



Doubling of hard currency



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Ambassador Kierscht attends McGovern-Dole sustainability workshop



Minister of Education,
Ladies and gentlemen,
It is always with great pleasure that I participate in activities that have a direct and tangible impact

on the education and health of our children, the leaders of tomorrow. The McGovern-Dole Program is one of them.

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Know the British Ambassador



Colin Wells became the British Ambassador to Mauritania in April 2021, presenting His credentials signed by Queen Elizabeth the Second, to President Mohamed Ould Ghazouani on 8 April. By accepting the letters, President Ghazouani gave permission to the Ambassador to start his duties.

Ambassador Wells was born in Zambia and grew up in Sierra Leone and Devon in South-West England. He joined the British Diplomatic Service in 1987 and has experienced 10 overseas postings to Barbados, Geneva, Nigeria, Azerbaijan, Sudan, Cote d'Ivoire, Ascension Island, India, Russia and now, for the first time as Ambassador, here in Mauritania. During his career, he has also enjoyed raising a family – two daughters, Gracie (28 years), Jade (26) and a son, Sam (24). Gracie has already visited him in Nouakchott.

The British Embassy in Nouakchott was opened in 2018. This was an important commitment to Mauritania and to developing stronger diplomatic, commercial, security and developmental links between the two countries. In an interview with The Key, Ambassador Wells said "It is a huge honour to be posted to Mauritania, where I have received the warmest of welcome from everyone I have met. It is clear there is a lot I can do while here. I want to see stronger ties between our two countries and governments, between our business leaders, our military and security forces, and between our peoples. I would like to see more Mauritians visit and study in the UK, and therefore I want to see a more accessible visa service. I hope also to see English language knowledge increase, going hand in hand with Hassaniya and French. Finally, I also want the UK to continue supporting Mauritania's ambitions for a greener society, its care for refugees, and its campaign for better living, education and health standards for all Mauritians."

The British Embassy plans to be pro-active in reaching out to the people of Mauritania, through The Key, but also through its social media to say more about the Ambassador's work.

Facebook: UKinMauritania
Twitter: UKinMauritania
ColinWellsUK

The Sahel:

A New Focus of International Competition

The African Sahel consists of nine countries: Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and the Central African Republic. The sum of these countries' populations reaches above 100 million and each country possesses immense natural wealth. From uranium in Niger; to Mauritania's abundance of livestock and water from the Senegal River; to Nigeria's gold deposits; to the arable land that covers 35% of the region and its two rivers in Senegal and Niger; to the vast, reclaimable desert – not to mention the oil and natural gas recently discovered in the region.

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Universal Coexistence



Human beings should pay respect to one another even if they belong to different races. We as human beings are all created from one male and female. Nevertheless, even brothers would disagree with each other, yet that shouldn't lead to hatred. All of us are related to one another somewhere back in history. There are a number of steps that can be taken to help us coexist when they are embodied. This article is going to teach you tolerance, as some people would like to fan the fuel of hatred, to which I am deeply opposed to.

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Ask an American

Q1- What do you have to say about the romanticism of USA? E.g. We've learned that equality, equity and justice are embodied in it, yet it's not.

A1: You are correct that there is often a sense of romanticism about the United States that clouds a realistic view of the country. I often meet immigrants disappointed to learn that American society States is neither as egalitarian nor as pluralistic as it is presented overseas. Injustice and inequality exist in many parts of Americans' daily lives. Yet what makes Americans stand out from other countries is their willingness to stand up to and challenge that inequality and injustice when they see it. Americans talk so much about racism, for example, because they are comfortable pointing out their society's flaws. Whereas a more closed off nation – whether out of guilt or pride – might not discuss its problems, Americans make them the center of their political and social worlds in order to solve them. Every country has its flaws, but Americans are simply more willing to discuss them. Rather than sweeping the broken glass of inequality and injustice under the rug, Americans choose to pick up each sharp little piece of glass in order, in the words of the U.S. Constitution, "to form a more perfect union."

Q2- Can we say that racism no longer exists in America?

Ask an American

Hello! My name is Alex, and I am a college student and ESL teacher in the United States. Each month I will answer your questions about learning English and about life in the United States. Send your questions of less than 100 words to keynewspaper21@gmail.com to have your question printed and answered here in The Key.

A2: Racism will always exist in some form in the United States. While tremendous progress has been made in eliminating racism's presence, there is always more work to be done. See my previous response on how American's deal with their society's flaws, racism included.

Q3- It's said that "Democracy is a Hypocrisy" Any comment regarding the above quote as far as America goes?

A3 : "Democracy is a Hypocrisy" is the title of a speech given by the civil rights activist Malcom X, referring to the way that Black men are treated in the American judicial system. Despite the name, his speech does not, in my view, have much to do with the democratic process, but

rather critiques the racism of the judicial system and American society more broadly. I would again direct you to the answer to my first question. Malcolm X is a perfect example of an American who stood up and challenged the inequalities that existed – and continue to exist – in American government and society.

Q4- Can we learn the language without learning its Grammar?

