

Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM): Terrorist Networks Infiltrate Northern Mali

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Abstract

The Paper provides an overview of the Tuareg rebellion in Northern Mali with particular reference to conditions that are conducive to terrorist networks infiltration of the age-long insurrection in the region. In this regard, the roles played by the infiltration of Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the return of the Migrant workers and Tuareg combatants from Libya as well as the 22 March mutiny and Military coup in the Tuareg rebellion culminating in the total collapse of north Mali and the unilateral declaration of the independence of the State of Azawad were highlighted. Noting that the problem in Northern Mali is not that of religious extremism or terrorism and that Military answer cannot be an effective long-term strategy or solution to the recurrent rebellion in the region, the Paper indicates that the solution to the problem lies in recognizing the fact that the Tuaregs have legitimate political, socio-economic, security, environmental, humanitarian and human rights grievances that must be addressed, without which the Tuareg rebellion will continue to resonate for some time to come

Index terms—

1 Background

he conflict that erupted in Northern Mali in January 2012 was not entirely new and unexpected. It was a continuation of the age-long and deeply rooted Tuareg struggle. Indeed, it has been termed the fourth Tuareg rebellion. What makes the difference between this and the previous insurrections was the way the struggle was coordinated and prosecuted this time around by the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) and the sudden change in the orientation from the rebellion of autonomy to secession due to the infiltration and hijack of the struggle by Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and its allied Islamist militant groups which led to the eventual declaration of the State of Azawad. destruction of properties, the southern part of the country was seized by young Military juntas who President Amadou Taumani Toure, suspended constitutional rule and dissolved Government institutions.

Also new, was the way the Malian army were brutally suppressed, humiliated and chased out of their garrison in the northern region thus culminating in the 22nd March 2012 mutiny and coup as well as the foreign military intervention in the crisis, thereby placing the conflict at the top of international political agenda for the first time.

The role played by AQIM and its allied forces which changed the course of the Tuareg's struggle is very crucial. This is the focus of attention of the Paper. In this case, the origin of AQIM, its profile, sources of finance and the nature of the group's terrorist activities in North Africa which led to its expulsion and consequent resurgence in Mali, were examined in the paper. Also, factors conducive for the infiltration of AQIM in North Mali, the hijack of the age-long Tuareg struggle by AQIM and the secession of Azawad from Mali, including the roles played by the dual factors of the return of the Migrant workers and armed Tuareg combatants from Libya, as well as the impact of the 22nd March 2012 mutiny and Coup D'état in Mali, were investigated.

43 Additionally, the impact of the Malian crisis on the People and Government of the country, and the role of the
44 international community, importantly the French Military intervention alongside the African-led International
45 Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) which led to the unconditional expulsion of AQIM and its rebel groups and
46 the timely restoration of democratic governance in Mali were highlighted in the Paper.

47 2 II.

48 Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is an Islamic militant
49 organization evolved from the Algerian militant group known as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat
50 (GSPC). [1] The GSPC, an offshoot of the Armed Islamic Group (Groupe Islamique Arme or GIA) was formed in
51 1998 following the decline in the popularity of the GIA as a result of its brutal tactics and extreme violence. [2]
52 The GIA it would be recalled launched a brutal insurgency against the Algerian government in 1992, resulting
53 in the killing of thousands of Algerian civilians, when the Algerian's military backed government cancelled the
54 country's electoral processes set to be won by an Islamist Party, Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). [3] A combination
55 of the intense pressure from the Algerian Security services and internal divisions over tactics within the group led
56 to its disintegration. [4] Following the announcement by Ayman Al-Zawahiri, Al-Qaeda's second in command,
57 the GSPC officially joined forces with Al-Qaeda in September 2006, declaring France an enemy and indicating
58 that they would fight against French and American interests. AQIM is essentially a regionally-focused terrorist
59 group [10] located in North Africa drawing its followers largely from the Algerian Islamists group. [11] Its reach
60 has also expanded across the Sahel region South of the Sahara Desert, attracting members from Mauritania,
61 Morocco, Niger and Senegal as well as from within Mali. [12] In an effort to weaken and ultimately overthrow the
62 Algerian government which it seeks to replace with Islamic rule based on a 'pure' interpretation of the Quran,
63 AQIM carried out series of attacks against the Algerian military and attempted to assassinate the Algerian
64 President, Abdul-Aziz Bouteflika in 2007. [13] Over time, AQIM has adopted a more anti-Western rhetoric and
65 ideology with the motivation to carrying out attacks on Western targets in the region and abroad particularly
66 on France and American targets and kidnapping Western tourists for ransom. [14] According to Jonathan
67 Masters, "most of AQIM's major leaders are believed to have trained in Afghanistan during the 1979-1989 war
68 against the Soviet as part of a group of North African Volunteers known as 'Afghan Arab' that returned to the
69 region and radicalized

