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**THESIS**

**THE POLITICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE TUAREG  
INSURGENCY IN MALI**

by

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June 2019

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**THE POLITICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE TUAREG INSURGENCY IN MALI**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Tuareg insurgency in Mali has its roots in the colonial period. However, the insurgency worsened when Mali became independent in 1960. This insurgency was characterized by four main periods. The first rebellion came in 1963, the second rebellion in 1990, the third rebellion came in 1996, and the last one was in 2012, where the Tuaregs again attacked the Malian troops. This thesis argues that developmental policies and military engagement in the northern region were the most significant factors that contributed to the recurrence of the Tuareg insurgency in Mali. However, there are other minor factors, such as the economic difficulties, the emergence of drug trafficking, the weak governance, the decentralization, social collapse, and regional dynamics, that also contributed to the resurgence of the conflict. This thesis stresses that domestic management of the crisis played a more significant role than the external factors. It is crucial for the Mali government to establish secure borders and a secure internal environment in the northern region before instituting any developmental policies. For this reason, the Malian state needs a strong army to prevent malicious actors from entering the region and obstructing the objective of peace. Also, it needs to always pursue and sign realistic agreements.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
ARLA	Revolutionary Army of Liberation of Azawad
AUREP	Authority for Oil Research
CNRDRE	National Committee of Recovery of Democracy and the Reestablishment of the State
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FIAA	Arab Islamic Front of Azawad
FPLA	Front of Liberation of Azawad
GSPC	Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat
IFAD	International Fund for Agriculture Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MPLA	Movement of the Liberation of Azawad
MPA	Popular Movement of Azawad
MNLA	National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OCRS	Common Organization of the Saharan Regions
PSPSDN	Special Program for Peace, Security and Development of the Northern Mali
RDA	Africa Democratic Party

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# **I. INTRODUCTION**

## **A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION**

Today, the crisis in the northern part of Mali has drawn the attention of the international community. Mali's existence is at stake because of security issues including insurgency and terrorism. The crisis continues to weaken the country's sovereignty and contributes to many civilian and military casualties. Unfortunately, diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis have not been successful. The Tuareg insurgency remains one of the most important problems facing the country.

Since independence in 1960, Mali's successive governments have worked to resolve the conflict with different approaches. Appeasement has failed; likewise, the community living in the region attempted to negotiate with groups of Tuareg leaders and the Malian government, but local efforts have borne little fruit. Moreover, the leaders of some neighboring countries, including Algeria and the Republic of Niger, directly or indirectly concerned with the crisis have tried to mediate between the Tuaregs and Malian authorities, but again these efforts have not been productive.

The crisis dates back to the colonial period of French occupation and continues to divide the society. Understanding the political factors that have caused the Tuareg's insurgency to persist is necessary to solve this issue. This thesis, therefore, will analyze the contributing factors to the crisis by answering the following research question: What are the political circumstances that have contributed to the crisis Tuareg Insurgency in Mali?

## **B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION**

This thesis will contribute to a better understanding of the Tuareg people and the Malian government in their political demands that have perpetuated the crisis since independence in 1960. A good knowledge of the roots of such a problem will contribute to the future framework of the country but also of the Tuareg communities and the Malian government to find the ways and means to converge towards a favorable outcome. By recognizing political issues, the new authorities that will take part in the future negotiations and eventual agreements will be sure to avoid falling into the same mistakes of the past.

In addition, a better understanding of the political situation will help to inform external mediators. For more than half a century, Algeria has been the main mediator and things have not necessarily improved. This may be the case because Algeria cannot or will not take the main political interests of the parties into account. Instead, the Algerian mediation does not seem to be an asset for Mali because Algerians have their own political interests that may prohibit them from pursuit of lasting peace.

This research will also aim to understand how the claims of the *Mouvement National of Liberation of Azawad* (MNLA) are rooted in longstanding political dynamics, and how the pretext of development and exclusion may relate to other agendas of the movement. Knowledge of these political factors will inform Malian authorities not to fall into the trap of having partition imposed upon the country, especially when: “Citizens believe there were substantial deficits in leaders’ strategic vision.”<sup>1</sup> If there is failure in vision, it will be difficult to come out with a sustainable political solution. Thus, it is important to know the outlines of the conflict in order to reduce the suffering of the people in these areas.

## **C. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1. Background**

There are many different explanations of the Tuareg rebellion. While some deal with distant causes, others focus on the immediate ones. The relations that had existed between the tribes and the impact of the colonial policy attempting to shape inter-linked communities are among the distant causes. With regard to the immediate causes, most attribute the crisis to the problem of development and state management. However, these explanations often fail to account for the political interests of the main actors, and do not appreciate the longstanding political contests that have helped to create the situation as it exists today.

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<sup>1</sup> Jaimie Bleck, Abdoulaye Dembele, and Sidiki Guindo, “Malian Crisis and the Lingering Problem of Good Governance,” *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 5, no. 1 (2016): 2, <https://doi:10.5334/sta.457>.

## 2. Historical Ethnic Origins of the Conflict

According to Lecocq et al.<sup>2</sup> and Keita,<sup>3</sup> it is impossible for one single scholar to account for the real causes of the problem in the north of Mali because it is complicated for anyone to gather all the necessary information. In fact, they believe the problem has originated from the social interaction within the Tuareg community. Historical research shows that the Tuareg community has always lived in an unstable environment of small confrontations among themselves or with their neighbors the Arabs, Songhays or Peuls ethnic groups. This ancestral conflict made it difficult for the Tuaregs to accept any domination coming from an external leadership.

Chauzal further adds that from the times of Malian grand empires in the 13th century, there were many tensions between tribes in the region.<sup>4</sup> Also, the French colonizers' tactic used to divide the communities played a big role in widening the existing social breach. In fact, the French colonizers considered the Tuareg as white people who should not participate in hard work like blacks, who are the majority of Malian society. With the emergent devaluation of the black community, the Tuareg's social redefinition takes a huge context on how they saw themselves as much more superior than others. At the same time the French colonizers failed to end or completely bury up the practice of slavery of the *Bellah* (black people in Tuareg community used as slaves) by the Tuareg, a practice still in question.

However, Kone argues that there are some misleading assumptions regarding Tuareg citizenship because they are at the borders Malians. He further demonstrates that Tuaregs are enemies of Mali, or can be viewed as insurgents, because they have always accepted a unitary state until the creation of the Republic of Mali. This argument imposes

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<sup>2</sup> Baz Lecocq et al., "One Hippopotamus and Eight Blind Analysts: A Multivocal Analysis of the 2012 Political Crisis in the Divided Republic of Mali," *Review of African Political Economy* 40, no. 137 (2013): 343–357, doi:10.1080/03056244.2013.799063.

<sup>3</sup> Kalifa Keita, "Conflict and Conflict Resolution in the Sahel: The Tuareg Insurgency in Mali," 1998, 102–128, doi:10.21236/ada349121.

<sup>4</sup> Grégory Chauzal and Thibault Van Damme., *The Roots of Mali's Conflict: Moving Beyond the 2012 Crisis* (Clingendal, 2015), <https://www.clingendael.org/publication/roots-malis-conflict-moving-beyond-2012-crisis>.

the rising misconception about the supposed superiority with which the Tuaregs view themselves. Greenwald adds that the Malian government's lack of progress in resolving the ethnic divergence exacerbated the tension between communities even before the international Jihadists settled the north with more illicit economic power.

### **3. Economic Difficulties**

According to Cristiani and Fabiani, and Greenwald et al., the Tuareg complain about persistent economic difficulties.<sup>5</sup> One source of these economic difficulties is geographic: the northern region is heavily dependent on the rainy season. Their food and the grass feed for their animals are all dependent on the rain. Because of this, the Tuaregs became known as nomad herders who search for different areas where they can feed and tend to their cattle when the rainy season is not yet around. When there is drought, the population in the northern region suffers the consequences. The record shows that economic difficulties drive Tuaregs to find other alternatives, which often include violently fighting for their survival with other members of the community. This rate of violence targets farmers around agricultural areas who are already suffering from the same reasons. Cristiani and Fabiani, and Greenwald et al. also assert that if populations depend on each other economically, as is characteristic of northern Mali, the collapse of one economy affects the others.<sup>6</sup>

Another scholar, Benjaminsen, argues about the importance of economic difficulties stressing the link between conflict and economic distress.<sup>7</sup> He continues that the northern regions are facing the consequence of land overexploitation leading to desertification. This desertification seriously impacts on the economy. For instance, when few people have access to basic needs, conflicts tend to break out—the balance of the

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<sup>5</sup> François Grunewald et al., *La Difficile Gestion d'une Crise Complexes au Nord Mali* [The Difficult Management of a Complex Crisis in Northern Mali] (Groupe U.R.D, 2015), [https://www.urd.org/IMG/pdf/La\\_difficile\\_gestion\\_d\\_une\\_crise\\_complexe\\_au\\_Nord\\_Mali.pdf](https://www.urd.org/IMG/pdf/La_difficile_gestion_d_une_crise_complexe_au_Nord_Mali.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Tor A. Benjaminsen, "Does Supply-Induced Scarcity Drive Violent Conflicts in the African Sahel? The Case of the Tuareg Rebellion in Northern Mali," *Journal of Peace Research* 45, no. 6 (2008): xx, doi:10.1177/0022343308096158.

distribution of resources is distinctively sought after by the members of the tribe, but seems to continue to be an elusive sense of social balance for the Tuaregs. However, Raleigh and Dowd explain that this lack of resource does not always represent a source of tensions. According to the authors, economic difficulties in these regions of the Sahel are not new to the current conflicts in the region. For instance, the drought crisis that hit Mauritania and Chad years ago did not lead to internal revolts.<sup>8</sup>

According to Grunewald et al., the Tuareg revolt is the consequence of economic difficulties coupled with the rising unemployment in combination with Malian state's inability to provide basic needs to the population.<sup>9</sup> Francis asserts that Mali, one of the poorest countries in the world, suffered from natural calamity due to insufficient rainfalls. With these matters considered altogether, it could be imagined what pressure and confusion is occurring among members of the community as they try to fight for survival.

#### **4. The Emergence of Drug Trafficking**

Another contributing factor to the conflict is the prevalence of drug trafficking. Caparini demonstrates that the worsening of living conditions in the northern part had had serious impact on the Tuareg livestock, gave the pretext for groups to start illicit activities such as drugs and arms trafficking.<sup>10</sup> Lacher states that drug trafficking had become a shared activity of Jihadists and Tuaregs in complex connection and conflict with some Malian leaders in the north of Mali.<sup>11</sup> The article highlights that drug trafficking exacerbated violence in the north because there are few opportunities to make money.

These conditions further gave way to the emergent existence of terrorism in the country. Cristiani and Fabiani argue that most of the contestations go back to the time the

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Marina Caparini, "The Mali Crisis and Responses by Regional Actors," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2015, xx, doi:10.2139/ssrn.2670222.

<sup>11</sup> Wolfram Lacher, *Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012), 1-32..  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265109369\\_Organized\\_Crime\\_and\\_Conflict\\_in\\_the\\_Sahel-Sahara\\_Region](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265109369_Organized_Crime_and_Conflict_in_the_Sahel-Sahara_Region).

former colonizer established the border of the countries.<sup>12</sup> They demonstrate that these borders did not take into account historical interaction between communities in the past. The article demonstrates how Malian government's behavior led many northerners to go abroad and escape the harsh time of scarcity. During this stay outside the country, they made contacts with fundamentalists and drug traffickers and became familiar with their networks and operations. Thus, they became inspired to give up with the existing status quo in the north of Mali and returned with new perspectives Political Management of 1963. Morgan notes that contrary to some points of view, the 2012 revolt was not only the consequence of the Libya civil war when Tuareg militiamen came in Mali with weaponry, but also the existence in the Sahara a network of organized crime, Jihadists who colluded with the Tuareg's movement: MNLA. Furthermore, the Algeria terrorist group, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) had also existed before it became the AQIM, a bright North African terrorist organization in search of support base influenced locals with money they got from drugs and kidnappings.

## **5. A Weak System of Centralized Governance**

Cristiani and Fabiani highlight the negative outcome of the Malian government's policy of abandonment of the communities in the northern regions.<sup>13</sup> When Malian authorities were not reachable by population, this led the community to question the interest of the central government to their citizenship. At the same time the spirit of self-governance became even stronger. Cristiani and Fabiani conclude that this absence of security led communities to create auto defense groups to protect themselves. These auto-defence groups (*Ganda Koy* for the Songhays and *Ganda Izo* for the Peuls) all declare a huge impact on the civil unrest existing in the community. Modibo Keita shows that when the state withdraws from a specific region in a certain location, the community feels

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<sup>12</sup> Dario Cristiani and Riccardo Fabiani, *From Disfunctionality to Disaggregation and Back?: The Malian Crisis, Local Players and European Interests* (Rome: Istituto Affari Internazionali, 2013), 3-12, D978-88-98042-79-1.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 3-12.

excluded which results to the development of extremism in the group, the Tuareg case resembles such phenomenon.<sup>14</sup>

Chauzal and Van Damme, and Francis assert that the first educated elites, who brought Mali to independence, used almost the same approach of divide and rule French colonizers used to control northern populations.<sup>15</sup> Chauzal and Van Damme conclude that political actors had little interest in the Tuareg uprising, their disinterest arises from the fact the northern regions, under-populated, cannot serve much in elections. This political view of the region created assumption of marginalization.

## **6. Decentralization and Social Collapse**

Cristiani and Fabiani assert that the Malian central government mistakenly provided too much autonomy to the locals.<sup>16</sup> This granting of powers to the regions after the signature agreement allowing decentralization facilitated the creation by local leaders of more communal division in the society they were supposed to unite. Moreover, partition occurred in a country striving to overcome challenges linked to the vast desert regions of the northern part since independence. However, the idea by Seely implies that the process of decentralization was a good step in improving state relation with the community.<sup>17</sup> She also indicates that the process of decentralization to cope with Tuareg threat credits the Malian authorities' willingness to end unilateral decision-making.

Caparini also assumes that the Malian government inability to implement the process of decentralization in all its aspects facilitated the return of past practices in the country before democratization. Saraceno was pessimistic about the success of decentralization because of the politico-economic regression that existed in Mali.

Raleigh and Dowd argue that geography played a big role in state's stability because as long as there is uneven population coverage of the territory, the risk of losing

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Chauzal and Van Damme., "The Roots of Mali's Conflict," 1-16

<sup>16</sup> Cristiani and Fabiani, "From Disfunctionality to disaggregation" 1-20.

