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OUT OF AFRICA

(By Thomas L. Friedman)

AGADEZ, NIGER.—It's Monday and that means it's moving day in Agadez, the northern Niger desert crossroad that is the main launching pad for migrants out of West Africa. Fleeing devastated agriculture, overpopulation and unemployment, migrants from a dozen countries gather here in caravans every Monday night and make a mad dash through the Sahara to Libya, hoping to eventually hop across the Mediterranean to Europe.

This caravan's assembly is quite a scene to witness. Although it is evening, it's still 105 degrees, and there is little more than a crescent moon to illuminate the night. Then, all of a sudden, the desert comes alive.

Using the WhatsApp messaging service on their cellphones, the local smugglers, who are tied in with networks of traffickers extending across West Africa, start coordinating the surreptitious loading of migrants from safe houses and basements across the city. They've been gathering all week from Senegal, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Chad, Guinea, Cameroon, Mali and other towns in Niger.

With 15 to 20 men—no women—cramped together into the back of each Toyota pickup, their arms and legs spilling over the sides, the vehicles pop out of alleyways and follow scout cars that have zoomed ahead to make sure there are no pesky police officers or border guards lurking who have not been paid off.

It's like watching a symphony, but you have no idea where the conductor is. Eventually, they all converge at a gathering point north of the city, forming a giant caravan of 100 to 200 vehicles—the strength in numbers needed to ward off desert bandits.

Poor Niger. Agadez, with its warrens of ornate mud-walled buildings, is a remarkable Unesco World Heritage site, but the city has been abandoned by tourists after attacks nearby by Boko Haram and other jihadists. So, as one smuggler explains to me, the cars and buses of the tourist industry have now been repurposed into a migration industry. There are now wildcat recruiters, linked to smugglers, all across West Africa who appeal to the mothers of boys to put up the \$400 to \$500 to send them to seek out jobs in Libya or Europe. Few make it, but others keep coming.

I am standing at the Agadez highway control station watching this parade. As the Toyotas whisk by me, kicking up dust, they paint the desert road with stunning moonlit silhouettes of young men, silently standing in the back of each vehicle. The thought that their Promised Land is war-ravaged Libya tells you how desperate are the conditions they're leaving. Between 9,000 and 10,000 men make this journey every month.

A few agree to talk—nervously. One group of very young men from elsewhere in Niger tell me they're actually joining the rush to pan for gold in Djado in the far north of Niger. More typical are five young men who, in Senegalese-accented French, tell a familiar tale: no work in the village, went to the town, no work in the town, heading north.

What's crazy is that as you go north of here, closer to the Libya border, to Dirkou, you run into streams of migrants coming back from Libya, which they found ungoverned, abusive and lacking in any kind of decent work. One of them, Mati Almani, from Niger, tells me he had left his three wives and 17 children back in his village to search for work in Libya or Europe and returned deeply disillusioned. In Libya, say migrants, you can get beaten at any moment—or arbitrarily arrested and have the

police use your cellphone to call your family in Niger and demand a ransom for your release.

Just as Syria's revolution was set off in part by the worst four-year drought in the country's modern history—plus overpopulation, climate stresses and the Internet—the same is true of this African migration wave. That's why I'm here filming an episode for the "Years of Living Dangerously" series on climate change across the planet, which will appear on National Geographic Channel next fall. I'm traveling with Monique Barbut, who heads the U.N. Convention to Combat Desertification, and Adamou Chaifou, Niger's minister of environment.

Chaifou explains that West Africa has experienced two decades of on-again-off-again drought. The dry periods prompt desperate people to deforest hillsides for wood for cooking or to sell, but they are now followed by increasingly violent rains, which then easily wash away the topsoil barren of trees. Meanwhile, the population explodes—mothers in Niger average seven children—as parents continue to have lots of kids for social security, and each year more fertile land gets eaten by desertification. "We now lose 100,000 hectares of arable land every year to desertification," says Chaifou. "And we lose between 60,000 and 80,000 hectares of forest every year."

As long as anyone could remember, he says, the rainy season "started in June and lasted until October. Now we get more big rains in April, and you need to plant right after it rains." But then it becomes dry again for a month or two, and then the rains come back, much more intense than before, and cause floods that wash away the crops, "and that is a consequence of climate change"—caused, he adds, primarily by emissions from the industrial North, not from Niger or its neighbors.

Says the U.N.'s Barbut, "Desertification acts as the trigger, and climate change acts as an amplifier of the political challenges we are witnessing today: economic migrants, interethnic conflicts and extremism." She shows me three maps of Africa with an oblong outline around a bunch of dots clustered in the middle of the continent. Map No. 1: the most vulnerable regions of desertification in Africa in 2008. Map No. 2: conflicts and food riots in Africa 2007-2008. Map No. 3: terrorist attacks in Africa in 2012.

