THE SAHEL: FOCUS OF HOPE, FOCUS OF FEAR

Editors

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Chapter 2

THE ECONOMY OF FORCES: FRANCE IN THE SAHEL AND THE GLOIBAL POWER PLAY

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Introduction

Since the 1960s wave of African independence, whenever political arrangements fail to fulfill their intended purposes, the French response to deviant actors has resulted in over 100 French military interventions in Africa with stabilizing consequences in some cases and destabilizing outcomes in others. French logic for intervention has been two-fold: reactionary and preventive. The reactionary mode is to maintain the *status quo* with France as regional hegemon in sub-Saharan Africa and as major player in the global arena. The preventive mode is to deter competitors (*l'enemi potential*) and outside threats to its national interests in the region. It is a model of an economy of forces whereby soft and hard power are combined and deployed to achieve results with maximum efficiency and minimum resources. More than half a century after independence, Francophone sub-Saharan Africa virtually functions as an extension of France's national territory. This illustrates the fact that actual boundaries of nations depend less on physical size than on influence and the capacity of force projection. France's role in world affairs exemplifies this assertion.

To analyze this phenomenon, this chapter is divided into five sections : France's Military Resurgence in the Sahel and West Africa that serves as a stepping stone for a larger role in global politics ; History of Geography that explains historical ties between France and the region, and the geographical and geopolitical importance of the region; Trends in France's Military Interventions where the rationale and decision-making for France's military interventions in the area are analyzed ; The Sahara-Sahel and West Africa: a Case in Interlocking Conflicts which seeks to sort out the overlapping harmony and clash of interests among the multiple players in

the region ; and Lessons Learned and Policy Recommendations, focusing on the dynamic between political stability, democracy and regional cooperation.

France's Military Resurgence in the Sahel and West Africa

In 2002, though with a limited goal of removing her nationals from the north of Ivory Coast, France's *Opération Licorne* prevented rebel groups from descending to the south of the country and achieving victory. The French 2011 intervention, again in Ivory Coast, led to the arrest and removal from power of President Laurent Gbagbo, who refused to recognize electoral results of the previous year, thus stabilizing the political situation in the country. Such operations illustrate resurgence of the use of the French military might in the region after a period of relative restraint following France's role in the Rwandan genocide. They preserved France's national interests and confirmed its status as an 'African' regional power. In contrast, the 2011 France-led NATO intervention in Libya was outside France's traditional zone of influence. It occurred two years after France re-joined NATO, leaving behind a period of 43 years of hiatus. *Opération Harmattan*, also known as Operation Odyssey Dawn for the US, certainly enhanced President Nicholas Sarkozy's stature as a global player. It demonstrated willingness to play a leadership role in the Mediterranean Basin as well as in international affairs, enforcing respect for UN norms and combatting human rights abuses perpetrated by the forces of the Libyan Colonel. As it led to Gadhafi's demise, it further sent a warning to other deviant political players on the African continent. However, *Opération Harmattan* had unintended consequences: regime change in Libya was a window of opportunity for proliferation of weapons and armed militias, creating the conditions for destabilization of countries in the Sahel and West Africa.

The subsequent influx of hardened Tuareg fighters into northern Mali equipped with heavy weapons from Libya's arms depots made emergence of the breakaway Islamic Republic of Azawad in April, 2012, possible. Furthermore, the opportunistic hijacking of Tuareg irredentism by Algerian and Mauritanian jihadi groups internationalized Mali's internal conflict. It introduced more instability in a region already plagued with human trafficking, narco-trafficking and uncontrolled 'border states' practically functioning like autonomous entities. This formed the context of France's *Opération Serval* in Mali in January, 2013.

Opération Serval reasserted France's political will to remain a hegemon in this part of the world and to project the image of a global player. It, in effect, prevented violent extremists from destabilizing Mali and, perhaps, the West African region. It denied non-state armed groups the possibility of establishing a state in northern Mali and using it as a safe haven from which attacks could be launched against neighboring countries. In so doing, this military expedition reclaimed France's historic privileges in the region. Support came from the US. Close collaboration with United Kingdom, particularly after the 2010 Franco-British defense agreements, indicated a trend toward an emergence of a European army. France emerged from diplomatic obscurity and achieved geopolitical relevance thanks to its recent military interventions in the Sahara-Sahel, such as the 2011 *Opération Harmattan* in Libya followed by military intervention in Ivory Coast the same year and the 2013 *Opération Serval* in Mali. This series of events not only created the perception of France as a player with global clout but also put the region at the center of a global power play.

Yet, if the rationale for such operations, past and present, is primarily for the purpose of preserving interests outside the Sahel region, neglecting local grievances that fueled violent conflicts in the first place, they will fail to ensure security and political stability in the long term. This kind of rationale is at risk of producing security architecture overly reliant on external military interventions while promoting a culture of violence, thus weakening local mechanisms of negotiation, mediation and conflict resolution. Therefore, the establishment of security mechanisms capable of facilitating political stability and regional cooperation requires evaluation of the rationale and consequences of France's military interventions in the region. This chapter argues that the focus should be on local needs and regional issues rather on geostrategic calculations. It also suggests that such evaluation begin with understanding historical ties between France and its former colonies as well as the role played by history and geography.

