



## **AFRICA DOES NOT EXIST**

On March 22nd 2012 a rag-tag group of officers from the Malian army led by captain Amadou Sanogo left their barracks and marched to the presidential palace. Without meeting any opposition and in a matter of hours they deposed president elect Amadou Toumani Toure' (ATT), dissolved Parliament and erased almost 20 years of democratic rule. Sanogo and his companions protested against the lack of government support in the fight against the Tuareg rebellions that have menaced on and off Mali's north-eastern regions and neighboring countries.

A few hours after ATT's overthrow those same rebel movements that the soldiers wanted to annihilate attacked Mali's main northern cities: Gao, Kidal and the mythological Timbuktu. Thanks to the arsenals coming from Libya and to the lack of resistance from Mali's army, the operations went just smoothly. In less than two weeks Mali has been erased from the geographical map: the Tuareg movement and the islamists from Ansar Dine have declared independence and created a new nation, Azawad.

The Cedeao, the organization of the West African states, has put the new junta under embargo forcing the coup plotters to hand over power and call for new elections in May. But as a matter of fact the situation is already compromised and the Cedeao - with France at the window - has already stated it is ready to send in a military contingent to mark - just like with Ivory Coast in 2002 - the division in two of Mali.

One could say: it is another African story. Another military coup, another rebel movement and another State just drawn on paper by the former European colonial masters, but whose institutions and government over their territory never saw the light. What is happening in Mali - considered an example of democratic rule whose measure in Africa is the number of former presidents alive and on the loose - should open our eyes on the frailty of African States that, 60 years on independence, are still sand castles, ready to dissolve after the first rain.

The question-marks also involve African civil society - never capable of contrasting military coups nor rebel armies - its presumably democratic parties - too often ridden with ethnic or clan division to be really relevant at a national level - and on the very same existence of institutions - defined as the architecture of a State including the public administration, the army and the police forces - who succumb every time weapons impress their will.

### **One of the cradles of African culture**

If there is a country in Africa blessed with millenary cultural heritage - as in the case of the Mandingue Empire of Soundiata Keita - this is Mali. It is not by chance that in these lands crossed

by the river Niger in 1235 twelve Mandingue tribal chiefs gave birth to the Kouroukan Fouga, probably Africa's first constitution. In the 44 edicts of the text the 12 tribes announced they would unite under a single reign, the Mande'. They also decided to give up war and chose instead the word. At the empire's head - whose territorial extension span from Mali to Senegal, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Guinea Bissau and Mauritania - was the Keita family and its valorous offspring, Soudiata Keita, who was named Mansa, king of kings.

The emperor was mainly an administrator. His dominion relied on the support of 30 clans, five of which were marabouts (at the same time wizards and preachers of Islam), five of artisans, four of warriors, four of griots (storytellers) and twelve clans of freemen. Soundiata put an end to slavery and favored commerce making his empire flourish. Social life aimed at the pursuit of peace, security and harmony. The space where power was exercised was the Mansaya, where secular and religious power were united in the name of justice.

This enlightened empire that would last until the 17th century was also based on the so called Mande' Charter, considered to be Africa's first declaration of human rights. The text, written down by the hunters' fraternity in 1222, stated that "the Mande' is founded on openness and concordance, on freedom and brotherhood. This means that there will not be any more ethnic or racial discriminations in the Mande'".

Soundiata Keita's and the Mandingue empire's heritage has survived in Mali and elsewhere across Africa thanks to the griots, the storytellers, who, for centuries, have passed on this oral tradition. Toumani Diabate', kora player and Grammy award winner, is one of their most important contemporary representatives.

### **Azawad and terrorism**

All right, centuries have gone by since the end of the Mandingue empire. In between there have been tribal wars, French colonization, two world wars, independence in 1960, a series of military coup d'etat and a return to democracy in 1991. The elections scheduled for April 2012 were to mark another step forward, since the incumbent president ATT had dropped the idea of meddling with Mali's Constitution to allow himself a third term in office. Why then did everything collapse?

