Transnational Threats to Peace and Security in the Sahel

Consequences in Mali

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Sammanfattning

Den här rapporten ger en översikt över de tre främsta transnationella hoten mot säkerhet i Sahel-regionen: väpnad separatism, väpnad islamism och organiserad brottslighet. Analysen visar att företeelserna är nära sammanlänkade vilket bidrog till statens sammanbrott i norra Mali 2012. Idag utmanar grupperingarna statens återetablering i de tidigare ockuperade regionerna och bidrar till ett fortsatt instabilt säkerhetsläge i regionen.

Sammanvävningen av hoten innebär att de inte kan bekämpas framgångsrikt såvida inte lösningen utgår från en bred ansats. Att hoten är transnationella innebär att lösningen på Malis nuvarande situation även måste involvera Malis grannländer, stater i den bredare regionen samt det internationella samfundet.

De bakomliggande orsakerna till uppkomsten av väpnad separatism, väpnad islamism samt organiserad brottslighet i norra Mali är social utsatthet och bristande mänsklig säkerhet. En varaktig lösning kräver därför ett nytt och inkluderande samhällskontrakt mellan den maliska staten och medborgarna. För att skapa förtroende för staten är de kortsiktigt mest prioriterade frågorna omedelbar förbättring av samhällsservice, upprättande av säkerhet samt ett slut på den straffrihet som i praktiken råder.

Nyckelord: Afrika, afrikansk säkerhet, Sahel, Sahara, Västafrika, Mali, separatism, islamism, terrorism, organiserad brottslighet, AQIM

Summary

This report reviews the three main transnational security threats present in the Sahel: violent separatism, armed Islamism and transnational organised crime. The analysis shows that these three phenomena form a complex nexus that led to the collapse of state control in northern Mali in 2012 and that now complicates the re-establishment of state authority and contributes to insecurity in the wider region.

The complex connections between the threats lead to the conclusion that a broad approach is necessary, as it is impossible to counteract the threats separately. As the threats are transnational in nature, the solution to the situation in Mali must be equally transnational, involving not just the neighbouring states but also states in the extended region, as well as the international community.

The underlying problems that led to the rise of separatism, armed Islamism and organised crime in northern Mali can be traced back to social exposure and lack of human security. The solution is therefore dependent on the creation of a new social contract between the Malian state and its citizens that builds on inclusion. In the short-term perspective, immediate improvements in service delivery, the establishment of security and an end to the culture of impunity are important components in creating trust in state institutions.

Abbreviations

AFISMA	African-led International Support Mission to Mali
ATT	Amadou Toumani Touré
AU	African Union
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
CPA	Coalition du peuple pour l'Azawad
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
EUCAP	European Union Capacity Building
EUTM	European Union Training Mission
FOI	Swedish Defence Research Agency
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GPS	Global Positioning System
HCUA	Haut conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad
IBK	Ibrahim Boubakar Keïta
MAA	Mouvement Arabe de l'Azawad
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MINUSMA	Mission multidimensionnelle intégrée des Nations unies pour la stabilisation au Mali
MNLA	Mouvement nationale de libération de l'Azawad
MUJAO	Mouvement pour le Tawhîd et du Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
SSR	Security Sector Reform
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
US	United States (of America)

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1 Introduction

Organised violence disrupting governance and hindering development takes many different forms. Apart from interstate warfare and major civil war, it also includes, for example, contests for state power, global ideological struggles and violence linked to the trafficking of illicit goods. These phenomena trap a number of countries in the world in recurring cycles of armed conflict and criminal violence.[1]

The cost of this insecurity is enormous, not only in terms of human suffering and loss of social capital, but also economically. For a medium-size developing country, the World Bank estimates that the average cost of a civil war equates to more than 30 years of growth in terms of GDP.[2] According to the *World Development Report 2011*, violence is also the main constraint to meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), illustrated by the fact that none of the low-income countries designated as fragile or conflict-affected has achieved any of the MDG.[3] The development gap between these countries and those not affected by larger-scale violence is also increasing.[4] Violence affects men, women and children differently. Men are often directly affected as fighters, with a higher probability of being killed, injured, detained or disabled. Women and children, on the other hand, constitute almost 80% of refugees and the internally displaced.[5]

At the same time as casualties of political violence are decreasing, deaths directly related to organised criminal violence are increasing[6] according to the 2013 *Human Security Report*. These deaths include murders and the victims of warlike situations between different criminal organisations and between criminal organisations and states. This has a direct effect on human, economic and state security.[7]

West Africa and the Sahel are obvious examples of regions suffering from multiple forms of recurring violence, weak governance and instability. Since 2008, five military coups[8] have been carried out in West Africa, as well as two coup attempts[9], and the region has endured two civil wars[10]. In the circle of the 15 member states of the West African regional economic community,

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[1] World Bank, 2011, p. 53.
[2] World Bank, 2011, pp. 5-6.
[3] World Bank, 2011, p. 46, p. 62.
[4] World Bank, p. 60.
[5] United Nations, 1995, p. 57; World Bank, 2011, p. 61; McKay, 1998, p. 389.
[6] Casualties in proportion to world population.
[7] Human Security Report Project, 2013, pp. 49-51.
[8] Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania and Niger.
[9] Gambia and Guinea.
[10] Côte d'Ivoire and Mali.

ECOWAS[11], only Cape Verde and Senegal have never experienced military coups.[12]

The threats to state stability in the region have diverse sources and take different expressions. These include secessionist armed struggles and terrorism in Mali and Niger and unstable narco-states in Guinea-Bissau and Guinea financed by the influx of money from the trafficking of South American cocaine. Chronic poverty and underdevelopment, state inability, neglect, clientelism and corruption have created unstable regimes with low internal and external legitimacy.[13] The conflicts that exist in many Sahel states have often been exacerbated by the government, due perhaps to a lack of resources or competence to deal with a crisis or conflict, but possibly also to active government complicity with organised crime, armed Islamists or other armed groups such as militias.[14]

Due to conflict, poverty, drought and the inability of states to fend for their citizens, it is estimated that over 20 million people in the Sahel will require humanitarian assistance during 2014, an increase of over 8 million since 2013.[15] The humanitarian situation in the Sahel should be seen as a threat not only to human security, but also to the security and stability of states of the region, as extreme poverty and desperation are important factors in people turning to violence and crime.[16]

One of the countries in the Sahel region which recently experienced a military coup and civil war is Mali. In 2012, an insurgency by rebel groups in northern Mali seeking independence from the Malian state led to the proclamation of an independent state of Azawad later that year. However, the occupation of the northern provinces was soon taken over by armed Islamists such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Discontent within the armed forces with the government's handling of the rebellion led to a military coup overthrowing the democratically elected president. Through international mediation, the military junta soon handed over power to a civil administration, which was replaced in 2013 by a new democratically elected president and a new parliament.[17]

In January 2013, France intervened militarily to assist the Malian government when Islamist advances threatened to extend the occupation southwards. Apart from the French military presence, the United Nations (UN) peace support

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[11] Economic Community of West African States.
[12] Berman & Florquin, 2005, p. 1.
[13] Shaw, 2012, p. 1; Jakobsson & Eriksson, 2012 (B); UNODC, 2010, p. 236.
[14] Bokhars, 2013 (A).
[15] Jefferys, 2014.
[16] Teirilä, 2012; Zoubir, 2012, p. 453.
[17] For more on the political developments in Mali 2012-2013, see Elowson & Tham Lindell, 2013; and Tham Lindell, 2012.

mission MINUSMA[18] has been present in Mali since mid-2013 to secure urban centres and support the re-establishment of the state throughout the country. The European Union (EU) also initiated a training mission, EUTM Mali, in 2013, focusing on capacity building of the Malian Armed Forces and the Ministry of Defence.

Despite Mali's return to constitutional order and the international community's assistance in securing the northern provinces, attacks by jihadists continue and the region of Kidal is still controlled by separatist groups. During late 2013 and early 2014, armed groups returned to areas previously evacuated during the French intervention in 2013, and continue to constitute an important threat to human security and state stability.[19]

Mali shares its security challenges and sources of conflict with the surrounding region. Important threats to peace and security, such as repeated and armed political uprisings among Tuareg factions, ideologically motivated armed Islamist groups and organised crime, are transnational, as are the consequences of conflict – refugee movements and delayed development.

1.1   Aim and scope

Using the classification given in the *World Development Report 2011*, Mali is a country ravaged by recurring violence stemming from:

1. "Conventional" political conflict (contests for state power or for autonomy or independence)
2. Local conflicts with transnational ideological connections
3. Organised crime or trafficking with accompanying violence
4. Local intergroup conflict[20]

In this report, the first three of these sources of insecurity are analysed, but are referred to here as *separatism*, *armed Islamism* and *organised crime*, as this describes more explicitly how these sources of violence are manifested in the Sahel context.

The aim of the study is to deepen previous analyses carried out within the Swedish Defence Research Agency's (FOI) *Studies in African Security Programme* on security challenges and causes of conflict in Mali and the Sahel region. The relevance of the work is confirmed by the fact that the parlous security situation in Mali, brought about by these threats among other issues, has

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[18] United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali/ Mission multidimensionnelle intégrée des Nations unies pour la stabilisation au Mali
[19] International Crisis Group, 2014; Follorou, 2014.
[20] World Bank, p. 54.

been acknowledged by the UN Security Council as a threat not only to security in Mali, but also to international peace and security.[21] Apart from being a major donor to Mali in terms of humanitarian assistance and development aid, Sweden is contributing to the training mission of the EU (EUTM Mali) focusing on the Mali Armed Forces, and to the UN stabilisation mission MINUSMA. The Swedish engagement in peacekeeping and in the reform of the security sector in Mali is expected to continue during coming years, creating a demand for increased knowledge about the challenges in the Sahel among Swedish ministries and government agencies.

1.2 Research questions and outline

The report examines the three driving forces behind the recurring cycles of violence in Mali, namely violent separatism, armed Islamism and organised crime.