All three outlines cover the same territory.

The European Union recently struck a deal with Turkey to vastly increase E.U. aid to Ankara for dealing with refugees and migrants who have reached Turkey, in return for Turkey restricting their flow into Europe.

"If we would invest a fraction of that amount helping African nations combat deforestation, improve health and education and sustain small-scale farming, which is the livelihood of 80 percent of the people in Africa, so people here could stay on the land," says Barbut, "it would be so much better for them and for the planet."

Everyone wants to build walls these days, she notes, but the wall we need most is a "green wall" of reforestation that would hold back the desert and stretch from Mali in the west to Ethiopia in the east. "It's an idea that the Africans themselves have come up with," she adds. It makes enormous sense.

Because, in the end, no wall will hold back this surging migrant tide. Everything you see here screams that unless a way can be found to stabilize Africa's small-scale agriculture, one way or another they will try to get to Europe. Some who can't will surely gravitate toward any extremist group that pays them. Too many are now aware through mass media of the better life in Europe, and

too many see their governments as too frail to help them advance themselves.

I interviewed 20 men from at least 10 African countries at the International Organization for Migration aid center in Agadez—all had gone to Libya, tried and failed to get to Europe, and returned, but were penniless and unable to get back to their home villages. I asked them, "How many of you and your friends would leave Africa and go to Europe if you could get in legally?"

"Tout le monde," they practically shouted, while they all raised their hands.

I don't know much French, but I think that means "everybody."

ENERGY POLICY MODERNIZATION BILL

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I want to applaud Senators MURKOWSKI and CANTWELL, the chair and ranking member of the Energy Committee, for their leadership and tenacity in passing yesterday's bipartisan Energy bill on the floor. This kind of bipartisanship has always been the political fuel that has driven some of our most important energy legislation. I thank them for their commitment to working together in a bipartisan fashion to pass this bill, and I look forward to working with them and all of my colleagues going forward to capture all of the potential for America's clean energy future.

There are many good provisions in this bill. The bill promotes energy efficiency in our buildings and appliances. It will help to modernize our electrical grid and support energy storage technologies. It permanently reauthorizes the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

The bill includes a number of provisions and amendments that I authored that were accepted on the floor.

I was pleased that my bipartisan legislation with Senators INHOFE, ROUNDS, and BOOKER to reauthorize EPA's brownfields program through 2018 was included in the Energy bill. This legislation will help clean up the decades of abuse our lands have experienced at the hands of corporate polluters. It will help to create jobs and spur economic activity in Massachusetts and around the country, while revitalizing underutilized and polluted lands.

In December, Congress voted to lift the 40-year old restrictions on exporting U.S. oil overseas. During that debate, I and other Senators raised concerns regarding the impacts that exporting American oil abroad could have on U.S. consumers and refined fuel prices, independent refineries, and other sectors of the U.S. economy such as shipbuilding. However, the final legislation did not even include any requirement for analyzing and reporting on any potential impacts that exports could have on these industries or on U.S. consumers. Therefore, I offered an amendment, which the Senate adopted, that would require the Government Accountability Office, GAO to review and report back annually for 3 years on the impacts of crude oil exports on U.S. consumers, independent refineries, shipbuilders, and energy production.

Exporting American crude oil could be a disaster for independent refineries in regions such as the east coast. Upwards of 55 percent of our refining capacity on the east coast could potentially close as a result of oil exports. The Energy Department has said that exports could lead to as much as \$9 billion less investment and 1.6 million barrels less refining capacity in 10 years. It could lead to up to \$200 billion less revenue for the U.S. refining sector over the next decade. It could raise prices for consumers who are currently saving \$700 a year at the pump and \$500 on heating oil this winter because of low oil prices. And it could harm U.S. shipbuilders. We have been having a shipbuilding renaissance in this country. We are currently seeing the biggest shipbuilding boom in 20 years. But exports could stop all of this in its tracks.

We should know how exporting American oil is affecting American consumers. We should know how it is affecting key sectors of our economy such as refining and shipbuilding. And we should know how it is affecting energy production in the United States. That is what my amendment would help us do, and I am pleased that it was adopted into the bill.

The bill also includes a bipartisan amendment that I authored with Senator CASSIDY to improve the way that we are going to be selling oil under a law passed last year to better protect taxpayers.

Our Nation's oil stockpile is supposed to be there to protect American consumers and our security in the event of an emergency. We shouldn't use it as a piggybank to fund other priorities. But that is precisely what we did in two bills passed last year.

But if we are going to sell oil from our strategic stockpile, we should do so strategically to get the best deal for taxpayers and drive down prices for consumers. That is what the Cassidy-Markey amendment would help us do.

