The Situation in Mali

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1. Historical background

1.1. The origins of Mali: pre-colonial and colonial period

The formation of Mali's State blends itself with Western Africa history. The country's genesis refers to the year 1235, when the battle of Kirina, won by the mandinga people against the Sosso – former conquerors of the region, served as the founder of the State (Maglia, Closs and Noronha 2013). Mali rose in the vacuum of power left by the fall of Gana's empire, then hegemonic in Western Africa (Macedo 2013). It would turn itself into the regional hegemony, based on an extensive tributary system with Mali's capital as the center (Ki-Zerbo 1972). Thereafter, Mali became the major military power and the most dynamic economy in the region, building a structure of power similar to an empire. The development of the civilization is deeply connected with Mali's territorial position between the Niger and the Senegal rivers.

A large group of ethnics formed Mali's State, among them the Malinke group, the Fulani group, the Sonike group and the Tuareg people (Visentini 2012). The empire was the richest, the most powerful and had the greatest reserves of minerals (especially gold) below the Sahara desert (Diallo 2011), a region of dynamic commercial transaharian activities (Pergher and Tocchetto 2013). The civilization was deeply influenced by the Islam (Maglia, Closs and Noronha 2013). Since that moment, the religion has been followed by a large percentage of the population. Eventually, Mali's hegemony would end in the XIV century due to the rise of new powers in the region, such as the Songai, and the Fula people (Visentini 2012).

In 1855, Mali was colonized by France after the decisions of the Berlin Conference. According to Diallo (2011, 36), during the period of occupation, Africa

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1 The expression "tributary system" refers to a set of states connected by power relations between them in which, unlike an empire, the stronger state does not attach the weak ones directly, but manages them by taxes in order to make them subordinate, although leaving with relative autonomy in their business.

2 According to Macedo (2013), the Tuareg people is a semi-nomadic ethnic group that developed its civilization in the Sahara desert and that used to be animal breeders – specially camels, goats and lambs (Mazrui and Wondji 2010). They also dedicated themselves to commercial caravans.
lost its sovereignty and the European colonialism was responsible for destroying the whole social fabric of African communities. Moreover, the colonials powers destroyed and remodeled the African map, building a new social hierarchy that would be the base for the modern African states’ future elites (Diallo 2012, 36). The Sahel region was under French’s colonialism: the French West Africa – commonly known as AOF, Afrique occidentale française, formed by eight French colonial territories: Côte d’Ivoire, Dahomey – current Benin, French Sudan – current Mali, French Guinea, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Upper Volta – current Burkina Faso. The AOF was similar to a federal structure, divided in local governments subaltern to the colonial governor of Dakar, the capital of OAF, which by its turn reported directly to Paris.

According to BD (2013), the Tuareg people were not part of Mali until the French colonialism, when the metropolis established the borders to the administrative districts without respecting former ethnics and political frontiers. The Tuareg people, located overwhelmingly in Northern Mali due to their close relation with the Sahara desert, since then aims to achieve their self-independent and autonomous zone, the Azawad. The first Tuareg rebellion that pressed for this erupted in 1916, when the French refused to release such territory, violently suppressing the rebellion (BD 2013).

In the Second World War period, France ended internally divided after Germany’s invasion between the Nazi-collaborationist Vichy’s Republic in the north and the not-occupied south. Therefore, regarding the metropolis situation, the AOF took side of the Nazi-fascism’s Vichy’s imperialism (Mazrui and Wondji 2010). Vichy’s France thus increased the economic exploration of AOF and hardened its colonial policy. Nonetheless, the AOF had changed in some aspects: in 1937 labor unions and union movements appeared for the first time in the region (Mazrui and Wondji 2010). At the same time that these social and workers movements were developing themselves, the awareness on their subaltern situation grew between African elites vis-à-vis the metropolis.

The post-War period brought together a context of relative economic development in AOF regarding agriculture and some industrial sectors. Such development, however, occurred overwhelmingly in port towns; therefore, Mali’s development was considerably restricted. Nevertheless, the international context would irreversibly distance Western Africa from France domination, which would be crystallized in France’s 1958 Constitution of its Fifth Republic, dissolving the AOF structure and enabling the independences.

1.2. The formation of the Nation-State in Mali

Mali’s evolution towards a modern State embraces the complex unification process of its region into a single Nation, which first can be seen in the attempt to form the Mali Federation (1959-1960). The Federation, formed by two majoritarian Muslim countries, was apolitical, economic and religious endeavor integrating the
Sudanese Republic (current Mali) and Senegal into a homogeneous nation under the French Community, adopting the name Mali Federation (Diallo 2011). Such development may be understood as part of a continuous process that would unify the whole francophone Africa. Also according to Diallo (2011), this Federation was a turning point for the emergence of the African states in the region, especially for Mali, even if such political organization was under French rule when it came to defense and international relations issues. This is due to the fact its political leaders saw the Federation as the beginning of a reconstruction of what was once the great Mali Empire. Nevertheless, it would become clear that such a project could not emerge under the rule of a foreign dominator and thus the Federation became independent from France in June 1960, by a power transfer agreement signed on the 4th April.

However, due to the many divergences that arose between the leaders, in August 1960 the Federation would be dissolved. A number of its causes are related to religious and political (exterior and interior) divergences between the parts. In regard of religious issues, it was not clear how the Federation, a secular State, should conduct its relationship with the Muslim leaders (Clark 1999). At the same time, the political lack of convergence between both States posed serious difficulties: at one side, Federation's Prime-Minister Modibo Keita, of Mali, defended a socialist option towards a radical africanization, at the other, deputy Leopold Senghar, of Senegal, had preference for an economic liberalization, guided by the French Franc (Diallo 2011). Under these circumstances, the Federation eventually reached an end and the Sudanese Republic became the independent Republic of Mali. The same happened with Senegal, turning into the independent Republic of Senegal.

The Federation was one between many possibilities of creating a forum for cooperation and national integration amid the African States. Another endeavor for integration in the region was the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), created in the 1970's. Within the Community's objectives were the creation of a common front against external domination, the establishment of a strong and viable economy that could eradicate poverty and the cooperation and protection of the many cultures and social institutions of the State-members (Fernandes 2011).

The political events that came after Mali’s independence from France are related with its internal stabilization and the country’s external aims. To achieve international stability, Modibo Keita, the first leader of the independent country, turned to the USSR for political support and, therefore, led Mali to become a socialist regime. Such regime, sustained between 1960 and 1968, created a sense of nationalism, consolidating the Mali State and its territory. However, the regime could not fully stabilize its institutions yet.

