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Benefits upon security enforcement: Unpacking migration governance in Niger

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1: Approaching the context in Niger

When I first arrived in Niamey it was April 2021. After completing my mandatory COVID-19 quarantine, one of my initial tasks was to visit the office of the European Union delegation. This occurred because a few days earlier, when I tried to secure an interview at the EUCAP-Sahel headquarters (a civil police organization under the European Union), I was informed that any organization affiliated with the EU mission in Niger required authorization from the delegation, issued through a dedicated communication office.

Strategically located at the city's geographical heart, nestled between the Yantala, Plateau, and Dar es Salaam districts, the EU delegation office stood as a testament to Niamey's burgeoning construction market. Shortly after emerging from quarantine, I swiftly observed that Niamey was in the midst of a real estate market boom. As Niger has become a trusted ally for Western nations in the Sahel in the fight against terrorism and irregular migration, the area has seen a surge in the presence of international organizations, NGOs, and embassies. Many opted to rejuvenate old buildings, while others embarked on entirely new constructions. The central streets were transformed into a sprawling construction site, marked by heaps of red earth, active concrete mixers, and tireless workers moving up and down the sunlit scaffoldings.

Contrary to many bustling West African cities, locals suggested that Niamey had largely remained untouched by the usual urban modernization trends until well into the second decade of the 2000s. It's in the last five or six years that Niamey's downtown has begun transforming into a vibrant center where modern shops and bars catering to Westerners coexist with stone mosques and vast informal markets.

When I'm in a country that's new to me or where I've recently arrived, I'm always curious to understand if and how it has changed in recent years. Partly, I'm curious to see if the processes in these new places mirror those from my hometown. Additionally, cities evolve so rapidly that their geographies often don't retain the imprints of time. Only through the narratives of those who've witnessed these transformations can one truly

grasp the changes. When I happened to ask about the urban evolution of Niamey my interlocutors usually answered "*Niamey avant c'était un grand village*", placing the word *avant* back of only a few years on the timeline. Over the past six decades, major West African cities have been renowned as sprawling, ever-expanding metropolises, representing the densest urban concentration on the continent. Not without reasons a United Nations report (UN-HABITAT, 2020) states that by 2030, 50% of the continent's population will become urban, due to the rapid growth of national economies that, since the 1990s and 2000s, have been playing an increasingly central role in the global supply chain. But unlike its neighbors, Niamey, and by extension, the entirety of Niger, lacked this element of dynamism. Recognized as one of poorest nation in the world, consistently ranking last in global HDI charts, Niger's international reputation has historically been defined by three key aspects: its history of *coups d'état* (1974, 1996, 1999, 2010 and the most recent on August 26, 2023) its status as a leading global uranium producer (entered into crisis due to the collapse of the international price following the Fukushima disaster), and its heavy reliance on developmental aid from donor countries. This paints Niger in a light that mirrors the West's orientalist narrative about African nations, encapsulating themes of political instability, resource abundance, and a perpetual need for external assistance. These aspects have defined Niger on the international stage over the nearly 50 years spanning from the end of colonial occupation to the first half of 2010.

With the advent of the Washington consensus era, democratization and economic liberalization became central themes. These, facilitated by structural adjustment plans championed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, were heralded as the antidotes to chronic poverty as well as prerequisites for securing aid resources. This narrative suggested that the previous state of subordination and dependency in the Global South was outdated, painting a picture of a brighter, more prosperous future in a pacified world. Niger did not hesitate to comply with these demands, embarking on a democratization process that culminated in the 1993 elections and the implementation of structural adjustment plans in two waves, in 1983 and 1997. However, this did not

extricate the country from its entrenched dependency dynamics, which continued to shape its political trajectory. Yet, during the 2010s, a significant shift occurred on the international stage concerning the scope of relations between EU countries and those of the Sahel region. This change primarily affected security, with cooperative plans targeting both counter-terrorism and irregular migration. Regarding migration, Europe was no stranger to externalizing border control to neighboring countries. Gaddafi's Libya had been a pivotal partner for the EU until 2011, aiming to halt migrants before they crossed the Mediterranean waters. However, following Gaddafi's fall and the subsequent regional security destabilization, the EU sought new strategic partners, this time further south, in order to manage migration flows.

After passing security checks at the entrance of the European Union delegation offices, I requested to speak with the communication staff. Introducing myself as a young researcher at the reception, I handed over my letter from LASDEL institue, where I was visiting. I was asked to wait in the lounge while the reception staff contacted the office to see if anyone was available. Without an appointment, I was an unexpected guest. Shortly after, an official from the communication office greeted me in the lounge. After exchanging initial pleasantries, I briefed him on my research and inquired about the current protocol for securing interviews. The official explained that to conduct the interviews, I would need to submit an official request via email, providing the following specific details: an abstract of my research project, a detailed list of topics and questions, and, crucially, a list containing the names of all individuals I had already interviewed in Niger. I left the meeting confused and disappointed. Indeed, I was concerned that this requirement might breach the confidentiality of my sources and more in general I found the official’s request an evident ethic violation. I found the situation particularly unsettling, especially since, back in Europe, the EU is reputed as an organization valuing and protecting research autonomy. When I sent my official request via email, I expressed my reservations about this particular requirement and chose to deliberately omit the requested details, considering it a breach to my deontological code.

During my three stays in Niger (spanning 2021 to 2022, totaling five months), I never secured an official interview from EU officials or from officials of other organizations affiliated with the EU delegation in Niger.

Over time, I realized that many stakeholders, especially European entities, were hesitant to discuss migration in Niger as the management of migratory flows is a politically and economically sensitive issue for all parties involved. Moreover, during the last years the joint management of migratory flows in Niger had garnered significant international attention. journalists and scholars (Boyer 2016, Frowd 2020, Molenaar 2019, Mounkaila 2013, Raineri, 2016) often underscored the inconsistencies between the principles safeguarding migrants and local communities' dignity and the actual enforcement of flow control regulations. This discrepancy heightened stakeholders' reservations about addressing this sensitive issue.

So, what was the situation in Niger, and how did it evolve?

The 2015 'migration crisis' in Europe marked a sharp rise in irregular migrant arrivals on Europe's southern shores. With the fall of Gaddafi's regime, a civil war-torn Libya could no longer control departures from its coasts. This renewed scenario necessitated new solutions.

In Italy, during asylum recognition hearings, nearly 90% of migrants arriving via the central Mediterranean route claimed to have passed through Niger. Specifically, they indicated that their journey across the Sahara was organized from Agadez, a desert city in northern Niger and the last stop before the vast desert and eventually to unstable Libya. Halting departures from Agadez effectively meant curbing migrant arrivals in Libya, where it was challenging to control direct departures to Europe, despite certain agreements with local militias. At the La Valletta Migration Summit in 2015, which convened European and African Union leaders, the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) was introduced. The fund, totaling €2500 million, was designated for African nations identified as particularly vulnerable to migration challenges, aiming to foster a collaborative framework between the EU and African countries to address irregular migration. Niger received the largest allocation from the EUTF, amounting to €253 million, out of all the beneficiaries.

The city of Agadez, along with the broader northern region of Niger, has reaped the benefits of the burgeoning migration sector. Despite the government's struggles to integrate this peripheral area both politically and economically, the migration economy has offered local stakeholders, (such as transporters, hoteliers, and restaurateurs and so on), an avenue to capitalize on the mobility of migrants. This dynamic has infused the region with a newfound vitality and fostered social stability, especially in areas historically marked by tensions with the central government. The implementation of a migration control regime directed towards the north, encompassing Libya and Algeria, posed a challenge to Niger's pacification strategy. This strategy had been established in the wake of two Tuareg rebellions, with the first occurring in the 90s and the second in 2007, both unfolding in the Agadez region. These rebellions, particularly the first one, resulted a reassessment of the country's post-colonial administrative framework, which was still rooted in a centralized model inherited from the French colonial experience. Thus, in Niger the implementation of the administrative decentralization (in the 1995) highlights how the coexistence of multiple authorities on the territory represent something that the state must deal with as exemplified by the integration of former rebels into both local and central government structures.

However, this does not imply that a pacified political realm ceases to be a contested space. In the case of the Tuareg rebellions, in the present we can observe how actors who initially acted against the government later became part of the very power structure they had opposed. However, this does not imply a complete alignment of their positions with that of the state; in fact, their practices and objectives often conflict and challenge those of Niamey.

Political consequences of the rebellions provide a clear illustration of the local power dynamics in Niger. They highlight the presence of a diverse set of actors (both state and non-state) exerting varying degrees of authority over the territory. At the current stage, this characteristic does not seem to have changed. In fact, on the ground, one can observe the presence of numerous non-state actors who navigate the political and economic landscape based on a logic of opportunities, aligning themselves either in favor of, in opposition to, or in collaboration with the state. This dynamic creates a unique context where power relations are consistently

renegotiated among the actors. Local governance, therefore, is a fluid interplay of negotiations, leading to ever-shifting alliances, pacifications, and conflicts. Understanding this intricate dance is crucial when considering the broader political and social implications of international mobility regulations.

1.2: Research themes

Upon reflecting on my experience at the EU delegation's office in Niger, I was engulfed by a profound sense of disconnection. It puzzled me how an institution, renowned for its commitment to transparency and openness, could manifest so differently in this particular setting. What underlying factors could have influenced this stark transformation? Moreover, was this change emblematic of the broader modus operandi of the EU in Niger? It was at that moment that I considered the possibility that being in Niamey, rather than Brussels, had influenced my experience in some significant way. I realized that the context played a crucial role, and it was essential to understand its nature.

In the broader mainstream discourse on the influence of Western norms in the Global South, there's a prevailing inclination to emphasize the transformative power of international standards on local contexts. This perspective often portrays norms, especially those related to the global approach to countering irregular migration, as the primary catalysts for ground-level changes. Such a viewpoint tends to see international norms as independent entities, focusing more on their impact on the local environment and less on the reciprocal influence.

My thesis aims to posit a different narrative. I argue that the international framework on migration is intrinsically intertwined with its local context of application as it's shaped more by the actions, negotiations, and visions of local actors than is commonly (Cassarino, 2018; Cebeci, 2016; Epstein, 2012; Olivier de Sardan, 2022; Schimmelfennig, 2000). This thesis, therefore, charts a dual path of exploration. On the macro level, it delves into the reasons behind the Nigerien government's alignment with the European strategy of border externalization and migration control. This alignment, I suggest, isn't merely about tapping into development funds. It's more about the broader implications related to the state's consolidation

efforts on various fronts: local, regional, and international. On a more micro level, I examine how ground-level actors, whether affiliated with the state or independent entities from regions like Agadez, navigate and leverage the provisions of this international framework. The aim is to understand how they either bolster their authority or shield it from potential erosion. Interestingly, the outcomes often finish to present striking paradox, deviating from European objectives. Often, this primarily results from the strategic maneuvers of these local actors.

In essence, the international framework, whether viewed from a macro or micro perspective, presents itself as multifaceted and multifunctional. It's not just about countering irregular migration but also about navigating the intricate local dynamics.

This realization prompts two critical reflections.

Firstly, although international legitimacy plays a role in shaping the policy decisions of Global South countries (Acharya, 2004) the adoption of norms is primarily driven by their ability to support broader local governance objectives (Tsourapas, 2017). Second, as the international migration framework becomes embedded locally, its effectiveness is shaped by the intricate dance of interactions among various local stakeholders and the evolving relationship between the framework and these actors.

1.3: Fieldwork and Methodology

Conducting fieldwork for this research presented multifaceted challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic led to multiple postponements, with the initial departure only materializing in April 2021. Furthermore, researching in Niger, designated as a "red-zone" due to the rise of jihadism, imposed travel constraints. This meant areas outside of cities accessible by Niger Airlines, such as Niamey and Agadez, were off-limits without a military escort. This limitation compelled me to conduct part of my research by proxy, focusing on these two cities.

While local individuals and local researchers could navigate freely, as a Western researcher, I faced restricted mobility. This situation not only highlighted the differentiated access in Niger and the Sahel but also prompted reflections on the positionality and legitimacy of Western

researchers in such contexts where the filed has become de facto inaccessible

Utilizing the snowball method, I secured interviews with a diverse range of stakeholders, totaling around 60 open interviews across Niamey and Agadez. Engaging in candid dialogue proved challenging, especially with Western and Nigerien state-affiliated actors. European actors' willingness to engage in dialogue was tempered by past critiques of the Niger-EU migration partnership. Meanwhile, the reticence of Nigerien actors appeared to stem from a protective approach to sensitive information within a context of stringent oversight by authorities.

Throughout my research, I found that using a recorder often turned interviews into my own monologues. In Niamey, I opted to conduct interviews solely with pen and paper, which notably enhanced the quality of our exchanges, within the given constraints. However, in Agadez, the dynamics shifted. The actors there, given their pronounced dissent towards Niamey and my intent to explore this divide, were more forthcoming. This variation highlights how state interactions can differ based on regional histories and geographies. During my two visits to Agadez (a week in early July 2021 and a month in October 2022), I opted to keep the recorder aside, a decision that seemed to foster more open discussions.

Interestingly, my identity as a white Western researcher granted me access to high-ranking officials, an advantage possibly not afforded to local researchers. The overarching theme of my research experience in Niger revolves around the positionality of a Western scholar in non-European conflict zones. While my background and perspective are undeniable, my endeavor is to illuminate local actors' priorities without imposing inappropriate models or hierarchies.

1.4: Theoretical approach

The theoretical reconstruction of the migration management framework (Chapter 4) plays central in this work.

Drawing from critical border studies (Gallie 1956; Baldwin 1997; Connolly 1999; Collier et al. 2006), I shed light on the international framing of the migration-terrorism nexus. This inquiry reveals a shift in the approach to security: transitioning from a state-centric paradigm to a

broader focus on global security (Minculete & Rapan, 2012). I stress that this theoretic re-configuration paved the way for the inclusion of Global South countries in the fight against irregular migration (Ogata & Cels, 2003). I also argue that this expansion is not solely a response to control needs but is also influenced by the inherent growth imperative of contemporary capitalism (Harvey, 2005; Robinson 2014). The unrestrained growth of capitalism compels the construction of additional filters (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2012), increasingly distant from Europe's natural borders, to more effectively regulate the access of foreign labor into the European continent. These concepts resonate with Castles' idea of "differential exclusion" stressing how capitalism has crafted tools (as the hierarchical structuring of citizenship as example) to incorporate subjects while simultaneously keeping them in subordinate positions (Castle, 2010a). Border externalization goes in the same direction. Beyond merely extracting value via process of migrants' selection, its ability to be both replicable and reproducible globally adds further value generation (Andrijsasevic and Walters, 2011; Salter, 2006). Border externalization is presented as a process guided by necessary forms of standardization which seek to optimize the balance between cost and value extraction (nota). Hence, border control mechanisms take on a distinctly performative role. Through media visibility, they depict migrants as both potential threats, given their border-transgressing tendencies, and as subjects requiring salvation (Bigo, 2006). This portrayal reinforces the notion that security and humanitarian strategies are the sole viable approaches to managing migration.

The concept of reproducing the security system, coupled with the labeling of migrants as part of a "border spectacle" is crucial for understanding the nuanced actions of local actors in Niger (Andersson 2014, De Genova, 2002). Especially when considering that the overarching themes of performativity and reproducibility in this framework might inadvertently create exploitable gray areas for local actor strategic positioning.

To provide a comprehensive understanding, I furnish theoretical insights into the gradual integration of non-European countries into this framework (Krasner, 1982; Behrends & Parks, 2014; Pécoud, 2018) . I also explore regional approaches, like the ECOWAS space, extending beyond mere

international contexts Boswell, 2007; Kaunert, 2009; Winn, 2008; Wolff, 2009).

1.5: Outline of the Work

Shifting the lens to the context, in chapter 2 I emphasize the centrality of mobility in shaping the economic and political landscape of Niger. Tracing back to the late nineteenth century, I recount the prominence of the trans-Saharan route, which once connected West Africa to the Mediterranean's southern shores. This historical perspective sheds light on the evolving political dynamics centered around mobility control and access. The Sahel, Sahara, and particularly Niger, are portrayed not just as geographical entities but as spaces defined by their intrinsic connectivity. Their very essence lies in bridging the *here* with the *elsewhere*, underscoring the importance of inter-regional connections in giving spaces their true meaning.

In chapter 3 I try to grasp how modern forms of migration connectivity are shaped in West Africa with a focus on mobility from Niger to Libya. Indeed, from the 1970s Agadez experienced the rise of young Tuareg migration to Libya, catalyzing the consolidation of trans-Saharan mobility as West Africa's primary migratory trajectory. These migration fostered the creation of a network between Algeria, Libya, and Agadez, positioning Agadez as a pivotal transit hub in regional mobility. The thesis chronicles the evolution of these trajectories, their logistical underpinnings, and the ensuing benefits for Agadez and the broader region. Within this framework, I delve into the dynamics between Niamey and the peripheral Agadez region, set against a post-colonial backdrop. The centralizing tendencies of the post-colonial state contrast with Agadez's endeavors to break free from enduring marginality. The chapter focuses on the region's armed rebellion in the 90s, highlighting its dual significance: as a pivotal moment leading to administrative decentralization and the integration of former rebels into state apparatuses, and as an influencer on the region's connectivity paths stemming from the rebel experience.

Chapter 5 focuses on Niger's integration into the migratory framework, emphasizing the geopolitical implications of Gaddafi's fall. This event, coupled with Libya's dual role as a migratory destination and Europe's

dialogue partner, triggered a security vacuum, prompting increased European engagement with Niger. I investigate the mechanisms and policies that have progressively integrated Niger in the international migration framework, with a particular emphasis on the establishment of the EUTF.

In Chapter 6, drawing from fieldwork in Niger, I analyze the country's strategic positioning within the domain of migration security. I stress how the Nigerien government navigated its international stance, leveraging the EUTF fund and implementing Law 2015-36 in order to reinforce regime stability. This chapter also clarifies the contested dynamics between Niamey and Agadez authorities regarding the implementation of the migration framework.

Finally, Chapter 7 delves into the aftermath in Agadez following the implementation of Law 2015-36, highlighting the altered migratory routes, the region's evolving migration and security infrastructure, and the nuances of border control mechanisms. This section underscores the interplay between state and non-state actors as they navigate the political and security landscape shaped by the implementation of the migratory framework.

CHAPTER II: HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF HUMAN MOBILITY IN THE SAHEL/SAHARA REGION

2.1: Introduction

Colonial ethnography used to identify Africa as a continent distinguished in two separate sections: a 'white' Africa in the north and a 'black' Africa stretching from the centre of the continent southward. Indeed, from the 18th century Europeans used the term Sudan from the Arabic *Bilâd as-Sudân* ('Land of Blacks') in order to describe the territory occupied by the population living south of the Sahara (Lefebvre 2015: 35). Represented as separate and self-reliant worlds, these two regions were conceived and described as spaces shaped by significant diversity. Therefore, this perspective was supported by ostensible racial, socio-cultural and political chasms delineating the 'white' north and the 'black' south as units split by uncrossable dividing-line (Austen 2010: 9). Designed upon a vision of world societies shaped on a racial and cultural bias, this belief paved the way for future colonialism conceived as a system of deliberated abuse and economic exploitation. However, although useful in propitiating inestimable capital accumulation (to the benefit of Europe) in form of dispossession (to the detriment of Africa), it fell short in grasping the multi-faceted aspects and the complex features underlying the African continent. The Sahara-Sahelian region makes no exception.

For Europeans the Sahara-desert in itself further evidenced the validity of outlining Africa as a polarised continent. Conceptually manufactured as a geographic border between two regions, this vast and apparently empty land constituted for the Europeans a mere shear zone. Very frequently the Sahara was outlined as a land of mystery as well as a '*res nullius'* stretching from the Atlantic cost to the Red Sea (Rossi 2015: 13). It was only in the 19th century that for the first time European colonizers associated the notion of connectivity to the Sahara. In that case, this spatial reconfiguration occurring on a conceptual level was actually aimed to justify a political intervention. French colonial empire needed to assure territorial continuity between Algeria and the French West Africa (Bower 2009: 199–222). To this end the Sahara turned (or, more accurately it was made turn) from a geographic obstacle to a connection area.

And yet, this redefinition was altogether partial. Focusing on the trans-Saharan connectivity, it left out the value of regional and intra-Saharan trajectories. Moreover, this approach fell short in assessing the degree of interdependence between the regional and the global scale (trans-Saharan and intra-Saharan connectivity). Indeed, the entire regional system was based on a close level of interdependence between the trans-Saharan and local economies. Both were based on a connectivity scheme that brought into dialogue long-distance mobility with shorter-distance mobility. This is why, in order to grasp historical paths of mobility regimes, it is necessary to take into consideration both by stressing the factors which determined their flow. By doing so, emphasis will be put on the re-configurations resulting from the trajectories undertook by goods and people, bringing to the fore how this influenced both human as well as political geography.

Over the years, scholars have showcased mobility dynamics occurring in the Sahara/Sahelian region focusing on the central role of connectivity. At first their aim was stressing this feature by undelining the relation between this area and the trans-Saharan trade (Gregoire & Schmitz 2000; Marfaing and Wippel 2004; Lydon 2009; Austen 2010). It is undeniable that this particular category of circulation has significantly contributed into shaping the region. Nevertheless, one may discover that this approach may result in reducing Saharan/Sahelian space to a mere transit area. Furthermore, this may reinforce the vision claiming externality factors as the ones prompting sociopolitical re-configuration in Africa.

2.2: The Evolution of Intra-Saharan Connectivity: Interplay of Politics, Economy, and Mobility since the 19th Century

Just recently scholars have started giving to local dimension of intra-Saharan connectivity the importance it deserved in order to grasp regional phenomena from a contemporary and historical perspective (Brachet 2009, Mcdougal and Scheele 2012, Scheele 2012).

Patterns of local connectivity are rooted in very ancient time. In order to grasp contemporary mobility, an historical focus may be a useful tool. In addition to an historical framework, this perspective will provide elements on how subjects have framed spatiality in the Sahel/Saharan region thorough an intersubjective relation with their environment. Getting the

picture of the past brings out how continuity and ruptures have evolved over the years designing different entanglement between politics, economy and mobility trajectories. However, reconstructing mobility trajectories in the Sahara is not an easy task. This is for a number of reasons, first of all because of the geographical breadth of the connectivity network. Against this backdrop, each piece of the puzzle forming the Sahelian/Saharan patchwork is connected more or less directly with an elsewhere. This elsewhere may be located in the West Africa region, or either along the northern or southern cost of the Mediterranean. For this reason, it is necessary to pursue a field reduction both in terms of space as well as of time, since also the diachronic dimension of spatiality takes shape as the product of a dense net of events scattered along the timeline.

There is an already extensive literature on this subject covering mobility in the Sahara/Sahelian region from classical age to contemporary times (Law 1967; Martin 1969; Lovejoy 1985; Mattingly et al. 2017). In our case a brief focus on connectivity paths from the 19th century may be noteworthy. This choice is not accidental. On the one hand it was during the 19th century that the central trans-Saharan route (i.e. the one transiting throughout our area of interest) became part of the capitalist economy (Miège 1981: 93). Indeed, during 19th century industrialisation occurring in Europe meant a moment of transformation for the Euro-African relations. This shift resulted in a fast acceleration of the consumer economy (in a clear manner in Europe but to a certain extent also in West-Africa) also tied to the diffusion of West-Africa goods both on the European as well as on the American market. Undoubtedly, this amplitude of trade volumes fostered dynamicity of local markets in the Sahelian/Saharan region (Lovejoy: 1985). Secondly, the entrance of Sahelian/Saharan economy into the capitalistic system (marked by a major availability of tracking and data)[1] offered to western scholars the chance to better observe evolutions of commerce and to a certain extent, the development of connectivity paths.

[1] British Consular reports from Tripoli for example have been an essential source for sketching the trends of trans-Saharan commerce (Baier 1978; Johnson 1978; Lovejoy 1984). On the other hand, scrutinise the size of local trade volumes it is a hard task. For example, on the subject of salt trade in the Sahara Barth (1857) uses the average amount of camels and donkeys composing a caravan to estimate the value of salt commerce. It goes without saying that these figures may be subject to approximations.

At the same time, during this century many transformations occurred at the political level. In many cases changes occurring in the domain of mobility of goods and people were the source or alternatively resulted in broader authority shifts. Some of them relied to the trend occurring at the international market level. Others on the contrary, impacted on social organisation, mobility and economy on the local scale. The analysis of this period therefore allows for an inner focus around the evolution of the interdependence level between local and trans-Saharan economy.

If from an historical point of view a reduction seems necessary, the same applies for what concerns spatiality. Being a very extensive region with very ramified connectivity links, connectivity lines crossing the Saharan-Sahelian region extend widely. Again, it is still the intense relationship between the regional and international dimension which determines this complex connectivity web. In this regard we may identify several key points which arose as essential connectivity spots. Utilizing Sayed (1996) classification, we may locate a number of spot/cities/markets located along three geographic belts extending from the southern Mediterranean coasts to the West Africa Savannah: starting from the northernmost spots the cities of Tripoli and Benghazi were the most relevant markets of the Ottoman Empire serving as entry and exit points for the West-Africa market. The second belt consisted of the oasis scattered in contemporary southern Libya (Ghadames, Sukra, Zallat), serving as buffer points for traders and as connection points for caravans originating from Tunisia and Egypt. Moving southwards we find the third belt consisting of the cities of contemporary central Sahara and the Sahel, means the oasis of the Kawar region (the cities of Bilma and Fachi), the city of Agadez in the Aïr region and more to the south the Sahelian city of Zinder (capital of the sultanate of the Damagaram). Finally, the last belt, the southernmost one, stretching from the Lake Chad to the Hausa Kingdoms consisting, among the others, in the cities of Kano, Katsina and Sokoto. In our case, the latter two areas are those more relevant to our matter of inquiry. However, in order to have a full understanding of the subject, it is important to have an eye also on connectivity paths inscribed outside of those.

In the context of the Sahel/Sahara region the environmental/climatic factor counts for central importance. The region is characterised by a semiarid

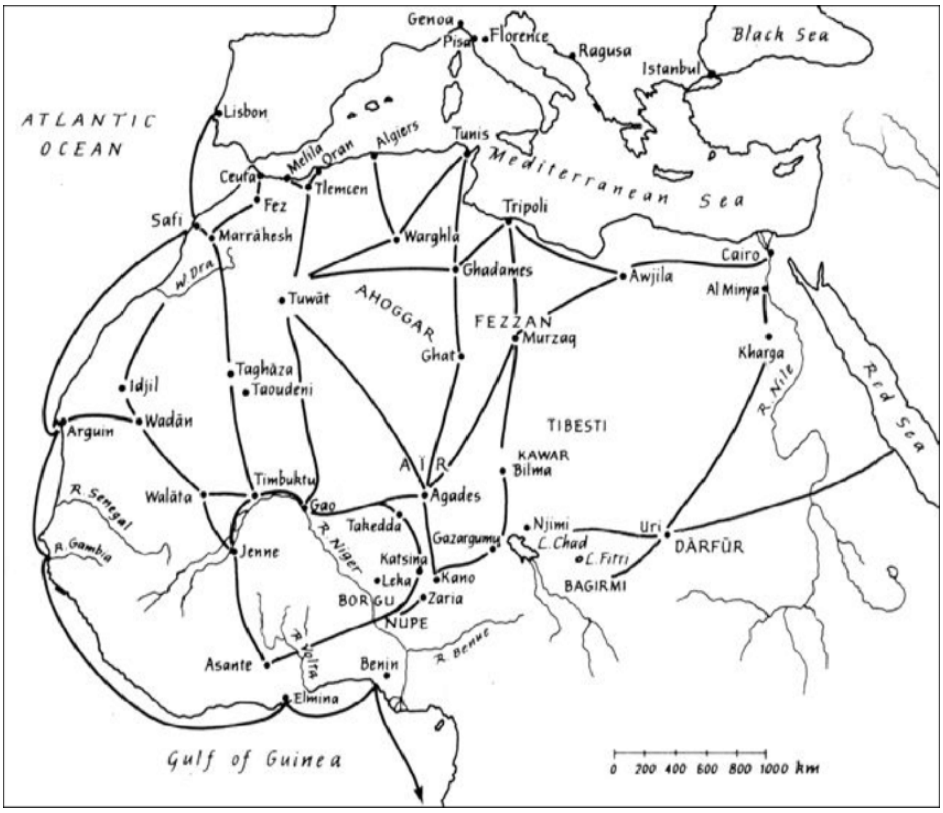
stripe of land 500 kilometres broad, the Sahel, gradually thinning out as it goes northwards. Then the desert area takes over, stretching for approximately 1800 kilometres essentially as far as the North Africa shores. This austere ecosystem is shaped by the alternation of two seasons: a dry season (from September to May) and a rainy season (from June to July). Against this backdrop, human activity as it has developed is strictly dependent from seasonality rhythms. Moreover, recurring droughts represent a very unpredictable issue reinforcing the bond between local communities and climatic/environmental trends. Hence, over the years human activity coped with unexpected meagre harvests and poor pastures due to droughts[2]. This paved the way for special forms of social organisation coupled with a widespread propensity for resilience. In fact, from an environmental perspective this region is distinguished for continuous transformations: an area may be flourishing for agriculture or grazing depending on the season. Or, in the event of a rainy season below expectations, a historically prosperous territory can turn into an arid area. Therefore, local human activity resulted from the need to cope with all these climatic/environmental factors. For this reason, we find multifarious social organisations ranging from sedentary farmers to semi-nomadic or nomadic herders.

2.3: Trans-Saharan Trade

In 430 B.C Herodotus was the first illustrating a trans-Saharan connectivity path linking the Fezzan (contemporary southern Libya) via Tassali and Hoggar (contemporary southern Algeria) to the Niger bend (Law 1967: 186). Generally, one may state trans-Saharan trade has lasted approximately twelve centuries: from somewhere near the end of the eight century CE up to the early twentieth century (Austen 2010: 23). Over the years, paths' trajectories have been influenced by number of circumstances. Political events and markets' restaging occurring both on the local as well as on the international scale have across time altered routes' directions. In some cases, these same variations have propitiated

[2] From 1790 to 1890 droughts occurred 5 times in the Sahel/Saharan region: during the 1790s (Bornu, Kano, Agades), 1847, 1855, 1890 (Hausa kingdoms) (Lovejoy & Baier 1975: 570).

trade intensification on certain routes to the detriment of others. Stretching from the north-Africa ports to the Sahel and the West Africa throughout the Sahara Desert, the trans-Sahara trade network may distinguish as a fluctuating space subjected to frequent economic and political makeovers. Nevertheless, some routes have experienced major degree of stability due to the constant need for supply of specific assets both on the African and on the European markets. As for the latter, key markets scattered along both the Sahel and the West-Africa served up as departing points for goods moving towards north. Indeed, these locations used to benefit from their strategic position lying next to raw materials' extraction areas or zones of slaves' supply. However, because of their durability and trade-flow constancy one may isolate four north-south paths relying the West Africa/Sahelian bounds to the Mediterranean transiting across the Sahara desert. These trajectories correspond to the Tripoli-Timbouctou axis via Ghadamès, the Tripoli-Bornu axis via Murzuq, the Tripoli-Kano axis via Ghat and the Tripoli-Ouadai axis transiting through Murzuq (Saied 1996 : 135).



Map 1. Routes of trans-Saharan trade. Source: Barau, 2009

Here because of our research interests converging on contemporary Niger, we focus upon the Tripoli-Kano axis via Ghat, and to a certain extent on the Tripoli-Bournou axis via Murzuq, the so-called 'Central Saharan routes'. Indeed, these two routes transited through cities and regions still rising today as key locations for contemporary migration pathways as the Aïr region and the Kawar. It is fair to say that those trajectories constitute the backbone of contemporary mobility patterns which still present a certain degree of endurance from the past.

These two routes distinguished from the others for specific reasons which contributed to their development and permanency over time. In the first place, geography granted a certain status to both trajectories. The arrival of Europeans on the African Atlantic coast during the 15th century resulted in the progressive inclusion of a large part of West Africa in the trans-Atlantic economy (Emmer 2003: 39). This affected the trans-Saharan routes until then establishing the only trajectory linking West Africa to the rest of the world. Indeed, the navigation of the entire length of the Niger river was and still is very problematic because of rapids preventing the navigation along several stretches (Andersen & Golitzen 2005: 19). At the same time, passage by land was obstructed by savannah's thick vegetation were the tse-tse fly (lethal to animals) proliferated making trade on large scale hard to realize (Webb 1995: 7). Unlike the other routes and because of their remoteness, central Sahara routes resisted to trans-Atlantic competition for a long time. The caravan system was thus the only way of trading across the region. Therefore, normally between the end of August and the month of September, a period when cooler weather sets in, caravans would move from north to the lands of central Sudan (Saied 1996: 112). Was only with the progressive expansion of French dominion over the Saharan territory (resulting into the social dismantling of connectivity paths) that the routes witnessed a dramatic decline which culminated in 1911 with the construction of the railway relying the coast to Kano (northern Nigeria) and trade's block in Tripolitania due to the Italo-Turkish war (Baier 1977: 45).

Another element that propitiated Central Sahara routes' prominence over 19th century was the vast number of oasis scattered in the southern of Libya providing vital stay for the caravans and connection points for traders.

Moreover, the oasis, as for Ghadames, were the homeland of important merchants (i.e. the *Adamusawa*)[3] which used their strategic position to better deal with markets spotted on both banks of the Sahara[4] (Haarmann, 1998). Indeed, they could rely on the crucial advantage of being at the *carrefour* connecting cities and populations. This aspect was fundamental in order to create stable networks for both the acquisition as well as the transport of goods. Brokers appointed by the merchants' family[5] resided in the major cities in order to monitor the markets, buying and sell goods and commodities. At the same time oasis' merchants (especially the *Adamusawa*) stipulated trust relations and alliances with nomads' clans (mainly Tuaregs) transiting through the oasis for seasonal transhumance. By consolidating cooperation with Tuaregs (tasked of goods' transport throughout the desert) merchants guaranteed mutual benefit and routes' reliability (Haarmann, 1998: 32).

Merchants operating along trans-Saharan routes imported European goods to West Africa markets in exchange for raw materials and luxury goods destined to Europe, America and to the territories under Ottoman influence. Goods imported to the West-African markets were essentially textiles processed in European industry (British of course, but also textiles from Italy or Austria)[6], as well as objects such as mirrors, paper, spices, perfumes, tea, sugar, copper, foreign pottery and weapons (Martin 1969: 15). On the other hand, these products were traded in exchange for slaves, gold, salt, animal skins, ostrich feathers, ivory, African textiles, civet, Arabic gum, wax and indigo (Martin 1969: 15) (Lovejoy 1984: 87). Along the Central-Sahara route slaves were the most exported good. Most part of

[3] *Adamusawa* was the term used by Hausa speaking population of the Sahel to designate the merchants originating from the Ghadames oasis (term deriving from the Arabic *Ghadāmisa*). While Arabs were generally designated with the term *Larabawa,* the *Adamusawa* were the only group that was granted a name on its own (Haarmann 1998: 9)

[4] While Arab traders owned the monopoly on trans-Sahara trade, over the years Jewish merchants based in Tripoli acquired a certain prominence in regulating imports and exports of goods from and towards north-Africa. For more on the role of Jews communities in trans-Saharan trade see Hunwick (2006).

[5] Haarmann (1998: 26) reports *Adamusawa* presence in all central Sudan main cities and regions: Bornu, Kano, Sokoto, Nupe, Katsina, Damergu and Damagaram.

[6] The city of Kano in northern Nigeria was one of the most important destinations for the products of the European textile industry. This was due to the emergence of a textile industry in Kano itself, which used European textiles for its processing especially at the end of the 19th century (Johnson, 1976).

slaves were caught during military operations ran by the Kanem-Bornu[7] kingdom in neighbouring areas and then sold to trans-Saharan traders or held by Kanem-Bornu ruling class. Since the sale of slaves supplied most of Kanem-Bornu economic resources (Bah & Diouf, 2003: 15), and the international slave-markets was until mid-19th century very demanding, trans-Saharan routes originating from Bornu arose as the most important in the central part of the Sahara. Indeed, Sudanic kingdoms as Kanem-Bornu based their authority on trade and warfare. Often warfare aimed to protect Saharan gateways for cross-desert trade (Austen, 2010: 64). In this sense one may say slavery was a key asset: the sale of slaves ensured profits, horses and weapons[8] through which onset military campaigns in order to strengthen political authority and eventually gain more slaves. Trans-Saharan trade allowed providing both: in addition to goods of consumption, towards trans-Saharan trades local authorities were able to get horses and firearms to use in warfare[9].

At north Tripoli was the gate heading towards the international markets of Europe, America and the East. Since the sixteenth century the provinces of Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and the Fezzan were under the authority of the Ottoman Empire. Although over the years Ottoman control over these territories assumed different shapes, from a more indirect to a direct rule system after 1832 (Ladjal, 2016) (in that year the provinces passed from a semi-autonomous administration under the Karamanli dynasty to Istanbul's direct control), the trans-Saharan trade represented a crucial

[7] The Bornu and the Kanem were initially two separate kingdoms. The former rose over a territory encompassing contemporary eastern Nigeria, parts of Chad, Niger and Cameroon and was ruled by the Saifawa dynasty. The latter encompassed most of Chad but also parts of southern Libya, eastern Niger, northeastern Nigeria and northern Cameroon and was ruled by the al-Kanemi dynasty. In order to dismiss the expansion of the Sokoto Caliphate in 1804 the Saifawa family requested help of a popular Muslim scholar from the Kanem named Shehu al-hajj Muhammad Lamino bin Muhammad al-Kanemi. The successes of al-Kanemi against the raids originating from the Sokoto Caliphate weakened Saifawa family legitimacy paving the way for al-Kanemi family to take control over Bornu (Brenner, 1973).

[8] For a detailed account on firearms in the central Sudan see Fisher & Roland (1971)

[9] "*Bornu's military supremacy was essentially based on the use of cavalry and firearms supplied by the Ottoman Empire, in exchange for cohorts of slaves driven through the Sahara. Bagirmi, located on the west bank of the Chari River, had consistently shown its intention to be politically autonomous from its two powerful neighbors. Bornu and Ouadday. The quest for and the supply of slaves were a major preoccupation in Bagirmi"* (Bah & Diouf, 2003: 15-16)

asset that Ottoman aimed to promote and protect. In terms of value and units, slaves were the major asset traded along the Tripoli-Bornu route (Lovejoy, 1984: 88). Indeed, for the Ottoman Empire, slavery was crucial for many reasons. Slaves were bought and sold in Tripoli and then moved to the international as well as to the local market (employed by households in gardening and other wearisome tasks) (Mack 1992: 101). But beyond that, slaves granted key manpower supply for the Ottoman navy supporting the effort to assert Istanbul military control over the Mediterranean Sea. Moreover, slaves represented a profit opportunity for local *deys* (Turkish term which designate ruling pashas) otherwise they complemented Ottoman military forces next to janissaries' regular troops (Erdem, 1966: 96). For this reason, especially over the 19th century Istanbul strove to protect and safeguard slavery and its relations with Sudanic kingdoms, from where slaves originated. This intense connection between Libyan Ottoman provinces and the Sudanic kingdoms was reinforced with the military alliance between Karamanli Yusuf Pacha (in power from 1796 to 1832) and the Kanuri Kingdom of Kanem-Bornu. This alliance resulted in military intervention of Ottoman forces alongside Muhammad El Kanemi's troops twice: in 1817 (against the Sokoto Caliphate) and in 1821 (to reestablish the order over the tributary state of Bagirmi). Thus, Karamanli Yusuf Pacha assured for a constant supply of such a precious revenue. This tie with the Bornu-Kanem kingdom assumed even further importance since European and American powers forced Yussuf to cease his support to corsair raids, which represented a significant revenue activity at that time (Minawi, 2016: 24).

However, Ottoman capacity to self-impose as an ordering actor in the Sahara was always met with material circumstances which downgraded Istanbul ambitions. Ottoman empire could rely on some key symbolic traits which undoubtedly proved central for mediating with the Saharan environment: above all the remarkable capacity to deal with segmented society and the legitimacy stemming from sharing with local populations Islamic values. Yet, this was not sufficient in allowing Istanbul to impose, for example, a well-designed and regulated system of taxation over the transit of merchandises along the trans-Saharan routes. At least not everywhere. Indeed, the regime of direct rule achieved in Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and the Fezzan after 1832 was more an effort to prevent

competing powers' intervention in the region, since France was progressively enlarging its dominion over the desert from Algeria.

Ottoman capacity of ruling over autonomous desert population met with evident complexities of governing a vast territory very hard to control taking into account the limited number of Turkish troops available.

For this reason, more than achieving the whole region's control Ottoman administration opted for a patchy administrative system focusing its effort on commanding over more strategic and viable areas. In many cases Istanbul political choices were tied to the entanglement of local concerns with out-reaching events occurring elsewhere. The hardships in controlling the whole territory affected security in some transit zones of the Fezzan region.

Turkish administration fell short in providing the same regime of security which conversely were granted by the relatively powerful Karamanli government. This was due on the one hand to the degree of autonomy allowed by the Karamanli administration assuring local appeasement (Kologlu 2008, 276), on the other because of hardship in assembling an administrative machine over such an extended and partially hostile territory (Anderson, 1984: 328). This lack of control, for example, paved the way for the intensification of Tuaregs and Tebus raids against caravans along the axis Bornu-Tripoli via Murzuq (Boahen 1962: 351). This was one of the reasons why between 1830 and 1842 the route fell into a complete standstill. Moreover, as slaves were the primary commodity conveyed along the route the progressive halt of slavery on Ottoman land led to its unavoidable collapse.

Indeed, the abolition of slavery in Africa was probably the most significative economical event across the years 1820s-1870s. France's gradual conquest of Algeria in the 1830s and 1840s resulted in the abolition of slavery in 1848. At the same time, slavery was abolished in Tunisia between 1841 and 1846. This led to a substantial loss of market by slave-traders (Wright 2007: 91). Simultaneously, pressure from England[10]

[10] After the abolition occurred in 1833 of the trans-Atlantic slavery the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society focused their activities on the suppression of slavery in Islamic countries, especially in the Ottoman Empire. Sultan dependency on Britain support against his rebellious governor, Mehmet Ali Paşa of Egypt, created fertile ground for the discussions on the abolition of slavery that had begun as early 1840 (Toledano 1982: 92).

on the Ottoman Empire for the abolition of slavery led to the 1857 *ferman*[11] banning slave trade on Ottoman possessions in Africa (Toledano 1982: 193–223). The gradual decline of the Tripoli-Bornu route coincided with the blossoming of the Kano-Tripoli trajectory transiting through Ghat and Ghadames. Merchants indeed, diverted their goods on this route taking advantage first of all of its level of safety. Raids and attacks against caravans were sporadic events to such an extent that even small convoys of few people could cross the route in safety (Boahen, 1962: 352). Tuareg communities exploited their desert knowledge in order to operate as security providers for caravans on the move. Indeed, unlike the Bornu-Tripoli route were Tuaregs and Tebus competed for establishing as main security providers (resulting in more frequent raids against the caravans), the Tripoli-Kano route was under net Tuareg control. From Tripoli to Iferwan *Adjer* Tuareg were accountable for caravans' safety in addition to provide animals for the transport of merchandise and people. Once in Iferwan, caravans were under the responsibility of *Kel Ewey* Tuareg guiding the convoy until Kano (Passon *et al.*, 2020: 50). The abovementioned privileged relation with the Tuareg community in addition to a widespread presence of *Adamusawa* branches resulted into a factual Ghadames' merchants monopoly over the Kano-Tripoli route (Baier 1980: 58).

The Ottoman administration capitalized on this reconfiguration by imposing hard taxation over Ghadames' inhabitants (taxes were imposed upon family trusts, adult males, wealthiest families and capitals) who until 1843 enjoyed a relative level of autonomy (Haarmann 1998: 44).

However, if the Tripoli-Kano route benefitted from an elevated degree of stability this was made possible because of some important political transformations occurring further south. In 1804 Shehu Ousman Dan Fodio founded the Caliphate of Sokoto (northern Nigeria) following the successful *jihad*[12] against Hausaland emirates. Under the rule of Ousman

[11] Decree issued by a sovereign in an Islamic State.

[12] The Jihad of Shehu Ousman Dan Fodio resulted in the introduction of the *Sharī'ah* as a law and the complete Islamization of Hausa society. Indeed, before the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate, the Hausa population consisted of Muslims, pagans and what in the Hausa language were called *mukhalliṭūn* (syncretists) who combined the observance of Islam with pagan rituals. The latter formed the bulk of the ruling class of the Hausa emirates that were subverted militarily, paving the way for the Islamic reform of Hausa society (Sulaiman 2008: 17).

and later of his son Bello Dan Fodio, the Sokoto Caliphate achieved a high degree of stability resting on the flourishing of its main cities' economies (Sokoto of course, but especially Kano where the progressive growing of the manufacturing industry ensured local economy fortune) profoundly tied with the trans-Saharan trade (Lovejoy, 1978). One of the effects of the Jihad of Ousman Dan Fodio was mass migration from Hausa kingdoms relocating elsewhere[13]. This population was probably syncretists and pagans escaping from Shehu Ousman Dan Fodio reforming plan. This migratory wave resulted in the establishing of former Hausa communities in the Damergu area controlled by Tuaregs. Another explanation to this resettlement may be the surplus of slaves produced by the Jihad sold to the Tuareg elite exerting control over the Damergu (Baier: 1980). Sokoto prominence determined first the progressive dismantlement of Bornu-Kanem as the most influent political subject of the region and then its fall contributing to redirect the trade from Bornu to the Tripoli-Kano axe (Boahen, 1962: 352). Bornu's collapse was also propitiated by satellite cities' upheaval which took advantage from Bornu crisis to gain independence (including the kingdom of Damagaram with its capital Zinder, northern Niger). Since this dependence bond entailed the payment of a tribute to Bornu, this break-away deepened Bornu's economic crisis. The end of Bornu led to the concentration of the central Saharan trade on the route connecting Kano to Tripoli via Zinder, Agadez and the Ghat oasis.

2.4: On Regional Connectivity

Division of labour can be tracked back to the formation of cultural groups. Their relations posit along a line designing different degree of dependence and subordination which are pillar of the regional socio-political framework.

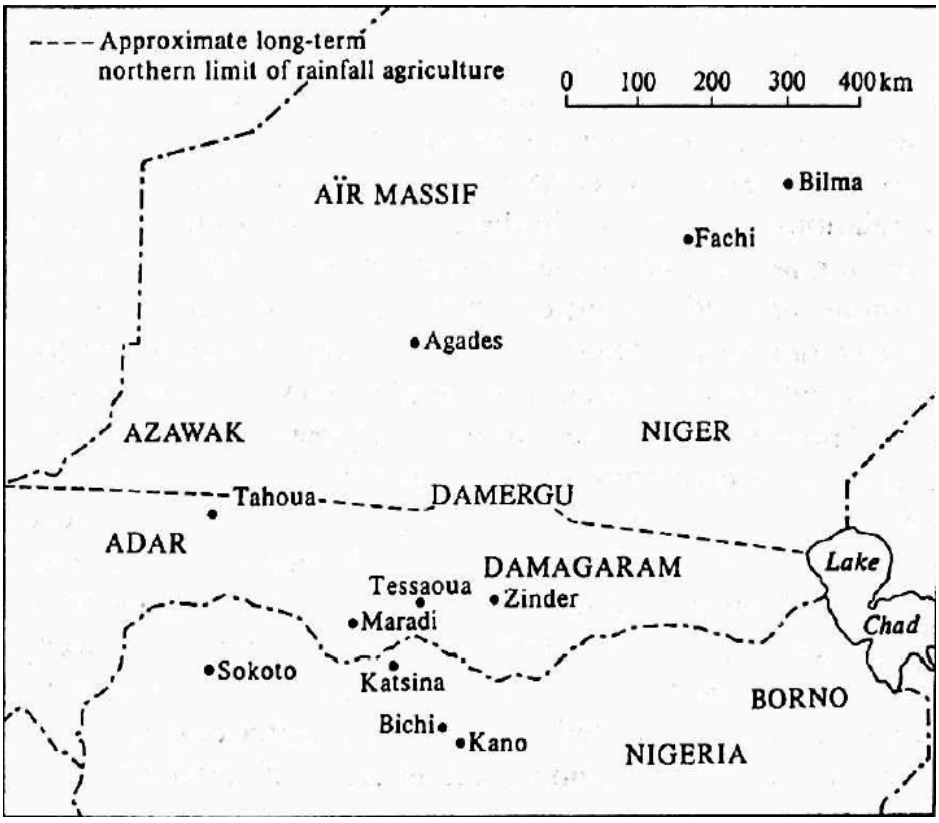
Transhumance in the Sahel/Sahara is the most common form of herding, at least it was during the 19th century. Lack of perennial grazing forced

[13] In addition to the migration of the population to form new settlements, there was in some cases the displacement of entire emirates who moved their territory to areas safer from the action of the Sokoto Caliphate. An example of this was the Emirate of Katsina, which moved further north from the savannah area into the Sahelian zone and took the name of Maradi.

herdsmen to move in order to find available lands of pasture for their cattle. In the central Sahara area, this activity was being carried out by Tuareg population. However, herders' mobility patterns underpinned a regime of mutual interdependence with sedentary population. Tuaregs military supremacy[14] allowed to exert control over vast areas of the Sahelian/Saharan region and over sedentary population. The latter used to pay a tribute to Tuaregs in forms of grain in change of protection (Baier 1980: 19). This was not the only way employed by Tuaregs in order to collect resources. Tuareg's aristocracy used to own estates scattered along the Sahel and the Savannah[15]. In these estates, the harvest (normally millet) collected by slaves constituted a precious living-resource for herders conducting transhumance not merely as food but also as commodity employed for trading along the route (Baier 1980: 27). In fact, Tuareg trajectories used to follow consolidated patterns in which herding was complemented by other commercial activities.

[14] Warfare must be viewed as a social pillar underpinning Tuareg society fostering domination over the territory. Tuareg society is subdivided into autonomous socio-political organizations commonly referred to as confederations. These confederations were led by a war chief (*amenokal*) appointed by an assembly of notable families (Grégoire 2010: 23).

[15] Tuareg society is based on a very hierarchical structure that nevertheless has a certain flexibility: at the apex is the aristocracy (in Tamaschek *amajer*), which controls trade and resources and holds military power, and the *inslimen*, or Muslim clerics. Immediately below are employees, craftsmen and blacksmiths the *imrad*. Finally, there are the *iklan*, the slaves. These accompanied their master or lived in the estates paying tribute to the master in millet or harvest. Slaves who followed their master were in fact part of the family and were integrated into Tuareg society. However, as slaves they were given the hardest and most exhausting tasks.



Map 2. 19th century Niger/Northern Nigeria areas of interest. Source: Baier, 1980: 13

During rainy season[16] Tuaregs used to leave the Sahelian stripe after collecting grain and millet to reach the Aïr massif, an area rich in vegetation for grazing. At the end of the rainy season, they would reach the Kawar region. Here, transiting across the cities of Bilma and Fachi they exchanged their grain for salt and dates. All these commodities (salt, dates and animals) were sold on their way back to the south (Knut 1982). At the meantime they continued grazing their cattle across the Sahel which offered few pastures during dry season. This pattern followed a cyclical cadence which could be disrupted in case of droughts. For this reason, herding was complemented by other activities providing subsistence in case of unforeseeable events. Firstly, Tuareg aristocracy could rise their tribute over both their dominion as well as their estates. Secondly, another complementary activity consisted in escorting trans-Saharan caravans across the desert as mentioned earlier (Prange 2006: 231). In this way

[16] However, Tuaregs have a much more detailed nomenclature of seasons: *Akasa* (rainy season from June to September), *Rarat* (intermediary season from October to mid-November), *Tagrest* (refreshing season from mid-November to mid-March) and *Welen* (dry season from mid-March to June) (Bernus 1966: 7).

Tuareg used to make profit from desert knowledge as well as from the control exerted over lands and populations. Indeed, Tuaregs used providing for trans-Saharan caravan camels and armed security, in addition of course to safe passages across the desert.

Stretching from contemporary northeastern Niger into western Chad is the Ténéré desert (which in Tamashek means literally *desert*). This area serves as a geographical border of 400,000 square kilometres dividing Tuareg zone of influence from the Tebu[17] controlled area. These last are another relevant seminomadic population inhabiting the Sahelian/Saharan region. Although coming from further south, between the area north of Lake Chad and south of the Tibesti massif, the Tebu initially controlled the salt and dates trade from the Kawar region to Bornu. Gradually, this trade came under Tuaregs' dominion, as they took over during 19th century, in concomitance with the collapse of Bornu[18] (Lovejoy 1984: 109). The Tebu also managed providing their livelihood offering protection to caravans transiting throughout territories they controlled[19].

