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**The United States Interests in Mali and The Implementation
of the Algiers Accord**

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Dedication

I have the honour to dedicate this thesis to all my loved ones.

Its achievement would not have been possible without:
their love, their patience, their understanding and their support.

Acknowledgment

The presentation of this modest work gives me the opportunity to thank the Almighty, who continuous to watch over me and who once again grants me his blessings through this achievement.

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Abstract

This Dissertation explores the crisis facing Mali, with a special focus on the US interests in Mali and the implementation of the Algiers Accord. It started with the 2012 rebellion between the Malian army and the Tuareg rebels. The main Tuareg groups included: the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) and the Salafist movement Ansar Dine, allied to other Islamist movements. This rebellion is a source of demand for self-determination and independence of Azawad, corresponding to the three regions of northern Mali (Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal). Algeria as a traditional mediator of the Malian conflicts successfully brokered a Peace Accord between the Malian government and the rebels. The United States as a member of the international community supports the efforts made to implement this said Agreement. The purpose of this research is to examine the US assistance to Mali with an emphasis on the Algiers Accord.

Résumé

Cette thèse explore la crise à laquelle est confronté le Mali, avec un accent particulier sur les intérêts américains au Mali et la mise en œuvre de l'Accord d'Alger. Elle a commencé par la rébellion de 2012 opposant l'armée malienne aux rebelles Touaregs. Les principaux groupes Touaregs comprenaient: le Mouvement National pour la Libération de l'Azawad (MNLA) et le Mouvement Salafiste Ansar Dine, allié à d'autres mouvements islamistes. Cette rébellion est source de revendications d'autodétermination et d'indépendance de l'Azawad, correspondant aux trois régions du nord du Mali (Tombouctou, Gao et Kidal). L'Algérie, en tant que médiateur traditionnel des conflits maliens, a réussi à négocier un accord de paix entre le gouvernement malien et les rebelles. Les États-Unis, en tant que membre de la communauté internationale, soutiennent les efforts déployés pour mettre en œuvre le dit accord. Le but de cette recherche est d'examiner l'assistance américaine au Mali en mettant un accent sur l'Accord d'Alger.

المخلص

تدرس هذه المذكرة الأزمة المالية مع التركيز بشكل خاص على مصالح الولايات المتحدة في البلاد وتنفيذ اتفاق الجزائر. إن انتفاضة مالي عام 2012 والتي كانت مواجهة مفتوحة بين الجيش المالي وتمردي الطوارق، ولا سيما الحركة الوطنية لتحرير أزواد والحركة السلفية أنصار الدين، المتحالفة مع ركات إسلامية أخرى للمطالبة بتقرير المصير واستقلال أزواد، هذا الإقليم الذي يضم المناطق الثلاث في مالي (تمبكتو وعاو وكيدو). نجحت الجزائر بصفتها وسيطاً تقليدياً في النزاعات المالية، في إبرام اتفاق سلام بين الحكومة المالية والتمرديين. في المقابل تدعم الولايات المتحدة بصفتها عضواً في المجتمع الدولي الجهود المبذولة لتنفيذ هذه الاتفاقية المذكورة. تهدف هذه الدراسة أساساً إلى دراسة السياسات الأمريكية تجاه مالي مع التركيز على مبادئ اتفاقية السلام الممضاة بالجزائر سنة 2015

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADC	Democratic Alliance for Change
AFISMA	African-led International Support Mission to Mali
AFRICOM	United States Africa Command
ARLA	Revolutionary Army for the Liberation of Azawad
AQIM	Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
ATNM	Alliance of Niger-Mali Tuareg
AU	African Union
CAR	Central African Republic
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
CMA	Coordination of Movements of Azawad
CMFPR	Coordination of Patriotic movements and Fronts for the Resistance
CNSP	National Committee for the People's Salvation
CPA	Coalition of Azawad People
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EPCMD	Ending Preventable Child and Maternal Deaths
EU	European Union
FAMA	Malian Armed Forces
FIAA	Arabic Islamic Front of Azawad
FNLA	National Front for the Liberation of Azawad
FPLA	Popular Front for the Liberation of Azawad
FTF	Feed the Future
GCC	Global Climate Change
GHI	Global Health Initiative
GHSA	Global Health Security Agenda

GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GSPC	Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat
HCUA	High Council for the Unity of Azawad
ICS	Integrated Country Strategy
IDP	Internally displaced person
MAA	Arab movement of Azawad
MINUSMA	UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali
MNLA	National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad
MPA	Azawad Popular Movement
MUJAO	Movement for Monotheism and Jihad
OCI	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
OTI	Office of Transition Initiatives
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PMI	President's Malaria Initiative
SIGI	Security Governance Initiative
TSCTI	TransSahara Counter Terrorism Initiative
TSCTP	TransSahel Counter Terrorism Partnership
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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Introduction

Two days after Mali's independence from French colonization on September 22, 1960, the United States became the second country to recognize the Republic of Mali, officially establishing diplomatic relations between the two countries. They collaborate in the fight against violent extremist groups. However, recognizing that Mali is facing a difficult period since its independence, which is characterized by a series of uprisings and rebellions, their governments work together to strengthen their countries' collaboration in areas such as economic growth, health, culture and security.

Northern Mali is a difficult controlling region undermined by rebel and terrorist movements. It was in 2012 that the country has been victim of a fourth rebellion opposing the Malian army to the Tuareg rebels. The ill-equipped Malian army overthrew the government of Amadou Toumani Touré, which it considers ineffective on this issue. Shortly after, the rebels declared the independence of Azawad and allied against the Malian government. Algeria, which has long defended the principle of a negotiated solution between the Malian government and the rebels, is once again intervening as the main mediator to assist the country. Despite some difficulties, it managed to have a peace agreement signed between the different parties in 2015.

For decades, US and Mali have had close ties based on common aims of enhancing stability and alleviating poverty through economic progress. Mali continues to rank towards the bottom of the human development index, particularly in the areas of health and education. Mali's security situation remains dire. The United States is committed to international efforts to help Mali restore peace and Stability throughout its territory. The 2015 Algiers Accord, which the transition government has committed to implementing, provides an opportunity for Mali to regain the path towards stability and prosperity.

This Master Dissertation entitled: “The United States interests in Mali and the Implementation of the Algiers Accord” deals with the US policy to Mali, which sees the implementation of the Algiers Accord as the best way to end the Malian War. It considers the US as a key partner in this process and discusses the US support for Mali in its quest for peace and reconciliation while highlighting the Algiers Accord.

This research contains three main methodologies: the historical approach is used in order to understand the present and probable political development in Mali; the qualitative method is used in order to analyse the real situation of Mali from several aspects such as political, economic and social; and the analytical approach is used in order to analyse the performance of the international community in Mali’s peacebuilding and the United States contributions to the implementation of the peace agreement resulting from the Algiers process.

This research aims to answer the following questions: What is the origin of the Malian crisis? What are the challenges of building lasting peace in Mali? What has been done to solve the problems in Mali and how effective have they been? How has the United States contributed to the implementation of the Algiers Accord?

This study is divided into four major chapters, an introduction and a conclusion. The first chapter entitled “Origin and Development of the Malian crisis” emphasizes the complexity of the Malian crisis while evoking recurrent conflicts between the Malian Government and the Tuareg revolutionaries.

The second chapter "The fourth Northern Insurgency since Autonomy" focuses on the conflict of 2012 itself, by stating the major causes and the direct effects of the conflict on the population concerned. It ends with an examination of the performance of the international community in bringing peace and security to the country.

The third chapter “Mali’s Algiers Peace Agreement: a Roadmap towards National Reconciliation” explores the dedication of Algeria with the help of the international community to find common ground between the Malian government and the Tuareg revolutionaries. Despite the difficulty of this process, Algeria managed to have a peace agreement signed between the different parties. This study also evokes the different objectives for achieving the implementation of this Agreement.

The last chapter is entitled “The US interests in Mali”. Knowing that the relations between these two countries are based on the objectives of improving stability and reducing poverty through economic growth, this chapter sheds light on the assistance of the United States to restore peace and stability in Mali, with focus on the expectations of the Algiers Accord.

Chapter One

Origins and development of the Malian crisis

Mali has had a harsh post-independence period. The former French Sudan is facing problems as natural as they are human. Natural problems include severe droughts as well as desertification. However, human problems are based on unsatisfactory government policies, ethnic and social trouble, and recession. First, until President Modibo Keita was deposed in a coup d'état in 1968, Mali embraced Marxist principles. The government's economic dominance gave minimal incentives for growth. Furthermore, until 1992, when a democratically elected administration took control, the country was ruled by authoritarian military governments, attempted coups, and corruption. Political, ethnic, and socioeconomic issues, however, persist.

One of the main reasons for the current crisis in Mali is the Tuareg rebellion. Distributed and divided into several confederations and tribes, the Tuaregs are the historical inhabitants of the Sahel region divided by colonisation between some African countries such as Mali, Algeria, Libya, Burkina Faso, Chad, Niger and Nigeria. The absence of writings on their past means that their origins remain unknown. In addition to speaking the same language “Tamasheq”, they also share a common culture.

1.1. Historical Background

Mali is named after one of the pre-colonial Sahelian dynasties. Ancient Mali, at its peak in the 14th century, spanned four times the size of modern-day France, stretching from the middle Sahara to the Atlantic Ocean. In the Islamic world, the empire's principal cities, Timbuktu and Jenne, were known for their riches and scholarship. However, ancient Mali ultimately fractured into a number of successor states (Keita 2).

In the late 1800s, France established colonial rule over the majority of West Africa. Following this, the French determined the borders of their territories, resulting in the current

borders that divide the subregion's autonomous francophone countries. Despite being a fraction of the size of the ancient kingdom, the “Mali” that emerged from French colonisation in 1960 inherited a vast land area, more than twice the size of modern France (Keita 2).

During Mali's first eight years of independence, Modibo Keita, an outspoken Marxist, implemented socialist programs. His government nationalised important industries and developed close ties with communist countries. His harsh rule appeared to be in place, but Mali was experiencing significant economic and financial challenges by 1967. Keita attempted to secure French assistance for the Malian currency, which caused dissatisfaction inside his party as well as accusations of betrayal from his more radical supporters. Keita initiated a Maoist-inspired cultural revolution in August 1967 to appease the latter, but the spiralling purges and dictatorial measures soon alienated the majority of the public. Keita was deposed in a bloodless coup organised by junior army soldiers in 1968 (“Modibo Keita”). This coup was led by Lieutenant Moussa Traoré, who will succeed him in the same year.

Following 1968, Moussa Traore's new military government aimed to orient the nation more clearly toward the West and free-market economic reform. However, foreign investment was inadequate, and the region was soon hit by severe drought. The construction of national infrastructure was gradual and unequal. Mali's government has been unable to shrink the size of an ever-expanding civil service or privatise the economically inefficient but politically powerful public economic sector, leading to a rise in national debt. Meanwhile, Mali's birth rate stayed high, and the country's growing population was unable to find useful work. Venality and corruption between government leaders became more visible in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1990, an economically and politically fragile Mali was confronted with a second Tuareg insurgency (Keita 4).

By 1991, pro-democracy movements had received attention in Mali, but Traoré's leadership dismissed them, claiming that the country was not ready for such transformation.

Demonstrations and violence erupted in major cities, resulting in a military takeover in March 1991 and Traoré's imprisonment. Amadou Toumani Touré's new military government pledged a rapid return to civilian authority and hosted a national summit attended by key organisations and unions. In 1992, elections were held, and Alpha Oumar Konaré, a well-known civilian intellect, was elected president (Clark; et al).

The hope of a more democratic future was boosted by the adoption of a new constitution and the formation of a multiparty administration. President Konaré's efforts to restore Mali were hampered, however, by frail economy, drought, desertification, decreasing foreign aid, significant socio-political pressures, and huge difficulties left over from previous conflicts (Clark; et al). He stood down in 2002, in accordance with Mali's two-term constitutional limit, and was followed by Amadou Toumani Touré, who was re-elected in 2007 ("Mali"). Konaré is to date, the only Malian president who has completed his mandate without having been ousted by a coup.

Rising ethnic tensions and an inflow of jihadists from Libya, some of whom were affiliated to Al-Qaida, sparked a rebellion and military coup in 2012. Following the coup, rebels drove the military out of the country's three northern regions, permitting terrorist groups to establish bases. The Malian government was able to regain most of the north with the help of French military intervention. The government's hold over the region, however, remains tenuous, with local militias, terrorists, and insurgent organizations constantly attempting to expand their influence. The Malian government and northern rebels signed a peace agreement in 2015, which was negotiated by the international community. Despite a deadline of June 2017 for the agreement's implementation, the parties have made little headway. Terrorist attacks are still widespread because extremist groups were left out of the peace process ("Mali").

In 2013 and 2018, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita won the Malian presidential elections. Apart from security and logistical issues, international observers found the elections to be legitimate. During Keita's second tenure, the country was beset by terrorism, banditry, ethnic-based violence, and extrajudicial military deaths. In August 2020, the military detained Keita, his prime minister, and other senior government officials, forming a military junta known as the National Committee for the People's Salvation (CNSP). The junta formed a transition government in September 2020, appointing Bah N'Daw, a retired army officer and former defence minister, as interim president and Colonel Assimi Goita, the coup leader and CNSP chairman, as interim vice president. The charter of the transition government allows it to reign for up to 18 months before a general election is called (“Mali”).



