<sup>96</sup> In 2009 the U.S. investment share in off-shore drilling operations in the deep waters of the Gulf of Guinea was 32% (\$52 billion).<sup>97</sup> Washington simultaneously developed an interest in Gulf of Guinea natural gas. As a matter of fact, the American Eximbank and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) support the development of a natural gas pipeline extending from Nigeria to Ghana, over Benin and Togo.<sup>98</sup>

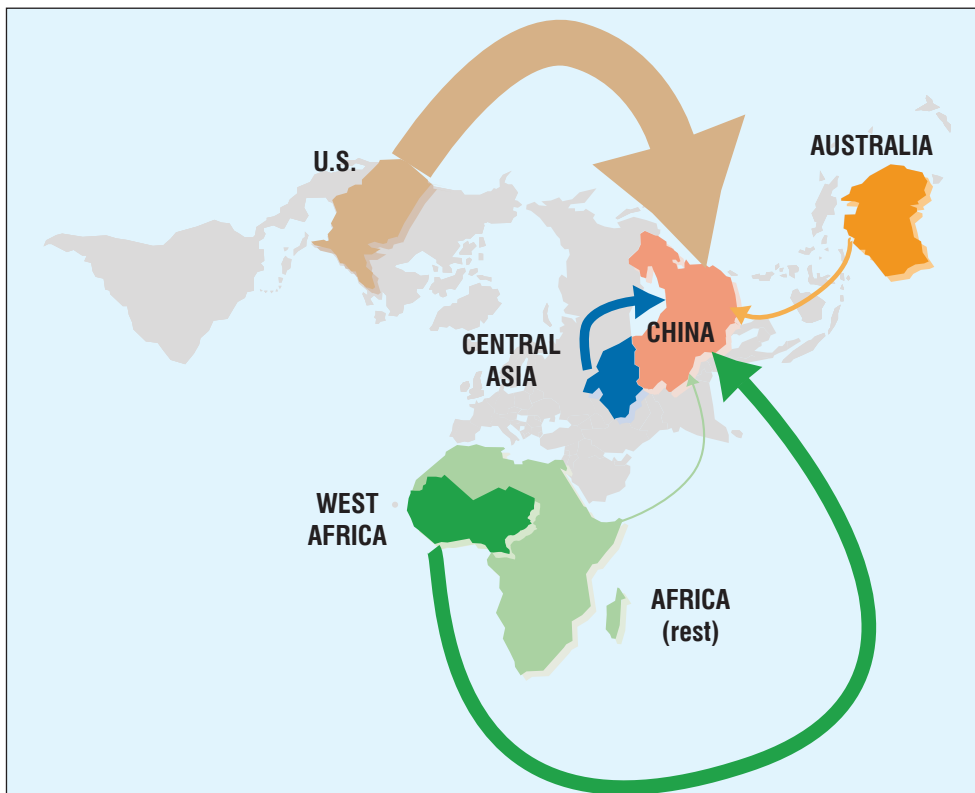
### 3) West Africa and Sensitive International Trade Issues

The war in Mali is more than just an expression of the domestic conflict between the two sides, it is also a reflection of the competition between giant commercial powers in West Africa. At this end, there is major competition between Brazil, China, the U.S. and Europe in such areas as the bio-fuel industry, garment and textile manufacturing, and agriculture. Cotton plays quite an important role in China's national economy. Today, approximately 40 million people are employed in the cotton industry in China. Similarly, the textile industry represented 11% of China's gross domestic product in 2010. In 2010, the African continent as a whole produced the sixth-highest amount of cotton, after China, India, the U.S., Brazil, and Pakistan. Furthermore, Africa's 2010 cotton exports constituted 10% of global exports, ranking it third after India and the U.S. China imported 300,000 tons of African cotton during the first seven months of 2011.<sup>99</sup>

West Africa is the source of much of China's African cotton imports. Between January and July of 2011 Mali produced 7% of China's cotton imports—the most on the continent. Burkina Faso is next with 6%, followed by Cameroon with 3% (Map 15-Table 5).<sup>100</sup>

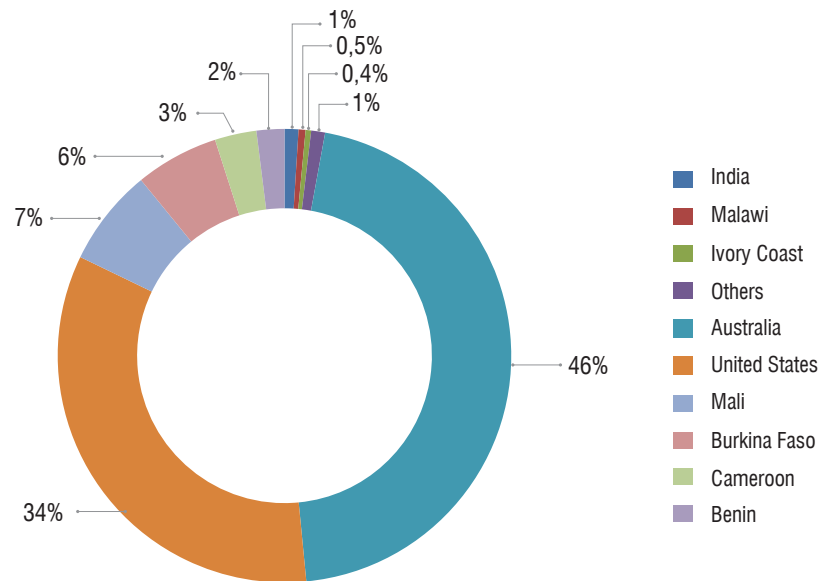
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**Map 15. China's Cotton Imports (2004)**



**Source:** Africa and China, Atlas on regional integration in west Africa, The Economic Community Of West African States -Sahel and West Africa Club, December 2006, P:12. <http://www.oecd.org/swac/publications/38409391.pdf>

**Table 5. Countries Exporting Cotton to China (January-July 2011)**



**Source:** China-Africa Cooperation Understanding the Chinese market and promoting African cotton, seminar organised by the International Trade Centre in China between 13 and 20 October 2011, Activities report, 2011, P:6

A careful review of the African Growth and Opportunity Act enacted by the U.S. Congress reveals that one of its main objectives is to contain the Chinese clothing and textile industry. This explains why all West African states have been authorized to benefit from the Act. Although American lawmakers are gradually lifting tariffs for products from these countries, it still maintains a set of restraints on certain products that are sensitive in the U.S. market. The textile, garment, and electronics industries lead these sensitive industries.<sup>101</sup>

The Growth and Opportunities Act emphasizes that clothing and textile products must be produced indigenously—as laid out by the “Rules of Origin” framework—if the sector is to benefit from the lower tariffs.<sup>102</sup> The U.S. intends to use this clause to prevent the Chinese textile industry from entering the American market. At the same time, the U.S. appears to have only targeted Sub-Saharan African states to benefit from this Act. As a matter of fact, the U.S. government requires special permission to send back goods which have entered the country illegally. What’s more, it requires actual customs and freight cooperation between the United States and the countries specified in the Act.<sup>103</sup> Similarly, the Act aims to prevent China from exploiting loopholes in customs laws and slipping illicit exports into the U.S. market. Additionally, U.S. Senator Jim Webb pointed out that China was able to benefit from some of the \$461 million the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Funds that were collected for projects in Mali, and called for the funds to be used for their original purpose.<sup>104</sup>

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**One of the main objectives of the African Growth and Opportunity Act is to contain the Chinese clothing and textile industry.**  
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Brazil, on the other hand, criticises Western members of the World Trade Organisation for their protectionist policies on certain products like sugar (the EU) and cotton (the United States).<sup>105</sup> As a matter of fact, American protectionist policies have caused developing countries like cotton-producing Burkina Faso, Mali, Benin, and other Western



and Central African states to suffer great losses. There are approximately 10 million individuals employed in this sector within the region. However, the American farmers, however, are still complaining about the gradual drop in Brazil's cotton production costs.<sup>106</sup>

