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**THESIS**

**THE IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL ACTORS'  
MOTIVATIONS AND INTERACTIONS ON PEACE  
PROCESSES: THE CASE OF MALI**

by

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September 2018

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INTERACTIONS ON PEACE PROCESSES: THE CASE OF MALI**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines the importance of international actors' influence on reaching an effective peace agreement and in enabling its implementation. Specifically, this study seeks to explain why, despite international attention, the situation in Mali has not improved in the past five years, either in terms of defeating the rebels in the country's northern areas or preventing terrorist attacks. To arrive at an explanation, the thesis examines the significant issues that have challenged the implementation of the 2015 peace agreement. Scholars agree that implementing a peace agreement is equally important as reaching it, and that peacemakers should therefore pay attention to the quality of peace agreements, the presence of spoilers, and the hostility of neighboring countries and international great powers to peace. Similarly, it is generally admitted that international actors should intervene to protect the peace process. Nevertheless, there is controversy over the strategy these international actors must adopt to prevent peace processes from derailing. In the specific case of Mali, the poor quality of the 2015 peace agreement, the inadequateness of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali's mandate, and the fact that Algeria and France primarily pursued their own interests, have undermined the UN's coordination of the peace process and diffused peace-making efforts.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFISMA	African-led International Support Mission to Mali
AQIM	Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb Ansar Dine
AU	African Union
CEMOC	Joint Operational Army Staffs Committee
CI	Integration Commission
CMA	Coordination des Mouvements de l’Azawad [Coordination of the Movements of Azawad]
CNDDR	National Commission for Demobilization, Disarmament, and Reinsertion
CNRSS	National Security Sector Reform Council.
CSA	The monitoring committee
CTS	Technical Commission for Security
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration
DRS	Algerian Military Intelligence Service
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EMP	Peace Keeping School
EU	European Union
EUCAP	European Union Capacity Building Mission
EUTM	European Union Training Mission
GAFTAG	German Federal Armed Forces Technical Advisers Group
MINUSMA	UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MNLA	National Movement of Liberation of Azawad
MOC	Operational Coordination Mechanism
MTAP	Military Training Army Program
MUJAO	Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OCI	Islamic Cooperation Organization
RSS	Security Sector Reform
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

This research focuses on the importance of knowing international actors' motivations in reaching an effective peace agreement as well as in enabling its implementation. In 2013, responding to Malian President Dioncounda Traoré's call for help to recover parts of the country that had fallen under the control of rebels and terrorist groups, the international community became directly involved in the Malian crisis. In fact, in January 2013, when suspecting several Islamic groups—including the National Movement of Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) rebels, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Ansar Dine, and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO)—were occupying the northern regions and moving toward Bamako, the transitional government demanded military assistance from France.<sup>1</sup> French President Francois Hollande then authorized the launching of Operation Serval, which stopped the advance of enemy combatants within a couple of days.<sup>2</sup>

After several months, France convinced its European allies, as well as the United Nations (UN), to intervene in the conflict. As part of the response, the April 25, 2013 UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2100 (2013) created the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), replacing the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) that had been initiated by West African countries in the beginning of the crisis and authorized by the UNSC Resolution 2085 (2012). Under pressure from the international community, the Malian belligerents entered negotiations in 2014 in Algiers and signed the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali in 2015. In addition to the UN, the involvement of Algeria and France has put the Malian crisis on the agenda of multiple actors with diverse interests at stake. Based on the 2015 Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, ten external actors are involved in

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<sup>1</sup> Ansar Dine and MUJAO are Malian-led terrorist groups, unlike AQIM, which originated in Algeria though it has some Malians within its combatants.

<sup>2</sup> Operation Serval is the military operation launched by France in January 2013 to recover some occupied territories in northern Mali.

the peace process. Algeria, the UN, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Islamic Cooperation Organization (OCI), the European Union (EU), Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, France, and United States have all co-signed the Algiers peace agreement. In light of so many co-signers, particularly those from beyond the region, the major research question of this thesis is: how do the motivations and interactions of various international third-party actors affect the peace process in Mali?

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

Despite international attention, the situation has not improved in the past five years, either in terms of defeating the rebellion or preventing terrorist attacks. Instead, and despite the signed peace agreement between the government and the major rebel groups, the crisis is increasingly becoming more complex as illustrated by a number of facts. First, the 2015 Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation (henceforth referred to as the 2015 peace agreement) signed in Bamako between the government and the major rebel groups faces serious implementation issues; second, and worse, most of the parties to this agreement are rejecting it; and third, the increasing number of terrorist groups operating in Mali and neighboring countries, which are not parties to the peace agreement, seriously challenge the implementation in the field.

In consideration of this situation, the French government replaced Operation Serval with Operation Barkhane in response to the spreading of terrorists groups' activities beyond the Malian borders. Unlike Serval, Barkhane mainly fights Islamic extremism not only in Mali but also in Chad and Niger. Other important information about this new French force is that despite its significant influence on the Malian conflict, it does not operate under the MINUSMA command.

In a September 28, 2017, report on the situation in Mali, the UN Secretary General observed that no progress had been made in the implementation of the 2015 peace agreement, though the Malian government quickly disputed that report.<sup>3</sup> Earlier on

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<sup>3</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Mali*, Report No. S/2018/273 (New York: United Nations Security Council, 2017), [https://minusma.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/report\\_of\\_the\\_secretary-general\\_on\\_the\\_situation\\_in\\_mali\\_-\\_29\\_march\\_.pdf](https://minusma.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/report_of_the_secretary-general_on_the_situation_in_mali_-_29_march_.pdf).

September 5, 2017, “the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted resolution 2374 establishing a targeted sanctions regime on Mali, [which] imposes a travel ban and assets freeze on individuals and entities engaged in actions or policies that threaten the peace, security, or stability of Mali.”<sup>4</sup> The designation criteria outlined in this UNSC resolution signals the seriousness of the implementation issues on the ground.

### C. LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent scholarship and practice, many have placed greater importance on the reaching of peace agreements than on their implementation. Stephen John Stedman argues that “since the end of the Cold War, scholars have tended to focus more on the importance and challenges of bringing belligerents to sign peace agreements, neglecting the fact that implementation can be equally important.”<sup>5</sup> Historical record suggests that such a trend, which considers the signing of peace agreements as a sufficient condition for peace, draws its foundation from several experiences.

In fact, while the successful cases of Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Nicaragua in the 1980s confirm the idea that the signing a peace agreement marks the end of a conflict, many other contemporary peace processes have challenged this assertion by demonstrating that getting the parties to sign a peace contract is often insufficient to end violent confrontations.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the reality seems to be that, in many cases, building peace may require more than the signature of agreement between parties. Today, many conflicts resist the implementation of peace agreements, mostly because of three categories of factors: factors internal to the conflict, factors related to the peace agreement itself, and factors external to the conflict.

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<sup>4</sup> “Security Council Establishes a Mali Sanction Regime,” What’s in Blue, Insights on the Work of the United Nations Security Council, September 5, 2017. <http://www.whatsinblue.org/2017/09/security-council-establishes-a-mali-sanctions-regime.php>.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen J. Stedman, Introduction, in *Ending Civil Wars: The Implementation of Peace Agreements*, eds. Stephen J. Stedman, Donald Rothchild, and Elizabeth M. Cousens (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 1–2.

<sup>6</sup> Stedman, Introduction.

## 1. Factors Internal to the Conflict

Some scholars argue that difficulty of finding an effective way to bring belligerents into the peace process is what makes the implementation of peace agreements more challenging for contemporary peacemakers. Some group leaders who ultimately join the peace process, for example, may later develop strong hostility to it. These factors fall under the spoiler concept, which scholars have used to explain a specific form of factor internal to a conflict.

Stedman points out three main factors that make an implementation environment difficult, including the presence of spoilers, whom he defines as group leaders opposing a peace agreement and using violence to weaken it.<sup>7</sup> Marie-Joelle Zahar also argues that the choice made by some actors to spoil the peace process constitutes the most plausible answer for why many peace settlements fail.<sup>8</sup> Speaking of spoilers in a conflict, Stedman argues that peace processes are sometimes endangered by the disappointment of some actors who may then attempt to weaken other actors by resuming hostilities. According to Stedman, this can occur because whenever diverse actors get involved in a conflict, it is increasingly unlikely that they will all be interested in making peace at the same moment. Stedman asserts that this battle between opponents and proponents to peace constitutes a serious challenge to peace processes because opponents to peace or “spoilers—leaders and factions who view a particular peace as opposed to their interests and who are willing to use violence to undermine it—pose a grave threat to those who risk making peace.”<sup>9</sup>

Further, Stedman classifies spoilers in different categories “based on their position in the peace process, their numbers, intent, and whether the locus of spoiling behavior lies with the leader or followers of the party.”<sup>10</sup> But this classification raises some criticism

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<sup>7</sup> Stedman, Introduction.

<sup>8</sup> Marie-Joelle Zahar, “Reframing the Spoiler Debate in Peace Processes,” in *Contemporary Peacemaking: Conflict, Violence and Peace Processes*, eds. John Darby and Roger Mac Ginty (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 114.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen J. Stedman, “Peace Processes and the Challenges of Violence,” in *Contemporary Peacemaking: Conflict, Violence and Peace Processes*, eds. John Darby and Roger Mac Ginty (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 103.

<sup>10</sup> Stedman, 106.



among scholars. First, some argue that because it is not possible to determine the kind of spoilers one faces, the concept is not helpful in terms of perspective. Second, the possibility of change in spoilers' behavior makes their classification problematic. Third, the focus on spoilers' intentions may distract participants in the peace process from other important aspects such as the spoilers' ability and the existence of spoiling occasions. Finally, there is a tendency to present local peacemakers as more efficient than international actors in mitigating the threats posed by spoilers.<sup>11</sup>

Zahar finds this debate more useful for academic purposes than it is for peace implementation, arguing that “if there was a magic indicator of type, then no party could act to deceive; they would all wear Ts, Ls or Gs on their chest.”<sup>12</sup> Moreover, Zahar asserts that based on experience “spoilers can be only defined in relationship to a given peace agreement;”<sup>13</sup> second, “the major fact of abhorrent behavior and totalistic rhetoric in the past does not in and of itself create a total spoiler.”<sup>14</sup> Finally, she argues, no matter how a spoiler is portrayed, there are always some actors who “are sympathetic with them and characterize them as reasonable, justice-seeking parties, capable of weighing costs and benefits of war and concessions.”<sup>15</sup> The point made here is that the unpredictability of factions who may spoil a peace process does not allow implementers to come up with any reliable scientific standards when elaborating strategies.

There is also the concept of ripeness, which is generally associated with the negotiations phase. However, ripeness, by pressuring belligerents to negotiate can weigh on the peace talks and impact the quality of the peace agreement—a quality that can lead to implementation problems, as we discuss in next section. Talking about ripeness, scholars introduce the concept of stalemate to convey the importance of certain conditions necessary to bring a conflict to a stage where both sides implicitly agree on the impossibility to

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<sup>11</sup> Stedman, 106–107.

<sup>12</sup> Stedman, 107.

<sup>13</sup> Stedman, 107–108.

<sup>14</sup> Stedman.

<sup>15</sup> Stedman.

achieve their aim through more violence. In their work on contemporary conflict resolution, Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse, and Hugh Miall define ripeness as a process of evolution on both sides in the behavior of partisans as well as in the perceptions and visions of their leaders.<sup>16</sup> These are the moment and context Mitchell and Zartman think can give leaders the feeling of being locked in a conflict, and therefore, can push them to seek ways out, including third-party options.<sup>17</sup>

Christopher Mitchell describes the factor as adversaries' need for help, making it important to decipher under which circumstances or when third parties should get effectively involved in peace process.<sup>18</sup> Mitchell and Zartman both support that "mediators and other types of third-party intermediaries should await the development of a 'hurting stalemate' for both adversaries, perhaps [accompanied] by an approaching mutual catastrophe,"<sup>19</sup> when opposing parties' leaders are "considering alternatives and searching for a way out."<sup>20</sup> In sum, if belligerents only stayed at the negotiation table because of ripeness without seeing true interest in the talks, then most likely after the signing of the peace agreement, some of them would find themselves spoiling the peace. Therefore, this concept of ripeness is not totally irrelevant in analyzing implementation issues.

## **2. Factors Related to the Peace Agreement Itself**

In addition to the factors internal to the conflict, such as ripeness of a conflict and the presence of spoilers in the peace process, discussed in the previous section, another factor some scholars use to explain the success or failure of a peace process is the quality of the peace agreement itself. And, they suggest that part of this issue may reside in the

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<sup>16</sup> Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse, and Hugh Miall, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The Prevention, Management and Transformation of Deadly Conflicts* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2011), 180.

<sup>17</sup> Christopher Mitchell, "Mediation and the Ending of Conflicts," in *Contemporary Peacemaking: Conflict, Violence and Peace Processes*, eds. John Darby and Roger Mac Ginty (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 79–80.

<sup>18</sup> Mitchell, 77.

<sup>19</sup> Mitchell, 79–80; I. W. Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985)..

<sup>20</sup> Mitchell.

negotiation process, the imprecision of the agreement, or the reaction of some groups left out of the agreement.

During the negotiations process, a common problem is that third-party actors will compete with each other for influence, which puts excessive pressure on the parties to the conflict. This competition may lead to a low-quality agreement, which itself can create problems for the peace process. Pierre du Toit argues that most important here is not whether the rules are set by outsiders or by the protagonists themselves; what is critical, he asserts, is for those rules to have a negotiating arena in which problems of ownership, reasonableness, and seriousness may come out.<sup>21</sup> If negotiations meet those criteria, then it is likely, as Bruce D. Jones suggests that “they tackle the core issues of the conflict, include the main participants of the conflict, and have sufficient local and international backing to implement any agreement.”<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately, the multiplication of mediators with different interests and values often challenges the inclusiveness of the process, affecting its internal and external legitimacies.<sup>23</sup>

According to Adrian Guelke, the presence of vague terms in a negotiated settlement exposes it to implementation difficulties, perpetuating the process of negotiations due to the need for new agreements to clarify the original one.<sup>24</sup> Guelke argues that working out those problems can be more challenging for parties and external mediators than the reaching of a broad settlement had been.<sup>25</sup> As Du Toit affirms, comprehensive negotiations also require several considerations. Chief considerations include knowing who among

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<sup>21</sup> Pierre Du Toit, “Rules and Procedures for Negotiated Peacemaking,” in *Contemporary Peacemaking: Conflict, Violence and Peace Processes*, eds. John Darby and Roger Mac Ginty (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 75.

