Regional Insecurity and State Weakness as Harbinger of Terrorism and Insurgency in Mali

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Von Marie-Theres Beumler

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Erstgutachter: Prof. Dr. Siegmar Schmidt

Zweitgutachter: Prof. Dr. Rainer Tetzlaff

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Marie-Theres Beumler Hamburg, den

Curriculum Vitae

Zur Person

Geburtsdatum	27.03.1987
Geburtsort	Hamburg
Nationalität	deutsch

Bildungsweg

2006	Halepaghen – Schule in Buxtehude **Abitur**
2007 – 2010	Ethnologie und Französisch Universität Hamburg **Bachelor of Arts**
2010 – 2012	Peace and Conflict Studies European Peace University Austria **Master of Arts**

Berufserfahrung

07/2012 – 07/2018	**BMVg** Offizier: Hauptmann des Heeres ZOpKomBw: Analystin islamistischer Terrorismus, Naher und Mittlerer Osten FüAkBw: Wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin und Dozentin, Fokus: Islamistischer Terrorismus, Naher und Mittlerer Osten, fragile Staatlichkeit BMVg: Stellvertretung Referenten

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Acronyms

AFISMA	African-led International Support Mission to Mali
AIS	Armée Islamique du Salut
AQ	Al Qaeda, general franchise
Al Qaeda Central	Groups' core led by the Emir al Zawahiri, based in Pakistan
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
AQAP	Al Qaeda in the Arabic Peninsula
AQI	Al Qaeda in Iraq
AQIM	Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
AU	African Union
COIN	Counter-Insurgency
CT	Counter-Terrorism
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EUTM	European Union Training Mission Mali
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FIAA	Front Islamique Arabe de l'Azawad
FIS	Front Islamique du Salut
FLN	Front de Libération Nationale
GIA	Groupe Islamique Armée
GJM	Global Jihadist Movement
GSPC	Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat
GWOT	Global War on Terror
IC	International Community
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
KFR	Kidnapping for Ransom
LIFG	Libyan Islamic Fighting Group

MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MNA	Mouvement National de l'Azawad
MNLA	Mouvement National pour la Libération du Azawad
MPLA	Mouvement Populaire pour la Libération du Azawad
MUJAO	Mouvement pour l'Unité et le Djihad en Afrique de l'Ouest
REC	Regional Economic Community

Introduction

In March 2012 a secessionist-Islamist insurgency gained momentum in Mali and quickly took control of two-thirds of the state territory. Within weeks radical Islamists, drug smugglers and rebels suddenly ruled over a territory bigger than Germany. News of the abuse of the population and the introduction of harsh Sharia law spread soon, and word got out that the Malian Army had simply abandoned the land. The general echo of the IC was surprise, a reaction that was, as this research will show, as unfunded as it was unconstructive[1]. When Malian state structures collapsed, the world watched in shock, even though the developments could have been anticipated – and prevented. Ultimately, the situation had to be resolved by international forces (most notably French troops), who are still in Mali at the time of writing (Arieff 2013a: 5; Lohmann 2012: 3; Walther and Christopoulos 2015: 514f.; Shaw 2013: 204; Qantara, Interview, 2012; L'Express, Mali, 2015; Deutscher Bundestag, MINUSMA und EUTM Mali, 2016; UN, MUNISMA, 2016; Boeke and Schuurmann 2015: 801; Chivvis 2016: 93f.).
This research will show that the developments in Mali in 2012 have been developing for a long time and could have been avoided. In doing so, it will also show why state security can never be analyzed or consolidated in an isolated manner. Instead, it is necessary to take into account regional dynamics and developments in order to find a comprehensive approach to security in individual states. Once state failure occurs, not only does the state itself fail, but the surrounding region equally failed to prevent the failure.

Weak states are a growing concern in many world regions, particularly in Africa. As international intervention often proves unsustainable for various reasons[2], the author believes that states which cannot stabilize themselves need a regional agent to support them. This regional agent should be a Regional Security Complex (RSC) as defined by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever (Buzan and Waever 2003). As the following analysis will show, Mali is a case in point. The hope is that this study will help avoid similar failures in the future by making a strong case for the establishment of RSC's.

[1] Malian citizens had already grown increasingly worried about security threats in the north of the country in 2011. The most worrisome threats were attacks perpetrated by AQIM, the spread of smuggling networks and the return of Tuareg soldiers who had fought for Gaddafi. In October 2011, the United Nations even issued a warning concerning the return of these fighters (van Vliet 2012: 129ff.).
[2] The most recent examples hereof are Operation Enduring Freedom/ the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan 2001 and Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq 2003. While international forces are still present in Afghanistan as of 2017, Operation Iraqi Freedom was one of several factors which led to the chaos in present day Iraq (BPB, das Ende der ISAF Mission in Afghanistan, 2014; The Guardian, Tony Blair is right: Without the Iraq War there would be no Islamic State, 2015).

As far as politics are concerned, the Malian democracy had been sold as a poster child a long time before 2012 (Hofbauer and Münch 2013: 8), and the IC has not been prepared to see the state fail. When the insurgency advanced, the Malian government quickly lost control over the majority of its territory. The army was driven southwards and extremists imposed their rule over several towns in northern Mali. This left a vast area completely outside state control, with corresponding possibilities for non-state actors.

While this meant instability, failure and conflict for Mali, it also threatened the entire region. Had the non-state groups remained in power, proliferation of money, weapons and smuggling items could have flourished, while border security and local economies would have been severely undermined. For the International Community (IC), this would have meant the development of an entirely uncontrolled zone, which would have offered opportunities for terrorist groups, criminal networks and other actors to gain strength. In the long run, this uncontrolled area would have threatened a growing number of states, starting with Mali's weak neighbors. Ultimately, criminal groups would have gained unprecedented leverage and power. The failure of the Malian state was thus a dangerous development, both regionally and internationally. This is why it is so important to investigate what enabled it and how it could have been prevented.

The causes for the unprecedented military advance of the insurgents, and hence for the breakdown of state institutions, were multiple. This study assumes that they originated in the weakness of the state, the weakness of the region and the strategy and capabilities of the respective non-state groups. Hence, this work seeks to explain the dynamics between the chronic weakness of the Malian state, the absence of a supranational provider of security (or Regional Security Complex) and the occupation of territory by insurgents.

The overthrow of a government and the capture of large parts of state territory require certain preconditions. According to this paper, state weakness and the absence of a Regional Security Complex are two conditions which provide a crucial predisposition for non-state groups to effect state failure. If a weak state in an equally weak or neglected region (absent of regional security structures) meets certain criteria, terrorist groups and insurgency movements of sufficient capacity can gain enough power to destabilize both state and region[3]. The internal organization and capabilities of the respective non-state groups are among the essential

[3] The establishment of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq provides another spectacular example of this (CFR, the Islamic State, 2016).

factors which enable this development, and the goal of this study is to bring these internal and external factors together to figure out how they influenced each another in the case of Mali.

Looking at the spread of violent groups in conflicted regions, Mali belongs to a number of states which have violent non-state groups operating on their territory. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and affiliated groups were neither extraordinarily powerful nor influential in their areas of operation before the insurgency in Mali began (ICG Mali: Avoiding Escalation, 2012). The assumption is therefore that these non-state groups exploited weaknesses in the Malian state and the surrounding region to gain control over parts of the Malian territory. Accordingly, structural state weakness and the weakness or absence of a Regional Security Complex provide the grounds for the development of terrorist groups and insurgent movements.

The insurgent operations in Mali are strategically significant for the entire region, and their implications can be applied in any region with similar pre-conditions. If a state in a weak region or RSC is sufficiently weak to offer certain opportunities to non-state groups, the latter might fill the power vacuum once they have the capacity to do so. This development usually creates conflict and thus significantly fuels the downward spiral of state weakness and violence. Also, it might often be too late to intervene once the downward spiral began. This means that these problems will likely continue to occur as long as reactionary policies are preferred over preventive measures.

The weaknesses of the Malian state and the assumed absence of a Regional Security Complex will be examined in the course of this research. This will serve to define indicators for state- and regional instability, which might help prevent destabilization in the future. Neither terrorist groups nor insurgency movements are unpredictable, as their ways of operating are based on organizational and structural necessities which often overlap (Howard 2010: 966). Once aware of a non-state group´s goals and strategies, action should be taken to deny the group the ability to develop sufficient insurgent quality to threaten state failure. Therefore, the analysis of the interplay between regional weakness[4], state weakness and non-state actors is also supposed to contribute to the development of early warning indicators which could help to predict and prevent state failure. To do so, this dissertation seeks to find out which factors led to the failure of the Malian state in 2012.

[4] Or the absence of Regional Security Complexes

I. Part One: Theoretical Approach, Research Design and Methodology

The first part of this dissertation is going to outline the theory used to examine the topic at hand. It will further explain why the theory is used. It will then describe the research design and the methodology. The first part concludes by giving the definitions for the most relevant terms for the context of this work.

1. Theories in International Relations

There are several theories to analyze phenomena in the field of International Relations. Among the most important schools of thought are Realism, Liberalism and Constructivism, to name only a few (Slaughter 2011; Auth 2015: 19, 157, 191).

Realism is one of the most prominent theories of International Relations, as it is close to "practical" politics (Auth 2015: 19). Realism is likely the oldest theory of International Relations and is easy to understand. For a long time, it was also the dominating theory in the field of International Relations (Schimmelfennig 2015: 66). The premise is that the world order is anarchic[5] in the sense that sovereign states do not have a higher authority that rules over them. Further, states all have the same main interest, which is to maintain their power. They develop strategies based on national interest instead of morality. Realists assume that states are rational actors and that survival is the main goal of all states, which makes security their main focus. Therefore, states behave in the way that is most conducive to their interests in order to maximize their potential gains. This means that, as states are driven by fear, means of coercive capacity are ultimately the decisive level of International Relations (Auth 2015: 21ff.; Slaughter 2011; Schimmelfennig 2015: 68, 71).

While states are the main actors for realists, Liberalism holds that groups and individuals are the main actors in International Relations. Liberalism claims that state behavior in world politics is being determined by the internal characteristics of the respective states. According to Liberalists, states do not have fixed interests, and governments act on behalf of the state and various other groups of interest. Liberalism seeks to explain the reasons for the relationships between different states. One prominent idea of Liberalism is the democratic peace theory (Auth 2015: 157f.; Slaughter 2011). Fittingly, one central idea of Liberalism is that

[5] For more on the anarchic world order, see Kenneth Waltz 1983: 102ff.

liberal orders of society and systems of governance change international politics in a positive way by fostering cooperation (Schimmelfennig 2015: 138).

Constructivism is a relatively new theory which was developed based on realist and institutionalist thoughts (Schimmelfennig 2015: 160). Like realists, constructivists believe the international system to be anarchic (Schimmelfennig 2015: 166). Constructivists assume that they need to understand the underlying facts (such as history and norms) which are the foundation of the social meaning every state assigns to variables of International Relations, like military power and trade relations. Constructivists analyze states in their context and try to include all underlying reasons for a states' behavior in their analysis. Constructivism also focuses on the interaction between states, from conflict to cooperation and coexistence. The idea is to explain why states act a certain way and why they change their behavior. Constructivists therefore emphasize the social aspects which regulate International Relations. Accordingly, structures and actors are also being interpreted in the light of cultural aspects. The decisive actors in International Relations are states, who interact with each other based on their own norms and experiences. The identities and interests of states are based on state-to-state interactions and mutual perceptions. Repeated interactions can in consequence lead to the establishment of institutions. Institutions and non-state actors are emphasized in Constructivism (Auth 2015: 191ff.; Slaughter 2011; Schimmelfennig 2015: 160f.).

A theory which is partly built on the premise of Constructivism is Regional Security Complex Theory, or RSCT. It offers a framework for the analysis of regions in the context of security (Buzan and Waever 2003: 4). RSCT promotes the idea that security issues need to be dealt with regionally, as decolonization and the end of the Cold War left more room for local states to deal with security challenges on their own. RSCT wants to enable researchers to understand these new, regional patterns of state-based security cooperation. It also wants to enable them to evaluate relationships and power balances between states on the regional and global level (Buzan and Waever 2003: 3). According to Buzan and Waever, RSCT is also comparable to neoliberalism as its regional level is complementary to the structural scheme of neoliberalism. RSCT's ideas of the distribution of power and territoriality are also close to neoliberalism (Buzan and Waever 2003: 3).

RSCT serves to understand and conceptualize the world order after the global power projection of the two (former) superpowers ended with the Cold War. RSC's are therefore expected to become principal components of international security. RSCT further serves to analyze and explain regional developments in the context of security (Buzan and Waever 2003:

3, 12, 40). Given the increasing number of weak states, the growing number of conflicts and the International Communities' (IC) inability to end these developments, the author believes that the development of Regional Security Complexes (RSC) might be part of the solution to those pressing problems. She will try to show this at the example of Mali. Hence why this dissertation uses RSCT as its theoretic basis.

2. Introducing the Theoretical Approach: Regional Security Complex Theory

Regional Security Complex Theory, or RSCT, departs from the assumption that ever since the bipolar world order ended with the end of the Cold War, declining superpower influence left more room for local states to handle their affairs. As the age of global bipolarity is over, Buzan and Waever argue that regions will gain greatly in relevance in terms of security cooperation. Therefore, Buzan and Waever generally expect RSC's to become components of international security[6] (Buzan, Waever, de Wilde 1998: 3, 9, 12).

The central thesis of RSCT is that threats travel easier over short distances than over long ones, and the combination of shared threats, responsibilities and capabilities makes neighboring states, or regions, the primary actor in terms of security[7] cooperation. In other words, regions are the primary actors dealing with security challenges, or at least they should be: "…*security interdependence is normally patterned into regionally based clusters: Security complexes*" (Buzan and Waever 2003: 4, 45). This means that security interdependence between the actors within such a complex is more intense and elaborate than security interdependence between actors inside and outside the complex. The main preconditions for the development of Regional Security Complexes are therefore the emergence of states as the main actors in terms of international security and room for regional subsystems to emerge on an international scale.

[6] As this theory concerns the international political system, it needs to be noted that Buzan defines this system as anarchic in the sense that it does not have an overarching government (Buzan 1983: 94). See also the description of Realism in part I, chapter 1.

[7] Here, security is defined in accordance with Buzan, Waever and de Wilde in the "*traditional, military-political understanding"* (Buzan, Waever, de Wilde 1998: 21) of the term. To them, security is about survival. It concerns existential threats, usually to a state or a government (Buzan, Waever, de Wilde 1998: 21). Mali is therefore a clear case, as the insurgency in 2012 threatened the state to such an extent that it was forced to call for external help. As Buzan notes, 'security' in itself is difficult to define, and he offers several definitions from other scholars in his 1983 book (Buzan 1983: 216). What is clear is that the notion of security only makes sense in reference to a particular object (see *referent object*). In this paper, this object will be the state. In this context, one of the definitions mentioned by Buzan is that "*security is 'the relative freedom from harmful threats'*" (Buzan 1983: 217), which seems a plausible, albeit short definition.
Security and security patterns are the defining terms for RSC's. While other factors such as economic issues can influence security patterns and can be analyzed in the frame of RSCT, security cooperation is the basis which forms, defines and distinguishes an RSC. RSC's are regions analyzed in the context of security, they do not depend on other understandings of the concept of regionalization (Buzan and Waever 2003: 44).

RSC's emerge and develop slowly, and because of their limited power and resources neighboring states are the main points of reference in terms of security for the great majority of states; with the very few exceptions of global powerhouses. The key to RSC-based analysis is hence to analytically distinguish between security dynamics on the global level and security dynamics on the regional level (Buzan and Waever 2003: 14).

The causes for the facilitation of a spillover of threats within specific regions are manifold. The assumption that instability and conflict cluster regionally is reinforced by Buhaug and Gleditsch, who find that ethnically motivated and separatist conflicts tend to be more contagious than others and often affect neighboring countries. While other factors also tend to influence a state's stability, they find that civil conflicts have particularly destabilizing effects on neighboring states (Buhaug and Gleditsch 2008: 225). According to both authors, cultural and ethnic ties make neighboring states more vulnerable to a spillover of conflict, and conflict in a neighboring state can tip the balance towards violence in a weak state (Buhaug and Gleditsch 2008: 230). Buhaug and Gleditsch believe that the causes for a spillover of instability are more likely to be found in factors such as shared ethnicities or economic deprivation than in geographic proximity per se (Buhaug and Gleditsch 2008: 229f.). Iqbal and Starr claim that conflicts spill over more readily in a clustering of weak or conflicting states, which makes geographic proximity a possible enabler for both state weakness and the outbreak of conflicts (Iqbal and Starr 2008: 319).

In any case, RSCT focuses on the mutual regional cooperation triggered by shared threats among neighboring states (Buzan and Waever 2003: 4), rather than on the causes for this development. Buhaug and Gleditsch find that the reasons of this neighborhood dynamic are manifold and can often be found in structural and cultural similarities between neighboring states. They also establish that armed conflict in one state appears to make its neighbors more prone to the outbreak of violence. This is echoed by Iqbal and Starr, who argue that civil war and violence are among the factors of state failure which are most likely to spill over into other states, particularly into weak ones (Buhaug and Gleditsch 2008: 230; Iqbal and Starr 2008: 325, 328).

An RSC has to consist of several states (also called actors or *units*, even though a *unit* or actor within an RSC does not have to be a state) and its structure needs four essential variables: Boundaries to distinguish one RSC from another, an *anarchic structure* referring to the

existence of at least two autonomous *units*[8] (mostly states) which belong to the RSC, a distribution of power within the RSC (*polarity*[9]) and patterns of enmity and amity between the units within an RSC, which Buzan and Waever call *social construction*[10] (Buzan and Waever 2003: 53). To form a security complex, there must be a geographically coherent pattern of security interdependence which needs to be distinguishable enough to differentiate a security complex from neighboring states. The pattern needs to be so strong and durable that criteria for inclusion and exclusion can be inferred. Therefore, when looking for an RSC, one needs to investigate the existence of such patterns and whether they are strong enough to distinguish one group of units from another or not.

The researcher needs to

a) identify whether an issue is securitized[11]
b) track the links from this issue and check in how far it affects the security of other states
c) follow these links to identify a pattern of security concerns and interdependence[12].

If an issue is securitized and patterns of security interdependence are strong enough, the investigated *units* might construct an RSC. The key to an RSC is to which extent actors are linked to each other by mutual security concerns (Buzan, Waever and de Wilde 1998: 14f., 42ff., 18; Buzan and Waever 2003: 73).

There are three ways in which an RSC can develop: It can maintain its form, it can undergo internal transformation (referring to structural changes that occur within the defined structure of the existing RSC, for instance a shift in power dynamics), and it can undergo external

[8] Buzan, Waever and de Wilde define *units* as actors of different natures who "*have standing at the higher levels*" (meaning the international system and international subsystems), such as states and transnational firms (Buzan, Waever and de Wilde 1998: 6). However, if they are strong enough, non-state actors such as transnational tribal groups can also be *units* and can equally form RSC's (Buzan and Waever 2003: 64). The levels of analysis in International Relations given by Buzan and his colleagues are *international systems, international subsystems, units, subunits* and *individuals* (Buzan, Waever and de Wilde 1998: 5f.). As Buzan noted, states are the most powerful units with regards to authority and political allegiances, and they are usually dominant in the military realm (Buzan 1983: 37). This and the fact that states are usually sovereign objects of the IC (Buzan 1983: 41) lead the author to believe that states remain the most suitable unit for analysis in the context of RSCT.

[9] Polarity refers to the fact that there is more than one great power in a system (Buzan and Waever 2003: 31).

[10] Enmity and amity can come in three forms: *Conflict formation* (interdependence is caused by fear and mutual threat perceptions), *security regime* (a regional framework based on cooperation seeking to avoid conflict, although states still see each other as potential threats) and *security community* (a tight regional integration where states no longer need to expect conflict) (Buzan and Waever 2003: 53f.; Buzan, Waever and de Wilde 1998: 12).

[11] Securitization in this context refers to the act of declaring something a security issue or threat; it is like politicizing an issue in the context of security. A specific issue is basically put on the agenda in a certain way by processes of securitization (Buzan and Waever 2003: 71f.; Buzan, Waever, de Wilde 1998: 23).

[12] Buzan, Waever and de Wilde state that a distinction between three different *units* is generally required in security analysis. *Referent objects* are objects which are threatened in their survival and have a claim to survive. *Securitizing actors* are those who declare the *referent object* as existentially threatened, and *functional actors* are those who affect the dynamics of a sector and who influence decisions with regards to security. R*eferent objects* are traditionally states (Buzan, Waever and de Wilde 1998: 36).

transformation by a change in the membership or composition of the RSC (Buzan and Waever 2003: 53).

Buzan and Waever distinguish between two different forms of RSC's; standard and centered. Standard RSC's are basically Westphalian systems which include several powers and have a security agenda. They are anarchic, which means they include at least two powers. Power distribution within a standard RSC varies between the unipolar manner (one main actor) and the multipolar manner (several main actors). Standard RSC's do not include global level powers, and security dynamics are not dominated by the most powerful actor (even though there might be one single dominant actor). The relationships between the regional powers are the core element of security policies in a standard RSC, as they set the conditions for external global power penetration of the RSC, as well as the internal power balance for the less powerful members of the RSC. Because of the absence of global powers, the distinction between internal (regional) and external (global) security dynamics are clearly defined in standard RSC's (Buzan and Waever 2003: 55ff.).

Centered RSC's, on the other hand, come in multiple forms, but security-related power is always distributed in a unipolar manner within them. Security dynamics either focus on a great power or a superpower (instead of a regional one), which will likely result in a domination of the global level power over the regional ones. Another form of centered RSC's is characterized by institutionalization, as is the case with the EU, for instance. If the most powerful actor in a centered RSC is globally oriented, regional security dynamics could be suppressed. But this might still qualify as an RSC, because the less powerful actors are still strongly linked to and interdependent of each other (Buzan and Waever 2003: 55ff.).

To sum up, centered RSC's are characterized by the fact that internal security dynamics are dominated by one or several core actors within the RSC, so that security dynamics circle around one specific center. Standard RSC's are, on the other hand, not dominated by a distinguishable core or center formed by one or several member units of the RSC. Even in case of dominance of one actor, security dynamics in standard RSC's do not focus on this actor (Buzan and Waever 2003: 55ff.).

There are different developments a region can undergo before becoming an RSC: *Pre-complexes* are regions which have sufficient mutual security relations to potentially become an RSC; yet the units are not sufficiently interconnected to actually be called RSC. The slightly further developed *proto-complexes* are regions with sufficient security interdependence to differentiate a region from its neighbors, albeit with internal regional dynamics which are too

weak to form an RSC. In their book from 2003, Buzan and Waever called West Africa the clearest example of a *proto-complex*. There are, however, also two conditions which make the formation of an RSC impossible; *overlay* and *unstructured regions*. *Overlay* refers to a situation where a great power has such strong interest in a specific region that it penetrates the region and dominates it to such an extent that regional security cooperation ceases to function. One symptom hereof is the long term stationing of foreign troops in a specific region. *Unstructured regions*, on the other hand, are multiple states that are either too weak to develop RSC's and sufficient security cooperation, or too geographically isolated to do so. So while regions are defined by the terms and conditions set by external powers in the case of *overlay*, they are defined by the absence of regional security dynamics if they are *unstructured* (Buzan and Waever 2003: 61f., 64). It is generally the interplay between power- and security dynamics and the pressure emanating from geographic proximity that leads to the development of an RSC (Buzan and Waever 2003: 45).

The regional level of security became more autonomous with decolonization and the end of the Cold War, which also made the regional level more relevant to security analysis. RSCT enables the analyst to better understand the structure of international security relations and to understand and analyze the relationships between regionalizing and globalizing trends (Buzan and Waever 2003: 1, 3f.). The idea of RSCT is to promote the regional level of analysis as the suitable level for security analysis, a field which is usually dominated by the national and the global level. As security is inherently inter-regional, a nationally oriented point of view is insufficient for analysis. As far as the global level is concerned, a holistic analysis of security issues is unrealistic, as integration among the states would prove insufficient. The regional level, on the other hand, is where links between states meet and connections are comparatively strong. Further, only very few countries have the power to project their security concerns and prerogatives onto a global scale. On the regional level, on the other hand, states interact to such a degree that their security relationships are by nature interconnected. Each RSC is strongly influenced by the fears and aspirations of its *units* and actors, and according to the founders of the theory, the regional level is the level of most frequent interaction between different states (Buzan and Waever 2003: 43). As different threats are being interpreted in the light of each other, the field of security is integrated, different issues are interconnected and what emerges is a regionally based system (Buzan and Waever 2003: 49). According to Buzan and Waever, "*the theory offers the possibility of systematically linking the study of internal conditions, relations among units in the region, relations between regions, and the interplay*

of regional dynamics with globally acting powers. It also provides some structural logic, most notably the hypothesis that regional patterns of conflict shape the lines of intervention by global level powers. Other things being equal, the expectation is that outside powers will be drawn into a region along the lines of rivalry existing within it" (Buzan and Waever 2003: 52). The region is the body where security between states or actors is interlinked to such a degree that their individual security situations cannot be evaluated independently from each other. In the future, the region will be the basis for clusters in which most securitization and de-securitization processes in the international system will manifest themselves. These clusters will in turn be durable and distinct from (de-)securitization processes on the global level (Buzan and Waever 2003: 43f.).

Within an RSC, one can find so-called *subcomplexes*, which are to be understood as "smaller" RSC's that are embedded in a larger one (the actual RSC). While their mutual patterns of security are distinct from the RSC they belong to, they still remain interconnected to the wider security patterns of their RSC. This also limits the probability of overlay between different RSC's. A prominent example hereof is the Middle East, where the Levant and the Gulf would each be *subcomplexes* (Buzan and Waever 2003: 51).

There is an ongoing debate about whether or not RSC's are mutually exclusive, and Buzan and Waever believe they are. In their view, RSC's are distinguished from global level powers because they occupy a different level of analysis, and they can be distinguished from each other by the different levels of security interconnectedness[13]. Any anomalies or doubts of this concept are intended to be explained by RSCT. As mentioned above, RSCT explains external involvement in the terms of *penetration* or *overlay*. Border issues can be explained by an ongoing transformation of the RSC, driven by either internal or external factors. Based on the assumption that RSC's are systems in which most security interaction is internal, it follows that

[13] Buzan and Waever hold that RSC's are mutually exclusive, while other researchers disagree with this notion. The author finds it difficult to determine whether or not RSC's are mutually exclusive. If the assumption is that security relations and cooperation within RSC's are by nature institutionalized, it can indeed be inferred that RSC's are mutually exclusive. If this is not the assumption, a lack of exclusiveness can always be explained by an ongoing transformation, for instance. Other concepts to explain a perceived lack of mutual exclusiveness are *penetration* and *overlay* (Buzan and Waever 2003: 48f.). While these concepts offer sound explanations, the author is not sure whether they automatically lead to mutual exclusiveness. However, it does make sense to assume that any particular state (maybe with the exception of global level powers) would have one main region to cooperate with and refer to in terms of security. Especially so because, as explained above, actors within an RSC will be most concerned about any possible involvement of other internal actors with external ones. This is why the members of any given RSC will likely disapprove of extensive cooperation with actors from another RSC.
It is, in any case, best to leave this particular question to those who initially raised it, as they will be the most qualified to answer it, especially because the question of mutual exclusiveness is a matter of detail. No matter in which way this issue would be resolved, it would not devaluate the concept and validity of RSCT as such. Neither would it affect the usefulness of the theory for this study.

internal actors fear their neighbors' involvement with external actors, which is why borders between regions are often zones of weak security interaction or occupied by an *insulator*. The concept of *insulators* is specific to RSCT and refers to a location where larger regional security dynamics stand back to back; not to be confused with a buffer-zone. While a buffer-zone exists within an RSC, where it keeps the powers within the RSC apart, *insulators* separate different RSC's from each other as they are zones of indifference between several RSC's (Buzan and Waever 2003: 41, 48f., 53, 483).

According to this definition of mutually exclusive RSC's, Mali would qualify as an insulator state, which is also the conclusion of Buzan and Waever (Buzan and Waever 2003: 230).

2.1. Regional Security Complex Theory and the International Community

One essential hallmark of RSCT is the fact that in terms of security only few states are global players. For the vast majority of states, security and security cooperation are defined in their immediate neighborhood, as are security threats (Buzan and Waever 2003: 14). Hence, security regions are subsystems in which most of the security interaction is internal, meaning that states mostly form alliances with other actors inside their region (Buzan and Waever 2003: 41)[14].

Actors in an RSC will have more interactions and intense relationships with each other than with actors outside their Regional Security Complex. Even though intervention by an external actor might occur and influence the security complex, the actors within the complex will operate according to their own dynamics and remain more dependent of each other than of any third actor (Buzan and Waever 2003: 41, 43). Buzan and Waever therefore point out that each Regional Security Complex possesses a certain degree of autonomy from the policies of external actors (Buzan and Waever 2003: 47).

As implied before, security complexes are regions defined by their patterns of securitization and security cooperation, not by social or cultural criteria (Buzan and Waever 2003: 71f.).

In the words of the authors, RSC's are "*regions as seen through the lens of security*" or "*a set of units whose major processes of securitization, desecuritization, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another*" (Buzan and Waever 2003: 44). They are therefore not necessarily regions in a

[14] A possible exception from the general pattern of a regional focus, as opposed to a global focus, is the Global War on Terror (GWOT) after 9/11, which was mainly conducted by today's only remaining superpower, the USA. While only few states maintain a capacity to engage globally, the majority of states concentrate on their neighborhood due to a limitation of means or interest.

geographic sense. Instead, they are strongly connected by mutual security concerns and policies. Regional Security Complexes must be independent in terms of security, which means that they have a stake in each other's stability and they must be able to establish security cooperation and distinguish themselves from other Regional Security Complexes. The definition of an RSC is therefore completely dependent upon the security perception and security cooperation of states and can be subject to changes. The argument goes that most clusters of interstate security are ultimately territorially based, with international terrorism as an exception. Further, Regional Security Complexes can be constituted by states and non-state actors alike, hence why Buzan and Waever refer to *units* instead of "states" in their definition (Buzan and Waever 2003: 44). It can be inferred from the description of Regional Security Complexes that the latter develop and cultivate a sort of "security culture" and security practice, which would refer to the internal interactions, interdependencies and patterns of each Regional Security Complex, and would also serve to distinguish them from other RSC's.

Buzan and Waever distinguish between three categories of states which are relevant for RSCT: Global superpowers, which are traditionally very few and have significant influence on other states on a global scale. Great powers, which are not as powerful as global superpowers but whose influence does exceed their region, and regional powers, which exert influence within their region and are more numerous than superpowers. Superpowers possess powerful military, political and economic means, they must exercise their global political and military reach and they must not only see themselves as a major global player, but they must equally be perceived as a major power by other states (Buzan and Waever 2003: 35f.).
Superpowers will influence nearly all regions in terms of securitization and stability. According to Buzan and Waever, the only country currently meeting these criteria are the USA. Great powers are considerably less powerful than superpowers, yet they still possess considerable influence on more than a regional scale. The difference is that they are not as capable as superpowers in all of the concerned areas and they do not take part in securitization in all regions. One important criteria which distinguishes a great power from a regional power is the fact that other states address and treat great powers as though they were on the verge of becoming superpowers. This means that the portrayed strength of great powers can be bigger than their actual strength, and their factual military, political and economic capabilities are not as relevant as they are for superpowers. China, Russia and some European states are examples of great powers, although the first two show some ambitions to become superpowers (Buzan and Waever 2003: 34f.).

Regional powers, on the other hand, mainly exercise influence within their immediate region and are treated accordingly by other states. They are capable of influencing the security situation within their respective region, but their influence does not extend beyond that. Accordingly, the difference between regional and global security dynamics is defined by the difference between superpowers and great powers on the one side and regional powers on the other (Buzan and Waever 2003: 37f.).

Naturally, the regional level of securitization is important to all of the aforementioned categories of states alike. For global powers, Regional Security Complexes are essential to shape the respective states and exercise influence on them, and for the states within a Regional Security Complex the regional level is the primary concern (Buzan and Waever 2003: 47).

The failure of the Malian state in 2012 provides a compelling case of internal and external reasons for state weakness which cannot be analyzed in a meaningful way without taking the entire region, or, if existent, the RSC into consideration. RSCT will be useful to understand the extent of regional involvement in the failure of the Malian state, and to understand the interplay between regional (external) factors and state (internal) factors. It will also serve to uncover to which extent regional dynamics failed to contain the activities of the non-state groups involved.

2.2. The Framework of the Theory

In order to be able to analyze and understand International Relations and global security issues, Buzan and Waever developed a framework of analysis for the background of their theory. There are four levels which serve to dissect security interactions within an RSC. The first level is the domestic one, which looks at domestic challenges and threats within the member states of an RSC. The second level is comprised of state-to-state relations, which form the basis of the RSC. On a third level, an RSC's interaction with other regions and RSC's can be analyzed. With regards to this level it has to be kept in mind that security interactions within the RSC are more important than those between members of the RSC and outside actors. The fourth and final level is the role global level powers play in an RSC or the interplay between regional and global structures. These four levels are what the authors call the *security constellation* of an RSC (Buzan and Waever 2003: 51). The levels serve to locate and pinpoint problems to facilitate analysis. This dissertation uses several of these levels to analyze the topic at hand, most notably the domestic and the state-to-state levels.

Next to the levels are sectors which describe the different areas in which security threats can be analyzed. These five sectors are military, political, economic, societal and environmental: "*One way of looking at sectors is to see them as identifying specific types of interaction. In this view, the military sector is about relationships of forceful coercion; the political sector is about relationships of authority, governing status, and recognition; the economic sector is about relationships of trade, production, and finance; the societal sector is about relationships of collective identity; and the environmental sector is about relationships between human activity and the planetary biosphere"* (Buzan, Waever, de Wilde 1998: 7).

There are two ways of working with sectors in RSCT; the homogeneous approach and the heterogeneous approach. In the homogeneous approach, security complexes are concentrated within specific sectors and hence made up of specific forms of interaction among similar units. In the heterogeneous approach, it is assumed that different actors can interact across different sectors. This dissertation will work with the heterogeneous approach, as it enables the researcher to gain a holistic insight (Buzan, Waever, de Wilde 1998: 16f.).
Sectors have the analytical function of distinguishing different types of interaction in order to facilitate the analysis (Buzan, Waever, de Wilde 1998: 27).

