

# ON A KNIFE-EDGE MALI'S CHALLENGES AFTER SERVAL OPERATION

January 2014



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# **ON A KNIFE-EDGE** **MALI'S CHALLENGES** **AFTER SERVAL** **OPERATION**

January 2014



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## | Abstract

**One year after the start of Operation Serval, Mali's reconstruction is only just beginning.** The security situation remains fragile. Moreover, the country is facing huge economic and political hurdles: coming out of the "poverty trap", putting some sense back into the State, building a nation and a citizenship, braking with five decades of more or less latent tensions...

**To face these challenges, support of international community is necessary,** both for contributing to reinforcement of security through the provision of peacekeepers, and allowing the launch of development projects and bearing on the negotiations between the government and the ex-rebels. However, several pitfalls must be avoided. Firstly, the fight against the jihadist groups must not take precedence over more important national issues. Secondly, the roots of the 2012 crisis are not economic but political, and development programs alone cannot lead to security mainly based on the settlement of sources of old tensions and the reinforcement of armed forces and police. Lastly, reflection and vigilance are required to reinforce the effectiveness of international programs.

**If an international commitment in the long term is required, Mali's future lies mainly in the hands of Malians** who could never be replaced by the international lenders and France. Without the Malian authorities taking into account the deep roots which toppled their country, without the will to put their country on a new path and without abandoning the logic of seizure of power and benefits by the winners during elections or rebellions, the period that opened up in January 2013 with the French intervention will only constitute an inter-war period. This transition will not be easy. Encouraging mentalities to evolve will take time. But this ill fate must not prevail for the Malian government and its citizens, and the coming months will be significantly important for addressing the new messages.

**Ultimately, Mali is a case study of teachings which go beyond the borders of the country.** Whereas the development of extremist religious mindsets, the absence of legitimacy of the State and the trivialisation of corruption are no exception in the sub-region, the Malian trajectory in 2012 must call upon all the Western African and Sahel leaders, and not only because of the necessity to reinforce an embryonic regional cooperation.







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## | Recommendations

Recommendation 1	<b>To reinforce the Minusma, necessary in view of the fragility of the security situation, through a larger mobilisation of all the international players</b>
Recommendation 2	<b>To follow-up the Malian units trained by EUTM Mali over the long term with closely integrated divisions carrying on the work of initial training</b>
Recommendation 3	<b>To make an unambiguous commitment with the Malian players in favour of the negotiations and a peace agreement which will necessarily require concessions from each party</b>
Recommendation 4	<b>Give some meaning to the idea of nation and to the State through actions including strong measures in education matters, powerful messages from political leaders and a clean-up of public life</b>
Recommendation 5	<b>Not to get locked in a conflictual North-South reading in the elaboration of political answers to the 2012 crisis, at the risk of increasing the tensions in the northern regions</b>
Recommendation 6	<b>Engage economic reforms and acquire the financial means to reduce a fragility of Mali which, although not at the origin of the 2012 crisis, is a vector of tensions</b>
Recommendation 7	<b>Encourage, in the face of an aggressive Wahhabi message, the more traditional religious views through the training of moderate imams in particular</b>
Recommendation 8	<b>Reinforce the measures for the fight against corruption and patronage, reinforce the judicial structures in charge of repression and make the Malians as a whole aware of the impact of the latter</b>

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- Recommendation 9 **Prioritise the fight against drug trafficking: in fact, because of the amounts involved, they strongly contributed over the past years to increase tensions and delegitimise the authorities and the security forces**
- Recommendation 10 **Reinforce the funding and monitoring mechanisms of international aid, by demonstrating willingness in the application of sanctions in the event of breach of the predefined rules and the objectives**
- Recommendation 11 **Continue the efforts to give body to an effective regional cooperation by favouring bilateral approaches in the short to medium-term and the use of existing international structures in order to initiate a dynamic that is still in its infancy**
- Recommendation 12 **Reinforce the crisis management capabilities of the CEDEAO, in particular through the constitution of an institutional database making it possible to draw lessons from past operations and to keep them**



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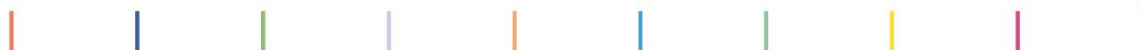
## | Introduction

On 11 January 2013 the French forces were intervening in Mali. Operation Serval contributed to dismantle the Jihadist infrastructure in Northern Mali. Several hundred fighters were killed. Logistics warehouses, weapons caches, several training centres, a printing press and twenty workshops for the manufacture of improvised explosives were destroyed. In the Amettetai valley alone, twenty tons of ammunition was collected, to which were added several hundreds of weapons.

Even if the tactical victory is real, the security situation remains fragile. Jihadist groups have not disappeared from the Malian scene and carry on harassing the coalition armed forces and the local representatives with attacks that will carry on for several years. Most of all, the military intervention is only the first stage of a long and complex procedure aiming at rebuilding Mali. The Malian army is still being trained and its supremacy, over and above the uncertainties, will take time. In the relationship between Northern and Southern Mali, the deep roots of the crisis that resulted in the emergence of a new rebellion in 2012, have not disappeared. Lastly, as far as development is concerned, Mali must reduce poverty, create jobs - in 2009, 47% of the population were younger than 15 - and consolidate its most important production chains.

The challenges for both stabilising and reconstructing a wounded country are therefore huge but the 2012 upsets are only a revelation of much deeper ills in which the Malian political class is at the forefront. As the French Ambassador in Mali reminded on 16 February 2013, at the Bamako Forum, the rebuilding of the State's structures and its links with the populations lies in fact before all on itself: *"it must as from now embrace the problem and say how it will prepare for the future, how to reform political habits, how to put an end to this atomisation of political life, how to make sure that each institution fully occupies its position, how to set the foundation of a national pact against corruption and bad practices, and, in short, how to avoid repeating the errors of the past"*.

In this context, the reconstruction of Mali is only starting and augurs to be difficult, imposing both a continued commitment of the international community and not just focusing on the real, but limited, jihadist threat. Of course, the offensive from the French and African troops made it possible to stop the dynamics of armed groups' implantation. But the use of force does not constitute a long-term solution. It only represents an opportunity to elaborate political answers to deep issues that have affected Mali for several years and in which both Malians and international community must work jointly<sup>1</sup>.



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<sup>1</sup> Besides the works and articles mentioned in the footnote, this study is supported by about twenty interviews carried out in Europe and in Western Africa, directly or by phone.




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## Part 1 | A fragile security situation

Mali is in a precarious balance. The jihadist groups carry on posing a latent threat whereas the Malian army is engaged in a long training procedure. But above all, the relationships between the former rebels and the State remain tense.

### 1 | Persistent jihadism



Even if the intervention from France, Chad and the African countries participating in the Misma made it possible to break the capacity of action of the jihadist armed groups in the northern Mali region, the operations are nevertheless not complete. Of course, several hundred fighters were killed or apprehended. The armed groups supposedly lost between 400 and 600 men of the 1600 estimated at the instigation of Serval mission including the Algerian national Abou Zeid, whereas about the same number supposedly decided to surrender. But the last third apparently chose to carry on fighting, starting with the men of the Mujao and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQMI)<sup>2</sup>. In fact the Mujao and Mokhtar Belmokhtar announced on 22 August of this year the fusion of their two movements and the creation of *Al Mourabitoune* (the Almoravides) with a view to *"achieve the unity of Muslims from the Nile to the Atlantic"*<sup>3</sup>.

In this perspective, the military operations carry on destroying the stocks of arms, eliminate the fighters refusing to surrender and halt any attempt at re-territorialisation. Contrary to the actions carried out in January and February 2013, it is however no longer a question of taking back a territory, but carrying out missions to monitor zones and engage in regular offensive actions in conjunction with the peacekeepers and the Malian security forces. The latter take either the form of heavy operations mobilising several hundred French, Malian and Minusma fighters, or smaller operations resulting from information obtained by electronic means or *"feedback"* from the population<sup>4</sup>.

The end of 2013 appears to demonstrate increased activity of the jihadist groups. On 23 October, soldiers from Chad were attacked in the Tessalit region during an operation qualified as "complex" by the French army: after the explosion of a car bomb, two kamikazes were trying to infiltrate the Chadian apparatus followed by *"several lines of fighters"*<sup>5</sup>. On 21 November, three rockets fell on Gao and, on 10 December, the French army carried out an operation in the Timbuktu region, during which at least 19 members of a jihadist group were killed. Admittedly, the towns were "liberated" but as the Defence Minister, Soumeylou Boubeye Maïga recalled at the beginning of November, *"the work is not over. [...] It is an emergency, because the groups are back in their sanctuaries"*<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Isabelle Lasserre and Thierry Oberlé, *Notre guerre secrète au Mali. Les nouvelles menaces contre la France*, Paris, Fayard, 2013, p. 59.

<sup>3</sup> Antonin Tisseron, "Quel terrorisme au Sahel après l'opération Serval ? Jihadisme nomade et extension régionale", Institut Thomas More, Note d'actualité 13, October 2013.

<sup>4</sup> AFP, "Opération contre AQMI au Mali", *Le Monde.fr*, 14 November 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Cyril Bensimon, "Au Mali, les groupes djihadistes se réorganisent et multiplient les attaques", *Le Monde*, 24 October 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Christophe Châtelot, "L'insécurité dans la zone de Kidal ternit les relations entre le Mali et la France", *Le Monde*, 18 November 2013.

The reduction of this unpredictable threat will take time and constitutes a real challenge for the Malian government, armed forces being reconstructed, and pending international community involvement. As reminded by the United Nations special envoy in Mali on 19 September this year, Bert Koenders, the Minusma does not have enough planes and helicopters and, from the 12,000 men initially envisaged, only 6,123 (5,056 soldiers and 816 policemen) have been deployed<sup>7</sup>. This jihadist activity, in spite of its consequences, must not however mask the other issues for Mali and is mainly a nuisance, considering that for the groups who base their legitimacy on their fight and their presence in the media, this action is a guarantee of survival.

## 2 | A Malian army to (re)build

At the beginning of March 2013, the Army Chief of Staff, Admiral Guillaud, was stating the French objective in these terms: *"There will remain a handmade dimension [of jihadism], which will no longer represent an immediate danger and which will be handled by the countries in the region"*<sup>8</sup>. If the capacity of the jihadist groups is one element of security reinforcement, another is that of the Malian security forces to oppose it. And in this domain, much remains to be done.

