

**CONFLICT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION  
IN THE SAHEL:  
THE TUAREG INSURGENCY IN MALI**

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## FOREWORD

Since 1990, the United States and other developed nations have committed substantial diplomatic, economic, and military resources to resolve extreme intra-state conflicts. The world has found that the hatreds behind the conflicts often are very difficult to suppress—and even harder to dissipate. It also has discovered that military interventions alone rarely attenuate the underlying problems that provoked the violence. One result has been a growing worldwide literature on mechanisms to anticipate intra-state conflict and on measures which may preclude the necessity for expensive military interventions.

But models and formulae are problematic in the analysis of conflict. Human culture is so complex that it is difficult to identify—let alone “control for”—all of the variables. History rarely “reproduces the experiment.” The analyst often is left with the sad role of explaining why problems of conflict were not foreseen, despite the best of resources and intentions. And military force continues to play a key role in intra-state conflict resolution, though often with less than satisfactory results.

When a society faced with a situation of severe internal conflict finds an internal solution which does not require outside intervention, that is of keen interest. If the society can do it in a way that preserves ongoing processes of political and economic reform, that is remarkable. If the society employs its military establishment as a key instrument in its processes of national reconciliation, that achievement is worthy of serious study.

In this paper, Lieutenant Colonel Kalifa Keita describes how his country—the Republic of Mali—did all of these. I can only echo his words, “truly, this is a story for our times.”

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

LIEUTENANT COLONEL KALIFA KEITA, Army of the Republic of Mali, currently is a student at the the U.S. Army War College. He entered commissioned service in 1975, serving for most of his career in Armor leadership positions in Mali. His previous education includes a B.S. degree from the Military Academy of Mali, military specialty training in the former Soviet Union, and the U.S. Army Armor School. He is a graduate of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. Lieutenant Colonel Keita has commanded at the level of platoon, company, battalion, and military region. In 1989 and 1990, he served as mayor of the largest suburb (commune) of Bamako—Mali's capital. His combat experience includes service in the Mali-Burkina War (1985-86) where his performance earned him advanced promotion and the Medal of Military Value. His role during the Tuareg Rebellion in northern Mali involved both military and civil leadership. From 1994 to 1997, he commanded Mali's 5th Military Region (the area around the historic city of Timbuktu). In that capacity, he was deeply involved in the activities which ended a festering rebellion in his country, and brought about a remarkable national reconciliation. His exceptional service earned him advanced promotion to Lieutenant Colonel and the prestigious award of *Chevalier de l'Ordre National*.

# **CONFLICT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE SAHEL: THE TUAREG INSURGENCY IN MALI**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Extreme ethnic violence has been a sordid feature of the post-Cold War world. The discontent underlying the violence sometimes flares into insurgency, threatening the cohesion of the state. Typically, primordial hatreds embedded in ethnic history erode a society's commitment to democracy and human rights. However, recent history offers examples of some states which resolved severe ethnic conflict without a bloodbath and without a halt to ongoing processes of political reform. The West African nation of Mali is one such state.

June 27, 1990, is a significant date in the recent history of Mali. It marks the beginning of what Malians call "The Second Tuareg Rebellion." The first had been staged against the post-colonial Malian government in 1963. The national government had suppressed that rebellion with harsh coercive measures, and the Tuaregs continued to nurture grievances.

The second Tuareg rebellion coincided in the early 1990s with turbulent political developments in Malian society as a whole. It soon was clear that Mali's stability and progress were contingent on ending the insurgency. This, in turn, required a solution to Tuareg grievances.

By the mid-1990s, Mali apparently had found a solution. Though by no means easy, or assured, that solution may provide useful insights into conflict resolution in the region as a whole. This study describes the nature of the Malian solution and indicates the reasons for its success to date.

More specifically, this study considers the Tuareg rebellion from the perspective of a senior Malian military officer who lived the events. It describes a conflict little known and poorly reported outside of West Africa. It emphasizes the trauma of conflict in developing societies and the excruciatingly difficult political and economic choices faced by their leaders. It highlights the appropriate role of the international community in resolving such conflicts. Finally, it illustrates that resolution of intra-state conflict in Africa requires intensive efforts to secure the willing cooperation of local communities with military and civil government agencies.

## **COUNTRY BACKGROUND**

Mali bears the name of one of the great precolonial Sahelian empires.<sup>1</sup> At its height in the 14th century, ancient Mali stretched from the central Sahara to the Atlantic Ocean, an area four times larger than modern France. The empire's great cities—Timbuktu and Jenne—were renowned in the Islamic world for wealth and scholarship. However, ancient Mali ultimately fractured into a number of successor states.<sup>2</sup>

In the late 19th century, France imposed its colonial control over most of West Africa.<sup>3</sup> The French subsequently defined the frontiers of their possessions, resulting in the borders now dividing the independent francophone countries of the subregion.<sup>4</sup> Though much smaller than the ancient empire, the “Mali” which emerged from French colonialism in 1960 nonetheless inherited a very large land area—over twice the size of modern France.<sup>5</sup> (See Figure 1.)

Mali's post-independence history has been traumatic. European colonialism had resulted in very limited development of the country. Independence found the vast majority of Mali's people as subsistence farmers or pastoral nomads. Life expectancy did not exceed 45 years. Access to modern medicine and modern education was restricted to a

# The Republic of Mali



**Figure 1.**

small minority, and by the end of the colonial era, the most promising Malian students were emigrating to Europe. Infrastructure remained poorly developed. The country had a small industrial sector and a weak export economy, resulting in very limited economic opportunity. Ironically, the French colonial state had left a comparatively large indigenous civil service—larger than the new state could easily afford, yet too powerful to reduce.

The first leader of newly independent Mali, Modibo Keita, endeavored to modernize and develop his country through an authoritarian regime of scientific socialism, pursuing a radical foreign policy and seeking East Bloc assistance. The Keita regime was able to crush a first rebellion by its restless Tuaregs in the early 1960s. But by the end of the decade, the impoverished country was bankrupt and destitute, and Keita turned to the West (particularly France) for assistance.<sup>6</sup> However, in 1968, before Keita's new direction bore any fruit, his regime was overthrown by a group of 14 frustrated young army officers led by Lieutenant (later General) Moussa Traore.<sup>7</sup>

After 1968, the new military government of Moussa Traore attempted to turn the country more explicitly toward the West and toward free-market economic reform.<sup>8</sup> However, foreign investment was minimal, and the region soon was afflicted by severe drought. National infrastructural development was very slow and uneven. Mali's government was not able to reduce the size of an increasingly bloated civil service or privatize the economically inefficient but politically potent public economic sector, resulting in increasing national debt. Meanwhile, birth rates remained high, and Mali was unable to provide meaningful employment to its expanding population. During the 1970s and 1980s, venality and graft among government officials became increasingly evident. An economically and politically vulnerable Mali faced a second Tuareg rebellion in 1990.

In 1991, public dissatisfaction with the economy, social conditions, and government policies boiled over, provoking a violent government response and popular uprising.<sup>9</sup> By now, the country had just embarked on a tenuous peace that had ended the civil war with the Tuareg in the north.

A new national leadership quickly emerged calling itself the "Committee of Transition for the Safety of the People." A prominent leader in the committee was Malian Army Lieutenant Colonel Amadou Toumany Toure, described by



one grateful citizen as “Zorro without the cape.”<sup>10</sup> The new leadership initiated immediate political and economic reforms, convening a national conference to write a new constitution. Within a year, Mali held an election which brought a former opposition figure—Alpha Oumar Konare—to power.