<sup>17</sup> Seely, Jennifer C. "A political analysis of decentralisation: coopting the Tuareg threat in Mali." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 39, no. 3 (2001): 499-524.

control of security is important. Raleigh and Dowd states that: “Small states with an even population distributions are expected to be the most peaceful, while large states with underpopulated ‘hinterlands’ are likely to have the most violence due to the inability of states to effectively police these territories.”<sup>18</sup>

## 7. Regional Dynamics

Cristiani and Fabiani further argue in their study that even though the fall of the Libyan revolution leader Gaddafi is not the root cause of the collapse of Mali under the control of the MNLA and its allies, it contributed to the acceleration of events.<sup>19</sup> Gaddafi played a big role the level of stability in the Sahel by using Tuaregs in his army as militiamen. Moreover, he financially helped both Mali and also the insurgent Tuaregs. However, Morgan argues that the whole insurgency cannot be attributed to Gaddafi’s fall. He argues that it contributed to fueling conflict in northern Mali by resourcing an ill-intentioned group now confident with the weaponry they received in Libya.

Cristiani and Fabiani argue that decentralization was not an efficient means of attaining security.<sup>20</sup> However, the idea by Seely presents that the initiative of the Malian government to implement the process of decentralization was a good step in improving state relations with the community.<sup>21</sup> She also indicates that the process of decentralization to cope with Tuareg threat has to be committed to the signs of Malian authorities to undertake reforms ending unilateral decision-making. Consequently, populations tried to seek for another other alternative; but she opposes the fact that government granted so much power to internal small entities.

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<sup>18</sup> Raleigh, Clionadh, and Caitriona Dowd. “Governance and Conflict in the Sahel’s ‘Ungoverned Space.’” *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 2, no. 2 (2013): 3.

<sup>19</sup> Cristiani and Fabiani, “From dysfunctionality.”

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Seely, Jennifer C. “A Political Analysis of Decentralisation: Coopting the Tuareg Threat in Mali.” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 39, no. 3 (2001): 499–524.

According to Stewart, the existing partnership between countries to face and eliminate threats gave opportunity to different kind of destabilizing groups.<sup>22</sup> For instance, a joint military force of Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and Niger intended to fight criminalities in the borders of their countries, collapsed when Algeria discontinued its participation in the operation.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, most countries in the region have to face internal problem. Wehrey et al. argues that the attitude of Algeria casts doubt in its willingness to participate in the eradication of threats at the border.<sup>24</sup> Not only does Algeria play a role as mediator, it also supports some groups that exacerbate tension in the northern Mali.

#### **D. POTENTIAL EXPLANATION AND HYPOTHESIS**

In view of these different causes of the Tuareg rebellion in northern Mali, it is difficult to clearly explain the politics behind the insurgency and Malian government response. On one hand there is a Tuareg community aspiring to have a more role in the political life of their community instead to remain constantly micromanaged by a far distant government. On the other hand, Mali works politically to keep the territorial integrity of the country. The existing explanations, however, do not provide all the necessary elements to understand the divergence in viewpoint between both parties.

The thesis examines two potential explanations:

The first hypothesis is that the historic effects of military engagement in the Northern regions have negatively impacted, and continue to impact, both the process of decentralization and the efforts to resolve the crisis. Mali has maintained a strong military presence in the northern regions since the first years after Independence in 1960. This militarization explained the tensions existing in this region with the question Tuareg and policy orientation of the leaders of that time. Today, abandoning these regions of the north devoid of any presence of the national army poses dangers for the populations and opens

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<sup>22</sup> Stewart, Dona J. *What is next for Mali? The Roots of Conflict and Challenges to Stability* (Army War College Carlisle Barracks PA Strategic Studies Institute, 2013), 51-52

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 51-52

<sup>24</sup> Wehrey, Frederic, and Boukhars, Anouar, eds. *Perilous Desert : Insecurity in the Sahara* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2013). Accessed May 28, 2018. ProQuestEbook Central.

door to other actors who escape the control of the Tuaregs themselves: The terrorist groups and narco-jihadists. If the policy does not give itself enough military means with consideration of locals' need, these terrorists and drug traffickers may further jeopardize the progress made until then. To answer the political approach of decentralization, an outcome of agreement signed between Malian government and the Tuareg, the leaders must provide some security in the northern regions before any handover to local actors.

The second hypothesis is that the effects of developmental policies in the past have been, and continue to be counterproductive to resolve the crisis. A good follow-up and accountability at higher authority level of activities aiming to develop the northern regions, which, for decades, suffer from the effects of climatic hazards, is necessary. It would be very important to look back at the situation in order to adapt the policy to the realities of the locality to build an economy capable of making the regions much more operational and peaceful. To achieve this goal, both Malian and Tuareg leaders in charge of the development of these regions should be exemplary in their management. As long as these northern regions remain behind because they are not treated according to their singularity, the tensions may persist for a long time.

## **E. RESEARCH DESIGN**

This thesis will take a historical approach by assessing the responses of the Malian government addressing Tuareg revolts in 1963, 1990, 2006 and 2012. By identifying the weak and strong points of the different approaches Malian authorities undertook to resolve the insurrection. I will then be able to tackle the right combinations for change in accordance with the present situation, and the attitude of different actors in the evolution of the divergence. Thus, I will be able to present the negative impact of military withdrawal from the northern regions and show why that withdrawal has been, and remains detrimental to the process of decentralization and peaceful resolution.

This thesis will mainly deal with review and analysis of existing accounts, which are based on information gathered in books, journals, and articles about the crisis as well as reports of national or international actors interested in the problem. I will focus on the management and the outcome of the rebellion.

Consequently, this work will consist in analyzing and proposing solutions to the crisis, and it will be articulated in three main parts. In the first section, this research will be focused on the sources of the problem during the earlier rebellions and the solution provided to move forward. The second part will be devoted to the study most recent revolt and their handling in order to reduce the suffering of the people in the Northern regions. The last part will study possible solutions for the establishment the approaches and policies to foster a successful development initiative in the regions.

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## **II. EARLIER REBELLIONS**

The history of Tuareg rebellions goes back to early as 1963. This chapter analyzes the two main hypotheses presented in the previous chapter—effects of military engagement and development policies—in the context of three early Tuareg rebellions in 1963, 1990, and 1996, specifically reviewing the opposition between the Malian government and the Tuaregs in the northern regions of the country, as well as its implications. Also, it explores the different efforts from the Malian government and the Tuaregs to resolve the conflict and their difficulties in reaching sustainable peace agreements, a potential source of stability and development.

The chapter shows how the government’s continuously inconsistent application of its policy of development of the northern region resulted in failure, and, also, the chapter shows how the ill-advised approach to deal with minor revolt by suppressing it weakened the already fragile relationship between the state and the northern population.

### **A. ORIGINS OF REBELLION**

In the early twentieth century, the French fought the Tuaregs in the Saharan desert at the time of the colonial invasion. The Industrial Revolution drove the French expansionists to seek other supply sources for French industries and for markets to sell finished goods.<sup>25</sup> Thus, during this adventure, the French encountered the Tuareg tribes in the Saharan desert region, the only vast expanse of land in Africa not yet controlled by any great power. The French colonizers fought the Tuaregs and seized the cities of Timbuktu in 1893 and In Salah in 1900. This annexation profoundly upset the Tuareg society. Despite domination by the French, the Tuaregs continued to show aspirations of freedom. During the entire colonial period, the French worked to appease Tuareg tensions by sparing the Tuaregs from hard labor.

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<sup>25</sup> El watan, “Genèse et Evolution du Problème Tuareg [Genesis and Evolution of the Tuareg Problem],” February 2013, xx, <https://algeria-watch.org/?p=37489>.

These concessions did not satisfy the Tuaregs. In fact, the French never managed to fully control the different Tuareg tribes.<sup>26</sup> Unable to maintain constant and permanent military presence, the French had to delegate power to some faithful clan leaders who had notoriety within the other group members. Despite this delegation of power, the French had always considered the Tuaregs unpredictable, and French attempts at of domination never resulted in the Tuaregs' total submission. Thus, to monitor the Tuaregs' actions, the French maintained indirect control to cope with the Tuaregs' continuing resistance. In time, other issues arose to affect Malian control of the region after independence.

Among these problems were the French giving specific status to the Tuaregs during the colonial time, which triggered tensions between the Malian government and the Tuaregs after independence. The French colonizers, in complicity with the Tuareg elite, also helped perpetuate the practice of discrimination.<sup>27</sup> This discrimination put the light-skinned at the top of the Tuareg society and the black-skinned people, victims of slavery, at the bottom. When the French tried to stop the Tuareg practice of slavery, the Tuaregs considered this measure as anti-religious and difficult.<sup>28</sup> This unresolved question of discrimination would consistently trigger the rise of tensions between the Tuareg community of the northern regions, the other communities, and the Malian government that needed to enforce a constitution that prohibited any form of discrimination. Mali's government worked to make sure each citizen's rights were respected throughout national territory and that discrimination based on color was banished mainly in the Tuareg community.

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<sup>26</sup> Charles Grémont, "Arabs and Tuaregs in Colonial and Malian Armed Forces: A Story in Trompe-l'Œil," IFRI - Institut Français Des Relations Internationales | Institut De Recherche Et De Débat Indépendant, Consacré à L'analyse Des Questions Internationales Et De Gouvernance Mondiale, last modified January 2010, <https://www.ifri.org/en/publications/enotes/notes-de-lifri/arabs-and-tuaregs-colonial-and-malian-armed-forces-story-trompe-0>.

<sup>27</sup> Baz Lecocq, "The Bellah Question: Slave Emancipation, Race, and Social Categories in Late Twentieth-Century Northern Mali," Taylor & Francis, last modified October 30, 2013, 44, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00083968.2005.10751309>.

<sup>28</sup> Kassim Kone, "A Southern View on the Tuareg Rebellions in Mali," *African Studies Review* 60, no. 01 (2017): 61, doi:10.1017/asr.2017.10.

Adding to the construction of states, Mali did not account for the Tuareg nomadic specificity which blocked their participation in state building. About two million people, the Tuaregs live mainly in five different states: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Libya, Mali, and Niger, in relatively 2.5 million square kilometer area.<sup>29</sup> This division of the Tuareg is the consequence of territorial division that occurred at independence time of the above former French colonies. The distribution among newly created states hampered the Tuaregs' usual freedom of movement in the Saharan desert because established borders prevented a smooth freedom of movement from one place to another. This restriction of movement due to borders coupled with the distance from the Malian government could have added to tensions because Tuaregs perceived abandonment or confinement not suitable for the development or political participation of the Tuaregs in the state building.

In fact, the Tuaregs refrained from participating in state building when the Malian state left the project of the Common Organization of the Saharan Regions (OCSR), an organization that intended to diminish the Malian central government influence on the northern regions.<sup>30</sup> In fact, the Tuaregs believed that in the future, OCSR could have provided them an opportunity to have their own nation-state. However, Malian authorities saw the OCSR project as a hindrance to the government's objective to have full control of the northern regions and the different communities. Hence, once Mali left, the Tuaregs felt Malian authorities betrayed them. Henceforward, the Tuaregs questioned the power dominance of the Malian state.

Actually, participation in the government required education that the Tuaregs did not have. Most of them objected to sending their children to modern school and still continued to teach the Tuareg traditional culture.<sup>31</sup> Because the illiteracy rate was high

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<sup>29</sup> Myriam Arfaoui, "Une Analyse Géopolitique du Conflit Malien [A Geopolitical Analysis of the Malian Conflict]," 2012, .5, [http://resmilitaris.net/ressources/10250/31/res\\_militaris\\_article\\_arfaoui\\_analyse\\_geopolitique\\_du\\_conflit\\_malien.pdf](http://resmilitaris.net/ressources/10250/31/res_militaris_article_arfaoui_analyse_geopolitique_du_conflit_malien.pdf).

<sup>30</sup> Chauzal and Van Damme, *The roots*, 18–19.

<sup>31</sup> Patrice Gourdin, "Les Touaregs Du Mali. Des hommes bleus dans une zone grise [The Tuaregs of Mali. Blue men in a gray area]," *Diploweb.com : Géopolitique, Stratégie, Relations Internationales Et Cartes*, last modified May 5, 2013, <https://www.diploweb.com/Touaregs-du-Mali-Des-hommes-bleus>.

among the Tuareg community, this attachment to their culture prevented them from largely participating in the government during the first years of independence. The rejection of modern education ensured that the Tuaregs were ignorant of the post-independence stakes, such as the importance of their becoming a lettered people in the future country. Hence, the Tuaregs became frustrated with the Malian political arena that could not provide them with many opportunities of participation in the administration. Consequently, the Malian administration appeared as a domination force for them to confront.

In summary, we can trace the origins of the rebellion to the geographic remoteness of the northern population and their continuous reliance on the local tribe leaders whose legitimacy is not based on social equality. Hence, successful integration of the northern population into the mainstream of Malian society was already partially destined for failure.

## **B. 1963 REBELLION**

This section analyzes different approaches and perceptions that the Malian government took after independence, as well as the response the regime of the time devised to answer to the Tuaregs early insurgency against the national authority. It specifically investigates the ways that developmental policies and the Malian government's military engagements increased tensions among the Tuaregs, as well as other factors, including the divide and rule system of governance inherited from the French colonizers and inadequate developmental policy, which contributed to the 1963 rebellion.

Three years after Mali became independent in 1960, a climate of defiance took place between the Tuaregs and the Malian authorities, seen by the Tuaregs as a substitute for the French colonialists. On one hand, the Tuaregs aspired to escape domination similar to the colonial time and, on the other hand, Malian government under President Modibo Keita was willing to preserve the national unity at all cost by strengthening the administrative and military presence to cover the whole northern region of the country ending the privileges of the Tuareg local leaders.<sup>32</sup> The main advocate of the maintenance

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<sup>32</sup> Emmanuel Grégoire, "Islamistes et Rebelles Touaregs Maliens : Alliances, Rivalités et Ruptures [Islamists and Malian Touareg Rebels: Alliances, Rivalries and Ruptures]," *EchoGéo*, 2013, 8, doi:10.4000/echogeo.13466.

of the local leadership was the Tuareg clan of the Kel Adagh. Eventually, the alteration of their way of life led to the deterioration of the relationship between the Tuaregs and the Malian authorities. Hence, the 1963 rebellion was an open manifestation of this discontent.

In 1963, tensions drove Modibo Keita's socialist regime to take military action against the Tuaregs' first rebellion in 1963. The Tuaregs' rebellious actions included surprise attacks against Malian security forces' position' in the northern regions. Mostly, these attacks were perpetrated by unorganized groups of locals. The immediate and violent repression of the Malian armed forces broke their determination to continue fighting the insurgents.