### A | EUTM-Mali: a European training mission

Several member states of the European Union, including France, Spain, the United Kingdom and Denmark have been working for several years in favour of a European action specifically centred on the Sahel<sup>9</sup>. On 15 October 2012, in particular because of the implication of the French Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, the Foreign Affairs Committee is asking for the drafting of a concept of crisis management. On November 19th, the latter was followed up by an agreement in principle to create a European mission to support the military intervention of the Economic Community of Western African States (CEDEAO). From the options taken into consideration, the simple financial support and a training-consultancy-teaching mission were discarded in favour of a training-consultancy mission for four battalions of the Malian armed forces<sup>10</sup>. After receiving a letter of invitation from the Malian authorities on 24 December 2012, the EU Committee set up the legal framework for EUTM Mali and appointed the Head of Mission on 17 January 2013. A few weeks later, the mission was launched.

The gestation of EUTM was thus relatively fast. Between the expression of the requirement in November 2012 and the actual launch in February 2013, only three months elapsed. Even better, within ten weeks, the European Union adopted the concept of crisis management, the legal framework of the mission and decided on its launch. For the participants to the project, *"the procedures provided the maximum of their potential"*<sup>11</sup>. However, as Roland Marchal recalled, the launch of this mission was not without difficulties. During 2012, the French authorities did not succeed in convincing their European allies of the threat represented by the situation in Mali, starting with the United Kingdom and Germany. The activism of Paris in favour of the Sahel was met in fact by British fears to neglect Somalia and German reservations regarding the use of force and the reinforcement of the military apparatus<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Christophe Boisbouvier, "Bert Koenders : il reste un risque jihadiste au nord du Mali", *RFI*, 19 September 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Isabelle Lasserre and Thierry Oberlé, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

<sup>9</sup> In 2008, France and Spain were the only countries to defend a European commitment in this region.

<sup>10</sup> Bérangère Rouppert, "EUTM Mali. Une mission déployée dans l'urgence dans un contexte de conflit ouvert", GRIP, Note d'analyse, 19 avril 2013, p. 8.

The financial support is considered insufficient compared to the evaluated needs. As for the training-consultancy-teaching mission, it was quickly abandoned because of the risks incurred by the European trainers within a context of conflict and the certainty to encounter the refusal from a great number of states.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted by Bérangère Rouppert, *art. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>12</sup> Roland Marchal, "Briefing Military (Mis)Adventures in Mali", *African Affairs*, 112/488, May 2013, pp. 486-497, p. 491. The German reservations are at the origin of the limitation of the mandate of EUCAP Sahel Niger concerning the support to armed forces.

However, in spite of the institutional success of EUTM Mali, training for ten to twelve weeks<sup>13</sup> only constitutes a starting point for the Malian army and the progress will evolve in time through the "consultancy" section. For their first important operation in the north, the soldiers of the GTIA *Elou* (the Elephants) set out without a map, while the medic had neither perfusions nor antibiotics<sup>14</sup>. Also, several questions remain such as the future of the units trained, the recruitment of new soldiers or also the follow-up of the training provided. Thus, the first unit of the Malian army trained by the European Union, the GTIA *Waraba* (the Lions), decided to boycott the investiture ceremony – cancelled by high command –, with the soldiers demanding ranks, allowances and indemnities.

## B | Deep ills

Far from being only the consequence of cyclical factors linked to the coup d'état of Captain Sanogo on 22 March, the collapse of the Malian army against the Tuareg rebels and their jihadist allies reveals the deep ills that cannot be limited to arguments associated to the lack of equipment or skills. In spite of numbers estimated between 7,000 and 14,000 men<sup>15</sup>, the Malian army is in fact deeply plagued by corruption, nepotism and politicisation of recruitments.

For many of its numbers, to belong to "uniformed servicemen" is before all a resource. In 2007, whereas the Malian State institutions do not hire, even dismiss, the army launched a recruitment campaign for about 3,000. But as a private earns 45,000 CFA francs a month, i.e. about 70 euros, there are many volunteers who opt for the army profession more for economic reasons than for combative or patriotic vocations. *"Some families are even prepared to do anything for their son to wear the army, police or gendarmerie uniform; in particular by giving backhanders to the recruiters to get them enrolled"*<sup>16</sup>. In this context, wearing the uniform comes with all sorts of racketeering, as the sole fact of joining the army is not really sufficient to emerge from insecurity. The officers are not concerned by the supplies and the access to care, even embezzling part of the salary of their men. In 1994, 800 trainee policemen thus protested in a Malian newspaper against embezzlement by their superior. As a result, they were removed... before being reinstated two years later<sup>17</sup>.

The Malian army is also a mirror of internal tensions which shake society.

- During his two mandates, Amadou Toumani Touré appointed 45 generals, reinforcing the unbalance with old captains in charge of the fight against armed groups and of which Sanogo - appointed general by the interim government - is indicative in spite of his lack of presence on the Front. In February 2012, the latter were in fact the ones holding positions in the north, whereas the funding by the international lenders was before all perceived by the troops as a vector of injustice benefiting superior officers.
- The integration of Tuareg fighters, and especially the collective waves, increased the frustration and resentment. From one day to the next, a lieutenant could find himself under the orders of a captain against whom he had fought a few months previously, with an unverifiable military experience and questionable loyalty. Captain Ousmane Haïdara, a former Tuareg rebel integrated with the rank of captain and appointed head of the Diabali military zone, thus disappeared during a rebel attack in 2008, before reappearing after the battles. He was however reintegrated and subsequently promoted to the rank of Commander and Colonel, before commanding the troops of Ansar Eddine that attacked Diabali on 13 January 2013<sup>18</sup>.

Using this as a stigmatisation for the absence of training, the lack of equipment, the inexperience of the Malian soldiers, the inefficiency of the French and American programs<sup>19</sup> must not hide deeper ills. Admitted-

<sup>13</sup> The training includes a first week of evaluation, three weeks initial training of the soldier, three weeks training to a speciality, two weeks training to an ETIA level (unified tactical scale) and one last week to a GTIA level (tactical unified group, i.e. a battalion and its support).

<sup>14</sup> Nathalie Guibert, "Tuer l'hydre djihadiste au Mali", *Le Monde*, 4 November 2013.

<sup>15</sup> Even if the number of 11,000 men (army, air force, national guard) is that quoted the most often, some uncertainty remains as to the exact numbers because of defection, forced resignations and striking-off of the post-coup of 22 March, high absenteeism, discrepancies between the actual numbers and those effectively under the officers orders... It should be noted that this inherent limit to the available numbers is far to be limited to Malian armed forces and to Mali in the sub-region.

<sup>16</sup> Eros Sana, "L'armée malienne entre instabilité, inégalités sociales et luttes de places", in Michel Galy (dir Michel Galy (dir.), *La guerre au Mali. Comprendre la crise au Sahel et au Sahara. Enjeux et zones d'ombre*, Paris, La découverte, 2013, pp. 106-120, p. 107.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>19</sup> About the security programs in the Sahel, refer especially to: Antonin Tisseron, "Enchevêtrements géopolitiques autour de la lutte contre le terrorisme dans le Sahara", *Hérodote*, no.142, 3e trimestre 2011, pp. 98-107 ; Bérandère Rouppert and Antonin Tisseron, "Approche comparée des politiques euro-

ly, the level is very low, as is proven by the absence, "during the retreats of 2012 and 2013, of actions as elementary as that of destroying the stocks of ammunition and supplies to avoid them falling into the hands of the enemy"<sup>20</sup>. But problems go beyond these dimensions and hark back to the motivation, the commitment, the allegiance to the uniform and the State, and even to the more general operation of Malian society. "Let us not have any illusions, declared at the end of 2013 a former French officer who trained Malian soldiers in Koulikoro, *nothing is going to change in a few years. The army has done nothing for 20 years*".

### 3 | Northern regions under tension

Finally, the North of the country remains under tension. The former rebels are engaged in a tug of war with the Malian authorities, of which a declaration for the resumption of hostilities against the Malian army by the MNLA on 29 November is one of the latest actions. On 26 September, the Tuareg and Arab rebellions halted the negotiations with the Malian government. "Further to the many difficulties for the implementation of the Ouagadougou agreement caused in particular by the non-respect of its commitments by the Malian governmental party", the Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad (MNLA) (National Movement for the liberation of the Azawad), le Haut Conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad (HCUA) (The high commission for the unity of the Azawad) and the Mouvement arabe de l'Azawad (MAA) (Arabic movement of the Azawad)<sup>21</sup> "decided to suspend [their] participation in the implementation structures of said agreement". Because officially, for the will not to negotiate for anything other than the autonomy of the Azawad<sup>22</sup>, whereas for the Malian President, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, "the territorial integrity of Mali as well as the national unity" were two red lines that could not be crossed<sup>23</sup>.

Being a sign of the tensions between the Malian government and the ex-rebels movements, it is only in mid-November that the MNLA left the buildings of the Governorate and the Radio in Kidal, both strategic and symbolic places, following a decision that was taken at the Ouagadougou agreements in June. And also: this evacuation, announced on 9 November, divided the partisans of the rebellion. Several people, opposed to this, organised a sit-in protest and demonstrators ransacked part of the Governorate as well as other public buildings nearby as an echo of the violence of 18 July: a march by the members of the Songhai community to support the return of the administration and the Malian army resulted into a violent reaction from partisans of the Azawad. The rebel leaders are in fact face with pressure from a support base which feels excluded from the current negotiations and procedures and even fears recuperation for individual purposes<sup>24</sup>. Thus, by accepting to compete in the Rassemblement pour le Mali (RPM) (Rally for Mali) in the legislative elections, three representatives of the HCUA – Ahmada Ag Bibi, Mohamed Ag Intalla (Alghabass Ag Intalla's brother) and Ag Ahmed Inawéléne – gave rise to a reaction of hostility from militants and combatants who felt betrayed<sup>25</sup>.

Even if the Kidal region presents a unique facet, the tensions are not limited to that zone. About a hundred young people demonstrated in Gao at the end of August to protest against the return of Arab inhabitants they accused of having been accomplices of the terrorist groups under the occupation. Especially, whereas the inhabitants of the Northern regions learned to live without State representatives, the question of the

péenne et américaine de lutte contre le terrorisme et l'extrémisme violent", in *Sahel. Éclairer le passé pour mieux dessiner l'avenir*, GRIP, 2013, pp. 77-94.