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71 Islamist movements in the years that followed". [15] AQIM has called for the freeing of the Maghreb countries
72 of North Africa from Spanish and French influences and for the regaining of the lost Islamic regions of Southern
73 Spain, known as Al-Andalus. AQIM has stated its support for Islamists extremist violence in Afghanistan and
74 Pakistan, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, Chechnya and Palestine. It has also called on Muslims across North Africa to
75 forget Western interest. [16] The basic principles objectives of AQIM in North Africa according to Geoff Porter
76 include ridding the region of western influence (in particular the French and the America) 'apostate unbeliever'
77 governments in countries like Algeria, Mali, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia, with the overall goal of
78 installing fundamentalist regimes based on Islamic law or Sharia. [17] Abdelmalek Droukdel popularly known as
79 Abu Mus'ab Abd al-Wadoud is an ardent believer and group leader of this ideology. It was under his leadership
80 that France was declared by AQIM as its main target. [18] AQIM is one of the region's wealthiest and best
81 armed militant group. Its members engage in kidnapping for ransom and criminal activities to finance their
82 operations with limited financial and logistical support from Algerian expatriates and AQIM supporters abroad,
83 mostly in Western Europe. [19] In the words of Oumar Ould Hamaha, a notorious Islamist Commander in the
84 deserts of West Africa, "the source of our (AQIM) financing is the Western countries they are paying for Jihad".
85 [20] Hamaha stated this in reference to the huge ransoms militants collect in exchange for the release of their
86 victims in the region. As noted by Adam Nossiter: Kidnapping is such a lucrative industry for extremists in West
87 Africa, netting them tens of millions of dollars in recent years, that it has reinforced their control over northern
88 Mali?" [21] Apart from the huge financial resources realized from kidnapping foreigners for ransom, AQIM also
89 generate enormous funds from other criminal activities in the Sahel-Saharan region to finance its operations. This
90 include, direct involvement in drugs trafficking or through protection offered to smugglers across the desert, arms
91 trafficking, armed robbery, money laundering as well as booty from captured enemy armies in the region. [22]
92 AQIM has also used kidnapping to obtain political concessions such as securing the release of Islamist prisoners.
93 [23] Al-Qaeda also provides material and financial support to AQIM. [24] In furtherance of its ideology, AQIM
94 continues to perpetrate criminal activities culminating in the 11 December 2007 bombing of the UN Headquarters
95 in Algiers killing 17 UN Staff and numerous innocent Algerians while several others were severely injured. [25]
96 AQIM had also intensified its efforts in kidnapping for ransom and conducted small scale attacks and ambushes
97 on security force. However, in 2011, AQIM intensified its terrorist activities with the attempted assassination
98 of the Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz on 7 February 2011 when a vehicleborne improvised
99 explosive device (VBIED) was detonated on his convoy in Nouakchott, injuring nine soldiers. [26] Following
100 crackdowns by the Algerian government forces in the north and south of the country over the years, a splinter
101 group of AQIM sought refuge in Northern Mali and Niger among the Tuareg where it capitalized on the armed
102 rebellion launched in January 2012 by the MNLA, a Tuareg group, to conquer the Northern part of Mali.

104 Aqim and the Hijack of the Tuareg's Struggle

105 With the nature of AQIM's ideology, its activities and pressure from the Algerian government forces, coupled
 106 with the porous nature of the Tuareg region in northern Mali, it is not difficult therefore, to understand why
 107 and how AQIM secured a safe haven in that part of the country, took advantage of the situation of the Tuareg
 108 and became very active in the region. The weak security infrastructure and poor economic situation in Northern
 109 Mali serve as impetus for the infiltration of AQIM in the region and the eventual hijack of the agelong Tuareg
 110 struggle for autonomy from the Central Government in Bamako.

111 Over the years, the Tuareg have been confronted with enormous challenges with grave economic implications.
 112 There was the problem of drought and desertification occasioned by climate change, culminating in famine, food
 113 shortage, and malnutrition and ultimately resulting into refugee crisis. [27] Despite this, the Malian government
 114 remained insensitive to the plight of the Tuaregs as it failed to provide economic support to the people in a
 115 way that will ameliorate their suffering and rescue them from a state of perpetual poverty. [28] In the absence
 116 of positive attitude towards their plight from the Malian Government by way of investment and provision of
 117 infrastructure that make life worth living, the Tuaregs continue to feel hopeless, frustrated and marginalized.
 118 It was not difficult therefore for militant groups and other criminal organizations to exploit the conditions of
 119 extreme poverty in the region. Given the level of poverty and frustration especially among the youth in the
 120 Tuareg region, there was hardly any alternative to the temptations of getting involved in drugs trafficking, armed
 121 robbery, smuggling, kidnapping or some other clandestine activities including militancy and terrorism.

