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THE INFLUENCE OF THE CRISIS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MALI ON THE POLITICAL SITUATION OF THE SAHEL

ABSTRACT   The aim of this article is to present the crisis in the Republic of Mali, a country with the largest democratic advances in West Africa in the nineties. However, in 2012 and 2013 Mali experienced a crisis which had led to a military coup. The collapse of state institutions in Mali destabilized the entire region. The author of article devoted particular attention to the process of decentralization of power in the nineties. A series of reforms that gave hope to alleviate the Tuareg issue. The author tried to describe the origins of the crisis in Mali in 2012/2013. She focused on the issue of the Tuareg returning from Libya and an accurate description of the course of events. The declarations of independence of Azawad, the military coup, Tuareg denial by the Islamists or the entry of the French army to Mali are the key points of these events. The author mentioned also the presidential elections that bring a chance for stabilization in Mali. As the events in the Sahel have an impact on other countries in the region the author would like to present the effects of the crisis on the situation in Niger, Mali and Libya. The author's aim was to present a forecast of opportunities and threats for Mali and the region. This topic is very dynamic, the situation in Mali seemed to stabilize but the violence erupted further in the northern part of the country.

Keywords: Mali, the Tuareg, crisis, uprising

The aim of the article is to present the transformation of Mali from the country which made the greatest progress in democratic transition in western Africa to a domestic strife-torn state. The purpose of this article is also to show the impact of the Malian civil war on the situation in other countries of the Sahel.

From 1993, when the process of decentralization of power started, until the events of 2012, Mali was supposed to be an example of blooming democratization, a role model for other African countries of how to accomplish democratic changes successfully. Among all of the West African countries, Mali has been given the highest mark in terms of democratization in the Freedom House Index over a long period of time. In 2012 Mali occupied the 79th place in the Failed State Index[1]. Nevertheless, this West African Republic has been struggling with numerous Tuareg rebellions and turbulence in the north ever since it regained its independence. One of them took place in 2012 when within two months Tuareg separatist groups from the Azawad National Liberation Movement (MNLA) overran the northern part of Mali. The event contributed to the military putsch and to a takeover by frustrated soldiers in March 2012. On April 6, Tuareg rebels from MNLA declared their independence from Mali and announced the formation of the Azawad state in the north of Mali. The Islamic groups such as Ansar Dine or al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) started the fight with the Tuareg in order to establish a country in which daily life would be subordinated to restrictions of the Sharia law. The central authorities of Mali promptly asked France and the ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) nations for a military intervention. Despite the initial difficulties, the military action succeeded. Regardless of such a serious domestic crisis, the Republic of Mali was ranked 38th in the Failed States Index[2].

Mali started to regenerate only a few months after the intervention of the French army, when the presidential elections were held and the new government was established. The new authorities are looking for ways to cope with the economic problems, famine, and migration and are also trying to find alternative sources of income. However, there are still many obstacles on the way to Mali's stability, of which corruption, the dynamic model of the market for drug trafficking and fundamentalism are the primary ones.

The crisis in Mali also had a serious impact on other nations of the region, some of which waited passively like Algeria or involved its armies to fight with the Tuareg and the Islamists in Mali, as in the case of Chad. Due to the relocation of terrorists, the situation in the south of Libya or Nigeria is still unstable. In my opinion it was the people's movement after the Malian civil war that largely contributed to such a strong position of Boko Haram in Nigeria and influenced to some extent the destabilization of Libya which is still in chaos.

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[1]   The Fund for Peace, *The Failed States Index 2012*, at <http://ffp.statesindex.org/rankings-2012-
-sortable>, 27 September 2013.

[2]   The Fund for Peace, *The Failed States Index 2013*, at <http://ffp.statesindex.org/rankings-2013-
-sortable>, 29 September 2013.

1. DECENTRALIZATION

Soon after assuming the presidential office in the Republic of Mali in 1992, Alpha Oumar Konaré decided to implement a nationwide decentralization policy. Army revolutions and riots had taken place before Konaré won and Mali was ranked as a Third Wave Democracy. Even though the new government led by Konaré proposed numerous initiatives, it is worth to mention the decentralization programme due to its deep and comprehensive features[3].

The law established at the local level obliges the provinces to hold administrative and fiscal control over the health care system, education and some parts of infrastructure. Each of the 682 provinces used to choose a council of representatives and a mayor (who holds the most power in the given region) until 1999. Although the provincial elections were postponed many times after the controversial elections of 1997, the decentralization programme seemed to succeed after all.

The Malian programme of decentralization was very ambitious, both in the realm and at the level of transferring power. Locally elected provincial councils had an obligation to collect taxes and to control the budget of three main areas: the health care system, education and development. Earlier each of these things were managed by the central authorities. The newly formed provinces have a privilege to cooperate with other provinces and regional development agencies in order to render better public service[4]. The presidential government was forced to ring the changes owing to numerous political reasons, especially because of the threat of Tuareg separatist groups in the deserted north areas of Mali. The decision of the president was a pragmatic, political answer not only to the risk of losing territorial sovereignty, but also to the political consequences of the Tuareg threats[5].

Decentralization is always seen as a tactical move but the political context plays a key role as well and is more important than a project of such a programme. Did the transfer of power to municipal administration become a prerogative of the democratic reformer or a hidden attempt to reassert the power of the central government?

Konaré started his leadership in June 1992 and the Decentralization Mission (DM) was formed six months later. A mandate of that Mission was to start, propose and simplify the process of decentralization within one year. The first action taken by the DM was to demarcate the administrative boundary of the provinces. Apart from their renaming, the DM offered small towns to group into the provinces. This process, more than other processes, extended the mission from one to three years. The actions consisted in getting a group of people together and their task was to teach Malians about de-

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[3]   J C. Seely, 'A Political Analysis of Decentralisation: Coopting Tuareg Threat in Mali', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 39. No. 3 (2001), p. 499, at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X0100369X>.

[4]   Ibid., p. 500.

[5]   R. Bernus, 'Etre Touareg au Mali', *Politique Africaine*, No. 47: *Le Mali. La Transition* (1992).

centralization. The DM was disposing neighbouring towns to come to terms with the issue of demarcating the new boundaries and was helping to choose a main, supervising town for a given province. In the urban area, neighbourhoods were grouped into the provinces. The DM required the provinces to be economically efficient, geographically-integrated, inhabited by 10 to 25 thousand people[6]. Taking into consideration some of the northern underpopulated regions and some prosperous, agricultural areas where the small micro-provinces were financially efficient, those criteria were changed. In the bottom line, at the end of 1996, 627 rural and 20 urban provinces were able to manage themselves. The new provinces were regrouped afresh into districts and these were further divided into eight regions. There was a council at each province's head with 11-45 members, depending on how the province was populated, and the council was elected every 5 years. Its task was to nominate a mayor who was supposed to serve as a provincial executive. Similar councils and executive bodies were formed at the level of districts. Each council is allowed to resolve issues. There are government officials whose main task is to monitor the state interest in every aspect, however the new law instructs to transfer the full range of competences into the areas which are supposed to be controlled by the newly formed authority organs[7].

The new local authorities responsible for executing reform programmes are glad to control the health system, education and a part of infrastructure. They collect taxes and the money is spent according to the budget plan compiled by the councils. This system is different from the previous one when local taxes had to go through Bamako first. Local authorities are also given a free hand in negotiations with entitlement agencies and in raising cash from other sources. Offices which spend development-oriented money more efficiently can be rewarded with extra financial means without fear of losing them on behalf of the central government. The new system also enabled horizontal coordination between all levels of administration and government[8].