<sup>20</sup> Béangère Rouppert, *art. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> On 4 November, these three movements announced their fusion in Ouagadougou, acquiring a common political "platform", a "commission of negotiations" and an "organ of decisions" (AFP, "Mali : trois mouvements touaregs rebelles et arabes annoncent leur fusion", *Le Monde.fr*, 4 November 2013). For a presentation of these three groups and their links with Ansar Eddine, refer to: Priscilla Sadatchy, "Mali, un dialogue de sourd ? Les suites de l'Accord préliminaire de Ouagadougou", GRIP, Note d'analyse, 19 November 2013.

<sup>22</sup> About the mythical founding of the Azawad, refer to: André Bourgeot, "Révoltes et rébellions en pays touareg", *Afrique contemporaine*, no.170, Q2 1994, pp. 3-19, p. 14 ; Frédéric Deycard, *Les rébellions touarègues du Niger : combattants, mobilisations et culture politique*, PHD diss., Institut d'études politiques de Bordeaux, Political science PhD (January 2011, pp. 171-173).

<sup>23</sup> AFP, "Négociations suspendues au Mali entre Bamako et les rebelles", *Le Monde.fr*, 27 September 2013.

<sup>24</sup> The project of fusion of the three movements may appear as a means of regaining control to fight against the centrifugal forces by restoring sense to fighting and by being able to lay more heavily in the negotiations with the Malian Government. However, the divergence between the HCUA and the MNLA towards the legislative elections are testifying of the limits of an agreement to be taken into consideration prudently.

<sup>25</sup> Priscilla Sadatchy, *art. cit.*, pp. 16-17.



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return of the administration and the resuming of the public sector remains to be answered. At the end of 2013, in the Timbuktu and Gao regions, only one doctor appointed by the Ministry for Health was working in each of the regional capitals, the others being from NGOs. Also, in Timbuktu, Prefects were still in the Governorate at the end of November, refusing to return to their districts because of the insecurity.

## Recommendations



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**Recommendation 1** | To reinforce the Minusma, necessary in view of the fragility of the security situation, through a larger mobilisation of all the international players

**Recommendation 2** | To follow-up the Malian units trained by EUTM Mali over the long term with closely integrated divisions carrying on the work of initial training


**Recommendation 3** | To make an unambiguous commitment with the Malian players in favour of the negotiations and a peace agreement which will necessarily require concessions from each party



## Partie 2 | Develop, pacify, reconstruct: the vast projects of Mali

In this context, the projects Mali is facing are huge. Development is of course at the heart of the challenges, but it must not hide the other dimensions of a rebuilding. More than a development issue, the insecurity refers to the feeling of exclusion from part of the population, to the reciprocal distrust and the absence of shared national story, to the necessity to return a sense of meaning to the State and to the notion of public service.

### 1 | The Malian "poverty trap"



Mali belongs to the group of countries with low human development. Between 1990 and 2012 the Human Development Index (HDI) for Mali went from 0.204 to 0.344. The progress is real but rather less rapid than in the other sub-Saharan African countries, where the average HDI was 0.475 in 2012. As far as poverty is concerned, the multidimensional poverty index (MPI) is not much better: the portion of the Malian population showing a deprivation of more than 33% in one of the three domains of the index (health, education and standard of living) is 86.6%. But then, this situation is greatly linked to the economic structure of a country caught in a "poverty trap".

Agriculture still dominates the Malian economy. The agricultural sector (including livestock, timber exploitation and fishing), evaluated at 70% of the GDP and 60% in the 1980's, still contributes in fact to 40% of the GDP and employs 80% of the work force. Furthermore, the last Malian population census, carried out in 2009, revealed that two thirds of the population lives in a rural environment. Food agriculture is the most important (20%), the main productions being cereals (millet, sorghum, corn and rice). As for livestock, it represented between 8 and 15% of the GDP in recent years<sup>26</sup>. Services accounted for 40% of the GDP and the industrial sector for 20% with a contraction in recent years of the manufacturing activity compensated by a growth of the mining sector, in particular gold mining: the latter contributing 8.4% of the GDP and three quarters of Malian exports in 2012 owing to the industrialisation of the exploitation of gold fields as from 1998<sup>27</sup>.

Contrary to gold, the cotton sector drives a whole segment of the economy beyond rural producers: ginning factories, oil mills, carriers.... But because of the absence of a textile industry, Malian production is very dependent upon international pricing mechanisms. From the outset and with the support from France<sup>28</sup>, the

<sup>26</sup> Jean-Étienne Bidou et Isabelle Droy, "Quelle économie pour sortir de la pauvreté ?", in Patrick Gonin *et al.* (dir.), *La tragédie malienne*, Paris, Vendémiaire, 2013, pp. 247-271, pp. 247-248, pp. 253-254.

<sup>27</sup> Mali changes in 1998 its policy of management of resources and opens the exploitation of gold to foreign companies. These companies (Canadian, American, South African and British) are associated to Malian State in the form of *joint ventures* for the mines in south and south-west of the country (*Ibid.*, p. 254).

<sup>28</sup> Vincent Géronimi and Issa Sacko, "La France et les dynamiques de la "trappe à pauvreté" malienne. Inertie des spécialisations et instabilités", in *Mali-*

sector thus benefits from coverage of the global fluctuations. This mode of regulation is however greatly called into question under the pressure from international institutions, as it proves very difficult to maintain a policy of stabilisation of cotton prices over the long term. The restructuring resulting from this incapacity presents two opposing views. The first one is an approach per sector, where the cotton sector is handled in a narrow fashion and the efficiency of which must be reinforced. If the prices fall, only the most productive farmers carry on. The second view is based on the idea that cotton forms part of rural development. An integrated approach must therefore be maintained, as defended by the farming organisations, the Malian State and, to a certain extent, French cooperation<sup>29</sup>. The privatisation of the cotton sector was not carried out and the failures in countries like Ghana or Benin have weakened the liberal dogma. However, the perspectives are not very optimistic, several surveys agreeing to underline the impoverishment of the rural populations in the cotton basin since 2006, when the region gained 1.5 million inhabitants in ten years and that the land reserves practically no longer exist<sup>30</sup>.

In this context, the question of the development of Mali remains pending, especially when the limited number of production sectors results in a strong macroeconomic vulnerability. As summed up by Vincent Géronimi and Issa Sacko, "*extroversion, dependence and concentration of exports translate into a strong sensibility of the economy to the multiple shocks affecting it, whether they are linked to the international markets or drought episodes. The maintenance of a primary specialisation over the long term also characterises the Malian poverty trap, and makes it possible to explain the relation existing between a high degree of instabilities and low macroeconomic performances over the long term*"<sup>31</sup>.

## 2 | One war, several conflicts

Whilst being a structural factor of tensions affecting Malian society, poverty and economic weaknesses have not been the elements triggering 2012 political and security crisis. Its roots lie in the history of Mali and several conflictual dynamics.

### A | The North-South grid model..

If the outbreak of the last rebellion in the north refers before all to the repercussions of the war in Libya, the "*Tuareg question*" is much older and has its roots in the political and economic challenges dating back to the arrival of French soldiers and administrators who split the desert territories – considered as having to be controlled at lower cost – in a useful enhanced Sahel<sup>32</sup>. In this context, the perspective of the decolonisation worries the traditional Tuareg leaders but, with the failure in the attempt of common organisation of the Saharan regions (ORCS)<sup>33</sup>, decolonisation has been carried out within the framework of the administrative borders of the colonial empire. The Sahara becomes divided between various States and Tuareg people are torn between Algeria and Libya in the North, Mali, Niger and Burkina-Faso in the South. The transhumance axes are cut. In the South, the power is transferred to "*Blacks*".

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France. *Regards sur une histoire partagée*, Bamako/Paris, Donniya/Karthala, 2005, pp. 463-481, pp. 466-467.

<sup>29</sup> Jean-Étienne Bidou and Isabelle Droy, *art. cit.*, pp. 260-261.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Vincent Géronimi et Issa Sacko, *art. cit.*, p. 472.

<sup>32</sup> About the colonial administration, refer to Elmouloud Yattara, "Les traitements différents des communautés africaines par les Français", in *Mali -France. Regards sur une histoire partagée*, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-89.

<sup>33</sup> For the promoters of the common organisation of the Saharan regions, the administrative dividing of the Sahara contradicts the view and to the organisation of an overall Saharan economy. The project is submitted in April 1956 at the Council of ministers and the law adopted on 10 January 10 1957. Its objective is to encourage the economic development and the social promotion of the French Saharan areas by acting in particular in the domain of road and air transports, and the agricultural and pastoral sectors ... and the exploitation of oil and mines (Emmanuel Grégoire, *Touaregs du Niger. Le destin d'un mythe*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2010, p. 30 ; Mamoudou Djibo, "Rébellion touarègue et question saharienne au Niger", *Autrepart*, no.23, 2002, pp. 135-156, p. 141).

The incorporation of Mali is perceived by Tuareg as a betrayal by France, with splits exacerbated by the distance and negative stereotyped representations<sup>34</sup>. Sign of these tensions and the refusal for the division of the borders by the decolonisation, the first rebellion occurred a few years after the independence processes, in 1963-1964. Until the beginning of the 1990s, the north is then placed under military control. The repression, together with the droughts of the 1970s and 1980s, result in the fall of the nomadic pastoral economy and the mass exile of the northern nationals to neighbouring countries, first in Algeria to find jobs, then more and more to Libya because of the warm welcome by the authorities of any potential worker and the opportunities of recruitment in the Libyan army. As for the development programs, they do not make it possible to reduce this marginalisation. The North remains forgotten by the education, health and infrastructure programs.

In 1990, the conflict starts again and, in spite of the signing of the national pact of April 1992<sup>35</sup> and a ceremony of the "*Flamme de la Paix*" (Flame of Peace) in Timbuktu on 27 March 1996, tensions remain. The integration of thousands of former fighters with ranks corresponding only to the concern of not bruising egos, the appointment of some leaders to high administrative functions without training, as well as the presence on the candidate lists and the integration of people not having fought between 1990 and 1995<sup>36</sup>, prove to be counter-productive. In this context, the policy of Amadou Toumani Touré, elected President in 2002, does not contribute to appeasement and reinforcement of the capacity of Malian State to offer safety to the populations in the North or to administer justice. The material neglect in which the Kidal region is maintained, new drought episodes and the dissatisfaction of Tuareg fighters integrated into the Malian army resulted in a new rebellion in May 2006. Four years later, the program for peace, safety and development of North-Mali, set up by the presidential decree on 20 July 2010 for a period of two years, placed under the direct authority of the President of the Republic and presented as articulating safety and development, does not mark any real change of policy. The priority consists in militarising the north, without really meeting local expectations.