The Tuareg - one of those people in the world without a State of their own such as the Roma, the Saharawi, the Kurds or the Palestinians - have rebelled regularly over the last decades of Mali's recent history. The first time was actually in 1914 against the then French occupiers when they asked for an independent State for the Sahel region. They are a nation without borders of five million people inhabited by the Kel Tamasheq (those who speak Tamasheq as the Tuareg call themselves) spread across Niger, Mali, Algeria, Burkina Faso and Libya. Over the last 60 years the Tuareg have risen up against central governments denying them the right to be a nomadic people free to roam across the desert regardless of national borders.

Today, even though several peace deals have been signed, it is these same young Tuaregs from Mali to Burkina Faso who have joined the ranks of Al Qaeda in the Maghreb. After having spent years in liberation movements asking the international community to grant a "special status" to the Azawad, the land of the blue men, in order to guarantee to its people the "preservation of their identity", they have now chosen the path of terrorism financed by the kidnapping industry. Yet, it is once again

from the Tuareg that the United States are fishing the special units that are deployed against Al Qaeda in the Maghreb in one of the new fronts of the war on terrorism after 911. You can read one of our previous articles on this specific issue.

Afterall, the recent Tuareg advance in northern Mali has formally seen the clash between two different visions on the future of the African country: on one side the pro-al Qaeda formations of Ansar Dine that want to impose - in a country 100% muslim - sharia law, and, on the other hand, the Movement National pour la Liberation de l'Azawad (MNLA, National Movement for the Liberation of the Azawad) who want and have already declared independence on the portions of "liberated" territory.

Ok, but can a probably legitimate discontent from a minority justify the disintegration of a State? If it has already happened in South Sudan - Africa's last born State that has broken the doctrine on the inviolability of national borders as stated in the Berlin Conference in 1884 - are we looking at a new phase of Balkanization of the continent? And which criteria would apply in this new scramble?

### **Geopolitics of resources**

Until a few years ago Mali was one of the most peaceful countries in Africa. Then, starting in 2008, came the hunt for oil, uranium, diamonds... After all, West Africa is at the center of an economic conflict for the control of its extractive resources. Starting from the Gulf of Guinea, where the United States plan to import 25% of their oil by 2015, to the offshore platforms spanning from Mauritania to Angola the entire region is under pressure from corporations. The Exxon pipeline that today channels oil from Chad to Cameroon tomorrow will probably be linked up with South Sudan (currently still dependent on the north for its oil exports). There are key uranium deposits in Niger, bauxite in Guinea, diamonds in Sierra Leone and Liberia and gold in Mali and Ghana. These are all billions worth of good reasons to make of West Africa a "national security" issue.

The U.S. are obviously not the only ones playing in the Sahel. China has been investing in Africa and is ready to put up to 30 billion dollars over the next few years in the continent's extractive industries. The Chinese have landed in Guinea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Sudan with one major difference with the West: they never meddle in the countries political affairs and never play with ethno-centrism. Beijing is not interested on who is in power as long as they are ready to do business according to the scheme: mineral resources in exchange for public works.

There is then the European Union, for once united in the name of its common interests. The project everyone agrees upon is the Trans-Saharan Gas Pipeline that should cross for four thousand kilometers the Sahara desert from Nigeria to Algeria's shores. The pipeline would then link up with the networks supplying Europe and Italy, thus providing an alternative to the increasingly unreliable supplies from Russia (see article on Gas Wars). The project is worth 13 billion dollars and has attracted the interest of corporations such as French TotalElf, Anglo-Dutch Shell, Russian Gazprom and the Italian Eni. Gas should start pumping 500 billion cubic meters per year to Europe by 2016. If rebels in the Delta of Niger, Tuareg and fundamentalists will allow so, that is.

### **A new scramble for Africa?**

If during the Cold War national borders marked the respective spheres of influence and guaranteed

the status quo, today those criteria are worthless. It seems as if we have taken a leap backwards towards a colonial past where the scramble for resources is used to re-define African national borders. If this were true, we should expect new countries to emerge all over the continent everywhere there is a large mineral deposit or a huge oil reserve.