In 1968, the Lieutenant Mousa Traoré came to power through a military coup, gaining popular legitimation through the promise of economic and political reforms. Nevertheless, with the passing of the years, unemployment, high birth
rates and economic inefficiencies increased, placing Mali as one of the poorest countries in the world (Keita 1998). Traoré’s government, though, would be maintained through strong repression and intense corruption until the beginning of the 1990’s. During this period, with the collapse of the bipolar world order, a growing demand from the civil society emerged, pressing for more freedom and also for political reform. The opposition to the regime resulted in innumerous crackdowns, which created a more intensive separatism between the minorities in the north of the country and the government in the south (Smith 2001). The geographical and ethnical polarization of this civil uprising is one of the many historical unsettled disputes of the country.

To better understand the brewing separatism in Mali, it is necessary to take in account the history of the Tuareg people. Also known as “Blue Men of The Desert”, they are spread in a region which encompasses not only Mali, but also Algeria, Burkina Faso, Libya⁴, Niger and, in a smaller part, Nigeria (Keita 1998). Seen as a minority by the government, the Tuareg faced political and cultural isolation since Keita’s regime, when the rejection of their demands (integration within the State and land reforms) resulted in many uprisings (Lecocq 2010). By the beginning of the 1960’s, such crackdowns ignited a short rebellion, which resulted in a period of guerrilla warfare between such minority and the new-established socialist regime. Despite the small number of combatants, this was one of the first uprisings against the Malian government and it resulted in a harsh resentment from the Tuareg, which would lead to a continuous instability between the two sides (Keita 1998).

After the end of the Cold War, the transition to a multiparty democracy turned out to raise innumerous internal and regional conflicts. Nonetheless, the political transition of the authoritarian regime to a democracy was possible, resulting in the first presidential elections in 1992, bringing Alpha Ounar Konaré to power. Despite its democratic institutions, Mali was facing economic instability, resulted from Traoré’s structural adjustments to the IMF (International Monetary Fund) norms (Heisbourg 2013). Such economic instability augmented inequality and, by the beginning of the 1990’s, resulted in innumerous protests from students and professors throughout the country. Also, leveraging the situation, new Tuareg rebellions extended the regional instability in the Northern Mali, being only minimized in 1997 by State force (Keita 1998).

1.3. Developments in contemporary Mali

In its new political phase, during the last three decades, Mali has been facing innumerous social and institutional problems. The democratic process can be characterized by the constitution of weak institutions and strong leaders, both correlated with high corruption rates (Smith 2001). Therefore, Mali entered the millennium with a democratic regime and increasing political freedom, but facing

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⁴ Before its downfall, former President Muammar Kaddafi started to incorporate many Tuareg in its armed forces since the 1980’s. These people migrated to Libya since it was once a wealthy and stable African country. Also, Kaddafi saw the incorporation of these and other minorities as a way to create and maintain stability in the region (Keita 1998).
innumerous insurgencies and minor protests.

In 1997, Oumar Alpha Konaré was reelected with large percentage of votes. The election was marked by national fervor as well as allegations of corruption by Konaré’s opposition to the elected candidate. The new President inherited an unstable situation in the country. The 1992 April National Pact between the Malian government and a number of Tuareg groups – which gave more autonomy to northern Tuareg provinces and, simultaneously, tried to integrate the ethnicity in Mali’s economic and social reality - renewed and re-inflamed the debate around the Azawed state due to the relative decentralization granted by Bamako. Internal violence once again escalated, resulting in almost 8,000 deaths (BD 2013).

In 2002, the ex-military Amadou Touré was elected President of Mali, backed by the former President Konaré. Touré's mandate is known as a period of democratic evolution in Mali (Smith 2010), where he pushed for a consensus government as well as trying to strengthen national unity through the dialogue between the different national groups in order to build Mali’s stability (Visentini 2012). Thus, Touré named a Tuareg as his Prime-Minister; however, according to Visentini (2012), Touré couldn’t consolidate the politics he aimed to. The consequence of Touré’s failure was the Tuareg’s insurgency of 2006, when groups attacked Malian military installations in Kidal, a city of Mali, demanding greater autonomy and development assistance (BD 2013).

President Touré was reelected with 71% of votes in the 2007 elections (Visentini 2012, 40). Nonetheless, once more he was not capable of maintaining a political-institutional system strong enough to govern and hold together the complex situation of the country. In March 2012, Touré was deposed by a coup headed by a military junta in the capital Bamako, while insurgent Tuareg groups occupied strategic parts of Northern Mali, unleashing the current crisis and removing from the country the status of one of the most democratic African States.

2. Statement of the issue

2.1. Developments after the 2012 coup

2.1.1. The seizing of Northern Mali

One of the reasons for the government’s fall in Bamako was its incapacity to deal with the spreading rebellion in Mali’s northern territory, as well as the lack of resources at the disposal of the army to deal with the brewing insurgency. Thus, when Captain Amadou Sanogo, leader of the junta which took control of the nation, assumed, he was commissioned to deal with such issue (Nossiter 2012). However, the coup would eventually bring even more instability to the country’s situation.

After the coup, the ECOWAS hurried in trying to achieve a commitment with

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4 During this period, Kaddafi’s regime approximation and aid to Tuareg people was already considerable, especially regarding food, shelter and military capabilities and training (BD 2013; Pergher Tocchetto 2013).
United Nations Security Council

Mali’s new established junta. The organization stated that it could contribute with a stand-by-force to intervene against the northern rebels once the civil government was restored. On April 6, an agreement mediated by ECOWAS was reached between Sanogo and former president Touré, where both would resign and power would pass to the National Assembly Speaker Diouncounda Traoré (The Daily Star 2012).

Taking advantage of the power vacuum caused by the coup and the incertitude surrounding Bamako, the insurgents in the north carried forward their task for an independent State. Days after the coup, the cities of Gao, Kidal and the historical Timbuktu were taken by the rebels. This was headed mainly by the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) and Ansar Dine, two of the biggest Tuareg movements in the country. On 6 April 2013, having already expelled government troops and seized the territory they wanted, the MNLA declared the independence of the Azawed State in Mali’s north. The endeavor, though, was not recognized by the African Union or any other country (BBC 2012a).

The MNLA, created in 2010, is embedded with an ideology of secular nationalism and presses for the independence of Azawed, thus being the group responsible for igniting the rebellion (Guardiola 2013). Before 2012, the MNLA attached itself only to the realm of political fighting, turning into a political-military movement when it joined forces with Ansar Dine, in the beginning of that year. The Ansar Dine emerged in 2012 and was composed of Tuareg Islamists. This group presents a synthesis between the discourses of the Northern population’s liberation and the promotion of a sociopolitical model based upon the traditional Islamic values – mainly the Sharia, which they wished to lay down on the new independent State that the group intended to create (Poupart 2013).