## B | ... and its limits

The inhabitants of Northern Mali are far from being united. One of the dimensions of the competition between the MNLA and Ansar Eddine is the control of the Kidal area and the relationship with Islam is not the only – even the main – cause of the conflict, but a means to conceal power challenges with a dual background: the succession of the Amenokal, traditional Tuareg leader of the de Kidal region, and the infighting between the noble lineages opposed to the agreements of Algiers or who were gradually evicted around Ibrahim Ag Bahanga, and those gathered around Iyad Ag Ghali, who had played the first role at the time of the settlement of the uprising of 2006<sup>37</sup>. Furthermore, contrary to all of its secular professions of faith the MNLA created, on 7 June 2012 following the first transition Council of the State to the Azawad, a position of consultant in charge of the Islamic orientation and predication, extended on the renewal of the movement's office on 15 January 2013<sup>38</sup>.

When the noble Tuareg lineages are fighting for the control of the territory, tensions also oppose the various ethnic groups and, within these, social groups. On the one hand, in the 1990s, self-defence militia with an ethnic founding, such as Ganda Koye mainly Songoye and Gnada Iso mainly Peule, are formed against the "armed fronts". On the other hand, a fratricidal war opposes in 1994 the Tuareg fighters of the *Mouvement Populaire de l'Azawad* (MPA), with a social *Ifoghas* base, and those of the *Armée Révolutionnaire pour la Libération de l'Azawad* (ARLA), regrouping the Tuareg wishing to end the domination of the *Ifoghas*<sup>39</sup>, whereas at the local level the implementation of the decentralisation in 1996 also fuels the clashes, like in the North of Ménaka over territorial dividing<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> International Crisis Group, "Mali : éviter l'escalade", *Rapport Afrique*, no.189, 18 July 2012, p. 2.

<sup>35</sup> The "National pact" was envisaging a gradual demilitarisation of the North, the complete integration of the rebels into the national forces. It was also acknowledging the economic marginalisation of the North and promising a plan or economic redress, everything with constitutional changes transferring a number of state prerogatives to the regions and opening the way to decentralised international cooperation.

<sup>36</sup> Charles Grémont, "Ancrage au sol et (nouvelles) mobilités dans l'espace saharo-sahélien : des expériences similaires et compatibles", *L'Année du Maghreb*, VII, 2011, pp. 177-189, p. 186. This presence of people not having fought is linked to the fact that the lists were established "by the former movement leaders in close collaboration with the faction leaders and other local political leaders" and that, for the latter, the integration was before all a "resource in which to invest".

<sup>37</sup> Roland Marchal, "Mali: Visions of War", *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development*, 2(2): 17, pp. 1-8, p. 5.


<sup>38</sup> André Bourgeot, "Des Touaregs en rébellion", in Patrick Gonin et al. (dir.), *op. cit.*, pp. 113-129, p. 123.

<sup>39</sup> Georg Klute, "From Friends to Enemies: Negotiating nationalism, tribal identities, and kinship in the fratricidal war of the Malian Tuareg", *L'Année du Maghreb*, VII, 2011, pp. 163-175, pp. 169-172. Pierre Boilley, *Les Touaregs Kel Adagh*, Paris, Karthala, 2012 (deuxième édition), p. 532.

<sup>40</sup> Charles Grémont, "Des Touaregs à l'épreuve de la frontière. Cohabitation et confrontations dans la zone de Tedjarert (nord-est du Mali)", in Sophie Caratini (dir.), *La question du pouvoir en Afrique du Nord et de l'Ouest. Volume 2*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2009, pp. 27-65.

These splits appear again in 2012. Since the beginning of Operation Serval, the *Ifoghas* are seen as essential interlocutors to the detriment of the other communities and the other regional traditional leaders and their vassals, the *Imghad*, relegated to the fringes of the politico-military negotiations. Former rebel of the 1990s, Major Colonel Elhaji Gamou is thus not included in the military operations in the Kidal region, whereas the Ganda Koye and Ganda Iso militia are excluded from negotiations which are, for the old warring Tuaregs, aristocracies and tools for preserving an old social order damaged by the elective democracy<sup>41</sup>. Moreover this opposition is one of the sources of recruitment of the Mujao: behind its references to Wahhabism and its implication in drug trafficking, the Arab cell has in fact recruited massively among the ranks of former Peule and Songoye, instrumenting the hostility against the Tuareg, the Songoye nationalism and the perspective of large amounts of money<sup>42</sup>. Therefore, if the previous social order of the colonial period has disappeared in the law, the ideology it contains remains and continues to drive the social relationships<sup>43</sup>.

### 3 | A country without a nation



Countering the perceptions in the North towards a South which oppresses and neglects, the MNLA is considered by the inhabitants of Bamako as the first terrorist movement in the country. On 15 November 2013, the Minister for national reconciliation and the regions in the North, Cheick Oumar Diarra, thus denounced *"the osmosis between the various groups"*, with members going *"from the MNLA to Ansar Dine to MUJAO and to AQIM depending on the opportunities"*<sup>44</sup>.

These representations are not unfounded. Created in spring 2013, the HCUA regroups around a peaceful discourse of former fighters of the MNLA and Ansar Dine *"who wanted to acquire a new reputation and detach themselves from these two formations which had become unpopular, even persona non grata concerning Ansar Dine"*<sup>45</sup>. Nonetheless, they also refer to historic stories of the country. As early back as the 1960s, the works published about the Moors and the Tuareg insist on the inherent difficulties to the integration of the nomadic populations into the Malian national space<sup>46</sup>. But this manner of treating the North continued under the Second (1974-1992) then the Third Republic (1992-)<sup>47</sup>. The *Panorama historique* by Adam Ba Konaré, published in 1984, only mentions the Tuareg twice in its fifteen pages: with the submission of the tribes of the region between Mopti and Timbuktu in 1898-1900, and during the police operations carried out under Modibo Keita in the Adrar of the Ifoghas against Tuareg elements. The capture of Timbuktu and the battle of Tacaubao on 15 January 1894, during which the Bonnier convoy was massacred by the Chebboun men, are therefore not even mentioned. For his part, in 1994, Youssouf Tata Cissé establishes a causal link between the ethnicity, the Muslim religion and the slavery practised by the populations from the North. *"Therefore everything happens, Francis Simonis summarises, as if the appreciation of the history of the empire of Mali, strictly regional history at the beginning of which successive governments made a national history in which each Malian was summoned to belong, had led a good part of the population of the country to feel excluded from a national story that it did not share"*<sup>48</sup>.

In this perspective, demands for truth and justice concerning the 2012 crisis cannot be sufficient to pacify the relations between the North and the South of Mali. A deeper work is necessary. The Dialogue and Reconciliation Commission constitutes a starting point, but the centralised approaches - favoured by the international community - are not the most adapted to reconcile the communities between themselves. Thus, the national Meetings of the North, organised on 1-2 November with the ambition of being one more step towards reconciliation of the people of Mali, incurred the wrath of Gao inhabitants deprived in the composition

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<sup>41</sup> André Bourgeot, *op. cit.*, pp. 125-126.

<sup>42</sup> Roland Marchal, *art. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>43</sup> André Bourgeot, "La crise malienne : vers une reconstitution géopolitique des espaces sahariens", in Mansouria Mokhefi et Alain Antil (dir.), *Le Maghreb et son Sud : vers des liens renouvelés*, Paris, CNRS Éditions, 2012, pp. 91-109, p. 93.

<sup>44</sup> Quoted by Priscilla Sadatchy, *art. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>46</sup> Quoted by Francis Simonis, "Récit national et recours au passé. À chacun son Mali", in Patrick Gonin *et al.* (dir.), *op. cit.*, pp. 183-199, pp. 196-197.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198.

of the delegation intended to represent them<sup>49</sup>.

## 4 | Returning a sense of meaning to the State

The background of the reconstruction and the reconciliation lies, in the regions of the North, upon the capacity of the Malian State and its players to put a sense of meaning back into their actions. In Mali, as in several Sahelian countries as reminded by the French senators Jean-Pierre Chevènement and Gérard Larcher, *"the lack of infrastructures and basic services has of course played the game of proselyte groups or associations sometimes advocating radical, which rushed into the void left by the States and could have appeared as factors of order or development"*. The Islamic associations and organisations first, then the jihadist groups, thus had free rein to play on the lever of *"the seduction of the populations by the satisfaction of their primary needs"*. *"By initiating an "administration", an Islamic police, health facilities, by encouraging electrification, by distributing food aid, they sometimes knew how to win hearts and ensure the support of the population, thus creating an atmosphere favourable to the development of terrorism. In Gao, it is the MUJAO which would have cleared the drains"*<sup>50</sup>.

This evolution refers back to several dimensions, two of which merit to be particularly highlighted.

The first one is the failure of a decentralisation, intended to bring a solution to the lack of interest from national leaders for regions having little weight in the political battles in Bamako: at the end 2013, the adult population in the entire Kidal region (without including the displaced and refugees resulting from the 2012 crisis) was evaluated at 38,499 people, compared to 289,490 in the Gao region, 363,207 in that of Timbuktu... and more than one million voters in the five other regions and the district of Bamako<sup>51</sup>. With three regions of the North with a population lower than each of the other regions in the country, the problems of the inhabitants of Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal are therefore not placed at the centre of the agenda of the Malian political elites, especially when the inhabitants of the South do not understand the magnitude of the spending to be carried out when the situation is already very difficult for them. In this perspective, the decentralisation represented a pertinent answer - at least on paper - to the rebellions of the 1990s, as local officials with an obvious local electoral interest were in charge of working towards the realisation of infrastructures, public health and even to development when some specific skills to this effect were transferred. In practice however, the latter embezzled part of the public funds for personal use. The most common practice was to create companies to which they attributed public contracts. *"Without any surprise, reminded International Crisis Group, for lack of the least real expertise, the works were never carried out or were carried out with delays and poor quality"*<sup>52</sup>.

