

## PRACTICE NOTE

## After the Fall of Qaddafi: Political, Economic, and Security Consequences for Libya, Mali, Niger, and Algeria

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On 20 October 2011, Muammar Qaddafi, the leader of Libya, was killed by members of a local militia in his hometown of Sirte. Qaddafi's death and his regime's end fractured a security structure that had brought some stability to Libya, Mali, Niger, and to a much lesser extent southern Algeria. Because of his regime's demise, a new swathe of instability that comprises fractured, compromised, or failed states has emerged in the Sahelian region, giving ample opportunities to militant entrepreneurial groups that have organized and are inhibiting the re-creation of more stable states and societies.

The fall of the Qaddafi regime has had catastrophic consequences for Libya and Mali. Niger and southern Algeria are, at least comparatively and at this moment in time, more stable. In Libya, Qaddafi's decentralized army was eviscerated. It has been replaced by militias that operate independently of the control of the state. These militias often intimidate the citizenry. The state in Libya will not be able to cohere unless these militias are replaced by a national army that takes its orders from a civilian political leadership. Furthermore, after Qaddafi's death, Tuareg soldiers who were in his employ in a force that was called the Islamic Legion looted heavy weapons from arms depots in Tripoli

and Ajdabiyya and headed southwest – back to Mali.<sup>1</sup> Their return to Mali was predictable. The Tuareg had waged a rebellion against the Malian government that was led by Ibrahim Ag Bahanga from 2006 to 2009, and they were inclined to recommence a revolt when they had an opportunity.<sup>2</sup> In 2011 and in the midst of the Libyan revolt, the Tuareg quit Libya and returned to Mali – this time with heavy arms. With their sophisticated armaments and under the leadership of Ibrahim Ag Bahanga and Mohammed Ag Najm (a former military leader in Qaddafi's Islamic Legion), Tuareg forces began military operations in Mali on 16 January 2012. By March 2012, Tuareg forces had eventually conquered Mali's major northern cities of Kidal, Gao, and Timbuktu and their environs, proving that they were more than a match for Mali's small and poorly equipped army. On 26 April the *Mouvement nationale pour la libération d'Azawad* or MNLA declared the new independent state of Azawad.

With the Malian army quickly retreating from the Tuareg advance, Captain Amadou Sanogo led a coup d'état on 21 March 2012 that overthrew President Amadou Toumani Touré. Sanogo initiated the coup because he claimed that the Touré government had not given the Malian army adequate support to combat the Tuareg rebellion. Since the coup, the Malian state and army have disintegrated, leading analysts to call Mali either a failed state or a failing state.

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Neighboring Niger seems more stable, at least on the surface. The marginalized Tuaregs there are not in open revolt, at least for the moment. A Tuareg leader (Brigi Raffini) has been appointed as Niger's Minister of Interior. Niger may help provide a contrast to Mali; the President of Niger has undertaken measures to integrate the Tuareg into government.

In this region, however, the ultimate key to security in the Sahel rests with Algeria. For decades now Algeria has had the most capable intelligence and military forces in the region. The Algerians understand the terrain of the Sahel the best. If security, economic, and political solutions are to occur, they will have to occur at least with Algerian participation or most likely with its leadership.

### **Libya**

The central problem for state-building in Libya is the need for a centralized army that answers to civilian leaders in government. In Libya two large militias have emerged: the Libya Shield (led by Hafiz al-Agouri) and the Rafallah Sahati brigade (led by Ismail al-Salabi) (Wehrey 2012).<sup>3</sup> The Libyan government has undertaken limited attempts to establish a central army that answers to its control but in Libya's immediate post-revolt environment, the government has determined that it needs to keep the young members of the operative militias quiet. The government has chosen for the present to pay these militias and their members to provide order on the streets. In today's Libya, militias employ increasing numbers of persons, with approximately 8 percent of the country's work force working for militias (Michael 2013).