2.2.1. The Military Sector

Military action is the most serious and most basic threat to the sovereignty of a state, which makes it the key issue of security concerns (Buzan 1983: 75). The main unit of concern with regards to the military sector is the state[15]. Only if states are weak or failing in this area can other state- or non-state actors play a significant role in the military sector, and they often do so against the interest of the respective state. Governments need to possess the capacity to protect the state from external threats, but also to uphold internal peace and a functioning governing body [16]. This is easiest to achieve when the state possesses the exclusive monopoly of force; it is more likely to be challenged by separatist movements, rebellions and the like when the sate fails to maintain its monopoly of force. Once there are considerable tensions between the state and its subjects, or once the state is partially too weak to uphold and defend its claim to power, non-state actors can readily step in, whether they are tribes, insurgents or other groups (Buzan, Waever, de Wilde 1998: 50f.).

[15] See Footnote 12, *referent object.*
[16] Among the typical internal threats to states are, according to Buzan, Waever and de Wilde, terrorism and organized crime (Buzan, Waever, de Wilde 1998: 50).

The general idea of RSCT applies to the military sector in an obvious way. States are usually most concerned with military activities on their own territory, along their borders or in their immediate neighborhood; either intentionally or because of an incapacity for wider engagement. The premise is that only few states ever acquired sufficient military capacity to engage globally in the military sector; most notably the United States. This means that states are generally more concerned about their immediate region in terms of security than about distant states. Non-state actors, most notably terrorist groups, are in turn capable to threaten states from a greater distance, although these will rarely be existential threats. As long as distance does not cease to play a significant role in the military sector, for instance because of technological innovation, Regional Security Complexes will equally maintain their relevance (Buzan, Waever, de Wilde 1998: 58ff.). Buzan and Waever therefore draw the conclusion that the military sector is usually dominant in regional security dynamics. Local dynamics are especially important in weak states, which tend to concentrate on their Regional Security Complex due to necessity and limited means (Buzan, Waever, de Wilde 1998: 70).

In this dissertation the military sector is highly relevant, as following parts will show. The security sector of Mali and regional cooperation are central to this thesis, and the fact that neither of these two actors manages to exercise its monopoly of force sufficiently to stabilize the state is one of the main subjects of this work.

2.2.2. The Political Sector

Similar to the military sector, the political sector deals with threats to a state's sovereignty, but the political sector focuses on non-military threats to state sovereignty. Purely political threats are about legitimacy (both internal and external) and recognition that can either be given or withdrawn. Political threats can be used internally by a population who does not identify with the state, or externally by the IC or individual states. Claims of legitimacy become especially difficult when a state does not cater to the feelings of belonging and identity of a subgroup (Buzan, Waever, de Wilde 1998: 141ff., 155). This means that state and nation or identity do not match, as will be of interest later in this thesis when the role of the Tuareg will be discussed. Internal and external legitimacy will usually be more commonly challenged in weak states than in strong ones (Buzan, Waever, de Wilde 1998: 146f., 152), which is a topic that will also be dealt with more extensively later on.

Political threats can be made on ideological grounds, when a state's ideology or policies are not internationally accepted. They can also be based on a perceived rift between the state and

the nation or the people within the state, as explained above. Other possible sources for security threats can be based on the possibility of integration or exclusion from supranational entities such as the EU, for instance (Buzan, Waever, de Wilde 1998: 154f.)

The political sector is important for the analysis in this dissertation, because state weakness and legitimacy are central questions in the context of this dissertation.

2.2.3. The Societal Sector

Societal security is closely related to political security, but the two are not identical. Societal security refers to the conditions within a society and is mainly based on the degree to which individuals identify with their respective in-group. Individuals and groups of individuals need to identify themselves as members of their society. With identity as the core organizing concept in the societal sector, societal security refers to a situation when a group does not feel threatened in its existence as a community. It is important that societal security is not confused with social security, which largely deals with socio-economic concerns and is often located at the individual level (Buzan, Waever, de Wilde 1998: 119f.). The most common threats to societal security are migration, horizontal competition (involuntary adaption because of overwhelming influences without migration) and vertical competition, which can for instance be caused by an integrating project such as the EU. Typically, minorities and majorities in many societies tend to worry about being influenced by processes of adaptation to other customs, which could result in losing their own customs. Threats to societal security can accordingly be external as well as internal (Buzan, Waever, de Wilde 1998: 121, 127). Buzan and Waever did not explicitly refer to this, but the nature of internal societal threats[17] dictates that once this threat becomes politicized it merges with the political sector and becomes a political threat, for instance a secessionist movement.

According to the description above, the main actors in the societal sector are in-groups who are entrusted with the loyalty of subjects who identify themselves with the group. These groups are further big enough in numbers to be able to reasonably claim the threat of identity of an entire community, if such threat occurs. Similar to the political sector, public opinion plays a significant role in the construction and deconstruction of societal security (Buzan, Waever, de Wilde 1998: 123f.). One important question in this context is whether or not issues

[17] For instance a lack of loyalty and identification by a certain tribe.

of societal security cause regionalizing dynamics and in which patterns they do so (Buzan, Waever, de Wilde 1998: 126).

For this research, the societal sector plays a significant role, as the concept of legitimacy of the state will be especially relevant with regards to the Tuareg. As will be shown, the extent to which a population acknowledges the legitimacy of the state as such and the role of the government is crucial for a state's stability.

2.2.4. The Economic Sector

The economic sector is generally a controversial and difficult one. There is a variety of security issues which can fall in the economic sector; the most relevant in this context is illegal trade, particularly in drugs and weapons (Buzan, Waever, de Wilde 1998: 95, 98). However, the question remains to which economic threats actually pose serious, existential threats to a state. Even illegal trade is, as the authors argue, ultimately a political and military security issue rather than an economic one (Buzan, Waever, de Wilde 1998: 103, 116).

Economic security also revolves around issues of global economies and economic stability within states (Buzan, Waever, de Wilde 1998: 95ff., 98), but these issues are not of concern in this dissertation.
In this context, illegal trade and economic regionalization (ECOWAS) will be the issues of concern with regards to the economic sector.

2.2.5. The Environmental Sector

The environmental sector deals with the relationship between civilization and the environment. In this context, the environmental sector deals with both threats to civilization from the environment and vice versa. Among threats to civilization, natural disasters are the most obvious ones (Buzan, Waever, de Wilde 1998: 71f., 79).
In the context of this dissertation, the largest environmental concern are droughts (IRIN, Au-delà de la Sécheresse – «Les Familles disparaîtront», 2012; Reuters, Drought, expanding deserts and 'Food for Jihad' drive Mali's Conflict, 2015). However, as this issue is not sufficiently securitized by the affected states, the environmental sector will largely be disregarded in this dissertation.

In RSC's, the military, political and societal sectors usually dominate in terms of security issues (Buzan, Waever, de Wilde 1998: 166), and it can already be inferred that this will also be the

case in this dissertation. This study will be analyze the situation in Mali and establish whether or not Mali is or was part of an RSC by using the heterogeneous approach. This approach enables the researcher to identify different lines of conflict and corresponding patterns of mutual threats and security interdependence and cooperation. It will enable the author to identify the threats, the actors (states, non-state groups) and the links between them in order to identify a possible RSC (Buzan, Waever, de Wilde 1998: 189ff.).

3. Introducing the Research Design

This dissertation aims to identify and analyze the underlying reasons for the breakdown of the Malian state in 2012. The basic question is what caused the phenomenon of state failure in this specific case. This study assumes the three main ingredients for state failure in Mali were regional weakness, state weakness and the capacity of the respective groups, although the military coup also factored into the equation. Hence, the Research Question this study seeks to answer is as follows:

Which factors led to the failure of the Malian state in 2012?

As pointed out before, the research framework of this dissertation is based on Regional Security Complex Theory developed by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever. The central thesis of Buzan and Waever's RSCT is that because security threats travel easier over short distances than over long ones, threats and security challenges are mainly being dealt with by the region that is affected by them, which makes regional actors the most important actors in terms of security. Regional dynamics have a crucial influence on the local security situation, while insecurity can likewise originate in one state and penetrate an entire region. This means that insecurity and security can both be imported and exported, both from a state to the region and vice versa. State weakness and regional dynamics are thus linked in a causal relationship and influence each other. This leads to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis I: Mali did not have a Regional Security Complex in 2012 and presently still does not have one because of insufficient mutual security cooperation among the states in the region. While some states in the region face the same threats, neither individual states nor region sufficiently tried to counter these threats in a concentrated effort before and after the events in Mali in 2012.

Hypothesis II: Insecurity was "imported" into Mali due to the absence of an RSC. This refers especially to Algeria and Libya, as both states' policies had a negative influence on stability in Mali. On the other hand, had Mali had a functioning RSC, the failure of the Malian state in 2012 could have been prevented.

Hypothesis III: The absence of an RSC and the internal weakness of the Malian state enabled AQIM and affiliated groups to occupy Malian territory and to threaten to control the entire state. Also, the development of AQIM and its affiliates from terrorist groups to an insurgency movement was the crucial element (or trigger) that led to the failure of the Malian state.

To answer Hypothesis I, this study will analyze why Mali did not have an RSC in 2012 by investigating the degree of security cooperation and shared threats between Mali and other states in the region. In this context, the study will focus on Mali's three biggest direct neighbor states; Mauritania, Algeria and Niger. Libya will be investigated as well because of the exceptional influence the fall of Gaddafi's regime had on the region. The main geographic denominator of these four states is that they are all mainly situated in the Sahel-Sahara region[18]. Evidently, existing regional organizations also need to be taken into account. The most powerful and influential in West Africa is the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which also includes regional powerhouse Nigeria. As will be shown later, immediate neighborhood plays an important role in the case of Mali. This hypothesis will also be relevant in the last part of this study, where an argument will be made about which states should form an RSC with Mali and why they should do so.

For Hypothesis II, it will be necessary to find out exactly where certain threats and weaknesses originated and how and why they finally materialized in Mali. The focus will be on non-state groups, especially the secessionist-Islamist insurgency (the groups investigated here are the MNLA[19], AQIM, Ansar Dine and, to a lesser extent, MUJAO) and organized criminal groups. Both phenomena are known to transcend borders, with sometimes grave consequences for the region. It will therefore be investigated where certain groups and phenomena originated,

[18] The fifth state which shares large parts of this area is Chad, but the author was unable to identify any cooperative links between Chad and Mali. The exception is that Chad participates in military operations in Mali, but this seems largely based on cooperation with the IC and France, not with the Malian government (The Guardian, Chad pulls its Troops from Mali, 2013; Reuters, Chad accuses U.N. of neglecting its Peacekeepers in Mali, 2014; The Christian Science Monitor, In Mali Fight, Chad proves a powerful Partner for France, 2013). Nevertheless, the author did gain the impression that Chad has a regional understanding of security and threat potentials, which would be "in the spirit" of an RSC.

[19] MNLA stands for Mouvement National pour la Libération du Azawad, MUJAO stands for Mouvement pour l'Unité et le Djihad en Afrique de l'Ouest.

how they operate and with whom they cooperate. In this context, special attention will be given to Algeria and Libya, as the author argues that these states played particularly negative roles in the Malian state failure of 2012.

The investigation of Hypothesis III requires the detailed examination of two different elements; the absence of an RSC and the internal weakness of the Malian state. Ultimately, interrelations need to be identified between these two and the success of the secessionist-Islamist insurgency in order to answer the research question. As the absence of the RSC will have been explored in the course of Hypothesis I and II, this Hypothesis focuses on the explanation of the internal weaknesses of Malian state institutions in order to bring the two factors together.

To organize the characteristics of state weakness in a meaningful way, this study uses four main categories to evaluate characteristics of state weakness. These categories serve to structure the analysis of the internal weaknesses of the state of Mali and to explain the condition of the Malian state at the time of the insurgency.
The characteristics which will serve to analyze the weakness of the Malian state are authority, legitimacy, capacity and civil war or conflict. They will shortly be introduced here, before being explained in detail in a following chapter:

1. The outbreak of civil war or violent conflict is an indicator of state weakness because any strong state will suppress violence on its territory in order to stay in control. State weakness is in turn gravely worsened by conflicts[20].

2. Authority refers to a state's ability to enforce its decisions, if necessary by force. This shows in the capacity of the state to claim the exclusive monopoly of force (Carment et al. 2008: 356f.). Other than human security, two of the strongest indicators hereof are the existence of ungoverned territories and a lack of law enforcement capacities. Ungoverned territories are meaningful in the context of non-state actors because they might be used as safe havens, which are in turn essential for the development and capacity building of non-state groups. A lack of law enforcement capacities, which most notably refers to the state's military and police forces, is especially relevant with regards to weak border controls in this context, as the latter play a crucial role for free movement and supply routes of the respective non-state groups.

[20] Interestingly, Iqbal and Starr note that one of the causes for civil wars and violence are previous conflicts (Iqbal and Starr 2008: 316). As will become clear, this is relevant in the case of Mali, which has experienced several Tuareg rebellions prior to 2012.

3. Legitimacy refers to the degree to which the citizens accept the state and respect its authority over them in combination with the citizens' belief in the legitimacy of the government and state system[21] (Carment et al. 2008: 357). It is therefore a factor which refers to the internal perceptions of a state's people.

4. Capacity is often echoed in a state's inability in terms of administration, most evidently witnessed in a lack of social service provision (Carment et al. 2008: 356f.). These include infrastructure, health, education and overall administration and are very basic, but strongly indicative signs of whether state institutions are weak or strong. This is so because insufficient administration along with other identity-based factors can quickly lead to a lack of state-acceptance among population. Importantly, a population which is emotionally detached from its home state makes the seizure of power by any non-state group considerably easier.

Large-scale terror-campaigns can develop the potential to threaten a government, but threatening the territorial integrity of a state is another level. Threatening territorial integrity essentially means that a group develops insurgent quality, as terrorist groups by definition do not seize territory (Walther and Christopoulos 2015: 499). As many conflict zones offer ungoverned pockets or a power vacuum, opportunities for non-state groups to find a safe haven grow, and so do the possibilities for terrorist groups to develop insurgent qualities. Opportunity creates possibilities for action, so it follows that the more power vacuums, the more groups (theoretically) have the chance to develop insurgent qualities which increases the likelihood that a conflict will being fueled. This is a vicious circle that needs to be ended by the state, which should be the most potent actor in this context. If, however, the state for some reason fails to end this downward spiral, the next actor who should step up is the state's region, or preferably its RSC. The region should feel responsible to do so, and as stabilizing a country is easiest with certain institutions and mechanisms in place, a consolidated RSC would be the most potent actor to stabilize a failing state (not only because of shared threats, but because of cultural and historic proximities). An RSC therefore has a lot of responsibility, which is why identifying the areas a state or RSC needs to work on in order to successfully counter terrorist and insurgent groups is crucial for international security.

[21] Gaining legitimacy is often especially problematic for post-colonial states (Carment et al. 2008: 355), such as Mali.

This also explains the strategic value of this thesis, as the last chapter will put the findings into a wider frame by making general inferences about how to best prevent state failure. If we fail to analyze the underlying reasons for state failure, we only have a general body of knowledge which does not explain the phenomenon sufficiently. Yet, if we fully investigate the causes and mechanisms behind the links between regional- and state weakness and the growth of violent non-state movements (mostly terrorist groups or insurgencies), we may find interrelations and mechanisms which might later serve for the implementation of early-warning-systems. This study favors this preventive idea, so the last chapters will also give an impression of what happened in Mali after 2012 and, more importantly, what could and should be done by the IC to achieve long term stabilization.

3.1. Relevance of the Research and State of the Art

In the past, reactionary policies have mostly proven inefficient against terrorist groups and insurgency movements. For instance, while the American bombing campaign of Tora Bora in 2001 massively weakened Al Qaeda Central, it did not contain the spread of the group`s ideology, let alone the global creation of new terrorist cells. So far, the IC has not found satisfying political and military answers to sustainably contain the global terrorist threat.
Once (civil) war breaks out, military intervention has the potential to contain the war, and combined with diplomatic efforts it might even end it. But military intervention equally has the potential to fuel the conflict, to create more resentment and to cause the conflict to spread. It might therefore be advisable to change reactionary politics to proactive policies: The IC should actively try to stabilize weak states in order to avoid their exploitation by terrorist groups and insurgent movements, and the most promising approach for this would be the development of RSC's. If the hypothesis in this work prove right, the IC will be one step closer to knowing which structural conditions to look for in order to prevent the creation of areas of interest to terrorist and insurgent groups[22]. Long term stability will be the most effective tool against terrorism, and this work explores the preconditions of such stability.

While there is some literature on the phenomenon of state failure or -weakness and the role of non-state actors involved in it, there is little work which explicitly links these two (Piazza 2007: 524). In this realm, most research concentrates on the relationship between state weakness and terrorism. Accordingly, Robert Rotberg clearly stated that state failure as a phenomenon is strongly under-researched (Rotberg 2003: 2). Over time, it has become

[22] For instance where they could establish a safe haven.

“conventional wisdom” that weak states harbor security threats such as terrorism. However, so far only light evidence has been presented to support this assumption. Some scholars even challenge the notion of a correlation, which they believe to be absent. According to Hehir, there is no causal link between state failure and terrorism, as the former is caused by a number of different factors and the facilitators do not exclusively appear in failed states. However, Hehir states that Islamist terrorist groups are generally attracted to conflicts, rather than to failed states. According to him, these groups are drawn in by the prospect of defending Islam, rather than the failure of the state where the conflict takes place (Hehir 2007: 307f., 321, 328). While this is a valid observation, it does not counter the argument of this study, which explicitly mentions conflict as one characteristic of state weakness. Further, there is no conclusive proof that the conditions of state weakness are not as conducive to the respective groups as the motivation to defend their religion. Stewart Patrick also states that the connection between global threats and state weakness is less obvious and more complex than is generally assumed. According to him, there is little empirical evidence behind the common assumption of a link between state weakness and spillover effects such as organized crime or terrorism. Accordingly, he states that the connection between global threats and state weakness is more complicated and less clear than often assumed (Patrick 2006a: 1).

Peter Tikuisis, on the other hand, clearly asserts a connection between state weakness and terrorism. Although he admits that more research needs to be done to find the reasons behind this connection, Tikuisis was able to establish a correlation between the occurrence of fatal terrorism and state weakness (Tikuisis 2009: 75f.). Tikuisis reinforces the assumption that weak states can be conducive to certain terrorist groups by stating that increased violence and political instability correlate with the presence of some terrorist groups. Nonetheless, this also goes for weak states with comparatively better performances in the realms of economy and human development, which seems contradictory (Tikuisis 2009: 76). Another researcher who asserts a causal relationship between state failure and terrorism is James Piazza, who notes that failed states create conditions which are conducive to existing terrorist groups and to the creation of new terrorist groups. Among the reasons he cites are the inability of failed states to manage conflicts and the divide between the population and the political elite (Piazza 2007: 524, 536). It remains, however, unclear in how far Piazza exactly distinguishes between weak and failed states and how he categorizes them.

In “Failed States and the Spread of Terrorism in Sub-Saharan Africa” Tiffiany Howard explicitly states how the porous borders and unpatrolled territories of failed African states allow for the

development of internationally sponsored terrorist networks. She also argues that violence and government failures disillusion the population and therefore make them more susceptible to cooperating with terrorists (Howard 2010: 4f.). While Howard links relative deprivation caused by state failure to terrorism, her study generally focuses on the societal aspects of state failure. Howard describes the possibilities relative deprivation provides to terrorist groups in combination with a more susceptible population, which is especially relevant in terms of shelter and recruitment. She does not, however, investigate the interrelation between state failure and organizational aspects of terrorist groups, as the focal point of her study is the respective population. Investigating why some people are susceptible to the influence of terrorist groups is an important step in understanding the composition of terrorist groups, but it does not investigate the structural requirements states can provide to terrorist groups.

In another study, James Piazza correlates state failure to the spread of transnational terrorism by linking the ranking of individual states in the Failed State Index to incidents of transnational terrorism (Piazza 2008). While this is interesting empirical research, it does not offer a detailed look into causalities and leaves many questions unanswered. It does come to the conclusion that state failure and levels of terrorist violence are indeed interrelated, but there is no in depth explanation of why and how this happens. This is the gap this work is trying to fill.

In a very recent work, Carla Monteleone explores the connection between state weakness, illicit business and terrorism. She points out that many studies agree on the fact that state weakness enables terrorist groups and organized criminal groups to work together, although there is no automatic relationship between the two (Monteleone 2016: 45). In her paper, she correlates armed conflicts with the presence of terrorist groups and drug production. One of her main findings is that, albeit a rare phenomenon, once state failure, terrorist groups and drug production occur together, their interaction is so relevant that it considerably decreases the chances of ending a conflict (Monteleone 2016: 47, 51f.). While covering an interesting aspect in the context of state weakness, her work focuses on states where drugs are actually being produced, which does not apply to Mali.

In his 2005 work “Al Qaeda’s Armies: Middle East Affiliate Groups and the next Generation of Terror”, Jonathan Schanzer gives an overview of the way several Al Qaeda affiliates use weak centralized state authority to their advantage (Schanzer 2004/ 2005). While his book provides a solid foundation of knowledge about these affiliates, more detailed studies are required to uncover the causalities and dynamics. Some of these details will likely concern ungoverned

territories and a lack of law enforcement capacities; both are topics which this paper is going to cover.

Classics to the topic, such as Robert Rotbergs' “When Nations Fail” and Peter Waldmanns' “Terrorismus und Bürgerkrieg” also deal with the relationship between state failure and terrorism. Their works provide a profound knowledge for further studies, thereby being an indispensable basis for case studies such as these. However, they do not go into detail when it comes to the explicit link between state weakness, regional weakness and terrorism (Rotberg 2004; Waldmann 2003).

With regards to Mali, one of the most comprehensive books about the country is the “Wegweiser zur Geschichte Mali”, which was published by the German military’s center for military history and social sciences. The book offers an extensive overview of the historic development of the Malian state, as well as descriptions of the state as it is today and the events in 2012. The book also explains the democratic development of the Malian state and introduces the most important ethnic and non-state groups living in Mali.
Eno Beuchelts’ Book “Mali” is equally comprehensive, but with greater focus on ethnographic data than on politics. The book is ideally read at the beginning of research on Mali and offers valuable information for a basic understanding of its history and society. Both books therefore constitute the basic body of knowledge about Mali on which this study is built.

What the works mentioned above have in common is the absence of detailed case studies concerning the interrelation between regional- and state weakness and the rise of terrorism and insurgencies, particularly with a focus on RSC’s. This gap needs to be filled, as explanations and causalities are missing. Should this study find an interrelation to a certain extent, states could be monitored according to the factors established in this work so as to anticipate the propensity of state failure. As Robert Rotberg points out, the question of how to prevent state failure is one of the most pressing policy questions in the 21st century, and it gains particular relevance with regards to the omnipresence of terrorism (Rotberg 2003: 1).

The fact that terrorist groups choose weak states as their hosts has become generally accepted knowledge, but very little has been written on why this is the case and how exactly state weakness is being exploited by terrorists. Moreover, the interrelation between terrorism and insurgencies on the one hand and regional weakness and state weakness on the other hand has neither been explicitly tested, nor has a case study been conducted on this topic.

All the previous observations lead to the conclusion that more research should be done in this particular field. This study assumes that regional weakness (especially prevalent in the absence of RSC's), state weakness and violent non-state actors such as terrorist and insurgent groups are linked in a complex relationship. The aim of this work is to fill the existing gap of knowledge by analyzing this link. While the existence of state weakness or terrorism does not automatically cause the occurrence of the other phenomena, there are ways in which both phenomena are conducive to each other, and this study will try to highlight them.

3.1.1. Relevance of the Research for Terrorism Studies

There are several reasons why the case of AQIM and its affiliates in Mali is relevant for terrorism studies. One is that the group exceeded the boundaries of a terrorist group by seizing territory and even acting like a state in some ways (Byman 2015: 11; Harmon 2014: 179). The second is that AQIM adopted behavior that is not conform to its original agenda and decided to cooperate with local groups which do not follow its Islamist ideology. AQIM is the first Al Qaeda offshoot to aggressively push into a state's territory by joining an insurgency movement. The group's regular strategy is to benefit from instability and weak governance without actively enforcing it itself. Al Qaeda traditionally uses safe havens to orchestrate terrorist attacks, not to establish a government. In Afghanistan, Al Qaeda benefited from Taliban protection after the latter had already taken over the government. In Somalia, al Shabaab has been destabilizing the country for years, but strategic gains were usually met by setbacks, as Somalia's neighbors tend to engage when they see their interests threatened. Even in Yemen, with Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) being a powerful Al Qaeda offshoot, the group takes advantage of the ongoing al Houthi-insurgency against the government, all the while staying true to its terrorist nature without showing the intention to develop into an insurgency (Bergen 2012: 55; Rashid 2001: 24; DW, Welche Ziele verfolgt al-Shabaab?, 2014; CFR, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, 2015).

Generally speaking, Al Qaeda does not seize land. In the view of the author, no Al Qaeda affiliate has been as conventionally progressive as AQIM so far. Staging an attack on the territory of a sovereign state is a different level than using a state's weakness to establish a safe haven. While creating a zone outside governmental control has been the goal of the Tuareg for years, AQIM managed to kidnap the Tuaregs' fight for independence by ruling the headlines of Western media for months. Apart from media attention, AQIM gained land and power through its move into Mali, which makes selling the events as a success story easy. It is

therefore possible that other terrorist groups will decide to engage in anti-governmental fights in third states as well once they have the means and opportunities. Hence, while AQIM's behavior in Mali is an example of political aggressiveness and risk-taking, it has the potential to become an example for more progressiveness on the part of militant non-state groups[23]. This points at an increasing merger between terrorist and insurgent tactics, a dangerous development in destabilized regions and weak states. It will therefore be necessary to monitor the character, strategy and opportunity of terrorist groups and insurgents to prevent them from using their home base to form alliances and attack third states. If terrorist groups gain strength and opportunities by becoming insurgent movements, the IC should anticipate and prevent this development early on to avoid as much conflict as possible.

To be prepared for the security challenges ahead, it will be helpful to study potent terrorist groups thoroughly. In some cases, terrorist and insurgent groups operate similarly. They learn from each other and cooperate, as did Al Qaeda and the Taliban before 9/11 (Rashid 2001: 24, 226f.). In many ways, insurgents and terrorists require the same infrastructure: A safe operating base, finance and recruitment. Therefore, this study will be applicable to several terrorist and insurgent groups. They all need to be looked at individually to be fully understood, but they also share certain characteristics. As both generally operate as violent non-state actors within a sovereign state, they need to establish a certain infrastructure in an environment that will likely be hostile to their existence and may be conducive to them only by default. Being an irregular group opposing a state entity requires among other things strategy, resilience – and in some cases state weakness and weak regions. This dissertation argues that the latter are crucial in developing the capacities which eventually lead to their own demise. Hence, uncovering the links between state- and regional weakness and non-state actors will be the focus of this study. Highlighting this at the example of Mali will hopefully contribute to research in the fields of international security and terrorism studies. To do so, the author chose to work with a theory that links regional security to the stability of a state; Regional Security Complex Theory.

[23] This is shown in the case of the so-called IS, which displays a much more aggressive insurgent strategy than AQIM (CFR, *The Islamic State*, 2016).

4. Introducing the Methodology

The following chapter will provide an explanation of the methodology which was used to conduct the research. This will be followed by a brief description of the advantages and disadvantages of the methods, including the criticism the methods face within the research community. The chapter will conclude with an evaluation of the sources which were used for writing the dissertation.

4.1. The Case Study Method explained

This research project is a desk-based case study. The case study method is usually utilized when a researcher investigates a contemporary, real-life phenomenon. According to Robert Yin, the more contemporary and in-depth the research question, the more suitable the case study method will be. Also, the more a study tries to explain a phenomenon or circumstance, the more suitable the use of the case study method. As a holistic approach for understanding social phenomena and unveiling complicated schemes and causalities makes case studies relevant to numerous sciences, among them political science (Yin 2014: 12, 14, 16f.).

With "Case Study Research", Robert Yin probably wrote one of the most important contemporary books on case studies. According to his definition,

"*a case study is an empirical inquiry that*

- *investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') in depth and within its real-world context, especially when*
- *the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident*" (Yin 2014: 16).

To conduct this inquiry, case studies can use qualitative and quantitative data alike (Schell 1992). One of the advantages offered by case studies is the variety of evidence the researcher may choose to conduct the study. Case studies allow for the combined use of documents, observations and interviews (Yin 2014: 12). Different forms of evidence offer different points of view and are therefore valuable for the thorough investigation of any given topic. What is more, case studies offer the opportunity to investigate phenomena without detaching them from their environment, as many experiments would do (Yin 2014: 12f.). This makes case studies a preferred method for political science, as these cases cannot be analyzed in a comprehensive way without taking their environment into consideration. According to John Gerring, any subject can be a case in scientific research as long as it is the main subject of an

inference and has clear boundaries, and temporary boundaries are often harder to identify than spatial ones (Gerring 2009: 19f).

The case study method offers numerous advantages for the investigation of this research topic. First, case studies are suitable to investigate a research question in a contextually rich and complex environment. Second, case studies are suitable to explore the conditions of events and explain why and in which form these events or phenomena occur. They usually investigate causal relationships or causal links which occur during a certain time span. Third, case studies offer a certain amount of freedom to the researcher. According to Robert Yin, case studies can be used for exploratory, descriptive and explanatory purposes alike (Yin 2014: 7). This offers a great variety for the application of the method and thus enhances its usefulness, especially since a case study can also combine these purposes. Hence, the qualitative approach of case studies is much more apt at understanding complex social phenomena than quantitative methods, due to its high degree of cultural sensitivity (Schell 1992).

Case studies can either focus on one specific case, as this work does, or on multiple cases. The rationale for investigating multiple cases may be to replicate a specific incident in different surroundings, to reduce complexity or to compare different cases. Single case studies may be chosen to either represent a critical case, to explain a unique but scientifically relevant case or to reveal a case which has previously not been scientifically accessible (Yin 2014: 18, 21, 51f.; Schell 1992).

This research aims to contribute to the understanding of a wide number of cases with the findings drawn from one single case – looking at "*a single example of a larger phenomenon*" (Gerring 2009: 20, 42). The single case being (temporary) state failure in Mali in 2012, the goal is to draw conclusions from the terrorists' and insurgents' exploitation of state weakness and regional weakness in order to be able to better contain them in the future. This will serve to identify ways in which other non-state actors might use state weakness to their advantage, and thus to develop the ability to prevent similar cases of state failure in the future.

4.2. The Necessity of in-depth Analysis of non-state Actors

In order to answer the research question, this study cannot only focus on Mali and surrounding states, but has to investigate the nature and organization of the concerned non-state actors as well. This will be essential to understand how these groups are structured, their goals and strategies so as to provide answers to the central questions of this work. To understand terrorist and insurgent groups and to prevent them from gaining power, one has to understand

their intrinsic motivations and the way they operate. Only when this is understood does it make sense to look at their host states and regions and compare both data in order to understand the way they influence each other.

In this dissertation the analysis of terrorist groups is based on the assumption that AQIM and its affiliates are realist actors who make rational decisions. As non-state aggressors, these groups constantly face existential challenges. There is no way for the author to verify in how far AQIM's leaders prefer ideology over Realpolitik or vice versa. This can only be deducted from their behavior and their rare interviews. Still, the author is convinced that AQIM, as probably most long standing terrorist groups, makes well-funded strategic decisions, and ideology is likely employed as a tool to gain followers[24]. Purely ideology-based behavior would not enable these groups to survive, as is maybe most obvious in their cooperation with organized criminal groups. It is therefore very likely that leaders of terrorist groups are strategic actors who make strategic decisions[25]. The assumption that AQIM are realist players (at least to some degree) is based on the group's behavior in the past[26]. The distinction between the "near enemy", the Algerian government, and the "far enemy", France and other Western governments, is a concession to the actual possibility of achieving a goal. The more absolutist the goal, the less likely it is to be achieved. The Al Qaeda ideology is based on a unifying, but entirely absolutist and therefore unrealistic idea. But AQIM needs proof of its capabilities, they need success to generate supporters. As a group dealing with the reality on the ground, overly ambitious goals are a luxury. Followers want success to show for. By keeping its focus on Algeria, AQIM shows that it understands the importance of realist goals and modifies its behavior accordingly. If it is therefore assumed that AQIM is a realist actor, it is to be expected that the territorial shift into Mali also occurred for strategic reasons, and this will likely be no different for the other major actors. This is especially so because the seizure of territory bears responsibilities AQIM did not have to deal with before: Territory needs to be governed, administered and defended. Economy and infrastructure need to be maintained and

[24] *"…these scholars have generally viewed leadership and decisionmaking in these organizations as more politically pragmatic and rational than ideologically doctrinaire: Group leaders attempt to promote their goals (survival, of course, being the preeminent one) while adapting to the opportunities and constraints they face and manipulating the ideologically based frames, narratives symbols, and appeals to competing identities they believe are most likely to resonate, persuade, and mobilize additional support for their cause, thereby enhancing organizational resources and capabilities"* (Davis et al. 2012: 41).
For instance, the constant reminder of the unjust suffering of the Palestinian people, which AQ never helped alleviate, is a good example of how AQ uses narratives and ideology to generate support (Davis et al. 2012: 55).
[25] See Davis et al. 2012: 48.
[26] AQIM for instance showed resilience in the face of government repression (in the GIA/ GSPC era), and it showed tactical adaptability and even strategic adaptability (both with the rebranding from GSPC to AQIM).

dependency on the population (and vice versa) rises considerably. All of this has to be financed, bilateral relations of some sort (at least with other non-state groups) need to be established and international intervention has to be feared. As will be shown later, letters written by AQIM's leader Abdelmalik Droukdal show that AQIM did indeed intend to hold the territory they captured. Given the responsibility attached to this goal, it is to be assumed that the group's leadership carefully considered its participation in the insurgency. For all the advantages a self-governed safe haven might offer (such as expanding cooperation with organized crime), the implications for a group that has been reduced to mobile units residing in a scarcely populated desert region are considerable.

A part of this study will therefore focus on the analysis of the nature and structure of the non-state actors involved in the insurgency, in order to understand the interplay between the internal (group level) and external (state and regional level) factors.

4.3. Weighing Criticism on Theory and Methodology

While case study is a frequently used method, it has been subjected to criticism by many researchers over time. Yin supposes that the main reason to criticize case studies as a scientific method is a perceived “lack of rigor”, meaning that many case studies in the past have been conducted in a “sloppy” way and did not correspond to scientific standards (Yin 20014: 19f.). However, if applied thoughtfully, the case study method can greatly contribute to the understanding of phenomena covering many disciplines. It offers possibilities to take a detailed look at the phenomenon in question, which is especially valuable when dealing with clandestine non-state groups.

Another concern is that generalization from a single case study to other cases does not necessarily seem appropriate. As Yin argues, “*case studies are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes*” (Yin 2014: 21). They serve to broaden knowledge and expand the theoretical framework instead of representing a concrete sample (Yin 2014: 40). Yet, the acquired knowledge is a new piece to the puzzle and serves the understanding of phenomena which are often too complex to be investigated in one single step.