The History of Geography

Writing in 1985 on 'The French Military Policy in Africa,' US diplomat and scholar George E. Moose commented that France justified its military role in Africa primarily on the basis of its security and cooperation agreements with its former colonies but, more broadly, by reference to France's historical ties to and special affinities with the continent (See Figure 1).To illustrate the manner in which the French see their national interests –political and economic- as by destiny

tied to those of their African neighbors, he quoted the words of Jean-Francois Poncet, former French Minister of Foreign Affairs, in an address to his country's parliament in May, 1979:

> There is undoubtedly no region of the world where the interests and sentiments of France are so profundly engaged as in Africa. Linked to this neighboring continent by ties of history, geography and culture, and dependent upon it as it is upon Europe for its prosperity and security, France pursues in regard to the continent a policy which is desinterested and courageous …If the government has intervened militarily and with a determination everyone today recognizes, it has been to respond to the requests of weak and unarmed African states obliged to face attacks launched from outside. These actions, limited in scope and duration, have never had any other goal than to permit that freely debated solutions might put an end to tensions and conflicts. The results have conformed to the intentions.[1]

Figure 1: The Sahara-Sahel and West African Region.

[2]

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http://www.bing.com/images/search?q=map+of+france+and+north+africa&id=F7CE0110CAA8FD40E8A6BA48D7B14ED9543AE7BD&FORM=IQFRBA#view=detail&id=F4EC05A30D38B7DEA6AE518FBFBF4F49FC199151&selectedIndex=19

The 1979 statement of the French Minister of Foreign Affairs quoted above can easily apply to France's military intervention in Mali in January, 2013. The limitation in scope and duration to which he refers can be understood by the strategic equation, S= kF x PsiT, in which S represents strategic action, F represents material forces, Psi represents psychological forces, T represents duration, and k represents a multiplicative factor. In a nutschell, in order to reduce T (duration of the operations), both F (material forces) and Psi (psychological forces) should simultaneously increase. At the same time, the reduction of T minimizes the chances of dissent, opposition, protests or fatigue at home. Total strategy, as General André Beaufre (1966) put it in his book, *Stratégie de l'Action,* is the art of dialectic of wills using force to resolve conflict.[3]

It is difficut, however, to square one's quest for 'prosperity and security' with being 'disinterested.' One may, on the contrary, argue that, 'dependent upon it [Africa] as it is upon Europe for its prosperity and security,' military gesticulations on the African continent constitute for France a necessity dictated not only geography, history and culture but also by national interests.

William J. Foltz (1985) offers a perceptive analysis of the role that Africa has historically played in great powers' strategic calculations as a consequence of the continent's geographical location.[4] That role has five components: 1) physical obstacle between Western Europe and Asia, 2) defensive posts to protect sea lanes, 3) launching pad for attacks against enemies situated elsewhere, 4) supplier of strategic resources and 5) surrogate terrain for competition among great powers. The following sub-sections of the chapter elucidate these five roles the African continent has historically played in world affairs.

Physical Obstacle between Western Europe and Asia

The massive landmass of Africa, viewed from both the west and the east, looks like a buffer zone or an obstacle that prevents direct access of Western Europe to Asia and vice versa. Routes were subsequently developed first by Vasco da Gama who sailed around the Cape of Good Hope at the end of the 15th century. Almost four centuries later, the French engineer Ferdinand de Lesseps, by digging the Suez Canal in 1869, significantly reduced sailing duration between the West and the East by joining the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. At the same time, however, the Canal cut North Africa from the Middle East. If the dominant countries in world affairs were

located in North Africa and the Middle East (NAME) at the time the Suez Canal was constructed, decision-makers would have rather looked for ways to increase traffic (by tunnels, bridges and other transportation means) within NAME rather separating Africa from the Middle East. Technological prowess combined with suppression of the piracy in the region that had been a response by Muslims of the Maghreb to western domination of the Mediterranean trade and the opening of routes around Africa and through NAME helped the West establish its primacy in world trade.

Protection of Sea Lanes

The second role of the continent is protection of sea lanes. Forts along African coasts faced the sea –not inland- and were not for defense against attacks from indigenous people, but to protect commercial routes and provide supplies to sailors. Such strategic calculations explain the presence of the British in South Africa, the conquest of Algeria by France, the establishment of France's 'protectorate' over Morocco, and the Franco-British rivalry over Egypt.