Fig. 1. Map of Mali

Source: Guichaoua, Yvan, and Gilles Yabi. “Mali: Avoiding Escalation.” (2012).

1.2. Who are the Tuaregs?

The word Tuareg is of Arab origin (Bourgeot, “Ideology and Ethnic Designations” 538). They are pastoralist people that live in north-western Africa (southern Algeria, southwestern Libya, Mali, and Niger), with smaller populations in Burkina Faso, Chad, and Nigeria. The lack of written records prohibits a reliable reconstruction of their past; hence their origin is unknown. Ottonio et al argues that according to most Arabian historians and geographers, the Tuaregs descended from Arabic or Semitic inhabitants who arrived in the Maghreb after numerous military battles and gradually moved south, where they mixed with the existing Berber populations. The Tuaregs speak Tamajaq (sometimes spelled Tamasheq or Tamahaq depending on the location), a Berber language with many dialects spoken in different parts of the country. The Tifinagh (also known as Shifinagh and Tifinar) is the Tamajaq writing system, whose origins are unknown. In north-western Africa, an older variant of Tifinagh, also known as Libyco-Berber, dated from the 3rd century BC to the 3rd century AD (Ottonio et al. 438).

The head veil, the sword, the dromedary, the ethnonym are the material and cultural supports for the aristocratic layer’s representations and ideals, which are internalised by all the dependents. This internalisation enables for the smooth reproduction of this dominant layer and the system related to it, while also creating the illusion of Tuareg identity autonomy in regard to the social ties that have produced it. This identity is both mysterious and effective (Bourgeot, “Identité Touareg” 138).

Despite their sharing a common language and culture, the Tuareg population has always been divided into different groups called confederations. Precolonial organization of Tuareg society was based on rigid division into social classes and reflected tribal separation. French colonization in the early 20th century, long periods of war, and Tuareg group rebellions between 1916 and 1919 severely weakened the Tuareg socio-political system.

Under French rule, most of the slaves were set free and the confederations disassembled. This was accompanied by a significant decline in pastoralism: nomad tribes were confined to areas designated by the new administration, and pastoral activities were restricted to small ranges. Many Libyan Tuaregs came to Libya from Chad, Algeria and Niger, and settled in the south of the country, near Ghat and Ubarj (Ottonio et al. 438).

There is a scarcity of genetic data on the Tuaregs so far. The Tuaregs and Eastern African populations from Ethiopia, particularly the Beja, have a high genetic kinship, according to nuclear genetic markers. Tuaregs from Mali, Niger, and Nigeria have a high affinity for western south Saharan groups, according to mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) research (Ottonio et al. 439).

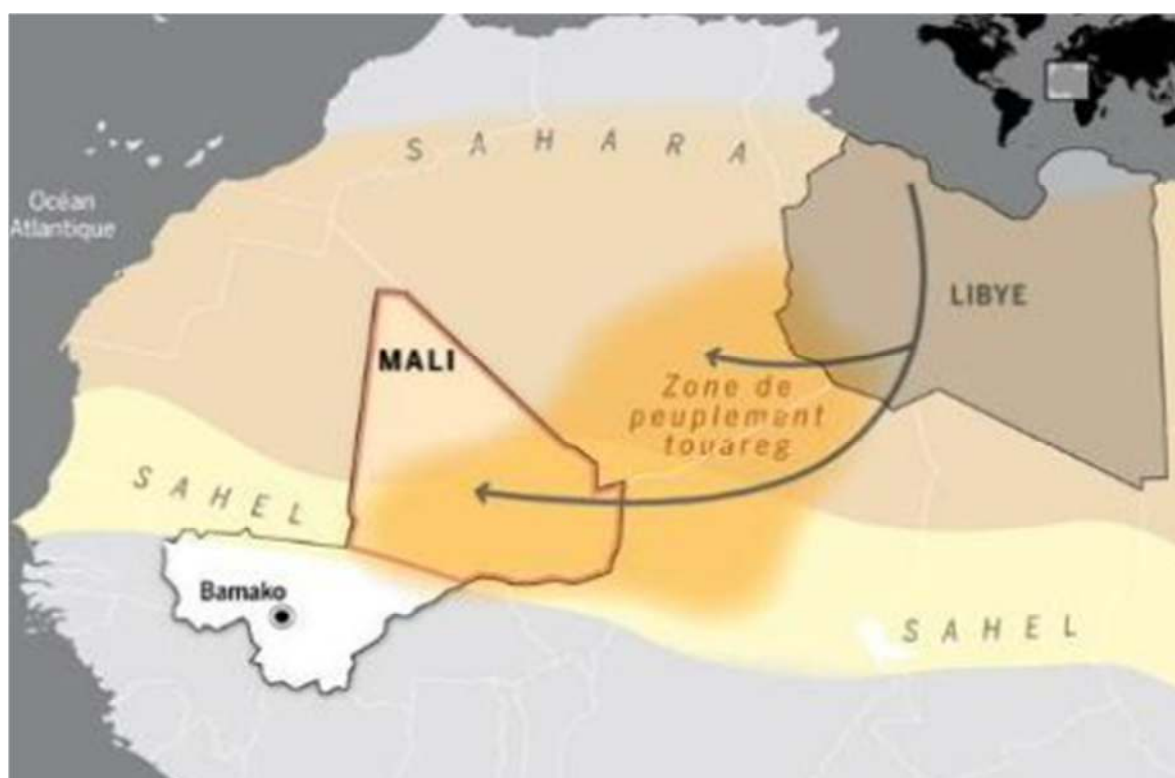


Fig. 2. Tuareg Settlement Area

Source: Anderson, Jason. "In Mali, Now Comes the Hard Parts." (2013).

1.2.1. Previous Tuareg Uprisings in Mali

When Africa's decolonization began in the 1950s, the inhabitants of the Sahara (mostly the Tuaregs) agitated for political autonomy, which often resulted in warfare. Tuareg regions were far from the capitals during the colonial era, and hence were cut off from influence. Colonial powers enacted a series of conventions regulating and limiting nomadic migrations to specific territories for each federation over time, thereby restricting Tuareg movements and increasing their isolation from power centers. Tuaregs fought French colonialists on these issues, but were defeated by French military superiority and divide-and-conquer tactics, which pitted Tuareg tribes against each other (Atallah 67).

The first significant Tuareg insurrection in modern Mali occurred in 1962, shortly after the country obtained independence. The regime of Modibo Keita, who came to power after the French left, repressed the Tuaregs severely during this time. Tuaregs were heavily discriminated against at the period, and their distribution of governmental benefits fell behind that of other groups. To make matters worse, Keita's government implemented land reform measures that threatened Tuareg access to agricultural products on their own territories (Mohanty, Abhijit).

On June 27, 1990, major disturbance occurred once more, although this time it was brief. This movement was likely sparked, at least in part, by a series of droughts in the 1970s and 1980s that wreaked havoc on conventional Tuareg pastoral practices. Most Tuareg people thought the Malian state was purposely withholding aid to them in order to push them out of the country (Keita 12). Droughts wreaked havoc on traditional Tuareg social systems, in addition to increasing resentment among the Tuareg as a whole. Younger Tuareg began to separate from their traditional elders, especially when more of them entered camps or were forced to relocate. In reality, certain lower-class and younger Tuareg have accused the Malian state of favouring the upper class (Lohmann 14).

A large number had also relocated to North African republics due to financial need. This was especially true when it came to immigrating to Libya. Although many Tuareg found work in the oil business in Libya, many more entered the Libyan military, either as regular forces or as members of the Libyan Islamic Legion. The latter group fought as insurgents in a variety of places. Despite the fact that none of their actions were aimed at Mali, the training and organisational capabilities they obtained created a solid foundation for the development of an insurgent movement. Many former members of the Islamic Legion returned to Mali after Libya's economic woes, but with more fighting experience (and in some cases, their weapons) and little possibilities for productive work (Atallah 68).

The Azawad Popular Movement (MPA), the Revolutionary Army for the Liberation of Azawad (ARLA), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Azawad (FPLA), and the National Front for the Liberation of Azawad (FNLA) were the main players in the 1990 revolt (Keita 15). The Tuareg rebels were apparently significantly more combat effective in 1990, despite not being a united movement. As a result, the Malian forces deployed to battle them suffered considerable fatalities. Iyad Ag Ghaly, later to become the leader of Ansar Din, was one of the most competent commanders during this rebellion. Following some bloodshed, Algeria mediated talks between Bamako and the Tuareg, resulting in the so-called Tamanrasset Accord of January 6, 1991. This was an interim agreement that included a cease-fire, the evacuation of army bases in northern Mali, and the establishment of a formal peace commission. The accord also created a provisional defence force made up of Malian troops and rebels to supply military units in the north (Cline 19-20).

After more discussions, the National Pact of 1992 was signed. It included a number of Tuareg in the Malian army and civil service. Although far from perfect—for example, former Tuareg rebels now serving in the army staged a mutiny in 1994, killing fellow (non-Tuareg) combatants. Malian administration tended to see the integration effort as working well

generally, at least in the short term. This strategy also included a series of trust-building efforts between the army and Tuareg villages, as well as inner army training aimed at familiarising the military with Tuareg culture and human rights issues in general. Despite the accord, some Tuareg tribes kept on fighting, and tiny counterterrorism activities and Tuareg raids persisted in the north. The degree of political or nationalist motivations vs banditry was questionable, as it had been in previous Tuareg activities. This cycle of conflict, though, came to a stop in 1996. The Tuareg's incorporation into the country's political, social, and economic structures has stayed fragile. According to a UN official: "The peace agreements signed after the Tuareg rebellions were not fully respected, reintegration was not adequately implemented and the political systems did not take into account the aspirations of the inhabitants." ("Famine not Fanaticism Poses Greatest Terror Threat in Sahel").

The situation in the north was also influenced by broader political difficulties in Mali. In 1991, there was a coup quickly followed by elections. All of this resulted in more freedom of speech and political decentralisation. Although these efforts had little influence in the north (which was still experiencing instability), "...decentralisation also escalated internal fights for power inside northern communities, with winner-take-all consequences in resource and aid access" (Gutelius 62).

The peace accord of 1996 had a multitude of unexpected consequences:

Following the final peace settlement in 1996, cities such as Timbuktu, Gao and especially Kidal were in many ways cut off from the rest of the country—partly because the ceasefire compelled a military withdrawal of Malian forces from key areas in the northern tier of the country. ... The late 1990s saw a kind of desert bloom in local Muslim grassroots self-help organisations and schools across Mali seeded and actively supported by Middle East interest groups or Malian expatriates. ... Most supporters remained more or less focused on much-needed economic development,

within a specifically Islamic framework. ... But some, including the Saudi Da'wa and Pakistani Da'wa al-Tabligh, came to Mali more interested in spreading particular interpretations of Islam to counter what they saw as an African bastardisation of religion (Gutelius 63).

After ten years of relative calm, in 2006 battling flared once more. This was accelerated when almost 60 previous Malian rebels who had been consolidated within the Malian armed force left in March 2006. Discrimination against the Tuareg in the Malian army was the main grievance of the deserters. There certainly was a noteworthy level of doubt between the "Malian" and the "Tuareg" officers and troops inside the purportedly bound together military and security strengths, with a genuine integration chimera. The Tuareg deserters, led by Lieutenant Colonel Hassan Ag Fagaga, formed an organised group and began targeting small army outposts in northern Mali (Emerson).

The Tuareg have formed once again another new organisation, the Democratic Alliance for Change (ADC). The Kel Adagh Tuareg tribe was nearly entirely responsible for the insurrection. With Algerian intervention, the Malian government and the ADC established a peace deal within a year. However, as had been the trend in the past, a section of Tuareg led by Ibrahim Ag Bahanga and known as the Alliance of Niger-Mali Tuareg (ATNM) broke away and resumed occasional conflict. Finally, on October 6, 2009, a definitive peace agreement with the surviving Tuaregs was concluded through Libya-led negotiations. It should be remembered that the Nigerien Tuareg were also involved in their own revolt during this time, which ended at the same moment. The Nigerien Tuareg movement, known as the Nigerien Movement for Justice, is said to have utilised weaponry acquired from Malian government stockpiles either by ADC or the ATNM, implying cross-border operational linkages among factions (Tamboura 5).

1.2.2. Current Groups in the Tuareg Area of Mali

Four main and one minor groups have emerged as key players in Mali's conflict: The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), Ansar Din, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the Movement for Monotheism and Jihad (MUJAO), and the Azawad National Liberation Front (FNLA).

The MNLA was the most important sovereignty movement to arise from the previous rebellions. The National Movement of Azawad and the Tuareg Movement of North Mali were legally merged in October 2011 to form this group. The MNLA's early organisational factors were described by one of the organisers as follows:

We talked about where things had gone wrong and tried to agree on a plan and on some common objectives. We created a ruling council, a military *état-major*, commanded and coordinated by Mohammed Ag Najim and other senior officers. There are about 40 of them. And we also created a political bureau, which set about analysing and considering all the political aspects including how to raise awareness among the international community, especially regional powers (qtd. in Atallah 5).