This was Malians' first experience dealing with a revolt in the northern region. For the first time, President Modibo Keita's (Father of independence) regime, facing a Tuareg insurrection, became willing to send a message through harsh correction to insurgents.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, the government considered this uprising as a serious test of regime survival. Instead of using police force, the regime used the military force to suppress the insurgency. In fact, the regime found an opportunity to reaffirm the political and military authority of the government.<sup>34</sup> This affirmation to preserve a unitary state could not allow any division of the territory and also contributed to the decision to use the military instead of the police.

Mali's independence made already existing territorial issues worse, leading the Tuaregs and Mali's government to fight over the creation of a separate state. In fact, for geopolitical planning, the French colonizers did not accept the creation of a Tuareg state, but they made the Tuaregs believe in the future political opportunity for the creation of such a state that comprised all the Tuareg tribes in the Saharan region.<sup>35</sup> Thus, during the first year of independence, the project of creation of the Common Organization of the Saharan Region (OCSR) had the objective of bringing together the ethnic groups (Berber,

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<sup>33</sup> El Watan "Genèse et évolution. "

<sup>34</sup> Convergence Africaine pour le Renouveau, *Analyse et Reflexion sur la Crise au Mali [Analysis and Reflection on the Crisis in Mali,]* (Bamako: CARE, 2012), 8, [http://fr.solidaritenordsud.net/res/site107721/res727585\\_ANALYSE\\_ET\\_REFLEXION\\_SUR\\_LA\\_CRISE\\_AU\\_MALI.pdf](http://fr.solidaritenordsud.net/res/site107721/res727585_ANALYSE_ET_REFLEXION_SUR_LA_CRISE_AU_MALI.pdf).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 11.

Tuareg, and Moor) of the Saharan regions. For the new state of Mali, this project was a sign of future destabilization. Then, the Malian government immediately started strengthening its military presence in the northern region. This military presence could not be without political consequence. The OCRS's implementation failed and the organization ended in 1963 without the expected outcome of Tuareg independent state as Malian government considered the OCRS organization a path to a divided state.<sup>36</sup> The relation between the Tuareg and the rest of the country was fragile because of the history.

The lack of good historical ties between the Tuaregs and Mali also contributed to the conflict. Using the military furthered division that already existed because of lack of historical ties. According to, Adeyami et Musa the "Tuareg people do not have historical affinities with the state of Mali."<sup>37</sup> For instance, an historical connection exists between family names in the south with those of the north, but this is not the case with the Tuaregs and, *the conventionalized cousins joking* (a kind of social and peaceful acceptance of each other) that ethnic groups share in Mali.<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, the Tuaregs do not share this Malian common value with the others ethnic groups of the south. The use of military means against populations created more gap between the northern and southern populations. The incomplete social integration of the Tuaregs with the other ethnic groups made any military intervention to deal with a small revolt was more detrimental to the unicity of the country.

Tuaregs complained about unequal treatment and asked for more than what was fair. However, Oumar Ba argues that, besides their questioning of the legitimate authority of Malian government, the Tuaregs advocated for, as they did in colonial time, an independent territory modifying the Malian current borders.<sup>39</sup> Ba continues stating there are legitimate claims that relate to certain basic needs, but the Tuaregs represent only 15

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<sup>36</sup> Oumar Ba, *Tuareg Nationalism and Cyclical Pattern of Rebellions: How the Past and Present Explain Each Other*, (Florida: Sahel Research Group, 2014), 7, [https://sites.clas.ufl.edu/sahelresearch/files/Ba\\_Tuareg-Nationalism\\_final.pdf](https://sites.clas.ufl.edu/sahelresearch/files/Ba_Tuareg-Nationalism_final.pdf).

<sup>37</sup> Adebayo E. Adeyemi and Mahmoud N. Musa, "Understanding the Tuareg's Struggle in Mali: From the Rebellion of Autonomy to Rebellion of Secession," *The International Journal of Social Sciences* 22 (April 2014): 77,

<sup>38</sup> Kone, "A Southern View on the Tuareg," 59.

<sup>39</sup> Ba, "Tuareg Nationalism," 3.

percent of the total population of the north and in answering to such demand, there is a risk of driving another group to seek for the same right until the country might no longer exist. As far as the Tuaregs' claim of the absence of basic needs in the north is concerned, actually, this is a matter of national situation because nowhere in Mali state there is a satisfaction of the population's basic need.

In conclusion, the Tuaregs, whatever motivated them at the beginning of the independence, were unable to fully participate in the administration because of their reluctance to send their children to school during colonial times. The rebellion resulted from this frustrating low participation in the government. However, the Malian government, eager to implement its policy at all cost, made the mistake of using excessive military force to deal with the revolt.

### **1. Developmental Policies**

Immediately after independence, tremendous constraint characterized the policy orientation of the President Modibo Keita's socialist regime, which affected the Tuaregs.<sup>40</sup> Initially, the regime focused on developing agriculture. However, the main activity of the nomadic Tuaregs was herding while agriculture remained dominant in the south of the country with sedentary people. Gourdin added that the Malian authorities ignored many realities of the Tuaregs by forcing them to become sedentary people. Thus, with the Malian law enacted to coerce the population into grouping around state-controlled cooperatives and when the Tuareg became sedentary, their main activity that was herding declined because, if developing agriculture favored population in the south, it was detrimental to the Tuareg nomadic life in the north. This inadequate developmental policy negatively impacted the Tuaregs.

While another developmental policy that could have helped integrate the Tuareg was the decentralization program, this program was never implemented, despite written in the Malian constitution since independence.<sup>41</sup> If implemented, it would have allowed the

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<sup>40</sup> Gourdin, "Les Tuaregs Du Mali," 3.

<sup>41</sup> Hawa Coulibaly and Stéphanie Lima, "Crise de l'État et Territoires de la Crise au Mali [State Crisis and Territories of the Crisis in Mali]," *EchoGéo*, 2013, 6, doi:10.4000/echogeo.13374.

Tuaregs to have the management of their resources to make them beneficial to the community without any imposition of the central government. Unfortunately, the authorities did not implement decentralization before the 1963 rebellion, preferring other forms of administrative reorganization inadequate to the Tuaregs' real challenges. Consequently, this administrative system did not bring coherent outcome because it needed permanent readjustment to fit current social environment in constant mutation. Finally, malfunction led to failure and decentralization was never achieved at the time.

Moreover, the developmental policy of the socialist regime was not limited to favoring agriculture as opposed to the Tuareg herding activity imposed on the population to end self-profit activities and work in groups under the control of the government.<sup>42</sup> This government control of the production prevented individuals from commerce with the external market because the benefit came to the government. In such a circumstance, it was difficult for the local population to have better life. External assistance in the direction of the northern region did not reach the population who were upset because of the bad management of the funds.<sup>43</sup>

Finally, the discord between different Tuareg tribes made difficult economic development. The Tuaregs, once famous as fighters, were most of the time fighting among themselves to have the monopoly of rare resources such as water source, grazing areas or trade routes for the commerce.<sup>44</sup> In an environment of opposition between different clan members, it would be difficult to carry out any development policy before the community made peace among itself.

In sum, the Malian government policy was not adapted to the Tuaregs' realities of development. If developing agriculture favored the southern population because these populations have always lived on agriculture, imposing agriculture on the Tuaregs who had herding as primary activity was handicapping the Tuaregs. This situation contributed to

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<sup>42</sup> Gourdin, "Les Tuaregs Du Mali," 3.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>44</sup> Keita, "Conflict and Conflict Resolution," 106.

rebellion because the Tuaregs' living conditions changed negatively, and they eventually resorted to violence to protest.

## **2. The Effects of Military Engagement on Malian and Tuareg Relationship**

This section analyzes problems linked to locals' participation in the administration of their regions. Malian authorities, instead of seeking Tuaregs' opinions regarding the management of their region, sent administrators and military from the south to impose new rules upon the Tuaregs.

In fact, government policy to send military increased Tuareg resistance. Some military governors were charged with administering the region.<sup>45</sup> The Tuaregs considered this decision as a unilateral initiative of the Malian government because the Tuareg community had not been associated with decision-making whilst it is their local areas. Consequently, the omission of associating the Tuareg local population to the decision related to military deployment or the assigning of military governors for their region was frustrating because the country was already independent and free from colonialism.

Hence, in response to this military-strengthening presence of Malian troops, the *Kel Adagh* (Tuareg tribe) tried to halt the progression toward the northern region.<sup>46</sup> Nonetheless, the *Kel Adagh* did not succeed to resist the Malian troops' bloodshed repression. Consequently, the political collaboration with neighbors helped Mali decapitate the rebellion. Morocco officials arrested and deported Mohamed Ali Ag Attaher Insar, Algeria also declared Zeid, who had fled from Mali, as *persona non grata*, and Malian authorities arrested him at his return in 1963. As far as Ellidi Ag Alla was concerned, Malian security forces caught him.<sup>47</sup> Finally, the Malian government declared the uprising over but memories of the event were difficult to erase completely in the mind of the population.

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<sup>45</sup> Gourdin, "Les Touaregs Du Mali."

<sup>46</sup> El Watan "Genèse et Evolution du Problème Tuareg."

<sup>47</sup> Alexander Thurston and Andrew Lebovich, "A Handbook on Mali's 2012–2013 Crisis" working paper, Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa, (2013), 22, <https://buffett.northwestern.edu/documents/working-papers/ISITA-13-001-Thurston-Lebovich.pdf>.

Ultimately, the consequences of this military engagement were disastrous in the relations between the Tuaregs and the government of Mali. Even if the Malian state responded with violence which might have solved the problem immediately without any negotiated form, a lasting defiance started between the Tuaregs and Malian authorities which eventually led to another rebellion in 1990.<sup>48</sup>

In conclusion, lack of consultation of the Tuaregs to find better alternatives to administer their region led to the continuation of the resistance. If the government had previously consulted the locals about the administration of their region, there has been a shared responsibility for any failure to meet expectations. If they had taken part in the political way of governance, the reaction would have been mitigated. Despite the good collaboration of neighbor countries with the arrest of some key actors of the insurgency, tensions remained.

### **3. Other Important Factors**

The success of Malian diplomacy might have stemmed the rebellion for more than two decades. In fact, the diplomatic relations with Algeria and Morocco was so strong that these countries, where Tuaregs insurgency leaders used as refugees, allowed Malian troops to pursuit any aggressors inside Algeria. Morocco arrested them and handed over anyone involved in the insurgency to Bamako. For instance, Algeria expelled the main instigator of the uprising, Zeid.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, Morocco also handed over another important actor of this 1963 rebellion, Mohamed Ali Ag Attaher Insar. This series of expulsions might have discouraged the insurgents to continue the revolt because there was restriction in their place of refuge. Hence, this was time for Malian authority to build a consolidated civil society deeply involved in national causes and working for sustainable peace. However, with sweeping changes in other neighbor countries and in the Middle East, Algeria, who used to be friendly with Mali, starting surprisingly, unfriendly and nontransparent behavior.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Grégoire, "A handbook on Mali's," 5.

<sup>49</sup> Grégoire, "A handbook on Mali's," 22.

<sup>50</sup> Boukhars, "The Paranoid Neighbor" 4.

Boukhars states: “Moral edge of leadership is long gone.”<sup>51</sup> He continues that Algeria’s ability to find negotiated solution to conflict disintegrated. He adds that strong countries which could play important role in between parties in conflict are often not able to make a conjunction of interests in harmony. This change in attitude toward Mali can only be favorable to Tuaregs to be more audacious because they can launch attacks and seek refuge in Algeria.

Additionally, there were historical and ethnic considerations that continued to concern the Tuaregs. Through their independence claim the Tuaregs created an additional challenge. In fact, the Tuareg’s requested independence with the French colonizers in the past, but did not get satisfaction. The Tuaregs brought the same request because they considered the Malian government as illegitimate.<sup>52</sup> Smith argued that this illegitimacy question might have something to do with the Tuareg assumption that they are of the Berber ethnic group origin dislocated during the Arab invasion of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. That is why the Tuaregs consider themselves the Arabs of the Maghreb.

In conclusion, Malian authorities did not handle the Tuareg question in 1963 by engaging talks. The main method of resolution was military, which, even if the Tuaregs were defeated, exacerbated the cleavage between Mali and the Tuareg population. Moreover, the developmental policy failed to respond to the needs of the Tuaregs while, the Tuareg’s questioning of the Malian government’s legitimacy exacerbated tensions. The next rebellion in 1990 would illustrate a negative approach of settlement of the 1963 insurgency.

### **C. 1990 REBELLION**

The 1990 rebellion was an indirect consequence of the Malian military engagement but also the consequence of development policies that were insufficient to accommodate the return of some young Tuaregs after several years in exile. In fact, some of these young

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>52</sup> Dillon R. Smith, “Realpolitik and the Deceptive Use of Islamist Narratives in Armed Struggles: the Case of Northern Mali Conflict,” Fall 2016, 33, <https://about.illinoisstate.edu/critique/SiteAssets/Realpolitik%20and%20the%20Deceptive%20Use%20of%20Islamist%20Narratives%20in%20Armed%20Struggles.pdf>.

Tuaregs received training from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and some served in the war between Libya and Chad in a decade before the 1990s rebellion against Mali.<sup>53</sup> When Libya lost this war in Chad, the Tuaregs, frustrated to go to Libya, headed to Mali and launched attacks on Malian military positions in the northern region.

The question of leadership among the insurgents increased tensions in the 1990 rebellion. In fact, the Malian government attempts to find solutions to the inequalities did not help the government to unite the northern populations around its projects.<sup>54</sup> This increase in tension is imputable to the slow implementation of the promised projects. The inability of the Malian authorities to realize their promises increased national disunity between the populations of the country.

The coming years after the first rebellion were economically very difficult for the population in the northern region.<sup>55</sup> The nomadic Tuaregs whose mode of development was altered suffered a lot, and most of them decided to leave the country in order to get a better life abroad. The final destination of this migration was mainly Libya, where Kaddafi enrolled, trained and used them in his militia to participate in different war groups Kaddafi backed. Finally, the young Tuaregs, radicalized, decided to return to Mali and take the northern region militarily.

The Tuaregs used a guerilla warfare to attack Malian posts in the northern region. Under the pretext to seek the relax of arrested and imprisoned Tuaregs in Mali, a Tuaregs movement Popular Movement of the Liberation of Azawad (MPLA) launched attacks

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<sup>53</sup> Nicolas Florquin and Eric G. Berman, *ARMED AND AIMLESS: ARMED GROUPS, GUNS, AND HUMAN SECURITY IN THE ECOWAS REGION*, (Geneva: Small Arms Survey, 2005), 49, <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/D-Book-series/book-01-Armed-and-Aimless/SAS-Armed-Aimless-1-Full-manuscript.pdf>.