If South Sudan and its rich oil fields were the appetizer, we should then expect two Nigerias, one for Boko Haram and Sharia law in the north and another with Christian oil drills in the south. The same will happen with the Democratic Republic of Congo, whose militias and future micro-states will be as numerous and scandalous as are its geologic and mineral resources. Or with Libya, who could be partitioned as it was in pre-colonial times in Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and Fezzan. We could continue with Somalia, without a central government for the last 20 years and where a new State is founded every week, and with Ethiopia, once the outpost of Christianity for the West, but now a country with a Muslim majority. We could finish off with Ivory Coast, the country with two presidents: Alassane Outtara, defeated and re-installed by the international community and Laurent Gbagbo, elected and extradited to the Hague.

These scenarios could all simply be lucubrations and political fantasies. Or they could be a modern version of the old divide and rule motto where marginalized minorities are manipulated by external actors. Let us only hope that what is happening in Mali is not the beginning of a new and painful phase of conflict in Africa. We also would expect that the African elites - its civil society, its ruling class and its regional and continental institutions - take this opportunity to think over the solidity of the national institutions and what it means to be a country and a people, regardless of your ethnic group, clan or creed.

## IRAN AND THE GREEN WAVE (part I)

The period we shall examine - spanning from June 13th 2009 to March 2nd 2012 - is characterized by a series of events that could lead to significant changes in the "institutional theocratic architecture" as envisioned by the Supreme Guide Ruhollah Khomeini, political and religious chief of Iran, who died on June 3rd 1989.

We should firstly point out that the results of the March 2nd 2012 elections for the Iranian parliament (Majlis) are as yet incomplete because only 225 seats out of 290 have been assigned; the other 65 will be assigned through a second round of elections the date of which will be chosen by the "Council of Guardians of the Constitution and of the Sharia" (probably on May 4th), the very same body that, before the elections began, had already selected - among the 5400 who wished to run - the 3444 candidates that would compete for the 290 seats in parliament.

The candidates chosen were mostly radical-conservatives that stand close to the Supreme Guide Khamenei and to the President of the Republic Ahmadinejad. Others were "neo-conservatives", close to the Guardians of the Revolution - the so-called "Pasdaran" - that in recent years have consolidated a significant financial power, other than being the institutional "regime's militia".

During the 2008 elections the candidates were mostly chosen from the ranks of the aforementioned conservatives (whom are determined to continue on the path started by Khomeini), reformists (open to a change in policies, whose most accredited exponent was the Ayatollah Montazeri, who died on December 19, 2009), and the pragmatists (favorable to the bettering of economic conditions through a process of liberalization and re-organization of local industries - whose most accredited exponent is the Ayatollah Rafsanjani).

It must be noted that the elections of the Majlis are a "thermometer" for the more significant presidential elections (2013), seen as the Iranian constitution does not allow a third mandate for the present president Mahmud Ahmadinejad. Ahmadinejad was elected in 2005 and re-confirmed in 2009 following elections characterized by frauds adopted by conservative figures that stand close to the Supreme Guide, Ayatollah Khamenei.

The confirmation of Ahmadinejad for a second presidential mandate, as we have noted, does not allow him another run, but will surely ease his designation of a trusted "successor" that will stand in the political path traced by him.

### **Here is some info on two high-ranked exponents of the regime: the Supreme Guide and the President of the Republic.**

Ali Khamenei was born in 1939 and was educated in Islamic theology in the Koranic schools of Najaf and Qom (he was a pupil of the Great Ayatollah Khomeini).

He was elected Supreme Guide in June 1989 with a waive of constitutional regulations because he was not an Ayatollah (he was merely a Hojatoleslam) and without the consent of the main Centers of theological studies. Thus the nickname, the "Ayatollah overnight".

Khamenei has always been a symbol of the conservative elite, filling successfully the role of supervisor of the "Council of the Guardians of the Constitution and of the Sharia", a particularly prestigious office that approves candidates for elections and has control over legislation.

He issued a fatwa against the production, storage and use of nuclear weapons. The fatwa was not published but was mentioned in August 2005 during a meeting of the AIEA in Vienna.