In terms of education, the provinces became responsible for kindergartens, primary schools and also they are in charge of literacy programmes. In the scope of infrastructure, the provinces in a given region are in charge of water and energy facilities and also of the public transport, roads, communication, local markets, sporting and cultural events and tourism. However, profit sharing gained by taxes resides in the councils.

At the beginning of his term, Konaré had to come to grips with many challenges. First of all, the peace concluded with the Tuareg was still recent and unstable[9]. The president inherited a peace treaty with the Tuareg from his precursors and he had to indicate that he championed the cause of amity and integration. Second of all, the government had to drum up support from the elites in the face of numerous, necessary political changes. Subsequently, Konaré's government encountered the issue of adjust-

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[6]   J. C. Seely, 'A Political Analysis...', p. 513.

[7]   Ibid.

[8]   Ibid.

[9]   A. Rybiński, *Tuaregowie z Sahary. Tradycyjna kultura Tuaregów Kel Ahaggar na przełomie XIX i XX wieku*, Warszawa 1999, p. 42 (*Współczesna Afryka i Azja*).

ing the structures to economic aims and of rationalizing the economy. Fourthly, the president had to make citizens distinguish his initiative from those taken in the past. It was believed that this would guarantee him success. Decentralization was a calculating, political answer to all challenges and in this environment the reforms had a future.

The aim of decentralization was to fight with the "Tuareg problem", to give more autonomy to the north region and to attend to the problem of the protests of separatist groups. The Tuareg independence movement was a threat not only to the electoral success of Konaré but also to the territorial sovereignty. In May 1993, the president spoke about the "risk of civil war". From that point on, owing to better administration of the regions by the local elite, the administration in the north could satisfy some claims of the disgruntled people. Many Tuareg groups did not sign the National Pact in April 1992, but over time plenty of groups suspended their military actions and signed the settlement. Decentralization was validated and all groups declared peace until June 1995[10]. The distribution of power aimed at co-opting the groups of the Tuareg by readmitting them under the umbrella of the central government. The government handed over the administration authority to the local units and by doing that it wanted to show its allegiance to the idea of democratic distribution of power to the Tuareg groups.

The voice from before the civil war about the willingness to stop the process of decentralization betokened that not all sections of the society of Mali wanted the change. Reforms were accepted in the north and amid the rural communities but still they carried a political risk. A great deal of Mali citizens still expressed their opposition to greater administrative autonomy of the Tuareg. Decentralization had many political opponents. According to them, there was no guarantee that the newly elected members of the provinces' councils would keep the spirit of reforms and that they would serve people better than the government officials[11]. Other politicians said that the reforms could end in taking further privileges from the local authorities. With the course of time it turned out that not all of the reforms worked out; combating the threats of Tuareg separatist groups went astray.

2. THE BREAKOUT OF THE CIVIL WAR

This West African Republic has been struggling with numerous Tuareg rebels and turbulence in the northern part of the country since it regained its independence. Therefore it was in the beginning of 2012 when within two months Tuareg separatist groups of the Azawad National Liberation Movement overrun the northern part of Mali.

The portion of northern Mali (to the north of Timbuktu) claimed by the Tuareg rebel movement is now called Azawad. The name derives from the Berber word *Azawagh* and refers to a dry basin covering what is today north-western Niger, parts of north--eastern Mali and southern Algeria. It is often said that the word *Azawagh* is translated

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[10]   J. C. Seely, 'A Political Analysis...', p. 516.

[11]   Ibid., p. 518.

into a land of transhumance which is the seasonal movement of people with their live-stock between fixed summer and winter pastures[12].

Since the indigenous Tuareg population has regained its independence, Azawad is accepted to be the last territory which should be claimed as an independent country. The Tuareg were pursuing an independent country because they have long complained of being marginalized by the government which favoured sedentary agriculture. In 1960 the French adjoined Azawad to Mali.[13]

The Tuareg are nomads, the population is over 5 million and they have a very strong separatist tradition which does not allow them to revognize connections with countries governed by sub-Saharan population and to which they are subordinated due to decisions of the colonial authorities.

From the point of view of history, the claims of the Tuareg people to gaining autonomy date back to colonial times. In 1890, the French colonial forces had to check the military resistance in the north of Mali. The Tuareg spearheaded resistance to colonial rule and numerous rebellions incited especially due to the drought that took place in 1910 in today's Mali and Niger. In the late 50s, within the process of independence transformation, the Tuareg were disappointed that their separate country would not be established. The revolt in 1963-64 reflected their discontent against post-colonial governance, their desire for independence and the division among the Tuareg from Kidal. The brutal suppression of these protests by Mali's army still provokes anger in the Tuareg nation. The fathers of current commanders of separatists such as Mohamed Ag Najem, Ansar ad-Dina or Iyad Ag Ghali died in that conflict[14]. The drought occurred in northern Mali in 1970 and the government's insufficient help and violations of international aid caused another wave of anger and mass migrations to Algeria and Libya in search of work. Further Tuareg separatist rebellions took place in 1990 and again 2006. Various peace settlements, development programmes or even decentralization was not able to improve the standard of living of the Tuareg and to de-escalate their separatist claims[15].

The authorities of Algeria and Libya managed to scotch the Tuareg revolts, even though these countries are multitudinously inhabited by the rebels. Especially in Libya, Col. Muammar Gaddafi assumed the approach of supporting the Tuareg movement outside of the country in return for internal peace. In Libya the Tuareg were better accepted than in Mali, especially after Muammar Gaddafi's statement in 1982. When Col. Gaddafi announced that Libya is home and the place of origin of the Tuareg, which gives them undeniable right to return to Libya[16]. In fact the Tuareg in Libya

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[12]   W.G. Moseley, 'Mali: Azawad – the Latest African Border Dilemma', All Africa, 18 April 2012, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201204190699.html?page=4>, 27 December 2013.

[13]   Ibid.

[14]   A. Thurston, A. Lebowich, *A Handbook on Mali's 2012-2013 Crisis*, Evanston 2013, p. 9 (*Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa Working Paper*, 13-001).

[15]   Ibid.

[16]   A. Bourgeot, 'Revoltes et rebellions en pays touareg', *Afrique Contemporaine*, No. 170 (1994), p. 14.

were faced with racism and discrimination. Many of them were arrested or mistreated. They were able to have only the most inferior jobs and it was difficult for them to receive legal documents. However, many of the Tuareg choose the life of illegal immigrants instead of Libyan citizenship which will not allow them to travel abroad[17]. The Libyan army willingly recruited the Tuareg. Those expatriated men were trained not only martially but also ideologically. They were taught the identity which differed from the ethnicity and traditional political structures in consonance with the premise of "the Tuareg nation based on the mythological foundations."[18] The colonel's failure and the conflict between the African population and the Arabic majority in Libya led to the reappearance of militarized Tuareg rebels in their countries[19]. First they fought in the Libyan armed forces and then they joined separatist movements. The return of Gaddafi's soldiers caused new conflicts and demands. The reunion of the Tuareg coming back from Libya and their brothers from Tuareg Movement of Northern Mali, Ibrahim Ag Bahangi, started the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) in October 2011. A former colonel of the Libyan army, Mohammed Ag Najem, assumed leadership of the MNLA and joined the Tuareg in the region of Kidal together with his considerable armoury (the Soviet BTR-60 eight-wheeled personnel carrier, a BM-21 missile launcher and surface-to-surface missiles) and about 400 soldiers from Libya[20]. The Tuareg dignitaries, who were involved in politics and had advocated the "national peace policy" before, now started separatist actions. Many soldiers deserted from the Malian army.