A4 : Yes and No. Plenty of people learn languages without any formal instruction in or knowledge of grammatical rules. An illiterate person who has never attended school yet who can speak a language is evidence of this. Despite this, learning a language's grammatical rules are essential for being able to communicate effectively. While it may

seem like skipping the learning of a language's grammar is a great way to save time, you will actually learn to express yourself in that language faster if you are familiar with its grammatical rules. Let's imagine, for example, that you were to want to express the verb "to go" in the future but were unsure of how to do so. If you were not familiar with English grammar, you would have to go to a book, look up the verb, and then look up its future form. On the other hand, if you were familiar with English grammar, you would know that all you have to do to express a verb in the future is add the word "will." By using grammar, you were able to expand your linguistic capacity without having to rely on a professor or book. This is one of just many reasons to learn a language's grammar. While it may seem like something you can skip to save time, learning grammar is essential to learning a language.

Q5- Can you tell us about the politics of America? How does the president get elected?

A5: Politics in the United States are immensely complex, and people spend their whole lives studying them. That said, I will try to provide a brief explanation of how the president is elected.

Presidential elections take place every four years, which is the same amount of time as a presidential term. Each president is allowed to serve for a maximum of two terms,

though some only serve for one. A common misconception about presidential elections is that the president is elected directly by the people, as is the case in all other American elections. Instead, the president is elected by a system call the "Electoral College." Despite its name the Electoral College is not a school, but rather an election process. On Election Day - the first Tuesday after the first Monday in the month of November – Americans travel to polling stations to cast their ballots. At the end of the day, those ballots are counted in each state. In most states, the person who wins the most votes receives all the "electors" for that state. Each state is allotted electors based on the number of representatives that they have in Congress. Smaller states have a smaller number of electors and vice-versa. A few weeks after the election, the electors in each state gather to cast their votes for president. There are 538 electors, so a candidate must receive votes from 270 electors in order to win. Whoever does so becomes the next president of the United States. This is an extremely simplified overview of the presidential election process and there are innumerable other aspects of the process that I encourage you to research on your own. These include primaries and caucuses, the role of the political parties, and national conventions, among others.

Universal Coexistence

■ **Abdrrehim Lekh'Deyem**
A writer and an English teacher

Human beings should pay respect to one another even if they belong to different races. We as human beings are all created from one male and female. Nevertheless, even brothers would disagree with each other, yet that shouldn't lead to hatred. All of us are related to one another somewhere back in history. There are a number of steps that can be taken to help us coexist when they are embodied. This article is going to teach you tolerance, as some people would like to fan c fuel of hatred, to which I am deeply opposed to.



Brothers do sometimes differ, as that's how life goes. Sometimes brothers don't have the same flavor or color; however, this should be a positive rather than a negative. Sharing parents cannot guarantee that we will be exactly the same. Every country has its own language, cuisine, dress code..... etc We ought to cherish these differences. If everybody were to have the same language, cuisine and dress code, mankind would be boring. Hence, we should accept diversity as it is. No one should enforce his opinions upon another's beliefs or theology.

Festivals, for example, can be celebrated in different ways. But, the question arises, should you oblige your sibling to celebrate a festival though he doesn't want to? If your answer is No, that means you're pragmatic and realistic. However, if it's the contrary, that could mean you just want to impose your

beliefs on others. Someone who is rational would respond with No. Therefore, since you don't have to force your sibling to do something that he is not pleased with, the same thing should be applied to people of different nationalities.

Religion is something that matters to most people. According to 2020 adherents there are 2.4 billion Christians —which equates to or 31.% of the global population — and 1.9 billion Muslims — or 25% and the list goes on. These two religions alone, represent more than half of humanity, which means religion plays a great role in human affairs. Yet, another question arises, should we hate each other just because we don't share the same faith? The answer should be self-evident. No, We should accept our differences and not let them get the better of us. As a result, we

should always allow individuals to embrace the religion that they want to practice. Religion should be a personal choice. Thus, religion shouldn't stop us from loving one another a natural love since a religious one may not be possible.

Diversity is so beautiful, for the world would be so boring without it. As a rule of thumb, mankind differs among itself. Not everybody has the same angle, the same lens, the same analyses and the same list of priorities. We see this reality in every single aspect of life, even during disagreements that sometimes become very bitter to the point where tempers would flare up. Although this is the way of life, should this stop us from allying with one another; even if we don't have the same religion? The response should be obvious: No, it shouldn't. All mankind should be

united when there is a common benefit. For example, if a Muslim and Non-Muslim happen to be seeking justice for the same wrong, they must unite in order to achieve the common goal.

One such wrong is racism, which has always existed, and it's an issue that matters to every single rational human being, yet it's difficult to eradicate. To eliminate racism, we need to understand the reality of why one would claim to be better than the other one? It seems a simple question to answer: Every race claims to be better than the other one because each race seeks to secure some perks in this worldly life. However, is that the reality? Are there some who are lower than the other ones? Even though some would brag about their nationality, skin color, tribe, or lineage, they must understand reality as it really is. There is not a single human being that you'll ever meet in life without whom, at some point in the historical past, you have had a familial connection. This is the biological reality that even modern science has proven. Therefore, everyone must wake up and smell the coffee. God made us with different races and tribes not to boast of our races or tribes but to get to know one another. Isn't it amazing that when you meet someone the first question that goes into your mind, where is he from?

To sum up, every human being must respect the other, as human beings were created by God honored and dignified and even related to one another biologically. However, there are not two human beings that are exactly the same, even identical twins. Thus, we need to coexist, tolerate each other, and see these beautiful differences positively and love one another naturally since we're biologically related.