Khamanei issued sensational statements on human rights - considered a weapon in the hands of the enemies of Islam - and threats against the "West" on June 4th 2006, when he said that any aggression by the USA over Iran's nuclear program would determine an end to oil supplies.

Mahmud Ahmadinejad was born in 1956 and has a degree in engineering. While a student he enrolled in the "Body of the Guardians of the Revolution" (the Pasdaran) and took part in "covert operations" and in the war against Iraq: he was a senior officer of the elite unit "Force Quds"!

At the end of the Iran-Iraq conflict (1988), when part of the army was dismantled, Ahmadinejad abandoned the militia and began his political career while keeping in touch both with the Pasdaran and the Basiji (young volunteers of the militia); he became mayor of Teheran in 2003 and President of the Republic in 2005 (his first term lasted 4 years). It was the electoral fraud of 2009 (second term for Ahmadinejad), that were strongly underlined by the media, that sparked the protests of June 13th 2009, namely the "Green Wave" for the exponential increase in participants - from the meeting in a city square to their successive dispersion. Green like the color of the electoral lists.

### **So what exactly sparked the green wave?**

The Green Wave begins right after the publication of Ahmadinejad's "divine victory" in elections that was contested for the following reasons:

The announcement was issued only eight hours after the closing of voting booths: an insignificant amount of time for a slow and rough electoral process such as the Iranian one, which includes successive checks and verifications.

In some provinces the amount of voters greatly exceeded that of those registered to vote.

Two or more provinces issued the same results.

There was a considerable victory by Ahmadinejad even in the provinces where his main contenders were based. The consensus for Ahmadinejad was greatly increased in these areas compared to the past elections.

The protesters - mostly young students - were soon joined by others who contest the regime's on matters of Human Rights and economy.

The demonstrations were repeated on several occasions, especially during religious recurrences and/or on dates coinciding with the murder of demonstrators during the violent reaction by Iranian authorities (here are some of them):

The day of the Ashura (June 19th), which is a recurrence of the death of the Imam Hussein, the first martyr of Shiites, in the battle of Kerbala in 680 AD. Together with his followers, Hussein had decided to die rather than survive under an illegitimate government.

The days relative to the death of the young soldier Neda Soltan, murdered by authorities on June 20th 2009 and adopted as a symbol for the Green Wave.

The days, according to tradition, are the 3rd from the date of her death (June 22nd), the 7th (June 26th) and the 40th, the most significant of all (July 29th).

The demonstrations were organized by means of social networks (such as Facebook, Twitter, etc.) in order to avoid censure, yet the Pasdaran adopted countermeasures (employment of foreign hackers, disturbing transmissions and the issuing of "alternative" information).

### **The fate of those arrested**

The mobilization of the regime against the contesters was led by the police and by the young Basiji volunteers (recruitment material for the future Pasdaran) that were employed in pairs on off-road motorcycles - one driving and the other handling a nightstick against protesters.

Internally, the reactions by authorities were differentiated:

The violent protesters are arrested during the demonstrations and taken to prison. They are identified and then released after a few days while the "organizing agents of the protests", be they Iranian or foreign, are taken to the special prisons of the regime (like Evin in Teheran) and sentenced. The same happens to those belonging to the "intelligenza" (journalists, writers, film and TV directors, other exponents of culture in general, etc.): it is the case of the American journalist Roxana Saberi and of the French researcher Clotilde Reiss. Particular attention is given to film director Jafar Panahi, kept under house arrests and prohibited from exercising his job for the next 20 years.

High ranking members of the opposition and their relatives were given the same treatment: reformists Mousavi and Karroubi are under house arrests and watched closely by the Pasdaran; the daughter of Ayatollah Rafsanjani (leader of the pragmatists) was arrested during the demonstrations and jailed.

The theocratic regime, within this context, has managed to stand its ground, in part because Khamenei gave the green light to the repression that followed the Green Wave. Repression of both demonstrators in the streets and high-ranking opposition leaders that are now checked closely. Mostly, the regime stands because the Green Wave has not made itself into a real revolution. Here's why:

The demonstrations have not produced an alternative leadership. Female demonstrators picked Noble peace prize winner Shirin Ebadi (who lives in the USA) as their symbol. In Teheran she is represented by Nargas Mohammadi, President of the "Committee for Free Elections", who is kept under close surveillance by authorities and who has trouble adopting an operative program for the opposition as a whole.