122 For instance, in an interview with Magharebia in Nouakchott, a former Al-Qaeda member who goes by the
 123 alias Nouredine confirmed that "Al-Qaeda relies primarily on the Maghreb region to recruit young healthy
 124 elements that are enthusiastic to rush to all kinds of adventure". [29] He went further to explain the reason
 125 for this development. According to him, "what facilitated the task are widespread unemployment, poverty and
 126 frustration among young people in the region making them easy prey in the claws of Al-Qaeda". [30] AQIM
 127 exploited the vacuum created by the negligence of the Malian government to gradually supplant itself in the
 128 northern part of the country, penetrating the local people and surreptitiously coopting them to its fold. With
 129 time, and in the absence of any viable alternative, the local Tuareg population gradually learns to accommodate
 130 their presence "in part, due to the organization's ability to develop the local economy and provide basic services
 131 in an impoverished region that felt abandoned by its host government". [31] Making use of monies originating
 132 from ransoms paid for the release of kidnapped Westerners and other questionable sources, AQIM bought itself
 133 goodwill, friendship and networks by distributing money and medicine, treating the sick and empowering them.
 134 These relationships were cemented through marriage, not necessarily into powerful families but to poor local
 135 women as a way of winning the support of the impoverished ordinary local Tuareg people. [32] Gradually, the
 136 organization changed its tactics and rule of engagement. In addition to the distribution of raw cash and provision
 137 of small welfare benefits, AQIM complemented its efforts with religion indoctrination. Through the use of the
 138 Islamic teachers, it began the preaching of its own brand of Islam, 'Salafism' while handsomely rewarding the
 139 religious teachers. [33] It was through this combination of strategies -economic, religious, military, political and
 140 humanitarian influences that AQIM penetrated the local communities in the Northern region of Mali and co-
 141 opted them into its fold. It was not a coincidence therefore, when in 2012, AQIM took advantage of the age-long
 142 political crisis in the Tuareg region to consolidate its hold and control on the region by joining forces with the
 143 MNLA to wage war against the Malian military forces to prosecute the secession of the Azawad region for the
 144 ethnic Tuareg people, through the support of the Ansar Dine, an Islamist militia led by veteran Tuareg fighter
 145 Iyad Ag Ghaly. [34] However, shortly after this 'victory', crisis broke out between the MNLA and Ansar Dine.
 146 Tensions came to a climax when a dissident splinter group of AQIM members broke off to form the Movement
 147 for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA) and violently expelled the MNLA out of key cities in the region.
 148 The group then supported Ansar Dine to entrench its power in the region, imposed Sharia law, levying taxes
 149 and issuing papers stamped with the State of Azawad seal. [35] As Ansar Dine and its allied militant Islamist
 150 forces tightened their hold on the northern part of Mali, they engaged in hostage taking, focusing in particular on
 151 expatriates from Britain, France, Japan, Ireland and the United States. They also accelerated the vandalism
 152 of tourism and religious sites especially in Timbuktu, classified by UNESCO as protected World Heritage Sites.
 153 Such acts of destructions were justified on theological ground based on Salafist Ideology. For instance in an
 154 interview with Magharebia, the Ansar Dine spokesman, Sanda Ould Bouamama, justified the destruction of such
 155 sites when he stated that:

156 "What is UNESCO? We don't care about the words of any entity because God is one without partners. All
 157 UNESCO's calls are just polytheism. We are Muslims and we don't revere any shrines or idols". [36] These
 158 chains of destruction, the high handedness of the militant Islamist groups and the ambitious encroachment into
 159 the southern parts of Mali, attracted the attention of the international community to the crisis situation in Mali
 160 and the need for its urgent intervention.

161 However, it is important to note that the 'success' achieved in the prosecution of the fourth Tuareg Rebellion
 162 which led to the temporary secession of the State of Azawad, was made possible not only by the infiltration
 163 of AQIM in the Tuareg's struggle, but additionally, by other related incidences such as the return of Migrant
 164 workers and Tuareg combatants following the Libyan revolution as well as the impact of the 22 March 2012

5 THE RETURN OF MIGRANT WORKERS AND FORMER TUAREG COMBATANTS FROM LIBYA

165 Mutiny and the Coup D'état in Mali. Each of these factors would be briefly discussed for a better appreciation
166 of the dynamics of the Tuareg's struggle in Mali.