One relevant objection to case studies is the validity problem. The problem here is the assumed subjectivity of the researcher and the fact that many researchers do not identify sufficient operational measures for the study of the topic at hand[27] (Yin 2014: 46f.).
Case studies are also criticized as producing a lot of work for the researcher due to the sheer amount of information and sources. On the other hand, limited access to sources and information can be a serious problem when conducting a desk-based case study. Finally, valid generalizations can be hard to achieve in single case studies, as inferences are subject to the judgement of the researcher (Schell 1992).

While the author did not find any scientific criticism of RSCT, there are researchers who criticize the concepts of state weakness and state failure. In his article "The Fallacy of the 'Failed State'", Charles Call notes that the concept of state failure adheres to a Weberian definition of the state and that it lumps together diverse states in a generalizing, imprecise way. He also criticizes the lack of a precise definition of the term "state failure" and claims that solutions to the problem focus on security measures and undermine civilian or democratic efforts. He further states that the focus on the topic emerged after 9/11 and therefore harbors the idea of increasing security for industrialized states instead of making genuine efforts to combat the root causes for state weakness (Call 2008: 1491, 1495ff., 1504). While Call has a point when saying that the definition of the term is not completely precise and that different states end up in the same category of state weakness, this does not mean that the concept of state failure is useless. The author believes that it offers a very useful frame for the examination of phenomena related to institutional weakness, just as this study does.

4.4. An Overview of the Sources

This study is based on sources of different kinds and countries. Theory and methodology are based on Buzan's and Waever's Regional Security Complex Theory and the case study methodology as explained by Robert Yin. Both theory and methodology are thoroughly explained in the sources used in this dissertation and the author believes that the combination of both offers the best way to analyze the research question.

As far as the chapters about Mali, the region and respective non-state groups are concerned, most of the literature will be francophone or in English. International think tanks, journals and books were used for the analysis of regional- and state security as well as for profiles of the

[27] Yin identifies four criteria to judge the quality of a research design: Construct validity, internal, validity, external validity and reliability. For more, see Robert Yin 2014: 45f.

respective non-state groups. In the course of the research, the author found that journalistic sources were also very valuable, as they often contained otherwise hidden details and insights. Most of the journalistic sources were available online, and the author made sure to only use sources she knew and found reliable. Very few exceptions were made from this; usually when otherwise unobtainable information was given on AQIM. The author only used these sources once she found that the content appeared reliable.

French online sources proved to be particularly valuable, especially with regards to the developments in Mali after 2012. This is not surprising, as French websites, newspapers and journals are known for extensive coverage of security-related issues in their former colonies.

To gain comprehensive insight, the sources used in this study are from various disciplines such as cultural anthropology, political science and security studies. With regards to the latter, scientific journals were particularly relevant. For example, journals like “Terrorism and Political Violence” or “Studies in Conflict & Terrorism” were used extensively in the course of this work. Literature on some of the topics at hand is not easy to find, and research and evaluation of the sources was especially challenging in this context. Even as more has been published on Mali after 2012, the majority of recent reports are journalistic in nature or come from a security studies background (Hüsken and Klute 2015: 321, 328f.).

With regards to Mali and other relevant states, this work focuses on the time period between 2002, the inauguration of ATT, to 2012, with a special focus on the time immediately prior to insurgency and coup. When looking at the time immediately surrounding the decisive events, the most important time span ranges from October 2011 (fall of the Gaddafi regime) to April 2012, when the independent state of *Azawad* was proclaimed. The decade of the early 2000`s was chosen as a time frame which is long enough to collect viable data on the strength of the region and state, yet not so long as to lose the connection to the events. When necessary for thorough understanding, background information covering the most important developments before 2002 and 2012 will also be given. This is for instance the case with the investigation of the concerned non-state actors, who need to be looked at from their beginning in order to understand their goals and strategy.

5. Essential Definitions for the Research Topic

To provide a common ground, this chapter will define the terms which are needed to undertake the research.

5.1. The Difference between Terrorism and Insurgency: A short Comparison

As both terms will be used frequently in this paper, it is necessary to define both terrorism and insurgency in order to understand the main differences between the two concepts. Both are violent political phenomena, yet they differ in their structure and agenda. Even though they often employ the same methods, both have different objectives (Howard 2010: 966). This paper emphasizes the fact that terrorist groups can evolve and become insurgency movements, which lends even more importance to the understanding of the differences between the two. While this is in principle also possible vice versa, the author argues that insurgency movements generally have a higher potential to present an essential threat to the integrity of a state than terrorist groups, as they are closer to a symmetric challenge than terrorist groups are.

To give a brief overview of the conceptual differences, terrorism is first of all a method, while an insurgency is a movement, not a method. Terrorism is by definition a method of asymmetric warfare, while insurgents are asymmetric actors who may employ terrorism as a means to reach their goal. However, insurgent movements can also employ guerilla tactics, methods of conventional warfare or a hybrid combination of these methods, as they are not as much defined by their methods as terrorist groups are. However, with growing media coverage the concept of terrorism becomes increasingly blurred in the public sphere, while many terrorist groups also become increasingly hybrid[28]. This makes a clear-cut distinction between terrorist groups and insurgency movements increasingly difficult. That being said, the following paragraphs will take a more detailed look at what exactly both phenomena are and how to define and distinguish them.

5.1.1 The Strategy and Nature of Terrorism

Even though terrorism is hard to define and there is an ongoing debate on what exactly terrorism is (Townshend 2005: 11), some important characteristics which define terrorism can

[28] In this study, hybrid organizations are defined as using a mixture of conventional and asymmetric military techniques, while also including various economic, social and political tactics in their strategy (Azani 2013: 899; GAO 2010: 6, 14ff.).

be established. It is for instance important to understand that terrorist groups are mostly rational actors. The decision to resort to terrorism is made based on the collective goals and values of a terrorist group, combined with a cost-and-effect-calculation (Gunaratna and Oreg 2010: 1044; Crenshaw 1981: 380, 385). Terrorism is the public use of or threat of violence against a specific target audience to achieve a political goal. Terrorism is a violent political tool, an asymmetric means to reach political ends. It is usually employed by symmetrically weaker parties who cannot afford to confront their opponent conventionally. The immediate victims of an attack are not the ones the attack is directed against; they are on the contrary picked with the intention that a much larger target audience might be coerced into fear and, ultimately, the change of their political convictions. Influencing politics by violent means is the core business of terrorism, and that is why terrorists prefer to attack civilians instead of military or police targets, which would be guerilla warfare. The goal of intimidating civilians to enforce political change is also the explanation for extreme methods such as suicide terrorism. Not only are western audiences strongly alienated by an ideological commitment that appears strong enough to favor death over life, but the more horrifying a terrorist attack, the more media coverage it gathers. Ultimately, as the victims are not the target audience, media coverage is the key to successful terrorism, because terrorists need to reach as many people as possible to gain political influence (Hoffman 2006: 2f., 30f., 40f., 133; Moulaye 2014: 8; Richardson 2007: 4f.; Bellany 2007: 101; Crenshaw 1981: 380). By attacking civilians, terrorists showcase that the government is unable to protect its citizens, which undermines the legitimacy of the government. Attacking defenseless civilians is also a very clear decision to not submit to the moral codes of western societies (Townshend 2005: 13, 15). Instead, their own norms are used against these societies.

There are different motivations for terrorism, from nationalist to separatist and religious terrorism. Even though there are various forms of terrorism and it is sometimes not possible to determine exactly whether an attack was an act of terrorism or not (it can for example be difficult to distinguish guerrilla tactics from terrorism), religious terrorism, and especially radical Islamism or Jihadism, has clearly been the most prominent form of terrorism in the last two decades. This was mainly caused by Al Qaeda[29] and 9/11, and it is recently being reinforced by the rise and resiliency of the so-called Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (IS). Whatever the motivation, the strategy of terrorism remains the same, even when the tactics

[29] AQ's ideology is global Jihadism. They do not directly seek to replace governments, which is a typical goal of insurgents (Davis et al. 2012: 39).

and the political goals differ. Importantly, the latter both depend on the organizational form and capabilities of a group (Hoffman 2006: 5f., 131; Crenshaw 1981: 385f.). Often, terrorism aims at the disruption of government processes in order to demoralize both the citizens and government officials of a state. By spreading fear among civilians, terrorists also aim to achieve a positive recruitment effect, as the effectiveness of their deeds is supposed to generate new supporters. A terrorist group can also intend for the government to strike back disproportionally so as to alienate the population by showing its aggressive nature (Crenshaw 1981: 386f.).

Terrorist groups can have different forms and goals. Methods of terrorism can be embedded in a greater struggle (as is often the case in insurgencies), and terrorists can have locally or politically limited goals (Hamas) and absolutist goals (Al Qaeda). According to Charles Townshend, only an absolutist, independent strategy of terrorism should be labeled "terrorism", while the singular use of terrorist tactics does not qualify for this term (Townshend 2005: 25). While the author agrees with the second part of this statement, the first part leads to difficulties in the categorization of certain groups. One example hereof are groups who make extensive, but not exclusive use of terrorist methods, such as the Hezbollah. Terrorist groups develop very differently. Some groups, like the Hamas, might become part of the political process, while others, such as Boko Haram, remain outside the political process (Azani 2013: 904f.; Beumler 2015: 209f.). In dealing with AQIM, this paper focuses on a group outside the political process and does not analyze lone wolves or homegrown terrorism.

Because of the unpredictability of the threat and the arbitrary character of the violence perpetrated by terrorists, media coverage states that terrorism has become one of the main concerns for international stability and foreign policy actors. According to the author, this elevates the threat profile of terrorism to a level it might not necessarily deserve, as terrorists are by nature the weaker actors in an asymmetric game. Nevertheless, dealing with terrorism and trying to counter it is an important effort and a central challenge to the international community.

Modern day terrorists are usually either organized in network structures or hierarchical structures. Hierarchies are organized like armies, while networks operate in small, clandestine cells with a high degree of personal trust, and its members are usually isolated from the population. The most extreme example of a network is Al Qaeda post 9/11. The group nursed the culture of independently developed homegrown cells and lone wolves to such an extent

that individuals can simply decide to perpetrate an attack in the name of Al Qaeda nowadays. While this sort of franchising expands the range and capabilities of the group (especially in terms of media attention), it is questionable how much actual influence the group retains over independent cells, if it has any at all. Even the exact influence of Al Qaeda central over its different subgroups is unknown (Levitt and Jacobson 2008: 9). The core of Al Qaeda Central, led by Ayman al Zawahiri, on the other hand, remains strictly hierarchically-organized (Rabasa et al. 2007: 3; Gunaratna and Oreg 2010: 1045, 1054).

While networks tend to be more resilient than hierarchies, they are also less suitable for complex operations. Just like other groups or organizations, terrorist groups have defined structures and organs of decision-making, they have specializations and functions assigned to their members, a formally recognized leadership and collective goals (Gunaratna and Oreg 2010: 1044).

Terrorism is generally known as the weapon of the weak (Crenshaw 1981: 387) and terrorists often require less sophisticated infrastructure than insurgency movements, as terrorists per se do not have the primary goal to rule over people or annex territory.

As a tactic which makes use of the weaknesses of the opponent in an asymmetrical way (for instance coercing democratically elected governments by attacking civilians), terrorism is suitable for small groups whose strength does not match the strength of their opponents. Among the advantages offered by terrorism are the possibility to avoid direct confrontation with state forces and to inflict high costs upon a state with relatively simple means (Hendrix and Young 2014: 335). When faced with a much stronger opponent, terrorism is therefore a logical, because efficient, method of choice (Crenshaw 1981: 387). Their minority-status and their clandestine character (Crenshaw 1981: 382) makes terrorist groups more independent and even harder to fight than insurgency movements, especially since most terrorist groups are known to be extremely clandestine (Alakoc 2015: 4; Ross 1993: 318) and only trust a very limited group of members.

Recent developments have led a growing number of researchers to determine that terrorist groups are becoming increasingly hybrid. This refers to a merger of their classic strategy and tactics with activities associated with their economic survival and other necessities; one example hereof is the participation in organized crime. Terrorist groups, and AQIM as well, use the latter to finance themselves, but in the long term their economic engagement also influences and changes their behavior and style of operations. The capacities and infrastructure required to conduct an isolated bomb attack are not the same as those required

to entertain a smuggling route or safe houses, let alone to maintain an entire criminal network. Hence, once a group has to adapt to economic and other necessities, it only makes sense that it change its' form of organization, which will in the long run penetrate and alter the group's structure. Another factor which might cause changes in the structure of terrorist groups can be a considerable growth in strength. In this case, a terrorist group can become an insurgency movement and may be able to challenge an opponent on a more conventional level, akin to a state. As opposed to insurgent movements, terrorist groups do not seize and hold territory. On the contrary, their survival usually depends on constant movement (Walther and Christopoulos 2015: 499).

Terrorists further think in extremely long terms when laying out their tactics, goals and strategy, sometimes as long as centuries (Waldmann 2003: 56). This is extremely indicative in terms of their goals and strategies. An actor who believes in a decade-long fight has no reason to be discouraged by short-term operational setbacks, which can considerably increase the resilience of terrorist groups.

5.1.2. Insurgency Movements as a political Phenomenon

According to the US COIN manual, insurgencies can be defined as the "*organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or challenge political control of a region*" (Kilcullen 2009: 6) or "'*an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constitutional government through the use of subversion and armed conflict*'" (Definition of the U.S. Department of Defense in Rabasa et al. 2007: 3). This means that insurgents' main goal is to replace a government and gain control of at least parts of this governments' territory and population. They will use all means available to achieve this goal, including economic, political and military tools. Insurgents typically try to reach their goal by force, which can also include the use of terrorism. Terrorism can therefore be a strategy of insurgency movements, but not vice versa. As they are key to the control over territory, winning over or controlling the population plays a crucial role for the success of insurgents, which is another important difference to terrorist groups. In order to gain control of the population, insurgent movements may try to set up administrations and means of political control so as to substitute the ruling government (in this context, Jeremy Weinstein specifically writes about rebel movements, but the author finds that the same criteria apply to insurgent movements). To be able to control the people, develop their organization and threaten the state's monopoly of force, they usually only require active support of a minority of the population, but at minimum the passive complacency of the majority. Hence, while insurgent movements require the active and

passive support of some parts of the population, successful Counter-Insurgency will equally only achieve long term stability when the population prefers the rule of the government over the rule of the insurgents. This, in turn, means that the government needs to eliminate as many root causes of the insurgency as it can (Kilcullen 2009: 6ff.; Howard 2010: 965; Weinstein 2007: 136; Petraeus 2006: 1-1). While they often share certain characteristics, insurgent movements are unique[30], which is what makes COIN such a complicated endeavor. The main similarity shared by all insurgent movements is their goal to enforce political change, and the violence they use achieve this target (Petraeus 2006: 1-5).

While insurgency movements in the past often had a central structure and hierarchy, modern-day insurgency movements are frequently built like networks, often with varying goals among different fractions. These fractions do not necessarily share the same ideology, as common goals such as the toppling or weakening of a government are sufficient to hold them together for a while. Not all members of an insurgency movement have to be ideologically motivated, and in some groups ideology only really concerns the leaders of the insurgency (Kilcullen 2009: 6-9). Individual motivation to participate in an insurgency can vary dramatically, from economic strains to a thirst for revenge or a sheer lack of alternatives (Kilcullen 2009: 7).
In all such groups, ideology can also be nothing more than a tool utilized as both a control mechanism and an incentive (Burki 2013: 239)[31].

Similar to terrorist groups, insurgencies often require safe havens to operate (Kilcullen 2009: 8). According to insurgency-specialist David Kilcullen, modern insurgency movements are commonly characterized by several criteria, one of the most important being charismatic leadership, which can be even more important for recruitment than ideology. In recent years, the most charismatic or mystified insurgent leader was surely Mullah Omar of the Taliban, who managed to build a powerful insurgency movement (Rashid 2001).

[30] As are the states in which they occur and their peoples.

[31] There is no conclusive proof for this as of yet, but the author believes that this is the case with the so-called IS. Its leader, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, is portrayed as the Emir whose leadership is religiously endorsed; yet he fails to display convincing religious authority, knowledge or, maybe most importantly, personal charisma. On the contrary, the IS is led in an extremely rational manner and its conduct clearly displays strategic and tactic knowledge and military planning skills. The strategic military skills displayed by the IS are unlikely to be al Baghdadis, but most probably show fingerprints of former members of the Baath party, who had several decades to learn how to conduct military operations and how to set up an administration and rule a country. They might have needed a scapegoat for religious credibility at the helm of their organization; someone who attracts recruits from all over the world but is himself not strong enough to challenge the power of those who pull the strings behind the scenes. If the theory proves adequate, this would be a good example of how ideology can be utilized for recruitment and identification purposes.

In terms of recruitment, financial rewards can be a stronger individual incentive to join a movement than ideology, and this allows to draw conclusions on the commitment of the respective recruit. Often, insurgency movements try to exploit the needs and grievances of the local population for their own end, but they usually also depend on that population to some extent (Petraeus 2006: 3-15). As for the majority of the members of an insurgency movement, it must be outlined that frequently employed ideological justification does not mean the ideology is fully understood by everyone. Also, initial motivations can easily be overshadowed by personal hatred and feelings of revenge which emerge during a conflict. Insurgents may also be used as proxies or supporters of third parties in a conflict. Further, tribal support can be crucial for an insurgency movement in tribal societies, such as Iraq for instance (Kilcullen 2009: 7). This shows how different individual and group motivation can be within an insurgency movement and also explains the different variables one needs to take into consideration when analyzing them.

As these chapters show, there are considerable differences between terrorist groups and insurgent movements which need to be taken into account when looking at both groups. The lines between terrorists and insurgents and their respective tactics are often blurred and most groups employ a combination of methods. Yet, it is important to keep in mind the distinction between terrorist groups and insurgency movements in the context of this study. While insurgents employ violence to replace a government, terrorists can have multiple goals. Their reasons and convictions can also vary greatly, with Jihadism as the most well-known terrorist ideology. However, while terrorists mostly seek some sort of political change, the form of this change can be manifold, and some might not even have a desired end state at all.

5.2. State Weakness, its Meaning and Consequences

There is no single way of defining and evaluating state weakness and state failure (Hehir 2007: 313), as the concept is very hard to pin-point (Carment et al. 2008: 349). Therefore, the definition of state weakness used in this thesis will be generated by a merger of definitions from several scholars.

The author uses the assumption that a functioning state needs to exhibit three fundamental characteristics as the basis for the evaluation of state weakness: Authority, legitimacy and capacity (Carment et al. 2008: 350). Additionally, civil war or conflict is maybe the most potent indicator of state weakness, since, as Robert Rotberg puts it, "*nation-states fail because they are convulsed by internal violence and can no longer deliver positive political goods to their*

inhabitants. Their governments lose legitimacy, and the very nature of the particular nation-state itself becomes illegitimate in the eyes and in the hearts of a growing plurality of its citizens" (Rotberg 2003: 1). This means that the strength or weakness of a state can be measured "*according to the levels of their effective delivery of the most crucial political goods*" (Rotberg 2003: 2), among which are human security, a judicial system, a free and open political system, social services and a socio-economic infrastructure (Rotberg 2003: 3). The less satisfying a state performs in a growing number of these categories, the weaker the state is. Strong states perform well in most of the categories, while the performance of weak states is mixed. Once a weak state begins to fail in an increasing number of the categories, it becomes a failing state. It ultimately becomes a failed state once it fails in most or all of the categories. Some political goods are more important than others in this context. For instance, a high level of internal violence is an especially dramatic indicator of state weakness (Rotberg 2003: 4). While the analysis of one single indicator will not suffice to predict state weakness, the analysis of several categories should offer the possibility to identify some warning signals to avoid state failure.

It is particularly hard to stop the downward spiral of state failure once it started, and the hitherto unanswered question remains as to why some weak states fail and others do not (Rotberg 2003: 21f., 11).

Authority, legitimacy and capacity are interrelated, as a state's authority depends on its legitimacy among its citizens and on its capacity to enforce its decisions. Authority is the degree to which a state is able to enforce its decisions upon its citizens and whether the state is able to provide a stable and secure environment; Weber calls this "'*Imperative control*'" (Carment et al. 2008: 350, 156f.; Weber 1964: 152). Legitimacy refers to the perspective of the state´s citizens, meaning to which degree the population accepts the state´s authority and is willing to identify with it or at least come to terms with it. According to some scholars, former colonies tend to be exceptionally challenged in this aspect, as former colonial states tend to be considered illegitimate by their citizens (Atzili 2010: 758; Carment et al. 2008: 350; Weber 1964: 324ff.). Capacity refers to the state's ability to provide public resources and services (Carment et al. 2008: 350). This means that legitimacy is closely linked to capacity, as the perception of the citizens depends on a state´s ability to positively influence their lives. A good performance in legitimacy, will, respectively, make achievements in the realm of capacity much easier, as the citizens will be more likely to cooperate with the state.

Edward Newman points out some more specific features of state weakness, such as the lack of a state's capacity to maintain public order and institutions and to contain external threats by controlling the borders (Newman 2007: 465). Weak states fail to provide physical security to their citizens, they allow for the development of ungoverned areas and fail to effectively counter illegal business like drug traffic and weapons smuggle. Infrastructure and administration are insufficient and so are most social services such as education and health care. This can lead to a vicious circle in which the state keeps growing weaker. The less governance and public services (particularly employment) a state provides, the easier it gets for illegal trade and business to grow. This undermines the power and authority of a government even further, making the government increasingly substitutable (Patrick 2006: 29; Rotberg 2004: 4f.; Schneckener 2004: 9f.).

While poverty does not automatically equal a high crime rate, it does foster relative deprivation. This in turn harbors grievance, an important feature of weak states. As Lu and Thies explain in their 2011 paper, when given an opportunity (which is according to them most likely to arise during civil war) grievance can easily translate into violence, further fueling the downward spiral of state weakness. The authors positively correlate high levels of economic grievance to the severity of civil war (Lu and Thies 2011: 226), which is maybe the strongest indicator of state weakness.

Other than civil war or conflict, the most severe indicators of state weakness, state weakness generally manifests itself in the malfunctioning of the state's organs: Weak states are often characterized by a flawed administration, an inefficient (and mostly corrupt) economic system and the absence of human rights, a lack of political freedom and no reliable judicial system (Patrick 2006: 29; Rotberg 2004: 4; Schneckener 2004: 9f.). The weakness of a state thus shows in the inability to provide its citizens with the most essential government functions. One of the most relevant goods a government should provide is human security (Rotberg 2003: 3). When this most basic good is not guaranteed, it automatically becomes exceedingly difficult for a state to provide other essential goods. Likewise, the population will be more susceptible to join violent groups if the state fails to provide physical safety. If individuals experience violence, they will be more likely to turn to violence as well to protect themselves and their families (Howard 2010: 966). Naturally, human security is least provided during civil war or other violent conflicts. State weakness generally tends to become really challenging for the government as soon as violent conflict or civil war breaks out. Anne Hironaka explains this as the downward spiral of state weakness, which is exacerbated by the outbreak of violence. As

violence and weak state institutions fuel each other, it is extremely hard to end either one once they occur together - especially since the state might simply lack the resources to do so (Hironaka 2005). It is therefore extremely important not to underestimate the vulnerability weak states display towards the outbreak of violence.

Conflict and violence both harbor opportunities for militant groups. Internal conflicts usually give rise to several militant groups which all pursue their own agenda. These groups tend to fight each other and the government in a complex system of alliances and enmity, which can result in an unexpected breakthrough for one of the participants. Even if not the most potent of groups, a group may be successful simply because the others are too busy fighting each other[32].

The characteristics of state weakness mentioned in this chapter refer to the states' structures and its performances, which are internal factors. State weakness can, however, also be fueled by external factors, such as bad neighborhood. Here, this term refers to a state which is bordered or in the same region as one or several states which have a bad influence on other states, most notably in the form of a spillover effect (Patrick 2006a: 21f.). This can be caused by their own internal weaknesses, for instance when weak economic performance leads to a growing shadow economy that spills over borders and penetrates other states' economies. Unprotected borders are another issue, as they are a source of refugees and, possibly, conflict. Another bad influence can be several states fight over a third one which they both seek to keep in their sphere of influence. Just as neighborhoods or regions can have stabilizing effects, they can equally accelerate the downward spiral of a weak state[33].

5.2.1. Worse than weak: State Failure

There is a scale between strong, weak and failed states, and states display weak structures to varying intensities. Strong states provide a sufficient quality and quantity of relevant political goods (Rotberg 2003: 4), and while there are many different forms of state weakness, failed states are "*tense, deeply conflicted, dangerous, and contested bitterly by warring factions*"

[32] This is one opportunity for non-state groups that can go hand in hand with civil wars and conflicts, as can be observed in the case of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, for instance (The Economist, Libya's Civil War, 2015).

[33] Such has been the case in Afghanistan for decades. The state does not only suffer from multiple foreign invasions and internal weaknesses (especially the lack of state legitimacy and national identity) but equally suffers from being surrounded by Iran, India and especially Pakistan. In terms of the influences of bad neighborhood as mentioned here, Afghanistan has been subject to all of them (Weinbaum 2006: 1, 5, 8f.), and it remains to be seen how Afghanistan's neighbors will affect the state once the international forces left the country for good.

(Rotberg 2003: 5). Failed states have flawed institutions, and they are unable or unwilling to perform the most fundamental tasks of a state. Often, the executive is the only functional branch in a deeply flawed political system. Corruption is often rampant in failed states, and the elites are likely to invest elsewhere and drain the state of its revenue[34].

According to Rotberg, in most failed states governments are militarily challenged by one or several armed revolts, and they often face a form of civil unrest or insurgency movement. Failed states are often unable to control parts of their territory and their borders, and the factual control of the government is often limited to the capital. This also goes hand in hand with growing lawlessness and a rise of organized crime, such as trafficking. As these and other criminal actors, such as warlords, grow more powerful, the state loses influence. Then, the people eventually turn to a non-state actor for the provision of the most essential goods. This downward spiral leads to a loss of legitimacy of the state in the eyes of its citizens, who will be more likely to accept a third party as a substitute for the state. In the most extreme case, this development can be beneficial for terrorist groups (Rotberg 2003: 5ff., 9).

Failed states often face civil wars which have their roots in some sort of intercommunal antagonism or ethnically or religiously motivated resentment (Rotberg 2003: 5ff.).

When states fail, state institutions disintegrate on all levels, especially with regards to the monopoly of force and human security. The economy declines sharply, there is no functioning service provision and people are on their own to organize their lives – the state basically ceases to exist on an institutional level. The presence of non-state groups who step in to fill the power vacuum and take over the tasks of the government is therefore one of the most obvious signs of state failure. Classic examples hereof are warlords, but also insurgency movements. These developments are often accompanied by high levels of violence (Rotberg 2003: 5f.).

Rotberg further defines a fourth category, the collapsed state, which is an extreme version of a failed state and harbors an absolute vacuum of authority. Examples hereof are Somalia in the late 1980's and Afghanistan in the 1990's (Rotberg 2003: 9).

As will be explained in a following part, the state of Mali and some of its neighbors can be classified as weak prior to the events of 2012. However, once the insurgents had managed to take control of the north of the country, the author classifies the Malian state as failed, at least temporarily. This might only have been the case for a certain period of time, but the author believes that a state which has lost control over a majority of its territory can reasonably be

[34] For more on this topic, see Tom Burgis' current book "*The looting Machine: Warlords, Tycoons, Smugglers and the systematic Theft of Africa's Wealth*", especially pages 5 and 73ff.

called a failed state, which is also in accordance with Robert Rotberg (Rotberg 2003: 5). Even four years later, in 2016, it still appears that the only reason Mali does not completely disintegrate is the presence of foreign troops.

To sum up, state weakness signifies a government's lacking authority, capacity and legitimacy and most prominently manifests itself in the outbreak of civil war or violent conflicts. If these deficits only occur to a certain extent and do not affect the state in its entity, a state is weak, as opposed to more extreme cases of failing or failed states. Either phenomenon can have grave implications on regional and international stability, and vice versa. It is also important to note that these classifications are not terminal. States evolve, and so do their strengths and weaknesses (Rotberg 2003: 10).

With growing global interconnections, instability in one state does not necessarily remain confined to this state, which is why state weakness is becoming a growing international concern (Rotberg 2003: 1). This also leads back to RSCT, which promotes the relevance of regional security dynamics.

5.2.2. Civil War and its Impact on weak States

The term civil war is generally assigned to a country´s violent internal conflict that produces more than 1.000 fatalities per year, five per cent of which must be suffered by both non-state and state forces (Collier and Hoeffler 2004: 565). Civil war often occurs parallel to the des-integration of a state, which makes it one of the clearest, if not the ultimate indicator of state weakness (Schneckener 2004: 5). This is logical, as a strong state will use force to end violence on its territory to avoid losing control. The most important difference between civil and interstate war is the fact that the violence in a civil war is restricted to opposing forces within a country (Kalyvas 2000: 2, 5). Ann Hironaka argues that the strength of a state´s structures has a decisive influence on the outbreak and duration of civil wars (Hironaka 2005: 20). This means that once internal violence breaks out weak states are more prone to being drawn into a downward spiral of violence than strong states. This phenomenon appears to be especially valid for formerly colonized states, whose structural weaknesses are largely rooted in their flawed post-colonial governance structures (Hironaka 2005: 21f.). As explained in the preceding chapter, civil wars also offer militant groups opportunities to seize control over parts of the state's territory. Once this control is consolidated and the territory is being used as an operating base, it gets increasingly difficult for the state to fight the respective groups.

For this research, it makes more sense to look at violent conflicts than civil war. Even comparatively low levels of violence can have repercussions on the stability of a state, and are therefore a contribution to state weakness[35].

5.2.3. Authority: Ungoverned Territories and their Impact on States

As described in chapter 2, authority mostly shows in the question of whether or not the state holds the exclusive monopoly of force. A state´s weak law enforcement capacity can lead to the development of so-called ungoverned territories. These are typically at far distance from the capital and in remote areas, where the government lost control and left a power vacuum. This vacuum is then often filled by non-state actors such as warlords, insurgents or terrorist groups (Newman 2007: 465; Rabasa et al. 2007: 1f.). The vacuum might show in a lack of military and police forces, which in turn cause a lack of legislation and jurisdiction. Non-state actors can not only make use of the lack of control by developing their own structures, but they often substitute the missing state forces. Effective government control in a specific area is thus the key to defining ungoverned territories. The lack of such control will be identified by the permanent absence of sufficient state forces (either military or police), permeable borders, ongoing illegal business such as cross-border trades and the influence of non-state actors in a specific area (Rotberg 2003: 6). This paper assumes that an area in which a state no longer enforces law and order will likely attract non-state actors to create a safe haven and exercise control, and the permanent residence and operational freedom of such groups in certain areas is probably the most obvious proof of the existence of an ungoverned territory and state weakness[36] (Rotberg 2003: 5f.).

Apart from law enforcement entities, the degree of control exercised by a state also shows in the extent to which the state provides social services and whether or not the citizens in a conflicted area accept the government and cooperate with it. Citizens strategically shift their favor to those actors who provide most benefits (Weinstein 2007: 163f., 168) and they are

[35] There is a possibility that non-state actors may try to seize the opportunity to emerge in moments of conflict; an "in the right place at the right time" momentum. Hence, the opportunities civil wars can provide to non-state actors are critical in the context of state weakness. With multiple parties already fighting, one actor might benefit from the fact that the others are already worn down or too engaged in their own fight. Once this actor manages to gain a sphere of influence and to consolidate power, fighting it off will become increasingly difficult for the state under attack. The Islamic State is a very good example hereof (CFR, The Islamic State, 2016).

[36] Jeremy Weinstein describes an environment where "*the barriers to insurgency are very low*" as a state with a corrupt government, financial instability, no regard for public interest and insufficient control over its territory: "*…these are also the conditions under which opportunistic rebellion is most attractive. The environments we might expect to foster revolutionary change are, it seems, the most prone to the emergence of destructive, violent, and state-destroying rebel organizations*" (Weinstein 2007: 53).

likely to accept a substitute for the government if necessary, which leads to a classic vicious circle (Rabasa et al. 2007: 1f.). This also depicts the level of interrelatedness between the different features of state weakness and how state weakness can influence an entire region in a negative way. This is especially true for ungoverned territories, which can easily lead to a situation where a state needs to fight off an irregular adversary without violating the territorial sovereignty of another state.

5.2.3.1. Ungoverned Territories and Terrorism: Uncovering the Links

Among terrorism scholars it is known that some terrorist groups prefer to reside in ungoverned territories to develop operational capabilities and find sanctuary or a so-called safe haven (Schneckener 2004: 5). It is no coincidence Al Qaeda declared its intention to use Sub-Saharan Africa as a future base of operations as early as in 2001 (Zoubir and Dris-Aït-Hamadouche 2013: 102). Among the conditions the group encounters there are poverty, corruption, ethnic tensions and persisting violence. These conditions can be used by terrorist groups for recruitment purposes, for the procurement of material and to hide their activities; although all of this depends on the individual strategy and tactics of the respective group. Relative deprivation can in some cases be favorable to recruitment purposes and can facilitate the possibility to gain influence (Takeyh and Gvosdev 2002: 98). Nevertheless, some groups might also benefit from or even require functioning state features, as Martha Crenshaw and Ken Menkhaus point out (Crenshaw 1981: 181; Menkhaus 2010: 186). Other scholars encourage a completely new way of thinking about the link between terrorist groups and safe havens, as they believe the concept of a safe haven has been misinterpreted (Campana and Ducol 2011: 396f.). Still, there are several examples of terrorist groups who use sanctuaries as a base for their operations, with Al Qaeda in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) before 9/11 (Gunaratna and Nielsen 2008: 779) as the most prominent example.

Maybe the most important advantage offered by ungoverned territories is that they allow terrorist groups to operate relatively undisturbed. As an autonomous state enjoys sovereignty according to international law, other states cannot intervene easily in ungoverned areas without violating the host state's sovereignty, even if the host state itself is too weak to stabilize the area. As terrorist groups can differ considerably in character and structure[37], it

[37] For Example, the Hezbollah became part of Lebanese politics over time, while Boko Haram will likely never take part in Nigerian politics (Azani 2013: 90f.; Beumler 2015: 209f.).

remains important to look at the individual case in order to understand the interrelation between the occurrence of ungoverned areas and the residency of terrorist groups.

5.2.3.2. A Lack of Law Enforcement Capacities as a Sign of State Weakness

In this context the term "law enforcement capacities" refers to the executive forces of a state which fall in the realm of authority (Carment et al. 2008: 350). As explained, the existence of ungoverned territories indicates a state´s ability to stabilize its territory far off the capital. It therefore serves as an indicator for the states' law enforcement capacities. But while ungoverned territories are areas which provide a kind of "passive support opportunity" by sheer existence, a state's security forces may or may not actively fight a terrorist group. Therefore, their strength in numbers, equipment, level of training, motivation and experience in Counter-Terrorism (CT) and Counter-Insurgency (COIN) need to be considered when measuring the strength of these institutions[38]. A government's control exercised over its military and other institutions is more difficult to measure, and moments of turmoil are often revealing in this context[39].