The lack of power in Bamako can be one of the reasons for the Tuareg reaching part of their goals, since the State’s instability facilitated a possible achievement of their demands. However, the rebellion this time had a main difference from previous attempts which is the fact that the rebels gained access to a huge influx of weapons entering in Mali’s territory since the downfall of Gaddafi’s regime in Libya. Moreover, there were many insurgents who fought aside Gaddafi’s loyal forces returning to Mali, endowed with recent fighting and insurgent experiences (Luntumbue 2013).

After the independence declaration of the Azawed State and the Mali’s army withdrawal, MNLA and Ansar Dine, now in virtual control of the North, soon dragged themselves in conflict with each other due to the differences that each movement envisioned for the future of the Azawed State. While the MNLA wished to impose a secular regime, Ansar Dine began to impose a radical form of the Sharia in a variety of towns, which resulted in popular protests and clashes between forces from both movements (BBC 2012b).

The lack of formal institutions and the absence of firm control in the Azawed region, as well as the conflicts among both factions, resulted attracting other
transnational regional groups that thought such opportunity could be utilized to their proper goals. These were groups such as the Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA), both radical Islamist movements. The AQIM was founded in 2006 and proposes a return to the original principles of Islam as well as the recourse to armed fight against its enemies, calling as its final objective the restitution of the Islamic caliphate. Supplying other contesting movements in the Maghreb with weapons, training and personal, AQIM soon acquired status and consolidated itself in the region. With such assistance, in 2011 was founded MUJWA, which also began preaching for the Sharia imposition not only in the Sahel, but in the whole West Africa. Both movements receive funds through drug and weapon trafficking in the region (Poupard 2013).

Such groups soon preached for radical Islamic imposition in Northern Mali, clashing with the secular MNLA and even the Islamic Ansar Dine. The jihadists groups manage to seize the rebellion initiated by the Tuareg, using Mali’s instability in order to achieve their aims. Taking control of important cities such as Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu, the groups expelled MNLA forces from it. The MNLA will in vain seek different attempts to regain the cities’ control, but in the end of 2012 it would be definitely out of such towns (France24 2012).

While Mali’s northern territories were under clashes between the different groups, the government in Bamako struggled to form any governance in order to get under its control the country’s territory. In August 2012, in a meeting at Ouagadougou, ECOWAS claimed for the formation of a national union government at Bamako. Weeks later, Mali’s interim president Dioufoumba Traoré announced the creation of the High State Council, which he would direct, as well as a national union government presided by Cheikh Modibo Diarra, that would integrate personal from the military junta (Aljazeera 2012a).

2.1.2. The Mali crisis’ international response

As soon as the new government was formed, Bamako pleaded to the United Nations for help in liberating Mali’s north from insurgents and terrorists, action backed by ECOWAS. The UNSC unanimously adopted on 12 October 2012 Resolution 2071, demanding a plan for military intervention by ECOWAS and the African Union. At 11 November 2012, ECOWAS would authorize a plan to deploy 3,300 military troops in Northern Mali as soon as they were ready (Guardiola 2013).

Meanwhile, the situation in the rebel-claimed area would deteriorate for MNLA and Ansar Dine, the original movements behind the Azawad situation. AQIM and MUJWA continued to advance its own forces through the region seizing many cities and imposing radical values and its ideals in them. Perceiving the situation changing, regional forces, mainly ECOWAS, called Ansar Dine and the MNLA to sever any relation they could still have with AQIM and MUJWA and to come
negotiate with Bamako. With the radical Islamics’ onrush in the North, by the end of November 2012 both Ansar Dine and the MNLA renounced the fighting for Azawed and came to the negotiating table in a meeting at Ouagadougou (Luntumbue 2013). The two movements would be incorporated in a national dialogue for reconciliation, where they could press politically for its Azawed-related demands, first helping Bamako to expel the now labeled terrorist groups from Mali’s north.

In December 2012, the UNSC would approve Resolution 2085, “authorizing the deployment of an African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) for an initial period of one year” (RES 2085) to be headed by ECOWAS, insisting at the same time in the necessity of a dialogue between the rebels who initially claimed for the independence of the Azawed State, as well as asking for national elections in 2013⁵ (UN 2012).

The tide of the events would change in the beginning of January 2013 when the radical forces captured the city of Konna, located just 600km away from Bamako. Such issue represented a real threat to the government, since it could mean a future headway to Mali’s capital. Thus, on the following day, the UNSC approved the fast dispatch of international military forces to Mali to handle the situation (UNSC Report 2013). France was asked by President Diouncoounda Traoré himself to urgently help Mali’s government since AFISMA was not ready yet. Hours later, in the afternoon of 11 January 2013, the French military launched Operation Sérval, deploying its special forces, infantry and gendarmerie as well as its aviation⁶ (Heisbourg 2013).

The radical groups were not only caught unaware by the suddenness of the attack, but also soon found themselves facing a military force more capable than their own (Ségou 2013)⁷. During the first week, the declared objective of the operation were to secure Mali’s capital and stop the terrorist offensive, as well as strike the radical forces’ bases, destroying its ability to regroup or retreat. All were declared to be preparing the terrain for the arrival of African forces (Heisbourg 2013).

The main justification given by the French government for the military intervention was the need to prevent Mali from becoming a “safe heaven” that could be used by terrorist forces to organize attacks elsewhere in the world, which could turn all Saharan regions in a new type of Afghanistan, a “Sahelistan”. The possibility of Mali turning into a breeding ground for terrorists would be reinforced through the weaponry spilled over from Libya (Economist 2013). Moreover, days

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⁵ In the same month, the prime-minister Modibo Diarra is detained by the military, following orders from Captain Sanogo, being substituted by Diango Cissoko.

⁶ The French forces could rapidly be disposed in Mali due to the presence of its military bases in West Africa countries, namely in Burkina Faso, Chad and Côte d’Ivoire.

⁷ Despite their knowledge of the terrain and experience of guerrilla war, the rebels chosen to fight like a conventional army, taking and holding cities, travelling along roads in vehicles that presented an easyy target for French jets (Ségou 2013).
after the French troops entered in Mali, a specific event helped to foster such an image of terrorism: the massacre in In Amenas gas factory made by AQIM⁸. At the other hand, as soon as the French troops moved into Mali, there were claims that Paris was acting one more time under a neocolonialist approach in order to guarantee its own interests.

After the first two weeks of Operation Serval, the French military would shift its efforts for the restoration of Mali’s territorial integrity, emphasizing the fight against terrorism. Along with some government troops, the international forces retook all towns by mid-February back to Bamako’s rule (Heisbourg 2013)⁹.

At the end of January 2013, the first African troops entered Northern Mali through the AFISMA, being headed by a Nigerian commander under the banner of ECOWAS (France 2013). During February 2013, new round of talks begun in Ouagadougou between Mali officials and MNLA representants, as well as the new formed IMA (Islamic Movement for Azawed)¹⁰, to discuss about the collective effort to deal with the jihadists in the North as well as future negotiations about the integrity of Mali (Observateur 2013).