The first part of the analysis (Chapter 2) analyses and presents the causes, manifestations and consequences of the three threats. The links between these three different sources of insecurity in Mali and the Sahel are also discussed.

Chapter 3 presents an overview of the current situation in Mali concerning developments regarding the separatists, armed Islamists and organised crime. It also summarises the current political process, actions taken to establish security or counter crime, and initiatives to enhance regional cooperation, all of which are important in improving the situation in Mali.

The final chapter (Chapter 4) examines how to deal with the challenges facing Mali and the other states in the Sahel, focusing both on acute and urgent questions and on how to break the repeated cycle of violence in a longer-term perspective.

1.3 Delimitations

Mali borders Mauritania, Algeria, Niger, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Senegal. Many of the current threats to peace and security in Mali are transnational in nature, as they transgress the open and inadequately guarded borders, originate and operate outside state borders and have connections that span the region and beyond. This study used Mali as a focus point, as it is an active hub for several security threats typical of the Sahel. However, since the threats are transnational in nature and cannot be dealt with solely within the borders of one state, a regional perspective is used throughout the analysis.

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[21] UNSC, 2013.

The focus of the analysis is the threat to state and human security, state stability and development created by separatism, armed Islamism and organised crime, all issues with transnational connections. These are not the only threats to human security in Mali and the Sahel, as the region is simultaneously experiencing food shortages, chronic underdevelopment, lack of functioning infrastructure and environmental threats, to name but a few of its problems.[22] These are important issues with great ramifications, but are beyond the scope of this study.

As this study examines how separatism, armed Islamism and organised crime affect security and stability in Mali and the Sahel, the analysis of the political conflict focuses on the *security threat* posed by these groups. This does not imply that separatist or ideologically motivated groups are not allowed to advance a political agenda, nor that their opposition to the state is always unfounded. However, the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the struggles and their political effect are beyond the scope of the study and are therefore not touched upon.

The *World Development Report 2011* identifies five forms of violence[23] that contribute to repeated cycles of violence. All of these forms except widespread gang-related violence are present in Mali.[24] Since local intergroup conflict is not directed towards the state and does not have a transnational connection, it is not included in this study. However, it must be pointed out that an understanding of inter-communal relations, such as increased tensions between cattle-herding nomads and farmers, is important for fully grasping the dynamics in northern Mali. It is also important for understanding the population's relations to the state, since in the past the central government exploited these tensions to control the north.

1.4   Method and sources

The study took the form of a qualitative literature review. A large array of open-source material was used for this purpose, consisting mainly of reports and studies from the UN, research institutes and NGOs, and media accounts. The material covers the historical background to the security threats, the dynamics leading up to the current situation and the latest developments on the ground.

To complement the written sources, interviews were carried out in Bamako, Mali, in November 2013 and in Dakar, Senegal, in March 2014. The 40 interlocutors represented a wide range of researchers, diplomats, state officials, international organisations and NGOs. The institutions represented by the

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[22] IPI, 2013, p. 10; Zoubir, 2012, p. 453.

[23] Local intergroup conflict, "Conventional" political conflict (contests for state power or for autonomy or independence), Wide-spread gang-related violence, Organised crime or trafficking with accompanying violence, Local conflicts with transnational ideological connections.

[24] World Bank, 2011, p. 54.

interviewees in Bamako included ECOWAS, the EU and the UN mission MINUSMA. In Dakar, interviews were held with, among others, the Africa Governance Institute, Gorée Institute, International Crisis Group, Institute for Security Studies, the EU, the UN Office for West Africa and the UN office on Drugs and Crime. In addition, telephone interviews were conducted with relevant researchers in Africa, Europe and North America in March and April 2014.

2 Transnational Threats to Security in the Sahel – the Case of Mali

This chapter examines three transnational threats facing Mali, separatism, armed Islamism and transnational organised crime, up to the start of the French intervention, *Operation Serval*, in January 2013 (the development after that point is described in Chapter 3). The text is divided into four parts, one for each threat plus a concluding part describing links between these.

2.1 Separatism

Causes

One of the most important sources of recurring violence in Mali is the struggle for autonomy or independence by rebel groups, notably Tuareg, in the north. The Tuareg constitute a small minority in Mali as a whole, but also in the northern regions of the country, where they are only in the majority in the region of Kidal. The political conflict in Mali gains its transnational character from the distribution of the roughly 1.5 million Tuareg to several Sahel-Sahara countries. Most Tuareg live in Niger (850,000), Mali (550,000) and Algeria (50,000), with smaller numbers in Libya and Burkina Faso and a very limited presence in Nigeria.[25] The Tuareg are most clearly defined by their language, Tamasheq.[26]

France's colonisation of Mali started around 1880, with most of modern Mali being included in French Sudan by 1889.[27] However, parts of the northern regions of today's Mali were not dominated by the French until 1905 and were never closely integrated into the colonial state.[28] Apart from initially being met with armed resistance to colonial conquest, the French authority was challenged by Tuareg-led revolts in both Mali and Niger in the 1910s, allegedly triggered by severe droughts. Mali became independent in 1960 without the ambition of some Tuareg for an independent state in the Sahara being realised.[29]

Added to the long-held aspiration for self-governance among Tuareg clans and the opposition to state interference in Tuareg affairs, dissatisfaction with post-colonial Mali has only augmented the desire for independence among separatist groups. At the core of the opposition to the state is a deep sense of political

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[25] The population figures vary, but the proportional distribution between the countries is usually as cited.
[26] Thurston & Lebovich, 2013, p. 3.
[27] Gorée Institute, 2012, p. 124.
[28] Boilley, 2012, p. 67.
[29] Thurston & Lebovich, 2013, p. 3.

exclusion, inequality and marginalisation. Tuareg groups perceive themselves as being excluded[30] from representation in government.[31]

Another cause of separatist aspirations is a perception among Tuareg of the central government being indifferent to the living conditions and suffering of the Tuareg people. The brutal state repression of the first armed rebellion post-independence in 1963-1964 and the state's inability to assist the pastoral population during serious droughts in the 1970s laid the ground for this perception. The rebellion in the 1960s resulted in the government declaring the Adrar mountain massif in the Kidal region a forbidden zone, cut off from the outside world until the 1990s. A number of rebel leaders were arrested and Tuareg combatants and families sought refuge in Algeria. Civilians were forced into labour camps and even executed as a collective punishment of families and communities from which Tuareg rebels originated. The Malian army killed cattle and poisoned wells, in a context where livestock is the basis for nomadic life and where water is an exceptionally scarce resource. These abuses fuelled the 1990 rebellion, which in turn led to similar cruelties involving the execution and forced displacement of civilians.[32]

Another contributing factor to the unresolved political conflict is the insufficient implementation of several peace agreements, including decentralisation initiatives, which have been concluded to end armed rebellions but have not succeeded in improving the population's living conditions. The responsibility for mismanagement and corrupt practices does not rest solely with the Bamako government, but also with local elites, which have taken the opportunity to enrich themselves.[33]

In a situation of extreme poverty and difficult living conditions in the desert areas populated by the Tuareg, the state's inability to provide any kind of protection or service to the population – such as schooling, health care or infrastructure – has also become a cause of conflict. The state's virtual absence from the northern regions also undermines the population's identification with a Malian nationality.[34]

Manifestations

Although the quest for independence is only supported by factions of the Tuareg community in Mali, the armed separatist rebellions are an important challenge to the Malian state. Since independence in 1960, grievances among the Tuareg

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[30] Government and state institutions are in general heavily dominated by people from southern Mali, but only 10% of the population lives in the three northern regions.

[31] Gorée Institute, 2012, p. 123.

[32] Thurston & Lebovich, 2013, pp. 21-24; Lecocq, 2012, pp. 176-200.

[33] Interviews Bamako, 2013; Interviews Dakar, 2014.

[34] Bøås & Torheim, 2013, p. 1280; Boukhars, 2013 (B); Thurston and Lebovich, 2013, p. 3; Gorée Institute, 2012, p. 119.

population have led to armed uprisings against the state in 1963, 1990, 2006 and in early 2012. Violent manifestations of conflict have led to harsh countermeasures, which in turn have created new grievances and lines of conflict contributing to new outbreaks of violence.

The first post-independence rebellion did not mobilise more than a few hundred men, while the latest rebellion is estimated to have consisted of a couple of thousand. The attacks by the rebel groups have mainly been aimed at military personnel and army bases, but they have also been responsible for numerous war crimes, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers, abductions, rape and looting.[35]

The series of separatist uprisings has also resulted in a number of political agreements aimed at laying the foundations for lasting peace. These agreements have led to more peaceful phases in some cases, but have also helped to trigger conflict by introducing new lines of conflict, dissatisfaction and group perceptions of being disadvantaged. For example, the preliminary accord signed in Tamanrasset in 1991 to end the 1990 revolt led to immediate conflict between rebels that had differing views on the negotiability of the territorial demands. The conflict therefore took a new violent turn before a National Pact was reached in 1992 that included a number of major reforms. One of these was special administrative status for northern Mali, and during the 1990s Mali was regarded as a role model for conflict resolution with regard to minorities and a forerunner within decentralisation. However, the failure to implement the agreement and to deal with the underlying causes of conflict provoked an armed inter-communal conflict between Tuareg factions 1993-1994.[36]

Several peace accords followed during the 1990s, including the renowned *Flamme de la paix*[37] ceremony in Timbuktu in 1996 at which weapons were symbolically burned, decisions on increased decentralisation and autonomy for northern Mali in 1999, and several demobilisation and weapon destruction programmes in the 2000s.[38] Notably, the 2006 rebellion had as its main demand that the agreements of the 1990s should be honoured and ended with new promises codified in the Algiers Accord later the same year. Nonetheless, since the accord was claimed to particularly favour one of the Tuareg clans, the Ifoghas of Kidal, violence resurged within a couple of months. The years leading up to the 2012 upsurge were marked by other failed ceasefires and fighting as far south as the Mopti and Ségou regions.[39]

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[35] Human Rights Watch, 2012; Amnesty International, 2012.
[36] Bøås & Torheim, 2013, p. 1284; Thurston & Lebovich, 2013, pp. 22-24.
[37] Flame of Peace
[38] Florquin & Pézard, 2005, pp. 48-49.
[39] Thurston & Lebovich, 2013, pp. 24-26.