The second factor is the development, for three decades, of a public religious space and an extremist mindset that came from abroad. On the one hand, whereas the State seems to be more and more between the hands of a politico-financial bourgeoisie *"familiar with informal practices"* and to the liberal economy, *"a sphere specialised in the affairs and the development rent"*, Malian society proceeded to a transfer of the *"political reason towards the religious sphere"*<sup>53</sup>. *"This is where we talk about the status of women, excision, polygamy, life sentences, unemployment and the absence of justice. There is no other place where the people can debate in the national languages"*<sup>54</sup>. On the other hand, under the Moussa Traoré regime, the Wahhabis acquired a privileged position in return for their support to the Coup then by paying their links with Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Development Bank, making it possible for the Malian State to benefit from

<sup>49</sup> "Violentes manifestations à Gao pour l'ouverture des assises du Nord", *Francetvinfo.fr*, 1 November 2013. Among rebel groups, only the MAA sent a delegation, the leaders from other wishing a peace agreement with political decisions and not meetings or simple exchange gatherings.

<sup>50</sup> Jean-Pierre Chevènement and Gérard Larcher (rapporteurs), *Sahel : pour une approche globale*, Rapport d'information no.720, Commission des affaires étrangères, de la défense et des forces armées (Sénat), 3 July 2013, p. 66.

<sup>51</sup> International Crisis Group, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>53</sup> Gilles Holder, "Un pays musulman en quête d'État-nation", in Patrick Gonin *et al.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-157, pp. 142-143. See from the same author: "Vers un espace public religieux : pour une lecture contemporaine des enjeux politiques de l'islam en Afrique", in Gilles Holder (dir.), *L'islam, nouvel espace public en Afrique*, Paris, Karthala, 2009, pp. 5-20.

<sup>54</sup> Interview de Gilles Holder, "Au Mali, la guerre des islamistes", *Le Monde*, 29 January 2013.



about 600 million dollars in the 1970-1980 decade. Damaged by the democratic revolution of 1991, they take control of the High Islamic Council of Mali (HCIM) in 2008 and commit to a political approach aiming at "both a foothold for the state" and the constitution of "party of Islam"<sup>55</sup>.

In this context, the challenge for the State is to return a sense of meaning to the populations who consider it to be at best, inefficient, and at worst harmful. It has to convince them that it is useful. Eventually, in the regions where its representatives were absent for several months, these officials will not be accepted and will remain to be considered as a foreign body, with as a consequence a reinforcement of the audience for the mainly jihadist armed movements. In any case, the state must rise to the challenge as it was reminded at the end of 2013, by the refusal from General Sanogo to answer the summons from a magistrate<sup>56</sup>.

## Recommendations

**Recommendation 4 | Give some meaning to the idea of nation and to the State through actions including strong measures in education matters, powerful messages from political leaders and a clean-up of public life**

**Recommendation 5 | Not to get locked in a conflictual North-South reading in the elaboration of political answers to the 2012 crisis, at the risk of increasing the tensions in the northern regions**

**Recommendation 6 | Engage economic reforms and acquire the financial means to reduce a fragility of Mali which, although not at the origin of the 2012 crisis, is a vector of tensions**

**Recommendation 7 | Encourage, in the face of an aggressive Wahhabi message, the more traditional religious views through the training of moderate imams in particular**

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<sup>55</sup> Gilles Holder, "Un pays musulman en quête d'État-nation", *art. cit.*, p. 153. Under pressure from Islamists, the president Amadou Toumani Touré had to withdraw in 2009 his reform of the family code which was aiming at the equality of sexes. It should be noted that 80% of the Malian population refers to a moderate Islamic doctrine (Islam sunnite malekite), but that the Wahhabi preachers are very active and having been trained in American schools, apply the modern methods of marketing (about the preachers practices, refer to Souley Hassane, "Société civile islamique et nouveaux espaces publics au Niger. Esquisse sur l'islam post-moderne et les pratiques religieuses "globales" en Afrique", in Gilles Holder (dir.), *op. cit.*, pp. 101-125).

<sup>56</sup> "Mali : le FDR s'indigne du refus de Sanogo à comparaître", *RFI*, 21 November 2013. A few days later, Malian soldiers intervened to apprehend General Sanogo.




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## Part 3 | Break with corruption and patronage

The pre-requisite of any reform lies upon a break with generalised corruption and patronage. Far from being a Malian specificity, these practices are however at the heart of the collapse of the State and its lack of legitimacy, because in particular of their growth from the 1980s and the political and social impact of drug trafficking.

### 1 | Losses amounting to several billion CFA francs



According to the 2012 classification of *Transparency International*, Mali came in 105<sup>th</sup> place – out of 178 – of “the least corrupt”<sup>57</sup> States. When this classification concerns the perception of corruption and sometimes raises fears that considerations of an ideological nature influence it because of the links between the organisation and the United States Government<sup>58</sup>, the evil is very much a reality. In order to get rid of it, the former Head of State Alpha Oumar Konaré (1992-2002) promoted several reforms and initiatives. For his part, after winning the election, Amadou Toumani Touré created the position of Auditor general in charge of investigating corruption in the use of public resources. The real impact of the Auditor general on corruption remains to be evaluated. However, his presence made it possible to improve the outlook on this phenomenon.

In his first report, published in 2006 and concerning the two previous years, the controls of the Auditor “revealed a shortfall for the State of 15,587,896,837 CFA francs”<sup>59</sup>, i.e. more than 23 million euros, associated with VAT fraud, customs rights and invalid agreements signed with three companies, two administrations (Customs and Taxes Department) and the town hall of the Bamako district. The second report, concerning the 2002-2006 period and published in July 2007, gives a better picture of the scale of the corruption. The twenty-six inspections carried out in 2006 show in fact that the State has been deprived of the recovery of more than 102 billion CFA francs, i.e. 150 million euros, associated in particular to the non-recovery or reduction of taxes and customs rights, to the embezzlement and dilapidation of public funds, and to over-invoicing or fictitious orders. “As a proof of the impact of this shortfall on the development of the country, the Auditor affirms that this amount represents double the budget for equipment and investment of the entire public administration or the cost for the construction of 176 schools or 312 health care centres equipped and staffed”<sup>60</sup>.

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<sup>57</sup> Transparency International, *Corruption Perceptions Index 2012*.

<sup>58</sup> “Qui se cache derrière la très opaque Transparency International ?”, Réseau Voltaire, 29 September 2007. Bernard Carayon, “Transparency International : une éthique à géométrie variable”, *Le Figaro*, 10 December 2012.

<sup>59</sup> Quoted by Georges Bergezan, “La corruption, au cœur de l’effondrement de l’État malien”, in Béangère Rouppert (dir.), *op. cit.*, pp. 41-60, p. 43.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

The report concerning 2011 seems to show a slight decrease in corruption. The ten inspections, the nine financial audits and the verification of the performance carried out on thirteen public institutions made it possible to establish a shortfall for the State of 10 billion CFA francs. However, independently from this evolution - dependent on the structures audited and the Auditor's "findings" – the scale of frauds estimated to be responsible for 80% of the losses remains enormous, especially since their ramifications extend to the level of the presidency and government.

## 2 | "The fish rots from the head"

In December 2010, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) stopped two subventions intended for the fight against malaria in Mali, and cancelled a third one aimed at tuberculosis because of embezzlement. High officials had in fact put in place a system of false invoices, tenders and over-invoicing. These revelations resulted in the stepping down of the Minister for Health, Ibrahim Oumar Touré, and then his arrest for "*crime for abuse of public funds*" in June 2011, as well as the arrest of fourteen of his former colleagues.

This issue only forms the emerged tip of the favours and compromises of some Malian leaders. In September 2011, during a trip in Europe, the wife of the Malian president supposedly carried out payments with bank notes previously used to pay ransoms to the AQIM<sup>61</sup>. Beyond the anecdote, the fact that this money finds its way into the hands of the presidential family is a reminder that the hostage trade is not only lucrative for the kidnapers, but also for the intermediaries some of them being at the highest levels of power. Moreover, in June 2011, in the Wagadou forest, the interceptions of conversations revealed the implication of Malian leaders and military forces in sharing information with the AQIM and the will to hide the presence of a jihadist group in the area, resulting in a raid of the Mauritanian army.

Like the hostage trade, drug trafficking is closely linked to the representatives of the State apparatus, forming "*State mafias*" made up of "*segments from the business world, high administration, the relatives or the inner circle of the President and other personalities in the political world*"<sup>62</sup>. These complicities come to light in 2009 with the Air-Cocaine affair: a Boeing 727 having landed near Tarkint, North of Gao, was set alight by traffickers. Yet the mayor of Tarkint and officials from Gao were present to receive the unloaded tons of cocaine, probably intended for Niger<sup>63</sup>. Two months later, on 25 January 2010, the same mayor supposedly assisted the landing of another cargo plane on the Mema runway, near the locality of Kita, 76 km from Timbuktu, before being in the news once more in his quality of emissary for Amadou Toumani Touré with the AQIM during the negotiations for the liberation of the French hostage Pierre Camatta. According to the CIA, on a list that the Malian press reported in February 2010, 57 directors of the high administration and the private sector were supposedly implicated in drug trafficking, whereas nine Malian generals were supposedly linked to the traffic of cocaine in the Sahara<sup>64</sup>.

Amadou Toumani Touré's departure did not result in the end of these practices. At the end of January 2013, Malian justice was issuing warrants of arrest for drug trafficking against six officials from the North including Ould Awainatt, protégé of the former president who in the meantime had gone to the Mujao, and the former mayor of Tarkint Ould Coueck. The two men were promptly arrested and taken, on February 4, to a prison in Gao, only escaping being lynched thanks to the intervention of the French army... before disappearing even before their transfer to Bamako. Yet according to several local media, they were freed further to the intervention of the Mayor of Gao and superior officers of the Malian army<sup>65</sup>. "*That is what our political leaders want*", noted the disillusioned editor of a Bamako weekly magazine to the French journalist Nicolas Beau, *it is*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>62</sup> Simon Julien, "Le Sahel comme espace de transit des stupéfiants. Acteurs et conséquences politiques", *Hérodote*, 2011, no. 142, pp. 125-142, pp. 137-138.

<sup>63</sup> "La véritable histoire de l'avion de la cocaïne", *RFI*, 24 November 2009.

<sup>64</sup> Georges Berghezan, *art. cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

*their part of the cake, but this cake no longer exists. The aim of our elites, is to have a wife who gives birth in France, with children studying in Canada, nice villas for themselves and their mistresses; all the showing-off and the glitter"*<sup>66</sup>.