This group was created following the fall of Kadhafi regime and includes many Tuaregs who were in the Libyan army. It aims to “liberate our lands from the occupation of the military forces of Bamako”, declares Hama Ag Sid Ahmed, one of its spokespersons, based in Paris and who was the confidant of Ibrahim Ag Bahanga, eternal rebel of the independence cause, died in a road accident in August 2011 (North-Mali: who are the rebels of the MNLA?).

Ansar Din is the second most important group. This movement began in late 2011 and is said to be rooted mostly in the Tuareg tribe of Ifora. Iyad Ag Ghaly, a Tuareg rebel leader since the 1990s, is the group's leader. He was a member of the Libyan Islamic Legion, as were many Tuaregs. He eventually became a member of the Malian Consulate in Jeddah, Saudi

Arabia, after some kind of reconciliation with the Malian government. As a result of his interactions with Tabligh Jamaat, the Saudi government reportedly ordered that he leaves the country (Vogl). He was seen as a “mainstream rebel” with minimal religious inclination before the foundation of Ansar ad Din. He has met with the US embassy in Bamako on multiple occasions to discuss Tuareg issues. The reasons for and methods by which Ghaly got radicalized, as well as the sincerity with which this radicalization occurred, are all open to debate (Flood 3). Since taking over as leader of Ansar Din, Ghaly's public goals have diverged dramatically from those of the MNLA. He has not called for Tuareg autonomy, but rather: “We are not asking for much: just the application of Shari‘a law in the northern and southern regions of Mali. We are Malians and we are against the division of Mali” (Flood 3).

Ansar Din's acts have a strong Salafist bent to them. Many of its members have “traditional” beards rather than Tuareg-style facial hair and wear robes that are shorter, another Salafist trademark. They have also shut down or demolished bars and prohibited men and women from interacting in public. Ansar Din would impose the veiling of women, amputations for thieves, and stoning for adulterers, according to Ghaly in a radio interview (“Mali: Timbuktu Heritage May Be Threatened, UNESCO Says.”)

The precise relationship between Ansar Din and AQIM is a matter of debate. Several AQIM officials have been spotted in Ansar Din-controlled areas, most notably Mokhtar Belmokhtar in Gao when Ansar Din took control of the city. Even though some of their doctrinal positions are similar, Ansar Din has shown no signs of seeking a major partnership with AQIM. Despite the fact that the two groups appeared to be on comparable tracks, they seemed satisfied to retain their distance. This is likely due to Ansar Din focusing on Mali-specific concerns while AQIM focuses on regional issues, and in theory, internationally (Cline 23).

Ansar Din's strength estimates, like the MNLA, are based on speculation rather than hard data. However, it appears that the number of its primary fighters will be limited to a few hundred at most. Many commentators remarked that most of the warriors who really captured the cities during the Tuareg's big advances in Mali appeared to be from the MNLA. Members of Ansar Din looked to be largely in support positions, with many of their actions appearing to be more political or symbolic than military in nature. As the Ansar Din and the MNLA divided and began fighting, Ansar Din appeared to have little trouble defeating the MNLA. This was most likely due to more organised Ansar Din elements and more motivated individuals, rather than relative strength levels in terms of sheer numbers of combatants (Cline 623).

AQIM is the successor to the GIA (Armed Islamic Group) and GSPC (Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat). Amir Abdelmalek Droukkel, also known as Abu Moussab Abdel Wadoud, is the head of AQIM, which is based in southern Algeria. AQIM has subordinate sections (perhaps with significant autonomy), with Amir Moktar Belmokhtar, an Algerian, as the leader of the western cell. Belmokhtar, a former member of the GIA and the GSPC, is believed to command 150 to 200 men (Lohmann 9).

In the past, there were few indications that the Tuareg had any particular affinities for Al Qaeda or the GSPC. This is due in part to the Tuareg's moderate type of Islam; as Ag Hindi, a professor at the University of Bamako, put it, "The Tuareg are Muslim by conformity, not by conviction" ("Famine not Fanaticism Poses Greatest Terror Threat in Sahel"). According to a 2007 field researcher, many residents in northern Mali "said that Islamist movements are unpopular; they mocked reformist adherents for their long beards, and thought that the proselytizers had returned to Pakistan, discouraged at their low conversion rate" (Rasmussen 188).

According to Lohmann, several Tuareg reportedly declared in 2010 that they were willing to battle AQIM and drive them out of “their desert.” Bamako, on the other hand, apparently did not respond positively to the Tuareg. As she points out:

The fact that the Tuareg have demanded governmental approval can be interpreted as a signal to the government, as well as the Malian society, that the Tuareg want to integrate and not act on their own, so that they are no longer considered criminals as they have been during and after the rebellions (13).

In 2009, the national family law in Mali (Code de la famille), was proposed to be amended in order to grant more rights to women, which could have been a hint that religion could be used as a mobilising weapon for the Tuareg in the north. Religious leaders quickly organised enormous protests, some of which were violent. According to one source, “Many of the demonstrators were not even aware of the details of the reform but perceived it as western intervention against Muslim tradition and were willing to protest against that” (qtd. in Lohmann 11).

Nevertheless “The Tuareg movement is an opposition movement fighting for territory, autonomy and resource management,” One regional diplomatic source said, “and nothing a priori links them to groups such as the GSPC. However, you cannot rule out the possibility that the GSPC has started planting seeds among them.” (qtd. in “Famine not Fanaticism Poses Greatest Terror Threat in Sahel”) In addition, the Islamic organisation Jama'at al Tabligh has increased its evangelizing among the Tuareg; despite the fact that this group is officially apolitical and has no history of violence, its operations are viewed with considerable mistrust by many nations (“Africa Report number 92, Islamist Terrorism in the Sahel: Fact of Fiction?” 8).

Some traditional Tuareg social systems have also been apparently affected by the Tablighi (Lecocq 148-151). Islamists have also paid increasing attention to other

organisations in the region. The majority of Muslim Sahelians have always followed a mild type of Sufism. However, Wahhabi evangelism and groups advocating a stricter brand of Islam, whether Wahhabi or Salafist, have increased in recent years (Laremont 31-34).

According to one observer with extensive experience in the region, the Tuareg have a more practical purpose for some of their partnerships with AQIM than religion:

Over the years, the local Arab-Tuareg population slowly learned to tolerate its presence, in part due to the organisation's ability to develop the local economy and provide basic services in an impoverished region that felt abandoned by its host government. Local leaders forged business relationships with AQIM that mutually benefited the two. These relationships were cemented through marriages to local women (Atallah 9).

Maybe when the MNLA attempted to implement Azawad, the Islamists of Ansar Din and AQIM increased their pressure, and the MNLA began to stress the matter of religion a little more than the group had done previously:

Our Constitution is based on the Qur'an and on other principles derived from international treaties that do not go against Islam. It will be based on the Koran as interpreted by Imam Maalik as well as other principles derived from international treaties that do not go against religion. The people of Azawad are 100% Muslim, and is a moderate Islam. People have always settled their problems among imams and cadis of the city before going to the police or in court of Mali. We just formalised on paper the reality of Azawadiens. So, we are not extremists but moderate or secular. The word "secular" has never been written in any official document of the MNLA. Those who speak of the secular Azawad are not aware of the ground realities ("Mali – Bilal Ag Acherif (MNLA)").

MUJAO is the fourth prominent group in northern Mali. Hamada Ould Mohamed Kheirou is the leader of this AQIM splinter faction. The rupture was apparently caused by AQIM's "marginalisation of black African members" (William). MUJAO first opened its doors in December of 2011. The initial actions took place in western Algeria. Interestingly, in one of the group's early films, members spoke in both English and Hausa, the latter of which is spoken primarily in Nigeria, Niger, and Burkina Faso (AFP). Mali doesn't speak either of these languages. MUJAO members have been operating in northern Mali, usually in collaboration with Ansar Din, despite having broader ideological goals than simply northern Mali. The MUJAO began with a small number of members, but has steadily grown in size. According to a source who spoke with residents in Gao, several members of Nigeria's Boko Haram have also been observed in the area (Flood 2).

The ideological relationship between these organisations is complicated. This is due, at least in part, to the MNLA's, Ansar Din's, and MUJAO's incoherent doctrines. The MNLA is definitely less religiously oriented, focusing instead on ethnic issues. Simultaneously, it has changed its public ideological orientations in response to changing circumstances. Both Ansar Din and MUJAO have emphasized their Islamist roots, however Ansar Din appears to be more comfortable using public Salafist signs. These two movements have basically Islamist goals in common, but their ideologies are mainly compatible (and overlap), but not identical.

Another breakaway organisation arose in northern Mali during the MNLA advance. The FLNA was the name of the organisation. According to Bate, this group of non-Tuareg Arabs, mostly from the Timbuktu area, was allegedly formed to defend the city from the Tuareg. Despite the fact that it was claimed to have only a few hundred members, this introduced further complexities to the already polarised climate. "We, the Arabs of Timbuktu, will never be ruled by a Tuareg from Kidal," one FLNA member declared (Bate). Mohamed Lamine Ould Sidatt, an elected politician, served as the group's Secretary General. The

military head, a Malian lieutenant colonel who had defected, claimed to command 500 armed troops. Even though the FLNA has not yet confirmed to be a substantial force, it could prove to be a valuable partner to one of the larger forces (“Mali: Création d’un Nouveau Groupe Armé Dans le Nord.”)

Chapter Two

The Fourth Northern Insurgency since Autonomy

Despite their apparent inchoate thirst for independence, the Tuareg have been staging little and major uprisings for many years. The Tuareg rebellion in Mali was born out of political blunders. It has several times been managed by negotiations, and always ends up reappearing because of economic frustrations and the Government's lack of concern for the inhabitants of the north. But the 2012 rebellion pushed things too far, because after serving as mercenaries in the Libyan war, the Tuaregs went so far as to proclaim the independence of the territory of Azawad in the north of the country.

This conflict led to the collapse of the government of Amadou Toumani Touré. However, the Tuaregs did not play a direct role in this overthrow. It was the incapacity of the President that served as a justification for the Malian Army to overthrow his government. The collapse of Mali's democratically elected government, led France and other Western States, as well as intergovernmental organisations to intervene and help Mali to drive extremists groups out of the region's cities, as well as to recover the two thirds of the country which were under their domination.

2.3. The Crisis of 2012

Many Malian-born mercenaries went home with weapons from Khadafi's armoury after Libya's fall in 2011. This paramilitary spill over accelerated the fourth northern insurgency since autonomy (the previous three occurred in the years 1963–4, 1990s, and 2006–9). In each insurgency, rebels, mostly from the semi-nomadic Tuareg group, have stated that northern people have been overlooked by the south-centric state, citing the need of open administrations and foundation. Before this reiteration, the Malian state had gotten especially frail within the northern hinterlands, where its deficiencies had created space for a variety of alternative political authorities, as well as a growing presence of hard-line Islamist

actors. The government's incapacity to control its own territory resulted in human, drug and cigarette trafficking, as well as kidnapping and banditry, all of which provided cash for a new breed of state rivals (Bleck 3-4).

In January 2012, three military groups: the secessionist MNLA, the Islamist hard-liner group Ansar Dine and the terrorist organization AQIM started attacks on military establishments in northern Mali, where they crushed Malian troops. Due to inadequate rains during the previous planting season, the nation was already suffering a food crisis, with more than three million Malians facing food insecurity. Around 400,000 people were displaced as a result of the struggle (Bleck 4)

Malian soldiers launched a coup on March 21, a month before scheduled national elections, unhappy at combating the northern insurgency with insufficient weaponry and supplies (Whitehouse, "What went wrong in Mali" 1-2). The junta's initial demand for better weapons and backing for their northern assault swiftly expanded to include larger popular grievances about poor public service and infrastructure, as well as political elite corruption (Whitehouse, "A festival of brigands"). While the coup was tragic, many urban residents saw it as providing a much-needed shock to Mali's crumbling democracy (Coulibaly, and Bratton).

The readiness of President Amadou Toumani Touré to deal with all parties, including those accused of unlawful activities in the north, combined with Mali's amnesty culture, fueled rumours of high-ranking government officials' involvement in illicit trafficking, embezzlement, and corruption (Dougnon; Wing). In a post-coup poll in Bamako, 65 percent of respondents said the junta's actions were justified (Guindo). The international community, on the other hand, condemned the coup and levied sanctions right away. The tourism industry, which was already in decline, came to a halt as a result of the insecurity, and the Malian economy took a significant damage.

The political crisis in Bamako was rapidly seized by the triumvirate of insurgent groups. They took the northern districts of Timbuktu, Kidal, and Gao, and finally made their way south into the Mopti region, less than a week after the coup. They declared Azawad to be an independent state. Within two months, the secular MNLA had been displaced by the MUJAO, and Ansar Dine, leaving people of northern capitals under harsh Shari'a law. Competition between armed organisations, as well as recruiting along ethnic and clan lines, intensified community tensions (Bleck 5).

The conflict of 2012 occurs in the background of the Sahel war and Tuareg rebellions against the Malian government. It is one of the consequences of Libya's civil war. Because, following the overthrow of the Gaddafi regime, armed groups plundered military arsenals, and Tuareg mercenaries working for the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya escaped to the Sahara with these resources to join rebel groups. The conflict opposed the Tuaregs groups to the Malian army (FAMA). However, due to a lack of sufficient equipment to continue the fight, the FAMA ended up overthrowing the government of Amadou Toumani Touré.