Konare continued to pursue an ambitious reform agenda. He was returned to power in a second national election in 1997. On an official visit to the United States in late 1997, Konare called attention to the accomplishments of his government, characterizing Mali as stable, democratic, and committed to economic reform.<sup>11</sup> His assessment was not disputed.

Since 1992, Mali has been widely viewed as a promising new multi-party democracy.<sup>12</sup> This is all the more remarkable since Mali’s political transformation occurred during a time of civil war and crisis. However, the country continues to suffer from a fragile economy, substantial socio-political tensions, and daunting problems left over from the conflicts of the past.<sup>13</sup>

Challenges to development in Mali spring from its ecology and ethnography as well as its political history. Mali’s climate spans the transition zone between arid Sahelian savannah and the Sahara desert itself. The region is subject to severe periodic drought.

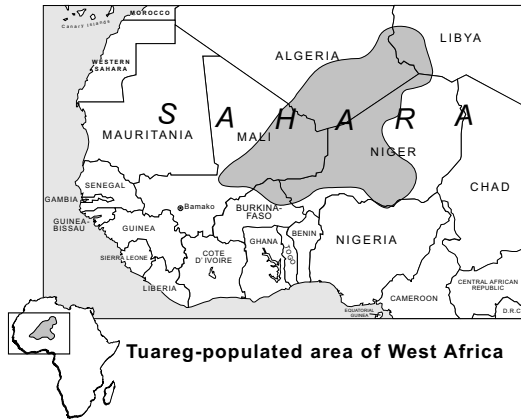
Mali is ethnically diverse. Ethnologists classify its 9.7 million people into five or six separate ethno-linguistic groupings, with many distinct peoples and several dozen different languages.<sup>14</sup> The most important aspect of Mali’s cultural diversity is socio-economic: the difference between the townsfolk, crop farmers, and settled villagers in the south—about 80 percent of the population—and the nomadic pastoralists of the north. The pastoralists include Tuareg peoples. Although Tuaregs alone comprise less than 10 percent of Mali’s total population, they make up much of the population in the sparsely populated northern regions of the country.

Despite its ethnic diversity, Mali generally has avoided the ethnic strife which has plagued some other African states.<sup>15</sup> Except for the Tuaregs, Mali's differing peoples have cooperated amicably in public and private sector activities. However, as in most African countries, ethnically-based tensions are part of the social fabric, and no national government can afford to alienate ethnic blocs. As a result, Mali's senior leaders have endeavored to avoid the appearance of ethnic favoritism while tolerating a considerable amount of "ethnic patronage."<sup>16</sup> However, when it came to infrastructural development, Mali's former governments emphasized the more populated, economically viable southern regions of the country. Until the 1990s, the sparsely populated northern desert regions benefited far less than other parts.

## **WHO ARE THE TUAREGS?**

The most substantial challenge to Mali's stability since independence has been insurgency by Tuareg peoples. To understand this threat, it is necessary to delve briefly into the history and ethnography of this unique group.<sup>17</sup>

Tuaregs, sometimes called the "Blue Men of the Desert" because of the indigo dye which colors their traditional flowing garments, are one of a number of pastoral desert peoples of North Africa. The Tuareg language (Tamasheq) and other cultural features indicate that Tuaregs are ethnically related to the Berbers of the Mediterranean littoral. But unlike the settled, agricultural Berbers, Tuaregs have a nomadic pastoral culture well-adapted to the harsh climate of the Sahara desert. Estimates of the total number of Tuareg vary, but most suggest several million. Mali alone contains about 621,000. Tuareg are most numerous in the West African countries of Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso. (See Figure 2.) Smaller numbers live in Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, and other countries of North Africa. Like their neighbors, the Tuaregs are Islamic in religion. However, their practice of Islam contains many



**Figure 2.**

unorthodox features probably inherited from a pre-Islamic past.<sup>18</sup>

Though they have a common language and recognize a shared ethnicity, Tuaregs are divided by tribe and clan. Tuareg society also is highly stratified by caste, including well-defined categories of nobles, freemen, and slaves.<sup>19</sup> In traditional Tuareg society, nobles and freemen depended on their slaves for manual labor. Tuareg histories suggest that until the advent of the colonial era, tribes and clans constantly were engaged in shifting coalitions of alliance and hostility as they competed with each other (and with neighboring peoples) for scarce water, grazing, and control of the trans-saharan trade routes.<sup>20</sup>

Tuaregs were once renowned as desert raiders, traders, and warriors. While they only occasionally have coalesced into sedentary state structures (as in the Sultanate of Air around Agadez in Niger), their proclivity (in autonomous groups) for slave raiding, banditry, and smuggling did not endear them to the authorities of other Sahelian societies. Typical Tuaregs were wide-ranging nomads whose wealth in livestock provided material security in a difficult environment. They generally have considered themselves superior to their darker-skinned agricultural neighbors on the desert's southern edge. Tuareg tradition still winks at

smuggling and banditry, a fact that does little to recommend Tuaregs to modern state authorities.

The French defeated and subdued Tuareg groups during the consolidation of their West African empire in the late 19th century. However, Tuareg society proved to be highly resilient and resistant to change during the colonial era, and seemed largely impervious to enculturation by colonial authorities.<sup>21</sup> Tuareg pastoralists also tended to ignore European colonial borders in their pursuit of a traditional nomadic lifestyle, moving from one colony to another, and the French never were able to assimilate large numbers of them into the emerging social fabric of colonial life.<sup>22</sup>

Tuaregs have maintained a complex, symbiotic relationship with sedentary agricultural peoples. The Tuaregs traditionally did not engage in crop agriculture, depending on the farmers for cereals such as millet, the traditional staple in the region.<sup>23</sup> Some Tuaregs (and other Sahelian pastoral peoples) also have depended upon seasonal access to the harvested fields of farmers. (The stubble left from the harvested grain sustains livestock during dry times of the year when other grazing is no longer available.)

Prior to the colonial era, the warlike Tuaregs were able to exact “taxes” in kind from the farmers who lived along the Niger River. French colonial authorities, in a generally successful effort to maintain peace with Tuareg groups, did not dispute Tuareg claims to land ownership or the right to exact taxes in kind from the sedentary farming peoples. This issue ultimately would poison relations between Tuaregs and their neighbors.

When independence came to the countries of West Africa in the 1960s, the bulk of the Tuareg communities remained outside the web of political relationships and material benefits of the new states. Tuaregs tended to view the new African leadership of their countries with resentment and contempt. For their part, the new national leaders tended to view Tuaregs as economically and socially regressive, and

their subsistence pastoralism as an obstacle to national development.<sup>24</sup> The new Malian government was not sympathetic to the traditional relations of production between Tuaregs and their agricultural neighbors, viewing the Tuareg demand for “taxes” as simple extortion. Land ownership remained an issue of bitter dispute: the new government considered that land belonged to those who tilled it.

Western media and literature show an occasional fascination for the Tuaregs and have tended to portray them in quaint and romantic terms.<sup>25</sup> This particularly is true of the French media. However, contemporary West Africans hold a distinctly different stereotype. They find distasteful the rigid caste system of the traditional Tuareg, with its reliance on dark-skinned slaves (the *Bellah* or so-called “black Tuareg”) for manual labor. West Africans tend to view the Tuaregs as lazy, prone to violence and criminality, opportunistic, ethnically chauvinistic, and unpatriotic. These views have been reinforced by Tuareg insurgencies in Mali and Niger.<sup>26</sup>

## **THE FIRST TUAREG REBELLION IN MALI**

Like other African peoples, Tuaregs were affected by “the winds of change” blowing through Africa in the 1950s, and were motivated to imagine a post-colonial dispensation. Many Tuaregs in Mali (and neighboring countries) had begun to dream of an independent state—“Azawad”—comprised of Tuareg-populated territory in northern Mali, northern Niger, and southern Algeria.<sup>27</sup> However, Tuaregs’ primary loyalties were directed to their local communities. Tuaregs as a group have never demonstrated a unified political (or military) agenda.

