UNDERSTANDING THE TUAREG’S STRUGGLE IN MALI: FROM THE REBELLION OF AUTONOMY TO REBELLION OF SECESSION

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ABSTRACT

The Paper provides an overview of the Tuareg rebellion in Northern Mali viz-a-viz the underlying factors and forces that constituted the root causes of the recurrent conflicts in the country including an assessment of the role climate change plays as a threat multiplier in exacerbating the conflict. Tracing the dynamics of the insurgency from the initial struggle for autonomy to the recent rebellion of secession, it argues that what was accountable for the recurrent nature of the rebellion was the inability of the successive Malian Administrations to find definitive solutions to the numerous challenges confronting the Tuaregs. In this regard, the Paper concludes that as long as these challenges are left unaddressed, they would continue to fuel and fan the embers of discord in the region.

1. Background

The recent rebellion in Mali which began on January 17, 2012 and led to the total collapse of the Northern parts of Mali and the eventual internationalization of the conflicts in the country has a long history. The conflict is deeply rooted in the dissatisfaction of the Tuareg with the Malian state, a disaffection which had built up over several decades in the country. The situation was aggravated by the invasion of Northern Mali, the abode of the Tuareg, by the French colonial administration; the neglect and marginalization of the region; the insensitivity of the successive Malian governments to the plight of the Tuareg; as well as the impact of environmental factors. All of these contributed to the root causes of the recurrent conflicts in Mali.

Overtime, the Tuareg disaffection with the Malian administration eventually erupted in form of insurgency shortly after political independence from the French colonial rule in 1960 and has continued unabated ever since then. To be able to proffer meaningful and realistic solutions to the Malian conflicts, there is the need for a clear and proper understanding of the history of the Tuaregs, vis-à-vis the scope of

issues that the modern day Tuaregs face namely, poverty; hunger; starvation; marginalization; dislocation; environmental degradation; lack of infrastructure for development; denial of self rule; as well as the absence of the kind of skills needed to survive in modern day Mali.

A combination of these factors resulted in the migration of a good number of the Tuaregs, mostly youths, to other countries in the region including Libya, from where they were transformed from ‘mere’ nomadic herders into guerrilla fighters. This situation in turn eventually spurs the return of the Tuareg to Mali with a view to restoring their place of heritage and their evaporating identity in their homeland.

In light of the foregoing, a study on the Tuareg Rebellion in Northern Mali is conducted with a view to critically analyze the underlying factors and forces which constituted the root causes of the persistent conflicts in the country. In the same vein, the relationship between climate change and conflicts is also investigated for a clearer understanding of the role climate change plays in exacerbating the conflicts in Mali.

In this regard, the first section of the Paper provides basic facts on Mali with relevant statistics and figures. The second section examines the background to the conflicts with a general brief on the Tuaregs, focusing in particular, on Northern Mali as well as an examination of the role the French colonial administration plays in helping to lay the foundation for the protracted disharmony between the North and South Mali. Giving the environmental peculiarities in the Northern region of Mali, the third section investigates the possible links between environmental factors and conflicts to explain the role of climate change in the perpetration and perpetuation of the Malian conflicts. The fourth section deals with the Second Tuareg Rebellion (1990 - 1992). While the fifth section is devoted to the circumstances that led to the Third Tuareg Rebellion and efforts made at reconciling the aggrieved parties, the sixth section provides the background to the fourth Tuareg’s rebellion leading to the unilateral declaration of the independence of the State of Azawad as well as the reaction of the international community to this development. Finally, the Paper ends with a general conclusion.

2. Mali: Country Basic Facts

Originally called French Sudan, The Mali Federation gained independence from France on 20 June 1960. With the withdrawal of Senegal from the Federation in August 1960, the Sudanese Republic was renamed the Independent Republic of Mali on 22 September 1960. According to 2010 United Nations estimation, Mali has a population of about 15,370,000 inhabitants, a population predominantly rural by nature. Mali’s population consists of diverse sub-Saharan ethnic groups, sharing similar historic, cultural, and religious traditions. This is with the exception of the Tuaregs and Maurs, who are

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4 Ibid.

desert nomads related to the North African Berbers.

Mali covers an area of about 1,248,574 sq. km (482,077 sq. mi.) an area about twice the size of the modern-day France and the largest in West Africa. The country is bordered to the north by Algeria, to the east and southeast by Niger, on the south by Burkina-Faso and Côte d'Ivoire, and on the West by Guinea, Senegal and Mauritania. With an estimated population of about 2,270 million, Bamako is the largest and the capital city of the Republic of Mali.

Mali is a landlocked country with varying degrees of temperature. Hot and dry in the northern region which constitutes two-thirds of the land areas of the country, while the southern part where the majority of its inhabitants lives is more temperate with increasing rainfalls compared to the north with virtually no rain.

The country’s economy is structured along Agriculture and Fishing, while its main natural resources include gold, cotton and salt. Indeed, Mali is the third largest producer of gold in Africa with earnings from gold production representing about 25% of GDP and 75% of export revenue. With the political instability, economic crisis and war in the northern part of the country which culminated in the 22 March 2012 coup d’etat, the economy largely ground to a halt in 2012. Real GDP growth was -1.5% in 2012 due to the weak performance of the secondary (-2.2%) and tertiary (-8.8%) sectors while the primary sector grew by 8.1%. About half of the Malian’s population the vast majority of who are employed in farming, herding, or fishing, lives below the international poverty line of US$1.25 a day.

Constitutionally, Mali is a secular state that allows freedom of religion. About 90% of Malians are Muslim (mostly Sunni), 9% adhere to indigenous or traditional animist beliefs while the remaining 1% of the population are Christian. Islam as practiced in Mali is moderate, tolerant and adapted to local conditions while relations between Muslims and practitioners of minority religions faith are generally amicable.

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7 See J. Tyler Dickovick op.cit.


10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.


14 Ibid.
Guided by the 1992 Constitution, Mali operates a Presidential system of Government. The Executive branch is headed by a President who is the head of state and popularly elected for a five-year term and is eligible for a second term. The Prime-Minister, who is the head of Government, is appointed by the President. The Unicameral National Assembly has 147 members who are popularly elected for five-year terms. The Constitution provides for a multi-party democracy but prohibits against parties based on ethnic, religious, regional or gender lines. In addition to the numerous political parties represented in the National Assembly, other minor parties are active at the Municipal Council levels.