Fig. 3. Northern Mali Conflict

Source: Anderson, Jason. "In Mali, Now Comes the Hard Parts." (2013).

2.3.1. The Causes of the Mali Conflict

The reasons for the resurgence of violence in Mali in 2012 are numerous. The first source of conflict is Malian government officials' ongoing political corruption. The second issue is rebel organisations' expanding power, which indicates a lack of a solid central authority capable of combating insurgency in both the northern and southern parts of the country. Finally, the third cause is the deterioration of economic conditions, which is partly state-engineered but also linked to a regional humanitarian disaster.

2.3.1.1. Corruption in Mali

The government of Mali's ongoing corruption exacerbates tensions between rebel groups and other civilians and the government. Examining the validity of a country's system of government and whether that government follows the law can reveal political fraud. Mali made the transition to democracy in the 1990s, but it was only a charade. The democracy crumbled after ten years under President Amadou Toumani Touré (Chauzal and Van Damme 14). The democratic processes were not valid, which is one reason for the failure. Although it was claimed that democratic elections were held in Mali, an interview featured in the documentary “Return to Bamako” stated that the polls were often rigged by important people with money buying citizens to vote for them. Essentially, the wealthy and powerful gained political clout in Mali, rather than fully democratic votes getting conducted.

Furthermore, during these elections, the government failed to provide equitable political representation to all Malians. Many ethnicities, such as the Tuareg and Arabs, were discriminated against by electoral zoning laws. Increased representation of less densely populated areas obliterated the Arabs' political dominance in the north, but helped some Tuareg communities over others. These electoral zoning laws benefited Tuareg groups that initially embraced the post-colonial Malian administration and were especially aggressive against French colonial goals. The electoral zoning laws are an example of political leaders'

corruption, as well as the deliberate political marginalisation of various Tuareg and Arab communities in the north (Davis).

2.3.1.2. Rebel Activity in Mali

The growth of violent anti-state groups has also contributed significantly to the security crisis. Mali has seen four rebellions since its independence in 1960, all of which have contributed to the country's ongoing turmoil. The first Tuareg uprising began in 1963, in response to dissatisfaction with governmental representation. Rather than considering the demands of those in the north, the administration chose to use military force to frighten them (Chauzal and Van Damme 30-31).

The Tuareg established a totally recognizable and unified political movement when the second insurrection began in 1990, due to the formation of a liberation group known at the time as MPLA. After an attack on the Malian armed forces in Menaka, a town in northern Mali, where weapons and trucks were stolen, the MPLA was officially formed. The rebels were not a recognized militant group at the time of the attack, but they gained legitimacy after receiving weapons and vehicles from the state's military. The Malian government responded by deploying two-thirds of its military forces to contain and eradicate the rebels' authority. Many civilians were killed in the military-uprising confrontation, and the incident inspired several people to join the forces of what would ultimately become the MPLA (Davis).

Violence erupted in Mali ten years after the second Tuareg rebellion. By 2006, the Tuareg movement had disintegrated, as evidenced by the existence of various violent groups on the resistance side. Despite the division, this movement might be referred to as the Third Tuareg Rebellion. The FPLA, ARLA, The Arabic Islamic Front of Azawad (FIAA), MPA are some of these organisations. Despite this, new groups developed in defiance of the state. Internal differences between the MPA and ARLA led to the formation of DAC in May 2006, which subsequently launched an attack on the GSPC, another rebel group (Davis).

The increase in the number of insurgent groups is closely related to the immediate cause of the intrastate conflict that began in 2012. The National Movement of Azawad was founded in October 2010 as a political movement to demand political autonomy for Mali. More people joined the MNA and created the MNLA after the movement's demands were denied. MNLA announced that its goal was to build Azawad an independent state, rather than asking for political autonomy and equity as MNA had done. In January of 2012, the MNLA attacked a state military brigade in Menaka. If the Malian government had a strong central authority, it would have been better able to suppress the insurrection from the start, or at the very least destroy some of it (Davis).

Not only is the country's growing number of anti-state groups an issue, but one of the motivating elements behind their development is the Malian government's role in manufacturing and exacerbating an economic crisis that was centred in the north. The rebellions were enraged by the disproportionate development of southern versus northern Mali and the failure of the National Pact of 1992. The issue of unequal development draws attention to the economic crisis as a source of political conflict (Davis).

2.3.1.3. Economic Conditions in Mali

Finally, due to a lack of investment in the domestic sector, the Malian government has aggravated the country's economic situation. Tuareg and Arabs make up the majority of the population in the country's north, and their economy is based on cattle and farming, as well as tourism, which accounts for around 43% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The revenue from these places has reduced as a result of the decline in tourism, leaving more than 8,000 people unemployed by the end of 2011 (Chauzal and Van Damme 25-36). The Malian state is not investing in locally produced agricultural items, which has angered many Tuareg who are struggling to feed their families. One man complained of being bolstered by

nourishment from other countries when there is nourishment on the farms in Mali, but they cannot sell it because of the government (Sarasin, Jackques; and Serge Elleinstein).

It's also true that the south's economy is mostly based on gold export and cotton production. By not participating in agricultural output in Mali, the Malian government basically suffocates the economy of the north, which is largely Tuareg and Arab. Additionally, the Malian government's interdiction of tourism aided in the creation of a financial downturn in the north (Chauzal and Van Damme 25). As a result, the economic condition in Mali enrages many Tuareg and Arabs, encouraging them to join one of the rising numbers of anti-government armed groups. This mobilisation poses a threat to the Malian administration because it reduces loyalty to the state and makes northern people more vulnerable to aid from states such as Libya and Algeria (Chauzal and Van Damme 26-27).

2.3.2. International Responses

The collapse of Mali's democratically elected government led France and other key Western states, as well as intergovernmental organisations such as ECOWAS, AU, the European Union (EU), and the United Nations (UN), to launch a series of external and regional military, political, and diplomatic interventions aimed at resolving the conflict. French troops began combat operations against Islamist extremists in the country's remote northern area in January 2013, under the auspices of a United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR). In less than a month, Operation *Serval* drove AQIM and allied groups out of the region's cities, opening the way for the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to organise an African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) and the potential return of democratic rule to the country as a whole.

2.3.2.1. France

The French military intervention was the most significant in putting the conflict in northern Mali to a swift and conclusive finish. President Hollande justified the intervention by claiming that France had no choice but to intervene to prevent the emergence of a terrorist state with major security implications for France and the West. The collapse of the Malian nation and the incapability of the military forces to protect the country and stop separatist rebels and their Islamist allies from advancing militarily, combined with the failure of African countries to send troops, obligated France to act unilaterally, but with the consent of the international community, such as Russia, China, and African regional actors (Francis 5).

According to all indicators, France's participation in Mali was a preemptive military strike against Islamist insurgents. President Hollande had previously refused to act in December 2012 in favour of the beleaguered President Bozize of the Central African Republic (CAR). The apparent U-turn on Mali was due to the threat posed by that country and how that threat resonates with the French home audience, namely, the possibility of a terrorist state forming and its effect on France. The French defense minister, Jean-Yves le Drian, justified the intervention by saying, "The threat is that a terrorist state will be created near Europe and France... we had to react before it was too late" (qtd. in Daneshkhu).

In Mali, France committed a large military force, including a well-equipped ground force of 4,000 soldiers and air power, which easily battered separatist rebels and Islamist extremists into fleeing. France was backed up by 6,000 ECOWAS-led AFISMA troops and hurriedly trained and heavily armed Malian soldiers. Other significant Western nations, including the United Kingdom, Belgium, Canada, and the United States, also contributed military, intelligence, and logistical support. France has stated that it will reduce military numbers by the end of March 2013 and has requested that the UN deploy a peacekeeping force to replace French personnel, which has been backed by the African Union, ECOWAS,

and the Malian government. The military goals of Operation Serval had been met by the end of January 2013. Despite the fact that the separatists had been crushed, the Islamists were on the run, and their terrorist infrastructure in the north had been dismantled, Islamist jihadists' military and security challenges had not been erased (Francis 5).

2.3.2.2. The United States

The United States is assisting the French operation by exchanging information and transporting French troops. Before the coup, the United States was one of Mali's top bilateral donors, but it has since been constrained by a policy of non-cooperation with post-coup governments. In 2005, the US assisted in the development of the Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI), a regional plan. Under the command of the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM), this plan aims to assist Algeria, Burkina Faso, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal in their battle against terrorists (Bakrania 15-16).

2.3.2.3. Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

Following Mali's military coup, ECOWAS took the lead in mediation attempts. ECOWAS has been at the vanguard of garnering support for an African-led regional military deployment, working closely with the AU. Following the coup, ECOWAS' diplomatic reaction has been heavily criticised, particularly Burkina Faso's President Compaoré's appointment as the chief mediator. The approach to mediation, which treated Sanogo as nearly the sole interlocutor while giving Compaoré carte blanche, has been chaotic and unilateral. Burkina Faso has had a disproportionate impact on Mali's transition since then.

The election of Modibo Diarra as acting prime minister and the establishment of his administration, which was criticised in Bamako for its illegitimacy and unrepresentative nature, were made with little consultation with Malian political circles. Indeed, critics in Mali have raised concerns about national sovereignty, arguing that leaders should not be forced on

the country from the outside. The AU and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) have joined the response to Burkina Faso's contentious approach to mediation (Bakrania 14).

Compaoré's most recent mediation attempts have centred on reaching an agreement between Ansar Dine and the MNLA, which is considered more moderate than either AQIM or MUJAO. Ansar Dine declared a ceasefire in November 2012, but it was interrupted in January 2013, citing the Malian government's refusal to talk. Following combat between AQIM, Ansar Dine, MUJAO, and the Malian army, further discussions between the MNLA and Ansar Dine, slated for the 10th of January 2013, were postponed. Some political parties and civil society organisations in Mali have resisted Compaore's attempts. They believe Mali should stay united and secular, and accuse Compaoré of supporting rebels and terrorist organizations (Bakrania 14). While the international world recognizes ECOWAS' vital coordination role, Carson argues that Algeria and Mauritania should also be active in Mali engagement. Algeria and Mauritania share a border with Mali but are not ECOWAS members.

2.3.2.4. The African-led International Support in Mali (AFISMA)

AFISMA was approved by the UNSC on December 20, 2012, as a joint ECOWAS/AU request. Its goal is to promote the restoration and stabilisation of northern Mali by assisting in the training of Malian security personnel. The proposal called for a 3,300-person commitment to reinforce the Malian army, which was extended to 7,700 African soldiers in January 2013 (Valdmanis and Le Guernigo). The length of time it took to prepare and deploy the regional deployment has been criticised. Indeed, even the African Union admits that its response to the violence was too delayed (Al Jazeera). Furthermore, major concerns have been expressed about regional soldiers' combat capabilities, dedication, and human rights records in northern Mali's arid terrain (Arieff).

2.3.2.5. The European Union (EU)

The EU is establishing a training mission to assist Malian security personnel in reorganising, reforming, and strengthening their capabilities (Arieff). The EU Training Mission in Mali (EUTM) will train and advise the Malian armed forces over the first 15 months of its mandate. The training will help to rebuild military capabilities and enable the armed forces to participate in combat operations aimed at re-establishing the country's territorial integrity. There will be no combat activities carried out by the mission (“EU Training Mission in Mali”).

The EU was involved in the Sahel Security and Development Initiative, a comprehensive EU-Africa policy announced in 2007, before the present war. The EU endorsed a Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel in 2011, with the goal of facilitating the execution of Mali's national security policy, which was enacted in 2010. In July 2012, the EU created EUCAP SAHEL, a civilian Common Security and Defense Policy mission, to assist in the fight against crime and terrorism in Niger and the Sahel region, as part of this policy (Bakrania 15).

2.3.2.6. United Nations (UN)

The UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for the Sahel, Romano Prodi of Italy, was appointed in October 2012. His responsibilities include coordinating the implementation of the UN Integrated Regional Strategy for the Sahel and supporting national, regional, and international mediation efforts in the sub-region, particularly on cross-border and transnational issues, with a focus on Mali at first. As a result, Prodi and the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA) have backed Mali mediation efforts headed by ECOWAS (“In Security Council, Top Envoy Urges Strong Support for Leaders,...”).

2.3.3. The Humanitarian Situation in 2012

Within three weeks of the insurrection breaking out in January 2012, more than 30,000 people had abandoned their homes, followed by tens of thousands more. The majority remained in government-controlled areas, primarily in Bamako and its environs, while the minority fled to neighbouring countries such as Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Niger, Guinea, Togo, and Algeria, where they immediately established refugee camps. Thousands of individuals remained in the North, hiding in abandoned buildings because they were too terrified to leave their few possessions behind. These folks were not only exposed to the elements, but also to armed Islamists who were out to loot, beat, and rape them. Many people were killed while attempting to protect themselves and their families (Besenyo).