It will therefore be crucial for this work to take a detailed look at Mali's security forces in order to find out in how far they influenced the failure of the Malian state.

5.2.3.3. Capacity: Administrative Weakness and the Relevance of Social Services

A state's capability to provide critical social services is a crucial indicator when it comes to determining a states' strength and when evaluating the extent of legitimacy a state receives from its citizens. As explained before, Legitimacy ideally requires the citizens to accept the authority of the state as just and to believe in the ruling system (Carment et al. 2008: 350). The people will be more inclined to support a system which provides basic goods and services (Buzan 1983: 60). Some of the most important areas of state administration are education, health and infrastructure. It will be considerably easier for non-state groups to gain a foothold in a society where the population is not satisfied with the provision of these essential goods. Whichever actor might be willing to step in and fill the vacuum, people in need will likely be susceptible to his influence. The possibility for non-state groups to create dependency this way

[38] A state basically needs the ability to meet any kind of security-related challenges it faces. In the context of this research, CT and COIN will be the most relevant capabilities for the respective states.

[39] This was proven by the Green Revolution in Iran 2009, where security forces stood by the government, as opposed to the Arab Spring in Egypt, where the military, deeply rooted in Egypt's society, did not completely turn against the population (TheWorldPost, Iran's Green Movement five Years later, 2014; Erickson 2013: 338).

is high, as these groups may for instance provide physical security or employment. Prominent examples hereof are the Hezbollah and the Hamas, who use social inequalities to create dependency and gain political influence (Azani 2013: 904f.; Szekely 2015: 284). Due to the alienation of the people in a state which does not fulfill its social role, a lack of social services potentially creates attractive conditions for terrorist groups who seize opportunities to influence and recruit the people while they have the resources (Howard 2010: 962). This is one example of the connection between the weakness of a state and the presence of non-state groups such as terrorist groups. The degree to which a group makes use of a states' administrative weakness largely depends on the groups' goals, strategy and capacity. As filling the administrative gap essentially means taking over parts of the government, it implies features of insurgency movements. Two prominent examples hereof are again the Hamas and the Hezbollah, who adapted their structure to their socio-political engagement (Baracskay 2015: 520f; Azani 2013: 900, 902, 904ff.).

5.2.3.4. Legitimacy: An important Indicator of State Weakness

As mentioned before, legitimacy refers to the state's ability to garner support for the government among the population and the degree of loyalty the state receives from its citizens. If the government is unable to create such loyalty through governance, it might sooner or later be confronted with a lack of public support, which is potentially dangerous once non-state actors appear who are ready to take over the role of the state. Further, if parts of the population do not identify with the state, conflict between different groups can easily break out, which threatens the internal peace of the state. States which face a legitimacy problem are therefore internally vulnerable to a critical extent (Carment et al. 2008: 357). While the issue of legitimacy can be critical for state stability, the state can also use its capacity to build legitimacy to generate trust and effect desired changes. If legitimacy is used as a soft power, it can constitute a positive basis for the relationship between the state and its citizens (Masters and Hoen 2012: 339).

In their paper, Masters and Hoen suggest that states with low rates of legitimacy are more prone to domestic terrorism than states whose legitimacy is undisputed. However, while their data hints that this assumption could be correct, the investigation is complex and more research is needed to verify the exact relationship between terrorism and low levels of state legitimacy (Masters and Hoen 2012: 345, 352f.).

In the course of the preceding chapters it became clear that state weakness and failure manifest themselves in multiple ways. While state failure is the more extreme form of state weakness, not all weak states fail, and it is important to understand the reasons why some do and others do not.

That is why the chapters above established criteria to evaluate the weakness of the Malian state. Looking at conflict levels, capacity, authority and legitimacy, this research will identify the degree of state weakness or failure in Mali and establish links with the respective non-state groups and their behavior.

II. Part Two: Introducing the main non-state Actors in Mali and its Neighborhood

The second part of this work will introduce the most relevant non-state actors who contributed to the events in Mali in 2012. These actors are AQIM and the Mouvement pour l'Unité et le Djihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (MUJAO) as well as some Turaeg groups, most notably the (MNLA) Mouvement National pour la Libération du Azawad and Ansar Dine.

As is always the case in a conflict, it is probably impossible for an external analyst to completely understand the internal perspective of actors on the ground and their exact affiliations. It is nonetheless vital to analyze these actors in order to understand and influence their actions, which is why this chapter will introduce the most important groups involved in the seizure of territory in Mali. One is a terrorist group unified by ideology and a political agenda, AQIM. The other is a much older ethnic group fractured into subgroups whose fractions do not all share the same religious and political convictions; the Tuareg. All of the non-state groups introduced in the following chapters are *functional actors* for security analysis (Buzan, Waever and de Wilde 1998: 36).

1. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: The Development of a regional Threat

While having been officially established in 2006, AQIM is originally an Algerian organization which had several predecessors with a long history of struggle against the Algerian government. This struggle is not only significant for Algeria, but for the entire region, as it introduced radical Salafism and religiously motivated terrorism to North Africa. Geographically, the predecessor-groups and their ideology have their origins at the Algerian coast of the Mediterranean Sea and eventually wandered southwards (Moulaye 2014: 8). AQIM (then the GSPC) fled to northern Mali in 2003, when, after years of fighting, the group could no longer sustain the pressure from Algerian security forces (Walther and Christopoulos 2015: 499).

The Algerian roots of AQIM clearly depict the regional dimension of the problem: When faced with rising levels of violence, the Algerian government identified a national security threat and took steps to counter it, most notably in the form of CT. Unfortunately, Algeria's CT-policy eventually led to a situation where the threat was simply pushed out of the country into neighboring states (Moulaye 2014: 8). This indicates that Algeria had a limited definition of its geographic responsibility, let alone a commitment to security cooperation as it would be required within an RSC. As will be shown later, Algeria, which carries a lot of responsibility for

the problems in Mali, appears to act primarily (if not exclusively) based on its own interests, without much regard for regional security or its immediate neighbors.
AQIM and its forerunners are the most influential non-state groups in contemporary Algerian history, and they are also the direct link between Mali and Algeria. The following chapters will explain the development of AQIM in Algeria and then proceed to describe the group in detail, as an understanding of its strategy is indispensable for this study.

In 1989, an official legal party named the Front Islamique du Salut or Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was formed in Algeria and in a sweep won both regional and local elections in 1990 and 1991. With all signs pointing at an FIS victory in upcoming legislative elections in the National Assembly, the Algerian military annulled previous election results and dissolved the national assembly. The military had previously taken power by force in fear of an Islamist victory (Schanzer 2004: 98). The Algerian military regime then started a systematic repression of the FIS and detained more than 12.000 suspected Islamists (Schanzer 2004: 98), thereby forcing the FIS to go underground, where a new group was formed, the Groupe Islamique Armé, or GIA (Hajji 2009: 17). The Algerian governments' harsh treatment of FIS members drove many civilians into the arms of Islamist groups, as the ban of the FIS suddenly placed members of a formerly legal party outside the law. It is quite possible that violent Islamist groups like the GIA would have remained marginal in size had it not been for government repression[40]. The ideology promoted by the FIS merged Islamism with the anti-colonial fight of the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN). This was an intelligent exploitation of strong anti-colonial sentiments which gave disenfranchised youths an ideology to identify with. Recruitment for Islamist groups further soared because many ordinary members of the FIS were driven underground by the ban of the party and subsequently joined illegal Islamist groups (ICG Islamism 2004: i). What is more, the founding members of the GIA were mostly battle-hardened returnees from the war in Afghanistan (Schanzer 2004: 99), contributing to the radical nature of the GIA and the combat experience of some of its leaders.

Eventually, the military wing of the FIS, the MIA, together with other Islamist groups declared war on the Algerian government, which in turn declared a state of emergency (Schanzer 2004:

[40] "*Counterinsurgent armies are notoriously brutal, employing tactics that target civilians indiscriminately in an effort to dry up the support base for guerilla movements. Such indiscriminate violence can drive civilians into the waiting arms of rebel groups, especially when such groups are able to mobilize their forces to protect noncombatants from further harm and abuse at the hands of the government. Extreme levels of state violence often leave civilians no other option than to join the insurgents or to live behind guerilla armies*" (Weinstein 2007: 37) – this seems to be a fitting description of the situation in Algeria during the Black Decade.

98). Contrary to the FIS, the GIA rejected participation in the democratic political process and started a bloody insurgency against the military regime. Between 1992 and 1999, more than 150.000 people lost their lives in the Algerian civil war, and the infrastructure of the country was completely destroyed (Schanzer 2004: 101). As a consequence of this violence, the GIA faced intense government repression and the population became increasingly alienated. In 1998 a new group developed out of the GIA, which called itself the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, or GSPC. The GSPC was the direct predecessor of AQIM (Hajji 2009: 23, 46).

1.1. Forerunners of AQIM: The Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA)

After the election results of the FIS were annulled the party was dissolved by the Army and ensuing riots led to the declaration of a state of emergency in Algeria. The FIS split into two fractions; a relatively moderate and a militant one. The moderate wing formed the Armée Islamique du Salut (Islamic Salvation Army) or AIS for self-protection, and the militant wing formed the GIA, which refused to consider peaceful means and instead declared Jihad on the Algerian regime. To a large extent, the GIA consisted of disenfranchised youths who saw Jihad as both a means and an end. They were largely influenced by Wahhabism from local mosques and incorporated their experiences of violence and delinquency into their Jihad. Like other Islamist groups at that time, the GIA also consisted of former Mujahedeen, FIS-members and ordinary criminals, which made for a dangerous combination (Hajji 2009: 31; ICG Islamism 2004: 10; Boubekeur 2008: 6).

The GIA was hardcore Islamist to such an extent that many of its members regarded the strict implementation of Sharia law in Algerian society as their top priority and the toppling of the Algerian regime as secondary. They rejected regular participation in the political process as a party, because in their understanding the establishment of a purely Islamist government was their duty. They were, however, divided between those who saw only the regime as impious and therefore punishable, and those who extended this view to the entire Algerian society (Hajji 2009: 23; ICG Islamism 2004: 10). The extreme ideology brought forward by the GIA can best be summed up in a quote by one of its leaders, who reportedly said ‘‘*those who fight against us with the pen will die by the sword*’’ (Lefèvre 2012: 924). The quote is a good indicator of the indiscriminate brutality of the GIA. Their doctrine was to wage war against everybody who cooperated with the government, including civilians. During the mid-nineties, when numerous militant non-state groups existed in Algeria, this policy basically led the GIA into a civil war with all groups, institutions and individuals opposed to them (Mellah 2004: 34, 52).

The violence during this conflict was so abhorrent that about 1.5 million Algerians were internally displaced between 1993 and 1997. As another consequence of the violence, unemployment and poverty rates were high in Algeria during these years, affecting over a third of the total population (Martinez 2003: 9).

Once they were in control of certain districts, the GIA strictly implemented their interpretation of Sharia and forced the inhabitants to adhere to their rules. Among these rules was an obligatory fee to pay to the "resistance", the banning of state-employment or military service and the rule that women had to wear a veil. Even though these rules were oppressive, parts of the population were willing to accept them for the opportunity to fight the government. However, as the GIA grew stronger, violence became increasingly arbitrary. Time witnesses even recount stories of murders of families or children, which severely intimidated the population (Mellah 2004: 33).

The GIA grew rapidly and in 1993 their fighters numbered more than 20.000, a number which enabled them to pose an actual threat to the Algerian government. As Algerian Islamists had fought against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the eighties, persisting ties to Al Qaeda`s leadership led Al Qaeda Central to support the GIA as early as in 1994. According to Algerian officials, the groups established a network which enabled Al Qaeda Central to supply the GIA with weapons and other military equipment. Apart from their connection to Global Jihadists and a high number of fighters, the GIA also became increasingly dangerous because of its ruthlessness. Eventually, the group started to target anyone who would openly oppose them. Among their targets were journalists, clerics and diplomats, but also families associated with the government and women who refused to wear veils.

A few years later, when the GIA carried out massacres against civilians, public opinion turned against them, and even their supporters began to distance themselves from the group. International allies such as the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) began to distance themselves from the GIA as well, and the latter´s rhetoric grew increasingly disrespectful towards the entire population of Algeria, which eventually turned most of Algerian society against the GIA (Hajji 2009: 23; ICG Islamism 2004: 10). Finally, the differences between the GIA and the Algerian population culminated when the GIA declared the population to be "*kouffar*", infidel. The GIA started to increasingly follow the *Takfiri*[41] ideology and continued to

[41] "*Takfir*" is the process of declaring a Muslim an apostate. An ancient interpretation allows for someone to be excommunicated first in order to be killed afterwards, as the killing of unbelievers was justifiable and could be declared as legal (Burki 2013: 241).

attack civilians, both of which led to an increasing loss of internal and external support for the group. Ultimately, the group and the Algerian people were involved in a conflict which severely weakened the GIA (Hajji 2009: 23). This seriously strained the GIA's relationship with Al Qaeda Central, which did not seek to alienate the population of Algeria[42] (Schanzer 2004: 104).

As mentioned before, the Salafist Group for Prayer and Combat, the GSPC, was formed by former members of the GIA in 1998 (Hajji 2009: 23). Some sources report that Osama bin Laden himself advised and even orchestrated the establishment of the GSPC, as Al Qaeda was looking for a less violent partner in Algeria at the time (Schanzer 2004: 104). In any case, the GIA continued their campaign of violence until 2002, when its then-leader Antar Zouabri was killed by Algerian security forces (Hajji 2009: 23).

This chapter shows that indiscriminate targeting of civilians can be a problem for terrorist groups, so that the question of how to deal with civilians poses a challenge. The author holds that terrorist groups should establish a coherent policy towards civilians, at least if their ability to operate is not entirely detached from the attitude of the people towards them. As they need infrastructure and supplies, it is unlikely a hostile attitude towards civilians will serve them well in the long run. The GIA learned this the hard way, as proven by the eventual dissolution of the group. It is therefore important to underline that AQIM, and in particular its leaders Abdelmalik Droukdal and Mokhtar Belmokhtar, appear to have understood the important role civilians can play for terrorist groups like AQIM. The author believes that AQIM probably implemented some lessons learnt from the GIA. Accordingly, AQIM's behavior towards civilians is one of the main differences between the group today and its forerunners, and also one of the most obvious signs of their strategic adaptation.

1.1.1. The Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat (GSPC)

The GSPC was officially established as a military organization in March 1999. Its' goal was to continue Jihad while denouncing the atrocities committed by its predecessor, the GIA. The GSPC was founded by former GIA leaders and declared that it would officially continue the fight against the Algerian government (Hajji 2009: 24). It was even reported that the GSPC-leader had by then had contact with Osama bin Laden, who reportedly advised him to restore the image of Jihad in Algeria. It is, however, unclear whether this actually happened or whether

[42] In his „The Management of Savagery", which is understood to be one of the most important strategic guidelines of Al Qaeda, Abu Bakr Naji explicitly refers to the GIA's policy of fighting against everyone who was against them as "unjust" and "ignorant" (Naji 2006: Third topic, section two [26]).

it is a myth. What is evident is that the image of Islamism was seriously damaged in Algeria because of the reckless behavior of the GIA, which the GSPC vowed to change. By then, the goal of the GSPC was to fight "*jihad against the Algerian regime…to implement Shari'a and remove the oppression and humiliation from the shoulders of our suppressed brothers"* (Hajji 2009: 24). The GSPC pointed out that "*its ambitions would not be limited to its local interest but would be extended to other places which could be reached by its fighters*" (Hajji 2009: 24), albeit still prioritizing the fight against the "near enemy" (the Algerian government) over the fight against the "far enemy" (Hajji 2009: 25). This rhetoric fits the group's dispatching of fighters to regions such as Southeast Asia and Europe, where the group sought to establish networks (Schanzer 2004: 105f.).

1.1.1.2. The Structure and Strategy of the GSPC

The GSPC was organized similarly to the GIA, in a number of battalions [43] which were supervised by a religious authority that would provide guidance to the group. The battalions, or *Katibas,* each controlled a territory akin to the military districts of the Algerian government and they were each responsible for their own funding, with most revenue provided through illegal trade. The leaders of the GSPC were reported to be constantly on the move to avoid capture (Kennedy 2007: 4f.).

Traditionally, the main areas of operations of the GSPC were the mountains in the north and the deserts in the south of Algeria, where the group primarily targeted Algerian security institutions. Most attacks were ambushes, bombings and assassinations. In order to supply itself, the GSPC also carried out raids during which they seized vehicles and other required goods. Ambushes were also used to generate anticipated government responses, which the group would then use as an opportunity to get hold of military equipment. The GSPC would only risk direct confrontation with Algerian security forces when they could use the element of surprise (Kennedy 2007: 3). In terms of finance and equipment, the GSPC generally made use of an elaborated smuggle-network which transcended the borders of Tunisia, Mauritania, Libya, Mali and Niger. As an operational base, the group chose the governorate Kabylia which was only weakly penetrated by the state (Schanzer 2004: 102).
At its peak, the group numbered more than 4.000 fighters, 1.500 of whom were stationed in Kabylia (Schanzer 2004: 104f.).

[43] The word used as an equivalent for battalions is often *Katiba*. These are organizational units used by AQIM and other Jihadist groups, and their exact size cannot be externally verified and is likely to vary.

Due to the fact that the GSPC used organized crime to finance itself and guerilla tactics to fight, it qualifies as a hybrid group to some degree, similar to AQIM today.

1.1.1.3. The GSPC Leadership

Many leaders of the predecessors of the GSPC were former Mujahedeen who had returned from Afghanistan with combat experience. When the GSPC emerged, its primary enemy was the Algerian state, in line with the "near enemy"- focus of the FIS (Steinberg and Weber 2015: 57f.). In mid-2004, Abdelmalik Droukdal took over the leadership of the GSPC when the leader was killed by Algerian security forces. Droukdal effectively built the narrative that the Global War on Terror was a threat to all Muslims worldwide, who were, according him, also under threat by governments cooperating with states which took partin the GWOT. Examples of such governments were Algeria and Pakistan, which, according to Droukdal, had "*sold out their own people´s interests*" (Hajji 2009: 267). Especially after the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the GSPC was divided in two fractions: The pan-Islamists headed by Droukdal, who wanted to showcase their solidarity with the Iraqi population, and the Islamist-nationalists headed by Hassen Hattab, who wanted to concentrate on the overthrow of the Algerian regime before engaging in a fight against the "far enemy". Hattab wanted to support the Iraqis passively by giving advice and forbade his men to join the fight in Iraq; but it was to no avail. Hattabs' reservations proved right, and the GSPC soon found itself in a situation where it had problems carrying out operations in Algeria because of a lack of available fighters. This forced Hattab to resign as leader, and he was replaced by Nabil Sahraoui (Hajji 2009: 26).

Confronted with a loss of fighters due to the Algerian government´s reconciliation program and its members' participation in the war in Iraq, the GSPC recruited youths as fighters (Hajji 2009: 33). The GSPC also had to deal with an aggressive and successful Counter-Terrorism program implemented by the Algerian state, which further caused the group to shrink (Kennedy 2007: 1). At the same time though, Operation Iraqi Freedom also generated recruits for the GSPC and other Islamist groups, as it led to an influx of young, radical males who wanted to fight against the American occupation (Harmon 2010: 15).

In spite of a generally declining number of fighters, the GSPC managed to actively participate in Al Qaeda's network, which enabled them to benefit from the mother-organization's expertise. During this time, representatives of the GSPC reportedly reached out several times to Al Qaeda franchises, most notably to Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), which was then led by Abu Musab al Zarqawi (Hajji 2009: 44f.). It is indeed a possible scenario that AQI's success in Iraq

might have caused the GSPC to push for a merger with Al Qaeda, as was assumed by Harmon (Harmon 2010: 16). However, other sources suggest that the GSPC primarily wanted to cooperate with AQI because of the latter's access to money (Byman 2012: 16). After having transformed their propaganda and communication methods to meet Al Qaeda Central's standards, the GSPC rebranded itself to AQIM (Hajji 2009: 44f).

As could be observed with the Global Jihadist Movement (GJM) over the years, it is not uncommon for the participating groups to cooperate or issue statements of mutual support, even when there is no proof of an actual operative link. The groups probably benefit from each other's experience and knowledge this way, but they also advance the agenda of the GJM in general. By presenting themselves as a unified movement, they can appear to be much more organized and threatening than they actually are. Judging from his Interview in the New York Times, this is something that AQIM-leader Droukdal seems to have understood fairly well (New York Times, Interview, 2008). This in turn hints at the strategic thinking of AQIM's leadership and is an indicator of their ability to do "Realpolitik"[44].

1.1.1.4. The Influence of the GWOT on the GSPC

The GSPC faced internal struggles long before its re-branding to AQIM. Between 1998 and 2001, defections were numerous and internal rivalries challenged the group structure. The Concorde Civile, which will be introduced in a following chapter, led to the surrender of more than a thousand GSPC fighters, which further weakened the isolated group (Hajji 2009: 28).

Shortly after 9/11, the Algerian government accused the GSPC of having perpetrated a massacre against civilians. In response, the GSPC claimed that the Algerian regime was blaming violence on the GSPC to gain international support in the Global War on Terror. According to the GSPC, the Algerian regime increasingly portrayed itself as a victim of terrorism and at the same time stepped up its media efforts to outline its own success in anti-terror operations (Hajji 2009: 24f.).

As the GSPC faced increasing internal and external problems, its interest in Al Qaeda appeared to grow steadily. Through Arab fighters, the GSPC reportedly established links with Chechen terrorists and began acting as a facilitator for Al Qaeda's networks. When the decision was made to unify Maghreb fighters in a regional, Jihadist project, a common cause and common

[44] Indeed, Martha Crenshaw hints at the necessity for terrorist leaders to be rational actors when pointing out the constraints under which they operate and the different interests they have to cater to within their group in order to maintain loyalty (Crenshaw 1981: 389).

goals had to be found so that fighters who were not Algerian would identify with the project. The GSPC started to adopt rhetoric in line with that of Al Qaeda, for instance when portraying themselves as the defenders of Muslims who were supposedly under attack by apostate[45] regimes all over the world. As worldwide Jihad was presented as the solution to this problem, the GSPC started to take part in the Global Jihadist Movement (Hajji 2009: 41).

While the GSPC was dealing with operational challenges, the Algerian government was actively trying to establish links with the U.S. Administration to forge a CT cooperation. The U.S. saw Algeria as a viable partner in the fight against terrorism, mainly because of the latter's long experience with terrorist groups. After 9/11, a bilateral partnership between Algeria and the U.S. emerged, and Algeria's military still receives training by U.S. forces (Boubekeur 2008: 11). In sum, the GWOT gave legitimacy to the Counter-Terrorism policy of the Algerian government, and the latter sought to reinforce this by strengthening cooperation with the U.S. Administration (Martinez 2003: 7).

With the global presence of Al Qaeda in the wake of 9/11 emerged a new generation of Jihadists in Algeria. The younger generations of radical Muslims no longer trusted institutionalized parties and had no sympathy for the failure of the struggle against the Algerian regime. Encouraged by Al Qaeda's show of force, they sought to fight global Jihad in Algeria. When AQIM was established in 2006, this was appealing to younger generations of Jihadists, who had been influenced by Osama bin Laden rather than the Algerian struggle for Independence (Boubekeur 2008: 9).

1.2. The Establishment of AQIM: A regional Game Changer

On September 11th, 2006, head of Al Qaeda Ayman al Zawahiri declared the allegiance of the GSPC with Al Qaeda, which was officially confirmed by the GSPC two days later (Hajji 2009: 46; Harmon 2010: 16). However, it wasn't until January 24th 2007 that the GSPC declared its change of name to Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (Hajji 2009: 46). The rebranding was soon followed by a particularly deadly and long-lasting series of attacks, which AQIM publicized effectively (Hajji 2009: 49f.).

Strategically, the merger with Al Qaeda showed in different ways, most notably by attacking representatives of foreign countries and by starting to operate outside of Algeria, mainly in Mauritania and Mali (Harmon 2010: 16). The development of the GSPC to AQIM is therefore

[45] Which means those cooperating with, and thereby selling their population to the West.

of relevance for the entire region, and this was already obvious years before the secessionist-Islamist insurgency in Mali in 2012. It is by no means certain that the insurgency in Mali would not have taken place without the active participation of AQIM. The author assumes that the Tuareg probably would have started it either way, and it cannot be verified to which exact extent the individual groups contributed to the insurgency. Still, it needs to be pointed out that the region and individual states did not do enough to stop the evolution of the threat. As it is known that Al Qaeda promotes global Jihad, it should have been clear after the rebranding that this also meant a change of the agenda of the GSPC to some extent. Had Algeria, Mali or other regional state powers acted swiftly, many of the conditions AQIM helped forge in northern Mali might have been avoidable.

While both groups officially claim mutual support and a shared goal as the reasons for the merger, analysts assume the GSPC's rebranding to AQIM was in fact its only chance of survival (Kennedy 2007: 1). Just as the creation of the GSPC was a direct answer to the GIA's violence, the establishment of AQIM was the answer to the steady decline in fighters and supporters the GSPC had been dealing with for years. The Algerian population had approved of a reconciliation program offering amnesty to thousands of ordinary GSPC fighters, while many high ranking members were being cracked down upon by state forces. Algerian Counter-Terrorism efforts were so effective that the group went from 30.000 members in the 1990's to less than 1.000 members at the beginning of the twenty-first century (Thornberry and Levy 2006: 4).

It was therefore vital to the group´s survival to reach out to the people with a new incentive. One of the main supporters of the name-change to AQIM appears to have been Abdelmalek Droukdal, who continues to be one of the group's leaders (Kennedy 2007: 2). This was likely so because Droukdal was looking for a long term strategy to increase AQIM's regional influence. The alliance with Al Qaeda did make up for the success of the amnesty program to a certain extent, and the merger in combination with the group's move into the Sahel was probably the only answer the group had to dwindling public support and increasing security crackdowns (Harmon 2010: 16, 20).

The rebranding also meant that AQIM was integrated in the organization and hierarchy of Al Qaeda Central to a certain degree. This offered the possibility to access Al Qaeda Centrals' networks, which is a key to funding, logistics, recruitment and more. Yet, the merger with Al Qaeda also attracted more attention from CT officials in North Africa (Kennedy 2007: 5f.). According to AQIM-leader Abdelmalik Droukdal, the merger with Al Qaeda was motivated by

the obedience of Allah's law, who allegedly wants the *Ummah*[46] to unite. This shows that Droukdal rightly understands unity as an instrument of power and influence, which is likely another reason for the merger. He explicitly emphasized how the merger is intended to intimidate and scare the enemy in an interview with the New York Times (New York Times, Interview, 2008).

One of the main differences between Al Qaeda Central and AQIM as a regional offshoot is the latter´s primary focus on regional issues instead of a broader Jihadist ideology, as AQIM gives the fight over the "near enemy" preference over the "far enemy" (Chivvis 2016: 26). Harmon argues that the allegiance of the GSPC with Al Qaeda distracts the group from its focus of toppling the Algerian government, especially as they have to devote parts of their resources to the expansion into other regions (Harmon 2010: 16). This, however, might be short-sighted. It is also possible that AQIM spread to other regions because of logistical necessities and was not so much distracted by Al Qaeda Central's strategy than it had the possibility to adopt the latter's tactics. For AQIM, the merger meant a gain in prestige and reputation. It facilitated access to global jihadist networks, made the group more attractive to recruits and elevated its threat profile. For Al Qaeda Central, the merger also offered a boost in publicity and threat potential and possibly source of fresh income (Chivvis 2016: 25).

It is therefore clear that while the relationship between Al Qaeda Central and AQIM is more a loose affiliation than a close partnership, it is nevertheless a mutually beneficial relationship. This has been reinforced by Droukdal, who called the relationship reciprocal and stated that he was in contact with the leadership of Al Qaeda Central, exchanging information and advice (New York Times, Interview, 2008). While AQIM's agenda is primarily regionally limited, they also spread Al Qaeda's global jihadist ideology. Since the overall complexity and threat potential of the global organization appears more powerful, its regional offshoot benefits from advice and expertise granted by the senior group (Chivvis and Liepmann 2013: 13). Nevertheless, Al Qaeda Central views nationalism critically, as it identifies it as a source of division for the *Ummah* (Byman 2012: vi). Since AQIM still has its nationalist goal, it is hard to tell how closely the two actually cooperate and how constructive their relationship is. Another indicator of ideological differences is the fact that even though AQIM widened its targets to include western governments, such as France, it did little to put its more international agenda

[46] *Ummah* is the Arabic term used for the community of all Muslims worldwide (Lahoud 2010).

into practice. Also, the adoption of the Al Qaeda-label led the IC and CT-agencies to focus on the group, which makes operations and movement harder (Byman 2012: 11, 30).

AQIM's most important goal is to overthrow all "apostate" North African governments, but particularly the government of Algeria. They further seek to get rid of Western influence in North Africa and to introduce governments to their liking, who should strictly adhere to AQIM's interpretation of Islam (TRAC, AQIM, 2014). AQIM's leader Droukdal himself made a distinction between the goals of Al Qaeda Central and the regionally limited goals of AQIM. It is therefore clear that AQIM's leadership has a realistic outlook and likely understands the distinctive tactical and strategic challenges the group faces (New York Times, Interview, 2008). This became especially clear during the interview the New York Times conducted with Droukdal in 2008. According to Droukdal, AQIM and Al Qaeda are involved in a necessary struggle for self-defense, which has been forced upon them by repressive and unjust Western regimes, most of all the United States and Israel: "*We say, why shouldn't we join Al Qaeda? God ordered us to be united, to be allied, to cooperate and fight against the idolaters in straight lines. The same way they fight us in military allies and economic and political mass-groupings. Why shouldn't we join our brothers while almost all these nations got united against the Muslims and separated them, and divided their land, and took away Al Aksa mosque out of their hands [sic!], and consumed their goodness, and destroyed their morals? Then look at the crimes that happen in Gaza and Iraq and Afghanistan, and Somalia and others [sic!] places. These crimes are committed by the Jew-crusader ally. But when the Muslims get together to defend themselves, they blame [sic!] them for getting together and accused them with mass-grouping, and made [sic!] an approach about their unity. Yes, we see that it's our duty to join Al Qaeda so that we can have our fight under one flag and one leadership in order to get ready for the confrontation. An ally is faced by another ally, and unity is faced by unity. The joining was a legitimate necessity by the book of our God and the sunnah of our prophet, peace and blessing be upon him*." (New York Times, Interview, 2008). Droukdal strongly expresses that AQIM acts on the basis of religious necessity and self-defense, hence creating the narrative of a weaker defendant (New York Times, Interview, 2008).

According to the analysis of the author, Droukdal's line of argumentation is relevant to AQIM, as it gives the group's claim of legitimacy a new quality. Essentially, AQIM created the narrative of a repressed victim defending itself, as opposed to the image of an aggressor. The rhetoric of AQIM evolves around the necessity to defend Muslim lands from unjust, heretic regimes, which are said to be attackers of the true Islamic faith. AQIM creates the impression that

Algeria is their country and that they act on behalf of the good, pious Muslims. Contrary to Al Qaeda Central, they have the advantage of being able to establish an emotional narrative based on their connection to an actual homeland (Algeria) which has a history of grievance against an oppressive Western state (French colonialism). Algeria does not, on the other hand, offer AQIM an emotional historic narrative akin to that of Palestine. Nevertheless, the emotional rhetoric AQIM employs seeks to legitimize its behavior by portraying the group as a victim who acts on behalf of the people. This strategy hints that they seek to draw the population into their struggle. It appears AQIM understood the relevance of popular support and is inclined to expand it whenever possible (see also part II, chapter 1.2.8.).

Overall, the interview with Droukdal suggests that AQIM should not be underestimated. Their strategy and tactics are clearly defined, they have a realistic operational agenda and the group proves to be able and willing to adapt to changing circumstances. The author believes that flexibility is often key to the prospering of non-state groups, as Al Qaeda has learned the hard way. To label AQIM weak because of the decline in manpower and to see the need for survival as the only reason for the merger leads to an underestimation of their capabilities. AQIM and their forerunners repeatedly proved their ability to survive, and they can be expected to do so again if necessary. Also, the author supposes AQIM does probably not perceive weakness the way western scholars do. Terrorist groups tend to think in very long terms, and in his interview Droukdal indicates that he does that, too (New York Times, Interview, 2008). The author believes that AQIM most likely sees Global Jihad as a long term strategy, in line with Al Qaeda Central's ideology[47] (Burki 2013: 236f., 239), which means they are unlikely to be too impressed by singular tactical failures or successes. AQIM is also aware that they force the West to counter an ideology, which is a very difficult task. Therefore, western claims of AQIM's alleged weakness should be viewed with care. Even if the group is weak, it still follows to the most powerful Islamist ideology in the world, and it is unlikely to run out of supporters anytime soon or to dissolve permanently.

1.2.1. The Ideology of AQIM: A short Introduction to Salafism

Ideology are the "*beliefs, values, principles, and objectives – however ill-defined or tenuous- by which a group defines its distinctive political identity and aims*" (Drake 1998: 54; Davis et al.

[47] Al Qaeda's goal to establish a global Caliphate which comprises the entire *Ummah* is an absolutist goal, and it is unknown whether the leaders actually believe to ever achieve this goal. In any case, the scope of the project clearly indicates its long term character.

2012: 51). Importantly, ideologies are not goals, but incentives to take action. Goals can be inferred from ideologies, but they are an end, not a means. The ideology, on the other hand, is the guideline which sets the ground for the goals. It determines and accompanies both the means and the end. This is an important distinction to make in order to fully understand religiously motivated groups.

As AQIM and its predecessors advertise and seek to utilize their religious convictions, it is essential to look at their ideology in order to understand the groups' agenda. Since AQIM has a long history in Algeria, its ideology is a merger of Algerian and Al Qaeda influences. Just like Al Qaeda, AQIM are Salafi-Jihadists (Council on Foreign Relations, AQIM, 2015). Salafists want to return to the old ways of living as portrayed in the *Qu'ran* and by Mohammad, while Jihadists seek a violent fight in order to establish Islamic rule (BfV, Jihadism as an Ideology of Violence; Lahoud 2010; Davis et al. 2012: 51). In their messages, AQIM often employ typical Islamist terminology, including the terms *jahiliyya* (ignorance in times before the arrival of Islam), *fitna* (disorder, fall from faith), and *fasad* (corruption, like blasphemy). The rhetoric is used to showcase the behavior of the *kuffar* (unbelievers) and stress the importance of waging Jihad against them (Porter 2011: 8).