Launching Pad

Third, parts of Africa have been used as a launching pad against enemies situated somewhere else. Occupation of the 'launch-pad territory' is minimal for this role. US strategic calculations during WWII, for example, can illustrate this point:

> From this rimland, nuclear armed B-36 bombers could strike at Soviet military concentrations if required; war supplies could be pre-stocked with assurance they would not fall into adversary hands; Soviets maritime and naval activities could be kept under surveillance; facilities in North Africa and Middle Africa could be used to transport…equipment into the Middle East; communication and other intelligence activities could be carried out in comparative security; antisubmarine patrols in the Atlantic, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean could be facilitated.[5]

The tense used in the quotation above may make one believe that such statements reflect only strategic hypotheses. Actually, as the Cold War began, the United States enthusiastically annexed North Africa to the rimland as part of its strategy to contain the Soviet Union.[6] In the 1950s, the US built a major strategic base in Libya (Wheelus Field), four air bases in Morocco and, on the east side of the continent, a substantial communications and electronic intercept

station in Ethiopia. Other parts of the Sahara-Sahel are not irrelevant to US global strategy. During World War II, the US Air Transport Command flew supplies from the continental United States via an extended route that included stops in such places as the Caribbean, Natal (Brazil), Ascension, Dakar (Senegal), Kano (Nigeria), Khartoum (Sudan) and Cairo (Egypt) to destinations in the Middle East or even South Asia. The relative importance of theses bases and routes has been altered by changes in geopolitics (the collapse of the Soviet Union for example) and technological progress. The role played by the continent in great powers' geostrategic calculations makes it an object of both cooperation and competition between the United States and France.

Strategic Resource

The fourth role of Africa is that of supplier of strategic resources. Colonial enterprise needed to be cost effective in order to have support at home. The use of natives, either through the British 'indirect rule' or the French 'direct rule,' was both a political and practical necessity. African manpower was a strategic resource as important as conducting trade and having access to strategic raw materials. Initially, France put more emphasis on human resources. African manpower, *la force noire*, was in demand to compensate for a low birthrate in France, to staff armed forces that could enable the country to recover the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine from Germany and, between the two world wars, to put down rioters and strikers. During World War I some 188,000 West African troops fought in France. Then, when World War II broke out in 1939, some 250,000 African troops fought for *la France libre* against the Third Reich. The British also raised 470,000 African troops in World War II, some 100,000 of which were involved in the Burma campaign.

With regard to raw materials, the US Manhattan Project was fueled by uranium from the Belgian Congo. Subsequently, interest in African strategic resources increased. A 1980 book by Gérard Chaliand, *L'Enjeu Africain: Stratégie des Puissances*, explains the importance of African minerals in the Cold War context listing Africa as the source of 75% of the world supply of diamonds, 70% of gold, 70% of cobalt, 50% of vanadium, 46% of platinum, 36% of chromium, 30% of manganese, 20% of copper, 20% of uranium, and more. While these resources were essentially concentrated in the southern part of the African continent, i.e. South Africa, Namibia, Angola and Zambia, none of which were colonized by France, gas and oil, phosphates, iron and

uranium were located in the Maghreb and the Sahara-Sahel, i.e. Morocco, Algeria, Western Sahara, Libya, Mauritania and Niger.[7] All of these countries, except for Libya and Western Sahara, were French possessions. Therefore, the area is of strategic importance for France. History and geography played a significant role in the development of France's interest in the region. The Tuareg case should be understood in that context.

Contextualizing the Tuareg Case

Following the1884-1885 Berlin Conference, that territorialized European occupation of the African continent, the reorganization of the 'French' Sahara-Sahel took three phases. In 1912, *Le Plan d'Organisation du Sahel* was promoted by former military officer and then Reverend Charles de Foucauld. It identified the area of Central Sahara and a Sahara-Sahelian zone. The administrative and military organization of Central Sahara included a concept of Tuareg territory. This concept was then extended to the Sahara-Sahelian area dominated by the Tuareg. In the second phase, the idea of a French Sahara emerged. Entities that composed it received either territorial designation or color classification (White Sahara, the Algerian part; Black Sahara that pertained to *Afrique Occidentale Francaise* (AOF) and *Afrique Equatoriale Francaise* (AEF)). Such autonomous territory with its five units (AOF, AEF, Tunisia, Algeria and Morroco), directly dependent on the metropolis, would cover a vast territory from the north of St. Louis, Senegal, to beyond the Tibesti in current Chad. The third phase was to create a common organization, *L'Organisation Commune des Régions Sahariennes* (OCRS). One of the objectives of OCRS was the creation of a market for French investments. Following the discovery of two important oil fields in Hassi Messaoud and Hassi R'Mel in Algeria in 1956, there was a massive influx of investments. A second objective of the OCRS project, motivated by protectionism, was to cut Algeria from the North of sub-Saharan Africa as a way to monopolize Algeria's mineral riches. On March 18, 1962, the Evian Accords between France and the *Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Algérienne ended the Algerian war.*[8] *It also put an end to the OCRS project as well as to the prospects of a Tuareg state.*