<sup>22</sup> John Darby and Roger Mac Ginty, *Contemporary Peacemaking: Conflict, Violence and Peace Process* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 51.

<sup>23</sup> Adrian Guelke, “Negotiations and Peace Processes,” in *Contemporary Peacemaking: Conflict, Violence and Peace Processes*, eds. John Darby and Roger Mac Ginty (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 59–60.

<sup>24</sup> Guelke, 60.

<sup>25</sup> Guelke, 63.

participants and external third parties makes the rules and procedures, on the one hand, and who acts to enforce those rules and procedures on the other.<sup>26</sup>

Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, and Miall discuss another dynamic related to the commitment of signatory parties to the respect of their engagements. Those scholars argue that “even when settlements are reached, if new life is not breathed into them by the will of the parties, their constituencies and external supporters to make them work, the best-engineered political arrangements can collapse again later.”<sup>27</sup> For this reason, involvement of external actors in the enforcement of peace settlements is often accepted.

### **3. Factors External to the Conflict**

Other scholars look beyond these factors internal to the conflict, and instead focus on international involvement itself as a reason why peace agreements falter during implementation. On the one hand, Barbara F. Walter argues that a third-party security guaranty, “any implicit or explicit promise given by an outside power to protect adversaries during the treaty implementation period,” is critical for the effectiveness of the implementation of a peace agreement. Walter then ranks those guarantees as weak, moderate, and strong, considering a strong one as the robust deployment of troops on the ground to make clear the intent of outside support to the peace process.<sup>28</sup> This emphasis on the importance of international third-party actors is also shared by Michael W. Doyle, who asserts that “international authority is a key dimension of peace implementation, because it offers a license to assist and, if needed, direct, as well as an implicit strategy for aiding the difficult transition from civil war to self-sustaining peace.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Du Toit, “Rules and Procedures for Negotiated Peacemaking,” 65.

<sup>27</sup> Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse, and Hugh Miall, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The Prevention, Management and Transformation of Deadly Conflicts* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2011), 197.

<sup>28</sup> Barbara F. Walter, “The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement,” *International Organization* 51, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 340.

<sup>29</sup> Michael W. Doyle, “Strategy and Transitional Authority,” in *Ending Civil War: The Implementation of Peace Agreements*, eds. Stephen J. Stedman, Donald Rothchild, Elizabeth M. Cousens (Boulder, CO; London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 71.

Stephen John Stedman and Bruce D. Jones find Walter's analysis limited for a couple of reasons. Stedman argues that the deployment of large numbers of troops itself does not always lead to the type of strategy and commitment necessary for the concept of guarantee.<sup>30</sup> Jones talks about the challenges of strategic coordination as well. He deplors the lack of strategic coordination through the various stages of the peace process, regretting that mediators and implementers of peace agreements often miss opportunities to coordinate with each other. As a result, Jones concludes, either multiple actors interact under conflicting strategies at a given phase of the peace process, or even when they have common strategy, they may have different ways to put it into practice, which undermines their actions.<sup>31</sup>

From this perspective, one must understand that international actors' presence needs to be sustained by a sort of strategy and commitment so that it can lead to a successful implementation. Some scholars consider that third-party international actors are more likely to be neutral than those internal to the conflict. Yet, Mitchell refers to Zartman, who questions this concept of 'outsider-neutral' versus 'insider-partial.'<sup>32</sup> Moreover, there is generally debate about the degree of involvement of international actors. For example, raising the case of Bosnia, Stedman maintains that an over-abundance of international actors in peace implementation may prevent local parties from developing their own peace-making initiatives.<sup>33</sup>

Because they are, with spoilers, the most challenging puzzle for international peacemakers, some scholars have suggested the importance of looking at the role of neighboring countries to further understand the implementation environment. According to Stedman, it is difficult for international actors to succeed in the implementation of peace agreements where no major state possesses an important security interest; most

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<sup>30</sup> Stedman, Introduction, 6.

<sup>31</sup> Bruce D. Jones, "The Challenges of Strategic Coordination," in *Ending Civil War: The Implementation of Peace Agreements*, eds. Stephen J. Stedman, Donald Rothchild, Elizabeth M. Cousens (Boulder, CO; London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 89.

<sup>32</sup> Mitchell, "Mediation and the Ending of Conflicts," 81.

<sup>33</sup> Stedman, "Peace Processes and the Challenges of Violence," 106.

importantly, not any neighboring state judges a conflict as vital to its security interest. Most of the time only major or regional powers will do so.<sup>34</sup> In fact, neighboring states hostile to a peace process usually manipulate some factions internal to the conflict to undermine it by violence. George Downs and Stedman warn that “before attempting to implement a peace agreement in a country where there are easily marketed valuable commodities (spoils)”<sup>35</sup> or that is adjacent to a state hostile to the peace process, “[The] implementer should have the strategy, resources, and commitment”<sup>36</sup> to regulate these commodities and the inflow of assistance to spoilers.”<sup>37</sup> This idea is relevant in many cases where there are real or suspected relationships between spoilers and some neighboring countries.

A number of scholars have reviewed the numerous problems that these factors bring in the UN missions coordination of peace processes. Jones mentions as limitations to the effectiveness of UN strategic coordination, the disparity of organizations involved and the fact that they usually represent states’ interests. Because of that, each one of those organizations may hold a political agenda; as a result, they often attempt to draw the peace process toward the perspective favorable to the state or the group of states they represent.”<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, powerful states, such as meddling neighbors and regional or global powers, unlike non-governmental organizations, are hardly likely to commit to act under the command of the peace process coordinator. Thus, the lack of successful coordination by either an international organization or a lead state undoubtedly leads straight to implementation failure.<sup>39</sup> Zahar also recognizes that “where international custodians have created and implemented [efficient] strategies for protecting peace and

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<sup>34</sup> Stedman, Introduction, 3.

<sup>35</sup> George Downs, Stephen J. Stedman, “Evaluation issues in Peace Implementation,” in *Ending Civil War: The Implementation of Peace Agreements*, eds. Stephen J. Stedman, Donald Rothchild, Elizabeth M. Cousens (Boulder, CO; London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 66.

<sup>36</sup> Downs and Stedman.

<sup>37</sup> Downs and Stedman.

<sup>38</sup> Jones, “The Challenges of Strategic Coordination,” 112.

<sup>39</sup> Jones.

managing spoilers, damage has been limited and peace has triumphed [and] where [they] have failed to develop such strategies, spoilers have succeeded.”<sup>40</sup>

Finally, the increasing number of cases where peace processes fail despite the presence of many international actors have brought some scholars to question the effectiveness of certain practices. Mitchell, for example, questions the international practice of using the same basic models of negotiation. She argues that such models or approaches may not be effective, especially for conflict “[taking] place within the formal boundaries of one of the members of the international community”<sup>41</sup> and those involving “[the] formal government of [a] state as one of the parties to the conflict opposed by ethnic or other types of insurgent.”<sup>42</sup> In such situation, she asserts, the international community is often “more preoccupied to preserve the unity of state as opposed to its division or disintegration; the tendency of the governments of existing states and international organizations to be somewhat biased in favor of the principles of continuing territorial integrity.”<sup>43</sup> Jasmine-Kim Westendorf gives a possible explanation for the failure of peace processes in some countries where international implementers have intervened, including an excessive preoccupation with the technical realization of a number of listed tasks. She then concludes after several case studies that “where security-building processes are undertaken without due regard for their political dimensions—in terms of who gets what, when, and how—they build insecurity and violence into the foundations of postwar societies.”<sup>44</sup>

Most importantly, Westendorf looks beyond the failures themselves to explore the reason for their perpetuation despite the identification of what causes them. One of her answers to explain the systemic failures of international implementers is the tendency in

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<sup>40</sup> Zahar, “Reframing the Spoiler Debate in Peace Processes,” 116.

<sup>41</sup> Mitchell, “Mediation and the Ending of Conflicts,” 79–80.

<sup>42</sup> Mitchell.

<sup>43</sup> Mitchell, 78–79.

<sup>44</sup> Jasmine-Kim Westendorf, *Why Peace Processes Fail: Negotiating Insecurity After Civil War* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2015), 98.

the UN system to apply this same flawed remedy in every case.<sup>45</sup> In sum, scholars have already highlighted the divergences between some interveners' interests and the hostility of others to peace, but there are many "flaws in the international community's approach to peace processes after civil wars that [themselves] contribute to the recurring failure of peace processes to consolidate peace."<sup>46</sup>

#### **D. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES**

Various international actors, including countries and organizations, found themselves involved in the Malian peace process for different purposes, thus making the process too complex. The major research question of this thesis requires the exploration of some key considerations. One of the issues raised is the motivating reasons for external actors' intervention. Not every one of the many external actors that signed the 2015 peace agreement gives primary attention to the evolution of the Malian crisis.

A country like France, an ex-colonial power, has constantly displayed great interest in regaining a military presence in Mali ever since the eviction of French forces in the 1960s by the socialist regime of the first Malian president. Most importantly, the fact that the French company Areva has an important installation for uranium exploitation just across the border in Niger puts the maintaining of stability in northern Mali on the French government's agenda.<sup>47</sup> For these reasons and because of the protection it gave the Mouvement National de Liberation de l'Azawad (MNLA) leaders against alleged abuses from Bamako, there is the assumption that France's involvement in the current peace process may constitute an obstacle for pressing the rebels to lay down their arms and make peace with Bamako.

Another country that has closely watched the devolution of the security situation in northern Mali since the 1990s is Algeria. It shares the longest common border with Mali, and it is a regional power. Most of the terrorists operating in Mali have come down from

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<sup>45</sup> Westendorf, 234.

<sup>46</sup> Westendorf, 242.

<sup>47</sup> Areva is a French nuclear company present in Niger for 50 years and the operator and principal shareholder of the four companies that are currently exploiting Niger's uranium resources.



southern Algeria and may return there depending on how they are affected by the peace process in Mali. Similarly, Algeria would have to face a border securing uncertainties if the Malian rebels of MNLA succeeded in creating a young state in between the two countries, as they have demanded for decades. Another important motivation for Algeria may be the presumed commonality of oil reserves discovered in northern Mali. Clearly, Algeria may have little interest in resolving the Malian conflict and therefore may instead be interested in keeping its neighbor Mali in trouble, which makes the former's role of chief mediator a possible hindrance to the peace process.

Finally, the geographic location of Mali also makes this country a strategic point in maintaining security and stability not only in West Africa, but also in the rest of the continent. Because of that, both the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) have successfully persuaded the United Nations to pay close attention to the situation in Mali. But, it is possible that the rivalry and mistrust between France and Algeria may undermine the UN coordinating ability, making its involvement useless to the peacemaking. In short, the intervention of international actors in a conflict is usually motivated by national, regional, or global interests. In some rare cases those interests can be convergent; however, in this case, they are presumably divergent, which make these actors' interaction potentially damaging for the peace process.

## **E. RESEARCH DESIGN**

This thesis analyzes the stagnation of the peace process in Mali by considering the quality of the 2015 peace agreement and the impact of some external factors—like the interaction of international actors at different stages—on it. This research focuses on Algeria, France, and the UN mission, because out of all the international signatories to the peace agreement, these three actors have the most influence over the situation in Mali. Considering the implementation difficulties in Mali, the thesis assesses also whether the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali can effectively coordinate the peace process using its current mandate and resources and despite the diverse interests of the mentioned external actors.

## **F. THESIS OVERVIEW AND CHAPTER OUTLINE**

Following Chapter I, this thesis examines the difficulties faced by the peace process; specifically, Chapter II gives the opportunity to examine the quality of the 2015 Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation and its implementation issues. Then, Chapter III explores the central role of Algeria in the Malian crisis. Delving into history, this chapter traces the longstanding involvement of Algiers in security management in northern Mali and how that impacts the current peace process. Finally, Chapter IV focuses on the French influence on the various actors involved in the peace process in Mali; after the exploration of potential French interests in Mali, this chapter attempts to explain how France has managed to control and drive the Malian crisis since its beginning in 2012, by weighing the perception of other international actors, including the UN and Algeria.

## **II. PEACE PROCESSES AND THE QUALITY OF PEACE AGREEMENTS**

Some scholars support that the quality of the peace agreement itself is an important factor in the success or failure of a peace process. Further, they suggest that part of this issue may reside in the negotiation process, the imprecision of the agreement, or the reaction of some groups left out of the agreement. They may be right as illustrated by the implementation issues presented by the 2015 peace agreement signed in Bamako in May and June 2015, which was intended to settle the Malian multidimensional crisis.

This chapter first examines previous peace agreements and some possible reasons for their failure to prevent the current crisis. This is important because the 2015 peace agreement partially acknowledges the legacy of these previous agreements. Then the chapter analyzes the quality of this 2015 peace agreement by considering factors such as the lack of precision and inclusiveness, because assessing the 2015 peace agreement is critical in understanding the issues encountered in the current peace process. Speaking of the lack of precision, this chapter demonstrates that the vagueness of some key provisions of the peace agreement is the one of the causes of the parties' disagreements over the provisions' implementation. Concerning the lack of inclusiveness, the chapter raises the implementation challenges posed by some groups spoiling the peace process due to their exclusion from the 2015 peace agreement negotiation process. In light of these assessments, the chapter concludes that the presence of significant flaws in the 2015 peace agreement makes its implementation difficult.

### **A. THE 2015 AGREEMENT FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION IN MALI**

Northern Mali, also known as Azawad (Northern Regions/Azawad) by some rebel groups, is a vast zone where there have been recurrent Tuareg rebellions since the country's independence in 1960. The reason often given for these armed movements is that some Tuareg feel this part of the territory has been the victim of poor political, economic, security, and judicial governance, which they claim has led to an accumulation of great frustration and, in turn, to many popular and armed uprisings. As mentioned in its

preamble, this 2015 peace agreement is rooted in the legacy of several previous ones signed between Bamako and various Tuareg movements in order to settle recurring rebellions.