Administratively, Mali is divided into eight regions and the capital district of Bamako, each region is under the authority of an appointed Governor. Each region consists of between five to nine districts (or Cercles), administered by Perfects (Commandants). Cercles are divided

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16 Ibid

17 Ibid
into Communes, which, in turn, are also subdivided into Villages or Quarters.\textsuperscript{18}

**Figure 1: Map of Mali by Regions\textsuperscript{19}**

![Map of Mali by Regions](image)

**Table I: Population History\textsuperscript{20}**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>1976</th>
<th>1987</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>Area (km(^2))</th>
<th>Area (mi.(^2))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bamako</td>
<td>404,022</td>
<td>646,153</td>
<td>1,178,977</td>
<td>1,809,106</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gao</td>
<td>367,819</td>
<td>383,734</td>
<td>495,178</td>
<td>544,120</td>
<td>170,572</td>
<td>65,858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayes</td>
<td>871,871</td>
<td>1,058,575</td>
<td>1,424,657</td>
<td>1,996,812</td>
<td>119,743</td>
<td>46,233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidal</td>
<td>n. a.</td>
<td>n. a.</td>
<td>65,524</td>
<td>67,638</td>
<td>151,430</td>
<td>58,467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koulikoro</td>
<td>916,148</td>
<td>1,180,260</td>
<td>1,620,811</td>
<td>2,418,305</td>
<td>95,848</td>
<td>37,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mopti</td>
<td>1,104,708</td>
<td>1,261,383</td>
<td>1,405,370</td>
<td>2,037,330</td>
<td>79,017</td>
<td>30,509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segou</td>
<td>1,111,810</td>
<td>1,328,250</td>
<td>1,652,594</td>
<td>2,336,255</td>
<td>64,821</td>
<td>25,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikasso</td>
<td>1,044,664</td>
<td>1,308,828</td>
<td>1,839,747</td>
<td>2,625,919</td>
<td>70,280</td>
<td>27,135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timbuktu</td>
<td>487,278</td>
<td>453,032</td>
<td>496,312</td>
<td>681,691</td>
<td>191,743</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{18} See the U.S. Department of State Background Note on Mali op. cit.


The major ethnic groups in Mali include the Mande 50% (Bambara, Malinke and Sarakole); Peul 17%; Voltaic 12%; Songhai 6%; Tuareg and Maur 10%; others 5%\(^{21}\). Although each ethnic group speaks a separate language, nearly 80% of Malians communicate in Bambara, the common language of the marketplace\(^{22}\). Other languages are Bomu, Bozo, Dogon, Fulfulde, Kassonke, Malinke, Senoufo, Songai, Soninke and Tamashek\(^{23}\). As a former colony of the French Republic, French is the official language of communication in Mali.

Each ethnic group was traditionally tied to a specific occupation, all working within close proximity. The Bambara, Malinke and Dogons are farmers; the Fulani, Maur, and Tuaregs are herders; the Soninkes or Saracoles are traders; while the Bozos are fishers\(^{24}\). In recent years, this linkage has shifted as ethnic groups seek diverse, nontraditional sources of income\(^{25}\).

3. The Tuaregs

The Tuaregs are a semi-nomadic pastoralist people of North Africa Berber origin and are nominally Muslim\(^{26}\). However, in light of their nomadic and pastoral life, it has become difficult to determine with exactitude their population. They are grouped into independent federations and live in the semi-arid Sahel and arid Sahara in Southern Algeria, Southern Libya, Northern Mali and Niger, with fewer numbers in Burkina-Faso and Nigeria. Although the Tuaregs are minorities in the countries they presently inhabit, their cultural unity is far-reaching\(^{27}\).

In all their places of abode, the Tuaregs are known predominantly as traders, warriors and pastoralists. In Mali and Niger where the Tuaregs are largely concentrated, they are primarily occupied as pastoralist, raising cattle, goats, sheep and camel\(^{28}\). In particular, the Tuaregs in Mali represent about 10 percent of the total population of the 15.4 million inhabitants. They live in the North, especially in the regions of Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal, which cover 2/3 of the country’s land mass of 1,248,574sq. km\(^{29}\).

\(^{21}\) See J. Tyler Dickovick op. cit.

\(^{22}\) Ibid.

\(^{23}\) Ibid.

\(^{24}\) See the U.S. Department of State Background Note on Mali op.cit.

\(^{25}\) Ibid.

\(^{26}\) "Who are the Tuareg? Art of Being Tuareg: Sahara Nomads in a Modern World" Available online from: http://www.africa.si.edu/exhibits/tuareg/who.htm/

\(^{27}\) Ibid.


The Tuaregs have preserved many of their pre-Islamic traditions. Like most followers of Islam in Northern Africa, they believe in the continuous presence of various spirits (djinns). Most Tuareg men wear protective amulets that contain verses from the Koran\textsuperscript{31}. Their women have a great freedom and participate in family and tribal decisions. Descent and inheritance are both through the maternal lineage\textsuperscript{32}.

\textsuperscript{30} Source: Obtained from www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-17635437

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.

Prior to the French colonial rule in West Africa and the subsequent invasion of the Sahara, the Tuaregs controlled the inter-Saharan trade routes and generally saw themselves as “masters of the deserts”. Their economy revolved around the trans-Saharan trade, exploring the five trading routes that extend across the Sahara from the Northern Mediterranean coast to the African cities on the Southern edge of the desert through which goods are brought to North Africa.

In view of the difficult nature of transport and the limited space available in the caravans the Tuaregs usually traded in luxury items, which normally take up little spaces and on which large profits are made. They equally engaged in slave trade, bringing slaves from West Africa to be sold to Europeans and Middle Easterners. Gradually, with their involvement in trading activities and their exposure to places outside their own environments, many of the Tuaregs began to settle into the communities, with which they traded, serving as local merchants and representatives from their nomadic relations back in the Sahara.

As earlier noted, there is also a larger concentration of the Tuaregs in the neighbouring Republic of Niger. Out of an estimated 14,693,110 inhabitants, 8.3% of the population representing 1,219,528.000 is Tuaregs. They are camel and goat herders. They live in the north (Agadez and Tahoua) and west (Tillabery) of the country.

However, whereas the Tuaregs in both Mali and Niger share similar post colonial experiences in terms of conflicts over perceived marginalization and harbor similar aspirations and demands from their central governments, local conditions are quite different in the two countries. In an interview with IRIN News (2013) Mohamed Ag Ewangaye, Director of Niger Higher Authority for the Consolidation of Peace (HACP), noted that unlike the Tuaregs in Mali who are concentrated in the North, those in Niger are spread across the territory, a factor that has helped blunt irredentism among the Tuaregs in the country. The Tuaregs in Niger are not confined in a single region, so there can be no secessionist demands like in Mali.

Beside, the Tuareg leaders in Mali and Niger have, also according to Ewangaye, had very different influences on their respective countries. While the Tuaregs in Niger appear to have more stable ties with the Nigerien government with the appointment of members of the Tuareg community to key government positions in a bid to assuage feelings of neglect, the same cannot be said of Mali where there is constant animosity.