The years immediately following national independence in 1960 were filled with disappointment for all Malian citizens. The new national government could not meet the high expectations for dramatic improvement in conditions of life. Administrative inexperience combined with

unworkable social and economic policies proved disastrous to Mali's economy and to the people's civil liberties. Added to the general misery was a conviction among the Tuaregs that they were singled out for particular discrimination, and were more neglected than others in the distribution of state benefits.

Tuaregs, of course, wanted benefits and opportunity, but they did not relish state supervision of their life style. They observed that most of the senior leadership of post-colonial Mali were drawn from the southern ethnic groups who were not sympathetic to the pastoral culture of the northern desert nomads. Tuaregs also were alarmed by the "land reform" that threatened their privileged access to agricultural products.<sup>28</sup> Some of the more volatile Tuareg leaders began to suspect that the new national elite was intent on destroying Tuareg culture under the guise of "modernization."

The first Tuareg rebellion began in northern Mali in early 1962 with small, "hit and run" raids against government targets. The attacks escalated in size and destructiveness through 1963, resulting in very unsettled conditions in the Tuareg-populated north. However, the Tuareg attacks did not reflect a unified leadership, a well-coordinated strategy or clear evidence of a coherent strategic vision. The insurgents generally depended on their camels for transportation and were equipped mainly with unsophisticated and rather old small arms. They also failed to mobilize the Tuareg community as a whole. While estimates of their numbers are highly speculative, it is unlikely that rebel combatants ever numbered more than about 1,500.

Still, the government reacted quickly and harshly. Mali's army, well-motivated and now well-equipped with new Soviet weapons, conducted vigorous counterinsurgency operations. By the end of 1964, the government's strong-arm methods had crushed the rebellion. It then placed the Tuareg-populated northern regions under a repressive

military administration.<sup>29</sup> Many of Mali's Tuareg fled as refugees to neighboring countries.

While the government had succeeded in ending the rebellion, its coercive measures alienated many Tuaregs who had not supported the insurgents. Atrocities and human rights abuses on both sides contributed to a climate of fear and distrust in the north. And while the government subsequently announced a number of programs to improve local infrastructure and economic opportunity, it lacked the resources to follow through on most of them.<sup>30</sup> As a result, Tuareg grievances remained largely unaddressed, and a seething resentment continued in many Tuareg communities after 1964. Clearly, the problem of instability in the north had simply been deferred, not resolved.

It is easy to criticize the Malian government for seeking a military solution to a social problem, but such criticism should be tempered by an appreciation for the political realities of the time. Mali in 1962 had been an independent country for only 2 years, and its leaders had legitimate fears about its capacity to cohere in the face of secessionist threats. The cultural distinctiveness of the Tuaregs, and their perceived lack of commitment to the new nation, alienated both the government and their non-Tuareg neighbors. Too, the former French colonial authorities and Mali's new Soviet patrons were noted for dealing harshly with threats to the state; neither provided Mali's leaders with the most effective models for conflict resolution and national reconciliation.

Nor was the rest of the international community of much help. In 1963 and 1964, the world was much more concerned about strife in the Congo and in Cyprus than about obscure insurgencies elsewhere in Africa, and no community of nations offered credible assistance to the Malians in resolving their internal problems. The large community of humanitarian nongovernmental organizations, so prominent in the 1990s, simply did not exist in the early 1960s.

## THE SECOND TUAREG REBELLION

The 1970s and 1980s brought many changes in West Africa. Few communities were affected as profoundly as the various Sahelian nomadic groups.

The region suffered devastating drought between 1968 and 1974, and then again in 1980 and 1985. This undermined the pastoral livelihood of nomadic peoples in the Sahelian states, killing a very high proportion of the livestock and forcing many of the nomads to find refuge in squalid refugee camps or in urban areas in the south, where their pastoral skills were of little economic value. The proud, self-reliant Tuaregs generally were not attracted by manual labor and suffered an excruciating humiliation as mendicants among those they considered their social inferiors.<sup>31</sup> Another flood of Tuareg refugees poured into neighboring countries.

Outside interest groups have accused the government of Mali of callous disregard for the plight of the Tuareg in the drought of the early 1970s, arguing that Malian officials withheld food relief in order to destroy the Tuaregs or drive them out of Mali.<sup>32</sup> Tuaregs themselves believed this to be the case. However, Mali's economy in this period remained very weak, a condition heightened by the drought. Whether or not relief was deliberately withheld, Mali's resources were very limited and the options of the national government were severely constrained.<sup>33</sup>

By the time of the drought in 1985, the international community was far more sensitive to the needs of the Sahelian states, and Mali received massive relief aid. During the period, the state undertook significant relief efforts among the northern nomads, including the Tuareg.<sup>34</sup>

By the end of the 1970s, the 20th century had begun to catch up with all African societies—even those isolated by the vast wastes of the Sahara. Tuareg encountered new social and economic challenges, and were exposed to the rapid changes occurring elsewhere in the region.<sup>35</sup>



Not surprisingly, some Tuaregs were more resistant to change than others, but all Tuareg communities experienced cognitive dissonance and internal tensions. This began to be manifested in some intergenerational conflict: impatient young men were no longer content to obey traditional community elders. Uncontrollable, rapid change is destabilizing for any society, and this one was no exception.<sup>36</sup>

The formerly cohesive, self-reliant Tuareg societies began to fracture. Government counterinsurgency operations in the early 1960s had shattered many communities, destroying livestock—the traditional wealth—and sending thousands of newly impoverished peoples to the refuge of neighboring states, or to the towns in the south, where they formed an indigent minority. Drought had been even more destructive, making it impossible for many remaining communities to pursue their traditional livelihood.<sup>37</sup> Commercial crop agriculture exacted still another toll on Tuareg economic options.

Since the 1960s, many of the Tuareg young men from the entire subregion had been attracted to the richer North African states, particularly Libya. Some were enticed by the wage labor in the oil industry, others (later) by Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi's military forces. Qadhafi incorporated some Tuareg volunteers into his regular military forces. Others, he inducted into a Libyan-sponsored "Islamic Legion" from which he subsequently dispatched Islamic militants to Lebanon, Palestine, and Afghanistan. By the mid 1980s, some of Qadhafi's Tuareg volunteers had acquired considerable combat experience in the various conflicts of the Near East and South Asia.<sup>38</sup>

Libya itself suffered a series of reverses in the mid 1980s. In 1985, world oil prices collapsed. Libya's oil industry laid off a large proportion of its workforce, including hundreds of Tuaregs. Many returned to their home communities, unemployed and resentful. In 1986, Libya's mercurial leader Qadhafi tried to annex neighboring Chad by an

outright military invasion. The Chadians, with French assistance, crushed Libyan forces in northern Chad, resulting in another exodus of Tuaregs—this time from Qadhafi's military forces.

The dissolution of the Libyan-financed Islamic Legion in the late 1980s and the Soviet evacuation of Afghanistan in 1989 resulted in the return of additional young male Tuaregs to their home areas. Thus, by the end of the 1980s, Tuareg communities throughout the Sahel had numbers of unemployed and restless young men with considerable military experience. Violence and banditry in northern Mali began to increase.