Brazil's reaction stems from its intention to implement its Cotton-4 Project, a project covering Mali, Burkina Faso, Benin, and Chad that aims to enhance the competitiveness of cotton through the know-how of the Brazil Development Agency. This project would integrate Brazil into the production stages of contemporary technologies.<sup>107</sup> During his Mali visit in late 2009, Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Luiz Nunes Amorim had talks with Tiémoko Sangaré, the Malian Minister of Agriculture. The parties reached a joint decision to expand cooperation in the field of cotton and develop it to cover other industries like rice production.<sup>108</sup>

However, China obtained marketing concessions by integrating Chinese business conglomerates with new business elites, in the West Africa region. Likewise, the Malian students, diplomats, and other officials who had stayed in China for more than a decade, have now become advisors to Chinese corporations.<sup>109</sup> Malian and Senegalese traders have formed a network of trade relations in Angola, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Congo and other countries, including Western and Central Africa.<sup>110</sup>

Young Malian traders have managed to prove themselves in Asian cities and markets. They have established their most powerful networks in the Chinese cities of Hong Kong and Guangzhou.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, they have become important actors in the commercial networks between Asia, Europe, and Africa since the mid-1980s. Trade networks between the Central African Republic, Brussels, and Bangkok that deal in gold and precious stones are also expanding through Malian traders.<sup>112</sup> In truth, rising unemployment among high school and college graduates in recent years in combination with the cruel European policies implemented against African immigrants, have been behind mass migrations of Malians to China. In terms of Chinese in Mali, a new generation of Chinese immigrants has settled in Mali since the 1990s and taken advantage of the experiences of their fellow citizens who had taken residence in Mali before independence. These people who are mostly college graduates have started to form a network of economic relations in a more effective way than the preceding generations.<sup>113</sup> Chinese immigrants who've arrived in Eastern and Southern Africa since 1990 have established familial and social ties with previous generations, and are recognized as "overseas Chinese". Furthermore, this new generation has started to form a kind of monopoly on economic activities in some regions.<sup>114</sup> Meanwhile, the Overseas Chinese Association in Mali was established in order to safeguard the interests of Chinese citizens and contractors in Mali. One of the purposes of this association is to set up social and economic ties between Chinese groups.<sup>115</sup> Mali's economic prominence is based upon economic activity in West Africa and from its position as a point of liaison between the U.S., Europe, and Australia. Malian students, diplomats, and other officials who had stayed in China for more than a decade, have now become advisors to Chinese corporations.

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and supporting land  
forces in the event of  
a land war.  
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## C. Geopolitical Sea Routes: From the Pacific to the Gulf of Guinea

### 1) China's Maritime Strategy and the Drift toward Africa

#### a) The Evolution of China's Maritime Strategy

In the early 1980s Chinese naval forces were tasked with providing security for the Chinese coasts and supporting land forces in the event of a land war. However, the promotion of Admiral Liu Huaqing to the Chinese fleet command brought about a new era for the Chinese navy between 1982 and 1988. In 1985, China adopted the "Comprehensive Defence" theory which entailed gearing up Chinese naval forces to allow them to move freely in the waters falling to the west, south, and north of China. This transformation accompanied China's increasing focus on economic development, particularly the increasing need for marine resources and energy.<sup>117</sup> From 1995 to 1996, China accelerated plans for its naval forces as a result of the growing tension in Sino-American relations, and the "Active Maritime Defence" strategy replaced the "Comprehensive Defence" theory. In other words, the Chinese navy's geographical area of operations was widened. One of the reasons underlying this transition had been China's urgent need to get access to international markets.<sup>118</sup>

The 2006 Chinese National Defence White Paper, issued by the Chinese Defence Ministry, mentions an urgent need to modernise the naval forces and enlarge their area of activity. Then Chinese President Hu Jintao, expressed the "need" to "spend more effort improving the Chinese navy" and "making it ready and available to engage in combat at any instant".<sup>119</sup> This modernization process was divided into three phases. The first stage entails developing naval capabilities to be able to respond adequately to Taiwan-borne potential threats. This strategy involves forming a line that interconnects the islands extending from southern Japan through the Philippines and Malaysia to Vietnam. The second phase, to take place between 2010 and 2020, envisions a secondary line connecting the islands starting from Japan and ending in Indonesia (Map 16). The difference between the first and second lines is that the second line penetrates deeper into the Asia-Pacific region. In the third phase, starting in 2020 and continuing until midcentury, China will endeavour to close the technological gap between the Chinese and American navies.<sup>120</sup>



**Map 16. Planned Island Chains**



**Source:** Charles-Louis Labrecque, Hugo Bourassa et Gérard Hervouet, “La modernisation militaire dernisation de la Chine - Une analyse des capacités actuelles et des efforts de montée en puissance “, Hautes études internationales (HEI), Université Laval, Québec, Canada, Juin 2011, P:141. [http://www.psi.ulaval.ca/fileadmin/psi/documents/Documents/Documents/LaModernisationMilitairedelaChine\\_28juillet\\_.pdf](http://www.psi.ulaval.ca/fileadmin/psi/documents/Documents/Documents/LaModernisationMilitairedelaChine_28juillet_.pdf)

In its quest to advance east into the Pacific, China was effectively drawn west to secure a series of military agreements with India’s neighbors. After signing a military agreement with Cambodia in November of 2003, Beijing provided military equipment to Bangladesh to shore up its defence against threats originating from India. On October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2007 Beijing signed an agreement to construct Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka, to India’s south. As for India’s west, China has erected an eavesdropping station in the Gwadar region of Pakistan.<sup>121</sup> On the other hand, Beijing also increased the level of importance it ascribed to India’s southern Indian Ocean coasts. These coasts face the Malakka Strait and link maritime routes to Persian Gulf and the Horn of Africa. This new importance given to the Indian Ocean reflects the fact that a vast majority of goods transported between China and the Middle East and Africa pass through this region.<sup>122</sup> Beijing’s overtures to India’s neighbors are attempts to improve relations for the sake of future policies (Map 17).<sup>123</sup>

**Map 17. China's String of Pearls Strategy**



**Source:** The Military Balance 2010, IISS; Bureau maritime international; BP Statistical Review 2010; Atlas geopolitique des espaces maritimes, Ed Technip; CIA World Factbook