Surrogate Terrain

The fifth traditional role of the African continent is that of a surrogate terrain. Great powers' politics should be seen as an architecture of complexity and it would be a distortion of reality to

reduce it to a single-issue explanation in Africa. The host of the 1884-1885 Berlin conference, the German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, encouraged French and British ventures in Africa. His aim was two-fold: to distract France from its obsession with revanche regarding the loss of Alsace and Lorraine in 1871 and to exacerbate the Franco-British rivalry. The African continent, then as now, was a place where great powers were and are, for the sake of national interests, more focused on rivalries among themselves than on local needs. The current debates about China's presence in Africa are a case in point. In the West, commentators seem to be more concerned about the 'recolonization' of Africa by China than assessing the advantages and disadvantages of China's presence for the people of the continent. Such rivalry is certainly less costly for great powers in Africa than in other more sensitive regions in the world. Furthermore, Africa has a symbolic value. It is viewed as a terra incognita challenging the brave to go where no one has gone before and where a presence enhances a sense of national prestige: Portugal in the 15th, Great Britain in the 19th century, the United States in the 20th century and China in the 21st century. The question raised by William J. Foltz in 1985 still resonates today:

> *Direct confrontations between major powers in Africa produced little more than sound and fury at the time, but they helped destroy the informal rules of the game and contributed to the breakdown of world peace in 1914 and again in 1939.*
>
> *Now, the questions should be raised as to whether once again great-power rivalry in Africa can destabilize the informal arrangements on which international peace rests and –more important perhaps to Africans- the playing out of great-power rivalries will lead outside powers to attempt to reassert control over the African continent.* [9]

The likely response to such questions is embedded in the history of France's presence in the Sahara-Sahel and the West Africa region.

Trends in France's Military Interventions

After 1960, post-independence francophone Africa was tied to France by two principal kinds of relationships. One was informal, even though powerful, cultural links. They were maintained through the French language, education and training programs, both for civilians and the military. Attending schools with French citizens, or having curricula patterned after the French educational system, created a network of affinities among elites on both sides. The formal ties

were two-fold: defense agreements and economic ties. These elements contributed to both the rise and the transformation of the Franco-African state or *Francafrique.*

The Rise of Francafrique

In 1960, 15 sub-Saharan African countries gained their independence from France. To manage the new era, the *Ministère de la Coopération* was created in Paris with a department for civilian affairs and a department for military affairs in charge of managing defense agreements. These defense agreements were signed as bilateral treaties and did not constitute anything like a regional military organization such as NATO or the Warsaw Pact. The agreements, similar in writing, gave France the right to station troops in or to transition them through signatory countries. In turn, France guaranteed territorial integrity and military training. Moreover, secret clauses provided France with the right of first purchase of raw materials from Ivory Coast's cocoa to Niger's uranium.[10] Obviously, military ties could not be separated from economic interests. With regard to financial arrangements, Senegalese economist Sanou Mbaye (2004) explained the nature of the deal:

> France's unchallenged political, economic, and military domination of its former sub-Saharan African colonies is rooted in a currency, the CFA franc. Created in 1948 to help France control the destiny of its colonies, fourteen countries--Benin, Burkina-Faso, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Togo, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Bissau Guinea, and Chad--maintained the franc zone even after they gained independence decades ago.
>
> In exchange for France guaranteeing the CFA franc's convertibility, these countries agreed to deposit 65% of their foreign exchange reserves in a special account within the French Treasury and granted to France a veto over the franc zone's monetary policy whenever this special account was overdrawn. These decisions have had devastating consequences for forty years. [11]

As an acronym, CFA has been kept. However, the wording changed after independence from *Colonies Francaise d'Afrique* to *Communauté Financière d'Afrique.* In a 1973 speech, the President of Ivory Coast, Felix Houphoet-Boigny, summarized the complexity of the Franco-African relationships in one word: *Francafrique.* The man

himself symbolized both that complexity and synthesis. He was initially affiliated with the French communist party and, thus, hated by the political establishment. He served as minister of health in France and participated in a hotly debated health care reform. Stephen W. Smith (2013) commented that there was no reference publicly made to his skin color or to his birth place during these debates. As he put it,

> Elite cooperation was the cement of the Franco-African state. As a result of its colonial policy of 'assimilation,' Paris has nurtured a sub-Saharan elite of 'black Frenchmen' (women were rarely part of the happy few) who have bought into the normative universalism of French culture and politics. Quite a few had been elected to the French Parliament at a time when 'colored people' in parts of the United States were not allowed to use the same public facilities with whites.[12]

However, the *de facto* Francafrican state was significantly altered by a series of events that occurred in the 1990s, a decade described by former UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata (2006), in her book aptly titled *The Turbulent Decade*.

The Transformation of Francafrique

In an attempt to adjust the policy of France toward the new international environment created by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the *perestroika* of the Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, President Francois Mitterrand redefined the Franco-African relationships at the 16th summit held at La Baule, France, in a speech thereafter known as *Le Discours de la Baule* (1990). He declared that he was speaking as a global citizen to other global citizens. He denounced the form of subtle colonialism that consisted of lecturing African countries and their leaders all the time and declared that France didn't want to interfere with domestic affairs. Not only did he promote democracy as a universal principle but he also stated that the functioning of democracy requires 'a representative system, free elections, multiple parties, freedom of press, independence of the judiciary, refusal of censorship.'[13]

Following that event, movements broke out in numerous Francophone African countries seeking democratic reforms. They eventually metamorphosed into a wave of *Conférences Nationales Souveraines* in Togo, Benin, Niger, Mali and former Zaire (Democratic Republic of the Congo) and Madagascar. In a way, the region experienced what is now described as 'Arab Spring' but two decades earlier. Mali's democracy was born out that movement.