2.5: Value of Regional Market: Perspectives from Slavery Abolition

Lovejoy (1984: 109) asserts that trade taking place within the region, i.e. goods produced and intended for local consumption, were crucial for maintaining regional order and livelihood. From this point of view, he states relevant importance of regional market when compared to the external one[20] (means the trans-Saharan trade). Indeed, for Lovejoy this assumption stems from the existence of two distinct economies, dissimilar for modes and features: on the one hand of course the trans-Saharan trade, on the other the so-called *desert side economy* (which refers to pattern of

[17] Tebu or Toubou is a term of the Kanuri language which means 'the man who lives in Tibesti' (Kohl 2014: 426).

[18] As Tuareg used to trade salt with the cities of the Sokoto Caliphate, the fall of Bornu resulted in a sort of Tuareg monopoly over salt (Lovejoy 1984: 109).

[19] During the 19th century the Kawar Sultan and Tebu Chief *Mayna* Adam were directly commissioned by the Turks to protect the caravans transiting through the Kawar in exchange for gifts and monthly compensation (Saied 1996: 77).

[20] Although based on inference Lovejoy asserts that salt trade in the Sahel/Sahara exceeded the trans-Saharan trade which amounted at £60,000 per year (Lovejoy 1984: 106).

local connectivity, as previously mentioned). However, this apparently sharp division underlies a more nuanced perspective. Indeed, one may assert that although dissimilar these two economies shared elements establishing meaningful continuity lines. Therefore, some clarifications are noteworthy.

For what concerns the impact on local population, we may corroborate a major importance to the *desert-side economy* for a number of reasons. First of all, goods circulating through the trans-Saharan trade were for the most part luxury goods. This means that mass consumption of these goods was exempted at least on the Sahelian/Saharan soil. Unlike *desert-side economy* goods whose circulation aimed social reproduction, trans-Saharan trade first aim was capital accumulation for profit and investment. It is true that a certain range of products could reach a wide market as well (mirrors, needles, knives and hardware were used by the popular strata) (Baier 1980: 43). However, the selling of luxury commodities represented a convenient strategy also for trans-Saharan traders. In fact, the more goods they sold on the West-African market, the more merchandise they could export northwards. Since luxury market was more profitable, it allowed for major acquisition on the local market. Secondly, taxation applied on import and export on departure/transit and destination markets, made luxury goods more viable since taxation was often applied on the carried amount of commodities[21].

Another aspect which is crucial in order to compare the two economies is observing the effects of the slavery crisis since the first half of the 19th century. Until the 1860s slavery was the most valuable trade. Some estimates suggest that two-thirds of the goods exported north in transit through central Sahara were slaves (Mahadi 1992: 11). Slaves used to come from three different areas: Bornu, Hausaland (composed of the emirates of Zazzau, Kazaure, Kano, Katsina, contemporary north Nigeria),

[21] It is no coincidence that this tax increase imposed by Tripoli Pacha Karamanli Yusuf from 1820 onwards resulted in a revolt in the provinces of Fezzan by Arab families (above all the Awlad Suleyman) who traded in consumer goods such as dates and millet. The revolt brought greater autonomy to the Awlad Suleyman who, however, saw it fade away in 1832 after Sultan Mahmud II ordered the re-establishment of Istanbul's administrative control over the regions of Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and Fezzan, which until then had been governed under the semi-independent Karamanli dynasty from 1711 thanks to the dismissing of Istanbul governor by Karamanli Ahmed Pacha (Minawi 2016: 23-27).

Waday (contemporary Sudan). It is legitimate to assert that slavery was a common practice in the region at the time. In Hausaland for example some estimates reported that about a third if not half of the population were slaves, giving rise to a veritable *farm-slavery* system (Robinson: 1896)[22]. The decline of this trade led to a reconfiguration of the political balance in the region as already seen with the collapse of the Bornu-Kanem Kingdom, and the rise of the Sokoto Caliphate.

This political restaging resulted also into a market transformation that affected the region from many perspectives. In addition to the progressive migration of caravans from the Bornu-Tripoli to the Kano-Tripoli route, slavery abolition resulted in the increase of trade in goods other than slavery[23]. It is very interesting observing how in some cases this event resulted into a reorganization of labour. Indeed, the procurement of slaves was carried out by local authorities counting upon a military organization. In other words, one may affirm that slaves-raiding was an economic activity of large scale which could be carried on by 'firms' (local aristocracies) in possess of wide-ranging means of productions (armies). In West Africa coastal side the end of slavery resulted into progressive break-up of local authorities and the emerging of a small-scale economy[24]. On the other hand, in the Sahel in some cases we witnessed the foundation of another framework encompassing new forms of social organization. Ostrich feathers were one of the goods (if not the most) encountering a

[22] However, it is important to point out that the neo-classical definition of slavery, a concept inspired by the Greeks and later by Romans, is far removed from what is found in Hausa societies. In fact, we have chosen to translate the institution of the *bawa* as slave, even though the role, value and rights enjoyed by the *bayi* in Hausa society were different from the classical conception of slavery. Slaves received a plot of land from their master, the revenues generated from the sale of agricultural products remained with the slave. With these proceeds, the slave could redeem his freedom by paying his master a sum usually equivalent to twice its value. Once free, the slave no longer had any bond of dependence on the master (Hill 1976: 398–401)

[23] Until 1850 the total volume of exports from Tripoli amounted to approximately £ 40,000. Of these, the value from the sale of slaves occupied about three quarters of the total. After 1860 the value produced by other commodities began to be more relevant. Estimates suggest that the value of imports remained unchanged despite the sharp decline in the sale of slaves. This suggests that, except for significant fluctuations in the value of certain goods, the export quantity of these goods had increased. Lovejoy taking into account the estimates of the British consular reports from Tripoli and Richardson's (1854) observations.

[24] Baier (1980: 40) referring to West-Africa coastal areas after the end of slavery claims "*Anyone, no matter how humble in status, could gather palm product for sale or cultivate trees, and large producers did not enjoy an advantage because of the lack of increasing returns to scale*".

dramatic growth after the end of slavery[25]. This value growth encouraged local population to organize ostrich hunting on a large scale. In a very simplistic way: the engagement of more people meant the catch of more ostriches. This gives an example on how an ecosystem specialization has paved the way for the foundation of a very basic form of large-scale economy[26]. For what concerns transformations on the political-authority level outlined by the end of slavery this resulted in multifarious circumstances designing manifold configurations.

2.6: Agadez: The Crossroads of Trans-Saharan Trade

The date of foundation of the city of Agadez is a very controversial subject. The sources estimate a range varying from the 920 CE (Abadie, 2010: 156) to the 1400 (Hunwick, 1976: 282). Since some oral sources estimate the foundation between 1415 and 1440 (Lhote et. al, 1985: 229) this period may be the most plausible. Hamani (2006: 161) designates the 15th century as a key period for the city and unofficially the moment of its foundation. Indeed, it's over this period that Tuareg confederations establish their sultanate in the city of Agadez, on behalf of the Sultan Yusuf[27] (Hamani 2006: 162). However, even before the Sultanate foundation we are sure the

[25] Between 19th and 20th century ostrich feathers came to be one of the most requested decoration utilized in the fashion of the time. However, the value of the feathers was flexible since it was reliant on fashion taste mutability. This was an issue concerning the most part of goods traded on the central trans-Saharan route: as luxury goods they were exposed to a certain degree of volatility. Indeed, part of the reasons of the end of the central trans-Saharan route was the collapse of the demand for certain goods on western markets, due to a generalized bourgeois change of taste. For more on the trade of ostrich feathers on the trans-Saharan route see Stein (2008: 84-112).

[26] Another example of the establishment of a large-scale economy in West-Africa is the textile industry developed in the city of Kano during 19th century. This industry represented a constant factor for years contributing to the status of Kano as one of the most important market of the West-Africa and the terminal of the central trans-Saharan route. For more on the textile industry in Kano and on the city during 18th century see Mahadi (1983).

[27] The history of the foundation of the Agadez Sultanate has been recently reexamined by Rossi (2016). Historiography of the Aïr and Ader has so far used the translation of the Arabic manuscript 'The Agadez Chronicle' (text LVII published by H.R. Palmer in 1928 5 and text B published by Yves Urvoy in 1934) as main text to interpret the history of the city from its foundation. Rossi claims that in 1907 the manuscript was altered in order to legitimate the consolidation of Lissawan's authority (a Tuareg federation) supporting French occupation of the Aïr, at the detriment of the Iwellemmeden and Kel Denneg groups which were fighting against French intervention. In the modified version the role of the Lissawa appears decisive for the foundation of the Sultanate unlike the original version.

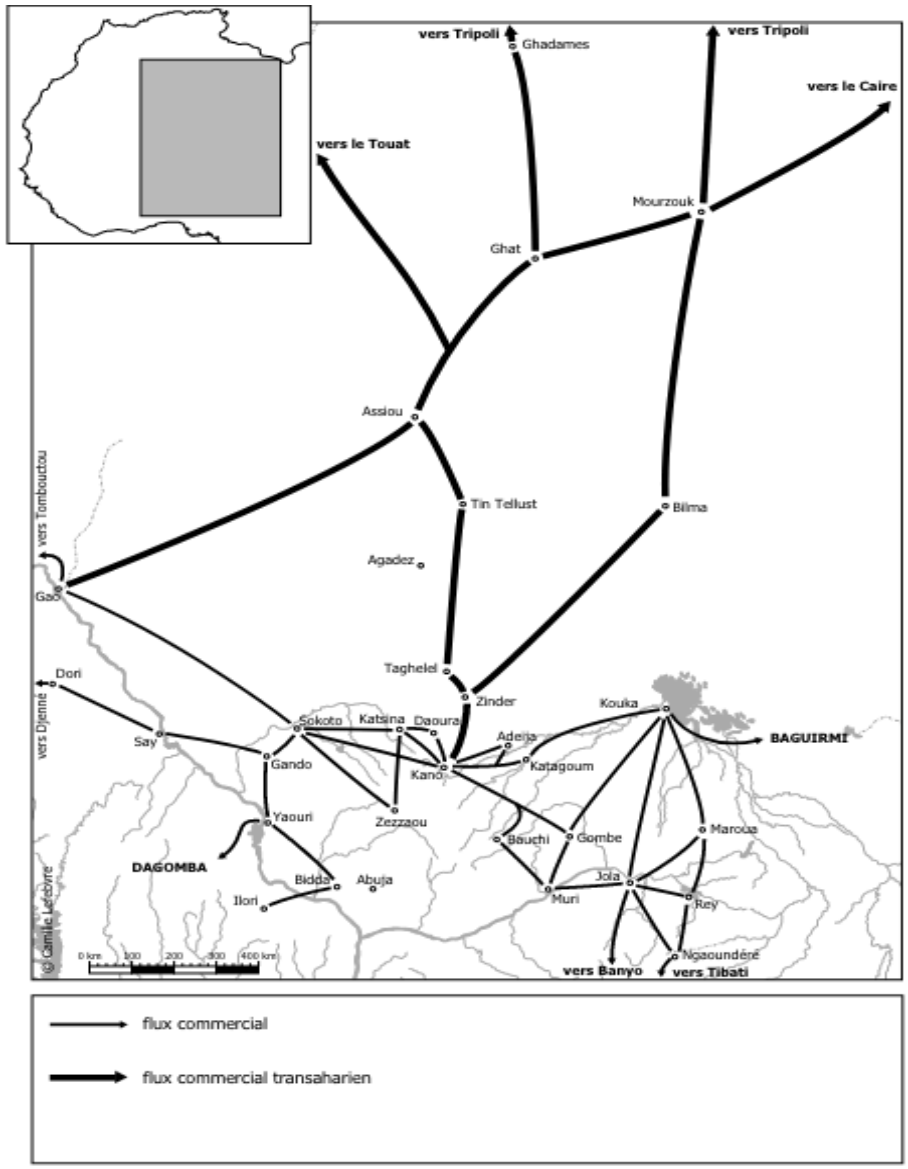
city was already existing. As Hamani (2006: 162) states the city was a little independent urban center known as a crucial hub of the trans-Sahara route, and as a rich local market especially bestowed to the production and sell of dyes and indigo. Agadez lies at the carrefour between the Arab world in the north and what was the Hausa zone of influence in the south which was gaining momentum during 15th century. For this reason, the city emerged as a political, economic and religious hub. The emergence of the Kano-Tripoli route gave Agadez further importance, and goes without saying that the city benefitted from this circumstance.

However, even before the rise in importance of the Kano-Tripoli route Agadez had already developed a standing status as transit point. The so-called 'golden-route' departing from Gao (contemporary Republic of Mali, at that time capital of the Songhai Empire) towards Egypt and transiting precisely through Agadez, was of vital importance for the city (Stebbing, 1935: 514). This route met its peak during 16th century, shortly thereafter the collapse of the Songhai Empire (1591) and the progressive expansion of the trans-Atlantic route led to its finale. However, the prominence of Agadez for this trans-Saharan route is attested by the huge tribute of 150,000 ducats the Sultan of Agadez handed to the King of Songhay as a return for the passage of caravans originating from Gao (Adamou, 2007: 12-13).

The taxation on the transiting of caravans and merchandise was one of the main means for the Sultanate. The manuscript *The Agadez Chronicle* reports that a system of taxation on caravans was existing since the establishment of the Sultanate. However, since a copy of the manuscript (as already mentioned) was produced in order to legitimate local authority before French colonial presence, one must take it with a grain of salt. There is no doubt instead that during the 19th century a system of taxation on the transit of merchandise throughout the Air was already existing. On 8th February 1877 the German explorer Erwin von Bary arrives to Iferuan from the Fezzan following a *Kel Ewey* caravan. Here he met an official of the Sultan (*oukil*), charged of collecting tribute from people on the move (Lefebvre, 2015: 94). At this stage the caravans payed a tribute for the value of the number of camels composing the caravan, while the *oukil* informed caravanners on merchandise prices on the market of Kano and Agadez (Lefebvre, 2015: 95).

The intercurrent *liaison* between Agadez and Kano was the result of the privileged relation between the Agadez Sultanate and the Sokoto Caliphate. As mentioned above, the restaging of political balance occurred with the expansion of the Sokoto Caliphate entailed a realignment of power ratio among regional political authorities. Against this backdrop, the Sultanate pledged allegiance (without losing its formal independence) to Sokoto and took part directly to the Caliphate military campaign (Lefebvre 2015: 144). This form of political bond (a kind of 'autonomous vassalage' we might say) was very common in the framework of precolonial states in West Africa[28]. Indeed, the expansion of Ousman Dan Fodio's Jihad had already stretched northwards and eastwards advancing in the Adrar region and as far as the territories once controlled by the Bornu state. In order to avoid losing its sovereignty the Sultan endorsed the Jihad to maintain its privileges as a key hub for trans-Saharan commerce (Hamani, 2006: 360).

[28] This authority ratio merging allegiance and independence was so common during pre-colonial West Africa that Lefebvre (2021) claims that at the arrival of French occupation armies in the Sahel, local authorities accepted colonial control supposing to guard independence in exchange of tributes.



Map 3. Commercial flows at the end of the XIX century. Source: Lefebvre, 2015: 147

Indeed, during a meeting occurred at Sifawa (northern Nigeria) between Muhammed Bello (Ousman Dan Fodio's son) and the Sultan Muhammad Ghuma, the latter agreed to improve its effort in controlling the route transiting through Agadez from the raids of the *Kel Geres* (Hamani, 2006: 360). This case explains very well the logics on interdependence that are very distinctive of the Saharan/Sahelian relations leading across time to number of negotiations and diplomacy interventions. Although Mohamed Bello relied on military hegemony[29], he knew that alone he may not be

[29] At its height the Sokoto Caliphate included over 30 Emirates which were expected to send military contingents (*maddad*) to aid campaigns undertaken by the Caliph (Sa'ad, 1974: 216).

able to assure route safety. This is why he needs Sultan's support. The Sultan is the only personality which may guarantee safety along commercial routes and intervention when necessary. Lack of knowledge of the desert coupled with a lack of legitimacy over a segment of population forces the Caliph to back the Sultan. Here as claimed by McDougall (2012: 76) the Sahara emerges as a set of overlapping and interdependent places entangling in a solid relation ecosystem, politics and communities. Here, once again appears evident that only cooperation between political entities exerting legitimacy over different environments/communities may guarantee political stability for the whole region. For what concern the Sultanate the logic encompassing its sovereignty does not refer to the capacity of exerting control over a territory. Rather it refers to the authority he expresses over a segment of (nomad) population. In the Sahara the control of the territory is in itself impossible due to its extension and volatility. The only way to control a variable and vast territory such as this is thus aiming to control individuals and relations crossing its lines. When compared to Eurocentric concepts of territoriality (and of territorial control), the paradigm emerging in the Sahara/Sahel evidences essential dissimilarities. We will come back later on this topic.

However, when German explorer Heinrich Barth entered the walls of Agadez in 1850 he finds a state of affairs far different from the magnificence of the past:

> *« L'aspect actuel de l'ensemble d'Agadez est celui d'une ville abandonnée. Partout on y retrouve les vestiges d'une splendeur évanouie. Au centre même de la ville, les maisons sont pour la plupart des ruines, et des mosquées autrefois nombreuses, il n'en reste que fort peu. Bon nombre de ses habitants auraient émigré vers les pays haoussa. Le rôle économique de la ville avait grandement diminué »* (Barth 1965 : 319)

Starting during the first half of the 19th century Tuareg confederations onset a fratricide conflict for the control of the Aïr and of the Agadez region. Against this backdrop the *Kel Ferwan* underwent a strenuous conflict against other Tuareg groups (*Kel Away*; *Ikaskazan*; *Kel Fade* and

Iwellemeden) which eventually led to the occupation of the area around Agadez by these latter. Far from encouraging commercial relations and hostile to both the Sultan as well as to Agadez inhabitants, *Kel Ferwan* rule caused the progressive collapse of the city once known as a key transit point for commercial relations. On the one hand this was due to the insecurity level which augmented around the city because of raids targeting the caravans (Hamani, 2006: 384-385). At the same time, *Kel Ferwan* pillages pointed against the same Agadez inhabitants, causing a mass migration towards Hausa emirates in the south. Is the same Barth that claims once in Agadez that population was reduced from 70,000 to 5,000 units (Leroy-Beaulieu, 1902).

During the second half of the 19th century the Kingdom of Damagaram was gaining momentum as already mentioned. Thus, an increasingly considerable number of Tuaregs (especially Kel Ewey) started gravitating around Zinder (Damagaram capital) during the dry season aiming to capitalize on this emergent market[30]. Former westernmost province of Bornu, this Kingdom was established over the 1870s with the occupation of the Muniyo province (until that moment part of Bornu) by the Sultan Tanimu (Lovejoy, 2007: 51). After its foundation Damagaram emerged as a key spot on the Tripoli-Kano route gradually assuming the role of Agadez as transit point, since the city was experiencing great instability[31]. However, Sultan Tanimu's ambitions went beyond that. Zinder was consolidating as an important market with tanned goat skins were as the major commodity exported northwards along the Tripoli-Kano route (Baier, 1980: 55). All these transformations resulted into Damagaram expansionism especially eastwards and southwards with the aim of annexing other trade routes and cutting out potential competitors to trans-Saharan commerce. The appointment of Amadou Babba as Sultan in 1890s coincides with a further escalation of Damagaram's ambitions. In fact, in

[30] One of the most relevant merchants of the city of Agadez during the last decade of the 19th century was precisely a Tuareg descendant named Malam Yaro. His status was so relevant since he worked out a system of credit delegation which enabled merchants to sell commodities in Zinder in exchange of a credit-letter allowing goods purchase in Kano, where Malam Yaro's half-brother set up a branch) (Lovejoy & Baier, 1975: 567).

[31] Besides the political causes during 19th century the city of Agadez was hit by several natural calamities: three plague epidemics over 1849-1850, 1852-1853 and 1889-1990 and the smallpox during 1877 (Hamani, 2006: 385).

addition to Bornu's Kingdom crisis occurred after war-lord Rabih[32] succeeded in occupying the capital Kukawa, even the Caliphate of Sokoto finds itself experiencing a moment of emergency due to the succession of Kano Emirate. The latter in fact had detached itself from the Caliphate of Sokoto becoming itself a caliphate, following a civil war that saw the fronts of the two successors opposing each other after Emir Mohamed Bello's (not to be confused with the son of Ousman Dan Fodio) death (Lovejoy & Philips, 1993: 78). Sultan Amadou tried to take advantage of this moment of instability in Kano waging war against the city. In the Sultan plot, Zinder would have replaced Kano as the terminal of the trans-Saharan route and therefore also as the largest market of the entire Sahel (Lefebvre, 2021: ch.1). Thus, since the conflict aimed to renovate regional commercial balances, during the initial stage the skirmishes were of commercial nature. While Sultan Adamou tried to impose the mandatory passage of caravans directed southwards throughout Zinder, the Emir of Kano Aliyu forbade to all caravans originating from Zinder to cross city's walls (Lefebvre, 2021: ch.1). This episode triggered Sultan Amadou's military attack against Kano. However, despite an initial success (with the occupation of the city of Malikawa, Kano's allied), Kano's soldiers succeeded in defeating Zinder army in the battle of Guezawa, eventually preventing city's military occupation (Lefebvre, 2021: ch.1).

The 19th century represents a period of great transformations in the Saharan/Sahelian region. Over the years political authorities and power relations have essentially alternated because of two elements: on the one hand, a reforming trajectory promoted by the *jihad* of the Sokoto Caliphate encouraging a reforming vision of society inspired by a model of justice and administration marked by imperative differences with non-canonical Islam models. Caliphate's expansion establishes new geopolitical balance as well as a deep transformation of regional authorities and local society. On the other hand, efforts and conflicts unfolding and revolving around the conquest, protection and consolidation over commercial routes represent the second pillar underpinning regional socioeconomic

[32] Rabih was a former soldier originating from contemporary South-Sudan which became a war-lord during the 1890s under the Khedivate of Egypt. With its army he moved from Sudan to the Lake-Chad basin where eventually he conquered Bornu State. For more on Rabih see Mohammed (2006).

framework. Attracting commercial flows and providing security protection for traders represent a key development opportunity for pre-colonial kingdoms. This from different points of view. Certainly, it allowed growth in terms of economic wealth and prestige, but also the opportunity of importing weapons or developing their own military industry[33]. Warfare is in many cases pointed to the conquest of trade routes controlled by competing realms, a method which allows at the same time to consolidate one's finances and weaken those of the enemy.

2.7: Colonial Ambitions in the Sahara/Sahel: France, Britain, and the Strategic Importance of Niger

However, Sahelian and Sahara kingdoms were not the only political entities recognising the importance of these connectivity paths. Colonial powers gathered in Berlin between 1884 and 1885 agreed to the division of African territories progressively incorporated into the European sphere of influence through commercial concessions and policies of imperialist expansion. The European states taking control of the region (France and Great Britain) of the Sahara/Sahel were first of all attracted by the opportunity of controlling mobility with the aim of extracting political and economic profit. In this context, the borders of the Caliphate of Sokoto were chosen as the dividing line between French possessions (the territories located north of the Caliphate coinciding with contemporary Republic of Niger) and those of the British Empire in the south. Indeed, after a long negotiation France and Great Britain signed on the 5th of August 1890 the Franco-British agreements[34], through which they determined the repartition of the central Sudan territories based on an imaginary line connecting the city of Say (on the Niger River) to the city of Barruwa (on Lake Chad)[35] (Kanya-Forstner, 1969: 628). On the 20th of

[33] Damagaram Sultan Tanimu for example organized its own weapons caravans from Egypt and Tripoli in order to circumvent the European ban preventing the sell of firearms to West African kingdoms. For this reason, the Damagaram also developed its own army industry. However, the number of weapons locally produced were low when compared to imported muskets from the north (Baier 1980: 45).

[34] In its provisions the treaty stated France's recognition of British protectorate over Zanzibar. Great Britain, from its own side, recognized French protectorate of Madagascar and French rights over a sphere of influence stretching south of her Mediterranean possessions as far as the Say-Barruwa line (Kanya-Forstner, 1969: 628).

[35] This division was actually very controversial. In fact, according to articles 34 and 35 of the Berlin Conference, European states could claim possession of an African territory

December 1900 a decree signed by the Afrique Occidentale Française (AOF)[36] General Governor inaugurated the establishment of the Niger military territory (Lefebvre, 2015: 223).

This particular denomination sheds lights on the very nature of France's aims in Niger which were limited in the first place to affirm control over a vast area in order to prevent western competitors' (Ottoman Empire and Italy[37] in the north and Great Britain in the south) expansion. Not accidentally Idrissa (1988) has defined French colonial occupation of Niger as a *mal nécessaire*. Indeed, the same French authority acknowledged limited relevance to Niger territory in terms of economic potential. Although the *Eldorado Myth* presenting the Sudan as a land rich of resources animated public opinion in continental France (Tignor, 1970: 1756), Niger reality was far from trivial orientalism. The first expeditions[38] soon showed to colonial administration the limits and the hardship in exploiting Niger lands and resources[39]. This basically for two reasons: on

only if certain precise conditions were met: sovereignty or effective occupation, having sent exploratory missions, having made agreements with local authorities. Neither France nor Great Britain met these requirements. While Britain invoked a form of sovereignty over the territories of Sokoto due to the proximity of the Caliphate to the river areas controlled by the Royal Niger Company, the French authorities for their part invoked the possession of what was called the *moral hinterland*, as it was considered a natural continuation of the Algerian territories.

[36] French colonialism in Africa included a number of territories responding to different administrative units (departments; military territories; federations; protectorates; territories under mandate). The conquest and establishment of the AOF took place under the *IIIe République* between the 1878-1914 and lasted up to 1958 (Kamian, 2007: 47-75). At its peak the AOF was composed by Mauritania, Senegal, French Sudan (Mali after independence), Guinea, Ivory Coast, Niger, Upper Volta (today Burkina Faso), Togo and Dahomey (today Benin).

[37] As a result of the 1911 Italo-Turkish War, the Kingdom of Italy occupied Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and the Fezzan (Medici, 2011: 190-218).

[38] Between 1890 and 1900 France effected six explorative missions: *les missions* Monteil (1890-1892), Toutée (1894-1895), Hourst (1895-1896), Cazemajou (1897-1898), Saharienne Foureau-Lamy (1898-1900) and *Afrique centrale* (1898-1900). France had limited knowledge of contemporary Niger since after the 1880 Flatters expedition (resulting in the massacre of all the 39 members of the mission after a Tuareg raid), France ceased its explorative activity towards central Sudan. For this reason, over the decade 1890-90 France explorative missions aimed at the same time to the recognition as well as to the occupation of Niger territory in order to delimit the perimeter of an unknown area and obtain informations on the local environment (Lefebvre, 2015). For more on the Flatters expedition see Cust (1884).

[39] Captain Monteil directing an explorative mission from St. Louis (Senegal) to the Lake Chad between 1890-92 affirmed after his arrival: "*Ce fameux Lac Tchad, savez-vous ce que c'est: un amas d'eau qui couvre d'immenses superficies, une vaste mare qui ne reçoit qu'un cours d'eau, le Chari. Le contingent des pluies est minime et le Lac est appelé, semble-t-il, à se dessechér. Á Kouka, ses berges sont couvertes de roseaux qui en rendent*

the one hand local production limited to foodstuffs (millet and cattle) reached a total amount of just a few tons. This paucity inhibited exportations as well as preventing the realization of any form of remarkable capitalization on the large scale (Idrissa, 1988: 598). Moreover, exporting commodities from Niger towards metropolitan France had huge costs of transport due to the significant distance separating Nigerien cities from the St. Louis port in Senegal (Idrissa, 1988: 599). This last represented a significant issue since colonial rentability was deepened intertwined with the capability of extracting value from extraversion. Another problem affecting French colonial administration was the momentum gained in Niger by British products as a consequence of the progressive involvement of the area former Sokoto Caliphate in the trans-Atlantic economy[40] (Swindell, 1984: 4). French tried to discourage this habit by implementing taxation on the imports of foreign commodities. However, this did not solve the problem of British commodities on Nigerien soil. Nigerien communities living nearby – or better to say across – the border in fact, moved across the frontier in order to capitalize on the most convenient taxation system. The struggle in register populations through a census made these regulations relatively ineffective.

The emergence of foreign products was influenced by the progressive isolation of the Niger territory due to trans-Saharan trade crisis. As abovementioned, during precolonial era Niger economic order rested on a system of environmental interdependence coupled with long-range commercial relations embodied by the trans-Saharan trade. However, both northward and southward extraversion – which followed historical connectivity paths – were considered by colonial administration unfruitful or unfeasible. Indeed, trans-Saharan trade presented some structural weaknesses for France from multiple points of view. Trans-Saharan connectivity paths as known until 19th century unfolded along a south-north axe. At the moment of France occupation, origin/destination

l'accès impossible; il n'a rien de beau, allez, le Tchad, il est terriblement banal, sans couleur, comme tout le pays du reste […]" (de Tessieres, 1972: 392).

[40] Hausa communities scattered on both sides of the Say-Barruwa succeeded in circumvent the border and operating in both markets (trans-Atlantic and trans-Saharan) according to convenience. However, the development of kola trading directed towards the Atlantic coast encouraged Hausa communities to take part resolutely to this commerce. For more on kola trade in former Sokoto Caliphate territory see Lovejoy (1980).

terminals both in the north and in the south were ruled by western competing authorities (namely the Ottoman Empire, Great Britain and Italy from 1911).

Solution could stem from negotiation among the parts. However, lack of dialogue among the parts prevented all forms of potential understanding or mutual aid. Of course, France was reluctant in undertaking any kind of cooperation with neighbouring authorities (Idrissa: 1988: 485). Indeed, it is fair to say that colonialism expansion happened in a context of strong competition among colonial powers not just in Africa but rather globally. Not surprisingly worldwide tensions among western powers led to World War I inception in a short time and one may say that geopolitical issues opposing France to Italy (part of the Triple Alliance) disallowed negotiation for the promotion of trans-Saharan trade (Idrissa: 1988: 486). Here emerges how geopolitical factors in a contest of global concurrence defined both colonialism evolution and western powers' choices. Indeed, geopolitical apprehension underpinned France opening phase in Niger. Although presenting limited economic opportunity, throughout the establishment of a military territory in Niger France ensured the control over a vast territory with a unique strategic position. As mentioned above Niger situates at the *carrefour* with neighbouring regions, symbolizing a quintessential connectivity area. The Niger River entangles the Sahelian region directly to the Atlantic coast, while in the north the Sahara constitutes the natural corridor towards the Maghreb and the Mediterranean. In the east, the area bordering with Chad represents the physical door to the Mashriq and Central Africa. In other words, considering a global state of affairs imposing mutual circumspection, by extending its control over Niger France gained strategic advantage in case of military escalation (Grégoire, 2010: 24). The imbalance leaning in favor of the military factor despite poor economic opportunity embodies the *mal nécessaire* stated by Idrissa.

Despite the military dimension that underpinned French agenda in Niger, colonial administration tried to restage Niger economy. However, this represented ~~a~~an hard task to accomplish requiring eminent social engineering intervention. In the first place, commercial interventions aimed to open more profitable trajectories in order to bond Niger to France

colonial economic system. It is fair to say that the attempts made did not led to desired effects.

Due to abovementioned bounds – i.e. hardship in connecting Niger market to the trans-Atlantic economy coupled with obstructions on traditional trans-Sahara routes – new commercial paths must rely on new routes. This represented a radical cut to secular connectivity paths, potentially hiding many pitfalls. To this aim, colonial administration tried in the first place to stimulate trading towards Tombouctou via the Niger river. At the same time colonial administration ambitions were to establish a new trans-Saharan commercial route connecting Niger to Algeria and Tunisia. Although during the 1910s and 1920s Niger's commercial ties with Tombouctou and Gao gained value, the same could not be said for the trans-Saharan trace.

Symbolically, the project of a trans-Saharan railway embodied the ambition of establishing a direct line connecting metropolitan France to Africa Atlantic coasts throughout the Mediterranean and the Sahara[41]. Indeed, as abovementioned, primary France aspirations in Niger aimed to set up territorial continuity across its African dominion. Besides allowing a rapid environmental modernization – thereby fitting with extreme accuracy the civilising canon of colonialism – this project eventually allowed capitalization of a key transit area. However, from the very beginning these ambitious plans collided with sobering reality. During the first explorative phase already, the environment evidenced manifest adversity *vis-à-vis* European presence. The abovementioned 1880 Flatters expedition, charged of verifying the potential viability of the trans-Sahara railway construction, culminated with the killing and death of all the European members of the crew[42]. Meanwhile, as Niger territory revealed its economic limits, the initial enthusiasm for the project gradually

[41] Over the years numerous trans-Saharan railway projects succeeded. Idrissa (1988) mentions at least two: the Algiers-Ouidah via Agadez line (conceived by engineer Amédée Sebillot) and the Oran-Niger line, 100,000 francs cost estimated (Idrissa, 1988: 66-69).

[42] In January 1880 Colonel Flatters already undertook a first explorative mission from Algeria southward. However, due to logistical difficulties, conflict between French and local guides and after meeting the opposition – although non-violent – of Kel Ajjer Tuareg, Flatters decided to interrupt the mission. The infamous second Flatters expedition departed Ouargla (Algeria) in December 1880, and tragically ended after an armed attack by the Ahaggar Touareg. For more on the Flatters expeditions see Strachan (2011).

vanished. Part of the public opinion and colonialism's supporting lobbies found the operation a huge waste of capital in exchange of poor economical returns in the short time[43]. Due to these ominous predictions in the persevering attempt of enhancing regional connectivity another project came to light: the *trans-Africain voie de transit international*, 9950 kilometres line relying Algiers to Oback (Djibouti) transiting through Agadez. However, because of huge costs (5 billions francs) the project never saw its achievement.

The starting of WWI and the consequent diversion of resources and efforts to fund war economy resulted in minor France interest in supporting project's realization[44]. Although discussions around trans-Sahara railway took place until the 1940s, it is fair to say that after WWI France fascination *vis-à-vis* the project almost completely faded.

One of the main problems occurred during the phase of exploration, was the hardship in ensuring security over the desert as attested by the Flatters expedition. This depended on a number of reasons. French military forces were insufficient for patrolling such a vast area, especially in the northern regions. Soldiers were few and the portion of land to control very extended (220 men for 200.000 square kilometers). As a consequence, the hardship met by French in controlling desert area resulted in a more repressive attitude towards semi-nomad population. The gap between the urgency of stabilizing and delimit the space on the one hand, and the need of leaving unaltered paths of local mobility on the other, soon resulted into violent clashes and escalation of authoritarianism.

Against this backdrop, colonial geography played a huge role in inspiring order implementation. French perceived the Saharan/Sahelian space as a territory to civilize according to notions of order and modernization. From

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[43] Publicist Paul Leroy-Beaulieu (1910: 93-94) editor of *L'Économiste Français* (weekly journal campaigning for French expansionist movement) declared «*Quant au chemin de fer transsaharien, son intérêt économique nous parait très discutable. La pauvreté du pays traverse suffit à décourager à l'avance toute entreprise de transports. Sans doute, il y a quelques gisements de sel du coté de Tombouctou, peut-être le Sahara recèle-t-il des mines ? Ce sont là des richesses hypothétiques qu'une prospection même sommaire n'a pas encore confirmées. Malgré l'opinion d'économistes éminents […] qui demandent deux transsahariennes, allant l'un des oasis du Touat à Tombouctou, l'autre du Sud-Constantinois à Zinder et au Tchad, nous estimons que le trafic transsaharien serait insuffisant, que les dépenses d'exploitation seraient plus élevées que les recettes*».

[44] Between 1913 and 1923 the line Cotonou-Savé (294 kilometers was the only sole railway realized in the AOF (Idrissa, 1988: 70).

this perspective colonial geography pushed French colonialism to frame local population as an entity sharply divided between sedentary and nomads. This framework disregarded reality observable on the field eliminating all forms of nuanced approach in the attempt of imposing colonial laws and social remodeling. Indeed, this perspective underestimates how Sahel/Sahara region relied on a system of socio-economic interdependence among sedentary communities and population on the move. With the aim of optimizing territory/population control, colonial administration attempted to cut regional collective and reproductive life by framing populations in specific categories neglecting all social forms going beyond this restrictive scheme.

However administrative delimitation was not an easy task since colonial administration dealt with a number of factors complicating the issues. In the first place, French authority must undergo the complex task of determining which administrative unit was responsible for the control of certain areas/populations. While for cities, villages and sedentary population this was relatively easy, things got a lot more complex for what concerned semi-nomad population. This was particularly delicate in northern Niger for a twofold reason. First, because this area was inhabited for the most part by the Touareg community prone to mobilize and settle independently from logics of administrative repartition. Secondly, this region laid at the intersection with other French controlled areas (made exception for the northern frontier with the Ottoman/Italian occupation) posing an administrative problem in terms of authority responsibility. In other words, it was difficult for French deciding which was the authority in charge of ruling – for what concern both control, grazing rights and tax collection – over a population moving across the border. The 1909 Niamey Convention establishing the border between Algeria and the Niger territory attempted to give answers to these issues. Besides determining a geographic border, the Convention consecrated a section on provisions

regulating semi-nomad communities' repartition[45]. Based on censuses[46] taking into account the geographical extent and the grazing zones of each clan, French tried to determine a zone of origin for Tuareg groups, in the attempt of 'fixing' semi-nomad population for administrative ends. The resizing and reformulation of the right to mobility posed problems both for colonial administrations and – of course – for Tuaregs. Although border crossing between Niger and Algeria was not forbidden, complying to convention provisions supposed Tuaregs to alter traditional paths of mobility or adding new practices to long-established habits. On the other hands, also colonial administration had its problems related to exerting authority over groups locating often out of their area of concern[47]. These issues resulted in a number of concrete limitations which it goes without saying affected Tuareg mobility.

Tuareg population demonstrated their dissent towards French presence especially in north Niger. This resulted in raids targeting French operations and in multiple Tuareg rebellions[48]. Indeed, in addiction to abovementioned mobility limitations also Tuareg commercial sphere was

[45] *"[…] la Convention se proposait de partager précisément entre les deux colonies les tribus Kel Ahaggar vivant du côté de l'AOF, à proximité de la frontière. En Aïr, les Ikerromoien, les Isoukenaten, les Teghe-n-Efis, les Iklam-n-Taousit, les Kel Arefsa, les Iralemen ayant émigré de l'Ahaggar depuis longtemps furent reconnus comme ressortissants du Territoire militaire du Niger. En revanche, il fut décidé que les fractions Ibottenaten et Irregenaten, nomadisant dans l'Adagh, relèveraient de l'Algérie."* (Camel, 1997: 130).

[46] After the military defeat suffered by the Kel-Ahaggar they submitted to French signing the *In Salah* peace agreement in 1904. In that occasion Moussa Ag Amastan, Kel-Ahaggar *amenokal* (meaning chief in Tamasheq) was demanded to declare to French the complete list of groups, subgroups and camps under its authority. That list formed the *aire administrative Kel-Ahaggar* while Moussa Ag Amastan was appointed as head of the administrative unit (Lefèbvre, 2015: 253).

[47] The case of the Taïtoq and Kel Ghela (two Kel-Ahaggar subgroups) was a case in point. Although administratively depending from Algeria they spent most of the time in the *Cercle d'Agadez*. In its annual report the *commandant de Cercle d'Agadez* expressed its concern about the issue *"Ces gens ne sont pas de mon ressort bien que stationnés en permanence dans le cercle d'Agadez. C'est une anomalie des plus bizarres que de voir un chef avec ses campements constamment sur un .territoire et dépendant d'un autre, ce qui amène les autorités administratives du Nord à intervenir pour l'administration sur 'un territoire du Sud tout comme si nous en étions incapables. Cette situation peut cesser par accord des autorités supérieures"* (Camel, 1997: 132).

[48] First Tuareg resistances (after the Flatters expedition) took place over 1900 when French faced the Tengueregueded and the Lagomaten on the right bank of the Niger river. Then French found the opposition of the Ouilliminden Kel Ataram and Kel Dinnik over 1903. The most important Tuareg rebellions during colonialism are those of Kel-Attaram lead by the *amenokal* Fihroun (1912) and the revolt lead by the historical figure of the Ikazkazan leader Kaocen in 1916. On these two rebellions see Fuglestad (1973).

profoundly undermined. On the one hand classical trans-Saharan route representing a vital resource for Tuareg, was progressively took down. To this must be added a very hard tributes imposition – normally paid in camels – that endangered Tuaregs livelihood[49]. One must take into account that camels levy became so massive that Tuareg salt trade from the Kawar could not be conducted over 1913-1914 because of lack of camels. Increasing levels of socio-economic insecurity led to Tuareg revolts repressed with extreme determination by French forces.

2.8: Conclusions

In this chapter, we have explored how connectivity serves as the *raison d'être* for the region. Places and actors exist because they are connected to other spaces and subjects located elsewhere, spanning the Sahelian/Saharan region and extending to the far reaches of the trans-Saharan routes. Within this context, the city of Agadez historically emerges as a crucial crossroad, acting as a connecting link between authorities and economies in a setting of mutual interdependence. It is due to this pronounced level of connectivity that the French occupation, starting from the late nineteenth century, attempted to control the territories of Niger to consolidate its dominion on the continent. However, the underlying logic of the French administration and its efforts to connect territories by reversing historical connectivity trajectories proved to be inadequate and inefficient in achieving the desired goal.

The intersection of historical trajectories and the needs of external forces outside the local context will be the recurring theme that shapes a significant portion of the country's recent international politics.

[49] In 1913 in order to persue the conquest of Tibesti (northern region of contemporary Tchad) French requisitioned 23,000 camels from Tuareg completely compromising their economy (Deycard, 2011: 87)

CHAPTER III: MANUFACTURING MOBILITY REGIMES IN NIGER

3.1: Introduction

In West Africa, as everywhere, mobility exists as a key financial strategy. Indeed, the whole region is crossed by a vast network entangling places and trajectories of multifarious shapes. This dense web connecting individuals, communities and places unfolds according to a variety of factors. As we saw in the previous chapter traditional patterns as transhumance and seasonal harvests find their roots in historical patterns. Some others instead, more recent, emerged as a consequence of new economic opportunities related to modernization. Some stretch along wide distances. Others cover shorter spaces. They are short or long term. Some developed as a consequence to economic opportunities stemming from the establishment of national borders. In many cases these patterns may walk on parallel tracks. In others, people on the move may change destination or journey's length depending on unexpected circumstances. This gives rise to a patchy and unpredictable cartography where old and new patterns cross each other, move away from each other, vanish temporarily to reappear somewhere else.

This to say that the task of framing and distinguish with extreme precision distances, lengths destinations of mobility patterns crossing the Sahelian region is far from being an easy one.

By the same token it is fair to say that for history – both the ancient as well as the more recent - and position Niger is a country where all these patterns are detectable, producing an interesting and rich socioeconomic patchwork. Internal mobility is a widespread phenomenon as well as the entrance on the Nigerien territory of neighbor countries' nationals. Some of these follow the orbit of circular migration. Others, coming from West Africa region, they transit through Niger in order to heading north in Algeria or Libya. Here we may refer to this kind of mobility as 'transit migration'[50] as labelled over the recent years by the international

[50] The use of this term is still very debated. I will critical analyze how this term has been framed, used, and the misconceptions to which it gave rise, in the next pages.

community. It goes without saying this class of mobility is the one concerning European authorities more than others. Indeed, with a creative imaginative effort, this mobility trajectory has been framed by the very same European authority as a linear path having for final destination European southern shores. In other words, in the European perspective all the people transiting through Niger heading northwards north are framed as potential irregular migrants crossing the Mediterranean-Sea.

It is against this background that since 2015, Niger has progressively entered the international framework of migration control which over the years have involved European neighbor countries in the effort of reducing irregular migration towards Europe.

These forms of partnerships between Europe and so-named by the bureaucratic dictionary *third countries*, are shaped in multifarious way. Western partners provide knowledge and materials in order to improve third-countries performance in border management and irregular migration control. These partnerships include a number of task and range from multifarious purposes: capacity building training to enhance border management; supply of technologic equipment to improve both territory as well as mobility control; establishment of a judiciary chain in order to protect migrants and pursue supposed traffickers; provide financial funds in order to mitigate the negative impacts of migration – as well as of migration control – in order to revitalize local development. To date Niger has been the recipient of an articulated framework including in short, all the instruments mentioned above. Mobility regulation and border enforcement have more recently entered among Niger concerns, becoming at least at a discursive and narrative level, pivotal priority goals.

The capacity of regulating and exerting control over mobility flows across the country entails of course an effort in reducing border fragility. From this perspective, borders in Niger, as in the whole Sahel/Sahara pose a prominent challenge. Borders porosity have historically been a distinctive feature for this country. Niger is a vast territory of 1.267.000 km2. Three quarters of its land is desert or semidesert. Against this framework, state presence along its borders has always been poor and scattered. The few resources were used in order to develop strategic areas almost never coinciding with state periphery. This sense of marginalization and lack of resources has led over the years to several rebellions and inter-community

conflicts. More recently jihadist movements have capitalized over chronic fragility of Sahelian borders' communities in order to gain ground against post-colonial states' orders. From this point of view, Niger is not an exception.

Started after the 09/11 attacks *Global War on Terror* pursued by Western countries established and diffused the paradigm become famous as the *terrorism-migration nexus*. Against this framework, the latter is perceived as a potential vehicle for the former if security is not managed and implemented according to standardized patterns of borders and mobility policing. This approach framing terrorism as a transnational threat has progressively widened worldwide, with the result of involving non-Western states in an increasingly accentuated way. Therefore, Global South states are framed as threats' incubators due to their endemic state fragility and lack of economic opportunities. However, if during the early stage terrorism threat seemed striking mostly Western countries, the progressive scattering of jihadist branches in some Global South states, has often resulted in a re-configuration of these countries involvement in the security global framework. In this regard, the Sahelian region is a case in point. In the aftermath of the 2011 NATO operations against Gaddafi's regime the Sahelian/Saharan region was invested by the spread of arms, violence, mass displacement and migration. Since the starting of the Mali War in 2011 the insecurity spillover incorporated neighbor countries resulting in the creation of a plethora of projects, frameworks, missions and acronyms in partnership with European (and to a lesser extent American) institutions with the aim of eradicate insecurity root causes.

Niger contribution for the (re)establishment of national as well as Sahelian security has become over the years a top priority for Niamey government. The fight against jihadism and irregular migration has marked government formal alignment to the international security framework. For this reason, in order to unpack Niger involvement in the international framework on migration it is important to frame various aspects contributing to the current state of affairs.

In order to grasp all these elements this chapter will highlight contemporary trajectories in West Africa. Secondly, particular attention is dedicated to the emergence of Gaddafi's Libya as a key-actor in the migration framework both from a regional as well as on the international

scale. This focus on Libya emerges as an essential element considering the role that migration from Niger has played in building a border-crossing regionalism with evident repercussion on contemporary migration of West-Africa nationals towards Libya. This perspective will have as background the complex ramification of Niger politics since after colonial times, especially for what concerns the role that the northern region of Agadez has played: from being an issue for the post-colonial order to the transformation into a recipient of measures of irregular migration contention.

3.2: Contemporary Mobility in West-Africa

Considering Africa as a continent 'always been on the move' (De Brujin et. Al, 2001:9), migration in the West Africa has constantly been a key factor outlining socioeconomic regional balances. However, over the years there have been continuity and discontinuity patterns producing significant political consequences both on the local as well on the international scale. Colonialism, of course, had crucial impact on West Africa migration. If in pre-colonial times migration responded to subsistence needs of population looking for food and security, colonial introduction of wage labor resulted into salary-led migration (Mitchell, 2012: p. 270). The economies developing around mines, plantations and cities operated as pull-factor for people stemming from less productive and arid zones of the region. These areas were for the most part located around the coasts profiting of better weather conditions for plantation economy and enhanced maritime connectivity. Mobility as a consequence to wage labor was a trait of both colonial and post-colonial economies, as the latter follow the same economic patterns of the former. Also, mobility trajectories followed basically the same paths. On the international scales people from landlocked areas (especially from Burkina-Faso; Mali and Niger) moved to the growing economies of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. However, a new migration path consisted in seasonal workers coming from coast countries (Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria) travelling from plantations within the coastal zone (Findley et Al., 1995). Intra-national migration featured the same traits (mobility from landlocked areas to the coast), except for those

trajectories directed to just sorted landlocked city capitals as Yamoussoukro and Abuja.

According to alternating phases Ghana (plantation economy), Nigeria (oil/industrialized economy) and Côte d'Ivoire (plantation economy) have emerged as net immigration countries. However, as a consequence to market's trends migration waves were often followed by mass expulsions as governments used migration as a scapegoat for economic crisis. From the 1960s, first Ghana and then Nigeria carried-out mass migrants' expulsions[51] (Van Hear, 2005). Côte d'Ivoire remained the only regional migration pole. However, the 1993 economic turmoil followed by the military coups of 1999 and 2002 and the outbreak of the civil war in 2002 resulted in Côte d'Ivoire strong nationalism. This led to massive waves of xenophobia forcing hundreds of thousands of migrants, predominantly Burkinabe, to leave the country (Kress, 2006).

This progressive drop in regional migration destinations pushed for finding new alternatives. During the first half of the 90s West Africa experienced the first waves of migration heading out of consolidated intra-regional paths of migration. On the one hand the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa functioned as pull factor attracting significant number of unskilled West Africa labor to the Pretoria's dynamic economy (Adepoju, 2004). On the other hand, in the north, the discovery of oil reserves in Algeria and in Libya especially, attracted number of West Africa migrants to the north. Redistribution of resources hailing from oil economy allowed Libya exponential growth. West African workforce installed in the southern cities of the Fezzan dealing mostly with unskilled labor such as gardening, construction sector and oil industry's satellite activities. In the first place this flow of migration was composed mostly by Sahelian population, among which Nigerien migrants represented about the half (approximately 20,000 individuals) (Grégoire, 2004: 175). Young Tuaregs from the northern region of Agadez were predominant as a consequence of droughts (1974 and 1984) which halved their livestock[52]. Moreover, the establishment of the Libyan Islamic Legion – a military force composed

[51] In the aftermath of the 1969 economic crisis Ghanaian government enacted the Aliens Compliance Order resulting in the expulsion of an estimated 155,000 to 213,000 West African migrants. As a consequence to the post-1981 decrease in oil price, in 1985 Nigeria expelled an estimated two millions West Africans migrants.

by foreigner fighters employed by Gaddafi especially during the Chadian war – operated as a pull-factor for an impoverished and marginalized Tuareg's youth (Grégoire, 2004: 175).

In order to grasp connectivity regimes as well contemporary mobility paths emerged around the Libya-Niger border one must accord particular attention to several elements: the establishment and expansion of Libya as a new political and economic subject in the sub-region; the varying in the course of time of Libya's positioning *vis-à-vis* migration; the political relations between Niger and Libya and finally the set of an informal regime of trade and mobility entailing communities from southern Libya and northern Niger.

3.3: Migration to Libya

With the oil discovery in 1960s Libyan government enacted a development plan aiming to revitalize a vast and poor territory after years of impoverishing Italian rule. However, lack of active population – about 400,000 people over a total amount of 1,500,000 – coupled with a high illiteracy rate pushed government to turn to migrant workforce which as a consequence witnessed an exponential growth between the 1964 and 1977 (from 17,000 to 400,000 units) (Pliez 2004: 133). Migrants hailed for the most part from neighbor countries as Egypt and Tunisia (which represented the ¾ of the total of migrants) and were most often hired in dynamic sectors such as processing industry and construction (de Haas 2008: 11). Likewise, not of secondary importance was the specialized workforce hailing from Europe and Asia – clasped especially over the 1980s - hired in the oil sector which constituted the remaining quarter of migrant presence (Pliez 2004: 133).