### b) China Reaches East Africa by Sea

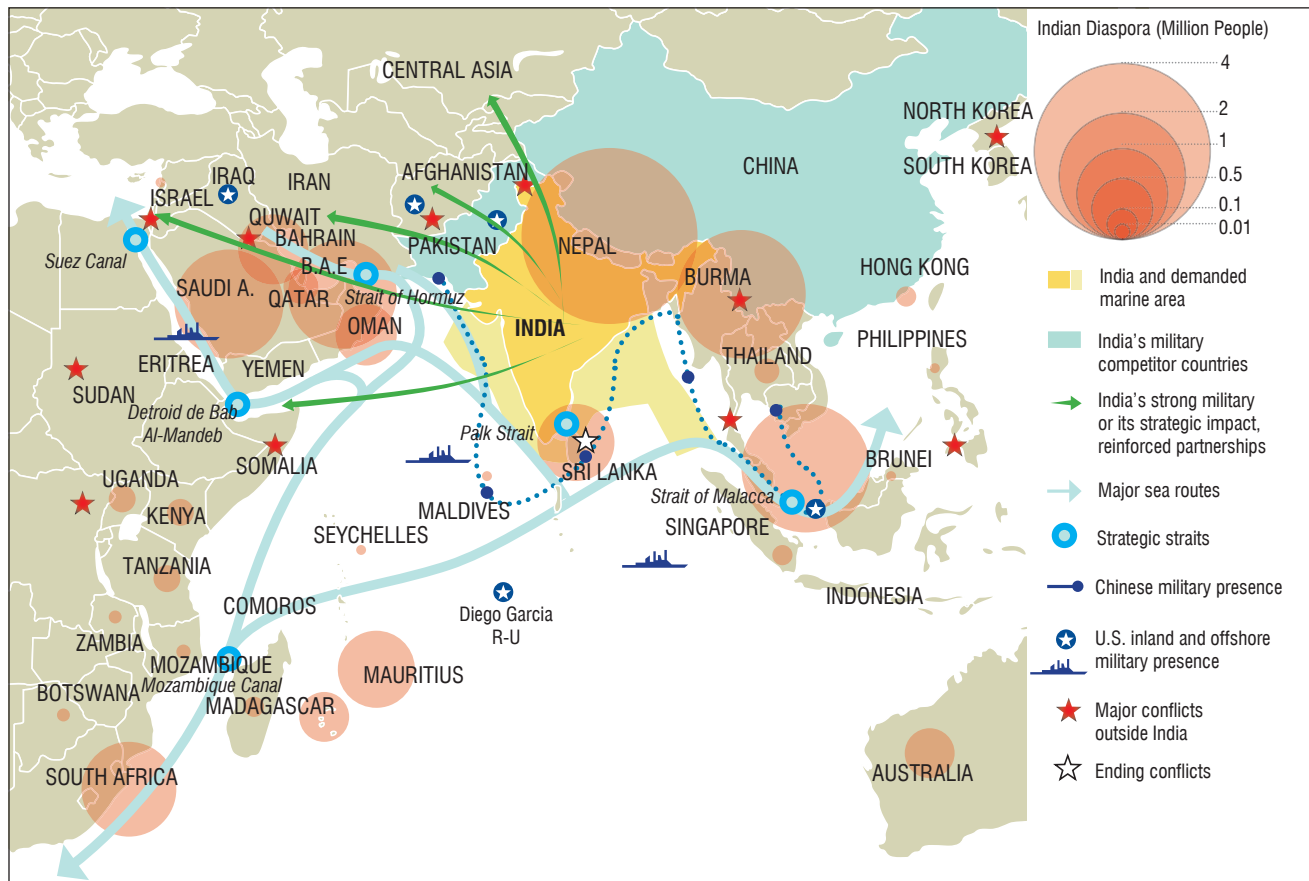
Throughout efforts to secure Chinese interests in the Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean regions, Beijing has also started to develop its relations with countries on Africa's eastern coast.<sup>124</sup> Over the last years, Beijing has started to enhance the military aid it provides to Kenya, a prominent country of East Africa and a significant player in the crisis in Somalia.<sup>125</sup>

When the Chinese military fleet began its first world tour in 2000, its ships first amassed on the Tanzanian coasts. In 2002, Chinese destroyers passed through Egypt's Suez Canal and convened at the Port of Alexandria on the Mediterranean shore. The Chinese Defence Ministry published another white paper in 2008 that referenced joint naval exercises China performed with South Africa. Egypt and South Africa participated (as observers) in China's naval exercises in its own territorial waters. China has also received official invitations from Cairo and Cape Town to visit their ports. When pirating started emerging off of the Somalian coast China hurried to ensure its interests by joining monitoring activities. China thus rallied its warships in Djibouti for the first time in history. In connection with this monitoring initiative, Chinese army officials submitted a proposition for building a permanent military sea base in East Africa. This base would have the additional benefit of lifting some of the problems associated with the Chinese fleet's long range journeys.<sup>126</sup>

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**Throughout efforts to secure Chinese interests in the Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean regions, Beijing has also started to develop its relations with countries on Africa's eastern coast.**  
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China places special importance on East African island-countries, for their unique strategic locations in the Indian Ocean. This is what underlies Chinese military aid to Madagascar. Beijing even sent equipment for the regime's security guards to use during the riot against the President of Madagascar, Marc Ravalomana.<sup>127</sup> In truth, despite the military relations between China and East African Countries, China does not have an official maritime base in anywhere in Africa. Yet, China plans to establish military bases in Seychelles, Iran, Maldives, Singapore, and Vietnam.<sup>128</sup> Seychelles, in particular, is considered to be a point of liaison between China's strategy on the Indian Ocean and on step-by-step expansion towards Africa's Indian and Atlantic Ocean coasts. In fact, there is a connection between China's efforts for developing relations with East African states and US geo-strategic targets. This is because China believes that Washington's intends to contain China and prevent it from becoming a global power by increasing its presence in Horn of Africa and Indian Ocean through military bases and agreements (Map 18).

**Map 18. Strategic Environment of the Indian Ocean**



Source: Philippe Rekacewicz, "Projections océaniques de l'Inde", *Le Monde diplomatique*, November 1st 2009

### c) The China-Atlantic Africa Military Relations

China deeply desires to develop military relations with Atlantic African states with the potential to meet its energy requirements. Furthermore, China has made its military presence in this region visible, by contributing to the UN's peacekeeping missions in the regions and supplying military aid through grants, loans, or direct sales under the framework of military training programs. In 2001 China extended loans to Nigeria in order to help it enhance its military capacities. In 2007, the Chinese Export-Import Bank (Eximbank) provided a loan of \$30 billion to Ghana in order to equip its army and develop its security forces' communication systems. This loan was also dedicated to further developing the prison services and security officers. Following the Liberian Defence Minister Daniel Chea's visit to China, China provided aid to Liberia to help it improve its army's capabilities.<sup>129</sup> Additionally, Beijing trained commando troops in the Guinean army—which were then called the “Chinese Commandos”—during the period between 2004 and 2008.<sup>130</sup> Furthermore, Guinea Bissau formally partook in a special program that China organised and implemented in 2007 to train African armies. Mauritania accepted Chinese military aid in 2010 to meet its need for military engineering equipment.<sup>131</sup>

Beijing equipped Cameroon's army under a December 2010 military cooperation agreement.<sup>132</sup> In 2009 China and Gabon held a joint training operation under the auspices of a Chinese humanitarian and medical aid operation. Between 2008 and 2009 China sent soldiers to the Democratic Republic of Congo under a program to train Congolese troops. In the meanwhile, Angola is one of the regular participants of China's military training programmes. As a matter of fact, 30 Angolan soldiers are sent to China to receive military training every year.<sup>133</sup> In addition to providing loans, grants and military training to African countries bordering the Atlantic Ocean, China has started sell weapons to them as well. China has sold J7 and K8 airplanes to Nigeria and Namibia, helicopters and Y12 airplanes to Angola and Ghana, and even sold airplanes to land-locked Mali.<sup>134</sup>

At the same time, the Chinese army actively participates in UN peacekeeping missions in Atlantic African countries. For instance, the peacekeeping troops positioned in Liberia include 600 Chinese soldiers, constituting the largest peacekeeping contingent on the continent.<sup>135</sup> The high numbers of soldiers representing China appear to be associated with these countries' respective economic importance. The Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan are especially good examples of this.<sup>136</sup> However, the case in Liberia is entirely different. Although Liberia is not of great economic importance, it does pose a strategic importance to China. This is because Liberia has special relations with the United States. Its geographical location also grants this country the ability to monitor the oil-rich Gulf of Guinea.

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**Although it does not have permanent maritime bases in Africa, China's network of military relations with East and West Africa has won Beijing certain tactical privileges.**  
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Although it does not have permanent maritime bases in Africa, China's network of military relations with East and West Africa has won Beijing certain tactical privileges. It is highly likely that China's navy will become very visible in African waters in the near future. Consequently, China is busy building special ships for humanitarian interventions in lands far from its shores; the first of which were set afloat in the beginning of October 2009.