Circumstantial evidence suggests that in the 1980s, Libya endeavored to destabilize the governments of Mali and Niger by providing arms, training, and advice to Tuareg dissidents.<sup>39</sup> By this time, the conflicts in Western Sahara and Chad had flooded the region with small arms.<sup>40</sup>

The original grievances of Mali's Tuaregs in the early 1960s had never completely disappeared. These were rooted in a Tuareg conviction that the national government was unresponsive and hostile. The grievances were exacerbated by the highly coercive counterinsurgency campaign during the first Tuareg rebellion, and by the subsequent harsh military administration of northern Mali. Many Tuaregs still distrusted and feared their non-Tuareg neighbors. Fears of cultural genocide stemmed also from government handling of famine relief. Like other Malians, Tuaregs increasingly were dissatisfied with conditions of life in the country at the end of the 1980s, and blamed the government for their own (and for Mali's) many ills.

The general dissatisfaction in Mali with the Traore government resulted, as we have seen, in a coup in 1991. However, prior to the coup, the Tuaregs of northern Mali launched their second rebellion (in June 1990). As in the first rebellion, the Tuaregs were by no means united in one insurgent force. In 1990, they comprised four major movements and a number of minor ones.<sup>41</sup> This time,

however, they were much better organized and equipped. Tuareg combatants were mounted on light vehicles and seemed to have an unlimited supply of modern Soviet small arms. They also were much more effective in destroying government facilities and eluding government pursuit, finding apparent safe haven in neighboring countries.<sup>42</sup>

While the bulk of the rebels apparently were Tuaregs, by no means all of them were. Some Bedouin Arabs and Maurs were part of one or another of the various rebel groups. Small numbers of the rebels came from other Malian groups, including Bellahs. Many communities in the north—Tuareg and non-Tuareg—did not support the rebels. Nor were rebel forces ever very large: at most, the various groups probably totalled no more than several thousand combatants at any one time. However, in the vast, sparsely populated regions of northern Mali, a group of a few dozen highly mobile rebels, utilizing the element of surprise, could cause considerable damage to lightly defended government facilities and civilian communities. In fact, it proved difficult to differentiate between insurgency and sheer banditry.<sup>43</sup>

Initially, the government reacted to the new Tuareg rebellion by declaring a state of emergency in the north and attempting to duplicate the strong-arm counterinsurgency measures of the 1960s, including very destructive attacks on Tuareg communities. This featured encouragement of the non-Tuareg population in the region to attack Tuareg communities. However, the violence only escalated.

While no external patron was providing the Malian government with significant financial or military assistance, by this point Tuareg rebels clearly had external sources of support. The Army and the other security forces (*Gendarmerie* and National Guard) began to sustain significant casualties. The rebellion compounded the political and economic problems of the state: the regime of Malian President Traore already faced severe financial constraints, and a growing domestic opposition.<sup>44</sup>

Traore, to his great credit, recognized very early that he could not achieve a military solution to the rebellion. He also recognized that an end to the immediate violence would require communication with Tuareg leaders and a conflict reconciliation process involving other interested countries in the region. He understood that a permanent peace would require a regional solution and a genuine attenuation of Tuareg grievances. Traore finally accepted offers of mediation by his Algerian neighbors. On January 6, 1991, government and Tuareg military leaders, after a series of discussions, signed the Accords of Tamanrasset (in the Algerian town of the same name). Mali had embarked on a new era.

## **THE CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS**

### **The Internal Agreements.**

The Accords of Tamanrasset formed a remarkable agreement that addressed (at least in part) most of the pressing issues that provoked the insurgency.<sup>45</sup> The specific provisions included:<sup>46</sup>

- A cease-fire and exchange of prisoners.
- Withdrawal of insurgent forces to cantonments.
- Reduction of the Army presence in the north, especially Kidal.
- Disengagement of the Army from civil administration in the north.
- Elimination of selected military posts (considered threatening by the Tuareg communities).
- Integration of insurgent combatants into the Malian army at ranks to be determined.

- An acceleration of ongoing processes of administrative decentralization in Mali.
- A guarantee that a fixed proportion of Mali's national infrastructural investment funding (47.3 percent) would be devoted to the north (Regions 6, 7, and 8).

While the Accords were a significant achievement for both sides, Tamanrasset was only a beginning (though a promising one). Considerable distrust remained on both sides, and not all the Tuareg combatants had been represented at the conference table. The level of violence in the north subsided only gradually, with many accusations (on both sides) of failure to respect the cease-fire. However, the key leaders on both sides demonstrated patience and vision, and continued to work toward a final settlement. Of great significance was the fact that, despite the change in Malian government as a result of the *coup d'état* in March 1991 and the national election of 1992, all parties affirmed the provisions of the Accords of Tamanrasset.

As a result of the continued consultations within Mali, leaders from all communities signed the National Pact in Mali's capital, Bamako, on April 11, 1992. This was a milestone achievement. It addressed a very wide range of issues, from integration of former insurgents into the Malian Army and government, to the creation of a hierarchy of local and regional councils with a real devolution of power, to the allocation of resources for national development, to the creation of various commissions to oversee implementation of the pact. In short, the National Pact was a carefully-wrought agreement resulting from a genuine national debate and national consensus.

One of the most significant results of the Tamanrasset Accords was the formation of temporary security forces to garrison the north. These forces contained a fixed percentage of Malian Army and rebel combatants. It was both an important confidence-building measure for both

sides and an initial mechanism to reduce the problem of unemployed, armed Tuareg youths.

The National Pact reaffirmed that a most urgent (though by no means only) priority was neutralization of the armed threat facing both sides. A key problem was posed by the existence of Tuareg combatants. Armed rebels were unacceptable to the government, obviously, because the Tuareg combatants **were** the security threat. But solving the problem also was important to the Tuaregs because it would provide the restless young men with a meaningful livelihood while at the same time protecting the Tuareg communities. The obvious answer was to induct Tuareg combatants into the Malian Army, police, and civil administration. Both sides clearly understood the importance of the issue. The good faith of both would be tested on the success of this effort. As of early 1998, some 3000 Tuareg combatants—probably more than ever were in the field as rebels at any one time—have been integrated into the various Malian security forces and civil service. (See Appendices A and B for details.)<sup>47</sup>

The early phase of the integration was difficult—as exemplified by a mutiny in 1994 in which recently integrated Tuareg combatants murdered their new comrades. At first there was a high level of suspicion on the part of both groups. Tuareg combatants did not have the formal education of their Malian Army counterparts—which undermined their credibility in the eyes of their fellow soldiers. Some could not adapt to the life of the regular military and left the service. However, over time, former Tuareg rebels adapted to the conditions of service and have been accepted by their non-Tuareg fellow soldiers.<sup>48</sup> Tuaregs seem to be progressing in rank and responsibility in the military (and other agencies of the state).

A second key issue was the repatriation of refugees, both those displaced within Mali itself and the thousands of Tuaregs who had fled to neighboring countries, especially

Algeria and Mauritania.<sup>49</sup> This was not simply a matter of transporting displaced peoples to their original homes. Those homes and livelihoods largely had been destroyed. Refugees were fearful of the dangers they would face upon their return and uncertain about their economic prospects. Clearly, the government would have to restore both the confidence of the refugees and their ability to sustain themselves. This, too, the government clearly recognized. Between 1968 and 1990, Mali had spent only about 17 percent of its infrastructural investments in the northern regions. Between 1991 and 1993, it spent about 48 percent of these investments in that area.<sup>50</sup>

The government of Mali also encouraged nongovernmental organizations and humanitarian relief organizations to assist in the resettlement and rehabilitation efforts.<sup>51</sup> Significantly, the government endeavored to provide additional training to its army, turning to the Red Cross and various European donors for instruction in professional ethics and standards of behavior toward noncombatants. This training coincided with the advancement to senior positions of well-educated, progressive young Malian officers trained in western Europe and the United States.<sup>52</sup>

A third important feature of the new peace was assurances to the Tuareg that their culture and sensitivities would be respected, and that they would be valued as citizens of Mali. This was accomplished by integration of Tuareg into the armed forces, police, and civil administration. It was facilitated by ongoing political reform which created a hierarchy of councils with clearly defined authority. This resulted, by the early 1990s, in a significant decentralization of power and gave local communities (including Tuareg) considerably more say in issues of local interest.<sup>53</sup> However, these measures alone could not have resolved the most pervasive and intractable problem: the climate of fear in the north.