Baz Lecocq from Ghent University prepared a comparison of Malian and Tuareg nationalism. Both the state of Mali and the Tuareg linked the nation with the state. The Malian political elite and the Tuareg leaders imagined that the nation had a right for political sovereignty and independence. They often mentioned the fact that their nations were independent before the colonial era. The only difference is that the Malian elite equated the Malian nation itself as connecting diverse ethnic groups that should take care of the common interest, whereas Tuareg politicians imagined the nation as homogenous striving for independence from a different nation. Thus, within the Malian state there clashed two views on the nations, having a completely different purpose[21].

In their rhetoric, the Tuareg refer to the slaughter, exaction of humanitarian aid and violations in its dispensing in 1963, 2006 and 2010. They claim that the Malian indulged in "inhumanity" using the drought in 1967, 1973, 1984 and 2010 to get rid of the people of Azawad. The Tuareg also argue that when they asked for and received the essential humanitarian aid from abroad, the government allocated it to the south of the

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[17]   B. Lecocq, *Disputed Desert. Decolonisation, Competing Nationalisms and Tuareg Rebellions in Northern Mali*, Leiden–Boston 2011, p. 208 (*Afrika-Studiecentrum Series*, 19).

[18]   A. Bourgeot, 'Revoltes et rebellions...', p. 14.

[19]   J. Kumoch, *Konsekwencje regionalne konfliktu zbrojnego w Republice Mali*, 2012, *PCSA Working Papers*, 2, at <http://www.pcsa.org.pl/publikacje/artyku%c5%82y/>, 4 January 2014.

[20]   M. Pellerin, 'La Sahel et la contagion libyenne', *Politique Etrangere*, No. 4 (2012), p. 841, at <http://dx.doi.org/10.3917/pe.124.0835>..

[21]   B. Lecocq, *Disputed Desert...*, p. 27.

country. Many researchers note that the Tuareg community was not involve in politics in independent Mali. They did not participate in elections due to the lack of interest and did not see any benefit in them. For the same reasons none of the Tuaregs leaders took an active part in elections[22].

The Tuareg claimed in their statements that over 50 years of wrong governance, corruption, and political, military and financial conspiracy endangered the existence of the Azawad population. It also jeopardized the stability of the sub-region and international peace[23].

Baz Lecocq says that "the main reason for the rebels' success is that their adversary, the Malian government and army, has "collapsed." During the fighting early this year, government forces were continually losing ground. Disillusioned with the leadership of President Amadou Toumani Touré in response to the Tuareg rebellion, army forces staged a coup d'état. The new leaders hoped that the putsch would improve the army's capacity to fight the rebels. However, the disorder in the capital only strengthened the relative power of the MNLA and the other groups operating in Azawad."[24]

On March 21, a number of military units of an army of eight thousand men from Mali took over the capital city of Bamako, recalled the upcoming presidential elections and put the outgoing president Amadou Toumani Touré under house arrest[25]. Meanwhile, within less than two months, the Tuareg took control over half of the country. The northern part was taken without any serious fights by the separatists who had been starting the rebellions before demanding independence. They were supported by the until then unknown organization Ansar Dine, often regarded as a faction of Al-Quaeda in the Islamic Maghreb[26]. It is a group of Algerian origin but today it features combatants from at least a few or so African countries, it is also suspected of having ties with Al-Quaeda. Due to the dysfunction of the central government the division of Mali took place in April/May.

It is necessary to note that the coup in Mali, contrary to stereotypical opinions explaining lack of respect for constitutional rules with specific regional conditions, happened in the country which is considered to have made the greatest – next to Senegal – progress in democratic transformation in Africa. The reasons of the military coup can be traced to two factors: the frustration of soldiers caused by the loss of the northern territory and control of smuggling routes taken over by Tuaregs[27]. The coup in Mali happened when all the Maghrebi countries were facing the consequences of the Arab Spring, which limited their regional activity. Some countries as e.g. as Tunisia passed

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[22]   Ibid., p. 35.

[23]   W. G. Moseley, 'Mali: Azawad...'

[24]   M. Dissler, 'A Mirage in the Sahara: The Fragility of Azawad', *Harvard Political Review*, 8 January 2013, at <http://harvardpolitics.com/world/a-mirage-in-the-sahara-the-fragility-of-azawad/>, 27 December 2013.

[25]   J. Kumoch, *Konsekwencje regionalne...*

[26]   Ibid., p. 3.

[27]   Ibid.

the process of political transformation, while other countries such as Algeria or Morocco did everything to defend themselves against social rebellion. Another important factor was associated with the change of government in France and the reluctance for another (after Libyan) international intervention in North Africa.

On 6th of April after several months of fighting in Northern Mali representatives of National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad declared independence of the state of Azawad in Northern Mali in a statement signed by the General Secretary of the Movement-Bilal Ag al-Sharif. MNLA called the international community to recognize this new state. The statement also announced the recognition and respect for borders of neighbouring countries. The New state was announced on an area of 850 thousand square kilometres. Timbuktu was the last town in the north in hands of government troops so when it was taken over by the MNLA they decided to announce independency. The MNLA secretary announced that the proclamation of independence took place after consultation with the representative bodies of the Tuareg[28].

What distinguishes the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) from other organizations operating in northern Mali is the fact that this movement refers to "the right of nations to self-determination". MNLA also ensured that "the new independent state of Azawad didn't want to expand their territory to southern Mali and wanted to announce [a] democratic constitution."[29] Fearing that the strong influence of Muslim fundamentalists among the Tuareg would lead to the establishment of religious law in the territory which is under the control of the MNLA they decided to ensure freedom of religion in the constitution.

The declaration of independence of Azawad was supposed to be a confirmation of a unilateral end of military action. MNLA promised to cease fighting because the Tuareg had already achieved their goal which was "to put an end to Malian occupation".[30]

The European Union, the African Union and former colonial metropolis immediately rejected the declaration of independence of Azawad.

However, the MNLA quickly felt into conflict with Islamist groups such as Ansar Dine and AQIM. the MNLA and the Islamists had completely different goals. The MNLA wanted to establish a secular, independent state but Muslims organizations urged to introduce Sharia law and to create a Muslim state.

To understand what makes Islamists groups so strong one has to trace their origins:
1) The AQIM is the oldest of Islamist organizations in the Maghreb. It comes from the insurgent Islamist movement (GIA-Armed Islamic Group) which fought against secular Algerian military government in 1990. Many soldiers of the GIA were trained in Afghanistan during the war with the Soviet Union. They learned then about the doctrine of Salafism, a kind of Islamic fundamentalism, and

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[28] 'Azawad – nowe państwo na mapie Afryki?', *Wprost*, 6 April 2012, at <http://www.wprost.pl/ar/315120/Azawad-nowe-panstwo-na-mapie-Afryki/>, 27 December 2013.

[29] Mouvement National de libération de l'Aazawad, *Déclaration d'indépendance de l'Azawad*, 6 April 2012, at <http://www.mnlamov.net/component/content/article/169-declaration-dindependance--de-lazawad.html>, 15 January 2014.

[30] Ibid.

learned the basics of the struggle against secularism, which then they brought to Maghreb. After that Al-Qaeda of the Islamic Maghreb broke away from the GIA and since then is a part of a larger movement of Al-Qaeda. The MUJAO had broken away from the AQIM at the end of 2011, setting the expansion of Islam in Africa as its goal[31].