In 2010, some of these ships embarked on an 88-day journey around the world. During this trip, they stopped at many African and Asian ports, and even reached the the Caribbean Sea in the Americas.<sup>137</sup>

China has also established a strategic presence in African Seas through its fishery industry. Beijing has supplied technical knowhow on developing fisheries and rehabilitating fishers, aquaculturists, and fishing firms to Ghana, which then exported it to the rest of the Gulf of Guinea. China also renovated the Accra center, which serves as a structuring and training center for this sector.<sup>138</sup> Ghana even obtained an interest-free Chinese loan worth \$99 million.<sup>139</sup>

In 2010, the Chinese Government signed a 25-year fishery agreement with the government of Mauritania. However, those opposed to the agreement accused China of attempting to establish some sort of statelet in Mauritania's territorial waters. The opposition alleged that China had secured broad privileges thanks to the agreement.<sup>140</sup> The problem originated from the rumours that the company who signed the agreement had links to a Chinese military corporation. Consequently, the Chinese Ambassador Shin Koonjlaa made a public statement to the people of Mauritania saying, "this company is known internationally and it invests in a broad range of economic sectors".<sup>141</sup> Despite this clarification, however, the agreement raised concerns from some bigger countries like France and the U.S. Notably, Mauritanian Minister of Fishery and Maritime Economy Eyih Ould Aghdhafna hosted a delegation from the U.S. Coast Guard to discuss ship and harboursafety on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2012, right after the visit of the Chinese Ambassador, Shin Koonjlaa, earlier on that day.<sup>142</sup> In terms of China's contribution to Mauritania's coastal security, in 2001 Beijing delivered a coastguard ship with a hull weight of 400 tons to Nouakchott.<sup>143</sup> This initiative indicates the level of importance that China ascribes to the Mauritanian harbour zone, as a crucial stepping stone towards a strong Atlantic presence.

## 2) Brazil's Drift towards West Africa

Brazil's initial overtures towards West Africa started in 1986. In 1986 Brazil managed to convince the UN General Assembly to issue the decree numbered 41/11, proclaiming the area between South America and Africa as the "South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone" (ZPAC - Zona de Paz e Cooperação do Atlântico Sul). However, Washington voted against this bill and former colonial powers (Italy, Belgium, France, and Portugal) abstained.<sup>144</sup> In 1996, the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP - Comunidade dos países de Língua Portuguesa)—consisting of Brazil, Portugal, Mozambique, East Timor (Timor-Leste), and the West African states of Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, and São Tomé and Príncipe—was established.<sup>145</sup> Brazil has begun to take an important role in West Africa through this organisation. In its role as a leader it tried to facilitate negotiations between the Guinea Bissau government and its rebels in 1998.<sup>146</sup>

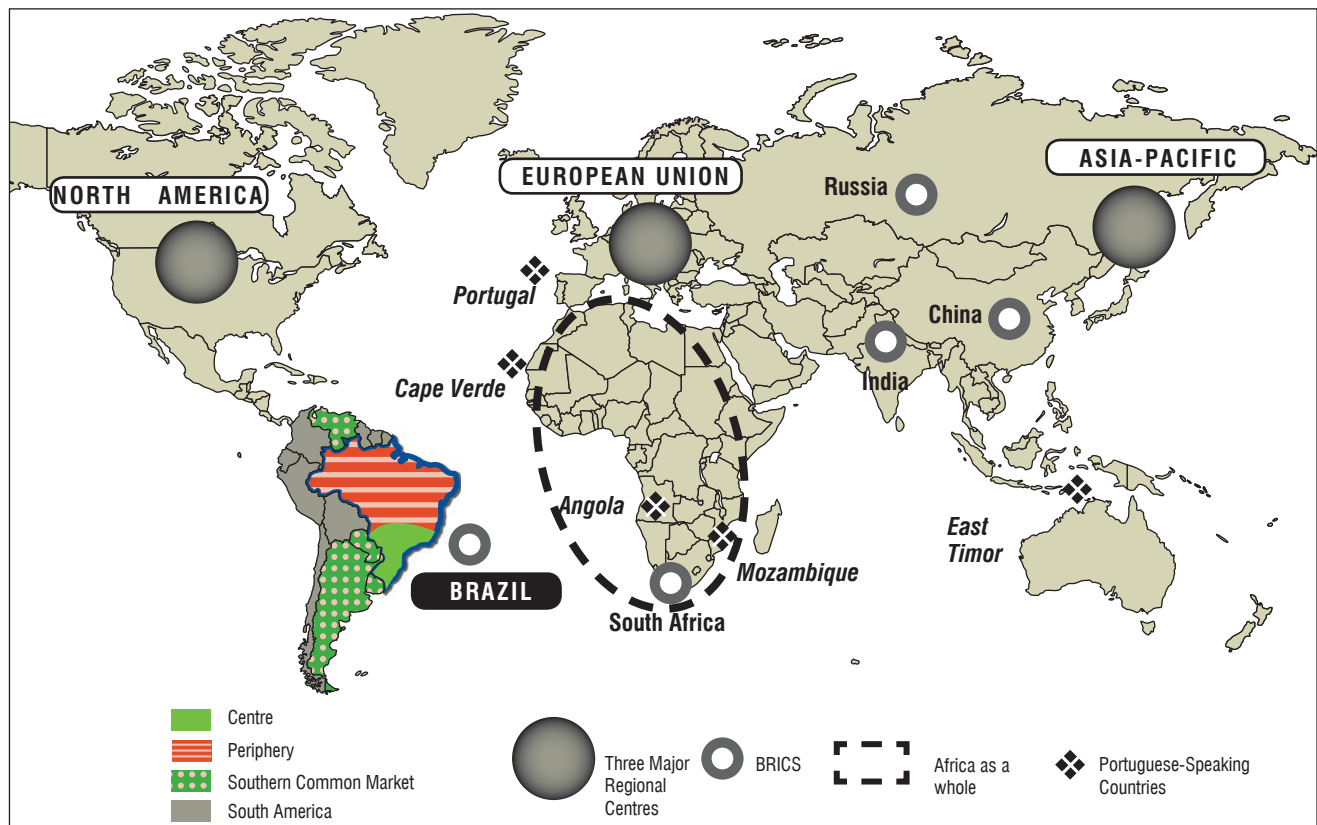
Moreover, the territorial waters and coasts of the South Atlantic have started to become part of Brasilia's geopolitical debates. These debates Brazil managed to convince the UN General Assembly to issue the decree numbered 41/11, proclaiming the area between South America and Africa as the "South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone".

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**Brazil managed to convince the UN General Assembly to issue the decree numbered 41/11, proclaiming the area between South America and Africa as the "South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone".**  
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Revolve around the international law that grants Brazil an exclusive economic zone up to 200 nautical miles off of its coastline. Brazil's international vision is being shaped around the need to develop cooperation with geo-strategic regions in the South Atlantic. These regions include the Southern Cone of South America, the Amazons, and Portuguese-speaking African states.<sup>147</sup>

Together with Brazil's focus on Portuguese-speaking West African states, its relations with other African countries started to evolve as well. Among these also included are countries within France's sphere of influence. When Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's came to office the Africa issue became the second-highest priority of the country's foreign policy, after Latin America (Map 19). In fact, 17 out of Brazil's 35 diplomatic missions across Africa were opened after 2003. Meanwhile, 13 out of the 29 African foreign diplomatic missions in Brazil have only recently been opened. Brazil has started to reactivate bilateral commissions repealed by the previous Brazilian government. During the period between 2008 and 2010, eight joint working committees were activated to improve relations between Brazil and Africa.<sup>148</sup> Brazil additionally entered into strategic partnership agreements with Angola and South Africa in 2010. At the same time, negotiations were held with the World Trade Organisation and political consultation agreements were concluded with the United Nations Security Council and the G-20 countries to ensure coordination with many African states on international topics.<sup>149</sup>

