

THE PARADOXICAL TRINITY OF THE RESPONSIBILITY
TO PROTECT IN THE MALIAN CONTEXT

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
General Studies

by

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			<i>Form Approved</i> <i>OMB No. 0704-0188</i>		
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 12-06-2020		2. REPORT TYPE Master's Thesis		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) AUG 2019 – JUN 2020	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE The Paradoxical Trinity of the Responsibility to Protect in the Malian Context			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER		
			5b. GRANT NUMBER		
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER		
6. AUTHOR(S) Captain Mohamed A.M. Keita			5d. PROJECT NUMBER		
			5e. TASK NUMBER		
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301			8. PERFORMING ORG REPORT NUMBER		
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)		
			11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)		
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT Since the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Mission for the Stabilization of Mali (MINUSMA) was established in 2013, attacks perpetrated by terrorist organizations against civilians, and intercommunal violence, have dramatically increased in Mali, especially in the Central region. Meanwhile, supported by the MINUSMA, and determined to fulfil its primary Responsibility to Protect (R2P) the people, the Malian state has adopted a strategy to reform its security sector, which aims notably at improving the Malian Armed Forces (FAMA) effectiveness so they can better accomplish their Protection of Civilians (PoC) mandate and combat terrorism. However, as civilians continue to be heavily targeted, both the MINUSMA and the state credibility has significantly deteriorated, with most of the people blaming the MINUSMA for its “unwillingness” to protect endangered communities consistently with its PoC mandate, as well as the state and the FAMA for their ineffectiveness. Paradoxically, the state and the MINUSMA, who are both struggling to implement and enforce their R2P and PoC conflictual mandates, tend to transfer and share their primary protection responsibilities with the people themselves, in an attempt to better combat human security threats.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Responsibility to Protect (R2P). Protection of Civilians (PoC). Paradoxical Trinity. Malian Armed Forces (FAMA). United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT	b. ABSTRACT	c. THIS PAGE			19b. PHONE NUMBER (include area code)
(U)	(U)	(U)	(U)	85	

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

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ABSTRACT

THE PARADOXICAL TRINITY OF THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT IN THE MALIAN CONTEXT, by Captain Mohamed A.M. Keita, 85 pages.

Since the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Mission for the Stabilization of Mali (MINUSMA) was established in 2013, attacks perpetrated by terrorist organizations against civilians, and intercommunal violence, have dramatically increased in Mali, especially in the Central region. Meanwhile, supported by the MINUSMA, and determined to fulfil its primary Responsibility to Protect (R2P) the people, the Malian state has adopted a strategy to reform its security sector, which aims notably at improving the Malian Armed Forces (FAMA) effectiveness so they can better accomplish their Protection of Civilians (PoC) mandate and combat terrorism. However, as civilians continue to be heavily targeted, the MINUSMA and the state credibility has significantly deteriorated, with most of the people blaming the MINUSMA for its “unwillingness” to protect endangered communities consistently with its PoC mandate, as well as the state and the FAMA for their ineffectiveness. Paradoxically, the state and the MINUSMA, who are both struggling to implement and enforce their R2P and PoC conflictual mandates, tend to transfer and share their primary protection responsibilities with the people themselves, to better combat human security threats.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As this thesis is the product of a collective effort, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all who in one way or another have contributed in its completion.

First, I am deeply thankful to my committee chair, Professor DeEtte A. Lombard, as well as my committee members, Dr. Rodney S. Morris, and Mr. Kevin G. Rousseau, without whom this research could not have been accomplished. Their continuous support, guidance, and enthusiasm have been a tremendous source of inspiration and motivation.

Second, I would like to extend my special gratitude to Mr. Christopher R. Johnson, Mr. Dwayne K. Wagner, and Mr. Roderic C. Jackson who helped me find the members of my committee. Without their fruitful assistance, I could not have even started this research process. I cannot also fail to thank Dr. Robert F. Baumann, Dr. Prisco Hernández, and Mrs. Ann M. Chapman, all from the Office of Degree Programs. Their commitment, patience, and precious tailored guidance have considerably enlightened the pathway through a successful research effort.

Third, I would like to thank my Staff Group Adviser, Mr. Edward V. Rowe, Lieutenant-Colonel Tom Chhabra, and my Kansas City sponsors, Charles and Anita Lenoire, for their permanent encouragement and daily support, which have been essential to the completion of the course. My appreciations also go to the staff of the Combined Arms Research Library for their professionalism and dedication to the success of all CGSC students.

Last but certainly not least, I would like to thank my parents, my beloved wife, Marguerite, and my two children, Tanya Henriette and Al Maamoun Charles, for their blessings and moral support. May God bless you all.

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ACRONYMS

AU	African Union
CGSC	Command and General Staff College
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
ECOWAS	Economic Community of the West African States
FAMA	Malian Armed Forces
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICIS	International Commission on Intervention and Sovereignty
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IHRL	International Human Rights Law
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Mission for the Stabilization of Mali
PoC	Protection of Civilians
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
SSR	Security Sector Reform
UN	United Nations
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UNPOL	United Nations Police
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Presentation and Purpose of the Topic

This thesis addresses the effectiveness of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Mission for the Stabilization of Mali (MINUSMA) in supporting the Malian state's primary responsibility to protect endangered civilians in Central Mali. The purpose of the research is to measure this effectiveness and analyze probable factors explaining why the quality of support brought by the United Nations (UN) mission to the Malian state is currently controversial. To understand this controversy, it seems necessary to analyze the national strategic context in which the MINUSMA is currently operating.

The MINUSMA deployed in a context where the Malian state was elaborating the national strategy for the Security Sector Reform (SSR) in the aftermath of the 2012 multidimensional crisis, and following the restoration of constitutional order in 2013. The SSR has two major objectives. The first objective is to increase the effectiveness of the Malian Armed Forces (FAMA) as primary providers of security and justice services to the civilian population. The second objective is to ensure that the FAMA account for their behaviors and attitudes towards the civilians because they have been entrusted with the legal use of force, on behalf of the Malian state, to accomplish their mandate, namely, the defense of the territorial integrity, and the protection of the people. Hence, the crucial notion of “responsibility” bearing the idea that with force comes necessary responsibility.

Importance of the Topic

This topic is significant to the military profession and security professionals because it helps them understand the importance of their role in the realization of the “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P) and “Protection of Civilians” (PoC), which are primordially the obligation of the state. In the current degraded security context, the image of security professionals has been tarnished by serious breaches of both the International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and the International Human Rights Law (IHRL). Clearly, the FAMA must behave like professionals during operations, in accordance with their ethics and deontology, to preserve and uphold the state’s vital credibility and legitimacy.

Moreover, this thesis emphasizes the significant role played by the MINUSMA, since their deployment in 2013, in the implementation of the SSR. Indeed, the SSR represents an opportunity to demonstrate that the MINUSMA’s main purpose is to support the Malian state through the peace process, and assist the FAMA in the protection of civilians. In the present context, the MINUSMA’s credibility has declined, as peacekeepers have been accused by the population of failing to intervene to stop the mass atrocities against civilians. However, what is perceived by many as another failure of the UN to prevent and react denotes a lack of understanding of the MINUSMA’s paradoxical and ambiguous mandate.

Core Assumption

In this thesis, it is assumed that the intentional assimilation of the R2P doctrine, which is highly political, to the PoC mandate, which is legally-based on IHL and IHRL, made the latter incoherent. Furthermore, this integration has undermined the mandate of

the peacekeepers who have not been trained and equipped to carry out large-scale R2P operations in a peacekeeping environment. It is paramount that all national actors engaged in the protection of civilians in Mali, and especially in the Central region, understand this serious limitation of the peacekeepers, to move forward in their collaboration, and assume their responsibility to better protect civilians. Meanwhile, it is essential that the UN Security Council (UNSC) improves the effectiveness of the peacekeepers either by providing them with “all necessary means to defend the mandate and protect the civilians including by the use of force,” to be able to undertake R2P operations; or, by detaching R2P doctrinal considerations from the PoC mandate for more clarity in its implementation by the peacekeepers.

Definition of Terms

Malian Armed Forces (FAMA): The Malian Armed Forces is the official entity regrouping the four principal armed forces responsible for the defense of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Mali, as well as the protection of the people and their properties across the country. These armed forces include: The Army; the Air Force; the National Guard; and the National Gendarmerie.

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Mission for the Stabilization of Mali (MINUSMA): The UN peacekeeping mission in Mali, established on 25 April 2013 by the UNSC Resolution 2100. Renewed annually by the Security Council, MINUSMA’s mandate includes: providing leadership assistance to the Malian authorities; engaging short and mid-term institutional and political reforms; supporting the Security Sector Reform process; and protecting civilians.

People: For the purposes of this thesis, the people refer to all Malian citizens who are neither members of the state apparatus nor the regular armed forces or organized armed groups. Characterized by their civilian status, the Malian people represent the sphere of society that is essentially defined by its apolitical and non-combatant nature. This entity forms the civil-society, and is composed of a multitude of individuals, communities, specific groups, or organizations, that are linked by common interests.

Security Sector Reform (SSR): The process by which countries formulate or re-orient the policies, structures, and capacities of institutions and groups engaged in the security sector (armed forces for example), to make them more effective, efficient, and responsive to democratic control, and to the security and justice needs of the people.

International Humanitarian Law (IHL): The body of International Law, codified in the 1949 four Geneva Conventions, which establishes the right of relief, as well as the rules of conduct during hostilities or armed conflicts, by regulating methods of warfare and establishing the responsibilities of the parties to the conflict. Also called “Law of Armed Conflicts” or “Law of War,” IHL safeguards military personnel who are not or no longer taking part in the fighting, and persons not actively involved in hostilities, including civilians.

International Human Rights Law (IHRL): The body of International Law, codified in several universal normative framework such as: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Convention against Torture (1984), the Genocide Convention (1948), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), or the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966). Applying to times of peace and war, IHRL aims at establishing the basic rights of all people, and defines the state’s responsibilities to protect and uphold

people's human rights (the right to life, the right to a fair trial, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of expression, etc.).

Significance of the Study and Justification of Qualification

This thesis builds on previous research by analysts and scholars, who are broadly specialized in IHL and UN Peacekeeping. Extensive work has already been conducted by a variety of authors in Law, Political Sciences, and International Relations, with regards to R2P and PoC, and their application in UN Peacekeeping operations. A wide range of these sources provide robust argumentation, illustrated by a panoply of case studies, that are used in this thesis. However, the present thesis draws its originality from two aspects. First, it examines the consequence of the assimilation of R2P and PoC in the UN peacekeeping operations' mandate on the peacekeepers' effectiveness, taking to consideration the Malian Central region environment. Second, it offers the singular view of an insider, the author of the thesis, on the research question, in a context where very few or no Malian military and security professionals have written about the subject matter from this perspective.

As a matter of fact, the author is qualified to explore this topic for two reasons. First, as an officer from the Malian National Gendarmerie, he is professionally involved in the protection of civilians and their properties daily, be it in peace time or war time. On one hand, in peace time, the National Gendarmerie protects the civilians by enforcing human rights law. On the other hand, in times of armed conflict, the National Gendarmerie provost units are responsible to protect the civilians, according to the Geneva Conventions provisions, by overseeing the Army's conduct during operations; which is often extremely challenging. Second, his experience as a gendarme requires

collaboration with many UN Country-Team agencies, as well as the MINUSMA, either to improve the work of the gendarmerie or, as a trainer, to educate the commissioned and non-commissioned officers of the FAMA in IHL, also known as the Law of Armed Conflict.

Limitations

Distance represents the major limitation to the study that is beyond the author's control, and which may have influenced the data collection. Indeed, being in the United States as a student in the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC), the author is constrained to conduct research on an issue that is currently developing in the African continent. The absence of fieldwork and direct contact with some of the key actors of this study may have limited the quantity and quality of data collected. To mitigate this factor, the author capitalized on his knowledge and experience about the operational environment considered.

Delimitations

Two delimitations, which represent deliberately self-imposed constraints, have been applied to this study. The first delimitation is related to the language of the sources collected. Indeed, most of the sources selected by the author are in English, and few of them are in French. Some people could find this surprising since French is not only the author's mother tongue, but it is also the first official language of Mali. Others may rightly criticize this choice arguing that pushing aside data in French could deprive the readers, and the research, from valuable information. In fact, the author believes that to facilitate the difficult process of writing a thesis in English, using the appropriate and

scientific terms, it is more helpful to collect, read, and analyze data which are in that same language. The author has mitigated the risk of losing valuable French sources for the research by selecting the most important ones. Moreover, one will notice that many of the English references selected for this study also exist in French versions.

The second delimitation refers to the focus on the MINUSMA's support, which is not a fortuitous choice. Readers may wonder why the author has not given priority to other African organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) or the African Union (AU), which could play a more effective role given their geographical proximity with the Malian problem. The truth of the matter is that it is more relevant for this study to focus on the MINUSMA simply because the primary existing organization that is supporting the Malian authorities in the peace process since 2013 is the UN Mission, and not the ECOWAS or the AU. As a matter of fact, the UN Security Council (UNSC) authorized the deployment of the MINUSMA to replace the ineffective ECOWAS and AU's International Mission for Assistance of Mali. Additionally, the ECOWAS just as the AU has the same R2P and PoC doctrine, which are ultimately both aligned with the UN's doctrine.