167 IV.

168 5 The Return of Migrant Workers and Former Tuareg Combat- 169 ants from Libya

170 The Libyan revolution which eventually led to the death of its leader, Moammar Gaddafi was accompanied by
171 reverberating impact across the globe. However, the brunt of the challenges that emerged as a result of the
172 crisis bore greater consequences for the neighbouring states of Algeria, Chad, Egypt, Niger, Tunisia, Mauritania
173 and Mali. [37] This is particularly so because of the influx of unemployed returnees, including migrants workers,
174 former combatants from Libya and armed Tuareg and Toubou elements into these countries, as well as the impact
175 that their return have on the Socio-economic and political stability of the affected countries as a result of the
176 inflow of illicit arms and ammunition into the region and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons
177 (SALWs). [38] Within a relatively short period of time, these countries and in particular those in the Sahel
178 region had to contend with the influx of hundreds of thousands of traumatized and impoverished returnees as
179 well as the inflow of unspecified and unquantifiable numbers of arms and ammunitions from the Libyan arsenal.
180 [39] The aftermath of the Libyan crisis posed a broader threat to peace and security across northern and western
181 Africa and is clearly among the many factors that have aggravated the recent rebellion in the northern region
182 of Mali. [40] As reported by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the crisis resulted in some
183 318,000 third country nationals in five of Libyan's neighbouring countries of Algeria, Chad, Egypt, Niger and
184 Tunisia and about 11,230 from Mali. [41] This figure does not include returnees who crossed the borders without
185 the assistance of IOM. According to Government estimates, the total number of returnees, including unregistered
186 cases, is approximately 420,000, out of which 200,000 are in Niger, 150,000 in Chad, 30,000 in Mali and 40,000
187 from Mauritania of which the vast majority were males of between 20 to 40 years old with low level of education.
188 [42] As in every humanitarian crisis, migrants left Libya under extremely difficult circumstances. They lost their
189 savings and possessions and became victims of extortion and human rights violation. This led to psychological
190 trauma, feeling of shame and embarrassment. Their inability to earn and provide for their families further
191 compounded their socio-economic situation.

192 [43] Their return therefore further placed additional burden on their home countries especially in the face of
193 chronic food insecurity due to climatic conditions. [44] In the absence of any gainful employment and with
194 the availability of arms and ammunitions at their disposal, the unemployed youth and returnees in the northern
195 parts of Mali engaged in crimes of all sought such as car theft and armed attacks including trafficking in drugs.
196 They also became potential recruit by criminal and militant groups in the region and rapidly became radicalized.

197 When therefore there were attacks on major towns in the northern region of Mali early in 2012, signaling the
198 start of a renewed armed rebellion by the Tuaregs, the services of these jobless teaming Tuareg youths and former
199 combatants including mercenaries became handy. With the array of arms and ammunitions in their possession,
200 they were able to participate effectively in armed insurrection. [45] The greatest beneficiary of this situation was
201 the AQIM which has long been active in the region and which has been looking for opportunities to create a
202 separate state to be governed by Sharia law. AQIM joined hands with the excombatants and its MNLA, MUJWA
203 and Ansar Dine Islamist militants to prosecute the Tuareg rebellion, over run northern Mali and ceased control
204 of the region. [46] V.

205 The 22 March 2012 Mutiny and Coup D'état

206 Unlike the situation during the first Tuareg rebellion during which the Malian Government deployed the
207 Military to brutally repel the Tuareg insurrection, this time around, the poorly equipped Malian Army of just
208 about 7,000 men proved no match for the Tuareg militants who armed with the Libyan arsenals successfully
209 captured major towns and cities in the northern region, including Gao, Timbuktu, Kidal, Tessalit, Aguel, Menaka
210 and Anefis and chased the Malian soldiers out of their garrisons in the region. [47] The humiliation of the Malian
211 Army in the hand of the rebels led to the 22 March 2012 Mutiny by the disaffected soldiers from the units
212 defeated by the armed Islamist militant groups against the government of President Amadou Toumani Toure for
213 his ineffective response to the Tuareg rebellion. [48] This eventually resulted in a military coup organized by
214 noncommissioned and mid-ranking Officers of the Malian armed forces led by Captain Amadou Sanogo, Chairman
215 of the National Committee for the Restoration of Democracy and State (Comité National de Redressement pour
216 la Démocratique et la Restauration de l'Etat (CNRDRE) The Coupist immediately suspended constitutional rule
217 and dissolved Government institutions barely a month to the planned April 2012 general elections in Mali. [49]
218 The President was accused of not doing enough to tackle Islamist extremists, drug trafficking and the needs of
219 the armed forces" thus demonstrating its lack of capacity and ability to deal with the new Tuareg rebellion.
220 [50] Domestically, the Malian ruling elite was perceived in many quarters as guilty of corruption, nepotism and
221 abuse of power. Within the armed forces, especially among the rank and file, a wide-spread sense developed that
222 the central Government had neglected its obligation, diverting significant resources from the counter-insurgency
223 efforts in the north to enrich a few corrupt senior officers. The capacity of the military units deployed in the
224 north thus became progressively weakened as a result of poor logistics, inoperable equipment and low morale.
225 [51] The mutiny and the resultant military coup accelerated the total collapse of the northern region of Mali as