Map 19. Brazil's Global Perspective



Source: Herodte, N 146-147, 3 trimestre, 2012



Furthermore, the *Brazil National Defence Strategy*, published in 2008 included West Africa in the strategic and technical lines of the Brazilian navy. The Brazilian navy outlined these four related objectives:

- 1- Proactive defence for offshore oil drilling platforms.
- 2- Proactive defence for marine facilities, harbours, and islands within Brazilian territorial waters.
- 3- Fast response to any threats directed against maritime trade routes from other countries or else, directed against maritime trade routes.
- 4- Ability to participate in international peacekeeping operations outside the Brazilian soil and territorial waters.<sup>150</sup>

In terms of the top beneficiaries these security and military initiatives, Guinea Biassau is ranked second after Haiti.<sup>151</sup> Brazil led the effort to establish an ad hoc committee within the UN to solve the Guinea Bissau military insurgency crisis of April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010. In addition, Brazil joined a technical military mission to restructure the army of Guinea Bissau. Cape Verde asked Brazil to found a coastguard force to patrol the territorial waters of West Africa due to Brazil's integral significance to the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries.<sup>152</sup> In addition to all these roles, Brazil also undertook missions to build infrastructure and train personnel for Namibia, including its fledgling navy which had just been founded in 2004. Moreover, Brazil funded UN peacekeeping missions and policing actions in Mozambique (ONUMOZ) and Angola (UNAVEM).<sup>153</sup>

Security concerns are critically intertwined in West Africa, as any potential localized crisis may spread to the other countries of the region. Furthermore, security concerns are the fundamental concerns of extra-regional countries like France, the UK and the U.S. In recent years, Brazil succeeded in proving itself to be a chief player in West Africa through its involvement with security issues and the political crisis in Guinea Bissau. Low-ranking officers carried out a military coup in Guinea Bissau in March 2012, only one month after the military coup in Mali. This coup in Guinea Bissau was taken as a problematic development by Brasilia, which wants to be part of Guinea Bissau politics.

According to a study published by a strategic research institute affiliated to the military academy in France, Brazil is highly keen to assume a role maintaining international balances. Brazil, though not yet militarily powerful, is attempting to adopt this role through its "Cultural Fraternity" mission. The aforementioned study finds that Brazil's intention is to win permanent membership on the UN Security Council.<sup>154</sup> The study indicates that Brazil has a strategic partnership with South Africa, India, and China to play a greater role in international politics.<sup>155</sup>

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**Security concerns are critically intertwined in West Africa, as any potential localized crisis may spread to the other countries of the region.**  
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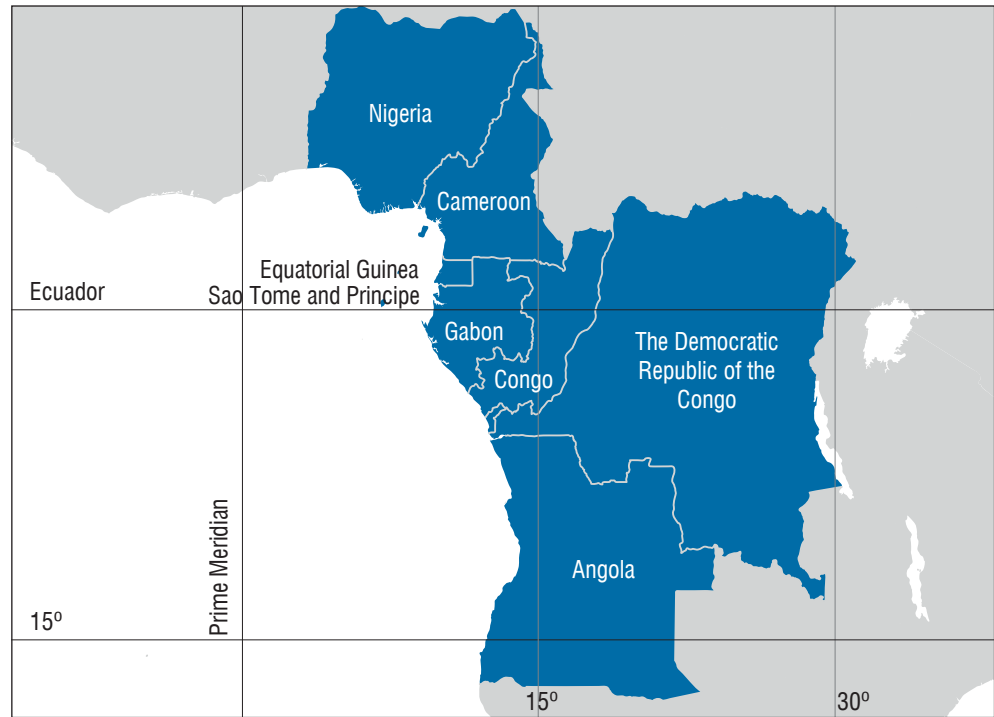
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 The spread of arms in the Gulf of Guinea has resulted in a proliferation of armed militias, money laundering, and smuggling. Even political leaders and parties have been accused of being in league with armed gangs.  
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### 3) The U.S. Navy Contains China in Africa

The spread of arms in the Gulf of Guinea has resulted in a proliferation of armed militias, money laundering, and smuggling. Even political leaders and parties have been accused of being in league with armed gangs. This situation led Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo to call the U.S. and UK for help in June of 2005.<sup>156</sup> The U.S. focused on encouraging reform efforts in the Gulf of Guinea region in order to resist the spread of instability. At this end, it picked Nigeria as the most suitable country for transformation.<sup>157</sup> The American interest in oil-producing countries like Angola and Equatorial Guinea has become more apparent. American corporations expressed interest in investing in the oil pipeline project between Chad and Cameroon. The U.S. also displayed interest in island-countries such as São Tomé and Príncipe.<sup>158</sup>

The Gulf of Guinea Commission, a regional framework, was formed as a result of the increasing importance of the Gulf of Guinea in international politics. Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, and Angola were the initial members. According to the Commission's charter, member states agree to strengthen mutual trust and economic cooperation and bringing environmental degradation under control. Agreements have also been reached on topics relating to conservation of natural resources like fish, oil, and minerals, as well as strengthening stability and peace in the region (Map 20).<sup>159</sup>

**Map 20. Member States of the Gulf of Guinea Commission**



**Source:** "Angola and the Gulf of Guinea: Towards an Integrated Maritime Strategy", Report of the Angola Forum conference aboard HMS Dauntless in Luanda, Angola, 29 June 2012, P:17. <http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Research/Africa/1112confreport.pdf>

In light of the increasing interest of Asian and European powers in the Gulf of Guinea, the U.S. initialised a multilateral dialogue mechanism concerning security issues in this region.<sup>160</sup> The U.S. Central Command in Europe (US EUCOM) led the Gulf of Guinea Guard Initiative on 5<sup>th</sup> of February, 2005. This initiative involved Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Togo. The purpose of this initiative is to strengthen the capabilities of West African and Gulf of Guinea countries in order to safeguard their coasts and harbours. The initiative will even be extended to include regional waters.<sup>161</sup> Moreover, Washington started working with Nigeria and several organisations to set up a database to strengthen naval capabilities in the Gulf of Guinea.<sup>162</sup>

Additionally, the U.S. has established the “Africa Partnership Station” under its Africa Command to improve naval capabilities through visits to African harbours and training programmes aboard ships. This partnership started its first program between November 2007 and April 2008. Ten countries from West and Central Africa participated in the first program. By the end of 2010, 14 training terms covering East and West Africa had been completed.<sup>163</sup> Most of these programmes were with Gulf of Guinea and West African states (Table 6) revealing the level of importance the American naval strategy accords to the region securing the oil supply and surrounding China.