Principal and Subsidiary Research Questions

The primary research question is: "How can the MINUSMA better support the Malian state in its primary responsibility to protect the endangered civilians of Central Mali?"

Subsidiary questions include:

1. Why is it complex to protect civilians in the current Malian armed conflict?

2. How can we assess the relationships between the state, the people, and the MINUSMA regarding the issue of 'responsibility' to protect?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Debate around R2P and PoC

Before measuring the effectiveness of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Mission for the Stabilization of Mali (MINUSMA) support to the Malian state primary responsibility to protect endangered civilians in Central Mali, it is vital to determine how the two central concepts that define the subject, namely, the “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P) and the “Protection of Civilians” (PoC) have been defined and analyzed in the literature. This review of the literature will enable the author to identify the gap(s) in current works.

R2P and PoC both refer to the highly controversial notion of “protection” in international law, and they represent thorny issues because of their possible interferences with state sovereignty. In his article, “International Law, Sovereignty and the Responsibility to Protect: An Overview,” Dr Thomas P. Botchway, a Ghanaian scholar expert in International Law, describes the evolution of the concept of “state-sovereignty” since the Treaty of Westphalia (from absolute sovereignty to conditioned sovereignty). Botchway shows that international relations are currently marked by a growing tension between two notions: state-centered sovereignty and people-centered sovereignty. He demonstrates the consequences that such conflict exerts on the credibility and operationalization of the Responsibility to Protect. As a matter of fact, the international law’s range of legal instruments, defined by states as a group or individually, has constrained, or limited, the powers of states, requiring them to protect the rights of

citizens. As Koffi Annan¹ pointed out, states are regarded as “instruments at the service of their people, and not vice versa.” Hence, there are two basic principles which underpin the concept of the responsibility to protect as endorsed by the international community through the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS). First, the primary responsibility to protect lies with the state itself. Second, if the state is unwilling or unable to protect its own citizens, then the international community has the responsibility to intervene.² Botchway rejects the validity of these principles arguing that the apparent paradox of the ICISS report (recognizing that the Permanent Five members of the UNSC can veto any humanitarian intervention whenever their “vital state interests” are at stake) clearly undermines the legitimacy of the concept of “Responsibility to Protect.”

In his essay entitled “From Sovereignty as Responsibility to the Responsibility to Protect,” Dr. Francis M. Deng³ builds on his previous work (Sovereignty as

¹ From 1997 to 2006, Koffi Annan (1938-2018) served as the seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations. His strong commitment to peace, development, and human rights are considered a foundation to the R2P doctrine endorsed by the international community in the 2005 World Summit.

² The principles of R2P, also called “the pillars,” can be found in the original report of the ICIS published in 2001. See International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), *The Responsibility to Protect*, Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect, 1 December 2001, accessed 6 September 2019, <http://www.globalr2p.org/resources/298>. In addition, a former CGSC student proposed a short analysis of these principles in his MMAS thesis. See Augustin Hodali, “Implementation of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) Norms by the African Standby Force in Sub-Saharan Africa,” (Master’s thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, June 2017), 17-18.

³ From 2007 to 2012, Dr Francis M. Deng, a South-Sudanese scholar and diplomat, served the United Nations as the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on

responsibility: Conflict Management in Africa), to show that the international enforcement of the principles of International Human Rights Law (IHRL), International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and R2P, have progressed considerably over the past decade thanks to the monitoring and reporting procedures enacted by international human rights bodies. Deng confirms that the principle of “sovereignty as responsibility” still implies accountability of both the state and the international community. He argues that the international community, and not the victims of internal conflicts, has the full capacity to persuade governments to discharge their primary R2P or to face the consequences of “the vacuum left by irresponsible or unresponsive sovereignty.”⁴ Deng affirms that some governments lack the resources and capacities to protect their threatened populations. Therefore, the international community’s responsibility is to offer them support “in a way that links humanitarian assistance with protection.”⁵ Deng concludes that assisting and protecting victims of internal conflicts is no longer insurmountable even though the narrow traditional concept of sovereignty remains an obstacle.

In his article, “The Practice, Pitfalls, and Prospects of the Responsibility to Protect in Africa,” Nicolas I. Erameh⁶ demonstrates that the concept of R2P has generated much debate. There are two primary opposing schools of thought: those who

the Prevention of Genocide. He wrote extensively on issues related to the present thesis such as international law, conflict resolution, internal displacement, and human rights.

⁴ Francis M. Deng, “From Sovereignty as Responsibility to the Responsibility to Protect,” *Global Responsibility to Protect* 2, no. 4 (2010): 19.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Nicholas I. Erameh is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. His fields of expertise include Humanitarian Intervention and the R2P in Africa.

support R2P as a necessary moral framework to respond to humanitarian catastrophes; and those who view it with great suspicion. Erameh argues that even though the doctrine is largely contested, the nature of conflicts with grave humanitarian consequences justifies its imperative application. However, he observes that the practice of R2P in Africa has remained controversial and largely counterproductive because the doctrine tends to aggravate the problems it was intended to solve. This author notes that there has been a “concentration” on Pillar 3 of the doctrine (Use of Force) that has led to a “misuse, misapplication, and misinterpretation” of the UNSC’s Resolutions. He mentions the cases of Libya and Mali to illustrate his point.

Regarding the PoC, Cristina C. Carmen⁷ has demonstrated in her article entitled “Protecting Civilians in Armed Conflict: International Framework and Challenges,” that in a world where non-international armed conflicts have become the norm, the suitability of existing legal frameworks and the legal responsibility of states to protect civilians is also seriously challenged. Carmen reminds us that PoC is founded on key principles defined in IHL, IHRL, and R2P. She focuses on the normative debate around the concept of Responsibility to Protect, and sheds light on the main difference between PoC and R2P stating that: “PoC encompasses more situations than the four mass atrocities to which R2P applies, but at the same time is limited to situations of armed conflict, while R2P extends beyond armed conflict as mass atrocities can occur in other situations of armed violence.”⁸

⁷ Cristina C. Carmen is Research Analyst at the European Parliament. Her fields of expertise include the European Union and the PoC in armed conflicts.

⁸ Carmen-Cristina Cîrlig, PE 573.917, “Protecting Civilians in Armed Conflict: International Framework and Challenges,” European Parliament Research Service,

Interestingly, Carmen also analyzes the main challenges of PoC in armed conflicts based on the five core challenges identified by the UN Secretary-General in his reports on PoC in armed conflict:

1. Enhancing compliance of conflicting parties with their international law obligations;
2. Engaging non-state armed groups;
3. Protecting civilians through UN peacekeeping and other relevant missions;
4. Improving humanitarian access; and
5. Enhancing accountability for violations.⁹

According to Keiichiro Okimoto¹⁰ in his article, “Protection of Civilians in International Humanitarian Law and by the Use of Force under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations,” International Humanitarian Law, through the 1949 Geneva Conventions, constitutes the traditional legal basis for the Protection of Civilians during international as well as non-international armed conflicts. Although the rules on PoC are applicable to all states and other actors involved in hostilities, it is noted that the UN peacekeeping forces have become increasingly engaged in protection of civilians during internal conflicts. Okimoto discusses in detail and clarifies the United Nations’

Members’ Research Service, January 2016 Briefing, 5, accessed 06 September 2019, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/573917/EPRS_BRI\(2016\)573917_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/573917/EPRS_BRI(2016)573917_EN.pdf).

⁹ Ibid., 8-10.

¹⁰ A former legal adviser to the International Committee of the Red Cross delegations in Iraq, Israel and the occupied territories, the Philippines, and Rwanda, Keiichiro Okimoto has written extensively on Public International Law and Human Rights related issues.

concept of PoC in armed conflicts.¹¹ This leads him to differentiate between two modes of PoC in armed conflicts: PoC under IHL which has been tried and tested since the Hague Regulations in 1899 without a clear success (rules constantly violated); and the UN approach to PoC using force under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Okimoto argues that the latter's effects on civilians is highly controversial, and "continues to be under scrutiny."¹²

Finally, Professor Raphael Van Steenberghe's¹³ essay entitled "The Notions of the Responsibility to Protect and the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: Detecting Their Association and Its Impact upon International Law," is of interest for this thesis because the author compares the concepts of R2P and PoC in armed conflicts. Indeed, Steenberghe analyzes the debate between those who advocate for the integration of both concepts, considering that R2P is part of the PoC normative framework; and those who support the idea that both concepts should be differentiated (PoC as legal-based *versus* R2P as politically-oriented). Steenberghe demonstrates that the association of R2P and PoC, may transform the negative public perception of R2P. The first major risk of such

¹¹ Keiichiro Okimoto, "Protection of Civilians in International Humanitarian Law and by the Use of Force under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations," *Asia-Pacific Yearbook of International Humanitarian Law* 4 (2008-2011): 43-51, accessed 06 September 2019, https://www.academia.edu/2190844/Keiichiro_Okimoto_Protection_of_Civilians_in_International_Humanitarian_Law_and_by_the_Use_of_Force_under_Chapter_VII_of_the_Charter_of_the_United_Nations_4_Asia-Pacific_Yearbook_of_International_Humanitarian_Law_2008-2011_1-77.

¹² *Ibid.*, 78.

¹³ Raphael Van Steenberghe is a Professor at the International Law Centre of the University of Louvain. Professor Steenberghe's areas of expertise include Public International Law, Interstate use of force, International Humanitarian Law, and International Criminal Law.

fusion would be the politicization of IHL, which could jeopardize the UN Peacekeeping principles of neutrality and impartiality and, by extension, it could undermine the legitimacy of the UN Peacekeeping mandate. Other risks are conflation of the scope of violations in both concepts as well as the bearers of the primary responsibility.

Gap in the Literature

Steenberghe's analysis on the differences and commonalities of R2P and PoC, and how both concepts may conflict in the context of a UN Peacekeeping operation needs to be extensively researched and confirmed. Indeed, this argument could explain the limitations of the MINUSMA while supporting the Malian state in its primary responsibility to protect the endangered civilians in Central Mali.

UN Peacekeeping Operation and the Implementation of their PoC Mandate

To progressively and rationally approach the subject matter, this section examines the literature related to the way UN missions tend to implement their PoC mandate in the context of a non-international armed conflict.

In his provocative work entitled "The Dangerous Liaisons of the Responsibility to Protect and the Protection of Civilians in Peacekeeping Operations," Dr. Thierry Tardy¹⁴ observes that there is an attempt by the international community, through the UN (especially since 2009 with the then UN Secretary General Report), to mainstream R2P goals in the realm of peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Tardy affirms that the two

¹⁴ Dr. Thierry Tardy serves at the NATO Defense College of Rome as Director of the Research Division. His areas of expertise include crisis management and peace operations.

concepts are different in nature, and that their amalgamation is counterproductive. Tardy analyzes the predictable rapprochement of the two concepts within peacekeeping operations in three different areas:

1. That conceptual proximity has allowed for certain unintended synergies between the two processes;
2. That R2P has been presented as an alternative to inadequate peacekeeping operations that would fail to protect the civilians; and
3. That peacekeeping operations, and their protection mandate, are perceived as ways to operationalize R2P.

Besides, arguing that the rapprochement of the two concepts in peacekeeping operations is counterproductive, Tardy also argues that it is risky because it may negatively impact the legitimacy of both concepts. In other words, assimilating R2P with PoC may undermine the civilian protection mandate of peacekeeping operations. Tardy evokes three reasons to support his argument:

1. R2P is narrower in scope than the PoC. R2P can only be invoked in four exceptional cases of mass atrocities (war crimes, crime against humanity, crime of genocide, and ethnic cleansing), whereas PoC covers a much broader range of threats;
2. R2P's third pillar implies a degree of use of force that is qualitatively superior to the use of force that peacekeeping missions can resort to, even in robust mandate; and
3. Lastly, Tardy warns that there is a risk of politicizing the PoC if R2P is made commonplace in peacekeeping operations.

In the same vein, Professor Wills Siobhan's¹⁵ book entitled "Protecting Civilians: The Obligations of Peacekeepers" is of interest for understanding how the UN attempts to amalgamate the political nature of R2P with the legal status of PoC peacekeeping mandates. After a historical review of PoC by UN peacekeepers, Siobhan demonstrates that in the context of Peace Operations, PoC is a "Responsibility." In fact, peacekeepers and other Multi-national forces have both a general "Responsibility to Protect" civilians under IHL and IHRL. She further argues that: "General areas of protection responsibility that concern peacekeeping forces fall into three broad categories: preventing attacks and abuse by their own troops; protecting people in their care from attacks and abuses by third-parties; and protecting the local population from attacks and abuses."¹⁶

Gap in the Literature

There is currently very little or nothing written on the consequences of the assimilation of R2P and PoC in Peacekeeping missions. Future research needs to focus in this area. The author of this thesis is convinced that this work will significantly contribute to the understanding of this issue using the Malian case, through the MINUSMA, into consideration.

¹⁵ Siobhán Wills is Professor of Law at Ulster University, and a College Lecturer at University College Cork. Her areas of interest include protection of civilians, peacekeeping, and use of force.

¹⁶ Siobhán Wills, *Protecting Civilians: The Obligations of Peacekeepers* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 261.