2) Ansar Dine is composed of natives and the goals of its leader Iyad Ag-Ghaly are unclear. Ag Ghaly started as a Tuareg insurgent and ultimately helped negotiate a peace settlement with the Government of Mali in the 1990s. Later, as an employee of the government, he visited Saudi Arabia where he made contact with extremist groups. Gradually he changed from a person who liked alcohol and women to a devoted Muslim. During the meeting with the leaders of the Tuareg in October 2011 he offered to lead the MNLA. However, his desire to introduce Sharia law made his candidature unaccepted. It is difficult to establish whether his fight is conducted with religious or personal-political reasons[32].

Various Islamists groups are connected with it. For example, the MUJAO (Movement of Unity and Jihad in West Africa) has links with Boko Haram, another fundamentalist group operating in northern Nigeria.

On 27th June a battle took place in Gao. Armed contingents of Al-Qaeda and the MUJAO tried to assume control of the city by attacking the headquarters of the Interim State Council of Azawad, MNLA provisional government.

After the battle of Gao MNLA withdrew from major cities and started preparing to rebound territories. Members of the MNLA were afraid of trying to rebound Gao because the Islamists took dozens of the Tuareg, both civilians and members of the MNLA, into captivity. They threatened that they would kill the hostages if the MNLA attacked. After the battle in Gao on 27th June which MNLA forces, the Islamists gained the upper hand over Tuareg insurgents. Cities that were previously occupied by the MNLA such as Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu fell into the hands of Ansar Dine and its allies. In Timbuktu members of Ansar Dine destroyed the ancient tombs of Muslim scholars from the fifteenth century, acknowledging the worship of people as a violation of Sharia law. Islamists enjoyed their increasing authority. Many researchers wondered how the MNLA managed to win battles with the government but lost with Islamists groups. The success of the Tuareg rebellion was due to the weakness of the Malian state, not to the organizational or material advantage of the MNLA. But in fact the insurgents did not really strengthen their forces since the last rebellion in 2009[33]. Their weakness was exploited by Islamists.

The MNLA planned to regain power in Azawad. However, there were rumours that those Islamists movements in Azawad: MUJAO, AQIM, Boko Haram, Ansar Dine, benefit from financial support from Algeria and Qatar. The MNLA decided to

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[31]   M. Dissler, 'A Mirage...'

[32]   Ibid.

[33]   Ibid.

ask the international community for support in the fight against jihadists and to rid the country of terrorists.

Numerous movements and organizations fighting for power in Azawad and the fact that there were domestic conflicts between secular nationalists from various Islamists groups led to misinformation and misunderstanding of the situation in Mali[34].

Islamists managed to change the plans of France. Earlier French forces were too confined to logistical support and intelligence, without using ground forces. However, the French government was forced to take part in war, mobilizing the land forces, intelligence, logistical support and air forces. They also asked for the support of neighbouring countries and the entire international community.

With the arrival of soldiers from armed Islamists movements on the outskirts of Mopti, their invasion on the city of Konna and military incompetence of Malian troops, France was forced to fulfil its earlier promise and to accelerate the dispatch of troops in Mali in order to prevent Islamists from gaining Bamako. When on 11th January the armed Islamist movement reached the outskirts of Bamako French troops sent a contingent of 2,500 to support the African Standby Force. On the first day two French helicopters were shot down and two French soldiers were killed. The French were forced to withdraw combat helicopters after it turned out that the Islamists had the ability to shoot them. French troops focused on using gliders: Jaguar, Mirage, Rafael.

France gained the legitimacy of their military actions in Mali using the request of the Mali government for assistance in maintaining sovereignty in the wake of Islamist attacks. It was also supported by United Nations, which issued resolution 2085 of 12th December 2012. The resolution facilitated the establishment of an international force to assist Mali in the fight or to regain the northern part of country. Another justification was to prevent the occurrence of the Salafists operations zone which could become a threat to the region and international community[35].

The French intervention in Mali was associated with the protection of French interests in the region and an attempt to promote French presence in this part of Africa in reference to the colonial past. This region is important for France because of the mineral resources in Mali. Significant deposits of oil, gas and minerals located near the Algerian border are in the area of French interests because they are close to their deposits exposed in Mauritania. Explaining the intervention, President Francois Hollande said that France did not have any alternative and had to intervene in order to prevent the creation of a state dominated by terrorists who could affect the safety France and other western countries. The collapse of the state and the inability of Malian armed forces to defend the country and to stop the separatists and Islamists combined with the lack of action on the part of African troops forced France to act with the consent of the international community including Russia, China and the regional actors. The legality of the French intervention was not challenged ever because France was obliged to respond to the request of the interim president of Mali for support and intervention in order

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[34]   Ibid.

[35]   Ibid.

to end the crisis, although the interim president did not have a democratic mandate of any kind. France sent a total of 4,000 soldiers and a well-equipped air force, which won the support of 6,000 ECOWAS soldiers involved in African-led International Support Mission to Mali. Moreover, other key players such as the United Kingdom, Belgium, Canada and the United States provided military support, logistics and intelligence[36].

President Hollande's decision to intervene in Mali had a positive impact on the social support for him and on the image of France in the international area. During the first year of his reign president Hollande was criticized for his too gentle way of governing. The French intervention in Mali had helped to improve the image of the president.

President Hollande declared that the one and only goal of France was to fight the terrorists, what seems a bit controversial. Many researchers believe that the real goal was to protect the French economic interests in Mali and especially in neighbouring Niger[37]. The spread of the conflict to Niger could have serious consequences for French interests. France runs a significant mining business in Niger, they import uranium from Niger to ensure France's energy security.

Regaining the region of Mopti from Islamists was the main aim of the French intervention called operation "Serval". French forces helped Malian, Chadian and ECOWAS forces to regain the biggest cities of northern Mali in January. After that they focused on ensuring security in the northern part of the country.

In February 2013, most cities had already been taken over from the hands of rebels by the French and Malian army. The first stage of the French military intervention was characterized by quick regaining of cities. It was followed by a series of guerrilla attacks made by Islamist militants including the first suicide bombing in the history of Mali which took place on 8th February 2013 in Gao. Foreign ministers of the European Union on 18th February approved the deployment of military training mission in Mali (EUTM – European Union Training Mission in Mali). The aim of this mission was training and assistance in the reorganization of Malian army. Once it was accepted, the mission was to be attended by approximately 200 military instructors and would last 15 months[38]. Military action resulted in rapid regaining of the strategic position. It seemed that ensuring stability in the country would be more difficult.

In February during his visit to Mali president Hollande presented a plan for the withdrawal of French troops. In April parts of French troops started retreating and they had being replaced by the forces of ECOWAS whose aim was to help Malian troops in maintaining security and stability. It seemed that France had achieved all the direct and short-term goals such as: preventing the acquisition of Bamako by Islamists and the creation of a religious state, ending the secessionist uprising in northern Mali and assisting government of Mali to restore control and sovereignty over territories. This

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[36]   S. Elischer, 'After Mali Comes Niger; West Africa's Problems Migrate East', *Foreign Affairs*, 12 February 2013, at < https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/mali/2013-02-12/after-mali-comes-niger>, 21 August 2013.

[37]   Ibid.

[38]   Ibid.

short-term success of the French intervention led to calls from France to deploy African troops and the UN peacekeeping force to replace the French forces. On 18th June Malian authorities failed to sign an agreement with Tuareg separatists. However, the immediate ceasefire was announced. Rebels agreed to hand over control of the town of Kidal, the last town which was previously entirely subordinated to them. The Malian army with the approval of the Tuareg according to the agreement are stationed in the northern part of country. To do this a committee consisting of eight Tuareg members and government representatives was set up. The committee was also composed of six members of the international organizations involved in the resolution of the conflict. The goal of this committee was to develop transfer of control of the Azawad to Malian military security forces within 10 days[39]. Improving security has led to announcement by Malian government of tge return of democratic and constitutional rules by holding the presidential elections on 7th July 2013.