Except for the 1963–1964 rebellion that was repressed by the Malian army, all others were followed by the signing of agreements between the rebels and the government in Bamako. The Tuareg rebellion of 1990–1996 began in 1990, two years after the creation of the People’s Liberation Movement from Azawad. A first period of conflict (October–December 1990) led to the signing of the Tamanrasset Accords of January 6, 1991, which led to the demilitarization of the regions of Kidal, Gao, and Timbuktu.<sup>48</sup> The Tamanrasset Accords failed to decisively settle the conflict, as hostilities erupted again in 1992–1995. Despite the signing of the National Pact in 1992, violence continued until a more stable peace was finally sealed on March 27, 1996, in Timbuktu during the ceremony of “the Flame of Peace,” at which the rebels Tuareg burned weapons used during the rebellion.<sup>49</sup> The Tuareg rebellion renewed again in 2006, however, and this episode of violence ended with the signing of the Algiers Accords on July 4, 2006.<sup>50</sup> Unfortunately this peace was short-lived, and additional uprisings repeatedly occurred from 2007 to the outbreak of the current crisis.

These agreements all failed to settle conflicts in northern Mali for various reasons that one could briefly summarize as follows: First, the regime change that occurred with the overthrow of President Moussa Traoré on March 1991 arguably undermined the newly signed Tamanrasset Accords. The fact that deposed president Traoré and most of his top collaborators were jailed left the rebels without any interlocutor from the government side and created a vacuum damaging to the peace process. Moreover, the jailing of old regime

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<sup>48</sup> Rick Gold, “Initiatives for Peace in Northern Mali in the 1990s-Lessons Learned,” *A Contrario International Criminal Law*, February 2013, <https://acontrarioicl.com/tag/tamanrasset-accord/>.

<sup>49</sup> National Pact between the Transitional Government of Mali CTSP (Comite de Transition pour le Salut du Peuple) and the MFUA (Mouvements et Fronts Unifies de l’Azawad), Decree No 92-121/p-CTSP2, April 11, 1992, [http://www.unesco.org/culture/fr/indigenous/Dvd/pj/TOUAREG/TouaregC4\\_2.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/culture/fr/indigenous/Dvd/pj/TOUAREG/TouaregC4_2.pdf).

<sup>50</sup> “Algiers Accords for the Restoration of Peace, Security and Development in the Kidal Region,” UN Peacemaker, April 7, 2006. (The Accords were signed on July 4, 2006, by the Malian government and the rebel group called Democratic Alliance of May 23 for Change), [https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/ML\\_060704\\_Accord%20d%27Alger.pdf](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/ML_060704_Accord%20d%27Alger.pdf).

officials, most of whom were military officers, also weakened the military, giving rebellion an opportunity to resume.

Second, the National Pact was unrealistically costly to implement for a Malian government with only limited economy and political will. A special agency—the North Regions Development Agency—was created and funded by the Malian government and its Western partners in order to finance peace-building projects. But because of widespread corruption among the elites, including the rebellion leaders, a large part of the resources managed by this agency—which was chaired by a Tuareg—were diverted.<sup>51</sup>

Finally, the 2006 Algiers Accords' main weakness emanated from the internal divisions both within the rebellion leaders and the government officials.<sup>52</sup> These divisions are arguably what progressively transformed classic Tuareg rebellions into an asymmetric crisis. In fact, since January 2012, and because of this failure of previous peace agreements, Mali has experienced one of the most serious multidimensional crises consecutive to another Tuareg rebellion that broke out in 2011. For the resolution of this important crisis, another agreement—the 2015 peace agreement—was signed on May 15 and completed on June 20, 2015, between the government of Mali, the Platform of the 14 June Algiers Movements (Platform), and the Coordination des Mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA).

### **1. Main Provisions of the 2015 Peace Agreement**

The Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali is a broad text of about 32 pages that draws the schemas base on which the country would be reorganized in order to satisfy the grievance of signatory movements without dismantling the agreement or hurting its republican form. The document has organized those concerns into four areas, but this thesis focuses on two of them: the political and institutional reforms and the defense and

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<sup>51</sup> “Peace Accords Matrix,” Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame, 2015, <https://peaceaccords.nd.edu/accord/national-pact>.

<sup>52</sup> “Algiers Accords for the Restoration of Peace, Security and Development in the Kidal Region,” UN Peacemaker, April 7, 2006. [https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/ML\\_060704\\_Accord%20d%27Alger.pdf](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/ML_060704_Accord%20d%27Alger.pdf).

security sector reforms.<sup>53</sup> The reason is because the implementation of the others areas—social, economic, and cultural; reconciliation, justice, and humanitarian—depend on progress in the two previously mentioned.

As a result of the legacy of these previous peace agreements, some of the provisions of the 2015 peace agreement like the security sector reform process were in process of implementation before its signature. Nonetheless, the consideration of this security sector reform process by the 2015 peace agreement now constitutes a crucial aspect because this peace agreement reaffirmed the political will of the parties to act in the area of security sector reform and confirmed that security-related reforms should remain a national priority. In addition, this 2015 peace agreement provides for a multi-dimensional approach to reorganize the national security apparatus, not only through the deployment of armed forces and security forces throughout the territory, but also through their coordinated reorganization from the central level to the local level.

The provisions of the 2015 peace agreement have involved a number of institutions, including the integration of actors outside the security sector reform process: the adjustment of certain institutional structures previously put in place by decree in order to integrate groups involved in its implementation, CMA, and the Platform. This 2015 peace agreement also provides for the cantonment of ex-belligerent groups' rebels, and the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) of the latter.<sup>54</sup> Finally, this peace agreement specifically defines priority areas for security sector reform; namely, the creation of a territorial police, the setting up of safety advisory committees at the local level, the establishment of civil protection capacities at the local level, and a process of in-depth reform of the judicial system.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> “Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali,” Conseil National de la Societe Civil [National Council of Civil Society], <http://www.cnscmali.org/IMG/pdf/1-accord-paix-et-reconciliation-francais.pdf>. The Agreement was signed on May 15, and June 20, 2015, between the Malian government and the armed groups.

<sup>54</sup> Conseil National de la Societe Civil.

<sup>55</sup> Conseil National de la Societe Civil.

Under political and institutional issues, the peace agreement addresses a number of important issues. With regard to the institutional framework and the territorial reorganization at the national and local levels, Article 6 stipulates that the parties agree to set up an institutional architecture enabling the populations of the North, in a spirit of full participative citizenship, to manage their own affairs on the basis of the principle of free administration and ensuring greater representation of these populations in national institutions.<sup>56</sup>

Concerning the distribution of powers and competences, Article 7 of the agreement stipulates that the parties recognize the need for a sharing of tasks and responsibilities between the state and the local authorities, to ensure the required level of efficiency and to take the needs and demands of citizens and grassroots communities into consideration.<sup>57</sup> Subsequent articles and their sub-paragraphs give more details on the modalities of this distribution, delimiting in particular the competences of the regions.

Another major political and institutional point concerns the representation of the state and the control of legality. Article 5 stipulates that the state shall appoint a representative to local and regional authorities for the purpose of preserving the general interest. As such, it relays the government's policy on major projects and facilitates policies for economic and social development and regional planning. This title, devoted to political and institutional issues, ends in Article 16 with a commitment by the state to: transfer to local and regional authorities the deconcentrated services within their areas of competence; make the public service of local authorities more attractive, primarily in the regions of northern Mali; and promote the recruitment of local authorities in the civil service, whose staff will be mainly composed of nationals from the northern regions.<sup>58</sup>

Lastly, this peace agreement, contrary to the previous agreements, gives an important place to the contribution of the international community to guarantee its diligent implementation. Regarding the role of the international community, Article 54 of the

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<sup>56</sup> Conseil National de la Societe Civil.

<sup>57</sup> Conseil National de la Societe Civil.

<sup>58</sup> Conseil National de la Societe Civil.

agreement provides that the international community is the guarantor of the scrupulous implementation of this agreement and is committed to supporting the efforts to this effect. Article 54 explicitly cites the UN, the AU, ECOWAS, and the European Union. Paragraph 3 even specifies that the international community is called upon to accompany the implementation of the agreement with the financial, technical, and logistical support required for the operation of the various mechanisms provided for in the agreement, the DDR, the Security Sector Reform (RSS) and the efforts to combat terrorism and organized crime. Furthermore, the international community is to do so by contributing promptly and generously to the proposed fund and taking the opportunity of the fund-raising conference provided for in the agreement to provide meaningful evidence of the development of the northern regions.<sup>59</sup>

## **2. Level of Implementation**

The monitoring committee (referred to in this thesis as the CSA) is expected to play a significant role in the implementation of the 2015 peace agreement, in accordance with its mission of monitoring, control, supervision, and the coordination of the effective implementation by the parties of all the provisions. The problem is that more than two years after its signing, the 2015 peace agreement's expected dividends for the population have yet to materialize. In his September 28, 2017 report on the situation in Mali, the UN Secretary General observed that no progress had been made in the implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation, though the Malian government quickly disputed that report.<sup>60</sup> Earlier on September 5, 2017, "the Council adopted resolution 2374 establishing a targeted sanctions regime on Mali, which imposes a travel ban and assets freeze on individuals and entities engaged in actions or policies that threaten the peace, security, or stability of Mali."<sup>61</sup> Such action from the Security Council signals both the

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<sup>59</sup> Conseil National de la Societe Civil.

<sup>60</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Mali*, Report No. S/2017/811 (New York: United Nations Security Council, 2017), [https://minusma.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/170928\\_sg\\_report\\_on\\_mali\\_september\\_eng.pdf](https://minusma.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/170928_sg_report_on_mali_september_eng.pdf).

<sup>61</sup> "Security Council Establishes a Mali Sanction Regime," What's in Blue, Insights on the Work of the United Nations Security Council, September 5, 2017, <http://www.whatsinblue.org/2017/09/security-council-establishes-a-mali-sanctions-regime.php>.



international actors' concern about the impasse in implementing the 2015 peace agreement and its importance on the entire process for resolution of the crisis. This section makes a brief overview of the 2015 peace agreement implementation issues by focusing on two major areas: the political and institutional reform and the defense and security sector reform.

*a. Political and Institutional Area*

It is true that there is some tentative progress in the implementation. Nevertheless, there are also many points of insufficiency. The report of the United Nations Secretary-General notes that “the implementation of key political and security provisions of the Agreement continued to face significant delays.”<sup>62</sup> At present, there is no consensus on the recommendations of the national consensus conference for the drafting of the Charter for Peace, Unity and National Reconciliation provided in Article 5 of the peace agreement. Moreover, the CMA denounces the violation of the peace agreement resulting from the Algiers process in relation to all the legislative texts voted on by the National Assembly and promulgated by the president of the Republic of Mali. On this point the report of the UN Secretary-General declares that “the signatory movements stated that the Government was taking unilateral action, notably the promulgation on 2 October of the laws on territorial communities, without sufficient consultation with the signatory armed groups.”<sup>63</sup>

The government seems to neglect any dialogue with the CMA and the Platform in addressing aspects related to the administrative division, despite the parties' consensus to widen the participation of and to empower the leaders of the regions of the North/Azawad in various national institutions. For instance, the project of establishing a new constitution, the code of free administration, the code of the collectivities and the electoral law adopted by the parliament on September 14 and 19, 2018.<sup>64</sup> Most of these new regulations raised

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<sup>62</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Mali*. United Nations Security Council, Report No. S/2017/1105 (New York: United Nations Security Council, 2017), <https://reliefweb.int/report/mali/report-secretary-general-situation-mali-s20171105>.

<sup>63</sup> United Nations Security Council.

<sup>64</sup> United Nations Security Council.

protests from other signatory parties, signaling the lack of inclusiveness in their elaboration process. This problem actually hides another one. Many of the northerners who should be integrated within national institutions under these new regulations are outside the country. This is because insufficient measures have been taken for the return of refugees who would ensure a better representation of the populations of the Northern Regions/Azawad within the institutions, large departments, and state administrations.

*b. Defense and Security Area*

The defense and security area remains the one in which the least concrete advances have occurred. It is true that the government has taken a number of actions like the establishment of various national commissions provided by the peace agreement, such as the National Commission for Demobilization, Disarmament and Reinsertion (CNDDR), the Integration Commission (CI), and the National Security Sector Reform Council (CNRSS). According to the report of the UN Secretary-General, “the signatory parties agreed on most eligibility requirements for integration and quotas for paramilitary forces but have not reached an agreement on the number of former combatants to be integrated into the armed forces.”<sup>65</sup> The implementation of the battalion of the Operational Coordination Mechanism (MOC) in Gao also constitutes progress in this area because this MOC symbolizes the operational collaboration between belligerents. In addition, the signatory movements made available to the Technical Commission for Security (CTS) the lists of their combatants for the Kidal and Timbuktu MOC battalions, making operational the servicing of eight cantonment sites out of the 24 proposed.<sup>66</sup> These small achievements are worth noting because they are the rare concrete actions demonstrating the parties’ commitment to the 2015 peace agreement.

Aside from those achievements, however, many difficulties remain. The failure to implement disarmament is the most important of those issues because most of the others cannot be solved otherwise. Unfortunately, no common global strategic vision is taking

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<sup>65</sup> United Nations Security Council.

<sup>66</sup> United Nations Security Council.

into account the innovative mechanisms for security and national defense through the national committee of the security sector reform. The report of UN Secretary-General notes the delay in setting up the Kidal and Timbuktu MOC battalions. Further, it cites the substitution of territorial police within the communities, as provided in the 2015 peace agreement, by an administrative police force, as stipulated in the new non-consensual code of territorial collectivities. Finally, the report notes the failure to construct other cantonment sites validated by the CTS.<sup>67</sup> The concretization of these mechanisms is important because they are expected to reestablish trust between the signatory parties, which is critical to success in the other implementation steps.

In addition to the political and institutional aspects and reform in the defense and security sector, the 2015 peace agreement addresses other important issues, including development in economic, social, and cultural areas, as well as in the areas of justice, reconciliation, and humanitarian affairs. But this thesis will not expand on those provisions because their implementation entirely depends on progress in the political and security areas. For example, at the levels of economic, social, and cultural development there is a delay in the creation of the Northern Regions/Azawad Development Zone and the non-consensual nomination and establishment of Regional Development Agencies in the Northern Regions/Azawad. This delay has occurred despite the reported success of the conference held in Paris to finance the development strategy, the validation of a specific strategy for development in the regions of Azawad, and the consensus on the creation of a sustainable development fund. Similarly, in the area of justice, reconciliation, and humanitarian affairs a key difficulty is the failure to set up an international commission of inquiry to shed light on the crimes committed since 1960 to the present day. This delay remains despite the implementation of the truth, justice, and reconciliation commission and the establishment of a tripartite commission regrouping the CMA, Platform, and government for the identification of persons detained in prisons. Clearly, most of these issues can hardly be solved without significant progress in political and security reform, on which this thesis focuses.

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<sup>67</sup> United Nations Security Council.