The opposition has been deprived of an exponent of uncommon humane qualities, with a cultural and ideological education much like that of Khomeini: It is - as we have already stated - Ayatollah Montazeri, deceased.

The reformists that are kept under house arrests (Mousavi and Karroubi) have found it impossible, since the 2009 elections, to exercise any kind of political action because of the close surveillance

kept on them by the authorities.

The pragmatists are also in the regime's sights (as we shall see, Ayatollah Ali Akbar Rafsanjani, leader of the pragmatists and President of the "Council of Experts" has announced his retirement from the council as of March 8th, 2011). The Council of Experts, among other things, is in charge of selecting the Supreme Guide if the present Guide were to die - the office of Supreme Guide is for life!

Another aspect worth considering for the evaluation of the regime's survival during the Green Wave, is the fact that opposing conservative factions all have an interest in keeping the system clean of the excesses of the reformists and pragmatists.

### **Opposing factions within the leadership**

The leadership of Iran had managed to keep its balance through the patriotic mobilization against the attack by Saddam Hussein (1980-1988), during the years of Rafsanjani's economic modernization (1989-1997), and during those of Khatami's reformism (1997-2005), all the way to Ahmadinejad's (in office since 2005) present populism. This balance came to an end in 2011, as stated by a Persian student that is much liked and listened to by UN diplomacy, Reza Aslan. In the beginning of August 2011 he stated that "There is an internal conflict in Teheran within the conservative group", the same group that piloted the election of Ahmadinejad against the reformists and pragmatists that were de facto excluded from the June 2009 consultation.

In that circumstance Ahmadinejad would have questioned the absolute supremacy of the sciite clergy over the government and underlined the intolerance of the neo-conservatives for the followers of the Supreme Guide, Khamenei.

The neo-conservatives constitute, as we have said, the power group that falls under the umbrella of the "Guardians of the Revolution" (the Pasdaran), who are responsible for the principal military and intelligence structures, with ample interests in finance: in practice, they hold the balance of powers between the Supreme Guide Khamenei and the President of the Republic Ahmadinejad.

Apart from institutional implications, the circumstance has a political relevance because it is an attempt to reduce the power of Khamenei in relation with the religious conception of Ahmadinejad and of his messianic fervor, based on the theory of the 12th Sciite Imam "duo-decimane", al-Mahdi, who hid inside the sacred well of Jamkaram (near Qom); the theory, if followed and used instrumentally, allows for a direct connection between Allah and his follower, without the mediation of the clergy, thus thwarting the very "theocratic construction" of Khomeini.

To such a subversive creed Khamenei answers by threatening to eliminate the office of President of the Republic which, if case be, would be replaced by a Prime Minister designated by the Parliament - in practice directly dependent on the Supreme Guide.

This is the most striking evidence of the clash at hand within the leadership of Iran, to which we could add the events of the period 2010-2011 that highlight such clash in terms of power and in view of the conclusion of the second and last term of Ahmadinejad (2013); here's what we are talking about:

The removal of Foreign Minister Manuker Mottaki (December 2010), replaced by a trusted collaborator of the President, Ali Akbar Salehi, head of the National Atomic Agency. Mottaki, designated in 2005, was thought to be "too soft": he had expressed his availability to negotiate on the nuclear issue.

The proposal to designate Pasdaran General Rostam Ghassemi, who figures on the West's "black list", Minister of Petrol.

The proposal to promote another Pasdaran to the head of OPEC (Iran holds the presidency of the OPEC "cartel", which sets the price of petrol in such a difficult global economic situation, since October 2010).