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Doubling of hard currency



The Prime Minister Mohamed Ould Bilal announced in a recent parliament session that the level of hard currency doubled at the end of 2021 compared with the same period in 2020. Also, the ounce exchange rate against major currencies especially the euro and dollar improved.

Ould Bilal added that the foreign currency reserves amounted to \$2.3 billion, equivalent to 12.3 months of imports of goods and services at the end of 2021, versus \$1.5 billion or 6 months of imports of goods and services at the end of 2020

During his presentation, the Prime Minister revealed that the nominal exchange rate of an ounce improved in the past year at an annual rate of 1.4% against the dollar and 9% against the euro. Hence, "this contributed to a deflation on a national level .»

The PM spoke about bank credit growth of 9.3% compared to the 2.6% recorded in 2020, «indicating better meeting the financing needs of the national economy and promoting economic recovery,» as he put it.

Ministry of Health

U.S COVID-19 Vaccines Donation



The United States works with international partners to donate COVID-19 vaccines in the world to put an end to this pandemic. Thus, the Deputy Chief of Mission Corey Crane joined representatives of the Department of Health at a ceremony, at which the United States donated 100,620 doses of Pfizer vaccine. It closely follows the donation of 504,000 doses of Johnson & Johnson last week. As President Biden said, «the United States will be the world's arsenal of vaccines in our common fight against this virus.»

The Update on COVID- 19 in Mauritania

It was reported on Monday, January 31st, 2022

45 new cases, 461 new recoveries, and 0 death.

Total cases in the country are 58, 243 out of those cases 54, 947 have recovered; 953 deaths.

Statistics of the Vaccination against COVID- 19 on Monday, January 31st, 2022

1st Dose 1215; 2nd Dose 1559; 3rd Dose 42

Ambassador Kierscht attends McGovern-Dole sustainability workshop



Minister of Education, Ladies and gentlemen, It is always with great pleasure that I participate in activities that have a direct and tangible impact on the education and health of our children, the leaders of tomorrow. The McGovern-Dole Program is one of them.

Indeed, this flagship project of the United States Government has demonstrated two essential points: One, the concrete expression of our support for the priority clearly expressed by President Ghazouani to improve schools in which children will be able to study in decent conditions.

Two, to unequivocally initiate a partnership between the United States and Mauritania to promote educational and health coverage in the regions of intervention of the McGovern-Dole program.

After three years of activities, two of which have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, I am pleased to see that more than twelve million

meals have been served to more than seventy thousand students in two hundred and nine schools in Brakna and Gorgol. In addition, the project has built one hundred and thirteen stores for the proper preservation of food and dozens of sanitary stations and hygiene rooms for schoolgirls, which has contributed to the improvement of hygiene in schools. In addition, more than twenty thousand textbooks and teachers' guides have been developed and distributed in two hundred and nine schools to strengthen children's learning, especially in reading.

Minister, ladies and gentlemen, These achievements cannot be sustained without the support of the Ministry of Education, whose leadership I salute here. Indeed, the Mauritanian government has clearly demonstrated its adherence to the new vision of education. It did so through a budget registration of more than \$5 million annually for

school nutrition programs. By supporting the school feeding program, you are creating an educational bridge for the child of tomorrow. In this way, you help to ensure that the achievements last beyond the life of this project.

This gesture deserves consideration. It gives the measure of future ambitions for the education and health of children, their mothers, and their communities.

Before concluding, I would like to thank the Ministry of Education and the other ministerial departments with which we collaborate in this area. My gratitude also goes to all n partners among elected municipal officials, the United Nations, and our civil society partners. No achievement would have been possible without them. Finally, I say a big thank you to Counterpart for the enormous work they've accomplished in difficult conditions.

Thank you for your attention.

27 January, 2022

The First Regular Session for the Year 2022



The Nouakchott Regional Council held its first regular session for the year 2022 on Monday, January 31st, under the presidency of Madame Fatimetou Mint Abdel Malick.

The agenda covered a number of important issues, including partnership agreements between the Nouakchott Region and its development partners.



The Sahel: A New Focus of

The African Sahel consists of nine countries: Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and the Central African Republic. The sum of these countries' populations reaches above 100 million and each country possesses immense natural wealth. From uranium in Niger; to Mauritania's abundance of livestock and water from the Senegal River; to Nigeria's gold deposits; to the arable land that covers 35% of the region and its two rivers in Senegal and Niger; to the vast, reclaimable desert – not to mention the oil and natural gas recently discovered in the region. But despite its wealth and population size, the region counts among the poorest and least literate in the world, especially four Sahelian countries: Mauritania, Mali, Niger, and Chad.



These countries have also suffered from war and conflict, such as in Mali, whose crisis has continued unabated since 2012, continuing up to the recent coup in 2020. Chad, which has experienced civil war for the last quarter-century, has suffered from high numbers of internally displaced people and migration. According to a report released by the International Committee of the Red Cross last September, more than a million people have fled the Sahel region. The combination of these factors has made the region the center of attention for many different entities.

The Sahel-Sahara region assumes particular importance for international policy on the African continent. It is a strategic region that possesses a number of characteristics that attract the attention of global powers seeking greater power and control and to benefit from the wealth enjoyed by Sahelian states. France's particular interest in the region stems from the latter's geostrategic importance and numerous other factors, as well as from French efforts to maximize its vital interests there. Paris has rushed to engage forcefully with regional issues in recent years in order to increase its influence, especially in regard to the increase in international and regional competition over the Sahel and Africa more generally.