226 it provided unfetter opportunity for Ansar Dine and its allied Jihadist AQIM rebels to tighten their grips over
227 the whole of the northern region and eventually declared the independence of the Tuareg state of Azawad. This
228 led to the emergence of a terrorist state under strict Sharia law in the largely secular Muslim northern Mali akin
229 to the Al-Shabaab terrorist state in Somalia and the Taliban Al-Qaeda terrorist state in Afghanistan before the
230 US-led invasion in 2001. [52] This development, coupled with the inability of the Malian military junta to deal
231 with the crisis situation that engulfed the whole of the country, brought tension to bear within and outside Mali
232 and necessitated the intervention of the international community.

233 6 Impact of the Malian Crisis

234 The insurgency in Mali brought about a considerable impact on the Malian government and its people. Since
235 clashes erupted in the northern region of the country between armed rebels and government forces in early 2012,
236 hundreds of thousands of people have been forced to flee their homes, thus adding to the woes of the civilian
237 population already severely affected by the drought and food insecurity that prevails in the Sahel region. [53] As a
238 result of the presence of heavily armed rebel groups, northern Mali remained largely inaccessible to international
239 humanitarian Agencies and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) while cases of violations and human right
240 abuses continued unabated.

241 [54] This situation triggered the internal displacement of an estimated 204,000 people who were forced to live
242 in extremely difficult circumstances, while more than 200,000 Malian found refuge in neighbouring Mauritania,
243 Niger and Burkina Faso. ?? In the same vein, human rights situation in Mali, especially in the northern region
244 deteriorated as a result of the renewed armed rebellion in January 2012. Extremist Islamist groups of Ansar Dine,
245 MUJWA and AQIM were reported to have committed gross human rights abuses, including "summary and extra-
246 judicial execution, sexual and gender-based violence, recruitment and use of child soldier, torture and looting".
247 [57] Immediately after taking over the northern region of Mali, the group imposed and implemented Sharia law,
248 and in the strict and extreme interpretation of the law, committed extra-judicial execution, flogging and stoning
249 among other crimes. ??58] The political and security situation in Mali also have grave economic implications
250 as key socioeconomic indicators and living conditions of the population were grossly affected. Throughout the
251 country, economic and basic public services were severely disrupted, resulting in an economic growth rate of -3.1
252 per cent in view of revenue shortfall. The Sectors most affected include construction, agro and manufacturing
253 industries, in addition to all branches of the service sector, including trade and financial services.

254 [59] As a result of the crisis, the Government was compelled to write off as unrecoverable, 400 billion CFA
255 francs (\$800 million) of the targeted revenue of 1.34 trillion CFA francs, for 2012 while spending plans were
256 slashed accordingly. Also, the suspension of external financing by donors as a result of the situation in the
257 country caused a state budget shortfall of 391 billion CFA francs (\$782 million) in 2012. ??60] Due to the rising
258 prices of food and fuel, inflation rate in 2012 rose to 5.3% compared to 3.5% in 2011. This resulted among other
259 things in the closure of many hotels, tourist establishments and tertiary institutions; slowdown in the Secondary
260 Sector particularly in construction industries; and a decline in foreign direct investments. [61] Also, in view of
261 the poor agricultural production, trade disruption, and the low level of public investments, poverty incidence
262 increased a percentage point from 41.7% in 2011 to 42.7% in 2012. With the decrease in the purchasing power
263 of the population, coupled with the higher food and oil prices it was estimated that the average inflation rate
264 would continue to rise for a while. [62] As the size of the population of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in
265 Mali and the number of people fleeing the country look set to grow in 2013, the United Nations High Commission
266 for Refugees (UNHCR) and its partners have been working on contingency plans. Such plans include protection
267 and assistance of refugees in neighbouring countries, as well as coordination of humanitarian actions for IDPs in
268 Mali. [63]