Over the course of Gaddafi's regime migration stood as a key element for regulating several political and socio-economic aspects of the Libyan state. As a rentier state depending on oil economy Libya suffered from the exposition to oil market variations. Considering the low rate of Libyan active population, migration assured Gaddafi a flexible labor force that could be hired over expanding phases and dismissed when the economy registered growth reduction. Indeed, until the 1990s Libya assisted to waves of immigration followed by mass expulsions according to elasticity

of the oil market. This partially explains migrants' expulsions occurred over three decades: 1979,1981,1985,1995,2000 and 2007 (Bensaâd 2012: 85) which coincide with significant shocks of the oil market. The other reason guiding Libya's migration policies was Gaddafi's positioning on the international relations framework. Indeed, hosting and expelling migrants worked as a crucial factor in order to exert pressure *vis-à-vis* neighbor countries. This feature was significant considering Gaddafi's aspirations of emerging as a relevant subject at the regional level and more in general his wish to overturn crystallized post-colonial balances. Gaddafi's politics were characterized by a strong anti-imperialist and Arab-Islamic blueprint positioning Libya as an antagonist to the international status-quo. For example, as a reaction to Tunis convergence with United States sphere of influence, in 1985 Libya expelled 80,000 migrants, of which most Tunisian nationals[53] (Grimaud 1994: 34). Europe will discover just over recent years Gaddafi's capacity of mobilize migration to bond historical asymmetrical power relations. Notwithstanding, this strategy also marked Libya's relations with Sahelian countries and with Niger especially. For this reason, the next section will address how Libya-Niger relations played a crucial role to manufacture contemporary regimes of migration and mobility.

3.4: Niger-Libya Relations

After the end of colonialism Niger-Libya relations were marked by constant tensions. On the one hand Gaddafi tried since his takeover to extend his influence over the Sahelian region under the umbrella of an Arab-Islamic project of confederation of the Saharan territories. On the other, after a first moment marked by a certain degree of acquiescence and collaboration by Nigerien authorities vis-à-vis Libya – especially under

[53] The decline of Libya-Tunisia relations culminated with the 1985 attack of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) headquarters in Hammam Chott, near Tunis, by the Israeli aviation. In the aftermath of the attack Gaddafi pointed the opening of Tunisian President Bourguiba to United States as accountable of the military operation. However, migrants' expulsion responded to a double strategy: on the one hand in 1984 revenues from oil exports decreased from 20 to 8 billion dollars, imposing a low coast labour market restage. On the other, because the high Tunisia unemployment rate in 1985 (attesting at 10%) migrants' expulsion acted as a heavy economic sanction (Burgat 1986: 105).

President Diori's Hamani[54] mandate –, relations saw a standstill following the 1974 establishment of General Seyni Kountché's regime[55]. However, although Niger-Libya relation diverged under these two regimes, it is fair to say that it was characterized by a constant sense of ambiguity which allowed for exchange also over phases of hard tensions – except for the period 1984-1987 which saw an authentic relation shut-down.

Indeed, since Gaddafi's takeover Diori realized that relation with his neighbor would have followed a complex trajectory. Indeed, in 1971 Libyan army occupied fortifications built over French occupation in the Nigerien territory of the Kawar as well as the Toummo wells, placed likewise on the Nigerien soil. Although Libyan occupation deprived Niger territory of about 20,000 square Km, Diori opted for an appeasement strategy avoiding exacerbating relations with Gaddafi[56] (Baulin 1986). Indeed, he voyaged to Tripoli to impede tension's escalation and signed with his Libyan counterpart a *traité d'amitié et de bon voisinage*[57]. Moreover, a Nigerien-Libyan commission for the economic development was established allocating a 3million dollars aid and a 10million dollars loan to fund Niamey development projects (Niamey will never receive this money) (Pliez 2004: 72).

General Seyni Kountché coup d'état in 1974 did not mean immediate deterioration of Niger-Libya relations. Although the issue of the Toummo wells was still actual this did not prevent Kountché to sell Libya significant amount of uranium (1212 tons) among 1979 and 1981 (Grégoire 2010: 41). At the same time the B*anque Arabo-Libyenne-Nigérienne pour le*

[54] Diori Hamani was Niger first President elected in 1960. He was member of the *Parti Progressiste Nigerien* (PPN/RDA), the Nigerien branch of the *Rassemblement Démocratique Africain* a federation of West Africa parties funded by at the time Côte d'Ivoire President Felix Houphouët-Boigny.

[55] After his takeover at the expense of Diori's Presidence a military regime is installed in Niger that will last until Kountché's death in 1987.

[56] Gaddafi legitimated Libya's southward expansion as an attempt of restoring borders enshrined by the treat signed between France and Mussolini extending the territories of Italian-occupied Libya into the French West African Empire. In the aftermath of the fall of the *Axis* states United Nations called treat legitimacy into question suggesting a re-negotiation between France and the independent state of Libya which happened in 1957 (Robinson 2020, ch.10).

[57] Among other provisions this treat foresaw Libyan military intervention in the event of putsch attempt against Diori Hamani (Robinson 1991: 5) . No Libyan military operation followed Kountché's putsch in 1974.

Commerce Extérieur et le Développement (BANILEX) and the *Société Nigéro-Arabe Libyenne de Développement de la Production et de la Commercialisation des Produits Agro-Pastoraux* (SONAL) are established between 1974 and 1981 (Grégoire 1998: 98). However, relations deteriorated with the enlargement of Libya's southern expansionism. Libya military occupation of the Aozou strip in Chad in 1973[58] showed at the same time Gaddafi's territorial ambitions as well as his capacity of strategically capitalizing on foreign conflicts[59] (such as the civil war in Chad)[60] (Buijtenhuijs 1995). This challenged Niger statehood from many perspectives. On the one hand, Libya's southward expansion constituted a potential menace to Niger's northern territorial integrity, already threatened by Libyan expansion in the Kawar. On the other, along the regular army Gaddafi deployed a contingent named Islamic Legion[61] composed, among the others, by Tuareg fighters hailing from Mali and Niger (Ronen, 2013: 250). Presence of Tuareg militias posed a crucial issue for a Nigerien government already worried about growing tensions in the Agadez region.

3.5: The Region of Agadez in 1970s-1980s Niger

In Agadez 1974 and 1984 droughts exacerbated a sentiment of dissatisfaction vis-à-vis the Nigerien state as the pastoral crisis which followed impacted on an already marginalized environment both on the political and on the economic scale.

[58] As for the Toummo wells, Libya occupation of the Azou strip based on the territorial provisions contained in the 1935 treaty between France and Italy (Robinson 2020, ch.10).
[59] Gaddafi offered military and financial support to the *Front de libération nationale du Tchad* (FroLiNaT) in order to weaken Chadian state and securing Libya's presence in northern Chad (Buijtenhuijs, 1995: 218).

[60] Armed rebellions questioning Chadian statehood find their origins soon after Chad independence in 1960 – the FroLiNat started its political activity in the 1966 – and still persist today with the hostilities carried on by the *Front pour l'alternance et la concorde au Tchad* (FACT). Recently clashes between Chadian regular forces and FACT resulted in the death of former Chadian President Idriss Déby Itno (mortally wounded on the battlefront in the Tibesti region on the 20th April 2021). For more on Chad statehood and Chad civil wars see Azevedo (2005), Buijtenhuijs (1987; 2019), Debos (2016).

[61] The Islamic Legion was a Libyan military force established at the beginning of the 1970s bringing together foreigner fighters under the ban of Gaddafi's *Jamahiriya.* The Islamic Legion was deployed in Lebanon (siding the OLP against the occupation forces of the Israeli army) and in Chad (Deycard, 2011: 172).

Reasons behind this state of marginalization are multifarious and lie in the first place on Niger post-colonial framework. First Nigerien ruling elite originated mostly from the western area that is the area corresponding to contemporary region of Tillabery, Dosso and the capital Niamey. The governing party of the PPN/RDA was effectively an expression of this elite composed in large majority by the Zerma/Songhay cultural group[62] (Fuglestad, 1985: 109). This meant that political institutions had their base in the western part of the country although economically, at least over the first decade after independence, Niger balance rested on the trade stemming from the Hausa area in the east (i.e. groundnuts exportation). Nonetheless, aware of the centrifugal forces crossing the country[63], Diori Hamani tried to extend power to the other cultural groups through cooptation and strategic alliances. In 1960 Diori nominated two Tuareg ministers Zodi Ikhia as *ministre délégué à la Présidence de la République* and Mouddour Zakara as *ministre chargé des Affaires Sahariennes et Nomades* (Grégoire, 2010: 34). However, both these ministers hailed from the *cantons sédentaires du sud*, more precisely from the area of Filingué. This mirrored how nomad Tuareg communities residing for the most part in the region of Agadez were to a certain extent excluded from participating in the process of construction of independent Niger. Indeed, this resulted on the first place from the political will of the ruling Zerma/Songhay elite of maintaining southern regions as pillars of independent Niger in continuity with the colonial order. Nigerien government was concerned that post-independent territorial integrity could be undermined by autonomous aspirations that in the north were more than a simple fascination. In 1957, just few years before Niger's independence, French assembly voted for the creation of the *Organisation Commune des Régions Sahariennes* (OCRS) including the Saharan territories of Algeria, French Sudan (today Mali Republic), Niger and Chad. This administrative

[62] Although the Zerma/Songhay are a minority in Niger (they make up about 20% of the total population), they largely benefited from French decision of electing Niamey as the capital of Niger although the most important city during the pre-colonial era was Zinder, capital of the Damagaram Kingdom. This move responded to French strategy of weakening the majority cultural group that are the Hausa (about 60% of Niger population) while at the same time taking advantage from Niamey commercial strategic position on the Niger river. Therefore, the educated Zarma/Songhay elite growing across the years of colonial occupation formed the first ruling class of the country.

re-territorialization followed the discovery of a large number of strategic mining sites scattered all over the region (Boilley, 1993). Therefore, through OCRS creation (that would have led to an independent state in the years immediately after) France foresaw to settle a privileged dialogue with a singular political subject in order to control a regional extractive industry and maximize profits for French energy sector (Boilley, 1993: 218). Indeed, OCRS establishment happened in the outset of independence that African states of the *Union Française* were about to obtain at the beginning of the 1960s. It was therefore a positioning *manœuvre* attempted by France in order to strategically locate its ambitions and capitalize on the incumbent process of de-colonization. This plan found the support of Tuareg elites especially from French Sudan[64] and Niger[65] as they felt post-colonial state would have established southern populations' rule over nomadic communities. However, although the OCRS was established, its activities[66] were below expectations. On the one hand some *Union Française* political leaders – as French Sudan President Modibo Keita who strongly opposed OCRS formation – accused the OCRS of breaching future independent states' territorial integrity. On the other hand, the escalation of violence and tension between Algeria and France following the Algerian independence war erased any chance of Algerian Sahara being part of the OCRS (Keita, 2002: 7).

OCRS failure dissolved Tuareg ambitions for a Tuareg state. Tuareg elites concern of finding their territories attached to a state led by southern

[64] *"Nous avons l'honneur de vous déclarer très sincèrement une fois de plus que nous voulons rester toujours français musulmans avec notre cher statut privé. Nous vous affirmons notre opposition formelle au fait d'être compris dans un système autonome ou fédéraliste d'Afrique Noire ou d'Afrique du Nord. Nos intérêts et nos aspirations ne pourraient dans aucun cas être valablement défendus tant que nous sommes attachés à un territoire représenté forcément et gouverné par une majorité noire dont l'éthique, les intérêts et les aspirations ne sont pas les mêmes que les nôtres. C'est pourquoi nous sollicitons votre haute intervention équitable pour être séparés politiquement et administrativement et le plus tôt possible d'avec le Soudan français pour intégrer notre pays et sa région Boucle de Niger au Sahara français dont nous faisons partie historiquement et ethniquement"* Open letter by the customary chiefs, notables and merchants of the *Boucle du Niger* (Timbuktu, Gao and Goundam), to the Président de la République Française, 30 May 1958, (Boilley, 1993: 225).

[65] El Hadj Alamine, a notable from the *Kel Aïr* group of the Agadez region, wrote to the French Republic President after the establishment of the OCRS: "*Puisque l'indépendance s'annonce, alors nous les Touaregs, nous voulons nous diriger nous-mêmes et rassembler notre société tout entière là où elle se trouve. Nous voulons que notre pays soit un seul pays*".

populations became reality after 1960. In Niger, as already mentioned, President Diori Hamani tried through a moderate cooptation system to involve Tuareg elite but was very careful to keep nomads to a proper distance. However, lack of participation of Tuareg elites to the government cannot be completely ascribed to a Niger's government political strategy. Indeed, another issue which prevented nomad Tuaregs to take part in governmental framework was the lack of political cadres hailing from northern Niger. This depended predominantly on the lack of education among Tuareg aristocracy due to their refusal to partake Western education system. This latter was considered corruptive of Tuareg's traditions and Islamic morality and deemed as means of oppression[67].

Therefore, Niger government considered Agadez region as a peripheric territory with poor strategic importance for the country and little opportunities to initiate a regional involvement in the state framework, at least in the short term.

Nonetheless, an event of crucial importance would occur in the 1960s that will change Niger economy and boost for at least ten years the country's development, that is the discovery in the region of Agadez of uranium sites. However, although resources deriving from uranium exploitation meant at least a formal enhancement of Niger growth, things were far from ensure development increasement on the local level. Indeed, notwithstanding the discovery of uranium deposit in Arlit (240 kilometers northeast of Agadez) resulting in the establishment of the *Société des mines de l'Aïr* (SOMAIR) in 1968, socioeconomic benefits for the Agadez region were meager (Grégoire, 2010: 36). This lack of positive fallouts was locally perceived as an issue considering how Niger (and to a certain extent the capital Niamey) took advantage from uranium economy. Indeed, national budget assisted to a progressive growth from 11,000 millions *francs* CFA (FCFA) in 1971, to 14,000 millions FCFA in 1974, 24,300 millions FCFA in 1976 and 43,400 millions in 1978. This exponential budget increasement originated from the growth of uranium price (from 5,000 FCFA per kilogram in 1971 to 24,500 FCFA in 1980). At the same

[67] For this reason, schools in northern Niger hosted for the most part non-aristocratic Tuareg youth. However, this posed a problem of representation of northern Tuareg at the political level. As hierarchy finds a prominent place in Tuareg society organization, leadership could not be delegated to individuals of non-aristocratic descent.

time uranium extraction grew from 400 tons in 1971 to 4,120 tons in 1980 (Adji, 2000: 7). Oil market's shocks over the 1970s grew uranium appeal as a valuable alternative to oil and gas energy. Uranium revenues helped Niger get out of a hard moment coinciding with the crisis of the groundnut industry (Niger leading economic sector until uranium discovery) affected by the 1974 drought. Moreover, over the 1970s considerable investments targeted the social state resulting in the rise of schools, clinics, and paved roads and highway (Bensaad, 2003: 10). However, these investments targeted notably the south resulting in limited impacts on the region of Agadez. Certainly from 1975 government's funds allocations brought about a minimum of raise in the field of service delivery (example of this is the hospital built in Agadez and the *École des mines de l'Aïr* built in the 1970s), even though Nigerien government targeted especially uranium logistic sector by strengthening the paved way connecting Agadez to Arlit (Pallier, 1984: 185). However, investment fell short in improving nomad populations' life conditions. On the one hand, investments were allocated to the cities especially to the city of Agadez. Even though it is important to state that a significant number of nomadic Tuareg moved to the cities (and notably to Agadez) as a consequence of the 1974 and 1984 droughts, one must consider that this process resulted from a twofold aspect: on the one hand uranium industry ousted pastoralism as a top Niger government concern in the Agadez region causing progressive lack of political attention to pastoralist crisis effects. Secondly, Tuareg workforce potentially employable into uranium sector was cut off from this new rising regional labour market (Grégoire, 2011). In this regard uranium industry hired labour force from the south considered more skilled and competent both for uranium extraction activities and for satellite jobs (construction sector, logistic, security and so on). Goods supply to the uranium sites were provided mostly by Arab traders from Agadez as Arlit locates on the route Agadez-Tamanrasset nearby the border with Algeria (Grégoire & Labazée: 1993). This to say that although uranium had some positive effects for the region of Agadez, it benefited mainly the settled population.

Therefore, consequence of droughts coupled with a lack of uranium economy in absorbing nomad youth labor force resulted in waves of migration hailing from northern Niger towards southern Libya. However,

this trajectory followed already existing trade patterns that were slowly reactivated over the 1960s. These latter worked as a sort of blueprint used by Tuareg youth to gain the north.

3.6: Trade and Migration from Agadez to Libya

Over the 1950s and 1960s trade volumes between Niger and Libya were very low. First of all, this resulted from a logistical issue. Indeed, at that time trucks were not able to pursue the unpaved traditional route of the Ténéré desert relying Agadez to Sabha transiting through Dirkou. Over this period this route was used almost exclusively by traditional camel breeders from the Agadez region heading to Sabha in order to sell their cattle and import small quantities of Libyan goods to Niger (reason why part of the camels was not sold in Sabha but used to carry the merchandise back to Agadez) (Grégoire, 2010). Instead, trucks used to reach Libya through the more 'comfortable' axe transiting through Tamanrasset in Algeria, the Ahaggar mountains, then Djanet and finally entering Ghat in Libya. These were Arab traders from Libya that used to export from Libya pasta, wheat flour, olive oil, mattress and carpets stemming from the Mediterranean coasts (Pliez, 2004: 73). On their way back to Libya traders embarked rams, millet and henné hailing from Nigeria and the Maradi region. Therefore, at the beginning trade on this axe was an Arab Libyan monopoly. However, the route transiting through Algeria was subject to several problems: it took longer (5 days instead of 2 of the Agadez-Dirkou-Sabha route) and exposed the drivers to the *tracasseries* of Algerian Security forces. Moreover, during the 1960s relations between Niger and Algerian governments were at a standpoint as Nigerien President Hamani Diori accused Algerian President Ahmed Ben Bella to support the socialist opposition party SAWABA (Grégoire & Pallerin, 2019: 156). For this reason, Nigerien government tended to frown on traders transiting through Algeria. However, during the 1970s the Agadez-Libya trade was revived primarily by the progress in the domain of motor engineering whereby trucks could deal with the desert routes of the axe Agadez-Dirkou-Sabha. Secondly, as this technical improvement made the trade along this route more appealing, rich Arab families from Agadez bought trucks in Libya in exchange for camels in order to challenge northern monopoly. As already

mentioned, the 1974 and 1984 droughts affecting pastoralism in northern Niger resulted in young Tuareg migration towards Algeria and Libya especially as a consequence of cattle lost. This consisted basically in seasonal or annual migration heading to southern cities of the Fezzan such as Sabha, Ubari and Ghat which migrants joined on boards of the trucks operating along the route Agadez-Dirkou-Sabha (Kohl, 2013: 149). Together with this flow of Tuareg migrants, southern Libya experienced mass Tubu migration hailing from northern Chad. Over the 1980s the Chadian conflict knew Libyan forces' setback. In this regard French-led military operations were crucial for enhancing Chadian forces' resistance (Buijtenhuijs, 1995). However, Libyan occupation had among its priorities to set bonds with local population reason why Tubu from northern Chad immediately obtained Libyan citizenship. When Chadian forces regained part of the north, Tubu felt threatened by the Chadian army and decided to move to southern Libya in the cities of Sabha and Jawf (Koufra) (Pliez, 2000: 169).

Nigerien migrants used to regain northern Niger at the end of the working season and import goods due to Libyan dinar inconvertibility. This activity posed a number of risks in several aspects. On the first place, Libyan alimentary goods – constituting the most part of exported merchandise, together with home appliance and automobile spare part, representing however a marginal share – were a subsidized commodity sold at a low-price at the *souks d'État*, whereby the exportation was forbidden. Secondly, the placing of military forces and custom on the Niger border side – also due to the escalation of tension between Niger and Libya – entailed the payment of importation taxes that most migrants could not – or did not want to – afford (Bensaad, 2012: 89).

For this reason, a large portion of the goods exchanged around the border were essentially contrabanded. This activity renamed locally *afrod* – from the French word *fraude* – emerged as a key activity for the Nigerien Tuareg youth, becoming a crucial resource for the whole region fragilized after years of droughts and famine. These young Tuaregs breaking with the traditional nomad way of life in order to find a job and better life-conditions far from home, emerged as a new subject both on the cultural and on the political stage in northern Niger. They were nicknamed *ishumar* – from the French word *chomage* – which became a sort of status

describing a youth generation living far from home conducting a risky and adventurous way of living along the borders (Kohl, 2013). Their conditions questioned and challenged both the hierarchic order of the Tuareg society and the role of state authority. Not surprisingly they were invested by a sort of aura of myth – they were dedicated songs and poems – which had the effect of inspiring the youth still at home to embark on the same trajectory (Belalimat, 2003). This resulted in a growing number of people reaching both Libya and Algeria, especially after the 1984 second drought. But more in general it resulted in a huge number of young Tuareg grasping the opportunities stemming from the existence of the border (over the 70s and 80s constituted basically of the export of cattle and the import of subsidized goods) in a renewed *régionalisme par le bas*. More in general the modernization of nomadism embodied by the *ishumar*, pushed for the creation of a network of people offering services and satellite activities (from making tea across the desert, food providers, the sale of water-cans to go through the desert and so on) which ensured a minimum margin of economic recovery as well as a substantial enlargement of the web of communities living by the border and the desert (Kohl, 2013: 145). Besides the circulation of merchandises and resources the *ishumar* activated a process of sharing of ideas questioning the conditions of young Tuaregs and of the Tuareg community in general undergoing an uninterrupted process of marginalization which prevented the Agadez region to gain benefit from the new postcolonial order.

If the *ishumar* and their *afrod* activities established Tuareg youth as a socio-economic subject, relations with Libya provided also for military education. Ended with the military defeat of the rebels, the 1964 Tuareg revolt in Mali (named by the insurgent forces *Al-Fellaga*, a North-African Arabic word designating a fighter for independence) resulted in rebels heading to Libya in order to escape from post-war Malian state repression (Lecocq, 2019: 28). Here they formed an informal nationalist organization in exile named *Tanekra* (Uprising). This organization benefited from Gaddafi's support aiming to extend Libyan control over Saharan Africa and Berber populations. *Tanekra*, played a role also in favoring Tuareg migration towards Libya. Indeed, the financial fund used to finance *Al-Fellaga* was reactivated during the 1970s in order to offer economic support to recent-arrived Tuareg migrants (both from Mali and from Niger)

in southern Libya. *Tanekra*'s aim was to create a Tuareg state in the Sahara crossing Mali, Algeria, Niger and Chad and was in this context that in 1980 the Tuaregs organized a conference in the town of Al-Khums in Libya resulting in the formation of the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Arab Central Sahara (PFLACS) (Lecocq, 2019: 29).

It goes without saying that Libya favored and invested on PFLACS formation. Indeed, in the aftermath of its foundation PFLACS was allowed to get military training in Libyan facilities. Consequently, this exacerbated Libyan relations with neighbor countries. Support to Tuareg nationalism was among the causes that brought to Libya-Niger standstill. However, Gaddafi's closure of some military camps in 1981 and the formal retirement of Libyan military support to PFLACS resulted in its dissolution (Olsen & Andersson, 2001). Nevertheless, this did not mean the conclusion of intense relations between Libya and Tuareg military fronts. Part of former members of the PFLACS were invited by Libya to join regular Libyan army and the Islamic Legion as volunteers. Members of the Islamic Legion – about 200 fighters – were deployed in Lebanon supporting the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Once Israeli forces ousted PLO from Beirut in 1982, members of the Islamic Legion moved back to the Sahara (Lecocq & Klute 2019: 30). Most of them where then deployed in Chad fighting alongside Libyan regular forces.

The 1974 coup d'état established a military regime in Niger under the authority of General Seyni Kountché. The military rule resulted in a general exacerbation of Tuareg relation with Niamey. Firstly, Kountché's takeover coincided with both a state militarization and a strong centralization. Concern about Niger centrifugal pushes grew considerably under Kountché's regime and this resulted in a grew of suspicion towards Libya's activities in the Sahara and by extension towards Gaddafi relations with Tuareg population. Kountché opted for the abandon of Diori's formal inclusive strategy *vis-à-vis* Tuareg community in the name of a more repressive approach. This explains the dissolution of the *Ministère des Affaires Sahariennes et Nomades* embodying Kountché's vision of the Tuareg issue. Things got worse when in 1976 Kountché was victim of a coup attempt (Grégoire, 2010: 43). Because of its ethnic composition coup attempt aimed for the first time to overturn the dominion of Djerma/Songhay elite minority in power since the end of colonial regime.

Besides Hausa exponents, the coup plot concealed members of the Tuareg communities: 9 individuals were condemned to death sentence, other 22 were sentenced to life imprisonment[68] (Salifou, 1993: 45).

Behind the increasing suspicion and reinforced control in the Nigerien Sahara, there was Nigerien regime's belief that Libya was an agent of destabilization and the invisible hand behind the coup attempt[69]. The general climate of alert exacerbated when in 1983 a second putsch attempt was neutralized by the regime (Souley, 1990, 49). Although this time there was no direct involvement of Tuareg exponents, it goes without saying that Kountché's regime political stability was anything but ensured. Indeed, in addition to the pastoralist crisis the military junta had to deal with the crisis of uranium market resulting from the growing opposition in Europe to nuclear energy employment.

It is in this frame that on 29 May 1985 according to the official version, an armed group of fourteen people assaulted the *Agence Spéciale* and the post office of Tchin-Tabaraden in the Tahoua Department with the aim of taking possession of the money deposits. During the firefight that followed two *gardes républicaines* lost their life and a *gendarme* was wounded. For the assailants one got killed, one wounded and ten arrested[70]. As the assailants were all Tuareg Nigerien government soon labelled the events as the consequence of the Libyan influence over Tuareg youth (Koré, 2010: 11).

Taking into account the role of Libya in training those who were considered potential Tuareg rebels in addition to the territorial issue at the

[68] A Tuareg named Limam Chaafi, the person suspected of providing weapons to coup perpetrators, was the only person who managed to escape from Nigerien authorities. Immediately after the arrest he took refuge in Libya. For Salifou (1993: 111), Limam Chaafi together with Ahmed Moussa were the persons behind the 1980s Tuareg recruitment in the Islamic Legion in order to structure a future liberation front in Niger.

[69] Over the 1980s other two events got Niger-Libya relations worse: in 1981 the *chef de Cabinet du Ministre de la Défense* Khamed Moussa self-exiled to Libya. His exile allegedly coincided for Nigerien authorities with the disappearance of crucial documents belonging to the ministry. Secondly, in 1982 a ~~a~~ firearm unit composed by 12 individuals (eleven Malian and one Nigerien) were confronted and neutralized by Nigerien Security Forces in Arlit while allegedly committing sabotage activities in the mining area. Nigerien authorities presented operation's members as militants of the Libyan Islamic Legion.

[70] Other sources state that assailants were heading to the *Office de Produits Vivriers du Niger* with the aim of collecting some provisions to distribute to the population affected by drought. According to this version the violent clash which followed was allegedly caused by Security Forces' excessive reaction.

Tummo wells border, all things considered relations between Libya and Niger were now compromised. Although relations between Libya and Niger registered a *de facto* standstill, the only domain where the two states continued to co-operate was the uranium industry. Here tensions did not reduce the volume of exchanges with Libya buying huge amount of uranium from its Nigerien neighbor.

When Seyni Kountché died in 1987 his successor Ali Saibou tried to recover relations with Tuareg communities. The problem of unemployed Tuareg youth was even more actual in the aftermath of Kountché's death after Gaddafi demobilized the Islamic Legion. This meant that a large number of Tuareg, many of them armed, found themselves with low chances of being absorbed into Libyan labor market and were ready to gain northern Niger (Marfaing, 2004: 65). The risks of a rebellion were under government's eyes. For this reason Saibou flew to Libya in 1990 in order to reassure youth Nigerien migrants to return to their homeland were they would have benefited from a reintegration program. Many young Tuaregs reassured by Saibou decided to return to Niger. Meanwhile Saibou's government organized in Tahoua and Agadez sort of immigration centers with the aim of hosting returning Tuareg from Libya and Algeria (Keita, 2002: 10). However, government plans of reabsorbing Tuareg into Nigerien society did not succeed. In the first place this attempt fell short because of the inadequacy of the fund mobilized. This resulted into low rate of Tuareg earning access to the labor market in addition to the pitiful conditions of the immigration centers which contributed to intensify Tuareg sense of marginality (Deycard, 2011: 170). At the same time, Saibou's strategy did not work due to tensions between Nigerien Security Forces deployed in the north and the local population. Indeed, the former accused the latter of organizing military training centers in the desert. This caused mass arrests among Tuareg population accused of attempting to state security[71] (Grégoire, 2010: 66).

It is in this framework that in the night between 6 and 7 May 1990 Tchin-Tabaraden is again scene of crucial events. Armed confrontation between a group of young Tuareg and the Nigerien Security Forces ends up with a

[71] Between March and April 1990 approximately 43 people were arrested in Iferouane (Agadez region). Among these, thirteen were found with weapons.

heavy toll of three deaths and one wounded among the Security Forces and three deaths among the supposed assailants. The facts of Tchin-Tabaraden followed waves of repression (300 arrests) and numerous violent episodes with unprecedent scale in post-colonial Niger[72] (Koré, 2010: 36). Symbolically the facts of Tchin-Tabaraden together with the first attack of the *Front de libération de l'Aïr et de l'Azawak* (FLAA)[73] against the poste administrative of the city of In'gall (region of Agadez) in November 1991 are ascribed as the events starting the Tuareg rebellion in northern Niger.

3.7: Libya International re-Positioning After the Sanctions: a new Framework for Regional Relations

The Tuareg rebellion soon spread in the whole northern Niger: Aïr, Azawak, Tamesna, Damergou, Ader. Rebels capitalized their desert knowledge against Nigerien Army while this latter even though were better equipped was not used to guerrilla confrontation into an unpredictable terrain as the desert. Most part of rebels' attacks targeted military and administrative posts in little localities very hard to reach and defend considering territory extension and the lack of regular routes. Alternatively, rebels ambushed military while on transit from one place to another (Krings, 1995: 26). Regional security witnessed a significant drop. Raids increased significantly not just against stationary targets but also

[72] The facts of Tchin-Tabaraden of course were interpreted in diametrically opposite ways by the government and the Nigerien Tuareg community. According to the official sources a group of armed young Tuareg targeted the *prison civile*; the *sous-préfecture*; the *gendarmerie* and the post office. In the government opinion assailants' aims were testing Nigerien Security Forces' response capacity in view of an extended conflict. According to Mano Dayak – one of the leaders of what would later be the Tuareg rebellion in Niger – instead of being assailants the young Tuareg involved in the facts of Tchin-Tabaraden were unarmed protestors occupying the local *gendarmerie* to demand the liberation of convicted Tuareg prisoners and shedding lights on the conditions suffered by Tuaregs in the governments' camps. From this occupation an altercation would follow concluded with an agent unintentionally self-shooting with the same weapon he pointed against the occupants. Moreover, in his version of the facts Mano Dayak especially makes reference to the retaliations committed by the Nigerien government against Tuareg community. The government reports that after the facts of Tchin-Tabaraden 70 people lost their life subsequent to military and police operations by Nigerien Security Forces. International Organizations stated that more than 600 people lost their life in the aftermath of Tchin-Tabaraden events. For Mano Dayak more than 1,000 individuals – for the most part Tuareg – were executed in all Nigerien territory.

against traders and trucks on the principal commercial itineraries. However, despite this weak security framework mobility trajectories relying northern Niger to neighbor countries continued their course. Important reconfiguration framing Sahara as a crossing space happened in the first part of the 1990s, due to a number of reasons.

In the first place, Gaddafi political re-orientation of Libyan external policies was of crucial importance. The embargo imposed by the United States (1986) followed by the UN embargo (1992 resolution n. 748 and 1993 resolution n°883)[74] reduced drastically Gaddafi international positioning. Embargo sanctions banned flights from and to Libya together with arms sale and purchase (Huliaras 2001: 12). These sanctions, contributed to further isolate Libya especially in light of the fact that the Arab League didn't support Gaddafi's defense against the accusations moved by United States and the United Kingdom. The lack of support from the Arab world was a crucial event. Indeed, until sanctions' application Gaddafi's aim was to emerge as a leader of Pan-Arabism (Kumetat, 2013). However, the end of the Cold War resulted in new balances on the international scale. The fall of the Soviet Union had propitiated an international alignment supporting Western hegemony. Historic Gaddafi's anti-imperialism lost its international resonance and potential sponsors. The lack of support from the Arab League went in this way and sanctions' applications could not but widespread the distance between the Libya and the Arab world. Indeed, air embargo meant the weakening of long-distance relationship, thus in order to support his cause Gaddafi turned to nearer African neighbors. However, if for the Arab World (especially for the emerging economies such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia) the end of the Cold War meant increased support for Western politics, in Africa things were somewhat different. During the East-West confrontation African countries were able to gain total economic and military support by Cold War superpowers by positioning on behalf of United States or Soviet Union. The leverage of African countries evaporated with the end of Cold War resulting into a very marginalized position of Africa in the International System (Brachet et al, 2011). Therefore, some African countries turned to Libya as a strategy to gain bargaining power vis-à-vis the United States in

order to reduce the marginalization of Africa. This reconfiguration was crucial also in view of the recent past of African-Libyan relations considering that in the period prior to sanctions a considerable number of African states aligned themselves against Libya as a reaction to Libyan expansionism and to its role in funding military fronts intended to undermine African states' integrity[75]. This although Gaddafi had over 1970s and 1980s contributed significantly to fund African liberation fronts against colonialism as happened in Angola, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe (Huliaras, 2001: 6). And yet, the withdrawal from Chad of Libyan troops let initially think to the international community that Gaddafi aimed to focus on his relations with the Arab World to the detriment of local insurgencies until then considered as a leverage for widespread Libyan foreign policies. However, in 1998 it became clear Libyan distancing from the Arab World following the refusal of the foreign ministers attending the Arab League meeting in Cairo in September 1998 to lobby internationally against the sanctions imposed to Libya (Huliaras, 2001: 6). It Is against this framework that Gaddafi sentenced 'Arab World is finished' (Huliaras, 2001: 6). Moreover, while the Arab League denied support to the Libyan cause, at the same time the Organization of African Unity (AOU) during the summit held in Burkina Faso in June of the same year expressed support to Gaddafi in order to back up Libya against the embargo (Huliaras, 2001: 6). Rapprochement between Libya and African countries in the first place involved in a logic of proximity neighbor Sahelian countries. This re-configuration made official through the establishment in 1998 of the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CENSAD) gathering Burkina-Faso, Chad, Libya, Mali, Niger and Soudan. This partnership aimed to restore deteriorated economic and political relationship due to the expansionism of Gaddafi. However, it is against this framework that migration formally became for the first-time object of regional political relations. In this sense dialogue around migration anticipated by far CENSAD establishment (Sturman, 2003: 211). Indeed, already in 1990 Libya and Sudan signed a treaty for freedom of circulation (Brachet, 2013: 43). Over time a series of bilateral agreement

[75] Libyan intervention in Chad is a good observation point in order to grasp this phase of Libyan-African relations: during the occupation of the Aouzou strip Libyan forces were confronted by Hissein Habré militias.

between Libya and African states were signed aiming to establish freedom of circulation[76]. However, the establishment of CENSAD crystallized and widened this trend of freedom of circulation taking into account that CENSAD states from 1998 to 2007 passed from 6 to 28[77]. Indeed in 2000 Libya abolished the request for a visa for incoming CENSAD citizens[78] (Brachet, 2011: 99).

Over the 1990s Libya became a full-fledged immigration state. For what concerns Sub-Saharan citizens residing in Libya, their number skyrocketed from 40,000 in 1995 to 1,5 million in 2000 (Perrin, 2005: 8). This number is of considerable importance taking into account that Libyan population in 2000 was about 5 million people and that a relevant number of migrants do not register or do it *a posteriori* after their arrival.

3.8: In Rebellion's Aftermath: new Spatial and Political Configurations in Agadez and in Niger

As the volume of Sub-Saharan migrants heading to Libya exponentially increased at the same time the route connecting Agadez to Libya witnessed a consequential growth. Although the spread of Tuareg rebellion weakened security in the region, Nigerien government acknowledged centrality for the Agadez region to have regular trade and interchanges with northern countries, especially with Libya. Indeed, the government established that vehicles could circulate in the region only with a military escort, reason why the government established that a military convoy left Agadez every Thursday towards Libya (Brachet, 2009: 51). This security adjustment of the government made the route Agadez-Sabha de facto the only safe route connecting West African region with North African countries considering other routes' insecurity. Chadian conflict, especially around the Aouzou

[76] However, most part of these treaty were at that time classified as secret as claimed by Perrin.

[77] CENSAD members states with their date of entry: Benin (2002), Burkina Faso (1998), Cape Verde (2009), Central African Republic (1999), Chad (1998), Comoros (2007), Côte d'Ivoire (2004), Djibouti (2000), Egypt (2001), Eritrea (1999, Gambia (2000), Ghana (2005), Guinea (2007), Guinea-Bissau (2004), Kenya (2007), Liberia (2004), Libya (1998), Mali (1998), Mauritania (2007), Morocco (2001), Niger (1998), Nigeria (2001), São Tomé and Príncipe (2007), Senegal (2000), Sierra Leone (2005) Somalia (2001), Sudan (1998), Togo (2002), Tunisia (2001).

[78] This measure was abolished in 2007.

Strip discouraged embarking on that itinerary. At the same time the route transiting or departing from Mali to Algeria (the route connecting Gao to Tamanrasset transiting through Kidal and Timbuktu) were subjected to banditism and used almost exclusively by Malian migrants (Brachet, 2013: 55). More in general for its very structure (as showed in Figure 4), West African transport axis system saw in Agadez the termination of a grid of roads entangling the coast to the so known 'desert door'. This logistic element contributed to the rise of Agadez as a transit city.

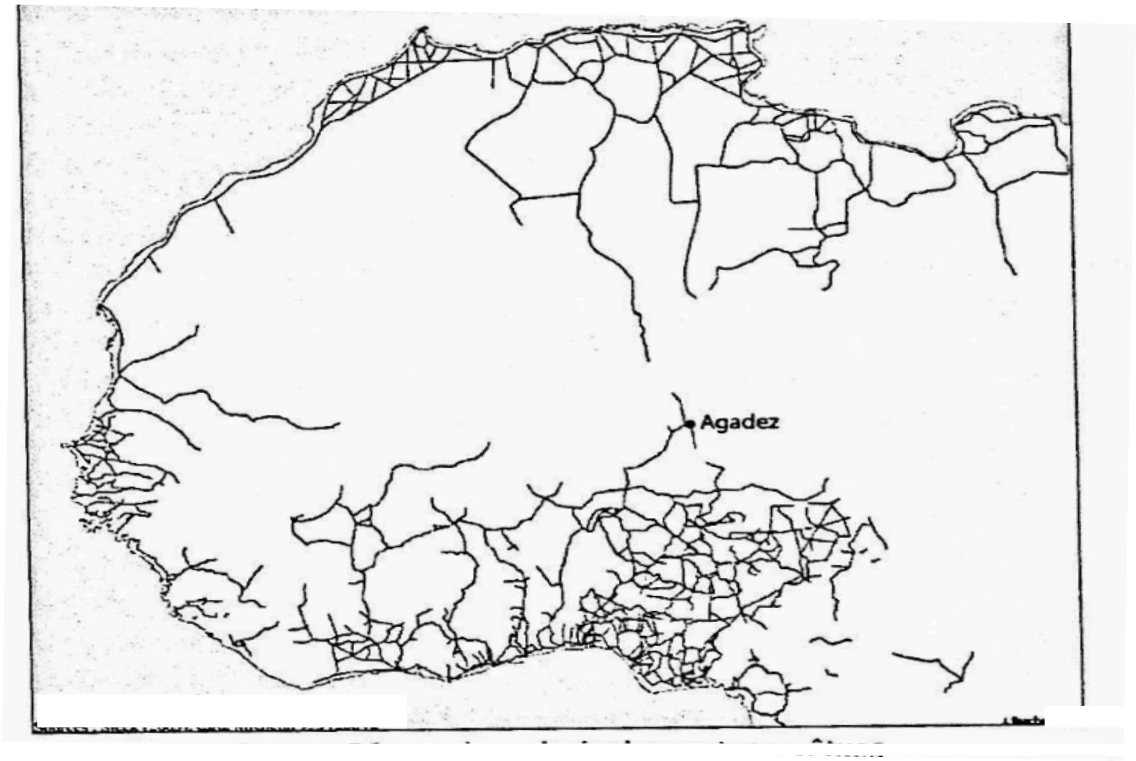


Figure 4. Network of main paved roads in West and North Africa. Source: Brachet, 2013: 35.

Indeed, Agadez finds itself at the crossroad of two important axes relying extensive zones of the West African region. On the one hand Agadez is the terminal of the ancient Trans-Saharan route (as showed in the previous chapter) starting in Kano and transiting through the city of Zinder. Moreover, Agadez is connected to the capital Niamey throughout the route transiting through Tahoua. If the first route is crucial since it connects Agadez to Nigeria – i.e. the most populous country of West Africa with a consistent flow of people on the move heading northward – the other route

links Agadez with the rest of West-Africa – i.e. the other Sahelian landlocked countries (Mali and Burkina-Faso) and the other coastal countries (Figure 5).

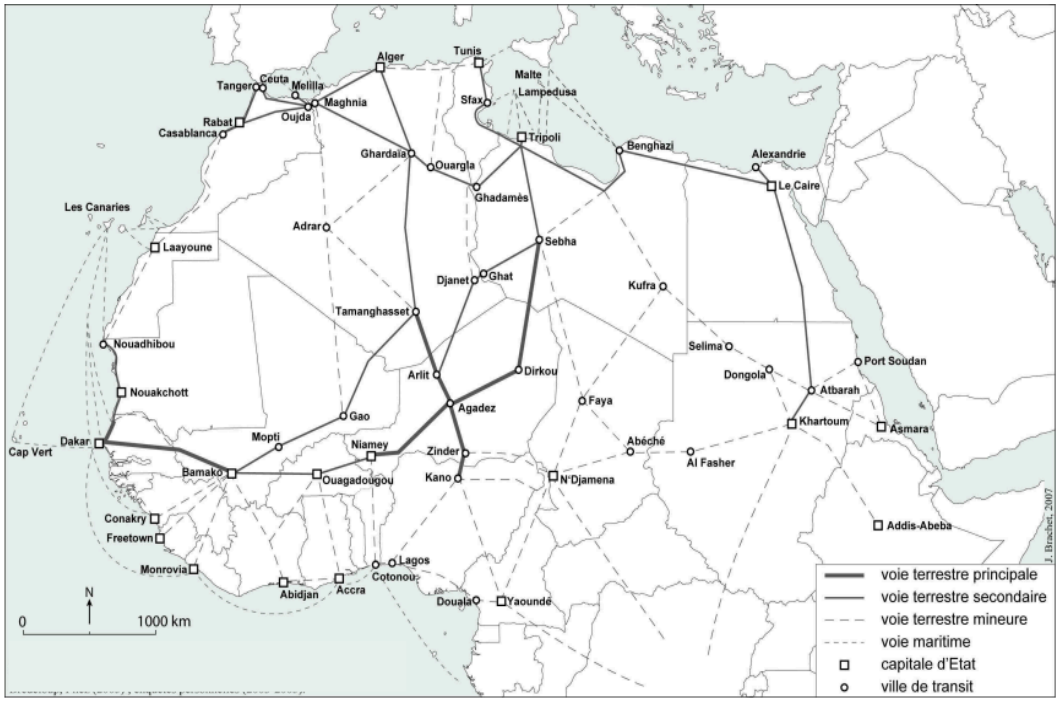


Figure 5: Migration routes across the Sahara. Source: Brachet, 2011, 14.

As it often happens when it comes to migratory patterns the presence of a safe route connecting Agadez to Northern Africa over the 1990s underwent a rapid word of mouth among communities on the move giving to the city a certain degree of popularity which resulted in the rise of people arriving to Agadez with the aim of gaining Northern Africa (Brachet, 2013: 59).

Moreover, Agadez relevance in the migratory framework coincided undoubtedly with the waning of the Tuareg rebellion which gradually started with the first negotiation begun in 1995. This contributed to stabilize the area and provided Agadez with an economic and administrative capacity which made the city a true hub for migration heading northward.

Indeed, a number of crucial events followed one another concerning both the rebellion and the evolution of the national political framework in Niger. First of all, at the beginning of the 1990s after the death of General Seyni Kountché succeeded by Ali Saibou at the presidency, the country witnessed an increasing need for democracy pushed especially by urban

civil society with students and school union representatives at the forefront (Elischer, 2019). Indeed, starting in the 1980s uranium exportations drastic drop determined a heavy economic crisis of the whole Nigerien economy. Uranium brought to government coffers a meagre 7% on the total of the revenues[79] (Adji, 2000: 6). This lack of resources resulted in Niger government signing an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to gain financial assistance. In return Nigerien government committed to the implementation of a Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in order to improve country's economic situation. Measures implemented consisted basically in the reduction of government employees, cut of public expenditure allocated to health and education, decrease of state subsidies, economy privatization and liberalization. However, notwithstanding the introduction of these austerity measures the country experienced exponential growth of its foreign debt which in 1989 amounted to 1,340 million FCFA. Between 1978 and 1990 employment fell by 22,68% (Adji, 2000: 8). Against this framework main opposition to SAP and therefore to Saibou's autocratic government came initially from the *Union des Scolaires Nigériens* (USN) and at a later time from the teachers' union of the *Syndicat national des enseignants du Niger* (SNEN), drastically affected by the cut of the education system. However, after the death of three students shot by Nigerien Security Forces during protests held in Niamey on 9 February 1990, the *Union de Syndicats des Travailleurs du Niger* (USTN) – umbrella union for public sector workers including the SNEN – associated Saibou's regime to SPA implementation[80] (Elischer, 2019, 73). In this framework democracy was held as political objective in order to overcome autocracy and protect public sector from austerity reforms. Therefore, pressure on Saibou's government dramatically increased. As a consequence, early signs of the Tuareg rebellion coupled with endemic economic crisis and social unrest resulted in Saibou resignation, after which he declared the establishment

[79] Up until 1980 uranium exportations constituted 40% of Nigerien revenues bringing in 28,000 million CFA. In 1982 this figure dropped to 6,700 million CFA.

[80] USTN positioning at odds with Saibou's regimes acquires a certain relevance considering that between 1974 and the onset of the democratic transition the USTN was part of the military regime according to the principle of 'responsible participation' underpinning Kountché's scheme of civil society political participation. Therefore, until then the USTN had never opposed the military regime.

in 1991 of a *Conférence Nationale* aimed to define the democratic transition to a multiparty system[81] in Niger (Ibrahim, 1999: 194).

Indeed, it is during this profound political transformation that the first phase of confrontations and parallel negotiations between the Tuareg rebellion and the Nigerien government took place. When the Conference started, the events of Tchin-Tabaradène had already taken place. The Tuareg population's needs of reaching new levels of autonomy was already an evident political issue, and for this reason it was treated as a top priority during the Conference. Tuareg community had indeed some notable representatives at the conference (historical Tuareg representative Mano ag Dayak was the most accredited) and a negotiation among spokesmen of Tuareg interests and the Transitional government took place (Keita: 2000: 19). If at the beginning the Tuareg front, especially the rank and files, posed as a political objective the independence of Tuareg majority areas – coinciding in prevalence with the ancient boundaries of the Nigerien territories composing the ancient OCRS – soon Tuareg representatives confronted with the need of establishing more reachable goals (Grégoire, 2013: 80). Indeed, the end of the military regime let glimpse the basis for a less repressive and more tolerant political framework underpinning dialogue. For this reason, the Tuareg front soon opted to claim the establishment of federalism in Niger as a key objective of the Conference. However, the choice of re-orienting Tuareg claims towards federalism arose from the net opposition of the Conference vis-à-vis any form of menace of Niger territorial integrity. The Conference more than a negotiation around federalism tried to channel the Tuareg front towards a more reasonable – in the government's eyes – administrative decentralization, considered a good compromise between the need of autonomy demanded by Tuareg collectivities and Transition Government's necessity of leaving as unaltered as possible the country

[81] In addition, democratic transition was influenced by French foreign policies which since 1990 channeled the budget to democracy support. During his famous discourse held during the 16th *Conférence des chefs d'État d'Afrique et de France*, French President François Mitterand stated "*La France liera tout son effort de contribution aux efforts qui seront accomplis pour aller vers plus de liberté il y aura une aide normale de la France à l'égard des pays africains, mais il est évident que cette aide sera plus tiède envers ceux qui se comporteraient de façon autoritaire, et plus enthousiaste envers ceux qui franchiront, avec courage, ce pas vers la democratization*".

administrative asset. (Salifou, 1993: 94). Indeed, since federalism let a door open for potential secessionist pushes, the government discouraged it. It was against the declaration of illegitimacy of federalism that the *Front de libération de l'Aïr et de l'Azawawak* (FLAA) was formed and the first attack in In'gall took place.

Between 1991 and 1997 Niger political scenario was crossed by a number of political events which consequently entangled with the evolution of the rebellion. Indeed, the end of preparatory works of the Transition Government[82] resulted in the first presidential elections held in 1993 which saw the victory of Mahamane Ousmane, candidate of the party *Convention Démocratique et Sociale* (CDS-Rahama). However, in 1996 a putsch by Colonel Ibrahim Maïnassara Baré ended the Ousmane presidency, and after 1996 Colonel Ibrahim Maïnassara Baré became new President[83] (Grégoire & Olivier de Sardan, 1996: 139). Along these paths of transformation both moments of détente and of harsh confrontation followed one another. The starting of a true process of negotiation saw the lights after the elections of Mahamane Ousmane following the slowdown of military activities due, among other things, to the mediation of Algeria, Burkina-Faso and France contributing to impede conflict escalation (Grégoire, 2010: 101). In 1994 President Mahamane Ousmane established the *Haut Commisariat à la Restauration de la Paix* (HCARP) an authority in charge of planning and executing agreement implementation following the peace negotiations officially started in Ouagadougou in 1995 (Hamadou, 2018: 200). It was during this phase that the FLAA presented for the first time a statement called *Programme Cadre de la Résistance* containing basic claims underpinning the rebellion. This document,

[82] The National Conference began its work on 29 July 1991 and appointed Amadou Cheiffou as government's Prime Minister with the task of organizing the parliamentary as well as the presidential elections while managing the country until the installation of the new power.

[83] Colonel Ibrahim Maïnassara Baré putsch took place as a consequence of the endemic economic crisis coupled with an overwhelming political stalemate. In 1996 tax revenue amounted at 43,000 million FCFA while current expenditure was of 76,500 million FCFA, moreover Niger Republic accumulated a budget deficit of 85,000 million FCFA (external and internal combined) of which 12,000 million represented four months of unpaid wages for its civil servants. On the political stage the hard cohabitation between President Mahamane Ousmane and the opposition Prime Minister Hama Amadou of the *Mouvement National pour une Société de Développement* (MNSD-Nassara) resulted into political impasse that paralyzing the country. Against this background the military intervention was justified as means to restore the country's political functions.

composed by two parts, outlined in the first one the settled historic causes of Tuareg marginalization and the historicity of the Tuareg nation[84]. While the second one contained provisions for the achievement of a *paix definitive et durable*. In addition to recommend a federal configuration of Nigerien administrative division, the document contained economic and development provisions such as the destination of a fourth of the national budget to the Agadez region as well as the allocation of the 40% of mines benefits to the region (Grégoire, 2010: 133).

On 15 April 15 a pre-peace agreement was signed in Ouagadougou between rebels and the Nigerien government anticipating the definitive agreement signed the 24 April 1995 in Niamey. The final draft proposed the adoption of a law for territorial and administrative re-organization, i.e. the establishment of decentralization while maintaining national unity. Moreover, the Niamey agreement foresaw the establishment of a *Comité spécial de la paix* with the aim of monitoring both agreement implementation as well as disarmament operations. Eventually the agreement foresaw the dismantling of armed group, a general amnesty, re-integration of ex-combatants in the *Garde Nationale*, in addition to dispositions for the economic and social development of the region of Agadez (Grégoire, 2010: 59). However, agreements application fell short in realizing its goals and this resulted from multifarious factors. First of all, although the agreement was stipulated under Ousmane presidency, its application took place after Colonel Ibrahim Maïnassara Baré's coup. It goes without saying that the new presidency felt less accountable with regards to the peace conditions enshrined in Ouagadougou and Niamey. In this respect, presidency change had crucial impacts on agreement's application. Indeed, Niger alone had scarce financial means (already weakened by the effects of the FMI's SAP whose application was still in course) to implement agreement measures. For this reason, international partners' support was a crucial precondition in order to implement such measures. However, Maïnassara Baré's coup was, at least at the beginning[85], condemned by Western communities resulting in the freezing

[85] Notwithstanding an initial suspect France soon moved in order to legitimize Baré regime with the aim of maintaining external control over a strategic country. When Baré established the *Renouveau démocratique* in order to draft a new constitution reinforcing president's power France first send member of the parliament Pierre Mazeaud of the

of international financial support with repercussion on the agreement which were poorly implemented (Gobi, 2002: 45).