It is not clear who is responsible for this blockade in the implementation of the 2015 peace agreement because the signatory parties accuse each other. What is clear is that in late 2017, after almost two years of complete turnaround, the parties agreed to come to the table and try to highlight not only the few points of tentative progress in the peace process but also the difficulties encountered in the implementation of the peace agreement. In fact, June 2017 was the deadline for the two-year interim period set by the peace agreement.

## **B. QUALITY OF THE 2015 PEACE AGREEMENT**

There is enough evidence to support the view that most implementation issues relate to the peace agreement's vagueness and lack of inclusiveness. At the end of the interim period in June 2017, the parties to the peace agreement called for a complementary agreement on a consensual timeline for the diligent implementation of the 2015 peace agreement. Most of the points the parties put forward in this call for a subsequent agreement relate to either the vagueness of the initial peace agreement or its failure to include all key actors.

### **1. Problems Related to the Lack of Precision**

Some developments have demonstrated that the necessity for other agreements was prompted by the vagueness of the principal peace agreement. First, the CMA called for the conduct of a review of legislative and regulatory acts initiated by the government without taking into account some provisions of the 2015 peace agreement in a new legal framework. These acts include a new constitution, a code of communities, as well as a free administration and electoral law. This would also include the effective implementation of the CNRSS in order to conceive a global strategic vision recommending innovative mechanisms for security and national defense.

Second, the CMA also required the postponement of the organization of scheduled local elections—regions, circles, municipalities—in the Northern Regions/Azawad. Instead, the CMA asked for the implementation of interim authorities at the regional level and the completion of their installation at the level of the circles and communes, which is intended to lead to the process of the administrative division, the return of the refugees, and the general consensus of the population on the concept of Azawad. This includes the

reaching of a consensus around the charter resulting from the national agreement conference. These points all relate to the measures necessary for a better representation of the diverse populations of the Northern Regions/Azawad within the national institutions, large services, and administrations of state as well as the creation and effectiveness of the Northern/Azawad development zone.

Finally, the CMA demanded the establishment of an international commission of inquiry and the formalization of the designation of an independent consensual observer of all parties before recalling the role and responsibilities of the international community in accordance with the conceptualization of commitments under article 54 of the 2015 peace agreement, the identification of missions and responsibilities, or the establishment of a plan of activities and actions under the monitoring committee to the 2015 peace agreement. Had the 2015 peace agreement originally addressed these key details their implementation would not raise such controversies. Instead of that, these issues were obviously avoided by the parties during the negotiating process, possibly because of their complexity.

## **2. Problems Related to the Lack of Inclusiveness**

Most of the provisions of the 2015 peace agreement face delay in implementation because of violence created by armed groups that were not part of the 2015 peace agreement, which raises questions about its inclusiveness. As previously mentioned, some scholars argue that difficulty in finding an effective way to bring belligerents into the peace process is what makes the implementation of peace agreements more challenging for contemporary peace makers. Some group leaders who eventually join the peace process may later develop strong hostility to it. These factors fall under the spoiler concept, which was described in Chapter I. As described in the literature review, Stedman points out three main factors that make an implementation environment difficult, including the presence of spoilers, which he defines as group leaders who oppose a peace agreement and use violence

to weaken it.<sup>68</sup> Zahar also argues that the choice made by some actors to spoil the peace process constitutes the most plausible answer for why many peace settlements fail.<sup>69</sup>

In theory, there are two main problems hindering the peace process in Mali: the first relates to the war against the secessionists and the second relates to counterterrorism. Based on such issues, the international community pressured the Malian government to exclude all terrorist groups from the Algiers process. The problem is that in the field the rebels and jihadists are almost the same as illustrated by the Islamic state built by these two entities on the back of the official government at the beginning of the crisis. Adding to this confusion, the 2015 peace agreement deals with the secessionist movement not as a political framework for the eradication of terrorism, but rather as a mean of sharing power with the rebels., As a result, this war against the terrorists lasts, and the northern regions remain beyond the control of both government and signatory armed groups.

This situation has occurred obviously because some important groups were excluded from the Algiers process for their presumed implication in terrorist attacks. It is, for instance, the case of Ansar Dine's leader Iyad Agli who, despite being a key actor since the beginning of the crisis, was excluded from the negotiations and the 2015 peace agreement because of terrorism charges against him and his organization.

In addition, many other armed groups spoiling the peace process emerged after the signing of the peace agreement. It is the case of a couple of groups conducting recurrent attacks in the central regions of Mali. The report of UN Secretary-General notes, "The security situation in northern and central Mali remains of grave concern, especially in Mopti and Segou Regions, where more terrorist and terrorist-related events occurred than in the five northern Malian regions combined."<sup>70</sup> The report continues, saying "some of

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<sup>68</sup> Stedman, Introduction, 1–2.

<sup>69</sup> Zahar, "Reframing the Spoiler Debate in Peace Processes," 114.

<sup>70</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Mali*, Report No. S/2017/1105.

those attacks were claimed by the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims, and others may have been carried out by Islamic State in the Greater Sahara.”<sup>71</sup>

In sum, despite a few points of progress in certain areas, there is no actual success in the implementation of the 2015 peace agreement. In terms of defense and security reform and political and institutional issues, the report of UN Secretary-General notes that laws establishing the Territorial Collectivities in the Regions of Menaka and Taoudenit have been adopted, and that additional funds have been secured for the United Nations Trust Fund for Peace and Security in Mali and a national strategy on security sector reform is being developed.<sup>72</sup> Aside from this limited progress, though, there are significant issues regarding the implementation of the 2015 peace agreement. Some of the most important of these problems are the disagreements between parties over the implementation of the DDR and the MOC as well as the designation or implementation of the remaining interim authorities in certain localities regions.

As a result of this lack of progress in the implementation of the 2015 peace agreement, insecurity continues growing not only in the northern regions but also in the central ones, fueled by the rise of new armed groups. According to the UN report, the Support Group for Islam and Muslims has continued to increase its operational capacity and expand the area in which it operates, particularly in the Mopti and Ségou regions. Specifically, the report cites an increase in deadly attacks between 2016 and 2017.<sup>73</sup>

In sum, the failure of previous peace agreements is one of the causes of the crisis that broke out in Mali in 2012. A more effective implementation of those past agreements would have resolved most of the grievances that led to the current crisis. The 2015 peace agreement intended to resolve the current crisis, but vagueness in the agreement itself and the failure to include key parties in the negotiations leading to the agreement present some implementation issues. Because some armed groups were excluded from the peace talks,

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<sup>71</sup> United Nations Security Council.

<sup>72</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Mali*, Report No. S/2018/273

<sup>73</sup> United Nations Security Council.

they are now undermining the peace process. The combination of these flaws allows the violence to continue and has delayed the effective implementation of many provisions of the 2015 peace agreement. Given that this violence represents a serious obstacle to the progress of the current peace process, the next chapter discusses the presumed connection between some of the signatory movements conducting violence and a number of regional or international powers involved in Mali.



### **III. ALGERIA'S ROLE IN THE MALIAN PEACE PROCESS**

Chapter II discussed the main provisions of the 2015 peace agreement and some of the difficulties regarding their implementation. The increasingly growing implementation issues stemming from this 2015 peace agreement confirm the hypothesis that building peace may require more than the parties' signatures on an agreement. The reality is that beyond factors related to the peace agreement, many conflicts, including the Malian crisis, resist resolution, mostly because of factors external to the conflict. So, besides the poor quality of peace agreements, neighboring countries and spoilers are probably the most challenging piece of the puzzle for international peacemakers.

In fact, the difficulty of finding an effective way to bring belligerents into the peace process is what makes the implementation of peace agreements more challenging for contemporary peacemakers. Some group leaders who join the peace process may later develop strong hostility to it. Known as a spoiler, this concept is a factor internal to a conflict and applies to the behavior of some armed groups. Therefore, it is important to examine spoilers as well as some neighboring countries in order to understand the implementation environment. Neighboring states hostile to a peace process tend to manipulate some factions internal to the conflict to undermine the peace process by violence. Thus, spoilers come in the form of external, as well as internal, actors.

This chapter discusses Algeria's involvement in recurrent Malian crises, beginning with the first Tuareg rebellion in 1963 to the current peace process. The chapter first assumes that, based on the implementation issues previously discussed, looking closely at Algeria—which is a regional power—is arguably helpful in understanding the current Malian peace process. This is important because today Algeria is indispensable in any reasonable security plan for the stabilization of the Sahel region, including Mali. This chapter then considers the current standing of Algiers in the region, in terms of economic and military power, and how Algiers may be using its commitment in Mali to strengthen those economic and military interests. Based on these considerations, the chapter concludes that, as chief mediator, Algiers, remains one of the most influential external actors involved in the Malian peace process—even though it has no soldiers in Mali.

## A. BACKGROUND

Algeria has repeatedly proclaimed its preoccupation with the diligent resolution of the crisis in Mali. At the same time, there are certainly many factors underpinning the Algerian external policy toward the region and toward Mali, in particular. Algeria has closely watched the devolution of the security situation in northern Mali since the 1990s. That is not surprising because Algeria not only shares the longest common border with Mali, but also it seeks to extend Algerian military and economic hegemony in the Sahel region. According to Anouar Boukhars, Algeria could use these economic and military assets to mediate the Malian conflict more effectively by exerting pressure on the armed groups in the northern Mali.<sup>74</sup>

Surprisingly, Boukhars finds that “the military resources Algeria has applied have not equaled its capabilities, judging Algerian foreign policy to be torn between the country’s claimed regional leadership and its reluctance or inability to use the significant tools at its disposal to maintain stability and help restore peace in Mali.”<sup>75</sup> As a result, some people, “in Algerian opposition circles as well as some actors in Bamako suspect Algerian intelligence and/or security services of covertly aiding or abetting AQIM in order to bolster their domestic and regional position.”<sup>76</sup> This mistrust in security cooperation between the two countries is probably justified by the complexity of their relationship. Algeria is deemed to have offered its support to some Tuareg armed groups before mediating the conclusion of the peace negotiations during the years 1990–2006. In 2008, for example, Malian President Amadou Toumani Touré suspected Algerian intelligence services of “running their own game in the Sahel and supporting some Islamists.”<sup>77</sup> Because of these presumptions and many others to be mentioned, it is important to make

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<sup>74</sup> Anouar Boukhars, *The Paranoid Neighbor: Algeria and the Conflict in Mali* (Washington, DC: The Carnegie Papers, October 22, 2012), 3, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/301627702/download>.

<sup>75</sup> Boukhars.

<sup>76</sup> Alexis Arieff, *Algeria and the Crisis in Mali* (Paris: Actuelles de l’Ifri, n.d.), Accessed August 15, 2018, <https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/actuellesariefffinal.pdf>.

<sup>77</sup> Abdoulaye Tamboura., *The Tuareg Conflict and Its Geopolitical Issues in Mali: Geopolitics of a Rebellion* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2016), 208–209.

an overview of Algiers' involvement in past Malian conflicts before addressing the current peace process.

Algeria has not always been so strong nor has Algiers always seen a particular interest in expanding its hegemony over the Sahel. Instead, the country underwent some social, political, and military challenges that possibly impacted its current policy toward this zone. As Boukhars puts it, “the conduct of Algerian security forces in the peak period of horrific violence in the 1990s put the country in the spotlight, and it became isolated internationally but most observers salute the fact that the Algerians fought an existential war against Islamist extremists without any external help.”<sup>78</sup> Not only was this experience useful for a better future in terms of military preparedness, but it enabled Algerians leaders to use it to gain diplomatic rewards. One example of this is, according to Boukhars, when “Algerian officials used the terrorist attacks in the United States to prove that the Algerian regime was prescient in its warnings throughout the 1990s about the dangers of radical Islam.”<sup>79</sup> As a result, he argues, “the security partnership between the United States and Algeria was strengthened in 2010 with the signing of a customs mutual assistance agreement and a mutual legal assistance treaty.”<sup>80</sup>

On the other hand, this did not improve Algiers' relationship with European countries, which Boukhars attributes to “historical and geopolitical reasons because Algeria sees France and its regional allies, namely Morocco, as the biggest hurdle in its quest for regional dominance.”<sup>81</sup> Nonetheless, the U.S. support to Algiers' counterterrorism policy in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks helped Algeria become an indispensable actor in the Sahel. Former U.S. Ambassador to Algeria Robert Ford argued in a diplomatic cable in 2008 that “with all these power attributes, Algeria is naturally seen as an indispensable actor in the Sahel. Its leadership might be ‘a prickly, paranoid group to

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<sup>78</sup> Boukhars, *The Paranoid Neighbor: Algeria and the Conflict in Mali*, 13.

<sup>79</sup> Boukhars.

<sup>80</sup> Boukhars.

<sup>81</sup> Boukhars.

work with,' but its importance in the fight against Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is essential.”<sup>82</sup>

## **1. First Rebellion**

Algiers made no direct intervention in the rebellion that broke out in Mali in 1963, possibly because the former was, at the same time, recovering from the French occupation. In addition, the Malian military appeared strong enough to control this Tuareg uprising. According to Arthur Boutellis and Marie-Joelle Zahar, “the 1963–1964 rebellion was militarily defeated by a strong Malian army supported by the Soviet Union.”<sup>83</sup> The only involvement of Algiers in this rebellion remains its accord given to Malian defense forces to pursue rebels on the Algerian territory.

Since then, Bamako has struggled with handling the ensuing rebellions because not only has Algiers’ involvement become progressively more complex, but the Malian defense forces had become weaker after the end of the Cold War. As Boutellis and Zahar remark, “all the other conflicts were followed by negotiations that resulted in a peace agreement” because governments in Bamako were too weak to do otherwise.<sup>84</sup> Another factor that weakened the Malian state is arguably the recurring institutional instabilities in Mali that emanated from the 1968 and 1991 military coups.

## **2. Second Rebellion**

By the time the second rebellion broke out in Mali in 1980, Algeria had become a stronger state. In addition, the 1970s draught prompted the migration of a large population of Malian Tuareg toward Algerian territory. Because of the connection they established with some of the Algerian Tuareg population, Algiers felt the necessity to follow their movement in Mali closely. The signing of the Tamarasset Accords on January 6, 1991, on Algerian soil, marked the beginning of a deep and longstanding involvement by Algeria in

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<sup>82</sup> Boukhars.

<sup>83</sup> Arthur Boutellis and Marie-Joëlle Zahar, *A Process in Search of Peace: Lessons from the Inter-Malian Agreement* (New York: International Peace Institute, June 2017), 3, <https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/IPI-Rpt-Inter-Malian-Agreement.pdf>.