## Changing the Climate of Fear.

By the end of 1992, the Tuareg communities in Mali had been devastated by violence and by pervasive, continuing fear of reprisals. Thousands of Tuaregs had fled the country. Those that remained were deeply suspicious both of the Malian government (and especially of its Army) and of their non-Tuareg neighbors. For its part, the Army and many of the non-Tuareg peoples in northern Mali viewed Tuareg communities as breeding-grounds for violent criminals and rebels. The civilian communities lived in terror of attack by Tuareg “bandits.” These mutual suspicions made the prospects for permanent peace very tenuous.

During the period of the rebellion, many of the farming communities formed self-defense militia units for protection against such attacks. Some, but not all, were provided arms by the various security forces of the Malian government.<sup>54</sup> After 1994, these communities still feared Tuareg attack, but now were increasingly worried by apparent government accommodation of the former rebels, and jealous of the relief and economic support being supplied to the Tuareg communities. As a result, many of the Songhoi-speaking self-defense units coalesced in 1994 into a larger political organization, the Malian Patriotic Movement “*Ganda Koi*.”<sup>55</sup> Fearing for the safety of their families, some Malian army personnel had even deserted in the early 1990s to join the *Ganda Koi*. Not surprisingly, this organization soon was accused of unprovoked attacks against Tuaregs, contributing to the unsettled conditions in the north.

By 1995, the government had been able to suppress the violent activity of the *Ganda Koi*, although the organization itself still remained in nascent form. But the *Ganda Koi* struggle highlighted the economic dimensions of the problem in the north: communities were fighting for scarce resources and jealously insisting that others not be preferred. The struggle was not so much an ethnic or racial issue as an economic one.



The integration of Tuareg combatants into a temporary military force (and, later, into the Army, police, and civil service) was intended as a confidence-building measure. However, in 1994, former rebels who had been integrated into the Army mutinied in Tonka and Kharous, killing about a dozen of their Malian Army comrades. This act of egregious indiscipline was very difficult for the Army to tolerate, and came very close to reigniting the conflict. However, many former rebels remained in the Malian Army throughout this period, loyally carrying out the orders of their non-Tuareg leaders, even in operations against rebel co-ethnics. Intra-service tensions surrounding the recently integrated rebels reached a peak in 1994 but abated quickly (and, seemingly permanently) after that time.<sup>56</sup>

By 1994, the senior civil and military leadership in Mali was strongly committed to solving the “Tuareg problem”—and doing it in a way that would end the cycle of violence and fear. The key element in this process—for good or ill—would have to be the Army. And that organization was undergoing a slow but ultimately dramatic transformation.

The government turned to a rising cadre of younger field-grade officers, more progressive and broadly educated than many of their predecessors, to undertake a two-pronged approach. A first step was to use the Army itself in efforts to win the confidence of the Tuaregs. Second, and more difficult, was to change the manner in which the Army characteristically dealt with security problems in the north.

To win Tuareg confidence, the Army instituted recurring consultations between senior military officers and Tuareg community leaders. These meetings provided *fora* to discuss grievances, address allegations of criminal activity, and examine accusations of human rights abuses. At the same time, the Army became heavily involved in relief efforts, providing foodstuffs (rice, millet, tea, sugar, and dates) to needy communities, and began to offer free medical services to nomad communities. The Army also organized regular meetings between Army units and Tuareg commun-

ities, in which the Tuaregs were encouraged to share and explain their arts, dances, singing, and other unique cultural features. This demonstrated to the Tuaregs that the Army valued their traditional culture, but also generated some appreciation for the Tuaregs within the rank and file of the Army itself.

It is possible to overrate the effectiveness of these measures. At the outset, the climate of distrust and suspicion was very strong. However, over the course of about 5 years, these measures had demonstrably positive effects. Most of the Tuareg communities discarded their fear of the Malian Army.

The second Malian approach was perhaps the most difficult: that of changing Army attitudes toward the Tuareg. The long, bitter history of insurgency and counterinsurgency had generated a legacy of hatred for the Army among the Tuaregs, but also a hatred for the Tuaregs among many military personnel. The mutiny in 1994 simply reaffirmed the soldiers' stereotype of Tuaregs as "violent, unreasonable, unpatriotic opportunists." These attitudes were very difficult to overcome.

To address this problem, the Army held a recurring series of workshops and consultations for soldiers of all ranks. The Malians invited the Red Cross and several other organizations to organize (or assist) in a substantial portion of this training, concentrating on professional ethics, respect for human rights, laws of land warfare, and the role of the military in democratic societies.<sup>57</sup> The effort entailed some very hard work, and at first it was hard to see tangible results. However, attitudes in the Army were changing, slowly at first, more rapidly in the mid-1990s. By that point, the efforts had been very successful: accusations of human rights abuses committed by Malian government personnel had declined to a very low level.

By the early 1990s, the Malian military leadership itself had undergone significant change. Increasing numbers of Malian officers had obtained professional military

education in western military schools and staff colleges. Malian officers regularly participated in international conferences and seminars concerned with conflict resolution and peace operations. Mali was contributing regularly to international peace operations in locations like Liberia, Rwanda, Burundi, Angola, and Central African Republic. These experiences had significantly broadened the experience and perspectives of Mali's rising military leadership.

After 1992, the government endeavored to appoint progressive, culturally-sensitive officers to key positions in the north. This effort is exemplified by Major Hamidou Mariko, chief executive and military commander of Kidal from 1991 to 1994. Of Bambara ethnicity but married to a Tuareg woman and fluent in Tamasheq, this officer was able to use his affinal connections to communicate very effectively with Tuareg communities. He was not alone.

Tuareg smuggling across the northern borders had been one of many irritants to previous regimes in Mali. This had resulted in sporadic harassment by government border officials of Tuareg border crossers, provoking understandable resentment. After 1992, Mali's new leaders showed a concern for Tuareg sensitivities by incorporating Tuaregs into the police and the customs agencies and ordering officials along the borders with Mauritania, Algeria, and Niger to treat Tuareg merchants and travellers with more consideration.

The government of Mali ultimately was able to reassert its authority over the north, and over a population that was much more confident in the good faith of its government. While a certain amount of banditry remains endemic to the region, the resentments that provoked the Tuareg rebellion seem to have been largely attenuated.

## **The Role of External Actors.**

In resolving the Tuareg crisis, the government of Mali also was obliged to consider the interests of a wide range of external actors. For instance, at least some of the Tuareg insurgents enjoyed the backing of Libya's Muammar Qadhafi. Some had received assistance from the POLISARIO insurgents (based in Algeria and fighting the Moroccans for the independence of Western Sahara). Algeria and Libya had indigenous Tuareg communities. Sizable communities of Tuareg refugees from Mali lived in Mauritania and Algeria. Thus, Libya, Morocco, Algeria, and Mauritania had a direct interest in the Malian conflict. Tuaregs also were pursuing an insurgency against the government of neighboring Niger. This suggested that some violence would continue in both Mali and Niger as long as the insurgency continued in either.