The fact-finding team of Human Rights Watch drew up more charges while reporting from the scene on the various groups occupying the northern territories. They cited terrorizing civil society, raping of women and young girls, robbing, looting, brutalizing captured government soldiers, and the use of child soldiers as examples (in the pursuance of war, Ansar Dine recruited children by force into their units). Tuareg and Islamist gangs are suspected of destroying Christian churches, bible schools, and hospitals, as well as attacking Christian minority communities in the country. As a result, a huge exodus started. The vast majority of Christians in the north fled to government-controlled territory or neighbouring nations. The Islamists, however, did not spare Muslim shrines; in Timbuktu, one of the World Heritage Sites, a cemetery regarded holy by Muslim religious scholars was partially destroyed, as was the 600-year-old entrance to the Sidi Jahya Mosque. The establishment of Islamist authority not only destabilized public law and order, but it also resulted in an increase in refugees due to executions, stonings, limb mutilations, torture, and public flogging (Besenyo).

More than 420 000 individuals have been forcibly driven from their homes since the conflict began, and their care remains unresolved. A portion of the refugees remained in Mali, but an increasing number of individuals have fled to neighbouring countries, where they feel safer. Out of the 3.3 million people residing in the North, at least 1.76 million are without food, as access to food is becoming increasingly difficult as prices have risen astronomically since the conflict erupted (ACAPS 1).

The Islamists, on the other hand, have made it illegal for international relief organisations to carry out humanitarian work on their lands. Some of these organisations were even hesitant to reach certain areas for fear of kidnappings and other violent crimes involving Red Cross personnel, forcing the majority of their Malian colleagues to flee the country. As a result of the current French operation, aggressive conduct toward foreigners has increased substantially, and humanitarian workers in Mali and neighbouring countries are in grave risk. Because the bulk of public institutions (hospitals, clinics, and schools) are closed and the majority of wells have been contaminated, health care in the north has all but vanished. As a cholera epidemic spread across Gao, the situation deteriorated, and the death toll increased (Besenyo).

2.3.4. Major Challenges to Peacebuilding

In Mali, the humanitarian crisis has been a substantial obstacle to peacebuilding. While it is true that the old Malian government contributed to some of the crisis, it is also environmental. The 1970s and 1980s brought with them a serious dry season, making it impossible to cultivate crops and resulting in a food crisis. The situation was even worse for Malians in the north, whose economy is primarily reliant on livestock and agriculture (Chauzal and van Damme 25). People in the north were prompted to migrate to other countries in search of better economic and living conditions, but many were forced to return due to worsening conditions in other countries (Hagberg and Körling).

Furthermore, according to UN data from 2011, there were nearly 200, 000 displaced people in Mali, not adding the more than 200,000 who fled to Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Niger. Worse, at least 4.6 million people in Mali were suffering from severe food insecurity, pushing the humanitarian group to step in to assist alleviate the situation (Assessing Developments in Mali 11). By 2013, the number of internally and externally displaced individuals had risen significantly, from around 410,000 to 475,000 (Moseley).

Furthermore, the presence of terrorist and rebel organizations in Mali forced the country to seek UN assistance in restoring political and security stability. Following the MNLA's offensive in 2012, the African Union and the United Nations initiated a military intervention in Mali in response to the country's humanitarian and security crises.

Maintaining a basis for Mali's territorial sovereignty, safeguarding human rights, reinforcing political stability, dismantling and destroying terrorists, and successfully transitioning to a transparent and trustworthy democratic administration were all factors in gaining support (Bere). France and the African Union have initiated two military operations, known as Operations Serval and Barkhane.

The Operation Serval lasted seven months and entailed the deployment of almost 4,500 soldiers. Its goal was: To assist the FAMA in stopping and repelling terrorist groups while ensuring the safety of civilian populations, to assist Mali in regaining its territorial integrity and sovereignty, and to facilitate the implementation of international decisions by enabling the rapid deployment of two complementary international missions. It was a crucial mission, because as stated by Tramond and Seigneur, it succeeded in recapturing the northern towns that were critical to Malian political authority and government. Terrorist groups' power regimes have also weakened as a result of fighting losses (Tramond and Seigneur).

Mali was able to hold elections in 2013 and 2014 following international military involvement. While some may consider the “handover to Malian authorities” a success

(Tramond and Seigneur), Bere does not believe the intervention was a success. While he acknowledges that the initiatives have resulted in significant developments in Mali, he emphasises the various issues of human rights, security, and the humanitarian crises that still remain. Terrorist attacks continue; many Malians are still displaced, humanitarian agencies are short on resources, and citizens are dissatisfied with the lack of basic social services.

At this stage of conflict resolution, international policies can be considered to be on the right track. If just the purposes of the military intervention as stated by the French Defence Ministry are considered, it is apparent that the second goal of assisting Mali in regaining territorial integrity and sovereignty has not been fully realised due to the challenges Bere mentions. While the Malian government has regained key cities in the north, smaller areas are still enduring humanitarian crises and bloodshed (Bere). In order for Mali's government to remain autonomous, it must have a monopoly on the ongoing terrorist attacks and human rights violations.

The performance of the international military intervention in addressing challenges in Mali and creating peace can also be examined through to the four most common peacebuilding standards: the security standard, the social standard, the political standard and the economic recovery standard. According to Call, the security standard evaluates the possibilities that a country with a history of intrastate strife may experience it again by determining if violence at the level of full armed conflict has recurred in the state. This norm places a premium on maintaining internal order and preventing civil unrest from repeating. With Mali's long and recurrent history of violence, it's possible that the country will revert to complete armed conflict at this point.

Another criterion, known as the social standard, assesses peacebuilding progress by determining whether or not a country has addressed the root causes of the conflict. There are two versions of this standard. The initial version of this idea proposes that conflicts be

resolved by addressing the root causes of the conflict. The other, however, approaches conflict by making a list of relevant risk variables in order to determine what is present. Lack of sustainable development, high levels of poverty, widespread inequality, corrupt government, a lack of democratic governance, and human rights violations are all risk factors (Call). Using either way of analysis to examine the situation in Mali, it is evident that the country is not a success story. If we consider political corruption and the security crises to be the core causes of the conflict, it becomes evident that Mali has not done enough to solve the problem. The government's stability is still threatened by the security issue (Rights TrenWorld Report 2017: ds in Mali).

Another way to evaluate the success of peacebuilding is to use the political criteria. This viewpoint emphasises the validity of the state's nature and status. This concept believes that civil war is the product of a country's failed authority, and requires that we assess whether the state is democratic or participative. It also calls for a review of the state's ability to perform its core functions (Call). Mali, again, fails to meet this level of peace evaluation. The US Department of State claimed in 2017 that the court was not independent of internal Malian politics, that government corruption continued to be tolerated, and that the Malian Ministry of Health embezzled \$124 million (“Mali-9-Corruption”). The partiality of the judiciary and embezzlement by state officials is evidence that the character of the state itself is illegitimate and exposes the corruption of governance still taking place in Mali.

The economic recovery criteria does not indicate that peace exists when there is significant economic recovery, but rather that bad economic conditions are linked to the emergence and recurrence of intrastate conflict. In contrast, a country's economic recovery is linked to the establishment of long-term peace (Call). According to the World Bank, Mali's economic recovery is moderately good, as evidenced by the number of people who have

benefited from infrastructure improvements and other economic activities in the country (“World Bank Group”).

Finally, declaring the intervention in Mali as a success suggests that there is long-term peace, giving the impression that the country is progressing faster than it actually is. As a result of this delusion, the international community's attention to ensuring that Mali does not back to conflict, as it has in the past, may be diminished.

Chapter Three

Mali's Algiers Peace Agreement: a Roadmap Towards National Reconciliation

Algeria has acted as the main mediator of previous peace agreements in northern Mali for years, a territory considered to be within its sphere of influence. Its goals of humanitarian and security concerns include monitoring terrorist activity and preventing world rival nations from gaining an influence in the Sahel. Algeria's policy to the Sahel region for years, has been based on the principle of non-interference in the international affairs of other countries, and preferred always encouraging the political solutions instead of the military ones by rejecting strongly any kind of foreign armed intervention in the region.

Since the beginning of the last crisis in 2012, Algeria has worked to establish a political solution between the parties involved in the Malian conflict. It emphasized the importance of the Malian parties to find a solution for their Nation. In order to achieve this purpose, Algeria with the help of the international community, succeed to create a Peace Agreement between the Malian Government and the Tuaregs. The implementation of this Peace Agreement, aims to bring peace in Mali; particularly in the Northern area.

3.1. The Algerian Stance

The Algerian state has served as the primary mediator and guarantor of past peace agreements in northern Mali for years, a territory considered to be within its sphere of influence. Under humanitarian and security concerns, the country's aims include monitoring terrorist activities and preventing world rival nations from establishing influence in the Sahel. The Algerian government is also interested in trans-Sahel trafficking, which is made possible by Mali's weak condition and inability to manage its northern regions and border crossings (Tandogan 318-319).

Since 1991, when Algerian mediation succeeded in bringing the opposition forces of the People's Movement of Azawad and FIAA to agree to the Tamanrasset Accord with the

Malian government, Algiers has positioned itself as a traditional mediator of conflicts in Mali. However, the Malian conflict parties' failure to respect the peace agreements, as well as the start of a new rebellion in 2006, forced Algeria to intervene once more as a crucial mediator to assist in the resolution of this conflict, which poses a danger to Mali's and the Sahel region's security and political stability. In the same year, Algerian diplomacy was successful in persuading all sides to the conflict to participate in negotiations, which were held in the country's capital and culminated in the signing of the Algiers Peace Accord in 2006 (Tandogan 319). Algeria has focused a lot on the situation in the Sahel in recent decades, to prevent terrorists from having control over this region.

3.2. Algeria and the Mali Crisis in 2012

According to experts, no one anticipated that the old Malian system would disintegrate as quickly as it did in 2012. Nearly three months after the country's crisis began to deteriorate, the Malian military forces that attempted to quell the rebel movement in the north were unexpectedly routed and forced back by armed terrorist groups. A coup d'état that took place on March 22 claimed that President Amadou Toumani Touré was unable to defeat the rebel forces. The Algerian administration has faced many difficulties as a result of this precarious situation (Boukhars).

Algiers was anticipated to play a significant role in resolving the situation because of its position as the region's leading economic and military power, its wealth of expertise, and its in-depth understanding of the dynamics of the crisis that Mali has been experiencing since 1991. Algiers, however, has been more ambivalent and cautious than the region's states as well as the west desired it to be because of the Algerian government's preoccupation with internal political transitions and fear of the consequences of armed operations in the region. This position was also linked to the rigid non-interventionist concept that underlies the nation's security doctrine (Boukhars).

Algerian policy toward the Sahel region has long been based on the concept of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries. Algeria has consistently supported political solutions over military ones and has deeply opposed all forms of foreign armed intervention in the area. Since the most recent crisis began in 2012, Algeria has worked to mediate a political settlement between the warring groups in Mali, emphasizing the importance of this position in the Algerian strategy. The two main Tuareg parties in the North, Ansar al-Din and the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad, successfully created a framework of agreement in Algiers on December 21, 2012, in order to accomplish this goal (Tandogan 319).

Algiers saw this accord as a crucial first step toward bringing the Malian government and the rebel groups together in a broader political settlement. The Algerian government has stated that in order to find a better solution to this situation, the UN should create a clear policy that adheres to three fundamental principles. First, the Malian parties should play a key role in establishing a lasting peace in their nation. Second, the international community should support the Malian government, taking into account the obligations of ECOWAS and the African Union to uphold regional peace and security as well as the rights of the countries that border Mali, including Algeria, Niger, and Mauritania, to safeguard their own national security interests. The final suggestion made by Algiers focused on using peaceful measures based on negotiations that should begin as soon as possible (Tandogan 319-320).

3.3. Negotiations and Conclusion of the Peace Agreement and Reconciliation in Mali

Under the auspices of the Government of Burkina Faso, mediation was established between the Mali transitional government and the MNLA in 2012. The Preliminary Agreement for the Presidential Election and Inclusive Peace Talks in Mali, signed on June 18, 2013, established the framework for the 2015 Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in

terms of armed group membership, pre-cantonment, and ceasefire verification (Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 2374 8).

A new round of discussions between the Malian government and armed groups in the country's north began in Algiers in January 2014. On March 1, 2014, the Algerian government and armed groups agreed to a mediation plan under its supervision. After a visit by the Prime Minister of Mali at the time, Moussa Mara, violence erupted in the Kidal region between government forces and armed separatist groups favourable to Azawad [MNLA, High Council for the Unity of Azawad (HCUA), and the Arab Movement faction of Azawad which rallied the Coordination of Movements of Azawad (MAA-CMA)] (Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 2374 8).

The Algiers Agreement was signed by the three parties to the conflict – the Malian government, the June 14, 2014 Movements Platform, and the CMA – and officially ended the Tuareg uprising that began in January 2012. The agreement is multifaceted, addressing political and institutional issues, defence and security, socioeconomic and cultural growth, as well as issues of reconciliation, justice, and humanitarian aid. The Malian government, the Platform, and international mediation signed it on May 15, 2015, but the CMA did not initial it until June 20, 2015, underlining rebel groups' hesitancy and displeasure. Its implementation, which will be overseen and supported by international mediation, intends to bring peace to Mali, particularly in the north (Bencherif).

