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Beyond institutional blueprints: hybrid security provision and democratic practice in Mali

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Citation

Vliet, M. T. van. (2021, April 21). *Beyond institutional blueprints: hybrid security provision and democratic practice in Mali*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3160763>

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Issue Date: 2021-04-21

Chapter 2

A flagship of democracy turned into a shipwreck of anarchy?

An historical analysis of hybrid security provision in Mali.¹⁴⁶
(1960–2012)

INTRODUCTION

Long perceived as a beacon of democracy on the African continent and a relatively stable anchor in a troubled region, the status of the Malian state radically altered in a short span of time. In early 2012, state authority withered in Mali's northern regions as an opaque alliance of terrorists, former Tuareg rebels and drug smugglers took control of an area encompassing more than two thirds of the country's territory. It thus seemed as though, almost overnight, a flagship of democracy had turned into a shipwreck of anarchy.

However, the speed at which the Malian state lost control over the northern regions exposed the shaky foundations that underpinned state authority in general and security provision in particular. This chapter counters an analysis that interprets the troubled events in 2012 in terms of a sudden collapse of robust state authority. Instead, the chapter examines how subsequent regimes instituted state authority in relation to other power poles in society and traces the historical roots of Mali's heterarchical political order. It zooms in on the historical interplay and changing power balance between state and non-state armed groups involved in hybrid security provision. This analysis is restricted to narrow hybrid security provision in northern Mali *from above* ("supply side"). It does not take popular perceptions of these efforts into account or address broader human security preoccupations *from below* ("demand side").

Three key dimensions guide the historical assessment of hybrid security provision. First, the chapter examines whether security cooperation between state and non-state actors occurred through *official* or *unofficial* channels. Secondly, the chapter assesses changes in terms of the form of cooperation. Did state defence and security forces and non-state armed groups engage in joint security efforts (*complementary*), or has the state relied on non-state actors to act on its behalf (*delegatory*). Finally, it examines shifts in the power balance between state and non-state actors in the security realm. Did the state obtain a *vertically superior* position, or was it merely a *horizontal equivalent* of non-state armed groups?

¹⁴⁶ Elements of this chapter were part of earlier publications: Vliet, M. van (2013) "The Malian State: From Flagship of Democracy to Shipwreck of Anarchy?", in: *Wegweiser zur Geschichte – Mali*. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag: 143-156.

and Vliet, M. van (2012) 'The Challenges of Retaking Northern Mali', *CTC Sentinel*, 5(11-12): 1-4.

2.1. INTERMEDIARY AUTHORITIES UNDER COLONIAL RULE

The northern parts of the Sahel, certainly the border area between Mali and Algeria, were amongst the last on the African continent to be colonised.¹⁴⁷ Tuareg warriors fiercely resisted colonial penetration and the vast terrains with a dispersed population proved difficult to control. In this situation, the colonial administration relied on *intermediary authorities* to maximise its geographical scope at limited cost as it sought to institutionalise its dominance over society. In its search for reliable local allies, French authorities made use of the hierarchical social structures that characterised Malian communities. These were organised along both kinship lines (multiple clans, differentiation at the *horizontal level*) and into hierarchical status groups (ranging from noblemen to former slaves, differentiation at the *vertical level*). The hierarchical stratification among Tuareg communities consisted of, for example, noble warriors (*imusgagh*), free noblemen (*ineslemen*), free non-noblemen (*imghad*), craftsmen and bards (*inadan*) and (former) slaves (*iklan*).¹⁴⁸ Many other communities consisted of similar “cultural fields of hierarchy.”¹⁴⁹ The exact meaning of a clan or status group was locally contested and boundaries between social groups were fluid and subject to change.¹⁵⁰ To create a more stable socio-political order, French authorities formalised the clan-based system.

They created the function of *chef de canton* and searched for candidates amongst aristocratic families to fulfil this critical function,¹⁵¹ thereby reshaping traditional leadership into an intermediary function between local subjects and the colonial state. The chieftaincy emerged into an “essential cog in the colonial system.”¹⁵² While the colonial state operated as the supreme hierarchical authority, it granted considerable levels of autonomy to its intermediary allies. In this context, it was important for local clan leaders to be recognised as the leading authority and privileged interlocutor in a particular region. In northern Mali, Ifoghas Tuareg

¹⁴⁷ Lecocq, B. and Klute, G. (2013) ‘Tuareg Separatism in Mali’, *International Journal*, 86(3):424-434, p. 425.

¹⁴⁸ Keita, N. (2012) *L’Esclavage au Mali*, Paris: l’Harmattan.

¹⁴⁹ For the pastoralist Fulbe in central Mali, see Pelckmans, L. (2011) ‘Traveling Hierarchies: Roads In and Out of Slave Status in a Central Malian Fulbe Network.’ Leiden: African Studies Collection, N. 34. For the Malinke in Southern Mali, see Jansen, J. (1996) ‘Le frère cadet et l’étranger. À la recherche d’un discours sur le statut au Mande’, *Cahiers d’Études Africaines*, (36)144: 659-688.

¹⁵⁰ Hall, B.S. (2011) ‘Bellah Histories of Decolonization, Iklan Paths to Freedom: The Meanings of Race and Slavery in the Late-Colonial Niger Bend (Mali), 1944-1960’, *International Journal of African Studies*, (44)1:61-87; Lecocq, B. (2010).

¹⁵¹ Fay, C. (1995) ‘La démocratie au Mali, ou le pouvoir en pâture’, *Cahiers d’Études Africaines*. (35)137: 19-53, p. 40.

¹⁵² Mann, G. (2015) *From Empires to NGOs in the West African Sahel: The Road to Nongovernmentality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 65.

managed to expand their influence over other clans in the Adagh area (today's Kidal region) as a result of their strategic alliances with French authorities.¹⁵³

Colonial forces also relied on allied factions amongst local communities to ensure law and order. Archival research by Gremont (2012) illustrated that French colonial forces aligned with and armed local militias to combat other (nomadic) groups who tried to resist the colonial state.¹⁵⁴ Ifoghas Tuareg established mixed military units with colonial forces to suppress revolts by other clans.¹⁵⁵ In Arab communities, the Berabiche frequently collaborated with French colonial forces.¹⁵⁶ In addition to such *complementary* hybrid security efforts, colonial forces relied on *delegatory* forms of cooperation to maintain order in the stretched-out Sahelian regions. They established auxiliary mobile police forces ('*gourmiers*'), who recruited from amongst local warriors and noble factions.¹⁵⁷ These forces surveyed the dispersed nomadic zones, collected taxes and went after those who rebelled against colonial oppression. Yet, the colonial administration remained the hierarchically superior command with a strong authority over these hybrid security practices.

Throughout the seven decades of colonial rule (1890–1960), the scope of the colonial state remained limited in the northern regions of today's Mali. French colonial authorities focused on the southern regions, in particular those areas with economic potential. As a result, most people residing in the North lacked vital connections to the colonial administration, francophone education system and other public services. Their livelihoods and sociocultural affinity depended more on networks across the Sahara towards northern Africa than the colonial epicentre towards the South. By the end of the colonial period, the French envisioned the establishment of the semi-autonomous Organisation Commune des Régions Sahariennes (OCRS), encompassing parts of today's Algeria, Niger, Mauritania and northern Mali, in an attempt to safeguard an influence sphere in the Sahel. Many community leaders in northern Mali perceived the OCRS as a strategic opportunity to avoid becoming ruled by the emerging southern elites during a post-colonial era. They fiercely opposed their integration into a Malian

¹⁵³ Boilley, P. (1999) *Les Touaregs Kel Adagh*. Paris: Karthala.

¹⁵⁴ Gremont, C. (2012) 'Villages and Crossroads: Changing Territorialities Among the Tuareg of Northern Mali', in: McDougall, J. and Scheele, J. (2012) *Saharan Frontiers: Space and Mobility in Northwestern Africa*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

¹⁵⁵ Klute, G. (1995) 'Hostilités et alliances. Archéologie de la dissidence des Touaregs au Mali', *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, (35)137: 55-71; Hüskén, T. and Klute, G. (2010) 'Emerging Forms of Power in Two African Borderlands: A Theoretical and Empirical Research Outline', *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 25(2): 107-121, p. 110.