French Interest

Paris has been closely linked to the Sahel region, especially because it possesses a network of vital interests in the region at political, strategic, economic, security, and military levels. France has identified these levels of engagement as the base for three complex strategies aiming to reinforce its influence in the Sahel and on the continent. These involve strengthening relations with ruling regimes and political and economic elites, increasing economic relations, and directing increased French investment toward the region. This is in addition to the military and security strategy adopted by Paris for the region, at a time in which the Sahel countries benefit from an abundance of natural resource wealth that has made them the focus of numerous international and regional powers.

The French intervention in Mali, which be-

gan in January 2013, marks a pivotal turning point for French policy in the Sahel, as Paris reinforced its influence by leading military operations directed against Islamic militants, such as Operation Serval (January 2013 – July 2014) which later transitioned into Operation Barkhane in August 2014. France has also participated in and supported numerous international and regional initiatives with the aim of confronting extremist groups in the region. This work has included supporting the regional coalition to combat terrorism in the Sahel, known as the G5 Sahel, and pushing for the formation of the "Takuba" force by European states to support Operation Barkhane.

France's orientation toward the Sahel has coincided with the presence of a highly complex regional context arising from political, economic, and security challenges facing most of the Sahelian countries, especially considering the deterioration of the economic situation and poor economic development indicators for a number of countries, such as in Chad, Mali, and Niger. This has reinforced the decline of the already-weak role of the state in the Sahel over the last decade and by the resultant political instability in the region. The Sahel is also considered an ungoverned space due to the weakness of government forces, fragile coordination, and unsteady security and intelligence cooperation between countries. Add to this increased competition between extremist groups active in most of the region and whose activities extend into strategic neighboring areas. This has made the Sahel-Sahara region one of the most volatile on earth in recent years.

As a result, Paris has adopted a security-focused approach to policy in the Sahel over the last decade, especially with its increasing strategic importance and the growth of security challenges in a number of Sahelian countries. The French also rely – albeit relatively less so – on other approaches that play a role in increasing French influence in Africa. These include political, economic, humanitarian, and developmental strategies, especially in light of rising calls for moving away from a solely security-focused approach to dealing with the region's crises. Critics have called

for seeking out other economic and developmental tools to help the region confront the challenges it faces in order to prevent further deterioration of the Sahel's security situation. France's security approach in the Sahel is one of the main pillars of its strength in the region. The approach is based on a well-established process: (1) signing defense cooperation agreements; (2) providing military assistance; (3) establishing military bases in some countries; and (4) stationing French troops in the region. France realizes certain strategic benefits from this approach, the most important of which being geopolitical gains, which manifest themselves in the acquisition of strategic resources such as oil and uranium. These benefits guarantee a growing French presence in the region and the protection of French interests there.

Nevertheless, recent regional developments in the Sahel have cast a shadow on the shift in French policy toward the region. There has been confusion and hesitation in regard to France's position on maintaining its forces in the region, which in turn has raised signs of a relative decline in the French presence there. This could be exploited by other international powers to increase their own influence at the expense of France and its geopolitical interests.

This transformation, which reflects signs of a French retreat from the Sahel, has multiple repercussions at several different levels. The countries of the region themselves will suffer the greatest loss from a continued French retreat or wholesale withdrawal. They fear a further deterioration of the present security vacuum in the region and the associated expansion in territory and activity of extremist groups such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (ISIS) in order to consolidate their influence in the Sahel and Africa more broadly. These groups also threaten neighboring geographic areas, such as North Africa, the Mediterranean Basin, and Southern Europe. French withdrawal will also increase international competition over the Sahel, as well as heighten the risk of separatist movements active in countries such as Mali.

Fears of a Security Vacuum

The cost of the French retreat or a possible withdrawal from the Sahel is growing, above all because Paris fears a threat to its strategic interests there. There is the possibility that France's reputation could be shaken, as well as the possibility of disengagement with the Sahel, which could lead to a loss of influence for Paris. The French retreat also opens up the possibility of other foreign powers finding footholds in the region and increasing their influence at France's expense, which could mean significant economic losses for Paris.

Despite this, it is likely that France's influence in the Sahel and the Sahara will increase in the near term. The cost of Paris' withdrawal from the region will be prohibitive in political, economic, and security terms at a time when Paris is seeking to consolidate its influence and protect its interests in the Sahel, without leaving a vacuum that regional or international opponents will be able to fill. France also fears an expansion of extremist activity in the region and the possibility that it could spread to European countries, bringing with it other challenges such as organized crime and high rates of irregular migration. Paris is still the dominant and most reliable actor in the Sahel and a key player in the fight against terrorism there.

The Mauritanian Approach to the Sahel

International interest in the Mauritanian approach stems from several basic factors, the most important of which are: Mauritania's unique position as the only Arab country in the Sahel community; it enjoys a decent level of political stability in a regional environment of unrest and instability, as is the case in Mali and the unstable border triangle between Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso; and recent victories by Mauritanian Army over armed groups and their superior ability to secure areas of conflict. In this context, the military, logistical, and technical support of



International Competition

the United States to the Mauritanian Army in the field serve as recognition for the latter's ability to defeat armed groups in the north of the country.