In October 2011, the *Mouvement nationale de libération de l'Azawad*[40] (MNLA) was formed, merging two previous political Tuareg alliances.[41] This movement became the main separatist actor in the 2012 uprising, which was ignited by the return of Tuareg fighters from Libya after the overturn of the Gaddafi regime in 2011. Just as in 1990 and 2006, migrants returning from Maghreb states played a crucial role in the rebellion, illustrating a cycle of how inadequate government response to poverty and conflict leads to mass migration and contributes to increased capacity among separatists and, ultimately, renewed armed opposition to the state.

On this occasion, the combatants had increased their capacity for violence through training within the Libyan armed forces and equipment, including arms, which were left outside government control after the Libyan revolution. The result was a rebellion with greater military strength than ever before, leading to an almost immediate collapse of Mali's armed forces in the north. On 6 April 2012, less than three months after the start of the insurrection, *Azawad* was declared an independent state consisting of Mali's three northern regions, Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal, representing two-thirds of Malian territory. The state was never acknowledged by the international community and the claim for independence was later withdrawn when the MNLA was adjusting its political position in late 2012, facing both peace negotiations and a credible threat of military intervention.[42]

Consequences

The cycle of conflict involving Tuareg groups and the state in Mali is an obvious example of how inadequate conflict resolution leads to the next outbreak of violence. Some of today's rebel leaders lost their fathers in the 1963 rebellion and some combatants have fought in all three successive insurrections.[43] The recurring clashes between the state and the separatists, as well as violent confrontations between groups in the north, have had a devastating impact on human security, with both separatists and government forces committing large-scale abuses against civilians. This has caused extensive refugee movements both to the south of Mali and to neighbouring countries that already lack the resources to care for their own impoverished populations. The judicial response to the human rights abuses committed has previously been inadequate, if not non-existent, and this is also the case for the crimes against civilians committed during 2012-2013, bringing the question of ending impunity to the core of the reconciliation agenda.

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[40] National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad
[41] Thurston & Lebovich, 2013, p. 28.
[42] Tham Lindell, 2012, p. 13.
[43] Thurston & Lebovich, 2013, p. 1, p. 3.

An effect of the deficiency in security is the creation of ethnically based self-defence militias. One example is the Songhai-dominated *Ganda Koy*, formed in 1994 in response to the deterioration of security caused both by armed conflict and by the different peace agreements. During the years that followed, fighting between the militia and Tuareg groups entailed a series of attacks and counter-attacks, including extensive killings of civilians.[44] Several of the militias have been government allies, used as tools against separatist Tuareg units. During the occupation of northern Mali in 2012 by armed separatists and Islamists, an Arab militia was established to counter the MNLA and protect the Arab population. The group, which later renamed itself *Mouvement Arabe de l'Azawad*[45] (MAA), is one of the armed groups which has had several violent confrontations with the MNLA.[46]

Another consequence of the fighting is the decomposition of the social fabric. There is pride in Mali that the country contains a large number of ethnic groups living peacefully together. However, the conflicts reinforce the dividing lines and there is an apparent lack of trust that particularly challenges the relations between, in very broad terms, populations in the south and the north; between pastoralist and sedentary groups; between different Tuareg clans; and between separatist groups and other parts of the population in the northern regions.[47] On top of this, the Malian government has previously used a strategy of divide and rule towards the north, pitting groups against each other by interfering with inter- and intra-group power relations by favouring some groups or individuals over others, further worsening community relations.[48]

2.2   Armed Islamism

Causes

In Mali and the Sahel, armed Islamism is a serious and obvious security threat. The activity of armed Islamists has increased since the early 2000s and up to 2013 there were three main organisations operating in the area. The establishment of these groups can be linked to e.g. a tradition of state neglect, constant poverty and underdevelopment, lack of state territorial control and ethnic tensions.[49]

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[44] Thurston & Lebovich, 2013, pp. 22-24.
[45] Arab Movement of Azawad
[46] Gorée Institute, 2012, p. 138; Thurston & Lebovich, 2013, p. 28; ICG, 2014, pp.17-18.
[47] Interviews Bamako, 2013.
[48] Boukhars, 2013 (B)
[49] Jebnoun, 2014, p. 4; Onuoha & Thurston, 2013, p. 3; Østebo, 2012, p. 4.

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) traces its roots back to the Algerian civil war and the group GSPC[50]. The name change and affiliation with Al-Qaida took place in 2006 and brought with it change in the goals and aims of the organisation towards a jihadist agenda, complementing the internal Algerian agenda. AQIM operates primarily in the Sahel and North Africa, with Algeria as its centre of operations. The main objectives are the fight against the Algerian state and the jihadist goal of establishing a global caliphate. AQIM mostly comprises native Algerians, but has also been able to exploit the social exposure and poverty in other states in the Sahel to gather recruits, predominantly young men. AQIM's presence in Mali has been dependent on the Malian state's inability to control its territory and also the government's previous lax attitude towards this organisation.[51] AQIM finances its operations mainly through kidnappings. Criminal networks and corrupt government officials in northern Mali provide AQIM with another source of income, namely trafficking in contraband, mainly cigarettes.[52]

A local offshoot of AQIM, *Mouvement pour le Tawhîd et du Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest* (MUJAO), was founded in 2011, after alleged frustration at the Algerian dominance of AQIM.[53] The bulk of this organisation is made up of southern Saharans and several important members are Malians, who are also said to be involved in the trans-Sahel drug trade.[54] While the MUJAO is a jihadist movement, it is also highly integrated with organised crime, which contributes to both the operational and financial success of the group.[55]

Founded in 2011 by Iyad Ag Ghali, *Ansar Dine*[56] has its roots in the traditionally secular Tuareg separatist movement. After being denied the leadership of the Tuareg Ifoghas clan and the leadership of the MNLA, which he sought to reform towards jihadist goals, Ag Ghali established the Islamist Ansar Dine in late 2011. Whereas AQIM is composed of mainly Algerian nationals, Ansar Dine is composed of mainly Malian Tuaregs, whose goal of establishing an Islamic state in Mali or northern Mali and instating sharia law in controlled regions coincides with that of AQIM, but not with that of the secular MNLA.[57]

Manifestations

AQIM's goals and objectives in northern Mali up to 2012 were mainly financial, with kidnappings of Western citizens being used to finance the struggle in Algeria. Since the 2012 Tuareg uprising, AQIM has changed focus to territorial

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[50] Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat, Salafist group for Preaching and Combat.

[51] Jakobsson & Eriksson, 2012 (A); Lacher, 2012, p. 13; Onuoha & Thurston, 2013, p. 3.

[52] Onuoha & Thurston, 2013, p. 3; Thurston & Lebovich, 2013, p. 4.

[53] Thurston & Lebovich, 2013, p. 26.

[54] Lecocq et al, 2012, p. 346; p. 350.

[55] Lacher, 2012, p. 15.

[56] Defenders of the Faith

[57] Gaasholt, 2013, p. 70; Lecocq et al, 2012, p. 346; Thurston & Lebovich, 2013, pp. 12-14.

control and until the French intervention in 2013 was governing parts of northern Mali.[58] The Islamist groups can be considered a new element to the conflict dynamics in northern Mali, as the previous Tuareg movements and rebellions had a secular agenda.[59] The MUJAO and Ansar Dine were able to recruit young Malians to their ranks due to social alienation and inequality, by exploiting internal tensions between ethnic groups and tribes, although some joined for ideological reasons. Among those Tuareg who joined Ansar Dine, some were convinced that the Salafist-Islamic ideology would be a unifying force for the Tuareg tribes.[60] AQIM has been active in the area since the late 1990s and has been increasing its popularity by marrying into local families living in poverty, helping the communities financially, offering protection from bandits and the MNLA, and acting as a welfare organisation, taking a role reserved for, but not filled by, the state.[61]

Taking advantage of the chaos that the 2012 rebellion created in northern Mali, the Islamist groups effectively side-lined the secular MNLA both politically and militarily and assumed a dominant role in parts of northern Mali. Although connected to AQIM, Ansar Dine cooperated with the MNLA in the opening stages of the 2012 rebellion before the differences in the groups' objectives triggered a confrontation that left Ansar Dine in control of Timbuktu.[62] This was the general pattern in the immediate aftermath of the rebellion, when armed Islamists soon outmanoeuvred the secular MNLA, and it is debatable whether the initial military success of the rebellion should be credited to the MNLA or to the Islamists.[63]

Consequences

AQIM, Ansar Dine and the MUJAO were a vital part of the 2012 uprising that caused Mali to lose control of half its territory to the MNLA and armed Islamism.[64] The jihadist groups provided manpower, expertise and firepower, and clearly challenged the integrity of the state and the stability of the region. The takeover by the jihadist organisations also affected the inhabitants of the region, as the introduction of sharia law and an interpretation of Islam foreign to the local tradition led to protests, collapse of the local informal economy and increasing tensions between ethnic groups.[65] Numerous violations of human

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[58] Jakobsson & Eriksson, 2012 (A).
[59] Thurston & Lebovich, 2013, p. 1.
[60] Boukhars, 2013 (B).
[61] Bøås & Utas, 2013, p. 9; Lecocq et al, 2012, p. 350; Onuoha & Thurston, 2013, p. 4.
[62] Thurston & Lebovich, 2013, p. 1, p. 12.
[63] Lecocq et al, 2012, p. 348.
[64] Thurston & Lebovich, 2013, pp. 12-13.
[65] Lecocq et al, 2012, pp. 351-353.

rights due to the implementation of sharia law were reported, with people being flogged, arbitrarily arrested and executed or having limbs amputated.[66]

The kidnappings orchestrated by jihadist groups and the instability at large devastated the emerging tourism industry in northern Mali. This had consequences for Mali as a whole, but was most problematic in the north, as tourism was one of the few legitimate income sources in the region.[67]

The emergence of local jihadist groups shows that radical Islam has penetrated the social fabric of Mali, creating the justifications and motivations for armed Islamist struggle in an environment that until recently considered radical Islam alien.[68] This could alter the future dynamics of the region and complicate the re-establishment of state authority in northern Mali, as well as potentially creating a long-term security problem as cycles of secular rebellions are replaced or are complemented with attacks and potential suicide bombings by armed Islamists.[69] In a regional perspective, a northern Mali outside government control could lead to an increase in terrorist attacks in neighbouring states, as well as functioning as a refuge for Islamist groups in the region. Such an Islamist hotspot could also function as a base of operations for global jihadist groups aiming at targets outside the region, not least in Europe.