<sup>84</sup> Boutellis and Zahar.

almost every domestic security issue in Mali.<sup>85</sup> There are a couple of possible reasons for this. First, Algiers arguably had at that time a view of the Tuareg issue in Mali, which prompted the Algerian government to support Bamako in settling this problem for fear that the unrest could reach its own Tuareg community as it already had to Mali's neighbor Niger. Furthermore, Algeria had the military and diplomatic power to resolve this Tuareg rebellion in Mali. According to Boutellis and Zahar, "under Algerian pressure, the Tuareg and Arab rebel groups entered into an alliance named after the Coordination of United Movements and Fronts of Azawad in order to negotiate and reach the National Pact with the Malian government on April, 11, 1992."<sup>86</sup> This Algerian commitment to help abate the Tuareg uprisings continued, as illustrated in the 2006 rebellion resolution.

Second, beyond Mali, Algeria has sought to dominate its neighbors by exercising control over counterterrorism operations, trafficking routes, and areas that could contain natural gas or ore. In addition, by appropriating the resolution of the crises in Mali, Algeria intended to thwart certain regional actors such as Libya, whose influence was growing rapidly in the Sahara. Thus, toward the end of the 1990s, Algeria's role became less clear, revealing a double game of pretending to fight terrorists while refusing to lend any outside intervention by its security forces.

### **3. Third Rebellion**

When new armed confrontations broke out between Bamako and some Malian Tuareg groups during the period of 2006–2009, Algeria offered to mediate once more. After some short negotiations held in Algiers, another deal between Bamako and the armed groups was reached. Boutellis and Zahar assert, "The Accord, signed on July, 2006, granted northern Mali further political autonomy and more development funds."<sup>87</sup> This longstanding Algiers' view would, however, fundamentally change, possibly because of increasing mistrust with Bamako. In fact, from a simple political grievance, the Tuareg

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<sup>85</sup> Boutellis and Zahar, *A Process in Search of Peace: Lessons from the Inter-Malian Agreement*, 5.

<sup>86</sup> Boutellis and Zahar.

<sup>87</sup> Boutellis and Zahar, 5–6; "Algiers Agreement for the Restoration of Peace, Security and Development in the Kidal Region, Algiers, Algeria, July 4, 2006," full text (in French), UN Peacemaker, <http://peacemaker.un.org/mali-accordalger2006>.

issue has evolved into religious extremism, notable for its radicalization of some Tuareg rebels and the presence of an increasing number of Algerian Islamists who have crossed into Mali under pressure from Algerian security forces.

#### **4. Current Rebellion**

Since the early 1990s, the security situation in the Sahel has been marked by cross-border drugs, arms, and human trafficking. But the situation worsened after the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) intervention in Libya and the elimination of Colonel Kaddafi in 2011. In fact, the Libyan crisis significantly increased cross-border or international terrorism, a phenomenon which would seriously compromise peace, security, and stability in the entirety of the region.

The current Malian crisis was born when, according to Boukhars, the secessionist movement MNLA, which launched the fight, was defeated by the Islamist movement Ansar Dine, which, in coalition with AQIM, sought to impose an extremist vision of Sharia throughout Mali.<sup>88</sup> This took place in the northern regions of Mali along the border with Algeria. Alexis Arrieff argues that this situation threatened two Algerian foreign policy priorities, which were “to stave off secession movements and to prevent the regional spread of terrorist ideology, and a budding refugee crisis, another undesirable factor.”<sup>89</sup> She is right, and it was possibly because of such a challenge that “on January 2012, Algiers appeared to be taking a predictable approach by calling for an immediate ceasefire and the preservation of Mali’s ‘territorial integrity,’ and offering its mediation as it felt the Tuareg insurgency predominantly separatist and rapidly growing.”<sup>90</sup>

The new ambiguous view and policy of Algiers towards the Malian security crisis is well summarized by Boukhars in his comments on the current conflict in Mali. He has said “this crisis has created a major challenge for Algeria because of what is expected from the country given its status as a regional military power and its intimate knowledge of the

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<sup>88</sup> Arrieff, *Algeria and the Crisis in Mali*.

<sup>89</sup> Arrieff.

<sup>90</sup> Arrieff.

conflict dynamics in Mali in terms of leading the resolution of the conflict.”<sup>91</sup> Boukhars then assumes that because of “its preoccupation with a looming leadership transition, a popular disenchantment at home, as well as its fearful of possible blowback from military intervention in Mali, Algeria has been more timid, hesitant, and ambivalent than the international community wants it to be.”<sup>92</sup> It comes out of the assumption that such Algerian behavior is due to national constraints that Arrieff characterizes as “Algeria’s leaders distraction by narrow domestic interests.”<sup>93</sup>

It may be equally important to consider other reasons Arrieff mentioned, such as “deep political changes in the Maghreb region that have left Algeria’s aging elite more isolated than ever to explain Algeria’s ambiguous stance in the face of a genuine regional crisis complicates the country’s self-projected image as a key regional player.”<sup>94</sup> Despite these constraints, however, Algiers obviously has some important interests to defend in the Sahel and through the Malian crisis. Moreover, since this thesis is about motivations, it focuses on positive foreign policy actions—military and diplomatic—rather than constraints. In others words, what Algiers decides to or not to do in response to the Malian crisis is of greater interest than what it has been constrained to do.

## **B. ALGERIAN INTERESTS IN THE CURRENT PEACE PROCESS**

Faced with the insecurity born of terrorist activities, each state reacts according to its own perception of the danger and its interests. This is probably why Algeria has consolidated its national security through effective border control, making its neighbors Mali and Niger more vulnerable to the security threat posed by AQIM in the region, as illustrated by the increase of illegal activities in northern Mali and Niger. This section focuses on measures taken by Algiers in the areas of defense and diplomacy in order to deal with the situation in Mali. In recent years, the Algerian authorities have constantly sought to centralize the fight against banditry and terrorism by the creation, in April 2010,

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<sup>91</sup> Boukhars, *The Paranoid Neighbor: Algeria and the Conflict in Mali*, 3.

<sup>92</sup> Boukhars.

<sup>93</sup> Arrieff, *Algeria and the Crisis in Mali*.

<sup>94</sup> Arrieff.

of a Joint Operational Staff Committee (CEMOC) consisting of representatives from Algeria, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger.<sup>95</sup> Located in Tamanrasset, the CEMOC planned to mobilize more than 25,000 combatants, including 5,000 Tuareg, in 2011 but has never been set up. For some military experts, the failure of the CEMOC is a result of inadequate security cooperation, such as intelligence sharing and joint patrols. In addition, the Operation Serval in Mali in spring 2013 was perceived by Algiers as interference in its area of influence.<sup>96</sup> This section maintains that most efforts deployed by Algiers regarding the Malian peace process as well as the fight against terrorism in the Sahel aim at securing Algeria's regional hegemony, notably by keeping Western forces away from the region.

### **1. Defense and Security Related Interests**

While Algiers has always demonstrated a readiness to mediate the Malian conflicts, the military dimension is where it displays significant hesitation. There are many different ways to analyze this behavior from Algeria. This section focuses on three factors, including the mistrust between Algiers and Bamako, the opposition of Algiers to the deployment of foreign troops in Mali, and Algiers' overuse of its noninterventionist principle. First, the growing mistrust between Algiers and Bamako over counterterrorism operations is arguably an obstacle to an effective Algerian military commitment in Mali. According to Arrieff, "Algerian-Malian counter-terrorism cooperation was troubled under former President Touré because Algeria, with some justification, viewed Bamako as insufficiently committed to the fight against Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), incapable of protecting shared intelligence, and eager to facilitate prisoner release agreements and ransom payments to AQIM kidnappers."<sup>97</sup> Basically, the Algerian government accused Malian authorities of being too complaisant with the terrorists operating in northern Mali.

Second, Algiers never hid its opposition to the idea of deploying foreign troops, including regional but particularly French and other Western soldiers, along its southern

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<sup>95</sup> Tamboura, *The Tuareg Conflict and Its Geopolitical Issues in Mali: Geopolitics of a Rebellion*, 208–209.

<sup>96</sup> Tamboura, 208.

<sup>97</sup> Arrieff, *Algeria and the Crisis in Mali*.



border in northern Mali. As Arrieff asserts, “Algiers’ distaste for the concept of a regional intervention force may be due to concerns that such a force could potentially serve as vehicle for French military deployments or intelligence collection activities in the guise of assisting regional troops.”<sup>98</sup> So, there has been much controversy over international intervention in Mali mainly because of the necessity to manage Algiers, the contribution and cooperation of which appears to most observers as critical for the success of such intervention. This point is supported by Boukhars who asserts, “the bottom line is that a sustained, cooperative, and sincere engagement by Algeria is critical to the success of conflict management and resolution in Mali due to the country’s economic and political power as well as its efforts to position itself as a leader in its neighborhood place it in a unique position to influence events.”<sup>99</sup> Boukhars goes farther by insisting that “these issues with Algiers do not negate Algeria’s assets as a critical player in the Malian conflict before warning that western powers should engage in the conflict in Mali in a way that is complementary rather than competitive to Algeria’s security and diplomatic initiatives.”<sup>100</sup> He may be right, because there is even no proper way to intervene effectively in Mali without soliciting at least the use of the Algerian air space.

A third problem with having Algerian support in Mali is Algiers’ commitment to its noninterventionist doctrine. No matter how serious the threat may be—like, for example, the one posed by AQIM—the Algerian government is resolved to not let any of its security forces operate beyond its border. As an illustration Boukhars recalls the fact that “Algiers has refused to direct its attack capabilities against AQIM outside its borders, justifying those decisions with its long-established doctrine of state sovereignty and nonintervention.”<sup>101</sup> As a sovereign state Algeria cannot be denied the right to this international law principle.

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<sup>98</sup> Arrieff.

<sup>99</sup> Boukhars, *The Paranoid Neighbor: Algeria and the Conflict in Mali*, 4.

<sup>100</sup> Boukhars.

<sup>101</sup> Boukhars, 14.

The problem is that there is a debate among Algiers' partners over its sincerity when it appears to overuse such principle. Boukhars writes that Europeans and Americans think that Algeria invokes this doctrine to avoid using its material and military capabilities to weaken AQIM.<sup>102</sup> Algerians hold a completely different narrative about their policy toward the Sahel. According to Boukhars, Algerian officials say that “their country has done more than any other country to support the objective of security and peace in the region—and to contribute actively to conflict resolution in Mali.”<sup>103</sup> This Algerian perception of its role in conflict resolution in Mali is probably what explains its traditional focus on mediation and negotiation rather than stronger military actions. It may also justify its choice to entertain close relationships with some armed group leaders, including those accused of terrorism, as claimed by many observers and illustrated by the presence of Iyad Agali, leader of Ansar Dine and one of the most controversial actors of the Malian crisis, in Algerian territory.

## **2. Diplomatic Related Interests**

Regarding Mali, the military cooperation that had been accentuated between Algerians and Malians at the end of the 1990s has suffered from the different approaches to anti-terrorist means since 2010, causing a crisis of confidence between Algeria and its neighbors.<sup>104</sup> For several years, Algerian leaders have constantly considered Mali as “the weak link” in the fight against AQIM and denounced the weak commitment of the Malian government to combat the terrorist threat, hence Algiers' reluctance to share information indispensable for regional cooperation. In addition, enough evidence exists to support the allegation that Algiers' contacts with some armed group leaders occurred far earlier than its official designation as chief mediator by the parties in conflict, as illustrated by the use of the Algerian territory and public facilities by both rebels and Islamists.

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<sup>102</sup> Boukhars.

<sup>103</sup> Boukhars.

<sup>104</sup> Tamboura, *The Tuareg Conflict and Its Geopolitical Issues in Mali: Geopolitics of a Rebellion*, 208–209.

This crisis of confidence not only contributed to the outbreak of the Malian crisis in 2012 but also and especially to the difficulties encountered in the implementation of the 2015 agreement negotiated in Algiers and signed in Bamako with Algeria as mediator in chief. According to Arieff, “Algeria’s stance toward Mali appears to consist of hedging bets while seeking to preserve the prerogatives of a regional heavyweight and that, possibly reacting to the shifting developments with uncertain implications, Algeria has maintained contacts with a wide range of actors, prioritizing access to information and influence over a clearly formulated strategy.”<sup>105</sup> Whether or not this is another Algiers’ strategy to keep its potential role of mediator by being neutral is unclear. What is obvious is the fact that Algiers was not the only regional country using such a strategy to secure or build its potential position as provisory mediator in the Malian conflict. Arieff mentions the case of Burkina Faso by asserting that “this may make sense for Algiers, and a similar approach can be seen in the behavior of Burkina Faso’s Blaise Compaoré, the official Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) ‘mediator’ in Mali.”<sup>106</sup>

But while Compaoré’s motivations are less obvious, many observers claim to understand the game Algiers has been playing. Arrieff suggests, for example, that “Algeria’s approach means that ECOWAS and Mali’s most militarily powerful neighbor are potentially working at cross-purposes and that such uncoordinated actions have presented western policy makers with a challenging environment for enabling sought-after ‘African solutions to African problems.’”<sup>107</sup> The point made here is the mistrust that exists between Algeria and ECOWAS, which Algiers sees as potential proxy organization for France.

Algeria, Burkina Faso, and Mauritania are neighboring states whose interaction with armed groups operating in northern Mali has been confusion despite the claim of these countries’ governments to be committed to the preservation of the integrity of Mali. In the specific case of Algeria, Arrieff notes that “Algerian nationals, including AQIM

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<sup>105</sup> Arieff, *Algeria and the Crisis in Mali*.

<sup>106</sup> Arieff.

<sup>107</sup> Arieff.

commanders, have also reportedly traveled to Gao in an apparent bid to help shore up the Mouvement pour l'Unité et le Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (MUJAO)'s position."<sup>108</sup> This is significant in describing the Algerian double game because AQIM, which originated from Algerian Islamist groups, now seems to be in coalition with MUJAO, the second most important Malian terrorist group after Ansar Dine. Most importantly, it would be unusually surprising if the cross-border transaction that gives these groups their strength against the Malian security forces has escaped the Algerian intelligence community.