3.3.1. The 2013 Preliminary Peace Agreement

The MNLA and HCUA signed a preliminary peace accord with the transitional administration on June 18, 2013. This was done in order to create a ceasefire and a certain level of security, both of which are required for the organisation and conduct of free and fair presidential elections. In July and August, Malian individuals across the country, including those in the three northern regions at the heart of the conflict, were able to register for and

participate in elections. With the exception of the Kidal region, the voting process was unobstructed and free of election-related violence, according to a UN Secretary-General report on the situation in Mali released in October 2013 (4). Attempts to enable Malian nationals to participate in refugee camps in neighbouring countries met with limited success and a very low participation percentage (Nyirabikali 177).

In addition to the provisional cessation of hostilities, intentional efforts to ensure a smooth electoral process and the re-establishment of legitimate authority were made by other key internal actors, including political parties and civil society organisations, by involving in inclusive dialogue and conducted civic education campaigns (National Forum for Civil Society in Mali). Despite the necessity for peace and stability, Democratic competition for the presidency was maintained with over two dozen presidential candidates. According to one analysis of the presidential elections, the majority of the candidates who did not advance to the second round urged their supporters to vote for President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, both for personal reasons and because they believed a victory for President Keita would be the best alternative for the nation (Ba and Boas 2).

Although presidential and legislative elections were held without incident in much of the country, governmental authority remained absent in the Kidal region, which has been under rebel control since the uprising began in 2012 (Koepf 2). The 2013 French intervention, which drove extremist groups out of Gao, Kidal, and Timbuktu, provided an opportunity for the MNLA and the HCUA to reclaim Kidal and use it as a bastion during the peace process (Tardy). State control remained shaky in Gao and Timbuktu, but rebel groups only denied access to government forces and representatives in Kidal until the peace deal was signed in June 2015. For instance, in May 2014, the Malian armed forces and rebel factions battled over Prime Minister Moussa Mara's attempted visit to Kidal. The ensuing violence resulted in the deaths of 36 persons and the displacement of over 3000 people ("Unrest in Kidal" 1).

The preliminary peace accord aided in the identification of critical concerns as well as the many stakeholders involved in the political conflict. Despite the fact that the agreement was only signed by two rebel groups, the MNLA and the HCUA, Article 24 of the agreement legally acknowledged the presence of other movements and demanded that they adhere to the terms of the accord. The negotiation of the comprehensive peace accord, which was finished in March 2015 and formally endorsed by the parties to the political conflict on 15 May and 20 June 2015, reinforced the identification and recognition features that underlie the basis of an effective peacebuilding process (Nyirabikali 178-179). The signing of this agreement has been beneficial for Mali. On the one hand, it allowed the holding of presidential elections throughout the national territory in 2013. On the other hand, it marked the beginning of a long political process that should lead to a definitive and comprehensive peace in the country.

3.3.2. The 2015 Algiers Peace Agreement

Mali's 2015 peace accord expanded on the preliminary peace agreement of 2013, particularly the pledge of two Azawad parties, the MNLA and the HCUA, to pursue a political settlement of their self-determination claim inside a unitary state that respected Mali's territorial integrity. Following clashes on the 17th and 18th of May 2014 in regard to the prime minister's attempted visit to Kidal, the Malian Government and three Azawad movements: the MNLA, the HCUA, and the MAA signed a ceasefire agreement on May 23, 2014, which kicked off the dialogue process (United Nations 1-2, Report of the Secretary G). Despite the fact that the ceasefire was negotiated by the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General in Mali and the AU chair, which at the time was held by President Abdel Aziz of Mauritania, the Algerian government played a key role in bringing the three Azawad movements together and reinforcing their commitment to negotiations. This was the first stage in forming the coalitions that would be a component of the peace deal ("Briefing to the Security Council by Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations in Mali").

The Algiers talks, which were set to begin on September 1st, were given a broader and more comprehensive mission for resolving the Mali conflict—one that went beyond the narrower subject of self-determination. As a result, other actors, such as self-defence organisations, were included in the Algiers Consensual Roadmap of July 24, 2014. These organisations shared the majority of the population's frustrations about weak governance and socio-economic marginalisation in the northern regions, but they opposed the Azawad movements' separatist goals. As a result, in order to involve all relevant players, two main coalitions of non-state armed organisations in opposition to the Malian government were identified as parties to the Algiers negotiations (Nyirabikali 179).

By the time of the conclusion of the 2015 peace agreement, the CMA was comprised of the MNLA, the HCUA, the MAA, a faction of the Coalition of Azawad People (Coalition du Peuple de l'Azawad, CPA) and a splinter group of the Coordination of Patriotic Movements and Fronts for the Resistance (Coordination des Mouvements et Fronts Patriotiques de Résistance, CMFPR–II). The Platform was comprised of the Coordination of Patriotic Movements and Fronts for the Resistance (Coordination des Mouvements et Fronts Patriotiques de Résistance, CMFPR–I), the Tuareg Imghad and Allies Self-defence Group (Groupe d'Autodéfense Touareg Imghad et Alliés, GATIA) and splinter groups of the CPA and the MAA (Malian Government, "Roadmap for the Algiers negotiations").

Table 1

The two coalitions of non-state armed groups in Mali's 2015 peace agreement

<p>The Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) - The High Council for the Unity of Azawad (HCUA) - The Arab Movement of Azawad (MAA) - A faction of the Coalition of Azawad People (CPA) - The Coordination of Patriotic Movements and Fronts for the Resistance–II (CMFPR–II)
<p>The Platform</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Coordination of Patriotic Movements and Fronts for the Resistance–I (CMFPR–I) - The Tuareg Imghad and Allies Self-defence Group (GATIA) - A faction of the Arab Movement of Azawad (MAA)-Splinter - A faction of the Coalition of Azawad People (CPA)-Splinter

Source: United Nations, “Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali.” *Security Council*, 11 June 2015.

The formation of these two parties was a major accomplishment by the mediation team, which was led by Algeria and included the Special Representative of the United Nations

Secretary-General in Mali and the head of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), representatives of the EU, the AU, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OCI), the ECOWAS, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania, Niger, and Nigeria, as well as the US and France, who were identified as “friends of the mediation” at the outset. The establishment of the two coalitions minimised fragmentation among non-state players and assisted to frame concerns into clear and negotiable political claims, in addition to boosting the inclusiveness of the negotiations (Nyrabikali 180; Pellerin).

Civil society consultations were held on each side of the three parties to the negotiations: the Malian Government, the CMA, and the Platform. This helped to broaden the negotiation process. Prior to the start of the discussions, the government held a series of public consultations with the goal of debating subjects such as: (a) national reconciliation, social cohesion and peaceful coexistence; (b) local governance and decentralisation; and (c) the issue of an accelerated development programme for the northern regions. Although these meetings gave the negotiation process some respectability, the meetings' brief duration prompted concerns about whether they allowed for a thorough discussion of the topics. They stressed the importance of a broad and systematic framework for popular consultations that may be implemented as part of the peace process at best. The Ministry of National Reconciliation, which is part of the new government structure, has the capacity to implement such a framework in conjunction with civil society. (Malian Government, and Ministry of National Reconciliation).

Despite the openness of the Algiers negotiations and the participation of a diverse variety of non-state players, some domestic parties were nevertheless left out. Ansar Dine was one such group, which is regarded as a violent religious extremist group both locally and globally. Despite having a presence in Mali, AQIM and MUJAO were also banned from the talks, but these two groups are transnational and thus not fully immune to Malian internal

dynamics. The exclusion of violent religious extremist organisations raises fundamental theoretical and practical problems concerning the inclusivity concept, as well as its consequences for achieving long-term peace in Mali. The conflict's complexity appears to have necessitated a two-pronged approach, with differing means to address internal political and human security challenges on the one hand, and violent extremism and other transnational criminal challenges that threaten Malian, regional, and international peace and security on the other. Articles 29 and 30 of the 2015 peace accord provide measures for combating terrorism, organized crime, and drug trafficking, specifically in relation to violent extremism, whether local or transnational. The establishment of special units, as well as the development of regional systems and policies, are among these measures (Nyirabikali 181).

Some neighbouring nations, Algeria, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Niger, for example, are directly impacted by the same transnational conflict dynamics and have thus committed additional resources to the Malian peace process. The G5 Sahel (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger) established a special regional cooperation framework on February 16, 2014, to coordinate efforts in addressing the security and development concerns that underpin the Sahel's conflict dynamics (Nyirabikali 181).

The G5 Sahel has a permanent secretariat in Mauritania that is in charge of developing a priority investment program as well as a portfolio of development projects. These are intended to place a high focus on security and democracy development, as well as participatory processes in the development of underdeveloped areas within the respective countries. As a result, the G5 Sahel objectives are remarkably similar to those of Mali's 2015 peace deal, and provide a much-needed constructive and comprehensive approach to addressing the core sources of conflict in Mali and throughout the Sahel territory (Nyirabikali 182).

Following a long period of negotiation after the case of the preliminary Accord of Ouagadougou, the Tuareg rebellion of 2012 officially ended with the signing of the Algiers Accord by the three parties: The Government of Mali, the Coordination and the Platform. Its implementation followed and supported by the international mediation with Algeria as leader, aims to establish a peaceful climate in Mali. However, the fact that certain groups like Ansar Dine, MUJAO and AQIM considered as violent religious extremists were not invited could complicate the mission.

3.3.2.1. An Agreement Signed into Two Stages and under Duress

The Algeria-led mediation team issued a statement inviting all parties to the inter-Malian conversation to sign the peace deal at a ceremony in Bamako on May 15, 2015, following consultations with the Coordination in Algiers from April 15 to 18, 2015. Meanwhile, Mali's foreign minister stated in a speech to the UN Security Council on April 9th that "negotiations are over" and that the Malian government is moving forward with implementation. He urged the world community to "isolate...and impose sanctions" on those who refuse to join the deal ("Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mali Abdoulaye Diop speech to the UN Security Council").

Only after intense international pressure did the Coordination sign the agreement in Algiers on May 14, 2015, on the condition that direct talks with the Malian government be made to meet its requests before the official signing ceremony. Indeed, following the Platform's takeover of Ménaka on April 27th, the Coordination made the peace deal conditional on the Platform's departure from the town. As a result, it refused to attend the May 15th signing ceremony with the Malian government and the Platform (Boutellis and Zahar 20).

As a result, the May 15th signing ceremony in Bamako was held without the Coordination (only the MNLA splinter group CPA attended). In a statement read at the

ceremony by UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Hervé Ladsous, the UN secretary-general asked for the agreement to be kept open for signature by the remaining parties and for discussion to continue. It also cautioned against using the signing ceremony as an excuse to resume military operations against non-signatory groups. This message was not well received by the Malian president, who accused MINUSMA of bias, exposing “substantial divergences with the host country on the process that should follow the signing,” according to MINUSMA (“Mali: An Imposed Peace?”).

Following additional talks on the implementation procedures, the Coordination announced on June 5th that it would ultimately sign the peace deal. This came after the Coordination and the government reached yet another deal on the departure of Platform forces from Ménaka. In exchange for the Coordination stopping its attacks in northern Mali, UN soldiers temporarily took over the security of the town and its residents on June 19th. Mali's government also withdrew arrest warrants against fifteen senior Coordination leaders on June 19th. Finally, on June 20th, in the presence of approximately 150 Coordination delegates from Kidal and the subregion, MAA-Coordination chairman Sidi Brahim Ould Sidatt signed the peace accord on behalf of the Coordination in Bamako (Boutellis 21).

Unlike the other parties who signed the agreement on May 15, the Coordination did not sign it until June 20. The delay of the Coordination at the signing of the agreement came from the fact that the city of Menaka, located in the northeast of the country, was under the domination of the Platform, and that the Malian Government had filed arrest warrants against certain senior leaders of the Coordination. It had therefore subordinated its signature to the departure of the Platform from the city of Menaka and the lifting of mandates against the rebel leaders.

3.4. The Implementation of the Algiers Peace Agreement

The peace accord signed in May and June 2015 provides possibilities to address chronic governance and socio-economic disparities that have hampered the Malian state's democratic development since its independence in 1960. It specifies the following goals in particular: To address the root causes of conflicts and promote a national reconciliation premised on a national unity respectful of the human diversity of the Malian nation; To undertake an accelerated economic development strategy for northern Mali; To establish a governance system that takes into account the geo-political and socio-cultural dimensions of the northern regions; To restore security and translate into reality the rules of good governance, including transparency in the management of public affairs, respect for human rights, justice and fight against impunity; and To combat terrorism and transnational organised crime (Malian Government “Accord for peace and reconciliation”).

Six months after the peace agreement was signed, the implementation phase has mostly concentrated on building various institutions aimed at facilitating the deal's implementation and strengthening security, including mediation and reconciliation between the three signature parties. In September and October 2015, for example, the CMA and the Platform held direct talks, which resulted in a common 'roadmap' that included the cessation of hostilities between the two groups, joint initiatives for inter- and intra-communal reconciliation, and the establishment of interim local administrations in Gao, Kidal, and Tombouctou's northern regions (Nyirabikali 187)

The establishment of a lasting truce and collaboration between the belligerent parties is a huge step toward national reconciliation, which is a primary goal of the peace deal. Understanding and peaceful coexistence in their own areas and constituencies will be facilitated by peaceful relations between the two main rebel alliances. Furthermore, as demonstrated above by their involvement in the development of interim local governments,

collaborative partnerships between these two parties will aid in the execution of other planned procedures (Nyirabikali 187).