<sup>54</sup> Dialla Konaté, *La Crise au Mali: Recueil de Contributions [Crisis in Mali: Collection of Contributions]*, (Bamako: Société Malienne des Sciences Appliquées, 2012), 32, [https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as\\_sdt=0%2C5&q=La+situation+au+Nord-Mali%3A+Une+tentative+de+compr%C3%A9hension-des+pistes+de+solution.&btnG=](https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=La+situation+au+Nord-Mali%3A+Une+tentative+de+compr%C3%A9hension-des+pistes+de+solution.&btnG=).

<sup>55</sup> Stephanie Pezard and Michael Shurkin, *Achieving Peace in Northern Mali: Past Agreements, Local Conflicts, and the Prospects for a Durable Settlement*, (Rand Corporation, 2015), <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a617796.pdf>.

against the Malian forces on June 18, 1990.<sup>56</sup> The operation was composed of 50 men armed with 2 hunting rifles, 5 Kalashnikovs, swords and commanded by Lyad Agh Ghali, one of the leaders of the movement. They attacked the city of Ménaka at night. During the attack, they reportedly killed 14 to 36 Malian military, captured a vehicle, weapons and ammunition. Moreover, they committed a series of attacks in the northern region on successively the military post of Tidaghmen, where 4 Malian soldiers were killed. On July 2, the post of Tin Essako in the northeast of the Kidal region was attacked, with 3 Malian casualties. On July 16, the MPLA attacked the post of Tarkint, 2 killed and lot of arms to continue their operations. Thus, in 6 months between June and December, they attacked about 30 posts of the Gendarmerie.

Besides attacks on the posts, the Tuareg insurgents also ambushed military convoys. They relied on their familiarity with the terrain and the army's inability to keep its movements secret.<sup>57</sup> In only four month after the first attack, the death toll was approximately 20 to 30 insurgents killed with 500 to 1,300 Malian army death soldiers. The destruction the Tuaregs caused, attracted more other Tuaregs to join the insurgency and: from 50 at the beginning of the year, to 3000 by the end of the year. Hence, the insurgents' system of "*hit and run*" was effective of the vast dessert, notoriously difficult to control.

Also, they created instability in the northern region to claim for a better integration in the administration.<sup>58</sup> They started with guerrilla warfare targeting Malian military, police, gendarmerie or customs service, but they targeted Malian administrative facilities which, they believed were symbols of invasion and aggression by a foreign state. However, Mali even though had striven to have some Tuareg elites in the government, it was not enough to bring build the national unity to which all the Tuareg would adhere.

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<sup>56</sup> Mériadec Raffrey, *Les Rebellions Touarègues au Sahel [The Tuaregs Rebellions in the Sahel]*, (Paris, 2013), 56–57, [https://flancosur.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/rebellions\\_touaregues.pdf](https://flancosur.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/rebellions_touaregues.pdf).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 56–57.

<sup>58</sup> Dominique Rosenberg, ,” . “Peuple Touareg du Silence à l’Autodetermination [Tuareg People from Silence to Self-determination],” *Rev. BDI* 5 (1992): 5, [https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as\\_sdt=0%2C5&q=Peuple+Touareg+du+silence+a+1%27autode+termination&btnG=.](https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=Peuple+Touareg+du+silence+a+1%27autode+termination&btnG=.) .

## 1. Developmental Policy

In order to solve the issue of Malian refugees who, once repatriated, continued to return to Algeria, Algerian authority financed a program through the IFAD (International Fund for Agriculture Development) to help the refugees in Mali.<sup>59</sup> This program intended to take into account the reintegration of the Tuaregs in their country of origin. This IFAD-led project did not provide significant impact as much as expected on the life of the northern population because of funds and materials misappropriation.

The above case of embezzling funds from the population depicted the degree of corruption in the Malian system of governance. Corruption developed with the consecutive regimes, but the democratic period was worse, mainly with the first democratically elected presidents Alpha Oumar Konaré and Amadou Toumani Touré.<sup>60</sup> Thus, it was not surprising that Mali moved back from the position of 96th least corrupted countries to the 118th.<sup>61</sup> This rising corruption diminished trust between the authority and the Tuareg community. This motivated the population to protest for more transparency.

Besides this failure in attaining military success, the Malian policymakers did not engage much in the economic development of this Northern region until 1990.<sup>62</sup> Conversely, the Malian government worked to make a kind of “ethnic patronage” while avoiding the accusation of ethnic-based favoritism.<sup>63</sup> Consequently, the gap in development widened visibly between the northern and southern regions. Subsequently, too much focus on the Tuareg issue drove other ethnic groups to rise up to secure themselves.

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<sup>59</sup> Georg Klute, “Hostilités et alliances. Archéologie de la dissidence des Touaregs au Mali [Hostilities and Alliances. Archeology of Tuaregs Dissent in Mali],” *Cahiers d’études africaines* 35, no. 137 (1995), 58, doi:10.3406/cea.1995.2023.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Keita, “Conflict and Conflict Resolution,” 105.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 105.

Also, the Malian government continued implementing the accord signed with the insurgents.<sup>64</sup> Malian government encouraged the NGO's for more investment and the government also recruited Tuareg insurgents into the national army, police, and other public functions. This process aimed at appeasing tension while providing local Tuaregs with more power regarding questions of local concern. However, there was less oversight, and people in charge of the project had all the benefits while the suffering of the population remained unchanged. This led to continuous growth of tensions. The decentralization of power enabled local leaders to regain their former social position.

## **2. Continuing Military Tensions**

The Malian army 1963 victory on the Tuareg first insurgency did not definitively resolve the Tuareg problem. Malian authorities did not manage to bring the Tuaregs and the other Malian community together. The Tuaregs who fled to neighboring countries and Libya renewed hostilities when they returned to Mali. The violence made many casualties before there was a peace agreement between parties.

To prepare for the 1990 rebellion, the Tuaregs had the plan of their future territory and the necessary preparations were ongoing to achieve the goal throughout training of Tuareg men in remote revolt such as Lebanon where there were tensions in this country. In 1990, Malian military responded with fire when the Tuareg insurgents attacked them.

Lecocq stated that:

The rebellion took place in a generally turbulent period in Malian history in which dictatorship was replaced with democracy. Both the democratization and the Tamasheq rebellion led to an upsurge in Malian nationalism that found its expression partly in the resistance against any compromise with the Tamasheq nationalist rebels. These competing nationalisms finally led to a full blown ethnic conflict locally perceived as a civil war, or an ethnic conflict cloaked in a nationalist discourse of true Malians against alien nomad invaders...But as the Tamasheq rebels were militarily superior to the Malian Armed Forces, compromise had to be reached.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.,115.

<sup>65</sup> Ba, "Tuareg Nationalism," 10.

As tension grew in the whole north, the main victims of the Tuareg raids were the Songhays and Fulani people.<sup>66</sup> The Songhays created the auto defense group: *Ganda Koy* (masters of the land) to fight the Tuaregs and the Arabs.<sup>67</sup> The Ganda Koy was mainly composed of deserters from the national army who were discontented with the government's inability to defend the Songhay community. The report said that the Malian army supported the self-defense group with money and weapons. Later, Ganda Iso erupted, the Fulani self-defense group, to defend the Fulani community. When these self-defense groups joined the conflict, it further spoiled the relationship between Mali and the Tuaregs.

The 1990 rebellion, also called the "second rebellion,"<sup>68</sup> lasted for six months before both parties accepted negotiations.<sup>69</sup> Unlike the 1963 rebellion, the Tuareg insurgents used guerrilla warfare. Overwhelmed, Malian soldiers turned to innocent civilians whom they arrested and extra-judiciary executed.<sup>70</sup> The regime declared a state of emergency and placed a curfew across the Northern regions. This state of emergency contributed to creating more fear within the entire population, even though the intention was to discourage anyone willing to join the Tuareg rebel group. Exacerbated by constant offensive actions, Malian troops finally retreated from some of their positions and left control to the insurgents.

The agreement signed between Mali and the Tuareg insurgent in the city of Tamarrasset called the "Tamarrasset agreement" became effective in time of a total political turmoil.<sup>71</sup> The citizens had no more confidence in the political elites. The Tamarrasset accord fell apart because some rebel members understood this agreement as a treason curtailing the independence objective.<sup>72</sup> In fact, the main points in the accord were the

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<sup>66</sup> Chauzal and Van Damme., "The Roots of Mali's Conflict," 19.

<sup>67</sup> Keita, "Conflict and Conflict Resolution," 11.

<sup>68</sup> Baz Lecocq, *Disputed Desert: Decolonisation, Competing Nationalisms and Tuareg Rebellions in Northern Mali* (Leiden: BRILL, 2010), 153.

<sup>69</sup> El watan, "Genèse et Evolution," 3.

<sup>70</sup> Lecocq, "Disputed desert," 258.

<sup>71</sup> Konaté, "La Crise au Mali,"17.

<sup>72</sup> Keita, "Conflict and Conflict Resolution," 113.

diminution of military presence in the northern mainly Kidal, integration of rebels, decentralization and 47% of national investment in the three northern regions.

The March 1991 military coup d'état was a turning point of the conflict. As the junta promised democracy, this coup d'état against Moussa Traoré encouraged talks between Mali and the Tuareg.<sup>73</sup> Importantly, security in the northern region was no more the business of the only Malian troops rather it was both Tuareg and Malian in the same barracks. However, Malian authorities were reluctant to continuously see rebels in arms though they claimed to protect the Tuareg community.

However, the complexities of the groups and their demands delayed the process of the Tamarrasset accord or later *pacte national* signed on April 11, 1992.<sup>74</sup> In fact, the government hastened the signature of this agreement to stop the fighting. However, there is no mention in the agreement that stipulated the transfer of the state's responsibility to armed groups because the legitimacy of these groups was in question. No one could assert that these arms groups actually represented the whole northern populations or if their struggle complied with the highest national interest of Mali. Finally, the *pacte national* did not address the *Bellah* (Tuareg slave) questions. The *Pacte National* led to interpretations and critics of other ethnic groups in the north and implementing it became almost impossible.<sup>75</sup>

In fact, the Tuareg's success was due to their determination to avenge the suffering and humiliation of previous Malian military repression.<sup>76</sup> The Tuareg engagement had nationalist characteristics in this 1990 insurgency. The atrocities committed saw the western press denounced them as they qualified an attempt of ethnic cleansing happening in Northern Mali.<sup>77</sup> In answer to this allegation, Malian authorities qualified as an "uncontrolled elements of the army" even if it might be the outcome of irritation and

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.,113.

<sup>74</sup> Konaté, "La Crise au Mali,"17.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>76</sup> Ba, "Tuareg Nationalism,"10.

<sup>77</sup> Lecocq, "Disputed Desert," 258.

anxiety of soldiers on the battlefield. Chipman argued: “If the state doesn’t protect the common life that does exist, its own defense may have no moral justification.”<sup>78</sup> Hence, these Malian soldiers should not have killed the innocent for the sake of the state’s survival.

### **3. Conclusion**

With the 1990 insurgency ceasefire, both Mali and the Tuareg insurgents had a deep breath of hope for a short time even though there were some small violations of the terms.<sup>79</sup> However, the political objective of a Tuareg independent state did not come true with this accord. Anyway, the Tuareg notables such as Intallah Ag Attaher, opposed the rebellion and accepted the preliminary agreement in 1991 at the Algerian city of Tamarrasset. At the signature, Iyad Ag Ghali represented the *Mouvement Populaire de l’Azawad* (MPA) and the Front Islamique Arab de l’Azawad (FIAA).<sup>80</sup> In addition to the two above movements, there were the Front of Liberation of Azawad (FPLA) and the Revolutionary Army of Liberation of Azawad (ARLA). However, more numerous than the other movement, the FIAA was a heterogeneous movement composed of white non-Tuareg (Kounta Arabs and Moors).

In conclusion, the alteration of the Tuaregs’ mode of development drove most of them to fly out of the country without abandoning the idea of returning by force in the northern region which they consider their homeland. Meantime, Malian policy intended to develop the northern region failed due to corruption. Moreover, the Malian government did not fully implement the terms of the agreement signed with the insurgents. Hence, frustration between the Tuaregs and the Malian authorities grew.

### **D. 1996 REBELLION**

This section analyzes the short-term effect of the 1992 agreement signed by both the Malian government and the Tuareg insurgents, and the subsequent rebellion that

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<sup>78</sup> John Chipman, “Managing the Politics of Parochialism,” *Survival* 35, no. 1 (1993): 147, doi:10.1080/00396339308442678.

<sup>79</sup> Keita, “Conflict and Conflict Resolution,” 115.

<sup>80</sup> Thurston, “A Handbook on Mali’s,” 23.

followed the deterioration of the peace agreement. After the signature, the expected regional stability did not come true because the Tuaregs were unable to agree among each other about the agreement, and the Malian government had difficulties implementing all the terms of the agreement.

Therefore, the National pact the Malian government and the Tuaregs signed in 1992 to stop hostilities did not actually end violence, but only satisfied some Tuareg movement leaders' aspirations or those of some powerful Tuareg clans of the Kidal region.<sup>81</sup> The mutual acceptance between different groups did not last for long, and came, unfortunately, during the period characterized by new opportunity for Kidal region to globalization and new economic development with the trans-Saharan trade exchange.

### **1. Developmental Policy from 1990 to 1996**

The Malian government invested less effort toward the development of the Tuareg region in order to balance the social inequality between the north and the south of Mali. This failure to achieve significant development led many Tuaregs to go abroad. During their exile, Tuaregs who managed to reach Europe campaigned for the unification the whole Saharan Tuareg communities.<sup>82</sup> This initiative of unification came when the model of development in the Tuareg region shifted a bit from the strong pastoral activity to the wide interaction with the external world and modernity accompanied with interest in education as well as politics.

Additionally, during the 1996 rebellion several other efforts by the government were intended to normalize the situation between Malians and insurgents in the northern region.<sup>83</sup> These efforts involved the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which played big role in its financial support. This support enabled the Malian authorities to carry out the program of demobilization and reintegration, an essential step to achieving development. Also, the collaboration between Malian and

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<sup>81</sup> Mats Utas, *African Conflicts and Informal Power: Big Men and Networks* (London: Zed Books, 2012), 119.

<sup>82</sup> Ba, "Tuareg Nationalism," 10.

<sup>83</sup> Florquin and Berman, "Armed and Aimless," 57–59.