2.3   Organised crime

Causes

There are several reasons why Mali and the Sahel region in general are attractive to transnational organised crime. First is the geographical aspect, northern Mali is sparsely populated and covers an area approximately the size of France, the terrain is predominantly desert and the area shares long borders with Mauritania, Algeria and Niger. This, in combination with lack of resources, makes control over the territory and borders virtually impossible outside of the few urban hubs of the area. Cocaine traffickers use established smuggling routes and take advantage, or consist, of local groups with great experience of traversing the desert, and exploit technology such as GPS and satellite phones to coordinate and diversify their routes. The opportunities that organised criminal activities offer are attractive for the people of northern Mali, partly because they provide rewards vastly outweighing the income that legitimate alternatives can offer, if such alternatives even exist.[70] Furthermore, the lack of functioning judicial and

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[66] Gaasholt, 2013, pp. 82-83, p. 85; IPI, 2013, p. 4.
[67] Lacher, 2012, p. 9.
[68] Boukhars, 2013 (B).
[69] IPI, 2013, p. 4; Onuoha & Thurston, 2013, p. 7.
[70] Global Initiative, 2014, pp. 7-9; IPI, 2013, p. 12; O'Regan, 2010, p. 2, p. 5.

law enforcement institutions means that the risk of repercussions from the state is virtually non-existent.

The Malian state's control over its northern territory was weak even before the loss of control in 2012. The territorial aspects, in combination with extensive corruption and political and economic neglect, had led to low levels of state legitimacy throughout the north. Furthermore, the economic neglect and weak economic infrastructure in the north had led to a situation where the population was dependent on smuggling from neighbouring Algeria for basic goods such as food, medicine and petrol, leading to a well-established underground economic infrastructure.[71]

The combination of corruption, alienation and an existing black market made the establishment of drug trafficking easier. The normalisation of goods smuggling in the north has also resulted in de-dramatisation of involvement in cocaine trafficking, as the step from petrol to narcotics smuggling is much narrower than e.g. the shift from farming to trafficking. This, in combination with economic hardship due to unemployment and low wages, has led many to turn to organised crime for their income. The establishment has also been helped by the fact that politics in Mali and in the Sahel in general are defined to a high degree by patronage and clientelism. Politics and private interests intermingle and make private relationships a high priority for gaining influence and power, in turn making corruption more common.[72]

State complicity has also played a role in the establishment of cocaine trafficking in Mali. Under the regime of President Amadou Toumani Touré (ATT) 2002-2012, organised crime was allowed to operate freely, as local officials profited from the trafficking, thereby further undermining the state's authority and legitimacy in the north. The motivation was also political, as ATT regarded organised crime as a potential tool in controlling the north. By allying with local traffickers and strongmen involved with the drug trade, ATT tried to control the north by pitting different groups against each other.[73]

Manifestations

Since the 1990s, Mali, the Sahel and West Africa have become a transit region for South American cocaine heading for Europe.[74] The local market for cocaine is small or non-existent; the cocaine enters West Africa mainly through ports in

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[71] Global Initiative, 2014, pp. 7-9; Hirch, 2013; IPI, 2013, p. 5, p. 12; Kühne, 2013, p. 6; Lacher, 2012, pp. 4-5.

[72] Hirch, 2013; Kühne, 2013, p. 6; Lacher, 2012, pp. 4-5; Shaw, 2012, p. 2; Vorrath, 2013, pp. 2-3; UNODC, 2013 (A), p. 5.

[73] Lebovich, 2013; Lacher, 2012, p. 1, pp. 11-12; Shaw, 2012, p. 2.

[74] The influx to Europe in 2010 was an estimated 60-250 tonnes.

Guinea-Bissau and Guinea and enters into north Mali through Mauritania on its route towards the Mediterranean and Europe.[75]

Organised crime in Mali is in no way limited to cocaine trafficking, as it also includes trafficking of humans and weapons and of legitimate goods such as petrol, medicine and staple foods. However, cocaine is by far the most lucrative commodity and is also that associated with the highest stability and security risks.[76] The competition for markets and routes has led to the establishment of private militias and sporadic infighting by local strongmen with interests in the cocaine trafficking trade.[77]

Consequences

The destabilising aspects of organised crime have been identified by the UN as a critical issue in West Africa: *"Unless the flows of contraband are addressed, instability and lawlessness will persist, and it will remain difficult to build state capacity and the rule of law in the region".*[78]

Cocaine is identified as one of two contraband goods[79] that have sufficient profit levels to pose a threat to the stability of West Africa and the Sahel region, as the value of cocaine trafficking is extremely high in comparison with the local economies. For example, the wholesale value of one tonne of cocaine in the EU even exceeds the military budget of some West African states.[80]

The collapse of the state's control of northern Mali in 2012 has been attributed, at least partly, to organised criminal activities, mainly cocaine trafficking. President ATT's complicity with organised crime led to an interlinking of the political system with criminal organisations to a degree where legitimate politics were rendered impossible, leading to a loss of state legitimacy and functionality in the north. The administration also regarded the militias that had been established by local drug traffickers and strongmen with interests in the drug trade as a potential resource to use against Tuareg insurgents, and paid little attention to what was happening in the north as long as they could reap the benefits from it both financially and politically.[81]

Even without direct government involvement, the income from cocaine smuggling distorted and corrupted the political process in Mali and the Sahel region. It also led to institutionalisation of corruption within the state apparatus

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[75] Global Initiative, 2012, pp. 5-7; O'Regan, 2010, p. 1; Shaw & Reitano, 2013, p. 6; UNODC, 2010, p. 234; Zoubir, 2012, p. 454.

[76] International Peace Institute, 2013, p. 3, p. 5; Lacher, 2012, pp. 3-6.

[77] Global Initiative, 2012, p. 11; Lacher, 2012, pp. 11-12.

[78] UNODC, 2013 (A), p. 1.

[79] The other is natural resources.

[80] UNODC, 2010, pp. 234-236; UNODC, 2013 (A), p. 3.

[81] Global Initiative 2014, pp. 11-12; Kühne, 2013, p. 6; Lacher, 2012, pp. 11-12.

and the private sector, ultimately disrupting both political legitimacy and economic development.[82]

The cocaine trafficking also had consequences for the social stability and traditional social structures in northern Mali. By adding highly valuable cocaine to the array of contraband already moving through the region, the value and importance of controlling smuggling routes increased substantially. This had a large impact on traditional social structures, which had been based on dominant and subordinate tribes and castes, as the influx of cocaine money brought with it opportunities to challenge these structures and establish new networks and power nodes. Some groups were empowered by the trafficking in cocaine, while at the same time it created new conflicts and amplified existing tensions between rival groups.[83]

In sum, organised crime contributed to the collapse of state control in northern Mali by amplifying existing corruption and underground economic structures and by providing financing for jihadists and other armed groups. This aggravated the situation for the already stretched state legitimacy in the region, as state complicity with organised crime removed what little legitimacy was left.

In northern Mali, organised crime cannot be blamed for creating corruption or weakened state institutions, as these components were already in place. What organised crime did contribute was the influx of cocaine money, which greatly increased the returns compared with trafficking in other goods or legal activities, thereby strengthening the existing criminal structures.

2.4 Links between the transnational threats

This study distinguishes between political conflict, armed Islamism and organised crime, based on the categorisation made by the World Bank in its *World Development Report 2011*.[84] However, these categories are seldom clear-cut regarding either group affiliation or mode of operation.[85] The alliances and dynamics ruling the situation in northern Mali and the Sahel are fluid and allegiances change easily. The main distinction between the groups is not their methods but their goal, e.g. the goal of organised crime is not political or ideological but plain profit, in contrast to the political goals of separatists.[86]

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[82] Global Initiative, 2014, p. 2; Jebnoun, 2014, p. 4; Shaw & Reitano, 2013, p. 2, p. 4.
[83] Global Initiative, 2014, p. 10; Boås & Torheim, 2013, p. 1285; Thurston & Lebovich, 2013, pp. 24-25.
[84] World Bank, 2011, p. 54.
[85] Sanderson, 2004, p. 49.
[86] Cornell & Swanström, 2006, pp. 11-12; Godson & Olson, 1995, p. 24; Makarenko, 2004, p. 130.