3. MALI AFTER THE CIVIL WAR

On 7th July 2013 the presidential elections were held. During the elections there were news about gradual stabilization of the country and the return of people who emigrated from Mali during the military coup and uprising that shook the country more than a year ago. Malians are slowly returning from areas of Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger. Just over 8,000 returning people had been registered in the regions of Gao, Mopti and Timbuktu between 25th June and 12 July 2013[40]. It was the most significant number of returnees since the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs began to prepare such reports.

In Mali there were still many traces of the war. Robberies occurred frequently, a sense of mistrust was common but less violence was reported in August since April 2013. The active presence of the army, the government and the local administration encourage people to return. More than 175,000 Malian citizens in 2013 were still refugees in neighbouring countries and 353,000 people were still displaced because of the coup of March 2012[41]. Neither the state nor the UN agencies were trying to encourage Malians to return but rather to meet their immediate needs, such as providing food. International organizations reported a high degree of malnutrition in the region of Gao and the situation was likely to worsen with the large number of returning people.

In the beginning of the year 2013 the crisis in Mali had forced up to 300,000 people (other sources say 400,000) into exile, as announced by the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and Displaced People Monitoring Center. Among these 300,000 people 200,000 to 230,000 were displaced within Mali, 40,000 in Bur-

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[39]   Ibid.

[40]   'Malian Refugees Trickling Back Home', All Africa, 26 July 2013, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201307291032.html?aa_source=useful-column>, 17 August 2013.

[41]   Ibid.

kina Faso and 50,000 in Niger[42]. Many people had also fled to Mauritania where more than 70,000 were in the camp Mbera in April 2013 as the Doctors without Borders reported[43]. An unknown number of people fled to Algeria and other countries in region. Those who had been displaced are living in terrible conditions. The International Committee of the Red Cross announced that the displaced people who are currently located northeast of Mali were suffering from lack of food and water.

Along with the elections in Mali there is a real hope for change, the government had plans to allow voting in the neighbouring countries. Reasons for returning in addition to the desire to participate in the elections were to see what happened to Mali, and to find if it was possible to receive assistance from international organizations. However, emigrants suffered from the lack of adequate food and they needed help to rebuild their homes. Children often had the problem of coming back to schools and regional economy which had been affected by the unrest was not able to provide an adequate standard of living for the returning population.

The first elections in Mali since the coup in March 2012 aimed to show the international community the return of Mali to democracy. The Electoral Commission reported a few minor problems in the conduct of the vote but no manifestations of violence in the northern part of the country during the elections.

Since the morning, long queues lined up before the electoral commissions. There were 27 candidates reported but Ibrahim Boubacar Keita was the favourite, predicted that he would even reach an overwhelming majority of votes[44]. Elections were held under the observation of the European Union and the United Nations and the turnout was 50%. Reasons for the low turnout were not only an insufficient number of ballots but also intimidation on the part of the MNLA. Youth supporters of MNLA protested against electoral commission in Kidal region. Despite the fact that in the region of Azawad still dominant forces are MNLA and the High Council for Unity of Azawad (HCUA) electoral commissions were opened and protected. Although the Tuareg approached voting unfavourably they announced that they would promote the idea of peaceful elections. The Malian authorities reported that the Tuareg had kept their word[45]. In the first round of elections none of candidates won the required 50% of the votes, a second round were scheduled for 11th of August 2013. Two candidates were taking part in the second round: former Prime Minister Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta (40% in the first round) and former finance minister Soumaïla Cissé[46]. The second round was won by Ibrahim Boubacar Keira after the resignation of Soumaïla Cissé.

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[42]   M. Jajali, 'Tuareg Migration: A Critical Component of Crisis in the Sahel', MPI, 30 May 2013, at <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/tuareg-migration-critical-component-crisis-sahel>, 17 May 2014.

[43]   Doctors without Borders, *Mali Healthcare in Crisis – 2012 Annual Report*, at <http://www.doctor-swithoutborders.org/country-region/mali>, 19 January 2014.

[44]   'Mali: Peaceful Presidential Election in Mali', All Africa, 29 July 2013, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201307291394.html>, 17 August 2013.

[45]   Ibid.

[46]   'Mali: Keita Strengthens in Mali Presidency Bid', All Africa, 30 July 2013, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201307310138.html>, 18 August 2013.

   Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta was faced with the difficult task of pulling the country out of the crisis. Referred to as IBK, Keïta is popular especially in southern Mali and in the capital. In the first round of elections he won by an overwhelming majority in all the districts in the area of Bamako. Supported especially by young people, he has a reputation of being fair and equitable, he enjoys trust as a person who can improve the situation in the country. Keïta was a prime minister from 1994 to 2002 and a spokesman for parliament from 2002 to 2007[47]. Before that he studied history and international relations at the University of Dakar and at the Sorbonne. After graduation he worked in the French think tanks and NGOs. During the democratic transition in Mali in 1990 he supported president Alpha Oumar Konaré, serving as his spokesman. Firstly, we was appointed ambassador to Ivory Coast, the Minister of Foreign Affairs (1993-1994) and later held the position of prime minister. Keïta took part in the presidential elections twice. He also has good contacts with foreign authorities. He is well known in the European Union and among Malian donors. This knowledge may be helpful more than ever because after the coup in March 2012 the economy is stagnant and many foreign investments were stopped, what was the reason for the European Union to grant Mali with 520 million dollar aid in 2013-2014[48]. Mali really needs this money to return to the path of development. Many citizens hope for more, they want a permanent peace with the MNLA, on the list of priorities there is also a stronger army.

   The state can be also enriched thanks to the contract signed in 2013 for the production of oil in the Taoudeni basin which extends from Mauritania to Algeria through Mali. Czech company New Catalyst Investment is to invest 51,7 million Euros in exploration in the Malian part of the basin. The Irish Company Circle Oil will allocate 7,7 million in another part of the Malian Taoudeni basin[49]. It is believed that attracting investment is an important step to ensure peace and stability in the region. According to a political analyst from Mauritania – Ould Habib, "Mali is in the moment of being in the spotlight of foreign corporations but most companies interested in the region are afraid to invest in it because of the safety reasons. Perhaps the Malian government realized that due to the large international interest in fight against terrorism Mali has the ability to draw attention and to attract investments as soon as stability is restored."[50] The country is becoming stable due to the fact that the Tuareg lean towards an agreement with the government. Consent requires that local communities will receive a part in the management of natural resources. A proposal of employing the Tuareg in the protection of oil installation had appeared. Money can help fight violence and begin of a string of investments in the Taoudeni basin, which will have an impact on economic growth, increasing the income of residents and protecting the work of young people. It can also affect better cooperation between Mauritania, Algeria, Mali and Niger – four countries each of which have to deal with terrorism.

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[47]   Ibid.

[48]   Ibid.

[49]   J. Oumar, 'West Africa: Mali Energy Deals May Strengthen Sahel', All Africa, 19 August 2013, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201308200308.html>, 8 September 2013.

[50]   Ibid.

The main challenges which Mali faced after the elections were the solution of difficult security problems in Northern Mali, including the armed Tuareg groups, as well as Arab and Songhai militants. In this regard, the national dialogue should cover the following topics: administration in northern regions, the strategy for regional and local integrated development, reorganization of the defence, security forces and the socio--economic programs related to disbarment, demobilization and reintegration of armed groups in northern Mali[51]. It is also necessary to improve administrative, economic and political governance, addressing the issue of refugees and their resettlement, protection of human rights and justice. President Keïta also planned to convene a national conference on northern Mali. This conference would be a prelude to negotiations on a final peace agreement. Another important task is to continue the introduction of democratic institutions, including the renewal of the National Assembly. The aim is also to achieve economic recovery, which in addition to the international community support is also dependent on the ability of the new government to create the conditions for development of economy also in peripheral areas. It is also important for the future to communicate with the opposition and to minimize the risk of protests and uprisings during the parliamentary elections[52].