¹⁵⁶ McGregor, A. (2013). 'French Cooperation with Tuareg Rebels Risks Arab Rising in Northern Mali', *Terrorism Monitor*, 11(5). Jamestown Foundation.

¹⁵⁷ Evrard, C. (2017) 'Les unités nomades des forces armées et de sécurité des États sahélo-sahariens. Un outil d'inclusion nationale ? Une perspective historique', *Franco-Paix Bulletin* 2(9): 1-7; Lecocq, B. (2010), p. 144.

state and pleaded their case with the French leadership, emphasising the profound sociocultural differences between northern and southern Mali. However, the French eventually aborted the OCRS project. The political leadership in Bamako had perceived the alignment of northern leaders with the colonial forces and the OCRS initiative with great suspicion.¹⁵⁸ Once in office, they were determined to swiftly institute state authority across the entire newborn nation.

2.2. ANCHORING STATE SOVEREIGNTY AND HIERARCHY AT INDEPENDENCE

The Union Soudanaise-Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (US-RDA) guided the country towards independence and, after a short-lived federation with Senegal, Mali was born as a country on 22 September 1960. Its leaders instituted a socialist inspired and highly centralised one-party regime, which they legitimised with a national unity discourse and modernisation agenda for the whole of society. Power was strongly vested in the hands of the party leadership and became increasingly personalised under President Modibo Keita.¹⁵⁹ The regime was driven by a strong desire to position the Malian state as the hierarchical superior locus of authority in society, both on the basis of an anti-imperialist agenda vis-à-vis the former colonial forces as well as domestically over other power poles in society. There was not a great deal of political, economic or civic space outside the realm of the state and little room for dissent. Hence, at independence, a hierarchical political order emerged in Mali rather than a hybrid model in which the state shared core duties with non-state power poles.

In the immediate years after independence, the US-RDA party took full control of the state. Zolberg (1966) demonstrated that the party-state emerged as the prevailing political model across the West African region.¹⁶⁰ In Mali, the US-RDA intended to supervise, control and co-ordinate all the other instruments of government. State officials and party representatives jointly collected state taxes along with party membership fees. In a relatively short time, the party established local structures across Mali's vast territory to ensure the channelling of its directives from the political centre towards the peripheries.

The independence leaders quickly asserted Malian state authority vis-à-vis the ex-colonial authorities. They opted for a radical break with the colonial past, in a much more profound way than most countries in the region. The US-RDA leadership took swift action to "Africanise" the

¹⁵⁸ Boilley, P. (1999), pp. 269-316.

¹⁵⁹ Baudais, V. (2016) *'Les Trajectoires de l'Etat au Mali'*, Paris: Karthala.

¹⁶⁰ Zolberg, A.R. (1966) *Creating Political Order: The Party-States of West Africa*, Chicago, IL: Rand McNally & Company, pp. 104-5 and 134-5.

state administration. They replaced French administrators with Malian nationals, notably party rank-and-file, at a much greater pace than in neighbouring countries.¹⁶¹ They enforced the autonomy of the Malian army by closing French army bases and by rejecting mutual defence cooperation. Moreover, they pulled out of the regional monetary union, thereby delinking Mali's currency from France.¹⁶² The authorities even went out of their way to obtain detailed information about Malian citizens residing in France, whom they encouraged to return home to contribute to the new state.¹⁶³

Domestically, the independence party dominated and controlled the public sphere. The US-RDA took a firm grip of the political, military, social and economic spheres by – as they put it – “weaving a dense spider’s web” across society.¹⁶⁴ The regime officially banned influential Islamic organisations as it sought to weaken the position of religious leaders.¹⁶⁵ In a crucial move to institute its political authority over society and to counter the influence of alternative power poles, the US-RDA had gradually restricted the role of the *chef de canton* in the years before independence. The Malian leaders questioned their legitimacy as intermediary leaders during the colonial era and eventually abolished the position altogether.¹⁶⁶ Ideological notions and a general policy geared towards promoting equal citizenship underpinned these measures. Moreover, the US-RDA wanted to lift what they considered to be traditional impediments to a modern society and economy. However, the policy also aimed to further entrench the grip of the party-state over society. The new decentralisation policy replaced the central role of the local chief with a state appointed administrator, who, in turn, appointed a local village chief.

Nonetheless, US-RDA had to acknowledge that it was impossible to entirely bypass the intermediary role of local chiefs in the densely populated and largely pastoralist northern regions. In the run-up to independence, the US-RDA had consistently expressed its commitment to liberate former slaves, who constituted an important electoral constituency to the party, from “feudal” oppression in local hierarchies. The US-RDA profiled itself as a people’s party and gradually managed to build a solid support basis amongst the so-called former slaves across the northern regions. Many tribal leaders, in turn, became active members of the Parti Progressiste Soudanais (PSP), a real chief’s party.¹⁶⁷ Once in office, Malian independence leaders indeed

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.64.

¹⁶² Mann, G. (2015), p.77.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ Thurston, A. (2013) ‘Towards an “Islamic Republic of Mali”’, *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, 37(2): 45-66, p. 49.

¹⁶⁶ Mann, G. (2015), pp. 62-77.

¹⁶⁷ Boilley, P. (1999).

pursued their anti-slavery ideology, promoting equal citizenship as noted above, and reinforced support networks with historically lower ranked factions across the region.¹⁶⁸ Moreover, it enabled “subordinate” factions to create their own administrative units at the local level in order to reinforce their autonomy vis-à-vis the traditional chieftaincy.¹⁶⁹ Mali’s independence leaders were particularly keen to institute state authority in these areas because of the rapprochement made by several chiefs towards the French-projected Organisation Commune des Régions Sahariennes (OCRS). However, in daily practice, the party also relied on local chiefs as crucial intermediaries to exercise public authority and administer these distant and vast areas. In contrast to the overall policy and prevailing practice in other parts of the country, they therefore continued to collaborate with chiefs in the remote northern regions.¹⁷⁰

Beyond centralisation in the political realm, the US-RDA nationalised the economy and created dozens of state enterprises. State companies secured a monopoly on the export of primary products. The introduction of a national currency, the *Franc Malien*, enabled the government to regulate and tax transnational trade, to the great annoyance of many merchants who resorted to smuggling their goods.¹⁷¹ Mali’s independence leaders aimed to transform the agricultural sector into a modern, socialist, peasant economy. Amselle (2002) portrayed the rise of a state bourgeoisie enforcing (and thereby exploiting) the rural areas to contribute to socialist accumulation.¹⁷² The US-RDA perceived small-scale agriculture as an impediment to development and instituted forced labour on collective fields through a system of local agricultural cooperatives. Farmers perceived these efforts as oppressive, exploitative and reminiscent of the colonial era and tried to wriggle out of the forced labour schemes. As a result, the state-led efforts turned out to be highly unproductive and the commercialisation of cereals diminished over time. Highly personalised – including family-based – support networks between the party-state and privileged entrepreneurs in the commercial realm emerged. Yet, the vast majority of non-privileged economic actors increasingly mobilised against the authorities.

The limited socio-economic efforts undertaken in the North focused on “rationalising” the cattle industry by settling nomadic pastoralists. The US-RDA also perceived pastoralism, as practiced by many Tuareg and Fulani in northern and central Mali, to be an obstacle to national

¹⁶⁸ Whitehouse, B. (2017) ‘How Did Mali Get There: (Part 1: Echoes of Decolonization)’, 5 May 2017.

¹⁶⁹ Molenaar, F. et al. (2019) ‘The Status Quo Defied: The Legitimacy of Traditional Authorities in Areas of Limited Statehood in Mali, Niger and Libya’, Clingendael, August 2019 (Research Report).

¹⁷⁰ Lecocq, B. (2003) ‘From Colonialism to Keita: Comparing Pre- and Post-Independence Regimes (1946-1968)’, *Mande Studies*, 5: 29-47.