One of the thorniest subjects that showed both scarce political will and lack of means was the issue of former rebels' reintegration. Indeed, number of former rebels re-integrated in the public functions' sector and in the security forces was much lower than the number set in the agreement. On a total amount of 5900 former rebels, just 2852 were actually involved in the re-integration plan. Moreover, especially for what concerned the re-integration in the security forces, the agreement fell short in realizing its objectives due to political and military Nigerien authorities fear of the repercussions this process could potentially trigger. Especially political forces feared that the presence of Tuareg individuals in the security forces could destabilize and undermine the control exerted upon the army by the political power (Norris, 2001: 10). In this regard it is important to state that after Maïnassara Baré's coup Niger returned effectively under a military regime albeit hidden under a democratic semblance. Keeping a solid and unaltered bond between the army and the political authority was therefore a key objective for Maïnassara Baré's regime. For this reason, both political and military authority did little to support agreement implementation. However, some reasons explaining the re-integration program failure can also be attributed to the rebels' counterparts. Indeed, it turned out that some positions were assigned to individuals that actually did not took part to the rebellion. This apparently happened because some rebels' chiefs – responsible for drawing up the list of subjects to be reintegrated – indicated relatives and friends as measure's beneficiaries. Finally, among the former rebels there were numerous cases of individuals that soon after the reintegration left their position due to dissatisfaction with military discipline and low salaries. Some of them left the ranks in the aftermath of their training taking away the weapons and ammunition supplied (Norris, 2001: 11).

Ressemblement pour la République in order to monitoring the fourm's activities. In a second moment, during the popular referendum to confirm constitution draft (the 12 may 1996) France special agents were sent to Niger in order to monitor the vote and favouring constitution's confirmation. Constitution will be adopted with the 92% of votes in favour albeit 78% of abstention (Traoré, 2002)

3.9: Consolidation of Agadez as a migration Hub

As already mentioned, the rebellion contributed to establish a number of practices in order to maintain mobility security in the northern region of Niger – i.e. the setting up of military convoys escorting vehicles going to Arlit and the Kawar –. At the same time rebellion's end resulted in more people dedicating to the flourishing migration sector. This assumption was valid especially with regards to transports. Indeed, in the aftermath of the end of the rebellion many former rebels decided to capitalize on their knowledge of the desert – learned at first during the *afrod* moments and widened over the rebellion – by working as *chauffeur* of the vehicles moving from Agadez northwards heading to Libya and Algeria (Brachet, 2009: 42). Until that moment transport of migrants from Agadez was carried out by individuals who were basically traders who didn't want to lead an empty course in direction or in return from Libya or Algeria. On the contrary after the rebellion, we assist to a specialization in the sector of migrants' transport. Convoys of Vehicles 4x4 carrying migrants were departing every week from Agadez northwards. This meant that during this moment we assist to both an enlargement as well as growth in terms of dynamism of the transport system to Libya and Algeria, that contributed to increase Agadez importance as a migration hub. It should be added that the widening of the transport system resulted also from the decline of the other two sectors where desert knowledge represented an essential resource: pastoralism and tourism. If for the former the 1990s proceeded without concrete improvements to get outside the fragile conditions matured during the 1970s and 1980s, for the latter the Tuareg rebellion resulted in the collapse of tourists gaining the region of Agadez to admire its cultural and landscape heritage (Deycard, 2007: 136).

Against this framework mobility linked to northern ward migration became the most important resource of the city. Migrants transiting through Agadez during 1999 as estimated by Bensaad (2003) amounted approximately at 65,000. In 2001 the number of people on the move transiting through Agadez reached 227,000. At that stage around 2 million West Africa migrants were living in Libya and 300,000 in Algeria. Moreover, migration transit resulted into an important demographic growth of the town of Agadez. From 49,424 inhabitants registered in 1998,

Agadez population amounted to 76,957 inhabitants in 2001, with an annual growth rate of 3,50%. This made the city the most dynamic urban space of Niger when compared to the other cities of such as Maradi (2,30% rate growth), Zinder (2,80) and Tahoua (2,90). An important contribution to the growth of Agadez stemmed also from the internal migration that over the 1990s made of the city of the Aïr the most attractive department of the country. Indeed, over this period Agadez attracted the 10,6% of Niger internal migrants (Hamani & Bontianti, 2015: 192). The economic development triggered by migration attracted individuals from the south during the dry season immediately after harvesting. Here in Agadez they could benefit from the dynamism of a city attracting external capital throughout migration, both participating to the migration economy or to other economic activities benefitting from the phase of economic expansionism.

In order to carry on migration activity over the years in the city of Agadez mushroomed a number of activities aiming to providing migrants with goods and services. In the first place a very important figure is the so-called *passeur*. Its task is to act as broker between migrants and the other migration actors of the city of Agadez (especially the chauffeur and the hoteliers, these latter also said *chef de ghetto*). This person is often in contact with the migrants before they arrive to Agadez, throughout a trusted person residing in the same country of origin of the migrant. The activity of the *passeur* is often developed and framed within an *agence de courtage*. As mentioned by Brachet at the beginning of the years 2000 in Agadez there were ten *agence*. These *agence* were regularly inscribed into a register at the Agadez municipality. Accounting the exact number of *passeur* operating in the city of Agadez it's almost an impossible task. As the presence of migrants were very elevated, there were *passeur* managing small groups of migrants and *passeur* which owning a discrete social-relation capital, could manage groups of several hundred migrants. This to say that, as a very spread activity it was very hard to make a census of the *passeurs* as of the *agence de courtage* inscribed in the official register work as the only source (Brachet, 2005: 46).

Arrived to Agadez normally by bus at the bus station the migrants are approached by a *coxer*, i.e. the person in charge of conducting the migrant to the *agence de courtage* dealing with the route and the destinations of

the migrants. Once agreed on the destination and the terms of the voyage, the migrants are directed to their guesthouse also known as the *ghetto*. The *ghetto* are houses deputed to host the migrants all along their stay in Agadez. Normally the *ghetto* host migrants of the same nationalities for which there are numbers of *ghetto* hosting people from Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, Senegal and so on (Molenaar et. Al., 2017). The *choffeurs* are always Tuareg and Tubu with, as already mentioned, deep knowledge of the desert routes. Normally the Tubu drivers are the one in charge of the axe to Libya, while the Tuareg are normally in charge of the axe going to Algeria. This division, related to the proximity ties these cultural groups have built on one side and on the other of the national borders, is not binding. Especially when the demands for departures from Agadez were abundant, Tubu and Tuareg could switch from their habitual route (Molenaar, 2017).

In addition to these occupations closely relating to the migration framework a huge number of small activities relating to the presence of migrants in the city mushroomed over the years. Sellers of cans, turbans and other utensils necessary for the desert crossing, managers of telecentres and cybercafés, merchants buying from migrants their personal properties they want to get rid of them before they cross the desert, restaurants, money-transfers, sex workers.

Effectively a huge part of the city benefitted from the arrival and staying of migrants.

3.10: Conclusions

In West Africa people's mobility has since ages marked the structure of social and economic relations. If during colonialism and in its aftermath plantations economies from the coast constituted attractive places for migrants, the discovery of mineral resources in Algeria and Libya opened these countries to migration from the south. In the first place, over the 1970s and 1980s this trajectory involved especially population stemming from neighbor Sahelian countries. Concerning our case study, by using trade routes relying the Sahel to the Sahara transiting through the city of Agadez, these routes consolidated as a key pattern for people – in our case Tuareg youth especially – aiming reaching the rich North Africa

economies. However, this emergence of the trajectory connecting Agadez to southern Libya happened during an important stage of change of regional politics. The expansionism of Gaddafi's Libya had undoubtedly impacted on the regional balance, especially for what concern relations with Niger. Indeed, initially Libya hosted young Tuareg from Niger moving out from economic marginalization suffered in their country which worsened with the advent of the post-colonial moment. Against this framework the time spent by these young Tuareg in Libya on the one hand served as a crucial moment to forge the socioeconomic ties that resulted into a migratory pattern involving the region of Agadez – and the city of Agadez in particular – and southern Libya. On the other Libya provided Tuareg youth with military knowledge and preparation, which soon alerted Nigerien government.

Yet potential economic improvements enabled by the uranium discovery in the region of Agadez, did not mean a factual rising of population conditions. All these elements combined together led at the same time to a mobility framework that across the Sahara saw over time a certain degree of expansion towards south, with an increasing amount of people originating from West Africa taking advantage of the path initiated by Nigerien Tuareg migrants in order to reach Libya. On the other hand, as already mentioned, Tuareg mobility practices coupled with the learning of military techniques in Libya and the persisting of dissatisfaction vis-à-vis Nigerien government, led to a Tuareg rebellion which set the stage for a re-configuration of the Nigerien state and a partial inclusion – albeit the attempt as shown in the previous sections was partially achieved – of former rebels into the Nigerien state. It is worth notice that over this phase – starting at the beginning of the 1990s – Nigerien state was already undergoing a process of authority renovation throughout the transition from a military regime to democracy. Therefore, Tuareg rebellion fits into a moment of crisis of the post-colonial state symbolized by both a need of modernization represented by the democratic transition, as well as by the claims of a population which saw until then its demands unheard. It is against this framework that following the unsolved crisis of pastoralism and the downturn of tourism, migration especially in the city of Agadez became the most important resource for local population. This resulted in more people transiting throughout this route and at the same time the rise

of a specialized industry able to provide – in addition of course to transport northward – all kind of necessary services for migrants during their staying. From this perspective the presence of former rebels with remarkable knowledge of the desert routes – bearing in mind the incapacity of the peace agreement to re-integrate these individuals in the state apparatus – resulted in a sort of growth of the mobility offer which contributed to consolidate Agadez as a quintessential transit city.

Within this last chapter we observed how migrant-receiving African states – as a worldwide established practice for modern states – have managed across time migration according to their capability of absorb migration flows into their labor market. Against these framework states' accepting or refusing migrants' entrance is strictly connected to their economic momentum, i.e. according to the expansion or contraction of their economy. As shown, this was true in West Africa plantation economies as well as in a rentier state as Libya. On the other hand, situation was different for Niger. From the migration perspective the country underwent over time a clear evolution. The country initially established itself as a 'departure state', with the most part of its migrant population directed towards coasts' economies. At a later time, North Africa resources rich economies represented a destination target especially for northern population of the region of Agadez, due to their historic Trans-Saharan ties developed over ages. Over this period the Nigerien government attitude *vis-à-vis* these migration flows shaped in different manners. The *laissez faire* attitude of Nigerien authorities stemmed from the incapability of the government of mitigating the consequences of the pastoral crisis that hit especially the region of Agadez. Later on Nigerien authorities fell short in spread the benefits of uranium discovery to northern region population. If the post-colonial state-asset underpinning southern population – Zerma especially – was a key factor that prevented northern population to get directly involved in the state building process, at the same time some external elements contributed in slowing down regional integration. I am referring to the exposure on the international market to the fluctuations of the uranium demand, and the structural adjustment reforms sorted by the IMF. For this reason, perceived as a resource, Nigerien authority let migration framework structuring from the bottom, with a key contribution stemming from informal actors that made considerable effort in building the network.

Indeed, the eminent role of informal actors in some way resulted from Nigerien authorities allowing a certain room for *manoeuvre* in the absence of significant development alternative stemming from the state. This explains why migration corridors rested untouched also during the rebellion period, and subsequently their importance increased as a consequence of the partial re-integration of former rebels in the state realm. It is fair to say that the apparent lack of interest of the Nigerien state *vis-à-vis* migration responded therefore to a twofold need: on the one hand for what concerns the rebels' issue, it responded to the necessity of assuring regional security – and to some extent state security – after years of conflict, bearing in mind the centrifugal tendencies of the northern region and the potential fallout in terms of state territorial integrity. On the other hand, this choice of Niamey reverbed the lack of development planification aiming to integrate the Agadez region into a more structured economic framework. Of course, this stem from a chronic fracture between center and periphery that deepened and became even more evident with the post-colonial momentum. From this point of view the inheritance of a centralistic state structure was impossible to heal. As evidence of this the crisis of this model explicated in three aspects, enshrining an evolution path: the democratic transition on the national plan; the *laissez-faire* attitude *vis-à-vis* migration from and transiting through Agadez and finally the administrative reconfiguration that resulted from the Tuareg rebellion meaning the establishment of decentralization.

CHAPTER IV: CAPITALISM, BORDERS AND MIGRATION: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF SECURITY PARADIGMS

4.1: Introduction

In the years following the turn of the twenty-first century, the field of security has undergone a complex and profound transformation. Until the end of the Cold War, the concept of security was predominantly understood in terms of national security and military power. In other words, security was seen as the ability of a state to protect its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political stability from external threats, primarily through military means (Chandra & Bhonsle, 2015: 337). This traditional understanding of security was closely tied to the balance of power between nations, the notion of deterrence, and the use of military alliances. During the Cold War, security was largely framed within the context of the ideological and military rivalry between the United States and its allies, and the Soviet Union and its satellite states (Waever et al., 1998: 2). However, with the end of the Cold War, the concept of security has evolved to incorporate a broader range of threats and concerns. With the reduced threat of nuclear war between superpowers, security has been redefined to encompass a wider range of potential perils and fears, such as economic instability, environmental degradation, terrorism, and cyber-attacks (Minculete & Rapan, 2012). This shift has led to a more extensive and multidimensional understanding of security, covering diverse range of facets in both state affairs and human existence.

This profound transformation of the concept of security can be summarized as a shift that has occurred in the field of international relations – and its studies – enshrining the passage from national security to human security. The definition of the concept of human security is itself a contested and complex space. While the realist approach still tends to equate the realm of security with a set of threats towards the state, the concept of human security embraces a broader range of existing domains that are considered susceptible to potential threats and therefore recipients of security interventions (Ogata & Cels, 2003). This comprehensive idea deals with the vulnerability of human beings as a whole, which includes various forms of threats from all origins. This goes beyond the narrow

definition of organized political violence, encompassing other types of violence as well as the possibility of natural disasters, illnesses, environmental degradation, food shortages, unemployment and economic decline (Fukuda-Parr & Messineo, 2012: 5). Rothschild (1995: 55) argues that it encompasses not only the security of individuals and groups, but also that of international systems. It extends in all directions, including towards international institutions, regional or local government, non-governmental organizations, public opinion, the press, and the unpredictable forces of nature or the market. This idea emerged during the numerous discussions – both at the political and academic level – regarding 'collective security' after the conclusion of the Cold War. The core concept centers around prioritizing the preservation of human life as the primary objective of security policies according to the expressions 'freedom from fear' and 'freedom from want' (Fukuda-Parr & Messineo, 2012: 3). The reference to the concepts of collectivity and universalism in human security (King & Murray, 2001: 585), while seemingly stating a certain degree of neutrality, actually underpins an ideological framework that aligns with a neoliberal vision of the global order. As Gasper (2010) argues, human security concept emerged in the mid-1990s, and there is no doubt that the hegemonic role of Western states during that period strongly influenced the emergence of human security as a cornerstone for the consolidation of the new global order. This concept is stressed by Chandler's analysis (2008) which highlights how human security replaced political interests between opposing groups with non-political, technical concerns about existing threats. This represents a certain degree of vulnerability of the human security discourse, as it makes it susceptible to being shaped conservatively by powerful actors with an interest-driven perspective. Consistently, within this backdrop of depoliticization and neutrality, the approach adopted by international organizations during this era can be understood as geared towards the promotion of humanitarian interventions. Indeed, the UN's recognition and protection of human rights became a crucial aspect of peacekeeping operations in various regions, most notably in Central America's (El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala) former Cold War flashpoints and in sensitive areas such as Rwanda and Haiti (Barnett & Weiss, 2013: 117). The effectiveness of these operations was mixed, but it is noteworthy that the Security Council

regarded the recognition and protection of human rights as a central concern and an integral part of an expanded definition of threats to international peace and security. Nonetheless, in adherence to the principle of upholding human rights during the 1990s (and early 2000s) Western states and Western states' coalitions undertook military interventions in Iraq (1991 and 2003), Kosovo and Serbia (1999), and Afghanistan (2001). In the years subsequent to these actions one observed that the necessary criteria for authorizing such interventions were not met (Chomsky, 2015). Considering these factors, Chandler (2008: 427) contends that the development of human security over the years inherently reflected a Western viewpoint, which has essentially facilitated the worldwide consolidation of Western States agenda. According to Chandler (2008: 428), Western states would have (1) exaggerate new post-Cold War security threats, (2) locate these threats in the developing world, and (3) facilitate short-term policymaking in the absence of clear strategic foreign policy visions making human security a western-led Global order instrument.

4.2: The Nexus of Migration, Terrorism, and Security: Implications for European Integration and Citizenship

It is within this context that migration has been framed as an international security issue, combining elements of both state and human security (Koser, 2018: 3). During the Cold War era, migration regulation measures were predominantly embedded within the framework of labor policies (Nekola, 2014). However, starting in the 1990s, the ideological and geopolitical importance of refugees diminished. Refugee movements were no longer seen as issues for individual states to manage, but rather as a collective international threat to security and stability. How has this change been produced? Following the 9/11 attacks, a profound and enduring connection between migration and security was solidified on a global scale. During this period, the Western world responded by implementing stringent measures aimed at regulating international mobility, which was considered one of the main vectors for the propagation of Islamic-rooted

terrorism on a global scale[86] (Faist, 2006). Karyotis (2007: 8) contends that these measures have led to a growing convergence in Western countries' entangling particular type of migration (namely, unregulated migration originating from the Global South) and the notion of terrorism.

This has forged an inseparable connection between these two concepts, where not only does the former act as a channel for the latter, but it has also come to be viewed as a potential threat to societal order and stability. Conceptually, policymakers, as evidenced by Galantino (2020), had recourse to what Hilgartner (1992: 41) described as the 'conceptual structure of risk definition', primarily through media channels. This approach generates an overlap between terrorism and migration (migration-terrorism nexus), subsequently establishing an opposition between the threat object – 'migrants' – and the threatened object – 'us' – which has serious material consequences in terms of perceptions and chosen paths of action (Galantino, 2020: 3).

Galantino's study investigates the role of the media in shaping the migration-terrorism nexus during the 2015 European 'refugee crisis'. While this article has a specific focus, it highlights important factors that are relevant to the discussion. Firstly, the distinction between 'migrants' and 'us' has significant implications for our analysis. Indeed, this demarcation emphasizes the role of geographical and cultural boundaries of identities, and the ways in which they shape and influence the significance of contemporary migratory pathways.

In this regard, it is important to note that not all forms of mobility align with the definition of migration. The prevailing discourse, incessantly adapted and reimagined by media and metaverses, delineates migration as

[86] In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, numerous countries enacted measures and legislation aimed at bolstering internal security, profoundly affecting the monitoring of migrants. One such instance is the 2001 USA PATRIOT Act in the United States, which heightened surveillance efforts targeting migrants. By endowing intelligence agencies and law enforcement with enhanced authority and resources, this legislation facilitated the scrutiny and investigation of individuals suspected of terrorism or posing other national security threats. As a result, migrants, particularly those hailing from countries with links to terrorism or deemed high-risk, experienced a direct and substantial impact due to these heightened security measures. In the wake of the U.S. example, additional countries adopted control and detention measures, predominantly impacting foreign populations and, more comprehensively, migrants. These legislative initiatives encompass the 2001 Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act in the United Kingdom, the 2001-2002 Sicherheitspaket I and II in Germany, and the 2001 Loi de sécurité quotidienne in France. For a detailed focus on these measures, see Haubrich (2003).

the movement of individuals from the Global South to the Global North – to employ Wallerstein's (1974) lexicon – transgressing the legal and spatial boundaries established by international migration management (Cohen, 2010; Crawley & Skleparis, 2018). According to this perspective, migration is framed as a political-legal concept. Thus, an individual is classified as a migrant when mobility intersects racial and cultural characteristics, and legal aspects.

This perspective underscores the intersubjective relationship between a racialized understanding of global society and the concept of security as an identity-generating instrument. In this regard the migration-terrorism nexus perfectly embodies this dynamic. Indeed, it establishes a security framework that assesses risks associated with specific segments of the global population, predicated on socially constructed markers of phenotype, ancestry, or cultural background (Castles et al., 2014: 57). In other words, in response to the conjectured potential threat posed by certain individuals, security apparatuses are deployed to inhibit or obstruct their mobility. Applying Balibar & Wallerstein's (1991: 34) prism on racism in contemporary capitalist society, it could be argued that the migration-terrorism nexus is closely linked to past racial boundaries, which are constantly adapted in the present. In contemporary Western society, the concept of security has expanded to incorporate new areas of the political and social landscape, particularly with regards to migration and citizenship. Integration for example has become a significant point of debate, with some scholars viewing it as a form of assimilation (Donato & Ferris, 2020). This shift is reflected in the growing use of citizenship laws, compulsory language and civic tests, and cultural codes of conduct for foreigners. These measures are aimed at gradually eliminating the presence of other cultures that are deemed dangerous for Western states. As a result, ethnic, national, or religious groups and communities are continually created and recreated by this nexus. However, the implementation of security measures *tout court* yields two notable consequences. Firstly, they criminalize individuals who defy these regulations. Secondly, the act of defiance itself serves to justify the existence and the requirement to augment the use of security instruments in order to further curtail the number of transgressors. The implications of this phenomenon are diverse and far-reaching. 'Migrant' and 'terrorist' are labels applied to particular

racialized groups, yet their defining characteristics are not exclusive to them. Anderson & Blinder (2011: 5) emphasize the tendency to conflate migrants with ethnic or religious minorities and asylum seekers. The selective application of such labels is crucial as it highlights the degree to which migration management is shaped by political and ideological factors, rather than adhering to technical considerations or the professed tenets of neutrality and universalism.

The European Union's approach to handling individuals' displacement in Ukraine, following the recent commencement of the second phase of the conflict between the Ukrainian Republic and the Russian Federation in February 2022, serves as an illustration that highlights this specific aspect. Indeed, the earlier widespread reluctance to embrace individuals trying to reach Europe from non-European neighbor countries, has been replaced by a public discourse in which media and politicians emphasize Europe's responsibilities vis-à-vis Ukrainian population, highlighting a shift in perspective and rhetoric (Wildemann et al., 2023). In this particular situation, the European Union demonstrated a cohesive approach, culminating in a comprehensive and coordinated security response[87]. The European Union, for the first time, activated the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD), permitting Ukrainian citizens and permanent residents to reside, work, and utilize healthcare, housing, and education services in the EU for a three-year period without undergoing time-consuming asylum processes (Bosse, 2022: 532). Following Russia's incursion into Ukraine, over 4.9 million individuals evacuated their homeland within two months (UNHCR, 2023). When considering the so-called 2015-2016 'European refugee crisis' as a parameter, these data are particularly striking as they highlight EU's discrepancies when it comes to migration management originating from Africa and the Middle East. Indeed, an influx of approximately 2.5 million individuals reached Europe from North Africa, the Aegean Sea and the Balkan route (Morrice, 2022: 251). During that

[87] The EU's reaction included the largest sanctions package in its history, with six sets of sanctions targeting Russia's economy and currency reserves. Additionally, the EU made a significant leap forward in security and defense by providing military support, including 1 billion euros worth of arms and military equipment, to Ukraine under the European Peace Facility (EPF). The EU also offered Ukraine and Moldova candidacy status despite enlargement fatigue among member states (Bosse, 2022: 532).

period the European response demonstrated a not so notable level of cohesiveness. Southern countries, including Italy, Greece, and Malta, contended that they could no longer accommodate 'irregular migrants' within their territories. In contrast, Northern countries emphasized the importance of the Dublin Agreement, adhering to the policy of returning migrants to their initial European entry point, demonstrating a united approach to migration issues (Guiraudon, 2018: 152).

The European strategy towards those fleeing the war in Ukraine not only highlights the 'color line' as a factor in determining receptiveness or vice-versa criminalization towards people on the move, but also demonstrates how international migrations exceed migration policy boundaries and integrate into a wider context of political and strategic factors. Offering easy access to European territory for Ukrainian refugees serves as a cohesive narrative component that differentiates a humanitarian and compassionate Europe from the perceived brutality and unlawfulness of the Russian Federation's intervention. Within this framework, migration management has become an essential aspect of both national and international governance. It serves as a pivotal element in the consideration of the visions and objectives of the actors within the international system. Tazzioli (2014) stresses how migration management represents a factor connecting various 'governing spaces' of politics, including sovereignty, citizenship, territoriality and the economy. Consequently, managing migrations cohesively enables concerned actors to engage with a broader political landscape in order to pursue key international and domestic objectives.

4.3: The Contested Nature of Security and the Securitization of Migration: a Critical Perspective

While the broad notion of migration is relatively straightforward, the task of defining security and delineating the formation of security processes is vital. It is through such understanding that we can grasp the reasons and methods behind subjecting international migrations to an increasingly rigorous security regime.

Numerous authors (Gallie 1956; Baldwin 1997; Connolly 1999; Collier et al. 2006) delving into the topic of security initiate their works by

recognizing the contentious nature of the term 'security' within the literature. Following this acknowledgment, they put forth their own understanding of what security entails, aiming to provide a clear and unambiguous definition. Balzacq et al. (2010), proponents of the Critical Security Studies (CSS) approach, present an engaging and innovative perspective by characterizing security as a '*[…] kaleidoscope of practices non-reducible to a core meaning or/and a linguistic formulation*' (Balzacq et al., 2010: 2). In taking this approach, they highlight the disputed character of security, not with the intent of proposing their own definition, but instead by emphasizing foundational character of the term 'contested' when inherent to modern securitization processes.

From this standpoint, CSS proponents strive to illustrate that security is not a fixed, monolithic idea. Rather, it is a versatile term that is adjusted and situated in the public and international domains to accommodate expectations and goals within a distinct spatial-temporal context.

The CSS which refers to the Aberystwyth, Copenhagen and Paris schools[88] emphasize how security is a process that relates to the identification of what is framed as a threat and a set of practices and technologies that are put into place to deal with such threats. In their opinion the construction of a threat is not historically given, but rather depends on how the interaction between different elements (whether they are of an identity-cultural, discursive, or governmental nature) is modulated by policymakers in a given context in order to identify and frame a phenomenon as a menace while developing security practices capable of containing such threats (Buzan et al., 1996). The CSS approach to security posits that securitization involves not only the intentions of policymakers but also the translation of these intentions into concrete actions, which are in turn influenced by various social processes (Balzacq, 2008: 76). Issues become 'security issues' through securitization. Against this background security

[88] Within the field of CSS, the Aberystwyth, Copenhagen, and Paris Schools each contribute unique approaches to the analysis of security issues. The Aberystwyth School (Booth, 2005; Booth & Wheeler, 2008; Jones, 1999) challenges traditional security concepts and advocates for human-centered security. The Copenhagen School (Buzan et al., 1998; Buzan & Wæver, 2003; Weaver, 1995) introduces the concept of securitization, which examines the transformation of issues into security threats via speech acts and political processes. Lastly, the Paris School, (Aradau & van Muster; Balzacq, 2010; Bigo, 2002; Bigo & Tsoukala, Bonditti, 2004; 2008; Huysmans, 2000; Huysmans, 2006) investigates security practices and the role of professionals in shaping security discourses, with a focus on the securitization processes of migration, crime, and terrorism.

emerges as a political and relational concept that helps to comprehend how human collectivities relate to each other in terms of threats and vulnerabilities (Columba & Vaughan-Williams, 2020). This framework highlights that the effects of securitization extend beyond their immediate operational objectives and can have consequential impacts at multiple levels on reality (Feenberg, 1991: 5). Security practices are designed to shape societal interactions in order to reduce the inherent risks and vulnerabilities that come with its existence (Jarvis & Holland, 2014). In other words, by employing specific security instruments or tools to securitize a particular phenomenon, policymakers articulate and implement a precise political vision that extends beyond the security domain, transcending the mere objective calculation of military force.

Security entails making ethical and political decisions related to a specific order, which serves as a method for organizing social life. Securitization processes, referring to the integration of specific issues into the realm of security, play a central role in comprehending the operation of security mechanisms and their societal impacts. From this perspective, Huysmans' (2006: 61) notion of discursive modulation provides an optimal lens for analyzing security policy components while simultaneously serving as a core principle for Critical Security Studies scholars. Huysmans' by referring to Waever's (1998: 46) theory posits that securitization of a phenomenon is characterized as a speech act. In essence, as a political actor utilizes discursive modulation to frame a phenomenon as a security threat, the phenomenon subsequently falls under the purview of security domain measures. It could be argued that existential threats and vulnerabilities aren't objectively present but arise from self-referential practices. Security finds its foundation in the linguistic speech act theory, which posits that uttering something also constitutes an action with moral, political, or legal implications, depending on the context that provides meaning to the act (Huysmans, 2011: 372).

We find a number of reasons leading to the framing of migration as a threat. The first, named the 'tautology of fear' by Dal Lago (1999), is a logic that links migration with various criminal occurrences or strategic challenges in order to present it as a threat to public order and state security. Two main arguments are typically used to establish the connection between migration and rising insecurity: one emphasizes the

rise in urban disorder and common crime in relation to the state's internal public order; the other links migration to traditional strategic threats like international terrorism and organized crime within the discourse of national security. As Campesi (2020) points out the tautology of fear highlights the ongoing transformation in Western societies resulting into a transition from a 'penal' to a 'preventive' state, with security measures becoming increasingly focused on prevention. Campesi's analysis (2020) on migrant detention centers can be broadened to include other countermeasures targeting irregular mobility towards Western countries. Indeed, the approach to combating irregular migration is rooted in a logic of 'presumptive guilt' directed at migrants, who, according to policymakers, are more prone to engage in criminal activities upon arriving to their destination countries. This perspective unveils a policing and justice framework that is centered on a prejudiced, racially biased view, which serves as a determining factor for an a priori categorization of individuals as either potential innocents or potential culprits. This establish a link between migration law and criminal justice paving the way for easily abusive prevention tools in the realm of policing and justice (Campesi, 2020: 16).

According to the second paradigm, immigration is largely seen as a political and identity-based issue that threatens the ethnic and cultural diversity of the destination country while also promoting racism and political radicalism. In this context, migration emerges as a factor that endangers population's homogeneity throughout a sharp division between *invaded* and *invaders* (Balibar, 1993). Beyond the racial and identity-related aspects conveyed by migration management measures, this situation reveals a distinct manifestation of contemporary governmentality principles, as expounded by Foucault (2005). He posits that a uniform population - in terms of composition, values, needs, and desires - enables the development of optimized societal management models. These models simplify decision-making complexities, enhance replicability, bolster statistical significance, and ensure the legitimacy of those in power (Burchell et al., 1991). Understandably, a more diverse society presents greater challenges for policymakers in terms of legitimization and consensus-building. This is due to the inherent difficulty in drawing upon a shared symbolic and tangible heritage that encompasses the societal

foundation in its widest sense. Consequently, securing legitimacy and obtaining consensus become more challenging for policymakers. It is no coincidence that in the recent past, Western societies have seen a surge in identity-driven political movements that foster a racist perspective on society. These groups, concerned about the potential erosion of their societies' foundational cultural and traditional values, have championed stringent and, at times, discriminatory immigration policies. The growing electoral support for these parties in many Western countries underscores the concerns of social groups who feel increasingly threatened by the ongoing societal transformations.

The third paradigm views immigration as a socio-economic risk, depicting immigrants as unauthorized competitors in the job market and exploiters of government welfare, posing a threat to the native population. Huysmans has referred to this phenomenon as "welfare chauvinism", which is often nourished by evocative images (and public discourse) of migrants as an invading flow (Huysmans 2000:769). Thus, the current link between migration and security arises from concerns regarding the potential negative socioeconomic consequences of the former. In this context, the study of the securitization process and its various epistemological viewpoints have led to the emergence of two distinct theoretical perspectives in analyzing the securitization of migration. These viewpoints illustrate how the Foucauldian theoretical heritage has been interpreted differently in the literature on migration, security, and borders.

4.4: The Intersection of Capitalism, Migration, and Border Regimes: A Critical Analysis of the Emergence of a Security Paradigm

The first perspective primarily draws on Michel Foucault's writings on security technologies and the neo-liberal political-economic system while the second is related to the ideas of sovereignty and the state of exception. As per the first viewpoint the securitization of migration has emerged as a way to regulate the insecurities that the neo-liberal system has exacerbated. In this sense the implementation of the Schengen agreements marked the beginning of this securitization process. According to this perspective the vocabulary of securitization was developed under the presumption that the removal of international border controls would exacerbate dangers to

public order if improperly handled (Huysmans, 2000: 752). In other words, the securitization of migration resulted from a technocratic spillover of the single market economic project into an internal security project. The current international capitalist regime bears a direct responsibility for creating mobility regimes, whether voluntary or forced. Consequently, it requires a regulatory system to mitigate the potential effects of unmanaged mobility on the economic and political plan both in terms of accumulation and reproduction (De Genova, 2016: 42). From this perspective, the propagation of a security paradigm in the management of migration can be regarded as a lens that facilitates the analysis of the crisis concept, while also serving as an outcome of the crisis in itself.

Surely the economic crisis of 2008 defined by Robinson (2018) as 'crisis for overaccumulation' has exposed the main contradictions of the international capitalist system. In this sense, international capital accumulation has led to economic stagnation laying on six interrelated dimensions: a) the reaching of ecological limits of its reproduction; b) unprecedented levels of social polarization and inequalities; c) unprecedented magnitude of the means of violence and social control; d) limits of the extensive expansion of capitalism; e) the rise of a surplus population pushed out from productive economy e) contradiction between global economy and sociopolitical organization based on a nation-state system (Robinsons, 2018: 3-4).

Following a phase of significant economic and financial growth, capitalism has been compelled to confront the limitations of available resources and physical space, leading to a structural transformation of the accumulation process. Land grabbing and privatization of public commodities have been implemented to overcome these limits, along with an intensive use of common resources to deal with goods scarcity. This has led to unprecedented levels of unrestricted indebtedness and dispossession of the international working class, particularly for those residing in resource-intensive areas such as Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Harvey, 2003: 137). Indeed, the effects of the capital restructuring process have had a profound impact in the Global South, where the repercussions have been felt most acutely. The introduction of systems of privatization and liberalization of the economy, resulting from the structural adjustments promoted by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF),

has deepened the wealth gap between the rich and poor and weakened the redistributive capacity of governments (Crisp & Kelly, 2002). Additionally, land grabbing operations combined with the deterioration of environmental and climatic conditions have deepened dispossession and hardened life condition in the so-called developing countries (Vigil, 2002)[89]. In this context, mobility represents a crucial resource for escaping chronic conditions of deprivation. However, in an era of interconnectedness and global exchange, Global South populations seem excluded from the full human experience due to a discursive vision that categorizes all of them as potential migrants capable of jeopardizing the sovereignty of Global North countries. Consequently, there has been a realignment of concepts, leading to a defensive assemblage of coercive controls and sociologies of knowledge, as well as a campaign to generate sedentary subjects. Landau (2019) stresses that this is particularly evident in Africa were politics of sedentarization ultimately gave rise to 'containment development' (Landau, 2019: 4) strategies aimed at restricting the desires and imaginations of Africans to certain geographic locations. As a result, this approach has the effect of materially and discursively marginalizing Africans. To this regard it is important to clarify that the majority of people who leave their countries in the Global South tend to remain within the Global South (Hujo & Piper, 2007). This

[89] The deterioration of living conditions in the Sahel due to climate change serves as a compelling case in point. This is particularly noteworthy considering the fundamental role the environment plays as a pillar of the social structure in Sahelian states, where urbanization is low and agricultural and pastoral activities hold significant importance. In recent years, the Sahel region has witnessed a significant upsurge in violent conflicts between herders and farmers (Olumba *et al.*, 2022). The core of the growing disputes lies in the specific issue of decreasing rainfall volumes, which leads to a general scarcity of water and rapid environmental changes. Over the past ten years these disputes have witnessed a significant escalation, largely driven by the emergence of jihadist rebel groups. These groups have tactically aligned themselves with either side, providing instrumental support to advance the causes of one group or the other (Cline, 2021). Their strategic involvement aims to secure support and recruit forces from within their own ranks, further fueling the intensity of the conflicts (Cold-Ravnkilde & Ba, 2022). While climate change alone cannot fully account for the decline in regional security, additional factors come into play. According to Benjaminsen et al. (2012: 109), the promotion of sedentarism policies in Sahelian countries has played a significant role in the progressive occupation of traditionally grazed lands by farmers. In addition, the decentralization policies implemented in many cases have created a local administrative void. This lack of effective governance at the local level frequently prompts farmers to assert ownership over land and natural resources that were previously unrecognized or unclaimed. Lastly, the increasing disconnection between the rural environment and the realm of politics has engendered a pervasive climate of mistrust among rural communities towards the governing bodies. This erosion of trust has often propelled communities to take matters into their own hands, resorting to self-administered justice and giving rise to highly violent conflicts.

is due to various factors, such as the distance required to migrate, the low cost of living in the receiving countries, and the proximity at social, cultural, and linguistic levels (Nawyn, 2016: 82). Furthermore, it is important to note that the almost complete absence of legal avenues for migration to Global North countries means that irregular migration is the only option for those seeking to migrate from the Global South to the Global North. It is therefore to those who seemingly violate the normative order on South-North mobility established by states and capital that the most recent measures for managing migration are directed.

4.5: The Securitization and Humanitarianization of Migration: Understanding the Dual Nature of Contemporary Borders

If the first perspective on the relation between migration and security relied on Foucaultian perspective, the second argues that the process of securitization serves as an example of how the paradigm of exception is being used to govern modern societies. This perspective draws on Schmittian political theory and the philosophy of Giorgio Agamben (1995; 2003; 2006). It is believed that the process of securitization has its origins in the gradual perception of migration as a danger to national security, which was fueled by the rise of international terrorism in the past two decades. Giorgio Agamben's theory of the state of exception applied to migration posits that governments and institutions invoke a state of emergency to legitimize severe measures and restrictions on specific groups of people such as migrants (Agamben, 2005). This state leaves individuals devoid of their legal safeguards, reducing them to a state of bare life where they exist outside of the normal bounds of the law (Agamben, 1998). According to Agamben, the state of exception has become the norm in many modern societies, particularly in the context of migration. As he suggests migrants are frequently depicted as a threat to national security, and their presence is used to justify extreme measures such as detention, deportation, and the denial of basic rights and protections (Rajaram & Grundy-Warr, 2004). Agamben's theory underscores the hazards of normalizing the state of exception in modern societies and the critical need to scrutinize how institutions and governments employ this concept to legitimize their actions (Agamben,

2005). Thus, the framing of migration as an exceptional domain reinforces the perception that it is an issue taking place outside the usual political arena deserving likewise exceptional practices in order to prevent undesirable repercussions. In policymaking, the focus on the need for emergency interventions has two effects: it distracts attention from the structural causes that generate migratory phenomena, and it normalizes the use of so-called exceptional practices (Jeandesboz & Pallister, 2016). A new perspective has recently emerged in literature that builds on the idea of the 'humanitarian border' to reflect on the process of securitization of migration (Ansell, 2015; Pallister-Wilkins 2022; Squire, 2020; Vaughan-Williams, 2015). This perspective suggests that the continuous references to humanitarian emergencies in the management of migrant influx towards certain areas along the north-south divide of the world, such as the US-Mexico border or the Mediterranean, is an implicit part of the securitization of migration. The 'humanitarian border' is considered a consequence of the growing violence that results from the militarization of the border. As noted by Pallister-Wilkins (2015:60), migrants crossing the borders of wealthy Western nations are perceived and framed by policing and humanitarian authorities throughout a twofold prism: they are both at risk and a risk. Over time, this has led to the emergence of the 'humanitarian border' (Walters, 2011:142) where policing practices are used for humanitarian purposes and vice versa. Although in the recent past this approach has emerged with particular vehemence when applied to border policing its use is not new. Other authors as Bigo (2006) have highlighted the role of French gendarmerie on the French territory stressing the transformation of the concept of protection. According to the author this one has switched from '[…] providing a safe place where someone could find refuge […]' (Bigo, 2006: 84) to the set of practices and technologies aimed at filtering, channeling, and controlling individuals '[…] for the purpose of their own protection'. Against this framework individuals are at the same time constantly framed as potential menaces and subjects in need of protection, blurring the limits between policing and assisting. It goes without saying that these measures have found a 'natural' application when it comes to migration control considering how the paradigm of what constitutes a security threat in Western states has shifted from interstate war to non-state threats (Pallister-Wilkins, 2015:58).

Reducing the complex issue of migration to a matter of 'lives-saving' contributes to limit policymakers' intervention to measures that prevent mobility while preserving lives. This blurring limit between the policing and the humanitarian domain proves central in order to grasp the architecture of the European migration management. To this aim it is important to stress how the creation of two separate and essential identities for the migration management discourse have been framed and narrated: the entangled figures of the migrant and the smuggler. As the migrant represents a recipient of humanitarian intervention, the smuggler (whose identity is increasingly superimposed on that of the trafficker) represents the recipient of the military/police intervention, especially along borders. For the former, self-determination capacity is often neglected and the migrant is portrayed as a victim and more in general a subject without agency (Agustín, 2003). Worldwide narrative about smugglers (to synthesize whoever facilitates migrants' paths and border crossing) and smuggling has been bended to a pre-conceived storytelling framing these individuals (or networks) acting according to a criminal inclination based on the denial of rights and self-determination of the migrants while forcing compulsory economic value extraction from people on the move. This narration has a number of direct repercussions on the framing of migration management which are constitutive of a certain approach concerning how regulatory, humanitarian and military models are implemented. Indeed, on the first place this very strict and one-sided recounting prevent from grasping all the possible and multifarious aspects of complex phenomena when it comes to migration. The storytelling about smugglers unavoidably performing as traffickers and migrants embodying the role of trafficked supply results in the cancelling of living experiences that are far from a master/servant dichotomy and that go beyond the criminalization/victimization scheme that current narration about migration imposes. However, and this is the point, this narrative about the migration phenomena allows and legitimize the implementation of current measures when it comes to migration, which reinforce a security/humanitarian approach. Since the smuggler is portrayed as a criminal identified with trafficking, human rights violations and illegal border crossing, his activity must be prevented according to a legal chains that foresee the establishment of norms criminalizing this activity, and on

the other hand the activation on sensible sections of the territory of military complex based on the deployment of trained policy/military personnel; advanced technologies for individuals' control and identification, geographic spaces' commodification to ensure their performance as a border blocking, preventing or dissuading mobility (Sanchez, 2015). At the same time, if for the smugglers persists a constant reference to their criminal nature, migrants who correspond to a trafficked commodity, are framed by authorities as agency-less victims of the smuggling activity and for this reason must be treated as such (Anderson, 2008). However, victimization implies the total alienation of migrants *vis-à-vis* their subjectivity and for this reason both their 'desiring part' and action for self-determination are removed for the benefit of the victim role (Collins, 2017). From this point of view victimization has a paradoxical effect: following the above-mentioned impacts of this processes, coinciding with the dispossession of any form of political subjectivity, the only visible element that remains in their possession is their body, or as claimed again by Agamben the concept of 'bare life' (Agamben, 1998). Throughout this prism migrants' life is considered as an element deserving an intervention limited to the life-saving, as we often see in the safe and rescue operations almost daily operated in the Mediterranean basin. This contributes to the legitimization of exclusionary policies and practices through discourse and the displacement of affected individuals from their physical locations (Cuttitta, 2017). At a later time, in case of positive response of the rescue operations the migrant trajectory is dotted with number of steps through which migrants' subjectivity is gradually dispossessed in favor of a vision that reveals 'bare life' as the only way of existence recognized by authorities and institutions. Therefore, migrants' life is suspended in the camps of reception or detention indefinitely in the expectation of receiving a document recognizing their right to exist. In case of negative response, they continue their existence in a state of total illegality or worse, become recipients of a procedure of repatriation following an arrest and detention in the infamous and increasingly widespread in Europe prisons for migrants[90]. In all these phases migrants' subjectivity is framed as a mere

[90] Across Europe, there exist approximately 420 detention centers designed for the purpose of housing and confining asylum seekers or individuals who have received

humanitarian issue: at first (at the border) he/she corresponds to a life to be saved and protected, during their stage of 'selection' authorities guarantee them barely basic rights of access to food and facilities without taking into account any possible alternative to personal development and access to any kind of social right. Finally, in case of denial of their right to reside they experience a new reduction to a body: in this case not a body to save or feed but rather a body to ignore, detain, expel (Raeymaekers, 2021).

It goes without saying that the use of military and humanitarian approach *vis-à-vis* migration represents the two side of the same coins: both notions intend to set out the terms of access to Western area, meant as its territory and its citizenship space.

This approach seemingly highlights how the stability of the modern Westphalian state still represents an essential concept especially when it comes to address transnational challenges within the global order. In this context, the concept of security appears to be based on a dichotomous understanding of internal/external, where security aims to protect an orderly internal system from external threats (Wolff, 2008). However, as globalization has fostered progressive financial and social integration, it has simultaneously resulted in the exclusion of certain entities from this process, leading the international system to frame these exclusions as threats. Against this framework the internal/external dichotomy loses its centrality, necessitating the adaptation and the reframing of security processes to address these new types of threats. International migration management serves as a case in point in order to frame this re-articulation, particularly when considering the border as a security instrument.

Scholars have emphasized that the traditional military concept of the border, understood as a division between inside and outside, is now outdated. As Salter (2012: 737) asserts, when borders are depicted as lines, the focus is on the elements being divided, traversed, or breached on both sides, rather than on the underlying system providing meaning to these boundaries. In contemporary times, the border adopts a dual nature: on one hand, it serves as a connecting element (a 'suture' according to Salter)

expulsion orders. For more on migrants' detention centers worldwide see https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/.

rather than a rupture; on the other hand, the border constitutes a space with its own unique characteristics, featuring dynamics that transform it from a mere line into a distinct space with its own practices (Brunet-Jailly, 2011). It is on this dual concept that one must focus in order to grasp contemporary borders architecture features. As mentioned above, the need to harmonize new regimes of accumulation with growing dispossession – and resulting social tensions – led to the proliferation of borders and borderlands. In this sense borders assume a twofold function: from the capital perspective it unhinges the frictions between capital and sovereignty inasmuch it redefines capital relation with time and space through re-territorialization (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2012). For this reason, the notion of border throughout the years has been re-discussed in order to better grasp its role in globalized order. Far from being the mere limit of nation-state sovereignty or an instrument performing as a wall, contemporary borders are assuming more the aspect of a complex and articulated regulatory tools. At this stage of modern capitalism, the spatial re-articulation meant the creation of hierarchical spaces of inclusion, or with the words of Castles, the establishment on the international scale of a 'differential exclusion' (Castles, 2010a). With differential exclusion Castles states that although some subjects and areas of the globe appear as marginalized by a status of apparent exclusion, indeed they join a specific pattern of inclusion and represent in all respects a constitutive part of modern capitalism (Castles, 2010b: 294). In this sense migration is a case in point. Irregular migrants' apparent exclusion from Western countries (through criminalization and illegalization) is a constitutive element of the notion of citizenship and their presence a factor contributing to regulate the access to the international labor market (Joppke, 2005). The division among different scales of citizenship (from a 'full citizenship', to a 'partial citizenship' as those of the asylum seekers, to an 'unrecognized citizenship' as those of irregular migrants) allows governments to manage states' resources according to a rationale that supports and justifies hierarchical society structure (Castles, 2005). Secondly, the very same prism of illegalization, although it effectively encompasses all those individuals not corresponding neither to 'full citizenship' nor to a 'partial' one, is not so accurate in preventing irregulars from selling their own workforce to the labor market. On the contrary it is precisely because of

the illegalization of migrants that capital, relying on the total absence of rights and protection at work as a consequence of individuals not benefiting from citizenship, can employ and exploit underpaid workforce that is so essential for economic system reproduction (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013). It's precisely in these terms that the notion of 'differential exclusion' bespeaks his constitutive potential. In the case of irregular migrants in Western economies, these are excluded from citizenship in order to be reincluded in the labor market in a more flexible and profitable way for the capital. Although the idea of geopolitical borders seems reproducing the architecture of a fortress protecting an inside from a threatening outside (so-called 'fortress capitalism'), reality seems suggesting that borders act as regulating filters in order to optimize flows crossing all over the world. Today we assist to the mushrooming of designed physic lines of separation (barriers, blockades, closures, road blocks, checkpoints, sterile areas, special security zones, closed military areas and killing zones) acting as borders. In addition to perform as a regulatory mechanism, these devices own per se the capacity of codifying at the same time legal personalities and the perception of migration (Sparke, 2006). In this case as well, the media plays a fundamental role in performing this correlated feature of the border.

Visual representations depicting boats and masses of people breaching state sovereignty further solidify the idea of these individuals as a danger. Consequently, the perceived level of danger necessitates the deployment of security measures to intercept and impede their mobility. De Genova (2002; 2005) has expanded upon the concept of the 'Border Spectacle' as a crucial component that reveals the interconnectedness of both the representation and implementation of measures against irregular migration, and the resulting impact on migration management. The term 'Border Spectacle' refers to the visual framing that, through images of practices enacted at borders, serves to normalize and validate the formation of migrants as dangerous subjects and the necessity for security measures (De Genova, 2012: 492). From this perspective, the Mediterranean Sea has emerged as one of the primary settings in which the border spectacle unfolds, as described by De Genova: '*In the face of increasingly fortified, militarized and securitized borders, those who elude detection and evade apprehension are rewarded with the protracted and indefinite social*

condition called 'illegality' and all its attendant deprivations'. (De Genova, 2019: 108). Migrants are not inherently illegal; their illegality arises when they cross borders, violating the established order. The depiction of border transgression through visual representations creates a dual narrative, presenting migrants both as potentially dangerous individuals and as individuals in need of protection. At the same time, these representations legitimize the existence of borders as tools for ensuring the security of territories and communities while also providing supposed protection for migrants in danger.

4.6: Shaping Migration Governance: Dynamics of International Collaboration and Border Management

States have come to acknowledge the importance of collaborative and coordinated efforts to regulate international migration in their favor, akin to their approach to other transnational issues such as trade, environment, and security (Betts, 2011). Consequently, a global governance of migration has emerged gradually, although often in a fragmented or *ad hoc* manner. According to Betts (2011: 26), migratory governance represents a key incentive for states resulting into trans-regionalism cooperation. This refers to a number of formal and informal institutions linking different geographic regions influencing the actions of states and non-state actors in a specific policy area. To achieve effective migratory governance, diverse modes of cooperation such as regional, inter-regional, and bilateral ones are required. Such forms of cooperation facilitate the creation of an international community of knowledge and expertise. According to Betts (2011) and Geiger & Pécoud (2010) states collaborating on migration seek to establish models of operative intervention that enable them to anticipate the timing and modes of migratory flows. This pursuit of predictability is closely tied to the economic advantages of maintaining a clear understanding of the migrant population, as discussed by Scott (1998). Indeed, the notion of migration management encompass all these features (states and non-state actors' cooperation, implementation of predictive models and economic harmonization) referred to migration. The term migration management was initially introduced by Bimal Ghosh in a report to the United Nations Commission on Global Governance in 1993 (Geiger

& Pécoud, 2010). This concept involves two aims, namely securing borders and facilitating cross-border mobility (Geiger & Pécoud, 2010). During this period, apprehensions regarding potential socio-economic crises resulting from post-Cold War migration were already interrelated with border management and the implementation of effective protocols in this context. The way border control and migration management were carried out underwent a change with the introduction of new public management (NPM) principles two decades later[91]. NPM applied to migration aimed at achieving 'improved control' of borders to streamline individuals' mobility. The NPM also justified the cooperation between the government and non-governmental entities, including public-private partnerships, in border management. This collaboration encompassed various domains such as the training of immigration personnel, the provision of equipment, and the use of technological devices such as digitized databases and fingerprint systems to gather data (Andrijsasevic and Walters, 2011; Salter, 2006). The privatization of security in the management of borders, originally a task of the state, aims to better control borders to prevent irregular migration. It is evident that the adoption of neoliberal principles ('secure' and 'facilitate' labor mobility), specific norms (predictable and orderly migration for states), and New Public Management rules and procedures have structured what Krasner (1982) has defined as an international border regime. As the elements and the knowledge underpinning border regimes circulate as 'travelling models' (Olivier de Sardan 2021; Behrends *et al.* 2014) between international institutions and regional organizations and within transregional forums they primarily serve the economic interests of dominant countries in the global economy. In this sense the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) adopted in Marrakech on December 18, 2018, confirms the so-called 'migration management' approach. The GCM envisions a world in which people can circulate smoothly and easily, without being hindered by the

[91] New Public Management (NPM) is a management philosophy that advocates for the application of business-like techniques and practices in the public sector. NPM aims to improve public sector efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability by emphasizing results-based management, performance measurement, decentralization, customer orientation, competition, and the use of market-oriented mechanisms. The approach emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, partly as a response to criticisms of traditional bureaucratic models of public administration, and has been adopted by many countries around the world in various forms (Crespy & Ravinet, 2014).

regulations of different states (Pécoud 2018: 28). It does not prioritize the fight against irregular immigration, but rather aims to facilitate legal and coordinated migration services. In fact, the need to facilitate migration is emphasized 62 times in the text of the GCM (Pécoud, 2018: 3), and international migration is viewed as a positive phenomenon that can benefit both the sending and receiving countries, as well as the migrants themselves, following a 'triple-win' approach (Pécoud 2018). However, advocating for such facilitation of mobility is also linked to adherence to the principles of free market. According to Antoine Pécoud (2018), labor force migration is one of the main concerns of the Global Pact. Objective 6 of the GCM on decent work defends the idea that mobility is a response to demographic realities and labor market needs, while simultaneously emphasizing that migrant workers must be protected from exploitation and abuse. However, it is evident that the GCM, in trying to bring together the interests of all parties (sending and receiving countries and migrants), is confronted with conflicting objectives (Pécoud, 2018). The GCM promotes temporary, circular, and flexible work migrations (which are often favored by receiving states), while also wishing to guarantee family reunification (Pécoud, 2018). However, seasonal mobility strategically excludes families and their right to settle. In addition, the facilitation of mobility also refers to the facilitation of voluntary return procedures or expulsion for individuals in irregular situations, which often occurs after the expiration of their temporary residence permit. The approach known as 'triple win' of the Marrakech Pact seems to be mainly subject to the pursuit of economic benefits by states. Human labor mobility must be facilitated to connect the supply of labor from Southern populations to the demand for migrant workers quotas in the North. The objective of the Pact is not to strengthen border controls but to make them 'compatible with the circulation of workers' (Geiger and Pécoud 2010: 14). In the globalized labor market, labor mobility is indeed a commodity like any other, whose price must be (and remain) competitive - the principle of flexibility - in an international competitive context (Crespy & Ravinet 2014; Mezzadra & Neilson 2013).