In overall, the Operation Sérval and all its supporters managed to make Islamist forces retreat to badlands in Northeastern Mali. The worst part of the military conflict seems to have gone. The discussion now in order reflects Mali’s post-conflict rebuilding efforts and the future of the international forces (Ségou 2013). Paris showed interest for the establishment of an UN peacekeeping force as soon as the situation becomes more stable, at best before elections are held. It is also in discussion the role African forces should have (Irish and Nichols 2013).

Whatever the results might be, lot of criticism was raised against the French involvement in Mali. To begin with, it was said that AQIM, demonized as a threat to France since it could develop a Taliban-style regime in Northern Mali, was overestimated. AQIM has never launched any attack in France or Europe since it was established, and its activities in the Sahel have been confined almost entirely to smuggling drugs and kidnapping foreigners (Cockburn 2013). Thus, France was appointed as entering in Mali just to achieve its own national interest goals. Arguments in this line of thinking vary widely. There are opinions that François Hollande could be using Mali as the easiest way for him to be seen as a man able

⁸ On 16 January 2013, a group of AQIM militants crossed the border from Mali into Algeria and captured a natural gas exploring field close to In Amenas. They not only took as hostages nearly 800 Algerians and foreigners who worked at the place, but also threatened to explode Tiguentourine factory, which produces 12% of the natural gas Algeria exports to Europe. The intervention of elite forces from Algerian antiterrorism police allowed the liberation of the majority of hostages; nonetheless, it was unable to avoid the killing of 40 people at the end of the four day crisis. AQMI, which claimed the responsibility for the attack, declared that it was related with the French Operation Serval, demanding the international forces exit from Mali, also threatening to deliver other terrorist attacks elsewhere. Algerian sources informed that the operation was launched by the Libyan territory (Guardiola 2013).

⁹ During all the operations, other countries also supported the French campaign, such as Belgium, Canada, Denmark and the United Kingdom, which provided helicopters and aero transport military planes (Théroux-Bénoni 2013a).

¹⁰ This is a group which splintered from the Ansar Dine movement.
to preserve France’s rank among the great powers – since its popularity until the operation was very slow inside France (Ndiayeis 2013). Also, there are critics stating that Operation Sérval is another neocolonial-style intervention in the region where it was the former metropolis, even though Hollande pledged that such an era was ending for France (Economist 2013). Such claims appoints to the interests France may have in controlling Sahara's natural resources – oil, gas, uranium and gold – as well as additional objectives related with Paris’ strategies for countries such as Nigeria and Algeria (Guardiola 2013).

Furthermore, it is important to notice that

[...] there is more than one center of power in Bamako and their positions differ with regard to foreign intervention. While transitional president Diouncounda Traoré and his government welcome the intervention, there are those who generally view African troops and foreign intervention in Mali with suspicion and fear. This latter position is held by Captain Amadou Sanogo, who has […], on numerous occasions, confirmed his rejection of the presence of foreigners on Malian territory (Aljazeera 2013).

2.2. The impacts and the importance of developments in Mali

The conflict in Mali has brought numerous problems not only for the country, but also for its region. Concerns were raised by the international community, mainly by Western countries, in relation to issues such as humanitarian impacts and the jihadists’ destination. Furthermore, it is necessary to analyze the importance of what happened in Mali through the lens of the regional problems. This includes the trafficking routes of weapons and drugs, Sahel’s strategic resources and the African organizations’ role in assuring stability in the region.

Regarding the crisis’ humanitarian impacts, the radical’s reign over Mali and the conflicts which followed it generated a huge number of refugees. About 370.000 people fled their homes, most of them to Southern Mali, but nearly 140.000 went to neighboring countries such as Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger (McConnell 2013). This number rose even more after the deployment of the French military. Only in Bamako there are more than 50.000 displaced (McConnell 2013), most of them arriving in the city with only what they could carry. Moreover, Northern Mali is currently suffering from a huge lack of food, a problem recurrent in this country, but which has been aggravated recently. “The World Food Program (WFP) said 1.2 million Malians face food shortages due to the lingering effects of the 2011 drought and because of disruption to normal trade caused by the conflict” (McConnell 2013). The organization affirms that food is simply not reaching markets, contributing for the statistics of nearly 210.00 people at risk of severe malnutrition. To make things even worse, the northern economy situation, weak since before the clashes, has deteriorated catastrophically under the extremists’ rule, due to the fact that it caused legal regional trade to dry up (McConnell 2013).
The combat against the Islamic extremists, by its turn, also brought problems to the region since a number of them may have fled to other countries. It was one of the aims of French and Malian troops to separate the most extremist zealots from Tuareg natives in order to permit a dialogue between Bamako and the rebels of the North. However, now that this aim may have been accomplished, the terrorists could eventually use neighboring territories to concentrate efforts from henceforth. While still helping in the pursuit of terrorist sanctuaries alongside Mali and African troops, the French operation found itself in the need to deal with rising suicide bombers and explosive terrorist attacks in some cities, which seem to be a new guerrilla-style tactic from the remaining radical Islamic forces (Ségou 2013).

Analysis also should be drawn in respect to the region’s problems and the possible effects that Mali crisis could have upon them. The Sahel region is known for the presence of narco-Islamists that control routes of weapon and drug trafficking. One of the main groups, AQIM, has as its zone of action the whole region between Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Algeria as well as parts of Libya, Chad, Burkina Faso and Nigeria. Regarding drug trafficking, there are flows of cocaine coming from South America to West Africa, where the drug travels across the Sahara Desert under the aegis of the terrorist groups into Europe, the consumer market. More recently, there is a new destabilizing factor which is the huge inflow of weapons coming from Libya that are now being illegally sold in the region. The main receptors of Libyan weapons were radical groups in Sudan and Nigeria, probably the group Boko Haram, and, until now, Mali (Luntumbue 2013).

The Sahel region is also important for its strategic resources, which draw attention from all world powers. Arguments that characterize interventions in Africa by external powers as neocolonialists are based on the profits that such countries could draw from the region’s economic potentials. Mali has important reserves of gold in its northern and southern territories as well as uranium, mineral also found in neighboring Niger and Algeria. It is also important to notice that the Guinea Gulf is developing as a significant center of energy, since oil reserves are being discovered in West Africa’s shores. Furthermore, also in relation to the energy market, there are important pipelines crossing Algeria and Libya’s territory. Projects to develop new routes for energy transportation to Europe are currently under process, and could run though Niger and Nigeria, countries localized near Mali (Luntumbue 2013).