The devaluation of the CFA franc in 1994 was also a transforming phenomenon. Like the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, it opened up the Franco-African state's enclave economy. While *Le Discours de La Baule* did not result in significant reforms of the cooperation structures, the demise of the two co-authors of *Francafrique* added to their loss of the legitimacy of business as usual: Felix Houphoet-Boigny died in 1993 and Jacques Foccart in 1997. Foccart was the chief advisor for African Affairs to Presidents Charles de Gaulle and Georges Pompidou (1960-1974). After President Valery Giscard d'Estaing, he was brought back to the same position in 1986 by Prime Minister Jacques Chirac during the two years of 'cohabitation' with socialist President Francois Mitterrand. Elected President in 1995, Chirac appointed the 81-year old Foccart to his cabinet as an advisor.

More importantly, the 1994 Rwanda genocide destroyed the reputation and legitimacy of the Franco-African state. The government of Francois Mitterrand was accused of having backed the Hutu *génocidaires* against the Tutsis and moderate Hutus.[14] The combination of these events *de facto* ended a *de facto Francafrique* as it was known before the 1990s.

Does France's intervention in Mali in January, 2013, signify a return to *pax franca*? Or does such event rather indicate the collapse of the political arrangements that succeeded the old cooperation structures? Military intervention as a show of force is, paradoxically, the result of a political failure. It indicates that the political arrangements in place are no longer strong enough to ensure the continuity of the *status quo*. In that case, the strategic importance of the region

requires a renewed presence of France as a regional hegemon in the Sahara-Sahel and West Africa in order to reposition President Francois Hollande, who succeeded Nicholas Sarkozy, as major player in the global power play.

The Sahara-Sahel and West Africa: a Case in Interlocking Conflicts

France is not the only global player for whom the Sahara-Sahel and the West Africa region is of strategic interest. The United States is increasingly involved in the region as well al-Qaeda affiliated groups such as *le Movement pour l'Unicité et le Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest* (MUJOA) and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The names of such groups in themselves constitute a political agenda.

The Military Presence of the United States in the Region

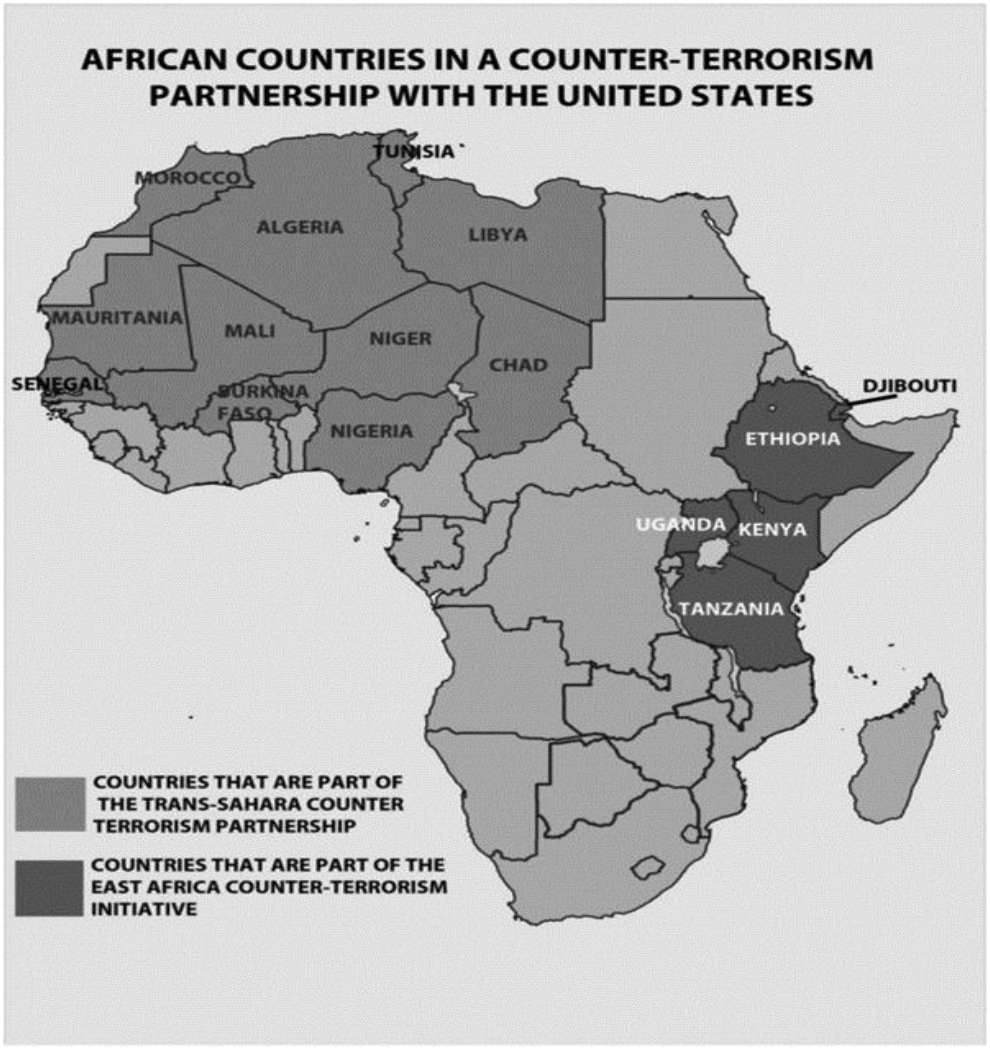
The U.S. phased out its military bases in North Africa in the 1960s. The general pattern that followed seemed to be that the U.S. responded only to crises and Africa tended to disappear from the Pentagon's radar screen unless there were a perceived challenge to its primacy in the region. Subsequently, the French perceived it as their responsibility to compensate for the American lack of commitment. As former President Giscard d'Estaing's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Louis de Guiringaud, put it in 1979, Africa is the only continent commensurate to the size of France in the scope of its power and the only place where it still can, with 500 men, change the course of history.[15] However, the Cuban intervention in Angola in 1975 rekindled competition with the Soviet bloc. During the 1978 *Opération Léopard* in the former Zaire (current Democratic Republic of the Congo), the U.S. gave logistical support to France as part of its policy of containment. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, both the 1993 Operation Restore Hope in Ethiopia and the non-intervention in Rwanda in 1994 indicated a return to the usual posture, the former for leading a humanitarian assistance effort and, in the latter case, there was no perceived challenge to US primacy in world affairs. After the Rwanda genocide, the Clinton administration launched the African Crisis Response Initiative in 1996. Under this initiative, the U.S. trained some battalions in Nigeria and Senegal for peacekeeping operations.