A Bet on Mauritania

Several international powers, notable the United States have bet on Mauritanian forces replacing French forces as they retire from Mali, as support for Mauritania's security and development strategy appears to be an excellent opportunity for curbing Russian and Chinese infiltration into the Sahel, which is a source of concern for American and European policymakers. The Mauritanian army has also succeeded in pushing extremist groups outside its borders, which have become secure and far removed from the risk of terrorist penetration.

And though Mauritanian army doctrine rejects the war by proxy by any country – the pressures of the Gulf countries are not far away – Mauritania is fully convinced of the need to intensify the coordination and exchange views among those concerned with security in the Sahel.

Russian Ambition: Wagner in the Sahel

The Russians did not wait for an invitation. While the world denounced a planned agreement between Mali and the mercenary group "Wagner" to train the Malian army, the "Yerewulu" group, a political group in Mali, praised the agreement, saying, "If Wagner went to liberate Syria, and if Wagner went to liberate the republic Central Africa, then we welcome Wagner to Bamako to liberate Mali. It's the end of French Africa." Russia is seeking to expand its influence in Mali, as the latter is increasingly seen as a potential security partner to fill the void left by a French withdrawal from Northern Mali. Nevertheless, Paris, seeking to withdraw its forces from the north of the country in early 2022 and end Operation Barkhane, continues to exercise significant influence. Despite its desire to leave the Sahel, France also does not want to leave a space to be filled by Moscow in a country that has long been considered as well within France's sphere of influence.

Since 2012, in conjunction with its requests for assistance from the French, Bamako has made an effort to revive its former military cooperation with Moscow. The two sides

have signed several military agreements, including an agreement signed in 2012 with the Russian arms export company Rosoboronexport to purchase 3,000 Kalashnikov assault rifles for nearly one million euros. In 2016, Moscow donated two helicopters to the Malian army, and two years ago former president Ibrahim Boubacar Keita concluded an additional defense agreement with Russia. Since the previous coup in Mali in August 2020, Russia has intensified its diplomatic efforts and reinforced its cooperation with the Malian energy and mining sectors, while France has taken steps to leave the Sahel theater. Following the last coup in May 2021, several sources have reported the strengthening of contacts between the Malian military and Moscow, including a visit by the Defense Minister coup leader Sadio Camara to the Russian capital this September to meet with Russian military officials and discuss a number of military and security agreements.

Within the context of the relationship between Bamako and Moscow, the former's Military Council and the paramilitary Wagner Group signed an agreement stipulating the deployment of 1,000 Russian mercenaries in the country in coordination with the army for the purpose of protecting high-ranking individuals. The contract also allowed the Russian company access to three mining sites, for which it will pay six million CFA Francs (about \$10 million).

Ultimately, as France prepares to gradually draw down its military footprint, Malians are playing France and Russia off each other for their own interests. This strategy has certain limits for the Russians, however, as the Malian junta sees Russia as simply a replacement for France in combatting extremism in the Sahel. This is not a role that Moscow is not necessarily willing to take on, especially as Africa is marginal to Russian interests in comparison with Syria and Ukraine. All Moscow is seeking, therefore, is to gain a new foothold in the place of a fading Western power and to consolidate its substantial network of alliances with authoritarian and military regimes. This strategy may bring mutual military and political benefits in the short term, but in the long term, it may make Moscow a popular enemy to chant against in the squares, as France is now.

The United States' Entry

American interest in the Sahel began ap-

proximately following the 9/11 Attacks and their repercussions, most notably in the 2002 National Security Strategy, which describes Africa as a key region for American security policy. Several initiatives arose from this strategy document, such as the 2002 Pan-Sahel Initiative for combatting terrorism in the region, followed by the Combatting Trans-Saharan Terrorism Initiative launched in 2005, and finally the 2007 establishment of AFRICOM, a US military combatant command dedicated solely to a US presence in Africa broadly, in addition to the Sahel more specifically.

U.S. intervention arrived under the auspices of the fight against terrorism, with the emergence of armed groups such as al-Qaeda in the Maghreb and Boko Haram, which intensified its activities in Nigeria and neighboring countries in a way similar to groups in the Middle East. It is notable that all American activity coincided with the consequences of 9/11.

Chinese Influence

China is perhaps the most acceptable foreign power to Sahelian countries through its soft power represented in trade, goods, and development projects. Today, China is one of the most active and cooperative countries with the Sahel, as it is the third-largest importer of oil in the world, thanks to the African continent, from which it receives 30% of its oil. There is also a Chinese monopoly on goods sold on the African market, overshadowing the U.S. and even France, which also has a strong influence there.

In an interview with Noon Post, Dr. Wael Ali believes that China has begun to surpass France in economic influence on the continent, although it was France that paved the way for China's entry.

The Saudi and Emirati Role in the Sahel

In early October, the Saudi Minister for African Affairs, Ahmad Qattan, visited Mauritania, Niger, and Mali. This was interpreted by Le Monde Afrique as an attempt by Saudi Arabia to place a pro-Saudi leader in charge of the country, above all one supported by religious leaders. The leading candidate for the position is the former head of the Islamic Council and the most celebrated man in Mali, Iman Dicko.

Later visits have confirmed the Kingdom's



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desire to create a place for itself in the region by buying governments' debts and supporting clerics, a policy that has long been adopted by Saudi Arabia, but which has seen mixed success in recent years.