4. THE IMPACT OF THE CRISIS IN MALI ON NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

It is a common fact that each country of the Sahel is a project under constant construction. Malian neighbours must endeavour if they do not want to cope with the same problems as Mali. Without a willingness on the part of three or four strong regional players to take urgent action to make cooperation with its neighbours closer, there is a concern that the management in the region may cease to be a regional issue and will become an international problem. In the Sahel as in any other region of the world security is closely related to the external political events.

Boko Haram continues its activity in Nigeria but also in neighbouring countries. The situation in Libya is still unstable; there is a strong conflict between the Tuareg and the Arabs. The passivity of Algerian diplomacy leads to its isolation. All these factors contribute to the activities of Islamist groups.

Algeria

Islamist groups in Mali were serious threats to the security of Algeria because most of them were organized at the time of the Algerian civil war in the 1990s. Islamists set up training and logistical bases in mountainous regions of Ageulhok and Tessalit near the

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[51] Institute for Security Studies (Tshwane/Pretoria), 'Mali's Post Elections Challenges', All Africa, 4 September 2013, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201309041024.html>, 9 September 2013.

[52] Ibid.

Algerian border. Therefore, it did not seem strange that with the outbreak of the crisis in Mali the Algerian government opposed the military intervention in Mali because of fear of escalation of terrorist insurgency and possible destabilization of areas of Algeria[53]. The fear that armed Muslim rebels would retreat towards the border had become a major security problem of Algeria. Therefore, at the beginning of the crisis Algeria closed the border with Mali. These fears seemed justified as armed Islamists were fleeing the French air raids on Timbuktu and Gao by retreating into the mountains near the town of Kidal at the Algerian border. The anxiety of Algerian authorities became justified during the attack of Islamic extremists at the Amenas refinery. Kidnapping and murder of hostages supposed to be retaliation for the French intervention in Mali. The taking of hostages in Algeria led international key actors such as the United Kingdom to become more involved in the fight against terrorism and extremism. Two years of unrest in the Sahel have shown the scale of Algerian government's problems with the adaptation to changes in regional and international politics. Without a clear vision of more realistic, geostrategic strategy, the position of Algeria is the subject of speculation. Some Algerian neighbours believe that during this double game Algeria firstly wants to keep the internal state of the terrorist threat which is to discourage citizens to protest modelled on the Arab Spring and secondly, it wants to secure a supply of external funds to finance the military. Diplomacy which was once a pillar of Algerian prestige in Africa became obsolete in the face of today's challenges. The old elites are ignoring the effects of globalization and the way in which Arab and Tuareg uprisings radically changed realities of the region. Algerian authorities are reluctant to accept the new regional balance and thus they were unable to take advantage and fill the gap that was created after the elimination of Gaddafi[54].

Niger

The crisis in Mali has a direct impact on the Niger, where the same problem was the influx of armed Tuareg and Islamists from Libya. Niger troops involved in the ECOWAS intervention in Mali which aimed to stabilize the situation in Mali before the crisis would move abroad from Niger. The main concern of the authorities of Niger came not only out of fear that the influx of separatists from Mali would worsen the tense situation with Niger's Tuareg community but also out of fear that Muslim militants could use the territory of Niger to carry out guerrilla attacks against French forces in Mali and West Africa. There were numerous indications that the crisis in Mali could move on to Niger, which has a similar internal situation as Mali. However, it seemed doubtful that France would allow Niger to fall into such a chaos as Mali because of its strategic importance for the French energy security. On the other hand, many researchers thought

[53]   J. Keenan, 'Mali Is Not Another African War', *New African*, No. 524 (2013), pp. 12-15.

[54]   C. Raleigh, C. Dowd, 'Governance and Conflict in the Sahel's "Ungoverned Space"', *Stability. International Journal of Security & Development*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2013), p. 11, at <http://doi.org/10.5334/sta.bs>.

that the crisis in Mali would not repeat in Niger where the government took demands of the Tuareg into account[55]. In Niger the Tuareg have been more involved in shaping the political and economic reality of the country. Encouraged by the situation in Mali, Niger increased military spending to improve its security. However, this emphasis on security leads to the relocation of resources at the expense of social investments.

Libya

During the first half of 2013 former Tuareg insurgents from Niger moved to the borderland between Libya and Niger what was then done by several members of extremists groups fleeing from northern Mali[56] Since Gaddafi's fall southern Libya has become an integral part of problematic issues of security in the Sahel and Sahara. There is a variety of forces fighting to control southern Libya. Many of them are a nominal part of emerging security system but they really pursue their own interests and their members are recruited from various ethnic and tribal groups. These individuals are officially entrusted with the task of controlling the borders. However, they often engage in lucrative cross-border activities. Smuggling drugs, weapons, alcohol, subsidized goods is flourishing and northern Niger has became an important transit area. Armed groups organize themselves in southern Libya or use these as a place of training. The significance of the number of links between groups was demonstrated during the attack on the pipeline in Amenas in southern Algeria in January 2013. Several reports suggested that the attackers came from northern Mali, northern Niger and southern Libya where they gained weapons.

The influx of armed militants caused a difficult situation in Libya. Now two governments (in Tripoli and other one in the east) are fighting to gain control over the whole country. As Leon Bernardino, U.N. Special Representative and Head of United Nations Support Mission in Libya announced on 28th May 2015, stated, Libya is close to economic collapse due to the conflict between two rival factions[57]. The tough situation in Libya made this country's coast a jumping off point for migrants' travels through the Mediterranean Sea.

Nigeria

Although Nigeria does not have a border with Mali, it is one of the countries in the region which is seriously affected by the Malian crisis. The Nigerian government perceived the crisis in Mali as a national security problem. Nigeria is currently struggling with Muslim extremist groups, notably the Boko Haram. It is believed that members of

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[55]   W. Lacher, 'The Malian Crisis and the Challenge of Regional Security Cooperation', *Stability. International Journal of Security & Development*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2013), p. 4, at <http://doi.org/10.5334/sta.bg>.

[56]   Ibid.

[57]   A. Croft, 'Libya on Verge of Economic Collapse. U.N. Envoy Warns', Reuters, 28 May 2015, at <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/05/28/uk-libya-security-talks-idUKKBN0OD29J20150528>, 30 June 2015.

AQIM have trained members of Boko Haram in northern Mali. The Nigerian initiative to deploy forces in the African-led International Support Mission to Mali was supposed to be a pre-emptive intervention to break the extremists in Mali and to prevent them from granting their support for the Boko Haram[58]. The Government of Nigeria like most Western countries and Malian neighbours was afraid of the establishment of a terrorist state in Mali and the base from where the terrorists would attack Nigeria and threaten the unity of the internally divided country.

Unfortunately, it happened, Boko Haram became really strong and poses a direct threat to the unity of Nigeria which in April 2014 cost already more than 4,000 lives and caused internal migration of about half a million. It also devastated the economy in the northeastern part of the country and ruined hundreds of government buildings[59].

5. THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Nowadays, Mali is at the turning point in its history. With the leadership of democratically elected president and government it starts a long and laborious process of the reconstruction.