¹⁷¹ Craven-Matthews, C. and Englebert, P. (2018), p. 9.

¹⁷² Amselle, J.L. (2002) ‘La corruption et le clientélisme au Mali et en Europe de l’Est. Quelques points de comparaison’, *Cahiers d’Études Africaines* 4(72): 629-642, p. 631.

development.¹⁷³ Yet, their sedentarisation policies threatened local economies and livelihoods. Many citizens in these areas felt increasingly alienated from the state.

On top of their efforts to anchor the authority of the party-state in a physical sense, Malian independence leaders invested in nation building. They promoted a “national myth” as a basis upon which citizens could relate to each other as Malians. However, they primarily rooted representations of a common political community in historical narratives of southern communities, notably the ancient Mali Empire. Various scholars noted the selective historiography and bias towards the Mande/Bambara cultural heritage in this regard.¹⁷⁴ President Modibo Keita was regularly portrayed as a descendant of Sundjata Keita, the alleged founder of the ancient Mali Empire in the thirteenth century.¹⁷⁵

At the same time, Tuareg leaders across the North made efforts to enhance a sense of belonging amongst their different factions in clear opposition to this “southern” nationalist discourse. The Malian state that emerged at independence thus “harboured at least two nascent national ideas, if not more: the Malian nation and the Tamasheq nation.”¹⁷⁶

It was not long before popular dissent mounted against the policies propelled and advanced in such a coercive manner by Mali’s independence leaders. It started with a first Tuareg rebellion in the northern regions. In the early 1960s, the highest leadership position (the *Amenokal*) amongst the Tuareg of the Kel Adagh near the Malian-Algerian border became vacant. Two brothers from the Ifoghas Tuareg clan were in the running to take up the position. The most popular candidate amongst local Tuareg factions aimed to reinforce relations with Algeria, Niger and France and to restrain the influence sphere of the Malian state in the northern regions. The US-RDA opposed France’s “imperialist” influence and strove for greater Tuareg autonomy, which frustrated the party-state’s centralisation efforts. The independence leaders actively supported the other brother, who was less popular locally but intended to solidify ties with the Malian state. This fuelled already mounting frustration towards the Malian state and a first armed rebellion broke out between 1962 and 1964.¹⁷⁷ The army brutally crushed the revolt, allegedly killing over a 1000 people and poisoning drinking wells.

¹⁷³ Keita, K. (1998) ‘Conflict and Conflict resolution in the Sahel: The Tuareg insurgency in Mali’, *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, (9) 3: 102-128.

¹⁷⁴ Charbonneau, B. and Sears, J.M. (2014) ‘Fighting for Liberal Peace in Mali? The Limits of International Military Intervention.’ *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, (8)2-3: 192-213. Lecocq, B., (2010).

¹⁷⁵ Amselle, J.L. (2002), p. 638.

¹⁷⁶ Lecocq, B. (2010), p. 27. *Kel Tamasheq* (“those who speak Tamasheq”) is a term primarily used in reference to pan-Tuareg mobilisation.

¹⁷⁷ Boilley, P. (1999), pp. 317-350.

The locally recruited mobile (camel-mounted) police forces (“*gourmiers*”) found themselves in a particularly difficult situation, being deployed to fight their own kin. Accustomed to the terrain, they constituted an important actor in security efforts geared towards suppressing the rebellion. However, after the brutalities displayed by the army, many *gourmiers* jumped ship and joined the rebellion.¹⁷⁸ After the rebellion, Malian authorities refrained from holding the army accountable for the many atrocities it committed. On the contrary, they imposed military rule in the northern regions. Military staff fulfilled key functions in the state administration – from governors to schoolteachers – in these areas. The Adagh area remained isolated from the political, economic and social development in the rest of postcolonial Mali.¹⁷⁹

While the rebellion in the North was brutally suppressed, popular resistance continued to mount against the authorities across the rest of the country. Citizens perceived the state as increasingly predatory and depicted the authorities in similar local terms as the former colonial regime.¹⁸⁰ Farmers and many entrepreneurs vocally protested against the failing economic policies and coercive governance style. The capacity of the Malian state to realise its leading role in the political, economic and social realms was limited and many of the initiatives it launched proved counterproductive in socio-economic terms. Numerous state-led efforts went against the very grain of local livelihoods and economies. They reduced citizens to subjects of forced labour and provoked firm resistance across the newborn country. Again, the US-RDA relied on repression and intimidation tactics to maintain its grip over society. They sent political opponents to prisons in remote areas and the party deployed an informal militia (the “army of the party”) – which was better funded, trained and equipped than the army – across the country.¹⁸¹ They empowered so-called *brigades de vigilance*, composed of urban youngsters attached to the party, to conduct policing tasks at the local level.¹⁸² These actors were not fully integrated in the state structures but rather operated at the interface between party, state and society.

Although hybrid security practices occurred during the first republic, the Malian state largely dominated the security realm. This reflected the broader ambition of Mali’s independence leaders to position the party-state as the central and hierarchically superior institution in society. The party-state constituted the primary institution exercising public authority in the public service. The room for manoeuvring of other power poles in society remained highly restricted.

¹⁷⁸ Lecocq, B. (2010), p. 175.

¹⁷⁹ Hüsken, T. and Klute, G. (2010), p. 110.

¹⁸⁰ Amselle, J.L. (2002), p. 638.

¹⁸¹ Mann, G. (2003) ‘Violence, Dignity and Mali’s New Model Army, 1960-1968’, *Mande Studies*, (5): 65-82.

¹⁸² Zolberg, A.R. (1966), p. 104.

It was only a challenge from *within* that toppled the regime. In 1968, a military coup ousted the independence leaders from power amidst the increasingly dire economic circumstances and mounting social resistance.

2.3. HYBRID PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE REALM OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Two, at first sight, paradoxical tendencies characterised the second Malian republic (1968-1991). On the one hand, its military leaders instituted a centralised autocratic regime, restricted civil liberties, ruled with a firm hand and sought to maintain the state as the main authority in society. On the other hand, actors operating outside the realm of the formal state increasingly performed key social services. Although hybrid patterns in the exercise of public authority in social service delivery emerged, the state continued to dominate security provision.

After the coup, Mali's new leadership initially established an authoritarian military regime that in 1979 was substituted with a one-party regime. From then on, the Union Démocratique du Peuple Malien (UDPM) and its leader Moussa Traore dominated Malian politics. As the Secretary-General of the party and only candidate during successive presidential elections, Traore was re-elected every five years. Local sections of the party proposed candidates for the legislative elections but the decision-making authority over the final candidate list rested with the party's Central Executive Bureau. The authorities co-opted the powerful class of state bureaucrats that they had inherited from the previous regime by keeping many of the national state companies intact, despite their inefficacies.¹⁸³ Fay (1995) illustrated how the party-state gradually established a system of governance based on predation and redistribution.¹⁸⁴ The authorities maintained a support base amongst influential power brokers across all strategic sectors in society in return for their loyalty. At the local level, the Malian state relied heavily on tribal hierarchy. Local chiefs regained their prominent role in conducting local affairs as state intermediaries and managed to reinforce their own position because of their allegiance to the regime. The informal political strategy of co-optation pursued by the UDPM raised public debt but was successful in political terms for many years.

The northern regions, still perceived as "*le Mali inutile*" (the useless part of Mali) in economic terms, received very little support.¹⁸⁵ The military regime "contented itself with the

¹⁸³ Bennett, V.P. (1975) 'Military Government in Mali', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, (13)2: 249-266.

¹⁸⁴ Fay, C. (1995), pp. 21-2.