"Saudi investments and the allocation of significant funds failed in persuading states and individuals in the region to support Saudi Arabia in its siege against Qatar. With the exception of Mauritania, no country cut ties with Doha," opined Nigerian journalist Omar Abu al-Fatah in a statement to Noon Post. As for the research and specialist on African affairs, Wael Ali, he believes that "the Saudi project in the region is undefined and its main goal is to undermine Turkish projects there.

Following the failure of Saudi efforts in the region, comes its ally, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which has adopted the same strategy as Saudi Arabia, namely allocation of funds and support for clerics. Mauritania and Senegal are perhaps the two countries most receptive to the UAE's influence and largesse, the latter manifesting most evidently in the construction of a new Emirati hospital in Mauritania, as well as other development projects in the country. But so far, the UAE's strategy has not succeeded in drawing African countries to its recently adopted program of diplomatic normalization with Israel. It has also been reported recently that the UAE is seeking to establish a military base in the Sahel, which could ignite a war in the long term if this were to occur.

Turkey: A New Player in the Region

Exactly a decade ago Turkey began developing a new strategy toward Sahelian countries. It began by opening embassies in Niger and Chad in 2012, as well as gaining a monopoly of Turkish goods over the Mauritanian market, establishing a new airport in Senegal, and supporting the Malian and Nigerian governments. Turkey's focus on a strategy of mutual benefit and common interests helped it to gain the acceptance of governments and individuals in the region. This upset officials in Abu Dhabi and Riyadh, motivating them to move at full speed to counter Turkey's project, which has recently been viewed as a success.

We conclude from the above that competition over the Sahelian states has intensified among the traditional players in the region – France, the U.S., and China – and the new competitors represented in Saudi Arabia and the UAE challenging a rising Turkey. A new Mideastern Africa might be more dangerous than the actual Middle East.





Founder of Tukolor Empire

El Hadj Omar Tall (1794-1864): warrior chief, mystic & anti-colonialist

Based on history data reported from lyricists, griots or storytellers, El Hadj Omar Saidou Tall was born around 1794 in Alwar (Podor, Senegal). He was supposed to be the 4th son of his blessed mother known as Sokhna Adama Thiam. Thus, the gifted-child was from the lineage of the honorable Talls. He was initiated to the Qur'anic culture early in life and especially to "Tijaniyya" doctrine in which he learned Arabic and was indoctrinated in a solid religious instruction. At a tender age, he was travelling from one Islamic scholar to another in Tagant and Oualata (Mauritania) to learn much from Moorish Qur'anic teachers to brush up on his language skills in Arabic as he was planning to visit and meet with Arab leaders and scholars across Africa and Middle East.

Pilgrimage to Mecca

El Hadj Omar Tall was on his way to perform Hajj (Pilgrimage) to Mecca in his early thirties and his expedition lasted for about 13 years. During his trip he visited Cairo, Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem. In Medina, he took time to upgrade his skills of Qur'anic culture and Islamic teachings to enable him to preach as a spiritual leader and to propagate Islam once back home. During the pilgrimage, he was introduced to the Caliph Cheikh Muhammad El Ghali (a disciple of Ahmad Al Tidjani) who would coach him a lot and who influenced him to undertake the sword for spreading Islam where people were still animists or had accepted imported foreign belief systems.

As El Hadj Omar was more determined to expand Islam with the sword, his mentor (El Ghali) gave him the title of Caliph of Tidjanese (disciple of the Tijaniyya doctrine). Henceforth Caliph was very enthusiastic to visit Sudan, Nigeria, Mali and Guinea before getting back to Fouta (his homeland) where he im-

mediately founded the locality of Dinguiraye as the headquarters of a large Muslim Empire. He edited «Al Rimah», the ideology of this religious doctrine. At this point, El Hadj Omar Tall was aiming at expanding Islam under the label of Jihad (holy war). This was the reason why he invaded Bambuk and Kaarta between 1850 and 1857 and later annexed Nioro that was the capital of the pagan kingdom of the Fulani and Bambara people, enlarging his empire from Upper Senegal to the Gambia.

El Hadj Omar Tall as Anti-colonial hero

When Tukolor's empire (El Hadj Omar's State) started, French colonization was about to reach its peak in Senegal. In 1857, Louis Faidherbe (one of the leading figures of French colonial conquest of West Africa) created the corps of Senegalese Tirailleurs, as he considered that "black soldiers" don't appreciate danger and had nervous systems that weren't functioning properly. According to Faidherbe any action must be set for the colonial cause; mostly he was acting in defiance of all humanitarian rules. Henceforward, an extraordinary man, with superpowers, a valiant spiritual leader, a chief warrior and mystic marabout was born. In the person of El Hadj Omar Tall.

War was indeed declared between the Caliph's disciples and the French colonial soldiers. Hostilities took place from 1857 in the locality of Medine and they fought deadly in Matam (1859) before a peace treaty in 1860. The setup helped El Hadj Omar to confront Pagan-animist Bambara and Peulh from Massina who were Muslims but refuted the Marabout's Jihad. There was bloodshed until the capture of Hamdallahi (the capital of those dissidents). Repeated assaults led to the mysterious demise of El Hadj Omar Tall in the caves of Bandiagara (Mali).