Salafism is a Sunni theological orientation which includes a literalist interpretation of Islamic laws. Its name derives from the term *al-salaf al-salih*, which means "the pious predecessors" and refers to a "golden age" of Islam, which in turn refers to the three first generations of Muslims. Their ideal is to follow the teachings and deeds of the Prophet Mohammed literally and to avoid innovation. Essentially, Salafists reject any innovation which came after the teachings of the Prophet. This interpretation of Islam also concerns law and politics, which Salafists do not accept because they perceive them as man-made alterations of the holy laws of Islam. The dichotomy between Prophet Mohammed's holy deeds and words (*sunna*) and man-made innovation hereof (*bid'a*) is central to the understanding of Salafist ideology. AQIM clearly follows this train of thought when they speak about abolishing apostate governments and introducing Sharia instead (Olidort 2015: 7f.).

While Salafism is often associated with terrorist groups like Al Qaeda, most Salafists reject both non-violent and violent political participation. The primary goal of Salafists is to correct the way Muslims understand and practice Islam. Salafists seek to behave in a way that the Prophet Mohammed would have approved of. Therefore, the creation of an Islamic State is just a secondary goal for most Salafists (Olidort 2015: 4f.). Jihadists, in turn, are radical Islamists who

interpret the word Jihad to mean fight. They believe it is their duty to fight the enemy and spread their religious convictions, if necessary by violent means (Lahoud 2010). AQIM are both Salafists and Jihadists. This makes AQIM violent, radical-Islamist missionaries, in many ways similar to AQAP, Boko Haram and the so-called IS. The IS is more extreme because they adhere to the *Takfiri* ideology (Bunzel 2015: 7f., 11).

AQIM's narrative includes both regional and global refrences, which is common for a regional group taking part in the GJM (Burki 2013: 236f.). Terrorist groups naturally build a narrative to generate supporters and provide a sense of a shared identity. In the case of AQIM, the narrative merges ideology and goals in order to appeal to regional and international supporters. It is used to justify the group's actions and enable future operations (Drake 1998: 54).

While AQIM uses its religious convictions to win new recruits, they will likely need additional qualities to consolidate themselves among the people. For instance, the main reason Algerians voted for the FIS before the Black Decade was not religion, but the people believed them to be the only actors capable of effectively opposing the ruling government (Shabafrouz 2010: 323).

1.2.2. The Structure and Organization of AQIM

While the exact degree of control of AQIM's leadership is unclear, it is known that the group is hierarchically structured, with the Emir at the top of the hierarchy. From there the structure unfolds into a number of executive councils with specializations such as media, military and finance (Chivvis 2016: 27). AQIM's ruling body is a *Shura Council*, which appoints the Emirs for specialized departments such as finance, communication, military affairs and religion (Le Sage 2011: 2). This structure is characteristic for Al Qaeda Central and its affiliates and is also known from other radical Islamist groups such as the Taliban for instance (Siddique 2014: 5f.).

Emir Abdelmalik Droukdal is the highest-ranking person in AQIM, and his subordinates are divided into three structural entities, as mentioned above: The committees are responsible for strategies in different areas such as politics, media, and communication and military. The *Katibas* are units assigned to a certain region. There are four regions covered by these *Katibas*; the north, the south-east, the south-west and Kidal in Mali[48] (Schreiber 2013: 163). *Katibas*

[48] It cannot be established where exactly which *Katiba* is stationed, as AQIM operates clandestinely and the units are apparently moving constantly.

usually comprise six or more vehicles with a total of over a hundred fighters, and the vehicle of the Emir carries a powerful weapon, such as an RPG. Smaller *Katibas* are sometimes called *Sarayas*[49] (Botha 2008: 46; Chivvis 2016: 27f.; Guidère 2011: 5).

It is mostly assumed that AQIM operates with a high degree of autonomy. The division into different entities enables the development of special skill sets required for terrorist operations and for AQIM to spread out over vast territory.

Geographically, AQIM used to operate in Kabylia in the north of Algeria, near the border to Libya and Tunisia in the east, near the Moroccan border in the west and in the south of Algeria, especially near the border to Mali (Steinberg and Weber 2015: 61). While the group used to have a stronghold in the northern region of Tizi Ouzu, located at the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, CT-measures ousted AQIM from this region in 2010 and led to the groups' move southwards, to the desert region bordering Mali (Porter 2011: 6). AQIM exploits this area, making use of mobile commando units which move across the border region from Mauritania to Chad (Filiu 2009: 8).

AQIM's area of operations is generally the Sahel-Sahara zone, where the group found a safe haven and fresh sources of income (Chivvis 2016: 28). Indeed, as the region was understood to be an ideal safe haven and training ground, Al Qaeda Central already showed interest in establishing units in the Sahel-Sahara Zone as early as in 2001 (Zoubir and Dris-Aït-Hamadouche 2013: 102). Mokhtar Belmokhtar first established a camp in the Malian desert bordering Algeria, Niger and Mauritania in late 2004. Reportedly, Belmokhtar had a very transparent policy of dealing with the population in the region, as he rewarded those who followed him and punished those who opposed him. He made no distinction between ethnic or tribal identities and made an effort to spread the GSPC's Jihadi ideology to the entire population of the region, which had traditionally been characterized by moderate religious affiliations (al-Ma'ali, 2012: 2). The camp in the Malian desert became the base of the GSPC, where the group would recruit and train fighters, and it became an important trading hub for organizing and transferring arms and other material to the Algerian parts of the group. It was during this time that the regionally-limited agenda of the GSPC broadened and the global outreach of the group was developed, as became evident in the rebranding to AQIM (al-Ma'ali,

In 2012, the names and leaders of the battalions were as follows: Abou Zeid led the *Tariq bin Ziad* battalion, Abou Yahya led *Al-Furqan*, Abd-al-Karim al-Targui led *Al-Ansar* and finally Belmokhtar led *Al-Mulathamin* until he founded his splinter group, the "Signatories of Blood".

[49] Once again, the exact size of the military units cannot be verified. It is, in any case, interesting that they are structured similar to traditional armies. *Saraya* is the Arabic term for car; translation by the author.

2012: 2). This gradual shift shows how the group eventually developed from an Algerian threat to a regional security threat, with a new home base in Mali.

During the beginning of the group's residency in Mali Belmokhtar did not target institutions of the Malian state, as he tried to keep conventional state forces at bay. Not only did he establish relationships with regional state representatives (reportedly making extensive use of corruption), but he is also well-known for creating extensive nuptial ties with the local population, most prominently with the Berabiche tribe (al-Ma'ali, 2012: 2).

Fighters from all over North Africa and the Maghreb poured into the region to be trained by AQIM. As time went on, the Emir Droukdal decided to replace Belmokhtar, and the numbers of recruits continued to grow until the group reportedly settled into a structure of two battalions and two squadrons[50] (al-Ma'ali, 2012: 3).

The ouster of Belmokhtar can be seen as a symptom for the development of AQIM, which has become increasingly diffuse and flexible over the course of the years. As the commanders' autonomy grows and possibilities and threat potentials in the different zones of operations vary, the battalions of AQIM seem to be operating increasingly independently (Chivvis and Liepman 2013: 13). This offers obvious advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, autonomy offers the ability to react in a flexible way, it facilitates operations and can therefore make the group more efficient. On the other hand, autonomy threatens cohesiveness and restricts mechanisms of control, which can become problematic. However, a certain degree of autonomy appears to be the most viable form of leadership for AQIM, as the group needs to cover vast areas of land to be able to finance and supply themselves. Until now, AQIM never appeared to suffer from a severe lack of unity or cohesiveness in its history of almost a decade. Even the removal of Belmokhtar as a *Katiba* leader did not lead to major frictions within the group.

1.2.2.1. AQIM's Leadership

AQIM generally operates autonomously from Al Qaeda Central (Chivvis 2016: 26, 7) and the overall leader of AQIM is Abdelmalik Droukdal, who is an engineer by trade and an expert in explosives. He is also known as Abou Mossab Abdelwadoud (Council on Foreign Relations,

[50] The information given in this paragraph is contradictory to the information given before, which claimed that AQIM has four battalions. It is difficult to determine the exact number of battalions for an outsider and this information is not essential to the research. Therefore, this study will have to make do with the fact that establishing the exact number of organizational units within AQIM is beyond the reach of this study.

AQIM, 2015). Until his ousting a few years ago, one of his most important commanders was Mokhtar Belmokhtar[51] who still plays an important role in regional Jihadism, albeit no longer as a commander of AQIM. While no longer leading an AQIM-battalion, some sources claim that Belmokhtar still remains affiliated to Al Qaeda Central[52]. In any case, he still shares the same strategic goals and ideas for Algeria with AQIM (Jamestown, AQIM, 2012). As of 2011, Droukdal held command of the north, the south was commanded by Abou Ammar, the south-east by Abou Zeid, the south-west by Belmokhtar and the Kidal region in Mali by a Tuareg leader named Abdelkrim le Tuareg, who is the only Tuareg leader in AQIM's ranks (Guidère 2011: 5; Alvarado 2012: 4). One of the main weaknesses of Droukdal is the fact that his charisma does not reach further than the operational area of the group (Steinberg and Weber 2015: 64). This might not be essential for a regional offshoot of a global organization, but it does decrease chances to generate fighters and support. It is to be assumed that the majority of the leadership of AQIM is exchangeable, if not all of them[53].

As Guidère describes it, the impact of the AQIM-leadership on the ground seems to be minimal, just as hierarchies do not seem to be very strict on the ground. Rather than a stringent structure, the group maintains its operational capabilities by ensuring the loyalty of the fighters through pledge of allegiance, or *Bay'at*, which they swore to an individual leader. Each of these leaders is in turn bound by *Bay'at* to a number of people who are beneath him in hierarchy and to at least one leader above him. The group is structured like a network, and each hub personally only knows a limited number of other hubs, who in turn have their own followers, and so on. The big hubs mainly know other hubs, so that the lowest-ranking fighter swore allegiance to his commander, who in turn swore allegiance to his commander and so forth. Ultimately, all are indirectly bound to the head of Al Qaeda, Ayman al Zawahiri, by pledge of allegiance. While this also means that commanders only know a limited number of fighters personally, it ensures flexibility and loyalty, technically enabling al Zawahiri to take full control of all of his fighters whenever he sees fit (Guidère 2011: 5, 8). This network-based system of allegiances can indirectly be traced back to interpretations of the *Qu'ran* as well: "*Verily, those who swear allegiance to thee indeed swear allegiance to Allah. The hand of Allah is over their*

[51] It is not possible to keep this information up to date, as the group does not necessarily publicly release changes among its leadership figures.

[52] As will be shown in the course of this study, Belmokhtar frequently makes new alliances, which is why it is difficult to determine his affiliation in the long run (Schreiber 2013: 163; Chivvis 2016: 162).

[53] Research on targeted killings and decapitation (intentional killing of important figures in a state of war, see Hepworth 2014: 2) shows mixed results and indicates that, while the method might be effective in the long-term, this applies particularly to small, cellular groups, whose size makes it much harder to sustain the loss of leadership personnel (Hepworth 2014: 8).

hands. So whoever breaks his oath, breaks it to his own loss; and whoever fulfils the covenant that he has made with Allah, He will surely give him a great reward" (Qu'ran, Qu'ran Surat Al-Fath, Verse 11). "*And fulfil the covenant of Allah when you have made; and break not the oaths after making them firm, while you have made Allah your surety. Certainly, Allah knows what you do"* (Qu'ran, Qu'ran Surat Al-Nahl, Verse 92).

While pledges of allegiance are the fabric of the group, AQIM is generally a relatively loosely organized group, in which commanders enjoy considerable autonomy. Indeed, commanders and leaders sometimes have very different priorities. This was the case with Mokhtar Belmokhtar and Abdelmalik Droukdal, as the latter grew increasingly worried about the former's involvement in contraband. Belmokhtar used his power as a *Katiba* commander to engage in extensive narcotics smuggling, which increasingly worried Droukdal (Thornberry and Levy 2011: 3, 8), as Belmokhtars deep involvement in smuggle was considered a deviation from the true path of Islam and it was doubted whether his actions were still in accordance with the Sharia (Jamestown, AQIM, 2012). It is no coincidence his nickname has been "Marlboro Man" for some time (IRIN, Mali, 2012).

Differences between Belmokhtar and other regional leaders were sometimes considerable, as he was notorious for conducting independent operations and ignoring orders from higher commanders. Belmokhtar reportedly refused to meet his regional leaders and instead tried to establish contact with Al Qaeda Central, although these efforts failed. Letters from AQIM leaders revealed their degree of dissatisfaction with Belmokhtar, whose behavior they found disrespectful. Belmokhtar himself wrote a letter justifying his separation from AQIM to the central leadership of Al Qaeda, in which he complains that his suggestions for structural adjustment of AQIM have never been implemented (Guidère 2014: 3f., 7). This is a good example of how an actual division of the group was caused by long term strategic and tactical differences, while loyalty to Al Qaeda Central remained intact. Belmokhtar decided to dissolve his bond with AQIM without dissolving his bond with Al Qaeda Central. This appears to be a good example of "Realpolitik" in a terrorist group.

In spite of leadership differences, loyalty to Al Qaeda Central remains strong among the leaders of AQIM (Joscelyn 2013: 6). Their homeland Algeria remains one of the strategic foci of the group (CFR, AQIM, 2015a), which bears advantages and disadvantages alike: While the decade-long fight for one singular goal harbors a high degree of emotional commitment which might facilitate recruitment and legitimization, Algeria is a particular case, and the situation in the

Algerian state potentially does not appeal to many radicalized Muslims. Algeria is not considered a heartland of Islam, which makes recruitment harder. Further, Algerians mainly come from Berber tribes (CIA World Factbook, Algeria; DW, Algerien: Gewalt zwischen Berbern und Arabern eskaliert, 2015), which gives them a different ethnic background than other Middle Eastern populations and decreases the likelihood of attracting followers from these countries.

As pointed out by Abdelmalik Droukdal, AQIM has a body for strategic decision-making, and decisions are frequently revised and adapted according to the situation and the nature of the enemy (New York Times, Interview, 2008). The author believes that the ability to be adaptive is crucial for the survival of non-state groups. Being able to adapt to new realities on the ground as well as to shifting alliances and to the will of the population is essential for a conventionally weaker party to survive against a stronger opponent. Being weaker than a state with a conventional Army, militant non-state groups can only afford so many enemies at a time without being existentially threatened. This, in turn, means that a holistic regional approach against such groups should be all the more effective.

1.2.3. The broader Picture: AQIM's Strategy and Goals

As one of AQIM's primary goals remains the liberation of their original homeland Algeria (CFR, AQIM, 2015a), it can be assumed that their push into Malian territory partly served the purpose of creating a safe haven from which to conduct attacks in Algeria. The group used the merger with Al Qaeda Central to adopt more effective terrorist tactics, such as suicide bombings and synchronized attacks (Gray and Stockham 2008: 95). Since changing its name to AQIM the group has also introduced new targets, like the apostate governments of other Muslim countries. Among these countries are Tunisia, Mauritania, Libya, Morocco and Mali. In line with Al Qaeda's goals, AQIM wishes to implement Sharia law in these countries, which are the "near enemy". AQIM internationalized as a result of its merger with the globally active Al Qaeda Central, and now also has "far enemies", which are mainly the governments of France and Spain (CFR, AQIM, 2015a). By targeting France, AQIM caters to both the anti-colonialist spirit of the Algerians and the global agenda of Al Qaeda Central.

AQIM also concentrates more efforts on attacking hard targets as opposed to soft ones and accompanies its actions with a media campaign (Gray and Stockham 2008: 95), which is a common strategy in Global Jihad. While the group was not able to sustain the intesnity of their most effective terrorist campaign in 2007, their strategy remains to destabilize the Algerian

government by perpetrating terrorist attacks. In accordance with this long term strategy, AQIM also changed its structure. While both GIA and GSPC had been organized like a conventional force, AQIM operates like a modern network, with a strongly decentralized style of organization (Gray and Stockham 2008: 95). This fits their mobile and flexible ways of operation. The group divides into several subunits scattered across the desert, which then conduct independent attacks (Rao 2013: 3). While in line with their flexibility, the fact that AQIM started to conduct operations (especially kidnapping for ransom, KFR) in the desert as opposed to major cities (Goïta 2011: 2) does not fully fit the terrorist character of the group. Neither does the fact that their activities sometimes leave the impression that they are more involved in making money by smuggling and KFR than in conducting terrorist attacks. While this is a concession to financial necessities, the author asserts that it does not fit the public image of an Al Qaeda branch.

Concerning Mali in 2012, documents recovered some years ago (letters from the leader Droukdal to the group) reveal that AQIM had a clear strategy of how to deal with seized land. The documents lay out a strategy for the governance of seized territories in northern Mali, stating that while the Sharia should be implemented, it should be done slowly and not too harshly, so as not to alienate the population. It also says in the documents that the Tuareg should officially be left in charge, in order to avoid a backlash by the IC, which would inevitably be caused if AQIM were to take official control over the territory in Mali (Algérie 1, le Document qui révèle la Stratégie d'AQMI, 2013).

The contents of the documents give an interesting insight into AQIM's strategic assessment of the situation immediately after their occupation of territory in 2012. Not only does it prove that the group understands the relevance of popular support[54], it also shows that AQIM is well aware of its national and international standing. In the letter to his fighters, Droukdal explains the likelihood of international intervention in case AQIM grew too strong and cautions against the strong "far enemy". But the crucial point is that the group's plan for the Tuareg to govern is proof of a realist concession: AQIM's wish to maintain its influence and to implement Sharia law, comparatively limited goals, are overruling their claim to governance and thus the possibility to raise their profile. As can be read in the letter, Droukdals' main priority after the establishment of the *Azawad* was to consolidate territory and control (Associated Press, Mali-Al-Qaida's Sahara Playbook, 2015). This means that AQIM put realistic goals above their harder-to-achieve long term ideas and shows that the group had to adjust its tactics the

[54] Seized territory is naturally much harder to sustain than mobile terrorist groups.

moment they seized territory. The necessities connected to holding power seem to have been the highest priority, possibly because a self-governed safe haven was seen as an important enabler for the implementation of the grand strategy.

Droukdal actively encouraged his followers to cooperate with other militant groups and to form a strong bond with them. He cautioned against introducing Sharia law too quickly, which he believed could alienate the religiously moderate population of northern Mali. His letter explicitly condemns the harsh punishment of un-Islamic crimes and the treatment of women, who were no longer allowed to leave their houses under Islamist rule. Instead of a quick and possibly shocking introduction of Islamic law, Droukdal preferred a slow and steady approach which would allow the population to see the presumed advantages of living under Islamist rule, such as being at the receiving end of support from their new rulers. In the letter, Droukdal even expresses regrets over the ouster of their former ally, the MNLA[55], which he says was a setback and mistake in the struggle to build a stable Islamist government (Associated Press, Mali-Al-Qaida's Sahara Playbook). The author believes the letter proves that Droukdal fully understands that AQIM cannot survive in the region, or anywhere, if the population turns against them.

Again, this is a crucial assessment, as dealing with the population as a governing entity brings AQIM yet again closer to an insurgent group (Weinberg 2007: 38).

1.2.4. Assault Tactics used to conduct Attacks

AQIM began a particularly deadly series of attacks in 2007, right after their rebranding. They used several suicide attackers and staged complicated, simultaneous attacks with high fatality rates. They also copied AQI's tactics by detonating bombs with cell phones; the attacks were generally ambitious and demonstrated an elaborate skill set. As this series of attacks came right after their merger, it can be assumed that the affiliation with AQ made AQIM more deadly and sophisticated. The fact that AQIM also targets security forces implicates that AQIM uses guerilla tactics, yet again displaying the hybrid character of the group. Using different methods is increasingly common among violent non-state groups, as the examples of Boko Haram and the IS prove (Beumler 2015: 209f.; Zelin 2016: 2; Barrett 2014: 36; Chivvis 2016: 22f.). Next to their operative capacities, AQIM's regional reach also widened considerably after the merger, as they conducted attacks in Mauritania, Niger, Tunisia, Mali and Algeria (Chivvis 2016: 23).

[55] AQIM, Ansar Dine and MUJAO ousted the MNLA from its strongholds after the establishment of the *Azawad*.

When Droukdal took power over the GSPC in 2003, the group increasingly sought connections with AQI and its leader al Zarqawi, a cooperation which enabled both groups to recruit from all across North Africa. Contrary to the GIA, which had always rejected the idea of foreign fighters in the Algerian Jihad, AQIM actively relies on foreigners to fill its ranks. American sources also estimate that in 2005, one fourth of all suicide bombers in Iraq came from North Africa, including Algeria (Filiu 2009: 4f.).

Not unexpectedly, AQIM reached its absolute peak of operations right after the rebranding in 2007, producing 1.112 fatalities, injuries and kidnappings. Most of the targets belonged to the security sector and were located in Algeria, Mali and Mauritania (Filiu 2009: 6f.). One outstanding example were the attacks perpetrated on April 11th, 2007. The attacks were thoroughly planned and involved multiple targets: The first target was the Government Palace in Algiers, where 45 people were killed by a car bomb. The second target, also located in Algiers, were the headquarters of Interpol, where another car bomb severely damaged the building and claimed eight lives. Third, the headquarters of the Special Forces in Algiers were attacked with a car bomb, and AQIM ultimately claimed more than 200 dead and wounded. In total, almost two tons of explosives were used in these highly coordinated attacks, named "operation unique" by the group due to the required level of coordination. The first attack had been carried out by a suicide bomber, the other two via remote control. The operations required a sophisticated planning effort, which made up for the lack of personnel the group had been suffering from for a while. AQIM targeted state institutions and the attacks were carried out during the night or in the early morning, apparently in an attempt to minimize the number of civilian victims (Hajji 2009: 50ff.).

AQIM also carried out a number of suicide operations that year. Not surprisingly, the civilian death toll resulting from suicide attacks provoked a backlash from the population and led to a growing association of AQIM with the GIA. This caused public approval to drop, and also led to a decline in recruitment numbers (Filiu 2009: 6f.). While suicide attacks had been rare in Algeria before, there were sixteen of them between 2007 and 2008, the majority of which were likely carried out by AQIM (Chivvis 2016: 22f.). The range of their attacks shows the regional dimension AQIM reached over the past years, which is clear evidence of the development from a national threat towards a regional threat.

1.2.5. Finance and Weaponry: Two Essentials for Terrorist Groups

The finance strategy of AQIM is mainly focused on smuggle and illegal trade. The group benefits tremendously from its control over important smuggle routes in the Sahel-Sahara zone, and a considerable amount of the money they generate also goes to Al Qaeda Central (Chivvis 2016: 28f.). Apart from drugs, AQIM benefits from the smuggling of cigarettes, humans, vehicles and other goods (Le Sage 2011: 4), with cigarette smuggle being a very lucrative market (Harmon 2010: 19). AQIM is also known to claim high taxes from other groups who smuggle within their territory. Apart from financial transactions, AQIM cooperates with drug traffickers to obtain everything from vehicles to weapons and communication devices. They launder money by paying drug traffickers with ransom money, and often receive their taxes from traffickers in equipment instead of cash. Sometimes AQIM also provides security to traffickers, who in turn purchase weapons for the group (Sidibé 2012: 39). AQIM has specifically raised its profile by collaborating with South American cocaine smugglers. Although AQIM members do not appear to personally take part in the smuggling activities, they earn money by granting safe passage to the traffickers or by charging transit fees. They also gain easy access to light and heavy weapons due to their connections with organized criminal groups (Larémont 2011: 251).

Since its' rebranding AQIM appears to have become increasingly hybrid. Their illegal funding activities in fact divert from their Islamist agenda, although some of the money is used to finance mosques and religious education (Harmon 2014: 150f., 63f.). As pointed out by Levitt and Jacobson, Islamist groups who engage in organized crime do invite suspicions of hypocrisy, which is why they go to great lengths to justify their methods of income (Levitt and Jacobson 2008: 4). This goes especially for the involvement in drug trade, but also for KFR, for instance (Freeman 2011: 463, 468).

AQIM is also very actively engaged in the KFR business, which they ramped up in recent years and which is one of their biggest sources of income (Le Sage 2011: 4). The group kidnaps hostages from all nations, and especially European nationals have earned them millions in ransom. The group took some 29 hostages between 2007 and 2011, most of whom were European. AQIM morally justifies KFR by explaining that every Western citizen is responsible for his governments' policy because of democracy. They take part in elections and therefore legitimize their home nation's policy. This explicitly refers to "western" policies towards the Middle East and Muslim countries. In general, anything which serves the purpose of defending or extending the influence of Islam is just and legitimate in the eyes of AQIM. The income

generated with ransom varies according to the nationality of the hostages and the ransom policy of their native states, but sums paid to AQIM increased considerably over recent years and are estimated to have totaled between $ 40 and 65 Million between 2008 and 2012[56] (Guidère 2014: 2, 4; Justenhoven 2015: 186).

When it comes to KFR, AQIM developed its own logic of negotiating releases. As they treat kidnapped persons like prisoners of war, there are several ways to deal with them. The hostages can for example convert to Islam and pledge allegiance to AQIM, or ransom can be negotiated with the respective government (Guidère 2011: 4f.).

While the desert generally offers advantages such as low state supervision, it also poses infrastructural challenges, as even most basic needs such as water and oil supply are expensive and require logistic planning efforts (Le Sage 2011: 4). AQIM's favorite methods of communication are human messengers (who cannot be intercepted by technology), satellite phones and the internet (Guidere 2014: 6). All of these are naturally challenged by the terrain and the lack of infrastructure in desert regions. On the other hand, the group possesses valuable communications equipment and vehicles, which make movement and flexibility a lot easier for them, while making CT measures much harder (Thornberry and Levy 2011: 3).

AQIM acquired a high number of weapons after the fall of the Gaddafi regime, among them Manpads (Man-Portable Air-Defense Systems), RPG's (Rocket-Propelled Grenades) and reportedly even missiles (Zoubir and Rozsa 2012: 1275).

In general, most of AQIM's weapons come from African black markets. Until 2013 most of the arms trafficking was done in northern Mali and the Western Sahara. Prior to the liberation of arms caches in the course of the Arab Spring, many of AQIM's weapons were stolen from weapon depots run by the Algerian Army. To hide their weapons, AQIM installed a system of specialized posts. Some members of the group would for instance be responsible for a weapon arsenal somewhere in the Sahel, and guarding these weapons would be their only job. Others would only be concerned with the logistics of trafficking (Guidère 2014: 5). By diversifying the tasks and dividing the work up into small operations which could be assigned to one person each, the likelihood of detection decreased considerably, but coordination becomes more complicated and accordingly requires more time and effort. AQIM today is a hybrid group, as

[56] Two of the main sources of AQIM's income have special terms assigned to them: Fees for passing smugglers are called *jizya*, and ransom from the kidnapping business is called *diyya* (Guidère 2011: 4f.).

evidenced by its operational flexibility and its resulting financial self-sufficiency (Justenhoven 2015: 186).

Describing AQIM's way of supplying themselves and their way of conducting attacks served to explain how they use territory. Prior to Opération Serval (see part IV, chapter 3.1.), AQIM was able to move freely and even control large parts of desert territory in an around northern Mali. This had been going on for several years after they first moved into Mali, and the structures they established to finance themselves and ensure operative capacities grew stronger[57]. As neither regional actors, nor the Malian government took decisive steps to end this development, AQIM ultimately developed capacities which made them a dangerous opponent for the Malian state forces. This is an excellent case in point for the way terrorist groups can exploit ungoverned territories and for the need of regional prevention mechanisms. As will be shown later, the Malian government largely ignored the problem.

1.2.6. The Recruitment Policies of AQIM

One fertile source of recruitment for AQIM appear to be Mosques, where recruiters look for young, disenfranchised males. Young males have in the past proven to be the most likely to support the group. Reasons for susceptibility to AQIM's ideology are manifold, with socio-political factors such as a lack of political representation and economic possibilities being two examples. Young males appear to be relatively easy to influence and older people mostly seem unwilling to join violent Jihad. It is known that members of AQIM personally approach prospective recruits, for instance at bookshops, Internet Cafés or Mosques. In some cases they even use family connections to try to convince prospective members and it appears they sometimes pay their recruits weekly allowances during training in one of their camps (Department for Education, Recruitment, 2009). Ethnically, AQIM focuses on recruiting Arabs, Tuareg, Moors and, to a lesser extent, men from Sub-Saharan Africa. The main asset these men offer is their knowledge of the desert, which AQIM uses to coordinate its subunits, which are scattered over thousands of kilometers. AQIM specifically tries to indoctrinate its members, whose sentiment of marginalization the group seeks to catalyze into motivation for violent Jihad (Sidibé 2012: 31f.).

As modern Jihadists do, AQIM is recruiting followers on the internet, a source which seems to be of special interest to Droukdal, who is quite present online. Unfortunately, messages issued

[57] This is an assumption of the author based on the idea that the more time the groups had to develop their cooperation, the better established their structures must have been.

on the al-Andalus platform are not very glorious, showing worn-out fighters in relatively low quality, which is hardly a proof of success and might seem far less appealing to young recruits than IS media activities, for instance (Steinberg and Weber 2015: 64; Jihadology, al-Andalus Media, 2015).

As Filiu observed, AQIM's threatening rhetoric does not match its actions, which could indicate that the group will aspire to be more effective in the future (Filiu 2009: 9f.). This might be one of the reasons why the group has relative difficulties to recruit; although their media presence gets more sophisticated, they struggle to recruit high numbers of volunteers (Le Sage 2011: 4). AQIM's internet recruitment also targets Muslims on other continents such as Europe (Department for Education, Recruitment, 2009). Also, the rebranding to AQIM most likely helped international recruitment, as it gave the group a global background and hence appealed to a broader audience (Byman 2012: 20).

In the evaluation of the author, AQIM's media activity pales in comparison to that of the so-called IS, whose media strategy is tailored to the mission and highly effective. This is not necessarily a sign of technological disadvantage, but may be due to the fact that AQIM does not target western audiences as much as the IS does. While the IS uses threats and beheadings to reach global target audiences, AQIM tailors its media activities to its local focus. In its messages, AQIM, just like Al Qaeda Central, uses its ideology to inspire followers to wage war against the enemy. The IS, on the other hand, uses war as a way to make people follow its ideology[58]. AQIM uses Jihad to justify its actions, while the IS uses its brutality and the promise of a life in an Islamist State to generate recruits[59]. Still, as can be observed in thousands of foreigners who joined the IS since 2014, the latter is very successful in exploiting global media, particularly social media, for their purposes. AQIM lacks behind in this area, especially as they concentrate on comparatively boring messages which are not as spectacular as the ones of the IS (Jihadology, al-Andalus Media, 2015; Washington Post, Foreign Fighters Flow to Syria, 2014).

[58] The author makes this inference based on the behavior of both groups. The IS clearly uses the fact that it managed to establish a caliphate to generate followers, just as it tries to lure in recruits by promising them to go to war against infidels (Dabiq Issue 3: 18f.; Dabiq Issue 4: 23f.)

[59] In the opinion of the author, the IS justifies its actions with Islam, but religion is much less the basis of the IS than it is of Al Qaeda and AQIM. That is one reason why the latter call for a unified *Ummah*, whereas the IS uses ethnic tensions to maintain its power. They specifically try to pin Sunni against Shia, a strategy introduced by their forefather Abu Musab al Zarqawi (Hunt 2005; Al Jazeera, Al-Zarqawi declares War on Iraqi Shia, 2005).

1.2.7. AQIM's Relationship with Al Qaeda Central

This chapter is going to briefly echo the thoughts of the author on the relationship between AQ and its affiliate AQIM, a topic which is difficult to research because of the secrecy of the groups.

It is impossible for an external observer to uncover the exact extend of the relationship between AQIM and Al Qaeda Central. However, thorough analysis of both groups suggests a high level of commitment to each other. AQIM reinforced statements of *Bayat* and support for Al Qaeda (The Long War Journal, AQIM rejects Islamic State's Caliphate, 2014), which is no longer self-evident since the rise of the so-called IS. The bond between the central organization and AQIM appears to be unbroken, although it has always been unclear to which extend AQIM receives advice and support. The orientation of AQIM towards illicit business is, however, an indicator of an autonomous way of operating. It is likely that al Zawahiri remains an important ideological guide for Droukdal, but the strategic involvement of AQ is probably much more limited than the ideological involvement. This is confirmed by Christopher Chivvis, who states that the direct influence of al Zawahiri on AQIM is limited (Chivvis 2016: 7).
Ever since the Algerian government started to crack down on Islamist groups, Al Qaeda made its southbound expansion in Africa one of its key regional priorities, which is why the loyalty of AQIM is important to the central group (Time Magazine, Nigeria's Boko Haram, 2011).

It is not to be expected that AQIM will break with its mother-organization anytime soon, especially since they do not have to expect support from any other actor. The identity as an Al Qaeda-offshoot is important to AQIM because it facilitates recruitment and elevates its status. On the other hand, AQIM is an important financial source for Al Qaeda.

It is thus valid to assume a solid bond between AQIM and Al Qaeda Central, even though the cooperation is likely mainly based on ideology and advice.

1.2.8. AQIM's Relationship with the local Population

Long before the beginning of the secessionist-Islamist insurgency, AQIM appeared to have picked up the popular "winning hearts and minds" theme of COIN[60]. In line with their support of the Tuareg rebellion, the group interacted with the population and made an effort to remain on good terms with it. Not only did group members intermarry with locals (a strategy to gain

[60] Researchers from the RAND Corporation assume that AQ has alienated a considerable number of potential followers by killing fellow Muslims (Davis et al. 2012: 40).

tribal loyalty) but they also supported people with basic goods such as water and food and generally acted like a patron of the people (Thornberry and Levy 2011: 3). Mauritanian journalist Isselmou Moustapha, who is knowledgeable on Islamist terrorist groups in the region, stated that the extensive nuptial ties formed between AQIM and the Malian population, which are facilitated by the polygamy of AQIM members, are one of the primary strengths of the group, as kinship provides loyalty (de Castelli 2014: 64).

AQIM started its integration into the population years before the Islamist insurgency. The group presented itself as honest, reliable traders who payed generous prices for local goods to support local merchants. They distributed medicine and money and established friendship ties, especially among poor members of society. After having gained a foothold, AQIM started to spread its strict interpretation of Islam. The group essentially bribed religious teachers, or *Marabouts*, to teach its version of Salafi Islam (Boas and Torheim 2013: 3). AQIM's activities regularly create employment opportunities in the regions they reside in and are often the only work opportunities. However, their activities also undermine tourism, which is one of the most important economic sectors in the Timbuktu region (Goïta 2011: 3). As the people living in the Sahara have traditionally rejected Salafist ideology, AQIM had to put considerable time and effort into the attempt to win over these people (Roas 2013: 4).