Populations of African countries had begun to see the conflict as a struggle between the "white" Arab/Berber/Maur and black African peoples, leading to growing resentments that threatened to polarize the subregion along racial lines.<sup>58</sup> The government of Mali devoted considerable effort to consultations with other regional actors to resolve these issues.<sup>59</sup>

The conflict had repercussions overseas as well. Tuareg dissidents had maintained some contacts with co-religionists elsewhere in the Islamic world. They also had lobby groups in European capitals—particularly in France—to generate sympathy for their cause. Tuareg propaganda was assisted by sympathetic nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Mali was obliged to pursue diplomatic efforts to portray the government's side of the story. But more importantly, Mali simply lacked the financial resources for the reconstruction necessary to maintain the peace. Such resources would have to come from the developed world.

In time, Mali was able to obtain financial assistance for the express purpose of national reconstruction. Significant contributors included Algeria, Belgium, Canada, the European Union (Economic Community), France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Germany, the United States, the African Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank, and various United Nations agencies.<sup>60</sup> Despite the generosity of these external patrons, Mali never acquired sufficient resources to implement all that had been specified in the various agreements.<sup>61</sup> However, by the mid-1990s, Tuareg leaders seemed confident that the government was making a good-faith effort to honor its obligations. Though there was continued grumbling about slow infrastructural development, the issue clearly was not explosive.<sup>62</sup> Senior Malian government officials also were confident that the peace in the north is durable.<sup>63</sup>

## **THE IMPORTANT LESSONS**

Mali's experiences in two Tuareg rebellions contain a variety of lessons, some of which may be exclusive to this unique African subregion, but many of which can be of general application elsewhere in Africa and the world. It is important that the analyst of African conflicts be able to distinguish this difference.

Africa contains many pastoral societies. Some share with the Tuaregs a very similar cultural and ecological environment. However, few of these societies have a recent history like that of the Tuaregs or are spread over such a large number of different African countries. Few pastoral societies have suffered such a simultaneous combination of pressures: crushing defeat and repression in the wake of failed rebellions, devastating drought, and heavy recruitment of young men for Islamic struggles throughout the Near East. Hence the Tuareg motivation for insurgency probably has a number of unique features.

That said, the underlying problems and grievances are all too common. Tuaregs in Mali watched incredulously in the early 1960s as people they considered their social inferiors inherited high positions in the post-colonial state. Tuaregs themselves were seriously under-represented in the new civil administration and military establishment. They quickly concluded that they were being denied their due. This was exacerbated by (what Tuaregs perceived as) a government contempt for their culture and way of life, and a refusal to extend national development into Tuareg-populated areas. Whatever the justification for these Tuareg conclusions, Mali's senior decisionmakers clearly failed to respect Tuareg cultural sensitivities and convince the Tuaregs of their value as citizens.

When the Tuaregs launched their first rebellion, the government relied almost exclusively on a military solution to end the violence and maintain the peace, suppressing the rebellion with considerable brutality. The government then maintained a strict military control over the region, while failing to address the underlying grievances and newly produced hatreds. Tuaregs did not have effective mechanisms to communicate their concerns and desires to senior government authorities. What was needed was an enlightened administrative approach, strong efforts to bring Tuaregs into national institutions, decentralization of administration, assurances that all cultures would be respected, and at least some concerted infrastructural development in the north. What the Tuaregs received instead was repression.

The government cannot be blamed for the severe Sahelian drought of the 1970s and 1980s, nor for the gradual lure of modernization to Tuareg youth. However, both of these undermined traditional Tuareg culture, producing great tensions in Tuareg communities. As livestock died during the droughts, many Tuaregs fled the desert for humiliating life in relief camps. Younger Tuareg males emigrated in droves for adventure and material

benefits elsewhere. Traditionalists sought explanations for the fact that their revered way of life was unraveling, and their communities were dying. The government served as a convenient culprit. Every evidence of lack of government concern thus served to reinforce Tuareg suspicions.

The second Tuareg rebellion probably would not have occurred without the presence of a large number of unemployed young Tuareg men and a proliferation of weapons in the region. To be sure, Mali did not contribute to the ready availability of weapons—these came from wars and suppliers elsewhere. Young men with guns and no honest employment are a seriously destabilizing factor whether in the Sahel, South Africa, the Balkans, or the inner cities of the United States. But the absence of employment opportunity points to economic mismanagement and the weak economy of the country. Lack of economic opportunity is destabilizing.

The second Tuareg rebellion probably also would not have occurred without agitation from external sources—particularly Libya—and safe haven in countries such as Mauritania. Mali alone did not have sufficient leverage to preclude these developments. They point to the need for regional and multilateral solutions to the problems of rogue leaders who export clandestine violence. However, Qadhafi's agents would not have succeeded if conditions in Mali were not already conducive to insurgency.

In the wake of the second Tuareg rebellion, it is instructive to note how the Konare government has endeavored to deal with all of these various issues. First, Konare continued a national commitment to political and economic reform in the expectation that this ultimately would attenuate many of the sources of grievance in Mali. Part of that reform involved the decentralization of power, which provided local communities with much more say in their own affairs. Another part of that reform involved the reallocation of financial priorities in Mali, which channeled much more of the budget to development and relief activity

in the north, and to resettlement of refugees. At the same time, Konare's government endeavored to make the nomads in northern Mali feel more secure by reducing the government military presence, and by incorporating large numbers of former rebels into Mali's security forces and civil service. However, even more important were strenuous (and successful) national efforts to use the military as a key instrument in nonviolent conflict resolution in the north. Though the road hardly has been smooth, these efforts have resulted in a remarkable national reconciliation in Mali.

## **POSTSCRIPT**

Mali is very remote to the consciousness of the developed world, and Mali's senior leaders have modestly refrained from boasting about their recent political successes. Thus, citizens of the developed countries are much better acquainted with the tragedies in Liberia and central Africa than with the relative tranquility and social progress in Mali. But Mali's example is a cause for optimism.

The discussion begs several important questions. How durable is this peace? Have the Tuaregs renounced armed rebellion as a viable option? Is the military integration a success for the long term? God alone knows the answers to such questions. But in the author's opinion and personal experience, Mali's commitment to conflict resolution after 1992 has resulted in a much greater confidence in the government on the part of the northern nomads than at any time in the past. The lifestyle of the nomads is changing—it is unclear how much of their traditional culture will survive the vicissitudes of climate change, population increase, and modernization. Nor is it clear how well, or peacefully, the Tuaregs can accommodate such change. But the Tuaregs now exhibit much less tendency to blame the Malian government for the resulting social tensions.

The Tuareg insurgency brought about remarkable changes in Mali's security forces. Mali's leaders were obliged to examine carefully how to best use the military



instrument of national power—and proved willing to implement changes that made the Army as proficient at waging peace as waging war. This required a difficult cultural transition in the Army itself—but one in which a new generation of officers played the leading role. Resolving the Tuareg conflict has produced an army with a commitment to a high professional ethic, and an army which has become very proficient at serving the needs of a developing nation. Mali's recent travail seems to have strengthened rather than weakened its commitment to democracy.

This is one case in which ethnic trauma appears to have been solved by a government willing to deal simultaneously with the root causes as well as the symptoms of the conflict, and a case in which leaders on both sides of a difficult divide have shown vision and political courage. This is a case in which democratic reform survived the challenge of ancient hatreds. Mali provides an instructive instance in which societies undergoing painful transition are attempting to walk together into the 21st century. Truly, this is a story for our times.