UNDP succeeded to gather funds of about 10 million Dollars necessary for the DDR implementation. The program was a success because many insurgents gave back their weapons and accepted reintegration into the regular armed forces. Moreover, a big ceremony (Flame of Peace) of burning of the weapons collected took place in Timbuktu to signify the end of hostilities. The period that followed the DDR had positive impacts because it provided employment to some former combatants, but the impact was relatively short. Not surprisingly, however, no DDR had ever succeeded in the past to collect one hundred percent of the weapons used during conflict. Consequently, the hidden ones had been sources of other tensions.

## **2. Military Engagement**

As the government endeavored to rectify mistakes, it did succeed in preventing the proliferation of self-defense groups that undermined the peace progress. A year before 1996, high range military intervention helped control the Ganda Koy violence.<sup>84</sup> However, the Ganda Koy movement obliged Malian national authorities to apply new initiatives to all ethnic groups in the region, while the Tuareg seemed to be inconsistent in their demands.

The Tuaregs' inconsistency created an incentive for criminal behavior in the northern region, sometimes involving Malian officials, the Tuareg, and other groups.<sup>85</sup> Those criminal activities continued while the Tuaregs were also fighting among themselves. When illegal activities take place in a less stable environment, there is a chance that other unknown actors will emerge, especially if government officials are behind those illegal activities, as occurred in Mali. These government officials would not certainly work to make a secure environment. Moreover, some historical behaviors also explain the insurgents' behaviors.

Kone stated that, "Historically, Tuareg agreements with the government have never been binding for long, and every rebellion has generated splinter rebel fronts led by individuals or groups that are dissatisfied with their share...is perceived as a form of

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<sup>84</sup> Keita, "Conflict and Conflict Resolution ," 116.

<sup>85</sup> Ba, "Tuareg Nationalism," 11.

anarchy.”<sup>86</sup> Lecocq illustrated this anarchy view of the Tuaregs’ situation as coming from the misunderstanding of the southern Mali population concerning the political mutations of the Tuareg society, which shine and fade and make the conflict confusing for the Malian government to resolve.<sup>87</sup> Yet, the conflict knew several moment when tensions abated but the exact solution still remained unfound.

After they got the upper hand on the Malian Military in 2012, the Tuaregs recall the important dates of the conflict against the Malian soldiers.<sup>88</sup> Their declaration stressed the Malian military excessive use of force that the Tuaregs qualified as genocide of 1963, 1990, 2006, 2010 and 2012. The Tuareg suffered from the military interventions, which caused some casualties; but, many fled to neighbor countries instead. In addition to these reasons, there are other factors that contributed to undermine the process of resolution of the conflict.

### **3. Other Important Factors**

The weapons not returned during the DDR process plus the negative impact of the porous border contributed to the rising arms smuggling at borders between Mali and some neighboring countries.<sup>89</sup> Hence, many communities gradually gathered weapons for use in case a security environment made it necessary to use them. Consequently, dissident people who did not join the peace process continued to harass the civilians in their local areas by depriving them of their properties but also resumed other prohibited activities. Unfortunately, some members of Malian security forces were suspected of collusion with smugglers because some arms found with them were from the Malian arm stock. This corruption of government officials played an important role in the deterioration of security in the Sahel and inhibited the process of development by preventing the NGOs from

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<sup>86</sup> Kone, Kassim. “A Southern View on the Tuareg Rebellions in Mali.” *African Studies Review* 60, no. 1 (2017): 53–75. p.67.

<sup>87</sup> Kone, Kassim. “A Southern View on the Tuareg Rebellions in Mali.” *African Studies Review* 60, no. 1 (2017): 53–75. p.67.

<sup>88</sup> Christian Bouquet, “Peut-on Parler de « Seigneurs de Guerre » dans la Zone Sahélo-Saharienne ?,” *Afrique contemporaine* 245, no. 1 (2013): 30, doi:10.3917/afco.245.0085.

<sup>89</sup> Florquin, Nicolas, and Stéphanie Pézard. “Insurgency, Disarmament, and Insecurity in Northern Mali, 1990–2004.” *ARMED AND AIMLESS* (2005): 47. p.59-61.

operating because bandits had started to make money in hostage taking. Finally, exacerbated with constant attacks from bandits, the population asked Malian authorities to reoccupy some posts in the northern region where the military withdrew from in respect to the clauses of the 1991 peace agreement.

In conclusion, as Gurr argued, the coercive management of a group revolt might eventually lead this group to the offensive, especially in a context where it thinks the intervention is not legitimate.<sup>90</sup> Gurr also illustrated his argument at first on White supremacy leadership in South America, which for a period acted cruelly, driving African-Americans to defend themselves in the same way. Another example Gurr indicated is Russians' repression of the Chechens' revolt. In this revolt, Russia used force as the alternative solution but over time, the Russians approach bogged down as the Chechens began to defend themselves against the Russians created a complicated situation formerly taken as a minor problem. Morgan added that frequent discord existed between different Tuareg tribes and individuals.<sup>91</sup> Thus, when Mali became independent in 1960, it integrated like Algeria, and Niger the French system of creating disunity among the Tuareg community to rule in order to rule them, or supported and forwarded "friendly" tribal chiefs whilst lessening the power of hostile ones.

Consequently, this policy of divide and govern weakened the national cohesion. Moreover, the attempts to develop the Tuareg region failed because of continuous tensions and individualistic interests favorable to the proliferation of illicit activities on the vast desert region of the north.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This chapter shows that, in all three rebellions, both development policies and military engagements served as contributing factors. The hypothesis that the Malian government's military engagement during the first insurgency in 1963 against the Tuaregs

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<sup>90</sup> Ted R. Gurr, *Political Rebellion: Causes, Outcomes and Alternatives* (London: Routledge, 2015), 107.

<sup>91</sup> Andy Morgan, "What Do the Tuaregs Want?," *Al Jazeera*, January 2014, 3, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/01/what-do-tuareg-want-20141913923498438.html>.

contributed to the insurgency is supported. The military engagement to resolve a mere revolt with lethal weapons and to intervene on unarmed civilians was an awkward approach. Moreover, the government failure to respect its engagement to bring development also widened the gap between insurgents and Malian authorities. The Malian government, instead of focusing solely on the agriculture, could encourage each group's mode of development such as agriculture in the south and herding in the north. However, if the Tuaregs had formed a consistent and homogenous group, eager to integrate the other ethnic groups of the country without discrimination based on skin color, it would remain easier to find a way forward with Malian authority.

The chapter also shows how other factors, including the failure of the DDR program to fully recover all the weapons, corruption of officials, and collusion with the enemy affected the onset and continuation of the Tuareg rebellions. Furthermore, uncontrolled groups infesting the northern region made the situation difficult to control by either the Tuaregs or the Malian government. Weapons or drugs circulating in the vast area of the Sahel made northern Mali a refuge for many criminal or terrorist groups.

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### **III. THE 2012 REBELLION**

This chapter analyzes the escalations and drivers of Mali's social crisis in 2012 that made the rebellion almost inevitable. While the Malian government tried to bring peace through the signing of agreements, they continued to neglect the development of the north, instead focusing on security, a focus that failed. Additionally, the coup d'état of March 2012 worsened the situation surrounding the rebellion by confusing ways of negotiation with the rebels which encouraged their military victory.

The political mismanagement of the country worsened because the policymakers had no clear vision to stop the insurgency. The solution to develop the northern regions served as a short-term solution and did not significantly raise the living conditions of the northern regions. The developmental policy's implementation also failed because of instability and corruption were increasing.

Moreover, military engagements continuously spoiled the relations between the Tuaregs and the Malian government because of the military's excessive use of force. Finally, the armed forces, after several repressions of the Tuareg insurgents, eventually were no longer able to preserve civilians in the north from criminal groups. In addition, past military exactions had created a climate of defiance within the locals. Thus, by the time Malian military decided to control the deteriorating conflict situation, it was too late. The military engagement, which had prevailed and destroyed the social cohesion in the past rebellions. In the 2012 rebellion, the military men could no longer engage efficiently or stop the insurgency.

#### **A. THE EVENTS OF 2012**

Fragile security conditions in the northern region contributed to some opposing groups unifying against Mali. The government's political inability to stabilize and secure the sensitive zone led to the unification of these opposing groups.<sup>92</sup> Formerly considered

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<sup>92</sup> Arfaoui, Myriam. "Une Analyse Géopolitique du Conflit Malien." P.13

as the sole question of the Tuareg insurgency, there were other ambitions tending to blur the realities. If the MNLA claimed independence on a specific region it considered to belong to their ancestors, AQIM worked for its religious ideology agenda, and the MUJAO tried to control the drug route in the Sahel. Eventually, the actors' agenda could not fit to remain homogenous for long period because each tried to gain a portion of territory to control.

Tuareg insurgents' offensive against Mali armed forces increased in January 2012 and led to deaths. Simultaneously, the MNLA, allied with the different Islamist groups of the AQIM, Ançar Dine (Defender of Islam), Movement of oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) or Boko Haram attacked Malian different military garrisons in the northern region.<sup>93</sup> During these attacks, which occurred on January 24, 2012, they summarily killed 142 Malian soldiers, prisoners of war in the city of Aguelhock. This atrocity badly echoed in Bamako and several defeats ensued for Mali troops despite attempts to resist the offensive. Moreover, defection of Tuaregs from Mali's national armed forces could not help Mali to defeat the insurgency. However, this progress growing progress galvanized the Tuareg insurgents and made negotiations difficult.

The growth of the insurgency drove the Malian troops to consecutively fight back but brought problems in the armed forces. Gradually, the vast desert zone was escaping from the Malian armed forces.<sup>94</sup> The defeat of Malian troops and progress of the insurgents led the national armed forces to complain. Malian soldiers complained about the crucial lack of logistics because during skirmishes, insurgents frequently captured Malian soldiers or seized Malian barracks. This led to the decrease of self-confidence in the Malian troops and the strengthening of the insurgents' position thanks to the Islamist groups, which were already present in the northern region.

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[http://resmilitaris.net/ressources/10250/31/res\\_militaris\\_article\\_arfaoui\\_analyse\\_geopolitique\\_du\\_conf\\_lit\\_malien.pdf](http://resmilitaris.net/ressources/10250/31/res_militaris_article_arfaoui_analyse_geopolitique_du_conf_lit_malien.pdf)

<sup>93</sup> Moctar Mariko and Florent Geel, *Crimes de Guerre au Nord-Mali [War Crimes in Northern Mali]*, (Paris: Fédération Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme, 2012), 5, <https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/rapmali592f.pdf>.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

The continuous losing of ground of the Malian armed forces led to the end of power for Amadou Toumani Touré (ATT). During battles against the insurgents decreased the support for ATT's regime in Bamako.<sup>95</sup> Thus, the existence of complex and ambiguous security conditions had weakened Mali national cohesion but also had spread panic in the Sahel and West Africa. Finally, in March 2012, a group of soldiers led a coup d'état to end the power of ATT.

Soldiers' anger led them to attack the presidential palace. In fact, in March 21, 2012, at 10 AM, the ministry of defense and the armed force general chief of staff decided to get to the military barracks (cam Sundjata) at 15 kilometers from the Bamako to have a talk with irritated soldiers.<sup>96</sup> These two officials came after a week of soldiers' unsuccessful requests to meet the president ATT himself to provide them with enough means to defeat the MNLA. During this talk with the ministry and the armed force general chief of staff, tensions grew because soldiers blamed the regime for not equipping them as the insurgents. Finally, at 11 AM, the two officials, unable to contain the tension, quickly abandoned the talk room. Then, without much consultation, in the minutes that followed, soldiers took their weapons and vehicles of war and started to fight toward the presidential palace. Soldiers had no precise objective at this time. Aware of the failure of his two envoys, ATT decided to strengthen his security around the palace. Unfortunately, at 9 PM, the mutineers succeeded to take the palace but ATT had already left. At 4 PM, more than a hundred others went to the national radio station and asked the personnel to leave the building.

During the period surrounding the coup, the Tuaregs' rebellion also intensified. While the Malian troops in Kidal struggled to prevent some groups of insurgents trying to take the city of Kidal, the news circulated that the Tuaregs and the Islamists they were

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<sup>95</sup> Bakary Sambe, "Crise Malienne : Origines, Développements et Répercussions dans la Sous-région" [*Malian Crisis : Origins, Developments and Implications in the Sub-region*] Working paper, European Foundation for Democracy (Brussels), n.d, [https://www.kas.de/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?uuid=587ab8a3-5734-4176-97ec-a49a80890ab5&groupId=252038](https://www.kas.de/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=587ab8a3-5734-4176-97ec-a49a80890ab5&groupId=252038)

<sup>96</sup> Christophe Boisbouvier, "Coup d'État au Mali : Le Jour où ATT a Été Renversé [Coup in Mali: the Day ATT Was Overthrown]," *Jeuneafrique*, March 30, 2011, 2-3, <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/142284/politique/coup-d-tat-au-mali-le-jour-o-att-a-t-renvers/>.

about to have control of Kidal.<sup>97</sup> The Tuaregs made significant progress in the fight to seize the northern region of Mali because of the coup d'état and the military was retreating from their positions. The Tuaregs, after several years trying to control the regions they consider as their homeland, were able to have easily the control within three days. The confusion that coup d'état created was an incentive for the Tuaregs because the Malian armed force commanders could not totally be indifferent to the evolution of events following the coup d'état in Bamako.

The coup d'état contributed to the insurgency because it added to the confusion already in the country. While the Malian troops were losing in combat, legitimate authorities in Bamako still existed. The coup d'état prevented the start of negotiations because there was no immediate legitimate authority with whom to negotiate. The climate of chaos, formerly located only in the northern region, had infected the capital city, where possible resolution emanated.

According to Boisbouvier, the end of ATT's regime was not surprising because it was clear that the regime had been unable to prevent the Islamists groups from operating in Mali without fear.<sup>98</sup> For this reason, ATT no longer had the support of the international community as he always had preferred compromise to the use of force. In fact, continuous compromise is not the solution to all evils. It can lead armed groups to bypass the state security forces. If armed groups get an opportunity to implement themselves for a long time, it will be difficult to subdue them.

The junta, composed of mainly non-commissioned officers, sought to stop the advance of the insurgents throughout the military coup d'état, as it spread chaos. Once the coup d'état succeeded, they created the National Committee of Recovery of Democracy and Re-establishment of the State (CNRDRE). The head of the junta Amadou Haya Sanogo a 39 years old captain, instructor at the military training school of Koulikoro with several

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<sup>97</sup> AFP, "Mali : La Junte de Plus en Plus Isolée et Sous la Pression de la Rébellion Touarègue [Mali: the Junta Increasingly Isolated and Under the Pressure of the Tuareg Rebellion]," *Jeuneafrique*, March 25, 2012, 1, <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/152455/politique/mali-la-junte-de-plus-en-plus-isol-e-et-sous-la-pression-de-la-r-bellion-touar-gue/>.