The landscape completely changed after September 11, 2001 when the East-West competition was replaced by a North-South struggle. In particular, the Bush Administration saw the Sahel as

a potential hotbed for international terrorism after defeating the Taliban in Afghanistan. The U.S. thus began to implement measures for a permanent military presence on the African continent. In 2002, it created a combined Joint Task Force for the Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA), a force of about 2,000 troops based in Djibouti. Its tasks include joint military exercises with local forces and a range of civil-military operations such as hospital and school renovation. The U.S. also launched the Pan-Sahel Initiative in 2002 (PSI).

In June, 2003, the G. W. Bush administration announced a $100 million, 15-month Eastern Africa Counter-terrorism Initiative to expand counter-terrorism efforts with Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. In 2005, the initiative became the Trans-Sahel Counterterrorism Initiative with a larger scope. Figure 2 shows African countries that are in a counterterrorism partnership with the U.S. With regard to the Sahara-Sahel, all countries in counterterrorism partnership with the U.S. are former French possessions except for Libya and Nigeria. Given that France continues to act as a hegemon in the region, harmony and clash of interests between the two western powers are inevitable.

Figure 2: The U.S. initiative in the northwest of Africa overlaps a portion of France's historic sphere of influence.



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Retrieved on May 7, 2013 from http://tsa.rmdesignlab.com/wp-content/uploads/usa.jpg

This military architecture was, in turn, absorbed into Africa Command, created in 2008, and currently based in Stuttgart, Germany, because of African countries' reluctance to house it given that Liberia's candidacy was not accepted. There are many other ongoing U.S. military programs, the most recent, as of this writing, being a 2013 agreement to operate surveillance drones from Niger.

David Wiley (2012: 152) commented that 'Globally, since 9/11, the U.S. has built an ever larger security apparatus, almost doubling its military and intelligence budgets to mount what President

Bush immediately announced as the Global War on Terror (now named by the Obama administration Overseas Contingency Operations).'[17] However, the two Sahel 'Initiatives,' given their designation, clearly indicate that the Sahel, as a region, is of strategic importance for the US. The Sahara-Sahel countries involved, from Mauritania to Chad, coincide with France's traditional zone of influence in Africa except for Nigeria, a competitor for regional influence.

Meanwhile, increasing activities, networking and cooperation among non-state armed groups in the region, particularly al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, *le Movement pour l'Unicité et le Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest* (the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa) and others, make it an area contested by many protagonists and create a situation of interlocking conflict.

Arrival of Jihadi Militants: A Sahel Emirate?