## APPENDIX A

### MILITARY AND SECURITY SERVICES OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALI (1998)

<b>Service</b>	<b>Mission</b>	<b>Number of Personnel</b>
Army	Territorial defense	7000
Naval Service	Security of Niger River waterway	70
Air Service	Territorial defense/military transport	450
Gendarmerie	Rural law enforcement/rural security	1500
National Guard of Mali (GNM)	Territorial defense/support to civil authorities	700
National Police	Urban law enforcement	1000

Sources: "The World Defense Almanac, 1997-1998," *Military Technology*, Vol. XII, No. I, 1998, p. 215. Author's personal information.

## APPENDIX B

### INTEGRATION OF REBEL COMBATANTS

Key to rebel group acronyms:

MPA = Le Mouvement Populaire de l'Azawad (Popular Movement of Azawad)

FPLA = Le Front Populaire de Liberation de l'Azawad (Popular Front for the Liberation of Azawad)

ARLA = L'Armee Revolutionnaire de Liberation de l'Azawad (Revolutionary Army for the Liberation of Azawad)

FIAA = Le Front Islamique Arabe de l'Azawad (The Islamic Arab Front of Azawad)

FPLA	MPA	ARLA	FIAA	Indep. units	<b>TOTAL</b>
150	120	140	190	10	<b>610</b>

**Table 1. First Integration (April 1993)—Army Only.**

	MPA	FPLA	ARLA	FIAA	<b>TOTAL</b>
ARMY	342 37 13 Total 392	128 13 5 Total 146	73 8 3 Total 84	68 8 3 Total 79	<b>701</b>
NATIONAL GUARD	162 23 4 Total 189	60 10 3 Total 73	35 7 3 Total 45	32 6 3 Total 41	<b>348</b>
GENDARM- ERIE	0 80 3 Total 83	0 31 3 Total 34	0 17 2 Total 19	0 15 0 Total 15	<b>151</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>664</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>1200</b>

Key to figures in each cell (as shown horizontally):

n<sup>1</sup> = enlisted men

n<sup>2</sup> = noncommissioned officer

n<sup>3</sup> = officer

**Table 2. Second Integration (October 1996).**

1. Police: 150
  - Commissaire-stagiaire (officer)—2
  - Noncommissioned officer—33
  - Agent—115
2. Douane (Customs Service): 100
  - Category A (officer)—10
  - Category B (mid-level supervisor)—30
  - Category C—60
3. Water and Forest Service: 50
  - Ingenieur (Engineer)—7
  - Technician superior (Senior technician)—14
  - Agent—29

**Table 3. Integration into Paramilitary Forces  
(October 1996).**

	MPA	FPLA	ARLA	FIAA	TOTAL
Category A (Senior Officer)	5	5	5	5	20
Category B1 (Higher Mid-level Officer)	5	5	5	5	20
Category B2 (Lower Mid-level Officer)	5	5	5	5	20
Category C (Junior Officer)	7	7	8	8	30
Convention (Lowest ranks)	7	8	7	8	30
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>120</b>

Source: *Report of the Commissariat au Nord* (Republique Du Mali), Presidence de la Republique, February 19, 1997.

**Table 4. Integration into the Civil Service  
(October 1996).**

## ENDNOTES

1. The Sahel (literally “shore” in Arabic) is the region of north Africa just south of the Sahara desert consisting generally of flat, dry grassland. It stretches from Senegal in the west to Sudan in the east. Over the past several millenia, the desert has increasingly encroached on the grasslands, a process possibly escalated in the 20th century by human activity.

2. For a particularly authoritative history, see Nehemia Levtzion, “The early states of the Western Sudan to 1500,” in J.F.A. Ajayi and Michael Crowder, eds., *History of West Africa*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1972, pp. 131-157.

3. For detail, see Douglas Porch, *The Conquest of the Sahara*, New York: Random House, 1984.

4. See Pascal James Imperato, *Mali: A Search for Direction*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, pp. 39-49.

5. For American readers, the land area of the Republic of Mali is slightly less than twice the size of the U.S. state of Texas.

6. For insights on the Keita regime, see Francis G. Snyder, “The Keita Decade: An Era Ends in Mali,” *Africa Report*, Vol. 14, 1969, pp. 16-22.

7. This, and the subsequent historical overview, is derived from the personal observations and experiences of the author.

8. Useful insights into the performance of the Traore regime are provided by Daniel P. Rawson, “Mali: Soldiers as Politicians,” in Isaac James Mowoe, ed., *The Performance of Soldiers as Governors: African Politics and the African Military*, Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1980.

9. For detail, see Mariam C. Diallo, “Comment Bamako a chasse son general,” *Jeune Afrique*, 1580, April 10-16, 1991, pp. 18-23.

10. Quoting new finance minister Zoumana Sako, Sennen Andriamirado, “Les premiers pas du nouveau regime,” *Jeune Afrique*, 1580, April 10-16, 1991, pp. 12-13.

11. "Mali Seeks Increased U.S. Cooperation Not Aid—Konare," On-line U.S. Information Agency news release, November 20, 1997, [http://www.africanews.org/west/mali/stories/19971120\\_feat1.html](http://www.africanews.org/west/mali/stories/19971120_feat1.html).

12. See, for example, Johanna McGeary and Marguerite Michaels, "Africa Rising," *Time*, March 30, 1998, pp. 43-44.

13. For illustrative detail on poverty, see Liz Sly, "Trapped by Poverty," *Chicago Tribune*, September 24, 1995.

14. Bokar N'Diaye, *Groupes ethniques au Mali*, Bamako: Editions Populaires, 1970.

15. Imperato, pp. 11, 84.

16. *Ibid*, p. 82.

17. For a particularly useful and succinct overview of early Tuareg history, see Robert R. Charlick, *Niger: Personal Rule and Survival in the Sahel*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991, pp. 30-31; for more detail, see Jeremy H. Keenan, "Social Change among the Tuareg of Ahaggar (Algeria)" in Ernest Gellner and Charles Micaud, eds., *Arabs and Berbers: From Tribe to Nation in North Africa*, London: D.C. Heath and Company, 1972, pp. 345-360.

18. For a discussion of Tuareg practice of Islam in historical perspective, see H. T. Norris, *The Tuaregs: Their Islamic Legacy and Its Diffusion in the Sahel*, Warminster, UK: Aris & Phillips, 1975.

19. For detail on servitude in traditional Tuareg society, see Stephen Baier and Paul E. Lovejoy, "The Tuareg of the Central Sudan—Gradations in Servility at the Desert's Edge," in Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff, eds., *Slavery in Africa*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977.

20. For ethnographic detail, see Jeremy Keenan, *The Tuareg: People of Ahaggar*, London: Allen Lane, 1977; and Robert F. Murphy, "Social Distance and the Veil," *American Anthropology*, Vol. 66, 1964, pp. 1257-1274.

21. Charlick, p. 37.

22. While the vast majority of Tuaregs avoided incorporation into the institutions of the colonial or postcolonial state and Tuareg societies remained suspicious of all external authority, some Tuaregs did break with tradition to join the military, the civil administration, or the urban merchant class of the state.

23. Some of the Tuareg slaves—the Bellah—maintained plantations of date palms in desert oases, but these activities were very limited and could not provide the daily staples of the nomads.

24. See Imperato, pp. 84-85.

25. Americans will find this evocative of treatment in the media and literature of the Plains Indians of the 19th century. Sympathy for their way of life seems directly proportional to time and distance separating them from the author.