### 3 | The trivialisation of corruption

Although corruption and impunity prevail in the spheres of power, they spread even further and permeate public service as a whole. In the teaching sector, teachers "*sell*" answers to students, communicating them by telephone or sending them the corrected copies. The police is "*too busy extorting motorists to protect the population*"<sup>67</sup>. As for judges, they issue verdicts in favour of the highest bidder, leading to an increase of "*mob justice*" and the untimely deaths of suspected criminals.

This generalised and "*discreet*" corruption<sup>68</sup> goes beyond the sole framework of the public service. During the presidential elections in 2002 and 2007, a ballot paper traded between 2,000 and 3,000 CFA francs<sup>69</sup>. In the north of the country, patronage of a tribal nature also corrupts the social relations. "*The dominating local families, as analysed by the French journalist Christophe Châtelot, [...] took over from a failing State by digging wells, building roads or schools. This patronage made these families the necessary relays of public power. Although they are the same ones that we find in the negotiations for the liberation of western hostages or in drug trafficking. That only contributes to accentuate the disparities, including within the Tuareg community, and fuel resentment*"<sup>70</sup>. Many players of the MLNA, local officials of the North, not to mention Tuareg officers in the army, were making as much business as their counterparts in the South. We can't therefore oppose on one side a corrupt centralised State, involved in drug trafficking and accomplice of the AQIM, and on the other the MLNA representing the Tuareg communities as a whole, on behalf of which it would express demands, untouched by any implication in the corruption, the trafficking and the implantation of jihadist armed groups. They all took their share<sup>71</sup>.

The private sector does not escape fraud and the logic of circumvention. Many doctors would make "*arrangements*" with pharmacists and would receive a commission on the medicine prescribed. In the domain of gold exploitation, according to an audit report published in December 2003, two of the main mines in the country only generated one third of the taxes due on the profits for the Malian treasury. "*On the whole, concluded Georges Berghezan, tax fraud supposedly reached billions of CFA francs, and included customs fraud, smuggling and illegal export of currency. Companies would use false import declarations in order to reduce the actual value of the imported goods and illegally take currency out of the country*"<sup>72</sup>. In this respect, these attitudes directly refer to a "*meaningless*" citizenship. Being a citizen does not include any duty towards the nation, only implications towards its clients and dependents, its protectors, and "*the right to benefit from national advantages without any reciprocal commitment to respect and represent his country in its culture, its laws and its customs*"<sup>73</sup>.

<sup>66</sup> Quoted by Nicolas Beau, *Papa Hollande au Mali. Chronique d'un fiasco annoncé*, Paris, Balland, 2013, pp. 107-108.

<sup>67</sup> Georges Berghezan, *art. cit.*, p. 44. Also see: Antonin Tisseron, *Élections législatives maliennes. Un simple passage obligé ?*, Institut Thomas More, Note d'actualité 17 December 2013.

<sup>68</sup> See about this question: *Silencieuse et fatale. La corruption discrète entrave le développement de l'Afrique*, Banque Mondiale, 2010.

<sup>69</sup> Nicolas Beau, *op. cit.*, p. 106. This practice is called "*l'achat de conscience*" ["*buying the conscience*"].

<sup>70</sup> Christophe Châtelot, "Les trois plaies du Mali", *Le Monde*, 4 Decmeber 2013.

<sup>71</sup> International Crisis Group, *Mali : sécuriser, dialoguer et réformer en profondeur*, Rapport Afrique no.201, 11 April 2013, p. 32.

<sup>72</sup> Georges Berghezan, *art. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>73</sup> Naffet Keïta, "Comment être Malien ?", *Les dossiers du CERI*, juillet 2013.

## 4 | The gangrene of drugs

Corruption, trafficking, backhanders and "*politics of the belly*" are not new practices. However, they flourished dangerously with the economic liberalisation of the 1980s imposed by the international lenders then the multiparty system in 1991<sup>74</sup> and, most of all, the emergence of an African route for South-American cocaine in 2005. The latter in fact resulted into a considerable increase of resources available for the traffickers, without any common measure with those accessible locally or in the circuits monitored by authorities. For 3,000 to 5,000 euros for 48 hours' work, local people can thus become carriers or security agents. Admittedly, the drug trade remains marginal in a world of exchanges which mainly concern food, oil, cars, cattle and other essentials. Most of the families of traders deal in fact with a bit of everything: salt and cattle business, livestock, real estate for the big brother, food and cigarette fraud for the young people<sup>75</sup>. Moreover, like the other forms of traffic, the drug trade is integrated in the course of life and social climbing, and the drug money is reinserted into the social circuit<sup>76</sup>.

But the introduction of drugs has important political, territorial and security consequences not limited to an acceleration of corruption and weapons circulation<sup>77</sup>. At individual level, drugs generate cases of spontaneous wealth and create role models for the young generations of men confronted with the economic slump and aware of the embezzlement of the elite. This situation, which exacerbates individual competition, has also collective implications. The entry of cocaine in the Sahel results in an acceleration of the enrichment phenomena and contributes to the "*wars of classification*" or to the redefinition of the statuses in the area. Some Arab groups in the Tilemsi valley thus benefit from the enrichment linked to their participation to the trafficking to challenge the pre-eminence of the Kunta, upon whom they were previously dependent<sup>78</sup>. "*There is therefore, concluded Simon Julien, stronger and stronger competition, sometimes regulated by violence, for the access to the resources linked to drug trafficking*"<sup>79</sup>.

At State level, the development of drug trafficking has three incidences<sup>80</sup>.

- Firstly, when the traffic is integrated to State mafias, the arrival of drug money creates competition between some local businessmen who neglect other sectors of the economy. In so doing, they reinforce a revenue economy based either on the levying of a toll when a convoy comes through, or a participation in the protection of the convoy, or the direct organisation of the convoy system. Entirely concerned by this revenue and its preservation, the elites then forget all about the deployment of economic policies.
- Then, the political power makes use of the traffic for internal monitoring ends. In the Kidal region, the groups who controlled the circulation of cocaine in 2009-2010 - the Lambar and the Imghad - were in majority opposed to the Tuareg Ifoghas and the Kunta, their Arab allies. But "*elements issued from the politico-security spheres, by allowing these two groups to control this traffic, made it possible for them to acquire a political and military platform to enable them to counterbalance in particular the Ifoghas group [...] at the origin of the Tuareg rebellions*"<sup>81</sup>.
- Finally, the arrival of drugs is, for the leaders, a resource making it possible to loosen the macroeconomic constraints imposed on the country by international financial institutions. While poverty is widespread, the revenue from drugs makes it possible to appease the society and reduce internal tensions.

<sup>74</sup> Georges Berghezan, "La corruption, au cœur de l'effondrement de l'État malien", in Bérangère Rouppert (dir.), *op. cit.*, pp. 41-60, p. 42.

<sup>75</sup> Judith Scheele, "Trafic ou commerce ? Des échanges économiques au Sahara contemporain", *Les dossiers du CERI*, July 2013.

<sup>76</sup> Judith Scheele, *Smugglers and Saints of the Sahara. Regional Connectivity in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 120. According to Judith Scheele, the opposition between legal and illegal commerce does not work in the region. For the Saharans, the distinction concerns a regional commerce morally accepted and a dangerous trans-regional commerce and potentially destroying social links (even if in the facts, this is not the case, few men leaving their home for ever and the drug money being reinserted into the moral circuits in order to be converted into social capital).

<sup>77</sup> Simon Julien, *art. cit.*, p. 138. Niger does not escape drug trafficking. However, their intensity is lower than in Mali in 2012... although things seem to be changing since Servat with a redistribution of routes to Chad and Niger.

<sup>78</sup> Judith Scheele, "Tribus, États et fraude : la région frontalière algéro-malienne", *Études rurales*, no.184, 2009, pp. 79-94, p. 86.

<sup>79</sup> Simon Julien, *art. cit.*, pp. 138-139.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

For the Mauritanian Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, ambassador of Mauritania in the United-States then representative of NU in Western Africa in 2002 and in Somalia in 2007, drugs are "*without any doubt the number one problem*" in the Sahel. It is much worse than terrorism<sup>82</sup>. In the same vein, for researcher Wolfram Lacher, "*the tensions linked to the increase of drug trafficking and the erosion of the state institutions through the complicities with organised crime, played a more important role [that the sole presence of jihadist criminal groups ] in the dynamics having given birth to the conflict in Northern Mali in January 2012*"<sup>83</sup>. Trafficking has in fact corrupted the customs system because of the corruption and the collusion against the smugglers and the officials, and has taken credibility away from a public power incapable of ensuring the safety of individuals. A document from Malian customs dating back to 2012 gives an account of the size of the phenomenon. The record for drug seizures, as transmitted to the World Customs Organisation, reveals sixteen seizures, eleven of which for cannabis and only one for cocaine, amounting to a total weight of 784 kg<sup>84</sup>. A derisory figure considering the amounts of cocaine transiting through the Sahel: these past years, the UNODC estimated the amount cocaine intended for Europe going through Western Africa at 20 tons<sup>85</sup>.

## Recommendations



**Recommendation 8 | Reinforce the measures for the fight against corruption and patronage, reinforce the judicial structures in charge of repression and make the Malians as a whole aware of the impact of the latter**

**Recommendation 9 | Prioritise the fight against drug trafficking: in fact, because of the amounts involved, they strongly contributed over the past years to increase tensions and delegitimise the authorities and the security forces**

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<sup>82</sup> Quoted by Nicolas Beau, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

<sup>83</sup> Wolfram Lacher, "Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Middle East Report, September 2012, p. 10. Translated by the author.

<sup>84</sup> Nicolas Beau, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

<sup>85</sup> Between 2005 and 2009, the volume of Saharan drug traffic was between 35 and 50 tons per year. For the UNODC, the fall results from the increase of operations on the Western African coasts (Pierre Jaquemot et Serge Michailof, *Développer le Sahel. Leçons de l'expérience, enseignements de la recherche*, IRIS, May 2013, p. 2).




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## Part 4 | An international challenge

The international community worked alongside Malian authorities to help them in rebuilding their country. However, the intervention looks to be long and development alone cannot be the answer to the reasons for the insecurity. A reinforcement of the regional cooperation is a must, just as taking care not to sum up the country to jihadism considerations.