In sum, Algeria has long given close attention to security challenges in Mali but Algiers' motivations for doing so have progressively evolved to become somewhat confusing to its partners and neighbors. First, Algiers sought to counter the spread of Tuareg secession in Mali in order to contain its own Tuareg community, which displays similar aspirations. Then, Algeria's involvement became more geostrategic or geopolitical as the country deemed it necessary to extend its presence in order to block the increasing influence of Libya in the region. Finally, Algerian officials have repeatedly justified their hegemonic behavior in Mali by their supposed commitment to the promotion of security in the region. In this regional rivalry over security policy Niger is one of Mali's rare neighboring countries that has constantly displayed a particular toughness toward both the Malian rebels and terrorists. Algeria, Burkina Faso, and Mauritania often appear to be playing a double game with Bamako. While Algeria is more or less able to influence the Malian peace process directly, the two others, Burkina Faso and Mauritania, are unable to do so. Nevertheless, some events suggest that they have occasionally served as proxy actors for France, which is another key external actor in the Malian conflict.

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<sup>108</sup> Arieff.

#### **IV. FRANCE AND UNITED NATION IN THE MALIAN PEACE PROCESS**

There is a large consensus among scholars about the necessity for international actors to intervene in peace processes. As previously mentioned, the 2015 Malian peace agreement emphasizes the contribution of the international community in guaranteeing the agreement's diligent implementation. Specifically, Article 54 of this agreement provides that the international community is the guarantor of the agreement's scrupulous implementation and is committed to supporting all efforts to this effect. Today, however, an increasing number of scholars highlight the importance of understanding that international actors' presence needs to be sustained by a defined strategy and commitment that can lead to successful implementation. Chapter III discussed the longstanding involvement of Algeria in conflict resolution in Mali and the possible main motivations for Algeria to do so. Yet, although the involvement of international actors in peace processes is not contested, the way some of them act in many peace processes has increasingly become controversial.

As a follow-up to the discussion of Algeria's Mali policy in Chapter III, this chapter presents the role of France and the UN in the resolution of conflicts in Mali from 1963 to date. The chapter examines France's and the UN's involvement in Mali by breaking their activities into military and diplomatic related actions. The reason for studying the actions of France and the UN together is because not only does France operate under UN authorization, but the UN was arguably brought into the latest Malian conflict by France, which used its diplomatic assets to convince the Security Council to do so. Despite the hypothesis that the basic reason for external actors' involvement in Mali is the enforcement of the 2015 peace agreement and the protection of the entire peace process, enhancing the understanding of the issues encountered in the process by examining more closely the behavior patterns of some external actors may suggest otherwise.

## A. BACKGROUND

France is the ex-colonial power that controlled Mali until 1960 when the country gained its independence. Thus, unlike the UN, which has not been involved in conflict resolution in Mali before 2012, France has a long history of intruding—directly or indirectly—in Malian national affairs. Furthermore, this French intrusion has progressively deepened, going from little and less obvious intervention in 1963 to more complex and explicit involvement in the 1990s. Finally, one could say that this French presence in Mali reached its paroxysm with the current crisis that broke out in 2012.

### 1. First Wave of Rebellions

The first Tuareg rebellion broke out only three years after the independence of Mali. There is no evidence of a French involvement in this first Tuareg uprising, possibly because there was no cooperation between France and the first Malian regime led by President Modibo Keita, who dismissed all French officials from the country in the aftermath of independence in 1960.

Another explanation for the absence of French influence on this 1963 conflict may be the adoption of socialism by President Keita, which brought the country closer to the Soviet Union. According to Anatole Ayissi and Nouhoum Sangaré, under Keita's socialist regime, "the Armed Forces were used as a key pillar in a highly centralized and authoritarian political system."<sup>109</sup> Ayissi and Sangaré assert that "Communist regimes of Eastern Europe equipped the army with heavy armaments and other military equipment."<sup>110</sup> As such and because of the arms race prompted by the Cold War at that time, the Malian military was sufficiently equipped to crush any attempts at secessionism.

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<sup>109</sup> Anatole Ayissi and Nouhoum Sangaré, "Mali," in *Budgeting for the Military Sector in Africa: The Processes and Mechanisms of Control*, eds. Wuyi Omitoogun and Eboe Hutchful (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 123.

<sup>110</sup> Ayissi and Sangaré.

## 2. Second Wave of Rebellions

France never really abandoned its attempts at regaining a military presence in Mali as demonstrated in the country's unclear position after President Modibo Keita was overthrown in 1968 by then-Captain Moussa Traoré, a junior officer reputedly close to Paris. As did his predecessor, Traoré instituted an authoritarian regime, which lasted until the wind of democratization blew over most former French colonies in Africa in the late 1980s. In fact, beginning in the early 1990s, many African countries, including Mali, had begun implementing the transition to democratic regimes after France made it a condition of their political and economic cooperation with these countries. Accused by Paris of resisting the implementation of plural democracy, President Traore was in turn overthrown on March 26, 1991, by Amadou Toumani Toure, another junior officer with presumed connections to Paris, amid popular demonstrations mounted by a coalition of civil society actors, most of whom were based in France.

This is when the second wave of Tuareg rebellions occurred. France was suspiciously close not only to the rebels but also the military and civil society leaders who formed a coalition to overthrow the regime of President Moussa Traoré. Deposed president Traoré repeatedly claimed that this event was an affair well established between the French socialists, the leaders of the so-called democratic movement in Mali and, of course, the officers—among whom was the chief of the operational command post. Traoré concludes that they brought foreign mercenaries to Mali and they fired on the protesters as a broad allusion to the French implication. The conflict lasted until 1996 and prompted the Malian government to sign at least two peace agreements: The Tamarasset Peace Agreement in 1991, and the National Pact in 1992.

With the end of the Cold War and the French-sponsored democratic transition in Mali, French presence in Mali has been increasing in various areas, including defense and security. Security cooperation, which was suppressed by Mali's first regime and remained limited under the second one, made its comeback. By the mid-2000s, the military cooperation between the two countries had become as intense as to intrigue Algiers and negatively affect the Algeria-Mali relationship, especially in the defense and security area. This situation continued, and the asymmetrical crisis that broke out in 2012 ultimately gave

France the opportunity to regain its most important military presence in Mali since the end of the colonization in 1960.

## **B. CURRENT REBELLION**

As previously mentioned, the mismanagement of the latest Malian rebellion that started in 2011 prompted a military coup in March 2012, which created an unstable political situation in Bamako. This unprecedented institutional weakness amid rebel and terrorist attacks and occupation led to a critical security situation in Mali and the region, requiring military and diplomatic interventions from Mali's partners.

### **1. Military Intervention**

According to Thomas C. Bruneau and Florina Cristiana Matei, "a United Nations (UN)-sponsored military force was [originally] planned to fight the various insurgents in order to retake the North of Mali. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), African Union (AU), as well as other partners, agreed in the fall of 2012 to an intervention plan for retaking the North."<sup>111</sup> They report that this plan was made up of "3000 troops provided by Mali, 3000 by ECOWAS, intelligence and logistics support, as well as aerial cover and surveillance by France and UN, and training of Malian troops by the European Union (EU)."<sup>112</sup> While the motivating reasons for ECOWAS' and AU's intervention raises little curiosity, the extent to which France and the UN got involved in the ongoing Malian peace process raises many questions about these two international actors' motivations for doing so.

#### ***a. Containing Regional and International Terrorism***

Counterterrorism is the most consensual and clearly stated reason that most external actors, including France, use to justify their presence in Mali. Bruneau and Matei argue that the "advancement to central Mali and possible capture of Bamako, which would have

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<sup>111</sup> Thomas C. Bruneau and Florina Cristiana Matei, "The Military Coup in Mali, 22 March 2012: Reflections on the Demise of Democracy and the Importance of Civil – Military Relations," *Defense Resources Management* 5 (2014): 14–15. [https://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/43283/Bruneau\\_Mali%20Coup%20Article.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/43283/Bruneau_Mali%20Coup%20Article.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).

<sup>112</sup> Bruneau and Matei.



had a deleterious impact on not only Mali, but also on the whole region, prompted the Malian president to seek military assistance from France in January 2013.”<sup>113</sup> Abdoulaye Tamboura advances the same perspective by reporting that by deciding to trigger Operation Serval, France intends, on the one hand to stem the dismemberment of Mali by the Islamists, and on the other hand, to restructure and train the Malian army.<sup>114</sup> Clearly, France anticipated the potential threat associated with the impact of rebels’ and Islamists’ domination of Mali and the consequences of such an outcome on the region.

The ongoing international plan to intervene previously mentioned was then precipitated after French troops were joined by an the “Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)-led force in late January, [and] the European Union started in March to provide training to the Malian armed forces to help them boost their effectiveness.”<sup>115</sup> In addition, Bruneau and Matei say “the operation was approved unanimously by the [United] Nations Security Council (UNSC), which underscores the shared international concern about the mounting extremism and armed conflict in Mali.”<sup>116</sup> This operation was somehow successful because “African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) troops,”<sup>117</sup> including “French, [Malian, Chadian] have recaptured important territories in the North of Mali, took prisoners, and killed several hundred, including important Al Qaeda leaders such as Abdelhamid Abou Zeid, one of the top ranking Sahara commanders of Al Qaeda in North Africa.”<sup>118</sup>

In addition to counterterrorism motivations, France as a major international power also has other interests to secure, especially in Africa. Bruneau and Matei mention France’s “particular interests in Mali, [such as] the number of French citizens living or traveling to

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<sup>113</sup> Bruneau and Matei.

<sup>114</sup> Tamboura, *The Tuareg Conflict and Its Geopolitical Issues in Mali: Geopolitics of a Rebellion*, 219.

<sup>115</sup> Bruneau and Matei, “The Military Coup in Mali, 22 March 2012: Reflections on the Demise of Democracy and the Importance of Civil – Military Relations,” 14–15.

<sup>116</sup> Bruneau and Matei.

<sup>117</sup> Bruneau and Matei.

<sup>118</sup> Bruneau and Matei.

and from Mali, [and its] business and economic ties with Mali and the region”<sup>119</sup> to explain the quick launching of Operation Serval on January 11 to stop the rebels’ and Islamists’ move toward the south with the presumed intention to take control of the capital, Bamako.<sup>120</sup> In the same vein, Tamboura speaks of a return of the former colonizer to expand its military influence in the region.<sup>121</sup> He reveals, for those who do not know, that the Serval that gave its name to this French operation, “is a small feline living in the Saharan environment that has the distinction of urinating thirty times per hour to mark its territory.”<sup>122</sup> Bruneau and Matei remark that despite the operational achievements previously mentioned, “Islamists melted back into desert and mountain hideaways and have begun a small campaign of harassment and terror, dispatching suicide bombers, attacking guard posts, infiltrating liberated cities or ordering attacks by militants hidden among civilians.”<sup>123</sup> The protection of these French interests in Mali and the Sahara is arguably what locked France in this Malian crisis as the security situation increasingly worsened despite international response.

***b. Anticipating a Humanitarian Crisis***

Soon after the international military operation led by France, the international community, including the UN, realized that because of its complexity, the Malian security crisis would require more efforts than expected. This is when France used its diplomatic assets not only to bring in its EU partners, but also to increase the UN presence, through a peacekeeping operation. Bruneau and Matei argue that a “multipronged approach by Mali, as well as its regional and global partners and allies—diplomatic, political, humanitarian, economic, and security,”<sup>124</sup> which developments possibly “made France consider an

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<sup>119</sup> Bruneau and Matei.

<sup>120</sup> Bruneau and Matei.

<sup>121</sup> Tamboura, *The Tuareg Conflict and Its Geopolitical Issues in Mali: Geopolitics of a Rebellion*, 219.

<sup>122</sup> Tamboura.

<sup>123</sup> Bruneau and Matei, “The Military Coup in Mali, 22 March 2012,” 14–15.

<sup>124</sup> Bruneau and Matei.

incremental withdrawal of its troops and AFISMA's replacement with a UN Force."<sup>125</sup> But before and unrelated to this trigger, the UN's global anti-terrorist strategy, according to Tamboura, was marked by several conferences of donors and experts in the fight against terrorism. These conferences produced recommendations of measures ranging from an all-out fight against the spread of terrorism to capacity building.<sup>126</sup> The existence of such a mechanism has certainly enabled France and Mali to more easily convince the United Nations Security Council of the replacement of AFISMA by MINUSMA.

In 2013 the UNSC "unanimously adopted Resolution 2100, which established the Peacekeeping Force for Mali [MINUSMA],"<sup>127</sup> to replace AFISMA.<sup>128</sup> On July 1, 2013, MINUSMA stated its operations to fulfill an initial mandate of "Stabilization of key population centers and support for the reestablishment of [state] authority throughout the country; Support for the implementation of the transitional road map, including the national political dialogue and the electoral process; Protection of civilians and United Nations personnel; Promotion and protection of human rights; Support for humanitarian assistance; Support for cultural preservation; Support for national and international justice."<sup>129</sup> In theory, this is basically what MINUSMA should be doing to address the situation in Mali.

The reality is quite different because, due to the particularly poor security environment, MINUSMA reduced its actions to less ambitious tasks. The UN provides support to the Ministry of Defense via MINUSMA for assistance logistics as well as for support more directly related to the RSS. From the logistics point of view, MINUSMA also provides support for the renovation of infrastructure and reconstruction for the benefit of

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<sup>125</sup> Bruneau and Matei.

<sup>126</sup> Tamboura, *The Tuareg Conflict and Its Geopolitical Issues in Mali: Geopolitics of a Rebellion*, 217.

<sup>127</sup> UN Security Council, Resolution 2100, *Establishment of the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali*, S/RES/2100, 7–8 (April 25, 2013). <http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/resolutions/2013.shtml>.

<sup>128</sup> UN S/RES/2100.

<sup>129</sup> UN S/RES/2100.

the military in Central and Northern Mali, regions most affected by the destruction.<sup>130</sup> Nonetheless, the presence of actors like France and the UN implies not just their own contributions, but also the role of potential partners that a France-UN presence convinces, encourages, or drags into Mali.