For the sales of SPR oil required by the Budget Act that became law last year, the Cassidy-Markey amendment would give the Secretary of Energy more flexibility to sell oil when prices are high. This fix should allow us to sell fewer overall barrels from the SPR and get a better return on these sales for American taxpayers. I am pleased that the Senate voted to adopt this commonsense amendment.

However, there are a number of provisions in the bill with which I have concerns. The bill would apply a 45-day shot-clock to the Department of Energy's review of liquefied natural gas export applications. There is no problem with the Energy Department delaying its review of LNG export applications. If there is any problem, it is that the Energy Department is moving too fast to approve these exports of American natural gas overseas.

Exporting less than half of the volumes of natural gas that the Department has already approved for export

could drive prices up by more than 50 percent for American consumers and businesses. This would be a disaster for consumers in many regions of the country, such as the Northeast. It would be a disaster for domestic manufacturing, where low U.S. prices give us a competitive advantage with the rest of the world. I have urged the Department to take a time-out from approving new LNG exports until we more fully understand how the volumes we have already approved will affect various regions of our country and our energy security. That is what we should be doing, not artificially truncating the review process.

I am similarly concerned that a provision about forest bioenergy would interfere with the EPA's scientific review process of the carbon pollution implications of biomass electricity and potentially interfere—with EPA's statutory responsibilities. The provision directs Federal policies to "reflect the carbon neutrality of forest bioenergy." But not all biomass energy is created equal. The timeframe for any climate benefits from biomass energy can vary. In many instances that timeframe can be very long—on the order of 50 to 100 years. Some practices, like clearcutting forests and burning whole trees for energy should never be considered carbon neutral. That is why it is critical to incorporate what science tells us about forests and their interaction with the global carbon cycle into policies governing biomass energy. Biomass energy is already contributing to the U.S. energy mix in ways that help reduce carbon pollution that causes global warming. I look forward to working with my colleagues as this bill moves through conference to ensure that the United States has a smart, sustainable, and scientifically-backed policy for biomass energy.

The bill also contains provisions regarding hydropower relicensing. I appreciate the willingness of Senators MURKOWSKI and CANTWELL to engage with stakeholders on hydropower relicensing and that they have crafted language that is a vast improvement compared to the House version.

It took me much of 1985 and 1986 to reach consensus on the bipartisan Electric Consumers Protection Act of 1986 that for the first time required FERC to give equal consideration to the environment, fish and wildlife, and other nonpower values as it gives to power and development objectives in making licensing decisions. I know how challenging it can be to find solutions that all stakeholders can support. But these hydropower licenses are good for decades, and we need to make sure that FERC's decisions are informed by the best, most up-to-date information, especially in the face of changing rainfall patterns driven by global warming. So I am concerned that this provision in the Energy bill could limit the ability of Federal agencies to require companies to undertake new analyses on the impacts of their dams by emphasizing the use of existing studies and data.

I am also concerned that the provision could require agencies to evaluate the impact of their recommendations on issues beyond their core abilities. Rather than speeding up the relicensing process, this could slow it down. Rather than saving taxpayers money, it could require more financial resources for Federal agencies.

Finally, I am concerned about what is not in this bill. The tax breaks for the oil, gas, and coal industries are permanent pieces of the TAX CODE that never expire. Meanwhile, tax breaks for wind power will begin phasing down in 8 months and be gone by the end of 2019. The tax breaks for solar will expire in 2021. That schedule would be a disaster for offshore wind in particular, which has the potential to create tens of thousands of jobs in Massachusetts and up and down the east coast. In fact, the Department of Energy has found that that there would be no offshore wind projects that would be able to qualify for these tax credits before they expire. That is just wrong. We need to put clean energy technologies on equal footing with mature fossil fuel industries, whose tax breaks date as far back as 100 years.

Senators CANTWELL and WYDEN put forward a Democratic energy bill which I was pleased to be an original cosponsor of, which would repeal these fossil fuel tax breaks and invest in clean energy. It would create a goal for reducing our emission of carbon pollution. And it would create an energy efficiency standard such as I have proposed. These are some of the measures that we should be considering to truly allow us to be a leader in developing clean energy technologies and jobs here in the United States.

As we work with the House on this Energy bill, we need to build on the bipartisan efforts that have been done in this bill and ensure that the Senate continues to reject the damaging and highly partisan provisions that the House has included in its bill. I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to ensure a final Energy bill that improves America's economy and environment.

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CITY OF SCRANTON

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, today I wish to pay tribute to my hometown of Scranton, PA, as it celebrates its 150th anniversary, or sesquicentennial.

Ever since William Penn invited carpenters, masons, weavers, and other skilled workers to settle in Pennsylvania, the story of our Commonwealth, and in particular northeastern Pennsylvania, has been the story of working people.

At the dawn of the 19th century, what would become known as the city of Scranton became a home to new immigrants who fought desperately to escape the horrors of religious persecution, famine, and poverty in Europe and dreamed of a better life. Many of