In sum, AQIM's treatment of the population appears to be reflective and well-considered. The group obviously understands how to analyze and successfully influence its environment, and the deeper AQIM is rooted in a society, the more difficult it will be to actively counter them.

Interestingly, most people in northern Mali, especially in the Kidal region, do not perceive terrorist and criminal groups as threats per se. They do not see the necessity to defend themselves against AQIM. Some people, especially among the Tuareg, even see AQIM as brothers who help them out with basic social services and invest money in development projects (Sidibé 2012: 79). Sidibés' report gives the impression that the people in the Kidal region do generally not mind other actors, even non-state governing actors, as long as they are not directly targeted by violence or suffer from other disadvantages[61].

The penetration of northern Mali's society by AQIM has been growing slowly but steadily, although it took the group many years to strike root. A mixture of economic benefits, nuptial ties and a religious ideology ultimately enabled AQIM members to integrate themselves in the

[61] This is in line with the theory on state weakness outlined in part I, chapter 4.2. The population will accept other actors once the state is unable to perform in certain areas.

society of northern Mali, which is especially important in the light of AQIM's participation in the insurgency movement in 2012 (Adeyemi and Musa 2014: 12).

However, behavior towards the population in their area of operation changed after the overthrow of the Malian government, when AQIM used gun power to enforce its extremely strict interpretation of Islam upon the people (Joscelyn 2013: 1). As will be shown in a following chapter, these policies were later rebuked by Abdelmalik Droukdal, who argued that it was essential for AQIM to preserve the support of the population to maintain power (Associated Press, Mali-Al-Qaida's Sahara Playbook).

1.2.9. The Relationship with other militant Groups

The following chapters will describe the relationship between AQIM and other groups in AQIM's new safe haven in northern Mali. AQIM entertains connections to criminal groups and is itself involved in organized crime, which is a very profitable business in the Sahel (Foreign Policy Journal, The Sahel, Libya, and the Crime-Terror Nexus, 2015). As was shown in part II, chapter 1.2.5., AQIM has benefited from extensive cooperation with criminal groups for years, and their involvement in organized crime, especially in drug trafficking, has become one of their major sources of income. Next to criminal groups, AQIM also cooperates with politically motivated groups, as this chapter will show.

The most influential ethnic group in northern Mali are the Tuareg, who have inhabited the Sahel-Sahara zone for decades. For AQIM, ties to the Tuareg are vital because they offer a possibility to connect with the population, which enables them to participate in local smuggling operations (Foreign Policy Journal, The Sahel, Libya, and the Crime-Terror Nexus, 2015). Although the Tuareg are traditionally hostile towards Islamist groups, they were more accommodating with AQIM, which was largely due to the before-mentioned network of nuptial ties. This has especially been encouraged by Mokhtar Belmokhtar (al-Ma'ali, 2012: 2). Belmokhtars' ability to make efficient use of alliances was particularly obvious when the coup d'état took place in 2012. Witnessing the destabilizing influence of Libyan fighters, his battalion joined forces with the AQIM battalion run by Abu Zeid, the Tuareg Ansar al Dine and the AQIM-offshoot MUJAO. In a concentrated effort, they pushed out the MNLA, a more secular Tuareg group which had been at the root of the insurgency movements in the north. The radical Islamist groups basically hijacked the MNLA's plans after previously having cooperated with them. In the end, AQIM and its Tuareg allies controlled large parts of the Malian north

including the important cities Kidal, Timbuktu and Gao (Chivvis and Liepman 2013: 8; Boeke and Schuurmann 2015: 807).

AQIM further entertains relationships with other Jihadist groups, such as Nigeria's Boko Haram[62] (Harmon 2014: 165f.; Time Magazine, Nigeria's Boko Haram, 2011). Relationships between terrorist groups generally enable the exchange of knowledge, resources, equipment and fighters (Levitt and Jacobson 2008: 8), which can be vital for terrorist groups. While the degree of actual cooperation can hardly be verified, both AQIM and Boko Haram have been issuing statements of mutual support for a while (Harmon 2014: 165f.; Time Magazine, Nigeria's Boko Haram, 2011). It is widely assumed that AQIM helped Boko Haram out in terms of finance, training and equipment in the past (Zenn, Boko Haram's international Connections, 2013). Boko Haram clearly looked to Al Qaeda for inspiration and guidance, and their devotion climaxed in a pledge of allegiance to the group (Guidère 2011: 5). The cooperation between AQIM and Boko Haram has most likely both geographic and pragmatic reasons. It can be assumed that cooperation offers a variety of advantages for both groups: While Al Qaeda Central remains elusive, AQIM is the nearest available offshoot and has years of experience in dealing with state opponents, which could be very beneficial for Boko Haram.
Close geographic proximity, experience and their role as the epitome of the wider Al Qaeda ideology might therefore be reasons why Boko Haram wants to cooperate with AQIM. As for AQIM, additional manpower, influence and ideally a direct corridor from Mali to Nigeria might be some of the pragmatic benefits to be considered when supporting Boko Haram. Both groups generally benefit from claiming to cooperate by raising their threat profiles, legitimizing their causes and raising the public profile of the GJM, which looks stronger the more it presents itself as a unified movement.

1.2.9.1. AQIM and Ansar Dine

While it is known that AQIM and Ansar Dine cooperated after their move into Malian territory, some analysts believe the groups began to coordinate much earlier, even though the nature of their relationship is not exactly clear. What is clear, however, is that AQIM, Ansar Dine and MUJAO initially shared power over the northern part of Mali, which was their sphere of influence before Opération Serval began (Lebovich 2013). The cooperation with Ansar Dine was vital for AQIM and MUJAO, as the latter are mainly composed of Arab Jihadists, whereas

[62] Boko Haram swore allegiance to the so-called Islamic State in 2015, and it is unclear in how far operational links with AQIM have been affected by this move (Marsili 2016: 86). The author believes that it is possible that cooperation persists at the same level due to practical considerations.

Ansar Dine mainly consists of Islamist Tuareg, who have strong roots in the region. What is more, their leader Iyad Ag Ghali is a local hero whose position gives additional influence to his group (Lounnas 2013: 327). According to Wolfram Lacher, it is likely that AQIM cooperated more closely with Ansar Dine than with MUJAO. Ansar Dine might even have executed orders from AQIM, while the AQIM-splinter MUJAO acted more independently (Harmon 2014: 180).

Among the close relationships involving direct operative cooperation is that between Belmokhtar and MUJAO. While no longer an official part of AQIM, Belmokhtars' group set up camp in the MUJAO-controlled Gao region after the insurgency, where they actively equipped and supported MUJAO's fight (Lebovich 2013). It appears that AQIM is generally open to cooperation with other non-state actors. While working with like-minded groups who share the same ideology might be easier, AQIM seems to be realist enough to also engage with groups for practical reasons; for instance for reasons economic cooperation.

1.2.9.2. AQIM and MUJAO

MUJAO (Mouvement pour l'Unité et le Djihad en Afrique de l'Ouest) is an offshoot of AQIM which operates in the Sahel region in northern Mali. The fact that the group has the term "unity" or "oneness" in its name, is likely an allusion to the *Tawhid* concept, which signals extreme Salafist ideology. Soultan Ould Bady and Ahmed Tilemsi, some of the first leaders of the group, were former leaders of AQIM. The group, which mainly consisted of fighters from the Sahara, emerged in 2011 and started launching attacks in Algeria that same year. It was founded in Gao, where its economic resources and investments were well-protected due to local connections. MUJAO is mainly composed of Arabs and black males from various countries such as Guinea, Nigeria, Mali and Mauritania. For some time their aim appears to have been the promotion of their "black" identity as opposed to the "white" identity of other groups. Contrary to the assumption that they are Salafists, MUJAO is not as ideologically focused as AQIM and Ansar Dine, so another reason for participating in the insurgency was probably to maintain their trafficking business. MUJAO was notorious for paying high wages to its recruits and they were known to provide easy earning possibilities to local youths[63] (Lacher 2013: 5f.; ThinkSecurityAfrica, MUJAO, 2012; Moulaye 2014. 14; Raineri and Strazzari 2015: 257ff.; Strazzari 2014: 62; Harmon 2014: 181).

[63] It is reported that monthly wages paid by terrorist groups sometimes equaled annual wages in other occupations.

MUJAO appears to have found its arch enemy in the state of France, but other than that, the group generally lacked political and military strategy. This might be one reason why MUJAO turned out to be the most brutal of the groups involved in the secessionist-Islamist rebellion. Contrary to the other groups involved in the insurgency MUJAO apparently did not want to establish a state, but promoted a sort of "borderless Jihad" and the widespread implementation of Sharia law. Like AQIM, MUJAO also engages in kidnapping operations and extensive drug trafficking. Drug trafficking is a persisting threat to stability in the Sahel region. Because countless groups are engaged in it, it is very difficult to determine the exact extent to which any individual group is involved. MUJAO's goal is to establish Sharia law in Mali and to spread Islamism in the entire region (Lacher 2013: 5f.; ThinkSecurityAfrica, MUJAO, 2012; Moulaye 2014. 14; Raineri and Strazzari 2015: 257ff.).

MUJAO extensively cooperated with AQIM during the insurgency in northern Mali in 2012. As mentioned before, both groups turned against their former Tuareg allies from the MNLA by capturing Ménaka in the Gao region together. Before their push into Mali, MUJAO and AQIM already entertained strong links, but the group is especially associated to Mokhtar Belmokhtar, whose own AQIM offshoot, the "Signatories in Blood", apparently cooperated with MUJAO in a suicide attack in Niger in 2013[64] (Lacher 2013: 5f.; Zenn, Boko Haram's international Connections, 2013). Both Ansar Dine and MUJAO recruit among Tuareg, Arabs and Algerians (Walther and Christopoulos 2015: 499).

1.2.9.3. AQIM and the MNLA

The author believes that the relationship between AQIM and the MNLA has been purely opportunistic. Focused on the accomplishment of their military objective, AQIM and the other groups ousted the MNLA as soon as the time was right. As the foundation of the MNLA only predates the coup in Mali by a short time and the group was abandoned by the Islamist groups shortly afterwards (Lecocq 2013: 24), the author assumes that the relationship between the MNLA and AQIM was not significant for the development of AQIM. Other than that, the author could not find any reliable sources which detailed the relationships between the two groups.

As the previous chapters show, AQIM entertains several relationships with other militant groups. These relationships are usually opportunistic and meant to facilitate the group's operative capacities. AQIM also cooperates with non-ideological groups, usually those

[64] The invasion of AQIM, MUJAO and Ansar Dine was also supported by Boko Haram, which provided military reinforcements (Lacher 2013: 5f.; Zenn, Boko Haram's international Connections, 2013).

involved in criminal activities such as smuggle and contraband. As illicit traffic and KFR are the main sources of income for AQIM, cooperation with other groups is likely crucial for AQIM's financial survival. It is impossible for an external researcher to completely analyze the networks AQIM entertains, as all of the groups are very secretive. However, one important conclusion for this work is that AQIM is a realist player, ready to make concessions and practical decisions. This has changed the profile of the group over the years and continues to influence it. Starting out as an Islamist group with a strong regional focus on Algeria, the re-naming introduced an internationalization (or regionalization) of AQIM's activities and area of operation. Cooperation with other groups was necessary for both the push into Malian territory in 2012 and the establishment of smuggle-networks[65].

Overall, the previous chapters show that the regionalization of AQIM was accompanied by cooperation with numerous non-state groups which all have their own interests, none of which are favorable to regional stability. It was foreseeable that the respective groups and their alliances would only gather strength and widen their regional scope if they go uncontained for too long. The spread and growth of the cooperation shows the importance of regional engagement against these developments.

1.10. Summary

As the previous chapters include information on AQIM's pattern of residence, its strategy, tactics and operational style, certain features emerge which need to be outlined for the following parts.

First, AQIM is organized in a decentralized way which enables them to operate in small units. These units are largely autonomous, self-sufficient and hard to detect. AQIM still entertains ties to Al Qaeda Central, but it does not depend on the mother organization for its survival. This is largely so because AQIM proved to be very adaptable in the past: The group adapted to the terrain it inhabits, as small mobile units require minimal infrastructure and are able to react swiftly and conduct operations in a wide geographic terrain. Another indicator that AQIM has been influenced by its environment is the group's increasing hybridity. The frequent interaction with organized criminal groups and the continuous involvement in criminal activities are an alteration of the activities AQIM's forerunners used to pursue. Most of these developments were made possible by the fact that the areas AQIM chose for its residence

[65] As drugs are generally said to be forbidden or *haram* in Islam, the involvement in this business is likely not in line with the ideals of Al Qaeda, which hints at the readiness to prefer pragmatism over idealism when necessary.

were remote and subject to little state supervision, as will be explained in detail in a following chapter.

One of the most important observations in this context is the geographic evolution of AQIM. While it have its roots in Algeria, it spread to Mali and other neighboring states. This is partly the result of Algeria's progressive CT-policy. While Algeria cannot be blamed for the containment of a national threat per se, such containment is a failure if it results in a regional shift of the threat. Algeria is to a large extent responsible for the establishment of AQIM in Mali, and this proves a lack of regional awareness or conscientiousness. Had there been an RSC (preferably one which included both Mali and Algeria) in the beginning of the 2000's, it is unlikely that Algeria would have simply pushed the threat across its national borders. As there were no regional mechanisms in place, Algeria was free to act as it saw fit, and this led to the protection of immediate national Algerian interests above anything else. Years later, Algeria's policies with little regard for regional consequences were one of the main contributors to the gradual destabilization of several of its neighboring countries. The development of AQIM from a local to a regional threat is therefore an obvious indicator of the importance of a functioning Regional Security Complex with regards to Mali and the entire region.

As their developments show, AQIM's predecessors each underwent internal structural changes, enabling them to adjust their strategies to their goals and respond to government actions. The group's forerunners had to develop a capacity for resilience and adaptation, as anything else would have led to their extinction. The author assumes that AQIM learned its lessons from previous failures of the GIA and the GSPC. Also, the ways in which AQIM's actions influence stability in Mali clearly prove that AQIM is a *functional actor*[66] in this context.

2. The Tuareg: A regional Source of Instability?

Not only were some of the main participants in the secessionist-Islamist insurgency in Mali Tuareg, but the Tuareg have always had significant influence on the stability of the Malian state, as will be shown in the next chapters. Stephen Harmon even goes one step further by stating that the Tuareg are the single ethnic group who defines the Sahel-Sahara region the most (Harmon 2014: 1). It is thus indispensable to introduce the Tuareg in this context. The focus here will be on the latter's role in the rebellion in 2012 and their general influence on stability in Mali, while also looking at the Tuaregs' role in neighboring countries in order to

[66] For *functional actor* see Buzan, Waever and de Wilde 1998: 36.

establish the regional dimension of the Tuaregs' influence. It needs to be pointed out that the Tuareg do not represent a united group; only some Tuareg groups claim political autonomy, and even fewer participated in the past rebellions[67] (Boeke and Schuurmann 2015: 805).

The Tuareg have shown resistance against every form of external rule that was being imposed on them. This makes sense when considering that the Tuareg are organized in tribes, which are socio-political units which were traditionally autonomous and sovereign. As tribes are political actors, this leads to tensions with the state, because both understand themselves as the highest authority in terms of political organization (Kohl 2007: 56, 82).

The Tuareg are ethnic Berber and have always been pastoralists, although most of them eventually settled down in the course of their history. The Tuareg are known for having run the trade across the Sahara, a tradition which still influences contemporary Tuareg culture. While they initially resisted religious influences, Islam eventually became the main religion of the Tuareg. As a minority with a distinct heritage and no defined area of residence, the Tuareg have often been subject to marginalization and displacement in the past. The Tuareg number between 1.2 and 1.5. Million people and live in autonomous federations mostly in Mali and Niger, but also in some neighboring countries. They are a minority in every state they inhabit, which makes political participation and achieving equality difficult for them. The Tuareg are divided into several regionally dispersed groups which vary in their local customs, but they all share the same language, *Tamasheq*. This is the origin of their self-elected name: *Kel Tamasheq*[68] (Hainzl 2013: 115f.; Benetti 2008: 12; Kolb 2013: 1; Nicolaisen I 1997: 41). The Tuareg inhabited the Sahara and the Sahel long before modern nation states and borders were introduced in the area. They similarly predated the arrival of Islam and Arab influences in the region (Hofbauer and Münch 2013: 10; Nicolaisen I 1997: 383).

The Tuareg have a history of struggles for autonomy and independency against states and colonial powers. One of their most notorious fights began in 1917 in the Nigerian town Agadez; it is known as one of the longest strategic fights of resistance against colonial rule. The Tuareg were eventually defeated and many of them were publicly executed, which they still remember as a catastrophic incident (Kolb 2013: 2).

The Tuareg resisted submission under colonial rule as much as they resisted being part of the postcolonial states which followed colonial rule. The Tuareg did not want to be integrated into

[67] This work will speak of "the Tuareg" while keeping in mind that certain actions and political acts do not necessarily represent all, or even the majority of the Tuareg.

[68] The Tuareg of northern Mali have another term for themselves: *Imushagh*, which refers to a person of free descent (Hainzl 2013: 115f.; Benetti 2008: 12; Kolb 2013: 1; Nicolaisen I 1997: 41).

a state at any point in time, but their most forceful demand for sovereignty did not come until 2011 when the MNLA was established. Still, the majority of the Tuareg today do not support the establishment of an independent home land or *Azawad* [69] (Lohmann 2012: 3). Nevertheless, many Tuareg in Mali and Niger display secessionist tendencies and have always done so (Klute and Lecocq 2013: 123). This bares conflict potential in both states and the entire region, especially if the Tuareg would ever unite for a common cause. Among the motivations of the Tuareg to establish their own state are the increasing aridity of the land and ensuing economic difficulties (Raineri and Strazzari 2015: 251f.).

The Tuareg are mainly Muslim, but Islam is not their main means of identification and they traditionally adhere to a moderate version of Islam. Many Tuareg pursued a nomadic lifestyle until the droughts of the 1970's and 1980's forced them to change their main means of subsistence, nomadic pastoralism. Due to this socio-economic change many Tuareg had to settle down and accept dependent employment. The Tuareg are not a homogenous group and are traditionally divided into different clans which are defined by kin and different groups of social status (Klute and Lecocq 2013: 123f.; van Vliet 2013: 145; Qantara, Interview, 2012). It can be inferred from studies of the Tuareg that states seem to have remarkably little influence on them. While patterns of organization and behavioral norms vary between some groups, the reasons hereof appear to have cultural roots within the group.

2.1. The traditional social and political Organization of the Tuareg

The Tuareg are subdivided into numerous ethnically and geographically defined groups (Kohl 2007: 46) which do not always live together peacefully, as is evidenced in the decade-long feud between two of their most powerful tribes, the *Ifoghas* and the *Inghad*[70] (Reuters, Tuareg Clans at Heart of Mali Conflict, 2015).[71]

The Tuareg know one main political body of organization, the *Ettebel,* which is most fittingly translated to "confederation". The *Ettebel* is made up of different social units which are called *Tiwsat* and are basically tribes. *Ettebel* are horizontally organized among each other and each *Ettebel* has its own leader, the *Amenokal*, whose authority covers territorial, political and

[69] This is especially so since the term originally only referred to the region surrounding Timbuktu (Lohmann 2012: 3).
[70] The author assumes that the source is referring to the *Imghad*. The different groups cannot all be introduced here, which is why an overview will offer a basic understanding of Tuareg society.
[71]The social organization introduced here was prevalent among Tuareg until the late 19th century, and parts of it are still relevant today, as the Tuareg are "socially conservative" in the sense that they traditionally display very little will or capacity to be changed by external influences (Kohl 2007: 59; Nicolaisen I 1997: 43).

juridical topics. The *Amenokal* increasingly gained power during the French occupation in the early 20th century, when the colonial rulers used them to govern and maintain control. While the individual powers of the *Amenokal* increased dramatically in the course of this development, he was henceforth chosen with the approval of the French administration instead of being elected by fellow Tuareg (Nicolaisen II 1997: 512f.).

Ettebel are hierarchic structures organized like a pyramid, and the internal structure appears to be the same in every *Ettebel*. Each *Ettebel* stretches over an individual, flexible amount of territory, and the size of the territory varies according to the respective *Ettebels*' capability to control its territory. Even though the Tuareg have these basic organizational structures, it is important to understand that independence on a micro-level is self-evident and absolutely essential to their understanding of society, and they do not require institutionalized forms of organization[72] (Benetti 2008: 13f.; Kohl 2007: 85). Next to the horizontal structures between the different *Ettebel*, the Tuareg also know vertical forms of social organization which can most accurately be described as castes and classes (Nicolaisen I 1997: 45). Tuareg society knows nobles and vassals, and the rest of their society is divided into groups according to religion and different trades[73]. The nobles were the highest social class and a numeric minority among the Tuareg (Nicolaisen II 1997: 512) and they traditionally belonged to the warrior caste, which originally meant they were allowed to carry weapons and were able to defend themselves[74] (Benetti 2008: 17ff.). Descent is organized in a matrilineal way among the Tuareg (Benetti 2008: 33).

As there are regional variations of this system of social organization, it is very difficult to give an all-encompassing description of the social organization of the Tuareg, and specific concepts

[72] The Tuareg know different units of organization within the *Ettebel*; some of which are related to patterns of residence and production and some to kin. The *Tawset*, which is a hierarchic group based on descent and only includes individuals who belong to the same social class, is one of the most important units. *Aghiwen* are small units of residency and production and can be imagined as a number of tents of one or several families and their workers. Both the *Tawset* and the *Aghiwen* have their own leaders, who are called *Amghar*. Ever since colonial rule, the Malian government has to approve of the leaders chosen by the Tuareg, which undermines the latter's claim to sovereignty (Benetti 2008: 15f.; Kohl 2007: 85).

[73] The trades are carpentry, peasantry and slavery. While nobles and vassals are organized in their own *Tiwsat*, both slaves and carpenters are integrated into the *Tiwsat* of their masters.

[74] Vassals did not have this possibility, and the term is usually used for all those who are not of noble descent, which is the vast majority of Tuareg society. The vassals were traditionally mostly shepherds who cared for the livestock of the nobles and had to pay protection money to the nobles. The religious groups are hierarchically inferior to the nobles, but they are superior to the vassals. They are called Marabouts in Mali and their social responsibility is the maintenance and dissemination of religious wisdom. They are often used as mediators and judges or serve as religious leaders. The political positions of the different religious groups vary greatly and can be either close to the bottom or close to the top of society. The slaves were the lowest class among the Tuareg and they were often captured or bought by their masters. These slaves, many of whom worked in agriculture, were called Bellah and were often the only members of Tuareg society who did hard physical labor (Benetti 2008: 17ff.).

and terms vary among regions (Benetti 2008: 17f.; Kohl 2007: 59ff.). It also has to be kept in mind that the system described here is the traditional form of social organization and has been subject to changes over the decades. In any case, the social organization of the Tuareg played an important role throughout their history, especially as they were continuously engaged in conflicts (Benetti 2008: 23).

Due to their system of social organization the Tuareg had little need for a state as an organizational entity as long as they could pursue their traditional economic activities. The principles of Tuareg social organization are important in the context of this study because they facilitate mobilization for the fight for autonomy and make any external state structure unattractive for the Tuareg. There is no supranational organization of all Tuareg, and this is likely advantageous for the region, as such an organization could pose threats to regional stability. On the other hand, each state deals with the Tuareg question individually, and there is no coherent, region-wide approach to the topic. This is certainly an issue that could be addressed differently if the region had a functioning RSC.

Tuareg society is very dynamic, and developments take place all the time. The most important traditional influences were described in this chapter (Benetti 2008: 85). Understanding the social organization of the Tuareg also means understanding that they are organized in a profoundly different way than AQIM, and they have different goals. The Tuareg are an ethnic group with a long history in Mali, while AQIM is a terrorist group who only resides in Mali for opportunistic reasons. It will be critically important to keep this in mind for the evaluation of the topic at hand.

2.2. The Tuareg in Mali after Colonization: A Succession of Conflicts

Todays' Tuareg live in Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, southern Algeria and southern Libya. The Tuareg are outnumbered by black Africans and constitute a minority in northern Mali, with the exception of the Kidal region. Under colonial rule, the Tuareg did not assimilate into the colonial system and instead maintained their nomadic lifestyle. Maybe most significantly, they did not take part in general education and continued to send their sons to Islamic schools. They were afraid to lose their cultural identity and thus refused to expose their offspring to colonial influence. The different Tuareg tribes were exploited and pitted against each other by colonial rulers, which legitimized Tuareg fears. The French soon realized that is was impossible to control Mali's vast desert territory, which is why they decided to exercise indirect rule via Tuareg leaders. The *Ifoghas* were the first ones to receive weapons, which made them the

most powerful tribe at the time. This policy resulted in deep intra-ethnic rivalries and conflicts among Tuareg tribes, the remnants of which persist until today (Papendieck et al. 2012: 2; Klute and Lecocq 2013: 124; Benetti 2008: 43f., 48). These rivalries are certainly part of the reason why the Tuareg do not all unite for a common political cause. Divisions among themselves limit their potential to act unilaterally, which in turn decreases their political and military power.

Once French colonial rule ended in northern Mali, southern Malians took control. This offered great conflict potential, as they did not know or understand the Tuareg and their lifestyle, and vice versa. For the Tuareg, this also meant being ruled by black people who they associated with their former slaves (Lemke 2013: 57). This means that many Tuareg struggle to accept the rule of southern Malians (Kolb 2013: 4).

One of the main causes for the first Tuareg rebellion in Mali in the 1960's was the anti-nomadic policy of then-President Keïta, who refused to accept nomadism and autonomous tribalism. The Malian government raised the taxes on cattle and decreased the prices of cattle trade, which effectively ended the cattle trade of the Tuareg. The Tuareg also felt increasingly marginalized by the central government, which did not take their concerns seriously. On the other hand, although the Tuareg did not want to be supervised by a state authority, they did want to receive support and benefits from the government. As a result, some Tuareg began an uncoordinated, ill-equipped series of attacks on government institutions, much in the style of guerilla warfare. There was no unified, strategic approach to fight the Malian government. Rather, the attacks were an outburst of frustration. According to the Tuareg, the trigger for the rebellion was ultimately the murder of one of their most prominent leaders, whom they sought to revenge. The conflict between the Tuareg and the Malian Army reached its peak in 1963 and did not end until the Algerian government stepped in on behalf of the Malian government and captured and humiliated several Tuareg leaders, which demoralized the resistance. The conflict remains symbolic to the Tuareg because of the brutality the Malian government displayed towards them. After the rebellion had been crushed by the Malian government, the government destroyed the social organization of the Tuareg, which severely limited the power of the nobles and profoundly changed social organization among the Malian Tuareg. The collective memory of symbolic violence is so intense among the Tuareg that the rebellion has been mystified, which in turn intensifies the latent conflict between the Tuareg and the state of Mali (Lemke 2013: 59ff.; Benetti 2008: 56, 58; Kolb 2013: 2; Keita 1998: 10).

When their area of residence was hit by severe droughts in the 1970's and 1980's, the pastoralist Tuareg lost the basis for their subsidence and conflicts arose with other peoples who lived along the Niger River, where the land was more arable. At the same time, the Bellah could no longer be employed by the Tuareg, which prompted them to leave their masters. Eventually, some Tuareg started to work as mercenaries along the border between Mali and Algeria, where they smuggled food and other goods. All these developments led to significant social change, as the Tuareg suddenly found themselves bereft of social and economic means. The growing relative deprivation formed the basis for the rebellion in the 1990's that was led by Iyad Ag Ghali and his Mouvement Populaire pour la Libération du Azawad (MPLA), which split up into several movements in the course of the events. The rebellion in the 1990's was of low intensity and had been prepared by the Tuareg for a long time; they had already started to establish weapon caches in the 1980's. The rebellion was strongly supported by many Tuareg living in northern Mali, especially because it sent a message of unity. The leaders of the rebellion knew they would not be able to implement secessionist goals, which is why they preferred a strategy of integration to at least achieve limited goals. While the strategy appears to have been laid out with some consideration, the beginning of the rebellion was a coincidence, as Ag Ghali was forced to order the assault on a police station in Ménaka when some Tuareg rebels were captured and their equipment was confiscated by the local police. The political climate had been conducive for the start of the rebellion, and so it began. Just like in the previous rebellion, the Malian Army's response was brutal. However, the Tuareg seemed to have learnt from previous experience and used bases in the mountains to retreat and prepare. Maybe more importantly, they started to protect civilians from arbitrary violence, which led to an unprecedented support and growth of the rebellion. Eventually, this seriously challenged the Malian Army, as the Tuareg were able to mobilize an increasing number of fighters. In the course of the conflict, the Malian Army started to target everybody who looked like a Tuareg, which pinned the Arabs against the Malian government and ultimately led to the foundation of the Front Islamique Arabe de l'Azawad (FIAA). As Algeria could not be expected to interfere on behalf of Mali due to fear that the conflict could spread to Algerian territory, the Malian government decided to end the conflict as soon as possible and opted for negotiations. The Accords of Tamanrasset, the peace agreement Algeria negotiated between the government of Moussa Traoré and the MPLA, effectively resulted in a sort of autonomy for the Tuareg in northern Mali, although it was probably nothing more than a ceasefire agreement for the government. However, it did not prevent the coup against Traoré, which

took place in March 1991 (Papendieck et al. 2012: 3; Klute and Lecocq 2013: 125f.; Benetti 2008: 63, 70f.; Kolb 2013: 2f.; Keita 1998: 11f.).

After the agreement, the Tuareg found themselves entangled in violent internal conflicts. These lasted until 1994 and led to the split of the MPLA into several groups. Both the MNLA and MUJAO have their roots in the groups which started with the first MNLA[75]. Another phenomenon that rose in the course of these conflicts was the carrying of arms, which became common among the Tuareg (Papendieck et al. 2012: 3; Klute and Lecocq 2013: 125f.; Benetti 2008: 63, 70f.).

After the ouster of Moussa Traoré, the democratic government of Kanoré signed a new peace agreement with the Tuareg forces, the Pacte National. This was an important agreement as it included many long-standing demands of the Tuareg and therefore signaled that their concerns were taken seriously. Unfortunately, the government faced serious problems concerning the implementation of the agreement, from financial issues to the consolidation of power. While the Pacte Nationale settled the conflicts between the government and the Tuareg in Timbuktu and Gao, instability persisted in Kidal, where another rebellion occurred in 2006. The rebellion, which was basically a series of attacks, was rooted in feelings of marginalization among some Tuareg who claimed that the conditions from the Pacte National were not being fulfilled and that Tuareg were faced discrimination in the military. This rebellion led to the Algiers Accords, which were mediated by Algeria and were supposed to appease the Kidal region (Papendieck et al. 2012: 4; Klute and Lecocq 2013: 127; Benetti 2008: 80f.; Straus 2011: 3, 9).

From the 1990's to 2002, the *Ifoghas* were the preferred Tuareg tribe of the Malian government, which accordingly supported the Kidal region. Government support for the region led the rest of the Malian people to believe that the Tuareg were being privileged and led to resentments against them. This changed, however, when ATT took office, who wanted to limit the power of the *Ifoghas*, and especially the power of Iyad Ag Ghali, who had led the rebellion in the 1990's. ATT started a policy of privileging the Arabs and Songhay in the north at the expense of the Tuareg, whose different tribes he tried to pit against each other. Later, he also utilized militias like the Ganda Koy to intimidate the Tuareg. These policies in turn led

[75] Internal conflicts among the Tuareg were also at the origin of the establishment of the Ganda Koy, which were self-defense units established to protect the Songhay population from violent Tuareg raids, which had grown drastically in the course of the latter's internal conflict.

to considerable resentment among the Tuareg (Papendieck et al. 2012: 5ff.; Heyl and Leininger 2013: 80).

In October 2010, the Tuareg founded the Mouvement National de l 'Azawad (MNA), which was a political initiative that sought to achieve Tuareg autonomy in Mali. Unfortunately, the movement was ignored by the Malian government, which imprisoned two of the movement's leaders. A little later, in 2011, many Tuareg decided to side with Muammar al-Gaddafi and joined his military as mercenaries in the course of the Arab Spring. When Gaddafi was ousted, the Tuareg returned to Mali and brought a substantial amount of weapons with them. Some of the returnees were integrated in the Malian military, but others joined the MNA and established the MNLA (Klute and Lecocq 2013: 132).

Politically, the Tuareg appear to be realists who look for partners and negotiations to solve conflicts (Papendieck et al. 2012: 10). However, Malian policies towards the Tuareg were insufficient in terms of long term appeasement, as latent conflict remained and many Tuareg demands were never met sufficiently.

The dynamics explained in this chapter result in two important conclusions. First of all, the resentment between the Tuareg and the institutions of the Malian state has grown for decades and is the direct result of failed, ethnically-driven politics. As the conflict has been going on for decades, it is unlikely that it can be resolved easily. Secondly, the Tuareg are not one united group. On the contrary, they are divided into several groups with their own agendas, which decreases their capacity to pressure the Malian state. In any case, since the Tuareg are central to the question of stability in Mali, they are equally important to regional stability, which will not be reached without a stable Malian state.

2.3. How the Tuareg migrated to Libya

After the establishment of new states and border in the wake of decolonization and after the conflict with the Malian government in the 1960's and the long period of droughts thereafter, the economic situation forced many Tuareg to leave their area of residence and migrate to one of the neighboring countries, among them Libya. The migration of many Tuareg to Libya was thus caused by long term processes of transformation which left some Tuareg with little other choice than to look for new areas of residence. Of the younger generation of migrants, many have never known the traditional nomadic lifestyle of the Tuareg. They were raised in the suburbs, *Talmasheq* was not their first language and the majority of them was unemployed

and without future perspectives – hence why they are called *Ishumar*, "the unemployed". (Benetti 2008: 64f., 69; Kohl 2007: 142). Unfortunately, their situation was representative for the majority of the Tuareg who had been forced into migration and suffered from the disruption of kinship ties and a loss of identity. Those Tuareg were not only marginalized in their new home countries, but also among Tuareg who still pursued their traditional lifestyle. The collective feeling of marginalization forged new groups and identities which were now based on relative deprivation instead of cultural traditions or kinship. Importantly, this development also led to growing individualization among Tuareg, which in turn opened new paths for political participation (Benetti 2008: 64f., 69).