Here are more proposals by Ahmadinejad that confirm his populist orientation that stands opposed to the conservative criteria of the Supreme Guide:

The retirement of tens of professors from Universities in favor of younger ones (liberalism);

An end to the ban of mixed classes, in clear contrast with the Islamization of the schools (started by Ahmadinejad himself);

The plan to transfer "administrative Teheran" outside the capital to ease traffic and overcrowding;

The abolition of aid for fuel and energy in exchange for a monthly allowance to the needy of 30 euro/person: such a measure is not sufficient to counter inflation and the increase in the price of gas (100%), so many use liquid gas which is less expensive. The measure is not saving Iran any money in favor of development, rather it has turned out to be more expensive than the aid itself (the President will have to answer for this in front of the Court of Justice for Economy, which has already summoned him).

*To be continued in the next issue...*

## WHAT WILL BECOME OF ABDALLAH SENUSSI?

On November 20 2011 Libyan authorities had announced the capture of Gaddafi's brother-in-law, Abdallah Senussi. The declaration had been informally confirmed by other sources, but had never been supported - as other seizures of important members of the former regime - by photos or videos of those arrested. Such circumstances had fueled various conjectures in Tripoli. Among them was that Senussi had been brutally tortured thus making his parading in front of the press not recommendable. This happened as the new authorities in Libya dealt with increasing accusations of human rights violations. Other sources - always in Tripoli - even suggested Abdallah Senussi could have been killed. Both hypothesis could have been true given that both Gaddafi, before being assassinated, had been sodomized and his son Mutassim had incurred in the mutilation of his genitals.

In truth, Senussi was neither imprisoned in Libya, nor dead. He had fled joining with the Tuareg tribes in Mali and continued his fight against the new leaders in town. On March 17 2012 he was captured by Mauritanian security forces at the Nouakchott airport. Libyan authorities have demanded his extradition home. Abdallah Senussi was one of the most hated leaders of Ghaddafi's regime. He was charged with dealing with the dirties affairs: chasing down and physical elimination of the opposition in Libya and abroad, persecution of their families, suppression of protests and all sorts of attacks.

For these reasons, on May 16 2011, the International Criminal Court in the Hague had issued - on request of Libya CNT who had filed a report - an international arrest warrant for crimes against humanity. The warrant extended from Senussi to Gaddafi and his son Seif al Islam.

### **Senussi the terrorist**

Abdallah Senussi had already gained international fame for his role in the bombing of the French UTA DC10 airplane over Niger's skies in 1989. The attack had costed the lives of 170 people, of whom 54 French. A tribunal in Paris had condemned Senussi in absentia to life in jail. The court had also issued an international arrest warrant in 1999.

At that time the Libyan official was had the head of the military intelligence. Gaddafi was forced - at least officially - to fire him. But his true power remained intact. In 1996, during an uprising in the maximum security prison of Abu Salim, Senussi had sent in the special forces to quell the prisoners. 1200 people were killed and buried in mass graves just recently unearthed. The irony is that the protests that lead to the overthrow of Gaddafi's regime were sparked by the families of the victims of Abu Salim demanding for the return of the relatives' bodies. It all began when in Benghazi the lawyer representing the families was arrested.

In 2002 Abdallah Senussi returned at the head of the military intelligence and the following year was accused by the Saudis of plotting to kill King Abdallah. In 2007, as part of Gaddafi's rapprochement policy with the West, Senussi was once again sidelined. He was named vice-director of the External Security Service (“Jihaz al Aman al Kharigi”), then lead by Musa Kusa. But whatever the formal nominations were, Abdallah Senussi was a key figure in Gaddafi's apparatus and would soon return at the head of the military intelligence.

## **Senussi and the Lockerbie bombing**

Senussi played a key role in the negotiations with the United Kingdom to free the terrorist involved in the Lockerbie bombings, Abdelbaset Mohamed Ali al Megrahi, released in August 2009. He negotiated with Italy the deals to curb illegal migration and was hence received in Rome. This is Abdallah Senussi's last political role. Once Libya had restored a certain degree of international "credibility" he was immediately re-installed as a leading public official. In 2009 he was nominated Head of the High Committee for the fight against illegal migration. This was a covert nomination for greater responsibilities: the control of Libya's entire security apparatus. Using migrants as an excuse, Senussi controlled Tripoli's three security services (External Security Service, Internal Security Service and the Military Intelligence), the Army and the Police. But this would be the last chapter in the story of Abdallah Senussi.