269 7 Diplomatic and Military Interventions in Mali

270 International action aimed at assisting the Malian regular forces retake the lost Northern region and return the
271 country into a democratic government was well coordinated. Immediately after the Malian coup, the Heads of
272 State and Government of the ECOWAS suspended Mali from participating in all the Community's activities
273 and imposed a range of political, diplomatic and economic sanctions on the Military Junta. The Organization
274 thereafter, on 27 March 2012, appointed President Blaise Compaoré, of Burkina Faso, to mediate in the crisis
275 and impressed upon the coup makers to revert to constitutional order. [65] At their Extraordinary Summit
276 in Abidjan on 29th March 2012, ECOWAS leaders served the notice of the possibility of the deployment of a
277 3,000 regional standby force to assist in securing the territorial integrity of Mali against the Tuareg rebellion
278 if the rebels refused to accept a peaceful solution to the conflict in the north. ??66] On 6 April the Military
279 junta and ECOWAS signed a Framework Agreement which provided for a series of steps for the restoration of
280 constitutional order in Mali as consistently called for by the UN Security Council and the international community
281 as a whole. The Ouagadougou political framework of agreement among other things led to the formation of the
282 Government of National Unity (GoNU) backed by a Presidential Decree in August 2012. [67] Headed by Prime
283 Minister Cheick Modibo Diarra, the government has 31 Ministers drawn from the representatives of almost all
284 the registered Malian's Political Parties, including four women and five close allies of Captain Sanogo, the junta's
285 leader. [68] However, as argued by David J. Francis, this arrangement did not help the political and military

9 CONCLUSION

286 situation on ground but rather emboldened the Ansar Dine rebels and their Islamic allies who took advantage of
287 the situation not only to consolidate their military control over the Azawad region, but also continue to advance
288 southward. [69] According to him, this imminent advance on Bamako by the military strong and coordinated
289 Islamist extremists and their AQIM allies, forced the international community into action. [70] In view of the
290 gravity of the threat the activities of terrorism and criminal groups in northern Mali poses not only to the region
291 but as well to the entire international community, the United Nations Security Council at its 6898th Meeting held
292 on 20 December 2012, unanimously adopted Resolution 2085 (2012) under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to
293 authorize the deployment of an African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) to support efforts
294 by national authorities to recover the North. [71] Prior to the authorization of the deployment of AFISMA and
295 the call for contribution of troops, an Extraordinary Summit of West African leaders was held in Abuja, Nigeria,
296 on 11 November 2012 to discuss the modalities of an international military intervention in the political crisis in
297 Mali. The Summit was preceded by the Meeting of Officials of ECOWAS, the AU, UN, EU and other partners
298 in Bamako as part of the efforts to wrap up the details of the operation to flush out the rebels.

299 [72]

300 Guided by the provisions of the UN Security Council Resolution 2071 of 12 October 2012, the Summit adopted
301 the harmonized concept of operations for the deployment of the African led international force in Mali as developed
302 by the Malian Military and ECOWAS Officials with the assistance of military experts from other countries and
303 international partners and organizations. [73] It was this ECOWAS-AU-facilitated strategic concept of operation
304 that formed the basis of the French-backed UN Security Council Resolution 2085 for the authorization of Military
305 intervention in Mali.

306 However, while efforts were being made at all levels to help Mali find solution to the raging conflicts and
307 security situation in the country, and whereas ECOWAS mediatory efforts were ongoing and indeed AFISMA
308 was scheduled for deployment in September 2013, the extremist Jihadist militant groups in the northern region
309 of the country continued to gain more grounds as they pushed southward from their strongholds in the north and
310 were progressively advancing on Bamako. The militants' advance led the Interim President Dioncounda Traore
311 to declare a state of emergency and appeal to the French President and regional leaders like Nigeria and Senegal
312 to help repel the militants. [74] This development necessitated swift and decisive military intervention in Mali,
313 changing the focus of engagement from diplomatic to military action. It was not difficult for France to respond
314 immediately to the call for help from Mali more so that French hostages have been taken in neighbouring Niger
315 by AQIM. France appears decided on containing any further military expansion in the region and assists the
316 Malian Government to reestablish its control over the lost territory.

317 [75] On 11 January 2013, France swiftly responded to the Malian Interim President's pleas for military
318 assistance with air strikes and ground troops, with a view to preventing the takeover of Bamako by AQIM
319 and its militant Islamist allies.