MINUSMA's Effectiveness under Scrutiny

To be able to measure the MINUSMA's effectiveness in terms of PoC, it is essential to understand how the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) officially approaches this concept. With this regard, the United Nations' founding document is entitled "The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping." This reference, which emanates from the UN headquarters, represents how the UN seeks to implement the PoC strategy in Peacekeeping operations. Thus, PoC in Peacekeeping is clearly defined as: "without prejudice to the primary responsibility of the host state, integrated and coordinated activities by all civilian and uniformed mission components to prevent, deter or respond to threats of physical violence against civilians within the mission's capabilities and areas of deployment through the use of all necessary means, up to and including deadly force."¹⁷

The document further compares the concepts of PoC and R2P, while also stressing their difference:

Like PoC, the responsibility to protect (R2P) also aims at addressing instances of physical violence, with a specific focus on mass atrocities (genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing). While the R2P framework shares some legal and conceptual foundations and employs some common terminology with POC, they are distinct. Most importantly, R2P may be invoked without the consent of the host state, specifically when the host state is failing to protect its population. R2P thus envisages a range of action that goes beyond the principles of peacekeeping, which require the consent of the host state.¹⁸

¹⁷ United Nations Department of Peace Operations (DPO), DPO Policy Reference 2019.17, *The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping*, 1 November 2019, 6, accessed 7 December 2019, <https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/wp-content/uploads/DPO-Policy-on-The-Protection-of-Civilians-in-United-Nations-Peacekeeping.pdf>.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

Paradoxically, the peacekeepers are also granted R2P powers in some extreme circumstances, which may replace the host state primary responsibility to protect civilians on its territory: “The mission will, as far as possible, support the host state’s protection efforts but may act independently to protect civilians when the host state is deemed unable or unwilling to do so or where government forces themselves pose a threat to civilians.”¹⁹

The “MINUSMA’s Protection of Civilians Strategy” builds on the UN approach to PoC in Peacekeeping operations. This strategy provides an overview of the main PoC threats in Mali as of January 2017, including: “Inter- or intra- community violence; Armed banditry; Unconventional (asymmetric) and/or terrorist attacks by non-state armed actors using terrorist tactics, techniques and procedures; Conventional attacks and other abuses by non-state armed groups, inter- or intra- armed group clashes and violations/abuses by state actors.”²⁰ Measuring the success and effectiveness of this strategy is essential to this research.

A panoply of references suggests that the number of attacks against innocent civilians as well as violations of human rights in Mali, and especially in the conflictual regions, has increased despite the adoption of the MINUSMA PoC strategy. Indeed, in a recent interview that followed the 23 March 2019, massacre of 139 members of the Fulani community in the Village of Ogossagou, Central Mali, International Crisis Group

¹⁹ DPO, DPO Policy Reference 2019.17, 7.

²⁰ United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Mission for the Stabilization of Mali (MINUSMA), *Protection of Civilians Strategy*, MINUSMA, United Nations, 3 May 2017, 13.

(ICG)'s Sahel Project Director, Jean-Hervé Jezequel, related the event, and explained that:

International forces are also active in the country's centre, but MINUSMA has concentrated its resources on Mopti and its mobility is compromised by security rules and a lack of resources . . . The international community can support the Malian government's efforts to restore order in Bankass, Koro and Bandiagara districts, which are the most affected by the recent violence. In the first instance, this is the responsibility of the MINUSMA, which has a mandate to protect the civilian population and provide advice and support to the government. Provided that the Malian authorities agree, it could, in the weeks to come, establish a base in Bankass with a strong police presence and a military contingent that includes a rapid reaction force (as in Mopti).²¹

Additionally, in ICG's recent Africa Report entitled "Speaking with the 'Bad Guys': Toward Dialogue with Central Mali's Jihadists," ICG's experts argue that both the counter-terrorism and development approaches to solve the problem are limited because they tend to exacerbate pre-existing conflicts. In the face of the Malian state weakness, and the international community failure to prevent recent mass atrocities in Central Mali, Ibrahim Y. Ibrahim and Mollie Zapata,²² in "Regions at risk, preventing mass atrocities in Mali," have expressed four key recommendations to better protect civilians and prevent mass atrocities in the region:

1. Ensure that counterterrorism operations do not exacerbate risks of mass atrocities;

²¹ International Crisis Group, "Central Mali: Putting a Stop to Ethnic Cleansing," Interview, 25 March 2019, accessed 26 October 2019, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/mali/centre-du-mali-enrayer-le-nettoyage-ethnique>.

²² Ibrahim Y. Ibrahim and Mollie Zapata are both Early Warning Fellows and Research Associates with the Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide. A Ph.D. candidate in Political Science, Ibrahim is also a Research Associate with the Sahel Research Group at the University of Florida.

2. Support the peaceful management of intercommunal conflicts that could lead to mass atrocities;
3. Promote justice and accountability; and
4. Improve information related to violence and efforts to prevent it.²³

Finally, the 2019 report of the UN Secretary General on the situation in Mali demonstrates that the UN's attention is increasingly focused on the deterioration of the situation in Central Mali. Also, the report represents an official way to measure the effectiveness of MINUSMA's PoC strategy. Thus, as of May 2019, the assessment of the PoC situation in Central Mali suggests that the strategy has failed to prevent mass atrocities in the region:

The central region of Mali, where an estimated 30 per cent of the country's 20 million population lives, continued to record the highest number of attacks against civilians and civilian casualties, owing to a further increase in intercommunal clashes and violence, as well as attacks by terrorist groups and self-defence militias. Violence across community lines occurred primarily in Koro and Bankass districts, Mopti region, between the Dogon and Fulani communities, and in Djenne district, Mopti region, between Fulani and Bambara communities.²⁴

The report includes recommendations made by the Secretary General to improve MINUSMA's support to the Malian state in Central Mali. According to the Secretary General, the lack of "effective mandate implementation is contingent upon several critical

²³ Ibrahim Y. Ibrahim and Mollie Zapata, *Regions at Risk: Preventing Mass Atrocities in Mali*, Early Warning Country Report, April 2018, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, The Simon-Skjodt Center, 31-33, accessed 6 September 2019, https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/Mali_Report_English_FINAL_April_2018.pdf.

²⁴ United Nations Security Council (USNC), UNSC S/2019/454, *Situation in Mali (Report of the Secretary General)*, 31 May 2019, 5, accessed 6 September 2019, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/S_2019_454_E.pdf.

factors, including the political will of the Government and the signatory armed movements, as well as performance and adequate resources.”²⁵

Gap in the Literature

Very little, or no work has been conducted in the scholarly arena regarding measurement of the MINUSMA’s PoC strategy effectiveness. The only way to attempt to evaluate the success of this strategy is through the various articles and UN reports that reflect a grave deterioration of human rights situation in Central Mali where attacks against civilians are intensifying despite the MINUSMA presence, and the Malian state’s political will to affirm its primary responsibility to protect. Further research needs to determine whether the Malian state has a strategy to address PoC or R2P; if yes, that strategy needs to be assessed.

²⁵ USNC, UNSC S/2019/454, 12.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

As a reminder, the primary research question of this study is: How can the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Mission for the Stabilization of Mali (MINUSMA) better support the Malian state in its primary responsibility to protect the endangered civilians in Central Mali? To find answers to the research question, as well as the subsidiary questions and issues raised in the literature review, the author of this thesis applied qualitative research methodology. In this regard, and for this thesis, the author has used three research methods, namely: the textual analysis, criticism, and comparison methodology applied through the “briefing the old Man” technique; the passive observation; and lastly, the case study methodology.

“Briefing the Old Man” Method

The “briefing the Old Man” method is inspired and taught by Dr. Prisco Hernández, Director of the Graduate Degree Programs of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, and it has been used to organize the literature review.²⁶ As depicted in figures 1 and 2, the approach used consists of assessing the key works dealing with the research topic in an order that begins with works that treat the general topic of the research interest first; progressing to those which deal more specifically with the

²⁶ This method is like the technique that officers use when introducing a commander to the area of operations in a briefing; i.e. from the large-scale (strategic) and general (operational) to the specific (tactical).

subject; and finally, to those which deal specifically with the research question or questions. The source materials include books, articles, reports, United Nations' relevant resolutions, documentaries, or interviews of top Malian and MINUSMA officials conducted by local or international journalists. One may also think of this method as the *three-level analysis* based on deductive reasoning, and founded on the core assumption that the understanding of issues pertaining to the echelon above will determine the understanding of issues specific to the echelon below.

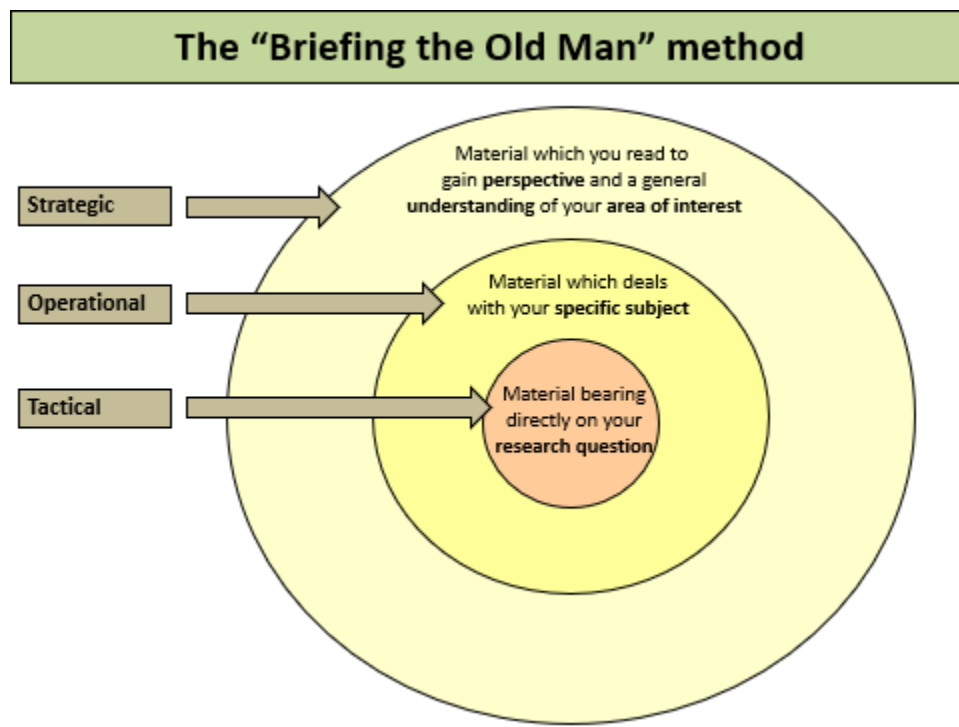


Figure 1. The "Briefing the Old Man" Method

Source: Prisco R. Hernández, "Fundamentals of Research, Part 1" (Lecture, A211 Research Methods, Office of Degree Programs, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, September 2019). Thus, the same method has been applied to the present research to organize the collection of evidence necessary to answer the principal and secondary research questions. Figure 2 depicts an example of the "briefing the old man" method applied to this study.

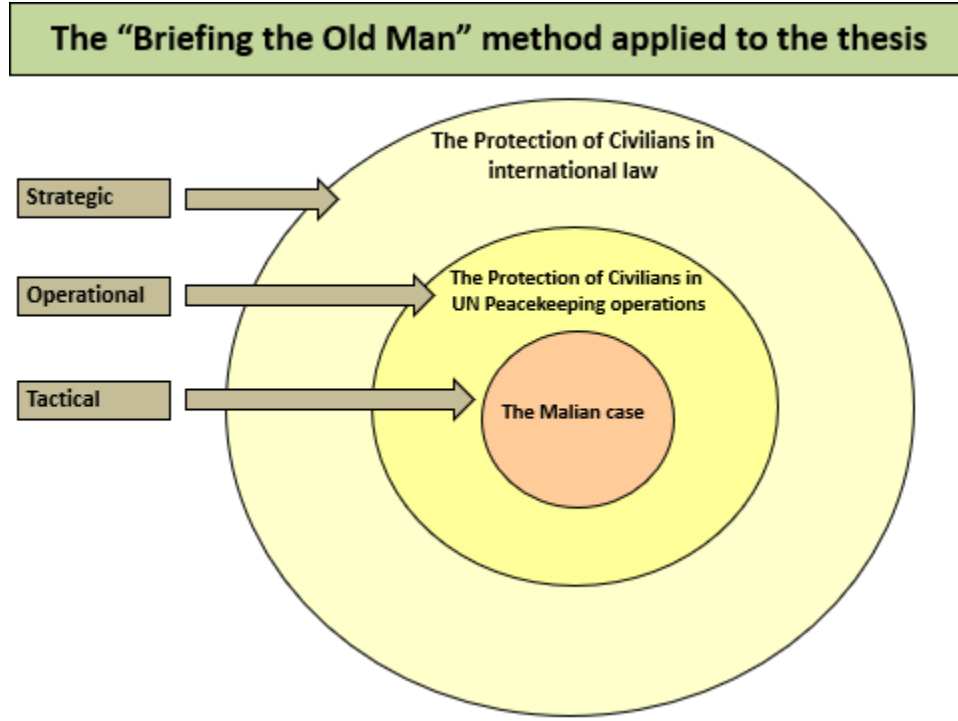


Figure 2. The “Briefing the Old Man” Method Applied to the Thesis

Source: Created by the author using the original figure from Prisco R. Hernández, “Fundamentals of Research, Part 1” (Lecture, A211 Research Methods, Office of Degree Programs, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, September 2019).