¹⁸⁵ Storhold, K.H. (2001) 'Lessons Learned from the 1990-1997 Peace Process in the North of Mali', *International Negotiation*, 6: 331-356.

outer control of the region to prevent any further upheaval.”¹⁸⁶ Many communities in the area lacked strong informal connections to the political centre that were crucial to advancing local interests during the UDPM era. The severe droughts that peaked in 1973-4 and again a decade later reinforced deep levels of popular mistrust vis-à-vis the central authorities across the northern and central regions. The droughts literally destroyed the pastoral economy, thereby inciting rapid urbanisation and sedentarisation. Many youngsters fled the area and settled in neighbouring countries where a considerable number joined the ranks of the armed forces. The Malian state completely mishandled the crisis across the northern and central regions. Citizens perceived the “dysfunctional and corrupt management of external resources by central authorities,” with great bitterness.¹⁸⁷

It was in this period that international organisations and NGOs gradually took on key statehood functions. First, by providing humanitarian aid and subsequently by expanding their scope to development cooperation encompassing a broader range of social services. This widened the already considerable gap between the Malian government, the state and society. The droughts and subsequent responses, Mann (2015) contended, thereby redefined “what government was and could be.”¹⁸⁸ He demonstrated that a form of *nongovernmentality* emerged whereby NGO’s increasingly performed different state functions. Yet, his nuanced assessment of this period moved beyond a zero-sum analysis or dichotomy between state and non-state governance. The increased role of non-state actors in providing public service delivery also enhanced the state in several ways. For example, it enabled the UDPM to focus on other dimensions of governance. This certainly held for its performance in the area of security. While the role of the state diminished in the area of socio-economic service delivery, its military presence in northern Mali remained considerable. The regime gradually dismantled many local mobile security units. The army also continued to play a leading role in administering the area.

While the role of non-state actors in delivering social services rose to prominence, the ability of the state to finance development initiatives and to preserve its pyramid of clientelistic support networks became increasingly constrained throughout the 1980s. The subsidies provided to highly inefficient and unprofitable state companies together with the expensive civil service wage bill had overstretched public expenditure.¹⁸⁹ Import tariffs and high export taxes had restricted trade through official channels and the smuggling economy flourished as a result. In

¹⁸⁶ Hüskens, T. and Klute, G. (2010), p.110.

¹⁸⁷ Baldaro, E. and Raineri, L. (2020) ‘Azawad: A Parastate between Nomads and Mujahidins?’, *Nationalities Papers*, 48(1): 100-115, p. 104.

¹⁸⁸ Mann, G. (2015), p. 169.

¹⁸⁹ Bourdet, Y. (2002) ‘Economic Reforms and the Malian Economy’, *Africa Development*, 27(1/2): 25-61.

the wake of these budgetary constraints, President Traore called upon the Bretton Woods institutions for financial support. International donors assisted Traore but made their support conditional on considerable cuts to public expenditure and demanded stringent administrative, economic and social reforms. In line with the broader framework of the Structural Adjustment Programmes, Malian authorities froze public wages, discharged civil servants, established performance-based criteria in the public service, ended food subsidies and cut social services. By the late 1980s, the purchasing power of urban households was down to half of the 1962 level.¹⁹⁰ Despite the fact that many citizens struggled to make ends meet amidst dire socio-economic conditions, corruption scandals that involved senior state officials were at the order of the day. Craven-Matthews and Englebert (2018) noted that:

By the mid-1980s, [...] regime members were accused of having stashed away \$1 billion in foreign bank accounts (by then about 25 percent of gross domestic product).¹⁹¹

Unsurprisingly, popular protests against the authorities swell. Citizens attacked state edifices and targeted properties of the regime's economic collaborators in the capital city Bamako.¹⁹² The state equally faced mounting security challenges in the northern regions. After the devastating droughts, numerous Tuareg youngsters migrated to Libya and Algeria, as noted above, and many had joined the ranks of the national armies. Whereas kinship and hierarchical differences obstructed the construction of a strong common identity in Mali, these migrants were all regarded as Tuareg's away from home. There was more that united than separated them. Many returned home and helped prepare a renewed rebellion in revenge for the brutal repression of the rebellion in the early 1960s, led by their father's generation, and subsequent military rule over the northern regions.

In 1990, they launched several successful attacks against the Malian army. Retaliatory actions by the army caused many civilian casualties, which only further eroded state legitimacy and encouraged other youngsters in the region to join the ranks of the rebellion.

Traore now faced fierce resistance in the capital city and well-trained rebels in the remote northern regions. With support from Algerian officials, he quickly negotiated a way out of the northern crisis and signed an agreement in the town of Tamanrasset in January 1991.¹⁹³ State

¹⁹⁰ Ouédraogo, D. and Piché, V. (eds.) (1995) *L'Insertion Urbaine à Bamako*. Paris: Karthala.

¹⁹¹ Craven-Matthews, C. and Englebert, P. (2018), p. 10.

¹⁹² Harsch, E. (1993) 'Accumulators and Democrats: Challenging State Corruption in Africa' *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 31(1): 31-48.

¹⁹³ Klute, G. (1995).

authorities made significant concessions to the rebellion by granting the northern regions a specific status with high levels of administrative autonomy. Moreover, they promised that almost 50 per cent of Mali's national infrastructural investment funds would be devoted to the northern regions. Locally recruited staff would replace army officers in the regional state administration and the army would vacate its military posts near Tuareg camps. Combatants of the armed groups would be integrated into the national army.¹⁹⁴ Those northern factions that were associated with the agreement welcomed it. However, other constituencies, most notably Songhay sedentary factions, complained that the deal failed to address their interests and rewarded those who had rebelled against the state. Opposition against the Tamanrasset accord was equally fierce in Bamako. People particularly criticised the granting of autonomy to the northern regions and questioned its impact on Mali's territorial integrity.¹⁹⁵

Meanwhile, wider protests against the UDPM's poor socio-economic performance, the lack of democratic space and rampant corruption mounted. The "street" emerged as an important space to enforce political change. Different interest groups teamed up. Graduated youth who could not find work in the downsized state administration created the Association of Qualified Youth Demanding Work. Petty traders in the informal sector who were tired of being harassed by corrupt police officers, student movements, the trade unions, newly formed associations demanding a democratic opening all joined in. As the street became an important political arena, the social forces marching on it turned into a powerful political force. The armed forces violently repressed the protests and opened fire on the demonstrators in March 1991. Parts of the army eventually sided with the protesters and ousted President Traore in a military coup. After 70 years of colonial rule and over 30 years of authoritarian rule, Mali was about to institute a democratic regime.

2.4. INSTITUTING A HYBRID POLITICAL ORDER UNDER DEMOCRATIC RULE

A military-led transitional government paved the way for a national conference during which more than 700 delegates discussed the institutional foundations of the new democratic era. The conference drafted a new constitution, an electoral law and political parties' act. A popular referendum adopted the constitution and multi-party elections were organised barely a year

¹⁹⁴ Adeyemi, A.E. (2015) 'Terrorism and Transnational Security Threats in West Africa: A Global Perspective.' PhD Thesis, Obafemi Awolowo University.

¹⁹⁵ Lode, K. (2012); Humphreys, M. and Habaye, A.M. (2005) 'Senegal and Mali' in Collier, P. and Sambanis, N. *Understanding Civil War: Evidence and Analysis, Volume 1. Africa*, Washington, DC: World Bank, 247-302.

after the coup. Mali witnessed an exemplary democratic transition. The political space opened up after decades of one-party rule and many new political parties registered in the aftermath of the transition. The democratically elected authorities respected civil liberties, new media outlets blossomed and numerous civil society organisations registered during the 1990's. Moreover, the authorities designed one of the most ambitious decentralisation programmes on the continent. Mali emerged as a leading example of democracy on the African continent.

Nevertheless, patterns of continuity in the political realm also prevailed. The institutional set-up of Malian democracy continued to concentrate powers in the executive branch of government. In fact, the formal political system could be characterised as “super-presidential,” as the Malian president had few colleagues on the continent with an equal number of powers vested in the presidency. Furthermore, the party system continued to be dominated by a dominant party (ADEMA) and a de facto party-state emerged throughout the 1990s. The next chapters of this thesis provide an in-depth analysis of the democratic regime and party system. This section focuses on the expanding role of non-state actors in the area of security provision throughout the democratic era. It particularly focuses on the security response to renewed conflict in the northern regions and the ensuing peace process. A hybrid political order further anchored and broadened as state and non-state actors shared the core duty of security provision.