Sword of El Hadj Omar Tall as Legendary Trophy

Many African leaders have recently demanded from France their cultural heritage objects taken/stolen by French colonizers. Senegalese President (Macky Sall) insisted to get the sword of El Hadj Omar Tall back to his home country. On Nov. 19, 2019 this sword was returned by French PM (Edouard Philippe) in the presence of President Macky Sall and El Hadj Omar Tall's family representatives. Today, the sword is being exposed at the Museum of Black Civilizations of Dakar for future generations and worldwide researchers. The mystic conqueror's sword was made in Klingenthal (Bas-Rhin, France). It's composed of a French blade of infantry officer known as "Montmorency series" or Model 1821. Most historians agree that this sword is a legendary trophy.

El Hadj Omar Tall as Influential figure in the Tijaniyya Doctrine

The Tijaniyya is a Sufi order in the Maghreb and West Africa whose philosophy deals with deep meditation. The disciples of this doctrine pray for the realization of Muslim identity worldwide. Hence, El Hadj

Omara Tall is undoubtedly a prominent Islamic scholar and spiritual leader in Senegal, Mali, Gambia, Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt...etc. Up to today, he is considered as a holy man. His life and legacy continue to impact millions of minds across the globe. He was virtuous and pure with supernatural powers but he never claimed divinity; his lifetime combat was fully Muslim orthopraxy. In short, Hadji Oumarû-Futiyou Tall is on the top of the list of the most influential Muslim spiritual leaders in the world. His weapon was more the rosary than the sword; he used to call out Allah via Zikr (Remembrance of Allah) using his Muslim rosary. There was no doubt about the fact that the maestro guru used to get positive answers to his divine requests each time

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Regions of America: The Midwest

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The United States is a massive, diverse country spanning the entirety of the North American continent and touching four different seas. Owing to this geographic breadth and the country's rich history, the United States is made up of many unique geographic and cultural regions. For the next few months, I will be writing about the most well-known of these regions here in The Key. Each month, I will discuss the geography, history, and culture of one region. This month's focus will be the Midwestern United States, informally known as "the Midwest."

Geography

The Midwest represents a significant part of the American landmass at more than two million square kilometers, more than twice the size of Mauritania. The composition of the Midwest is often debated, but the broader definition of the region includes twelve states: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. To the north, the Midwest is bordered by Canada. Much of this border is a maritime border, as the Great Lakes separate the region from southern Canada. The five Great Lakes make up a significant portion of the Midwest's total area. States such as Michigan, Wisconsin, and Ohio, therefore, have extensive inland coastlines. Away from the shoreline, the Midwest is known for being exceptionally flat, with few major geographic features.

The western part of the region is marked by immense plains that, even today, are sparsely populated. Despite this, the Midwest is nicknamed "America's breadbasket" because of its incredibly productive farmland, where crops such as corn, wheat, and soy, as well as livestock such as cattle and swine are grown and raised on an industrial scale that feeds both the United States and a significant part of the global population. In order for these goods to be shipped across the United States and the World, much of the region's material and financial output passes through Chicago, the economic and cultural capital of the region and the third largest city in the United States, after New York and Los Angeles. The Midwest is therefore marked by a sharp contrast between rural and urban areas.

Climatically, the Midwest experiences the full range of seasons. In Chicago, for example, summer temperatures frequently climb above 90oF (32oC) in the summer with high humidity, and plunge below 0oF (-18oC) in the winter.

History

Prior to the arrival of European settlers during the middle of the 19th century, the Midwest was inhabited by a diverse constellation of primarily nomadic Native American tribes who roamed the Great Plains. Many of these groups survived by following the great herds of buffalo that provided everything that tribes needed. Like many nomadic Mauritanians, these tribes lived in tents



that they could fold up and carry every time they moved to a new location.

This way of life ceased to exist, however, with the arrival of American settlers eager to spread out into the vast, uncultivated plains that laid west of the populated urban centers of the Atlantic coast. Throughout the 19th century, hundreds of thousands of European settlers spread out across the region, founding innumerable agricultural communities, as well as large cities along key trade routes. The vast network of rail lines that the country began to build at the same time was key to the region's development, and control of these lines helped fuel the Midwest's growth. Even today, most major railways begin in Chicago before spreading out across the entire North American continent. In addition, the Midwest saw its economic fortunes soar during the first half of the 20th century through its massive industrial output, with factory smokestacks dotting the skyline of almost every urban center in the region. Until the 1980s for example, almost every car produced and sold in the United States was produced in Detroit, Michigan, nicknamed "Motor City" for being the center of the American automobile industry.

Today, the economy of the Midwest is much the same as it was more than a hundred years ago. The region's economy continues to be based on the production of raw goods that help feed and furnish America.

Culture

When many Americans are asked to imagine what "authentic" American culture looks like, many draw in their mind an image of the Midwest. Small communities, neat neighborhoods, smiles to passing strangers: the Midwest is seen by many to represent the purest representation of American culture. In many ways this is true, but the Midwest is also incredibly diverse and, in many ways, tied to the world beyond America's shores more closely than any other region through trade and commerce. Despite this, there are some basic characteristics that define Midwestern culture.

First, Midwesterners are known for being the kindest people in the United States. In most parts of the country, for example, a person walking down the street stares

straight ahead, unsmiling and rarely acknowledging passersby. In the Midwest, however, it's perfectly normal to see someone walking down the street – even in large cities – smiling and nodding to everyone they pass. Midwesterners take great pride in this kindness and are always eager to express it, even to strangers. In most parts of the country, for example, saying "how are you?" is merely a polite formality – you are not really asking how the person is. In this Midwest, however, when you are asked "how are you?" it usually means that the person asking genuinely wants to know how you are.