In the 1980's, Libya's then-head of state Gaddafi realized the potential of the disenfranchised Tuareg, whom he sought to utilize for his own geo-strategic goals. Gaddafi had an ambivalent attitude towards tribal societies, which he understood as both a basis of society and a danger for national governments (Kohl 2007: 88f.). Consequentially, he welcomed the Tuareg in Libya in order to achieve his goal of a southern expansion of Libyan territory. For the Tuareg, this presented a possibility to receive military training and equipment, even though it was clear that they were to serve as proxies for Libyan goals. In total, thousands of Tuareg fought for Gaddafi in the Sahara and the Middle East. After Gaddafi experienced a series of setbacks, some *Ishumar* decided to stay in Libya (where some of them were granted citizenship), while others moved to Niger, where they started a rebellion in the beginning of the 1990's.
For those Tuareg who planned resistance against the Malian state, the only chance was an underground organization, which they established from 1982 to 1987 while beginning to stockpile weapons and form combat units. During this time, Gaddafi's ideology increasingly fell on fertile ground due to the Tuareg's identity crisis. For many of them, the eventual return to Mali meant the recovery of honor and lost territory, which had very strong implications for their identity and turned their return into a political issue. The Tuareg who had left Mali for Libya and other states were therefore ready to unite in their fight against the Malian government in the late 1980's (Benetti 2008: 66ff.; Kohl 2007: 145).

The mass-exodus of Tuareg to Libya and their activities there should have been evidence enough of the regional scope of the Tuareg issue. As has been pointed out, the Tuareg had been relevant political actors in Mali for decades when they left the country. While many Tuareg never felt part of the Malian state (Gourdin 2012: 2), some Tuareg strongly linked their

identity to the territory of northern Mali[76]. It is therefore all the more notable that to this day, the Malian government has not been able to address the Tuareg question in a sustainable, comprehensive manner.

2.4. Violent non-state Groups among the Tuareg

This chapter will introduce the groups that are either mainly made up of, or led by Tuareg[77] and played an important part in the secessionist-Islamist insurgency in Mali 2012. The aim is to understand these group's strategies and goals so as to understand their modus operandi.

2.4.1. The MNLA and its Role in the 2012 Insurgency Movement

The MNLA (National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad) was founded in autumn 2011 by a merger of young Tuareg, experienced Tuareg fighters and former Libyan soldiers. The formation of the MNLA and the return of Tuareg fighters from Libya coincided in a way that ultimately fueled the strength of the Tuareg insurgency (Boeke and Schuurmann 2015: 805f.). The social base of the group is the *Ifoghas* tribe, similar to Ansar Dine. Although the MNLA are mainly Tuareg, their ideas do not necessarily represent the majority of the Tuareg. Rather, the group is mainly comprised of Tuareg who returned from Libya and used to fight for Gaddafi. This is also why many Malian Tuareg feel detached from the MNLA and believe that the group does not understand their reality in Mali (Lohmann 2012: 4; Papendieck et al. 2012: 6ff.; Klute and Lecocq 2013: 132; Alvarado 2012: 5; Zounmenou 2013: 170). The leading figure for the establishment of the group was Ibrahim Bahanga, who had led the Tuareg rebellion from 2006 to 2009 and had since been in Libyan exile. Bahanga had spent years planning the rebellion against the Malian government and likely would have emerged as one of the leaders of the MNLA, had he not died in a car crash in 2011. Nevertheless, when the MNLA was formed in autumn 2011 shortly after Bahanga's death, it was the most unified and best equipped of the Tuareg and Arab movements. Their weapons mainly came from Libya or Malian soldiers who had either been defeated or who had defected (Harmon 2014: 175f.).

The MNLA`s goal was the establishment of an independent Tuareg state in the north of Mali, and they are first and foremost a nationalist, not a religiously motivated group. The MNLA was a Tuareg-nationalist movement. Due to the returnees from Libya, it had a well-equipped armed

[76] As can be observed in the fact that many groups have the term *Azawad* in their name; see MPLA, MNLA and HCUA.
[77] Most groups consist of multiple ethnicities.

wing and a well-educated political wing at its disposal. The MNLA was also the first group to openly claim the establishment of an independent *Azawad* (Lohmann 2012: 4; Papendieck et al. 2012: 6ff.; Klute and Lecocq 2013: 132; Alvarado 2012: 5; Zounmenou 2013: 170).

In order to push Malian forces out the group aligned with AQIM, Ansar Dine and MUJAO. Many Malians apparently even perceived the MNLA as a door opener for the Islamists, as they believe the Islamists could not have gained a foothold in Mali without help from the MNLA (Zounmenou 2013: 170). However, after having defeated the Malian Army, the three Islamist groups turned against the MNLA. In spite of its military superiority, the MNLA quickly lost control over the conquered territory, and many of its members defected, particularly to Ansar Dine in the Kidal region (Lecocq 2013: 24; ThinkSecurityAfrica, MNLA, 2012; Papendieck et al. 2012: 6). The MNLA also quickly lost popular support in the areas controlled by them due to their violent and abusive behavior (Klute and Lecocq 2013: 135).

Before the insurgency, the MNLA had often distanced itself from both AQIM and Ansar Dine, as it was a secular group and did not support an Islamist agenda. The heads of the MNLA are supposed to be residing in Mauritania and Burkina Faso. The MNLA published a political agenda for the rebellion, but their concept appeared to be idealistic and detached from the reality on the ground. Most of their goals remained rather vague, such as autonomy, self-determination, democracy and the establishment of a modern society (Lohmann 2012: 4; Papendieck et al. 2012: 6ff.).

2.4.2. Ansar Dine: An Islamist Tuareg Group

Ansar Dine was founded by well-known Tuareg leader Iyad Ag Ghali and first appeared on the scene in 2012. The name of the group means “Defenders of Faith”, and the group adheres to a strict Salafi-form of Sunni Islam. Ag Ghali established the group when he found himself excluded from the plans of former Libyan mercenaries who refused to give him the powerful position he desired in their movement. What is noticeable about Ansar Dine is that the group is homegrown and, as opposed to AQIM and MUJAO, it has its roots in northern Mali. Accordingly, the majority of the group’s members are ethnic Tuareg and Berber from northern Mali. It is unclear how exactly the group gained equipment and financial means, but it is likely they were being provided to them by AQIM, who probably made a deal with Ag Ghali. It is also likely that Ansar Dine receives financial support from Qatar and Saudi Arabia[78] (DW, Ansar

[78] Both are states where Ag Ghali used to live for some time.

Dine, 2014; Lecocq 2013: 21; Papendieck et al. 2012: 6; Lohmann 2013: 2; Alvarado 2012: 5). Ag Ghali is a key leadership figure for the Malian Tuareg and he has strong connections to Algeria. However, rumors that Ansar Dine was established with help from the Algerian security apparatus were never proven (Strachan 2014: 15; DW, Ansar Dine, 2014). According to Ammour, Ag Ghali works closely with Algeria's intelligence service[79], and it is claimed he was involved in liberating hostages and apparently took a share of the ransoms (Ammour 2013: 3).

The members of Ansar Dine are predominantly *Ifoghas*. The group distinguishes itself from other Tuareg groups by its radical Islamist agenda[80]. The official goal of Ansar Dine is the implementation of Sharia law in all of Mali, including the south. During its height, the group was said to have had several thousand members, even though it largely failed to obtain support from moderate Tuareg due to its extremist ideology. As Lecocq argues, many fighters joined Ansar Dine because of tribal loyalties instead of religious conviction (DW, Ansar Dine, 2014; Lecocq 2013: 21; Papendieck et al. 2012: 6; Lohmann 2013: 2; Alvarado 2012: 5).

Both Ansar Dine and the MNLA had a relatively easy time when they took territory in 2012, but both of them were apparently equally overwhelmed by the task of governing and administrating the territory and people (Papendieck et al. 2012: 10).

2.5. Summary

The previous chapters described that the Tuareg are an ethnic group who resides in numerous countries in West Africa, among them Mali, Libya, Niger, Algeria and Burkina Faso. The example of Mali shows how complicated and protracted the case of Tuareg independency is. Policies concerning the Tuareg are a highly sensitive and relevant topic, and they have been an unresolved issue in Mali in particular, but also the region as such, for years. The ease with which Muammar al-Gaddafi exploited Tuareg grievances is the best proof of a failed policy and its disastrous consequences. Because of their regional dispersion and the longstanding conflict over residence, which is constantly being aggravated by extreme aridity, the issue of Tuareg residency and governance clearly constitutes a regional problem. As appears to have been the case with so many issues in the region, the Tuareg question has been developing for decades, and no government, especially not the Malian one, appears to have taken sufficient steps to

[79] The Algerian intelligence service is called the "Département de la Sécurité et du Renseignement" (DRS). The DRS is reported to have major influence on important policy circles in Algeria (Arieff 2013: 3).

[80] The author believes it is possible that the religious agenda was a concession as part of a deal with AQIM, especially since Tuareg are traditionally moderate Muslims who do not mainly define their identity along religious lines (Klute and Lecocq 2013: 123).

resolve the crisis. This indicates that a supranational institution, such as an RSC, is needed to resolve the conflict or urge the nation states and the Tuareg to find a solution. As there has been no RSC in the past, the Turaeg question largely went unresolved, and this ultimately resulted in some Tuareg groups fighting the Malian government in 2012.

The Tuareg groups introduced here all participated in the insurgency movement in 2012, and their influence on Mali has even been greater than AQIM's influence over the years, which clearly makes them a *functional actor* as well (Buzan, Waever and de Wilde 1998: 36).

III. Part Three: Mali, its Neighborhood and regional Cooperation

The intention of this chapter is to establish which states have the most influence on stability in Mali, either because of shared threats or because of mutual security cooperation. It will first describe cooperation among states in the region where Mali is located, West Africa. According to Hypothesis I, Mali does not have an RSC and did not have one when the insurgency occurred in 2012. This chapter will investigate the ways in which neighboring countries influenced the development of the secessionist-Islamist insurgency in 2012. It will then introduce the structure and institutions of the Malian state in order to evaluate whether or not Mali was a weak state when the insurgency occurred. This will be followed by an analysis of the threats which transpire to Mali from some of its neighbors.

Africa has always been a challenging subject to analyze for RSCT because of the conflicted nature of the postcolonial nation state. The weaknesses of these states led to a situation where non-state actors constantly threaten state stability and make security analysis more complicated. Further, many postcolonial states gained sovereignty long before they were able to develop the capacities to actually govern their territory. Because postcolonial states received legal recognition by the IC quite suddenly, they did not face the same pressure and competition evolving states usually face, which in turn significantly hindered the development of prospective RSC's[81] (Buzan and Waever 2003: 19ff.).

Buzan and Waever argue that the fact that many African states are basically hollowed-out by their governments makes it difficult to work with the state as a unit of investigation, which is why it would make more sense to work with governments instead of states as *referent objects* (Buzan and Waever 2003: 125). This dissertation will nonetheless work with states as main *referent objects* for two main reasons: States are better units for analysis, as distinguishing between different governments does not necessarily make sense because different governments all influence a state to varying degrees throughout its existence. Further, once the existence of a regime is in danger in weak states, so is often the existence of the state in its present form, especially when non-state groups interfere. This makes the distinction between government and state obsolete in any analysis that deal with state weakness.

[81] For many of these states, stagnation and even decay were other results of this development. For further reading see Nugent 2004, Meredith 2005, Bayart 2009, Tetzlaff 2008 and Tetzlaff 2009.

1. Regional Cooperation

In order to establish whether or not Mali was part of an RSC in 2012, it is essential to take a close look at security cooperation in the region. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, the states belonging to West Africa are Ghana, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Capo Verde, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Mauritania, Gambia, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Togo (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Western Africa, 2015). As could already be inferred from the development of AQIM, Mali's main states of reference in terms of security do not necessarily belong to the same regional system as Mali. This is why, instead of analyzing all West African states, this study will analyze the regional organizations Mali belongs to, most notably ECOWAS. It will also analyze those states which share the biggest part of the Sahel-Sahara region with Mali; Mauritania, Niger, Algeria and Libya. The assumption is that sharing the same geographic challenges will lead to shared threats and should result in cooperation. Research on Chad, which also shares part of this zone, revealed no conclusive information about shared threats and security cooperation between Chad and Mali.

According to the World Bank, West Africa suffered less conflict-related violence and fatalities than any other African sub region over the past six decades before 2010. In general, patterns of violence in West Africa shifted after the end of the Cold War and colonization, from interstate wars to a rise of more low-level insurgencies. In line with Buzan and Weaver`s RSCT[82], the World Bank states that interconnectivity of conflict is relatively high in West Africa, with regular spillover effects among several states in the region. This is especially so because of the arbitrary character of post-colonial borders (Marc et al. 2015: 7, 18). After colonization, newly formed nation states struggled to maintain stability and internal peace, which led to a sort of "negative peace" that largely resulted in the absence of interstate wars. Borders were valued and states were not willing to challenge them, as they offered protection from external threats (Marc et.al. 2015: 16). Therefore, most of the security interaction in Africa takes place between non-state groups and states, not so much in the form of state-to-state interaction (Buzan and Waever 2003: 229). According to Buzan and Waever, "*the general pattern is that each country sits at the centre of a set of security interactions connecting it to its immediate neighbours, but with limits of power meaning that these individual patterns have not as a rule linked significantly into wider patterns of security interdependence*" (Buzan and Waever 2003:

[82] *"In much of Africa, the main lines of security interaction take place either within states or across state borders by non-state actors … In a sense, security interaction in Africa is generated more by weakness than by strength, as when imploding states inflict spillover on their neighbors*" (Buzan and Waever 2003: 229).

232). They therefore conclude that security patterns in Africa are mostly not established and wide enough to constitute RSC's (Buzan and Waever 2003: 232).

As Stephen Harmon argues, the Sahara-Sahel zone is not only highly interconnected and integrated, but further constitutes the core of what he calls Northwest Africa. He argues that the Sahel-Sahara zone is a distinct region in itself due to many reasons, from historic events over cultural roots to securitization. Within this region, Harmon names the Sahelian parts of Mali, Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Niger and Chad as the most important areas in terms of security. These areas share strong cultural and economic ties. Control over the Sahara has historically been important as it equals control over the trade routes, which are another strong source of interconnectivity between the respective states. Within these areas, the cardinal point for stability are northern Mali and southern Libya, areas which, although they do not share a border, share constant security challenges which affect the entire region. Among the shared harbingers of instability in Mali and Libya are drug and human trafficking as well as Islamist groups whose existence is facilitated by a lack of policing in the respective territory (Harmon 2015: 227ff., 240ff.). As can be inferred from the interconnectivity of the Sahara-Sahel zone, it seems almost pointless to analyze the area in the context of nation states, as many characteristics appear to be shared regardless of which state a particular area belongs to; especially since non-state actors in the region are notoriously disregarding borders, as described above. Nonetheless, nation states are still the best units for analysis in this context for lack of an alternative.

1.1. Systems of enhanced regional Cooperation in West Africa

Some of the states in West Africa cooperate more closely with each other than others, and this hints at whether Mali does or does not have an RSC. One of the sub complexes in West Africa is, as the World Bank calls it, the "Mano River Delta conflict system", which includes the Ivory Coast, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Between these states, the level of interconnectivity is very high in terms of security, and they sometimes share the same preconditions and causes for conflicts. Mali however does not belong to this conflict system (Marc et al. 2015: 8, 18). Another conflict system that does not include Mali is called the "Senegambia conflict system" by the World Bank and it includes Senegal, Gambia and Guinea-Bissau. When it comes to Mali, the World Bank report claims it shares a conflict system with Niger and the Tuareg, as the latter have had destabilizing effects on both states for decades (Marc et al. 2015: 19). However, the Tuareg also reside in other countries and it remains to be seen whether security cooperation between Mali and Niger is elaborate enough to potentially call them an RSC. The author

further believes that a conflict system which would include Mali would need to include more states than Niger and Mali; at least Algeria and Libya should be involved.

A further look at regional organizations will clarify to which extend Mali is part of structures of regional organization in terms of security, and to which degree these organizations share the same threats and are interconnected.

1.1.1. The African Union and its Influence on regional Stability

Founded in 2002, the African Union (AU) has since its birth "sought to establish integrated frameworks to address Africa's security, governance and development challenges"; it was Africa's answer to the changing nature of conflicts on African soil after the end of the Cold War (Paterson 2012: 1; Bah et al. 2014: 27; Leininger 2009). Except for Morocco, all 54 African states are members to the African Union, which also strives to strengthen African sovereignty and limit dependence from other international actors. Other goals of the AU include the protection of Human Rights, democracy and equality (Leininger 2012: 69, 71). One of the main tasks of the AU is therefore continental integration, which requires the coordination of Africa's 14 regional communities, among them ECOWAS (Tetzlaff 2015: 234f.). The AU has more interventional and administrative powers than its predecessor, the Organization of African Unity, and its' Peace and Security Council has since its foundation authorized peacekeeping missions in Burundi and Darfur. However, 90 per cent of the AU's security efforts are externally funded and the AU has no control over UN-authorized interventions. Further, the AU's role as a stabilizing factor is hindered by the policies between different interest groups and by bureaucratic hurdles. What is more, some states appear to try to strengthen democratic developments, while others seemingly prefer to maintain non-democratic systems. The AU generally has significant financial problems, as richer member states often do not contribute sufficiently, while poorer member states are unable to contribute financially (Bah et al. 2014: 21; Williams 2008: 18; Leininger 2012: 75f.).

The AU's Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) is responsible for the implementation of measures of conflict prevention and peacekeeping and is supposed to represent an increasing focus on human security. In the specific context of CT, the AU has mainly established and legitimized procedures for individual member states to adopt (Bah et al. 2014: 21; Williams 2008: 18). The APSA includes five rapid-reaction forces (ASF) as well as an early warning system (CEWS), a Peace Fund and a Military Staff Committee (MSC). The AU is committed to working with the most important Regional Economic Communities (REC), one of which is the Economic

Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Interestingly, Mali appears to be cut in half in the regional allocation of the rapid reaction forces: The north of Mali (where the independent state of *Azawad* was proclaimed in 2012) belongs to the northern ASF, whereas the south of Mali belongs to the Western ASF. Naturally, the fact that some states belong to more than one ASF brigade further complicates the implementation of effective ASF activities (Paterson 2012: 1; Bah et al. 2014: 50f.). The AU and its organs face a multitude of challenges, among them funding, administrational weaknesses and planning issues, which likely contributed to the fact that violence and conflict are still present in many parts of the African continent (Paterson 2012: 3, 8). Maybe the most relevant shortcoming of the AU and APSA is a lack of practical capacity, although it is clearly not the only hindrance for effective policy implementation (Vorrath 2012: 1; Tetzlaff 2015a: 234ff.). As the intention of the AU is to promote solidarity and unity among all African states (Paterson 2012: 8), the AU is not a regional organization in the sense of an RSC. The AU's range is far too wide for this, considering the vastness of the African continent.

The African Union is specifically committed to the strengthening of constitutionally legitimized governments (Tetzlaff 2015: 234). As eleven coups d'état took place in Africa in the decade following 2003, the AU increasingly focused on the containment of coup-related conflicts and in this context suspended several of its member states, one of them being Mali (Paterson 2012: 3). As a response to the conflict in Mali in 2012, the AU authorized ECOWAS to take all necessary steps to reinstate the authority of the Malian government and provide stability by delegating the main operations related to stability in Mali to ECOWAS (Vorrath 2012: 2).

1.1.2. Institutionalized Security: The Role of ECOWAS

ECOWAS, the Economic Community of West African States, was founded in 1975 and initially had 16 member states (until Mauritania left in 2000). Comprising more than 300 million people, it is not only Africa's largest regional organization, but also the most militarily capable REC in Africa, and it is often described as the most active and advanced REC[83]. In West Africa, where according to Iwilade and Agbo "*the region is largely an imagined concept*" (Iwilade and Agbo 2012: 363), ECOWAS is the premier actor in terms of regional governance and security. Although the organization initially focused exclusively on economic and social issues[84],

[83] As Buzan and Waever point out, regional organizations are usually not identical with RSC's (Buzan and Waever 2003: 233).

[84] It appears that the original motivations for the member states to agree on the establishment of ECOWAS mainly comprised possible economic or financial gains and the development of a platform to present national economic

ECOWAS soon understood that West Africa was in need of an actor who could deal with regional security issues. This led to the adaptation of several measures in the pursuit of creating institutions which could deal effectively with regional security. At to the end of the Cold War followed a period of little external interference in African affairs and a series of brutal conflicts in West Africa. ECOWAS therefore grew considerably in its range and area of responsibility, to the effect that it is now basically a regional security actor rather than an economic organization (economic goals have also largely been thwarted by conflict and violence). ECOWAS revised its treaty in 1993, and the new focus on democracy and the rule of law was in large part the result of the brutal civil wars which had raged in Sierra Leone and Liberia (Iwilade and Agbo 2012: 363ff.; De Wet 2013; Kirschner and Stapel 2012: 141, Tetzlaff 2015: 268). The developments ECOWAS underwent in the decades since its foundation are especially remarkable considering that West Africa was an *unstructured region* until well into the 1970's, according to Buzan and Waever (Buzan and Waever 2003: 238).

This pivot towards democratization and progress in the institutionalization of security mechanisms led to the assumption that ECOWAS might eventually claim the role of a regional peacekeeper, especially since it has the longest standing mechanism for regional intervention among all African REC's. Some major steps towards this goal have already been taken in the past: In 1999, ECOWAS agreed on the establishment of six organs in the frame of the protocol on the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, one of which was the early warning system ECOWARN. The protocol also authorizes military intervention in member states for a number of reasons which threaten peace and security in the region. Among the reasons given are violent conflicts, humanitarian disasters and severe violations of Human Rights. Further, the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework was adopted in 2008, with the aim of containing conflicts before they break out. This Framework (ECPF) includes numerous inter-state and intra-state initiatives, one of them being the ECOWAS standby force. ECOMOG, the ECOWAS Monitoring Group, was created as a peacekeeping mechanism in an ad hoc fashion, which inevitably led to it having considerable flaws. It was re-established as a standby force by the name of ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF) in 2004 and its tasks were widened to conflict prevention, humanitarian intervention and other security-related initiatives. ESF includes a rapid reaction task force which is supposedly deployable within two weeks (Marc et al. 2015: 158; Haysom 2014: 7; Hartmann 2012: 88).

interests. According to the official founding treaty, the goal of ECOWAS is to achieve swift and sustainable economic development in West Africa (Hartmann 2012: 85f.).

Within ECOWAS, decisions concerning security and conflict resolution are made by the Assembly of the Heads of States. Yet, the implementation of these decisions (which include military deployment) is being decided upon by the Mediation and Security Council (MSC), which consists of nine member states (Yabo 2010: 10f.).

Because of the varying nature of security threats in West Africa, the task to create and implement sustainable and preventive frameworks of security is extremely challenging, and it is made more complicated by internal divisions (Iwilade and Agbo 2012: 360). Also, ECOWAS would need to develop clear strategies and goals in order to deal effectively with complex situations. ECOWAS has been hindered by disagreement among member states which concerned both policy and practical issues, and the organization cannot take action against the sovereignty or political will of any member state. Decisions are only made unanimously and are not binding, which presents a considerable challenge as governments tend to favor short-term solutions. ECOWAS further depends on logistical support from the IC for peacekeeping missions, and little can be done without the consensus of Nigeria, which is clearly the most powerful member state (De Wet 2013; Tetzlaff 2015: 270f., 275). What is more, there are stark contrasts between different member states. Some states, like Nigeria and Sierra Leone for instance, are exporters of raw materials, while others like Benin fully depend on agriculture (Tetzlaff 2015: 270).

As bad governance continues to undermine security in West Africa, one particular shortcoming of ECOWAS is its failure to engage with civil society. Corruption is also crippling both national governments and military organizations with widespread consequences. Even though all these problems hinder progress, ECOWAS remains the most potent agent of stability in West Africa and has actually performed better than many analysts expected, although conflict prevention remains a particular challenge for the organization. One instance where ECOWAS managed to contribute remarkably to conflict resolution was conflict in the Mano River Basin in the 1990's[85] (Marc et al. 2015: 158; Iwilade and Agbo 2012: 364f.; Yabo 2010: 6, 10, 54f.; Tetzlaff 2015: 275f.).

While ECOWAS proved able to learn and adapt in recent decades (Iwilade and Agbo 2012: 371) and clearly constitutes the most potent institution for the provision of peace and security in West Africa, the author argues that the organization is not yet a Regional Security Complex. It could become one, but this would still require several developments, as the author's

[85] Nonetheless, ECOWAS troops (ECOMOG) were also accused of behaving like a force of occupation and a warring party in this context.

comparison of ECOWAS to the structural necessities of an RSC will show. One could argue that ECOWAS does have clear boundaries in a sense that it has a clearly defined membership, but the Malian case shows how complicated this issue is: In terms of perceived (and real) threats, securitization and security cooperation, Mali clearly leans towards Algeria (one might even say Mali is dominated by Algeria in terms of security policy, as will be explained in a following chapter), which is not a member of ECOWAS. ECOWAS is obviously made up of more than two units or member states. There is also *polarity*, and Nigeria is clearly the most powerful member state[86] (indeed, if ECOWAS were to form an RSC, it would be a centered one with Nigeria as a regional power). *Social construction* is also given in a sense, as there has been disagreement among members of ECOWAS on certain issues (such as the necessity for military intervention in Liberia), especially between francophone and English-speaking member states. The acceptance of Nigeria as the leading regional power also largely seems to be given (Brown 1999), even though some of the francophone member states appear to view ECOWAS as a Nigerian tool to reinforce its hegemony (Söderbaum and Hettne 2010: 24).

However, RSCT holds that most security interaction within an RSC needs to be internal, and the RSC has to be independent in terms of security (see part I, chapter 2.1.). Even though ECOWAS member states signed a treaty of non-aggression and an agreement on mutual defense (BPB, ECOWAS, 2012), security cooperation among ECOWAS states is not sufficiently elaborated and independent to form an RSC. Maybe this is because the interest among certain member states is simply not there yet. This would fit the assumption that ECOWAS member states agree to conflict resolution based on their national interests because they seek to increase their power in the region. In her report for the US State Department, Natalie Brown argues that, as a community, the member states of ECOWAS only share few unifying similarities (Yabi 2010: 6; Brown 1999). This goes hand in hand with the argument that neopatrimonialism, which is prevalent in some West African states, clearly has negative effects on regional integration, as has autocratic governance. In the latter, statesmen have little incentives to act transparently and to integrate into supranational organizations, because they do not depend on democratic elections. Autocracies are also less committed to regional organizations because they have to make sure to uphold their internal power, which makes regional commitments more challenging (Kirschner and Stapel 2012: 142ff.).

What is clear is that most of ECOWAS' conflict prevention mechanisms would not work without external funding, and the role of Nigeria seems so strong that the entire existence of ECOWAS

[86] See Buzan and Waever 2003: 34, Hartmann 2012: 90f.

could be in danger if Nigeria was severely weakened. Because of its power, Nigeria has considerable potential to both stabilize and destabilize the region, and Nigeria's national security is linked to regional security in West Africa (Karugia 2008: 113).

A report by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung from 2010 states that ECOWAS is not able to contribute decisively to sustainable peace and security in difficult situations. Sustainability appears to be a particular issue in this context, as ECOWAS, which has to make do with very limited human and financial resources, appears to take immediate action rather than long term initiatives (Yabi 2010: 5; Haacke and Williams 2008)[87].

The case of Mali is, in fact, a good example of why ECOWAS does not constitute an RSC. Mali is strongly influenced by Algeria in terms of security and the harbingers of its main external security threats originated in Libya and Algeria (Whitehouse and Strazzari 2015: 216). Mali's membership in ECOWAS essentially means that the country is a member of an organization which is, among other things, concerned with regional security – even though Mali does not share its main security threats with the other member states, but instead shares these threats with countries outside ECOWAS. This must have been one reason for Buzan and Waever to classify Mali as an insulator state. There is no supranational organization which involves Mali, Algeria and Libya, and it appears as if this would be necessary for the development of a sustainable RSC involving Mali (Buzan and Waever 2003: 23; Haysom 2014: 6).

In line with its strong aversion against military coups, ECOWAS denounced the coup in Mali in 2012 and called for the reinstitution of the government. This was followed by diplomatic sanctions and border closures, and ECOWAS also negotiated the appointment of the new Malian government. However, due to financial and logistical challenges ECOWAS was unable to take military action against the secessionist-Islamist insurgency movement on its own. ECOWAS established the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) to intervene after the coup in Mali. However, as the force remained ineffective due to a lack of financial and material resources as well as experience, the mission soon merged into the MINUSMA mission, which continued for years. Therefore, while it did not really act militarily, ECOWAS tried to solve the Malian crisis through mediation and remained engaged in the process of conflict resolution. The result was that direct military action in Mali was ultimately taken by international forces. It is therefore necessary to acknowledge the shortcomings of

[87] It can in fact be argued that some interstate dynamics in West Africa, such as shadow economies, fuel regional conflicts instead of containing them (Söderbaum and Hettne 2010: 24).

ECOWAS when analyzing the functional role of the organization (Haysom 2014: 5ff., 13; Tejpar et al. 2015; Tetzlaff 2015: 278).

Apart from the institutional shortcomings listed above, the member states also suffer from a variety of security challenges that differ in scope and character. One prominent example in the economic sector is illicit traffic in many ECOWAS member states (Detzi and Winkleman 2016: 227, 232f.). Further, security interrelations appear weak among some member states and their dependency on Nigeria seems too strong. While the provision of security and cooperation among member states is, according to the author, not yet elaborate enough to call ECOWAS an RSC, the organizations' evolvement proves that the relevance of security cooperation has been acknowledged by its member states. This gives hope that ECOWAS or its member states might indeed develop to become an RSC in the future.

This would likely start a debate about mutual exclusiveness and overlap of RSC's, as some eastern ECOWAS states clearly have interests in more than one African region. Mali is a prime example hereof, as its main external security threats originate in two states which are not members of ECOWAS; Algeria and Libya. Further, the involvement of external forces, most notably former colonial power France, in conflict resolution shows poignantly in how far West Africa is still being influenced by external actors. As pointed out by Iwilade and Agbo, "*ECOWAS will always have to, now and then, resolve large-scale violent conflicts that it has neither the capacity nor the need to engage with*" (Iwilade and Agbo 2012: 372). According to the author, there are three main reasons why ECOWAS is no RSC:

a. A lack of clearly defined boundaries in terms of threats and security cooperation. Best examples hereof are Nigeria and Mali, both of which share threats and cooperation with states outside of ECOWAS (most prominently Boko Haram and AQIM). To take this one step further, there is little doubt that non-ECOWAS-member Algeria is the single state which exerts the most influence on northern Mali, is the region where instability originates (Lacher 2013a: 3).

b. The inability of ECOWAS to act independently. ECOWAS still largely depends on external funding, military assistance and logistical support, especially from the UN (De Wet 2013).

c. The lack of effectiveness. ECOWAS has simply not been effective enough in maintaining or providing stability in the past to qualify as an RSC. It is noteworthy in this context that ECOWAS undertook military peace operations upon invitation in the recent past, leading to the question whether the organization would take action if this was not requested by the respective government (De Wet 2013).

In the case of ECOWAS, patterns of security are not running deep enough to distinguish ECOWAS as a security complex from other states. Hence, all authors cited here hold the opinion that ECOWAS is not yet able to deal with the security challenges in the region. Therefore, the author, in line with Buzan and Waever (Buzan and Waever 2003: 238f.), holds that ECOWAS is, as of yet, a *proto-complex* which has the potential to become an RSC.

1.2. Regional Security Cooperation: Counter-Terrorism

One of the main indicators of an RSC is cooperation in the security sector, as it is a clear sign of shared security concerns and threats. Mali mostly shares its long term terrorism threat, AQIM, with Algeria, Mauritania and Niger, neither of which have full control over their entire territory. Terrorism and illegal trade are facilitated by permeable borders and are being exploited by terrorist groups such as AQIM at the expense of the respective states. Accordingly, all four states decided to implement measures to contain the threat potential and enhance regional cooperation (Lohmann 2011: 1, 3). While the predecessor of the African Union began dealing with terrorism as a security threat in 1992, the outcome was mainly limited to the banning of terrorist groups and a number of statements concerning the topic (Haacke and Williams 2008: 790). This is also true with regards to the states in the Sahel-Sahara region, which clearly share part of the problem; yet their reactions were limited to legislation instead of combatting the root causes for instability and terrorism (Zoubir and Dris-Aït-Hamadouche 2013: 103). It therefore needs to be pointed out in this context that CT-cooperation has basically been imposed on African states in the course of the GWOT. After 9/11, the USA gained increasing interest in a stable Sahara-Sahel zone. African states adopted a declaration against terrorism in October 2001 and developed an action plan which included increasing surveillance to counter cross-border trafficking, to counter weapons trafficking and increase border controls. Unfortunately, the AU still took very little effective action, in spite of the heightened terrorism awareness (Haacke and Williams 2008: 791f.). One result of rising US interest in the region and increasing terrorism awareness was the Pan Sahel Initiative (PSI). At

first, the PSI's objective was to counter the GSPC in a concerted effort with the Algerian government (Harmon 2015: 230).

1.2.1. The Pan Sahel Initiative

The Pan Sahel Initiative (PSI) was developed to counter the threat emanating from the GSPC in Mali, Chad, Niger and Mauritania. It was the first US-led securitization initiative in the region and was run by the US European Command (EUCOM) from November 2002 to March 2004. Its objectives were to strengthen the affected sates' CT-capabilities and to prevent the establishment of terrorist bases in these countries. In order to enable the affected states to fight Islamist insurgents, drug trafficking and porous borders, the PSI aimed to improve the quality of training and equipment in the respective states. Soldiers of all four states were trained by US Special Forces, especially with regards to border security. A total of about 1.200 troops received training in the four countries and much focus was given to the border region between northern Mali and Algeria. One specific aim of the PSI was to create rapid-reaction units for CT-deployments. To the detriment of regional security, the participating states were much more interested in the provision of military hardware and financial resources than in actual combat against terrorism. As could be observed in the events in 2012, the PSI did not manage to achieve its goals. It did, however, manage to capture important GSPC personality Abderrazak El Para[88] in Chad in March 2004 in an operation which received high publicity and was meant to serve as a proof of success for the PSI. Unfortunately, one of the results of increasing Counter-Terrorism policies against the GSPC in Algeria was the group's migration southward, especially to the Kidal region of northern Mali (Harmon 2014: 62f.; Harmon 2015: 230).

1.2.2. The Trans-Saharan Counter Terrorism Partnership

The Trans-Saharan Counter Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP) was created as a follow-up to the PSI[89]. It was an extension of previous efforts and additionally targeted illicit traffic of drugs and weapons, as it was assumed that the traffic combined with poverty and labor migration would likely cause conflicts. The TSCTP combined support in diplomacy and governance with military support and was regionally expanded to include Algeria, Nigeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Senegal, resulting in the involvement of ten regional states. The TSCTP began operations in 2005 and mainly focused on border security and stabilization of ungoverned territories,

[88] See also Le Monde Diplomatique: El Para, the Maghreb's Bin Laden, from 2005.
[89] It went by another name for a brief time.

including Counter-Terrorism. It also aimed at establishing relationships between the affected countries in an initiative that intended to bring together the respective heads of defense – most of whom had, remarkably, never before met. As the root causes of regional instability were identified as socio-economic factors, diplomatic and development-initiatives were also included in the TSCTP. Just like the PSI, TSCTP remained ineffective and did not prevent the secessionist-Islamist insurgency and coup d'état in Mali (Harmon 2014: 140; Harmon 2015: 232). According to Harmon, the reason both initiatives failed was corruption in Mali and the fact that the Algerian government continued to focus on its own survival instead of CT. Neither government was committed to contain the elements from which non-state groups benefited, which is why Malian officials did not end KFR and cocaine smuggle[90], while Algeria did not control illegal immigration. The TSCTP was ultimately absorbed into AFRICOM (Harmon 2014: 136; Harmon 2015: 232).