The absence of a migration regime must also be considered in light of this asymmetry between migrant-sending and migrant-receiving countries. They would respectively be 'rules takers' - having the discretion to open

or not their borders - and 'rules makers' (Betts 2011: 25). This would explain why receiving countries tend to prefer unilateralism in their relations with third countries, while multilateralism would be in the interest of the latter. However, this representation is not without problems. It assumes that states embody their populations, and, at the same time, it deprives migrant people of the capacity to act outside formal rules. In addition, it overlooks the possibility for a state to be both a sender and a receiver of migration, depending on the geographic angle considered.
In order to grasp the abovementioned practice of the travelling models applied to migration management, it may be useful looking at the Euro-African cooperation in the context of migration policies.

4.7: The Externalization Process: Integrating Neighbors and Expanding EU's Security Dimensions

As previously stated, the exacerbation of globalization-led contradictions worldwide has led to a progressive phenomenon of security threats de-territorialization, such as 'terrorism' and 'irregular' migration. Consequently, states and regional governance subjects have developed evolving instruments to address these challenges. Regarding the European Union, the process of de-territorialization has coincided with the increasing significance of external governance, which has played a crucial role in shaping the intricate framework of regional cooperation in recent years. However, the process of externalization is also grounded in theoretical frameworks that emphasize the implementation of progressive subcontracting procedures. Wolff (2009) defines the underlying logics of the externalization process as follows:

> *'According to the logic of the 'spillover effect', collaboration amongst the Member States on common policies naturally pushes them to cooperate on the external dimension of these policies, leading to what is called the 'externalization' of internal policies. This so-called 'externalization hypothesis' assumes that 'external conditions will become less exogenously determined if integrative rather than disintegrative strategies are commonly adopted'* (Wolff, 2009: 159).

In addition to this process of externalization of the internal dimension, the same Wolff highlights how externalization entails a process of gradual integration of neighbors for security reasons. From this perspective Sjursen (1998) states that the European Union implements its policies towards neighboring countries by externalizing them, as it acknowledges that integration can have detrimental impacts on entities beyond the EU. The neighboring countries' pursuit of membership can be interpreted as a direct reaction to the apprehension of being marginalized from European collaboration. In addition to these factors that contribute to the expansion of the EU's external dimension, one must also consider the strategic endeavors of neighboring countries to leverage their geographical positioning by offering cost-effective and valuable solutions to member states of the European Union (Cassarino, 2018). The positioning of neighboring countries, including the European neighbor's neighboring state as in our case, holds significant importance in comprehending the recent configurations of migration frameworks and power relations within the north-south context. The externalization process in Europe has taken an intriguing trajectory. Specifically, concerning 'terrorism' and irregular migration, the European Union has categorized these issues within the realm of Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) (Boswell, 2007: 597). However, due to the de-territorialization of threats, Europe has undergone a gradual externalization of Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) policies. While these policies remain rooted in the internal dimension of the European Union, it is undeniable that this process has expanded its scope through the increasing involvement of third parties, the so called *third-states*[92]. This trend emerged following the 1999 Tampere Summit and the 2000 Feira Council, where strategies aimed at engaging and reaching agreements with third countries to strengthen Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) through partial externalization materialized into reality (Boswell, 2003: 630). This paradigm shift solidified the connection between Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) and the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), establishing that the reinforcement of the latter was a fundamental prerequisite for the

[92] According to the European Union's terminology, as outlined in Article 2(5) of Regulation (EU) 2016/399 (Schengen Borders Code), a third country is defined as '*A country that is not a member of the European Union as well as a country or territory whose citizens do not enjoy the European Union*'.

effective implementation of the former (Winn, 2008). Furthermore, the European Union clearly demonstrated its intention to strengthen this connection through the publication of the 2005 document titled 'Strategy for the External Dimension of Justice and Home Affairs' by the European Commission (Kaunert, 2009: 662). This publication formalized the significance of elevating Justice and Home Affairs to the status of a foreign policy objective as stressed by the Council of the European Union (2005) document 'A Strategy for the External Dimension of JHA: Global Freedom, Security and Justice'. The document emphasizes the need for the EU to prioritize Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) in its external relations, ensuring a coordinated and coherent approach. It suggests a shift from simply integrating JHA into external policies to making it the primary focus of the EU's external relations (Wolff, 2009: 155). In doing so, the European Union formalized its intent to exert influence over the security sectors of neighboring countries with the objective of preventing the spillover of insecurity into the EU.

4.8: Transregional Initiatives and the Impact on West African Migration Policies

The early 2000s witnessed a proliferation of transregional initiatives that impacted the formulation of West African migration policies (Betts 2011; Kabbanji 2011). For the purpose of this study, it is useful to note that this cooperation was exemplified by the 5+5 Dialogue on Migration in the Western Mediterranean (1995), the Dialogue on Migration for West Africa (MIDWA, 2001), the EU Global Approach to Migration (2005), the Rabat Process (2006), the Global Forum on Migration and Development (2006), the United Nations High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (2006), and more recently, the EU-Africa Summit in Valletta (2015). Kabbanji has demonstrated how these processes are particularly suited to bring-about political change. Her analysis of cooperation between the EU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) provides several valuable insights (Kabbanji 2011). Firstly, until 2006, the only actors involved in the formulation of the legal framework for free movement within this West African regional space were its member countries. In 2006, an ECOWAS-EU working group on migration was

established, which was tasked with supporting ECOWAS in establishing its migration approach (Kabbanji 2011). International experts from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) were part of this group. An ECOWAS-Spain Fund for Migration and Development was also created in 2009, with an initial budget of €10 million, of which €4 million was allocated for institutional support around 'the Common Approach on Migration of ECOWAS'. The fund is managed by a steering committee composed of representatives from the Spanish cooperation and ECOWAS (Kabbanji 2011: 62).

In addition to this expansion to non-state and European actors, Kabbanji observed a content change in the objectives pursued by ECOWAS member states with the introduction of a restrictive approach to interregional migration. Thus, at the Ordinary ECOWAS Heads of State and Government Summits in 2006, 2007, and 2008, new concerns emerged regarding the 'illegal' emigration of West African youth to Europe and the root causes of 'clandestine' migration (Kabbanji 2011: 60). Terms that can be found in identical wording in the EU's Global Approach to Migration documents at the same time. As of 2008, the approach exclusively geared towards intracommunity migration was partially redirected towards measures related to interregional migration between West Africa and Europe (Kabbanji 2011). This does not mean that the fight against irregular immigration and illegal labor trafficking was not formulated in ECOWAS action documents before 2008. However, it only targeted intra-community migration (Kabbanji 2011). As Lama Kabbanji, we note that from 2008 to the present day, the common ECOWAS approach tends to reflect the two logics of the external dimension of Europeanization of migration policies: the repressive aspect aimed at restricting migration through security measures and the preventive aspect confirming the link between migration and development. Thus, control of interregional migration now prevails over the consolidation of intra-regional freedom of movement (Kabbanji 2011).

This reorientation could be considered one of the factors explaining the limited effectiveness so far of the right to free movement in the ECOWAS space, which remains largely subject to 'harassment' and informal practices at the borders. Since the early 2000s, migration policies in the

ECOWAS region have been closely linked to the external dimension of Europeanization of such policies. The transregionalism model of Alexander Betts is reflected in the structures set up for this purpose. They involve state and non-state actors in intergovernmental consultative processes, which can take the form of forums (Channac 2006). Political convergence has emerged, even in the absence of a multilateral regime in the migration domain. However, migration is still largely associated with the role of the state and its sovereign right to control the admission of foreigners (Pécoud, 2014). The connection between mobility and economic integration is also evident in official discourses and texts in West Africa. Article 2 of the ECOWAS founding treaty states that the organization's mission is to promote economic integration through 'the removal of obstacles to the free movement of persons, services, and capital between the Member States'. However, it is important to note that the free movement provided for by the ECOWAS protocol predates any logic of adjustment to neoliberal precepts. The historical trend of intra-regional migration in West Africa primarily explains the regional integration process (Kabbanji 2011; Ouédraogo 2002; Sawadogo 1999). This must be understood as a legitimization from above of circular migrations and identity pluralism (Kabbanji 2011: 58; Ouédraogo 2002: 17). In parallel with the adoption of new forms of mobility control in the ECOWAS region, states in the region have implemented a number of economic agreements in favor of liberalization, which impact the opportunities and conditions for migration. For instance, the Cotonou Agreement signed in 2000 includes the integration of African Caribbean Pacific Group of States (ACP) into the global economy through market liberalization, capital, and investment attraction (Kabbanji 2011: 51). The state must thus be able to 'provide an attractive, flexible, and qualified labor force, meeting the needs of integrated transnational production' in a context of global competition. Migration from ACP countries must be modulated according to the needs for flexible and mobile labor of the globalized economy, especially in the interests of certain European countries. Articles 13, 79, and 80 of the Agreement bear witness to this reorientation. At the Euro-African Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development held in Tripoli on December 22-23, 2006, the only measures related to liberalizing circulation from one side of the Mediterranean to the other were limited to

circular and seasonal migrations, the mobility of skilled African workers to Europe, and those concerning forced returns (Kabbanji 2011).

4.9: Institutional Developments and International Conventions: Niger's Response to Migration Challenges

Recently, the Niger has assumed a pivotal role within the context of the European Union's strategic pursuit to externalize its migration policies. Despite the significant role that Niger plays in the European Union's migration externalization strategy, it is important to emphasize that the process of aligning Niger's policies with international standards is still in its early stages. The so-called transit migration which has attracted the European Union interest towards mobility management in Niger has gained international significance only in the last decade. In retrospect, delving into the historical trajectory of Nigerian migration policies, which gained substantial significance from the 1980s onwards, it becomes evident that Niger government focus during that period primarily revolved around effectively addressing the multifaceted concerns associated with the diaspora, which played a pivotal and integral role (as stressed in Chapter III).

During this phase, the role of the government primarily centered around addressing the challenges associated with mass expulsions coordinated by destination countries. As previously mentioned (Chapter III), these expulsions were a result of unforeseen economic and political changes in the host countries, rendering them difficult to predict. Consequently, during this period, the Nigerien government prioritized the implementation of technical measures. Their goal was to ensure that the expulsions were not only organized but also aligned, to a certain degree, with the state's existing management framework. Notable expulsions took place in both Ghana and Nigeria. In 1969, Ghana saw approximately 20,000 Nigeriens being forced to leave the country, while between 1983 and 1985, Nigeria expelled around 100,000 Nigeriens. The Nigerien government took an active role in facilitating the return of the expelled individuals to Niger by organizing their transportation (Bredeloup, 1995). For the same reasons in the 2000s, the Nigerien government established a dedicated committee to handle the expulsion of its citizens from Ivory Coast (Mounkaila, 2002).

However, it is important to highlight that during this period, there was a significant surge in expulsions from the emerging migration destinations for Nigerien migrants, specifically Libya and Algeria[93] (Mounkaila, 2015). The institutional response to migration-related matters in Niger has also undergone recent developments. In 1991, the *Haut conseil des Nigériens de l'Extérieur* was established, followed by the creation of the *Direction des Nigériens de l'Exterieur* within the *Ministére des Affaires Étrangères de la Coopération et de l'Intégration Africaine* in 1995 (Boyer & Mounkaila 2018). These initiatives underline the significance of the diaspora, not only in terms of addressing expulsions but also in recognizing the substantial economic contributions through remittances that are vital for the country's economy (Youngstedt, 2008).

Moreover, Niger has adopted and ratified several international conventions in the field of migration. Nigerien government has ratified the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Additional Protocol, the African Union Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa in 1969; the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children of 2000, and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air of 2009. In the same year, the state adopted the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families of 1990. In addition to these international treaties, Niger ratified the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Protocols on the Free Movement of Persons, the Right of Residence and Establishment in 1979.

4.10: Conclusions

The concept of security has undergone significant transformations in recent decades. It was traditionally linked to national security and military power, aimed at protecting a state sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political stability. However, with the end of the Cold War, security took

[93] In 2005, a total of 6,913 Nigeriens were expelled from Algerian and Libyan territories, highlighting a significant wave of forced repatriation. This expulsion trend continued in the subsequent years (2006 and 2007), with an estimated 12,000 Nigerian citizens facing similar fates across different African countries (Brachet 2009; Mounkaila 2015).

on a more comprehensive and multidimensional understanding that included diverse aspects such as economic instability, environmental degradation, terrorism, and cyber-attacks. This shift towards a more human-centered approach to security aims to prioritize human life as the primary objective of security policies. The securitization of migration has emerged as a significant issue in the contemporary world, combining elements of both national and human security which has led to the establishment of a nexus between terrorism and migration following the 9/11 attacks. The CSS approach highlights that the construction of a threat is not historically given, but rather depends on how policymakers frame and modulate different elements to identify and contain perceived threats. The securitization of migration can be analyzed from two perspectives: one based on Michel Foucault's ideas on security technologies and the neo-liberal political-economic system, and the other on the ideas of sovereignty and the state of exception by Giorgio Agamben. According to the first viewpoint, securitization of migration has emerged as a way to regulate the insecurities that the neo-liberal system has exacerbated. The Schengen agreements marked the beginning of this process, which resulted from a technocratic spillover of the single market economic project into an internal security project. The second perspective argues that the process of securitization serves as an example of how the paradigm of exception is being used to govern modern societies. The framing of migration as an exceptional domain reinforces the perception that it is an issue taking place outside the usual political arena deserving likewise exceptional practices to prevent undesirable repercussions. The focus on the need for emergency interventions diverts attention from the structural causes that generate migratory phenomena, and it normalizes the use of so-called exceptional practices.

The issue of migration is often reduced to a matter of ‘lives-saving’, leading policymakers to focus on preventing mobility while preserving lives. This results in a blurring of the line between the military and humanitarian domains, which is central to understanding the architecture of European migration management. The creation of two separate identities - the migrant and the smuggler - is central to the discourse on migration management. The migrant is often portrayed as a victim without agency, while the smuggler, increasingly seen as a trafficker, is subject to

military/police intervention. This narrative of smugglers as criminals who deny migrants their rights and self-determination has direct implications for how regulatory, humanitarian, and military models are implemented. The portrayal of migrants as agency-less victims results in their subjectivity being removed in favor of a victim role, leading to the paradoxical effect reducing them to their body. In all phases of migration management, migrants' subjectivity is framed as a mere humanitarian issue, leading to their reduction to a body to be rescued or ignored. This approach to migration management reinforces a security/humanitarian approach. By depicting border transgression through images, a concerning normalization and validation occur. This normalization perpetuates the perception of migrants as inherently dangerous individuals while simultaneously reinforcing the perceived necessity for implementing security and humanitarian measures. The media plays a pivotal role in showcasing the functioning of borders, thereby legitimizing their existence as crucial instruments in safeguarding the security of territories and communities.

At the same time the need to harmonize new regimes of accumulation with growing dispossession led to the proliferation of borders and borderlands, creating hierarchical spaces of inclusion and differential exclusion. The division among different scales of citizenship allows governments to regulate access to the international labor market, where irregular migrants are excluded from citizenship but reincluded in a more flexible and profitable way for the capital.

Border diffusion is a sharp representation of the establishment of a global regime regulating international mobility. Migration management, which involves securing borders and facilitating cross-border mobility, is a key aspect of this governance. The adoption of neoliberal principles, specific norms, and New Public Management rules and procedures has structured what Krasner has defined as an international border regime. The GCM adopted in 2018, emphasizes the need to facilitate legal and coordinated migration services and views international migration as a positive phenomenon that can benefit both sending and receiving countries as well as migrants themselves. However, the GCM is confronted with conflicting objectives, such as the facilitation of voluntary return procedures or

expulsion for individuals in irregular situations. This global vision resulted in the implementation of trans-local cooperation.

The Euro-African migration policies exemplifies the practice of traveling models applied to migration management. The proliferation of transregional initiatives had a profound impact on West African migration policies. In this regard, migration in the ECOWAS region has been closely linked to the external dimension of Europeanization of such policies. The free movement provided for by the ECOWAS protocol predates any logic of adjustment to neoliberal precepts. However, in parallel with the adoption of new forms of mobility control in the ECOWAS region, states in the region have implemented a number of economic agreements in favor of liberalization, which impact the opportunities and conditions for migration.

Regarding Niger, its peripheral role within the Euro-African migration framework has sparked a distinct interest from the government, primarily focused on the diaspora issue and regional repatriation management. In the forthcoming chapter, we will delve into how Niger has become an integral part of the intricate tapestry of international migration management, exploring the consequences of implementing this management model on the country.

CHAPTER V: THE EVOLUTION OF NIGER'S ROLE IN EUROPEAN MIGRATION CONTROL STRATEGY

5.1: Introduction

Niger's significant engagement in the EU's externalization process can be attributed to the end of Gaddafi's regime in Libya. This disruption has led to a lack of control over migration routes originating from West Africa. In Chapter III, I discussed how Gaddafi, during a period of isolation due to international sanctions, sought to compensate for this lack of external engagement. He achieved this by intensifying his focus on cooperation with the African continent, particularly the Sahelian region. While this phase led to less strict regulations governing migrants' entry into Libya, it is important to note that Gaddafi's strategy was not driven by ideological motives but rather had a temporary duration, rooted in opportunistic reasoning. Indeed, after years of negotiation, Gaddafi's acknowledgment of responsibility for the 1988 and 1989 airliner bombings played a pivotal role in allowing Libya to emerge from a prolonged period of hardship (Martinez, 2006: 152). Indeed, the imposition of sanctions, combined with the decline in oil prices in the late 1980s, resulted in a significant decrease in purchasing power for approximately 700,000 civil servants (on a total active population of barely 900,000 individuals) (Martinez, 2006: 154). A Libyan survey presented to the UN Security Council estimated that the application of sanctions resulted in a loss of approximately $24,000 million (Martinez, 2006: 154). Therefore, Therefore, the lifting of UN sanctions in 2003 and the EU's lifting of the arms embargo in 2004 (Lutterbeck, 2009: 505), presented Libya with a valuable opportunity for new economic prospects and the potential for a fresh strategic position within the broader landscape of regional relations. From this perspective, migration served as a crucial issue for Gaddafi in his endeavor to redefine his international standing.

Until the early 2000s, Gaddafi adopted an 'open door' policy towards migration, aiming to attract a quick and inexpensive labor force to address the struggling job market in Libya (William, 2020: 248). The presence of an unskilled migrant workforce could mitigate the negative impact of the embargo by reducing labor costs. The regulations concerning the entry and

stay of foreigners in Libya were insufficiently enforced at the borders, leading to a lack of effective control over these conditions. The authorities solely demanded a medical certificate from Sub-Saharan migrants, which they colloquially referred to as the 'health ticket' (Bradeloup & Zongo, 2005: 125). For this reason, the Libyan migration policy has been described by legal experts as a 'legal vacuum' due to the lack of proper regulations in place (Perrin, 2005).

However, the expanding presence of immigrant labor was met with a parallel rise in social discontent among the Libyan population, who were already grappling with the economic hardships imposed by sanctions. This discontent specifically targeted labor migrants whose presence was seen as obstructing an already chronically burdened national labor market. During the autumn of 2000, a tragic event unfolded when 130 Sub-Saharan migrants lost their lives as a consequence of anti-African migrants' riots that took place in Tripoli and Zawiya (Bradeloup & Pliez, 2011: 7).

From a political standpoint, taking into account the historical moment, this event assumed a remarkably delicate significance for Gaddafi: in light of the international rehabilitation efforts, Libya was faced with the imperative of taking a resolute stance and imposing sanctions on the events in Tripoli and Zawiya, as a tangible demonstration of the country's transformation into a law-abiding state. On the other hand, the need to maintain a low-cost labor force clashed with the increasing disillusionment among the Libyan population, who turned to migrants as scapegoats for their hardships. The circumstances called for a delicate juggling act between the international agenda and the domestic agenda (the latter characterized by the necessity to maintain the backing of the Libyan population and the urgency to avert a total economic collapse). As a result, this complex interplay resulted in a series of ambiguous political positions. The acts of violence that took place in Tripoli and Zawiya were dealt with through the imposition of stringent penalties and sanctions, ensuring a strong response to the incidents[94] (Bradeloup & Pliez, 2011: 7). However, in the realm of public discourse, Libyan leaders harshly criticized the migrants involved in the

[94] A total of 291 Libyan and 26 African foreigners were put on trial, resulting in 7 individuals being sentenced to death, 12 receiving life imprisonment, and 138 being sentenced to imprisonment ranging from 6 months to 15 years (Bradeloup & Pliez, 2011: 7).

events, portraying them as individuals engaged in illicit activities and carriers of diseases within Libyan cities (Pliez, 2003: 196). It was at this point that the Libyan authorities first evoked the image of Libya as a transit zone for migrations destined to Europe. In June 2002, Gaddafi made a declaration, expressing the viewpoint that "*No North African state wishes to guard the gates of Europe for free, as our region is invaded by sub-Saharan migrants*" (Reuters, 2002). In this manner, the Libyan authorities were addressing two interconnected needs. Firstly, they sought to exert pressure on Europe to expedite the strategic partnership process. Secondly, they aimed to absolve the government of responsibility towards the Libyan population by framing migration not as a phenomenon directly related to the country, but rather as a consequential effect of migration towards Europe.

Indeed, it is true that during that phase, Libya experienced a rise in the departure of migrant boats destined to Europe (Hamood, 2006: 19) especially as a consequence of Morocco and Tunisia aligning with the European framework to address irregular migration (Cassarino, 2014; Wunderlich, 2010). Consequently, there was a notable change in the locations where migration routes originated, with a discernible shift towards cities located in Tripolitania (Hamood, 2006: 19). In June 2003, a tragic incident occurred when a boat carrying 250 people, originating from the Tripolitania coast, sank off the Tunisian waters, claiming the lives of 210 individuals (Pliez, 2003: 201). This devastating event drew significant attention from both the media and political spheres, shining a spotlight on the issue of departures from the Libyan coast.

5.2: The Role of External Aid and Migration Security in EU-Libya Relations: A Comprehensive Analysis

While June 2003 can be considered a central date, it is worth noting that consultations regarding migration in the wider Mediterranean region had already started prior to this time. Shortly after the suspension of sanctions in 1999, a dialogue on combating terrorism and irregular migration started between Libya and the European Union (Zoubir, 2009: 409). However, during this initial phase of European integration, the management of the EU's external relations primarily fell within the purview of individual

member states, who engaged in bilateral arrangements. In the case of Libya, dialogue on economic and security integration was established with key European countries, including Germany, Great Britain, and Italy (Zoubir, 2009: 409-413). When it comes to the security landscape in the Mediterranean region, Italy stood out as the key player in advancing the project of Libyan integration within the broader European context. Italy was indeed motivated to advocate for Libya's re-integration to secure a lucrative market for its military industry and ensure access to oil supplies that had been affected by the imposition of sanctions (Toaldo, 2013). During the period between 2000 and 2007, Italy and Libya entered into a series of agreements aimed at strengthening their bilateral relationship. The provisions encompassed a range of projects and missions financed by Italy with the aim of managing migration and reducing the influx of arrivals from Libya to the Italian shores. These included: equipment provisions to enable Libyan authorities to effectively patrol their coasts, land borders, and ports; the establishment of return flights of irregular third-country nationals from Italy to Libya; financing of flights for the repatriation of undocumented migrants from Libya to their respective home countries; the establishment of capacity-building missions reinforcing Libyan police expertise in the realm of migration[95] (Paoletti: 2010, 2011; Paoletti & Pastore: 2010).

In 2004, the European Union embarked on its engagement with Libyan authorities in the field of migration while simultaneously lifting the arms embargo. During the period from 2004 to 2011, the European Commission

[95] In December 2000, Italy and Libya reached the first agreement that explicitly mentioned migration, known as the Memorandum of Intent. This agreement, signed between the two countries, addressed several important matters, including drug trafficking, terrorism, organized crime, and undocumented migration, among other areas of concern. In Tripoli on July 3, 2003, both parties reached an agreement regarding the exchange of information on migrant flows and the supply of specialized equipment to Libya for the purpose of managing and securing sea and land borders. From October 2004 to March 2006, Italy provided financial support for the repatriation flights of more than 3,000 irregular third-country nationals to Libya. The migrants who had returned from Italy were later repatriated to third countries by Libyan authorities, utilizing either air or land transportation. Italy and Libya entered into an agreement on December 28, 2007, regarding the collaborative patrolling of coasts and ports in northern Libya. Italy made a commitment to supply six patrol boats, and in January 2008, the Italian parliament endorsed the allocation of over €6 million to implement the agreement. On August 31, 2008, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and Colonel Gaddafi signed a significant agreement regarded as historic. Italy made a commitment to provide reparations amounting to US$5 billion over a span of 25 years. Berlusconi expressed his approval of the agreement ensuring ‘more oil and fewer migrants’ (Paoletti, 2011).

financed various projects aimed at migration management in Libya (Table 1). The majority of these projects were funded through the AENEAS Programme and the *Thematic Programme on Cooperation with Third Countries in the Areas of Migration and Asylum*[96] (Akkerman, 2018: 44). Some of the projects involved supplying equipment, such as the *Sahara-Med Project* which provided technical resources to enhance the operational capabilities of Libyan agencies responsible for border and migration management (Akkerman, 2018: 44). Simultaneously, Gaddafi's collaboration with Europe was accompanied by the implementation of legal frameworks governing migration. Among these, the most significant was the enactment of Decision No. 91 of 2006, which established regulations governing the employment of foreign labor (Perrin, 2011). Under this provision, foreign workers seeking a labor contract were required to demonstrate their lawful entry into Libyan territory and possess a valid residence permit (Perrin, 2011). These provisions brought about a significant shift in Libya's migration framework, resulting in tangible transformations for migrant populations.

EU funded 'Migration management' projects in Libya 2004–2011 (Akkerman, 2018: 45)

Project	EC Funding
A comprehensive approach to the effective management of mixed migration flows in Libya	€2 million
Across Sahara – Pilot project of regional cooperation and capacity	€1.6 million

[96] Both the The AENEAS and *The Thematic Programme on Cooperation with Third Countries in the Areas of Migration and Asylum* were funding initiatives launched by the European Commission in 2004. They aimed to support projects related to migration and asylum in collaboration with third countries. The programs provided financial resources to various initiatives and projects focused on managing migration, improving border controls, enhancing reception facilities, and promoting cooperation on asylum issues. For more on the AENEAS programme see Charpin & Aiolfi (2011), for more on *The Thematic Programme on Cooperation with Third Countries in the Areas of Migration and Asylum* see EU Commission (2006).

	building on border and illegal migration management (Libya and Niger)	
	Across Sahara II – Regional cooperation and capacity building on border and migration management (Libya and Algeria)	€1 million
	Facilitating a coherent migration management approach in Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and Libya by promoting legal migration and preventing further irregular migration	€2 million
	nteractive Map on Irregular Migration Routes and Flows in Africa, the Middle East and the Mediterranean Region (i-Map) (Libya and other MENA countries)	€0.9 million
	Project Réseau Afrique/Migration : renforcement de l'engagement opérationnel et de la collaboration régionale des acteurs de la société civile sur la gestion des flux migratoires de transit dans le Maghre (Libya, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia)	€1.3 million

Regional Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) Programme for Stranded Migrants in Libya and Morocco (Libya, Morocco and Niger)	€2 million
Sahara-MED: prevention and management of irregular migration flows from Sahara Desert to Mediterranean Sea	€10 million
Special Measures for Asylum and Migration for Libya and South Africa	€5 million
Strengthening the Criminal Justice System Response to Smuggling of Migrants in North Africa (Libya, Morocco, Algeria, Egypt and Tunisia)	€1.5 million
Support to Libyan authorities to enhance the management of borders and migration flows	€10 million
Migration observation, analysis and monitoring system in the North Africa and Eastern Mediterranean region (Libya and other MENA countries)	€1.4 million
The East Africa Migration Route: building co-operation, information sharing and developing	€0.9 million

joint practical initiatives amongst countries of origin, transit and destination (Libya, other countries in North and East Africa and Yemen)	
Title Programme for the Enhancement of Transit and Irregular Migration Management in Libya	€2 million

From a legal standpoint, these norms signaled a departure for Libya from its previously open-door migration policy, as evidenced by the numerous bilateral agreements entered into with African nations, as well as those within the framework of CENSAD. Conversely, this paradigm shift led to a proliferation of foreign individuals residing in Libya who suddenly found themselves in an irregular immigration status. More in general, these measures served a dual purpose: they facilitated a restructuring of the labor market, which needed to adapt after years of international marginalization, while also addressing European demands to align the Libyan migration framework with EU objectives.

Indeed, despite the regime's efforts to enforce laws intended to reduce irregular migration, the 'open door' policy under Gaddafi remained largely intact, as the laws against irregular migration were never genuinely enforced. The actions of the regime were primarily limited to symbolic mass expulsions, which had minimal impact on the influx of migrants who continued to enter Libya without regularizing their immigration status[97] (Baldwin-Edwards, 2010). This occurred due to several factors. The primary factor was Libya's persistent requirement for unskilled, affordable labor, which, despite the lifting of sanctions, remained necessary.

[97] 200,000 migrants are estimated to have been deported from Libya between 2003 and 2006 (Migreurop, 2012: 12). However, while it is true that Libya expelled migrants from its territory, with around 43,000 migrants being expelled in 2003, it is important to note that a significant portion of them were deported in accordance with the repatriation agreement signed with Italy. It means that these individuals were nationals of third countries who were initially expelled from Italy to Libya and then sent back from Libya to their home countries (Baldwin-Edwards, 2010: 7).

Secondly, as part of the EU partnership focused on managing 'transit migration' towards Malta and Italy, the endeavors and allocation of resources primarily targeted the northern regions of Libya and its Mediterranean coastline (Akkerman, 45: 2018). This did not deter migrants from entering Libyan territory through the permeable southern borders. Thirdly, the official criminalization of migrants in Libya contributed to the strengthening of what Shaw and Mangan (2015) described as the *protection economy*. The term *protection economy* refers to a range of transactions undertaken by a criminal organization to ensure the smooth operation, longevity, and security of various activities, whether legal or illegal (Shaw and Mangan 2015: 101). Throughout the years, Libya has emerged as a significant hub for illicit activities, with a thriving underground market encompassing various illegal endeavors such as drug trafficking, arms smuggling, illicit pharmaceutical trade, and the unauthorized resale of 4x4 trucks, as noted by Lacher (2012). The networks engaged in the trafficking of illegal commodities spanned across the entire country, allowing for the transportation of goods into and out of Libya (see figure 6). Nevertheless, this illicit economy was anything but an unregulated market. Participation in this illegal economy was limited to individuals (often families) who had connections to the regime. The Libyan state structure was founded on a confederation of cultural groups and tribes that possessed their own armed forces, (frequently engaged in internal conflicts) and pledged allegiance to Colonel Gaddafi[98] (Hüsken, 2007). In doing so, these groups dedicated themselves to preserving the cohesion of the state and refraining from engaging in any military activities that could destabilize the established framework of the state. In return, they gained access to state military and political positions, as well as entry into both

[98] Gaddafi strategically assigned security, military, and economic roles by employing a system of political familialism or tribalism. Primarily, Gaddafi's regime formed strong alliances with the *Qadhadhf*a, *Magarha*, and *Warfalla* groups. These influential figures, known as *rijal al-khayma* (men of the tent), held power over a vast network of key individuals, including army colonels, petroleum engineers, police officers, and high-ranking bureaucrats. Their recruitment aimed to maintain a familial/tribal equilibrium at the local level (Droz-Vincent, 2018: 436).

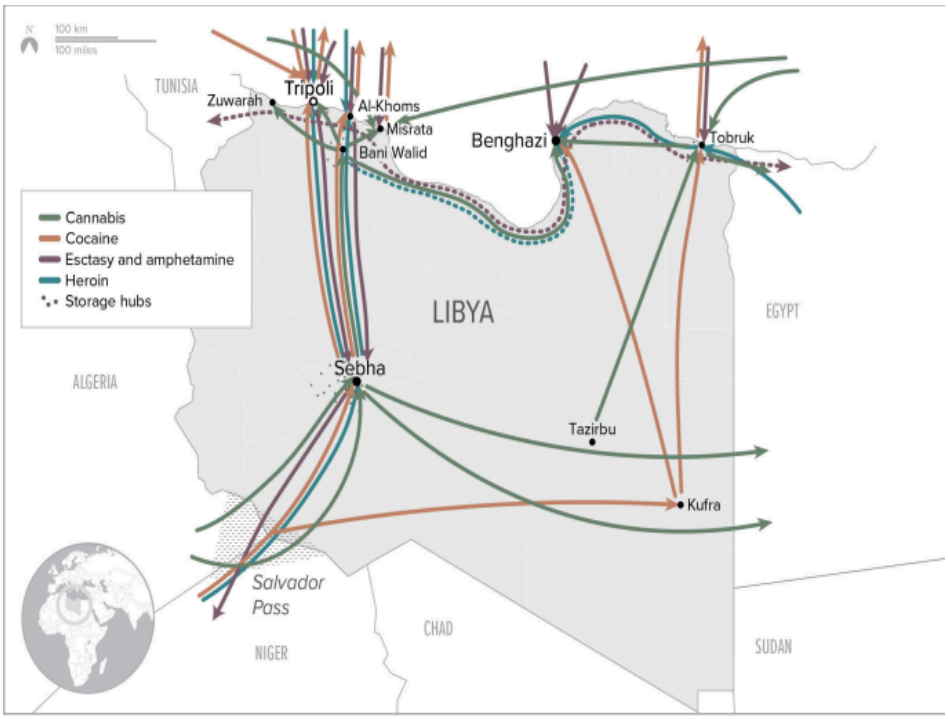


Figure 6: Main illegal drug trafficking routes in Libya. Source: Mangan, 2020: 10.

lawful and unlawful markets. Gaddafi utilized illegal economy as a system of reward and punishment by allowing or excluding someone by this state-financial machinery. This system of distributing goods and political positions from the top allowed the regime to maintain a level of dominance and legitimacy in a potentially competitive environment, as noted by Shaw and Mangan (2015: 103). As a result, the implementation of measures against irregular migration and the criminalization of migrants created a lucrative opportunity for those in advantageous positions on the territory to engage in the illicit taxation of migrant entry. It could be argued that managing migration according to the EU paradigm provided Gaddafi with an opportunity to strengthen the political system centered around the *protection economy*.

5.3: From Uprising to Civil War: The Case of Libya and its Regional Ramifications

When the Arab Spring uprising erupted in Tunisia in 2010, it served as a pivotal precedent for other countries in the Middle East and North Africa. The departure of former Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in

2011 became an emblematic symbol of political transformation arising from the empowerment of the population and the collective awakening of political consciousness. In a brief period, the wave of dissatisfaction with the governing elites expanded to the neighboring regions. In this context, the population, attributing the lack of democracy and persistent economic stagnation to local governments, took to the streets and confronted state authorities in an unprecedented display of social unrest. Nevertheless, twelve years since the inception (and conclusion) of this movement, the initial political and social demands have failed to materialize into tangible realities. Despite undoubtedly reflecting the aspirations of millions, the transformative momentum generated by this movement was gradually absorbed by autocratic regimes within a few years. As a consequence, socio-economic conditions remained largely unchanged when compared to the pre-revolution era (Khandelwal & Roitman, 2013: 5). In certain instances, the Arab Spring served as the catalyst for ongoing civil conflicts, resulting in the entrenchment of chronic instability and hindering the establishment of lasting peace. From this perspective, Libya (alongside Syria and Yemen) serves as a prominent example.

The uprising in Libya initially witnessed the population demanding respect for human rights, an end to political corruption, and ultimately the removal of Gaddafi, who was held accountable for the misconduct of state authorities. The confrontations between the population and the regime quickly escalated into a civil war, with loyalist forces supporting Gaddafi facing off against rebel groups advocating for a revolution against the regime (Echevarría & García-Enríquez, 2019: 2). The spread of violence and the uncertainty surrounding the regime had far-reaching implications, both in terms of governance and the economy, which soon garnered international attention and significance. Given Libya's strategic importance in relation to European, and more broadly, Western interests, the civil war issue was recognized as a top priority on the agendas of both the European Union and the United States (Campbell, 2013; Engdahl, 2011; Forte, 2012). In response to the NATO decision for military intervention in 2011, Gaddafi's regime was dissolved, ultimately leading to his death at the hands of the rebels on October 20, 2011. (Echevarría & García-Enríquez, 2019: 2).

The fall of Gaddafi had far-reaching implications for regional security, leading to the proliferation of armed conflicts in the Saharan and Sahelian regions. There are numerous reasons behind the resurgence of violence, which, to this day, appears to have no resolution in sight. Firstly, the return of foreign loyalist armed groups to their home countries following Gaddafi's death played a significant role. Defining the concept of foreign fighters under Gaddafi's regime, and more broadly, defining nationality within the Sahelian/Saharan context, is a complex undertaking. As mentioned earlier, certain fighters belonged to cultural groups that extend beyond state borders, where their cultural identities, despite technically being Libyan, held more prominence than their national citizenship. In other instances, as exemplified by individuals enlisted in the Islamic Legion, Libyan security forces recruited fighters who held nationality in neighboring states. In 2011, Mali faced the return of around 30,000 Tuareg migrant workers from Libya, who resettled in Mali's northern region. Among these individuals, a significant number were former members of the Libyan security forces[99] (DW, 2012). Their return to north Mali raised several issues for Malian government. Throughout history, both politically and economically, Northern Mali has followed a trajectory very similar to that of Northern Niger. Both regions endured socio-economic marginalization alongside periodic uprisings by the Tuareg community, which were often fiercely suppressed by national governments[100]. However, while the Malian government had a degree of familiarity in addressing Tuareg issues through a combination of negotiations and repression[101], the spillover effects from the Libyan civil war disrupted the local status quo in an unprecedented manner. The presence of armed men in a region with limited state involvement disrupted the power dynamics,

[99] It is estimated that in 2011, out of the approximately 30,000 Malians returning to Mali from Libya, around 2,000 were Gaddafi loyalists with a Tuareg background, equipped with small arms and artillery (DW, 2012).

[100] Prior to 2012, Mali witnessed three Tuareg rebellions: from 1962 to 1964, from 1990 to 1995, and from 2006 to 2009. For further information on the Tuareg rebellions in Mali prior to 2012, refer to Lecocq's work (2010).

[101] Prior to 2012, President Amadou Toumani Touré entered into informal agreements with traffickers operating in northern Mali, some of whom had connections with al-Qaeda. These agreements involved the commitment of traffickers to refrain from destabilizing northern Mali in exchange for the government's tacit approval and protection of their illicit activities (Diallo, 2017: 301-302).

undermining the authority of the state and rekindling long-standing aspirations for independence and self-determination among the Tuareg community. As a result, in January 2012, Tuareg rebels, led by the *Mouvement National de Libération de l'Azawad* (MNLA), initiated an armed uprising in northern Mali against the Malian state, ultimately leading to the declaration of the Republic of Azawad (Lecocq et. Al, 2013; Strazzari, 2015; Skretting, 2021). The consequences for the Malian Presidency were catastrophic. The defeat of Malian forces highlighted a complete lack of preparedness within the Malian security sector, both in terms of capacity and equipment (Hagberg & Körling, 2012) while security forces attributed the military defeat primarily to the pervasive corruption within the government[102] (Hagberg & Körling, 2012: 118). As a result, on March 21, 2012, the Malian military successfully staged a *coup* against President Amadou Toumani Touré, leading to his deposition (Hagberg & Körling, 2012).

The success of the MNLA in northern Mali can undoubtedly be attributed to the state's inability to effectively manage the demographic changes in an environment characterized by limited resources and a marginalized position in national policies. In addition, one must acknowledge the presence of armed groups that took advantage of community dissatisfaction for their own benefit. Within this context, it is important to highlight the significant proliferation of arms in the region, stemming from Gaddafi's arsenal, as another crucial factor contributing to the deteriorating security situation and its spillover effects. Armed groups capitalized on the vast stockpile of weapons, exacerbating the conflict in Libya and facilitating the smuggling of weapons throughout the region. In a remarkably brief period, trafficked weapons inundated the entire Sahara and Sahel regions[103] (Marsh, 2017).

[102] However, in addition to the responsibility of the presidency, the lack of success of the Malian military forces can be attributed to the chronic presence of corruption and nepotism within the army. For more information on the state of corruption in Mali prior to 2012, refer to Shipley's work (2012).

[103] Quantifying the extent of Gaddafi's arsenal is a challenging undertaking since there are no official data available prior to 2011. However, it is important to highlight that in 2011, two significant ammunition depots in Libya, located near the cities of Benghazi and Ajdabiya, were raided. According to reports from Human Rights Watch, both depots contained a substantial number of heavy artillery items, amounting to thousands (Larémont, 2015: 256).

The cascading effect of security challenges that began in Libya and spread to Mali played a central role in reshaping the security dynamics in the Sahelian region, creating favorable conditions for the emergence of jihadism. While the presence of jihadism in the region predates 2012, it was in the aftermath of the Azawad's declaration of independence that it gained a foothold in the Sahelian territory, emerging as a significant challenger to state authority.

In addition to the MNLA, the pro-Azawad front initially included the Salafist group known as *Ansar al-Dine* (defenders of the faith)[104]. Following an initial phase where the two forces collaborated against the Malian state between February and April 2012 (which culminated with the expulsion of Malian security forces from northern Mali) Ansar al-Dine managed to gain control over the MNLA's stronghold. This was accomplished with the assistance of the *Mouvement pour l'Unicité et le Jihad en Afrique Occidentale* (MUJAO) and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The ascendance of radical Islamic forces in northern Mali led to the implementation of *Shari'a* law under the banner of the Islamic Emirate of Azawad (Svensson & Finnbogasson, 2021: 574).

The jihadist spreading in Mali was not a random occurrence. Since its inception, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) had a primary objective of establishing a logistical center in the Sahel region to actively conduct and coordinate operations throughout the entire area[105] (Dowd & Raleigh, 2013: 502). Within this context, the Libyan Civil War presented

[104] Walther and Christopoulos (2015) have emphasized the importance of 'brokers' who possess significant social connections with influential figures within the pro-independence and jihadist factions.This led to a profound interconnection between individuals within both forces, often based on family ties or shared patterns of militancy. An illustrative example is Iyad ag Ghali, the leader of *Ansar al-Dine*, who has held various prominent positions within different factions. He initially joined the Islamic Legion in the 1980s, later serving the Tuareg cause during the 1990-1996 rebellion. In 2011, he made an unsuccessful attempt to gain leadership within the MNLA, which led to the establishment of *Ansar al-Dine*. In addition, he played a role as a negotiator between Western government officials and the kidnappers of European hostages in Mali during both 2003 and 2010. Furthermore, in 2010, he served as a consular officer for the Malian government in Saudi Arabia.

[105] AQIM was established in 2007 when the Algerian *Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat* (GSPC) pledged loyalty to Al-Qaeda Central, led by Osama Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri. Prior to this, the GSPC had been active since 1992 as an offshoot of the group known at the time as *Groupe Islamiste Armé* (GIA), engaging in armed opposition against the Algerian state. As a result, AQIM's activities primarily concentrated on the Algerian territory (Larémont, 2015: 243)

AQIM with an opportunity for expansion in the Sahelian region. This expansion was a result of AQIM's consolidation in Libya, their acquisition of a significant portion of weapons from Gaddafi's stockpile, and their exploitation of the conflict between Tuareg separatists and the Malian state (Raineri & Strazzari 2015, 2017; Hansen, 2022). From this perspective, the 2012 Tuareg rebellion presented AQIM, primarily composed of individuals from Arab ethnic backgrounds, with a significant opportunity to execute its strategy of establishing a presence in the peripheral regions of Sahelian states[106].

Therefore, 2012 marked a pivotal phase in the insurgency and counter-insurgency dynamics within the Sahelian region. The establishment of a jihadist stronghold in northern Mali compelled interim President Dioncounda Traoré to seek direct intervention from French troops, as the jihadist forces posed a threat to occupy the capital city of Bamako after gaining control over two-thirds of the country (Charbonneau, 2017a: 333). French President François Hollande promptly extended his support to Mali, in line with the Western doctrine of combating global terrorism (Charbonneau, 2017a). On January 11, 2013, the French military launched Operation Serval, deploying 5,000 French troops on Malian territory. The initial phase of the operation achieved significant success, leading to the expulsion of jihadists from several key cities in the north, including Douentza, Hombori, Gao, Timbuktu, Kidal, Tessalit, Menaka, and the Adrar des Ifoghas Massif (Walther & Christopoulos, 2015: 514). Nevertheless, despite the initial success, the jihadist insurgency in Mali and the Sahel region did not come to an end. On the contrary, the defeat of jihadists in northern Mali led to their reorganization and repositioning. Following the dissolution of the Caliphate, the jihadist front adopted a new strategy, shifting away from aspirations of controlling specific territories. Instead, they embraced a regional approach with the goal of destabilizing neighboring countries (Raineri & Martini, 2017: 7)[107]. Furthermore, the

[106] To consolidate its presence in northern Mali, AQIM employed two strategies to engage with Tuareg communities. Firstly, they provided logistical support for trafficking and smuggling activities conducted by members of the Tuareg community. Secondly, they arranged strategic marriages with women from the Tuareg aristocracy. A notable example is Moktar Belmokhtar, a former leader of AQIM, who married four women from prominent Tuareg and Arab Berberiche families (Larémont, 2015: 249).

establishment of the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (as an offshoot of MUJAO)[108] with a focus on the three borders region' (the Liptako-Gourma region encompassing the borders of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger) led to a further escalation of violence (Raineri, 2020). The resurgence of violence, coupled with the diminishing impact of joint French and Malian actions, contributed to a gradual erosion of their effectiveness. Indeed, while numerous operations have led to the neutralization of jihadists over the years, they have not succeeded in fully restoring the territorial control of the Malian state. Western technology has proven to have limited efficacy in desert and vast environments, and the coordination between French and Malian forces has often been weak, exposing the vulnerability of counter-insurgency governance in the Sahel region (Charbonneau, 2021). On the contrary, guerrilla tactics and the gradual recruitment of marginalized social groups, particularly the Fulani cultural group[109] in addition to the Tuareg, have bolstered the jihadist strategy and facilitated

[107] From 2013 to 2016, Moktar Belmokhtar, a prominent jihadist leader, took credit for several significant terrorist attacks that took place in the Sahel region. These attacks included the In Amenas gas plant attack in Algeria in January 2013, the attacks in Arlit and Agadez in Niger in May 2013, the assault on Bamako in November 2015, the incidents in Ouagadougou in January 2016, and the attack in Grand Bassam in Ivory Coast in March 2016. Belmokhtar's involvement in these high-profile attacks highlights his role as a key figure in the region's extremist activities (Raineri & Martini, 2017: 7).

[108] Following the French intervention, various jihadist factions in the Sahel region underwent several divisions, some driven by strategic differences and others due to disagreements in military operations. One significant split occurred when the MUJAO merged with Mokhtar Belmokhtar's *Katibat al-Mulathimeen* and *Katibat Mouwaqun bi dima* ('those who sign in their blood') to form the federation *al-Mourabitoun*. However, MUJAO itself experienced a division, with a faction led by Abou Walid al-Saharawi and Burkinabé preacher Ibrahim 'Maalam' Dicko establishing the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) by pledging allegiance to Caliph Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi in May 2015. In 2017, Iyad ag Ghali, the leader of *Ansar al-Dine*, announced the unification of major jihadist forces (excluding ISGS), establishing the federation *Jama'at Nusrat ul-Islam wal-Muslimin* (Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims - JNIM). JNIM currently represents the Al-Qaeda branch in the Sahel region. For more on the composition of Militant Islamist Groups in the Sahel see Eizenga & Williams (2020).

[109] The expansion of jihadism towards the south can be attributed to various factors. One significant reason is the gradual involvement of the Fulani ethnic group in jihadist ranks. This can be seen as a consequence of the lack of state intervention in resolving longstanding pastoral disputes between Fulani nomads and settled communities. Presently, the *Katiba Macina*, a jihadist group associated with AQIM, led by the preacher Amadou Kouffa, has managed to recruit a significant number of fighters from Fulani communities. Another reason for the spread of jihadism in the Liptako-Gourma region is the jihadists' exploitation of the lack of coordination among states in defending peripheral areas, which allows armed groups to move across borders. The inadequate collaboration and cooperation between states in these regions create opportunities for armed groups to operate freely and expand their influence (Eizenga & Williams, 2020).

the expansion of jihadist governance experiments in the Sahelian region[110] (Rupesinghe et al., 2021).

Consequently, despite an initial phase of success, French operations against Sahelian jihadism have increasingly struggled to restore a secure security framework. In contrast, jihadist forces have expanded and proliferated across the Sahelian territory. The situation in the region becomes even more alarming considering the presence of jihadist militias such as Boko Haram and the Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP) in the Lake Chad basin area, which includes Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria. Figuratively, these groups represent the jihadist grip on the Sahelian states[111] (Amao, 2023; Wild, 2021; Zenn, 2020).

It is noteworthy that significant reconfigurations have also taken place on the Western front, aiming to enhance and readjust European efforts. Indeed, in response to the repositioning of jihadist forces, European-led counter-terrorism operations have undergone a strategic re-territorialization, expanding their focus to encompass the entire Sahelian region. In 2014, Operation Serval transitioned into Operation Barkhane, encompassing a broader scope of action that included not only Mali but also Niger and Burkina Faso (Wing, 2016; Charbonneau 2017a; 2017b;). Furthermore, this expansion of territory coincided with a gradual involvement of EU member states, either individually or under the auspices of the European Union. They committed to combating jihadism

[110] As highlighted by Rupesinghe et al. (2021: 7), the establishment of jihadist governance in the Sahel involves the implementation of institutions and practices based on their interpretation of 'authentic Islam'. Interestingly, this governance is enforced remotely, even though jihadists may not have full control over the territories they operate in. They assert their authority by regulating the movement of goods and people, implementing surveillance systems within communities, and controlling patron-client relationships. Through these means, jihadists seek to exert influence and control over the local population, despite their limited territorial control. Their governance practices aim to shape social and economic dynamics, as well as maintain a semblance of order within their areas of operation.