Finally, attention should be given to Operation Sérval’s impact in the African continent and its regional organizations. As Guardiola (2013) puts it, whatever Mali’s war results may be, this new foreign military intervention brings to memory South Africa’s warning from the Libyan war time: Africans will not be able to effectively oppose external interference in Africa’s conflicts while they do not have the political willing and the military means to resolve such problems by themselves in a collective and supportive way. It is up to the […] African Union
2.3. Searching stability in the long term: current developments and structural problems

There were debates about what was the most pressing issue when dealing with the Mali case: the international community, mainly led by Western countries, claimed that the terrorist threat is the most important to be dealt with, securitizing the whole Mali affair; on the other hand, it was appointed, mainly by African countries, that most pressing is the necessity to keep Mali as a whole territorial unit, rejecting any secessionist movement. Whatever the case may be, both are apparently solved at the present time, although such kind of discussion is still at the table when dealing with Mali in the long term, since the country must prioritize one of these agendas.

In fact, the country’s problems are just initially being settled. The newest Tuareg insurgency and the taking of Northern Mali by jihadists are symptomatic of a juxtaposition of deep-rooted structural problems. Such are some of the issues that must be tackled in order to full address the instability in Mali, especially now that efforts are being directed to a post-conflict reconstruction. Four main areas could be highlighted that must be taken in consideration: national reconciliation, security governance, electoral process and the economy and the development of Mali’s peripheral regions.

The process of national reconciliation must address the ongoing historical conflict between the Tuareg people from the north and the central government in Bamako. This was not the group’s first insurgency and may not be the last if the issue is not resolved. During all the previous conflicts between the government and the Tuareg, the former responded with harsh military measures as well as a strategy of arming different opposition groups for them to neutralize each other. Ex-president Touré itself rested on a personal network of loosen alliances with Mali’s periphery leaders that disintegrated itself in face of the rebellion and the opportunism of the jihadist groups. Thus, the crisis breakthrough is a sign of the central government’s weak governance and instability. The new elected government will have to deal with a group of people – the Tuareg – that has been maintained in distance for a long time, sidelined from Mali itself (Beaumont 2013).

There is the possibility that the recent crisis may force Bamako to either grant greater autonomy for the region or treat it differently, fully integrating the North

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11 Our translation from the original: “Seja qual for o resultado da guerra no Mali, esta nova intervenção militar estrangeira em África traz à memória o aviso lançado pela África do Sul quando da guerra da Líbia: os africanos não poderão opor eficazmente às ingerências externas nos conflitos em África enquanto não tiverem a vontade política e os meios militares para os resolver coletiva e solidariamente. Cabe a [...] União Africana [...] acelerar a formação e dar autonomia e capacidades à Força Militar Africana de intervenção rápida, criada em 2003, mas que não estará operacional antes de 2015”.
in the country’s governance and in a new model of democracy. Attention must be paid to the fact that President Diouncounda Traoré is not yet strengthened enough in the government, which may loosen its position vis-à-vis negotiations with the Tuareg. This may lead to an unprecedented political control in the hands of the Tuareg regarding Northern Mali, but it might also result in an even greater lack of state presence in the region, eventually making harder to Bamako to hold its territory altogether, thus possibly threatening Mali’s foundations (Ndiayeis 2013).

In regard to the country’s security governance, one of the reasons for the breakout of the most recent crisis was Malian army’s lack of capacity to defend its own territory properly. The initial plan delineated by the international community to help Bamako was composed by three overlapping phases: the reconstruction of the Malian army, the deployment of AFISMA, and the operation to take the north back, which would then lead to the withdrawal of international troops. However, the attack against Konna disrupted the planning: the incapacity of the Malian army to respond urgently and the impossibility to deliver AFISMA at that moment would lead to the deployment of Operation Sérval. In order to improve such field, the Malian army is expected to be rebuilt in order to be engaged in operations on the ground. Moreover, now that the north is apparently liberated, the area must be secured and stabilized in order to consolidate the military gains achieved (Théroux-Bénoni 2013).

Regarding the international forces in Mali, France’s expressed desire to scale down its presence or, at least, to “multilateralise” its commitment, the idea now is to deploy a UN operation that will take over from AFISMA. While this operation seems to be supported in principle by several members of the UNSC, it nevertheless raises serious issues given the volatile nature of the region, which calls for the kind of coercive action that the UN has so far been reluctant to undertake. The UN has instead preferred the conventional concept of consent of the parties, impartiality and non-use of force except in self-defense. (…) [However,] the debate on a possible UN operation should not distract attention from the need to put in place an efficient and adequate security governance system in Mali and to strengthen regional defense and security cooperation (Théroux-Bénoni 2013).

It is also necessary to address the electoral process and the democratic issue. The electoral process was extensively debated in Mali, since it is expected that the holding of elections be related to the restoration of state’s authority. Part of the government’s authorities argues that elections could only be envisaged if the North is completely liberated, otherwise the partition of Mali’s territory would be legitimated. On the other hand, it has been said, particularly within the international community, that only an elected government could help the country emerge from the crisis. This way, it is of utmost importance to create conditions to free, transparent and fair elections (Théroux-Bénoni 2013a).

However, it is important to notice that the electoral process and the advent
of an elected government alone will not resolve Mali’s problems. Such procedure is important, but must be the first step in a more complex debate to overhaul Malian governance system’s structure. As Penney (2013) puts it, “restoring Mali’s democracy by reverting to the pre-coup status quo poses a major threat to Mali’s long-term future. After all, it was precisely this pre-coup status quo that allowed the country’s dramatic collapse to begin with”.

Finally, economical problems in Mali also must be tackled since they are one of the main root causes for the conflicts to arise. Short-term measures, such as the foreign intervention to contain the jihadist expansion in the northern territory, will not address the reasons why the people may fall in the hands of terrorism or separatism. Most of times, they follow such paths if they are not fully incorporated by the State apparatus, which should grant enough public goods for their survival as well as opportunities for them to develop themselves economically. Until the recent crisis, there was a clear lack of State presence in the whole Northern region. In order to reconstruct and stabilize Mali, this sort of problem must be tackled with the elaboration of long-term solutions.

In Southern Mali resides 90% of the population, whom survives mainly from agriculture. The crops produced in this region are the ones responsible to feed the whole country, including Northern Mali. The North accounts for two-thirds of Mali’s territory, but consists almost entirely of sparsely populated desert, inhabited mainly by the Tuareg, which are less than 10% of the population. However, what is produced is not enough to feed the whole populace since the country suffers from food distribution and shortage problems, thus resulting in chronic malnutrition (Penney 2013). Moreover, the population suffers with lack of electrical energy production, with a per capita rate from just 60kWh, an extremely low number even by Western African standards, which result in the vast majority of Malians continuing to rely on biofuels (wood, charcoal) for their energy needs (NERINT 2009).

It is important to keep in mind that all such fields to be addressed in Mali are related to the first debate presented, where threats emanating from terrorism are sided by the necessity of tackling all the country’s issues while managing to maintain its territory united. This presents all parties involved in Mali with challenges when creating an agenda for the most pressing issues to be dealt with, making necessary to distinguish where points converge or diverge.