Even while we recognize that the Libyan government for practical reasons has had to pay to sustain these militias, we need economic context. Governmental reform and the creation of a centralized army in Libya have been delayed because the government has enjoyed the tremendous rebound of Libya's economy. During 2012, Libya's economy was the fastest growing in the world. Its GDP per capita expanded at a rate of 76.3%

(Dabrowska 2013). This explosive rate of expansion occurred after GDP drastically fell (by 61%) during the 2011 civil war (Global Finance 2013; The Economist 2013). Hydrocarbon production in Libya has vigorously returned. Current production now exceeds pre-revolutionary levels. It has become ironic, however, that Libya's present regime has become as dependent upon hydrocarbon exports for government revenue as the previous Qaddafi regime had been. Presently, the Libyan government receives 90 to 95% of its income from hydrocarbon exports.

With Qaddafi now ousted, the new rulers of Libya have resorted to using petroleum and natural gas sales income to fund the militias to maintain order. Substantial governmental revenues have actually made it easier for the government to transfer funds to the militias and the inflow of revenue as decelerated progress towards establishing a centralized army that answers to a civilian elected leadership. In this context we can assert that the new Libyan government may actually be in a worse position than that enjoyed by Qaddafi. Qaddafi's militias and military forces were loyal to him; the militias in Libya today answer to themselves and secondarily to their paymaster government.

### **Mali**

Mali is either a failing or a failed state. Its President, Amadou Toumani Touré, was overthrown in a coup d'état that was led by Captain Amadou Sanogo on 21 March 2012. Since his ouster, the governance of Mali has been rendered chaotic with successive interim prime ministers because what is left of the military is unwilling to submit to the authority of Touré's successors. State institutions have been weakened, most importantly the army. And the army's weakness encouraged northern rebels, principally from the Tuareg ethnic community, to wrest political and military control over northern Mali from the Malian government. The rebels even dared to advance militarily into southern Mali, only to provoke a French military

response beginning on 11 January 2013 that reversed their advances.

Tuareg demands for either independence or autonomy from the state of Mali have been longstanding. The first Tuareg rebellion against the state of Mali took place from 1963 until 1964. Subsequent rebellions took place during 1990 until 1995, from 2007 until 2009, and from 2011 until the present. The Tuareg community, which is a nomadic ethnic group residing principally in southwestern Libya, southern Algeria, northern Mali, northwestern Niger, and northern Burkina Faso, have for decades felt marginalized by the operations and governance of central states in the region that are dominated by other ethnic groups who have made inadequate attempts to integrate the Tuareg communities into their states and societies. Because of this failure to integrate the Tuareg, the Tuareg have either kept to themselves or have episodically revolted, being assisted at different times by either Qaddafi or by Algerian intelligence services. Qaddafi in Libya established an armed force called the Islamic Legion that recruited considerable numbers of Tuaregs and whose soldiers were deployed in Mali and Chad.<sup>4</sup> In separate efforts Algerian intelligence forces have tried either to infiltrate Tuareg rebel groups or coopt them into cooperating with Algeria.

Regarding the present Tuareg rebel movement in Mali, it has several groups. The first, the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), does not aspire to establish a sharia-based state but it does want to create either an independent state or an autonomous region for the Tuareg that they call Azawad. The MNLA is technologically sophisticated, media savvy, and it claims to represent not only the Tuareg but also the other ethnic groups who reside in the north. For the MNLA and the other rebel Tuareg groups in Mali that will be described later in this paper, the minimal territorial definition of Azawad would include northern Mali; its maximal definition would include northern Mali, northwestern Niger, southwestern

Libya, southern Algeria, northern Burkina Faso and quite possibly southeastern Mauritania. In Mali the two other principal groups in the present Tuareg rebellion include Ansar al-Din (led by Iyad Ag Ghaly) and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa or MUJAO (led by Hamada Ould Mohamed Kheirou). In contrast to the MNLA, these two groups would like to create a sharia-based state in northern Mali and perhaps within the larger territorial definition of Azawad. These two groups have also been disposed to ally with Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which is a jihadist group based both in southern and northern Algeria that aims to overthrow the Algerian government. The MNLA eschews such a relationship with AQIM.

Complicating the drive for autonomy or independence lie potential economic forces and interests. Based upon geological assessments, there are numerous basins in Mali and Niger that suggest the presence of significant oil and gas reserves underneath the sands of the Sahara and the savannahs of the Sahel. Uranium mining is already active in Niger and is prospective in Mali.