**Table 6. U.S. Joint Naval Exercises with African States**

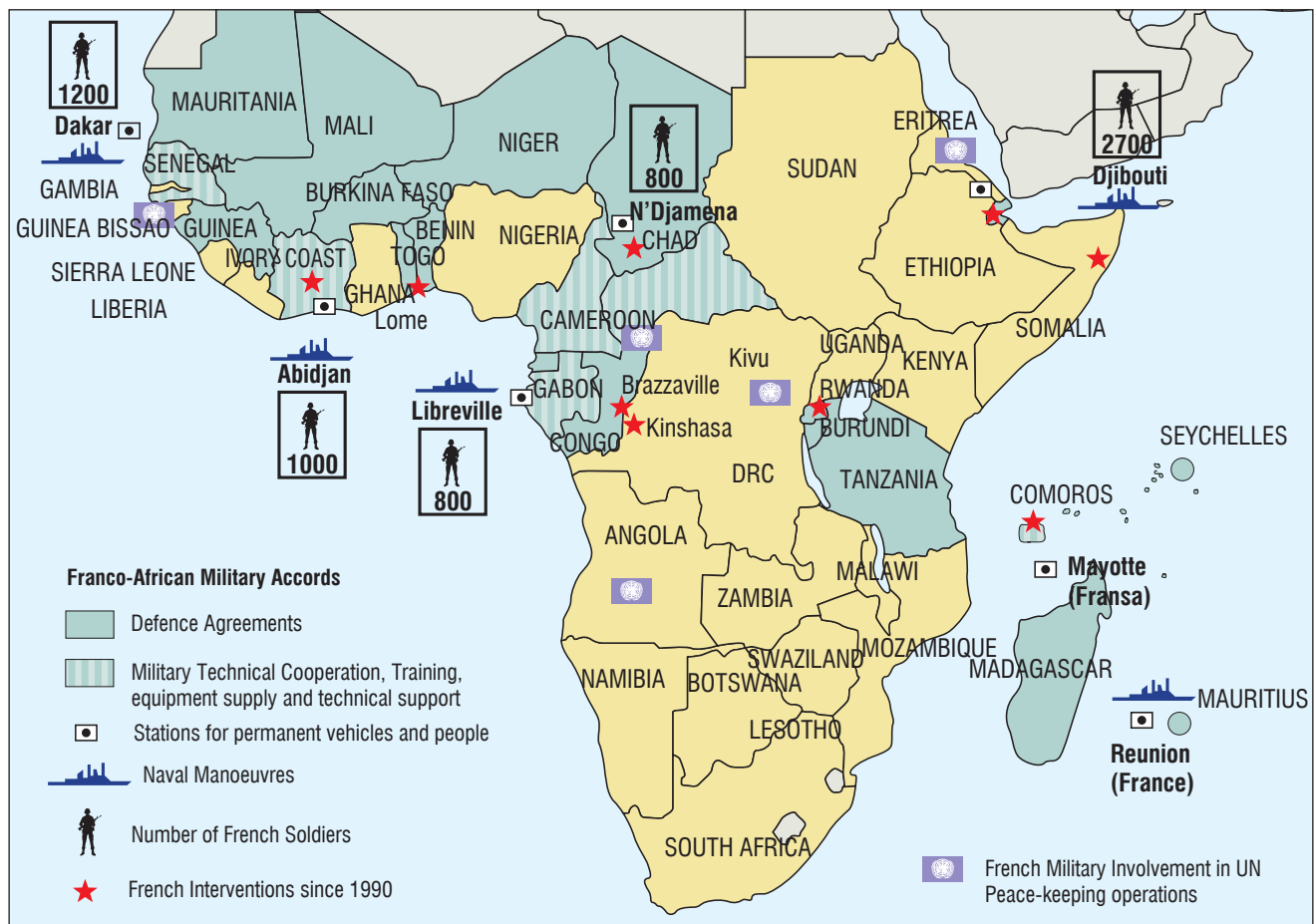
SHIP	TIME INTERVAL	COUNTRIES VISITED
USS Fort McHenry	November 2007-April 2008	10 countries in West and Central Africa
HSV-2 SWIFT	January-April 2008	Togo, Ghana, Gabon, Nigeria, Benin, Liberia, Angola
USS Nashville	January-May 2009	Senegal, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Cameroon, Gabon, Sao Tome and Principe
USS Robert G. Bradley (FFG 49)	February-April 2009	East Africa: Mozambique, Kenya, Tanzania, Djibouti
USS Arleigh Burke	June-August 2009	Djibouti, Kenya, Mauritius, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Reunion (France)
USCGC Legare	July-September 2009	Cape Verde, Sierra Leone, Senegal
HSV Swift	July-September 2009	Senegal, Gambia, Liberia, Ghana, Togo, Nigeria, Cameroon, Gabon
HNLMS Johan de Witt (Netherlands)	October-November 2009	Senegal, Sierra Leone, Cape Verde, Liberia, Ghana
HSW Swift & USS Nicholas	November 2009-March 2010	Comoros, Djibouti, Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, Reunion (France), Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania
USS Samuel B. Roberts	November 2009-March 2010	Cape Verde, Senegal, Ghana, Congo, Angola, Sao Tome and Principe, Gabon
USNS Grapple	December 2009	Tanzania, Kenya, Seychelles
USS Ganston Hall	March-May 2010	Senegal, Gambia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Togo
BNS Godetia (Belgium)	March 2010	The Democratic Republic of Congo, Benin
USCGC	May-September 2010	Indefinite

**Source:** Defence Management - Improved Planning, Training, and Inter-agency Collaboration Could Strengthen DOD’s Efforts in Africa, United States Government Accountability Office (GAO), Report to the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives, July 2010, P:50

#### 4) France Gets Territorial over Sea Routes

The white paper published by the French Defence Ministry in 2008 mentions the need to make French forces visible again on the “strategic belt” axis extending from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean.<sup>164</sup> This subject was a reaction to France’s concerns about the increasing roles of global powers like China, India, and U.S., in Africa. For instance, China’s intention to gain access to African coasts threatens Paris’s naval presence. (Map 21). This concern emanates from China’s growing presence off of the Somali coast aimed at checking piracy. In particular the Chinese navy’s stopping off at Djibouti—which hosts one of France’s African military bases and is considered to be a strategic centre—worried France. Director of Research at the Institute of Strategic Research of the French Military Academy Admiral Jean Dufourcq advocates the idea that French interests in the Indian Ocean are based on two axes; the first axis extends from Djibouti to the Persian Gulf, while the second axis constitutes the region called “Mascareignes”, falling to the south of the Indian Ocean, near Madagascar.<sup>165</sup> Remarkably, the Chinese navy’s areas of strategic interest include both of these regions.