As a result of the involvement of the UN and France, a number of multilateral actors came to work with the Ministry of Defense of Mali. The EU, which supports the Ministry of Defense as part of its restructuring through the European Union Training Mission (EUTM) and European Union Capacity Building Mission (EUCAP) Sahel, is the main international player engaged with the Malian armed forces.<sup>131</sup> The World Bank has helped the ministry prepare the national strategy documents for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration.<sup>132</sup>

In addition, several of Mali's traditional allied countries, including the United States, Canada, Germany, and Russia drive direct support actions, on a bilateral basis. The United States is providing support to strengthen the doctrine and planning from the ministry. Through their "Security Governance Initiative," the United States also helps in strengthening the human resources systems, finance, and logistics of the Ministry of Defense.<sup>133</sup> The Directorate of Military Justice also receives support from the United States for strengthening its structures and training its staff, in collaboration with EUTM and EUCAP Sahel Mali.<sup>134</sup> Canada is providing support to the Peace Keeping School (EMP) Bamako and has provided language training for the benefit of Malian defense forces in their preparation for peacekeeping operations, as part of their Military Training Army Program (MTAP). Canada also supports the renovation of the military camp human

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<sup>130</sup> Niagalé Bagayoko, *The process of reforming the security sector in Mali*, (Montréal (Québec): FrancoPaix Center in Conflict Resolution and Peace Missions, February 2018), 51, [https://dandurand.uqam.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2018/02/2018\\_02\\_Rapport-Bagayoko\\_CFP.pdf](https://dandurand.uqam.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2018/02/2018_02_Rapport-Bagayoko_CFP.pdf).

<sup>131</sup> Bagayoko, 49-52.

<sup>132</sup> Bagayoko.

<sup>133</sup> Bagayoko.

<sup>134</sup> Bagayoko.

resources put in place by the EUTM.<sup>135</sup> In order to continue to support military engineering, as it has done traditionally, Germany is contributing via its German Federal Armed Forces Technical Advisers Group (GAFTAG) for the period 2017–2020. Germany is thus pursuing long-standing cooperation in supporting the Army Corps of Engineers in the fields of mine clearance and aids for crossing.<sup>136</sup> Russia is also present in Mali, but its cooperation seems to revolve around the delivery of weapons and the training of Malian soldiers.<sup>137</sup>

The French support is more operationally oriented compared with that of other external actors. France militarily supports the Malian defense forces in areas of military engagement that occur in the central and especially the northern regions of the country. As such, Operation Barkhane plays an important role in mentoring. Despite this French operational engagement through Operation Barkhane and the dedication of a French contingent as intervention force to MINUSMA, France does not operate under the UN command. In addition, as Tamboura points out, the French intervention was arranged outside the solicitation of the Bamako authorities; in particular, he alludes to telephone calls between the French president and his Mauritanian counterpart.<sup>138</sup> Hence the question of the unacknowledged reasons for the commitment of France as well as its troubled relations with the Malian rebels, a question that is discussed in depth in the next chapter.

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<sup>135</sup> Bagayoko.

<sup>136</sup> Bagayoko.

<sup>137</sup> “Military Cooperation with Russia: What Can Win Mali,” Studio Tamani, 28 August 2017, <http://www.studiotamani.org/index.php/magazines/12704> <http://bamada.net/cooperation-russie-mali-une-aide-militaire-planifiee>.

<sup>138</sup> Tamboura, *The Tuareg Conflict and Its Geopolitical Issues in Mali: Geopolitics of a Rebellion*, 219.

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## **V. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION**

This chapter discusses the roles of Algeria, France, and the United Nations in the negotiation and implementation of the 2015 peace agreement by assessing how these external actors have helped or hindered these efforts according to their regional ambitions and their national interests. First, the chapter argues that Algerian and French involvements in the Malian peace process are driven by diverse interests and values and that their motivations are hardly compatible with their contribution to the progress of the peace process. Second, it suggests that the coordination challenge that the UN peacemaking system faces on the ground in Mali is due to the inconsistency between its mandate and the ground reality.

### **A. ALGERIA, FRANCE, AND THE MALIAN ARMED GROUPS**

The divergence of international actors' interests and values may lead them away from addressing the core issues of the peace process. There are two main components in the Malian crisis: Rebellion and Terrorism. Each of them constitutes an existential threat to the Republic of Mali. There are also two key external actors in the peace process: Algeria and France. Each of these countries can have significant impact on the conduct of the peace process. Moreover, both Algeria and France have contacts with both the rebels and the Islamists. Given this reality, it is important to analyze the motivations and interactions of Algeria by focusing on the two main aspects previously mentioned as rebellion and terrorism in Mali.

#### **1. Algeria and the Malian Armed Groups**

For having been a mediator in the resolution of past rebellions, Algeria already had relations with most of the protagonists of the security crisis that began in 2012. With leaders of the rebellion, Algeria's relations appear more suspicious than with those of some terrorist group leaders like Iyad Agali, who was also one of the prominent leaders of the 1990s' wave of rebellions before turning to religious fundamentalism more recently. This distrust between Algeria, the mediator-in-chief, and the rebels that are among the main signatory parties of the 2015 agreement has consistently posed a serious threat to the peace

process from its beginning. In addition, as previously discussed, Algiers' connection with Ansar Dine leader Iyad Agali is another issue slowing the implementation of 2015 agreement. Ansar Dine, in particular, is one of those Malian armed terrorist groups that was left out of the peace process and is now spoiling it.

**a. *The Rebel Groups***

Algiers' attitude towards the crisis that broke out in Mali in 2012 and the relationship it has developed with different actors in order to achieve its own interests is not easy to comprehend. Boukhars argues that like in the 2006 rebellion previously mentioned, Algeria's contribution has been unclear since the beginning, possibly because Algiers has chosen to carefully protect its strategic interests by staying away from the conflict. This stance may also have been intended to punish then Malian President Amadou Toumani Touré, who Algiers suspected of being complicit with AQIM.<sup>139</sup>

In light of this quote, it is obvious that despite the disappointment of both the National Movement of Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) and Algeria with Bamako, there is a mutual suspicion between them. While on the one hand Algiers plays along to avoid any tolerance for this Tuareg secessionist group out fear of inspiring its own Tuareg population, the MNLA, on the other, conscious of that, manages to keep its distance from Algiers. According to Boukhars, "MNLA is suspicious of Algeria's intent and harbors resentment at the country's past mediation strategy and choice of interlocutors, which limited Algeria's influence over the MNLA."<sup>140</sup> In other words, the MNLA accuses Algeria of having made the choice to weaken and block their demands in the mediations previously conducted with Bamako.

**b. *The Terrorist Groups***

Contrary to the distance Algiers maintains from the MNLA, its relationship with Agali, the leader of Ansar Edine, is presumably more intense. Boukhars remarks that "[The] dominant role of [Agali] in the current crisis in Mali and his connections to Algeria

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<sup>139</sup> Boukhars, *The Paranoid Neighbor: Algeria and the Conflict in Mali*, 11.

<sup>140</sup> Boukhars.



have placed enormous pressure on the Algerians to use their influence with him and his armed group.”<sup>141</sup> This is not the only assumption observers make about the connection between Algiers and this terrorist leader. Talking about the relationship between armed groups, Boukhars suggests that “[The] marginalization of Iyad Agali during the formation of MNLA was in many ways an indirect jab at [Algeria and Agali], the architects of the 2006 Accords”<sup>142</sup> now rejected by the Tuareg.”<sup>143</sup> Furthermore, Boukhars notes, “some of the malcontents are convinced that [Agali] in particular is an agent of the feared Algerian Military Intelligence Service [DRS].”<sup>144</sup> The point made here is that Algiers has constantly appeared to have made the choice of entertaining a relationship with someone all Western countries consider a terrorist leader.

The specific reasons underlining this Algerian choice are yet to be determined. Nonetheless, Boukhars says some observers assume that Algeria is purposefully letting Ansar Dine settle in northern Mali in order to thwart the realization of MNLA’s secessionist pretensions. This is because Agali, due to his “political, tribal, and ideological connections that make his movement more effective at establishing a modicum of order in its territory” arguably threatens MNLA’s ambitions to assume the role of sole representative of the north.<sup>145</sup> Clearly, almost anything Algeria does regarding this peace process is done for the ultimate aim of safeguarding its interests in the region.

## **2. France and the Malian Armed Groups**

Unlike Algeria, France seems to adopt a policy of tolerance towards the Malian rebels and much more firmness with regard to terrorist groups. There are elements supporting the collaboration between the French and the Tuareg rebels. As for French steadfastness against Islamists, we must consider the embarrassing case of Iyag Agali,

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<sup>141</sup> Boukhars.

<sup>142</sup> Boukhars.

<sup>143</sup> Boukhars.

<sup>144</sup> Boukhars.

<sup>145</sup> Boukhars, 12.

leader of Ançar Edine that France continues to avoid eliminating despite its location in the south of Algeria, presumably to spare Algiers geopolitically.

*a. The Rebel Groups*

Another possible reason for Algiers to distrust the Tuareg rebels is France's presumed support of them. As Boukhars analyzes, Algeria distrusts the National Movement of Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), "mainly because of MNLA's links to the country's own separatist groups in France [as illustrated in] MNLA's association with Algerian Berber nationalists irritates Algiers."<sup>146</sup> In fact, Algiers, according to Boukhars, accuses "Kabyle activists in France who agitate for Berber self-determination in Algeria [with providing] significant logistical assistance to the separatist activism of the MNLA," which may highlight an embarrassing lack of consistency between "Algeria's support of the Polisario's three-decade-long quest for the independence of Western Sahara from Morocco"<sup>147</sup> and its denial of the Tuareg people's attempts at self-determination."<sup>148</sup> Boukhars is right in concluding that "these factors [make] it all the more difficult to take action to stabilize northern Mali—even when outside forces, Algeria especially, have the capacity to act."<sup>149</sup>

France's hesitating policy that resorts to using the rebels' support to fight the terrorists raises a lot of grievances within the Malian public because those actors are often the same people. Tamboura recounts that, according to a member of the French intelligence community, the MNLA reportedly provided the GPS data allowing the French bombing to hit their targets in the cities held by the Islamists at the time. This intelligence community member, Tamboura notes, further insinuated that as a counterpart, French secret services allegedly supplied 70,000 liters of fuel and parachuted weapons to support MNLA troops after being ousted by AQIM jihadists in the summer of 2012.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Boukhars.

<sup>147</sup> Boukhars.

<sup>148</sup> Boukhars.

<sup>149</sup> Boukhars.

<sup>150</sup> Tamboura, *The Tuareg Conflict and Its Geopolitical Issues in Mali*, 223.

This could also explain the French operation's choice to free all occupied northern cities except Kidal, where it installed the MNLA rebels and implicitly denied access to Malian soldiers. Since then the city is administered by the rebels of MNLA, and this was more explicitly confirmed when the French pressured former Prime Minister Moussa Mara to request the authorization of these rebels before visiting the city in May 2014. As a result of Mara refusing the French suggestion, his visit to Kidal turned bloody, putting Bamako in an uncomfortable situation while entering the Algiers peace process. Many people in Mali also see in the large advantages granted to the rebels in the peace agreement to be the result of French pressure on Bamako and support for the rebels of MNLA.

Most of Malians now oppose the French policy toward the rebel groups, especially the MNLA. They dislike the fact that, while the representatives of the Malian State are banned from staying in Kidal, the representatives of MNLA luxuriate in the beautiful hotels of Bamako. Furthermore, Malians resent the fact that businessmen and leaders of armed groups share territories and trade route initially financed by hundreds of millions in West African CFA francs from Malian taxes, and that in a democratic Republic as Mali, representatives of armed groups have replaced the elected authorities of the northern regions.

They may be right, because ultimately, roads and people are under the control of armed groups—the same groups that lead the bodies of the local authorities. Consequently, the North of the country is administered by the northerners while the South is the “okra field” of everyone, including the rebels. This is the type of new Mali that the peace agreement draws. Ironically, the more the state goes backward, the more the Malian authorities applaud, giving the feeling of a pact between them and the rebels' supporters over the rest of Malians.

***b. The Terrorist Groups***

The fight against terrorism in the Sahel is one of the main reasons given by Paris to justify its commitment to Mali. It is not surprising that French soldiers wanted, as soon as they deployed, to launch major efforts against Islamist groups that occupied the northern part of Mali. The French strategy to accomplish this, as Tamboura reports, took place in

several phases: the first was to stop the offensive by narco-jihadists in Konna; then to retake Gao and Timbuktu, the two largest cities in the North at the hands of the Islamists; and, finally, to eliminate the terrorists who have taken refuge in the massifs of the Adrar des Ifoghas.<sup>151</sup>

This relative success, however, should not hide the reservations that many people have about the strategy of France in Mali as it is becoming increasingly clear that the international actors' hesitating policy in Mali is not only about the Tuareg issue. Instead, the same pattern is observable in the way they deal with terrorism as well, because in addition to its tolerance of Iyad Agali, France collaborates with some of the rebels with links to Ansar Edine or AQIM.

## **B. MINUSMA AND THE MALIAN PEACE PROCESS**

As previously mentioned, the United Nations was brought into the Malian crisis by France because of the complexity of the situation, which made bilateral actors incapable of dealing effectively with it. One could argue that this was one of the recurring cases in which peacekeeping was deployed not just to keep peace, but to restore it. Thus, the possibility for this specific UN mission to get involved in violent confrontations is real. Consequently, soon after the creation of the MINUSMA by Resolution 2100 (2013), the constantly evolving environment forced the UN Security Council to amend this mandate to adapt to this situation.<sup>152</sup>

Despite a couple of amendments, there is still a significant gap between MINUSMA's operational capability and what is expected as results. One of the issues with the UN coordination of the Malian peace process that this section discusses is this inconsistency between MINUSMA's mandate and the security environment in northern Mali. The other obstacle to the UN coordination is the competition between Algeria and France over the control of the peace process in order to make their interests and values prevail.

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<sup>151</sup> Tamboura, 219.

<sup>152</sup> UN S/RES/2100.

## 1. The Particularity of the Malian Crisis

As previously stated, MINUSMA's initial mandate had to be amended shortly after because of an increasingly changing security environment on the ground. This is an unprecedented situation in the UN peacekeeping record for various reasons. First, there are no clearly identified belligerents between which peacekeeping forces should interpose. This can be attributed to the fact that there are not only many different rebel and terrorist groups involved, but also these groups' main actors overlap and cooperate according to circumstances. In fact, as previously discussed, after the international operation to chase them from main cities, the Islamists, in complicity with some rebels, came back in small groups, and spread violence by attacking Malian state symbols, international non-governmental organizations, as well as the MINUSMA Forces.

