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

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This Malian case study joins an expanding body of literature that challenges prevailing state-centred and institutional approaches to both political authority and legitimacy. In contrast with classical representations of the state as the hierarchically supreme institutional locus of political authority in society, a heterarchical political order gradually emerged in Mali. The state increasingly operated as one of the institutions amongst many non-state equals involved in the exercise of public authority and performance of key statehood functions. The first part of this thesis reveals that the Malian state increasingly relied on non-state actors to counter recurrent security threats. The core part of this case study demonstrates that prominent democratic institutions have not enhanced Malian state legitimacy as expected from their official mandates and in ways predicted by theory. Quite to the contrary, the democratic structure seems to have actually weakened the position of the state vis-à-vis non-state power poles in Mali's heterarchical context.

Martin van Vliet (1979) studied Cultural Anthropology and Sociology of Non-Western Societies at the University of Leiden. He subsequently engaged with the Sahel region as programme officer for the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy; as advisor to the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations for Mali and Head of MINUSMA; and Sahel Coordinator at the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During the course of his professional career, he has published extensively on democratic, security and governance developments in the Sahel and wider African continent. This thesis started as a project in the "IS-Academy" of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which launched this initiative together with several research institutes and universities to increase knowledge about the functioning of, amongst others, fragile states.

Front-page image: © *Militants from the Movement for the Salvation of Azawad (MSA), a Tuareg political and armed movement gather in the desert outside Menaka on March 14, 2020 during the MSA congress.*  
(Photo by Souleymane Ag Anara / AFP).