[111] Founded in 1995, Boko Haram, also known as *Jamā'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wa'l-Jihād (JAS), meaning* 'Salafi Muslim Group for Preaching and Jihad' in Hausa, launched its military campaign against the Nigerian state on December 24, 2003. Their first attack targeted a police station and several public buildings in the towns of Geidam and Kanamma in Yobe State. In 2015, then-leader Abubakar Shekau pledged allegiance to Abubakar al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISIS, transforming JAS into ISWAP (Islamic State West Africa Province). However, in August 2016, ISWAP experienced a split, with the son of JAS's former leader, Muhammed Yusuf Abu, also known as Musab al-Barnawi, assuming leadership of ISWAP, while Shekau reestablished JAS (Amao, 2023; Wild, 2021; Zenn, 2020).

in the Sahel through the implementation of operational activities and capacity-building missions[112]. Of equal significance are the endeavors of Sahelian states, which have attempted - albeit with limited success - to establish joint security forces in collaboration with EU missions. These efforts aim to eradicate violent extremism and include initiatives such as the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF)[113] and the G-5 Sahel[114].

However, over the course of more than a decade, the security landscape in the Sahel region has noticeably deteriorated compared to the situation in 2012. States have effectively lost control over significant portions of their territories, and even more tragically, the conflict has escalated into an inter-community stage. This has resulted in escalating violence that affects civilians, who are increasingly targeted by both jihadist groups and regular security forces[115] (Pérouse de Montclos, 2021: 4). Moreover, the perceived

[112] In 2011, the European Union External Action Service (EEAS) introduced the 'Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel', aiming to tackle the security and development challenges in the Sahelian region. Currently, the European security operations in the Sahel include EUCAP Sahel Mali, EUCAP Sahel Niger, Operation Barkhane, and the European Union multinational military training mission (EUTM Mali).

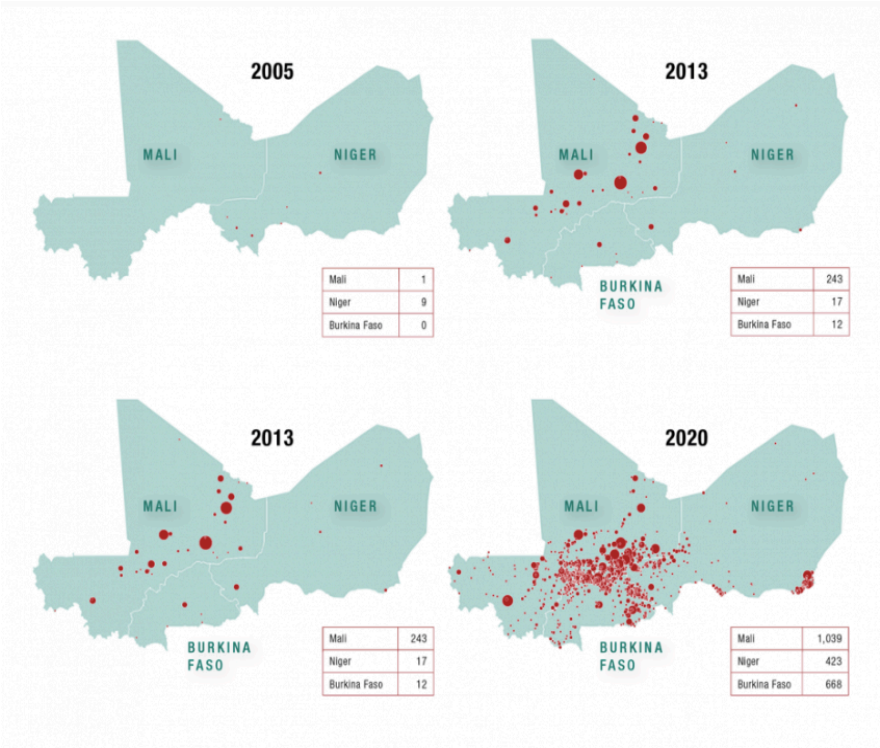
[113] Established in 1994 as a mechanism to combat criminal activities in the Lake Chad Basin area, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) has undergone adjustments over the years to specifically address the Boko Haram insurgency across Nigeria, Chad, and Niger. While the mission includes police and civilian officers, the MNJTF has primarily focused on its military component. The mandate of the MNJTF aims to "*creating safe and secure environment in the areas affected by Boko Haram and other terrorist groups to pave the way for the reduction of violence against civilians; facilitating stabilization programs in the member states; and facilitating humanitarian operation and the provision of assistance to affected population*" (Kifle, 2018: 20). Despite the efforts of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), the success in countering the insurgency and reducing violence in the Lake Chad Basin Area has been limited. For more on the limits of MNJTF see Gershon (2023).

[114] Established in 2015 with the support of France, the G-5 Sahel force was created as a mechanism to enhance coordination among Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger in terms of security and development activities. The initiative has primarily prioritized security-related activities, with a focus on deploying military operational forces along key fronts. These include the border between Mali and Mauritania (referred to as the western front), the Liptako-Gourma region (known as the central front), and the border between Chad and Niger (referred to as the eastern front). With the deteriorating security situation, the focus on developmental activities within the G-5 Sahel force has been overshadowed, yielding poor results. Moreover, in June 2022, Mali decided to withdraw its support from the G-5 Sahel force due to the worsening regional and international relations following the second coup and the blockage from other member states in assuming the group's presidency. Mali's withdrawal effectively marked the end of G-5 Sahel activities. For more on the G-5 Sahel see Dieng (2019), Rupesinghe (2018), Sandnes (2022), Welz (2022).

[115] According to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) (2023), the number of reported deaths from political violence has significantly increased across the entire Sahel region. Mali has experienced a staggering 150% increase in political violence compared to 2021, while Burkina Faso has witnessed a 77% growth in such incidents. Furthermore, it has been reported that in 2022, Malian military forces were

inefficiency of Operation Barkhane has contributed to an escalation of tensions between the transitional government of Mali and France. This culminated in the withdrawal of French troops from Mali in August 2022, as both governments accused each other of lacking effectiveness in confronting the threat of jihadism[116].

The spillover of violence has unquestionable impacts on patterns of people's mobility, inhibiting some individuals while compelling others to relocate. It is evident that as conflict leads to forced migration, European efforts and local governments strive to address violence and mobility as intertwined factors. Indeed, the correlation between the escalation of violence and forced migration in the Sahel region is alarming. The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has surged dramatically, increasing tenfold from 217,000 in 2017 to 2.6 million in 2022 (Dieng, 2021: 774).



responsible for more civilian casualties than in all previous years combined. This marks the first time since the beginning of the conflict in 2012 that the Malian military has emerged as the deadliest actor. A significant number of civilian deaths were the result of mass atrocities.

[116] Tensions between Mali and France have escalated as a result of the military coup d'état that ousted President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta in 2020, and the subsequent removal of Transition President Bah Ndaw by Colonel Assimi Goïta in 2021. Moreover, the deployment of Russian mercenaries from the Wagner Group in Mali, at the request of the Transition government, has further strained the relationship between Bamako and Paris.

Figure 7: Violent events in the Sahel (2005-2020). Source: ACLED, 2020.

5.4: Niger's Role in the European Migration Control Strategy: From Cooperation to Criminalization

The repercussions of the civil Libyan civil war on the regional migratory framework were substantial. First and foremost, the security vacuum in Libya had a profound impact on the long-term migrant population. Indeed, during the initial phase of the civil war, migrants witnessed a sharp increase in systematic abuse and violence. According to migrants who arrived in Europe after Gaddafi's fall, Sub-Saharan migrants were compelled to join Libyan military forces against the rebels. Consequently, the rebels viewed individuals with dark skin as potential adversaries, leading to an escalation of violence against foreign nationals (Morone, 2016: 149). As a result, the precarious situation compelled a significant number of sub-Saharan individuals living in Libya to flee the country and seek refuge in neighboring nations. Out of the total of 2.5 million migrant workers in Libya, with 1.5 million lacking legal status, 253,506 individuals crossed the border into Tunisia, including 60,492 Tunisians and 193,015 nationals from other countries. Additionally, 183,334 individuals entered Egypt, comprising 105,821 Egyptians and 77,513 nationals from other countries. Moreover, 24,050 individuals migrated to Algeria, while 43,795 sought refuge in Chad, and 2,800 fled to Sudan. Additionally, approximately 60,000 skilled migrant workers employed in the oil industry were evacuated by plane. Furthermore, around 500,000 Libyans migrated to Tunisia (321,830) and Egypt (172,873) (Koser, 2011: 3).

Simultaneously, a total of 42,788 migrants arrived on the Italian island of Lampedusa, comprising 24,241 Tunisian nationals and 18,647 individuals from sub-Saharan African countries, primarily Nigeria, Ghana, Mali, and Côte d'Ivoire (Koser, 2011: 4).

The circumstances surrounding these departures are complex and multifaceted. It is worth noting that many of these migrants were compelled or coerced by Libyan authorities to board vessels. This was done with the intention of exerting pressure on NATO nations, who were simultaneously conducting an offensive against Gaddafi's regime (Morone, 2016: 143). Alternatively, some migrants independently reached

the southern coasts of Europe, primarily due to the closure of the Tunisian and Egyptian borders, leaving crossing the Mediterranean Sea as the only viable option to exit the country (Rothe & Salehi, 2016: 390). Furthermore, the departure from the country became more viable due to the release of numerous smugglers who had been imprisoned during the Gaddafi regime. These smugglers grasped the desire of foreign populations to swiftly leave the country (Morone, 2016: 143).

In parallel with the departure of long-standing migrants, the fall of Gaddafi saw an increase in the number of transit migrants heading towards Europe. Indeed, the outbreak of the civil war initially led to the temporary suspension of the implementation of the 2008 treaty between Italy and Libya (Morone, 2016: 144). The Libyan corridor emerged as a widely recognized route for individuals aspiring to reach Europe, as news of successful arrivals spread to the migrants' countries of origin, thereby triggering a pull effect (Altai, 2013: 62). In 2014 alone, approximately 170,000 individuals made the journey from Libya to Sicily (Baldwin Edwards & Luttemberg, 2019: 4). Effectively, the civil war transformed Libya into a significant transit state, materializing European concerns regarding the unregulated influx of people reaching Europe from the coasts of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. Moreover, transit migration witnessed a surge as armed groups resorted to taxing and extorting money from migrants as a crucial means to finance their ongoing war efforts. Migrant prisons, which already existed during Gaddafi's regime, assumed a pivotal role during the civil war, as the practice of detaining and extorting migrants became a lucrative source of revenue[117] (Morone, 2015).

During that period, Libya witnessed the emergence of a robust smuggling network, driven in part by the influx of Syrian refugees seeking refuge

[117] The detention centers for migrants in Libya have garnered international attention due to well-documented cases of widespread violence, abuse, and human rights violations. With the onset of the Civil War, Libya witnessed the proliferation of both official detention centers, operated by the Directorate for Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM), and informal detention centers, run by various armed groups. It is important to note that while systematic violence may not occur in the DCIM-led facilities, there have been reports documenting instances of violence in these centers as well. According to an IOM report, there are currently 25 operational DCIM centers, 18 centers that are inactive, nine centers that have been closed, and two centers undergoing maintenance. Providing an exact count of the detention centers operated by traffickers or armed groups is exceedingly challenging. According to Al-Dayel et al., there are a minimum of 34 centers in Libya under the control of armed groups (Al Dayel et al., 2021: 5).

from the devastating civil war in their homeland. The influx of Syrians into Libya, characterized by their considerable purchasing power, brought about a tangible transformation in the smuggling network[118] (Tinti & Wescott, 2016: 3). In order to capitalize on the new demand, the pre-existing smuggling network expanded its reach, establishing intricate connections and operating with heightened efficiency. Prior to 2011, it is evident that Sub-Saharan migrants did not necessarily prioritize Europe as their intended destination. Nonetheless, they seized the opportunity presented by the enhanced capabilities of the smuggling network. The period between 2012 and 2013 witnessed a significant surge in arrivals to Europe via the 'central Mediterranean route', with the numbers escalating from 15,900 to 40,000 (Tinti & Wescott, 2016:3). Subsequently, in 2014, the figure soared to 170,760, and by 2015, it stabilized around 153,000 (Tinti & Wescott, 2016: 3). In the context of Niger, it is noteworthy that an approximate annual transit of 100,000 migrants has been observed since 2000 (Moretti, 2020: 83). Furthermore, there have been significant peaks in migration, with recorded transit numbers reaching as high as 330,000 between 2011 and 2017 (Molenaar, 2017: 4). In the specific context of the city of Agadez, estimations suggested a weekly influx of approximately 3,000 migrants who were *en route* to northern destinations (Tinti & Wescott, 2016: 2). As a result of this substantial northward migration flow, Niger has emerged as a fundamental actor within the European strategy for migration control, especially following Gaddafi's downfall.

As discussed in the previous chapter, during the pre-2000 phase, Niger's primary focus was on nurturing its relationships with the diaspora residing abroad. Until that moment, it can be argued that migration was not perceived as a security concern by the government. However, it was during the 2000s that Niger started gradually aligning itself with the European migration framework, signifying the initiation of the securitization process of migration mobility in the country. This commitment is exemplified by

[118] The utilization of the central Mediterranean route by Syrian refugees was primarily observed during the immediate aftermath of Gaddafi's demise. Subsequently, the trajectories of Syrian migrants heading towards Europe underwent a swift shift as they began to follow the Eastern Mediterranean route, spanning from Turkey to the Greek islands in the Aegean Sea. Notably, it is estimated that in 2015, a staggering number of approximately 850,000 individuals successfully reached Europe via this particular route (Reitano & Micaleff, 2016: 1).

its active involvement in diverse initiatives and endeavors associated with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). This occurred as a result of the Nigerien government's need to address mass expulsions of its fellow nationals from neighboring countries. In this regard, IOM takes a leading role in coordinating practices related to readmission and repatriation (Webber, 2001: 99). Indeed, a significant development occurred in 2004 when IOM set up its operations in Libya to oversee the repatriation of Egyptian, Nigerien, and Chadian nationals (Boyer & Mounkaila, 2018a: 273). This marked the initial interaction between the organization and the Nigerien government. In 2006, IOM established its presence in Niger, marking a significant milestone. During this phase, IOM engaged in a multitude of activities in collaboration with the Nigerien authorities. These activities encompassed: providing humanitarian assistance to migrants in distress, supporting the socio-economic reintegration of returning migrants, strengthening the capacity of Nigerien authorities in migration management and anti-trafficking efforts, as well as conducting targeted awareness campaigns to inform migrants about the risks associated with crossing the desert (Boyer & Mounkaila, 2018a: 275). The activities of IOM experienced a notable intensification, particularly starting from 2011 in response to the Libyan crisis. During this period, in close collaboration with the Nigerien government, the organization made significant efforts to facilitate the repatriation of a total of 114,500 individuals on the Nigerien territory (out of which 6,278 were non-Nigeriens) (Mounkaila, 2015: 99).

Simultaneously, the European Union member states embarked on a closer engagement with Niger in the domain of bolstering migration policies. Initially, Spain and Italy, recognizing their geographical position at the southern border of the European Union, played a pivotal role by providing technical and financial support in the creation of a committee tasked with formulating a national migration policy document (Boyer & Mounkaila, 2018a: 275). Under the leadership of the Niger's Minister of Interior, this committee convened various stakeholders, including the police, customs, *l'état civil*, and technical financial partners such as IOM (Boyer & Mounkaila, 2018a: 275). The composition of the committee underscores the emergence of a trend within the Nigerien framework, whereby migration is progressively intertwined with principles of surveillance and

criminalization. The consolidation of this link is exemplified by the establishment of EUCAP-Sahel in Niamey, operating as a European civilian police cooperation body created within the framework of the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). However, it is worth noting that EUCAP, during its initial establishment, did not prioritize objectives related to migration (Bøås, 2020: 9). Indeed, until 2015 - when the European Council extended mission's scope (Niemann & Zaun, 2023: 2967) - EUCAP's initial objectives were primarily focused on counterterrorism and combating organized crime (Boyer & Mounkaila, 2018a: 280). However, from that year onwards, EUCAP started to expand its scope to include migration, with a particular emphasis on the Agadez region recognized by the agency as a pivotal hub for trafficking activities across the Sahel region (Bøås, 2020: 11). Boyer and Mounkaila's (2018a: 280) stress the pivotal role of EUCAP in addressing outward migration from Niger. Specifically, EUCAP has been instrumental in disseminating and implementing targeted strategies aimed at the identification and containment of migration flows. This includes the transmission of effective practices and measures for enhanced border management. Indeed, despite EUCAP's lack of an operational mandate in the country, their capacity-building and monitoring missions conducted in collaboration with the Nigerien Police and Gendarmerie have served a crucial preparatory purpose in the lead-up to the enforcement of the law on migrant trafficking in 2015. Indeed, quoting Boyer & Mounkaila (2018a: 280), '[…] *la coopération policière constituant alors l'instrument par lequel l'UE diffuse et impose des techniques, des méthodes de travail, mais aussi des modes de représentation de la frontière*'.

Meanwhile, from a legislative standpoint, the country became engaged in adjustments that moved towards a progressive criminalization of mobility, which later would be referred to as 'transit migration'. In 2010 the government established the *Commission Nationale de Coordination de la Lutte Contre la Traite des Personnes* and the *Agence Nationale de Lutte Contre la Traite des Personnes* through the enactment of Order 2010-86 (Boyer & Mounkaila, 2018b: 35). This measure was undertaken in accordance with the country's ratification of the United Nations Convention and its Protocols on Transnational Organized Crime (the Palermo Protocols) in 2004 (Boyer & Mounkaila, 2018a: 273). During this

phase, the two institutions primarily assumed a role of raising awareness on the subject of human trafficking and more in general on the pitfalls of irregular migration, as the Nigerien government will take a significant stride only in 2015 by enacting a comprehensive law that explicitly addresses and prosecutes migrant trafficking (Boyer & Mounkaila, 2018a: 273).

5.5: The Migration-Security-Development Nexus: Interconnected Relationships and Policy Frameworks

In 2015, the European Union experienced a significant acceleration in its dialogue with Niger on migration matters, aligning with the principles set forth in the European Agenda on Migration[119]. One of the key goals of this agenda, as articulated by the European Commission (2015), was to foster '*Stronger partnerships with Third Countries in the field of smuggling and return*'.

The Valletta summit on migration held in November 2015 was a stalemate of this process. This significant EU-led initiative brought together heads of state and government from both Europe and Africa to address the complex issue of mixed migration. During the summit, crucial discussions took place, leading to the identification of key steps and strategies for managing migration and migration related issues such as development, protection and asylum, combating irregular migration and smuggling, and addressing the root causes of migration.

The summit highlighted the imperative for the EU and African counterparts to collectively address the pressing issue referred to as the 'migration emergency'. This collaborative approach was perceived as the sole viable means to effectively deal with the matter. In European

[119] The approved text by the European Commission addressed several key components, including: improving the management of the EU's external borders through coordinated action and increased cooperation among member states; enhancing the common European asylum system by ensuring fast and efficient asylum procedures, fair responsibility sharing among member states and protection of the rights of asylum seekers; tackling the underlying causes of irregular migration, including conflicts, poverty, instability, and climate change, through international cooperation and sustainable development; intensifying cooperation with third countries, particularly those of origin and transit for migrants, to better manage migration flows and combat human trafficking; promoting the integration of legal migrants into European society by ensuring access to education, employment, healthcare, and other essential services.

intentions the summit underscored that irregular and unmanaged migration posed a shared challenge for both continents, necessitating a cooperative approach founded on a 'win-win' principle. This attempt by the EU aimed to redefine the perception of unmanaged migration, recognizing that its impact extends far beyond destination countries. The goal was to highlight the global ramifications of unmanaged migration and emphasize that addressing this issue requires collective action and cooperation[120]. However, by framing unmanaged migration as an international problem, the EU sought to unite its efforts and address the shortcomings of the past two decades in its reception, asylum, and relocation policies. These policies have often caused divisions and gridlock within the European Union, hindering effective solutions to the migration challenge[121] (Zaun and Nantermoz, 2023: 2992).

To foster cooperation in addressing irregular migration, the European Commission highlighted the negative implications of migration concerning African countries. According to the Commission, migration was primarily linked to poverty, with a particular emphasis on how chronic poverty inevitably drove a significant number of people to seek opportunities elsewhere[122]. While this assumption is based on a flawed premise - as reducing poverty in an already impoverished country leads, at least in the short term, to an increased propensity for migration (Lanati &

[120] Here is an excerpt from the document titled '*Valletta Summit, 11-12 November 2015 Political Declaration*' prepared by the participants (2015: 2): 'We fully recognise the benefits of well-managed migration and mobility between and within our continents. We underline that a comprehensive approach is necessary for boosting sustainable economic, social and environmental development and to ensure that human beings can fulfil their potential to live in dignity and equality. We have a common responsibility to address the opportunities and challenges of migration and mobility which must be shared in a fair manner between countries of origin, transit and destination. We commit to take into further consideration migration and mobility in our development strategies, programming and implementation'.

[121] This discourse revolves around a fracture between European southern and northern countries, (which are involved in both primary and secondary flows of migrants) and the *Visegrad Group* countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) with the latter vehemently oppose any proposals for relocating asylum seekers that originate from the former group (Zaun, 2018).

[122] Excerpt from the document titled '*Valletta Summit, 11-12 November 2015 Political Declaration*' prepared by the participants (2015: 2): 'We recognise the high degree of interdependence between Africa and Europe as we face common challenges that have an impact on migration: promoting democracy, human rights, eradicating poverty, supporting socio-economic development, including rural development, mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change'.

Thiele, 2018) - it creates a connection between development and migration, where irregular mobility is portrayed as a thermometer of eroded socioeconomic conditions (poverty, unemployment, education).

Secondly, the participants highlighted the negative correlation between migration and the security framework, emphasizing the impact of insecurity in driving forced migration[123]. Also in this case, the Commission's assumptions were based on weak foundations. According to Raineri & Rossi (2017: 11), although deteriorating security conditions have contributed to mass forced migrations in some cases, we have evidences that populations in highly impoverished countries often choose to remain within their own territories after armed conflicts. For example, the authors estimate (Raineri & Rossi, 2017: 11) that 63% of migrants transiting through the so-called Central Mediterranean route (which passes through Niger) come from countries that are currently not at war (Senegal, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Sierra Leone). Furthermore, even when considering the security perspective (as previously discussed regarding development), it is not the most marginalized who are leaving, but rather those who possess economic, social, and security assets that enable them to pursue mobility.

Moreover, the Commission highlighted how irregular migration serves as a means for non-state actors or terrorist networks to finance their activities[124]. This second aspect highlighted the interdependent relationship between irregular migration and the integrity of African states, with a specific emphasis on countries of origin and transit. Additionally, in accordance with the Palermo protocols, the portrayal of migration within the security context resulted in the criminalization of smuggling activities, thereby depicting migrants as victims of trafficking[125]. This

[123] Excerpt from the document titled '*Valletta Summit, 11-12 November 2015 Political Declaration*' prepared by the participants (2015: 2): 'We will pay particular attention to stability and security, which is currently threatened by terrorism, the arms trade and armed conflicts. We commit ourselves to address these challenges in a concerted manner, notably through early warning, conflict prevention and conflict resolution'.

[124] Excerpt from the document titled '*Valletta Summit, 11-12 November 2015 Political Declaration*' prepared by the participants (2015: 3): 'We will strengthen the fight against organized criminal networks, including their links to terrorism, through effective border management, enhanced cooperation and the implementation of the relevant legal and institutional frameworks'.

[125] Excerpt from the document titled '*Valletta Summit, 11-12 November 2015 Political Declaration*' prepared by the participants (2015: 3): 'We undertake to scale up our joint

discussion also highlighted the potential erosion of humanitarian principles associated with irregular migration.

The emergence of the so-called migration-security-development nexus in public discourse can be attributed to these interconnected relationships. Originating from the La Valletta Summit, this nexus has become the fundamental framework for shaping border externalization policies and European asylum practices. However, this connection is framed in a manner that presents the security aspect, particularly concerning the protection of African countries' borders, as a prerequisite for the EU's provision of development aid. According to Bisong (2020: 226), the Valletta summit played a significant role in creating a framework that linked aid provisions to partner countries' dedication to border enforcement and their active involvement in the process of externalizing asylum. This framework operated under the concept of 'tied aid' whereby development aid was utilized as a means to incentivize or penalize states based on their level of engagement in addressing migration issues (Bisong, 2020: 226) This tie emerged sharply when the Commission introduced the New Partnership on Migration (NPF). This framework was designed as a tool to '*[…] establish a coherent and tailored engagement [...] with third countries to better manage migration'* (EC, 2016: 6). The Partnership text states that there are three essential factors for a partnership to be successful: (1) the partner country's cooperation in terms of readmission and return, which is contingent on certain conditions; (2) the provision of effective incentives, particularly through EU trade and development policies; and (3) the implementation of a customized package specific to each country's needs (Gazzotti *et al*., 2023: 76). The migration partnership framework aimed to comprehensively incorporate migration within the foreign policy of the European Union (EU) through the utilization of various instruments, mechanisms, assets, and leverage from both the EU and its member states. Its objective was to foster collaboration with partner countries in order to achieve the sustainable management of migration movements (EC, 2017a, p. 2). The operation of the NPF was structured

efforts in preventing and fighting migrant smuggling, eradicating trafficking in human beings and combatting those who exploit vulnerable people, both in Europe and in Africa. Trafficking in human beings, including for the purpose of sexual exploitation and forced labor is a serious crime and an unacceptable infringement of fundamental human rights'.

around the use of ‘compacts’ which are adaptable agreements tailored to the specific circumstances of each country (Bisong, 2020: 225). This approach has provided the opportunity to establish ad-hoc components that are designed to be flexible and adaptable, taking into account the diverse scenarios of each country under consideration.

The selected countries for the compacts included Ethiopia, Nigeria, Senegal, Niger, and Mali deemed by the EU as priority countries (Castillejo, 2017: 7). These countries were identified based on specific criteria and considerations, which deemed them suitable for collaborative initiatives aimed at addressing migration challenges and fostering cooperation in the field (Bisong, 2020: 225). In this context, development assistance was strategically employed as a tool to either reward or sanction states depending on their efforts and actions in the realm of migration. Moreover, during the summit, the European Commission made an official announcement regarding the launch of the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Stability and Addressing the Underlying Causes of Irregular Migration and Displacement in Africa (EUTF). Its primary objective was to support projects and programs that promote stability, address the drivers of irregular migration, improve migration management, and enhance economic opportunities in African countries. This fund, initially allocated with a budget of €2.5 billion, primarily sourced from the EU budget and the European Development Fund, aimed to address pressing migration challenges in the region (EC, 2016a). In its inaugural year, the trust fund demonstrated its commitment by allocating over €900 million to combat ‘irregular migration and migrant smuggling’ in the Sahel region and the Lake Chad Basin. Notably, the most significant portion of this budget was specifically allocated to Niger with euro 253 million to finance activities ‘ranging from economic development and job creation for local communities to support for migrants and refugees (Golovko & Molenaar, 2023: 132). Considering Niger's dependency on external aid, with a calculated public debt of 46.7% (Boyer & Chappart, 2018: 94), this opportunity held utmost significance.

5.6: Conclusions

Niger's engagement in the EU's externalization process is a direct result of the end of Gaddafi's regime in Libya. This disruption has led to a lack of control over migration routes from West Africa. Gaddafi, facing international sanctions, focused on cooperation with the African continent, particularly the Sahelian region, as a temporary solution. His strategy was opportunistic rather than driven by ideology. Sanctions and declining oil prices resulted in economic hardships for Libya, but the lifting of UN sanctions in 2003 and the EU's arms embargo in 2004 presented new economic prospects. Gaddafi implemented an "open door" policy towards migration to address the struggling job market, attracting an inexpensive labor force. Insufficiently enforced regulations created a legal vacuum in Libyan migration policy. The presence of immigrant labor caused social discontent among the Libyan population already burdened by economic hardships. Tragic events, such as anti-African migrants' riots in 2000, forced Libya to take a resolute stance, imposing sanctions and penalties to demonstrate its transformation into a law-abiding state. However, leaders criticized migrants in public discourse, portraying them as carriers of diseases and engaging in illicit activities. In 2002, Gaddafi portrayed Libya as a transit zone for migrations to Europe, exerting pressure on Europe and deflecting responsibility from the government. Departures of migrant boats to Europe increased, particularly due to Morocco and Tunisia aligning with European efforts to address irregular migration. Migration routes shifted towards cities in Tripolitania. A tragic incident in June 2003, where a boat carrying 250 people sank off Tunisian waters, highlighted the risks faced by migrants. This event drew attention from the media and politicians, shedding light on the issue of departures from the Libyan coast. In summary, the end of Gaddafi's regime in Libya had significant implications for migration dynamics. Economic and social impacts arose, and the discourse and actions of Libyan authorities and European partners were shaped accordingly. Niger's involvement in the EU's externalization process stems from the disruptions caused by Gaddafi's regime and the subsequent migration challenges. Prior to June 2003, consultations on migration in the wider Mediterranean region had already begun. After the suspension of sanctions in 1999, Libya and the European Union initiated a

dialogue on combating terrorism and irregular migration. However, at this time, individual member states of the EU were primarily responsible for managing their external relations through bilateral arrangements. Italy played a key role in advocating for Libya's reintegration into the European context, driven by its military industry and access to oil supplies.

Between 2000 and 2007, Italy and Libya entered into various agreements to strengthen their bilateral relationship and manage migration. These agreements included providing equipment to enhance border and migration management, establishing return flights for irregular migrants, and capacity-building missions for Libyan police. From 2004 to 2011, the European Commission financed migration management projects in Libya, primarily through the AENEAS Programme and the Thematic Programme on cooperation with Third Countries in the Areas of Migration and Asylum. During this period, Libya implemented legal frameworks governing migration, including regulations on the employment of foreign labor. These norms marked a departure from Libya's previous open stance on migration and aimed to align the migration framework with EU objectives. However, the enforcement of laws against irregular migration remained limited, with symbolic expulsions having minimal impact. Factors such as the need for affordable labor, EU-focused efforts in northern Libya, and the criminalization of migrants contributed to the continued influx of migrants. Libya's illicit economy, encompassing activities such as drug trafficking and arms smuggling, operated through connections to the regime. Participation in this economy was restricted to individuals and families with ties to the state, enabling them to exploit migrants through illegal taxation. Gaddafi utilized the illicit economy as a means of reward and punishment, maintaining dominance and legitimacy within the political system. Overall, the management of migration according to the EU paradigm presented Gaddafi with an opportunity to strengthen the political system centered around the protection economy.

The Arab Spring uprising that began in Tunisia in 2010 had a significant impact on the Middle East and North Africa. However, despite its initial transformative momentum, the movement failed to bring about lasting change. In Libya, the uprising against Gaddafi quickly escalated into a civil war, attracting international attention due to its strategic importance. The

NATO intervention led to Gaddafi's downfall, but it also had unintended consequences. The fall of Gaddafi led to the proliferation of armed conflicts in the Saharan and Sahelian regions. The return of foreign fighters from Libya and the presence of abundant weapons from Gaddafi's arsenal fueled violence and instability. Mali, in particular, faced the return of former Libyan security forces and experienced a Tuareg uprising, leading to the declaration of the Republic of Azawad. Jihadist groups, such as Ansar al-Dine and AQIM, took advantage of the chaos and established a presence in northern Mali. The Malian government sought French intervention, leading to Operation Serval in 2013. While initially successful in expelling jihadists from key cities, the insurgency persisted, and jihadist groups adapted their strategies. The situation in the Sahel region has worsened over time, with jihadist forces expanding and proliferating. European-led counter-terrorism operations, including Operation Barkhane, have expanded their focus to the entire Sahelian region. However, the security landscape has deteriorated, and states have lost control over significant territories. The conflict has also escalated into inter-community violence, targeting civilians. The spillover effects of the violence have led to a surge in forced migration and a significant increase in internally displaced persons in the Sahel region. Efforts to address the security challenges and forced migration involve collaboration between Sahelian states, the European Union, and various multinational initiatives. However, the situation remains complex, and the effectiveness of counter-terrorism operations has been questioned. In recent developments, tensions between the transitional government of Mali and France have led to the withdrawal of French troops. The need to address the interconnected issues of violence, mobility, and displacement in the Sahel region is a pressing concern for both local governments and international actors.

The Libyan civil war had a significant impact on regional migration. Migrants faced increased abuse and violence, with Sub-Saharan migrants coerced into joining Libyan military forces. Many fled Libya, seeking refuge in neighboring countries like Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria, Chad, and Sudan. Skilled migrant workers in the oil industry were evacuated, and Libyans also migrated to Tunisia and Egypt. The fall of Gaddafi led to a surge in transit migrants heading to Europe. Armed groups taxed and extorted money from migrants, using it to finance their war efforts.

Migrant prisons became lucrative sources of revenue. The influx of Syrian refugees into Libya expanded the smuggling network, leading to a significant increase in arrivals to Europe through the central Mediterranean route. Niger saw a substantial northward migration flow, with around 100,000 migrants annually. The International Organization for Migration facilitated the repatriation of migrants from Niger. The European Union supported Niger in formulating a national migration policy. Securitization of migration emerged, with surveillance and criminalization becoming intertwined with migration policies. EUCAP-Sahel was established in Niger to address outward migration, focusing on enhancing border management and combating trafficking. Niger also implemented laws to combat human trafficking and prosecute migrant trafficking. Overall, the civil war in Libya displaced long-term migrants, increased transit migration to Europe, and led to the securitization of migration in countries like Niger.

In 2015, the EU intensified its engagement with Niger on migration issues, aligning with the principles outlined in the European Agenda on Migration. The Valletta summit, held in November 2015, played a crucial role in this process. The summit brought together leaders from Europe and Africa to address mixed migration challenges and identify strategies for managing migration, development, protection, and asylum. The EU emphasized the need for a cooperative approach to address the migration emergency, recognizing that irregular and unmanaged migration is a shared challenge with global ramifications. This approach aimed to overcome the divisions and gridlock within the EU regarding migration policies.

The EU framed migration as a consequence of poverty, highlighting the connection between development and migration. However, this assumption overlooks the fact that reducing poverty in impoverished countries can actually increase the propensity for migration in the short term. In terms of security, while insecurity can drive forced migration in some cases, evidence suggests that populations in highly impoverished countries often choose to remain within their territories after armed conflicts. Moreover, the EU emphasized the link between irregular migration and the financing of non-state actors or terrorist networks, leading to the criminalization of smuggling activities and the portrayal of

migrants as trafficking victims. The concept of the migration-security-development nexus emerged from the Valletta summit and shaped border externalization policies and European asylum practices. The EU established a framework called the NPF to engage with partner countries and manage migration effectively. The NPF focused on three essential factors for successful partnerships: cooperation on readmission and return, the provision of incentives through trade and development policies, and the implementation of customized packages for each country's needs. The EU identified Ethiopia, Nigeria, Senegal, Niger, and Mali as priority countries for collaboration. Development assistance was strategically used as a tool to reward or sanction states based on their efforts in addressing migration challenges. The EU also launched the EUTF. With a budget of €2.5 billion, the EUTF aimed to support projects promoting stability, addressing the drivers of irregular migration, improving migration management, and enhancing economic opportunities in African countries. Niger received significant funding from the EUTF, which held immense importance considering its dependency on external aid.

CHAPTER VI: FROM MARGINALIZATION TO MANEUVERING: UNDERSTANDING NIGER'S STRATEGIC POSITION IN THE EUROPEAN SECURITY FRAMEWORK

6.1: Introduction

The year 2015 marked a turning point for Niger as collaboration with Europe in terms of migration security began in earnest following the La Valletta summit. However, one particular event stands out for its significant impact on the public perception of the relationship between Niger and migration bringing to light the inherent risks associated with mobility in the northern region of the country.

In November 2013 32 women and 48 children were found dead at the border between Niger and Algeria[126]. The majority of these individuals hailed from the Kantché department in the Zinder region. Their journey to the cities of southern Algeria was not an isolated occurrence. Instead, it was part of a longstanding pattern of mobility in this region.

The issue of the women from Kantché became a heated topic of debate in Niger for various reasons. Once these women arrived in Algeria during the dry season, their primary activity was begging. This also accounts for the unusual presence of children, as their presence could elicit a greater sense of compassion, thereby increasing donations (Maga, 2020). Indeed, this issue resonated deeply in Niger, touching on aspects of public opinion and institutional responsibility. Prime Minister Brigi Rafini, who visited Kantché after the incident, stated, "*Chaque jour que Dieu fait, d'autres Nigériens prennent le même chemin périlleux. Il y a en a beaucoup qui meurent sans qu'on le sache. […] Il n'est pas question que nous laissions nos concitoyens aller à l'aventure*"[127].

The exposure of the November 2013 tragedy, both nationally and internationally, necessitated decisive action from Nigerien institutions. After declaring three days of national mourning (Boyer et al., 2020: 107),

[126] *Les cadavres de 92 migrants retrouvés dans le désert au Niger*. (2013, October 30). Le Monde. https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2013/10/30/87-cadavres-de-migrants-nigeriens-retrouves-dans-le-desert-pres-de-l-algerie_3505703_3212.html

[127] *Niger: 150 nouveaux migrants pour l'Algérie arrêtés après le drame du Sahara*. (2013, November 2). Jeune Afrique. https://www.jeuneafrique.com/depeches/27938/politique/niger-150-nouveaux-migrants-pour-lalgerie-arretes-apres-le-drame-du-sahara/

the government took action. The institutions' accusation was directed against the unscrupulous *passeurs*. Interior Minister Bazoum publicly accused the *passeurs* deemed responsible for *"[..] ce drame de la migration clandestine [...], résultante d'activités criminelles pilotées par des réseaux de trafiquants de toute sorte"*[128]. The governor of Agadez[129], for his part, initiated a judicial investigation to identify the alleged *responsables*. As a preventive measure, the first repressive actions were taken against in the city of Agadez. The ghettos in the city were closed, and controls in the desert were intensified[130].

However, the closure proved to be merely symbolic and short-lived. This is substantiated by the sustained departures from the city of Agadez to Libya and Algeria, which carried on until 2016, even witnessing monthly peaks of transit with up to 10,000 people (Hoffman et al. 2017: 9). However, there was a measure implemented at that time which proved to have significant relevance and sustained application in the future. In December 2014, an agreement was signed between the Nigerien and Algerian authorities. This agreement permitted Algiers to expel women and children from Niger, who had illegally entered Algerian territory, back onto Nigerien soil[131].

These premises are what lead to the writing and application of the *loi* 2015-36 *Relative au Traffic Illicite de Migrants* between 2015 and 2016. The implementation of this law has had a profound impact, as it effectively criminalizes individuals who assist or support foreign citizens without valid travel or residency documents in their attempts to enter, exit, or reside

[128] *Niger: la mort des 92 migrants dans le désert résulte d'activités criminelles pilotées par des réseaux de trafiquants (gouvernement)*. (2013, November 2). aNiamey.com. http://news.aniamey.com/h/9028.html

[129] In each region, in addition to locally elected officials (*Mairie* and *Conseil Regional*) the central government appoints a *gouverneur* who has jurisdiction over the region and a *préfet* with jurisdiction over the *commune* (that is the municipality encompassing a city and its affiliated villages) (Molenaar et al. 2019).

[130] *Niger: 150 nouveaux migrants pour l'Algérie arrêtés après le drame du Sahara*. (2013, November 2). Jeune Afrique. https://www.jeuneafrique.com/depeches/27938/politique/niger-150-nouveaux-migrants-pour-lalgerie-arretes-apres-le-drame-du-sahara/

[131] Pauset S. (2023, May 8) *Entre l'Algérie et le Niger, la prison à ciel ouvert d'Assamaka.* Afrique XXI. https://afriquexxi.info/Entre-l-Algerie-et-le-Niger-la-prison-a-ciel-ouvert-d-Assamaka

within the territory of Niger (Articles 10[132] and 12[133]). The law 2015-36 imposes strict penalties for these violations, ranging from 5 months to 10 years of imprisonment. In addition to imprisonment, fines are also imposed, with amounts varying from 1 million to 5 million FCFA. In recent years, this law has sparked intense debates both politically and academically, as it has come to symbolize the negative repercussions of European migration laws on so-called 'third' countries where these laws are enforced (CNDH, 2021). This assumption holds true from multiple perspectives, including legal, developmental (especially in the region and city of Agadez), and migrant security.

Undoubtedly, one of the primary reasons for the controversy surrounding law 2015-36 is the conflict it presents with the 1979 ECOWAS protocol on free movement[134]. The ECOWAS protocol grants to its citizens the right to unrestricted mobility within their own territory, which directly contradicts the significant restriction imposed by the enforcement of law 2015-36. Specifically, this limitation primarily affects movement from the city of Agadez towards the north (as we will stress within this chapter). As a consequence, an ECOWAS citizen is permitted to enter Niger's territory and travel to the city of Agadez but any subsequent movement towards the north from Agadez (as well as the stay in Agadez) is regarded as an irregular attempt to exit the country. This to say that while exiting towards other borders is relatively allowed with ease, mobility towards the north of Agadez is perceived as an illegal attempt to reach northern countries such as Algeria and Libya.

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[132] 'Est passible d'une peine d'emprisonnement de cinq (5) à moins de dix (10) ans et d'une amende de 1.000 000 de francs CFA à 5.000 000 de francs CFA, toute personne qui, intentionnellement et pour en tirer, directement ou indirectement, un avantage financier ou un autre avantage matériel, assure l'entrée ou la sortie illégale au Niger d'une personne qui n'est ni un ressortissant ni un résident permanent' (art 10, loi 2015-36).

[133] 'Est passible d'une peine d'emprisonnement de deux (2) à (5) ans et d'une amende de 500.000 francs CFA à 2.000.000 de francs CFA, toute personne qui, intentionnellement et pour en tirer, directement ou indirectement, un avantage financier ou un autre avantage matériel, utilise des moyens illégaux pour permettre à une personne qui n'est ni un ressortissant ni un résident permanent de demeurer au Niger, sans satisfaire aux conditions nécessaires au séjour légal' (art 12, loi 2015-36).

[134] 'The community citizens have the right to enter, reside and establish in the territory of Member States' Article 2 of the 'ECOWAS Protocol A/P. 1/5/79 Relating to free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment'

6.2: The Reconfiguration of Territorial Space: Agadez as the New Southern Border of the EU

Against this framework, the city of Agadez embodies a dual paradox of space and time, simultaneously representing the apex and the boundary of contrasting realms of mobility and immobility. The act of traversing the space to the north of the city is perceived as both an illegal attempt to exit the ECOWAS space and as the commencement of a trajectory leading towards Europe. The act of 'violating' a purposely established frontier gives rise to the infringement of two additional frontiers, which are expected to take place in the future.

It is noteworthy that this spatial-temporal reconfiguration appears to be influenced by Europe's biased perception of mobility occurring outside its own borders, particularly in the context of Africa. In Chapter IV, we shed light on Europe's perspective regarding mobility, emphasizing its conceptualization as a linear trajectory. According to this viewpoint, migrants are believed to determine their final destination at the outset of their journey (Schapendonk *et al.*, 2018: 2). Furthermore, when considering routes along the south-to-north axis, Europe perceives the ultimate destination as inevitably lying within its own borders as a consequence of the process of stigmatization of West Africa mobility which is perceived as a security threat (Schapendonk, 2012).

These two principles are subject to scrutiny from an empirical observation standpoint, particularly when considering the material and internal trajectories of individuals in motion. Beyond seasonal or circular mobility — which involves a planned return to the place of origin within a specific timeframe — migration journeys are characterized by a multitude of contingencies that significantly influence the directions taken (Schapendonk *et al.*, 2018: 2). These unpredictable contingencies (influenced by chance encounters, received information, individual or collective needs, and family dynamics), play a crucial role in shaping decision-making processes throughout the migration journey (Benezer & Zetter, 2015). This indicates that the concept of destination, if we can even use such a term in this context, is not fixed or predetermined but rather subject to change over time. Moreover, the assumption that mobility towards the north inevitably leads to Europe as the final destination,

thereby categorizing North African countries as mere 'transit' nations, is proven to be not true, especially when considering mobility from West Africa to Algeria and, more significantly, Libya[135]. As seen in Chapter V, Libya has long served as the northernmost point of trajectories originating from Sub-Saharan Africa. While it is true that an increase in departures towards Europe occurred from the latter country following the fall of Gaddafi, it is also true that a significant number of migrants continue to view the North African countries as destinations rather than mere transit points towards Europe. A limitation on mobility imposed north of the city of Agadez is based on preventive logics aiming to restrict legal movements due to their perceived potential danger, even though the actual manifestation of such danger remains uncertain.

For this reason, several studies have highlighted how the city of Agadez has become the new border for migrants in northern Niger. Here, it is important to specify that the term 'migrants' is used exclusively for foreign citizens, as they are the only ones affected by this regulation. The native Nigerien population, on the other hand, retains the right to freely move within their own territory (and even beyond) without any such restrictions (further references on this matter will be made throughout this chapter).

The reconfiguration of territorial space resulting from these dynamics has led to a widely held perception that Agadez has become the new southern border of the EU (Bøås, 2020; Molenaar, 2018). This suggests a profound transformation in the way Niger's institutions engage with northward migration, particularly when considering the previous laissez-faire stance adopted by the country's political actors until 2015. However, when it comes to European migration policies, and particularly in the context of externalization, the seemingly monolithic norms that are expected to have a transformative impact on the ground often lead to nuanced consequences and multifaceted outcomes. This is despite the fact that the initial phase of law enforcement was harsh and severe.

Another crucial aspect to consider is the reconfiguration of the relationship between the Agadez region and the central state due to the implementation

[135] Interviews conducted with citizens from Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, and the Central African Republic at the Center for Migrant Pastoral Service in Niamey (June 22, 2022) and at the headquarters of Alarmphone Sahara in Agadez (July 10, 2022).

of this law. The intricate dynamics and challenges involved are underscored by the tensions and frictions that have emerged between local authorities, the Presidency, and the interior minister during and after the implementation phase of the law. Considering the region's state of economic and social marginalization, it becomes evident that the legal pursuit of what was previously regarded as a fundamental form of regional economic sustenance, namely migration, poses significant challenges to local and regional dynamics. These conflicting dynamics highlight the complex historical relationship between these entities, which has been characterized by disputes and even armed conflicts, as discussed in Chapter III. This takes on greater relevance considering how, in recent years, the stability of Sahelian countries has increasingly become a priority for Western partner countries (Raineri & Strazzari, 2019; Raineri & Baldaro, 2020). The implementation of law 2015-36 reveals the conflict between the interests and perspectives of the central and peripheral regions. Paradoxically, the aim to stabilize the region through this law may have unintended consequences, potentially undermining regional security. This highlights the contested space where the application of norms and the narratives surrounding them intersect, as local and national actors strive to construct and calibrate their own legitimacy.

Finally, there is the perspective of individuals who traverse or aspire to traverse these areas, but find themselves in worsening material conditions despite measures intended to protect them as these measures, unfortunately, fall significantly short from achieving their intended goals.

6.3: Decentralization and Discontent: The Unfulfilled Aspirations of Agadez Region in Niger

Throughout my research journey on migration in Niger, a persistent and fundamental research question has been the government's rationale behind adopting a securitized approach to mobility. This question has remained relevant and continues to drive my investigation. The Valletta Summit, acknowledged as a crucial milestone in the literature, represents Niger's substantial and widely acknowledged shift from one form of migration management to another. This model stands out for its distinct focus on value extraction from 'transit' migration, which in turn manifests in a

contemporary, transnational, and politically advantageous approach. However, the state's adoption of a modernized approach to security and development unfolded within a complex and highly contested political landscape, characterized by the entanglement of actors and political frameworks that spanned across regional, national, and international dimensions.

As highlighted in Chapter V, the dialogue at the Valletta Summit between European and African policymakers revolved primarily around the two main pillars of border enforcement and development (with the latter presented as a conditionality to the former. In the case of Niger, the implementation of this new regime of migration management sparked discussions that primarily centered around the region of Agadez. This focus on Agadez was driven by its strategic position as one of the largest external borders of the ECOWAS area and its well-known status as a prime transit area. However, the intertwined occurrences of security issues and administrative reconfigurations that characterized the region-state relations in the past twenty-five years (taking into account the inherent transnational ramifications within the political and security realm of the Sahel) have exerted a notable influence on both the pre-implementation and post-implementation phases of the law.

At both the regional and national levels, both the region and the government were actively engaged in seeking opportunities and anticipating potential negative effects stemming from the Valletta Summit on the territory of Niger.

As mentioned in Chapter III, the end of the first Tuareg rebellion in the Agadez region led in 2004 to a process of administrative decentralization. However, from the perspective of regional actors in Agadez, the outcomes of this process have failed to meet their expectations and aspirations. The initial federalist aspirations were left unrealized, and the outcomes in terms of economic and developmental goals fell significantly below the expectations that inspired the rebel militants. As for the latter, the decentralization plan encompasses the transfer of responsibilities in crucial sectors such as healthcare, education, environmental resources management from the state to local administrative bodies. However, the limited allocation of funds to the regions significantly restricts their

capacity to take initiative in the areas that have been devolved to them[136]. As indicated by Molenaar et al. (2017: 15), the *Agence Nationale pour le Financement des Collectivités Locales* (ANFICT), the body responsible for redistributing funds from local taxation to the communities, appears to be non-functional. For instance, the Agadez region did not receive the 500 million FCFA that was due to it in 2016[137].

A similar discourse applies to the revenues from uranium extraction, whereby Niger's mining code mandates that 15% of mining revenues should be reinvested in the territories where extraction takes place (Grégoire, 2014: 214). However, the current allocation for this purpose stands at approximately 3%, indicating a significant disparity between the mandated percentage and the actual investment[138]. This has contributed to a profound sense of discontent among the Agadez community. Despite efforts to grant greater autonomy to the region, the persistent marginalization has played a role in inspiring a second armed Tuareg rebellion in 2007, or at least served as a foundation for the public discourse surrounding it.

The second rebellion, led by the *Mouvement des Nigériens pour la Justice* (MNJ), aimed to address various issues, including advocating for increased representation of individuals from Northern regions in the military and civil service, expediting the decentralization process, ensuring the fulfillment of commitments regarding budget allocations to municipalities, and critically, reevaluating the distribution mechanisms for revenue generated from uranium extraction in the Arlit mines (Guichaoua, 2009: 16). However, the rebellion had limited success on the ground and was eventually defeated by the state, leading its leaders to seek refuge in Libya (Raineri & Strazzari, 2021: 8). The unsuccess can be attributed to several underlying factors. In contrast to the first rebellion, the second uprising faced significant challenges in garnering support from the local population, as only a few hundred of young fighters rallied to their cause (driven more

[136] During my research visits to Niger, I encountered challenges in obtaining precise information about the extent of the backlog that exists between the Agadez region and the government in subsequent years. During an interview conducted on October 30, 2022, with a member of the *Conseil Régional d'Agadez*, it was confirmed to me that the mentioned amount had not been transferred yet.

[138] Interview conducted on October 30, 2022 in Agadez, with a member of the *Conseil Régional d'Agadez*.

by the perceived economic opportunities of the rebellion rather than its political aspirations) (Guichaoua, 2009: 18). The actions of the MNJ were widely interpreted as an endeavor by combatants who had been excluded from the process of reintegration into the Nigerien state to pursue a form of acknowledgment (Guichaoua, 2009: 13). This perspective was reinforced by their initial demand, which specifically focused on the issue of reincorporation. Moreover, the MNJ faced the overshadowing influence of notable Tuareg individuals within its ranks who had previously participated in the first rebellion but were widely recognized for their involvement in narcotics trade across Algeria, Libya, Mali, and Niger (Raineri & Strazzari, 2021: 7). According to sources, the MNJ's rebellion was primarily driven by the control of drug trafficking routes across the desert, rather than addressing the sociopolitical grievances of the population in Agadez[139]. Secondly, the disruptive potential of the MNJ was limited by the mediation of Tuareg figures, some of whom were former combatants of the first rebellion, but had already integrated into the state. This included individuals such as Brigi Rafini, who was serving as the mayor of Iferouane at the time in 2007, and Mohamed Anacko[140], the president (at that time) of the HARCP[141]. Given the region's susceptibility to instability, it is not coincidental that migration emerged as a significant concern, considering the exceptional economic impact it had on both Agadez and the broader region (see Chapter III). Undoubtedly, the taxation derived from migration, in the absence of substantial state investments, was highly beneficial for the regional coffers. For instance, in the city of Agadez, the influx of people heading north resulted in the collection of a municipal tax on visitors, which was estimated to range between 3 and 5 million FCFA per week in 2014 (Molenaar et al., 2017).

[139] Interview conducted on November 5, 2022 in Agadez, with a HACP official.