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34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
and suspicion between the Malian Government and the Tuaregs, especially over non-implementation of the numerous agreements entered into between the two.

Consequently, whereas the reasons for hostility and rebellion still exist among the Tuaregs in the two countries, the methods of struggle have changed. While the Tuaregs in Niger are beginning to achieve progress through collaboration with the central government, the situation in Mali is becoming more volatile and confrontational.

4. The French Colonial Factor in the Tuareg’s Rebellion

The existence of Mali could be traced back in history from the fifteenth to the sixteenth centuries, during which period Timbuktu was well renowned as a great Islamic centre of study and knowledge, as well as trade. The French entered the region in the mid-nineteenth century and conquered the lands as part of French West Africa. In 1946, French Sudan, as it was called at that time, became an overseas territory of the French Union. Although France was not initially interested in extending its rule to the Saharan regions, but eventually did in view of competition for territories between it and the United Kingdom during the colonial period around the 20th century. Its intention originally was to create a Saharan state, which could be assimilated to the Azawad region in Mali in addition to the South of Algeria as well as the whole central parts of the Sahara.

However, with the competition between the European colonial lords and the subsequent redefinition of borders, the need for the extension of the French colonial territory to cover the Sahara became inevitable. This exacerbated the longing for independence among the Tuaregs who naturally desired an independent Tuareg state from what was then a constituent part of Soudan François (French Sudan).

Attempt to take advantage of the French preoccupation with the First World War to engage France in war between 1916 and 1917 bore very devastating consequences for the Tuaregs. The war became bloody, leading to severe causalities among the Tuaregs and the loss of the Sahel desert which was one of Tuaregs last possessions. The defeat of the Tuaregs by the French in the late 19th century in Mali and early 20th century in Niger marked the beginning of the decline of their power.

Timbuktu and town of Bourem Northwest of Gao, but gradually expanded to mean the entirety of Northern Mali.


42 The term Azawad traditionally refers to the vast plain North of the Niger Bend between

43 Fred Schoennahl and Andy Whittington “Tuareg Culture and History” http://tuaregs.free.fr/common/credits/creditsintro.htm

44 “Mali’s Tuareg Rebels Declare Independence” Associated Press, April 6, 2012

45 Schoenahl and Whittington op. cit

Progressively, the Tuareg territories were taken under French governance, and their confederations were dismantled and reorganized.

Expectedly, the seed of animosity was planted between the French colonial administration and the Tuaregs in Mali over the forceful occupation of the Sahara. The Tuaregs progressively became the most fervent enemies of France in the region. The harsh way the French administered the hitherto proud Imashaghen did not help matter either: numerous taxes were imposed; the Tuaregs labour and resources were exploited; their men were forcefully conscripted into the French Army; they were dispossessed of their livestock; there was interference with their trans-Saharan food and salt trade. The French also attempted to ban ancestral slave trade a major preoccupation of the Tuaregs.

Besides the animosity between the Tuaregs and the French colonial administration, Northern Mali was generally adjudged to be of little significance during colonialism and did not truly interest France which left the region underdeveloped with neither schools nor infrastructure of note. Thus, the Tuaregs were marginalized without the benefits of colonial education and were consequently not able to take part in the wave of emancipatory ideas which began in the 1950s. Gradually, the Tuaregs’ condition continued to deteriorate and declined over the ensuing years.

Even at independence, the deprivation of the North and the marginalization of the Tuaregs persisted. This situation, coupled with the highhandedness of the Modibo Keita led central government in Bamako inevitably led to the first Tuareg insurrection which occurred in Mali in 1963 with very devastating implications for the Tuaregs. The Tuareg rebellion was decisively repelled and repressed by the Malian army leading to the sack of Kidal region; the poisoning of wells; the use of aerial bombardment and the killing of an estimated 1,000 Tuaregs; as a result of which many fled northwards to Algeria. It was this treatment among other things that constituted the precursor of the rebellion of the 1990s as many of those who took part in the second and third rebellions were among those who were sent on forced exile during the 1960s uprising.

The North was extremely marginalized with the nomads especially excluded. They were not allowed to manage their local affairs in accordance with their traditions and needs. They held no position at any level in the government either in the military or in the administration whereas the southern officials rarely understood

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47 The term ‘Imashagen’ among the Tuaregs refers to clan elders regarded as wise-men, noble and free.

48 See Schoenahl and Whittington op. cit


50 Ibid.


52 Ibid.
or appreciated Northern cultures\textsuperscript{53}. There were few development programs that targeted the North and hardly any infrastructure for education, health and communication neither did the government address basic issues confronting Northerners including frustration over traditional land and water use rights\textsuperscript{54}.

It must be stated therefore, that Mali’s current borders like most colonial borders in Africa, are due to French colonial rule and that the Tuareg people do not have historical affinities with the state of Mali. That Mali is one example of many situations in which the European colonial rule lumped different ethnic groups under one state’s rule in their desperate scramble for Africa, thus becoming a major source of conflicts in most of the African countries today. That the Tuaregs people, who originally did not want to give up their traditional life that they have gotten accustomed to over centuries but subdued and merged with the Republic of Mali by France, are victims of colonialism\textsuperscript{55}.

5. Climate Change: A Threat Multiplier in Mali’s Conflict

Climate Change is widely recognized today as a major environmental problem facing humanity across the universe with very devastating effects.

In the words of the United Nations’ Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, “Climate Change is the major overriding environmental issue of our time, and the single greatest challenge facing environmental regulators\textsuperscript{56}. It is a growing crisis with socio-economic, health and safety implications as well as food production, security and other dimensions.

The Oxford University Dictionary defines Climate Change as “changes in the earth’s weather, including changes in temperature, wind patterns and rainfall, especially the increase in the temperature of the earth’s atmosphere that is caused by the increase of particular gases, especially carbon dioxide\textsuperscript{57}.

In the Framework to the United Nations’ Convention on Climate Change, the concept ‘Climate Change’ is described as:

\texttt{change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods}\textsuperscript{58}.

\textsuperscript{53} Kâ e Lode “Mali’s Peace Process: Context, Analysis and Evaluation” Accord 13, Available online from \url{http://www.c-r.org/sites/c-r.org}

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{55} See Inventory of Conflict and Environment (ICE) “Conflict in Mali and Climate Change” ICE Case Studies, May 2013. Available online from: \url{http://eagle1.american.edu/~aw9001a/mali.html}

\textsuperscript{56} United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) “Environment for Development” Available online from: \url{www.unep.org/climatechange}.