## **Niger**

Niger is more stable than Mali for two reasons. First, unlike Mali where the Tuareg are geographically concentrated in the north, the Tuareg in Niger are geographically dispersed throughout north, west and south of the country, which makes the regional organization of ethnic resistance more difficult to initiate and sustain. Second, President Mahamadou Issoufou of Mali has more actively and more successfully incorporated the Tuareg into government and governance, which gives the Tuareg in Niger greater hope that their political, economic, and social demands will be heard and addressed.<sup>5</sup> Niger can still slip back and experience Tuareg revolts (it is important to remember that Tuareg revolts occurred in Niger from 1990 until 1995 and again during 2007 until 2008) if the more recent gains that have led to the comparatively more successful incorporation of the

Tuareg into government and society were to be reversed. The last significant Tuareg revolt occurred in 2008. Five years of tenuous peace have ensued. It needs to be nurtured and sustained.

### **Algeria**

Stability in this region of the Sahel cannot be attained without the active support of the Algerian government. Algeria has the most effective military force in the region and it has the most capable human intelligence network. Furthermore, the Algerians have considerable interests in preventing Tuareg independence or autonomy because successful Tuareg efforts for independence or autonomy in Mali may spark similar irredentist movements among the Tuareg who reside in southern Algeria. The outcome of the Tuareg rebellion in northern Mali inevitably implicates not only southern Algeria but also northwestern Niger and southwestern Libya because Tuareg reside in all of these areas. Because of their geographical dispersion the Tuareg question can only be approached and resolved regionally rather than on a state-by-state basis. Only a regional peacebuilding approach that incorporates Libya, Mali, Algeria, Niger, and arguably Burkina Faso will provide the comprehensive answers that will improve the security, political, and economic challenges in the Sahel.

### **Geopolitical Considerations**

France, the other members of the European Union, and the United States are all concerned that if northern Mali were to become either autonomous or independent that region could possibly become a safe haven for Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which is a jihadist group that would like to establish a sharia state in Algeria and secondarily in Mali. France, besides sharing the immediate objective that a militant jihadi state does not arise in northern Mali, has substantial economic interests in the region. France (and more recent arrivals, including China) is particularly interested in assuring

continued access to existing uranium mines in neighboring northern Niger and prospective uranium mining sites in northern Mali. (Initial estimates by geologists indicate that northern Mali may be a promising site not only for uranium mining but also for petroleum exploitation.)

Given its security and economic interests, France during January 2013 deployed fighter aircraft and 2,500 infantry troops after France had assessed that militant jihadi forces from northern Mali were intent upon advancing militarily into southern Mali. The French military's objective was to reverse that jihadist advance. The more important question involves the durability of the French intervention in Mali, especially given the precarious state of French governmental finances. Under a previous best-case scenario, France had hoped it would not be necessary to intervene militarily in Mali. France's plans had involved providing assistance in the creation and training of an ECOWAS military force that would have provided security in southern Mali. It had been contemplated that if the ECOWAS forces were successful in reestablishing security in the south, they could then advance towards northern Mali to oust jihadi military forces from their stronghold there. However, the northern Malian jihadi forces, being fully aware of this EU/ECOWAS plan, sought to move preemptively upon the south. France, after reviewing the rapidity of the jihadi military advance, felt obligated to prevent the success of their effort.

The EU shares geopolitical interests with France. Like France, the EU is interested in stabilizing Mali's government and would like to prevent the establishment of a sharia-based state in northern Mali. Until the attempted January 2013 jihadi military advance into southern Mali, however, the EU had primarily focused upon improving governmental capacity in the region and had sought to address conditions that lead to systemic poverty (European Union 2013). Military preparedness was a secondary priority. To understand the EU's military policy, one

needs to remember that the EU's most influential partner (Germany) during the post-World War II period has preferred to focus its foreign policy initiatives in the areas of governmental capacity, economic development, and adequate and transparent financial state management rather than military affairs. Because of the horrific military, economic, and social consequences of its experience in World War II, Germany has been demonstrably risk adverse towards the deployment of European troops in Mali, the Sahelian region, Africa, or even the rest of the world. With EU Sahelian policy being substantially determined by Germany's economic capacity and secondarily by France's security and economic interests, the EU's policies had focused upon providing financial assistance to the Malian, Nigerien, and other Sahelian governments. Within the realm of military affairs, the EU had always hoped that ECO-WAS would take the lead in this region with the EU being limited to providing financial and logistical assistance to that effort (Coolsaet, Biscop & Coelmont 2013).