[140] Brigi Rafini would later become the Prime Minister during the second term of former President Mahamadou Issoufou. Mohamed Anacko holds multiple positions of responsibility within the government of Niger. He currently serves as the President of the *Conseil Regional d'Agadez*, the President of the *Association des Régions du Niger* (ARENI), and is also a member of the *Assemblée Nationale*. Both Mohamed Anacko and Brigi Rafini were elected under the Parti nigérien pour la démocratie et le socialisme - PNDS-Tarayya (PNDS-Tarayya), party of the former president Mahamadou Issoufou.

[141] Interview conducted on November 5, 2022 in Agadez, with an *Association Femmes Nigériennes Contre la Guerre* (AFNCG) member.

6.4: Niger's Strategic Maneuvering in the European Security Framework: A Study of Political Legitimacy and Regime Stability

Beyond the economic aspect, there was also a security concern, as the transport activity helped address the gaps in the reintegration plan for former rebels. Upon analyzing the 2007 rebellion, it becomes apparent that the potential danger arising from the claims made by war professionals posed a significant threat. Furthermore, this potentially weakened the credibility of the high-ranking members of the first rebellion who were leading the municipalities and the *Conseil Regional*, in the eyes of the rank and file, thereby jeopardizing the process of community stabilization[142].
Considering the high stakes involved in La Valletta, it is evident that both the government and the *Conseil Regional* were well aware of the importance and transformative nature of the summit. Furthermore, the interviews conducted in Niamey and Agadez confirmed that negotiations and dialogue between the EU and the government, as well as between the EU and the *Conseil Regional*, regarding the outcome of La Valletta had commenced well in advance of the summit. Within this framework, it is worth highlighting the significance of the actors' recognition and perception of the pre-La Valletta dialogue. This recognition not only provides insights into their understanding of the moment but also sheds light on their perception of their own role and the role of their counterparts. Indeed, in 2015, a delegation from the European Union, led by the then High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, visited Agadez as part of a preparatory mission for the La Valletta Summit[143]. During this visit, the officials of the *Conseil Regional* presented a development fund management plan to the Commission, which included the establishment of a regional consultation framework for fund management and the creation

[142] During that period, it is noteworthy that fourteen out of the fifteen municipalities in the Agadez region were under the leadership of mayors who had actively participated in the rebellion of the 1990s.

[143] Interview conducted on December 13, 2021 in Niamey, with *Conseil Regional d'Agadez* official.

of an EU delegation office in Agadez[144]. This indicates that the *Conseil Regional* had prior knowledge of the arrival of European funds specifically designated for regional development in relation to migration. Furthermore, this awareness among the officials highlights their recognition of the direct responsibility entrusted to them, in accordance with the decentralization norms, to manage these funds for regional development. The meeting came to a close with the European delegation acknowledging the necessity of postponing the discussion to the La Valletta summit.

Sources in Agadez confirm that the security aspect, specifically the implementation of a regulatory framework criminalizing migrants' mobility, was never addressed during the meeting. In fact, the Agadez authorities understood at the time that Europe would provide funds to support the region's gradual transition away from the migration economy[145]. However, there were already signs indicating the possibility of a security reform being included in the new migration framework. Indeed, in 2015, the Nigerien Ministry of Defense took significant measures to strengthen the military zone in the Agadez region, including the addition of resources and personnel[146]. According to sources, this reinforcement was perceived as a symbolic gesture by the government, demonstrating its willingness to implement restrictive measures following the summit[147]. From a technical and institutional perspective, the Nigerien government strategically embraced a multisited approach in anticipation of the Valletta Summit. This approach was in line with the European perspective, which recognized the inherent links between migration and security. Indeed in 2014, with the technical support of the German Agency for International Cooperation (Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, GIZ), the Nigerien government initiated the *Première Étude de l'Élaboration de la Politique de Migration Nationale*[148]. This

[144] Interview conducted on July 11, 2021 in Niamey, with a HACP official.

[145] *Ibid.*

[146] Interview conducted on May 14, 2021 in Niamey, with organization *Alternative Espaces Citoyens*' official.

[147] *Ibid.*

[148] Interview conducted on May 17, 2021 in Niamey, with GIZ official.

study laid the groundwork for the later formulation of the *Politique Nationale de la Migration (2020-2035) avec son plan d'actions quinquennal*, which was drafted by the Ministry of Interior of Niger in 2020, once again with the support of GIZ containing explicit references to the migration-security nexus[149].

Therefore, it is not surprising that the Nigerien government, represented by the President of the Republic Mahamadou Issoufou and the Minister of Interior Mohamed Bazoum, attended the Valletta Summit with a draft legislative measure on migration (later enacted as Law 2015-36) and a development plan to be presented to the EU. Furthermore, they established consent to implement readmission of third national countries from Nigerien territory[150].

The Nigerien government's adherence to the migration framework is an integral part of the country's broader integration into the European security complex. Indeed, besides receiving support from the United States[151] and France, Niger has been assisted by the European Union's Common Security and Defense Policy since 2012 (Elischer, 2021), playing a significant role in sustaining Niamey's efforts against jihadism. This engagement has led to some sources in Niamey suggesting that Niger's participation in the migration framework can be seen as a tradeoff, exchanging increased EU support in countering jihadism for its commitment in addressing migration challenges[152]. Indeed, the spillover of the conflict in Mali (as discussed in Chapter V) posed a substantial threat

[149] *'L'environnement géopolitique découlant de la position géographique du Niger confère à ce pays une place stratégique en matière de migration et de sécurité*' (Ministère de l'Intérieur, de la Sécurité Publique, de la Décentralisation et des Affaires Coutumières et Religieuses du Niger, 2020: 11)

[150] Interview conducted on May 14, 2021 in Niamey, with organization *Alternative Espaces Citoyens*' official.

[151] Since 2002, the US has been conducting training missions for local forces in an effort to equip them to combat jihadist forces. However, the landscape of US engagement in the region shifted significantly after the Tongo Tongo ambush in Niger in October 2017. In this incident, Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) fighters killed four US and five Nigerien soldiers (U.S Department of Defense, 2018). In response to the ambush, Niger granted authorization for US armed drones to operate within its territory, prompting the US to commence the construction of its drone camps Goxho, 2021: 99). At present, the US operates three drone camps in Niger, located in the cities of Niamey, Agadez, and Dirkou (New York Times, 2021).

[152] Interview conducted on May 14, 2021 in Niamey, with organization *Alternative Espaces Citoyens*' official.

to the territorial integrity of Niger, particularly in the regions of Diffa, Tahoua and Tillabery (see figure 8). Against this framework Niger has progressively played an increasingly central role in

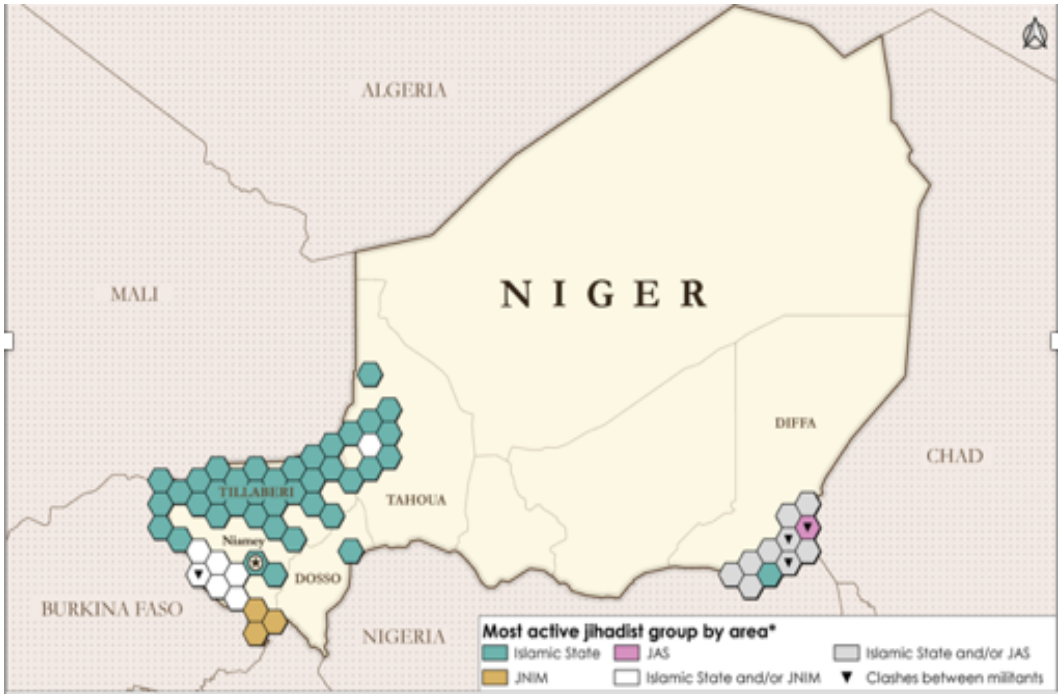

Figure 8: Violent Activity of jihadist groups in Niger, 2020. Source: (Acled/Menastrem, 2021).

European security strategy. In 2014, the air base of Operation Barkhane was hosted in Niamey. Following this, Niamey became actively involved in the establishment of the G5 Sahel as it hosted the command post for the Central Joint Force of the G5-Sahel under the command of Nigerien General Brigadier Oumarou Namata (Colomba-Petteng, 2022: 226). The G5-Sahel has been a mechanism strongly advocated for and financed by Western partners in order to construct a regional approach to security issues in the Sahel (Antil, 2020). Therefore, the prominent role assumed by Niger should be interpreted in the context of the country's rise as a security actor.

However, Niger's integration into the broader framework of European security policies not only offered tangible strategic benefits, such as access to equipment and training, but also conferred intangible advantages. These included an enhanced degree of regime stability, which was facilitated by the support from European partners. Cooperation with Europe in the security domain in the Sahel region is deeply interconnected with the

objectives of political stability and democratic resilience. The stability of the political landscape is perceived by European Union as an essential feature to ensure the successful implementation of effective security measures in order to foster a solid platform for dialogue among democratic counterparts. This requirement is explicitly emphasized in the Sahel Region Action Plan (RAP), which was established in 2015 by the Union's Foreign Affairs Council (Venturi, 2019: 5). This approach is not new to interventions in the region, as demonstrated by the previous United States-led Pan-Sahel Initiative. Launched in 2003, this military program, managed by the Department of State, aimed to promote democracy, market economy, and the containment of violent crises as means of integrating the region into a Western framework (Baldaro, 2017). According to this approach, stable democratic systems commit to foster transparency and establishing legitimate institutions capable of generating revenue through taxes, fees, and duties resulting into economic development (Bøås, 2021: 14).

However, within the context of European external action, there is often a prioritization of short-term security objectives. This focus tends to overshadow the commitment of states to uphold democratic procedures, pushing such commitments into the background (Raineri & Strazzari, 2019). This tendency arises from the European Union's primary need to prevent the expansion of threats in the Sahel, as these could potentially have far-reaching implications and reverberate within Europe itself (Thurnston, 2021). Yet, in European intervention plans, security objectives and respect for good governance are considered equally important, with the latter often acknowledged as a prerequisite for fostering enduring dialogue between the parties involved. This divergence between short-term and long-term objectives often results in the EU overlooking violations of rights and transparency by recipient countries, as a means to maintain the continuity of ongoing security operations (Raineri & Strazzari, 2019). This situation paradoxically creates a convenient framework for the 'recipient' countries. They find in this contradictory aspect of European action an opportunity to selectively adhere to the European vision on rights and governance, only if deemed favorable. Despite this selective adherence, they still manage to gain a degree of

international legitimacy, thanks to their involvement in the security effort. In the case of Niger, several episodes support this thesis.

The 2016 presidential elections, which resulted in Issoufou being declared the winner for a second term, gave rise to significant concerns regarding his legitimacy. Concerns were primarily rooted in the forced exile of the main opposition leader, Ama Amadou of the *Mouvement démocratique nigérien pour une fédération africain* (MODEN/FA-Lumana) in 2014. His exile was a direct result of an arrest warrant voted on by the National Assembly[153]. In November 2015, Ama Amadou made a daring attempt to return to Niger from Paris to prove his innocence and participate in the elections. However, upon the landing of his flight at Niamey airport, he was swiftly apprehended and arrested by authorities[154]. Despite being incarcerated, Hama Amadou participated in the elections[155]. However, his ability to campaign and engage with voters was severely hindered, ultimately resulting in his defeat. While he received 17.73% of the votes in the first round, his support decreased to 7.49% in the runoff (against Issoufou 48.43% in the first round and 92.51% in the second)[156]. The outcome of the elections was significantly affected by the opposition's electoral boycott who firmly believed that Ama Amadou's arrest masked Issoufou's intent to irregularly suppress the opposition[157]. In other words, despite the electoral campaign and voting process appeared to be formally regular, there was a lingering shadow over the PNDS regarding potential violation of democratic norms during the voting process.

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[153] Ama Amadou faced accusations of involvement in a baby trafficking network (DW, 2017).

[154] *Niger: arrestation de Hama Amadou*. (2015 November 14). BBC News Afrique. https://www.bbc.com/afrique/region/2015/11/151114_niger-amadou-arrest

[155] Massalaki A. (2016 February 26) *Niger's Issoufou faces run-off against jailed opposition leader*. Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-niger-election-idUSKCN0VZ2CL

[156] Olivier M. (2016 March 22) *Niger : Mahamadou Issoufou réélu avec 92,49% des suffrages, selon des résultats provisoires*. Jeune Afrique. https://www.jeuneafrique.com/312110/politique/niger-mahamadou-issoufou-reelu-9249-suffrages-selon-resultats-provisoires/

[157] *Boycott helps Niger President Issoufou win re-election* (2016 March 22). Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-niger-election-idUSKCN0WO0ZN

Another notable example occurred on September 2020, when the *Commission Nationale des Droits Humains* (CNDH) published a report revealing the military's alleged responsibility for the deaths of 102 civilians found in mass graves in the Inates area of the Tillabery region (RFI, 2020). The report claimed that these mass killings were carried out by the Nigerien army as reprisals in response to a jihadist attack on a military outpost in the same location on December 10th, 2019, which resulted in the deaths of 71 Nigerien soldiers. Despite the report, the military forces were not held accountable by the government, and Western partners did not publicly condemn the events.

Finally, no public condemnation was made regarding a scandal involving the Ministry of Defense in Niger, which faced allegations of embezzling public funds through overpricing and non-delivery of military equipment. The scandal amounted to a total of 116 million euros between 2017 and 2019[158].

This assertion remains equally valid when the roles are reversed. In November 2021 a convoy from the French Barkhane mission, tasked with transporting equipment from Abidjan to Niamey, faced resistance from the local population[159] in the city of Téra, located in the Tillabery region[160]. Tensions escalated into confrontations, tragically culminating in the deaths of three protesters. Despite an investigation conducted by the Nigerien authorities to determine responsibility, the details and circumstances

[158] *Niger – Détournements au ministère de la Défense : « L'État fera toute la lumière sur ce qui s'est passé »* (2022 January 10). Jeune Afrique. https://www.jeuneafrique.com/1292843/politique/niger-detournements-au-ministere-de-la-defense-letat-fera-toute-la-lumiere-sur-ce-qui-sest-passe/

[159] Over the past few years, the Sahel region has been experiencing a growing anti-European and specifically anti-French sentiment. This sentiment has been largely fueled by the perceived failures of recent security policies. A notable incident that underscores this sentiment involved the Barkhane convoy. Before it could even reach Niger, the convoy was halted in the city of Kaya (Burkina-Faso) by protesters. These demonstrators were calling for an end to French military operations in the region, reflecting the escalating discontent with European involvement in Sahel's security affairs. Source: Faivre A. (2021 November 25) *Convoi de Barkhane bloqué au Burkina Faso : «La France n'a pas d'amis, que des intérêts»*. Libération. https://www.liberation.fr/international/afrique/convoi-de-barkhane-bloque-au-burkina-faso-la-france-na-pas-damis-que-des-interets-20211125_7IVQIC7S7BFGNEAYEXA2RN5Y74/

[160] *Convoi militaire français bloqué au Niger : les causes de la mort de trois manifestants restent inconnues* (2022 May 18). Le Monde Afrique. https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2022/05/18/convoi-militaire-francais-bloque-au-niger-les-causes-de-la-mort-de-trois-manifestants-restent-inconnues_6126673_3212.html

surrounding the incident were never disclosed or made public[161]. The relationship between the EU and Niger could be characterized as a bond of interdependence, as the involved actors rely on each other to effectively operate in the region (the European Union) or exercise their sovereignty (the government of Niger).

If the pursuit of security objectives is one of the causes for the European Union's lack of attention towards respecting the rule of law in partner countries, another motivation can be found in the competition for European hegemony in the region by actors such as Russia, China, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia. These states champion alternative development models that prioritize economic profitability over political objectives (Sandnes & Carrozza, 2023). It is not coincidental that cooperation with the aforementioned countries in Africa is intensifying (Sandnes & Carrozza, 2023), given the continent's strong growth rate, its appeal to external markets and the pretty low levels of democratic guarantees. This kind of competition places Europe in a challenging position, where it faces the dilemma of demanding fewer political concessions in order to preserve its security interests. Furthermore, it is important to highlight that the ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia, with its gradual polarization of the international scene between NATO alliance and non-NATO countries, has direct implications for the Sahel region. As a result, the security dynamics in the Sahel have become an area of substantial interest and a high-stakes game. For example, in Mali[162] and Burkina Faso[163], military juntas have seized power (in 2020 and 2022 respectively) in response to what they

[161] Both the governments of Paris and Niamey undertook investigations into the incident, aiming to understand the dynamics of the events. However, despite their efforts, the investigations were unable to provide clarity. As a result, the two countries have made a joint decision to provide equal compensation to the relatives of the victims.

[162] In August 2020, a significant political shift occurred in Mali when the military overthrew President Ibrahim Boubacar Kéita and established a transitional government. In May 2021 the transitional president of Mali, Bah Ndaw, and his Prime Minister, Moctar Ouane, were arrested by members of the armed forces. Following this, Colonel Assimi Goita emerged as the new leader, assuming the role of president. Source: *Mali, a Coup within a Coup*. (2021 May 27). Crisis Group. https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/mali/mali-un-coup-dans-le-coup

[163] In January 2022, Lieutenant-Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba overthrew the elected President, Roch Marc Christian Kaboré. However, this change in leadership did not quell the unrest within the military hierarchy. In fact, it led to further discord, culminating in a *coup within a coup*. In September 2022, Captain Ibrahim Traoré orchestrated a counter-coup against Damiba (Raineri, 2023).

perceive as failures by democratically elected governments, which were supported by the European Union and its member states, in effectively addressing the chronic jihadist insurgency (Raineri, 2023). This has resulted in the suspension of security partnerships with the European Union (in this case with France) (Raineri 2023). In Mali, to compensate for the lack of European forces, the transitional government has turned to the Russian Wagner mercenaries (ACLED, 2022). Wagner's presence has had immediate consequences, leading to a surge in indiscriminate violence perpetrated by the military forces of both countries against the civilian population[164]. This alarming development has the potential to fuel a further escalation of violence and exacerbate the already precarious state of instability in the region.

The collapse of democratic regimes, combined with the emergence of other actors in the security sector (for the first time even a private actor), presents a potential conflict with the European Union's long-term regional vision. Nonetheless, these occurrences undeniably cast doubt on the effectiveness of the EU's security measures in the Sahel region. This situation underscores the European Union's struggle to maintain a balanced approach in its relationships with Sahelian partners. The lack of harmonization between political and security interests highlights the EU's inability to effectively manage these relationships. The emphasis on security aspects creates a scenario where military dominance overshadows the political sphere. This imbalance carries significant implications, affecting not only the security landscape but also the democratic fabric of the region.

Amid a backdrop where the democratic systems of two allied European nations have imploded, Niger's stability and resilient democracy prove

[164] The village of Moura in the Mopti region of Mali witnessed a military operation, overseen by Russian mercenaries and conducted by the Malian army, resulted in the deaths of hundreds of civilians and alleged members of an al-Qaida affiliated Islamist group. A detailed United Nations report (2023) has shed light on this five-day operation that took place in March 2022, marking it as the worst single atrocity associated with the Kremlin-linked Wagner group outside Ukraine. The UN human rights office concluded that over 500 people were killed in this operation, with the majority being extrajudicial killings carried out by Malian troops and foreign military personnel believed to be from Wagner. Source: Burke J. (2023 May 20) *Russian mercenaries behind slaughter of 500 in Mali village, UN report finds*. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/may/20/russian-mercenaries-behind-slaughter-in-mali-village-un-report-finds

critical for maintaining regional equilibrium. The decision by France to shift the Barkhane operation to Niger after the deterioration of relations with Mali is not a coincidence[165]. Moreover, the European Union has made the strategic decision to allocate $30 million in funding to the European Union Military Partnership Mission (EUMPM). This mission is specifically designed to strengthen the military capabilities of the Nigerien Armed Forces through a comprehensive approach encompassing the provision of equipment, infrastructure development, and military training (EEAS, 2023).

Niger's government actions can be interpreted as a strategic maneuver to leverage the securitized framework for its own advantage. As per Cassarino's study (2018), Global South countries gain significant political legitimacy by aligning with the security framework, successfully fostering regime stability even amidst structural constraints and glaring deficiencies.

6.5: Perceptions of Inequity and Marginalization: The Implementation of the *loi* 2015-36 in Agadez

In August 2016, Law 2015-36 was suddenly applied in Agadez. Approximately a hundred people and a hundred vehicles were seized in the region[166]. The adverb 'suddenly' is not used by chance. Certainly, the law was adopted by the National Assembly of Niger on May 26, 2015, but it took one year before the first imprisonments were carried out (Tinni, 2017: 157). What occurred during the interim period between the law's enactment and its subsequent implementation? In this context, ongoing low-level conflicts between the local authorities of Agadez and the national government continue to surface. Local authorities assert that the adoption of the law failed to consider their warnings about the economic and social risks that such a law's implementation would impose on the population. Such tensions had already surfaced during the law's drafting

[165] The withdrawal from Mali includes around 2,400 French troops under Operation Barkhane and the French-led Takuba special forces mission of 14 mainly European nations. Source: *Niger becomes France's partner of last resort after Mali withdrawal* (2022 February 18). France24. https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20220218-niger-becomes-france-s-partner-of-last-resort-after-mali-withdrawal

[166] Interview conducted on July 9, 2021 in Agadez, with an official of the *Association ex passeurs d'Agadez*.

phase, a process from which, according to Agadez authorities, they had been excluded. Niamey's authorities make no secret that the drafting of *loi* 2015-36 was more of an international endeavor rather than a local process. The law was indeed written in close collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDC) (project funded by Denmark and Italy) (Spijkerboer, 2019: 49). Sources in Niamey question the degree of participation of the Nigerien state in drafting the law, suggesting that the predominant contribution to the writing of the law came from the United Nations agency[167]. This approach evidently fostered a sense of exclusion among the Agadez authorities, who describe this process as something that was imposed without their input or consultation. Nonetheless, during the months that passed between the vote and the law's enforcement, several regional figures and those interested in local security issues raised their voices. They advocated for a partial revision of the law, aiming to mitigate potential damage in a context that seemed increasingly likely to have disastrous repercussions. Besides the notable figures of the region, particularly represented by the efforts of President Mohamed Anacko, a warning was also issued by General Abou Tarka, the president of the HACP[168]. Indeed, the HACP, being the guarantor of the post-rebellion peace processes in Agadez, voiced concerns over the implementation of a law that could potentially undermine the consolidation of regional stability. However, efforts to soften the law proved futile. The essence of the law is deeply entrenched in its notably punitive nature; thus, any downward revision of the penalties could potentially undermine its deterrent effect. Secondly, the assembly's favorable vote on the law, beyond solidifying the expressed will of the representatives as irrevocable, unequivocally demonstrated the political direction and the endorsement of certain values within the international migratory framework. A reconsideration of the law would also have had repercussions for Niger in terms of development aid, as the law was, to a greater or lesser extent, overtly connected to it.

[167] Interview conducted on 26 June, 2021 in Niamey, with scholar from the *Université* Abdou-Moumouni.

[168] Interview conducted on 7 December, 2021 in Niamey, with HACP official.

Confronted with the inability to revise the law, the Agadez authorities urged the central government to shoulder the responsibility of raising awareness among Agadez population about law contents. To this aim a delegation from the *Comité de Paix d'Agadez*[169] traveled to Niamey to demand the government take the initiative[170]. This initiative steered to distance the regional authorities from the rule in the perception of the Agadez population, while simultaneously emphasizing the government's authoritative stance and ownership of it. Despite the Agadez authorities' initiative, the government opted not to support an initiative aimed at raising the population's awareness about the *loi* 2015-36.

However, regarding this occurrence, the sources are conflicting. While multiple interviews in Agadez confirm government's lack of effort, sources closer to the government in Niamey have revealed that the Ministry of Interior Bazoum personally traveled to Agadez before the law came into effect to announce that the days of the migration economy were numbered[171]. What can be inferred from this is that the government's effort was deemed insufficient by the regional authorities. In fact, in response to the government's apparent hesitance, the task of initiating an awareness campaign fell upon the local authorities, under the predominant leadership of Mohamed Anacko[172]. Despite initial resistance, the local authorities concluded that mitigating the potential harm stemming from the law enforcement took precedence over any other political consideration. Consequently, as a precautionary measure, the authorities requested *passeurs* and *transporteurs* to temporarily halt their activities while

[169] The *Comité de Paix* d'Agadez is an organ of the Agadez region, established in 2014 with the aim of resolving the conflict between the Tubu and Tuareg communities in Libya that arose following the dissolution of the Gaddafi regime. The conflict stemmed from disputes over territorial control and resources. The *Comité* consists of 108 members, including regional representatives, members of the National Assembly of the Agadez region, and traditional and religious authorities. Mohamed Anacko, the President of the Conseil Régional, serves as its president, while Elhadji Oumarou Ibrahim Oumarou, the Sultan of Agadez, is the honorary president. Currently, the role of the *Comité* is to address regional conflicts with a particular focus on community cohesion. Interview conducted on July 7, 2021, in Agadez, with an official from the *Comité de Paix d'Agadez*.

[170] Interview conducted on December 13, 2021 in Niamey, with *Conseil Regional d'Agadez* official.

[171] Interview conducted on 7 December, 2021 in Niamey, with HACP official.

[172] Interview conducted on December 13, 2021 in Niamey, with *Conseil Regional d'Agadez* official.

committing to advocacy efforts aimed at renegotiating the law's content with Niamey.

Based on accounts from the authorities and some former agents of the migration sector, this awareness-raising effort was effective[173]. In fact, between 2015 and 2016, the truce requested by the local authorities was reportedly upheld. However, there are several factors suggesting that this claim is only partly true. Firstly, the assertion that everyone involved in the migration sector ceased their activities is challenged by reliable statistical data, which records that between 2015 and 2016, departures from Agadez to Algeria and Libya were still ongoing (Hoffman et al., 2017: 9). Secondly, a portion of the population engaged in migrants' transportation stemmed from the Tubu group. Many of them do not identify as Nigeriens (although some of them are Nigerien nationals) as their community primarily resides in Chad and Libya, which results in their struggle to acknowledge Niger's authority. Finally, given both the previous point and the absence of concrete measures in place, it appears improbable that all of the approximately one thousand individuals involved in the migration sector[174] would decide to cease their activities. The Regional Council's statement, under these circumstances, could be interpreted as a *bluff*[175]. Nonetheless, the narrative from Agadez authorities, who proclaim the success of this persuasion campaign, is an interesting point. It illustrates the perceived level of credibility—whether actual or purported—that the local authorities believe they wield over the territory. Secondly, and perhaps most notably, the Agadez authorities suggest that due to the halt in migration activities in anticipation of the law's application, any ensuing arrests were viewed as retroactive[176]. This perception was driven by the idea that the Nigerien government needed to demonstrate its enforcement capabilities to European donors, even in the

[173] *Ibid.*

[174] This figure was derived by the *Association des Anciens Passeurs d'Agadez* a committee that operates within the region, dedicated to advocating for the interests of individuals who were *ex-prestataires de l'économie de la migration*. Interview conducted on July 9, 2021 in Agadez, with an official of the *Association ex passeurs d'Agadez*.

[175] Interview conducted on July 9, 2021 in Agadez, with an official of the *Association ex passeurs d'Agadez*.

[176] Interview conducted on July 5, 2021 in Agadez with local journalist

absence of any tangible violations, as part of the wider outsourcing process.

Moreover, Niamey's display of authority seemed increasingly unjust when considering that in 2016, all those accused of breaching law 2015-36 were exclusively residents of the Agadez region. Therefore, both local authorities and the population perceived the effects of the law as inequitable and disproportionately punitive towards their region exclusively (Boyer *et al*., 2020: 111). The inhabitants of the region lodged complaints, pointing out that the prohibition of accommodating and transporting foreign individuals was restricted to Agadez, thereby effectively highlighting a clear violation of the provisions outlined in the ECOWAS protocol on freedom of movement. In essence, the implementation of this rule was perceived as a continuation of Niamey's persistent marginalization of Agadez.

6.6: Institutional Frameworks and Migration Policy in Niger: A Look at Niger's Migration Governance

It is crucial to provide an overview of the institutional/organizational framework that Niger established simultaneously with the introduction of *loi* 2015-36. On the national level there are two important frameworks for migration policy: the *Cadre de Concertation sur la Migration* (CCM) and the *Comité Interministériel Chargé de l'Élaboration du Document de la Politique Nationale de Migration* (CIM). The CCM convenes twice a year and is chaired by the Head of the EU Delegation and the Minister of the Interior. It also comprises sub-committees that convene more frequently and are responsible for developing specialized policy recommendations. The Permanent Secretariat, located within the Ministry of Interior's Migration Unit, provides oversight for the management of the CCM. The CIM, which is the second framework, consists of personnel employed in the primary ministries responsible for migration governance. In addition to government ministries, the membership of the CIM comprises UN Agencies, the CNDH (National Human Rights Commission), and representatives from civil society organizations in Niger. The CIM has

been supported by the German Development Agency (Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, GIZ) since 2017[177].

The Ministry of Justice hosts the *Commission Nationale de Coordination de la Lutte Contre la Traite des Personnes* and the *Agence Nationale de Lutte Contre la Traite des Personnes*. The first entity is responsible for formulating policies and programs related to human trafficking, while the second entity is responsible for their implementation. Both have received direct financial assistance through the EUTF funded project called *Appui à la Justice, la Sécurité et la Gestion des Frontières* (AJUSEN). The overarching goal of the AJUSEN project is to enhance the capabilities of Niger's criminal justice system, enabling the effective implementation of the national strategy to combat irregular migration. The project focuses on key objectives such as enhancing court operations, optimizing pre-trial detention processes, improving information management within and between jurisdictions, and providing human resources support[178]. With the enactment of the 2015-36 law on smuggling, the mandate of both entities was expanded to include smuggling of persons.

The EU provides significant support to the enforcement of the anti-smuggling law by funding the development of the *Stratégie Nationale de Lutte Contre la Migration Irréguliere*. In 2016, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development's (ICMPD) Migration EU Expertise Initiative (MIEUX) was assigned the task of formulating this strategy in collaboration with Nigerien stakeholders under the framework of the CIM, with financial backing from the EU (Jegen, 2019: 24).

The Ministry of the Interior is responsible for the *Direction Génerale de la Police Nationale* (DPGN) which oversees the border police (Direction de la Sourveillance du Territoire, DST). The DST plays a pivotal role as the recipient of numerous projects, encompassing various initiatives aimed at promoting data management, enhancing border control infrastructure, facilitating institutional reform, and policy development. Additionally, DST receives multiple training sessions facilitated by different stakeholders. These projects are fund and backed by the IOM and EUCAP

[177] Interview conducted on June 28, 2021 in Niamey, with a CCM official.

[178] Interview conducted on June 21, 2021 in Niamey, with a *Syndicat Autonome des Magistrats du Niger* (SAMAN) official.

Sahel (with the partnership of European Union countries) (Jegen, 2019: 20).

Enhancing the collection of biometric data at border crossing points has played a pivotal role in promoting surveillance and facilitating data exchange between Niger and external stakeholders[179]. One of the newly implemented systems is the Migration Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS) by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which has been in place at border posts and the central office of the border police since 2016 (Dauchy, 2023). Additionally, another data management system for entry and exit information is the US Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation System (PISCES), which has been interoperable with MIDAS since March 2019 (Zandonini 2019a; 2019b). The data collected from both these entry-exit systems is analyzed within the Africa Frontex Risk Analysis Cell (AFIC), funded and equipped by the EU. AFIC is operated by national border agents based at the national border police in Niamey and has been operational since November 2018 (Frontex 2018). Furthermore, in addition to strengthening the capabilities of Nigerien security forces, European actors are increasingly engaged on the ground. Through the EUTF funded the *Équipe Conjointe d'Investigation* (ECI), three French, three Spanish, and twelve Nigerien policemen have been collaborating since 2017 to carry out joint operational activities targeting irregular migration, document fraud, and dismantling smuggling operations. The ECI also provides capacity building support to Niger's national police service, including in the field of border management[180].

6.7: Security, Migration, and Discourse: Understanding Niger's Alignment with European Standards

The institution of a regulatory framework in Niger has effectively characterized it as an exemplar *transit state* in the contemporary understanding of the term. This characterization signifies that Niger,

[179] Prior to 2016, Niger did not collect data of individuals entering and exiting the country, as highlighted by Jengen (2019: 25).
[180] Interview conducted on October 26, 2022 in Agadez, with an Agadez DST's official.

considering the type and scale of mobility it experiences, has adapted by implementing specific measures and organizing its political structures accordingly. Consequently, this process has shaped Niger's international role, further cementing its identity as a prominent transit state.

The interplay mentioned above, which encompasses local, regional, and international issues, is instrumental in shaping the emergence of political opportunities for Niger. This dynamic interaction across various levels of governance fosters an environment conducive to the adoption of the European security framework. By addressing issues at multiple levels, it creates a compelling narrative that underscores the desirability and relevance of aligning with the European security standards. Yet, this alignment necessitates a discursive practice that can substantiate it. This practice must be capable of justifying the alignment in a manner that resonates with the expectations and needs of the constituencies involved. By crafting a narrative that is both persuasive and responsive to these needs, the alignment can be effectively sustained and made more meaningful to its stakeholders. In the context of security concerns, this endeavor requires the backing of a discourse that underscores a state of potential threat. In the specific context of Niger, executing this operation is not an entirely straightforward task. This complexity arises from the fact that the government is addressing a diverse array of interlocutors, each of whom has established a relationship of accountability with. The Nigerien population, international and European organizations, local state and non-state actors together form a framework of complex and/or conflicting relationships and needs. These entities, each with their unique perspectives and stakes, show varying degrees of interest in the adoption of norms and orientations concerning security matters.

When addressing migration management, a distinct divergence becomes apparent between the perceptions of local constituencies and those at the international level. Northward mobility has never been perceived as a threat by either the institutions or the general population. Indeed, for a subset of the population, particularly those residing in the Agadez region, the concept of northward mobility takes on a different meaning. Rather than being viewed as a challenge, it is seen as an economic resource. Another element of complexity concerns the composition of the migrant population subject to the securitization process. This population is foreign,

over which Niger only exerts authority when it transits through its territory. This transit typically occurs over a short duration and only in very specific places. In fact, the Nigerien population is not typically considered a candidate for migration to Europe[181]. However, as highlighted in previous chapters, Nigeriens do engage in migration towards North Africa following temporary trajectories. This adds complexity to the issue. Indeed, the domestic population may more readily accept the implementation of a penalizing norm against foreign citizenship. However, the discourse shifts significantly when it comes to norms that could potentially harm the direct interests of a portion of the citizenry. This dynamic can, for instance, explain the widespread reluctance observed among so-called 'departure' countries when it comes to collaborating with Western nations on implementing border enforcement or repatriation programs (Dimé & Jaji, 2023). For this reason, the public narrative employed by Nigerien policymakers follows a twofold pattern. It simultaneously emphasizes the country's humanitarian responsibility towards internal security and the protection of lives at risk in the desert, while also highlighting the country's role as a transit hub. This political trajectory became strikingly evident in the wake of the Kantché women's tragedy. For the first time, the Nigerien government decisively assumed responsibility, expressing a firm commitment to curtail the recurring and grim phenomenon often referred to as the ‘drama of deaths in the desert’.
Along the same lines as Europe, Niger has navigated the link between migration and crime/terrorism in a particular way. This approach has been instrumental in legitimizing the efforts and measures implemented to protect not only its territory and population but also to ensure migrants’ security. Both President Issoufou and the former Interior Minister Bazoum have underscored the profound linkage between the transportation of migrants and the criminal networks operating across the country. This connection was particularly highlighted during a meeting at the Elysée in August 2017, which was focused on managing migratory flows. During

[181] A significant proportion of individuals leaving Niger typically settle in Nigeria, accounting for 37.8% of the emigrants. Libya and Côte d’Ivoire are the next most popular destinations, hosting 12.6% and 12.4% of Nigerien emigrants respectively. Other countries are Benin (8.3%), Ghana (7.7%), Togo (5.2%), and Cameroon (3.5%). When it comes to migration towards countries that are members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the numbers are relatively small. It is estimated that only about 3% of Nigerien migrants reside in European nations.

this meeting, President Issoufou declared: *'[…] le Niger est fortement engagé pour des raisons sécuritaires parce que les passeurs qui amènent les migrants en Libye reviennent au Niger avec des armes, cela nous pose donc un problème de sécurité'* (Agence Nigerienne de Presse, 2017). Likewise, Mohamed Bazoum's statements echoed this sentiment, suggesting that he was ' *[…] comfortable with considering [migration] as a criminal activity imbricated in broader criminal networks in a totally interconnected way'* (Frowd: 2020, 7).

In the aftermath of adopting Law 2015-36, a number of compelling questions naturally emerge, spotlighting changes and impacts on Niger's migration landscape. These include whether the law has brought about significant changes in the migration patterns in Niger, and how it has influenced the Agadez region. Furthermore, questions arise concerning the authenticity of the terrorism references: are they genuine, or are they simply leveraged to justify the enactment of this regulatory framework and uphold the existing political status quo? The subsequent chapter endeavors to unpack these critical inquiries.

6.8: Conclusions

In this chapter, we have seen how Niger has positioned itself over the years in the international security market to strengthen its own position. We have seen how, both at the national and regional level, some issues have emerged that have favored the rise of the country and have led it over time to approach the European security approach in terms of the fight against both irregular migration and terrorism. In this regard, we have seen how these two elements, which in the European narrative are continuous, are speculatively taken up by the narrative of local state actors in order to favor a narrative that sees the need to adopt security measures in the field of migration. To this must be added the humanitarian approach that, since the time of the emergency related to the women of Kantché, has been loudly invoked by government actors.

If these elements describe the regional and international framework, on the local level, on the other hand, a sort of friction can be detected between the government of the Agadez region and the central one. This friction, which lasts over time, is reproduced to the same extent in the issue of migration

management. The central government is thus accused of a top-down approach that does not take into account the context and needs. If the application of law 2015-36 effectively interrupts a flourishing economic activity for the population, at the same time it endangers security balances, undermining peace agreements. Within this framework, the local government has attempted to mediate with the operators of the migrant economy while also seeking to med with the central government. Despite these efforts, the desired outcome was not achieved, and the law was eventually enforced. The application that takes place in fact only in the Agadez region appears as even more discriminatory in the eyes of the population.

These passages tell us a lot about the structure of the state of Niger and the level of apparent opposition. If on the one hand the local authorities can only endorse the will of the government, on the other hand they are simultaneously within, against and beyond the state, trying to exercise in their own way a form of control over people (and not over the territory) in order to maintain the relationship of trust with the constituencies. Apparently at first this thing succeeds when the economic operators of Agadez accept (or at least so it is inferred from the recitation of the sources) such a truce. The credibility of the local authorities at this moment appears to be intact and seems to correspond not so much to the fact that they are part of the state organization, but is mostly based on the credibility that these people have built on the field, that is in the period of rebellion and as mediators with respect to the demands of the central government which however continues to appear as a force opposed to local interests.

In the next chapter we will try to reconstruct this delicate relationship and the asymmetries that a system like that of power in Niger produces and reproduces. More specifically, we will try to see how the management of the migration issue in the Agadez region fits into this opposition between the national sphere and the local sphere and what new scenarios are being faced.

Chapter VII: BETWEEN INTENT AND REALITY: MIGRATION, SECURITY, AND DATA COMPLEXITY IN NIGER'S AGADEZ REGION

7.1: Introduction

The implementation of an institutional and regulatory framework aimed at curbing irregular migration has profoundly resonated in Niger. This significant impact is increasingly drawing attention, both in journalistic and academic circles, due to the escalating political importance that the fight against international migration holds in Europe. Over the past few years, Agadez has seen a significant influx of scholars and reporters. They are drawn to the region with the intent of documenting and understanding the unfolding scenario of Europe's border externalization project. Consequently, Niger finds itself under an intensifying spotlight. Recent studies have delved into various aspects of this issue, primarily focusing on how the security and economic landscape in the region has transformed (Bøås, 2020, Boyer *et al.*, 2020; Hoffman *et al.* 2017; Molenaar *et. al*, 2017). This transformation has had adverse effects not only on the population of Agadez but, of course, also on migrants themselves. Indeed, despite the enforcement of law 2015-36, the Agadez region continues to be a conduit for migratory flows heading north.

This chapter aims to unpack the consequences of applying this law and, more broadly, the migration management framework in the region. Furthermore, it seeks to elucidate the political and economic processes triggered by the application of this framework. As observed, numerous state and non-state actors are connected to migration-related activities. Therefore, it is crucial to understand how the application of this migration framework has been integrated into the local context, what processes it has initiated, and how various actors have maneuvered to counter or seize the opportunities presented by this change.

As elucidated in the previous chapter, 2016 police operations led to the arrest of approximately 100 people, comprised mainly of transporters and smugglers. An equivalent number of vehicles were also seized. Subsequent years witnessed similar law enforcement efforts, although with varying degrees of intensity. In 2017, out of 136 people investigated, 90 were

apprehended. The following year, in 2018, saw a decrease in these activities, with 32 arrests made out of 76 individuals investigated. The downward trend persisted into 2019, resulting in 23 arrests from an investigation pool of 37 individuals. However, this trend reversed in 2020 when the government increased its efforts, leading to 55 arrests from 121 investigations. In 2021, the campaign yielded 45 arrests, although the total number of individuals investigated remains unspecified[182]. The enduring frequency of arrests over the past several years signals that Agadez remains an hub for migrants moving northwards. Consequently, it's reasonable to deduce that the associated transportation networks facilitating such movements persist in their operation.

7.2: The PAIERA Project: Intent, Execution, and Discord in Niger's Migration Economy

While there remains ambiguity over whether the enforcement of migration laws was preceded by a noticeable deceleration among economic operators (as stressed in the previous chapter), it's unequivocally clear that following this enforcement, migration activities came to a dramatic halt. At least in the close following period. This occurred as the arrests affected almost everyone involved in the sector. From a demonstrative perspective, this had a profound and significant impact. Indeed, over the years, some Agadez's smugglers had ascended to a level of economic prominence in the city that commanded significant social prestige. This economic stature simultaneously aligned with their gaining of political influence at the local level. As in many contexts worldwide, also Niger experiences the intertwining of entrepreneurship and political parties for the mutual benefit of both[183]. However, the arrests in 2016 also targeted the most prominent

[182] The aforementioned data was supplied to me by a DST during an interview I conducted in Agadez on October 26, 2021

[183] Throughout my stay in Agadez, I had the opportunity to explore the city by car, accompanied by locals with whom I had been connected in Niamey. Fully informed about the aims of my research, they took the initiative to point out the dwellings of those who had previously been the city's most affluent and visible smugglers. In the backdrop of Agadez, where the majority of homes adhere to a modest, if not austere, desert architectural style featuring stone structures with expansive internal courtyards, these opulent dwellings stood out strikingly. With their multiple floors, vibrant colors, modern materials, and the wide, towering walls that set them apart from the street, these houses were effortlessly discernible.

figures who ended up in prison or suffered substantial seizures[184]. This made it clear that the enforcement of the law would be strict and devoid of any potential favoritism.

Indeed, the weeks that followed saw the release of the more affluent smugglers[185]. It remains challenging to determine the proportion of these releases in relation to the total arrested, and whether these individuals secured their freedom through monetary payments (indicative of corruption) or via the intervention of political forces that negotiated their liberation. Nonetheless, multiple sources corroborate that those who were unable to afford such a release continued to languish in prison.

However, in the immediate aftermath of the arrests, the dilemma arose of how to tackle the economic fallout experienced by many individuals whose livelihoods were tied to migration, and who now found themselves devoid of an income stream. This issue, as emphasized repeatedly, was predominantly faced by the transporters. Comprising mostly ex-combatants, who had not undergone any form of reintegration following the rebellion, they posed a significant security concern for the region in the absence of a viable legal alternative. In fact, during this particular juncture, the HACP once again championed the cause for transitioning the security sector[186]. However, their proposal met with refusal, both from the government and a substantial number of the transporters themselves[187].

However, this refusal should not be interpreted as a lack of concern or interest from the government's side. Indeed in 2017 the *Plan d'Actions à Impact Economique Rapide à Agadez* (PAIERA) project funded by the EUTF, was initiated with the objective of repurposing the roles of the former operatives within the migration economy towards alternate

[184] Interview conducted on October 28, 2022 in Agadez, with a former *passeur*.

[185] Interview conducted on July 7, 2021 in Agadez, with an *opérateur agence de courtage gare d'Agadez.*

[186] Interview conducted on November 1, 2022 in Agadez, with an HACP official.

[187] In terms of the government's stance, as we've noted previously, the process of reintegrating ex-combatants into the security forces has consistently been met with significant skepticism. However, when it comes to the transporters, their rejection can be attributed to several reasons. Indeed, their ambitions within the *Forces de Sécurité* (FDS) are restricted to the lowest ranks because of their low education level precluding career progression. This relegate them to roles with minimal remuneration (Interview conducted on November 1, 2022 in Agadez, with an HACP official).

entrepreneurial ventures. This was to be achieved through the allocation of a fund designated for the procurement of necessary goods and equipment. The Nigerien government entrusted the execution of this project to HACP (co-administered by a Nigerien NGO named Karkara, and the Italian NGO named CISP) underscoring its significant role in fostering social cohesion within the region. However, the PAJERA project, despite its intended objectives, sparked a series of controversies, with the recipient selection process being a highly contentious aspect right from the outset. The compilation of the list of eligible applicants was undertaken by the mayors of each *commune* of the region of Agadez before being transferred to the HACP. This list was intended to include the names of all individuals in the region whose economic activities had been halted due to the implementation of the *loi* 2015-36. This marked the onset of the first point of contention. According to the association of former smugglers[188], the actual count of individuals active in the migration sector amounted to 1154, exclusively hailing from the *communes* of Agadez, Arlit, and Dirkou[189]. Contrarily, the total number of individuals included in the lists submitted by the mayors was, a significantly larger figure: 6565. The association of former smugglers contended that this inflated number encompassed individuals who were not involved in migration activities at all. Determining the veracity between the two figures remains challenging. Indeed, one could infer that the figures provided by the association were strategically tailored to encompass only its own members. Nonetheless, the assertion stating that those involved in the migration sector were exclusively residents of the hub cities (Agadez, Arlit, Dirkou), carries a high degree of credibility.

Once the roster of potential beneficiaries had been assembled, these were tasked with submitting a comprehensive business plan to the HACP in order to finally get the fund. However, this phase was beset with distinct challenges. A considerable number of projects were either incomplete or mere replications of others. Indeed, a significant number of the submitted

[188] Established in 2015, this association (*Association des Anciens prestataires de l'Économie Migratoire d'Agadez*) was formed with the objective of providing economic and social safeguards to former smugglers, in the wake of the implementation of *loi* 2015-36.

[189] Interview conducted on July 7, 2021 in Agadez, with an *Association des Anciens prestataires de l'Économie Migratoire d'Agadez* official.

projects were mere replications, copied and pasted from others. This prevalence of duplicated proposals can largely be attributed to the low levels of education and the widespread illiteracy among the potential beneficiaries[190]. Ultimately, the HACP granted approval to slightly over 300 projects (specifically 328), each receiving an allocation of 1.5 million FCFA. Estimates from the *Association des Anciens prestataires de l'Économie Migratoire d'Agadez* suggest that only about half of these beneficiaries originated from the three main migration-hub municipalities[191].

Other grievances arose against the PAIERA project from the beneficiaries' end. Many perceived the allocated fund as insufficient, considering that the disbursed amount was roughly less than half of what they earned through migration[192]. Another issue centered around the money allocation method. The project stipulated that the organizing entities, upon project approval, would purchase the necessary materials equivalent to the budget. Many beneficiaries voiced complaints that the value of the materials procured was lower than the agreed budget, which they considered to be an illicit appropriation of funds by the organizers[193].

The combination of organizational and financial issues, coupled with alleged miscarriages in the beneficiary census, amplified the collective perception of PAIERA as a failure. Especially this latter is seen as the most severe infringement within the scope of PAIERA. The prevailing sentiment, shared by sources not necessarily associated with those engaged in the migration economy[194], is that the mayors may have attempted to use the fund to favor individuals within their familial or electoral circles. From

[190] Ibidem

[191] Ibidem

[192] Most part of the beneficiaries have ventured into small-scale informal activities. These primarily involve the sale of basic commodities, the purchase of livestock for pastoral pursuits, or the acquisition of tuk-tuk taxis (in hausa language named *Adaidata*), a form of transportation that enjoys widespread local popularity.

[193] Ibidem

[194] This perspective was echoed by all the HACP officials I interviewed when discussing PAIERA and those at the Regional Council. Evidently, this stance allowed the HACP to distance itself from any potential mismanagement of funds. It would have been insightful to conduct interviews with the mayors of other municipalities within the Agadez region regarding this matter. However, due to mobility restrictions within the region, I was unable to venture outside the city of Agadez.

this viewpoint, it appears that the HACP endeavored to strike a balance between accommodating the mayors' preferences and ensuring the funds were allocated to those who genuinely fulfilled the selection criteria. This balancing act is reflected in the ultimate distribution of the funds, with half allocated to recipients from Agadez, Arlit, and Dirkou, and the remaining half disbursed among beneficiaries from other *communes*. Currently, the l'*Association des Anciens prestataires de l'Économie Migratoire d'Agadez* advocates for the approval of a new plan designed to assist all individuals in need. However, as of now, no additional reconversion projects have been financed through EUTF funds.

7.3: Shifting Sands: The Paradox of Security Regulations and Trafficking in Niger's Agadez

The Agadez region confronts the paradoxical circumstance where the enforcement of a security regulation inadvertently triggers additional security problems. The ceasing of transport activities and the absence of an effective reconversion plan for these operators represent a concerning factor. These Tuareg transporters are, once again, experiencing marginalization in relation to the political processes that originated in Niamey.

Concurrent to the situation faced by these Tuareg transporters is the circumstance of the Tebu transporters. The latter group—whether by choice, due to disinterest, or out of mistrust towards state initiatives—has not engaged in the reintegration process[195]. Consequently, one could state that a substantial number of individuals, whose expertise lies primarily in *navigating* the desert terrain, transportation, and weaponry use, are now confronting a renewed phase of uncertainty. What ramifications has this had on the security regional equilibrium?

During my stay in Agadez, a recurring narrative I encountered was the overall deterioration of the region's security framework[196]. However, the

[195] Interview conducted on November 1, 2022 in Agadez, with an HACP official.

[196] Although it is technically challenging to statistically confirm an increase in banditry acts over recent years, the sentiment across various stakeholders in Agadez — encompassing civil society, security forces, and political representatives — indicates that criminal activities have become more commonplace than in the past.

situation in this part of Niger presents a distinct dynamic compared to other regions. The deterioration of security here is not predominantly associated with jihadist groups' activities. Instead, it is primarily driven by issues linked to trafficking and banditry. Indeed, recent years have seen a surge in acts of violence, primarily associated with attacks on convoys or vehicles transporting goods across the desert. Moreover, following the discovery of gold deposits in the region (Tchibarakaten, Djado, Tabelot) banditry activity has significantly intensified (Fareday, 2023: 7). Gold from the region is transported via convoys, making them susceptible to attacks by desert bandits. Notably, these attacks are not confined to the desert. Incidents involving gold-carrying vehicles have also been reported within the city of Agadez itself[197].