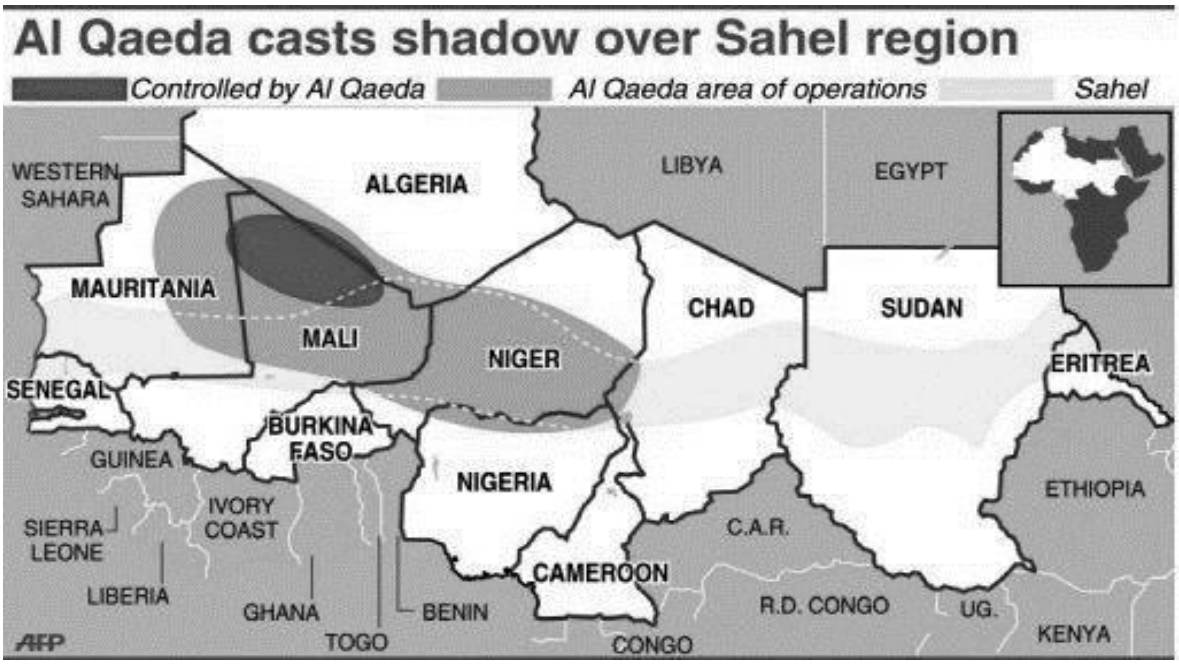
By virtue of history and geography, the Sahel area where Tuareg irredentism takes place and where the presence of jihadi activists is salient overlaps with both France's traditional zone of influence and the US-led coalition of the willing against terrorism. At the same time, the nationalistic agenda of the Movement for the Liberation of Azawad neither coincides with the interests of France nor with the global ambition of al-Qaeda nor, similarly, do France's national interests in the region perfectly coincide with the objectives, however complimentary, of the Overseas Contingency Operations of the Obama Administration. The combination of activities of this multiplicity of actors has led to an increased militarization of the region. A brief historical summary will help clarify the embedded/interlocking conflicts that provoked France's military intervention.

The *Front Islamique du Salut* (FIS) won election in Algeria in 1992. Political authorities reacted by first annulling the electoral results then by dissolving the FIS and jailing some of its leaders. A civil war broke out. In 1993, the FIS was transformed into AIS (*Armée Islamique du Salut*) which, in turn, became known as GIA (*Groupe Islamique Armé*).

GIA, initially, had a double agenda: to fight against the Algerian government and to establish an Islamic state in the country. In 1998, as a result of disagreements internal to GIA, the fundamentalist GSPC (*Groupe Salafiste pour la Predication et le Combat*) emerged. The kidnapping of 33 European tourists in 2003 made the GSPC known world-wide. The group imploded in 2006. The following year, 2007, some of its members formed the al-Qaeda in the

Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) under the leadership of Abdelmalek Droukdal, who pledged allegeance to Osama bin Laden.[18] AQIM entertained two goals: destabilizing the Algerian government in northern Sahel and expanding its influence in southern Sahel as first step (See Figure 3); the second step would consist of reifying Osama bin Laden's vision of a *Grand Sahara* as a counter-project to G. W. Bush's idea of Greater Middle East, a response to Nicholas Sarkozy's efforts toward the formation of a Mediterranean Union and an alternative to Gadhafi's United Great Maghreb. The *Grand Sahara* could be used as a launching pad, one the the traditional roles of Africa, for the conquest of the Maghreb and Europe.

Figure 3



[19]

Retrieved on May 6, 2013 from http://themoornextdoor.wordpress.com/2010/08/16/on-maps/

Specializations began to emerge among sub-divisions of operation in this geographical space: hostage taking in Niger; bombings and attacks upon military and diplomatic facilities in Mauritania; in northern Mali roughly two functions, detention of hostages and source of supplies and ammunition. These functions required a relatively stable settlement and local alliances; hence, there were marriages between jihadists and local Moorish, Berabish and Tuareg women and creation of networks for drug trafficking.[20] Such an agenda is much more ambitious than the pre-existing Tuareg irredentism and makes a clash of interests inevitable. Its implementation also

directly challenges France's interests and Western security archtecture in the region. Figures 1, 2 and 3 practically overlap. In the face of what can be seen as a major political challenge to global players such as the U.S., France and other Western European countries in the region, the fighing in northern Mali was more trigger than sole cause of France's direct military intervention.