The elections on August 11 in 2013 lived up to the expectations of the Malian and external actors about the legal transit of power. President Keïta has to face many challenges. The biggest problems concern four hundred thousand displaced Malian people, conducting permanent peace with MNLA, negotiations about the role of Islam in the public life and getting the credit from legitimate government among all the Malians. Additionally, the new government has to come face to face with the terrible state of national economy and with the problem of corruption which led to citizens' loss of faith in the public institutions upon crisis.

Even if the effort of the European Union and United States repays and the Malian army will brace it to deal with domestic problems, it will not be able to handle the problems arisen over an international location. And those regard fighting with enormous network of political, military and economic ties. As it is public knowledge, senior military officers and soldiers are connected with organized crime[60]. The drug trafficking business still flourishes in the neighbouring countries of Mauritania and Niger. In both of these countries, groups of drug dealers are very influential. Mali is a transit area of marijuana and soft drugs. Crime network groups of the Moroccan, the Sahrawi, the Algerian and the Libyan people are involved in the drug traffic in Mali as well.

There are many trans-Saharan drug trafficking and smuggling routes within the Sahel. The most popular smuggling routes lead to seaside resorts – through Guinea and

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[58] *Curbing Violence in Nigeria (II): The Boko Haram Insurgency*, Africa Report, No. 216, International Crisis Group, 3 April 2014, at <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/west-africa/nigeria/216-curbing-violence-in-nigeria-ii-the-boko-haram-insurgency.aspx>, 8 April 2014.

[59] Ibid.

[60] W. Lacher, *Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region*, Washington, D. C. 2012 (*Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Working Papers*).

Mauritania, northern Mali, Algeria, Libya and Egypt all the way to Europe[61]. Drug trafficking in each of those countries is linked with the great network of drivers and the service that use the protection of civil and military power.

Some of the international key players still send their economic and military support in order to fight against drug trafficking, even though those who are involved are unwilling or unable to deal with the problem. For instance, growing international response to the problems in Mali led to dramatic growth of organized crime[62]. It is crucial for the international community to estimate if the country is ready to take up that help before it is sent.

International support with empowering national institutions' suitability is not enough. State entities must be ready to thwart the actions of drug traffickers or gun-runners and to control an illegal cash flow. Without government determination, all the external efforts to equip the executive and its army, police or the judiciary could backfire. It is believed that a country which lacks suitable institutions but has a leader who is determined to combat terrorism and organized crime is the best candidate to build future potential[63].

The French actions to establish military control in the north of Mali and to drive jihadists and armoured criminal away from their lairs in Ifoghas and in Tigharghar mountains will not extirpate the endangerment in Mali. Even though Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and its allies were defeated in Mali, the main threats will sustain as long as the government will not show the volition to pre-empt the terrorist and criminal activity.

Due to the crisis in Mali new possibilities to recruit the new members to terrorist groups and to run guns appeared after the civil war. The biggest concerns grow over the refugee camps in the neighbouring states. In April 2013, Secretary General of the United Nations advised caution about the radicalism of the Sahrawi people in the refugee camps located in north-western Algeria which are under Polisario control[64]. It was the first time for the senior office of the United Nations to forewarn against something that has been mentioned for many years by the experts who call those camps from Western Sahara a "ticking bomb". The same concerns apply to the refugee camps in Mauritania and Niger where Malian refugees live in terrible conditions. Organized crime and extremist groups will still use the weakness of countries, frozen conflicts such as in Western Sahara and lack of regional cooperation in terms of state security.

Another important threat applies to how the radicalism of mood influences the local stability. Extreme ideologies imported from the international Islamic organizations

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61   *Mali: sécuriser, dialoguer et réformer en profondeur*, Rapport Afrique, No. 201, International Crisis Group, 11 April 2013, at <http://www.crisisgroup.org/fr/regions/afrique/afrique-de-louest/mali/201-mali-security-dialogue-and-meaningful-reform.aspx>.

62   W. Lacher, *Organized Crime...*

63   L. Simon, A. Mattelaer, A. Hadfield, *A Coherent EU Strategy for the Sahel*, European Parliament, May 2011.

64   A. Hirsch, 'Mali Conflict Could Spill Over into Western Sahara, Warns Ban Ki-moon', *Guardian*, 9 April 2013.

which justify armoured warfare permeate into society and lead to radicalization of religion discourse and to extremism[65]. Drug trafficking and the local network of terrorist groups has its influence on the growing popularity of the Islamic ideologies within the country. It is necessary to recognise not only the determining factors of radicalization but also the reasons which led the extremist groups to settle in northern Mali. What impelled the young Malian men not only from the Tuareg tribes but also the Fula or Songhai people to join the MUJAO? Plenty of them do it obviously for the financial or local reasons (diverse society, no access to education, common sense of injustice). Others join the terrorist groups out of strictly ideological inducements[66]. For the same reasons, Tuareg rebels willingly join the Ansar ad Din group. Many of them believe that only Salafi ideology can unite various Tuareg clans, sundry ethnic groups or even the whole Mali. The leader of Ansar ad-Din, Iyad ag Ghaly, proposed: "an alternative to both the Malian nation-state, riddled with corruption and nepotism, and the political ideal of Tuareg independence, which so far has been unable to overcome the divisive clan structures within Tuareg society."[67] Such words sounded compelling before the civil war and will for sure draw men to join extremist groups after it. Therefore, in order to provide security development in Mali, the first step is to understand who seeks to join these violent extremist movements and why.

The crisis in Mali and damage which armoured Islamic groups caused to the Malian community gives the political leaders an opportunity to marginalise extremists and to discredit their narrations and ideologies.[68] Applying repression against the extremists would be unsuccessful in the long run and could give the voice to frustration and discontent. The bigger the gulf between the expectations of the youth and the willingness of the government to meet them, the higher the risk that those young people will turn to various crime groups which draw them with the vision of acquiring some basic goods.

The roots of the crisis in Mali are deep and complex. The internal causes of instability include weakness of institutions, corruption, poverty and obvious society differentials. The authorities have not consulted the national identity and that led to deeper fragmentation of the society. What is more, that split is worsening by the legacies of past abuses and military actions. Yet it seems unfair to blame Bamako for conducting a discriminatory policy against northern Mali and especially against the Tuareg[69]. A few governmental, economic projects (primarily in terms of infrastructure) were northbound, but their impact on the population's life standards was limited due to gross negligence in the area of fund management, lack of responsibility and expanding

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[65] B. Lecocq et al., 'One Hippopotamus and Eight Blind Analysts: A Multivocal Analysis of the 2012 Political Crisis in the Divided Republic of Mali', *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 40, No. 137 (2013), at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2013.799063>.

[66] G. de Kerchove, 'Au Sahel, la tâche est immense', *Le Télégramme*, 26 January 2013.

[67] B. Lecocq et al., 'One Hippopotamus...'.

[68] *Mali: sécuriser...*

[69] Ibid.

local corruption. Powerful local elites, including the Tuareg were complicit in inaccurate fund managing and in embezzlement of financial funds allocated to the region by the authorities[70].

Decentralization and local community willingness to govern were supposed to be an answer to the internal conflicts and an example of good governance, but they led to high level of corruption instead. According to some of the researchers, it is not an exaggeration to claim that electing the Tuareg to the local authorities contributed to the criminalization and delegitimiszation of the state[71]. Today's challenge is to reduce corruption and improve the redistribution of public goods. The crisis of 2012-2013 showed that the democracy in Mali was built on unreliable foundations and exposed the greatest challenges which the government has to face. In order to stabilize the country, the concrete anti-corruption measures must be taken as well as actions against human rights abuse and legal empowerment. The authorities must force Malian society, especially the elites, to take responsibility for good governance which would avert future crisis.