As the uprising in Benghazi began, Senussi tried - without much success - to quell the revolt. Even though his men are accredited for their brutal methods, Abdallah Senussi will fail. He will stand by his brother-in-law Gaddafi until the end. After all, he could not leave the country due to the international arrest warrant. In August 2011 his son Mohamed - known in Italy for his alcohol abuse and the consequences thereof on which Italian authorities turned a blind eye - was killed in a NATO raid together with Gaddafi's son Khamis. In November 2011 the rumors had it that he had been captured in Libya's south.

A key figure in safeguarding the regime's security and a troubling - at least on the international scene - political ally, Senussi was renowned for his brutal, cruel and vengeful methods. He is now acting the last act of his life. If Senussi is handed over to Libya authorities, his chances of survival are basically zero. He will hardly make it through detention and through a trial whose outcome is already written. In tribal and beduin culture, whom Abdallah Senussi is a true representative, there is no room for acts of pardon and the respect of human rights is a rarely applied option. In his particular case - given the ruthless acts Senussi has been responsible of - there is no margin he will be treated humanely. As a matter of fact, Libyan authorities have already announced, as they have regarding Seif al Islam, that in case he be extradited he will not be handed over to an international tribunal.

What remains to be seen is what Mauritanian authorities will decide. Their first step has been to deny an agreement on the extradition with the CNT following a visit in Nouakchott by Libya's new deputy prime minister, Mustafa Abu Shagour. At the same time, Tripoli has issued through Interpol an international arrest warrant in their own. The move is seen as an attempt to overcome the one issued by the Hague court.

Authorities in Mauritania are well aware that an extradition will equal to a certain death sentence for Senussi. Instead, his handing over to the International Criminal Court will have consequences not as cruel. We should underline that Mauritania is non-signatory of the Rome Treaty recognizing the statute and role of the ICC. It is hence not clear how Mauritania will behave in determining Senussi's fate and in responding to Libya's requests. To this respect we should evaluate a series of issues.

## **Not all is lost for Senussi**

First of all, when arrested Senussi was on a return flight from Morocco. This means he had been granted a certain degree of freedom of movement. His face and his reputation have been well known for the last 40 years. There is no way Abdallah Senussi was moving without being identified or monitored. If he could freely enter and exit Morocco, then he must still benefit from a certain level of credibility or political weight. Regardless of Gaddafi's death, Senussi is still in high regard in North Africa. A further confirmation comes from the fact that despite his arrest, he is not detained in a prison in Nouakchott, but is instead hosted in a residence for authorities.

Secondly, we should make some political evaluations. Senussi's reputation is inversely proportional to the credit granted to the new Libyan leadership. Several countries in the region don't look with favor the current instability in Tripoli and the role played by the Islamic leadership. Mauritania fears terrorism and is afraid of fundamentalists. From this point of view, Senussi would not create any problems. Gaddafi's brother-in-law has another plus to his score: he has strong links with the Tuareg tribes who fought alongside his regime in Libya and who are now profiting from the coup d'etat in Bamako and destabilizing the wider Sahel region. There are the same people who are making independentist claims and are allied to Salafite Islamist groups, some of whom are linked to Al Qaeda in the Maghreb.

The timing for any action that would upset the Tuareg is not ideal. Handing over Senussi to Libya could have negative effects for Mauritanian president Ould Abdel Aziz. After all, it was Gaddafi who had lobbied for Aziz's admission to the African Union after the coup that had brought him to power in August 2008. Ould Abdel Aziz could feel he owes a debt of gratitude to the fallen Libyan regime.

On the other hand, Mauritania is under strong pressure from France. Paris has not forgotten about the UTA bombing and was on the forefront of the NATO countries that helped overthrow Gaddafi. And behind France is West and several economic and commercial deals whose outcome could influence Nouakchott's choice. Furthermore, some of these same countries are currently helping Mauritania fight terrorism in the region. President Aziz's decision will come after having weighed out his options.