As in Afghanistan, Islamic jihadists' first move was to subvert an existing 'state' (*talibanism*) or to opportunistically take over a new one (Islamic Republic of Azawad), then operate within the structures of that state to challenge the international power structure. Given the complexity of this situation of interlocking/embedded conflicts, how and who can cut the Gordian knot? What are the possibilities for solving the interlocking conflicts in the Sahara-Sahel and West Africa and achieving political stability?

Lessons Learned and Policy Recommendations

The concept of economy of forces discussed in the section of this chapter about France's military interventions has had relative success in sub-Saharan Africa, not because it is still a region where, with 500 men, one still can change the course of history, but because France's policy makers skillfully combine soft power (culture and networking among civilian and military elites) and hard power (military agreements and economic ties) in projecting force when and where needed.

However, the resurgence of foreign military activities, be they regional (Jihadist groups) or international (primarily France and US) will heavily militarize the Sahara-Sahel and West Africa and render it overly dependent on the use of force to manage conflict. Such an approach has four major consequences: a) it weakens local mechanisms of conflict resolution and promotes a culture of violence; b) it creates the incentive for an arms race within the region, not only to confront new threats, but also to keep military balance between neighboring states; c) this, in turn, will divert funds from development to military expenditures; d) as neighboring states intervene in Mali, they make themselves vulnerable at home. Sub-Saharan African countries have small and weak armed forces. Their very success in northern Mali is forcing the Jihadists to disperse and regroup forces elsewhere in the region where they may face diminished resistance.

With regard to terrorist activities in the Sahara-Sahel and West Africa, there is osmosis between North Africa (Algeria in particular) and sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, any counter-terrorism

measure calls for cooperation with North African states which have significant experience in dealing with terrorism and much stronger armed forces than their sub-Saharan neighbors.

Most importantly, excessive focus on foreign threats tends to overlook local grievances that create the conditions for violent conflicts. As Muna Ndulo (2011: 795) pointed out,

> Very often, conflict is a symptom of an intrastate crisis that is deeply rooted in the following conditions: authoritarian rules; exclusion of minorities from governance; socio-economic deprivation; and weak state structures that lack the capacity to handle normal political and social conflict…Unfortunately, the resources and energies of the international community tend to be mobilized around the symptoms - rather than the causes- of conflicts.'[21]

It is also important to strengthen democratic processes. According to Afro-Barometer (2013), 'As of December 2012 [in Mali], a clear majority (62 percent) said that they prefer democracy to other forms political regime. But the proportion that expressed allegiance to democracy was down by ten percentage points from 2008.'[22] Obviously, the legitimacy of Malian democracy declined when the military coup took place. The diminished legitimacy of Mali's regime before the coup was also illustrated in an article, '*Trafic de Cocaine: Une Pièce Negligée du Puzzle Sahélien'* by Anne Frintz in a special edition *Manière de Voir* of *Le Monde Diplomatique*, titled *À Qui le Crime Profite* (August/September, 2013). Frintz reported that, even if the high ranking military officers embezzled the whole defense budget of Mali, they couldn't afford, collectively, the quantity and quality of the cars they possess.[23] Corruption was rampant. And social inequality worsened. That was no guarantee of democracy and political stability. The Brazilian physician, Josué de Castro, in his book *The Geopolitics of Hunger* (1977), demonstrated the correlation between hunger and the structure of power in a political system.[24] Food insecurity, a case of 'long emergency' in the Sahel, cannot be separated from countries' policy choices hence from deliberative democracy.

When exclusion of minorities from governance is addressed, socio-economic deprivation mitigated and participatory democracy established, border ethnic groups such as the Tuareg, can feel part of the national community rather left in the periphery of socio-economic development. In such conditions, regional cooperation can help solve regional problems. Models exist for cooperative mechanisms and *fora* for border ethnic groups: the Akwasasne at the border between

the US and Canada is an example. On a larger scale, a mechanism is offered by the Arctic Council composed of eight member states, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the US. The Inuit Circumpolar Council is a Permanent Participant in the organization for the purpose of consultation with Inuit representatives.[25]

To establish a 'Pan Sahel Tuareg Council' within a regional state organization, France has a unique role to play. It can help with internal negotiations between the Tuareg and their states, within and between countries of the region. It can facilitate regional cooperation within the Sahel and the West African region. And it can promote greater cooperation between countries of the region and North Africa. If, in so doing, it can promote democratic processes, France will be an even greater actor in the global power play than it is now. And so will the Sahara-Sahel and the West Africa region.

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Figure 1 map
http://www.bing.com/images/search?q=map+of+france+and+north+africa&id=F7CE0110CAA8FD40E8A6BA48D7B14ED9543AE7BD&FORM=IQFRBA#view=detail&id=F4EC05A30D38B7DEA6AE518FBFBF4F49FC199151&selectedIndex=19

Figure 2 map http://tsa.rmdesignlab.com/wp-content/uploads/usa.jpg

Figure 3 map http://themoornextdoor.wordpress.com/2010/08/16/on-maps/

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