During the democratic transition, the “National Pact” replaced the Tamanrasset agreement that was hastily signed by former President Traore.¹⁹⁶ The peace deal aimed at bridging Mali's North–South divide by: orienting more development funds to the northern regions; decentralising governance responsibilities and means; creating the new administrative region of Kidal where key Tuareg rebellion leaders resided; reducing the presence of the Malian military across the North; and reintegrating former rebels into the army and society.¹⁹⁷ However, armed conflict against the Malian state continued during the first years of the democratic regime. Fighting amongst northern factions – the “*Krieg im Krieg*” (the war within the war) as Klute and von Trotha (2000) called it – also escalated.¹⁹⁸ Tensions amongst Tuareg factions had already mounted during the democratic transition phase. The Tuareg Ifoghas faction monopolised the seats allocated to the Tuareg community during the National Conference, the Monitoring Committee of the Tamanrasset peace agreement and positions in

¹⁹⁶ The National Pact is available at: http://tamazgha.fr/IMG/pacte_national.pdf.

¹⁹⁷ For a more detailed analysis of the National Pact, see: Pezard, S. and Shurkin, M. (2015) ‘*Achieving Peace in Northern Mali: Past Agreements, Local Conflicts, and the Prospects for a Durable Settlement*’, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, available at https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR892.html.

¹⁹⁸ Klute, G. and von Trotha, T. (2000) ‘Wege zum Frieden. Vom Kleinkrieg zum parastaatlichen Frieden im Norden von Mali’, *Sociologus*, 50(1): 1-36, p. 10.

the transitional government.¹⁹⁹ Other Tuareg clans, including the Imghad and Idnane, felt excluded and contested this Ifoghas dominance. Their rank-and-file became important constituencies of the Armée Révolutionnaire de Libération de l'Azawad (ARLA). This armed group not only fought against the Malian state, but also pursued a regional emancipatory process vis-à-vis the Tuareg Ifoghas. Tuareg factions from the areas between Timbuktu, Gao and Menaka dominated another armed group, the Front Populaire pour la Libération de l'Azaoud (FPLA). Ifoghas Tuareg, in turn, emerged as the principal constituency of the Mouvement Populaire de l'Azawad (MPA). Because the National Pact predominantly centred on Tuareg rebels and Malian authorities, the sedentary Songhay inhabitants and former (black) Tuareg slaves in northern Mali felt ignored. A former army colonel helped to establish the Mouvement Patriotique Ganda Koy (MPGK), often simply referred to as the Ganda Koy (literally “masters of the land”) to cater to their interests. During much of the first half of the 1990s, northern armed groups continued fighting each other and the Malian army. Violent conflicts led to an estimated death toll between 6000 and 8000 people and soured relations between and amongst northern communities.

Hybrid security patterns came to the fore as the Malian state aligned with specific actors in the conflict to counter other armed groups. The Ifoghas dominated MPA defeated the ARLA and FPLA with the help of the Malian army. Different sections in the army also supported the Ganda Koy.²⁰⁰ The Malian state thereby managed to exert considerable influence over events in northern Mali through unofficial (complementary and delegatory) forms of cooperation with loyal armed groups. The Ifoghas leadership of the MPA, in turn, managed to uphold and further enhance its dominance, if not regional hegemony, over other Tuareg factions as a result of its strategic partnership with the Malian state. In fact, the Ifoghas chieftaincy appropriated a number of rights and key public functions of the state in the Adagh region. Klute and von Trotha (2000) conceptualised the emerging state of affairs as a form of “para-statehood.”²⁰¹ Through a process of informal decentralisation, or privatisation, the Ifoghas Chieftancy assumed the national state’s monopoly on the use of violence in the most northern region. It mediated between the region its internal and external affairs, controlled external financial resources and thereby secured their dominance over other local factions. This constituted a move away from (direct) complementary forms of cooperation to more (indirect) delegatory arrangements.

¹⁹⁹ Klute, G. (1995).

²⁰⁰ Lecocq, B. and Klute, G. (2013), p. 427.

²⁰¹ Klute, G. and von Trotha, T. (2000), pp. 31-2.

In addition to this prevalence of hybrid security practices through unofficial channels, security cooperation through official channels advanced during the implementation phase of the National Pact. France supported the establishment of a number of official military units composed of both army soldiers and (former) Tuareg rebels who conducted so-called mixed patrols.²⁰² Moreover, approximately 2500 rebels integrated into the army and civil service while an additional 9500 ex-combatants received financial support and training for their socio-economic reintegration into society.²⁰³ The numbers integrated, although considered too few by some and too many by others, did improve interethnic contacts within the army's structures.²⁰⁴ Yet, the disarmament of rebels was only partially successful as combatants handed over light weaponry but kept a significant arsenal sequestered. Importantly, the withdrawal of the army from numerous northern sites, as stipulated by the peace agreement, significantly reduced the geographical scope of the state. Certainly because alternative security arrangements foreseen by the peace accord, the so-called Special Security Units, were never operationalised. As the army vacated several military sites across the northern regions, the state would come to rely ever more on non-state armed groups to counter security threats in the area.

In sum, non-state actors enlarged their role in hybrid security provision practices in northern Mali throughout the 1990s. The Ifoghas chieftaincy managed to position itself into an "intermediary position" of domination, governing *internal* local and regional affairs while monopolizing *external* ties with the central state and international organisations.²⁰⁵ It obtained a considerable level of discretionary authority between the state (above) and citizens (below). Though increasingly relying on delegatory forms of security cooperation, at distance, the state was still positioned, hierarchically, above its intermediary partners up North.

This power balance altered during the course of the next decade. The withdrawal of state forces from several sites in northern Mali weakened state presence. More importantly, however, the rise of high-value transnational networks facilitated major sources of income and arms to the northern armed groups beyond the state. At the same time, several "glocal" jihadist groups became anchored in the socio-political fabric of northern Mali, as the next section demonstrates.

²⁰² Klute, G. and von Trotha, T. (2004) 'From Small War to Parasovereign Peace in the North of Mali', in: *Healing the Wounds: Essays on the Reconstruction of Societies after War*, Oxford and Portland, OR: Hart Publishing, pp. 109-144.

²⁰³ Gold, R. (2013) "Initiatives for Peace in Northern Mali in the 1990's – Lessons Learned." *A Contrario*, Criminal Law, available at: https://acontrarioicl.com/2013/02/13/initiatives-for-peace-in-northern-mali-in-the-1990s-lessons-learned/#_edn12.

²⁰⁴ Norris, C. (2000) 'Mali-Niger: Fragile Stability', UNHCR Centre for documentation and research (Paper No. 14).

²⁰⁵ Klute, G. and von Trotha, T. (2000), fn. 2.

2.5. TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS AND THE RISE OF A HETERARCHICAL POLITICAL ORDER

Throughout the first decade of the new millennium, the intermediary form of para-statehood gradually gave way to an even more heterogeneous political order in northern Mali. A wide variety of “tribal, Islamist and jihadist, youth, civil, organised crime, and militia-like forms of political organisation” became anchored in the socio-political fabric of the region.²⁰⁶ Actors across northern Mali obtained access to considerable rent-seeking opportunities and heavy weaponry through transnational networks. The balance of power between state and non-state actors shifted as a result. In an analytical sense, the state lost its vertically superior position managing ties with intermediary para-states, powerbrokers and armed proxies. Instead, it became one of the horizontally equivalent institutions competing for influence in northern Mali. A heterarchical political order thus emerged.