### 1 | Long-lasting intervention



The international intervention in Mali will be long-lasting, and not only for the co-signatory European Union - for the first time in its history - of the Ouagadougou agreement of 18 June 2013. *"Today, everyone is afraid of everyone! Such is the reality surrounding day-to-day social relations"*, noted Charles Grémont at the end of 2012: of the Malian army who, already in the 1990s was exercising a bloody repression on many civilian camps; of Tuareg and Arab fighters whose conquest of the towns in the North at the end of March 2012 came with very violent pillages; of neighbours organising, in all impunity in Bamako in February 2012, destructions of houses and shops belonging to Tuareg people; of the jihadist and their supporters at the origin of the destruction of mausoleums in Timbuktu<sup>86</sup>. Rebuilding the link between Malians will take time. The absence of reciprocal confidence will brand the social and ethnic relations for several months even years, with as a background the opportunities lost since independence and the residual conflicts which were never concluded.

This situation between war and peace is reminiscent of the Ivory Coast and highlights the limits of intervention of an external player in a civil war, whether open or corrupt. In fact, two results are possible: partition or the victory of one of the camps. Under these conditions, the capacities of intervention from a third party are limited. Although just as in Mali, France did not choose either of these two options for its intervention, making the choice of the political solution within the framework of the respect of the Ivory Coast's territorial integrity, while preserving a neutral position. The latter was denounced as factitious several times, at times by one of the protagonists, at times by the other against the background of the historic links between the Ivory Coast and France<sup>87</sup>. That being, during the first years of the Licorne mandate, the Ivory Coast President did not at all wish to end the crisis, in part in fact because of the way the negotiations of the Linas-Marcoussi agreement were conducted<sup>88</sup>.

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<sup>86</sup> Charles Grémont, "Comment imaginer revivre ensemble ? Au Nord-Mali, des responsables civils tentent de préserver la cohésion sociale mise à mal par des groupes armés", *art. cit.*, pp. 121-123 and 131.

<sup>87</sup> Hewane Serequeberhan, "Le réengagement français dans les conflits africains et le défi ivoirien", *Annuaire Français de Relations Internationales*, 2005, vol. VI, pp. 323-339, pp. 333-334. During the Ivory Coast crisis, the heritage of the Franco-Ivorian relation interfered several times with the negotiations, making the positioning of Paris even more difficult. In that respect the positioning of the European Union as co-signer of the Ouagadougou agreements is quite relevant....


<sup>88</sup> See also Laurent d'Ersu, "La crise ivoirienne, une intrigue franco-française", *Politique africaine*, 2007/1, no.105, pp. 85-104. In his speech of 7 February 2003, Laurent Gbagbo told Ivorians of his will to engage *"in the spirit of the Marcoussis text"*. However, his interpretation of the Marcoussis spirit, is far from the expectations of the international community. *"I understand your anger*, he continues addressing his most radical supporters, *it is unbearable to see the rebels appear on television. [...] If I had not been president, I would have been in the streets with you."*



Coming back to Mali, besides the absence of progress in the negotiations further to the signature of the Ouagadougou agreement, several signals are worrying. In the South, part of the population wishes a return to the policy of Amadou Toumani Touré of management at little cost and of *containment* through policies of divisions. Tiébilé Dramé, one of the Malian drafters of the preliminary peace agreement signed in Ouagadougou to restart the dialogue with the North, is representative of this state of mind, criticising the liberal approach that gives too much importance to elections only allowing the political impasse to be overcome. *"We – Malians and the international community - have lost time, he declared to a French journalist in mid-November. We rushed to organise the presidential elections and we forgot Kidal. The MNLA would all the same have accepted a sovereign Mali, united and secular in Ouagadougou. We are back to the starting point. The Tuaregs are talking about autonomy and the jihadists are regrouping"*<sup>89</sup>.

For their part, at the same time, the former rebel movements, just as during past rebellions, wanted to negotiate the status of the regions of the North directly with the State within the framework of a political peace agreement, i.e. in the absence of the main parties concerned, or the local officials in charge of the management and the conduct of day-to-day development actions. In this context, the pacification of civil society and the reduction of antagonism appear to be difficult, especially when the mayors openly declared their will, at the end of 2012, to be part of their mediation and negotiation initiatives and not to repeat the mistakes of the past<sup>90</sup>.

## 2 | Develop, yes but...



Whereas economic development can in no way replace a political solution capable of ending the centrifugal forces in the country, as a provider of livelihoods and a concrete testimony of the investment by the State and the authorities, it constitutes an element that contributes to social pacification, insofar as the expectations are real. On the other hand, the lenders involved in the programs will have to remain vigilant.

### A | Expectations and projects

On 17 May 2013, the Aménokal of the Ifoghas, Intalla Ag Attaher, indicated through one of his sons, Mohammed Ag Intalla, that he was joining the HCUA around an agenda making way for negotiation: *"my father is now going to manage the HCUA. We want peace with Mali. We do not want independence. We are in favour of development"*<sup>91</sup>. But the matter of economic development in Mali refers to two dimensions.

First of all, in a country where the majority of the population is rural and where food insecurity remains a reality, the *Plan pour la Relance Durable du Mali (plan for the lasting recovery of Mali)* concerning the 2013-2014 period identifies *"two main challenges"*:

- *"to make sure that Mali becomes again the grain store and the first producer of meat, milk and fresh water fish in Western Africa and becomes an agro-industrial power, making the most of its raw agricultural products";*
- *"to make sure that, in a context of deep climatic changes, the intensification and the modernisation of agriculture are compatible with the preservation of the environment and the natural resources for future generations"*<sup>92</sup>.

To this end, the intention is to intervene first of all on a few large structuring projects in the Office du Niger zone (in order to double the areas cultivated in the 2017 time frame) and, in the North, to develop a water control program and the development of the riparian zone.

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<sup>89</sup> Quoted by Christophe Châtelot, "L'insécurité dans la zone de Kidal ternit les relations entre le Mali et la France", *art. cit.*

<sup>90</sup> Charles Grémont, *art. cit.*, pp. 126-127.

<sup>91</sup> Quoted by Jean-Pierre Chevènement et Gérard Larcher (rapporteurs), *op. cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>92</sup> *Plan pour la Relance Durable du Mali. 2013-2014*, République du Mali, April 2013, p. 21.



Then, according to many inhabitants in the Kidal region, the development refers also to the exploitation of the underground resources. The mining industries fuel greed and fantasy, with consequences on the social struggles about their distribution and even the use of the revenue that they produce<sup>93</sup>. Behind these expectations and hopes, the mining industries don't however provide many jobs. Thus, although Mali is today the third gold producer in Africa with about fifty tons produced each year since 2002, behind South Africa and Ghana, the characteristics of the exploitation of this metal "give rise [...] to some questions about the lasting impact that this resource can have on development"<sup>94</sup>. The links upstream and downstream with other sectors of the economy are in fact quite small. On the one part, the industrial exploitation of mines requires the intermediary imports of equipment, fuel and consumer goods. On the other part, the employment in the mining sector is limited to a few thousand, and the consequences on the rural communities are mixed, with social and environmental issues. In other terms, the main interest is to supply income through exploitation licences and various taxes and charges, the redistribution of which between the regions will solidify the conflicts.

## B | Vigilant lenders

The recovery of development in Mali is not impossible according development specialists. Nonetheless, it requires a properly targeted external support and integrating the limits of liberal dogma, important efforts over the long term and, most of all, mechanisms allowing greater efficiency by taking into account the political and economic fabric.

Conscious of the limits of former programs, the European Union today brings in budgetary support and no longer just for specific programs, not forgetting the *Multi-donors Budgetary Support* of Ghana. Established on the basis of an indicative planning between the Government and the various lenders, a program over three years is negotiated. It sets objectives of means or results measures for year  $n$ , and provisions at  $n+1$  and  $n+2$ . At the beginning of the fiscal period, a basic tranche of 50% is released and the other, called "*performance tranche*", is released during the year depending on the results of a certain number of predefined indicators. An independent audit is carried out each year and an execution report is drafted<sup>95</sup>.

Other experiences can also inspire action in Sahel. The *Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund* is managed by the World Bank which is responsible for bringing coherence to the projects and programs for a group of donors<sup>96</sup>. But several uncertainties remain in these modalities. That being, lenders must have the courage to apply their decisions to Malian partners who, for the most part, are not really aware of the need to put an end to old practices. Whereas everyone in Bamako continues to operate with backhanders<sup>97</sup>, "*this deletion of the benchmarks employed by Malians is not about to diminish*, lucidly noted Naffet Keïta, *even with the use of preaching, education, mobilisation and awareness. The Malians still cannot admit that their country is gangrened, like a human body, and that it is in the process of becoming a world of darkness*"<sup>98</sup>. But as demonstrated by Robert D. Putnam in a book about democracy in Italy published in 1993, the development of a community of citizens is not economy-driven. To the contrary, the performance of institutions depends on the presence or not of a civic community allowing relations of confidence and cooperation<sup>99</sup>.

During the second half of 2013, the international lenders in fact intervened twice to avoid measures reminding the abuses of pre-2012. First, they obtained the postponement of several transactions at the end of June with China, arguable because of the personal implication of high political officials or their families, attribution mechanisms resulting from direct understanding or private arrangements, lack of appropriate controls because of the rapidity with which they were dealt with before the presidential elections, and of a nature not in line with the mandate of interim Government<sup>100</sup>. Second, Malian Government envisaged for a while a project of revaluation of former ministers, before abandoning it under international pressure. In short, we must therefore remain vigilant.

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<sup>93</sup> The international aids have the same effect in other sectors of the economy: everyone wants a share of the cake.

<sup>94</sup> Jean-Étienne Bidou et Isabelle Droy, *art. cit.*, p. 250. It should be noted that the gold production has not suffered at all from the latest rebellion, with an official production of 50.3 tons in 2012 for 43.5 in 2011.

<sup>95</sup> Pierre Jaquemot et Serge Michailof, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> A Malian General thought in fact, mid-2013 that the 2012 crisis was not caused by the Malian soldiers but a consequence of their lack of equipment... this in spite of American deliveries and European support, especially French.

<sup>98</sup> Naffet Keïta, *art. cit.*

<sup>99</sup> Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work. Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993, pp. 157-159 especially.

<sup>100</sup> Kakadoundiaye, "Mali : pendant les élections, les affaires continuent", *Les blogs de Médiapart*, 26 June 2013.

### 3 | Reinforce the regional cooperation

In security sector, the armed operations carried out against the jihadist groups in Mali are only one dimension of an issue concerning the sub-region as a whole. These are present in Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. On the one hand, they are nomads, circulating from one region to the next depending on opportunities. Tunisians were present in the AQIM katibas in the Sahel or were fighting under the Mujao flag. Also, by giving "a kick in the Malian anthill"<sup>101</sup>, the French forces led to the departure of several fighters to Libya.