Passive Observation Methodology

Passive observation is a methodology widely used in social science. It consists of observing behaviors, attitudes and reactions of individuals without interacting with them. This kind of *Laissez-faire* approach presents the advantage of not influencing the subjects whom are observed. The observer takes extensive notes on what is objectively observed. In this method, listening also constitutes a critical skill. Examples of this sort include observation in public places such as public parks, train stations, airports, or fast-food.

Choosing an appropriate place where he/she can sit and carry out a one-hour observation without bothering anyone, the passive observer discreetly writes down his/her observations on the spot regarding the spatial arrangements, movements, and interactions.

Passive observation has already been applied for the present research during two major events organized in Kansas City. The first observation was at the National WW I Museum on September 24, 2019, during a one-hour conference on the following theme: *“Protecting the Peace: United Nations Peacekeepers in the 21st Century.”* This conference saw the participation, as panelists, of four CGSC international military students who have experienced numerous deployments as UN peacekeepers. Overall, the event served as an opportunity to measure the degree of familiarization of the panelists with the problematics raised by the research topic. The author collected valuable information based on the formal interview conducted by the moderator, the individual presentations, and the various contributions during the Question & Answer session. Most importantly, it must be emphasized that the author was authorized, by the organizers, to record the event, and exploit the data collected for research. The panelists agreed to be quoted.

The second event was organized by the United Nations Association of the United States of America, Greater Kansas City Chapter, on October 21, 2019. It was the 48th annual Mayor’s UN day dinner. Likewise, this event served as an opportunity to listen to practitioners’ experiences in the realm of protecting civilians, especially children, in conflictual contexts.

The Case Study Methodology

This thesis focuses on one case study, which addresses the issue of protecting civilians in the Malian armed conflict, and especially in Central Mali. As Russell Lenth explained in his article entitled “Some Practical Guidelines for Effective Sample Size Determination,” the main purpose of the case study methodology is to provide an in-depth conceptual analysis of critical events, factors, or actors, and to explain how they relate to each other in a particular context.²⁷ The academic world is replete with examples of case studies used by researchers to examine in detail a real-world issue, for instance the impact of climate change on sustainable development in emergent states, and propose solutions to solve that problem. To explore the complex problem identified in this study and find solutions, the author of the thesis made use of a variety of data essentially collected in the Combined Arms Research Library of the CGSC, through public presentations, and via the Internet open sources. To visualize and describe the relationships, functions, and tensions among the state, the people, and the MINUSMA regarding the issue of ‘responsibility’ to protect, the author used a tool of choice called “the relationship matrix.”

In U.S. Joint Planning doctrine, the relationship matrix is one of the tools used by U.S. Combatant Commanders and their staff to develop their strategic estimate, which corresponds to an in-depth analysis of a region or an entire area of responsibility.²⁸ The

²⁷ Russell Lenth is a retired Professor Emeritus of Statistics, University of Iowa (USA). His argument is mentioned in Augustin, “Implementation of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) Norms by the African Standby Force in Sub-Saharan Africa,” 36.

²⁸ Department of Joint, Interagency and Multinational Operations, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC), “Guide to Strategic Estimate

purpose of this matrix is to gain an understanding of the challenges, opportunities and risks that emanate from the interactions between the actors. Table 1 displays a sample of the relationship matrix, developed by U.S. Army personnel, and introduced to CGSC students during the practicum “Strategic Estimate of the Baltic Sea Region.” In the “Guide to Strategic Estimate Development,” the authors explain how the matrix should be read:

To use the matrix, one plots how each country views the others in the rows and the columns, thereby gaining two perspectives on each bi-state relationship. For example, following the “Russia” row, the block in which Russia intersects with Estonia would depict how Russia views its relationship with Estonia. Dropping down one row to the “Estonia” row, the block in which Estonia intersects with Russia . . . These two perspectives will likely be quite different. Color coding of each cell of the chart provides a quick view of its character – either Risk, Caution, or Positive.²⁹

Development,” C299 RA Strategic Estimate Practical Exercise, (CGSC, Fort Leavenworth, KS, September 2019).

²⁹ Ibid.

Table 1. The Relationship Matrix Example

Analysis of Baltic Sea Countries' Relationships							
	Russia	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania	Poland	Finland	Sweden
Russia		How Russia Views Its Relationship with Estonia					
Estonia	How Estonia Views Its Relationship with Russia						
Latvia							
Lithuania							
Poland							
Finland							
Sweden							

Source: Department of Joint, Interagency and Multinational Operations, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC), "Guide to Strategic Estimate Development," C299 RA Strategic Estimate Practical Exercise (CGSC, Fort Leavenworth, KS, September 2019), 6-7.

As it is clear, the matrix relationship applied to the Malian case study will allow a better understanding, visualization, and description of the interactions between the three actors mentioned above, through their perceptions, where they agree and where they do not. The major limitation of the matrix is the fact that it does not analyze the grey zones, namely, the blocks in which each actor intersects with himself. Thus, in this study, a fourth color, grey, will complete the legend. As a matter of fact, analyzing the grey zones is crucial not only to reflect on the unknowns about each actor, but also to understand

how each one perceives himself, and what strategies or reforms they have adopted and implemented to address the issue of protection.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Introduction

The findings of this study are organized around the principal and subsidiary research questions as mentioned in Chapter 1. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Mission for the Stabilization of Mali (MINUSMA) effectiveness in support of the Malian state's primary responsibility to protect endangered civilians in Central Mali constitutes a very complicated problem. To understand this problem, one must analyze first the level of complexity that characterizes the strategic and operational environment in question. By doing so, the author addresses the challenges of civilian protection in Central Mali, which will drive a successive study of the major obstacles to the state's ability to protect, the major obstacles due to the ambiguous nature of the conflict and, lastly, the major obstacles to effective training of armed forces personnel. Second, an analysis of the relationships between the main actors is imperative to understand that the problem of responsibility to protect is not only at the level of the MINUSMA, but also at the levels of the state and the people. To clarify that crucial point, the paradoxical trinity of the responsibility to protect is proffered, which finally takes the analysis to an interpretation of the relationship matrix.

Overview of the Challenges of Civilian Protection in Central Mali

When the Malian Armed Forces (FAMA) arrived in the Fulani village of Ogossagou, Central Mali, it was already too late.³⁰ On the morning of March 23, 2019, the FAMA discovered that 134 persons were dead, and the entire community nearly annihilated. Disturbing images broadcast by the media displayed the horrific scenes of women, children, and even animals, brutally killed. In addition, corpses and all huts were set on fire.³¹ Thus far, neither the terrorist organizations nor the vigilante groups involved in the ongoing armed conflict have claimed responsibility for this atrocious crime. Calling on the Malian government to urgently investigate and bring the perpetrators to justice, the United Nations Human Rights Office warned that “the protection of lives and the well-being of civilians is at stake.”³² At the national level, Malian public opinion is that the state as well as the international forces present have failed to protect innocent civilians from gross human rights violations and, therefore, must exercise due diligence to prevent further attacks against civilians, react to stop such attacks, and rebuild the socio-ethnic fabric.³³

³⁰ See Appendix A for maps of Mali and Central Mali.

³¹ Eliane Luthi, “Opinion: Children are paying the highest price in central Mali’s insecurity,” *CNN*, 25 April 2019, accessed 26 October 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/04/25/africa/mali-village-ogossagou-massacre/index.html>.

³² The United Nations, “Central Mali: Top UN Genocide Prevention Official Sounds Alarm Over Recent Ethnically-Targeted Killings,” *UN News*, 28 March 2019, accessed 6 September 2019, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/03/1035661>.

³³ Amandla Thomas-Johnson, “Massacre in Mali: How the ‘War on Terror’ Fuels Tribal Violence in the Sahel,” *The Middle East Eye*, 28 March 2019, accessed 6 September 2019. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/big-story/massacre-mali-how-war-terror-fuels-tribal-violence-sahel> The United Nations.

Preventing, reacting, and rebuilding, represent the three core elements of the Responsibility to Protect doctrine (R2P). Based on Francis M. Deng, Sadikiel Kimaro, and Terrence Lyons' idea that the "state's sovereignty is a responsibility,"³⁴ the International Commission on Intervention and Sovereignty endorsed this view in a report, "The Responsibility to Protect," stipulating that "the primary responsibility for the protection of its people lies with the state itself."³⁵ Since the adoption of the United Nations World Summit Outcome Document in 2005, the principle of R2P was elevated into a global doctrine. With this development, member states, including Mali, officially pledged to act according to their obligation, and acknowledged that "[e]ach individual state has the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. This responsibility entails the prevention of such crimes, including their incitement, through appropriate and necessary means."³⁶

Mali's commitment to protect its populations reflects the state's strong dedication to uphold human rights values not only in peace time, but also in times of armed conflict during which the law of war especially applies. Often referred to as "International Humanitarian Law (IHL)," the law of war's sacrosanct principles were codified by the four Geneva Conventions in 1949, with two Additional Protocols adopted in 1977.

³⁴ Francis M. Deng, Sadikiel Kimaro, Terrence Lyons, Donald Rothchild, and I. William Zartman, *Sovereignty as Responsibility: Conflict Management in Africa*, ed. The Brookings Institution (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1996).

³⁵ ICISS, *The Responsibility to Protect*.

³⁶ United Nations General Assembly, Resolution A/60/L.1, *2005 World Summit Outcome*, 15 September 2005, accessed 6 September 2019, <http://www.globalr2p.org/resources/280>.

Dealing with non-international armed conflicts, the second Additional Protocol as well as common Article 3 to the four Conventions bind the state-parties to their legal requirements, and underpin principles of distinction, precaution, proportionality, military necessity and humanity through the prohibition of superfluous injury or unnecessary harm. However, given the challenging nature of asymmetrical warfare, those principles tend to be frequently flouted, which is ultimately prejudicial to the state's R2P. As a matter of fact, protecting civilians in the Malian armed conflict is complex owing to state and security apparatus weaknesses, the permanent 'fog' surrounding current internal wars, and the ineffective training of the military personnel on International Human Rights Law (IHRL) and IHL.

Major Obstacles to the State's Ability to Protect

The Malian state and security apparatus weaknesses constitute the main reason why the protection of civilians (PoC) is arduous in current armed conflict. Firstly, protecting civilians has been a major concern since the enfeeblement of the state, which was engendered by the March 22, 2012, coup d'état. The political chaos and the security vacuum that resulted from the weakening of the state enabled the Tuareg rebels, and their Islamic-terrorist allies, to capture the three major provinces of the North, and to rule by terror from April 2012 to January 2013. At that time, numerous reports issued by human rights organizations were warning the international community about the disastrous humanitarian conditions of thousands of civilians compelled to renounce their fundamental freedoms, and obey the Islamic Law, or *Sharia*. Any transgression of *Sharia* led systematically to corporal punishment such as mutilations, or even a death sentence. Unable to prevent or react to these serious violations to human rights, the state's

responsibility to protect civilians was undermined by the military coup. Moreover, the situation was compounded by consecutive military defeats of the FAMA in the North. Poorly trained and under-equipped to face asymmetrical warfare, the FAMA were continuously losing battles, soldiers, and were clearly incapable of protecting the people living in areas jointly controlled by the Tuareg rebellion and the terrorist networks. Despite the persistent support of international and regional strategic partners since 2013, the security forces' effectiveness to combat terrorism and better protect the civilians has barely improved as their reform process is far from complete, and they continue suffering from devastating lightning attacks carried out by terrorist fighters.

Secondly, despite its reinforcement, the security apparatus is still vulnerable. Officially launched in 2013, the ongoing Security Sector Reform (SSR) aims at improving the quality of security and justice services provided by the FAMA, and other security forces such as the National Police, to the populations. The people perceive the reforms as a great opportunity to impulse fundamental changes by increasing the state security institutions' effectiveness in protecting civilians, notably through capacity-building programs in terms of specialized training, equipment and infrastructure. Simultaneously, a series of highly important rules and regulations have been adopted by the government to make these state security actors more responsible and accountable for their actions towards the populations. Notwithstanding their substantial progress, the defense and security forces faced several challenges that have jeopardized the SSR, and threaten their legitimacy when protecting civilians. For instance, over the past five years, the FAMA troops deployed in Central and Northern Mali have suffered an increasing number of devastating asymmetrical attacks, thus degrading their effectiveness. Also, the

Army's image and credibility declined after investigations confirmed that some soldiers were implicated in mass killings of civilians. The bottom line is that civilians' status in the Malian armed conflict is troublesome as they may also be perceived, according to circumstances, as fighters. Such a condition keeps thickening the 'fog' of war, which is harmful to the concept of PoC and its execution.³⁷

Major Obstacles due to the Ambiguous Nature of the Conflict

There seems to be a permanent 'fog' surrounding the current internal wars in Central Mali, which is detrimental to the state's ability to successfully protect civilians.³⁸ This perception reflects a general trend described by Ensign R. O'Connor in the article "Ethics in asymmetrical warfare," and that characterizes contemporary wars: enemies wear no combat uniforms, are civilians themselves, and hide among the law-abiding

³⁷ The Defense Post, "Mali Troops Implicated in Mass Killing of Civilians, Defense Minister Says," 20 June 2018, accessed 6 September 2019, <https://thedefensepost.com/2018/06/20/mali-troops-implicated-civilian-deaths/>.