3. Previous international actions

The situation in Mali has been dealt with by different levels and layers of international organizations. Mali’s crisis first phases were managed initially at the regional level through ECOWAS, evolving to a wider support and effort of the African Union (AU). Even though the international level was also playing a role during this first period, its full involvement would come through Operation Sérval. Then, the following step would see a greater participation by the part of
the United Nations. All processes would be composed by an overlay of the different levels, all affecting the situation on Mali’s ground.

3.1. The regional level: ECOWAS and the AU

Triggered by Mali’s coup d’état in June 2012, the first international response consisted of a regional articulation. ECOWAS was at the center, being led by the ECOWAS-appointed mediator, President Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso. The organization followed two parallel tracks: negotiations with the coup authors to ease the constitutional order restoration and complete the transition process, also fostering negotiations with groups in the north to address the Azawad crisis and keep Mali’s unity (Affa’a-Mindzie and Perry 2013).

Days after the coup, the regional bloc suspended Mali from the organization, imposing legal, economic and diplomatic sanctions, actions followed by the African Union’s own sanctions against the military junta’s leaders. Having managed to apply enough pressure on Bamako, a framework agreement was signed in April 2012, transferring power from the junta to Dioncounda Traoré. Also, in January 2013, a transition roadmap was endorsed by the Malian parliament after being adopted by the government. In regard to the negotiations with the northern groups, Mali initially recognized only MNLA as a rebel group, and Ansar Dine was considered a criminal faction. Only in November 2012, through the ECOWAS mediation, alongside the United Nations Office for West Africa, talks with MNLA and Ansar Dine were set up. Calling them both to suspend any action related to MUJAO and AQIM, the parties would eventually recognize the need to establish an inter-Malian dialogue framework, involving representatives from various communities in the north (Affa’a-Mindzie and Perry 2013).

In parallel to the negotiation track, ECOWAS also planned to deploy a multidimensional mission to Mali – the ECOWAS Mission in Mali (MICENA) – in order to resolve the situation in the north if the rebels did not cede power in a peaceful way. However, problems were raised and the mission never went farther than the planning stages. According to Théroux-Bénoni (2013b), among MICENA’s obstacles were the Mali’s military junta’s hostility to any armed presence in Bamako; the lack of consensus and a way forward with Algeria - an important player in the region, absent in ECOWAS; and logistical and financial constraints which made impossible the mission’s deployment without international support.

The African Union, by its turn, initially limited its efforts in supporting ECOWAS’ plans, adopting a more active role in the second half of 2012. Differences among Malian actors and ECOWAS were being overcome, since it was accorded that the Malian army would lead any envisaged regional military operation. The African Union played an important role containing the reluctance of Algeria regarding MICENA when it turned such option into a continental initiative, transforming ECOWAS’ mission in the African-led International Support Mission in Mali
(AFISMA). Also, AU facilitated the provision of support to the mission through the United Nations, framing the military action in a more global perspective (Théroux-Bénoni 2013b). Through Resolution 2085, adopted by the United Nations Security Council on December 2012, AFISMA would be deployed by an initial period of one year in Mali.

3.2. The broader level in the crisis management: the UN and France’s role

As seen above, since the beginning of Mali’s crisis the United Nations has played at least a supportive role, either through backing up negotiations with the rebels in the north or fostering the planned military options. The UNSC has adopted three resolutions on the situation before France’s intervention: Resolution 2056 (July 5, 2012), calling for a “road map” for restoration of constitutional order in Mali, giving its support to ECOWAS and AU and considering a UN mandate for a West African Stabilization Force; Resolution 2071 (October 12, 2012), stating its readiness to consider requests for International Military Forces, calling than an actionable plan for military intervention to be made by ECOWAS and the African Union; and Resolution 2085 (December 20, 2012), authorizing the deployment of AFISMA (Affa’a-Mindzie and Perry 2013).

AFISMA, however, would face its first problem in the Malian army’s capacity to lead the campaign to regain control of the north. On January 10, 2013, jihadist groups launched an offensive against Konna, taking control of the city. Such attack called for an urgent action spearheaded by the Malian army, which reorganization was still under process. AFISMA was at its planning stages, also unable to be deployed at that moment. Thus, at the request of Mali’s government, France launched Operation Sérval, marking an important shift in the international response to this crisis. In the official declarations, Paris said that the intervention was not a long-term solution, urging for a UN mission to be deployed as soon as the situation on the ground was safer (Théroux-Bénoni 2013b).

There was a subsequent discussion about UN’s role in Mali after the fight with the jihadists, being won by France. The UN Secretariat was reluctant to allow any deployment of force with harsh conditions on the ground, since that would lead to an operation unable for the UN to conduct, requiring high employment of force. At March 2013, as put by Théroux-Bénoni (2013b), two options were being provided: “either an integrated and multidimensional presence alongside a military force under African leadership; or an integrated and multidimensional stabilization mission authorized under Chapter VII and supported by a parallel force”.

On July 1, 2013, the UNSC established a peacekeeping force for Mali to be effective on July 1, 2013, unanimously adopting Resolution 2100 (2013). It was stressed that “terrorism could only be defeated by a sustained and comprehensive approach to isolate the terrorism threat”. The deployment of 12,600 troops in Mali was authorized, setting up the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated
Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), transferring the functions of AFISMA to the new entity (UN 2013).

MINUSMA, according to its mandate granted by the UNSC, should support the transitional authorities of Mali to reestablish State administration throughout the country and also help to “stabilize key population centers, especially in the north, deter threats and take active steps to prevent the return of armed elements”. “The seven-part mandate also included responsibilities to support the implementation of Mali’s transitional road map to restore democracy and stability” (UN 2013). Furthermore, the UNSC urged presidential and legislative elections to be hold, “welcoming the commitment to organize presidential elections on 7 July 2013 and legislative polls on 21 July 2013” (UN 2013).

4. Bloc positions

Relations between France and Mali are deeply complex, since Mali’s situation is linked to France’s social, political, economic, strategic and energetic development. Firstly, the African country is one of the main access points into Sahara/Sahel region’s natural resources – such as oil, gas, gold and minerals, which are demanded by France - due to its geographic position\(^\text{12}\). The French Republic is also concerned with the rise of terrorist groups in Mali, an issue considered as a national threat. Therefore, France has a full commitment with Mali’s stability, which resulted in Operation Sérval. Thus, France is interested in keeping itself involved in Mali’s future in order to rebuild an African state which can more effectively correspond to French’s national interests. The country has already announced its pledges in helping Mali’s rebuilding (BBC 2013) and sees that the international community should focus on aid to Northern Mali (Irish 2013). The French Republic supports Mali’s integrity, condemns any sort of separatism by the MNLA group and does not recognize the Azawad state (Aljazeera 2012b). Due to France’s advances since Operation Sérval, the French Republic already proposed a French permanent force in Mali with 1000 troops, in order to create a permanent force equipped to fight terrorism (New York Times 2013). Finally, France supports the transition from African Mission to Mali – AFISMA - to UN Mission – MINUSMA - authority in Mali, since the country is interested in reducing its military contingent to 1000 troops until the end of the year (Nichols 2013).