During the 2000s, northern Mali became a vital hub for global drugs smuggling networks and the nerve centre of a regional kidnapping industry. Intercontinental drug networks benefitted from the social infrastructure underpinning the ancient trading and smuggling networks. Subsidised consumer goods from both Libya and Algeria had long been sold across the region, while transnational cigarette smuggling networks had risen to prominence in the 1980s. Demands for, in particular, small arms increased throughout the 1990s.²⁰⁷ Ellis (2009) traced the historical roots of West Africa’s role as “transit point” in transnational drug networks to the early 1960s.²⁰⁸ In 2007, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) assessed that 25 per cent of cocaine entering the European market arrived via West Africa.²⁰⁹ By 2009, this figure had dropped to an estimated 17 per cent and possibly even less in the year after.²¹⁰ However, as these data were primarily based on actual cocaine seizures, which were modest in comparison to the likely cocaine flows affecting the continent, it remained difficult to obtain an accurate picture of the actual quantities involved. In 2008, officials confiscated 750 kilograms of cocaine in a single arrest, equalling the value of one third of Mali’s total annual

²⁰⁶ Hüsken, T. and Klute, G. (2015), p. 324.

²⁰⁷ Sidibe, K. (2012) ‘Criminal Networks and Conflict-Resolution Mechanisms in Northern Mali’, *IDS Bulletin* (43)4: 74-88; Lacher, W. (2012) ‘Organised Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region’. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (Carnegie Paper).

²⁰⁸ Ellis, S. (2009) ‘West Africa’s International Drug Trade.’ *African Affairs*, 108(431): 171-196.

²⁰⁹ UNODC (2007) ‘*Cocaine Trafficking in West Africa: The Threat to Stability and Development*’. 9 December 2007.

²¹⁰ Dechery, C. and Ralston, L. (2015) ‘Trafficking and Fragility in West Africa’, World Bank (Report No. 98903); EMCDDA–Europol (2010); ‘Cocaine: A European Union Perspective in the Global Context’, April 2010 (Issue No.2).

military expenditure.²¹¹ The drugs were transported by road but also flown into the region. In November 2009, a burned-out Boeing 727-200 (originating from Venezuela) carrying an estimated 10 tonnes of cocaine was found near Gao.²¹² Although the number of cocaine flights remained elusive, a US security official referred to a “growing fleet” of jets, and interviews with local observers suggested that multiple flights were taking place.²¹³ Moroccan cannabis constituted a particularly lucrative contraband passing through northern Mali. Hence, the region was integrated into smuggling networks operating at a truly global scale and the value of the contraband was unmatched by any other product. This raised the stakes in terms of obtaining control over territory across northern Mali, or at least the high-value goods passing through strategic territorial junctures. Consequently, rivalry within and amongst northern factions intensified. Moreover, the precarious power balance that had characterised relations between the Malian state and various competing northern factions altered.

Conflicts between competing smuggling networks, tied to local factions, amplified. In December 2007, for example, Ifoghas Tuareg stole seven cars loaded with cocaine from Arab smugglers, almost inciting a violent response from a large group of Arabic youngsters.²¹⁴ A year later, local Ifoghas and Arab Berabiche community leaders just managed to avoid violent confrontations over smuggling routes between community members. Members of competing Saharawi and Malian Arab smuggling networks did clash regularly.²¹⁵ Moreover, violent confrontations between “aristocratic” Ifoghas and Kounta factions, on the one hand, and traditionally “subordinate” Tuareg and Arab clans, on the other hand, transpired as a result of disputes linked to the smuggling economy. Similar tensions were witnessed in local and regional political institutions when former “vassals” turned drugs money into campaign funds in an attempt to improve their political representation.

In order to protect their drugs convoys and profits derived from the trade, smugglers established their own militias or aligned with existing armed groups. The arms trade flourished alongside drug smuggling and Mali witnessed an inflow of heavy weaponry.²¹⁶ It was the downfall of Colonel Gaddafi, however, that constituted a real game changer when it came to

²¹¹ O'Regan, D. (2010): 'Cocaine and Instability in Africa: Lessons from Latin America and the Caribbean', Africa Security Brief N.5. The seizure took place in 2008.

²¹² 'Mali Tackles Al Qaeda and Drug Traffic', (*The New York Times*, 1 January 2011).

²¹³ Burbank, J. (2010). *Trans-Saharan Trafficking: A Growing Source of Terrorist Financing*, Center for the Study of Threat Convergence. Occasional Research Series Washington, DC: The Fund for Peace; 'Boeing Transporting Cocaine from South America to Africa Crashes' (*The Telegraph*, 16 November 2009); interviews with local actors are reflected in Sidibe, K. (2012), esp. p. 85.

²¹⁴ Scheele, J. (2010) 'Tribus, États et fraude. La région frontalière algéro-malienne', *Études rurales* (2):79-94.

²¹⁵ 'Mali. Trafic de drogue et tensions communautaires', (*Jeune Afrique*, 15 September 2011).

²¹⁶ ICG (2018) 'Drug Trafficking, Violence and Politics in Northern Mali', 13 December 2018 (Africa Report No. 267).

the availability of military equipment. Some of the criminal networks engaged in drug trafficking also started smuggling Libyan arms.²¹⁷ More importantly:

Hundreds of ethnic Tuareg fighters left Libya during and after the 2011 conflict and drove across the desert to northern Mali, and took with them arms that had not previously been common such as anti-tank weapons, mortars, and heavy machineguns.²¹⁸

These weapons did more than boosted the military capacity of Tuareg-led armed groups; the UN also reported that arms originated from Libya “significantly reinforced” terrorist groups operating in Mali.²¹⁹ From 2003 onwards, Algerian Islamic radicals started using the region as a safe haven. Many scholars have indicated the arrival of some 500 to 1000 representatives of the Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat (GSPC), established by the most radical Islamic militants of the Algerian bloody civil war.²²⁰ Following a change of leadership, the GSPC reinforced its ties with Al-Qaeda and formally rebranded itself as Al-Qaeda the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in early 2007. The group established a lucrative kidnapping industry and primarily targeted Westerners, whom they released in exchange for significant ransom payments. This multi-million-dollar industry targeted more than 50 people between 2003 and 2011.²²¹ These ransom payments constituted the most important source of revenue and bolstered AQIM in northern Mali. Kidnappers initially captured most hostages in Algeria, Mauritania or Niger and subsequently negotiated their release from northern Mali. Sidibe (2012) noted that AQIM also benefitted from established networks with drug traffickers: “AQIM escorts drug convoys and provides security to the destination, and in turn, drug traffickers provide AQIM with funds.”²²² AQIM leaders notably solidified relations with Berabiche Arabs in and around Timbuktu – with whom they shared both linguistic and cultural

²¹⁷ March, B. (2017) ‘Brothers Came Back with Weapons: The Effects of Arms Proliferation from Libya’, *PRISM*, 6(4): 79-96.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

²¹⁹ UNSC (2015) ‘Final Report of the Panel Experts Established Pursuant to Resolution 1970 (2011) Concerning Libya’, New York (Report No. S/2015/128).

²²⁰ Harmon, S. (2010) ‘From GSPC to AQIM: The Evolution of an Algerian Islamist Terrorist Group into an Al-Qaeda Affiliate and Its Implications for the Sahara-Sahel Region’, in: *Concerned African Scholars*, Bulletin 85: 12-29; Ould Mohamedou, M-M. (2011) ‘The Many Faces of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.’ GCSP Policy Paper N.15. According to the US National Counterterrorism Center, members were “fewer than 1000”, available at: www.nctc.gov/site/groups/aqim.html.

²²¹ Daniel, S. (2012) ‘*AQMI al-Qaïda au Maghreb islamique, l’industrie de l’enlèvement*’. Paris : Fayard; Ould Mohamedou, (2011).