³⁸ For a detailed study about the causes and challenges of armed violence in Central Mali, see the following source in French: Federation Internationale des Droits de l'Homme (FIDH), Association Malienne des Droits de l'Homme (AMDH), *Dans le Centre du Mali, les Populations Prises au Pieu du Terrorisme et du Contre-terrorisme*, Rapport d'enquete No. 727F, November 2018, 19-34, accessed 6 September 2019, https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/fidh_centre_du_mali_les_populations_prises_au_pieu_ge_du_terrorisme_et_contre_terrorisme.pdf. / In English, see: International Crisis Group, *Speaking with the "Bad Guys": Toward Dialogue with Central Mali's Jihadists*, Africa Report No. 276, 28 May 2019, 3-11, accessed 6 September 2019, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/mali/276-speaking-bad-guys-toward-dialogue-central-malis-jihadists>; International Crisis Group, *Central Mali: An Uprising in the Making?*, Africa Report No. 238, 6 July 2016, 2-15, accessed 26 October 2019, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/mali/central-mali-uprising-making>; Aurélien Tobie, *Central Mali: Violence, Local Perspectives and Diverging Narratives*, SIPRI insights on Peace and Security No. 5. December 2017, accessed 6 September 2019, https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2018-02/sipriinsight_1713_mali_3_eng.pdf.

citizens to remain invisible so as to carry out devastating asymmetric attacks.³⁹ Consequently, since the line between enemy-civilians and innocent-civilians is blurry, it becomes extremely problematic for soldiers to “identify the morally guilty from the morally innocent,” as O’Connor suggested to explain the “ethical dilemma” inherent to asymmetrical warfare. Even so, it is required that conventional soldiers strive to overcome such a dilemma which is, in the Malian context, persistent through two conflictual dimensions: intercommunal armed conflicts and Jihadist terrorism. As demonstrated by the French political scientist, Jean-Pierre Derriennic, intercommunal armed conflicts represent one of the genuine forms of what is commonly known as “civil wars.”⁴⁰ Recurrent in Mali, these conflicts oppose the members of, at least, two different ethnic groups organized in militias, and they are usually caused by disputes over land. According to the United Nations Human Rights Office, at least 289 civilians were killed in 2018 because of interethnic violence. Meanwhile, a recrudescence of attacks occurred in the Central region of Mopti, opposing the Dozo traditional hunters, and their allies from the Dogon villages, to the members of the Fulani ethnic group.⁴¹ Intercommunal armed conflicts often escalate into extreme violence where civilians always pay the ultimate price, simply because it is a war fought exclusively by civilians against other

³⁹ Ensign R. O’Connor, “Ethics in Asymmetrical Warfare,” *Journal of Security Law & Policy* 144, no. 10 (2018): 52-55, accessed 6 September 2019, <https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2018/october/ethics-asymmetrical-warfare>.

⁴⁰ Jean-Pierre Derriennic, *Les Guerres Civiles*, ed. Les Presses de Sciences Po (Paris: Collection Academique, 2001).

⁴¹ Aljazeera, “Mali: Hundreds Killed in Intercommunal Violence this Year,” 17 July 2018, accessed 6 September 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/07/mali-hundreds-killed-inter-communal-violence-year-180717165055888.html>.

civilians. In this case, the PoC by state security forces seems to be a complex equation. In fact, this equation has become even more intricate since the local Jihadist groups have ‘got in the game’, and have started manipulating the ethnic divides to gain more popular support to achieve their goals.

As the author of this thesis demonstrated in a previous article, the Jihadist groups in Mali have expanded geographically, intensified attacks, and increased the threat against civilians. Northern and Central Mali have become incubators for Islamic radicalism and violent extremism.⁴² Since 2017, with the emergence of the Al Qaeda-affiliate conglomerate, the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims, and the establishment of the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, the terrorist networks have become more powerful and harmful. Indeed, with their asymmetric tactics, based on hit-and-run attacks and the use of stratagem, these groups have conducted devastating raids against the FAMA’s security posts as well as the local administration facilities, which are no longer able to protect the civilians in remote areas.⁴³ At this moment in time, wherever the state is absent, the jihadists have become more influential. They strive to recruit among the Muslim layers of the society, and spread their anti-western values ideology, based on a violent interpretation of the Qur’an, notably by intimidating the communities, students, and teachers. The repercussion of the overall deterioration of the

⁴² Mohamed Keita, “Mali’s Terror Fight: Confronting Violent Extremism on Multiple Fronts,” *Per Concordiam* 8, no. 3 (2017): 42-47, accessed 2 January 2020, <https://www.marshallcenter.org/mcpublicweb/en/nav-publications-per-concordiam-on-pw-en.html>.

⁴³ Attacks against civilians in Central Mali went crescendo since 2015. See Appendix C.

security situation on human rights is critical. Indeed, according to an investigation conducted jointly by the Malian Association for Human Rights, and the International Federation for Human Rights concerning the humanitarian situation in Central Mali, from 2016 to 2017, 1200 civilians were killed and 30000 were displaced or refugees. In 2018, 40% of all attacks against civilians in Mali were registered in Central Mali. Between January and August of the same year, 500 civilians were killed in asymmetric attacks; and 15000 fled persecutions and intercommunal violence.⁴⁴ As of March 2019, 525 schools were closed in the region of Mopti, which has imperiled the right to education of approximately 157,000 children.⁴⁵ Thus, the expansion of terrorist networks throughout the country has raised enormous concerns over the PoC. Recent cycles of interethnic violence between the Dogons and the Fulanis, exacerbated by Jihadist interference, have tragically led the FAMA to confuse innocent Fulani civilians with terrorist fighters of the Katibat Al Macina, also composed of Fulanis. Making a clear distinction between the two categories appears impossible given their acquaintances, and since the terrorists are embedded within their community. This inability to make a positive identification of the enemy fighter will likely persevere if the training of the military personnel on IHRL and IHL remains insufficient or ineffective.

⁴⁴ FIDH, AMDH, *Dans le centre du Mali, les populations prises au piège du terrorisme et du contre-terrorisme*, 6-7.

⁴⁵ Christophe Boulhierac, “Protracted Crisis in Central Mali Impacting all Aspects of Children’s Lives,” The United Nations’ Children Fund, 26 April 2019, accessed 6 September 2019, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/protracted-crisis-central-mali-impacting-all-aspects-childrens-lives>.

Major Obstacles to an Effective Training of Armed Forces Personnel

The ineffective training of the military personnel on IHRL and IHL has also made the PoC challenging. As noted by Professor Mitt Regan, the difference between these two branches of international law is that IHRL, the *lex generalis*, applies at all times, whereas IHL, the *lex specialis*, applies specifically during armed conflicts through the Geneva Conventions.⁴⁶ The first major obstacle to effective training in the areas of IHRL and IHL is the general feeling that the principles, put forth by the two categories, are impossible to observe in an asymmetrical conflict where the enemy does not act legally, ethically, or morally. As an example, in recent training that the author of this thesis conducted in Bamako, from February 11 to 22, 2019, within the frame of the United Nations-supported project “Strengthening the capacities of the Malian Armed Forces in the areas of International Human Rights, International Humanitarian Law and Protection of Civilians,” some of the trainees severely criticized the rationale of the training.⁴⁷ They argued that the principles of IHRL and IHL represent “theories,” “myths,” and are “not applicable in real combat situations” because the enemy follows no rules. If military personnel remain pessimistic and skeptical, soldiers will continue to commit unlawful

⁴⁶ Mitt Regan, “From Protecting Lives to Protecting States: Use of Force in the Threat Continuum,” *Journal of Security Law & Policy* 10, no. 171 (2019): 171-236, accessed 6 September 2019, <https://scholarship.law.georgetown.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3179&context=facpub>. Professor Mitt Regan is Co-Director of the Center for the Study of the Legal Profession, and Professor of Jurisprudence at Georgetown University. His fields of expertise include ethics, legal profession, and national security.

⁴⁷ United Nations Institute for Training and Research, “Strengthening the Capacities of the Malian Armed Forces in the Areas of International Human Rights, International Humanitarian Law and Protection of Civilians,” After Action Report, United Nations, February 2019.

acts, during battle situations, which will put civilian lives at risk, and could lead to mass atrocities. Hence, the crucial role of the trainers changes the military mindset through education and patience. Training will be conducted in vain if the trainers are unable to take on such a challenge. That said, a durable change in attitudes and behaviors will be possible if, and only if, the training curricula on IHRL and IHL is practical.

The second main obstacle to effective training on IHRL and IHL is the fact that the training curricula are too theoretical and are regularly conducted by trainers who lack the appropriate pedagogy to cope efficiently with such sensitive issues. The typical training is taught in only 15 hours, starting with a description of the origins of IHL, then focusing on the basic definitions, the legal framework applicable, the military operations, the principles of IHL, the Rules of Engagement during military operations, and an introduction to the Red Cross and the Red Crescent. The syllabus includes no scenario-based exercises, which are essential to comprehend the friction points between theory and practice, to understand the importance of IHRL and IHL, and to apply their principles in concrete combat situations. For example, it is truly demanding for a student to comprehend the abstract notions of “positive identification” or “the reasonable and proportionate use of lethal force.” Therefore, for a better understanding, theory must be complemented by a scenario-based shooting simulation exercise, which is a powerful pedagogical tool still not available. Existing courses on IHRL and IHL are lackluster because they lack the necessary dynamism to bear by modern training technologies, capable of stimulating and sustaining the conventional warfighters’ interest and enthusiasm to learn.

To conclude, it has been demonstrated that three interrelated factors make the protection of civilians in the Malian armed conflict particularly challenging: the state and security apparatus weaknesses, the permanent ‘fog’ surrounding the current internal wars, and the ineffective training of military personnel on IHRL and IHL. In the context of the SSR, protecting civilians is of strategic importance for the Malian state. Indeed, as a sovereign state, the Republic is responsible for protecting all civilians, including those of other nationalities, from human rights violations and mass atrocities. Ultimately, it is pivotal for the FAMA to obey, protect and promote the Geneva Conventions, in all circumstances, to remain professional and humane, even in irregular warfare.

The Paradoxical Trinity of the Responsibility to Protect

The growing unpopularity of UN peacekeepers following mass atrocities in Central Mali reveals a profound malaise of the MINUSMA regarding its relationships with the Malian state and the people. Engaged in a kind of ‘Clausewitzian paradoxical trinity’ whereby both the people and the state try to influence their protection responsibilities, the UN mission struggles to enforce a very ambiguous PoC mandate. The paradoxical trinity of the responsibility to protect is based on three main observations reflecting three levels of frustration expressed by each entity in their relationship.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Clausewitz’ paradoxical trinity of warfare represents a dialectical relationship that is essential to understand warfare. According to Clausewitz, there are three constant imponderable elements that together make up real war: violence and passion, which refer to the people; uncertainty, chance or probability, which refer to the commander and his available forces; political purpose and effect, which is the matter of the government. In fact, these three elements act like magnets, and interact simultaneously in every war, though with different intensities according to the existing operational environment variables. Adapted to this study, the Clausewitzian remarkable trinity of the responsibility to protect is caught between three magnets, namely, the Malian state, the people, and the MINUSMA. For more details about Clausewitz’ remarkable trinity of war see: Carl Von

The first and most important level of frustration is the one generated by the interaction between the state and its own people. Data collected through the research confirm a persisting crisis in popular confidence with respect to the government's ability to secure and protect vulnerable communities against mass crimes.⁴⁹ Worse, the news of recent major terrorist attacks carried out against the armed forces, resulting in numerous casualties and important destruction of materiel and equipment, is not improving the public sentiment. Civil society activists blame political leaders for trying to conceal a certain 'truth' regarding the lack of preparedness of the regular army to face the threats.

Paradoxically, there seems to be consistent effort, accomplished by the government, to share the burden of responsibility with the communities themselves by advocating a new concept called: "the shared security governance."⁵⁰ This approach

Clausewitz, *On War*, eds. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 89. See also the analysis made by Peter Paret, "Clausewitz," in *Makers of Modern Strategy, from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 201.

⁴⁹ Jeune Afrique, "Mali: Une Manifestation Contre les Violences dans le Centre Dispersee au Gaz Lacrymogene," 5 April 2019, accessed 6 September 2019, <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/759615/politique/mali-une-manifestation-contre-les-violences-dans-le-centre-dispersee-au-gaz-lacrymogene/>.

⁵⁰ In fact, the concept of "shared security governance" (in French, "Gouvernance partagee de la paix et la securite") is not really new because it was proposed since 2012 by two Malian technocrats, Dr. Zeini Moulaye and Inspector General of Police Mahamadou Niakate. According to Moulaye and Niakate, this new principle consists of the implication of all components of the nation in the management of security preoccupations. Its foundation is human security. For more insights, read: Zeini Moulaye and Mahamadou Niakate, *Gouvernance Partagee de la Paix et la Securite: L'Experience Malienne*, ed. The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (Abuja, Nigeria: Single Vision Ltd., 2011). The problem is that, as every new concept, the government has been slow to test it. So, what is new is the willingness of the government to experiment it urgently as part of the national Security Sector Reform Strategy.

consists of involving the communities in collaborative policing with the FAMA, as well as the peacekeepers, to improve the provision of physical protection, and establish a sustained protective environment. Thus, a key focus of this principle is building trust with the community to combat crime and foster confidence in the service/force, all while ensuring a safe and secure environment within and outside of national boundaries. At its best, shared security governance through collaborative policing allows communities to benefit from an improved policing service which is based on responsiveness, consultation, more effective mobilization, and problem-solving.⁵¹ Notwithstanding the government's multiple initiatives to build trust with local communities given the importance of their effective collaboration in the fight against terror, there is still a strong feeling among the people that the "sons of the nation are sent to the butchery" ill-equipped and poorly trained. For that reason, the people have placed greater hope in the UN peacekeepers to improve their security and protection.