According to the International Crisis Group, some individuals within the rebel groups MNLA, the HCUA[87] and the MAA defend the aim of political Islam and some sympathise with the jihadist groups, which in some cases they temporarily joined during 2012.[88] Important Tuareg leaders and notables are said to shift their support between the MNLA and Ansar Dine, sometimes depending on which seems to be dominant and sometimes to balance the influence of these groups.[89] According to political scientist Wolfram Lacher[90], Tuareg leaders and notables are also involved in smuggling and drug trafficking, illustrating how the three types of networks described in this report are interlinked through individuals shifting and combining group memberships to maximise their political and business interests.[91]

In some instances the separatists and armed Islamists have also formed more institutional alliances. The MNLA and Ansar Dine formed an unsteady alliance during 2012, providing manpower for the uprising. This was facilitated by the fact that both movements are predominantly made up of Tuaregs and that the founder of Ansar Dine, Iyad Ag Ghali, is a former Tuareg rebel commander.[92] After the collapse of the state in northern Mali, the alliance soon dispersed due to differences in goals and priorities.[93] While being a jihadist group, Ansar Dine shares at least one of its goals, that of an independent Azawad, with the MNLA. The difference is that while the MNLA wants to establish a secular state, Ansar Dine wants an Islamic caliphate in the whole of Mali or in an independent north.[94]

AQIM finances its activities through organised criminal activities, predominantly kidnappings but also trafficking in illicit goods, especially cigarettes.[95] According to Lacher, there is no evidence connecting AQIM directly to the trafficking in cocaine, but it is likely that AQIM has imposed 'taxes' on trafficking operations in territories that it controls.[96] Other researchers claim that AQIM is active in the trafficking of drugs[97], but hard facts are scarce. MUJAO is highly involved in drug trafficking, both in a first-hand capacity and as an ally to traffickers, offering protection in exchange for money. The organisation's

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[87] Haut conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad/The High Council for the Unity of Azawad. The HCUA is one of the main Tuareg rebel groups formed by dissidents from Ansar Dine (*Mali: fusion de trois mouvements rebelles touareg et arabe*, 2013).
[88] ICG, 2014.
[89] Lacher, 2012, pp. 16-17.
[90] German Institute for International and Security Affairs
[91] Lacher, 2012, pp. 16-17.
[92] Global Initiative, 2014, p. 13.
[93] Teirilä, 2013, p. 26.
[94] Klute, 2013, pp. 62-63.
[95] Bøås & Torheim, 2013, p. 1285; Global Initiative, 2014, p. 13.
[96] Lacher, 2012, p. 8.
[97] Schori Liang, 2011, p. 3.

pragmatic and adaptable position on drugs has allowed the MUJAO to thrive both as a drug trafficking actor and as a jihadist organisation.[98] Like AQIM, the MUJAO also uses ransoms from kidnappings as an important source of income.[99] According to a report by the Gorée Institute, Ansar Dine is not financed through criminal activities but through donations from Gulf countries and civil society organisations supporting their cause.[100]

The criminal networks established in the Sahel have in some cases established contact with armed Islamist groups and have provided them with weapons, money and travel documents in exchange for protection or payment.[101]

The linkages to the state

Apart from the individuals and periodic alliances linking these groups in Mali, they also have one important factor in common – they have all been enabled by the non-existent state presence in northern Mali and the general low state capacity in the Sahel. Long-held grievances with the state explain the outbreaks of separatist violence. The recruitment of locals by armed Islamists has been facilitated by the state's failure to provide security and basic necessities in the north and by the Islamists' ability to offer large incentives due to the incomes generated through trafficking and kidnappings. Organised crime established partly because of the lack of basic goods coming from the south and was made possible by the lack of territorial and border control in the region. Furthermore, all these groups are now complicating the efforts to (re)establish state legitimacy and presence in the area.

What makes the situation in Mali particularly alarming are the reported links between the state and organised crime. By the end of ATT's presidency,[102] it became increasingly evident that government officials were in collusion with organised crime. Prior to the armed revolt in 2012, the government sought to control the northern regions through the outsourcing of security functions to criminal networks, local strongmen and local militias. There are also examples of government officials intervening to encumber investigations into drug trafficking, implying that they had personal interests in the continuation of criminal business.[103] Although the political leadership has changed in Mali, there is a widespread notion that these corrupt links still exist.[104]

The kidnapping of mostly Western citizens by AQIM during the past decade and the payment of ransoms has also created dubious links between government,

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[98] Global Initiative, 2014, p. 15: Lacher, 2012, pp. 15-16.
[99] Gorée Institute, 2012, p. 137.
[100] Gorée Institute, 2012, p. 135.
[101] Onuoha & Ezirim, 2013, p. 7; Zoubir, 2012, p. 454.
[102] ATT was ousted from power in a military coup in March 2012.
[103] Global Initiative, 2014, p. 12; Lacher, 2012, pp. 13-14.
[104] Interviews Bamako, 2013; Interviews Dakar, 2014.

intermediaries and the terrorists responsible. If successful as a go-between, it is believed that intermediaries can keep a substantial share of the ransoms paid. Being designated as a negotiator by the Malian government therefore became lucrative and it is believed that government officials also received a cut of the money paid for the release of hostages.[105]

Global patterns

The Sahel is an example of how separatism, terrorism and organised crime can feed and enable each other. The pattern of alliances of utility and shifting personal and group affiliations briefly described here is symptomatic of these phenomena globally. Organised crime thrives in post-conflict and conflict environments, as state control is minimal. In exchange for equipment, funding and intelligence, criminal networks can receive protection from armed separatist or terrorist groups or exclusive rights of operation in a territory.

Since the end of the Cold War also meant termination of large-scale state sponsorship of terrorism and separatism, organised crime has generally become an important source of income for these groups.[106] At the same time, organised crime groups sometimes adopt terrorist tactics in their efforts to deter the state or other criminal organisations.[107] This is also true of some separatist groups[108], turning to terrorist tactics to promote their cause. This has led to a situation where it is often difficult to define a group as a clear-cut terrorist, violent separatist or organised crime group, as many groups contain degrees of characteristics belonging to all three.[109] As it is often in the interest of criminal groups for the governance of a state or region to remain weak, they may provide support that allows armed conflicts to continue. The importance of organised crime in enabling and fuelling continuation of ongoing conflicts is therefore important to emphasise.[110]

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[105] Global Initiative, 2014, p. 12; Lacher, 2012, pp. 13-14.
[106] Makarenko, 2004, p. 130; Sanderson, 2004, pp. 49-50.
[107] Makarenko, 2004, pp. 133-135.
[108] For example: Hamas and IRA.
[109] Makarenko, 2004, pp. 135-136.
[110] Cornell & Swanström, 2006, pp. 11-12; Godson & Olson, 1995, p. 24; Makarenko, 2004, p. 130; Olson, 1997, pp. 75-77; UNODC, 2010, pp. 221-223.

3 Current Situation and Counteractions

This chapter presents a review of some aspects of the present situation. The focus is on the current status of the three types of transnational groupings described in Chapter 2. The analysis also includes the initiatives, or lack thereof, taken to seek a solution to the political conflict, establish security in the previously occupied regions, fight organised crime and promote regional cooperation.

3.1 Political process

On 18 June, 2013 a ceasefire agreement was reached between the then interim government of Mali and the two main Tuareg groups, the MNLA and the HCUA. A number of other factions also declared their intent to observe the agreement facilitated by ECOWAS and entitled the *Ouagadougou Preliminary Agreement*. Besides the immediate termination of armed hostilities, the accord set out the terms for the presidential and legislative elections that were held later in 2013, and described a road map for sustainable peace in Mali. One mainstay is actual peace negotiations to reach an agreement that regulates the political disputes. Among the areas pointed out for negotiations are e.g. the status of the northern territory, the government's territorial control, the distribution of state resources, SSR, DDR, good governance, refugees, human rights, justice and national reconciliation. Such negotiations were to be started within 60 days of the democratically elected president taking office. However, the President took up his duties in September 2013, but at the time of writing in May 2014 no formal peace negotiations had yet been initiated.

Since Mali's return to constitutional order, the President has increased the national ownership of the process, shifting talks from Ouagadougou in neighbouring Burkina Faso to the Malian capital. It is not clear to what extent the President aims to involve new external mediators, but during the first quarter of 2014 both Algeria and Morocco have hosted meetings with groups from northern Mali. In mid-January 2014, representatives from the MNLA, the HCUA, the MAA and the militias Ganda Koy and Handa Izo participated in "*exploratory discussions*"[111] in Alger. Later the same month, King Mohammed VI of Morocco met with the civilian wing of the MNLA.[112]

The MNLA is experiencing internal divisions as different clans have longstanding rivalries, resulting in conflict over leadership and the focus of the

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[111] *Romano Prodi : 'Sans accord avec le Nord, il n'y aura jamais de paix' "*,2014. Quote translated by authors from French.
[112] *Peace process slows down*, 2014; *Talking Timbuktu,* 2014; Carayol, 2014.

continuing struggle.[113] This has led to splits and new groups have formed out of the MNLA, the most recent being the CPA[114].[115] While not being as territorially limited as the MNLA, the MAA has experienced internal strife and divisions similar to those in the MNLA, mostly based on disagreement between hardliners and moderates on how the activities of the group should proceed. The three main rebel groups – the MNLA, the HCUA and the MAA – sometimes cooperate and claim to have a common political platform, while at other times they clash.[116] The divisions in both the MNLA and the MAA have had effects on the prospects for talks with the Malian government, as the lack of unified movements has made it difficult to establish dialogue and reach agreements.[117]

The President has initiated national dialogue on finding a way out of the political crisis with the north[118] and on decentralisation[119]. Nevertheless, the Malian government has been criticised for lack of interest in initiating an inclusive dialogue with the armed separatist groups and for setting conditions for peace talks, such as the complete disarmament of the opponents, that inevitably delay the start of negotiations.[120] According to interviews carried out within this study, the political class in Bamako is not willing to make sacrifices to reach sustainable peace with groups in the north. With general perceptions among the population in the south that no concessions should be made to the armed parties in the north, the politicians in power risk losing their electoral base if viewed as complying with claims from the groups responsible for the uprising and territorial takeover in 2012.[121]

The links between separatists and armed Islamists are described in section 2.4 of this report. Even if individuals can move between the different types of organisations, the separatists and armed Islamists are two distinct types of groups when it comes to reaching peace agreements. This can only come into question for the territorially motivated groups, with which it is possible, at least theoretically, to achieve a political settlement.

Reconciliation and justice are important prerequisites for sustainable peace settlements and several reconciliation initiatives have been taken. The new government includes a minister for national reconciliation and development of the northern regions and in March 2014 the General Assembly established a

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[113] Elowson & Tham Lindell, 2013; *Tuareg spit widen*, 2012; Boukhars, 2013 (B); Tinti, 2014.
[114] Coalition du peuple pour l'Azawad / Coalition for the People of Azawad
[115] Tinti, 2014.
[116] *Mali: fusion de trois mouvements rebelles touareg et arabe*, 2014.
[117] Tinti, 2014.
[118] Assises nationales sur le nord du Mali
[119] Etats généraux de la décentralisation
[120] Interviews Bamako, 2014.
[121] Interviews Bamako 2013; Interviews Dakar 2014; Interviews by phone 2014.