²²² Sidibe, K. (2012); Burbank, J. (2010), p. 25.

ties – and the informal militias established by the latter to protect their smuggling interests.²²³ Yet, the strong “crime-terror” nexus often referred to in relation to AQIM remained unwarranted and appeared conflated. Flexible alliances of convenience characterised these partnerships. AQIM’s offshoot, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), maintained much stronger links with traffickers.²²⁴

How did Malian authorities respond to these rising challenges? President Amadou Toumani Touré (ATT), who had made a successful political comeback during the 2002 elections, relied on what the International Crisis Group aptly referred to as a policy of “remote-control governance through dubious criminal and mafia intermediaries” in the northern regions.²²⁵

In response to two successive Tuareg rebellions that erupted in 2006 and 2007, delegatory forms of security cooperation with non-state actors, though unofficial channels, now clearly prevailed. The Malian defence forces, largely confined to urban pockets and isolated military camps, played a limited role. The Touré regime relied on private militias that well-known (mostly Arab) traffickers had established to secure their drugs transports and protect their zones of influence in the smuggling economy. At times, the army sent senior military officers to train these irregular forces.²²⁶ Malian army representatives also occasionally commanded these militias, despite the fact that these forces maintained close ties with AQIM.²²⁷ In response to a small but violent rebellion that erupted in 2007, a lieutenant and former Tuareg rebel, Elhajj Ag Gamou, established an unofficial military unit composed of (Imghad) clan affiliates. His group secured victory against the rebels in 2009.²²⁸

By now, Mali’s recurrent hybrid security practices rested on increasingly shaky foundations. State officials almost entirely outsourced security provision to local “Big Men” and their militias. In sharp contrast, armed groups opposing the Malian state considerably reinforced their military capabilities, the numbers of recruits and weaponry.

During the first half of the year 2012, the Malian state descended into a deep crisis at the centre and completely collapsed in the northern regions. From January onwards, a renewed Tuareg revolt incited an unprecedented series of dramatic events. In the run-up to the rebellion, former Tuareg rebel leaders succeeded in overcoming various factional differences.

²²³ Marchal, R (2012) ‘Is a Military Intervention in Mali Unavoidable?’ 12 October 2012, available at: <https://noref.no/>.

²²⁴ Dechery, C. and Ralston, L. (2015); Briscoe, I. (2014) ‘Crime after Jihad: Armed Groups, the State and Illicit Business in Post-Conflict Mali’, CRU Report, May 2014.

²²⁵ ICG (2012) ‘Mali: Avoiding Escalation’, 18 July 2012, (Africa Report No. 189), p.7.

²²⁶ The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime (2014) ‘Illicit Trafficking and Instability in Mali: Past, Present and Future’, January 2014, Research Paper.

²²⁷ Lacher, W. (2012).

²²⁸ Lecocq, B. and Klute, G. (2013), p. 429.

In October 2011, they established the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) together with the National Movement of Azawad (MNA), which regrouped a younger generation of Tuareg. The return of many well-armed Tuareg fighters from Libya “catalysed” the rebellion. The MNLA initially managed to establish a broad coalition amongst the different Tuareg factions. Important to note, though, is that despite this enhanced cooperation, internal unity amongst the Tuareg was far from complete. Government allied factions, notably the “subordinate” Imghad, remained loyal to the Touré regime and hundreds of fighters returning from Libya also joined the military ranks. Moreover, one of the principal leaders of the previous rebellion, Iyad Ag Ghali, established his own resistance movement. He failed to convince fellow Tuareg leaders to establish an independent Tuareg state under sharia law. Iyad Ag Ghali had become an early convert to the largest Muslim missionary organisation Tablighi Jama’at and was later expelled from Saudi Arabia, where he worked at the Malian consulate, for maintaining contact with Sunni extremists.²²⁹ He called his own group Ansar Al-Din (“Defenders of Faith”) and recruited from amongst the Ifoghas Tuareg and Kounta Arabs.

On 17 January 2012, the MNLA launched its first attack in northeastern Mali. The little that was left of the Malian army faced – in the words of the Malian Minister of Foreign Affairs – around a thousand well trained fighters “with heavy machineguns mounted on all-terrain vehicles, forming a potent insurgent weapon that combined mobility and firepower.”²³⁰ The Tuareg rebels now pursued independence from Mali rather than increased autonomy.²³¹

On 22 March 2012, a group of disgruntled junior officers and soldiers staged a chaotic military coup. Ordinary citizens did not take to the streets to defend their democratically elected president. In an opinion poll conducted shortly afterwards, more than six out of ten people in Bamako expressed their support for the military coup.²³² Afrobarometer surveys confirmed this sentiment of considerable popular dissatisfaction with Malian authorities, the democratic regime and the state.²³³

The military coup in March 2012 engendered a power vacuum at the centre of the state. The military junta arrested senior army generals, the chains of command broke apart and rebel groups took full control over strategic areas in northern Mali as soldiers fled southwards. Government-aligned Tuareg and Arab militias moved into exile in both Niger and Mauritania.

²²⁹ Flood, D.H. (2012) ‘Between Islamization and Secession: The Contest for Northern Mali’, *CTC Sentinel*, (5) 7: 1-6.

²³⁰ March, B. (2017), p. 82.

²³¹ Lecocq, B. and Klute, G. (2013), p. 425

²³² Whitehouse, B. (2012) ‘Bamako’s Lone Pollster Strikes Again’.

²³³ Bratton, M. and Gimah-Boadi, E. (2015).

On 6 April 2012, the MNLA declared Azawad an independent state and subsequently tried to assert its authority over northern Mali. The territorial delineation of the term Azawad is subject to different interpretations and strategic considerations. The MNLA demarcated Azawad within Mali's original colonial boundaries in order to avoid direct opposition to its independence project from neighbouring countries. It pushed its occupation southwards well beyond the Niger River – often considered as the internal border between northern and southern Mali – up to Douentza.²³⁴ The MNLA entered into negotiations with Ansar Al-Din and established a government to rule over the new state. For a while, it seemed as though a long-lasting dream had finally come true for the rebel leaders. However, “the MNLA's sovereignty was limited by the competition of powerful non-state armed actors deeply embedded into the local social structure, such as communal militias and jihadist groups.”²³⁵

Indeed, it soon became clear that the MNLA did not control northern Mali. While the MNLA had claimed responsibility for the ousting of the Malian army in strategic northern areas in its savvy media campaign, reality on the ground had been different. A group of seasoned scholars noted that the “[a]ssaults on Aguelhoc, Tessalit and Kidal were all carried out by an alliance of Jihadi-Salafi movements [...] who did not directly claim their victories.”²³⁶ Lacher (2012) demonstrated that the MNLA never really controlled Timbuktu, as influential local Arab drug smugglers aligned their militias behind AQIM instead of the Tuareg rebels.²³⁷ Moreover, popular legitimacy of a Tuareg-led independent state was extremely limited across northern Mali, most notably in the town of Gao, where Songhay militias – who had fought bitterly against Tuareg factions throughout the 1990s – were dominant. The looting and misbehaviour of MNLA rank-and-file only further reduced their popularity in the area.

In July 2012, just three months after the fall of the Malian state, jihadist groups ousted the MNLA from most urban areas across northern Mali. During the second half of that year, AQIM, MUJAO and Ansar Al-Din became the leading actors governing northern Mali. The groups dismantled the state bureaucracy, imposed a monopoly of violence and established their own judicial and administrative system while putting in place favourable (tax) policies for traders, smugglers and pastoralists. Molenaar (et al., 2019) demonstrated that the customary “qadi” – a highly respected traditional religious figure in reconciliation and justice, administering verdicts based on Islamic sharia law – particularly gained influence in this period across northern

²³⁴ Jacobs, F. (2012) ‘All Hail Azawad’, 10 April 2012.

²³⁵ Baldaro, E. and Raineri, L. (2020), p. 108.

²³⁶ Lecocq, B. and Mann, G. (eds.) (2013) ‘The Blind and the Hippopotamus: A Multivocal Analysis of the Current Political Crisis in the Divided republic of Mali’, *Review of African Political Economy* (40)137: 343-357, p.348.

²³⁷ Lacher, W. (2012), p.16.

Mali.²³⁸ The three organisations coordinated efforts amongst themselves but maintained a considerable degree of autonomy.²³⁹ Tapping into supranational and local support networks, each of these actors asserted control over a specific stronghold.