\textsuperscript{57} Oxford University Dictionary Available from: \url{www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/English/university}.

\textsuperscript{58} “United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change” Available online from:
The Framework further described the adverse effects of Climate Change to include:

“changes in the physical environment or biota resulting from Climate Change which have significant deleterious effects on the composition, resilience or productivity of natural and managed ecosystems or on the operation of socio-economic systems or on human health and welfare”.

There is a growing awareness on the linkages between Climate Change and human violence around the globe. Report of a recently concluded study at the University of California, Berkeley and Princeton University reveals that changes such as droughts, food shortage due to unfavourable climatic conditions and high temperatures have strong correlation with conflicts. The study draws on a variety of research fields including climatology, archaeology, economics, political science and psychology to provide a comprehensive explanation on how Climate Change shapes human conflicts and violence. Out of about 27 modern societies studied, all 27 showed a positive relationship between higher temperatures and violence.

References were made in the study to the increasing spate of domestic violence in India and Australia; assaults and cases of murder in the United States and Tanzania; Ethnic violence in Europe and South Asia; land invasion in Brazil; police violence in the Netherlands; and civil conflicts throughout the tropics as having possible links with Climate Change. While concluding that strong evidence exists that climatic events may be a cause of conflicts, the Report nonetheless stresses the fact that conflict dynamics are deeply complex and remain poorly understood.

Even though the insurgency in Northern Mali has a complex historical and political undertone, environmental vulnerability is a contributing causal factor among many in the conflict situations in the region. There are reasons to believe that the severe droughts of the 1970s and 1980s had profound impact on the Tuareg rebellion of the early 1990s. R. Watts (2013) in a Case Study titled ‘Managing Climate Change and Conflict in Mali’ identifies Climate Change and environmental stress as possible contributing factors.

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61 Ibid.


63 Ibid.

factors to the conflicts in Mali. He noted that conflicts of varying severity between agricultural farmers and mobile pastoralists are quite common in Mali at local levels. Such conflicts, according to Watts can occur when there is crop damage by livestock and in cases of changing land-use practices and changing regimes of access to water resources.

Due to the strong dependence of its population on rain-fed agriculture and livestock, the Sahel region is generally known to be highly vulnerable to Climate Change. About 60 percent of the Tuaregs who live a nomadic and pastoral life live in the Sahara Desert with virtually little or no rainfall. Since the 1970s, the annual amounts of rainfall in the Sahel have continued to drop steadily, resulting in the drought that occurred between the 1970s and 1980s with very serious devastating consequences for livelihoods across the region where hunger, malnutrition, diseases and loss of lives and livestock led to massive human displacement.

Reduction in crop yields occasioned by warmer temperatures and changing rain patterns makes the region susceptible to food crisis and malnutrition. The drought has led to the death of many indigenous crops that were known to be rich in vitamins and caused deforestation, to the extent that there is less arable land in the Northern parts of Mali today to grow crops compared with the South-Western part like Bamako. With its fast growing population and the fact that about 80 percent of its population rely on agriculture or fisheries for their livelihoods, coupled with the vulnerability of the region to environmental factors, the consequences of Climate Change in North Mali is better imagined.

Government approach to addressing Climate Change-induced conflicts is crucial. Where for instance, nomadic and pastoralists like the Tuaregs are regarded as insignificant and less important people, and where government implements policies that further limit their access to grazing land and water resources, such policies would aggravate, rather than ameliorate the situation they were meant to address. This could lead to serious conflicts as such situation would be tantamount to further marginalization and heightening of tension. Such was the case in Mali where the various land tenure reforms since the 1970s have tended to promote private ownership of land rather than common property.

65. Robbie Watts “Managing Climate Change and Conflict in Mali” Case Study 13, Institute of Development Studies (IDS).

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid.


71. See Inventory of Conflict and Environment (ICE), op. cit.
rights which favours agricultural expansion over pastoralism.  


The devastating effects of the 1970s and 1980s drought which destroyed livestock and grazing lands in the Northern parts of Mali coupled with a lack of response by the Government aggravated the frustration of the Tuaregs and led to their forceful migration to neighbouring countries of Algeria, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Libya. Apart from having been lured by jobs in Libya’s oil industries, majority of the exiled Malians while in Libya joined the Libyan Army and fought for the Islamic Legion. They received sophisticated military training and experienced fighting in Chad, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria, while a few joined POLISARIO and fought in the Western Sahara. According to Kâ e Lode:

These experiences stimulated the belief that it was acceptable and possible to solve important problems through the use of force. Some aspired to use their experience to address the problems of marginalization of the Northern Mali. This aspiration was compounded by the widespread feeling of hopelessness for their future among the North’s younger generation.

However, with the collapse of oil prices in the mid-1980s and the defeat of Ghadafi in Chad, the demand for migrant labours in Libya became less attractive and led to the redundancy of the Tuareg fighters. Consequently, many of the Tuareg migrants’ workers including ex-combatants were sent back to their home in Mali. Coincidentally, over 10,000 Tuaregs were also expelled back to Mali from Algeria at this same period. Back home in Mali, the Government increased intelligence-gathering operations on the returnees, arresting and torturing them. This clampdown by the Malian Government, the returnees confidence in the military training they received while in Libya as ex-combatants, the arms and ammunitions at their possession, coupled with the absent of a viable alternative set the stage for the Second Tuareg Rebellion which started in June 1990 and lasted until 1992. The rebellion was organized by the members of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of the Azawad (MPLA) returning from Libya under the

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74 The Islamic Legion was a Pan-Africa force created by Muammar Gaddafi at the beginning of the 1990s to combat Western imperialist initiatives. The Legion was used in Uganda, Lebanon and especially Chad in the early 1980s.

75 Kâ e Lode op. cit

76 Ibid.


leadership of Iyad Ag Ghaly, the current leader of the Salafist group, Ansar El Dine. Unlike the first rebellion (1963) during which the Tuaregs lacked unified leadership and a coherent strategy, this time around they were better organized and well equipped. They enjoyed the support of all ethnic groups in the North including the Arabs who organized their own Arabic Islamic Front of Azawad (FIAA). In spite of this, the government responded with brutality akin to the type visited on Kidal during the first rebellion in the 60s. The result of this was the heavy casualties on both sides. As reported by Humphreys and Mohamed (2003):

> With inferior command of the desert, and frustrated by a failure to engage directly with the rebels, the army struck at non-combatant Tuareg communities and Arab civilians, staging a series of beatings and public executions.

The brutality of the military repression in turn resulted in popular support for the insurgency as sedentary populations sympathetic to the rebellion lent logistical support to the rebels. At the same time, criticisms of the military brutality against the Tuaregs were intensified both from the international community and at the domestic level including South Mali, where communities, already dissatisfied with the Traore’s regime were quick to recognize the marginalization of the North.

