

Mali, Al Qaeda, and the US Neo-Colonial Agenda

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Recent developments in Mali illustrate both the way in which the United States and its Western allies directly project military and political power, as well as the role of terrorism as a necessary pretext for imperialist, neo-colonial domination. Beginning with the establishment of AFRICOM (US Africa Command) in 2007, incorporating the war in Libya and the military coup d'état in Mali, and up to today's consolidation of power by Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), it has become clear that the United States has managed to successfully destabilize West Africa and achieve many of its long-term strategic objectives in the region.

While the Western media portrays the situation in West Africa as an "unintended consequence" of the imperialist aggression against Libya, the incontrovertible fact that the United States has, for years, attempted to expand its control of the region, has been made all the more apparent by the current instability and the "decisive action" that it necessitates. The spread of AQIM, which has now consolidated control over a vast swath of land in the Sahel region, rather conveniently provides the US with the crucial cover it needs to expand its military presence.

Recent Developments

Since the fall of the Gaddafi regime in Libya, Mali has been embroiled in a fierce civil war that has torn the country apart. The Tuareg fighters, who had fought on the side of Gaddafi and the Green Resistance, began to return home armed, battle-hardened, and bearing a grudge. This was, understandably, a recipe for war in Mali where the central government was seen as little more than a US puppet regime, [touting democracy as it bowed to US military and corporate interests](#). The rebels began waging war against Bamako in hopes of creating their own independent state of [Azawad](#) in Northern Mali, a goal which has been stifled since Mali gained its own independence in 1960.

As the war continued to intensify, the Malian military became increasingly frustrated with what they perceived to be a lack of support from the civilian government. This anger and resentment was then channeled by a small clique within the Malian officer corps into a coup d'état to overthrow the government in Bamako. The coup was led [by Captain Amadou Sanogo, a US-trained mid-level officer](#), heading an assortment of lower-level military officers who claimed to be patriots seeking to quell the rebellion in the North. In reality, the move was a cynically designed ploy by Sanogo and his US sponsors to destabilize Mali. As anticipated, the overthrow plunged the country into political turmoil, and with no legitimate government in the capital, opened the door to a much more dangerous enemy in the North.

Enter: Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb

In the midst of the fighting between the Touré government and the Tuareg forces, there emerged a new threat in the North, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). This offshoot of Al Qaeda, [once seen as a marginal threat with little to no chance of establishing a significant presence in the region](#), began to make its presence felt through an alliance with

the rebels. Really no more than a marriage of convenience, the two forces fought side by side to defeat the weak Malian military which, despite years of training and advanced equipment from the United States, was unable to inflict any significant damage on the rebels or terrorist fighters. However, once it became clear that the North was going to be “freed” from the control of the government and Malian military, the divide between rebels and AQ fighters became evident.

[Eyewitness accounts](#) from Mali describe the AQIM fighters as having arrived in Land Cruisers with advanced weapons and communications equipment, ostensibly acquired through defeating the Malian and other military forces in the region. This highly organized and well-funded contingent emerged in Mali after having been roundly defeated by the military and other government forces in Algeria, where the group originated. This fact should not be lost on keen observers who note that, due to their failure to destabilize that oil-rich country in the interests of Western imperialists, AQIM migrated to Mali where they successfully hijacked the civil war there and turned it into another staging ground for terror and destabilization, like its corollary in Libya.

AQIM, US-AFRICOM, and the Destabilization of the Sahel

As with other Al Qaeda offshoots, AQIM’s history is directly related to that of the US intelligence and military presence in the Sahel. The US military’s Africa Command (AFRICOM) was established by the Bush Administration in 2007 in order to, in their words, “defend US national security interests by strengthening the defense capabilities of African States...and defeat transnational threats.” However, within months of the establishment of AFRICOM, the Algerian group known as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (SGPC) was rebranded AQIM and immediately became a much more serious threat with international capabilities, something it had never had before that point.

One can only wonder how, within the span of a few short months, as US military and intelligence presence is dramatically increased, such a group can immediately spring up. It would be logical to assume that the two events are not merely coincidence. Rather, AFRICOM, in order to legitimize its own presence in the region needed an enemy. So, it took an obscure terror organization, gave them the Al Qaeda banner, and thereby created the conditions for a military presence. AFRICOM was then able to install so-called “advisers” in the militaries of the region, ostensibly to combat the threat posed by this new organization while, in truth, creating dependence of those militaries on the United States. These developments were part of the broader mission known as the [Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership](#) which enabled the United States to penetrate the militaries of the entire region and thereby make them into clients or proxies of the US military. It is precisely this dependence which was so evident in the routing of the Malian military at the hands of the rebels and AQIM.