Simultaneously, consistent seizures made by the police has shed light on the flourishing nature of trafficking activity[198]. The region serves as a hub for a variety of trafficking routes, encompassing drugs (cocaine and cannabis), weapons, and pharmaceuticals such as Tramadol[199]. Predominantly, narcotics and Tramadol originate from Mali or Nigeria and are transported northwards towards Libya[200]. According to local authorities, there are at least a dozen convoys transiting through Agadez each week, reportedly transporting cocaine (Jeune Afrique, 2017). On the other hand, the flow of weapons follows a reverse path, being transported from Libya southwards (de Tessières, 2017:6).

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[197] During my field stay in Agadez on November 3, 2022, a significant incident took place. A group of armed individuals managed to seize a shipment of gold, valued at 24 million FCFA, in the outskirts of the Agadez airport (Air info, 2022).

[198] Based on data from Nigerien authorities, illicit substances confiscated throughout 2021 held a staggering value of 26,089,037,000 FCFA (ActuNiger, 2023). Numerous instances of such seizures have been recorded specifically in the Agadez region. Among these, a particularly significant event occurred in January 2022 when 200 kg of cocaine were seized from the mayor of the city of Fachi, in the Bilma *commune* (BBC, 2022).

[199] Tramadol, a synthetically modified opioid primarily destined for Libya, originates from Nigeria. Its trafficking route involves a passage through Niger before it reaches its final destination in North Africa. A supply bought in Nigeria for 300 euros can be resold in Libya for around 4,000 euros. However, alongside this international trafficking, there's a growing trend of local consumption within the Sahel region (Tinti, 2017).

[200] Cocaine typically starts its journey in the Menaka region, located on Niger's border in Mali, from where it is then transported to the Tahoua and Tillaberi of Niger. Its route continues to the Agadez region, which serves as a hub leading to an intricate network of pathways towards southern Libya. Once in Libya, these drugs are primarily channeled through Egypt to reach their ultimate markets in Europe and the Middle East (Bish, 2019)

Determining a concrete increase in such activities is challenging due to the scarcity of statistical sources. However, what can be affirmed, as was unveiled in an interview with the Agadez[201] prosecutor, is the trend of transporters previously involved in migration activities now being apprehended due to their engagement in trafficking and banditry. Many individuals previously involved in migration have found themselves, by force of circumstances, engaging in illicit activities. The lack of a consistent influx of money in the region has essentially undermined the standing of numerous actors, resulting in a relative downturn in the overall economic landscape This observation stress the link between the enforcement of Law 2015-36 and the subsequent weakening of security.

However, an important distinction must be made regarding the perception of security threats in a region like Agadez. The understanding of what constitutes a threat here is notably nuanced, making it a significantly different context compared to other environments. The region's historical and social structures have always been deeply intertwined with the mobility of goods and people (as already seen), thus ingraining a certain sense of acceptance towards even some unconventional activities. This implies that trafficking of illicit goods and engagement in predatory practices, despite their apparent negative implications, are not immediately perceived as threats within this context. The Tebu and Tuareg communities, profoundly conscious of their integral roles within their region, function as invaluable guides for merchants seeking to transport their goods across the desert terrain. Within the division of labor in drug trafficking, the Tuareg and Tebu population exclusively engages in transportation. They don't 'own' the transported goods per se but receive compensation for facilitating their movement[202]. This distinction plays a significant role at a local level as it helps evade social stigmatization: transporting illicit substances isn't considered *haram* (forbidden) in the same way as profiting from their sale or consumption. In an effort to maintain their Islamic integrity, many individuals believe that simply wearing gloves during transportation can be enough to prevent contact

[201] Interview conducted on July 7, 2021 and November 5, 2022 in Agadez, with Agadez prosecutor.

[202] Interview conducted on July 5, 2021 in Agadez, with local journalist.

with sinful items[203]. Transport across the desert, irrespective of the type of goods, is perceived as a distinguishing mark of their essence within the Tuareg and Tebu culture. Both communities view the task of transporting commodities across the harsh Sahara not merely as a job, but as their inherent social role. They consider themselves custodians of the desert, safeguarding and facilitating commerce in this challenging landscape, embodying an ancestral duty passed down through generations (Kohl, 2015). This perception, when combined with a particularly weak local labor market, tends to soften social judgments towards those engaged in such activities. Adding to this sense of social indulgence is the prevalent practice among affluent traffickers of reinvesting part of their profits back into the local community. This reinvestment often takes the form of job creation, financial support for political parties, contributions to public investment (Raineri, 2018).

Thus, trafficking is deeply rooted in a context where distinct social and economic dynamics play a pivotal role in its emergence and structuring. This perspective becomes evident when examining cases like that the MNJ, where trafficking routes were codified within an established framework of political and economic power relations. This construct allowed trafficking to exist without posing significant security risks. However, this equilibrium becomes precarious when the status quo is disrupted due to the emergence of new actors or the breakdown of pre-existing agreements. It is under these altered circumstances that trafficking starts to pose negative security implications.

Considering this overall scenario, efforts have been made over the years to create a regional framework where trafficking is integrated in such a way that it doesn't destabilize the area. Rather than opposing it outright, authorities have attempted to integrate trafficking by employing a co-optation system. This approach aims to establish a certain level of state authority over peripheral regions, such as Agadez, by integrating a valuable economic sector like trafficking into the regional framework. From this perspective the story of Elhadj Chérif Ould Abidine, better known as *Cherif cocaïne*, is a case on point. Cherif Abidine, an Arab

[203] Interview conducted on July 5, 2021 in Agadez, with *Comité de Paix* official.

Dermachaka businessman from Tassara (Tahoua region) was the main figure in cocaine trafficking in the Agadez region until his death in 2016 at age 37[204]. As a respected businessman and owner of the 3STV transport company, Cherif Abidine had become a key political figure in the region. From 2011, he served as a representative in the National Assembly for the PNDS-Tarraya party of President Issoufou and simultaneously as the party's secretary in the Agadez region (Raineri, 2018: 79). According to various sources, while Cherif Abidine was alive, he was instrumental in shaping the most significant political decisions regarding the Agadez region, often made within his residence[205]. His influence was so significant that President Issoufou attended his funeral when he passed away. The alliance between the PNDS and Cherif Abidine secured him access to public markets and the freedom to continue his illicit activities, which were largely overlooked by the Nigerien authorities[206]. In return, he funneled a portion of his wealth into the party, thereby supporting its electoral campaigns[207]. This co-optation strategy was implemented by the PNDS across the entire country, involving key regional economic players and significantly expanding the party's reach[208].

However, in the aftermath of Cherif Abidine's death, the trafficking conditions in Agadez has greatly transformed. The legacy of Cherif Abidine has not been taken over by a specific new drugl-ord, but rather a plurality of players are now competing for control over the routes[209]. There are numerous reasons why, apparently, no one has been able to establish a monopoly on drug trafficking. Among these reasons, a key factor is the evolving landscape of regional security. Indeed, the intertwining of drug trafficking with jihadist groups in the Sahel region has become progressively prominent. Certain factions appear to levy a tax on drug-

[204] Interview conducted on July 5, 2021 in Agadez, with local journalist.

[205] Ibid.

[206] Ibid.

[207] One common strategy was the settlement of debts owed by certain voters, which in return would secure their vote in favor of the PNDS. Interview conducted on November 5, 2022 in Agadez, with an official of the organization *Femmes Contre la Guerre*.

[208] Interview conducted on June 9, 2021 in Niamey, with political specialist.

[209] Interview conducted on July 5, 2021 in Agadez, with local journalist.

carrying convoys, utilizing these proceeds to finance their activities. (Gaye, 2018; Chelin, 2020). This has clearly drawn greater international attention to the trafficking in the Sahel, not surprisingly, one of the main objectives of the EUCAP program is to counter the drug routes and more in general transnational crime (EU RACC Sahel, 2022). Financial support from this program enabled the establishment of the *Office Central de Répression du Trafic Illicite des Stupéfiants* (OCRTIS) in 2015 (Niger Diaspora, 2018). This specialized police department has significantly amplified the intensity of interventions and intelligence work related to drug trafficking in recent years (together with the UNODC and American intelligence services)[210]. In the aftermath of Cherif Abidine's death and the heightened police activities, the PNDS saw an opportunity to gradually decouple itself from trafficking entities. Indeed, during this period, the PNDS was consolidating its influence in the Agadez region. It nurtured stronger relationships with figures from former rebellions and traditional authorities, and it began aligning itself with emerging businessmen, predominantly those involved in the gold sector (I will delve further into this aspect later). This comprehensive network allowed the PNDS to deepen its roots in the region. This shift marked a new path for the PNDS, potentially coinciding with the election of President Mohamed Bazoum in 2021, as it represented a step toward modernization and disentanglement from illegal networks, particularly in Agadez[211]. Amidst the absence of any particular political force's hegemony over the territory—unless proven otherwise—this transition enabled residual banditry to regain a foothold along the desert routes. Consequently, these routes have increasingly become targets for raids not only for gold shipments but also those carrying illicit substances. This phenomenon has been observed to such an extent that drug trafficking routes have recently started to shift. Instead of passing

[210] March 2021 marked a significant milestone in combating drug trafficking in the region of Agadez. This came as a result of cooperative efforts between the OCRTIS and American intelligence agencies, leading to the arrest of key figure Goumour Atouwa Bidika. Known for his his prior involvement with the MNJ, Bidika was seen as a successor to Cherif Abidine in the drug trafficking sphere (CENOZO, 2022).

[211] As emphasized during an interview with a police officer from OCRTIS (Niamey on June 1, 2021) President Bazoum's tenure was highlighted as marking a pivotal shift in the battle against drug trafficking, an assertion underscored by the arrest operation targeting Goumour Atouwa Bidika..

from Mali to Niger via Agadez, traffickers are now transiting from neighbors' countries through Niamey using trucks or tankers[212]. This trend provides significant insight into the underlying factors causing the modification of trafficking routes. Indeed, trucks transiting through Niamey have no option but to pass through border posts. Indeed, recent trends show a shift towards the use of heavier vehicles, which, while being more challenging to inspect, are not equipped to manage off-road terrains. This contrasts to the scenario in the north, where the typical choice of transport was 4x4 vehicles which can easily circumvent even mobile control posts. Taking this factor into account, we can confidently assert that the shift in routes was more influenced by the rise in predation in Agadez than by the actual checks conducted by law enforcement. Furthermore, the absence of a dominant power in the trafficking arena, a role that could have been filled by figures such as Cherif Abidine in the past, has inadvertently provided an additional advantage to the bandits. They can now operate with diminished fear of retaliatory harm from a powerful authority.

7.4: Navigating North: The Resilience of Migration Networks Amidst Repressive Legal Frameworks in Agadez

Examining this situation from a more centered migration perspective, we can identify key repercussions stemming from the implementation of the new migratory framework. Indeed the stringent initial application of the law, has not stopped migratory flows' persistence. Significantly, Agadez continues to function as a primary transit zone in the north. However, the region is undergoing a profound transformation in the migratory system. This change is being shaped by strategies and reactions of stakeholders at every level. To fully grasp the complexity of this situation, several key factors must be considered. First of all, a fact needs to be clearly stated: all sources interviewed in Agadez unanimously confirm that migration to the north persists with considerable volume. Regardless of the manner in

[212] In March 2021, a container filled with 17 tons of cannabis resin originating from Lebanon and transiting via the port of Lomé, was seized in Niamey. This interception was part of a larger operation that culminated in the arrest of Goumour Atouwa Bidika. (RFI, 2021).

which it is stated - either 'off the record' or explicitly during interviews - there is an undeniable circumstance: despite the implementation of a more repressive legal framework, mobility persists.

During my stays in Agadez, I was frequently struck by the sentiments expressed by interviewees, who often perceived the persistence of migratory patterns as commonplace. Despite multiple apparent authorities' endeavors to address it, many believed that halting mobility in a region like Agadez was an insurmountable task. Drawing upon insights from these sources, it becomes evident that the regime's implementation of migration control had nuanced implications. Rather than primarily curbing mobility, its most pronounced effects were twofold: it not only reduced migration as a key economic boost for the local community but also significantly diminished safety and worsened daily living conditions for those journeying north. This dual consequence can be likened to two sides of the same coin. The overwhelming sentiment was that Agadez had become the primary focal point for the application of this law, a development influenced by several factors. Notably, while Agadez was originally just one node within a broader migratory network spanning the region and even the country, its high visibility and the tangible feasibility of law enforcement transformed it into the central hub for the law's application.

As previously highlighted, the abrupt enforcement of the *loi* 2015-36 in Agadez unexpectedly impacted even those figures who had prominently risen within the migration business and were once deemed 'untouchable'. Indeed, the regulatory implementation acted as a deterrent for many. Reflecting upon the events of November 2016, several chose to disengage from the migration sector. Nevertheless, the rigorous controls in Agadez have not halted the influx of foreigners to the city. This persistence indicates that pathways to the north remain viable. The pressing question then becomes: through what means? The dynamics of northward mobility have evolved significantly in response to the implementation of control regulations, manifesting changes in two primary areas: the residency patterns of foreigners in Agadez and the complexities of desert traversal. In Agadez, regulatory checks have cultivated an atmosphere of suspicion. The visible presence of foreigners in the city has shifted to one of clandestineness, largely driven by frequent police interventions. Indeed,

it's undeniable that migrants, not explicitly criminalized by the regulation's text, find themselves in a de facto criminalized situation due to the day-to-day police practices.

Agadez station emerges as a pivotal juncture where this combined security and humanitarian oversight begins. Prominent billboards sponsored by the IOM stand as stark reminders, cautioning migrants about the dangers of desert crossings. Police frequently conduct operations targeting foreigners arriving on buses from the city of Tahoua, with the intent to detain and transfer them to the police station[213]. This suggests that migration control mechanisms are not only activated in Agadez but also beforehand. Intriguingly, this system is not solely the domain of law enforcement; transportation services play a significant role. Transportation service employees, in many cases, act as the first line of control and deterrence. They often bar migrants from buying tickets for the journey between Tahoua and Agadez. Alternatively, these employees might alert the police along the route about foreign passengers, enabling law enforcement to either remove migrants or, frequently, accept a nominal bribe in exchange for allowing them to proceed[214]. Upon reaching Agadez, those migrants who are detected by the police — especially if they've managed to get to the station — are transported to the police station. Here, they are identified, and in some cases, introduced to IOM staff, who present them with the option of an organization-managed assisted voluntary return. The identification process usually entails a fine of FCFA 12,000 for migrants unable to produce identity documents, a deliberate choice by many for evident reasons. Occasionally, this fine is backed by an official receipt[215]. However, when it's not, there's a substantial chance that the fine directly benefits corrupt police officials. Following these procedures, migrants are typically released. Once released, migrants normally make their way to the ghettos.

[213] Interview conducted on October 29, 2022 in Agadez, with an Alarmphone Sahara member.

[214] Interview conducted on May 17, 2021 in Niamey, with a member of Tournons la Page organization.

[215] Interview conducted on October 29, 2022 in Agadez, with an Alarmphone Sahara member.

The dynamics within the ghettos of Agadez have notably shifted. While once managed by locals, the majority of these temporary housing units for migrants now fall under the oversight of foreigners, often migrants themselves. These migrants typically settle in Agadez, awaiting a favorable opportunity to continue northward. However, describing these individuals simply as *geto* managers oversimplifies their position. They essentially serve as liaisons between migrants and true homeowners from Agadez. In this arrangement, they pay a predetermined amount to the homeowners, ensuring the properties remain fully occupied to avoid financial losses on their part. This managerial role comes with its own set of challenges, particularly in the form of legal responsibilities towards the police. With the enforcement of the *loi* 2015-36, these intermediaries often become the targets of accusations, especially as police operations increasingly focus on identifying migrants within the *geto*[216]. Regularly, the police conduct targeted raids on these known dwellings, which, given their notoriety within Agadez, are easy to pinpoint. Similar to procedures witnessed at transportation hubs, these apprehended migrants are taken to the police precinct for identification and potential fining[217].

During my research at the Agadez courthouse, I reviewed a document titled *Statistiques des Affaires Relatives au Trafic Illicite de Migrants et Traite de Personnes des Années* 2015 *à* 2020, provided by an official from the prosecutor's office. This file chronicles individuals investigated under the *loi* 2015-36. Though touted as official, it displays several inconsistencies. Notably, entries for 2018 are absent, and many records lack violation locations. Additionally, the numbers in this document seem significantly reduced compared to the informal data I collected, suggesting that not all cases were documented. Given the unwillingness of other authorities, particularly the police, to share such records, this remains our primary reference for any subsequent estimations. From the document, two interconnected insights emerge prominently: firstly, a significant proportion of the 2015-36 law violations in the past two years took place

[216] Interview conducted on November 1, 2022 in Agadez, with Guinean citizen living in Agadez.

[217] Interview conducted on October 29, 2022 in Agadez, with an Alarmphone Sahara member.

within Agadez, and secondly, foreign citizens were often the main offenders[218]. This highlights a few pertinent aspects. Even if the data in the document isn't exhaustive, it hints at a limited control impact beyond Agadez's city limits. Primarily, the focus seems to be on discouraging migration by hampering the daily routines of those in transit. The law's enforcement has predictably dwindled the number of transporters, consequently prolonging the preparation time for northern trips. Thus, migrants often face extended stays in the city, with their circumstances worsened by their clandestine status and the ever-present threat of police action. Where migrants previously waited an average of a week before setting out, the wait time now can extend to a month until a vehicle is ready for departure[219]. Moreover, it must be said that smugglers intentionally used to extend this week-long period to optimize their earnings from migrants, who then faced higher living and service costs. Moreover, the secretive nature of these transport services makes it a challenge to fill a vehicle. This responsibility often befalls migrants themselves, who are hurried into finding travel companions swiftly.

Today, the cost of traveling from Agadez to Sebha in Libya has skyrocketed to 250,000 FCFA, up from 50,000 FCFA before law's implementation[220]. This significant rise in price is primarily due to the heightened risks faced by transporters. Individuals traversing the Agadez-Dirkou route face multifaceted challenges. Beyond the looming threat of arrest, they must also navigate the dangers posed by bandits.

The route is punctuated with authority checks at specific intervals[221]. The journey begins at Agadez, the primary checkpoint, where vehicles preparing to head north pass through the city's exit barrier. Here, a combination of police and customs inspections levy a departure tax:

[218] Out of the 131 documented cases, the vast majority of violations took place in the city of Agadez. Furthermore, from 2019 onwards, most of these charges were primarily levied against foreign nationals.

[219] Interview conducted on October 29, 2022 in Agadez, with an Alarmphone Sahara member.

[220] Interview conducted on October 28, 2022 in Agadez, with ex *passeur.*

[221] The data pertaining to the checkpoints and the associated tariffs were sourced from interviews with a former *passeur* (October 28, 2022), and a transporter (November 10, 2022), both conducted in Agadez. The lack of specific figures related to the number of vehicles and personnel is attributable to the interviewees' limited knowledge on these matters.

20,000 FCFA for vehicles and 1,000 FCFA per individual. As one travels 78 km further from Agadez, they encounter a Gendarmerie unit. However, their primary role isn't regulation and tax collection but rather to assist vehicles in distress. Continuing on, roughly 650 km from Agadez lies the Seguidine checkpoint, staffed by both police and the *Garde Nationale*. Each traveler here incurs a 1,000 FCFA fee. Proceeding from Seguidine, the last checkpoint is in Madama (200km from Seguidine). Here, the military control post enforces a 10,000 FCFA fee per vehicle or, alternatively, accepts 20 liters of gasoline. In addition to fixed stations, there are specific points along the route between Agadez and Fachi where no checks on vehicles are performed nor are any fees collected. While these outposts are principally tasked with response and area patrolling, they do not function as roadblocks. Their checks are either exceptional in nature or implemented basing on specific requests from the governorate. The governorate oversees a security committee that meets monthly in Agadez. This committee, beyond comprising senior officers from different military branches, also integrates a delegation from EUCAP Sahel. Most of these are staffed by military personnel and members of the *Garde Nationale*. For instance, 50 km from Agadez, one can find a *Garde Nationale* station staffed with 30 personnel and equipped with 10 vehicles. Adjacent to this, a military outpost houses 50 personnel and 15 vehicles. Fachi is home to another military station boasting 40 vehicles. Further along, 143 km from Fachi in Bilma, there's a military station with 10 vehicles, alongside a vehicle from the Gendarmerie. Dirkou, just 40 km from Bilma, has a substantial military presence with a station comprising 1,000 personnel. Finally, in Leté, there's another National Guard station. A significant role of these outposts is to oversee the two primary water sources along the route, the *Puit d'Espoir*, located 300 km from Agadez, and the *Puit d'Achigour*, which is 650 km from Agadez.

In response to these established control locations, transporters have implemented countermeasures to circumvent the checks. While official convoys still set out for Dirkou from the city's designated exit barriers, transporters have increasingly shifted their departure point to the city's outskirts. To further evade detection, migrants are quietly moved from the ghettos to departure points during nighttime, using motorcycles with their

lights off[222]. In response to the challenges posed by the control locations in Agadez, many migrants have adjusted their paths. Instead of funneling through Agadez, a once common transit point, they now often prefer alternative routes. This shift has given rise to regional networks that deliberately avoid Agadez, spanning from various parts of the country. Notably, emerging gold hubs in Tchibarakaten, Tabelot, and Djado have become focal points[223]. These areas attract foreign workers for gold mining. Law enforcement in these locales is lenient: the absence of established police stations combined with a military focus on safeguarding gold transport rather than addressing migration makes these areas attractive. With the added potential income from artisanal gold extraction, migrants find it more feasible to travel northward from these locations. For many, the lure of the gold sites has even transformed the Agadez region from a transit zone into a final destination.

On another front, the advent of satellite technology has birthed new routes. Transporters, often hailing from Libya, leverage GPS coordinates to set rendezvous points with intermediaries, especially from Niger's southern regions of Zinder and Diffa. These pre-arranged spots serve as transfer points where migrants board northbound vehicles from Libya. Here, they opt for lesser-known alternative paths that, while free from official scrutiny, come with their own set of challenges[224] (see figure 10). These off-the-beaten-track routes are unpredictable; if a vehicle breaks down, migrants are often left stranded in the desert. Moreover, when these vehicles encounter military patrols, migrants are sometimes forced to disembark, allowing the less encumbered vehicle to evade the authorities more easily[225]. To further complicate matters, the growing threat of desert banditry has compelled carriers to arm themselves for protection. In the desert, an increasing number of migrants are being abandoned, leading to a rise in fatalities[226]. While transporters adeptly evade military

[222] Interview conducted on October 28, 2022 in Agadez, with ex *passeur.*

[223] Interview conducted on October 14, 2022 in Agadez, with artisanal miner from Tchibarakaten and Tabelot.

[224] Interview conducted on December 9, 2021 in Niamey with official from the *Direction générale de l'immigration Gouvernement du Niger.*

[225] Interview conducted on November 10, 2022, in Agadez, with migrants transporter.

checkpoints, the military, the only force with mobile capabilities in the desert, face inherent challenges in combating irregular migration. The transporters are well-informed about the military's checkpoint locations and strategically avoid them. When the military does manage to intercept a migrant-carrying vehicle, they are faced with logistical and economic hurdles. They must summon a reconnaissance vehicle to transport migrants to their base, an operation that is both time-consuming, taking up to half a day, and costly due to the high value of fuel in the desert[227]. Some sources even suggest that, faced with these challenges, the military might opt to accept a bribe, roughly around 100,000 FCFA, to turn a blind eye to such interceptions[228].

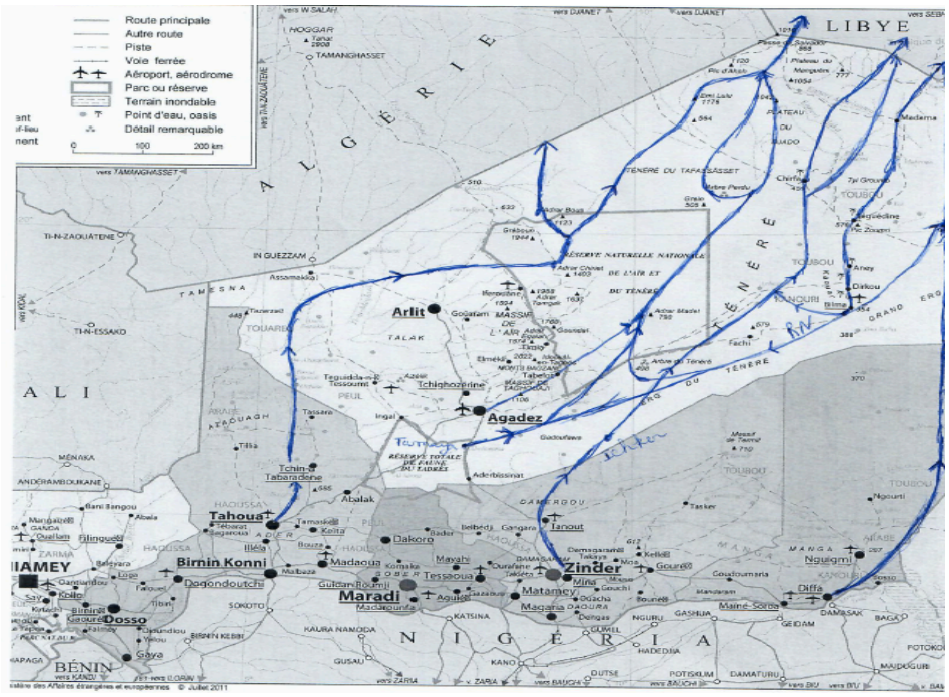

Figure 10: Map of alternative migrant routes following the application of Law 2015-36 in Niger. Source: Map reconstructed by an official of the *Direction générale de l'immigration, Government of Niger*.

[226] Interview conducted on October 29, 2022 in Agadez, with an Alarmphone Sahara member.

[227] Interview conducted on November 10, 2022, in Agadez, with migrants transporter.

[228] Ibid.

7.5: Data Dilemmas: The Complexity of Tracking Migration Flows in Niger

However, providing evidence to substantiate this claim presents a substantial challenge. Naturally, this challenge is closely linked to data collection and management, which in a context like Niger, may be compromised due to issues of transparency and traceability. In terms of quantifying migratory flows in Niger, two primary entities are principally responsible for documenting and ensuring their tracking: the Nigerien Police and the IOM. The DST division takes responsibility for reporting migratory movements at border posts, utilizing the MIDAS[229] database technology furnished by the IOM[230]. Concurrently, police operations against irregular migrations are aimed at collecting data on those movements. However, the police demonstrates a certain level of reticence in disclosing the data they hold[231]. Numerous reasons underpin this level of reticence. Primarily, as per the IOM policies outlining the database, the

[229] What follows is an excerpt from the *brochure* in which the IOM presents the features of MIDAS to potential state buyers *'[…] MIDAS is a high-quality, user-friendly and fully customizable Border Management Information System (BMIS) for States in need of a cost-effective and comprehensive solution. Currently operational in countries across Africa, Asia and the Americas, MIDAS has been designed to be compliant with international standards (ICAO and ISO). With the capability to collect, process, store, and analyse traveller information in real time and across an entire border network, MIDAS enables States to more effectively monitor those entering and exiting their territory while providing a sound statistical basis for migration policy-related planning. IOM ensures that governments have full and exclusive ownership of any data recorded by MIDAS. Given IOM's status as a non-profit making international organization, MIDAS is a cost-effective alternative to more expensive commercial options. IOM provides expert guidance throughout the installation process, including the delivery of systems administration training workshops and the provision of post-project support to ensure MIDAS' sustainability. MIDAS automatically captures traveller's biographic and biometric data through the use of document readers, webcams and fingerprint readers. This automation of data collection allows for faster and more accurate capture of information - alleviating the workload at borders. Data captured by MIDAS includes: • Biographic data. • Biometric data (photographs and fingerprints). • Travel document images examined under Infrared, Ultraviolet and White Light. • Entry and exit data. • Visa data. • Vehicle/flight/vessel data*' (IOM, 2018).

[230] MIDAS has been set up at various terrestrial border including Makalondi (Burkina Faso border), Malanville (Benin border), Dan Issa/Farou, Dan Barto, Sassoumbroune (Nigeria border), Kundikaré (Mali border), and Assamakka (Algeria border); in addition to the international airport in Niamey (interview conducted on November 10, 2022 in Niamey, with IOM official).

[231] This concern has been recognized by an official from the UNODC (interview conducted on June 10, 2021 in Niamey), who reports that the agency faces challenges in formulating follow-up measures to the plans launched in the country due to the police not providing the necessary data concerning migration flows.

data obtained through MIDAS is held by the state that collects it, which then has sole ownership over these info (IOM, 2018). This provision effectively empowers Niger (and the Nigerien police) to impose the highest level of confidentiality on the data derived from MIDAS. Despite this, there are certain indicators suggesting that the discretion surrounding MIDAS data could be linked to challenges arising from the use of the technology. In a setting where borders are typically located in remote areas, distant from populated centers and where reliable connection to the power grid can be challenging, as it is for all border posts in Niger, maintaining an operational electronic database often presents substantial technical difficulties. Moreover, even when a generator is installed to ensure power supply, if it fails, replacement can take several days. During this period, the database inevitably becomes non-operational[232].

The electricity-related issues not only hinder the functioning of the MIDAS equipment but also disrupt the operation of air conditioning systems within the offices. This can create intolerable working conditions, particularly during periods when temperatures can exceed 40 degrees, thereby severely impacting the ability to perform control activities[233].

Further to these technological difficulties, we must also consider the challenges faced by the human personnel, i.e. the DST staff working in these challenging environments. Although they receive training from IOM and EUCAP to learn the operation of the database and general protocols to apply along the border, performance is not always in line with indicated standards. This situation primarily arises from factors related to field operations in a very peculiar environment such as the Sahel. Many scholars (Hahonou, 2016; Mixed Migration Centre, 2019; Nugent, 2019) have underscored the unique dynamics of borderland relations in the Sahel and the West-Africa, which are primarily characterized by cross-border interactions and relationships. In addition to migrants from distant regions, the border posts - particularly those located in the southern parts of Niger - predominantly serve locals who live near these points and frequently cross the border for various social and economic reasons. This results in daily mobility patterns characterized by short cross-border trajectories that

[232] Interview conducted on November 10, 2022 in Niamey, with IOM official.

[233] Ibid.

occur quite regularly. Given the substantial volume of these cross-border movements, DST staff, in some instances, might opt for less rigorous checks on transiting individuals. The checks could range from overlooking document inspection to simply verifying the validity of passports[234]. This strategy aims to prevent undue slowdowns in transit or to avoid excessive workload. It's important to note that this desire to avoid delays at border points is shared by both the DST personnel and the population crossing these points. This often results in individuals choosing to circumvent official border checkpoints, instead opting to enter the neighboring countries through adjacent areas that lack regular monitoring. Given that border control stations are commonly situated in large, open or desert areas, it's quite straightforward for individuals to sidestep the main route leading to these posts, opting instead for less conspicuous alternative paths[235].

This underscores the reality that the DST's data capture, regardless of its public availability, is inherently incomplete, registering only a limited portion of the total populace moving in and out of the country. Particularly in terms of data related to irregular attempts at crossing border posts, the statistics remain largely undisclosed. The prevailing rule suggests that individuals trying to irregularly entering or exiting Nigerien territory, are less likely to use an official border post. This fact effectively negates the capability of the border posts to offer a comprehensive depiction of irregular mobility. Additionally, it's important to highlight that the majority of people attempting to enter Niger are ECOWAS citizens, who generally face no significant barriers to entry. Given these circumstances, the primary breaches of migration measures in Niger are observed when individuals attempt to depart the country at the borders with Chad, Algeria, and Libya. Against this framework, it's noteworthy that the focus of migration policy violations is predominantly on irregular exits towards Algeria and Libya, due to the limited concern around mobility between Chad and Niger. However, along the frontiers shared with the two North African countries, only the border post in Assamakka, adjacent to Algeria,

[234] Ibid.

[235] Ibid.

is equipped with MIDAS. Conversely, on the Niger-Libya border, there isn't a formal border post but rather a military outpost situated in Madama[236]. Moreover, the Assamakka border post mainly identifies foreigners expelled from Algeria, as it is totally circumvented by people entering Algeria from Niger[237].

As a result, the key method for quantifying the number of individuals trying to leave Niger illegally — a violation under the *loi* 2015-36 — is through police operations conducted in the Agadez region. This assessment presumes a continuous focus on data sourced from police activities. The functionality and impact of these operations will be discussed further later in this chapter.

The IOM serves as an alternate provider of migration data, employing a system known as Flow Monitoring Points (FMP) to trace northward movements. These FMPs are strategically stationed across various locations in Niger, including Arlit, Madama, and Seguidine (in the Agadez region), and Tahoua (Tahoua region), Dan Issa (Maradi region), Dan Barto and Magaria (Zinder region) (see figure 11) (IOM, 2019). With IOM officials at these points conducting interviews and gathering sample data, crucial details related to gender and nationality are counted. The FMP in Arlit is dedicated to monitoring movements across the Algerian border. Meanwhile, the FMPs located in Madama and Seguidine primarily focus on documenting the flow of individuals across the Libyan border.

Every month, the IOM publishes a 'Flow Monitoring Report', providing estimated data for all movements recorded by these FMPs throughout Niger. However,

[236] Interview conducted on October 28, 2022 in Agadez, with ex *passeur*.

[237] Interview conducted on October 30, 2022 in Agadez, with IOM official.

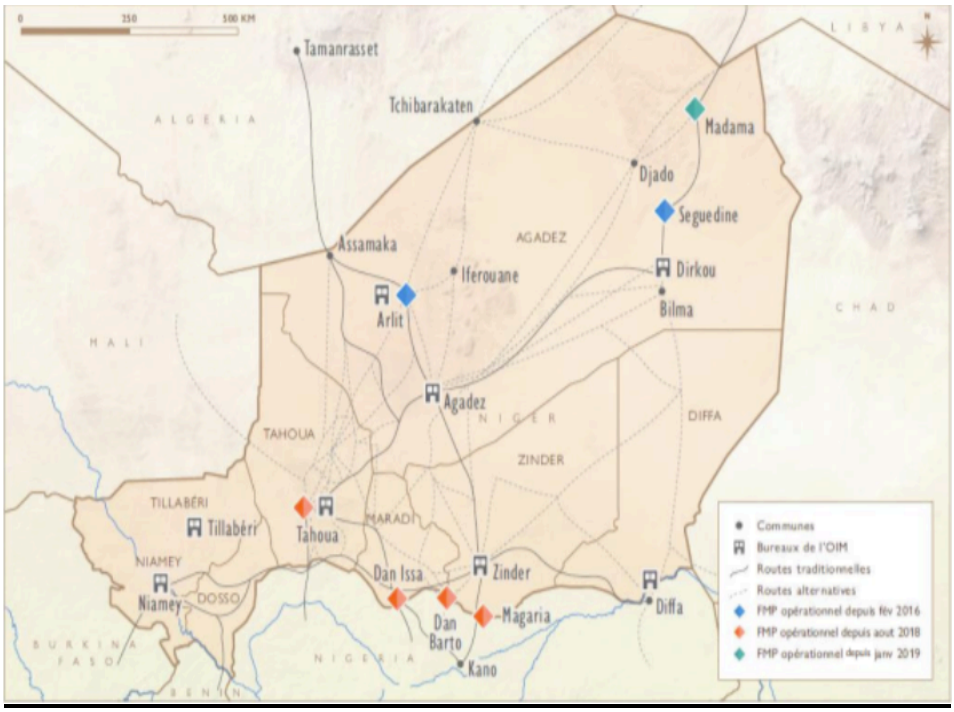

Figure 11: Posizione degli IOM's FMPs in Niger. Source: IOM (2019).

interpreting these numbers poses several challenges. This issue stems from a variety of factors, including how the data are collected and the quality of the collected data. Notably, the FMPs operated by the IOM are not the sole means through which the organization interacts with individuals in the attempt of leaving Niger. Besides the Flow Monitoring Points, there are other mechanisms that function at a hybrid level, incorporating elements of security monitoring, humanitarian intervention, and data gathering. These mechanisms are strategically deployed across various locations within the Agadez region.

Indeed, in addition, along the route towards Libya, the IOM implements specialized monitoring units along alternative paths. These units, comprised of Nigerien personnel, are strategically positioned near Seguidine. Their core responsibility is twofold: not only do they keep tabs on vehicles moving along unconventional routes towards Libya, but they also perform rescues in collaboration with the FDS due to the dangerous nature of these trajectories, or alert the latter for a prompt rescue and identification intervention[238]. Due to safety considerations, this monitoring is carried out remotely (the IOM personnel, observing the transiting

[238] Ibid.

vehicles from a distance, do not maintain direct contact with the individuals passing by), which inherently limits the precision of transit population count.

Furthermore, the IOM has established community focal points dispersed across various passage locations for northward mobility[239]. These focal points perform two crucial tasks: first, they keep the IOM informed about vehicles in transit, and second, they alert the authorities in the event of vehicle breakdowns, enabling the provision of necessary assistance and carrying out identification procedures[240].

Finally, the IOM collaborates with the FDS to conduct bimonthly joint missions called *missions de ratissage*. These operations involve the deployment of three vehicles - one from the IOM and two from the FDS - from the city of Agadez. With a duration that can span from 48 to 72 hours, the convoy traverse unconventional desert routes to locate vehicles in distress and, upon finding them, provide necessary assistance while simultaneously conducting identification procedures[241]. For all these different types of tracking, which are supplementary to those conducted at the FMPs, it remains unclear from the official data if these observations are incorporated into the overall figures.

The limitations of the IOM data are not confined to the abovementioned factors alone. The approach adopted for monitoring cross-border movements faces additional limitations. Firstly, echoing the earlier discussion related to DST, it is highly unlikely that individuals planning to exit Niger irregularly would voluntarily decide to halt at control points and divulge their personal details. The second concern arises from the way the gathered data is presented. Indeed, it includes the total count of border crossings, distinguishing between inbound and outbound flows, and identifying nationalities. However, the link between these latter two

[239] Ibid.

[240] It remains unclear whether the IOM notifies the FDS to intervene when vehicle movements are reported, or if they merely document the occurrence. In the event of vehicle breakdowns, the procedure varies based on the available personnel. If resources allow, IOM staff intervene, always escorted by FDS. In situations where the IOM personnel are not available, the responsibility solely falls on the FDS to address the situation. Interview conducted on October 30, 2022 in Agadez, with IOM official.

[241] Ibid.

parameters remains ambiguous. Without specific information about the nationality of the people leaving, the data's qualitative interpretation becomes problematic. Moreover, while the figures include entries/exits at control points, and nationalities presented as a percentage, they do not disclose the proportional distribution of nationalities entering or exiting these border posts. Indeed, a significant consideration is that Nigerien citizens, unrestricted in their national mobility, are not prevented from nearing and even crossing the border, notwithstanding the presence of local authorities. For instance, at the Madama border-post, controlled by Nigerien military forces, a transit fee is imposed on Nigeriens arriving in convoys destined for Libya. Nigerien migrants lack any official documentation authorizing their entry into Libyan territory, but they persist nonetheless[242]. As previously noted, the *loi* 2015-36 indirectly penalizes foreign migrants, rendering the knowledge of the percentage of foreigners in outbound flows essential.

Thus, we turn to how the outflows from Niger have changed in recent years following the implementation of the new migration framework. According to IOM data, the introduction of *loi* 2015-36 in 2016 led to significant fluctuations in outbound flows over the years. Initially, there was a marked decrease following the application of the law as evinced by the following figures: 333,891 (2016); 69,430 (2017); 106,766 (2018); 202,409 (2019); 147,206 (2020); 299,265 (2021); 328,522 (2022)[243]. The notable substantial decrease in the figures for 2017, requires some clarifications as they pertain again to the challenges concerning the use of numbers by the IOM. Indeed, as early as late 2016, the IOM highlighted in multiple public briefs a marked decline in migrant transit through northern Niger. However, there was a reporting error in the November data, which initially stated that only 1,525 migrants were recorded moving towards the borders, a drastic drop from 12,600 in October (IOM, 2016). Despite the error, these figures were quickly adopted by EU officials as evidence of the

[242] Interview conducted on October 28, 2022 in Agadez, with ex *passeur.*

[243] I obtained the annual aggregate data through a document shared by the IOM officials titled '*OIM Niger Groupe de Travail sur la Migration (GTM) Coordination & Partage d'informations*',' presented at a meeting held on October 27, 2022, by the *Groupe de Travail sur la Migration de la Région d'Agadez*. This group, convening monthly in Agadez, comprises all local and international actors actively involved in the regional migration framework.

effectiveness of their strategy to curb irregular migration through partnerships with African countries. This incorrect figure was cited in an EU progress report and press releases, claiming success in managing migration flows (EC, 2016: 3). Though the EU was later aware of the error, it has continued to reference the incorrect figures in its communications and has yet to publicly acknowledge the mistake (EC, 2016).

Reflecting upon the 2016 estimates, which were deemed a success, allows us to delve into a more critical and interpretative data analysis. If these figures—albeit revised—still serve as markers of success for policies aimed at curbing irregular migration, then the subsequent rise in numbers, matching 2016 levels by 2022, underscores the diminishing efficacy of these measures. Evidently, their effectiveness waned from 2019 onwards, when departures from the country exceeded 200,000 individuals.

However, given our earlier observations, it remains unclear how the law's implementation has impacted mobility patterns. Furthermore, the challenges concerning data accuracy have been an inherent issue in the IOM's work, as illustrated by the preliminary estimates generated following the enactment of the 2015-36 law.

7.6: Conclusions

The *loi* 2015-36 has cast a dichotomous shadow over both Agadez city and its surrounding region. Previously viewed as a threat, irregular migration paradoxically reinforced the region's security framework. Consequently, the law's implementation gave rise to conflicting and unexpected outcomes. In a bid to prevent complete societal and economic disintegration, there was an imperative need to establish a reconversion plan for the migration-economic actors that would alleviate potential negative repercussions.

However, a significant hindrance to its success was the diversion of essential funds for the political pursuits of local decision-makers. This diversion, unfortunately, amplified the insecurities in the region. Desert areas, in particular, faced increased threats not just from conventional activities but also from insidious undertakings like trafficking.

A closer look reveals the stringent enforcement of the regulation predominantly within Agadez city's confines, less so in the broader region.

Several factors contribute to this selective application. The foremost is the vast expanse of the Agadez territory. Spanning a colossal 667,799 square kilometers, it holds the distinction of being the country's largest region. This sheer size makes it an insurmountable task to monitor all migration routes effectively. As a result, efforts concentrated on transforming the city of Agadez, thereby channeling the law's focus from broad mobility to localized permanence, and shifting the spotlight from the facilitators to the migrants themselves.

Furthermore, the emphasis on monitoring the well-trodden path between Agadez and Dirkou indirectly turned the adjacent desert areas into natural barriers. The perilous nature of these desert routes, resulting in many unfortunate fatalities, inadvertently became a self-regulating mechanism for migration.

Yet, the spirit of movement remains undeterred. The allure of newfound gold deposits has given rise to alternative destinations and routes, ingeniously designed to evade the ever-watchful eyes of control mechanisms. Amid these shifts, a glaring challenge persists: quantifying the law's impact. Ambiguities, especially regarding data from sources like the IOM, obscure a clear understanding. Such ambiguities might be a strategic move, emphasizing the need for more significant investments to combat irregular migration.

Nevertheless, one fact stands out unequivocally: Agadez, with its intrinsic character of mobility, remains unfazed in the face of these challenges.

CHAPTER VIII: CONCLUSIONS

On the morning of July 26th 2023, news began to circulate on social media and Niamey's news outlets that the city center, specifically the area near the presidential palace, was in turmoil. There was a significant movement of military vehicles, and the already heavily monitored area was further reinforced. Initial reports suggested that President Bazoum had been taken hostage by members of his own presidential guard. Within hours, the news was confirmed: General Abdourahamane Tchiani, the head of the presidential guard, declared the end of Mohamed Bazoum's presidency (Le Cam, 2023)[244]. Shortly thereafter, the establishment of the *Le Conseil national pour la sauvegarde de la patrie* (CNSP), a military-controlled body similar to those established in Mali and Burkina-Faso following coups in those countries, was announced (DW, 2023)[245].

The international community's response was swift and categorical: the EU (especially President Emmanuel Macron), the USA, and ECOWAS states condemned the coup and demanded the release of President Bazoum and the return to democratic order. ECOWAS states approved a package of sanctions against Niger and threatened a joint military mission if the president was not released (Felix & Meridzhanian, 2023)[246]. As I write, two months after the coup, despite the condemnations, the CNSP and General Tchiani remain in control of the country. The ECOWAS military mission has not materialized, and even President Macron, after initial

[244] Le Cam M. (2023, July 29) *Coup d'Etat au Niger : le général Tiani, un nouveau dirigeant au pouvoir fragile*. Le Monde Afrique. https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2023/07/29/au-niger-le-general-tchiani-un-nouveau-dirigeant-au-pouvoir-fragile_6183791_3212.html

[245] *Coup d'Etat au Niger : le "CNSP" a pris le pouvoir*. (2023, July 27). DW. https://www.dw.com/fr/niger-putcsh-cnsp-bazoum/a-66360642

[246] Felix B., Meridzhanian A. (2023, August 8) *What sanctions have been imposed on Niger since the coup?* Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/what-sanctions-have-been-imposed-niger-since-coup-2023-08-08/#:~:text=Niger%20had%20planned%20to%20raise,and%20exports%20of%20Nigerien%20goods.

condemnations, announced a plan to withdraw French troops from Niger (Ricard & Vincent, 2023)[247].

Yet, for weeks, the international community's condemnation was unanimous and reached a level of visibility in the West rarely seen for other recent coups in the continent, starting with those in Mali and Burkina-Faso. This suggested that the parties involved were seriously considering intervening, risking an unpredictable escalation, with the juntas of Mali and Burkina-Faso immediately siding with Niger in the event of an attack. There are many intriguing aspects regarding what have occurred in Niger during last summer. Firstly, the motivations leading to the coup. In one of his first statements as president of the CNSP, General Tchiani claimed that Bazoum's deposition was in response to the current government's inability to halt the deteriorating security situation in the country, referring to the ongoing jihadist fight that has been ongoing for nearly a decade. Moreover, the general implicitly pointed fingers at European partners, particularly France, accusing them of not providing the necessary support to Niger and deeming them a primary cause of the military failure (Africanews, 2023)[248].

However, the general's statements contrast with the situation on the ground. Despite ongoing clashes with JNIM and ISGS forces in the Diffa, Tahoua, and Tillabery regions, the frequency of jihadist attacks against military personnel and civilians in Niger has notably diminished, particularly during Bazoum's presidency (Africanews, 2023)[249]. This contrast becomes even starker when juxtaposed with the situations in Burkina-Faso and Mali, where military junta takeovers have led to an uptick in casualties from jihadist attacks (Africanews, 2023)[250].

Hence, it's reasonable to explore alternative explanations for the coup, especially when the publicly stated motivations appear to have limited, if

[247] Ricard P., Vincent E., (2023, September 25) *La France contrainte de se retirer du Niger*. Le Monde Afrique. https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2023/09/25/la-france-contrainte-de-se-retirer-du-niger_6190866_3212.html

[248] *Niger coup supporters rally after French ambassador ordered out*. (2023, August 27). Africanews. https://www.africanews.com/2023/08/27/niger-coup-supporters-rally-after-french-ambassador-ordered-out//

[249] *In Niger, a jihadist threat difficult to measure.* (2023, August 21). Africanews. https://www.africanews.com/2023/08/21/in-niger-a-jihadist-threat-difficult-to-measure//

[250] Ibid.

any, alignment with the actual situation on the ground. Many have speculated on the reasons: some claim that Bazoum wanted to dismiss Tchiani and that the latter orchestrated the coup to keep his position. Others believe that the coup was orchestrated by former president Issoufou, given that he had established the presidential guard and "imposed" General Tchiani on Mohamed Bazoum as a means to control his successor's actions. Some posit that Tchiani embodied the collective sentiment of the military, which was critical of Bazoum's strategy of engaging in dialogue and negotiations with jihadist factions, a policy that resulted in the release of certain jihadist militants for the sake of specific truces (Franceinfo, 2022)[251].

Beyond the real motivations (it's still too early to fully grasp them, and it's uncertain if they will ever be fully understood), there are some elements that can already be discerned.

Leveraging failures in the security realm as a justification for regime change allows for criticism of the alliance with France and Europe, thereby garnering popular support. Four days after General Tchiani's statements, a massive crowd flooded the streets of Niamey, showing the capital's support for the military junta. Many signs were raised against France and the departure of French troops, with numerous Russian flags also on display. Significantly, a segment of the demonstrators directed their march towards the French embassy. As protesters tried to assault the building, they were driven back by tear gas deployed by French soldiers positioned behind the embassy's gates[252]. By mobilizing a narrative that squarely blamed the partnership between the government and France, the military junta tapped into the long-standing anti-colonial sentiment, which over the years has evolved into an anti-French sentiment due to the perceived inefficacy of military operations. The international sphere and especially the role of international alliances, have taken on fundamental significance in the eyes

[251] *Niger : la stratégie du dialogue avec les jihadistes pour retrouver la paix.* (2022, March 18). Franceinfo. https://www.francetvinfo.fr/monde/afrique/niger/niger-la-strategie-du-dialogue-avec-les-jihadistes-pour-retrouver-la-paix_5024541.html

[252] *Coup d'État au Niger : l'ambassade de France prise pour cible*. (2023, July 31) Franceinfo. https://www.francetvinfo.fr/monde/afrique/niger/coup-d-etat-au-niger-l-ambassade-de-france-prise-pour-cible_5981801.html

of the population, leading them to support a junta primarily because of its opposition to an international order perceived as unjust.

Just as the Nigerien government had capitalized on the needs of the international security framework to strengthen its position a few years earlier, the CNSP junta capitalized on a security situation that, although improving, bears the original sin of being perceived as an extension of the activities of an external actor unpopular within the population. And even though the correlation between the *coup* and the security situation seems inconsistent, the legitimacy derived from a strategic narrative of the latter proves crucial to achieve junta's purposes. Recent events in Niger highlight several aspects that have been the subject of this thesis: not only how the political field generated by the relationship between the local and international spheres is a contested space, but also how the existence of multiple actors proves detrimental for the government without a proper and effective negotiation.

In the thesis, we observed how, over the centuries, external authorities have repeatedly tried to exploit and/or reconfigure Niger's spatiality. However, the application of external models in this context seems destined to follow a very specific trajectory: they fail to extend their authority over the entire territory or all the people. Instead, they end up having a limited application to specific spaces, specific moments, or specific individuals. The challenge arises when trying to apply a migration governance model, designed for countries with easily controllable borders and a centralized authority, to a unique context like Niger, where multiple entities exercise territorial authority. What we saw in the Agadez region, for instance, is that the control regime's application works almost exclusively in the city of Agadez. In that place, one can observe the effects of measures that seem to disappear as one moves outside the city's perimeter. This is undoubtedly due to the impossibility of controlling an uncontrollable terrain, but also because, as we have seen, changes to the security setting have the paradoxical effect of worsening the security framework. Too rigid an application of the rules (assuming it's possible) would have the catastrophic consequence of disrupting the pacification system (albeit in a continuously changing context) between state and non-state actors at the local level. Thus, the operations taking place in the city of Agadez make

the system of control visible and allow for the performance of the border, regardless of whether this means a concrete reduction in flows to the north or greater protection for migrants.

At the same time, the thesis highlights that although the application of the migration framework represents a contested space between regional and central authorities, once the management framework arrives on the ground (as evidenced by the PAIERA plan), it falls into the daily dynamics of authority consolidation. In this case, it allowed mayors to redistribute the fund among their constituencies. This highlights the fluctuating dynamics between the central and local state, where periods of harmony can swiftly transition to moments of discord, with these tensions being contested on a daily basis. However, it follows that the PAIERA project under these conditions fails to reach the people for whom it was conceived, resulting in inefficiency due to the incongruence between idea and application.

Overall, it is evident that the realization of Western strategic objectives is strongly conditioned by the actions of local actors. They will align with this framework if it enables them to adapt the contextual conditions to their benefit or reinforces their authority.

This results in a complex set of fragmented migration measures with effects far from being able to prevent consistently the mobility of those trying to move to North Africa, to discourage departures, or to provide assistance to those in need. Although connectivity has not been entirely halted, it is clear that deaths in the desert (and more generally the worsening conditions of people on the move) brought about by the criminalization of irregular migration serve as a filter, making a selection among those deciding to move along the trans-Saharan trajectories. The persistence of deaths in the desert and the Mediterranean creates a paradox: it tragically strengthens the conviction among policymakers that these control measures, which contribute to these fatalities, are indispensable in preventing such tragedies.

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