Map 21. France’s Military Presence in Africa

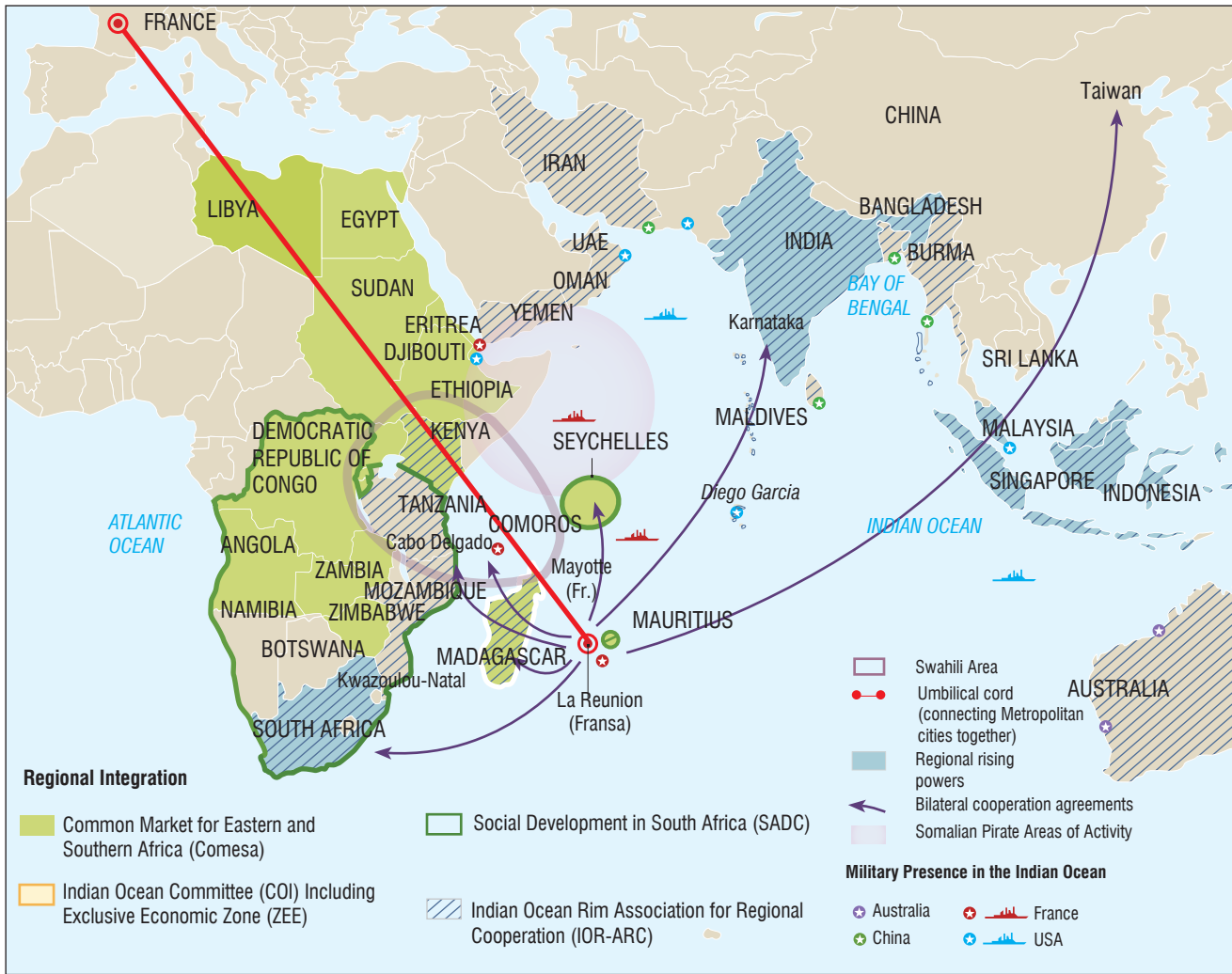


Source: Philippe Rekacewicz, Accords militaires franco-africains – 2002, Le Monde diplomatique, novembre 2002

The fact that China had reached marine areas of critical importance to France put Paris in a scramble to lead the European anti-piracy “Atlanta” operations in 1998.<sup>166</sup> Subsequently in 2009, France began constructing a new naval base in Abu Dhabi, UAE. Paris renewed its defence agreement with Djibouti in 2011. Admiral Jean Dufourcq justified these steps by referring to threats from Iran, namely the nuclear issue and threats to the Strait of Hormuz.<sup>167</sup> Yet, Paris’s primary goal is to prevent China from entering the Gulf of Guinea. Paris considers Beijing’s construction of a port in Pakistan’s Gwadar region to be a preliminary step toward gaining access to France’s sphere of influence on Africa’s coasts. The reason for the French navy’s cautious stance toward China is also explained in a study prepared by Benjamin Negroto of the French Ministry of Defence’s High Working Centre for Naval Weapons. The study titled “National Navy Armed and Civilian Service” refers to the expanding activities of the Chinese navy under medical and humanitarian aid schemes, and mentions its short to medium-term stays at ports in Djibouti, Kenya, Seychelles, and Tanzania. This study advises France and other European countries to make floating hospital ships, just as China did, in order for them to assume broader international roles.<sup>168</sup>

What worries France—and Western states in general—most is that China’s (and other rising powers’) economic relations with Africa are accompanied by military relations. France and the U.S. signed a sort of guarantee agreement with India to contain China in the Indian Ocean before its influence gets stronger throughout African territorial waters (Map 22). Looking at the relations developing between China and the countries that France believes fall within its sphere of influence, it becomes obvious that France’s approach to China is defined by geopolitical and geo-economic worries. For example, an examination of the French “strategic belt” that originates from Mauritania on the Atlantic Ocean and extends to Djibouti on the Indian Ocean reveals that France has entered a powerful conflict against China during the recent years, to avoid losing influence in Africa. When China and Sudan were supporting the rebel movement against the Chadian government, France sent military reinforcements to secure the capital N’Djamena, and prevent the toppling of President Idriss Déby’s government.<sup>169</sup>

**Map 22. Regional Ties and French and the U.S. Military Presence on Indian Ocean**



Source: Philippe Rekacewicz, Journal Le Monde Diplomatique, March 2010

Likewise, the internal and external pressures exerted on Niger after the President's opened his country's gates to Chinese investments—especially in the areas of petroleum and uranium—resulted in a military coup in 2010. Today's crisis in Mali cannot be considered irrelevant, because China entered the rebellious regions of northern Mali to make investments. During France's military intervention in northern Mali, the French air force was reportedly bombing certain Al-Shabab controlled areas in Somalia in response to the extremist group taking a French hostage. It is true that terrorism is a problem in this region, but, at the same time, there is also an international and regional conflict between China, France, Kenya, and Ethiopia. France and the West are also concerned about China's efforts to secure an agreement enlarging the Nouakchott Port in Mauritania. In context of China's control over the Gwadar Port in Pakistan—considered a part of the Chinese navy's logistical infrastructure—French and Western concerns are warranted.<sup>170</sup>

# 3

## CONCLUSION AND REMARKS

*The crisis in Mali has given rise to humanitarian, political, and strategic problems. These problems can only be solved through intense efforts at the local, regional and international levels.*

In fact, the crisis has the potential to affect not only socially and politically vulnerable states, but even the seemingly strong states of the region. This danger may even spawn unrest capable of threatening global security and stability.

- **Military Problems**

The military operations led by France and other African states in northern Mali have forced radical groups to retreat. However, unless these problems are completely eliminated, the risks to regional security will persist. As a matter of fact, these groups have resorted to guerilla wars to survive. Another peril is the spread of war across the territories of the oil-rich, but relatively fragile states of Nigeria, Niger, and Chad due to French military pressure.

- **Humanitarian Problems**

In humanitarian terms, there are four perspectives worth examining in Mali. The first is malnutrition resulting from prolonged droughts that hit the Sahel region from time to time. The northern part of the country is considered to be the most exposed to drought. Second, the humanitarian problems in Mali are directly tied to war and instability as armed conflicts have forced untold numbers of Malians to trek to refugee camps in neighbouring countries like Mauritania, Algeria, and Burkina Faso. Another humanitarian issue is the mismanagement of humanitarian aid allocated for northern Mali. There are complaints about donors politicizing this aid as well as about it being stolen and resold on the market. Finally, the low level of education in Mali is another factor of these problems. When children are forced to migrate due to successive wars and droughts their education is often interrupted. Accordingly, literacy drops, empowering extremists, militias, and criminal networks over civilians. Low levels of education hamper the flourishing of an elite/intellectual class capable of competently serving the national interest.