Concerned that the warring situation on its Southern border might draw the disaffected Tuareg population into Algeria and in view of its own precarious internal security situation, the Algerian Government became active in supporting peace initiatives to address the Malian conflicts. On his part, the then Malian President Moussa Traore recognized that a military solution was untenable and quickly accepted Algeria’s offer of mediation. This led to a series of direct negotiations between the government of Mali and the leaders of the Tuaregs under the MPLA which later transformed to People’s Movement of Azawad (MPA). With the Algeria’s mediatory role and assistance, the negotiations culminated in a Peace Agreement in Tamanrasset on 6 January 1991.

### 6.1 The Tamanrasset Accord

The Tamanrasset Accord was signed on 6th January 1991 between the Government of Mali and the Tuaregs, following a peace negotiation

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79 See Rudolph Atallah op. cit


83 Ibid.

84 See Rudolph Atallah op. cit.

85 Ibid.
brokered by the Republic of Algeria. The Accord was signed on behalf of the Malian Government by Colonel Ousmane Coulibaly, a member of the National Council, while Iyad Ag Ghaly, the Secretary General of Popular Movement for the Liberation of the Azawad (MPLA), signed on behalf of the Tuareg. The following were the key provisions contained in the Accord:

i. Withdrawal of insurgent forces to cantonments thus providing for a gradual demilitarization of the Northern Region;

ii. Elimination of some selected military posts including military activities especially near Tuareg camps and pasture considered threatening by the Tuareg communities;

iii. Acceleration of ongoing processes of administrative decentralization in Mali;

iv. Integration of insurgent combatants into the Malian National Army at the ranks to be determined;

v. Disengagement of the Malian Army from Civil administration in the North and replacement of the army by the civilians in the regional administration thereby creating jobs for the people in North Mali;

vi. Promised that the allocation of a fixed proportion of 47.3% of Mali’s national infrastructural investment funding would be devoted to the North;

vii. Accord the three Regions of the North constituting the Azawad territories i.e. Kidal, Timbuktu and Gao, a “Statut Particulier” thereby giving the region a high degree of administrative autonomy;

viii. A cease-fire and exchange of prisoners.

As generous and ambitious as the Accord was, the commitments therein were never fully met by the Malian Government. In the first place, the Traore regime refused to publicize the terms of the Accord, fearing that the South would interpret it as a capitulation. The regime took contradictory public stance when its spokesman denied on National Radio that there would be any “Statut Particulier” for the North whereas this was one of the central aspects of the Tamanrasset deal. When eventually the Accord was published, it was widely interpreted as giving autonomy to the North. Consequently, the frustration generated by the perceived ‘loss of status’ of the army and public concerns, led to more attacks conducted by dissatisfied sections of the armed forces, notably in Gao.

Beside, not all Tuaregs were represented during the negotiation of the Tamanrasset Accord and its signing. Those excluded from the process such as the Songhoys became negative about the Accord, believing that the Tamanrasset Agreement failed to pay serious attention to their particular needs. Additionally, promises of material benefits reached in the Accord could not

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86 See the Tamanrasset Accord, 6 January 1991. The Accord was originally written in French and Arabic Languages.

87 Ibid.

88 Rudolph Atallah, op. cit.

89 See Humphreys and Mohamed op. cit.

90 Lode Kåre, op. cit.
be met as funds were not available for their implementation.

The failure of the Malian Government to implement the terms of the Accord gave impetus to the renewed demand for independence amongst the Tuaregs. Two months after the Tamanrasset Accord was enacted, there was a coup in Mali which put an end to President Moussa Traore’s 23 years regime. Consultations on the Accord were suspended and a process was set in motion by which Mali would be returned to civilian rule.91

6.2 The National Pact

With the fear from the South that the Tamanrasset Accord would jeopardize the country’s integrity; the apathy from the army as well as from sedentary communities who were not involved in the making of the Accord; the lack of resources for its implementation; coupled with the fact that the new regime of Gen. Adamou Toumani Toure who overthrew Moussa Traore, did not consider the Accord legitimate and made no considerable efforts towards its implementation; the Tamanrasset Accord rapidly became irrelevant. Consequently, the Accord was abandoned while army’s atrocities against civilians in the North continued unabated. This led to the emergence of more aggressive movements such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Azawad (FPLA) and the Revolutionary Army for the Liberation of Azawad (ARLA).92

To address the festering problem of the insurgency movements in the North, the Transitional Government of Gen. Adamou Toure set up an international mediation team with the assistance of Algeria. Edgar Pisani of France and Ahmed Baba Miske of Mauritania were both invited to assist in the negotiation, in view of their well acknowledged personal skills and impartiality.93 This initiative gave birth to a new peace agreement that was signed on 11 April 1992 in Bamako - known as the National Pact.94

More formal than the Tamanrasset Accord, the National Pact was concluded between the Government of Mali and the Unified Movements and Fronts of Azawad (MFUA). The Pact was the most ambitious of its kind as it gave expression to the special status of Northern Mali. Specifically, the National Pact:

i. Provides for the gradual demilitarization of the North and the complete integration of the rebels into special units of the national forces. This was to be based on individual and voluntary acceptance and competence of the combatants of the MFUA into the various uniformed bodies of the Government;

ii. Recognized the need to launch a special program of


92 Kåe Lode, op. cit.

93 Ibid.

94 See Humphreys and Mohamed, op. cit.

95 The National Reconciliation Pact was signed on 11th April 1992 and Published as Decree No. 92-121/P-CTS between the Transitional Government of Mali, and the Unified Movements and Fronts of Azawad (MFUA).
development in Northern Mali to address the economic marginalization of the region. In this regard, a ten-year economic recovery plan to redress the economic, social and cultural inequalities between the North and the rest of Mali was provided for, for this purpose. The program was to be organized in two consecutive schemes of five years each:

iii. Accord Northern Mali a special status through constitutional changes that would transfer a number of State powers to the region and open up opportunities for the decentralization of international cooperation as well as extensive control over issues of regional interest;

iv. Provided for the establishment of two separate funds, namely — a development and reinsertion Fund and an indemnization and compensation Fund for Military and Civil victims from the two parties signatory to the Pact.

To oversee and ensure the scrupulous implementation of the Pact, provision was made for the appointment of a Commissioner for North Mali. The Commissioner would be appointed for a five-year renewable term and will be reporting directly to the Head of State.

Again, as ambitious and promising as the National Pact was, it was confronted by a mirage of problems akin to those that led to the non-implementation and failure of the Tamanrasset Accord.