There is a threat that army militarization in the northern Mali can reassert the past state of affairs. Supporting the political reconciliation and sending signals to the society that peaceful cohabitation between all the northern communities is in fact possible, should be a priority. The process of reconciliation is and will be crucial for the return of hundreds of Malian refugees.

Owing to the events of May 17 in 2014, the conflict in the north of the country triggered a conflict again. Then, the anti-government protests associated with Prime Minister's visit in Kidal turned into acts of violence in which the civilians and government officials suffered. 36 people died and 87 were injured in the riots. Kidal went under MNLA control again. 20 Malian soldiers died in the fighting over control of this key location[72]. Moreover, 30 officials were taken captive and held in the governor's office until May 19 when they were released[73]. The fighting over Kidal caused mass emigration. It is estimated that 4,5 thousand people fled the city[74].

Due to the acts of violence in Kidal, on May 20 2014, special Emissary of General Secretary together with the leader of MINUSMA conveyed a message to the Security Council that certain measures must be taken to save the country from the spiral of violence.

On May 24 2014, three main Tuareg tribes signed a cease-fire agreement with the Malian government. After 4,5 hours of negotiations, three armoured groups: MNLA,

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[70]   Ibid.

[71]   W. Lacher, *Organized Crime...*

[72]   'Mali Says Around 20 Soldiers Killed in Loss of Kidal to Rebels', 22 May 2014, at <http://en.africatime.com/ghana/db/mali-says-around-20-soldiers-killed-loss-kidal-rebels>, 30 May 2014.

[73]   'Mali: FIDH and AMDH Strongly Condemn the Killings in Kidal', FIDH, 21 May 2014, at <http://www.fidh.org/en/africa/mali/15360-mali-fidh-and-amdh-strongly-condemn-the-killings-in-kidal>, 30 May 2014.

[74]   'Mali: Civilians Suffering Effects of Recent Fighting in Kidal', All Africa, 28 May 2014, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201405301263.html>, 30 May 2014.

HCUC and Arab Movement of Azawad (MAA) signed an agreement with the presence of the president of Mauritania and the leader of African Union, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziza.[75]

Parties of the Malian conflict, which were not involved in the main dialogue, allowed the drawing up of the document that was created mainly by international mediators and in part reflects the interests of mediators. Prioritizing restoration of order and stability rather than making changes that will affect the population of northern part of Mali. The agreement contained only scant mention of such important matters as access to basic social services, labour, which are main topics of the demands of the population of northern part of the country. Putting safety first obscures the need for reconstruction of basic social functions of the state[76].

A report of the International Crisis Group from 10th January 2014 warned that "the urgent need to stabilize the [security] situation should not detract from implementing meaningful governance reforms and a truly inclusive dialogue on the future of the country[77]. The authors from the International Crisis Group wrote in a report that there were also many promises regarding development and strategy of local autonomy but the Malian government aimed to persuade the leader of the Tuareg rebellion and did not concern real causes[78]. Due to International Crisis Group people should derive some sort of profit from being part of society and that unfortunately did not happen. The Malian government organized number of conferences about decentralization to alleviate Tuareg unrest about renunciation of giving more autonomy to the northern part of the country. Although, The International Crisis Group warns that: "the meetings should be more inclusive ... and result in prompt, tangible actions".[79]

Chrisitine Lagarde the head of International Monetary Fund wrote on her blog "that all sectors in Mali's economy should have access to opportunity, including in the education sector and participate in the benefits of growth." This means that development in Mali should be more inclusive and equal[80].

The president of Mali, Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, proposed the Tuareg to step back to their original positions before the acts of violence recurred on May 17 2014 but they rejected it. This means that the separatists were still in control over Kidal and Ménaka. However, both sides agreed to free the prisoners, to help United Nations and respect

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[75] Ibid.

[76] *Mali: An Imposed Peace?*, Africa Report, No. 226, International Crisis Group, 22 May 2015, at <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/west-africa/mali/226-mali-an-imposed-peace.aspx>, 24 May 2015.

[77] *Mali: Reform or Relapse*, Africa Report, No. 210, International Crisis Group, 10 January 2014, at <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/west-africa/mali/210-mali-reform-or-relapse.aspx?utm_source=mali-report&utm_medium=1&utm_campaign=mremail>, 24 May 2014.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Ch. Lagarde, 'Mali – At the Dawn of a New Year', The International Monetary Fund's global economy forum, 11 January 2014, at <http://blog-imfdirect.imf.org/2014/01/11/mali-at-the-dawn-of-a-new--year/>, 24 May 2014.

human rights, to form international commission which task is to examine the late conflict and finally to cease any acts of violence[81].

Separatist groups and the representatives of Mali's central authorities met on May 29, 2014, in Burkina Faso, during negotiations which were supposed to be the first step to restore peace in Mali. The members of MNLA agreed to meet with the president in Ouagadougou in the presence of the local mediator[82].

The fighting ended on July 24, 2014, the cease-fire was in the effect from then on. Yet, two MAA factions clashed on October 9, 2014, in Lerneb. Eventually, the MAA deviationists formed the Popular Front for the Salvation of Azawad (MPSA). On August 1, 2014, the French army of three thousand soldiers launched an operation under the codename "Barkhane", which replaced the previous Operation Serval which had lasted since the invasion in Azawad. On August 10, 2014, the French launched an air-raid against the extremists in Essakane. On August 16, 2014, two soldiers of MINUSMA died in Ber in the car-bomb attack. The peace talks in Algeria were resumed on September 1, 2014.[83] Further that month, on September, 12 Tuareg organizations signed a federal solution for Azawad. Unfortunately, in October 9, 2014 United Nations soldiers were killed in the attack on the United Nations military base. There was another event of that kind on January in which one Chadian soldier died and another was seriously wounded.

More measures should be taken to motivate the national media and civil society to promote reconciliation. The authorities in Bamako should encourage the local representatives both in the south and north to fight against violence[84].

In conclusion, the road to stability in Mali is still long and fraught with dangers. The fact that the democratic elections took place is important but will not provide quick solutions to Mali's problems. Unifying the country will require a widespread dialogue and international support. The internal security of Mali requires an international community and main local entities to harmonize their views, put great effort to fight with international terrorist groups, drug traffickers and gun smugglers.

An international interest in investments in Mali seems to be optimistic. Moreover, the global community conveys the impression of knowing how important it is for the safety of the country and the whole region to deal with the problem of Islamic groups in northern Africa. Community involvement, efficiency in concrete anti-corruption and anti-smuggling measures will be of fundamental importance to the stability of Mali and the entire Sahel region. Further passivity of the state power in reference to the issue of home rule power abuses, such as: corruption, social rejection, in-group favouritism or government corruption results in the subsequent success of extremist groups in

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[81] 'Mali: Tuareg Rebels, Govt Sign Ceasefire, Agree Peace Talks', All Africa, 24 May 2014, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201405240316.html>, 30 May 2014.

[82] A. Look, 'Mali: New President Appoints Prime Minister', All Africa, 6 September 2013, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201309070091.html>, 30 May 2014.

[83] W. Lacher, *Organized Crime*...

[84] Ibid.

the Sahel[85]. The Tuareg problem was attended to only temporarily. It is interesting how strong further claims of autonomy will be and what influence it will have for Mali and the Sahel.

The quick regeneration of Mali after such a serious crisis seems to happen owing to the previous reforms. This phenomenon is very interesting and surprising, and therefore I made an attempt to explain it by describing and analysing the details of transition in the 90's, the period before the civil war and the events of the last two years. The purpose of this article was also to show the impact the Tuareg rebellion had on unrest in neighbouring countries such as Libya, Niger, and Algeria.

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[85]   Ibid.

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