With the defeat of the Malian forces and the de facto establishment of the state of Azawad, AQIM now controls a large portion of the Sahel/West Africa region, allowing it to menace neighboring states and continue to legitimize the AFRICOM presence. This military presence, though, is not entirely visible. In fact, it is now confirmed that [US commandos and other Special Forces have been actively engaged in Mali since before the coup](#) in late March. According to mainstream media and military spokespeople, the commandos were purely communications experts providing technical assistance to the military. While this is undoubtedly true to a certain extent, the news indicates a much broader engagement in the country, one that likely includes all manner of covert operations engaging with terrorists, rebels, and the military forces. Essentially then, the situation in Mali, and the wider region, has to be understood as being directly and cynically manipulated by the United States.

US Objectives

The US imperialist ruling class has a multitude of reasons for their desire to destabilize the Sahel and Africa more broadly. First and foremost is the desire to block the continued Chinese economic penetration of the continent. It is no secret that China has become, by far, the most significant investor in Africa. With the mutually beneficial arrangements wherein China engages in large-scale economic development while receiving, in return, access to raw materials, the Chinese have entrenched themselves in many African nations. Because of this, the United States must find ways to slow down or stop altogether these relations by any means necessary.

Secondly, the US seeks to prevent the independent economic development of Africa. Washington and Wall St. cannot bear to watch their former servants establish themselves outside of US dollar hegemony. As the US, Europe, and much of the world have slipped into a global depression, much of Africa has remained economically stable. Naturally, the 1% cannot allow this, and so, they must seek to re-impose their dominance utilizing the usual assortment of weapons: terrorism, military coups, and blackmail. In so doing, Africa is once again under the thumb of Western financiers.

Lastly, the US must do whatever it takes to continue to justify its military presence on the continent. Despite public revulsion throughout Africa to the idea of AFRICOM, Washington has managed to incorporate it into many of the militaries on the continent. In so doing, the US both legitimizes its own expenditures and is able to enforce the agenda of Wall St. and the international financier class. Moreover, this provides the muscle behind US puppet regimes such as those in Ethiopia, Rwanda, Uganda, and elsewhere - governments that act as the brutal enforcers of US policy, always bowing to the dictates of their patrons in Washington.

In many ways, Mali has become a second Libya - a fractured nation that has been reduced to chaos with much of the population living under the rule of terrorists and extremists. Like Libya, Mali is undoubtedly being transformed into a sanctuary for international terror campaigns that have, as their mission, nothing less than the total destruction of modern Africa.

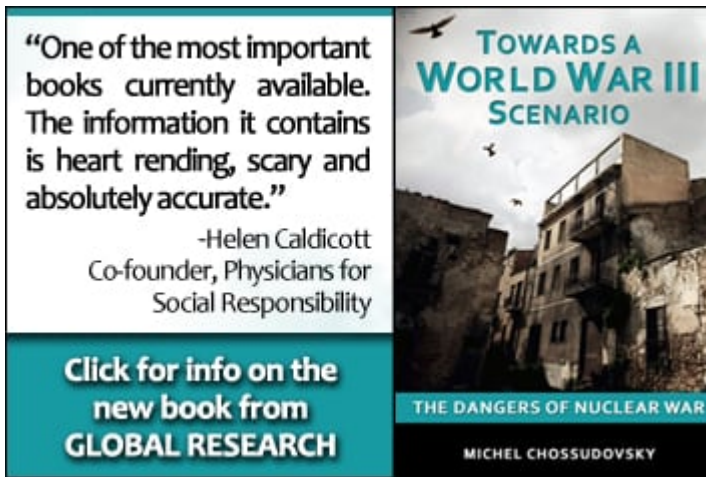
Whether conscious or unconscious, these forces, which seek to impose their will on the people of Africa, work in the service of the United States. As with Libya, Somalia, Nigeria, and countless other nations, the US imperialists, using the brutal weapon of terrorism, have reduced Mali to a failed state in order to consolidate their own domination and further their neo-colonial agenda.

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