First, the Malian Government lacked the financial resources with which to execute the key provisions of the Pact. Consequently, the aspirations of the Pact could not be met, especially in the area of the integration components of which implementation was continuously postponed for paucity of funds.

Moreover, international donors were not forthcoming at a time when financial supports for the peace processes from the international community, would have been most beneficial for the implementation of the Pact.

Second, because of insecurity in the region, it became difficult and impossible for the local communities to implement the provisions of the Pact as they could not adapt the agreement to their local conditions. They do not therefore see any dividend of the Pact which brought little or no changes in their living conditions.

To the English Translation of the Summary of the National Pact Published in Ag Mohamed,

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96 See the English Translation of the Summary of the National Pact Published in Ag Mohamed,


99 See Kå e Lode, op. cit.
Third, like the situation with the negotiation of the Tamanrasset Accord, there was minimal consultation and involvement of the sedentary populations in the processes that led to the making of the National Pact, neither was any provision made in the Pact to allow them any meaningful role in its implementation. Therefore, many of the sedentary communities especially in Gao and Timbuktu were not comfortable with the National Pact and were not ready to be associated with a Pact which they perceived as nothing more than the handing over of the region to the Tuaregs. 

Consequently, the perceived neglect among the sedentary communities gradually gave rise to a violent reaction from a sedentary militia called Ganda Koy who along with their former militia soldiers transformed the conflict in Northern Mali into a violent inter-communal and racial conflict with a very devastating consequences for the light skinned Tuaregs and Arabs, especially in the Gao region between 1994 and 1996.


The Third Tuareg Rebellion broke out on 23rd May 2006 when a new rebel group, the Democratic Alliance of 23 May for Change (Alliance Democratique du 23 Mai pour le Changement (ADC) raided the military bases in Kidal Menaka and Tassilit near the border of the Republic of Niger and absconded with a large amount of weapons to a well stocked base in the Tegharghar hill North of Kidal.

Led by Ibrahim Bahanga and Lt. Col. Hassan Fagaga, one of the highest ranking Tuaregs to have been integrated into the national army following the Tuareg rebellion of the 1990s, the group was dissatisfied with the conditions of living of the former rebels who had been integrated into the army and was of the view that a new political district should have been created for the Tuaregs in the Kidal region for better representation of their interests.

Part of the frustration expressed by the group whose followers were mainly Ifoghas Community in Kidal was that instead of focusing on building schools and roads, the Malian Government chose to militarize the Azawad region by building more military bases and bringing more troops.

As was in the previous cases, Algeria once again played a leading role in the mediation of the Malian conflict. It broker a new peace deal known as the “Algiers’ Accord” between the

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102 See Tyler Dukovick J. op. cit.


104 Tyler Dukovick, op. cit.

105 Ibid.

Malian Government and the Democratic Alliance of 23 May for Change (ADC).

7.1 The Algiers’ Accord

The Algiers’ Accord was signed on 4 July 2006 in Algeria, two months after the rebellion instigated by the ADC among the Kidal Tuaregs on 23rd May 2006. The Accord basically restated many of the previous agreements as contained in the Tamanrasset Accord and the National Pact. Among other things, the Accord provided for the followings:

i. The organization of a forum on development in the Northern regions of Mali;

ii. The withdrawal of the army from urban areas of Kidal;

iii. The re-integration of deserted Tuaregs;

iv. The creation of Special Security Units made up primarily of the Tuaregs with a joint command;

v. The creation of a Regional Council in Kidal to supervise the whole process;

vi. The creation of a special tax regime for North to encourage investment;

vii. Granting of greater autonomy for the Kidal region;

viii. Greater recognition of the Tamasheg language and culture in the national media and in education.

Additionally, the Accord provided for the creation of a development and socio-economic rehabilitation fund for civilians particularly young people affected by the events of 23rd May 2006, without excluding all other young people from the Kidal region. Other initiatives were also anticipated: a program targeted at ending the isolation of the region via the paving of principal roads; the construction of an airfield in Kidal; the electrification of the primary towns, districts, and communes; telephone coverage; and the establishment of a regional radio and a national television relay networks.

With this Accord, a ceasefire was brokered by Algeria. While the rebels gave up demands for regional autonomy, the Government agreed to speed up development of the three Northern provinces of Kidal, Timbuktu, and Gao. Deserters were once again permitted to return to the army, and the rebels agreed to return stolen arms and ammunitions. The Accord benefitted the Kidal region especially the Ifoghas community who were over-represented in the monitoring organs created to implement the Accords, while representatives of the other communities such as the Idnan and Taghat Mallet were excluded in this arrangements even when they struggled to be part of the steering

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107 See the Algiers’ Accord signed on 4th July 2006 between the Malian Government and the Democratic Alliance of 23 May for Change (ADC).

108 Ibid.


110 Ibid.

111 See Tyler Dukovich J. op. cit.

committee established for the implementation of the Algiers’ Accord. As was the case with the implementation of the previous Agreements, there was also tardiness in the implementation of the Algiers’ Accord especially with regard to the creation of a Special Security Units among the Tuaregs. Consequently, a faction of the ADC led by Ibrahim Bahanga refused to abide by the peace treaty and therefore resumed guerrilla warfare against the Malian troops under a new alliance dubbed the Tuareg Alliance of Northern Mali for Change (ATNMC). On 26 and 27 August 2007, this group took 40 civilian and military hostages and demanded application of the Algiers’ Accord. The group took refuge in the mountains and laid mines on the roads until the Malian Government deployed a large offensive force which eliminated the insurgency and temporarily interrupted the activities of the dissidence in 2009, while Ibrahim Bahanga, the ring leader escaped to Libya.Obviously, the Algiers’ Accord just like the previous peace agreements before it was not able to produce the much anticipated peace in Mali. Instead, the forces hostile to a durable peace continued to fester unabatedly in Northern Mali. While the region continued to groan under an uneasy peace, the implementation of the Algiers’ Accord gradually grounded to a halt. It was this situation that laid the foundation for the Fourth Rebellion driven by a new Tuareg coalition called the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) with the infiltration of the Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the consequential change of goal from the rebellion of autonomy to the rebellion of secession following the April 2012 insurrection which led to the total collapse of the Northern Mali and the unilateral declaration of the independence of the State of Azawad.


What could be regarded as the fourth Tuareg Rebellion was organized under the banner of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), a movement founded at the

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114 Ibrahim Ag Bahanga, an ex-rebel fighter of the 23rd May Coalition mysteriously died in a car accident in August 2011 as reported by France 24, on August 27th, 2011.