Despite these gains, the Secretary- General's report on the situation in Mali in December 2015 highlights complaints from the two coalitions about a lack of inclusivity in the integration of northern citizens into government and other public institutions, as well as insufficient consultation on institutional reforms. While the 2015 peace agreement provides opportunities for adequate redress of the issues of inclusivity and participation that have characterised all episodes of violent conflict in Mali, it also contains serious flaws in the representation modalities that should accompany and facilitate targeted inclusion and participation of Malian society's diverse groups. As previously stated, clearly defined modes of representation within agreed-upon governance reforms could make implementation easier and lessen the likelihood of rebel groups re-emerging (187-188).

Finally, while some progress has been made toward developing a specific socioeconomic development strategy for the northern regions in accordance with Article 36 of the 2015 peace agreement, the Joint Evaluation Mission in northern Mali (Mission d'Évaluation Conjointe, MIEC/Nord Mali), which ran from July to October 2015, emphasised the importance of providing adequate responses to the population's immediate needs while also strategizing for longer-term interventions. It shows that the government emphasises infrastructure and capacity building, whereas a rapid recovery for local populations, particularly in rural regions, necessitates improvements in the supply of essential social services like water and health care. Despite the fact that many policy research has emphasised the harmful consequences of compartmentalised and fragmented interventions on recovery, the current situation in Mali indicates that this difficulty will endure. Both national and international actors must consider both short- and long-term perspectives in their operations in order to deliver aid and build resilience for the Malian people (188).

Chapter Four

US Interests in Mali

After the coup d'état in 2020 and the loss of huge sections of the country's land to violent extremist groups, the United States is engaged in international efforts to assist Mali restore peace and stability across its territory. Since 2013, French counter-terrorism forces and the MINUSMA peacekeeping mission have been fighting to restore and protect Mali's territorial integrity. The 2015 Algiers Agreement, which the transitional government has pledged to implement, gives Mali a chance to go back on track to stability and development. The Accord's comprehensive strategy includes measures to demobilise armed militias, reform the Malian military, implement critical political and institutional reforms, stimulate development in northern Mali, and build the groundwork for long-term reconciliation among Mali's different people. The US will continue to assist Mali in achieving its peace and economic development goals, understanding that achievement would need a strong commitment from all signing parties to carry out their commitments under the Accord.

Currently, the United States assistance to Mali is bearing fruit. However, there have been some restrictions, due to the management of Malian Government politics which go against American expectations. For instance, concerning the reform of the Malian Army, the United States stopped their direct assistance in the country, until the election of a new Government. These assistances concern: the training of the Malian Army, the procurement of new equipment and others.

4.1. US-Mali Relations

In 1960, seventeen colonial administrations became independent governments in the middle of Africa's independence movement. In their fight for recognition and self-determination, the new states and their supporters were unified. Two days after the country gained its Independence, the United States became the second country to recognize the

Republic of Mali, formally establishing diplomatic relations between the two countries. Under the guidance of John Gunther Dean, the first U.S. representative to Mali, the United States of America established the first embassy in Mali in under two months. The US formed the first bilateral assistance mission, provided the first military training, and established the first cultural center and English course for Malians, with President Modibo Keita and his wife as the first students. The US strove to be one of the first to engage with Mali for the following sixty years, under the guidance of 22 ambassadors (“The United States and Mali Celebrate 60 Years of Friendship and Partnership”).

The growth of extremist groups in this region alarmed the United States fifteen years ago. Mali is a participant in the US-led Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Program, in which the two countries collaborate to combat violent extremist groups. Their governments have worked together over the past 60 years to strengthen their countries' collaboration in areas such as economic growth, health, culture, and security. However, their connection has evolved beyond the influence of diplomats and politicians to become something that truly belongs to their peoples (“The United States and Mali Celebrate 60 Years of Friendship and Partnership”).

The United States and Mali have a common goal of supporting democracy and eliminating poverty through economic development. It's a relationship that's evolved to include helping Mali prepare for new security concerns, supporting the peace process, and ensuring that the justice system is fair to all Malians. They are still committed to growing economic opportunities as well as trade and investment between their countries because peace and security are difficult to achieve without a robust economy. In education, health, governance, and agriculture, the US-Mali connection continues to include life-saving and life-changing efforts (“The United States and Mali Celebrate 60 Years of Friendship and Partnership”). As for the economic development and humanitarian assistance, the United

States government, through USAID, is committed to a five-year national strategy. This strategy promotes Mali's path to self-sufficiency by emphasising stability, resilience and governance.

Since 2016, USAID has helped develop the educational foundation of Mali's future leaders by training over 7,500 Malian teachers and distributing over one million teaching and reading materials. The US government has provided \$14 million in agricultural loans to Mali's rural farmers in the last year, as well as nutrition interventions to approximately 2.5 million Malian children under the age of five. By funding \$16.5 million to support elections and civil society in Mali since 2014, the US has helped to re-establish and deepen the country's democratic process. Since 2012, they have combined to cut Mali's malaria prevalence rates by 60% (“The United States and Mali Celebrate 60 Years of Friendship and Partnership”).

4.2. The US Assistance to Mali in the light of the Algiers Accord

Understanding the need of maintaining Mali's stability in order to attract more development investments, the United States' support to the country aims to help its fragile peace and the execution of the Algiers Accord. Promoting regional security by combating terrorists and traffickers who seek to exploit ungoverned spaces in the Sahel; reducing chronic vulnerability by improving social development and increasing sustainable livelihoods; and encouraging economic growth, opportunity, and development by supporting sustainable development and increased U.S. economic investment are all priorities for the United States in Mali (“US relations with Mali”). After carrying out an in-depth analysis of the situation in Mali in general, US objectives, in accordance with the Algiers Accord, are crucial for a comprehensive and lasting peace.

The mission goals for 2018-2021 are as follows: Promoting democratic institutions, responsive governance, and respect for human rights; Enhancing regional security by building institutions to counter transnational threats; Advancing social development

(particularly health and education); Increasing economic growth and sustainable livelihoods; and Promoting the United States as a key partner to Malian stakeholders, enhancing mutual understanding, and protecting the wellbeing of United States citizens (“US relations with Mali”).

4.2.1. The Obstacles the country has faced

Maliens have historically experienced various challenges, including a lack of education and economic opportunity, chronic hunger and food insecurity, a deficient health-care system, widespread corruption and weak institutions, and continuous conflict insecurity.

Youth (aged 25 and under) account for 67 percent of Mali's population. They are a source of tremendous vitality, but they are disproportionately underserved by the educational system, are still recovering from the ravages of violent conflict, and lack the basic skills and competencies required to earn a living. As a result, the vast majority of Mali's youth are undereducated and unemployed, which, if left ignored, might deepen instability and increase vulnerability to extremist recruitment. Only four out of ten female youth have attended school, indicating a chronic lack of access to education and opportunities. While Mali has improved access to education over the last five years, the system still faces significant challenges, including high teacher absenteeism, poor educational achievement leading to high levels of grade repetition, a lack of evidence-based reading materials, damage and destruction of schools in the north, and demand exceeding capacity for southern schools to absorb the influx of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from the north. (USAID/Mali 6).

Mali's economy is mostly based on rain-fed agriculture and pastoral activities. Agriculture accounts for more than 35% of GDP and 80% of livelihoods, but growth rates have been very unpredictable year to year, showing vulnerability to weather, policy changes, and external shocks. Mali has significant potential for irrigated agriculture, livestock production, and inland fisheries; however, increased population pressure on land and water

resources, uncertain land tenure conditions, climate change, and an educational system that does not adequately prepare students for productive jobs in a growing agro-food economy are major challenges. Poor policies that stifle private-sector investment incentives, as well as inadequate agricultural extension services, obstruct progress even more (Staatz, John et al.).

Mali's healthcare system is underdeveloped and underfunded, contributing to some of the lowest health-care metrics in the world. Although health habits such as greater immunizations have improved, the fertility rate has remained high at over six children per woman, with just ten percent of women reporting usage of modern contraceptives (2015). The mortality rate for children under the age of five fell from 191/1,000 live births in 2006 to 95/1,000 in 2013, while the maternal mortality rate fell from 368/100,000 live births in 2006 to 95/1,000 in 2013. Much of the physical health infrastructure in northern Mali has been damaged as a result of the fighting, making it impossible to deliver health care services (USAID/Mali 7).

On the security front, International and Malian troops have both sustained considerable losses as a result of the resurgent terrorist forces. AL-Qaeda-affiliated militants have taken advantage of ethnic tensions in central Mali to expand their influence and make new sections of the country ungoverned. The security and governance vacuum has benefited traffickers tied to armed groups, terrorist actors, and international criminal networks, turning Mali into a key transshipment zone for drugs, arms, and people. Illicit activities further contribute to endemic corruption that negatively affect development and erodes Malians' trust in their government ("Chief of Mission Priorities" 2).

While the Government of Mali is committed to brokering a peace accord and unifying the country, the process has been slow, and the spread of violent extremism continues to pose a security danger in many areas. This has major implications for delivering much-needed

development aid to conflict-affected communities, and emphasises the importance of flexible, responsive programming. (USAID/Mali 7).

All of these various challenges have contributed in one way or another to the ongoing crisis in Mali, and basically represent a brake on its development. Through the technical, logistical and financial support of the United States, the resolution of these problems could help the country to rebuild.

4.2.2. USAID's Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS)

With its collaboration with the government of the United States and Mali, USAID has succeeded in obtaining positive results concerning the situation of Mali in the past years. However, its continued presence results from the fact that the situation in Mali is deeply rooted and complex. As shown in the previous chapters, Mali is facing a multidimensional crisis that is having a negative impact on its development. After the coup d'état and the conflict of 2012, a good part of the population has taken refuge in the southern part of the country and in neighbouring countries. The 2015 presidential elections did not change much, as armed rebel bandits, illicit traffickers and terrorist groups are still active in the country.

To address the issues Mali is facing, USAID/planned Mali's five-year strategy seeks the following goal: "Maliens secure a democratic, resilient, and prosperous future", through four objectives: 1- Reinforced stabilisation of conflict-affected areas (such as, support for humanitarian aid and transition to development in Gao, Timbuktu, and Kidal, Mali's northern regions); 2- Fostering enhanced public trust in government (such as, through improved public service delivery (especially health, education, and justice), administration of justice and respect for human rights, and citizen participation in Malian electoral processes); 3- Enhanced resilience and adaptive capacity of vulnerable communities and households (through climate change mitigation, countering violent extremism, economic diversification, and human capital strengthening); 4- Increased prosperity through socio-economic advancement (particularly

through improving health services and adopting healthy behaviours, reducing poverty and malnutrition through investment in agriculture, and promoting early grade reading for boys and girls) (“US relations with Mali”). This aim is based on the belief that a democratic, resilient, and successful future cannot be achieved unless the country as a whole benefits from development aid.

The realisation that Malian women and girls have traditionally faced specific development problems that have not been systematically addressed is inherent in this goal statement and USAID's strategy. Mali's circumstances offer chances to advance gender equality and assist inclusive development, while also posing new obstacles in areas like gender-based violence (GBV). Although cultural, political, and economic obstacles severely limit the potential for fast improvement in the position of Malian women and other marginalised groups, strategic investments can help to improve women's and girls' abilities to take active roles in reaching the Country Development Cooperation Strategy goal in the long run. The Mission has challenged design teams to integrate gender activities that promote women's and girls' empowerment, women's role in peace processes, and GBV prevention through all sectors, recognizing that broad-based development goals can only be achieved when assistance is implemented in an inclusive manner (USAID/Mali 7).

Here, USAID tries to show the importance that women can have in society. It shows that the development of a country resides in the respect of women's rights. A country where women and girls are marginalised is not fit for development. Conflicts and their consequences can give rise to the possibility of reshaping gender relations and promoting the rights of women.

Unlike prior USAID/Mali initiatives, USAID will use a two-pronged approach to improving governance and resilience across all of USAID's core technical support sectors of health, economic growth, and education. The Mission will use an integrated approach to

address Mali's institutional shortcomings and severe poverty, leveraging governance and resilience knowledge and resources. Simultaneously, reducing stove-piping will improve the cost-effectiveness and long-term viability of USAID investments. Integrating governance within the Mission's prosperity work will strengthen the Mission's efforts for inclusive development and poverty reduction by combating corruption and improving local government responsiveness. Integrating resilience will ensure that the needs of severely poor, vulnerable communities, households, and individuals are met, enhancing their ability to reduce and manage risks and decreasing their reliance on humanitarian assistance (USAID/Mali 8).

Due to security concerns and limited access, USAID will pursue a Transition Objective over the next two to three years that will provide immediate humanitarian and stabilisation assistance at the community level. Through essential public services support, employment opportunities, and conflict mediation for citizens residing in the North, including IDPs and refugees affected by the ongoing conflict and vulnerable to extremism, programming under the Transition Objective will help to mitigate conflict within and among ethnic groups, support peaceful democratic transition, and enhance reconciliation and security. Males, females, adults, and kids, especially survivors of sexual GBV, confront different problems in reintegrating into their communities. As a result, when creating specialised interventions for IDPs, the Mission will analyse these limits. Recognizing the important role women play in peace processes, the Mission will support and encourage women's participation in community and peacebuilding activities through Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) activities, Trans-Saharan Counter Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP) programming, and elections and political process assistance (USAID/Mali 8).