320 With nearly 4,000 troops, [76] the French military intervention in Mali was swift, decisive and précised. In
321 less than three weeks, the rebellion in Northern Mali was scuttled with the recapture of all the major cities in
322 the region under the control of AQIM and its rebel allies. The success recorded by France in this endeavour was
323 however not without the support of the Malian troops, the ECOWAS, as well as the assistance received from other
324 Western countries. Even though AFISMA's Volume XIV Issue V Version I deployment was initially to begin in
325 September 2013, however, with the unexpected advance by AQIM and its allied forces towards the southern parts
326 of Mali and the subsequent intervention from France, ECOWAS was compelled to deploy on 17 January 2013,
327 beginning with the contingency from Nigeria. [77] Subsequently, the contingents from other AFISMA troops
328 contributing countries like Burkina Faso, Benin, Chad, Togo and Senegal later joined the French and Nigeria's
329 troops, while Major General Abdulkadir Shehu, a Nigerian was appointed the first Commandant of the Mission.
330 [78] Table ?? With these crucial supports from the international community and in particular, France's military
331 intervention, the efforts of the African nations, the international organizations and institutions as well as those
332 of the partner countries involved in the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA), the unity,
333 stability and integrity of Mali was once again restored. Consequently, AFISMA was transformed to the United
334 Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

335 Against this background, and with the supports and goodwill of the international community, it was thus
336 possible to open negotiations with the North and conduct the Presidential elections as stipulated in the Transition
337 Roadmap unanimously adopted by Mali's National Assembly on 29 January 2013. [81] On Thursday, 19
338 September 2013, Mali's new President, Ibrahim Boubacar Kaita was inaugurated in Bamako, thus marking
339 the beginning of a new era in Mali's history. [82] The task before the new government nonetheless remains
340 daunting. It must address the country's most pressing challenges including fostering national reconciliation;
341 strengthening democratic institutions; spearheading security sector reforms; and training of its army to be able
342 to ultimately defend its territorial integrity.

8 VIII.

9 Conclusion

345 The intervention of the international community in the crisis that engulfed Mali is remarkable and commendable,
346 especially those of the ECOWAS, AU, UN and the French Government and it's allied. The foreign military

347 intervention facilitated the unconditional retreat of the extremist Jihadist groups from the northern parts of
348 Mali; the recapture of the loss territory; as well as the timely restoration of democratic governance in Mali.
349 However, the problem in the northern region of Mali would not suddenly disappear merely because of the return
350 of the country to a democratic rule. Malians are not alien to democratic rule. Indeed, more than any country
351 in the West African sub-region, Mali had experienced enduring democratic governance. Yet successive Malian
352 administrations have not done enough to promote the unity and proper integration of the entire country but
353 rather fanned the embers of discord and rebellion.

354 For a start, Mali's new President, Ibrahim Boubacar Kaita, should be encouraged to form a broadbased
355 National Unity Government that would ensure the participation of all the stakeholders especially the Tuareg,
356 in the administration of the country. This step would give all the regions of the country a sense of belonging
357 and form the basis for the much anticipated national reconciliation in Mali. The international community must
358 strengthen this process by facilitating a prompt dialogue between the Central Government in Bamako and the
359 Tuareg people in north Mali who recognizes the country's secular nature and territorial integrity and who indeed
360 rejected terrorism thus facilitating the isolation and early defeat of AQIM and its allied militant Islamist groups.

361 The sensitivity of Mali's neighbouring countries like Algeria, Niger and Mauritania must be taken into account
362 in this negotiation. They are involved in the crisis and indeed are affected by it. They should therefore be
363 involved in the dialogues that could lead to the resolution of the Tuareg problem. Their participation would be
364 crucial to finding lasting solution to the situation not only in the northern part of Mali but also the plight of the
365 Tuaregs in the Sahel region as a whole.

366 To ensure a lasting peace and stability in the country, the Malian Government can only ill-afford to continue to
367 rely solely on military solution in the fight against the Tuareg insurgency as it did in the past. While recognizing
368 the inevitability of the use of force in tackling the recent terrorist threat and instability in Mali, military answer
369 cannot be an effective long-term strategy or solution to the problem in northern Mali. The fight for peace
370 cannot be won through war. The solution to the recurrent rebellion in the region lies in recognizing the fact that
371 the Tuaregs have legitimate political, socioeconomic, security, environmental, humanitarian and human rights
372 grievances that must be addressed.

373 The problem of the Tuareg people in Mali is not about religious extremism or terrorism. Indeed, it was to
374 the credit of the Tuaregs whose way of life and culture is at variance with the extremist Jihadist groups and
375 who promptly denounced terrorism that led to the successful isolation and consequent ejection of AQIM and its
376 allied forces from the northern region. The challenges facing the Tuaregs stem from the long term insensitivity
377 of the Malian Central Government to the plights of its people in the northern region of the country. It is a
378 question of protracted economic inequality, extreme marginalization, and total exclusion from the management
379 of their own local affairs, abject poverty, gross underdevelopment and infrastructural deficit among others. A
380 problem exacerbated by extreme and unfavourable climatic condition leading to environmental degradation, food
381 shortages, malnutrition and displacement.