26. Author's experience, based on a lifetime in the region and extensive travel throughout West Africa. See also Charlick, p. 71, for views on (and treatment of) Tuaregs in Niger in the late 1980s.

27. Despite the enthusiasm of some Tuaregs for an independent homeland, French officials consulted with Tuareg tribal leaders prior to decolonization of the region. According to Bakara Diallo, governor of Gao in the 1960s, some French colonial officials apparently tried to pressure the Tuaregs to fight for an independent Tuareg homeland, although this met with less than universal enthusiasm among the nomads. The Tuareg leaders consented at the time to be part of the new Republic of Mali.

28. Significantly, French anthropologist Meillassoux, who studied the population of Bamako (Mali's capital) in the early 1960s, could identify no percentage of the merchant or civil service populations of Tuareg origin. See Claude Meillassoux, *Urbanization of an African Community: Voluntary Associations in Bamako*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968, pp. 27-34.

29. These facts derive from the author's discussions with large numbers of Malian military personnel, government officers, and local civilians with first-hand knowledge of the events.

30. One significant government concession, however, was Tuareg representation in Mali's National Assembly (parliament) after the first Tuareg rebellion.

31. For an excellent treatment of the impact of the earlier drought on Tuareg communities, see Thurston Clarke, *The Last Caravan*, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1978. For more detailed treatment, see Edmond Bernus, *Dates, Dromedaries and Drought: Diversification in Tuareg Pastoral Systems*, New York: Guilford Press, 1990.

32. Imperato, p. 85.

33. In the wake of a failed coup attempt, former Interior Minister Colonel Kissiman Dounkara was implicated in schemes to divert (to his own profit) international relief funds designated for northern Mali. Whether or not the charges had merit, they indicate that relief for suffering people in the north could have been blocked as much by graft as by deliberate government intent.

34. Imperato, p. 85.

35. One significant change in Mali was increasing commercialization of peasant agriculture along the Niger River, resulting in an expansion of the amount of land under irrigation. This permitted more than one annual crop, significantly reducing the opportunity for pastoralists to graze their herds on the harvested stubble. Farmers began to fence more of the agricultural land. These measures significantly reduced the options of the stock herders, producing controversy and stress.

36. Commentary on social phenomena in Tuareg communities is based on author's personal experience as a senior military official with service in the region. Insight into the sociological ramifications of rapid change is based on interviews in March 1998 with Colonel Dan Henk, U.S. Army, Director of African Studies at the U.S. Army War College.

37. Insights derived from author's personal experience.

38. Gilbert Lam Kabore, "La Paix Fragile de Tamanrasset," *Jeune Afrique*, No. 1568, January 16-22, 1991, p. 30.

39. See Charlick, pp. 141-142.

40. "The Tuareg: Drying Up," *The Economist*, November 2, 1991, p. 41; Francis Kpatinde, "Touareg: Partout et nulle part," *Jeune Afrique*, No. 1544, August 1-7, 1990, pp. 39-40.

41. See *Livre Blanc sur le "Problem du Nord" du Mali*, Bamako: Official publication of the Republic of Mali, December 1994, pp. 10-11. The differing rebel groups reflected the distinctions among the various Tuareg communities. Each group had a different geographical base. They included the following:

— Le Mouvement Populaire de l'Azawad (the Azawad Popular Movement) — M.P.A.

— L' Armee Revolutionnaire de Liberation de l'Azawad (the Revolutionary Army for Liberation of Azawad) — A.R.L.A.



— Le Front Populaire de Liberation de l’Azawad (the Popular Front for Liberation of Azawad) — F.P.L.A.

— Le Front National de Liberation de l’Azawad (the National Front for Liberation of Azawad) — F.N.L.A.

— La Base Autonome de Timitrine (the Autonomous Base of Timitrine)

— La Base Autonome du Front Uni de Liberation de l’Azawad (the Autonomous Base of the United Front for the Liberation of Azawad) — F.U.L.A.

— Le Front Islamique Arabe de l’Azawad (the Islamic Arab Front of Azawad) — F.I.A.A.

42. Author’s personal experience.

43. Author’s personal experience and discussions with a wide range of civilian and military government officials involved in these events at the time.

44. Jacky Rowland, “The Tuareg Rebellion, *Africa Report*, July/August 1992, pp. 43-45.

45. For initial Tuareg reactions, see Tieble Drame, “Trop frustres. . .,” *Jeune Afrique*, No. 1611, November 13-19, 1991, pp. 19-20.

46. “Les Accords de Tamanrasset (6 Janvier 1991)” in *Livre Blanc*, pp. 9-10.

47. Mali’s Army at the time of the Second Tuareg rebellion numbered about only 6,900. (The Gendarmerie numbered about 1,800 and the National Police numbered about 1,000.) The immediate addition of several hundred former rebels thus was a profound change. See International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1988-1989*, pp. 134-135.

48. This is based on the author’s personal experience as a senior field-grade officer in the Malian Army. It is important to note that Tuaregs were serving in the Malian Army prior to rebellion and continued to serve in the Army during the rebellion. The newly integrated former rebels thus encountered co-ethnics with considerable previous government service. This probably eased the transition.

49. The refugee population was by no means limited to Tuaregs alone. Maurs and Arabs also had fled to neighboring countries during the crisis.

50. *Livre Blanc*, p. 7.

51. The government took something of a risk in accepting the contributions of the humanitarian relief community. This community would tend to sympathize with the refugees and could be expected to call international attention to government errors and inefficiencies, providing unwanted (and possibly unfair) scrutiny that might undermine the confidence of donors and the international monetary agencies.

52. Author's personal experience.

53. See Kabore, pp. 28-30.

54. Arms and support came also from co-ethnics living abroad, especially in the West African countries of Nigeria and Ghana.

55. "*Ganda koi*" means literally "land owner" in Songhoi. See also *Reglement et prevention des conflits armes (cas de la "rebellion touaregue" au Mali)*, Presidence de la Republique, Commissariat au Nord, undated, p. 4.

56. Author's personal assessment.

57. This assistance included U.S. International Military Education and Training (IMET) programs organized by the U.S. Embassy, which provided a series of seminars for military and civilian officials. Held in Bamako in 1994 and 1995, these seminars explored issues of military justice and human rights. The seminars were very well-received and had an enormously positive impact on evolving Malian thinking on these subjects.

58. Herbert Donald Gelber, a retired senior Foreign Service Officer and former U.S. Ambassador to Mali (1990-93), employing a fine geological analogy, argues that this polarization occurs along a "cultural fault line" running roughly between the Sahara Desert and Sahel. North of the line are the Afro-asiatic societies, many of which are pastoral, including Arabs, Berbers, Tuaregs, Maurs, and similar groups. South of the line are a host of different Sub-Saharan African societies. Gelber views the conflict in 1989 between Senegal and Mauritania, and the ongoing civil war in the Sudan as evidences of stress along the "fault line."

59. Kabore, p. 30. This information also is based on the author's personal experience.

60. *Livre Blanc*, pp. 95-107.

61. The daunting challenges which remain are rather well described by Larry Thompson of Refugees International, "Tuareg Refugees Return to Bleak Future in Mali," October 6, 1997, Africa News Online, [http://www.africanews.org/west/mali/stories/19971006\\_feat1.html](http://www.africanews.org/west/mali/stories/19971006_feat1.html).

62. Author's personal experience and consultation with Tuareg leaders in the region, 1995-97.

63. Telephonic interview of Lieutenant Colonel Tjignoujou Sanogo, Commander of the 5th Military Region—Timbuktu, March 9, 1998 (by facsimile).

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