In accordance with the article of the Agreement, the specific development strategies are based on both long-term and short-term implementations. Thus, this Transitional Objective through the Country Development Cooperation Strategy which has just been

mentioned, follows the regulations of the Algiers Accord by moving towards a short-term strategy.

Once security allows, USAID plans to expand key Governance, Resilience, and Prosperity programming now underway in the rest of the country to northern areas. This includes improving public health and education services, as well as promoting economic growth, particularly in the agricultural sector, in order to increase incomes, nutrition, and employment. The focus will be on youth and women. In direct partnership with the Malian government, USAID will assist institutional improvement, advancing the government of Mali's decentralisation aims and increasing public trust in government. Furthermore, via strategic collaborations with the private sector, USAID will accelerate the adoption of technology and innovation to increase long-term economic prospects and prosperity (USAID/Mali 8). This could help Mali to achieve its goal of undertaking an accelerated economic development strategy for the northern regions of the country.

In Mali and the surrounding region, the United States Government objectives include countering cross-border threats to global and regional peace and security, public health, and economic growth. Mali has been named as one of six African countries to join President Barack Obama's Security Governance Initiative (SGI), which was established to help African countries improve their security sector institutions' capacity to protect civilians and confront challenges and threats that inhibit economic growth and development. In order to address “the underlying grievances and conflicts that feed extremism,” USAID/Mali will work to combat violent extremism, mitigate the effects of climate change and infectious diseases including Malaria, HIV/AIDS, and Ebola, and enhance educational and economic opportunities for youth. USAID/Mali will address these complex development challenges that do not respect political borders by continuing to work with defence and development partners, the Malian government, local civic groups, like-minded funders, and a new generation of entrepreneurs.

As stated in the Embassy's Integrated Country Strategy (ICS) for FYs 2015-2017, Mali is emerging from the most serious, multi-faceted challenges it has faced since independence, including a January 2012 rebellion in the north, a coup d'état followed by an attempted counter coup, and the loss of the northern two-thirds of the country to violent extremist groups. Mali's crisis has exposed fundamental faults in the country's democratic system and demonstrated the fragility of Mali's political institutions, which were formerly acclaimed for almost 20 years of democratic stability. With its location in the heart of the Sahel, where drug traffickers and terrorists seek refuge, restoring security in Mali will be critical in combating terrorism in this volatile region. France and the international forces through the MINUSMA, the world's third biggest UN Peacekeeping Mission, aims to maintain Mali's territorial integrity while promoting sustained progress in the implementation of the peace accord and supporting reconciliation (2).

These missions are deployed for different tasks. But both are there to support the FAMA. Their operations meet the objective of the Agreement which is to combat terrorism and transnational organized crime. They therefore represent support for the agreement. And the United States is assisting Mali through these two operations.

The portfolio of the Mission will support US foreign policy and human development initiatives, as well as USAID Forward goals for host-country systems, assessment, innovation, and financial inclusion. The CDCS will also directly support a number of key US foreign policy and assistance priorities, including the Global Health Initiative (GHI), the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI), Ending Preventable Child and Maternal Deaths (EPCMD), the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA), Feed the Future (FTF), the Global Climate Change (GCC) Initiative, Women, Peace and Security, and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (SGI) (USAID/Mali 10).

In brief, This CDCS for Mali considers the institutional shortcomings and instability that contributed to the coup in 2012 and the current conflict. It uses analyses and experiences learned from earlier generations of programming to try to address the main obstacles to Malians having a democratic, resilient, and prosperous future through cross-sectoral approaches and integration. In the short term, Mali's most immediate needs in the north will be met through a Transition Objective, while ongoing development programs in the south will be scaled up countrywide whenever security permits.

USAID/Mali addressed Mali's institutional vulnerabilities while contributing to the eradication of extreme poverty by integrating governance and resilience across traditional technical fields such as economic growth, education, democracy, rights and governance, and health. Previous attempts at cross-sectoral programming focused on specific projects; this method differs in that integration occurs across the entire mission, requiring a mission-wide contribution to address Mali's development issues. This plan promotes gender equality across all program areas, takes advantage of emerging technologies, and employs best monitoring and evaluation procedures.

4.2.3. The Implementation of US Strategic Program

Undersecretary of State for political Affairs David Hale testified to congress in early 2020 that US “diplomatic efforts are focused on supporting the 2015 Algiers Peace Accord, which remains the best mechanism for achieving a peaceful and reconciled Mali” (“Crisis in Mali”). He also stated that broader US engagement in the Sahel “promotes inclusive and just political systems; advances regional security by combatting violent extremists and traffickers; and encourages economic growth and opportunity through sustainable development and increased American investment” (“Crisis in Mali”). Full implementation of the peace and reconciliation agreement is a top US priority. Because it plays a very important role in the application of this document. It strongly supports Barkhane and MINUSMA as a major

component of the efforts of the international community to deal with the political and security crises in Mali.

Despite various limitations, the United States continues to provide assistance to the Malian people. Without humanitarian aid, in fiscal year 2019, the United States provided more than \$134 million in bilateral foreign assistance to Mali's development, with more than \$146 million in fiscal year 2020. For FY 2021, more than \$133 million in bilateral foreign assistance has been requested. Health initiatives received 58 percent of the budget between 2017 and 2021, followed by agriculture (17 percent), education (14 percent), and peacebuilding and governance (11 percent). (“US relations with Mali”).

An example of health initiative is that: During the rebel occupation of Mali's northern regions (Gao, Timbuktu, and Kidal), as well as three districts in the Mopti area (Youwarou, Tenenkou, and Douentza), health services were essentially rendered non-functional. All supplies and medicines were stolen from regional hospitals, district and community health clinics. The rehabilitation of these health-care facilities is a high priority. Replacement of clinical equipment and furniture, as well as refrigerators for storing vaccinations and replenishment of drugs and related supplies, are all priorities. Many staff members fled to the north, regardless of where they were from in Mali, either their homes had been looted or they were afraid of being attacked. USAID has assisted the Ministry of Health by redeploying workers to these districts in an effort to help the country return to normalcy. USAID has trained 160 women nurses and healthcare practitioners, primarily through support to the Gao School of Nursing, to enable core populations to return to their homes (USAID/Mali 26). As part of the improvement of access to basic social services of the Agreement, the continuation of actions to rehabilitate deteriorated health facilities and the construction and equipment of new community health centers is mentioned.

The United States humanitarian assistance to Mali is more about territorial security. It has focused its security assistance on defence sector reforms and strengthening Mali's internal security forces' counterterrorism abilities. However, on August 18, 2020, the country once again faced a military uprising against Keita's Government. The following year was marked by the same event. The latter begins on May 24, 2021, when the Malian army captures the Transitional President, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defence.

Following the August 2020 coup d'état in Mali, the United States restricted assistance to the Government of Mali in accordance with provisions of the annual appropriations acts. It suspended security assistance that benefits the Malian Security and Defence Forces that they had continued previously pursuant to available authorities. The United States has also said it will consider targeted measures against political and military leaders who impede Mali's civilian-led transition to democratic governance ("On the situation of Mali").

Indeed, among the soldiers and officers that the United States regularly trained in Mali were the officers who had launched the coup. It also provided intelligence help to France's Barkhane forces, which are fighting al Qaeda and Islamic State affiliates (Diallo and Aaron Ross). US Special Envoy to the Sahel, J. Peter Pham, who recently visited Mali and met with the transition's new leaders, said at a press conference that the interim government had made progress toward holding free and fair elections. However, they are required by US law to limit their military aid until those elections are held and a constitutional government is restored. During this time, the US has continued to support other international partners in Mali, such as the G5 Sahel states, the French Barkhane operation and European Takuba task force, as well as collaboration with the UN mission in Mali. Pham explained that the limitations are very particular. They provide security assistance to the administration that takes power after an elected government has been deposed. It excludes humanitarian and development aid, which make up the majority of their assistance to Mali (Reuters Staff).

Furthermore, the detention of civilian leaders of Mali's transition government is harshly condemned by the United States. It backs ECOWAS and the African Union's joint statement of May 24, and is working closely with the local transition monitoring committee and other international actors to secure the immediate and unconditional release of those incarcerated, as well as the restart of the civilian-led transition. In Mali and the wider Sahel area, a democratic, civilian-led administration offers the best chance for security and prosperity. Mali's commitment to a civilian-led transition and democratic elections in 2022 has set the tone for the country's sustained engagement with foreign partners to advance democracy, human rights, peace, and security operations. The events of May 24 threatened such progress (“On the situation of Mali”).

Long-term displacement, disrupted trade flows, and limited humanitarian access continue to exacerbate household vulnerabilities. Mali is in the midst of a complicated crisis brought on by the onset of conflict in 2012, climate change, and sectarianism in the region. As insecurity, violence, and chronic vulnerabilities combine with recurrent shocks like droughts and floods, the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate. The humanitarian response of USAID is focused on the country's north and, increasingly, the center. More than a third of Malian citizens, or 7.2 million people, live in crisis-affected areas, with 5 million people experiencing food insecurity and 5.9 million people in need of humanitarian aid (“US relations with Mali”).

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated Mali's existing vulnerabilities, particularly in terms of health systems, which have already been compromised by violence and insecurity, as well as water, sanitation, and hygiene. Food insecurity is anticipated to rise by 20% as a result of this. In the meantime, the number of IDPs is increasing. January 2021 recorded over 147,000 refugees and in April 2021 IDPs climbed above 372,000, the largest number to date. The majority of IDPs have inadequate access to basic social services and

many do not have proper shelter. Because of their fragile living status, individuals may be more vulnerable to COVID-19's direct and indirect effects (“US relations with Mali”).

The US government donated about \$83 million in FY 2021 to assist food security, health, water/sanitation, nutrition, protection, livelihoods, and disaster mitigation through USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance and DOS/PRM. This aid also aims to strengthen local capacity, support development assistance when possible, and leverage and improve the contributions of key stakeholders through flexible, rapid response processes and programs. Over \$474 million in US humanitarian aid has been sent to Mali through USAID from FY 2011 to FY 2020. The Mission redeclared a disaster to the current complex emergency in Mali on November 9, 2021, allowing for uninterrupted US humanitarian aid to IDPs and the most-acutely affected communities enduring conflict, crises, and/or food hunger (“US relations with Mali”).

Conclusion

Mali initially followed a socialist course after independence in 1960, and was ideologically associated with the communist bloc. Mali's foreign policy has evolved over time to become more pragmatic and pro-Western. Mali's relations with the West in general, and the United States in particular, have greatly improved since the establishment of a democratic form of government in 1992. The United States and Mali have good and expanding relations, according to the US Department of State, especially considering Mali's recent record of democratic stability in a difficult region of West Africa and its open support for the war on terrorism. Mali is said to be one of Africa's largest receivers of US aid.

The former French Sudan has recorded four armed rebellions since its independence. Mali now experiences ongoing political, humanitarian, and social conflict as a result of these uprisings. A rising ethnic tensions and an influx of jihadists from Libya, some of whom were affiliated with Al-Qaida, sparked the recent rebellion and a military coup in 2012. After the coup, the rebels drove the military out of the three northern regions of the country, allowing terrorist groups to establish bases. With the French military intervention, the Malian government was able to regain most of the north. However, the government's grip on the region remains tight, with local militias, terrorists and insurgent organizations constantly trying to extend their influence.

Many factors have contributed to the current crisis in Mali, that make it difficult to break the deadlock. USAID, the Peace Corps, and other US government programs all contribute to long-term economic and social development in Mali. USAID's prolonged involvement demonstrates the depth and complexity of Mali's development issues. Mali is in the midst of a large-scale development, governance, and security crisis that is both an immediate and long-term concern, with frequent and severe food security and humanitarian crises. 135,000 Malians remain as refugees in neighbouring countries as a result of the March

2012 coup d'état and violent warfare, 86,000 Malians are internally displaced, and roughly 1.9 million people required sustained emergency food assistance in 2014. The political atmosphere in Mali remains highly unstable, despite the restoration of democratic institutions following the Presidential and National Assembly elections.

Armed rebel bandits, drug traffickers, and terrorist groups continue to operate across the country, holding about two-thirds of the country's territory in Northern Mali. Now that a peace deal has been reached, US and international engagement in the immediate post-agreement period will be important in assisting the Malian government in demonstrating immediate and real advantages while building the groundwork for a long-term peace.

As of today, despite the signing of a peace agreement that has resisted reconciliation between the Malian government and the Tuareg rebels, it is not fully implemented. An economic and humanitarian catastrophe, instability, and political corruption have all been and continue to be obstacles to the formation of transparent and credible governance. While the international community's active participation has helped to solve each of the challenges, the country still has a long way to go. Unfortunately, evaluating peace according to political, economic, social, and security norms at the same time makes it clear that Mali is not a success at this point. Political corruption, which has been one of the principal causes of violence in Mali since 1963, remains a concern for the government.

Instead of relying on the international community to address all of the country's problems, the interim government should work hard to establish a more transparent, responsible, and credible administration. Mali's current situation, while terrible, suggests that there is yet hope for the country. If international players continue to cooperate with Mali on some level, as does the United States, for example by providing money to assist address food, education, health shortages until the country can maintain itself, or more military intervention to increase the nation's control over violence, sustainable peace is likely to become a reality.

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