The United States of America considers that violent extremism is increasing in the northern region of Mali, where civil conflict has been intense. For the USA, the conflict is giving ground for terrorist\(^\text{13}\) and/or criminal organizations

\(^{12}\) France’s nuclear power plants are supplied from the uranium mines in Niger (Bhadramucumar 2013) and the Republic has flirted possibilities of exploration in Mauritania (Aljazeera 2013). 75% of France’s electricity resources for nuclear reactors comes from Niger and are explored by Areva, the French nuclear company (Erlanger 2013).

\(^{13}\) It is considered by the country that Al-Qaeda, Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA) and other organizations classified as terrorists are having an important stake on the conflict. The al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is considered by the US senate to be a serious threat not only for Africa, but also for the world.
to perform attacks and to traffic weapons and other illicit materials. Therefore, Washington considers a United Nations strategy and the action of the Special Envoy as a necessary way to foster cooperation not only between international actors, but also between the UN and sub-regional organizations. A military intervention in Mali must be thought comprising not only military operations, but also humanitarian participation in order to respond to the local humanitarian needs (UNBISnet 2012). The United States is helping with intelligence, military transportation and more than 1.200 tons of equipment and supplies not only to help current French forces, but also to support domestic institutions in Mali (Sisk 2013). A small number of American troops were deployed to Mali to support allied forces (The Washington Post 2013) and to train national forces, also in its neighbor, Niger (Reuters 2013b). Thus, it can be understood that Mali is part of the informally known “War on Terror” campaign, since the United States aims to eliminate organizations considered terrorists as a national security objective. For this reason, a UN Mission not only helps to diminish Mali’s instability, but also creates an intensive US military presence in the continent.

Although voting in favor of the international intervention in Mali in December of 2012 (UNBISnet 2013), the Russian Federation believes that regional organizations and the Sahelian states should take the initiatives to solve Mali’s problems. Deeply concerned with the instabilities’ spillover effect over the Sahara/Sahel region and in arms and drugs flow, Russia claims that the situation in Mali must be addressed not only to achieve immediate and urgent goals, but also taking into consideration the whole Sahel region’s situation in order to prevent the disappearance of secular regimes (Lavrov 2013). Russian Federation condemned the MNLA actions, standing for Mali’s territorial integrity (Ria Novosti 2012) and believing that institutions such as ECOWAS and regional and continental institutions must be the major actors in Mali’s situation. Moreover, Russia blames the vacuum of power left by the downfall of Muammar Gaddafi as one of the main reasons of the current instabilities in Mali, since the Federation believes that armed groups now fighting in the region are the same who were armed by Western countries in the overthrow of Libya’s former leader (Heritage and Baczynska 2013). Committed with this position, Russian Federation refuses to send any military troop to the country (The Brics Post 2013). Nonetheless, the government declared it is delivering military light and hardware weapons to Bamako’s government (Zarks 2013). The Russian Federation, however, is concerned with a rowing shift involving force aspects within MINUSMA, since the country believes that the peacekeeping mission must not evolve to a peace enforcement operation (Nichols 2013).

The United Kingdom understands that the main reason fostering the current conflict is the religious extremism present in the north of Mali. For the UK, such external factor has increased Mali’s criminality rates, destabilizing the country and violating many Human Rights. It is for such reason that the option for military...
action against such destabilizing factor was needed. The United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, through the actions of the Special Envoy, is considered by the UK as the main form of leadership to maintain stability in the region (UNBISnet 2012). UK is also one contributor to Mali national forces, providing training, logistics and surveillance packages to it in order to enhance current military operations (United Kingdom 2013). Financial aid for the country has also increased, and UK has granted a €150 million aid package for the next three years (The Guardian 2013). Furthermore, it should be understood that the UK sees the UN Mission as a form to maintain its presence in the region, especially to fight the consolidation of terrorist organizations, like Al-Qaeda.

**China** considers that the current humanitarian situation in the Sahel has deteriorated due to severe food crisis as well as with the ongoing conflict in Libya and Mali, which increased transnational crime and other terrorist and extremist activities. Furthermore, China has interests in Mali, since it has applied large investments projects in the whole African continent. Therefore, the scenario of a formalization of new African interventionism could destabilize China’s relations with African countries (Asia Times 2013). For the country, the integrated United Nations strategy (developed under the views of the countries in the region as well as African regional organizations) is necessary to create specific objectives in the short term. China’s response to the French intervention in Mali also originates from its concern about a potential abuse of the UN mandate, similarly to what happened in Libya (Sun 2013). In the long term, it considers that donors and international financial institutions must assist with regional development in order to diminish the humanitarian crisis (UNBISnet 2012). To achieve such objectives, the external troops in the country have to pull out and hand over the military responsibility to the African-led mission.

**Togo** sees the situation in Mali as a result of structural problems of Sahel’s region as a whole: due to regional structural problems, not only Mali is victim of terrorism, drug trafficking, weapons trafficking and religious extremism, but the whole region suffers with its consequences. Therefore, Togo believes that the strategy to resolve Mali’s problem must be based on a comprehensive approach and in a regional integrated strategic plan (UNBISnet 2012). Togo also understands that the country must address the root problems that cause instability in the region and should not focus only on short term solutions. Togo welcomes initiatives such as MINUSMA and Operation Sérval, but understands that both must dialogue with ECOWAS and with regional institutions in order to achieve better results, since the country believes that such organisms should lead the international actions in Mali. In January, a contingent of Togolese troops arrived in Mali to help Mali’s and French soldiers.

**Australia** sees that African forces under the AFISMA banner are essential to halt the extremist advance from the north of Mali (Australia 2013b), since the country argues that the major threat in such country is the extremist Islamism
militants. Thus, Australia is supporting actions taken against Tuareg rebels with material supplies to the UN operations (Sydney Morning Herald 2013). For the long term, Australia will provide US$ 10 million in humanitarian assistance to Mali (Australia 2013) and the country financially helps the UN Trust Fund in order to maintain the operations of the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA).

**Luxembourg** sees the French military intervention as an important and necessary step to stop the terrorist expansion in the region. The country is providing four million Euros to the mission efforts in the Mali conflict and believes that the International Mission in Support of Mali (MISMA) is an important step to stabilize the region. Luxembourg is also sending some soldiers to train and instruct local armed forces and to help communication between the UN Mission and Mali personnel’s (Wort 2013). The objectives of such actions are in consonance with other European countries.