The US position is distinguishable from that of France or the EU. The US's objectives are dual: First, to prevent the establishment of a safe haven for the growth and operations of AQIM in northern Mali; second, to see the restoration of a democratic regime in Mali that would be friendly towards the West and that would function as a possible anchor of stability in the Sahel.

Under President Barack Obama's foreign policy, however, Asia is now considered to be at the core of America's foreign policy interests; the Sahel is at the periphery. Still, while the United States has begun looking to Asia and perceives the Sahel as being less essential, it nevertheless remains keenly interested in assuring that the Sahel does not become (as Somalia and Pakistan/Afghanistan had previously been) a sanctuary for jihadist forces that potentially could develop a global capacity to inflict harm. Viewed from this dual perspective that gives primary foreign policy focus to Asia yet still

desires the prevention of the creation of a safe haven for Al Qaida-oriented militants in the Sahel, it seems more likely that the United States will not to take the lead in the Sahel as it redirects its military resources elsewhere, particularly the southern Pacific Ocean, the South China Sea, and the Indian Ocean. Under America's new foreign policy strategy the US will most likely delegate military and policing duties in the Sahel to ECO-WAS, France, and Algeria. From the perspective of the United States, this option would be arguably more efficient. To the extent that the United States does remain active in the Sahelian region, it will most likely occur under the aegis of continued funding for the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership (a military training program) and other non-military sources of aid that are channeled through the United States Agency for International Development.

As to the geopolitical interests of Algeria and Niger, both are concerned that the establishment of either an autonomous or independent Azawad in Mali would encourage Tuareg irredentist movements in their own countries. The Algerians are particularly worried that a successful Tuareg rebellion in southern Algeria would ignite both a Tuareg rebellion in southern Algeria and restart a Berber rebellion in Kabylie region of northern Algeria. A successful Tuareg rebellion in southern Algeria would provide a nightmare scenario for the Algerian government as such a rebellion would spread to the Kabylie and lead to the possible disintegration of Algeria. The Algerian argument against Tuareg independence or autonomy in Mali is resoundingly similar to the arguments being made in Turkey and Iran about Kurdish independence or autonomy in Iraq. Just as the Turks and Iranians fear that Kurdish independence or autonomy would encourage Kurdish rebel movements in their own countries, the Algerians and Nigeriens fear that successful Tuareg efforts for self-determination in Mali may encourage similar movements in Algeria or Niger.

As for Mali, the failing government there is panicked. The Tuareg rebellion (until it was recently reversed by the French military operations that began on 11 January 2012), led to a coup d'état by military officers (on 21 March 2012) who had become discouraged by the rapid Tuareg military advance. Their coup ended 20 years of democracy in Mali. Most Malians would prefer to preserve their multi-ethnic and democratic country. Malians are also concerned that if they cede and provide autonomy or independence to the north, they may lose the potential petroleum and uranium resources that lie underneath the sands of northern Mali.

### **Moving Forward to Stabilize the Sahel**

To stabilize the communities of the Sahel, the international community needs to go beyond terrorism assessments and military and counterterrorism responses. Three societal and economic concerns need to be addressed: climate change and access to water; the creation of realistic, viable alternatives to the lucrative smuggling of contraband (which include narcotics, gasoline, cigarettes, and stolen automobiles); and, the question of the continued migration of workers from tropical and Sahelian Africa to North Africa.