<sup>98</sup>Boisbouvier, "Coup d'État au Mali."

trainings in the U.S.A. declared, “our army was not in the conditions to adequately serve and with professionalism.”<sup>99</sup> Consequently, since January 2012, cities and garrisons were falling one after another such as Anderamboukane, Abeibara, Ménaka, Tinzawaten and Amachach. Soldiers sometimes fled to neighbor countries, took off their uniforms and dressed in civilian before their repatriation home and sad welcome of the authorities and the population.

Adding to the chaos, soldiers were reluctant to serve a Tuareg Senior commander who remained faithful to Mali and ATT was slow to contain the situation. The president’s failure to respond appropriately to contain the insurgency, many soldiers were reluctant to serve under the command of El Hadj Gamou, a former Tuareg insurgent of the 1990 rebellion.<sup>100</sup> The soldiers’ reluctance to serve under Gamou leadership could be the result of distrust after many Tuaregs had abandoned the Malian armed forces to join this 2012 insurgency. Also, soldiers could see him as not totally devoted to win combats because he is of the same ethnic group as the insurgents.

While ATT was losing the control of his power in Bamako, the insurgents had caused many exactions against the Malians such as the slaughtering of Malian soldiers in Aguelhock by the MNLA and Ansar Dine. This coalition MNLA-Ansar Dine had given an ultimatum of 72 hours to the Malian armed forces to evacuate the camp. When the Malian military did not comply before the expiration, the insurgents launched the attack. After hours of fighting, Malian soldiers ran out of ammunitions and had to surrender to the enemy. During this fighting, the Malian soldiers had to be cautious because the insurgents used other captured Malian soldiers as human shield, which prevented the Malian military from adequately fighting.

However, a 72-hours ultimatum was enough for the ATT regime to take the necessary actions to send backup troops and prevent the seizure of the camp and the mass killing of soldiers.<sup>101</sup> This lack of response to the urgent situation could be a reason for

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Mariko and Geel, “Crimes de Guerre,”6.

<sup>101</sup> AFP, “Mali : La Junte de Plus en Plus Isolée.”

soldiers' actions against the regime because what happened to those killed during the lost combat could happen to any of them if they had continued to observe the situation, which did not show any improvement.

Despite the chaotic situation, not all political leaders backed the coup. This coup d'état had the support of only some political actors; others opposed it, judging that it was anti-constitutional to seize power by force.<sup>102</sup> If the coup d'état gained support among the political class, it means that President ATT did not have the full support to strengthen his power. Eventually, if there is imminent risk for the country, sometimes people do not look at the regularity of their actions, whatever comes, they believe to be a solution to the current problem. Thus, the opponents to the coup pressured the junta to give power to civilians, this added more to the chaotic situation of the country.

Of several, one important factor that drove the coup was ATT's misread of the level of political consensus and national unity in the country. The old assumption that negotiations have always succeeded to calm the insurgency misguided the ATT's regime. ATT believed that his former negotiation skill of bringing the insurgents and the Malian government in 1992 with the signing of the National Pact would resolve the 2012 insurgency.<sup>103</sup> Unfortunately, he neglected the rise of fundamental Islam. This ignorance of the new phenomenon of fundamental Islam contradicted past presumptions that the insurgency was resolvable through negotiated forms. In fact, ATT, without a political party for his own, worked with all the political parties. Thus, the consensus he built might have prevented him from knowing the changing realities of the Malian crisis. The existence of an opposition to the regime would have denounced the wrong approach the government was using to deal with the insurgents. When all the political parties sided with the regime, they tend to have similar visions and are more inclined to protect their interests rather to express a vision that might irritate the president.

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<sup>102</sup> Mariko and Geel, "Crimes de guerre,"6.

<sup>103</sup> Jacques Delcroze, "Effondrement du Rêve Démocratique au Mali [Collapse of the Democratic Dream in Mali]," *PRESSE-TOI A GAUCHE*, September 17, 2012, xx, <https://www.pressegauche.org/Effondrement-du-reve-democratique-au-Mali>.

The second factor that drove the coup was that state authority had been declining for some time thanks to insufficiently inclusive developmental policies. The government's authority was also drastically declining. According to Vliet, the sole explanations for the fall of Kaddafi in Libya and the widespread of different uncontrolled groups in the north of Mali were insufficient to explain this drop.<sup>104</sup> He asserts that declining state authority was general across the country and the regions formerly considered as ungoverned suffered of poor governance. He then concludes that the Malian crisis was the “result of state policy, not state failure.”<sup>105</sup> The state never managed to fully dominate the northern region to efficiently implement policy. The different governments relied on some local elites of the northern region to act on behalf of the others. Knowing that the northern region is composed of multiethnic groups, this policy was difficult to implement because of the historical social stratification which characterizes the northern Mali. Yet, this policy helped some in the Malian regimes to deal with the insurgency but never worked to bring a definitive solution to the Tuareg problem. The 2012 Tuareg insurgency could have had a close link to the inappropriate policy implementation by poor policymakers. The failure of those people in charge of conducting the developmental policy intended to resolve the crisis contributed to the 2012 insurgency.

## **B. THE DEVELOPMENTAL POLICIES**

The lack of progress in development in the northern Mali and the authorities' inability to establish reliable security conditions left a huge vacuum that uncontrolled groups coming from different horizons quickly filled. These groups hampered the Malian government's efforts to develop in the north because of their illegal activities. Moreover, destabilization of Libya also played significant role in the collapse of the Malian economy. This contributed to the Tuareg insurgency to resume their opposition to the Malian government because of past military interventions and developmental problems.

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<sup>104</sup> M. Van Vliet, “Weak Legislatures, Failing MPs, and the Collapse of Democracy in Mali,” *African Affairs* 113, no. 450 (2014): 48 , doi:10.1093/afraf/adt071.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

Although it was not a policy decision, the destabilization of Libya affected the economic conditions in the Sahel. The collapse of Libya made urgent the need for effective policy responses. Mali's failure to fill the economic gap increased contributed to the insurgency. When the Libya crisis started, the economic situation in the Sahel changed with it because most countries, including Mali, were dependent on Kaddafi's aid. For instance, a Malian journalist stated that "Kaddafi is not quite anybody in the African continent..." before adding that the three main hotels of Bamako are Libyan properties and Libya also built for Mali a place where several departments are grouped called *Cité Administrative*.<sup>106</sup> This project cost Libya 120 million dollars. Moreover, Kaddafi financed 180 million dollars in rice farming, the opening up of the canal of Timbuktu, and in the building of a mosque in Ségou. Kaddafi's interest in investing in Mali was motivated by the failure to have sustainable cooperation with Arab countries. Consequently, because of its dependence on Kaddafi's investments, Mali feared that the collapse of Kaddafi could affect its stability. In fact, the presence of Libya could help Mali fill some economic gaps and enable the country to continue investments in the northern regions. However, Libya's absence would drive Mali to split financial efforts between the needs of the north and the financial gap left by Libya.

In fact, before Kaddafi fell, millions of Sub-Saharan immigrants worked in Libya.<sup>107</sup> These immigrants had contributed to the economic stability, thanks to the money they sent home. Unfortunately, with the crisis in Libya, money transfer was no longer possible, and the immigrants had to flee the instability of the country. These people who returned amplified developmental challenges by increasing the population.<sup>108</sup> The economy was unable to absorb the new people who returned home and youth from rural areas coming to big cities of employment. Moreover, Kaddafi played significant role in the

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<sup>106</sup> Raphael Meuldiers, "Le Mali et l'Argent du "Guide" Kadhafi [Mali and Money from the "Guide" Gaddafi]," *La Libre.be*, April 2011, xx, <https://www.lalibre.be/actu/international/le-mali-et-l-argent-du-guide-kadhafi-51b8d195e4b0de6db9c0ea01>. Kaddafi <https://www.lalibre.be/actu/international/le-mali-et-l-argent-du-guide-kadhafi-51b8d195e4b0de6db9c0ea01>

<sup>107</sup> Salim Chena and Antonin Tisseron, "Rupture d'Equilibres au Mali [Rupture of Stability in Mali]," *Afrique contemporaine* 245, no. 1 (2013): 73, doi:10.3917/afco.245.0071.

<sup>108</sup> Christian Bouquet, "Peut-on Parler," 43.

resolution of the Tuareg uprisings by encouraging talks between insurgents and the central power thanks to his huge revenue from oil.<sup>109</sup> Consequently, in absence of economic support, all these opportunities of development and financing of dialogue process would disappear. This absence of support contributed to the insurgency because the government only effort did not help improve the populations' living conditions in the northern region.

The increase in insecurity in the northern region affected economic activities, which further contributed to the insurgency because workers were afraid to go to their activities. When criminal groups such as the GSPC, known for hostage taking, settled in the north, tourism decreased. In fact, tourism, representing a significant source of income for populations in in the northern region, dropped considerably. About 17.000 people lived on tourism in 2005 and, between 2007–2011 just before the 2012 Tuareg insurgency, 8,000 people lost their jobs because of constant security warnings.<sup>110</sup> Decrease in tourists in the northern Mali seriously increased economic challenges. For instance, activities such as the *Paris-Dakar* and the Tuareg music *Festival du Desert* were cancelled. When young people gradually lost employment opportunities because of instability, frustration gained them. There were few policies in place to help alleviate these problems causing people to become further disillusioned with the government. The policies implemented to develop the northern regions hardly came to integral fulfilment or reached the general satisfaction about the question of development.

One of the main policy ideas was the Malian government's vision of a tremendous project entitled Special Program for Peace, Security and Development of the Northern Mali (PSPSDN). This program, developed in June 2010, was one of the recommendation of the Accord d'Alger signed in 2006 between the Tuaregs and the Malian authorities.<sup>111</sup> The main objective of the PSPSDN was to achieve economic development only in the northern region with the creation of infrastructures such as health centers, homes, schools and

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<sup>109</sup> Chena and Tisseron, "Rupture d'Equilibres," 73.

<sup>110</sup> Chauzal and Van Damme., "The Roots of Mali's Conflict,."25-26.

<sup>111</sup> AMBASSADE DE LA REPUBLIQUE DU MALI, « *Sécurité et Développement* » en Afrique de l'Ouest, les Défis Régionaux [Security and Development in West Africa, Regional Challenges], (FRANCE, 2012), <http://www.oecd.org/fr/csao/evenements/Discours%20Ambassadeur%20Tour%C3%A9.pdf>.

drillings for the populations. The Malian authorities believed that the success of the PSPSDN would end insecurity, provide employment, reduce poverty, and hostage taking. The Malian government to fulfill its commitment regarding the Accord d'Alger signed with the Tuareg insurgents. Besides strengthening security, there were several socio-economic activities contained in the program, such as school, clinics, and drillings in the interest of the northern region population. Launched in 2011, the project stopped with the crisis in Libya followed with the increasing instability in the north by non-state armed groups. These uncontrolled and heavily armed groups prevented the continuation of the project because of the threats they represented in the region. Eventually, when development failed, the old grievances emerged to violent actions.

Unachieved decentralization process created disorder within local populations. The decentralization was confusing the population with the use of several technical words such as subsidiarity, progressivity and experimentation that made it difficult for the population to understand the scope of the process.<sup>112</sup> The supposed transfer of competence or resources to municipalities led to excessive creation communities some with state's or international partners' financial assistance and some not. According to Coulibaly and Lima, the 2012 crisis erupted during these incoherent attempts to have good decentralization. They imply that the decentralization failed because the head of the department charged to conduct the whole decentralization had not the total expertise. In addition, they consider that the prerequisite (strong central government or a unified population) was inexistent while Mali continued to accelerate the process. In this kind of situation, decentralization could bring more harm than contributing to development, because not all villages can be a commune and the population of those not eligible could develop a grievance. The northern regions more fragile than the other because of latent instability would be mostly affected. The historical split between populations of different ethnic groups over the questions of skin color or slavery could lead some villages to reject joining a closer commune. Moreover, over-division of communities to force decentralization while the state was unable to assist each commune created a climate of despair. The 2012 insurgency could be

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<sup>112</sup> Coulibaly and Lima, "Crise de l'État," 16–17.

a result of such confusion because dissatisfied communities could support the insurgents, which can intensify insurgents' actions against the government.

Another source of economic discontent was the fact that much donor aid appeared to benefit the elites. In his abstract, Walle states that, "aid was not very successful at reducing several of the underlying, structural constraints that were to prove the country's undoing in 2012."<sup>113</sup> Mali received 12–15 per cent of its Gross National Income (GNI) from donors, representing half the national annual budget of the country. For instance, from 2000 to 2010, investment of all donors was 5.6 billion dollars.<sup>114</sup> Considered as a test country for donors, Mali did not rank among top countries which benefited from international aid countries. In any case, despite Mali's low income, donors mostly viewed the country as a rising and stable country. Walle further added that this continuous "aid dependence" demonstrates the country's inability to execute good development policy. Consequently, foreign aid, instead of solving the issue of development, sometimes worsens the situation by declining the democratic consolidation because the elites particularly those at the presidency tend to strengthen their power over the other branches of governance. Consequently, the gap increased between urban elites and the population.

Most donors' aid fell in the hands of corrupt elites. The difference in investment between Libya and the other donors could reside in the elites' management of donors funds. In this context, it is difficult to assess the effects of foreign aid on the civil society. A visible phenomenon is that public officials are mostly above the law; nearly half the population shows their dissatisfaction with this injustice.<sup>115</sup> For instance, in 2010, a former head of the health department, Oumar Ibrahim Touré, resigned under the pressure of a donor (Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis) internal inquiries suspected him of stealing 4 million dollars.<sup>116</sup> Consequently, high officials can easily use donors' money

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<sup>113</sup> Nicolas V. Walle, "Foreign Aid in Dangerous Places: The Donors and Mali's Democracy," *Democratic Trajectories in Africa*, 2013, 1-3, doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199686285.003.0004.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

for their private use. Back in the 1980s, the Malian population depicted the IMF as an accomplice of corruption because despite the President Moussa Traoré dilapidating aid, the IMF continued to give fund as usual. Thus, as long as the elites will have close access to donors' money, the effects of any investment will become less visible. According to Welle, the "government and donors failed to reduce the marginality of northern populations or to increase the capacity of the Malian state to bring law and order as well as development to the northern regions."<sup>117</sup> Even though donors failed, the responsibility of the Malian government is engaged first because donors facilitate states to achieve their policy of development. If there is any failure regarding the good implementation, the first responsible the people blame is the government because donors do not impose on a country. By not demanding more accountability of their investment, donors encouraged the rise of corruption of the elites. Thus, the aids did not serve the development objectives and it led to the resurgence of the Tuareg insurrection.