Commission for Truth, Justice and Reconciliation.[122] The commission's mandate and scope have been the subject of discussion, as have the conditions for transparency and inclusiveness.[123] In the end, the commission was given a three-year mandate covering the period between 1960 and 2013 and tasked with analysing the causes of the armed conflicts in northern Mali, contributing to reconciliation and directing victims of the conflicts to relevant judicial institutions.[124]

3.2   Establishing security

The French *Operation Serval* has been militarily successful, reconquering the regional capitals Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal during 2013 and launching several anti-terrorist offensives. French and African troops have killed or captured significant numbers of fighters, the most high-profile being the killing of the MUJAO spokesperson known as Red Beard[125], and the detainment of the MUJAO commander Abu Dar Dar.[126] The offensives have pushed back the armed Islamists from the population centres and stabilised the situation in northern Mali, enabling the government, development aid and humanitarian assistance to return and the UN mission MINUSMA to establish itself.

While the French operations have placed great pressure on the jihadists, these groups are still highly motivated and well financed, and have not been defeated militarily, politically or socially. It is most likely that the majority have relocated into neighbouring states, retreated into inaccessible mountainous areas or blended in with the population.[127] The main effect of the French intervention seems to be a change in the jihadists' tactics, to harassment of the international troops rather than the previous tactic of territorial control.[128] This has been visible in attacks on French and African troops, kidnappings, suicide bombings and also harassment and killings of civilians accused of collaborating with the French.[129] There have also been reports of Ansar Dine re-establishing its role as an Islamic welfare group, distributing money and aid to local residents.[130]

AQIM and Ansar Dine are currently mostly concentrated to the mountainous regions north of Kidal.[131] Clashes between AQIM and the MNLA have been

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[122] La Commission Verité, Justice et Réconciliation
[123] Interviews Bamako 2013; Interviews Dakar 2014.
[124] Elowson & Tham Lindell, 2013; *Peace process slows down*, 2014; *Mali: Vers la création d'une Commission 'Vérité, Justice et Réconciliation'*, 2014,
[125] Omar Ould Hamaha
[126] *Mali Islamist leader Red beard 'killed in Frech strike'*, 2014; Farge, 2014.
[127] Elowson & Tham Lindell, 2013; Onuoha & Ezirim, 2013, p. 5; ICG, 2014, p. 10.
[128] Onuoha & Ezirim, 2013, p. 5; ICG, 2014, p. 11.
[129] Follorou, 2014; *Retour inquiétant des jihadistes dans le Nord du Mali*, 2014.
[130] Follorou, 2014.
[131] Follorou, 2014; Onuoha & Ezirim, 2013, p. 5.

reported in the area and Ansar Dine is claimed to be stockpiling weapons and recruiting young men from across the border.[132] The Jihadist groups have also experienced internal dissent and splits. A new group, described by the US State Department as possibly the largest security threat, is al-Murabitun,[133] which came into existence in late 2013 due to a merger between the MUJAO and the former AQIM commander Mokhtar Belmokthar's splinter group the al-Mulathameen[134] Brigade.[135]

During 2013, the MNLA was active in fighting jihadists in the Kidal region, in some operations cooperating with the French forces.[136] Even if weakened, the MNLA is still a military factor in the conflict, especially in Kidal, the traditional stronghold of the Tuareg Ifoghas clan, where the movement has retreated geographically. In mid-May 2014, Kidal was the scene of an armed confrontation between government forces on the one side and the MNLA, the HCUA and the MAA on the other, in connection with a visit by the Malian prime minister. Although the exact figures are contested, some 30-40 people were killed, several injured, state officials were briefly held hostage by the armed groups and several thousands of people fled Kidal. Through African Union (AU) and UN mediation a new ceasefire agreement was soon reached, but the incident clearly illustrated the government's lack of access to Kidal and the fact that the armed rebel groups intend to defend their authority if challenged.[137]

However successful, *Operation Serval* has apparently not meant the end of armed Islamism in the area, nor of armed resistance to the Malian government. Rather, it has contributed to remodelling the politico-military landscape of northern Mali. In the absence of Malian security forces capable of upholding security, the containment of armed groups is currently entirely reliant on a continued French military presence.[138] There were even signs during late 2013 and early 2014 that armed Islamists were re-establishing themselves in northern Mali, as the French are withdrawing their troops, illustrating how temporary the advances on security are.[139]

Since the French intervention in January 2013, France has been trying to cut down on its military presence. This has been difficult to effect due to the parlous security situation and the lack of other forces with offensive capabilities. During

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[132] Follorou, 2014.

[133] "The Sentinels"

[134] "Masked", also known as "al-Mua'qi'oon" – "those who sign in blood".

[135] Gordon, 2013.

[136] Mpoke Bigg, 2014; Tinti, 2014.

[137] *Mali: une quarantaine de soldats maliens tués et soixante-dix prisonniers, selon le MNLA*, 2014 ; *'C'est fini pour tout le monde' : un rescapé raconte le 'carnage' de Kidal*, 2014 ; *Mali : cessez-le-feu entre Bamako et les groupes armés contrôlant Kidal*, 2014.

[138] Follorou, 2014.

[139] Follorou, 2014; Jebnoun, 2014, p. 5; *Talking Timbuktu*, 2014.

2014, France aims at reducing the number of forces in northern Mali to 1000, something that could worsen the security situation and increase the pressure on the UN force.[140]

In the medium-term perspective, the presence of the UN stabilisation mission MINUSMA is the foundation for the maintenance of security and protection of civilians. The mission was established in July 2013, replacing the African-led mission AFISMA[141] that was initiated by ECOWAS and started to deploy during spring 2013. The mission's mandate is to stabilise key population centres and support the re-establishment of state authority throughout the country, support the national road map for peace and reconciliation, protect civilians and human rights and support humanitarian assistance, cultural preservation and national and international justice.[142]

The strength authorised by the UN Security Council is 12,640 uniformed personnel (11,200 military and 1,440 police) and a civilian component. By March 2014, 6,483 military personnel and 986 police had been deployed alongside civilian personnel.[143] This means that MINUSMA is only at half-strength and, according to media reports, certain communities in the northern regions are still dependent on armed groups for their security in the absence of a state or international presence.[144]

In the long-term perspective, territorial control and protection of the population from violence and abuses must naturally be upheld by the Malian state. Despite bilateral support to the armed forces during recent decades[145], the Malian Armed Forces collapsed during the uprising in 2012, showing their lack of capacity, equipment and discipline.[146] In March 2013, the EU launched a training mission (EUTM[147] Mali) providing training for soldiers and an advisory role to the Ministry of Defence. Professional forces capable of providing security for civilians, combating armed groups and controlling territory and borders would be an important step towards enhanced security and state legitimacy. The EU is also preparing for a civilian mission focusing on other parts of the security sector and MINUSMA will carry out police training.[148]

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[140] *Map: France revamps military operations in Africa's Sahel*, 2014.
[141] African-led International Support Mission to Mali
[142] UNSC, 2013
[143] UN, 2014
[144] *Talking Timbuktu*, 2013.
[145] Library of Congress, 2005, p. 18.
[146] Tham Lindell, 2012, pp. 19-20.
[147] European Union Training Mission
[148] European Union Delegation to the United Nations – New York, 2014; UNSC, 2013

3.3   Countering crime

Interviews with researchers and UN officials show that once declarations must be turned into action, the political will in West Africa to fight organised crime is absent. Smuggling of contraband and narcotics is often perceived by the elites in power as "business opportunities"[149] that generate large incomes, money that also can be invested in legal markets such as agriculture and construction to the possible benefit of the country.[150] It is telling that the fight against organised crime has been completely omitted from both the mandate of MINUSMA and the scope of *Operation Serval*.

As hard evidence is scarce, it is difficult to say exactly how the jihadist and French presence in north Mali has affected organised crime. However, existing sources indicate that neither the jihadist nor the French intervention has had any significant impact on cocaine trafficking in the region, which mostly follows the Mauritania-Mali-Libya route.[151] According to interviews conducted by an NGO in Mali, the only impact the French presence has had is that traffickers have decreased the size of their convoys, spitting them up in several consignments.[152] This is most likely due to the ability of the criminal organisations in the region to adapt easily to changing circumstances and to the Jihadists, MINUSMA and the French not confronting the traffickers.

3.4   Regional cooperation

The main regional cooperation organ in West Africa and the Sahel is ECOWAS[153]. Within ECOWAS, several programmes and initiatives have been established to deal with regional challenges. These include control of small arms and cooperation against organised crime.[154] Other regional initiatives include a joint Mali, Niger, Algeria and Mauritania intelligence bureau and anti-terror command in Tamanrasset[155], talks between, among others, Algeria, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco and Niger to cooperate on transnational issues[156] and the establishment of what has been dubbed the *G5 of the Sahel* with the goal of strengthening cooperation on development and security in the Sahel.[157]

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[149] Interviews Dakar, 2014.
[150] Interviews Dakar, 2014.
[151] Global Initiative, 2014, p. 9, p. 16; Lacher, 2012, pp. 7-8.
[152] Global Initiative, 2014, p. 9.
[153] The Economic Community of West African States
[154] Shaw & Reitano, 2013, p. 3.
[155] Lohman, 2011, p. 15; Ramzi, 2010.
[156] UNODC, 2013 (B).
[157] *African nations to boost Sahel security*, 2014.