116 Statement by Hamma Ag Sidahmed, Spokesperson for the rebellion group in “Ahwatan”, Algerian Daily Newspaper 9 September 2007


end of 2011 by a fusion of rebel groups. The rebellion occurred as a result of the unsuccessful attempts to resolve the discontent in Northern Mali against the backdrop of the rapidly changing security, environmental and economic situations in the region. It is to be noted that whereas the First Rebellion of 1963 was brutally repressed, the sophistication with which the Second and Third Rebellions were executed did not give room for such high handedness by the Malian Government.

Consequently, the Second (1990) and Third (2006) Rebellions resulted in series of negotiations brokered by the Algerian Government, giving birth to a number of peace Agreements through which series of promises were made by the Malian Government to the Tuareg in Northern Mali. These Agreements were put in place with a view to promoting economic development; administrative decentralization; and the integration of the former rebels into the Mali’s administration and security services, most notably in local units tasked with securing the Sahara. These Agreements and the promises therein were contained in the Tamanrasset Accord of 6th January 1991; the National Pact of 11 April 1992; and the Algiers’ Accord of 4th July 2006. All of these were signed between the Malian Government and the rebellion groups in North Mali.

However, while the Malian Government did not do enough to keep faith with the promises made in these peace deals by not adequately decentralizing power from the Central Government in Bamako to douse the tension from the North, the Tuareg continued to be confronted by a profound crisis with grave political, security, socio-economic, environmental; humanitarian and human rights consequences. The communities in the North were neglected, marginalized and unfairly treated by the Central Government yet the effects of environmental degradation, climate change and economic shocks confronting the region continued to be strongly felt by the ordinary Tuaregs.

This situation culminated in a series of attacks in mid January 2012 against the Government forces in Northern Mali by a Tuareg movement known as the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA). The rebellion was staged 92-121/P-CTS between the Transitional Government of Mali, CTSP and MFUA.

The Algiers’ Accord was signed on 4th July 2006 between the Malian Government and the Democratic Alliance of 23 May for Change (ADC)

See Ebru Fumun, op. cit.


Ibid.
along with Islamic armed groups including Ansar Dine; Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM); the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MOJWA); as well as with the collaboration of the deserters from the Malian Armed Forces.\footnote{Ibid.}

It is to be noted that the rebellions of the 1990s and 2000s were not, as rightly indicated by Mohamed Mahmoud “demanding the independence of Azawad, [but] only the greater administrative and cultural autonomy of the region and a program of investment to accelerate economic and social development”\footnote{See International Peace Institute (IPI) “Issue Brief on Threat to Peace and Security in the Sahel: Responding to the Crisis in Mali” Originally written in French in June 2012 by Mohamed Mahmoud Mohamed and translated in English by Annie Jacobs in December 2012.}. The MNLA’s External Affairs Director, Ibrahim Ag Mohamed for instance told the Voice of America (VOA) that they (the Tuareg) did not want to “cut Mali into two but that ways of governing must be adapted to the unique cultural, historical, and even environmental characters of the three harsh desert regions in the North namely, Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal.\footnote{Voice of America (Washington DC), “Mali: MNLA Rebels Look to Talks, Greater Autonomy in North by Anne Look, 26 August 2013.}

The President of the Negotiating Committee for the MNLA and its Allies, Mohamadou Djeri Maiga, in a similar interview with the VOA stated, in reference to the Tuareg struggle, that “what we want is a political status for the territory that we call Azawad, we want to be able to provide our own security and participate actively in its development, in a Mali where we have a say in our own future”.\footnote{Ibid.}

However, with the infiltration of AQIM and the backing of the heavily armed former insurgents from Libya the Tuareg struggle was hijacked. The goal of the fourth rebellion (2012) changed from the initial demand for autonomy to secession with the carving out of the Northern Mali under a new independent country to be known as Azawad\footnote{Azawad is the Tuareg name for the country’s Northern region, encompassing the area of Timbuktu, Kidal and Gao.} through secession from the Republic of Mali. Consequently, having overrun the Government forces in the regions of Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu, an independent state of Azawad was proclaimed in April 2012 with the immediate imposition of Sharia law.

8.1 The Azawad Region

Located in the Northern region of Mali, Azawad is rich in Uranium and accounts for about 2/3 or 60 percent of Mali’s total land areas. It is bordered by Burkina Faso to the South;
Mauritania to the West and Northwest; Algeria to the North and Northeast; Niger to the East and Southeast; and Mali to the Southwest. While it lasted, Gao served as the temporary capital, being the largest city in region\textsuperscript{133}. Because of the porous nature of Mali’s borders with its neighbouring States of Mauritania, Algeria and Niger, and given the lack of effective government control over these borders, the region has for long time played host to transnational criminal organized groups and became vulnerable to infiltration by Jihadist movements and organizations such as the AQIM\textsuperscript{134}. Figure 3 below shows Azawad territorial coverage areas.


\textsuperscript{134} Alessandro Casarotti “The Role of Al-Qaeda in Mali: A Lesson for Arab Spring Future” International Security Observer (ISO) 23 October 2012.
Figure 3: Map of Azawad\textsuperscript{135}

\textsuperscript{135} Source: France 24 International News, 03/04/2012
As contained in the Declaration signed by the Secretary-General of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), Billal Ag Acherif on 6 April 2012 proclaiming the independence of the State of Azawad, the following reasons were adduced for the secession of Azawad from the Republic of Mali:

i. France’s forceful and unilateral attachment of the region to Mali despite an appeal dated 30 May 1958 addressed to the French President Charles de Gaulle;

ii. That the consent of the people of Azawad was not sought by France in 1960 when the latter granted independence to the Malian State that France had just created then;

iii. The massacres, the atrocities and abasement, the plundering and genocide of 1963, 1990, 2006, 2010 and 2012, which targeted exclusively the people of Azawad up till 1 April 2012;

iv. The devastating effects of the droughts of 1967, 1973, 1984, 2010 etc, in Northern Mali for which the Malian government sought and obtained generous humanitarian support without ameliorating the effects of the drought in the affected region;

v. The accumulation of more than 50 years of bad governance, corruption, and military-political and financial collusion threatening the existence of the people of Azawad and imperiling regional stability and international peace.

It was also stated in the Declaration that the new state of Azawad would recognize the existing international boundaries with its neighbouring states and their inviolability; fully adhere to the UN Charter and that the MNLA would be firmly committed to creating conditions for lasting peace, to introduce the institutional foundations of the state based on a democratic constitution for independent Azawad. The Executive Committee put in place to run the affairs of the newly proclaimed state of Azawad was therefore called upon to “invite the entire international community to without delay recognize the independence of the new state in the interest of justice and peace”.