Additionally, the fall of Kaddafi and the return of immigrants in northern Mali affected stability. According to Pezard and Shurkin, the living conditions (droughts and harmful state policy) in northern Mali are so difficult that the population is in permanent crisis.<sup>118</sup> They add that the only alternative the region provided to the local youth was to compete among themselves to get international aid or to have access to any kind of sources of income such as illicit drug traffic. Drug trade encouraged competition, gradually jeopardizing local governance and created disunities among locals. When traditional values of living together corrode, there is less chance to avoid a revolt. Moreover, when individuals become accustomed to important easy money profits, it is difficult for them to abandon them because legal activities are not much profitable. The young Tuaregs saw insufficient the efforts of the government as insufficient and decided to escape any government attempts to control the illicit activities.

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid.,3.

<sup>118</sup> Stephanie Pezard and Michael Shurkin, *Toward a Secure and Stable Northern Mali: Approaches to Engaging Local Actors*, (Rand Corporation, 2013), 5, [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR296.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR296.html).

The rise of diverse criminal groups operating in northern Mali increased instability. As discussed in the previous section, the ATT's presidency let drug and arms dealers, human traffickers and cars rubbers to easily operate. The facilitation of these activities gradually interested the Tuaregs insurgents who later developed close contact with the criminal networks.<sup>119</sup> Harmon states that most of the drug dealers crossed the Saharan dessert and, the drivers they used are mostly Tuaregs.<sup>120</sup> This kind of rapprochement between the Tuaregs wand narcotics in an environment the state is working to stabilize could be a driver of revolt for more freedom of operation. Drug trafficking was so much on the rise that, supposedly, aircraft coming from Venezuela used to crash at about 15 kilometers from Gao, a northern region of Mali with approximately 10 tonnes cocaine on board.<sup>121</sup> The content disappeared, the plane burned down and no dead body found in place.

The government's deliberate neglect to develop the north increased tensions there. According to Chauzal and Van Damme, through deliberate neglect, the Malian authorities thought that associating the local communities in the north with the new projects regarding future natural resources exploitation would increase the northern communities and the southern splits.<sup>122</sup> Also, the northern regions would have good assets in a matter of energy and mineral resources. For instance, the Authority for Oil research (AUREP) that Mali created in 2005 estimated that free regions in the north could have at least 850,000km<sup>2</sup> of oil and gas.<sup>123</sup> Moreover, there are approximately 200 tonnes in the Gao region. The study also shows that Algeria supposedly financed more than \$60 million in the Kidal region precisely in the city of Taoudenit for oil research. The fact that authorities granted less

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<sup>119</sup> "BBC NEWSAfricaSahara Cocaine Plane Crash Probed," BBC, last modified November 17, 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8364383.stm>.

<sup>120</sup> Stephen A. Harmon, *Terror and Insurgency in the Sahara-Sahel Region: Corruption, Contraband, Jihad and the Mali War of 2012–2013* (London: Routledge, 2016), 147, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315612096>.

<sup>121</sup> BBC, "Cocaine Plane Crash Probed."

<sup>122</sup> Chauzal and Van Damme., "The Roots of Mali's Conflict," 29.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 29.

importance to these kind of projects undermines development and keeps the population in poverty. This poverty can lead them to revolt against the authorities.

Developmental projects failed in part because of government mismanagement. Mali Placed under the management of the president, the PSPSDN created in July 2010 to deal with security and developmental questions, did not bring expect expected changes in the government's policy.<sup>124</sup>

Easy moneymaking from crime encouraged the 2012 rebellion. At least the jihadists took 29 persons generally of European origin as hostages between 2007–2011.<sup>125</sup> This gave the terrorist groups news headlines. Moreover, the ransom earned from the liberation of the hostages helped the terrorists finance trainings in the Kidal region (northern Mali). Harmon argued that, “kidnappings were...only the prelude to the breakdown of northern Mali.”<sup>126</sup> There are several allegations that the insurgency was triggered because the French President Nicholas Sarkozy colluded with the MNLA. He did so because the Malian government did not succeed in facing AQIM and freeing the French hostages, Sarkozy might have seen the MNLA as a possible alternative capable of achieving this goal.<sup>127</sup> This conspiracy could have triggered the 2012 Tuareg insurgency against Mali.

Hence, in 2012, the Tuaregs made the declaration of independence in which they deplore “inhuman behavior of Mali, which has used the various droughts ...to annihilate our people...poor governance, corruption and military-political-financial collusion, endangering the existence of the people of Azawad and jeopardizing sub-regional stability and international peace.”<sup>128</sup> In fact, the Malian government's efforts could better serve the Tuareg population if the officials in charge of development in the region did not engage in activities unfavorable to successful developmental policy such as corruption.

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<sup>124</sup> Chena and Tisseron, “Rupture d'Equilibres au Mali,”77-78.

<sup>125</sup> Harmon, “Terror and Insurgency,” 161.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>128</sup> Christian Bouquet, “Peut-on parler,” 30.

### C. THE MNLA MILITARY CAMPAIGN AND MALI TROOPS RESISTANCE

The Malian armed forces showed a decrease in their efficiency to counter the insurgency while the Tuaregs became more organized, equipped and motivated. The Tuaregs were no longer ill equipped as in the past rebellion, while the Malian armed forces were now not well equipped. Malian soldiers' lack of equipment was demotivating because the Tuaregs had more sophisticated weapons brought from Libya. Thus, the weapons Malian soldiers used in the first rebellion could not resist these new weapons from Libya. Finally, defeats caused Malian soldiers to blame the political leadership.

One of the factors contributing to increasing tensions among the Tuaregs was the Malian government non-respect of the 2006 Accord d'Alger dissatisfied the Tuaregs. In fact, the Accord d'Alger stipulated that there would be a reduction of the Malian military presence in some northern cities.<sup>129</sup> However, the Malian government failed to decrease the military presence; instead, it strengthened its positions.<sup>130</sup> This attitude eventually led the Tuaregs to protest the non-compliance to the term of the agreement. Besides, there was other increasing phenomenon.

State use of criminal groups exacerbated further tensions between Mali and the Tuareg population in the north. According to Vliet, the International Crisis Group depicted ATT's regime as playing "remote governance through dubious criminal and mafia intermediaries to institute state authority over the northern regions."<sup>131</sup> Mali had become a turning point for transcontinental cocaine trade where private militias established to protect their benefits. These criminal groups strengthened ties with locals and gained a support system among some state officials. These government officials, thus, made money by serving as intermediaries in the release of criminal groups' hostages. This case raised

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<sup>129</sup> United Nations, "Accord d'Alger pour la Restauration de la Paix, de la Sécurité et du Développement dans la Région de Kidal [Algiers Agreement for the Restoration of Peace, Security and Development in the Kidal Region]," July 2006, xx, [https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/ML\\_060704\\_Accord%20d%27Alger.pdf](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/ML_060704_Accord%20d%27Alger.pdf).

<sup>130</sup> Harmon, "Terror and Insurgency," 182.

<sup>131</sup> Van Vliet, "Weak Legislatures," 48–49.

many questions regarding levels of corruption in Mali. The legislature seemed to be unable to pressure the executive for more accountability.

Therefore, the irredentism of the Tuaregs for independence cannot be underestimated in explaining the 2012 insurgency. In their constant move towards separation, the Tuaregs had formed a united front, the MNLA. Harmon described it as “the most unified and best armed of any Tuareg...rebel movement.”<sup>132</sup> The MNLA, formed in October 2011 was more homogenous and more equipped with weapons from Libya and others from the Malian army or integrated Tuareg who deserted the national armed force.<sup>133</sup> When Bahanga ( a Tuareg insurgents’ leader) died, different insurgents groups held a meeting in October 2011. During this meeting, Lyag Ag Ghali, the journalist Andrew Morgan describes as “rebel in chief and high-level fixer,” failed to get the position of the chief in command for the MNLA during the election. Many Tuareg believed his constant change in employment led many Tuareg to go abroad, but also Lyad had fundamentalist Islam ambitions. Despite these depictions, Lyad remained with the insurgents. Instead, the meeting recognized the cousin of Bahanga, Bilal ag Cherif, as secretary general and Alghabass ag Intallah as the political leader. Besides, the Tuareg had created a system of communication, a new approach in the insurgency.

The MLA strategy of communication paid. The MNLA had also developed diplomatic approaches to conduct the new insurgency that will help them legitimate the cause of the uprising. Then on January 17, 2012, the MNLA started the hostilities. The acquisition of sophisticated weapons from Libya and the confusion in Bamako after the coup d’état could also explain the MNLA’s regained confidence. Meantime, Malian troops were still waiting.

The defection of Tuaregs recruited in Malian armed forces as relating to the terms of peace agreement affected the morale of the government troops. Those who fled grew the rank of the MNLA in the north of Mali.<sup>134</sup> Despite the fact that this defection did not

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<sup>132</sup> Harmon, “Terror and Insurgency,” 176.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>134</sup> Mariko and Geel, “Crimes de Guerre,” 5.

involve all the integrated Tuaregs, many others who remained faced the consequence of the decrease of confidence between soldiers of Tuareg origin and the rest of the Malian troops. Thus, defection contributed to frustration in the Malian force, which was going from defeat to defeat, and insurgents took many men as prisoners.

The Alger Accord was not beneficial for all aspects. The Alger Accord, in order to establish law and order in the cities Kidal and Ménaka, stipulated that the Malian military should not operate outside the cities of Gao, Kidal and Tombouctou.<sup>135</sup> Some actors taking part in the signature of the agreement feared the risk of the state losing military and administrative control over parts of the country in favor of the creation of lawless zone. The lawless zones are favorable places for criminal groups to operate without fear. The consequence of March 2012 military coup d'état exacerbated insurgent military progress. This coup d'état, intended to build a solid institution capable of preparing the Malian army to launch successful counteroffensive, remained counter-productive.<sup>136</sup> The headquarter of the Malian armed forces established in Gao fell in the end of the insurgents who voluntarily stopped their progress after the seizure of the three main northern administrative regions. These three regions represent approximately 75 % of the Malian territory.

#### **D. OTHER FACTORS**

Besides the developmental and military factors contributing to the insurgency, other factors played significant roles in increasing tensions between the Tuaregs and the Malian government. Some of these factors arose from both internal and external actors' self-interests.

French geopolitical interests encouraged the insurgency to develop. According to Gantier, France, unable to conduct direct military intervention, used the MNLA in the forefront to launch the attacks to achieve its goal of maintaining its influence on a former

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<sup>135</sup> Christian Bouquet, "Peut-on Parler," 28.

<sup>136</sup> Mariko and Geel, "Crimes de Guerre," 4.

colony to keep emerging countries like China away.<sup>137</sup> He adds that the French pushed forward the notion of independence of former colonies while developing a politico-military dependence relationship. He illustrates the current intervention as “rhétorique de l’ordre et pratique déstabilisatrice [rhetoric of order and destabilizing practice.]”<sup>138</sup> This interference policy goes back to the end of the Cold War encouraged by the interference law in 1987 and the *authority to secure* created in 2001. Thus, the logic helping changed to a logic to discipline (powerful states go beyond simple interference to direct involvement in other state internal affair for security reasons.) Gantier also mentions that the way the French intervened in Mali seemed to contradict the French actual strategy based on indirect intervention in coordination with the ECOWAS. He concludes that the interference led the Sahel to be in 2000 a region of crisis with multiplication of non-states armed groups.

Not surprisingly the MNLA after its victory over the Malian armed forces in 2012 blamed the French for joining the Tuareg occupied region to Mali during independence time.<sup>139</sup> The declaration states that, the French did not take into consideration the Tuaregs’ appeal of May 30, 1958 during independence of African countries not to attach their homeland “Azawad” to the newly created state of Mali. Though there were questions of development, an independent Tuareg state also was an aspiration regarding the mention in the declaration.

Other rivalries between countries in northern Mali also fueled the conflict. There was a competition between Algeria, Mauritania and Tunisia on one side and Libya and Morocco on the other.<sup>140</sup> These groups rivalries went outside their borders. The mains actors, Algeria and Libya, backed their respective Tuareg movement leaders in Mali and Niger. One objective of the Algeria-Libya opposition was to control the illicit trafficking

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<sup>137</sup> Camille Gantier, “Cahiers D’Études Africaines,” *La Guerre au Mali, Comprendre la Crise au Sahel et au Sahara. Enjeux et Zones d’Ombre [The war in Mali, understand the crisis in the Sahel and the Sahara. Issues and dark areas,]* 55, no. 219 (2015): 615, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24476694>.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.,616.

<sup>139</sup> Christian Bouquet, “Peut-on Parler,”30.

<sup>140</sup> GRÉGORY GIRAUD, “Cinquante Ans de Tensions dans la Zone Sahélo-Saharienne [Fifty Years of Tension in the Sahelo-Saharan Zone],” *Algeria-watch*, 2013, 35, [https://www.algeria-watch.org/pdf/pdf\\_fr/galy\\_guerre\\_mali\\_chap1.pdf](https://www.algeria-watch.org/pdf/pdf_fr/galy_guerre_mali_chap1.pdf).

in the region. Each state had its connection and strategy to get the raw materials or any resources in the future. Finally, Algeria took the leader after Kaddafi was killed. From locals to high civil servants, the Algerian regime controlled through corruption and illicit trafficking.

Impunity also spoiled democratic system in Mali. Since the 1991 coup d'état ending dictatorship, Malian has not suffered post electoral crisis. Thus, a United Nations observer praised Mali as an "island of tranquility in ocean of wars."<sup>141</sup> This assumption means that even though the country was not as stable as one could believe, the calm hid something deep. For instance, Mali's city of Timbuktu received the honor from the UNESCO's Cities for Peace distinction 1998–1999. However, Harmon argues that this democracy fell apart because it hid serious social inequality. On one hand people in big cities benefiting of the economic success, on the other hand rural populations mostly left in poverty. Furthermore, he depicted the democratic system as "neither socially nor regionally inclusive."<sup>142</sup> The elites are the only beneficiaries but what Mali needs is true democracy. If there is such social inequality, the northern region, mainly pastoralist population will eventually suffer due of their social status. Thus, it will be difficult to maintain social cohesion. When there is no cohesion, the instinct of each group would be to defend self-interest even though it could harm those of the others. This self-interest protection eventually encourages the creation of militias. When private militias become powerful, they would eventually harm the states because their practices are anti-democratic.