Apart from the regional initiatives, there are also externally initiated projects, among them the US-led and US-funded Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership,[158] which includes Mauritania, Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal and promotes cooperation with Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. It is tailored towards training and equipping the participants to counter terrorism. A military exercise, *Exercise Flintlock*, is conducted annually, with Special Forces from the US and other Western states training with their counterparts from the African states. The partnership has been troubled by fluctuations in funding and by lack of strategies for implementation. It has also been questioned whether all partnership states are dedicated to the goal of fighting terrorism, or whether they are only taking advantage of US funding to update outdated equipment.[159]

At the same time, some states in the region perceive cooperation against armed groups as a risk, since it increases the potential for attacks in their own territory.[160] Organised crime is largely seen as a non-issue in the region, both by politicians and the public, creating a lack of will and initiative to deal with the problem.[161]

Effective regional cooperation is stalled by insufficient trust between the states, lack of resources and capability and even lack of political will.[162] Many regional initiatives have also been criticised for lacking understanding of, and failing to address, the underlying causes of the problems and therefore being ineffective.[163] Furthermore, many initiatives regarding regional security are relatively new and any effects are difficult to measure. However, ECOWAS played an important role in pressuring the military junta that took power in Bamako in 2012 to hand over power to a civil interim administration.[164] ECOWAS has also been active in the mediation process between the Malian state and the MNLA.[165]

One critical problem for regional cooperation is the rivalry and tensions between Algeria and Morocco, which are not Sahel states per se, but are influential and integrated into the transnational problems in the Sahel. This rivalry is blocking cooperation, as Algeria does not want to participate in any endeavour of which Morocco is part, and vice versa. This is creating a situation where the two

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[158] A direct successor to the Pan Sahel Initiative 2002-2004.
[159] Global Security.
[160] Lacher & Tull, 2013, p. 5; LeCocq et al, 2012, p. 354.
[161] Interviews Dakar, 2014.
[162] Jakobsson & Eriksson, 2012 (B), pp. 53-54; Ammour, 2012, p. 4; Jebnoun, 2014, pp. 3-4; LeCocq et al, 2012, p. 354; Onuoha & Ezirim, 2013, p. 3; Zoubir, 2012, p. 453; ICG, 2014.
[163] Onuoha & Ezirim, 2013, p. 8.
[164] Tham Lindell, 2012, pp. 24-25.
[165] Carayol, 2014.

powerhouses of the extended region, with resources that can affect the situation, are unwilling to take part in encompassing regional initiatives.[166]

During 2014, both Algeria and Morocco have hosted talks with parties to the conflict in Mali. While Algeria has a history of involvement as a mediator, this is the first time for Morocco on the Tuareg issue. The involvement of the Moroccan king Mohammed VI is therefore interpreted as a desire to balance Algeria's influence in the region.[167] Morocco has a broad policy approach to the Sahel, involving military aspects, but also social, political and religious aspects.[168] The Sahel politics of Algeria focus on security. Algeria is regarded as highly non-transparent on security policy and applies a principle of non-intervention in the region[169]. However, Algeria engages in certain security cooperations such as the mentioned bureau of intelligence in Tamanrasset founded in 2010.

Mauritania, Mali's Western neighbour, also struggles with armed Islamism and organised crime. Mauritania's reaction to the latest Mali crisis, namely increasing security along its border and stepping up military exercises and operations, has been interpreted as a determination to keep the armed Islamists on the Malian side of the border.[170] Both the Mauritanian capital Nouakchott and Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso, Mali's southern neighbour, are claimed to house senior MNLA leaders.[171] The Burkinabé president Blaise Compaoré played a central role in the mediation during the occupation of northern Mali. However, since Mali returned to constitutional order, the democratically elected president has chosen to move peace negotiations from Burkina Faso to Mali and to alienate Compaoré from the process, claiming that he is close to several Tuareg rebel leaders.[172]

Despite a number of regional initiatives on enhancing security cooperation, effective implementation remains a problem. In sum, the lack of interstate trust in the Sahel region undermines the information sharing and collective strategies that are needed for efficiently addressing transnational challenges to security.

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[166] Jakobsson & Eriksson, 2012 (B); Ammour, 2012, p. 4.
[167] Carayol, 2014.
[168] Sudan, 2014.
[169] Eriksson, 2014, p. 48, p. 53; Kodmani & Chartouni-Dubarry, 2009, p. 98; Zoubir, 2012, p. 455.
[170] *Tuareg splits widen*, 2012; *Peace process slows down*, 2014.
[171] *Peace process slows down*, 2014.
[172] Carayol, 2014.

4   The Way Ahead

This report described three driving forces behind the recurring cycles of violence in Mali and analysed the causes, manifestations and consequences of the occurrence of violent separatism, armed Islamism and organised crime. The analysis showed how root causes of political conflict concur with failed conflict resolution initiatives and poor implementation of peace agreements, resulting in new outbreaks of violence. The analysis also showed how weak state institutions and territorial neglect act as a catalyst for armed Islamism and organised crime.

At the time of writing, in May 2014, there were no signs of any kind of solution to the conflicts between the separatist groups in the north and the state or the establishment of terrorist groups in the ungoverned spaces of the Sahara, while the issue of organised crime was not even on the table. Nevertheless, any long-term strategy for peace and security must take into account these three phenomena and address the linkages among them and between them and the state.

None of the causes of conflict leading to the armed separatist uprising in January 2012 has yet been handled. Unless forceful national, regional and international initiatives are taken to resolve the causes and effects of the conflict, the Mali crisis of 2012, the international interventions of 2013 and the now ongoing political and military aftermath will also become factors in future violent conflicts in Mali – or in neighbouring states. The conflict history of the Sahel and West Africa illustrates all too well the risks of spill-over effects from previous poorly handled conflicts, including:

- AQIM establishing itself in northern Mali after having been pushed south by Algerian counter-terrorism operations

- Arms traffic to Mali from Mauritania, Algeria, Niger, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea

- Weapons left unguarded after the overturn of the Gadhafi regime in Libya providing assets for an armed uprising in Mali

- Failed reintegration of former combatants after the civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia, resulting in them seeking opportunities as mercenaries in other conflicts in the region

- Refugees returning from neighbouring states better trained and equipped to challenge the state

- The children of killed former rebel leaders leading new rebellions.

This leads to the question of how the crisis in Mali and its handling will affect the dynamics of other conflicts in the wider region. Refugees not returning to

their homes from camps in neighbouring countries such as Mauritania and Niger, which are already facing chronic underdevelopment, is one potential source of tension. Confronted by the French counter-terrorism *Operation Serval*, terrorist groups have sought a new safe haven in southern Libya, which is now serving not only as a source of weapons affecting both West and East Africa, but also as a refuge for separatists, armed Islamists and criminal networks. The expected dialogue in Mali on the status of the Tuareg also has the potential to heighten tensions in other countries with Tuareg minorities, such as Niger, Algeria and Libya. These examples highlight how Mali shares the important challenges to state stability and human security analysed in this report with most of the surrounding region, imparting a regional dimension to the problems and to the required solutions.

4.1   Critical priorities

Since France intervened militarily in northern Mali in January 2013, Mali has become the host of several international military and civilian missions and receives extensive development and humanitarian aid. To ensure sustainable development in Mali, the cycle of violence has to be stopped once and for all. In this endeavour, the recommendations given in this section are important to consider whether support is given in the form of peacekeeping operations, security sector reform, diplomatic efforts or development aid.

The lack of trust between factions of the population and the government is at the core of the new social contract needed in Mali. To give the state meaning and positive value among the population in the north, *immediate service delivery* should be top of the agenda. The state must establish itself visibly in all regions and quickly enable e.g. schools and health care to function, as well as the provision of water, electricity and other important infrastructure. For this, the government needs funding and technical support from the international community – but without too many foreign 'flags', as it is intended to show a distrustful population that this government will be different from previous governments.

If Malian citizenship is imbued with some kind of significance, in the long run this can reduce the possibilities for rebel leaders to mobilise people against the state. With an important gap between public demands and state capacity, there is high probability of non-state actors such as religious institutions or criminal networks filling the void and offering essential services which, as recent developments show, challenges the state in the longer-term perspective.

The previous neglect of the north motivates special attention to the needs of the northern regions. However, it is important that service delivery and poverty reduction strategies *include all regions*, as otherwise tensions between populations in the south and the north may increase, deepening already serious

inter-community distrust and the perception present in the south that the Tuareg are more favoured than other, equally impoverished, groups due to their armed struggle.[173]

Another urgent issue is to **end impunity**. All parties in the armed conflict, including government forces, have committed serious human rights violations. The culture of impunity must end to enable reconciliation, but also to create trust in government institutions. This is not only important in the three regions previously controlled by armed Islamists, but also to people in southern Mali, especially in relation to the crimes committed by the MNLA.[174]

Another instant priority is to **establish security**, with French forces and the UN mission MINUSMA providing much needed support to the Malian army. MINUSMA will also support the police and gendarmerie, while the EU is launching a civilian mission, EUCAP Sahel Mali, to support internal security through strategic advice and training for the internal security forces[175].[176] The international military presence must not be exploited to prolong the status quo and avoid state reform, but the security that it manages to achieve must be used to deliver the state services listed above. The fact that Kidal in the north is not yet stabilised and fully in the hands of the government is not only a security concern, but also creates political tensions, since with its history of Tuareg uprisings Kidal is perceived as the 'Gordian knot' of the peace process.[177] In that sense, 'the battle for Mali', both symbolically and literally, takes place in Kidal, and by extension 'the battle for the Sahel' is currently taking place in Mali.

A **peace agreement** between the government and the separatist groups is needed for stable peace. Due to the lack of trust between the parties and the history of negotiations and agreements, this will not be easy. A number of conferences and meetings through third party mediators have been held during the past two years, e.g. in Burkina Faso, Algeria and Morocco, so far only involving armed parties. To date, these agreements or talks have had a limited impact on the ground. One way forward could be for the government to focus less on the leadership of the armed groups and devote more efforts to reforming the state, making sure the population receive economic and social development as well as security. Several of this study's interviewees pointed to a political solution that bypasses the leadership level and focuses on a **people-centred and broad dialogue on peace and reconciliation**.