- **Culture Under Threat**

Northern Mali and the city of Timbuktu, in particular, are considered one of the world's most important historical sites, and has been classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. However, these cultural assets have been devastated by war, terrorism, vandalism, and plunder. The greatest crime has been the burning of libraries hosting loads of books written in Arabic, Hebrew, and Alhamido (Spanish written in Arabic), and considered to be vastly important scientific, cultural and historical references. These books had been preserved in this region for several centuries. Great care and diligence was spent attempting to preserve this legacy for future generations. The conservation and restoration of Timbuktu's historical heritage is a humanitarian and moral obligation for the international community and regional and international organisations. At this end, there is a need to form a UN-affiliated international committee to investigate the destruction, locate the remaining artifacts, and raise awareness about the issue. This investigation should take due account of the risks of artifacts being stolen or illegally smuggled for resale in the black market.

- **The Challenge of Re-establishing Social Peace**

At the moment, one of the biggest challenges facing Mali is the need to re-establish social peace. Defining the crisis in northern Mali as an ethnic conflict between Arabs and Tuaregs on one hand and Blacks on the other makes it insolvable. Ethnic identity, in fact, has been manipulated to justify what the parties have done to one another. Nevertheless, it would be inaccurate to describe this as a fundamental conflict between Blacks and other ethnicities, because Black ethnicities are also clashing among themselves. The same applies to Arab and Tuareg communities in the north of Mali. These kinds of clashes are also visible in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast, Liberia, and other countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, any attempt to solve the crisis should avoid the peril of focusing only on the ethnic dimension. The reality is that African conflicts are largely problems related to the orderly transfer of power between elites. In other words, conflict is about generational succession, areas of responsibility, and centers of influence.

Since France's advance into northern Mali, extremist groups have retreated and acts of revenge have been carried out against the people of northern Mali. Even ethnic militias reappeared, signaling that the conflict will continue for a long period of time. This should compel the international community to send UN peacekeeping forces to Mali. Africa in general needs an institution to address these kinds of schisms as they have ethnic, political, religious, social, and economic aspects. The fact that Africa is becoming the backyard of numerous extra-continental necessitates that the crisis be solved immediately. Similarly, the region faces risks emanating from militia forces, which may be characterised as extremists, and cross-border networks of organised crime.

- **Democratisation Problems**

One of the most important steps necessary to restore social peace in Mali is founding genuinely democratic institutions. In truth, Mali was a candidate model nation for democracy in Africa—especially after the army resigned from the government. However, for several reasons, this experience ended in failure. The first of these reasons

is that some military leaders resisted steps toward democracy and took advantage of the crisis to regain control of the country and pursue personal gains. Furthermore, poverty, economic crises, and natural catastrophes have prevented Mali's democracy from sufficiently maturing. In the face of all these problems and the tense regional atmosphere they have induced, military-based solutions have been sought.

Also, the recent developments in Mali nurtured the lack of confidence between political and social elements in the country. Malian Blacks will not allow Tuaregs in powerful administrative positions from which they can establish a new nation out of Mali's north. Although this reaction may be understandable in part, it is unacceptable.

Many Tuaregs who have access to public agencies of the country were those who formerly took up arms against the government. This fact gives rise to the idea that those who are disgruntled need to grab their weapons in order to be appointed to offices or win their economic or social rights. Terrorists, militias, and mobs in turn benefit from this perception, and rebellions become easier to foment.

On the other hand, there is a psychological factor that stops some from participating in democratic institutions. The legacy of slavery persists in relations between Blacks and Tuaregs. Doubtlessly, this belief has a factual basis in history and sociology. Bedouin and tribal cultures practiced slavery across the region in the past. However, this issue is usually and purposefully exaggerated to justify acts committed against Arabs and Tuaregs living in the country's north. Additionally, in Mali, among other regions of the continent, people are often classified according to the blackness of their skin, the size of their noses, or lips.

All these factors highlight how centrally important education, culture, human rights, and concepts of citizenship are to building a fully-liberated society and strong democratic institutions in Mali.

- **Regional Instability Risks**

The events in Mali have brought instability to the Maghreb, Sahel, Sahara, and Gulf of Guinea regions. After Qaddafi was overthrown, the spread of arms made it easy for radical armed groups and militias in the Maghreb region to gain access to weapons. Regional and international action is needed to buttress border security, especially in Libya and Tunisia. Moreover, it may be necessary to begin a broad discussion on the type of government that would solve the crisis in Mali. Previous peace negotiations carried out between rebels and Malian authorities in the past had focused on integration into economy and public entities and participation in local institutions. At the time, Algeria and other neighboring countries categorically rejected the notion of autonomy for the north. However, in response to the latest crisis, for the first time in the country's history both France and Algeria have accepted autonomy as a formula for solving the problem. In light of France's military intervention and dynamics within the Tuareg community, some Tuaregs may be amenable to giving up on a fully-independent state in the north and see autonomy as an acceptable alternative. Others may demand a federal government solution. In any case, the solution may

determine the direction of similar discussions going on throughout the countries of the Maghreb. The notion of dividing Libya into three federal districts may serve as an example to these discussions.

The crisis may affect countries of Sahel and Sahara region, as well. Though Mali, Algeria, Niger, and Libya--home to large numbers of Tuaregs--may seem like stable states, they face the possibility of more rebellions. Also, Chad, with its Toubou tribes, will be another countries affected by regional instability. The Toubou tribes share many commonalities with the Tuareg. So much so that the Tuareg supported the Toubou tribes in their Qaddafi-directed rebellion against the central Chadian government. The Toubou tribes were also part of the smuggling networks that arose amidst the Sahara desert during the international embargo imposed on Libya. In all probability the Toubou of southern Libya will rebel along with the Toubou of northern Chad, as the Libyan authorities are unable to govern the country's southernmost borders and the Libyan Toubou are not very congenial toward the Arab tribes of the north. Past events imply that such a scenario is likely: Toubou leaders have previously challenged Libyan army units that had entered their territory. Leaders of the south in turn, have been accused of separatist activities. Therefore, the Toubou tribes' attitude toward Arabs resemble those of the Tuareg. All these factors collectively lay the groundwork for even more complex conflicts. Sudan's Darfur and Egypt's Nubia may also be theatres of similar conflicts.

There cannot be a comprehensive solution to the crisis in Mali without the participation and assistance of regional and international actors. If the Mali Crisis continues in its current state (or is ignored) it is not a distant possibility that it will infect the rest of Africa. In fact, crises of this type and the resulting illicit mass migrations can even impact Europe and Turkey. Apart from the burden of hosting refugees, such desperate mass migrations are often accompanied by organised crime, trafficking, and various human tragedies.

# FOOTNOTES

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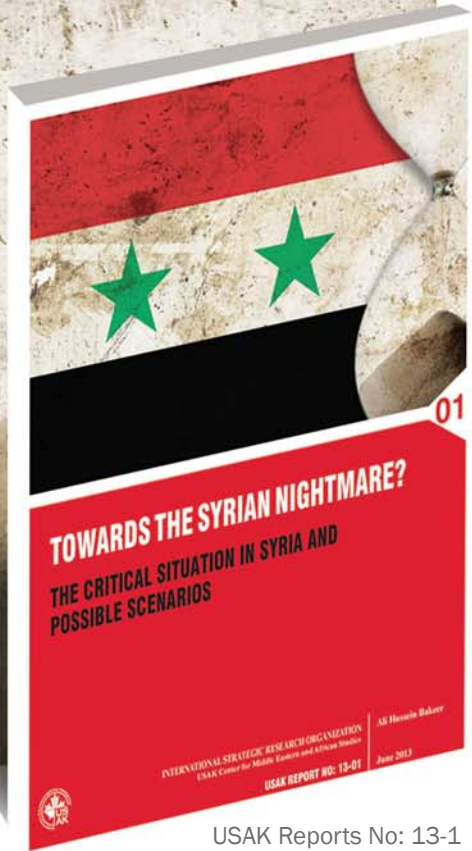
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