#### ***Climate Change and Water***

The western Sahel is undergoing considerable ecological stress. Across the Sahel, average temperatures have risen by 0.8 degrees Celsius and rainfall has decreased by 48 percent in some areas (Bafana 2011). Deforestation is extensive, leading to increasing patterns of migration of transhumance herders towards the south (Gonzalez, Tucker & Sy 2012). A February 2010 Sahel climate study undertaken by the United Kingdom's Meteorological Office predicts that the western Sahel should experience continued and pronounced drought while the eastern Sahel may experience greater rainfall (Met Office 2013). If this prediction were to become true

we could assume greater armed conflict in the western Sahel that would emerge from competition for access to water. In considerations and planning for how to deal with conflict in the Sahel, one needs to consider the migratory patterns of herders towards the south, their possible conflict with agriculturalists who plant their crops along the river Niger, and how these interactions will factor into plans for conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

#### ***Alternatives to the Contraband Trade: Uranium and Petroleum?***

Because of the lack of access to water, residents of the Sahel, particularly among the nomadic Tuareg, have resorted to trafficking in contraband (especially cocaine, hashish, gasoline, and cigarettes) to sustain themselves economically (Lacher 2013). Any strategy to stabilize the Sahel would have to take into account providing alternatives to this contraband trade, especially given the dwindling prospects for the promotion of agriculture or pasturage, which will continue to dwindle given the UK's Meteorological Office's prediction that rainfall will continue to plummet. Given these stark prospects, will the discovery of uranium in Mali or petroleum in Mali and Niger change the economic dynamics of the region and provide an economic basis for the stabilization of societies?

Although there are well established and proven reserves of uranium in Niger, in 2007 Oklo Resources Ltd, a company listed on the Australia Stock Exchange, started exploration for uranium in northern Mali in the region of Kidal (Oklo Resources 2013). The Mali government told the IAEA in 2009 that the Kidal project covered an enormous area of about 20,000 square kilometers. In southwestern Mali, the Rockgate Capital Corporation and DRA Group of Capetown, South Africa undertook a separate pre-feasibility study of uranium mining prospects in Faléa, Mali (Rockgate Capital 2013). That study began in 2012. These mining studies should be encouraged. If these uranium mining

projects were to come to fruition, viable and legitimate economic alternatives could be created to the illicit contraband trade.

Beyond uranium, the Mali Ministry of Mines believes that there are prospects for petroleum exploration in four basins in Mali: the Taoudeni Basin in northern Mali, the Tamesna and Iullemedens basins that traverse the Mali-Niger border, and the Nara basin underlying Mopti and Segou (Mali Ministry of Mines 2009). Again, if petroleum were to be discovered in these regions, the underlying economics of conflict in Mali would have to be reconsidered.

### ***Labor Movements across the Sahel***

Although migration across the Sahara from Sahel to North Africa and vice versa are centuries old, the pace of migration has accelerated in recent decades as migrant workers have sought improved economic prospects either in the capitals of the Sahel, the capitals of tropical West Africa, or farther afield in North Africa. As rainfall continues to decline in the Sahel, it is predictable that populations will disperse and, according to one study, their most likely destinations will be firstly tropical West Africa (especially Côte d'Ivoire) and secondarily North Africa (Hummel, Doevenspeck & Samimi 2013).

Last, there is a relationship between climate change and large-scale labor migrations in Sahelian and tropical West Africa. According to a recent study by the United Nations, the Sahelian region's average temperatures have increased by almost 2 degrees Celsius (the UK Meteorological Service documented a 0.8 degrees Celsius rise), which has led to decreasing rainfall throughout most the region and unpredictable rainfall in a minority of areas (International Organization for Migration 2013). These changing rainfall patterns have affected and will continue to accelerate migratory patterns, which will cause workers either to move into, across, or away from conflict zones. This last consideration should be incorporated into our peacebuilding efforts, especially in consid-

ering nonmilitary responses to dealing with conflict in the Sahel.

### **Notes**

- <sup>1</sup> Qaddafi formed the Islamic Legion in 1972.
- <sup>2</sup> Ag Bahanga had received military assistance from both Colonel Qaddafi and, allegedly, from Algerian intelligence forces.
- <sup>3</sup> The Libya shield was constituted from to other, pre-existing militias: the Zintan and Misrata militias.
- <sup>4</sup> Tuareg leaders Ibrahim Ag Bahanga and Mohamed Ag Najm were both affiliated with the Islamic Legion.
- <sup>5</sup> For example, Niger's Prime Minister, Brigi Raffini, is a Tuareg.

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