It is difficult to imagine stable peace and security in Mali without a reasonably stable social contract between the citizens and the state. One of the most crucial

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[173] Interviews Bamako, 2013; Interviews Dakar, 2014.
[174] Interviews Bamako, 2013.
[175] The police, the Gendarmerie and the Garde nationale.
[176] European Union Delegation to the United Nations – New York, 2014.
[177] Interviews Bamako, 2013.

priorities for the future is to ***establish an inclusive Malian state*** that clearly encompasses all communities and that supports the diversity of the population. Minorities must be integrated in the management of the state and the government must prove its support for cultural diversity. New ways need to be found to build trust and to integrate the north and south of the country. In this, the work of the Commission for Truth, Justice and Reconciliation would be an important component, provided that it is inclusive, open and transparent.

The immediate initiatives to restore or create confidence in the state are more important in the current situation than sweeping institutional reforms. In the longer perspective, however, ***reform of the democratic institutions*** must follow to create institutions with popular legitimacy. Research shows that in fragile and violent environments, the reform of institutions providing citizen security, justice and jobs should be prioritised, since they are key elements for human security.[178] Improvements within these policy areas in Mali would clearly contribute to the efforts to counter the three major transnational threats included in the scope of this report. However, local political will must be mentioned as a prerequisite for international investments in institutional reform.

In order to build strong and legitimate institutions with integrity, it is imperative for ***corruption to be countered***, since corruption decreases both the legitimacy and capacity of institutions.[179] One of the main priorities should be to focus on the chain of justice, as corrupt law enforcement is an important enabler of organised criminal activities such as cocaine trafficking, which often finances terrorism and insurgencies.[180]

An important part of the checks-and-balances in a democracy is a strong civil society. An important parallel process to the institutional reforms is therefore ***strengthening civil society organisations***. In particular, groups that can voice the grievances of women and young people are important to ensure their inclusion in the political dialogue and to undermine the recruitment of children and youths to armed radical groups.

Poverty plays a critical role as background to the separatism and to recruitment to armed Islamism and organised crime. According to public perception surveys, unemployment is the main motivator for young people joining criminal gangs and rebel movements.[181] Poverty as a factor in terrorism has to be eradicated and ***economic development*** is needed to present legitimate alternatives to crime, rebellion and terrorism. This will not be an easy task in the northern regions of Mali, where desertification is worsening already extremely difficult living conditions. If not handled, this will be an increasingly important factor for

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[178] World Bank, 2011, pp. 11-12.
[179] Godson & Olson, 2006, p. 26.
[180] Cornell & Swanström, 2006, p. 13.
[181] World Bank, 2011, p. 6.

poverty and famine which, by extension, could drive people towards crime and violence.[182]

The threats covered by this report are transnational in nature and therefore *transnational cooperation* is needed to counteract the problems. The reason for this is that the groups posing these threats can relatively easily relocate their activities to another area or state if the environment in one state becomes hostile, and since the threats often do not originate, target or affect just a single state. In Mali this has been the case for Tuareg rebels, which have taken advantage of long unguarded borders to find refuge in Niger, Algeria or Libya when in escalated conflict with the Malian state. The Tuareg question is also transnational in nature, as several states in the Sahel have Tuareg minorities and as Niger has also experienced uprisings.[183] The armed Islamism is transnational in nature, since the members are from several states and since their goals and operations are not targeted against specific states, but are part of a global jihadist agenda.[184] Criminal networks also simply move their operations if increased state pressure leads to the risks outweighing the gains, as well as using legal differences between states to work clandestinely and avoid justice.[185] Any lasting counter-efforts therefore need to include not only Mali but also all the other states in the region, as well as providing international support.[186]

The regional cooperation that is needed in the form of e.g. joint monitoring and operations and intelligence sharing is obstructed by a lack of trust between countries in the region. Algeria and Morocco are key players in the Sahel-Sahara region but the suspicion between them makes fruitful cooperation impossible. If the dynamic between the two countries were to change, this could alter much in the region as a whole. Another factor is differing views on the character of the security challenges and on preferred solutions. Despite a number of regional agreements, initiatives and strategies, as described in Chapter 3, very few results of implementation are visible.[187] The conclusion from this study's analysis of regional security cooperation is that lack of trust is a fundamental problem and that *confidence building* between the states in the Sahel region is of paramount importance for progress on transnational cooperation, which is crucial to counter the security challenges analysed in this report.

The lack of territorial control in Mali and the Sahel at large needs to be addressed, as it is an enabler of all three threats encompassed in this study.[188]

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[182] Jakobsson & Eriksson, 2012 (B), p. 30.
[183] Jakobsson & Eriksson, 2012 (B), pp. 25-26; Bøås & Torheim, 2013, p. 1282.
[184] Jebnoun, 2014, pp. 5-7; Thurston & Lebovich, 2013, p. 26.
[185] Williams, 2001, p. 78.
[186] Lecoqc et al, 2012, pp. 354-355; Onuoha & Ezirim, 2013, pp. 8-9.
[187] Boukhars, 2013 (A).
[188] Schori Liang, 2011, p. 5.

This includes establishing **border control** over long borders and vast areas of mostly uninhabited desert and mountainous terrain. Regional cooperation and international support are vital to the success of this endeavour, as it not possible for one state to fully regulate the borders. Furthermore, successful action by a single state to establish control over territory would only lead to relocation of the threat if other neighbouring states do not take appropriate action.

The support of the international community is needed both for the domestic reforms proposed above and for containing the external stresses on the fragile states facing security challenges. For this, a **regional approach** has to replace the normally country-focused assistance.[189] The EU, UN and AU have developed Sahel strategies acknowledging the interlinkages. However, more can be done to coordinate multilateral and bilateral international assistance, as well as the different policy areas involved, ensuring a whole-government approach.

Concerning the political peace process in Mali, the conflict history described in this report underlines the importance of not pushing through an agreement that does not have true support among the parties and in the country. Yet another failed peace process would simply add grievances that could fuel renewed hostilities. Instead, donor countries should focus on the **inclusiveness of the peace process**, enabling groups that have not taken up arms to participate. According to some of the interviewees in this study, the question of women's representation has become a lower priority during the government of IBK compared with that of ATT, a development that is worrisome.[190]

The violent expression of separatism, armed Islamism and transnational organised crime are all sources of violence in the Sahel that will continue to dominate the security landscape in West and North Africa during the years to come. Apart from a number of measures that need to be taken in the directly affected states and the region, only a few priorities among which are mentioned above, the Western world also needs to **consider its role in fuelling or ignoring causes** of the violence. A few examples of the links are:

- The responsibility for the destabilisation of Western Africa due to its role as a transit region for narcotics travelling from South America to Europe lies heavily with the supply and demand sides. In institutionally weak states with populations experiencing extreme poverty, the fight against organised crime can be all but impossible for the government to take on. Therefore, fighting these flows, including the financial flows, outside the transit region could be a more successful approach than expecting the transit of drugs through West Africa to be stopped.

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[189] World Bank, 2011, p. 25.
[190] Interviews Bamako, 2013; Interviews Dakar, 2014.

- Ransom payments for kidnapped foreigners, predominantly from Western countries, constitute the main source of income for AQIM and have given the organisation its key role on the security scene of the region.

- As a part of hostage negotiations, foreign governments have in some cases put pressure on Sahel countries to release members of terrorist groups in exchange for kidnapped individuals.

- The exploitation by foreign companies of natural resources in the Sahel has grown as a conflict issue, e.g. in Niger, with the terms of the contract for extraction of uranium perceived as lacking decency. This fuels anti-West sentiments that play into the jihadists' hands, creates environmental conflicts that could lead to a surge in separatism to increase Tuareg control of natural resources, and undermines a local and national economy that could provide alternatives to illicit activities.

4.2   Breaking the cycle of violence

The components proposed above for a long-term solution to the cycle of violence in Mali only represent some of the crucial priorities ahead. The components selected for discussion are intended to stress the importance of proving the immediate benefits from the establishment of government control in the north, the need to reform the state from above and build citizenship from below, and for the international community to reflect on its role in the insecurity of the Sahel. Finally, the role of poverty as a root cause of conflict, crime and lack of trust and as an important explanation for the difficulties in negotiating peace and cooperating regionally must be clearly acknowledged.

At the moment, the most probable future scenario seems to be a protracted state of crisis and low-intensity conflict in northern Mali, with sporadic armed attacks and confrontations between parties. The international military presence will probably prevent the territory from being taken over once again by rebels or terrorist groups. However, a risk with foreign military engagement is that it might prolong the status quo, since an acceptable security situation makes solving political conflicts less urgent, and unresolved political conflicts increase the long-term risk of new violent uprisings.[191]

The reason for these currently low expectations on achieving long-term conflict resolution is the lack of political initiatives for a genuinely inclusive political dialogue handling the grievances against the state in both the north and the south,

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[191] This reasoning is based on the series of interviews with scholars and officials focusing on Mali and the Sahel carried out within the scope of this study.

as well as settling inter-communal conflicts. However, if the government in Mali manages to break the conflict cycle and reduce the levels of violence, the prospects for improvement would increase dramatically. Such progress has previously been achieved in, for example, Ghana, Liberia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and South Africa.[192] However, for this to materialise, a number of measures such as those described above have to be taken, both domestically in Mali and regionally in the Sahel. Furthermore, extensive long-term support is needed from the broader international community to uphold security, stimulate economic development and put pressure on politicians to practise good governance.

It is important to remember that the origin of the present security situation in Mali is social. Poverty, political and social alienation and state neglect create incentives to join militant groups, be they political or religious, or to seek a living within criminal organisations. What we are witnessing in Mali are the security policy consequences of social problems and thus the solution to the situation lies not within military force, but with political and social reform.

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[192] World Bank, p. 11, p. 50.

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The Sahel region is suffering from multiple forms of recurring violence, weak governance and political instability, which has led to numerous coups and rebellions. In 2012 the Malian government lost control over its northern regions due to the interplay of three security threats with transnational connotations: violent separatism, armed Islamism, and organised crime.

This report reviews the causes, manifestations and consequences of the challenges to the state posed by these groups and their current status. It also highlights the origins of these challenges in poverty and social exposure and provides recommendations for addressing the current situation in Mali and the Sahel, noting that transnational threats must be countered by transnational measures.