The legislature is in the image of the current political climate. Most of the Members of Parliament (MPs) side with the party in power and back decisions of the presidency.<sup>143</sup> Thus, some people depict the parliament as a "rubber stamp," a formalizing tool of the president, unable to make any legislation itself.<sup>144</sup> Not only has the parliament not

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<sup>141</sup> Harmon, "Terror and Insurgency," 74–76.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>143</sup> USAID, *Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance Assessment of Mali*, (Tetra Tech, 2014), 25, [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1860/Mali\\_2014DRG%20Assessment\\_public\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1860/Mali_2014DRG%20Assessment_public_FINAL.pdf).

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., .25.

contributed to any oversight of the executive but also has not acted to the benefit of the people. For instance, in a rare case, at the beginning of the insurgency, some members of parliament tried to address questions related to the crisis in the northern region. However, there was no follow-up actions taken. Finally, the situation worsened until soldiers overthrew the regime.

The lack of accountability has plagued Malian democracy. The absence of accountability of the executive branch may explain its failure.<sup>145</sup> While external aid provides incentive for democratic consolidation in diverse ways, tools of control of the governance such as the legislative branch in Mali suffered from marginalization or played a negative role in aid distribution. The role of checking the executive, which the legislature failed to play, prevented Mali from building a strong democracy. The fact that members of parliament seemed to be less interested in social demands because the political parties' not being embedded in society. In other words, once elected, few politicians consult their voters about their opinions or interests. This gap between politics and society is historical. Most of the MPs financed their positions on the ballot. Consequently, these MPs tended to recover their investment rather than initiating policy in favor of the communities they represent.<sup>146</sup> For instance, the Africa Democratic Party (RDA), created in 1946, simply developed personal connections with "regional power brokers."<sup>147</sup> This model of the RDA seemed to perpetuate and, continued to disconnect the population from politics.

Finally, state support of self-defense groups spoiled ethnic groups' relationships. When the Tuaregs were engaged in internal power conflict, the other communities in the north created self-defense militias.<sup>148</sup> Ganda Koy and Ganda Iso were some illustrations of these militias. The creation of these militias further deteriorated inter-community relations and brought large-scale conflict. Some senior army officers sided with some communities against the others in the conflict. For instance, the government armed the

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<sup>145</sup> Vliet p.46-54

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>147</sup> Van Vliet, "Weak Legislatures," 55.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 48.

Arab drug guerrillas and the Tuaregs who have been faithful to the Malian state to counter a revolt. If, a government aligns itself to support specific community militia over the others in the same country will undoubtedly encourage insurgency to last.

In conclusion, after the successive rebellions of 1963, 1990 and, 1996, the 2012 rebellion continue to divide the Malians. If Tuaregs in their past rebellions did not see the Malian troops totally kicked out of the northern region of Mali, 2012 rebellion, in coalition with terrorist groups, succeeded. The multiplications of threats against society prevailed over the developmental and military efforts engaged to stabilize the region. Also, the military coup d'état of March 2012 contributed to the Tuaregs' and terrorists' coalition advance. This destabilization of the north by insurgents and the military coup of March 2012 in the south worsened the security situation to the extent of endangering the whole existence of the country. State's capability to control the northern region had decreased long before the rebellion. This failure to ensure security created the rise of hostage takings, drug trafficking and other criminal behaviors. It was difficult to efficiently carry out developmental activities because workers and their assets were not safe.

The victory of the Islamists over the MNLA closed all doors to the negotiations Mali and the Tuaregs. If the MNLA intended to have an independent country, its affiliated Islamists groups were willing to continue the combat and capture the rest of the Malian territory.<sup>149</sup> Once the whole country occupied, Islamists planned to establish the Sharia law. The divergence of agenda led to fighting between the two sides, Islamists chased the MNLA out of the main northern regions cities and tried to capture the rest of the country. Finally, the transition government established after the coup d'état, called for the French to intervene.

Development and military dynamics interacted to worsen the insurgency and the crisis. Armed groups made the resolution of the conflict difficult. Security being essential to conduct humanitarian assistance and programs of development.<sup>150</sup> Thus, the insecurity

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<sup>149</sup> Flood, Derek Henry. "Between Islamization and Secession: The Contest for Northern Mali." *CTC Sentinel* 5, no. 7 (2012): 1–6. p.5.

<sup>150</sup> Gantier, "Cahiers D'Études Africaines," 617.

prevented the realization of assistance and development. When poverty grows and the government becomes instable, the resolution of the gets complexes because the armed groups are not easily controllable.

## IV. CONCLUSION

Insurgencies by Tuareg groups have occurred in Mali regularly since Independence in 1960 at which time the Tuareg's began questioning the legitimacy of the Malian government. Major Tuareg rebellions against the Malian occurred in four time periods 1963, 1990, the 1996, and in 2012. The Malian government has always sought to control violence throughout the country, and this goal, as it applied to the Tuaregs and the other community, created ongoing conflict that led to insurgency because Malian authorities became resolved to maintain a unified country. The complexities of the Tuaregs' demands and the Malian authority's inability to handle the issues have continued for years.

This thesis sought to discover which policies have most contributed to the recurrence of the Tuareg insurgency. While developmental and military engagement are the main factors, other contributing factors include decentralization, instability, the state's disrespect of past agreements, the collapse of Kaddafi's regime, rising impunity of political leaders, and the French's geopolitical interest.

### A. SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT: DEVELOPMENT POLICY & MILITARY INTERVENTION

The failure of developmental policy played a pivotal role in the Tuareg insurgency in Mali. The Malian government tried many policies to improve the living conditions of the northern population most deeply in need of development. Since colonial times, the northern region suffered drought and received less attention regarding development than the other regions. Despite these attempts, the efforts to at least bring the northern region's level of development to that of the regions in the south have remained unsuccessful. The policies that the government tried to apply were mostly inadequate to answer the needs of northern region development. Also, the government, by replacing herding, the main method of production of the Tuaregs, with farming, affected the living conditions of the population. Eventually, the attempts to control the means of production and adapt it to policymakers' perceptions contributed to a full collapse of the Tuaregs' economy.

Consequently, tensions became unavoidable as the population resisted the authoritarian policy of the Malian government.

Few developmental programs the Malian government did pursue were poorly implemented, further stirred the Tuaregs' insurgency. In fact, the Malian government initiated several projects to fill the development gaps between the north and the south of the country, but none of them ended with total satisfaction. The termination of the projects had to do with the absence of political vision and appropriate people to carry out the projects' expectations. The Algerian-financed project FIDA and the PSPSDN exemplified the problem of development in the north. The people in charge of the project were mainly corrupt elites focused on self-interest rather than aiding development. Repeated poor implementations hurt the region and, therefore, encouraged the insurgency. Donors' aid, even though significant, failed to respond to the population's needs because of elite corruption and the mishandling of distribution. Corrupt people either misused or diverted the funds allocated to development. Consequently, the population's needs grew. After decades of interventions, the economy in the northern region fell.

The 1963 repression of the Tuareg revolt has remained an almost unforgettable memory for the Tuareg community. Thus, when the Tuaregs fled their homeland to either neighboring countries or Libya, they did not abandon Mali for pleasure but from fear of persecutions. Of course, it was difficult for the Tuaregs to remain silent forever. Once they had the opportunity, the Tuaregs tried to free themselves from military domination, while the Malian authority worked to strengthen its military presence. This constant effort of both sides to control the northern regions enhanced instability and clarified why military engagement remains a main factor that led to the recurrence of the Tuareg revolt.

The implementation of military administration on the Tuareg region also increased the division between Mali and the Tuareg communities. After the military repression, the Malian government made things worse by imposing military administrators on the Tuareg population who sought more participation in their regional governance. Thus, in addition to the grievances linked to repression, the implementation of the militaristic rule further spoiled the relationship between Mali and the Tuaregs. This Malian government's

insistence to govern by force degraded the process of stability necessary for durable peace in the northern region.

Military engagement thus exacerbated the Tuareg insurgency. In fact, the suppression of the first Tuareg demonstration, which killed many civilians and damaged properties, remained in the hearts of the Tuaregs. The use of the military to resolve a minor demonstration left negative marks on the relationship between the Malian government and the Tuaregs communities in northern Mali. Instead of stressing dialogue, for several years the Malian government believed the military to be the best way to resolve the Tuareg insurgency. Moreover, the collapse of Libya also played an important role in the northern region's stability. When living conditions became difficult, most young Tuaregs migrated to Libya for better living conditions. This migration helped alleviate the economic difficulties of the Tuaregs. However, with the repatriation of migrants from Libya, the northern region's economy suffered, and the government was not able to provide sustainable solutions. Government efforts to succeed in economic development failed to satisfy the needs of the population to keep the region stable and avoid revolts. The government projects of development also failed because of several factors such as poor governance and corruption. When Libya collapsed and many Tuaregs returned to Mali, there was no planned response to welcome them once they arrived. Thus, Tuaregs left a war-torn environment and entered the difficult conditions of their homeland. Eventually, confronted with economic hardship, in 2012, they chose to resume the insurgency.

## **B. OTHER FACTORS**

In addition to development policies and military interventions, a number of other important factors encouraged the insurgency. First, the Malian government's decentralization reforms communities. In fact, the Malian government tried to implement decentralization before the state had all the necessary means to accompany the new communities that decentralization had created. Without enough means and the failure to provide populations with a better understanding of the aims of decentralization, the government ended up misleading communities. Hence, decentralization failed as policy and created, an additional source of social discord because of the lack of clear explanations

regarding the division of the territory into distinct administrative communities. Thus, decentralization failed to unify the populations of all communities.

Historical tensions that existed in the northern regions between the Tuareg tribes or the Tuaregs and their neighbors sometimes reemerged in the northern region. Small confrontations between communities existed sometimes took place based on ethnicity or tribal questions. During the colonial period, the French did nothing to unite communities; instead, they based their policy on division to control the Tuareg group. These confrontations grew over time to negatively affect the relationship between the Tuaregs and the Malian state.

The proliferation of criminal groups contributed to insurgency because it hindered the prospect of the development projects due to the fear they established in the region. These criminal groups took advantage of the government's inability to accompany the development policy with the security it required. Eventually, when the region of the north became a safe haven for criminal groups, several illicit activities occurred, such as hostage-taking or drug-trafficking. These two activities flourished and negatively influenced some young Tuaregs to reject the Malian state's authority. Furthermore, this instability affected the sector of tourism, another area that previously provided jobs to many young Tuaregs. Tourism became dangerous in northern Mali because criminal groups taking tourists as hostage to gain money for their release flourished. Thus, young Tuaregs who earned their living from tourism languished. This loss of employment helps explain why the Tuaregs resumed hostilities against the Malian regime.

Moreover, the rise of private militias and the government's support of them promoted instability. In fact, due to the lack of stability, communities in the northern regions internal opposition. Each blamed the other for attacks against their community ethnic group. Instead of immediately banning the private militias so as not to exacerbate the existing tensions with the Tuareg community, the Malian authority used the private militias to help fight the Tuaregs. This involvement of the state in favor of distinct unofficial groups increased the Tuareg determination of self-protection and defiance against of the government. In addition to the state's violations of human rights in 1963, private militias also committed violence against the Tuaregs, whom they considered as

their enemy. Hence, the Malian authority played a significant role in pitting communities one against the other. This attitude of the Malian authorities also explained the Tuaregs' frustration and rebellion against Mali.

There were also geopolitical issues. The collapse of the Kaddafi regime in Libya is also an important reason for the Tuareg rebellion. Before the collapse of Kaddafi's regime, many Tuaregs lived in Libya. When conflict started there, they fled back to Mali. During their return to northern Mali, some Tuaregs brought sophisticated weapons. Later, these armed groups allied with the Islamist groups who were operating in the northern region despite the Malian military presence. The ATT's regime acceptance of armed groups in Malian territory incentivized the Tuaregs to launch the 2012 rebellion, which culminated in the defeat of the Malian military. The source of this last uprising was a direct consequence of the destabilization of Libya.

The French's geopolitical interests have played important roles in the destabilization of Mali. As long as Mali remains a country where there is competition between other superpowers, the Tuaregs will take advantage of this opposition to resume the conflict. Above all, when insurgents have close ties with a superpower, there is less chance they will negotiate because they might have relied on their support. Conversely, instability is likely to rise. At the regional level, interstate cooperation implemented to fight against criminal groups failed because Algeria, an essential member, withdrew, which eventually weakened the other states' members in their fight for stability in region. This withdrawal weakened the organization and enabled criminals to move freely in the Sahel. The criminal freedom of movement exacerbated tensions in northern Mali.

Additionally, the growing impunity and corruption continued to worsen governance in Mali, leading the people to question the system of governance. This in reality, is how the Malian government lost the support of the people. Mismanagement increased and the living conditions decreased in the north as well as in the south of the country. This weakening governance and corruption spread to the armed forces. Hence, violations of law became common until the military perpetrated the 2012 military coup d'état, considered anti-constitutional. Future research should further investigate the importance of these other factors for understanding the roots of the Tuareg insurgency. Additional investigation can

prove not only that the developmental policies and the Malian military intervention played a significant role in the tensions, but also could also identify other important factors not mentioned in this thesis. The result of such research guides researchers to deeper understanding of the roots of the uprising. Also, it helps that forcing development or using the military to impose peace does not necessarily solve crises.

### **C. IMPLICATIONS**

A focus on development policies and military interventions is an important theoretical contribution to the literature on the Tuareg insurgency. Existing theories tend to focus on ethnic divisions, poverty or the geographical expanse of Mali's territory. These theories ignore the important decisions made by the Malian state, as well as the strategic interactions between the Tuaregs and the Malian government. By focusing on development policies and military interventions, this thesis identifies a set of important proximate causes of the ongoing nature of conflict between Tuaregs and the Malian state.

There are also important policy implications. First, in view of the failure of development-oriented programs in the northern regions of the country, future political decision-makers must primarily understand that they need to stabilize the region first in order to achieve development. A strong army capable of stopping any threat to development projects creates stability. In addition, it will be important to learn that the military must remain constantly powerful for dissuasion and to use as an ultimate necessity.

Second, the Malian state has signed agreements whose application is almost impossible. For the future Malian political leaders, it will be important to take into account the capabilities of the country to meet the terms of the any peace agreement before signing it. This thesis demonstrates that the government's failure to apply agreements provided insurgents with important reasons to restart the conflict.

Moreover, countries like Algeria, Burkina Faso, Mauritania or Niger where Tuareg communities exist can learn from Mali's experience. In fact, in not respecting promises, a result of a peace agreement with insurgent groups can lead to further tensions. These countries, after Mali's experience, will do all the effort for a better understand of the Tuaregs and to their full integration into the society, this will avoid any breakout of

violence. Also, in case of Tuareg uprising, they should avoid military repression as an alternative of resolution unless several means of resolution fail.

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