⁵¹ Keita, "Mali's terror fight: Confronting violent extremism on multiple fronts," 45.

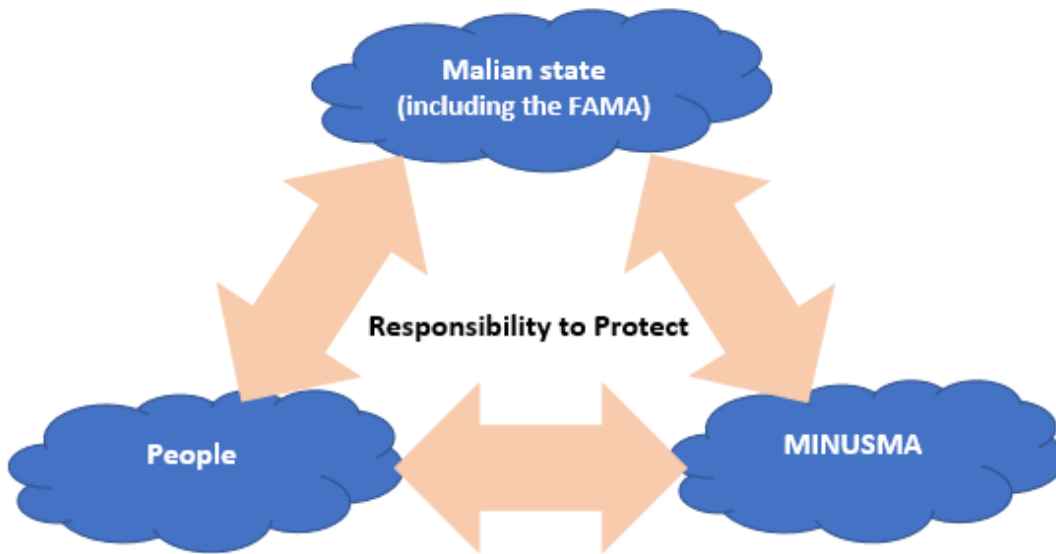


Figure 3. The Paradoxical Trinity of the Responsibility to Protect in Mali

Source: Created by the author.

The second most important level of frustration results from the interaction between the people and the MINUSMA. At this level too, the UN mission’s credibility and legitimacy are being put in question by the people. In fact, most people blame the MINUSMA through the peacekeepers for not keeping their promise to provide endangered communities permanent physical protection. The people believe that the UN mission has enough strength to provide protection, but is unwilling to do so despite having numerous contingents in Northern and Central Mali.⁵² Hence, the general feeling emanating from the people that the UN mission presence is useless.⁵³

⁵² See Appendix B for a map depicting the MINUSMA contingents’ deployment.

⁵³ Multiple news releases have reported the anti-MINUSMA sentiment expressed by the people in Mali during demonstrations. In fact, this sentiment already existed in Northern Mali since the early stages of the UN Mission’s deployment, and it kept

Such a negative popular perception obviously concerns the MINUSMA, whose officials have recently decided to address the situation by launching a media and public awareness campaign intended to better explain the role, responsibilities, and limitations of the peacekeepers. Thus, when invited to justify the presence of the UN Police (UNPOL) on a popular TV show called “Politik Debat,” the UNPOL Commissioner claimed that the idea that the peacekeepers are unwilling to intervene to protect is flawed.⁵⁴ According to him, the MINUSMA is “only there to support the Malian authorities; not to replace them. If the Malian gendarmerie, national guard, or the police don’t ask for our direct support, we can’t intervene on our own.” Unfortunately for the UNPOL Commissioner, civil society’s activists perceived these words as outrageous because, as one of them pointed out, “it only demonstrates that the MINUSMA is

intensifying following the mass atrocities committed in the Central region. See the following articles: United Nations, “Mali: La MINUSMA Condamne les Actes de Vandalisme a Sevare et Appelle au Calme,” *UN News*, 14 October 2019, accessed 26 October 2019, <https://news.un.org/fr/story/2019/10/1053981>; Lassaad Ben Ahmed, “Mali: Manifestations contre la Presence des Armees Etrangeres,” *Anadolu Agency*, 10 October 2019, accessed 26 October 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/fr/afrique/mali-manifestations-contre-la-presence-des-armees-etrangees-/1608959>; Victorien Cauet, “Bamako: Une Manifestation Controversee Organisee par des Leaders Religieux,” *Observatoire Pharos*, 9 April 2019, accessed 6 September 2019, <https://www.observatoirepharos.com/pays/mali/bamako-une-manifestation-controversee-organisee-par-des-leaders-religieux-fr/>.

⁵⁴ Africable TV, “Forces Etrangeres ou Internationales au Mali: Enjeux et Perspectives d’une Presence de Moins en Moins Comprise,” Emission Politik Debat, 20 October 2019, YouTube video, accessed 2 November 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4YspI1nduRg&t=28s>.

useless” to prevent mass atrocities in Mali; “if the MINUSMA can’t help us, they must leave!”⁵⁵

This crisis in popular confidence preoccupies the UN Mission’s officials to the extent that they have taken significant measures to improve the organization’s communication strategy; the objective being to gain the communities’ support, which is perceived as vital for an effective implementation of the PoC strategy. Interestingly, just as the government’s approach of sharing the burden of the responsibility to protect, the UN Mission is also promoting a “community-based approach,” aiming at empowering the people so they can participate to their own protection in collaboration with state and UN agencies.⁵⁶ Increasingly, communities are called upon to support the peacekeepers by sharing intelligence and reporting any suspicious activities either to the government’s law enforcement agencies, or to the UN.

Much more enigmatic than the two others, the third level of frustration is generated by the interaction between the state, or “host-country” in the UN language, and the MINUSMA. The relationship between both entities is enigmatic being full of ambiguity and contradictions regarding the rationale behind the UN presence, and the

⁵⁵ Pronounced in French, these words were video-recorded after the TV show, backstage, by some civil society activists during their conversation with the UNPOL Police Commissioner. The video footage went viral on the social media.

⁵⁶ MINUSMA, *Protection of Civilians Strategy*, 11. “A community-based approach: Taking into consideration that men, women, girls and boys often have different security concerns, needs and perspectives, actions to protect civilians should -when possible- be planned in consultation with women, men, girls and boys belonging to the affected local community and with a view to empowering them and supporting the mechanisms and community-based organizations they have established to cope with the threats and ensure their own protection.”

kind of support that each one expects from the other in terms of responsibility to protect. The ambiguity and contradictions are due to two factors.

First, the assimilation of R2P doctrine with the MINUSMA PoC mandate, as well as the conflict between the concepts that resulted, is a reality and represents the source of all confusion around the roles, missions and responsibilities of peacekeepers in the Malian context. Indeed, the fusion of R2P, which is proper to peace enforcement operations, and PoC, which is specific to peacekeeping operations, gave birth to a hybrid mandate based on a new kind of peace operations called “robust peacekeeping.” Authorized by the UN Security Council, this new approach has requested MINUSMA to move to a more proactive and robust posture as detailed in the PoC strategy document, notably in its paragraph 19(c), which authorizes the Mission “to enhance early warning, to anticipate, deter and counter threats, including asymmetric threats, and to take robust and active steps to protect civilians, including through active and effective patrolling.” Also, paragraph 19(d) authorizes “robust and active steps to counter asymmetric attacks against civilians” and “to ensure prompt and effective responses to threats of violence against civilians.”⁵⁷

It is essential to understand that, on the one hand, robust peacekeeping represents more than a regular peacekeeping operation that is only possible with the consent of the main parties to a conflict, and is intended to preserve peace, and to help implement peace agreements. On the other hand, robust peacekeeping is less than peace enforcement. Peace enforcement may include the use of military force without the consent of all the

⁵⁷ MINUSMA, *Protection of Civilians Strategy*, 7-8.

parties to the conflict, generally for humanitarian purposes to stop mass atrocities.⁵⁸ By upgrading the MINUSMA's mandate to the robust peacekeeping approach, it seems that the UNSC acknowledges the necessity to adapt the levels of protection to the complexity and volatility of the Malian conflict considered to be the most dangerous UN mission in the world.

However, with its robust mandate, the MINUSMA must manage two contradictions that constitute major obstacles to the peacekeepers' duty to protect. Firstly, robust peacekeeping involves the use of force, including against the elements of the regular armed forces, to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical attack. Paradoxically, it also requires the consent of the host country and/or main parties to the conflict to do so. In the Malian situation where the state constantly affirms its willingness to protect the people, and retains the monopoly of the use of force as an instrument of sovereignty in order not to appear like a failed state, the ability of the peacekeepers to perform their duty of protection seems simply impossible.

Secondly, the emergence of the robust peacekeeping approach is a result of the intensification of asymmetric threats that target civilians. At this level, the contradiction resides in the fact that the peacekeepers' mandate does not authorize them to fight such threats, notably terrorism, but only to support other forces in doing so.⁵⁹ Paradoxically,

⁵⁸ United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support, *Peace and Security Activities: Core Pre-deployment Training Material*, United Nations, 2016.

⁵⁹ Those other forces include the FAMA, the French military operation "BARKHANE," and the G5-SAHEL Joint Force (G5S/JF) operating in the Malian area of operations. The G5S/JF is composed of armed forces from Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Chad.

the “proactive and robust posture” described by the PoC strategy could lead the peacekeepers to perform counter terrorism or counter insurgency operations to fulfil their PoC mandate, and win the support of the local population.⁶⁰ Still, the peacekeepers are neither trained nor equipped to face such threats. Worse, some contributing countries have imposed their own operational caveats in taking active and robust steps to protect the civilians in order not to take unnecessary risks for the survival of their personnel, and using the excuse of the sacrosanct primary responsibility of the host-country to protect its own people.

From the analysis of the paradoxical trinity of the responsibility to protect, we can deduce the relationships between the state, the people, and the MINUSMA. These relationships are depicted in Table 2.

Table 2. Matrix of the Relationships among State, People, and MINUSMA

	State	People	MINUSMA
State			
People			
MINUSMA			

Legend:

	Risk		Positive
	Caution		Grey zone

Source: Created by the author using the matrix developed by Department of Joint, Interagency and Multinational Operations, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

⁶⁰ Lawrence J. Richardson, “A Comparative Analysis of the Effectiveness of Operations in Mali and Somalia,” *InterAgency Journal* 10, no. 4 (2019): 109.

Interpretation of the Relationships Matrix

1. State-People: The relationship is positive. The state perceives the people as an essential component in the fight against asymmetric threats. The government multiplies initiatives, such as accelerating the development of grass root institutions in remote areas, to gain the people's support and commitment in favor of the FAMA. The people should be empowered to participate in the process, and to collaborate effectively with the FAMA, and contribute to their own protection.
2. State-MINUSMA: The relationship is positive. The state perceives the presence of the MINUSMA as necessary to support the peace process, prevent conflict with the former rebellion, consolidate peace by fostering development, and build the capacities of the FAMA so they can better accomplish their missions and protect civilians. Moreover, the state perceives the presence and distribution of UN military and police contingents across Northern and Central Mali as a constant deterrence to asymmetric threats, and an opportunity to rebuild, restructure and reform its defense and security system.
3. State's grey zone: the state persists in affirming its ability and willingness to protect the people. However, despite the significant reforms of the defense and security system, the FAMA continues to suffer from major terrorist attacks. What remains unclear is the posture of the state *vis a vis* the Dozo hunters' militias, accused by human rights activists of perpetrating mass crimes of the Fulani tribes, who used to be supported by the government in the fight against the local terrorist organizations.
4. People-state: This relationship is tenuous, and should be approached with caution.

The people's confidence in the state's ability to protect them is rapidly deteriorating because of the recurrence of attacks against vulnerable communities, and due to major destruction suffered by the FAMA. Worse, civil society activists regularly question the government's willingness to fight impunity by bringing to justice militia commanders accused of "war crimes" and "genocide." Therefore, members of targeted communities, notably the Fulanis, tend to ensure their own protection either by creating their own armed militias, or by joining the local terrorist organizations. Obviously, both options increase the level of insecurity in Central Mali, which easily spreads in Southern and Northern Mali, as well as to the neighboring countries such as Burkina Faso and Niger.⁶¹

5. People-MINUSMA: This relationship presents a risk. The people continue to blame the MINUSMA for the peacekeepers' inaction to intervene and stop mass atrocities. They believe that the MINUSMA is aware of ongoing massacres, but fails to react timely. The anti-MINUSMA sentiment is intensifying across the country. Recent demonstrations of civil society organizations perceive the international presence as useless, ask for the immediate departure of the peacekeepers, and describe the MINUSMA as part of a global conspiracy to divide the nation by supporting the independentists.⁶²

⁶¹ Gendarmerie Nationale du Mali, *Atelier de Reflexion sur le Concept de Gendarmerie Communautaire au Mali*, Rapport, 13 September 2017.