Second, most of these groups conduct counterinsurgency actions for which UN peacekeepers were not prepared. In the context of the first amendment, Resolution 2295 (2016), in paragraph 18, "requests MINUSMA to adopt a more proactive and robust approach to fulfill its mandate"; a year later, a second amendment was introduced with Resolution 2364 (2017) which, in paragraph 18, "Authorizes MINUSMA to use all means necessary to fulfill its mandate, within the limits of its capabilities and areas of deployment."<sup>153</sup> The situation did not seem to improve as a result of these amendments. It is true that despite having produced little in terms of effectiveness, MINUSMA's initial mandate as well as the amendments to it represent a significant move in UN peacekeeping. One could therefore argue that the UN's misunderstanding of the Malian conflict parameters until the first peacekeeping contingents were deployed continues to prevent MINUSMA from fulfilling its mandate.

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<sup>153</sup> "UN Security Council, Resolution 2295, Extension of MINUSMA's Mandate, S/RES/2295," United Nations, June 29, 2016, <http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/resolutions/2016.shtml>; "UN Security Council, Resolution 2364, Extension of MINUSMA's Mandate, S/RES/2364," United Nations, June 29, 2017, <http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/resolutions/2017.shtml>.

## **2. The Necessity for Adapting the MINUSMA's Mandate to the Situation**

Because of its unpreparedness to deal with counterinsurgency, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali only conducts humanitarian activities, abandoning nearly all its military-related operations to the French Barkhane contingent. The French force is, it is true, sufficiently robust to support MINUSMA to fulfill its mandate; however, as Tamboura points out, the use of military force must be scrutinized carefully and with extreme caution in order to prevent external forces from becoming occupation forces that could be counterproductive, as in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>154</sup> Moreover, already more and more voices are rising both in France and Mali to condemn paternalistic behavior on the part of France.

The other UN strategy that has shown its limits in the management of the security crisis in Mali and the Sahel is the capacity building of the states of the region. Tamboura finds that this approach of the United Nations has not made it possible to solve complex situations such as the terrorist threat provoked by AQIM. This terrorist threat is, along with other factors, a serious departure from the progress of the peace process in Mali, as shown in the following section. So, Tamboura is absolutely correct in saying that it is important for the United Nations to think about the implementation of other coherent and strong approaches that can reduce the intensity of conflicts.<sup>155</sup>

### **C. IMPACTS OF ALGERIAN, FRENCH, AND UN MOTIVATIONS ON THE MALIAN PEACE PROCESS**

In the previous two sections, the contribution of each of the three external actors examined in this work to the Malian peace process was widely discussed. The first two actors, France and Algeria used proxy groups to undermine each other. France did so by marginalizing armed groups like Ansar Dine while backing the rebels and strengthening their position at different steps, namely during the negotiation and implementation phases. Conversely, Algiers has consistently tried to include Iyad Agali in the peace process in

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<sup>154</sup> Tamboura, *The Tuareg Conflict and Its Geopolitical Issues in Mali*, "217.

<sup>155</sup> Tamboura.

order to weaken the position of the rebel groups. This section argues that the strategy implemented by each of those external actors has not only had negative effects on the negotiation of the 2015 peace agreement but also, and above all, on the implementation of this agreement.

### **1. During the Negotiation of the Peace Agreement**

One aspect to consider is the correlation between the actors' motivations and their interactions within different stages of the peace process, including the negotiation and implementation of the peace agreement. Since the beginning of the Malian crisis in 2012, various external actors have been interacting at different stages with the purpose of framing the situation in accordance with their own interests. The two major players in this game are Algeria and France, which employ both military and non-military tactics to achieve their interests.

The decision about which types of factions fighting the government should be included in the Algiers negotiations revealed a fundamental divergence in views between international actors. While French-led Western actors were hostile to the participation of some factions they consider to be terrorists, Algeria and a number of African countries were and remain favorable to the inclusion of all Malian groups, including those accused of terrorism. By denying the participation of terrorists in the peace process, France's rationale was to pursue its principle to not negotiate with terrorists. Given that such a rationale is shared by most Western great powers, the opposition from some African leaders to it could not stand. Ultimately, the position held by France prevailed and some armed groups, including Iyad Agali's Ansar Dine, were excluded from the 2015 peace agreement. France succeeded in imposing its view because of its significant military presence in Mali and its diplomatic influence over most of regional states involved in the resolution of this crisis. In fact, the fear of a potential French retaliation probably prevented countries like Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mauritania from supporting Algiers, undermining Algerian influence in the negotiation.

This competition between Algiers and Paris, which put excessive pressure on the other actors involved in the conflict, negatively affected the 2015 peace agreement's

quality, creating those implementation issues previously discussed. According to Du Toit, it is critical to have a negotiating arena that acknowledges problems of ownership, reasonableness, and seriousness that may arise.<sup>156</sup> This point is supported by Jones who argues that such a negotiating arena allows negotiations to “tackle the core issues of the conflict, include the main participants of the conflict, and have sufficient local and international backing to implement any agreement.”<sup>157</sup> Unfortunately, the divergence of Algerian and French interests and views prevented the 2015 peace agreement from being inclusive, which has affected its legitimacy.<sup>158</sup> Because some of the major belligerents were excluded from the negotiations, it was impossible to address the core issues of the Malian conflict.<sup>159</sup> The exclusion of these factions has created spoilers that now represent a real obstacle to the implementation of the 2015 peace agreement.

## **2. During the Implementation**

The military component is critical for the implementation of the 2015 peace agreement because the presumed terrorists groups that are being excluded from the peace process need to be militarily defeated. Because of the weakness of the Malian defense and security forces, then, the G5 Sahel quickly became the basis of counterterrorism in Mali and the Sahel region. Therefore, the efficient functioning of the G5 Sahel is necessary to sustain the peace process. The problem is that this French-initiated organization has been slowed down by a number of factors, all related to the competition between regional or international actors.

The Algerian-initiated Joint Operational Army Staffs Committee (CEMOC) is arguably the G5 Sahel’s most direct counterpart. This organization that regroups Algeria, Mauritania, Mali, and Niger was created under the leadership of Algeria in order to counter the growing cross-border terrorism threat in the region. But given the resistance of Algeria to the deployment of foreign troops in this area, one could argue that one unstated purpose

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<sup>156</sup> Du Toit, “Rules and Procedures for Negotiated Peacemaking,” 75.

<sup>157</sup> Darby and MacGinty, *Contemporary Peacemaking: Conflict, Violence and Peace Process*, 51.

<sup>158</sup> Guelke, “Negotiations and Peace Processes,” 59–60.

<sup>159</sup> Darby and MacGinty, *Contemporary Peacemaking: Conflict, Violence and Peace Process*, 51.



that Algiers expected from CEMOC was arguably to “dissuade Western states from intervening more directly in the Sahara”<sup>160</sup> by convincing them that it had regional threats under control through the creation of this organization.<sup>161</sup> What is clear is that the CEMOC has not been effective given the devolution of the security situation in the region that led to the outbreak of the Malian crisis. As a result, Chad, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger created the G5 Sahel, this time under French leadership and without the participation of Algeria.

The absence of Algeria is definitely another significant handicap for the G5 Sahel. As previously discussed, Abdallah Brahimi argues that since the creation of G5 Sahel, [The Algerian] government is making efforts [not only] to demonstrate its control of its military [but also to send] a message to France, its neighbors in the Sahel, and other countries interested in regional security that Algeria is still the dominant player.”<sup>162</sup> For Brahimi, “Algeria’s expertise and extensive knowledge of militant groups across the Sahel is invaluable to the success of any multilateral security mechanism.”<sup>163</sup> Although Brahimi is correct about the importance of Algeria in any security mechanism, Arrieff casts doubt on such Algerian potential by arguing that “The effectiveness of the Joint Operational Army Staffs Committee (CEMOC) remains unproven.”<sup>164</sup> Clearly, there is debate over the impact that excluding Algeria may have on a multilateral mechanism like G5 Sahel.

Nevertheless, the interaction between Algeria and France definitely undermines the G5 Sahel and negatively impacts the implementation of the 2015 peace agreement. In terms of the security and defense area, the fight against the armed groups spoiling the peace process is failing because of a lack of commitment from Algiers. The most important of those spoilers is arguably Ansar Dine, the combatants of which continue to supply themselves on the Algerian territory, as previously mentioned. The G5 Sahel force that is

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<sup>160</sup> Abdallah Brahimi, *Algeria’s Military Makeover* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 2016), <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/63373>.

<sup>161</sup> Brahimi.

<sup>162</sup> Brahimi.

<sup>163</sup> Brahimi.

<sup>164</sup> Arieff, *Algeria and the Crisis in Mali*.

expected to defeat the spoilers militarily can hardly do so without the full cooperation of Algeria. And because of the exclusion of Algeria from this regional organization and because of France's influence on it, Algiers sees this organization as more of a rival than a regional counterterrorism partner. Clearly, Algiers shows little interest in resolving the Malian conflict. Therefore, the country's involvement in the Malian peace process and especially its role of chief mediator are definitely falling short in the peace process.

In addition to the armed group left out of the peace process, the signatory groups, including the MNLA also continue to conduct violence on the ground. Despite the violation of the ceasefire by these Tuareg rebels, France continues to cover their leaders. As previously mentioned, it is hardly possible to make progress in the political and institutional area without reaching a certain level of security and stability. Thus, France's involvement in the current peace process also constitutes an obstacle for pressing the rebels to lay down their arms and make peace with Bamako.

Clearly, the situation in Mali did not improve as a result of the involvement of the many international actors previously mentioned. Algeria's and France's contributions to the negotiation and implementation of the 2015 peace agreement have been so far motivated by their own interests, which obviously conflict with the progress of the Malian peace process. The United Nations mission, the MINUSMA, is not operationally designed to address the recurring new types of threats arising in northern Mali, nor is it influential enough to coordinate and mitigate the adversity between Algeria and France.

Unfortunately, this adversity is arguably one of the most important obstacles to the progress of the Malian peace process. For instance, Algiers holds its position to not intervene in Mali itself, but also to prevent any potential rival, such as France, from taking root in northern Mali. In fact, Algeria has always rejected the deployment of Western troops, particularly French soldiers, in Mali. In fact, when the Malian government asked France for help, which was only air support at first, French authorities would not agree to help unless they could send troops on the ground. Malian and French officials then had to push hard to get an accord with Algiers, which allows French soldiers not only to station themselves in northern Mali but also to use the Algerian air territory for strikes.

This troubled situation makes Tamboura argue that only an inclusive approach taking into account the complexity of the Malian crisis and supported by regional and international mechanisms will lead to a real peace situation in northern Mali and in the Sahel-Saharan region.<sup>165</sup> All this confirms the hypothesis that the French and Algerian double games as well as the inadequacy of the coordination strategy employed by the UN so far have a relatively negative impact on the smooth running of the peace process in Mali.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

There is a consensus among scholars that implementing a peace agreement is as important as reaching it, and that peace makers should pay attention to factors such as the quality of peace agreements, the presence of spoilers, and the hostility of neighboring countries to peacemaking. Similarly, it is generally admitted that international actors intervene to mitigate factors and protect the peace process. Yet, there is controversy over the strategy these international actors need to adopt in order to prevent peace processes from derailing. This thesis has demonstrated that the intervention of international actors in a conflict is usually motivated by national, regional, or global interests. Although in some rare cases those interests can be convergent, this thesis concludes that in the case of Mali, they are absolutely divergent, making these actors' interactions damaging for the peace process.

More concretely, the low quality of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali signed in 2015 emanated from the motivations and interactions of international actors such as Algeria and France, while the weakness of the United Nations contributed to slowing down the peace process. Furthermore, the fact that Algeria and France act primarily in pursuit of their own interests complicates the coordination of the peace process by MINUSMA and diffuses peace-making efforts. As Jones argues about the UN coordinating system in general, the prevalence of geostrategic competition between these two influential countries present in Mali and the weakness of the MINUSMA's authority

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<sup>165</sup> Tamboura, *The Tuareg Conflict and Its Geopolitical Issues in Mali: Geopolitics of a Rebellion*, 217.

over the peace process primary actors creates serious coordination issues in the specific case of the Malian peace process.<sup>166</sup>

For example, the French contingent, the largest and best-equipped one in Mali, is not under the command of the MINUSMA. Instead, it operates under French authority, and its actions reflect France's particular interpretation of the conflict. Even though there is good cooperation between French forces and the UN peacekeeping contingents on the ground, coordinating such an operation at a strategic level between Paris and the UN command in Mali may be more problematic.

On its side, Algeria, though it has no troops on Malian soil, uses its chief mediator status to significantly influence belligerents, including the Malian government. This situation may also explain why many core issues, including the critical controversy over Kidal and the extending of the negotiations to some terrorist factions, have been avoided not only during the negotiations but also at the implementation step.

While Algeria is closer to the terrorist groups, France has more contacts with the rebels. This expresses a fundamental divergence in values and may have been caused by the pursuit of each actor's interests. In fact, on the one hand, Algeria fears the development of rebellion because it may directly affect its own communities and so tends to work with terrorists to weaken them. France, on the other hand, fears terrorists and tends to cooperate with the rebels to undermine them.

In addition to ideological conflicts of interest, France and Algeria also seek to protect their particular security and economic interests. Indeed, this Sahelo-Saharan region is renowned for its immense potential in natural resources such as uranium, which Areva, a French multinational energy company, already exploits in Niger. In addition to uranium, the northern Malian region overflows with oil the exploitation of which would have a negative impact on the Algerian oil resources because of the low altitude of Mali compared to Algeria. So, even if Algeria pledges against the emergence of a Tuareg state in northern Mali for the reasons mentioned previously, it is in no hurry to see peace and stability return

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<sup>166</sup> Jones, "The Challenges of Strategic Coordination," 111.

to Mali, because this could allow Bamako to realize its dream of a country producing black gold at the expense of Algerian reserves necessary to extend Algeria's economic and military hegemony over the entire region.

Ultimately, these Tuareg rebellions are more of a manipulation orchestrated from the outside to undermine the successive regimes of Bamako rather than the consequence of the under development or socio-political exclusion of the northerners as repeatedly proclaimed by the rebels leaders. Clotilde Barbet argues that the Tuareg's claims have not always been well-founded because large sums of money were allocated to the northern regions to help implement many programs aimed at improving the living conditions of the population there.<sup>167</sup> Furthermore, Barbet notes that the international community supports the rebel movements more or less directly.<sup>168</sup> In the light of all this, Barbet's arguments are consistent, not only with the reality on the ground, but above all with the perception that most Malians have of French and Algerian policies, respectively, with regard to the Tuareg rebels and some terrorist groups operating in Mali.

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<sup>167</sup> Clotilde Barbet, *Tuareg Rebellions in Northern Mali: Between Received Ideas and Realities* (Paris: Harmattan, 2015), 144.

<sup>168</sup> Barbet.

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