382 It was this consistent neglect and marginalization of the Tuareg by its own government that have made the
383 northern region of the country a magnet for foreign Islamist fighters like AQIM and an ideal environment in
384 which violent extremist strive, illicit arms and ammunition are proliferated and a place of abode for mercenaries
385 and all manners of transnational organized criminal gangs.

386 In the absence of concerted, deliberate and sincere efforts to addressing the age-long and deep rooted challenges
387 facing the Tuaregs in ways that would reverse the threat that plagues the people, ameliorate the impact of the
388 negative climatic condition in the region and preserve their way of life and culture, the Tuareg rebellion will
389 continue to resurrect from time to time.

390 10 Notes

391 1 2

¹Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM): Terrorist Networks Infiltrate Northern Mali

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Figure 1: Figure 1 :

PAN-SAHEL INITIATIVE

INTRINSIC FORCES



7

Figure 2:

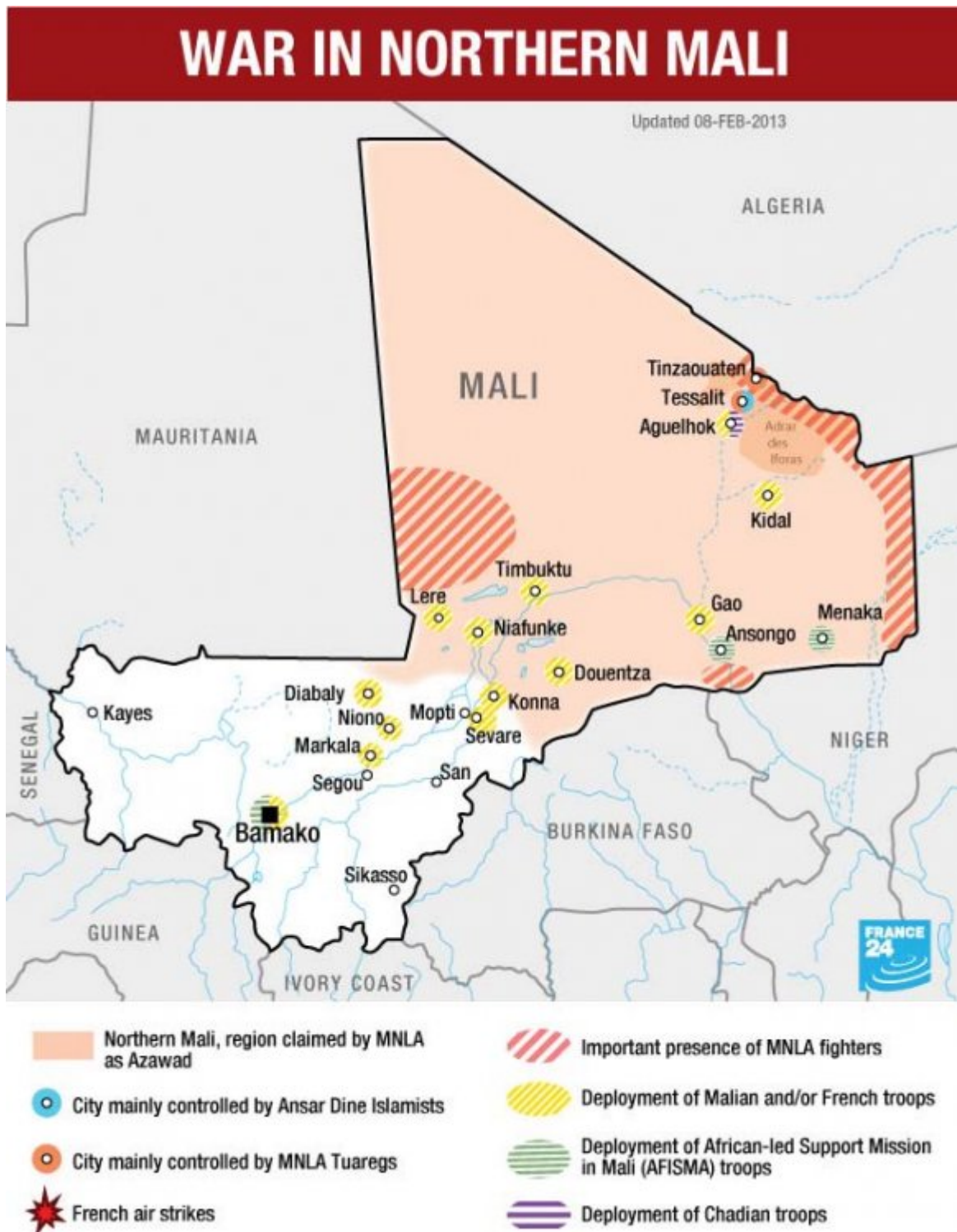


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