The question whether the transplant of AQIM in the South and especially the East Libyan was successful, remains unanswered. Observers think that there is supposedly already an advanced implantation<sup>102</sup>. Others consider that the organisation may only be at the stage of the logistic complicities or the temporary welcome with other armed groups, and that any attempts of lasting implantation will cut into the autonomy of the Libyan militia and their reluctance to obey an organisation seen as Algerian in spite of a relative "sahelisation". This being said, as reminded by the senators Jean-Pierre Chevènement and Gérard Larcher a few months ago, "the question of the degree of implantation of Al Qaeda in Libya could only in fact be a question of time"<sup>103</sup>. Whereas AQIM was carrying out its insertion strategy in Northern Mali<sup>104</sup>, in 2012 already, the terrorist organisation was present in Libya, with partisans "active in the purchase of weapons, in the escorting of drug convoys" and the identification of zones in the "eventuality of a retreat from Northern Mali"<sup>105</sup>. The success of the fight against the jihadist groups in the region therefore calls for an international action over the long term in Mali, but also a mobilisation of the sub-regional players.

The reinforcement of the national security forces, however, only constitutes a part of the security solution itself.

- On the one hand, in spite of the efforts carried out through initiatives such as the French Recamp program (reinforcement of the African capacities for the maintenance of peace, established in 1998), the difficulties encountered by Misma reminded of the progress that remains to be made in order to enable Africans to ensure the security on their continent themselves. Both the deficiencies as far as the *leadership* of the CEDEAO is concerned – with for example a lack of commitment from Ghana and Nigeria or mediation from Burkina Faso reluctant to communicate with its partners - and the inadequacies of the standby forces and the lack of financial assets have in fact discredited the efforts of the organisation<sup>106</sup>.
- On the other hand, because of the areas to be controlled, the resources of the States and their military and police numbers, the research for synergies between the Saharan States is a must. Northern Mali covers an area equivalent to one and a half times the size of France, with a total of 6,500 km of borders. Even Algeria, the first military power in the region with twenty times more soldiers than Mali for land borders of a similar length, is not really capable of securing them. After the bloody attack on In Amenas on 16 January 2013, the Algerian prime minister, Abdelmalek Sellal, declared that it was impossible for Algeria to monitor its borders, adding that it would take "two NATOs" to be able to do so<sup>107</sup>.

<sup>101</sup> Jean-Pierre Chevènement et Gérard Larcher (rapporteurs), *Mali : comment gagner la paix ?*, Information report no.513, Commission des affaires étrangères, de la défense et des forces armées (Sénat), 16 April 2013, p. 104.

<sup>102</sup> Samuel Laurent, *Sahelistan*, Paris, Seuil, 2013.

<sup>103</sup> Jean-Pierre Chevènement et Gérard Larcher (rapporteurs), *op. cit.*, p. 93.

<sup>104</sup> The French soldiers of Operation Serval found in Timbuktu a report dated 20 July 2012, drafted further to "collegial discussions" within AQIM entitled *Orientation du jihad dans l'Azawad*. Organised in six chapters and subtitled "Vision globale du projet jihadiste dans l'Azawad et politique d'Al-Qaida à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur de l'Azawad", Droukdel exposes his objectives for the Azawad and the results of the movement. In fact, the acquisition of this territory is only a starting point. It is a laboratory in the organisation of an emirate. Meanwhile, the "international jihad" carries on outside the Azawad, "independently from Ansar Dine". In the end, with the offensive towards the South, this project became invalid, the organisation having to find another place for his "emirate".


<sup>105</sup> Jean-Louis Carrère (sénateur), quoted by Jean-Pierre Chevènement et Gérard Larcher (rapporteurs), *op. cit.*, p. 105. Also see: *Al Qaeda in Libya: a profile*, Library of Congress, August 2012.

<sup>106</sup> The commitment of the CEDEAO in Mali is potentially rich in teachings. But as far as the institution does not have much institutional memory, without any real formalisation of the "Lessons Learned" both from the political and military point of view, the experience recently acquired is at risk to be lost.

<sup>107</sup> Quoted by Adam Bernard, *Mali : de l'intervention militaire française à la reconstruction de l'État*, GRIP, Rapport, 1 March 2013, p. 27.

As far as cooperation is concerned, the challenge is not limited to the failure of the *Centre d'état-major opérationnel conjoint* (CEMOC) (joint operational headquarters centre) of Tamanrasset, created in April 2010 and from which Mauritania has since withdrawn his liaison officer. Niger offered, without success, to the Malian President Amadou Toumani Touré to carry out joint operations between the Niger and Mali troops to avoid the entry of Libyan fighters and their weapons into Mali<sup>108</sup>. Furthermore, the relations between Mauritania and Mali are difficult - at least between their presidents -, as was demonstrated by the absence of General Aziz at the investiture of Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta. In this perspective, the modest bilateral initiatives or a sharing of information in the international structures such as Interpol are fields for action not to be neglected to progressively launch cooperation dynamics. However, beyond this necessary cooperation comes the question of the status of the borders which are, for local populations, less factors of rupture than lines separating areas that are closely interconnected socially and economically.

## 4 | The risk of the distorting mirrors



To perceive the Sahara through the sole prism of insecurity and trafficking is at last not without dangers. Such a vision neglects the complexity of the societies and of a space the borders of which cannot be arbitrarily limited. The Sahara is not inhabited by fundamentalists or criminals. Its inhabitants try before all to exist by leaning on old networks and organisations, provided that the sub-regional and international environment allows it<sup>109</sup>.

Replaced in the historical depth, the Koran has even already supplied *"the banner and the moral foundations of rebellions against the coloniser"*<sup>110</sup>. In the case of Mali, the founder of the theocratic and Peul empire of Mancina, which went from Mopti to Timbuktu from 1819, had ordered the destruction of the great mosque of Djenné because its beauty offended the bare Islam he was advocating. The novelty of the 2012 dynamics turning into insurrection is not because of its degree of violence – already important in the 1990s with the repression of the Malian army -, nor because of the capture of war hostages, *"but rather the modernity of its global rhetoric"* imported from the Arabo-Persic Gulf and the recourse to widely publicised suicide attacks<sup>111</sup>.

By neglecting the nuances, the length of time elapsed and by reacting in a disproportionate manner, there is a double risk: rebuilding a united and dreamed Sahara reminiscent of European stories of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century; creating a self-fulfilling prophecy by locally reinforcing the feeling of being attacked by hostile external powers, attracted by the exploitation of wealth and by using their military apparatus in a neo-colonial manner. In other terms, by focusing too much on a real but limited jihadism, Europe and United-States run the risk of only reinforcing it by providing it with the echo it needs to fuel its rhetoric, recruit and carry out armed activities.

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<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>109</sup> Judith Scheele, *Smugglers and Saints of the Sahara. Regional Connectivity in the Twentieth Century*, *op. cit.*, pp. 235-236.

<sup>110</sup> Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, "Dans l'œil du cyclone. Une lecture internationale", in Patrick Gonin *et al.* (dir.), *op. cit.*, pp. 7-31, p. 22.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

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## Recommendations



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**Recommendation 10 | Reinforce the funding and monitoring mechanisms of international aid, by demonstrating willingness in the application of sanctions in the event of breach of the predefined rules and the objectives**

**Recommendation 11 | Continue the efforts to give body to an effective regional cooperation by favouring bilateral approaches in the short to medium-term and the use of existing international structures in order to initiate a dynamic that is still in its infancy**

**Recommendation 12 | Reinforce the crisis management capabilities of the CEDEAO, in particular through the constitution of an institutional database making it possible to draw lessons from past operations and to keep them**

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## | Conclusion

One year after the instigation of Operation Serval, Mali is facing huge hurdles. The recapture of the regions of the North and the disorganisation of the jihadist groups does not in any way settle the roots of the 2012 crisis. The Malian armed forces remain incapable of ensuring the security of the country in the face of a persistent threat. There are still many social and political tensions in the regions of the North where the populations are torn between resentment, hope and fear, against a background of failed public services which remain to be reinstalled and a missing nation. In fact, the situation is in many ways similar to a civil war "smothered" by the intervention from France and its African partners.

The international intervention to aid Mali is therefore already set to last, with a transition which will take time and will be marked by episodes of sudden peaks of tensions. There are many hurdles however, starting with the risk of focusing too much on the security dimension to the detriment of the other challenges and a false perception of the Sahara. Also, an efficient cooperation at sub-regional level remains to be built because of rivalries and defiance between the States. Lastly, differences of perception of the threats between international lenders, current foreign powers and Malians run the risk of posing further challenges in months and years to come. In the end, without any awareness from the Malian leaders as to the damage caused by corruption and drug trafficking, without a will not to repeat past errors, the military intervention at the beginning of 2013 was not enough to put an end to the tensions. Of course, the international community must remain mobilised beside Mali but, in the end, it is most of all up to the Malians to rebuild their country and put a sense of meaning back into the State and its missions.

Although Mali's trajectory refers to internal issues, the emergence of local jihadist movements and the collapse of the State are not exceptions in the sub-region. In Senegal, in the slums of Dakar and the city of Thiès, many people openly support the action of the jihadists of Northern Mali<sup>112</sup>. Further south, in Ivory Coast, journalist Venance Konan wrote very interesting columns on corruption in his country at the beginning of the 1990s and 2000s: "*When we see the attitude of policemen, civil servants, when we see the generalisation of prevarication and corruption, when we see that the only value offered today to young people is money, we have to pray very hard that this country will never be attacked. Because there will not be many people to defend it. Everyone will first wonder "how much will I earn?" before leaving. When the population also has the feeling that there is a group who is filling its pockets, it will not risk its life for this group*"<sup>113</sup>.

For this reason, the Malian trajectory must alert all sub-regional players about religious radicalism and the corruption. This might be the main lesson of a collapse the repercussions of which will last for several years and the roots of which have not disappeared.



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<sup>112</sup> Bakari Sambé, "Grand angle sur le radicalisme religieux et la menace terroriste au Sénégal", *Rapport sur la paix et la sécurité dans l'espace CEDEAO*, no. 3, May 2013, p. 4.

<sup>113</sup> Venance Konan, *Nègreries. 1994-2006, chroniques de 12 années sèches*, Abidjan, Frat Mat Éditions, 2006, p. 74.



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