⁶² The anti-MINUSMA sentiment is worsening in the beginning of year 2020 as villagers of Bandiagara, Central Mali, massively took to the streets to claim the withdrawal of all "foreign forces" including MINUSMA. See notably the following article: Saidou Guindo, "Bandiagara: la Population Reclame le Depart des Forces Etrangeres," Malijet, 2 January 2020, accessed 2 January 2020,

6. People's grey zone: It is arduous to control the dynamics underpinning the public sentiment, which are extremely versatile. Besides, the real agendas followed by some civil society activists remain unclear, and need to be closely monitored. An aggravating factor is the emergence of fake news, which represents a new phenomenon. Disseminated rapidly through the social media by unknown malign persons, they are intended to discredit the presence of international partners, notably the MINUSMA, in the eyes of communities.⁶³
7. MINUSMA-state: This relationship is tenuous, and should be approached with caution. The UN Mission acknowledges the progress made by the state in the frame of the peace agreement and reconciliation efforts. However, the MINUSMA often deplores the Malian authorities' failure to investigate and prosecute members of the FAMA found responsible of human rights violations and extrajudicial execution of innocent civilians. The UN Mission perceives this as a lack of willingness of the state to repair the victim's rights and fight

<http://malijet.com/actualite-politique-au-mali/flash-info/237562-bandiagara-la-population-reclame-le-depart-des-forces-etrangeres.html>.

⁶³ With this regard, the social media is replete of examples of rumors or fake news propagated through popular Internet networks such as Malijet, Facebook, or WhatsApp. On December 27, 2019, the UN Mission was openly accused members of the Dozo hunters' community of bombarding and killing villagers. The MINUSMA immediately issued a statement in the media rejecting the authenticity of the information, and calling on the Internet users for more discernment and restraint. The MINUSMA further deplored the propagation of such fake news intended to create confusion among the people, and reassured that the UN Mission is "besides all Malians on the way of peace." The statement can be found online, in French version: MINUSMA, "Dementi de la MINUSMA sur de Fausses Informations Circulant sur les Reseaux Sociaux," Malijet, 27 December 2019, accessed 2 January 2020, <https://malijet.com/actualite-politique-au-mali/flash-info/237426-dementi-de-la-minusma-sur-de-fausses-informations-circulant-sur-.html>.

impunity, which compromises the state's credibility regarding the responsibility to protect.⁶⁴

8. MINUSMA-people: This relationship is positive. The UN Mission perceives the people as an important component for the success of the PoC strategy. Conscious of its growing unpopularity among the people, the Mission's major challenge is to regain popular support by capitalizing on community based-policing.
9. MINUSMA's grey zone: MINUSMA is torn between the people, who want them to leave the country because of their ineffectiveness, and the state, who want to confine their role into a simple deterrent force. This uncomfortable posture creates a protection dilemma, which negatively impacts the UN mission's ability to develop a more coherent approach to effectively protect the civilians.

⁶⁴ See Appendix D. See also: United Nations Security Council (UNSC), UNSC S/2019/782, *Situation in Mali (Report of the Secretary General)*, 1 October 2019, 11, accessed 26 October 2019, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/S_2019_782_E.pdf.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This thesis analyzed the delicate problem of protection of civilians (PoC), and responsibility to protect (R2P), in the current Malian security crisis that is devastating the Central region. The goal of the study was to develop greater understanding of this complex issue. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) was established in 2013 by Security Council Resolution 2100 to support the peace process, and help the Malian state restore its authority to better secure and stabilize the country. However, over the past six years, the Malian Armed Forces (FAMA) deployed in Central and Northern Mali have suffered an increasing number of devastating asymmetrical attacks carried out by terrorist organizations, thus undermining their effectiveness and credibility. Moreover, as the epicenter of the threats has moved from the Northern region to the Central region, civilians have begun to be indiscriminately targeted, resulting in recent mass atrocities. More preoccupying, the Army's legitimacy has declined after recent investigations have confirmed that some soldiers were involved in the mass killings of civilians. Simultaneously, anti-MINUSMA sentiment has intensified, accusing UN troops of failing to intervene and protect innocent civilians from gross human rights violations. The bottom line is that the primary responsibility to protect lies with the Malian state itself. The purpose of the study was therefore to clarify the crucial issues surrounding the responsibility to protect the civilians.

The problem of protection led the author of this thesis to formulate the following research questions:

1. Primary research question: How can the MINUSMA better support the Malian state in its primary responsibility to protect the endangered civilians of Central Mali?
2. Subsidiary questions: Why is it complex to protect civilians in the current Malian armed conflict? How can we assess the relationships between the state, the people, and the MINUSMA about the issue of ‘responsibility’ to protect?

The key assumption was that the origin of the UN failure to support the Malian state in its primary responsibility to protect the civilians resides in the assimilation of the R2P doctrine, which is highly political, with the UN peacekeepers’ PoC mandate. It was assumed that the new kind of mandate, “robust peacekeeping,” confuses the UN peacekeepers who have not been sufficiently trained and equipped to implement it.

To conduct the study, the author followed three research methods. These procedures included: the textual analysis, criticism, and comparison methodology applied through the “briefing the old Man” technique; the passive observation; and finally, the case study methodology. The latter was considered the most important for analyzing the Malian situation in depth, and shedding light on the relationships between the three major actors involved in the thorny issue of protection and the responsibility to protect civilians. These actors include the state, the people, and the MINUSMA.

Conclusions

Five major conclusions can be drawn from the study’s findings.

1. It is highly complicated for the MINUSMA to improve its support to the Malian state's primary responsibility to protect endangered civilians in Central Mali because of the three chronic obstacles that aggravate the environment's uncertainty, volatility, complexity, and ambiguity. These three obstacles include state and security apparatus weaknesses; the permanent 'fog' surrounding the current internal wars; and the ineffective training of military personnel on International Human Rights Law (IHRL) and International Humanitarian Law (IHL).
2. In the case of Mali, the doctrinal conflict between R2P and PoC, which is inherent in the MINUSMA's mandate, hides a much more complex problem that can be conceptualized as the "paradoxical trinity of the responsibility to protect." In Mali, the responsibility to protect is caught among three magnets, namely, the Malian state, the people, and the MINUSMA. Analyzing the interactions among the state, the people, and the MINUSMA is necessary to understand that the latter cannot improve its support, nor implement its new mandate adequately, without understanding the perceptions of the two others and resolving its own internal contradictions.
3. If the MINUSMA does not resolve, firstly, its own contradictions due to the doctrinal conflict between R2P and PoC and, secondly, manage to overcome the protection dilemma caused by its paradoxical relationship with the people and the state, any efforts to improve the support to the Malian state and better protect civilians will be difficult.

4. It is also clear that the existence of the “grey zones,” or the unknowns, that characterize each actor’s inner context, act as impediments for a better protection of civilians. Their analysis is arduous, but imperative to better understand the rationale behind each actor’s behavior.
5. Most importantly, the analyses of the paradoxical trinity of the responsibility to protect and the relationship matrix demonstrate that the people constitute the central solution to improving the protection of civilians in the Malian context. Indeed, both the state and the MINUSMA understand the importance of committing the people to their own protection. Conscious that the people’s trust determines success in the fight against asymmetric threats, they are multiplying initiatives aimed at raising public awareness of the crucial support to be brought by the people.

Recommendations

Six recommendations can be formulated following the analysis and the conclusions.

1. Within the frame of MINUSMA’s “robust” peacekeeping mandate, UNSC should approve the creation of an “offensive” combat force like the “Force Intervention Brigade” created for the UN Mission for the Stabilization of the Congo (MONUSCO). Indeed, the intervention brigade was successful in protecting civilians by carrying out, either unilaterally or jointly with the Congolese armed forces, targeted operations intended to neutralize and disarm asymmetric groups. In collaboration with the Malian authorities, a working group should be put in

- place to study and learn from the Congolese experience, and assess the suitability, acceptability, and feasibility of such a force in the Malian context.⁶⁵
2. Both the MINUSMA and the Malian authorities must coordinate their strategies to regain the trust of the people. In this regard, it is first better that both entities speak the same language to the civil society activists and communities' representatives to avoid any misinterpretations or misunderstanding. The UN and Malian officials must be trained on how to communicate with the public with regards to their responsibility to protect as well as the necessity for the people to bear their part of that responsibility. Second, both entities must coordinate their community-based policing, which represents one very effective way to “share” the responsibility to protect with the communities themselves, and progressively gain their strong commitment to the fight against terror.
 3. The MINUSMA and the state should also put substantial efforts into the fight against the dissemination of fake news, which is intended to deteriorate their image and discredit both the state, and the UN Mission's actions in the eyes of the people. Both entities must set up joint teams whose work would be to closely monitor the social media, and alert the authorities on the propagation of fake news so urgent action could be taken to deny the false information and provide fact-based positions. It is imperative that the MINUSMA and the state coordinate their

⁶⁵ Regarding the FIB's achievements and challenges in MONUSCO, see the following article: Peter Fabricius, “Is the Force Intervention Brigade Still Justifying its Existence?” *ISS Today*, 22 June 2017, accessed 7 December 2019, <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/is-the-force-intervention-brigade-still-justifying-its-existence>.

- efforts to fight the fake news together rather than unilaterally to demonstrate that both entities are mutually supportive, and that both are committed to the protection of the people.
4. The Malian authorities must stop any kind of military collaboration with the Dozo hunters' militias. Such a collaboration is counterproductive, and leads to mass crimes being perpetrated by uncontrollable militia combatants. To regain the trust of the people, those responsible for mass atrocities should be rapidly prosecuted and convicted. Meanwhile, it is vital to intensify the public awareness campaigns intended to avoid any amalgamation between the Fulani community and the Katibat-al-Macina, whose leaders, from the Fulani ethnic group, exploit the ethnic divides to trigger deadly intercommunal violence.
 5. The new kind of training on the PoC, IHRL and IHL created for the benefit of the FAMA, to which the author participated as a trainer, and which put a large emphasis on practice rather than theory, should be disseminated to all units of the FAMA deployed across the country. For better development, it is central to vitalize the classic training programs on IHRL and IHL. By including and organizing realistic simulations whereby leaders, as well as soldiers, not only learn how to apply the principles, but also strive to develop their critical and creative thinking, and adapt their attitudes and behaviors is essential. Applying these skills in a variety of circumstances, especially when faced with diverse types of enemy, even if the latter follows no conventional rules, it would be better prepare all participants in these operations. Since the first session was a complete success, it is high time that the government fund, or seek financial support among

the international partners, to sustain such training. With this regard, the MINUSMA should coordinate its training curricula with other UN agencies, such as the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), who conduct similar courses. Most importantly, the Malian authorities must affirm the ownership of such training to ensure that the personnel of the armed forces do not have misconceptions about the concepts of PoC, R2P, IHRL and IHL. The weak commitment of defense and security personnel constitutes one major obstacle to a successful protection program, because they still believe that these concepts represent a western norm created to undermine their work as well as state sovereignty. In fact, the soldiers' misconceptions are a microcosm of the larger public sentiment on this issue. Though difficult to change, attitudes and behaviors are of paramount importance. If soldiers and military leaders' attitudes and behaviors are not sufficiently addressed and corrected through training, they will likely fail in their responsibility to protect civilians. Obviously, the Malian authorities bear the primary responsibility to change the mindsets of their own soldiers and citizens.