136 “Declaration of Independence of Azawad”
Originally written in French and posted on the website of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) on 6th April 2012 and translated into English by Evan Centanni of Political Geography Now. Available online from: http://www.polgeonow.com/2013/.../declaration-of-independence-of-Azawad.htm...

137 Ibid.

138 Ibid.

The 6th of April 2012, was proclaimed as the independent day of the State of Azawad.

8.2. Reaction of the International Community to the Declaration of Independence of Azawad

Responses from the international community to the declaration of the independence of the State of Azawad were spontaneous, decisive, unanimous and indeed unambiguous. No single Member country of the United Nations recognized the independence of the State of Azawad. Rejecting the unilateral declaration of independence as proclaimed by the MNLA, Algeria, Mali’s immediate neighbor was the first to pronounce the repudiation of Azawad, indicating that it would never “accept the questioning of Mali’s territorial integrity”.

In its own reaction to this development, France, the colonial master of the Republic of Mali while declaring the declaration as null and void, stated that “a unilateral declaration of independence which is not recognized by African States would not have any meaning for us”, France indicated that it would offer military assistance to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) forces aimed at stabilizing Mali and containing the rebels. The US State Department rejected the MNLA’s statement of independence and reiterated its support for territorial integrity of Mali. The US further expressed concern that the separation would exacerbate the grave problems challenging the Malian State. In the same vein, Russia affirmed the territorial integrity of Mali and called for the immediate restoration of the constitutional order in the country.

On their parts, regional and continental Organizations such as the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS), the African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU) were not left out in the swift rejection and condemnation of the unilateral declaration of independence by the MNLA in the Azawad region. For instance, the

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140 “Tuareg Rebels Declare the Independence of Azawad, North of Mali” AL ARABIYA NEWS, 6 April 2012. Available online from: http://www.webcitation.org/6BTuuxxYR


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143 Fessy Thomas “Mali Tuareg Rebels Call on Independence Rejected” BBC News, 17 October 2012 Available online from: http://www.webcitation.org/6BTvTYrWp


145 “Russia: No Chance to Recognize Azawad Independence” CRI English, Xinhau, 6 April 2012 Available online from: http://www.webcitation.org/6BTCtigt.
ECOWAS described the declaration as “null and void and of no effect”\(^\text{146}\), saying Mali is “one and indivisible entity and that it would take all necessary measures, including the use of force to ensure the territorial integrity of the country”\(^\text{147}\). ECOWAS therefore, disclosed preparations for the deployment of a 3,000 personnel intervention force to contain the rebels and protect the constitution of Mali\(^\text{148}\).

Reacting on behalf of the AU on the development, the AU Commission Chairman, Jean Ping firmly condemned the announcement of the independence of the Azawad from the Republic of Mali, describing it as null and of no value whatsoever\(^\text{149}\). He therefore called on the international community as a whole to “fully support the principled position of Africa” and shun the secession bid\(^\text{150}\).

Both the ECOWAS and the AU also subsequently suspended Mali from the activities of their Organizations when a group of young military officers led by Cap. Amadou Sanogo capitalized on the situation in the northern part of the country to forcefully overthrow President Amadou Toumani Toure in the early hours of 22 March 2012\(^\text{151}\). The two Organizations also led international efforts to press for the early resolution of the crisis situation in Mali and return the country to constitutional order under a democratically elected government\(^\text{152}\).

The European Union (EU) also rejected any break-up of Mali and called for talks to resolve the crisis. In an interview with the African Press (AFP), the spokeswoman for the EU Foreign Affairs Chief, Maja Kocijancic state that “the EU has made clear throughout the crisis that it respects the territorial integrity of Mali”\(^\text{153}\).

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\(^\text{147}\) Ibid.

\(^\text{148}\) Bate Felix “AU Rejects Mali Rebels Independence Declaration” Reuters, April 6, 2012 Available online from: http://www.webcitation.org/6BTva7FTG

\(^\text{149}\) Mark John “AU Rejects Mali Rebels Independence Call” Reuters April 6, 2012 Available online from: http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/04/06/us-Mali-idusBRE83507L20120405

\(^\text{150}\) Ibid.

\(^\text{151}\) “The Coup in Mali is only the Beginning” Foreign Affairs, Available online from: http://www.foreignaffairs.com

\(^\text{152}\) See the Communiqué of the Extraordinary Summit of the ECOWAS’ Heads of State and Government held in Abidjan, Republic of Cote d’Ivoire, 27 March 2012. Available online from: http://www.allafrica.com/stories/201203280710

9. Conclusion

An assessment of the Tuaregs Rebellion in the Northern parts of Mali is presented in this Paper with a view to identifying some of the background factors which served as the root causes of the recurrent conflicts in the region. In light of the climatic condition of the region, the Paper further explored the relationship between Climate Change and Conflicts, with a view to investigate whether or not there is a link between climate variability and conflicts and if indeed, the climatic condition in Northern Mali played any role in the conflict situation in the region.

From the study carried out, a number of factors can be seen as the underlying causes of the unending cycle of the Tuaregs’ rebellions namely: economic inequality; extreme marginalization of the Tuaregs in the Northern region; exclusion of the North from the management of their local affairs in accordance with their tradition and needs; lack of infrastructure for development; frustration over traditional land and water use rights; extreme and unfavourable climatic conditions among other things.

The challenges posed by Climate Change in Mali is real, daunting and a source of serious concern. The situation portends greater threats to the stability of the country, particularly, in the Northern region where Climate Change serves as a threat multiplier. The increasing and continuing vulnerability of the Tuaregs to the changing climatic conditions if not addressed, is capable of aggravating the existing conflicts in the region, or even generate new ones.

Problems relating to shortage of water, deterioration of natural habitat, drought, desertification, environmental degradation, scarcity of grazing land, food shortage and malnutrition, all of which are associated with Climate Change must be resolved. For as long as the Tuaregs, majority of who are predominantly nomadic and pastoralists who rely heavily on land for their livelihood continue to feel so neglected, marginalized and unprotected by the Malian government, there can be no enduring peace in the country.

It was the inability of the successive Malian Administrations to find definitive solutions to these problems that causes the unabated and recurrent Tuaregs rebellions that started right from the time of independence in 1960 till the present date. It was also this ineptitude on the part of the Malian Government that led to the transformation of the struggle from the demand for autonomy to the demand for secession. Even when Agreements were reached to address these problems, such Agreements were hardly implemented by the Malian Authorities.

These problems, which represented the long-standing grievances of the Tuareg tribes in Northern Mali as well as elsewhere in the region, must be recognized and resolved. As long as these challenges are left unaddressed, they would continue to fuel and exacerbate conflicts in the region.

9. References


/confusion-in-Mali-after-Tuareg-independence.html

   Associated Press, 6 April.