In Gao, the MUJAO top leadership consisted of radical Islamists from Mauritania, Algeria and Mali. However, the group also attracted jihadists from Sudan, the Western Sahara, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia, and also recruited in neighbouring villages.²⁴⁰ The resources gained through global drug smuggling and kidnapping networks were of critical importance to its leadership and enabled the organisation to recruit widely. Various reports equally suggested that people from neighbouring villages joined out of religious conviction.²⁴¹ MUJAO legitimised its authority not only in reference to repertoires related to the “global jihad.” It also made use of symbols from the ancient Songhay Empire in a move to raise popular support, which the Tuareg rebels had clearly lacked in Gao.²⁴²

AQIM’s primary focus constituted Timbuktu. While preserving its image as the regional branch of Al-Qaeda, the top leadership of AQIM was very much aware of the need to anchor itself in the social-cultural environment of northern Mali. In a letter sent to the AQIM and Ansar Al-Din leadership in northern Mali, the principal AQIM leader Abdelmalek Droukdel expressed his frustrations with their strict adoption of sharia law because it alienated local citizens from the organisation. He lamented their failure to develop and maintain strategic alliances with other influential actors in northern Mali.²⁴³

The Islamists in both Gao and Timbuktu initially gained some degree of popular legitimacy beyond the (modest) group of religious supporters because of their capacity to restore order after the Tuareg revolt. Nevertheless, this support rapidly dwindled. Local opposition to their strict application of sharia law was widespread and voiced by influential traditional and religious authorities, women’s and youth associations.²⁴⁴ Malian organisations and media outlets recorded hundreds of human rights abuses, varying from residents being stoned to death, having their limbs amputated or jailed for offences against sharia law. The prohibition of

²³⁸ Molenaar, F. et al. (2019).

²³⁹ Baldaro, E. and Raineri, L. (2020), pp. 109-110.

²⁴⁰ ‘Mali Crisis: Foreign Fighters Come to Help Islamists’ (*BBC*, 23 October 2012); Flood, D.H. (2012) ‘Between Islamization and Secession: The Contest for Northern Mali’, *CTC Sentinel*, 5(7) 1-6; Aa, G. van der (2013) ‘Sahara is Terreunest’ (*Elsevier*, 19 January 2013).

²⁴¹ Daniel, S. (2012) ‘Scores of New African Recruits Swell Al-Qaeda Offshoot’s Ranks in Mali’ (*Middle East Online*, 18 July 2012).

²⁴² Lebovich, A. (2012) ‘Trying to Understand MUJWA’, (*Al Wasat*, 22 August 2012).

²⁴³ Siegel, P.C. (2013) ‘AQIM’s Playbook in Mali’, *CTC Sentinel*, (6)3: 9-11.

²⁴⁴ Lecocq, B. and Mann, G. (et.al.) (2013).

listening to music, smoking or watching football and the obligation for men to accompany their (veiled) women in public only further alienated ordinary citizens from their new authorities.

While MUJAO and AQIM dominated Gao and Timbuktu respectively, Ansar Al-Din's stronghold was Kidal, where its leader Iyad Ag Ghali had been a prominent figure for many decades. His organisation benefitted from the financial support provided by AQIM and recruited many new Tuareg members after the marginalisation of the MNLA. Senior people within the traditional hierarchies aligned with his organisation but local opposition against the radical Islamist orientation was also fierce. Tuareg women, known for their prominent role in public life, repeatedly protested despite harsh reprisals.

Meanwhile, the prolonged crisis at the centre of the state frustrated any viable move to counter events in the northern regions. Diplomatic pressure raised by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the wider international community eventually spearheaded the establishment of an interim government in Bamako.

In April 2012, three weeks after the military coup, Dioncounda Traore was sworn in as interim president. Finding a solution to the security challenges in the North remained unfeasible, however, as different political factions and junta leaders continued to compete for influence.

In January 2013, the situation drastically altered when the Islamists overplayed their hand. Ansar Al-Din fighters moved across the "border" separating northern and southern Mali, in an attempt to gain control over the strategic airport near Ségou. This would pose considerable challenges to any future international military intervention.

On 11 January, French forces suddenly and swiftly launched a military campaign to dislodge the radical Islamists from the northern regions, at the request of Mali's interim president. The French managed to drive many Islamists out of the principal urban areas with targeted airstrikes and the deployment of more than 4000 boots on the ground, although numerous Islamists went into hiding in the rural areas. It goes well beyond the scope of this chapter to provide an analysis of the military intervention. Nevertheless, two points are particularly relevant as background to Chapter 6, which assesses the "internationalisation of hybrid security practices" in more detail.

First, although being invited by the Malian state, French forces also collaborated with the MNLA because the group obtained useful knowledge of the terrain and positions of radical Islamists across northern Mali. Many citizens, however, perceived this cooperation as a clear breach of the country's sovereignty, certainly in light of the MNLA's recent attempt to achieve independence from the Malian state by means of military force.

Secondly, French forces were soon drawn into existing local conflicts. Tensions between Tuareg and Arab (smuggling) factions, particularly in the Kidal region mounted, as Arab leaders feared being dominated and sidelined because of the French-Tuareg “alignment.”²⁴⁵ Chapter 6, as indicated, provides a more detailed analysis of the different alignments between international and local military forces.

By the end of January 2013, public security provision obtained an increasingly heterogeneous character and involved a range of state and non-state actors at the local, national and international level, who were tied together in complex and dynamic relations. The Malian state obtained an increasingly marginalised role in shaping hybrid security provision.

2.6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter traced the roots of Mali’s heterarchical political order. At independence, the country’s leadership set out to firmly institute state authority in society and left very little scope for other power poles. They positioned the state as the central and hierarchically superior locus of authority. The party-state enforced its authority in an institutionalised manner by creating a large state bureaucracy with tentacles across all sectors. Huge state enterprises, for example, emerged in the economic realm. Subsequent regimes largely relied on informal networks with influential and loyal power brokers across society to maintain their power basis in society. However, the state’s ability to maintain and fund these (unproductive) clientelistic ties and networks of patronage became increasingly restricted over time. This chapter revealed that the role of the state in public service delivery gradually decreased. Firstly in the area of a number of social services and subsequently in the security realm too. In contrast, non-state actors increasingly boosted their authority. The material resources and immaterial sources of legitimacy that became available through transnational networks played a key role in this regard.²⁴⁶ During the first decade of the millennium, non-state actors increasingly operated as horizontal contemporaries of the organs of the state and a heterarchical political order gradually emerged across northern Mali.

Hence, the state shared more and more core duties with non-state power poles over time. The analytical focus thereby shifts from *state* authority and state services to *public* authority

²⁴⁵ McGregor, A. (2013) ‘French Cooperation with Tuareg Rebels Risks Arab Rising in Northern Mali’, *Terrorism Monitor*, 11(5), Jamestown Foundation.

²⁴⁶ This is not to suggest a sharp dichotomy between state and non-state actors as individual state representatives equally profited from lucrative smuggling networks. In general, the rise of transnational networks did contribute to a significant shift in the power balance between state and non-state actors.

and hybrid forms of public services. The chapter particularly focused on historical patterns of security provision under successive Malian governments. It examined changes in the interplay between state and non-state actors based on three dimensions: (1) the power balance (the state as *vertically superior vs horizontally equivalent*); (2) the channel (*official vs unofficial*); and (3) the nature of cooperation (*complementary vs delegatory*).

Over time, Malian state authorities progressively *delegated* security provision to non-state actors as the presence of the Malian Defence and Security forces reduced across northern Mali. In the 1990s, efforts to formalise security cooperation between state and non-state actors through the official channels of a peace process made considerable headway. However, *informal channels* of hybrid security cooperation eventually prevailed. The *vertically superior* position of Malian armed forces over non-state armed groups gave way to a power balance in which the army was just one institution amongst equals in the wider context of the heterarchical order. By 2013, Mali's increasingly heterogeneous security realm involved a myriad of local militias with or without links to traffickers, terrorist groups, armed groups, the army and international forces. Chapter 6 provides an analysis of the anchoring of Mali's heterarchical order in the five-year period after the 2012 crisis. Despite considerable international efforts in support of the Malian state, non-state actors actually further expanded their role in security provision and other public services provided at the local level.

Before looking forward, the following chapters first examine the functioning of key democratic institutions in the period preceding the 2012 crisis. The next chapter assesses patterns of political participation and representation as shaped through the party system and expected to boost state legitimacy in the wake of Mali's emerging heterarchical political order.