6. Finally, the previous recommendations provide good indications of two critical issues that need attention in a future study. The first most important issue to explore would be the phenomenon by which the state and the MINUSMA tend to transfer their primary responsibilities to the people. With this respect, one could reflect on the emergent concept of "shared security governance," and conduct an in-depth analysis of how a shared responsibility to protect, with the people themselves, would improve the situation in Mali. The second most interesting

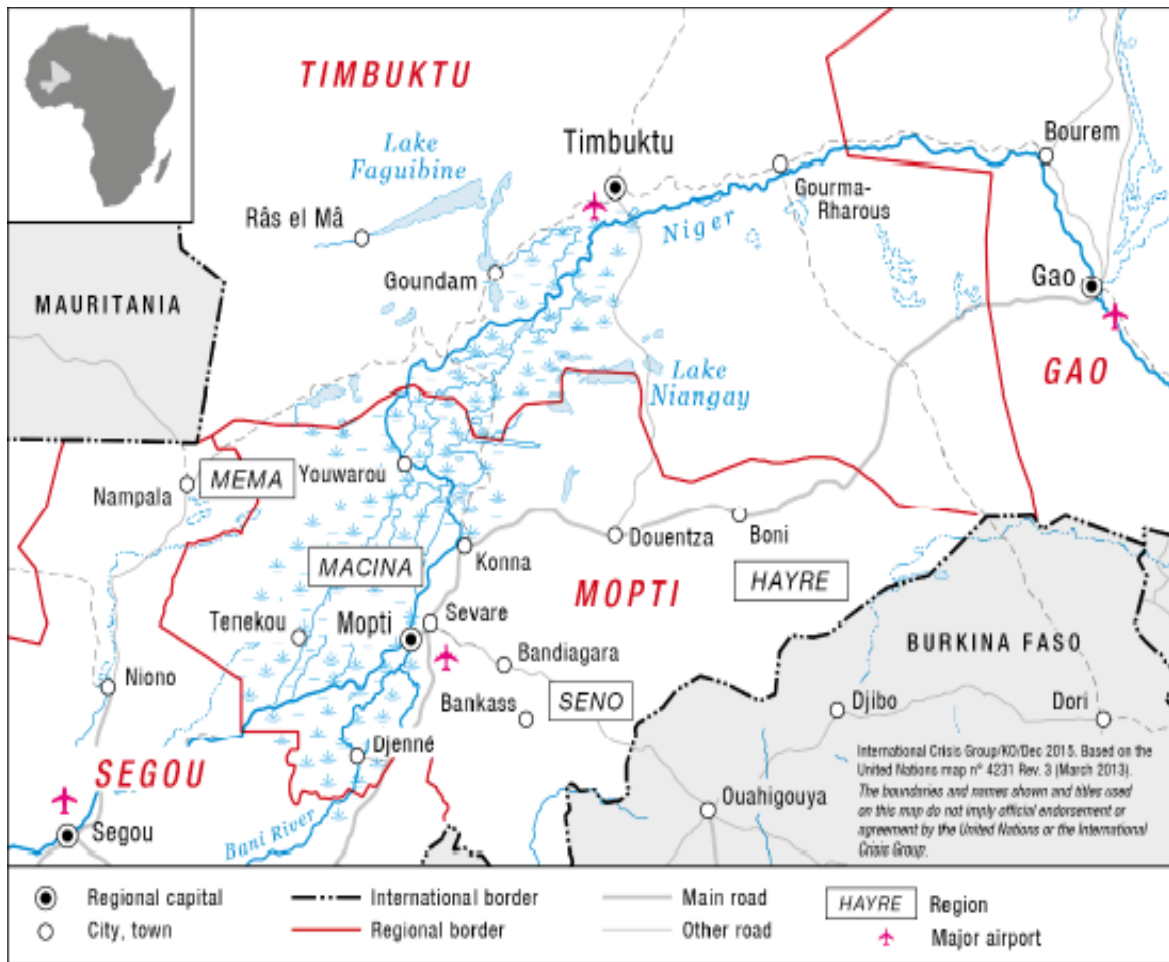
issue to examine relates to the phenomenon of fake news, which is intentionally disseminated via social media by some malicious citizens to harm the state as well as the MINUSMA's credibility and legitimacy. On this topic, one could assess not only the impacts of such a phenomenon on the effectiveness of the state and the MINUSMA's ability to protect, but also the strategies adopted and implemented by both actors to deal with that problem.

APPENDIX A

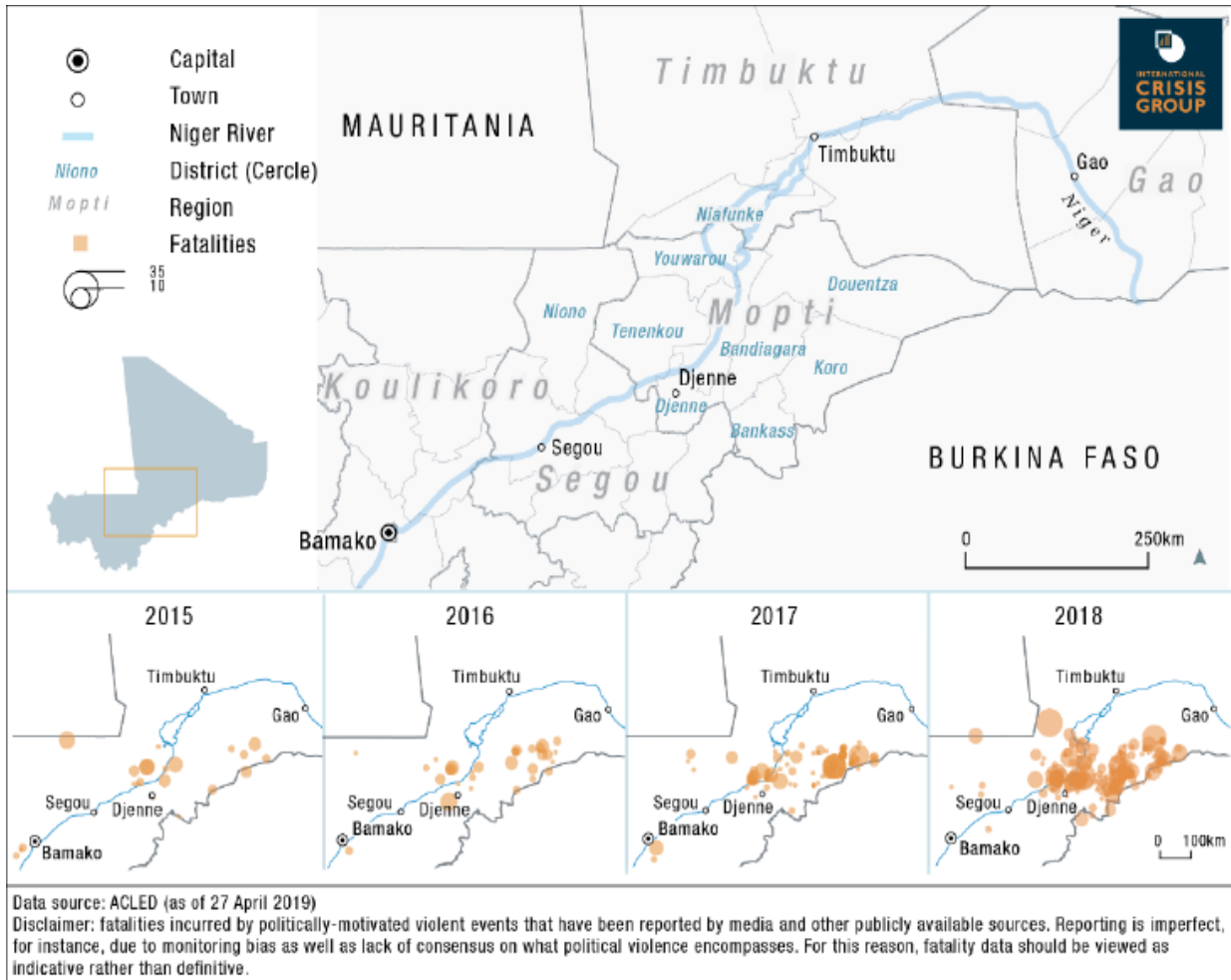
MAPS OF MALI AND CENTRAL MALI



Source: International Crisis Group, *Central Mali: An Uprising in the Making?* Africa Report No. 238, 6 July 2016, 25, accessed 26 October 2019, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/mali/central-mali-uprising-making>.



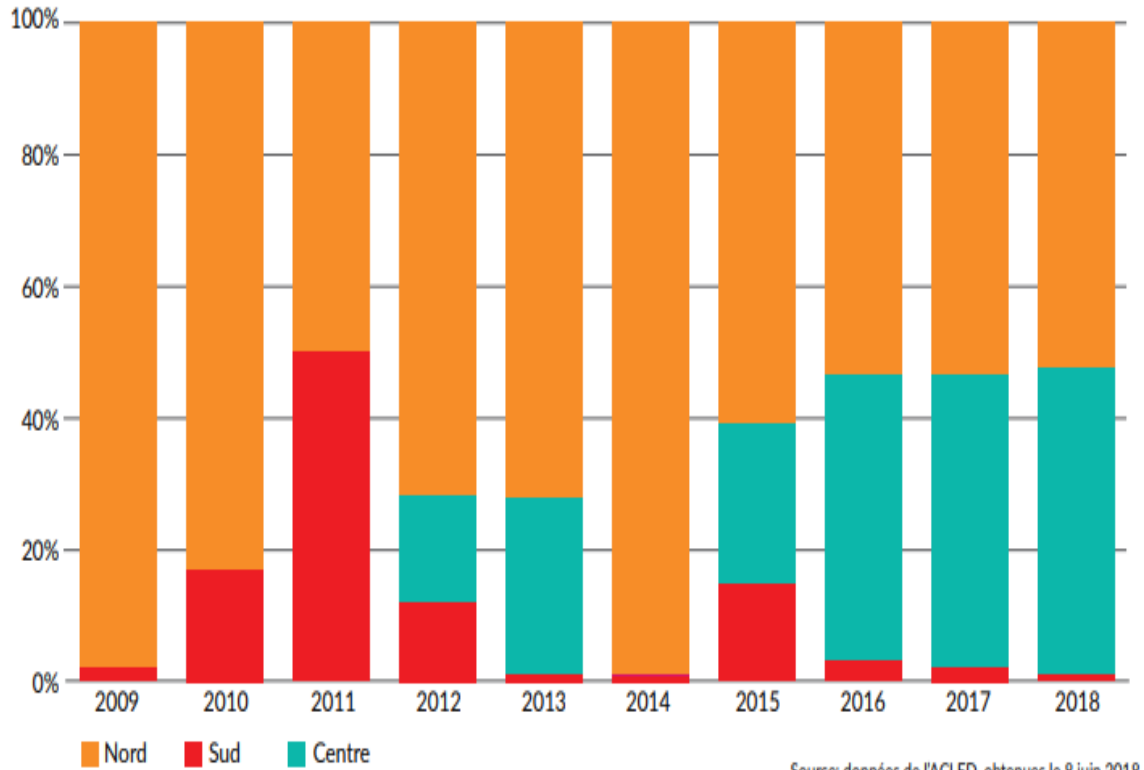
Source: International Crisis Group, *Central Mali: An Uprising in the Making?* Africa Report No. 238, 6 July 2016, 26, accessed 26 October 2019, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/mali/central-mali-uprising-making>.



Source: International Crisis Group, *Speaking with the “Bad Guys”*: Toward Dialogue with Central Mali’s Jihadists, Africa Report No. 276, 28 May 2019, 32, accessed 6 September 2019, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/mali/276-speaking-bad-guys-toward-dialogue-central-malis-jihadists>.

APPENDIX C

ATTACKS AGAINST CIVILIANS IN MALI



Source: Richard Reeve, *Le Mali a la Croisee des Chemins*, Peace Direct Report, July 2018, 17, accessed 26 October 2019, https://www.peacedirect.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/P772-PD-Mali-LVP-Report-FR_WEB_2.pdf.

APPENDIX D

JOINT STATEMENT ON ATTACKS AGAINST CIVILIANS IN CENTRAL MALI

13 Jun 2019

JOINT STATEMENT ON ATTACKS AGAINST CIVILIANS IN CENTRAL MALI BY THE UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL ADVISERS ON THE PREVENTION OF GENOCIDE AND THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT AND THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

New York, 12 June 2019 – The three senior UN Officials [i] condemn the unspeakable attack of 9 June 2019 against the village of Sobanou-Kou in the Mopti region of central Mali in which dozens of civilians have been killed, the vast majority being women and children. They deplore the high number of civilian casualties in Mopti region since the beginning of the year, including the 1 January attack against Koulougou village that killed 39 civilians and the 23 March attack against Ogossagou village, in which at least 157 civilians were killed. They call for immediate actions to deescalate tensions, particularly the cycle of intercommunal and ethnic violence and retaliatory attacks that have been unfolding in central Mali. They urge the Malian government to swiftly undertake a credible investigation into all the atrocities committed in Mali and bring the perpetrators to justice.

“It is urgent to prevent further violence and brutality and to protect the civilian population from such grave violations, especially women and children who are among the most vulnerable in times of conflict,” they said. “Accountability is instrumental in the pursuit of peace and stability and the Malian authorities, with the support of the international community, must step up to address the growing insecurity in central Mali.”

The details of this attack have yet to be clarified, but civilians caught in the spiral of violence have been paying a heavy price since 2018, leading to the killing of hundreds of people since the beginning of the year, increasingly framed along ethnic lines.

“As we recently stated in our statement on 27 March following the attack of Ogossagou Peulh village, we are extremely alarmed by the ethnically motivated attacks against civilians in central in Mali as demonstrated in this recent attack against the Dogon community,” the UN Officials stated. “We cannot stand by silently in the face of ethnic-based violence, human rights violations and abuses. We call on the authorities and all parties involved, including the international

community, to fulfill their responsibility to prevent atrocity crimes and protect civilians,” the Officials reiterated.

In addition, more than 800 schools remain closed in northern and central Mali, the delivery of humanitarian assistance and protection to thousands of people in need has been hampered, making communities even more vulnerable to instability and exposed to serious violations.

The UN Officials call on the Malian Government, with the support of the international community, to discharge its primary responsibility to protect and address the root causes of violence and ensure that vulnerable population, including boys and girls, are provided with the appropriate protection and assistance. They further stressed that accountability for serious human rights violations, local reconciliation and the full implementation of the peace agreement of 2015 are the only sustainable ways to ensure lasting peace and protection of the civilian population.

[i] The United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Mr. Adama Dieng, the UN Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect, Ms. Karen Smith, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Virginia Gamba.

Press releases 2019

Source: United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Mission for the Stabilization of Mali (MINUSMA), “Joint Statement on Attacks against Civilians in Central Mali,” United Nations, 13 June 2019, accessed 6 September 2019, <https://minusma.unmissions.org/en/joint-statement-attacks-against-civilians-central-mali-united-nations-special-advisers-prevention>.

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