**Argentina** supports international cooperation to achieve peace and stabilization in Mali and supports initiatives such as MINUSMA to help build Mali’s political, social and military transition. However, the Argentine Republic is alarmed with the limits of the peacekeeping operation: the country is concerned with MINUSMA’s commitment with impartiality, the consent of parties, and the non-use of force, except in self-defense and defense of the mandate (What’s in Blue 2013). Also, Argentina gives emphasis to the importance of the whole African continent in Mali’s situation and believes that an integrated approach should be the basis of an UNSC’s plan. Argentina is critical to a UN approach focused in the security aspect only, since the country understands that the solution to Sahel’s problem is social and political, not only military (Tokatlian 2013). Therefore, Argentine Republic focuses on development, Human Rights and political dialogue issues in the Mali situation’s debate.

Following an agenda similar to Argentina’s, **Guatemala** understands that solutions to Mali’s situations must be mapped based on an integrated and coordinated approach (UNBISnet 2012). Also, the country believes that problems such as terrorism must be addressed with a strategic plan, focused not only on security issues, but also on social and political aspects.

**South Korea** stands out to be one of the major trading partners of Mali and, therefore, has large economic interests in the country. It intends to make a contribution of $ 1 million to the humanitarian mission in order to help stabilize the situation in Mali (Korea Times 2013). South Korea also expressed great concern about the situation in Mali due to the fact that some Korean residents live in this African country. Bearing this in mind, the country worries about any terrorist aggression against foreign personnel, especially unarmed.

For **Azerbaijan**, it is important that the UN remains strongly committed to respecting sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of the Sahel countries. Azerbaijan supports the current regional and international
efforts to restore order in Mali. Measures under Chapter VII of the UN Charter are considered essential to restore territorial integrity and sovereignty, as well as to repeal terrorist and criminal networks in the country. It has been declared by the country that the UN integrated strategy for the Sahel region under UNSC Resolution 2056 will create a way for an efficient international approach to the governance and Human Rights issues in the region (UNBISnet 2012).

**Pakistan** has a special and complex relation towards Mali’s situation: both countries are now fighting jihadists terrorists groups and many Pakistani nationals – derived from terrorist networks, specially from Al-Qaeda – work at northern Mali as trainers of Mali’s Muslim groups (Roggio 2012). Also, Pakistani Taliban strongly condemned French’s intervention in Mali and understood Operation Sérval as an ideological war. Therefore, Pakistan is deeply interested in resolving Mali’s situation, since the success of the jihadists terrorists groups represents a threat to Pakistan’s security. Pakistan urges for an international coordination to address not only the northern Mali conflict, but the structural problems in Sahel’s region (Pakistan Today 2012). Pakistan believes that the root of the conflict is the systemic social and humanitarian crisis in Sahel; thus, the country understands that international strategy must be based on an United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, addressing security and political issues in order to build the prevention of terrorism, based on development and the rule of law (Pakistan Mission to United Nations 2012). Hence, Pakistan sees that regional and sub-regional cooperation should be strengthened and that the United Nations and African Union must focus on terrorism prevention (Pakistan Mission to United Nations 2013).

**The Kingdom of Morocco** has strong historical and religious relations with most of Mali’s ethnics groups. The territorial proximity of both countries makes Morocco an important player in Mali’s situation; however, the tensions in the region made the Kingdom to reinforce its borders in order to avoid spillovers, especially from jihadists groups (World Tribune 2013). The country was one of the first countries to support French’s Operation Sérval: both countries have strong bilateral cooperation (Euronews 2013) and Morocco is a historical ally of France. It has signed a security agreement with France, Spain and Portugal in order to fight terrorism, illegal immigration and drug trafficking, especially in Sahel, in January, after France’s intervention in Mali (Reuters 2013a). Also, the country has allowed French planes to overfly Morocco’s territory during France’s missions in Mali (CNN Security Clearance 2013). Nonetheless, Morocco already affirmed that has no intention to send military troops to Mali’s territory (Reuters 2013a). Finally, Morocco is committed with the urgent fight against terrorism and urges to address quickly the jihadist threat in Sahel. Therefore, the Kingdom of Morocco adopts an agenda focused on security issues and believes that the UNSC must focus on security goals.

**Republic of Rwanda** has a growing importance in the United Nations Security...
United Nations Security Council

Council (The News Time 2013), specially debating Mali’s situation, since the country passed through interventions in the 1990 decade and had rebuilt its territory after a war. Therefore, Mali has appealed to Rwanda as its African-spoke in UNSC, and Rwanda has fulfilled the task (Republic of Rwanda 2013). Also, Mali demanded Rwanda political pressure at UNSC in April of 2013 in order to obtain the peacekeeping operation (Kwbuka 2013). Nonetheless, Rwanda has no interests in sending military troops to Mali, because the country believes that the best way it can contribute to Sahel’s development is with its post-conflict experience and by sending the current commander of MINUSMA, who is the Rwandan Maj. Gen. Jean Bosco Kazura (The News Time 2013). As the African representative of Mali in UNSC, Rwanda tries to strengthen the Africa’s role in Sahel’s stabilization and urges for a solution to jihadists and terrorists groups, since the country fears the spillover effect in the African continent. Therefore, Rwanda’s commitment in solving Mali’s situation focuses on security aspects of the conflict.

5. Questions to ponder

1. Should MINUSMA’s mandate be reviewed in order to ensure that all post-conflict projects be correctly developed? In which circumstances should the mission withdraw from Mali?

2. Which is the best way to provide national reconciliation between Northern Mali and the Tuareg and the rest of the country? How this might be ensured? How can further problems in such relation be avoided in the medium term future?

3. In which way should the terrorism problem be tackled in Mali and in the region? Further short-term measures should be prioritized or long-term measures to address the roots of the problem must come to the forefront? What might be done in relation to the fundamentalist groups that fled from Mali into the region?

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Abstract

Mali has been facing a situation of political turmoil after years of relative stability in the region. After a military coup that toppled the government in March 2012, ending the democratic development that was in order since the end of the country’s dictatorship, Tuareg rebels in the north started an insurgency against the central government and, seizing parts of Northern Mali and declaring an independent state. However, after the Tuaregs called for the creation of the Azawad State, al-Qaeda militants of the Maghreb took the opportunity and to advance their own plan for the region: to create an independent Islamic state. In November 2012, ECOWAS agreed to launch a coordinated military expedition to recapture the north, an effort that was already backed by the United Nations. However, before long the Islamic groups were controlling considerable portions of Northern Mali. The new government in Bamako requested military aid to France, a request to which Paris responded by sending warplanes and troops to its former colony. Later, ECOWAS also prepared its own mission, mainly commanded by Nigeria.