Second, life in the Midwest moves slower than in the rest of the country. There is no such thing as a "Chicago minute" (a "New York minute" is a colloquial term for a very short amount of time). The pace of life, in some part owing to the vast distances that define the region, moves at a much slower pace than on the coasts. Whereas, for example, someone in New England might nod politely at someone they know at the grocery store, a Midwesterner would stop and talk to that person for as long as necessary.

Third, Midwesterners are resilient. Whereas most parts of the country do not see wild climatic swings throughout the year, the Midwest is constantly experiencing the extremes of weather, from sweltering, humid summers to frigid, snowy winters. Nevertheless, Midwesterners rarely complain about the weather and simply adapt to whatever they find themselves in. This spirit is exemplified by the response to the frequent destruction wrought by tornadoes. Whole towns are often destroyed by these extreme events, yet every time one strikes towns are rebuilt, and people continue on with their lives, taking it all in stride.

The Midwest is frequently skipped by visitors to the United States drawn to the shining skyscrapers of New York and the sunny boulevards of Los Angeles. But the Midwestern United States represent the nation's core, literally and metaphorically. Anyone seeking to experience the America idolized in traditional concepts of American culture would be hard pressed to skip a visit to America's heartland.

AFCON 2021 "No Sleep" :

Senegal wins Africa Cup of Nations 2021

Mauritania has qualified twice in a row for the Africa Cup of Nations. The first time was during the 32nd edition, hosted by Egypt. In a major milestone for the country, Mauritania defeated Botswana 2-1 to seal spot in the 2019 tournament. This year, they qualified for the 33rd edition. Every Mauritanian enthusiastically awaited for the tournament's kickoff match between Cameroon, the host, and Burkina Faso.

As the referee whistled, there was much on stake for the host – they had to win their opening match. It didn't take too long before Burkina Faso scored a goal with a perfect delivery at the 33 minute mark, frustrating Cameroon. As the match went on, the home team kept fighting back. Then, Cameroon got a penalty at 40 minutes – it was an opportunity to bring the scores in line before surpassing their opponent. The penalty walloped into the net successfully. Cameroon rejoiced and looked to build a lead. It only took Cameroon a few minutes to get another penalty and score again successfully. The second goal sealed a victory for Cameroon in the opening match, 2-1. I mention this match, for I want to set up the stage in detail.

Later comes the big day Mauritania has been awaiting for. The first match in the Group Stages that was scheduled for January 12th. Mauritania played Gambia, which has three highly experienced players. Mauritania kicked off the match. The Mauritanian fans were engrossed by the match. It only took nine minutes, however, before Gambia's Jallow scored the first goal, landing perfectly in the back of the net. Mauritanian fans hoped that their national team could bring the score to a draw before beating their opponent. The match went on, and Al-Mourabitoune kept pushing back and attempting to force a tie game. Out of nowhere, at 24 minutes, Abubakar had a great strike, but it fell short of evening the score. The Scorpions continued to hold the lead. The match finished 1-0 for Gambia. It was a debut win for Gambia. Despite the defeat, Mauritanians still hoped to see their team make the Round of 16. The second match for Al-Mourabitoune took place on January 16th against Tunisia. As the match started, everything was on the line for the Mauritanians, as they had already lost the debut match. At three minutes, Tunisia scored early with great technique. Mauritania almost lost hope, as it only took the Tunisians' captain a matter of minutes to score a second goal at nine minutes. Then, a third goal was scored with a slick maneuver at 64 minutes. Mauritania may have lost hope of qualifying for the Round of 16 stage, but they wouldn't leave the field with an embarrassing score. They kept resisting, but Tunisia insisted on scoring one more goal as if to say, "we've made it." Tunisia scored the fourth goal.



They later received a penalty, but the player didn't kick it perfectly into the net and it bounced off the post. The match ended 4-0 for Tunisia. The match was frustrating for Al-Mourabitoune fans, and they began severely criticizing the national team. They couldn't help themselves, however, to not watch the final match for Al-Mourabitoune, hoping to at least earn a good standing among the teams. The third match of Group Stage 3 took place on January 20th. Mauritania had already lost hope of qualifying for the finals but hoped to at least leave their mark on the 33rd Africa Cup of Nations. They were to play Mali in the final clash for the Group Stage. The match commenced and, lo and behold, Mali scored a slick goal at two minutes. This was too much for the Mauritanians to take. Mali took the lead at the very beginning of the match. Then they got a penalty at 48 minutes. The penalty strike walloped into the corner. Mauritania got a foul at 61 minutes. Nevertheless, they failed to score. The referee blew the final whistle 2-0 for Mali, and Mauritania was disqualified from the tournament without scoring even one goal.

When Al-Mourabitoune lost the three group stage matches, the fans were split between the disappointed and the patient. Many Mauritanians blamed the president of FFRIM, Ahmed Yahya, and even demanded his resignation. They said that he had made a huge mistake when he fired the former coach. On the other hand, some said that Ahmed Yahya has been bettering football in Mauritania since he was elected. Thanks to him, Mauritania qualified for the Cup twice. He appeared on television on January 25th and responded to the many accusations made against him. He concluded his speech by saying "I don't sleep when Mauritania gets defeated."

I will conclude my article with the idea that winning isn't everything, but learning is.



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