Joint regional CT efforts are especially important for Algeria, which seeks to present itself as a vanguard in the fight against terrorism. Algeria thus seeks to receive continuous support from partners such as the US and the EU. But CT-policies can also backfire: Belmokhtars' "Signatories of Blood" battalion explicitly stated that Algeria's decision to allow surveillance drones to patrol its southern borders was the main motivation for the In Amenas attack in 2013 (Huber et al. 2014: 6). The most explicit example of CT-cooperation under Algerian guidance took place in 2009, when the Algerian Air Force decided to establish surveillance in the Sahel zone to monitor the movements of terrorist groups. This was conducted in cooperation with Mali, Mauritania, and Niger. The four countries had been stepping up their military- and intelligence cooperation for some time, mainly because of the transnational nature of the threats all four states faced, especially in the Sahel-Sahara region (Zoubir and Dris-Aït-Hamadouche 2013: 115f.).

Still, the respective states' tendency to act individually and according to their own interests is one of the main challenges with regards to region-wide CT cooperation, as it results in a lack of coordination. This is also rooted in a widespread lack of trust. Algerian officials perceive Mali as a weak link in security and believe it is not committed enough to the fight against terrorism. Other Sahelian countries in turn mistrust Algeria, as it is the state of origin of AQIM and allegedly supported Tuareg rebellions in Niger and Mali to contain Gaddafi's aspirations (Ammour 2012: 3f.).

[90] For more on how smuggle affects African states see Burgis 2015.

1.3. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to evaluate which states need to be taken into consideration when trying to establish a possible RSC for Mali. So far, no RSC could be established on the basis of regional patterns of organization and security interdependence. Even though many states, especially those in the Sahel-Sahara zone, share several threat potentials, security cooperation with the regional organizations is insufficient at best (especially prior to 9/11 and during the current Malian conflict). As has been established, the major CT-initiatives in the region were initiated by the US, while many heads of defense of the participating states had not even met prior to these initiatives.

As has been demonstrated, the AU does not show sufficient security cooperation and is too large to form an RSC. ECOWAS is still weak and does not have the scope or connectivity to establish an RSC, and not all members of ECOWAS share the same threats and security prerogatives. In the case of Mali it therefore makes sense to look at Stephen Harmons' definition of the Sahel-Sahara zone, which includes Mali, Algeria, Libya, Niger, Mauritania and Chad. The author believes that there is no sufficient degree of cooperation in terms of security between these states. This will be analyzed in the following chapters to establish whether Mali had or has an RSC. To find out whether these states were relevant in the case of Mali in 2012, the remaining question is whether the states largely share the same threats. Algeria and Mali share a common threat, namely Islamist terrorism in the form of the GSPC or AQIM. This is a highly interconnected threat, as it travelled from Algeria to Mali, where AQIM was among the main participants of the secessionist-Islamist insurgency due to securitization initiatives in Algeria. Southern Libya and Mali share some of the main challenges to stability, so what remains is the question of interconnectivity of the threat. This also appears to be given, and some of the following chapters will point out how much returning Tuareg and the vast influx of Libyan weapons influenced the conflict in Mali. Mauritania and Mali share a long border and they also share some of the same threats, as will be explained later. This is also the case with Niger, which is linked to Mali because both states face challenges from their Tuareg minority. As for Chad, the research did not indicate any connection to Mali in terms of security.

1.4. Excursus: The Role of France in Mali: Overlay?

In order to fully understand the background dynamics of the conflict in Mali it makes sense to take a look at the influence of France's foreign politics with regards to stability in Mali. The aim is to establish whether the former colonial power France still has significant influence in Mali and whether this produced an effect akin to the concept of *overlay*[91] as described by Buzan and Waever in 2012 (Buzan and Waever 2003: 61f., 64).

1.4.1. France's Security Policies in Mali after Decolonization and prior to 2012

France has been criticized for several features of its foreign policy regarding Mali. Looking back at the colonial period[92], France's policies towards the Tuareg were partly responsible for creating some of the perpetuating instabilities in the north of Mali which continue until today. France's presence and some of its actions divided the Tuareg tribes by utilizing their social organization for France's political purposes and by interfering in their political hierarchies, which left the Tuareg fragmented and weakened. It was for instance part of France's policy to limit the dynamics within the tribes by fixing the political hierarchy according to a certain moment in time; they simply assigned the chiefs and rulers to permanent posts, contrary to traditional Tuareg politics. France also claimed the power to appoint these posts, which was another interference in traditional Tuareg policies. France further only allocated minimal financial resources to the development of the north of Mali. The development gap was exacerbated by the Tuareg's refusal to send their children to European schools (Benetti 2008: 36, 40, 43ff., 48f.; Kolb 2013: 1f.; Papendieck 2012:2).

Some authors claim that France is still acting under the premises of neo-colonialism, which is a rather general criticism (Survie 2013). Among the aspects which were specifically criticized was France's former policy to pay ransom for hostages, which fed into the financial strategy of groups like AQIM. It is further criticized that Counter-Terrorism efforts such as the Pan-Sahel Initiative[93], in which France participated, were largely ineffective (Survie 2013: 61f.; Lasserre and Oberlé 2013: 121f.).

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[91] See page 10.

[92] This chapter deals with France's influence on Mali in the recent past; it will not deliver an overview of the colonial period. For sources concerning the colonial period see Jean-Francois Bayart, *The State in Africa* 2009; Stefan Brüne, *Afrika Jahrbuch*, 1995; Stefan Brüne, *Die Afrikapolitik Frankreichs*, in Tetzlaff/Jakobeit, *Das nachkoloniale Afrika*, 2005; Jürgen Osterhammel, *Kolonialismus*, 1995; Rolf Hofmeier, *Afrika Jahrbuch 1991*, 1992; Koepf 2011).

[93] See part III, chapter 1.2.1.

In the years immediately prior to Opération Serval, the consensus in French foreign policy had been to withdraw military forces from Africa to let Africans deal with security challenges on their own. However, France had repeatedly sent its military to intervene in African states after the end of the Cold War[94], in spite of recurring assurances that it had no intention to do so. France henceforth became an important agent of security in its former colonies and retained strong influence in Africa, while Africa also played an important role in France's politics. The fact that Africa is the only continent outside Europe where France still has considerable political influence is another important factor to consider[95] (Chivvis 2016: 35f., 42f.; Lasserre and Oberlé 2013: 219).

After the Cold War ended, France's military forces were reduced, and so were unilateral engagements in Africa. France henceforth aimed to organize any potential military intervention under the umbrella of international institutions such as the European Union. Even though, realities on the ground repeatedly hindered France from completing a military drawback of the envisioned size, which is why France still maintained a reduced, albeit noteworthy military presence on the African continent prior to 2012 (Chivvis 2016: 43f.). France engaged in more than 30 military operations on the African continent after 1960, and it still has military bases in several African countries (Dehez 2014: 108). From 1960 to the middle of the 1990ies, France's foreign policy in its former colonies was driven by the goal to become an important global player, to be independent of other states and to contain the influence of the Soviet Union. French military action was always unilateral during this time and often focused on the support of friendly regimes. A critical, fundamental debate about France's Africa policy only started after the genocide in Rwanda. The genocide triggered discussions about France´s responsibilities and showed the French government that it was no longer able to achieve its' political goals with the same means it had used in the previous decades, among them the protection of friendly regimes. It can therefore be argued that the Rwandan genocide marks a pivotal point in France's Africa policy which resulted in the abandonment of the policy of unilateral military engagements[96] (Koepf 2011: 107f., 116ff., 122f., 125f.).

[94] For more on France's continuous Africa-policy, see Koepf 2016.

[95] Sub-Sahara Africa was as actually the only region where France was able to maintain an exclusive zone of influence during the Cold War (Koepf 2011: 89).

[96] After negative experiences with the UN and NATO, France began to look for greater EU involvement in international military operations. France also increasingly began to support the strengthening of African security measures (Koepf 2011: 132ff., 143f., 155).

In early 2013, France had around 7.000 troops engaged in military operations in four African countries, one of them being Mali (Tertrais 2013: 52). France also uses a network of military advisers and support officers who are mainly deployed to francophone ECOWAS - states as members of the host nation's military. This personnel is meant to give France some influence on the ground, and the tactic is complemented by French advisors who serve at the office of the ECOWAS commissioner[97] (Chafer 2013: 245ff.). What is more, France began funding over a dozen military academies in West and Sub-Sahara Africa in the late nineties. Thousands of students graduated from these academies, and France was also engaged in military training efforts in some of these countries, among them Mali. France and its former colonies further signed numerous bilateral agreements at independence concerning economic, political and cultural topics (Chafer 2013: 250; Chivvis 2016: 44f.).

Among the general strategic goals of French policies in Africa are the containment of illegal traffic, of non-state actors such as AQIM[98] and the preservation of France's influence. France appears to seek a greater European and African involvement when it comes to conflict resolution on the African continent. France would prefer multilateral engagements over unilateral ones in this context, meaning that if France believes intervention by non-African states to be necessary, it would prefer not to go in on its own, but in a multinational framework[99], for instance with the UN or EU. However, France has so far only had limited success with this strategy[100]. As then-president Hollande highlighted in a comment shortly after the beginning of Opération Serval, he was disappointed that France felt compelled to unilaterally send forces to Mali. According to him, it was a sign of weakness that the European Union was unable to send European forces to prevent further violence in Mali, which underlined that European defense capacities did not yet meet his expectations (Dehez 2014: 109f.; Boeke and Schuurman 2015: 808; Tertrais 2013: 55; Chafer 2013: 241ff.; Wehrtechnik 2013: 53). In hindsight, however, it can be argued that Mali represents a case were France's strategy to shift some of the military responsibility to other actors was indeed successful. The

[97] France used to send advisors, or Assistants Militaires Techniques, to the central command of its partner states; the idea behind the French military presence was to deter potential aggressors. These advisors had considerable influence, and Tobias Koepf even argues that they basically led the respective military (Koepf 2011: 96).

[98] Both of which are present in Mali, see part III, chapter 2.

[99] France pushed for UN-involvement early on when it became clear that the crisis in Mali was intensifying (Assemblée Nationale, Rapport d' Information Sur l'Opération Serval auf Mali, 2013: 29f.). France also secured the approval of the African Union before launching Opération Serval (Africa Times, François Hollande's Legacy in Africa, 2017; AllAfrica, Mali: Politics of Death – France in CAR and Mali, 2016). For more on France's pivot towards multilateral engagement see Koepf 2011.

[100] What can be observed is a growing Franco-British cooperation with regard to their African policies which is mainly based on growing concerns over regional security. Contrary to France, Great Britain does not usually deploy military forces to Africa (Chafer 2013: 234f., 245).

continuing missions MINUSMA and EUTM Mali are examples hereof and relieved France of some of its military burden (UN, MINUSMA: United Nations Stabilization Mission in Mali, 2017; Deutscher Bundestag, MINUSMA und EUTM Mali, 2016).

1.4.2. Continuation of the "Françafrique"?

During the presidency of former French President Nicolas Sarkozy the focus of France's foreign policy was taken off the former colonies and shifted towards transatlantic relations. There has also been a general development of a French political culture towards lesser focus on Africa (Dehez 2014: 109, 111; Chivvis 2016: 91). Even though both Presidents Sarkozy and Hollande declared their intention to end the policy of "Françafrique"[101] which has marked Franco-African relations since decolonization, there had not been a complete rupture with this policy at the time of the crisis in Mali, and some networks continued to exist (BpB, Der schwierige Abschied von der "Françafrique", 2013).

There are several reasons why France is no longer able to maintain a strong influence over its former colonies. Among them is the fact that a multitude of actors are involved in African politics and that France increasingly cooperates with other countries in the region. Further, France does not have the human resources to maintain extensive networks, and France's economic engagement in Africa (and Mali in particular) also declined. What is more, Mali has never been at the center of France's interests and the relations between both governments were rather tense, even though France did have considerable influence on Malian politics. Professor Chafer from the University of Portsmouth therefore argues that Mali was among the former colonies which adopted the most drastic anti-colonial course. While Mali never considered itself part of the privileged sphere of French influence in Africa, its anti-colonial policies gained momentum with the declaration of independence in 1960, when Mali officially declared all previous engagements to the former colonial power to be dissolved. One way this

[101] The term "Françafrique" refers to a web of diplomatic and economic relations between France and its former colonies which gave France considerable influence over African governments so as to protect French national interests. The underlying goal was Charles de Gaulle's idea to turn France into an important global player, which is an important hallmark of French self-image and foreign policy to this day. De Gaulle believed that the outward appearance and internal cohesion of France were co-dependent. The concept of "Françafrique" included plans for French military intervention (in case of threats the survival of the respective government) with several African states in exchange for access to natural resources; Mali was not among the countries which signed these treaties (BpB, Der schwierige Abschied von der "Françafrique", 2013; Die Zeit, Das ist auch Europas Krieg, 2013; Koepf 2011: 78f.). As the policy was covert, it is difficult to estimate the extent of its influence on a particular event. While the policy had strong influence on Africa in the first 50 years after decolonization, its influence seems to be receding. While some African politicians still claimed it very influential at the beginning of the 21st century, others denied its continuation (Die Zeit, In Frankreichs Armen, 2010; Jeune Afrique, Bénin: Pour Lionel Zinsou, la «Françafrique» est un «Mythe», 2015; BpB, Der schwierige Abschied von der "Françafrique", 2013; Die Zeit, Das ist auch Europas Krieg, 2013).

policy manifested itself was Mali's refusal to sign defense and military cooperation agreements with France (WAPSN, France in Mali: Myths and Realities, 2016). However, after the presidency of Modibo Keita the political course of Mali gradually shifted towards a more western-friendly approach, which was first introduced by Keitas' successor Traoré (Schlichte 2016: 63). When Alpha Konaré took over the presidency in 1992, Malis' democratic development accelerated, which was why Mali began to receive growing international assistance (Heyl and Leininger 2016: 71f.)

Although the culture of "Françafrique" does not constitute an underlying reason for Opération Serval according to Professor Chafer, this does not mean that geostrategic interests did not play a role in the respective decision making. On the one hand, France appears to be unwilling to give up its position as an important actor in Africa. On the other hand, the relationships between France and African states are becoming more bilateral, as for instance the leaders of Niger and Senegal were among the first to call for French military intervention. Opération Serval appears to be a case where both French and African interests were push-and-pull factors (Jeune Afrique, Bénin: Pour Lionel Zinsou, la «Françafrique» est un «Mythe», 2015; WAPSN, France in Mali: Myths and Realities, 2016; Kinsey Powell 2016: 3, 21f.; Survie 2013: 14, 27; Notin 2014: 19f.). In some cases, African heads of government even applied considerable pressure on France to agree to send military support, as they knew that France equally depended on them maintaining its power (Kinsey Powell 2016: 11f.; Marchal 2015: 23). France is also required to cooperate with African states due to the establishment of regional organizations such as the African Union[102] (Dehez 2014: 111). Accordingly, then-President Hollande appeared eager to promote cooperation between Mali and France in the course of Opération Serval (Bergamaschi 2013: 8). François Hollande clearly declared that the time of "Françafrique" was over (Jeune Afrique, François Hollande: «Le Temps de la Françafrique est révolu», 2012; Lasserre and Oberlé 2013: 217) and numerous sources confirmed that he does not have any specific interest in the continent per se (Marchal 2015: 21; Kinsey Powell 2016: 2; Lasserre and Oberlé 2013: 191), although other sources claim that he simply tried to cover up underlying strategic and economic interests of France in Mali[103] (Survie 2013: 35f.). Among the latter is Stefan Brüne, who stated that he does not believe that "Françafrique" is over and

[102] Another one of them being ECOWAS, see part III, chapter 1.1.2.

[103] This shows the extent to which the topic is ideologically charged. It is striking that publications with a generally negative tone towards France's policy in Mali claim that France tolerated the actions of the Malian government and did not get involved enough to appease the north of the country, which is a somewhat contradictory claim (Survie 2013: 45, 49f.).

equally does not expect any changes from a new President after Hollande. According to him, France will try to maintain good relations with states who are rich in natural resources (DW, Hollandes Afrika-Politik: Zwischen Befriedung und Eigeninteresse, 2017).

However, the claim that France mainly intervened in Mali because of its economic interests does not appear conclusive. Opération Barkhane is France's biggest military deployment abroad and Opération Serval was the most expansive French deployment at the time with a daily cost of about 2.7 million euros[104]. France's economic involvement in Africa declined in the past, and in the decade between 2005 and 2015 French trade value with Sub-Saharan states accounted for less than two per cent of France's imports and less than three per cent of France's exports. Also, French market share in West and central Africa has declined by more than half in the same period (Kinsey Powell 2016: 2f.; France 24, Mali War costs debt-laden France 70 Million Euros, 2013). In 2011, the French ministry of finance declared that Mali was only a minor trade partner, which makes sense because Mali's main foreign trade partner has been China for some years. As far as Mali's uranium resources are concerned, it is unclear how much uranium Mali really possesses and how long it would take to exploit it. Combined with instability and security threats, the option to mine uranium in Mali is not imminently attractive[105] (FAZ, Mali: das sagenhafte Reich voller Gold und Bodenschätze, 2013; Munzinger 2014: 3). In 2014, a French government report declared that France lacks both the financial means and the intention to maintain a strong military presence in Africa. As France believes continued military presence in the Sahel-Sahara zone to be necessary, the report declared that this could be achieved by shifting some troops from other African countries to the Sahel-Sahara region. As France nonetheless seeks to keep its influence in Africa and wants to profit from future development, it identified cooperation with African and international partners as a means to achieve both goals. The report also clarifies that France intends to be one of the most, if not the most important partner for Africa in this context[106] (Assemblée Nationale, Rapport d'Information sur l'Evolution du Dispositif militaire Francais en Afrique et sur le Suivi des Opérations en cours, 2014: 99f., 227, 233).

[104] The total cost of Opération Serval in 2013 was estimated to exceed 640 million euros (Kinsley Powell 2016: 21f.).

[105] It is, however, important to note that France uses nuclear technology to produce the vast majority of its energy (Munzinger 2016: 1, 7). It is likely that Opération Serval was also triggered by France's desire to protect its uranium mines in Niger, which would have been considerably more difficult if Mali had actually been taken over by the insurgents. France has also been the third most important donor of development aid to Mali for several years before the crisis broke out in 2012 (Munzinger 2014: 4).

[106] The same report also calls for a greater involvement of the African Union in military operations on the African continent (Assemblée Nationale, Rapport d'Information sur l'Evolution du Dispositif militaire Francais en Afrique et sur le Suivi des Opérations en cours, 2014: 240).

It therefore seems unlikely that economic factors were the main motivation for the French intervention in Mali. While they might have played a role, it seems that national security was a more pressing issue when the decision to intervene was made, especially with regards to international criminal networks and transnational terrorism[107] (Assemblée Nationale, Rapport d'Information Sur l'Opération Serval auf Mali, 2013: 15f.).

The author further believes that the French government seeks to maintain a reliable and credible profile in its former colonies. One the one hand, this means that France cannot unilaterally intervene in the political affairs of African states as it sees fit. One the other hand, it also makes it harder not to intervene when asked to do so by a friendly government.

1.4.3. France's Military Engagement in Mali 2012

When the French government authorized Opération Serval in January 2013, it reacted to a call for help from the Malian government and might have prevented the complete takeover of the Malian state by the insurgents (Dehez 2014: 106f.). France quickly tried to garner international support for the intervention. Reasons hereof can be manifold; maybe because it was also militarily engaged in the Central African Republic with Opération Sangaris or because the French military faced financial cutbacks (Dehez 2014: 107; Chafer 2013: 245f).

Even though the French government stated immediate reasons as the main motive for the intervention in Mali, it is clear that France assigns particular importance to its former colonies (Dehez 2014: 108f.). As Bruno Tertrais stated, "*Mali had been on the French strategic radar for a long time*" (Tertrais 2013: 49).

Among the official reasons given were humanitarian ones, the desire to protect the Malian government and people and the need to contain a jihadist threat in Europe's neighborhood (Dehez 2014: 108; Bergamaschi 2013: 6; Tertrais 2013: 53; Lasserre and Oberlé 2013: 220). In line with this, it is certainly observable to any francophone security analyst that there is a profound understanding and culture of analysis of the jihadist threat in France (Chivvis 2016: 173). The fact that French citizens had been taken hostage by AQIM and MUJAO was another more immediate factor (Boeke and Schuurman 2015: 806f.). It should also be considered that

[107] It is further interesting that the French government uses the efficiency of Opération Serval to justify the existence of pre-deployed French troops in numerous African states. The quick deployment to Mali would have been impossible without these pre-deployed troops, which is being underlined in a French government report. In accordance with this, the report also announces the intention to concentrate more of France's military potential in Africa on the Sahel-Sahara zone (Assemblée Nationale, Rapport d'Information sur l'Evolution du Dispositif militaire Francais en Afrique et sur le Suivi des Opérations en cours, 2014: 31, 41ff.).

France is home to a significant population of native Malians (Marchal 2015: 21; Lasserre and Oberlé 2013: 46).

Then-President François Hollande publicly stated that the only purpose of the French intervention was to fight terrorism and that no specific French interests were being defended (Le Monde, Hollande: L'Opération au Mali "n'a pas d'autre But que la Lutte contre le Terrorisme", 2013). However, some sources claim that the proclaimed fight against terrorism was largely a narrative constructed to underline the legitimacy of the intervention (Survie 2013: 56ff.). It is further suggested that France wanted to protect the uranium mines in Niger, which are significant providers to the French energy sector. Some authors claim that French companies have fundamental interests in the yet-to-be-exploited natural resources in the north of Mali (Survie 2013: 36ff.), although it appears questionable whether these resources are actually profitable[108] (Chivvis 2016: 76).

Two other important factors need to be considered when analyzing the French policy with regards to the intervention in Mali. The first is that France had already been fighting the GSPC, the direct predecessor of AQIM, in the black decade in the 1990ies. The intervention in Mali might have been conceived as an opportunity to get rid of the threat once and for all, especially since France wanted to prevent the development of an ungoverned area exploited by terrorist groups and drug cartels in geographic proximity to Europe. The second factor is the shrinking influence of the United States, which created a gap that France may have endeavored to fill (Tertrais 2013: 53f.).

It is clear that France's only option to maintain significant political influence in a region outside of Europe is to insist on keeping a relatively influential role in Africa (Kinsey Powell 2016: 4; Lasserre and Oberlé 2013: 51). And yet it seems highly questionable whether the intervention in Mali signals a continuation of former French policies towards its colonies. Not only has Mali never been the focus of these policies, but African Presidents asked for French military intervention, and, as mentioned above, France tried for months to persuade its international partners to join the intervention. France also does not control Mali's main economic resources and the mandate for the intervention in Mali was fairly limited (Marchal 2015: 21ff.; Tertrais 2013: 55). What is more, it was quite clear that no other actor was going to intervene in Mali

[108] What is clear is that Opération Serval was rather popular among both the Malian and the French public, and then-President Hollande gained some popularity based on his decision to send troops to Mali (Survie 2013: 15; Bergamaschi 2013: 7; Marchal 2015: 34, Smith 2013: Chivvis 2016: 104).

(Chivvis 2016: 172). Therefore, it seems likely that France wanted to protect some of its economic and political interests in the region, albeit without having to take on too much responsibility. It also does not seem as if France wanted to widen its influence on Mali or the region, but that it merely wanted to maintain it.

It is likely that an important underlying cause for the French intervention was the fact that the political culture and thinking had been shaped by colonialism for so long that the French government felt more compelled to act on behalf of the Malian government than other states, even though the financial burden of military intervention made it an economically unattractive endeavor[109] (France 24, Mali War costs debt-laden France 70 Million Euros, 2013). So, while the decision to intervene militarily may have been partially shaped by France's colonialist past, it was not a decision that was driven by neo-colonial interests[110] (Chivvis 2016: 76f., 172; Smith 2013; WAPSN 2016).

After centuries of colonialism and decades of "Françafrique", it will evidently be difficult to completely change France's political course. Because France's foreign policy has always been linked to its former colonies to some extent, stability and policies in these countries have been given a lot of attention by French governments. The author believes that Opérations Serval and Barkhane are examples of the continuing focus on France's former colonies. This focus will only gradually decline in the face of financial and political constraints, but it will likely continue to be an important aspect of French foreign policy for some time.

In accordance with this, the latest French defense strategy[111] which was published in 2013 showed that much of France's political focus shifted back to Africa: "*Le Sahel, de la Mauritanie á la Corne de l'Afrique, ainsi qu'une partie de l'Afrique subsaharienne sont également des zones d'intérêt prioritaire pour la France…*"[112] (*Livre Blanc* 2013: 54). In the chapter which outlines the strategic priorities, the *Livre Blanc* defines terrorism as the most likely and most pressing

[109] Military spending had in fact been an economic burden for France years before Opération Serval began (Coulomb and Fontanel 2005: 299).

[110] As has been pointed out, political elites in France and Africa have traditionally had strong ties. What is more, both the government systems and the constitutions of the former colonies were usually modelled after the French systems. According to Dustin Dehez, the French system leaves some room for authoritarianism (Marchal 2015: 34), which makes it a fertile breeding ground for many governance problems in the former colonies (Dehez 2014: 109). After decolonization, Mali's state institutions were further mostly built by elites who had undergone French education (Lecocq 2010: 35ff.). Another issue is the fact that French efforts often resulted in the undermining of reforms which in turn backed incapable governments (Kinsey Powell 2016: 4).
For data on the economic relation between France and Mali see the previous chapter.

[111] "*Livre Blanc* 2013 de la defense et de la sécurité nationale" (Bergamaschi 2013: 8).

[112] „The Sahel, from Mauritania to the Horn of Africa and a part of Sub-Sahara Africa are also zones of primary interest for France", translation by the author.

challenge for France's national security. The book continues to explain how organized international crime can in some instances provide support to terrorist networks, especially with regards to finances (*Livre Blanc* 2013: 47ff.). When seen in the context of Opération Serval, the French intervention served to contain both illegal criminal networks and terrorist groups in close geographic proximity to France. It is therefore no surprise that the *Livre Blanc* later states Mali as a primary example of how security threats abroad can develop into risks for France and Europe and hence require action (*Livre Blanc* 2013: 55; Assemblée Nationale, Rapport d' Information Sur l'Opération Serval auf Mali, 2013: 16f.).

The partial pivot back to Africa is especially interesting as France's foreign policy in Africa had been rather disregarded by the candidates during the presidential campaign in 2012 (Brink 2012). Some authors now assume that France might be going back to projecting more of its military and political power in Africa (Chivvis 2016: 174).

The new *Livre Blanc* also discusses strategy with regards to the operations in Mali and Libya in 2012 and 2011, respectively. Both were used to manifest the lessons learnt and integrate them into the French defense strategy, while North Africa and the Sahel Zone regained strategic priority. Islamist terrorism and groups linked to Al Qaeda are also explicitly mentioned as threats several times, as are organized criminal networks (CSS Analysen 2013; Bergamaschi 2013: 8; *Livre Blanc* 2013: 40f., 44, 47ff., 55). Among the lessons learnt was the advantage of having troops stationed on the African continent for rapid deployment, which has proven very useful in the case of Mali (Tertrais 2013: 55).

1.4.4. Conclusion

As this chapter shows, there is no general answer to the question as to why France intervened in Mali (Marchal 2015: 34), as the reasons appear to be rather multi-causal. And while it has become clear that France still has influence in some of its former colonies, including Mali, one cannot soundly speak of *overlay* in this case. Even though France did intervene militarily, it did so with a limited approach focused on counter-terrorism[113] and quickly reduced its troops once the main goals were achieved. On the other hand, a limited military presence still remains in the country, most notably in the form of Opération Barkhane[114]. However, it seems unlikely that France's political influence in Mali was big enough to be considered *overlay*.

[113] See part IV, chapter 3.1.
[114] See part Iv, chapter 3.1.1.

It appears that France had two main strategic aims when the decision was made to start Opération Serval. One aim was to contain the spread of a jihadist threat, which has been on the political agenda of France for many years (Legislationline, France Counter-Terrorism, 2004 – 2017; France Diplomatie, Counter-Terrorism in France, 2013). The other aim was probably to maintain France's political influence in Western and Sub-Sahara Africa. Government documents point out that France sees Africa as an important geographic area in terms of its national security and that France equally seeks to continue to play an important political role on the continent (Assemblée Nationale, Rapport d'Information sur l'Evolution du Dispositif militaire Francais en Afrique et sur le Suivi des Opérations en cours, 2014: 99f., 227, 233; *Livre Blanc* 2013: 47ff.). According to the author, this is a form of Realpolitik and not necessarily a sign of neo-colonialism. It is certainly in France's interest to protect existing economic assets such as uranium mines in Niger. Yet, considering the overall circumstances, it does not make much sense for France to engage militarily in a state like Mali solely in the hopes of future economic profit (Koepf 2016: 214). Mali itself is simply too unstable and there is no conclusive evidence of the exact amount of natural resources in Mali's soil. Moreover, the entire Sahel-Sahara zone is, as this work shows, basically impossible to control and hence always prone to security risks. Therefore, there was never a time when it would have made sense to consider a military intervention economically feasible, as it was always clear that sustainable stabilization would require long-term military engagement. This is why the author believes that long-term political considerations which included national security, France's role in global politics, France's internal politics and economic aspects, caused the French government to militarily intervene in the Malian conflict in 2012.

To use the terminology of Buzan and Waever, France might be the curious case of a regional power without its own region in a sense. As has been pointed out above, France's military force seems to be seen as a sort of last resort for some African heads of states, and even the population appears to agree with this. While France cannot, and does not seem to want to, act unilaterally in Africa, it is the first European actor called for when some African politicians see the need[115].

[115] It is important to note in this context that there is no special role assigned to France the with regards to Africa in the CSDP. It does, however, specifically mention the case of Mali and the need to contain transnational terrorism. It also declares the goal to intensify cooperation with the African Union and ECOWAS (Council of the European Union 14392 2016: 15, 30; European Union Global Strategy 2016: 21, 29, 35; Council of the European Union 13202 2016; Bendiek 2016).

France revised its Africa policy in important ways and no longer supports dictatorships just because they are useful allies (Tertrais 2013: 54). All in all, it seems that France is looking for a way to be a potent, yet responsible actor in the African security realm[116]. France does not appear to be willing to let its influence fade, and large-scale military drawdowns may not happen in the near future. It is, however, also clear that France does not have the means for a considerable extension of its commitment on the African continent.

When looking at the situation in Mali prior to 2012, there are certain structural conditions which were caused by colonization and decolonization which did feed into the instability of Mali, especially in the north (Benetti 2008: 36, 40, 43ff., 48f.; Kolb 2013: 1f.; Papendieck 2012:2). However, there are no reasons to believe that France is directly to blame for the events which unfolded in Mali in 2012. As will be shown later, the situation in 2012 was a result of a culmination of various immediate events combined with long-term structural factors. Among the long-term factors, France bears some responsibility for the instability in Mali (albeit not most of it). Many of the long-term factors were caused by the neglect of Mali's north, the miscommunication with and mistreatment of the Tuareg and the exploitation of ungoverned areas by criminal groups. These factors created conditions in which instability could foster and made it impossible for Mali's weak military forces to penetrate, let alone control, the area. These circumstance were further exacerbated by a corrupt government and a severely weakened democracy.

Among the immediate factors, France bears some responsibility for the events which unfolded in Libya due to UN Resolution 1973 (BBC, Libya UN Resolution 1973: Text analysed, 2011; Phinney 2014: 90).

It can therefore be concluded that, while France remains an important actor in West and Sub-Sahara Africa in terms of security, France's politics did not cause the events in 2012, and there is no French overlay in Mali or the region as a whole.

[116] Which does not disregard the fact that France will continue to pursue ist national interests on the continent.

2. The State of Mali

The state of Mali was created after a series of historic empires and kingdoms left their mark on the region. Most recently, French colonial rule left its traces on the territory in West Africa. When Mali was officially established on September 22nd in 1960 (Schicho 2001: 267; Ansprenger 1961: 344ff.) the government faced the challenge of integrating different peoples with different ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds into a new state. There was no general consciousness of a Malian state or identity and the first government under Modibo Keïta quickly imposed a centralized, autocratic government in an effort to gain legitimacy. Complete national integration of the different population groups failed. One group in particular emerged as the most disenfranchised group in Mali – the Tuareg (Lemke 2013: 54f.).

Today, Mali is home to an ethnically diverse population of about fifteen Million people who belong to multiple ethno-linguistic groups and speak several dozen languages. 90 per cent of the population is Muslim, and the rest are of indigenous and Christian believes. Even though the majority of the population are Muslims, the Malian state is officially secular and the traditional form of Islam practiced in Mali is a moderate, tolerant form of Sufism. Only in the recent past did radical Islamist preachers from Saudi Arabia and Pakistan establish themselves and gain influence in Mali. Wahhabism started to gain a foothold in northern Mali with the building of Mosques in the 2000's and then spread to other regions. Social life became more restricted and radical ideology was introduced to society. Although this affected local communities, it did not change the moderate spirit of Malian Islam in general, which is one of the reasons the brutal behavior of AQIM and affiliates led to public resentment in Mali. One of the most prominent figures influenced by Pakistani preachers is the leader of Ansar Dine, Iyad Ag Ghali. He is a good example of how the growing influence of radical Islamism, which began in the late colonial period, facilitated relations between Islamist non-state groups, to the effect that these groups found it easier to install themselves in Mali. That said, is has to be pointed out that before the arrival of AQIM, MUJAO and Ansar Dine, such a violent, extreme form of Islamism had never before been practiced in Mali (Harmon 2014: 160f.; Solomon 2013: 13f.).

More than 80 per cent of the Malian population work in agriculture, which is critical because of the extremely arid climate in the country (Gourdin 2012: 6; Hofbauer and Münch 2013: 13). Another problem in terms of living conditions is that, while Mali made economic progress on the macro-level in recent years, this effect does not reach the micro-level, which is one reason

why most of the countries' population still live in extreme poverty (Gutelius 2007: 60). One of the main demographic features of the state is the distinction between farmers in the south and nomadic pastoralists in the north, who are mainly Tuareg (Keita 1998: 5).

Governance and state control are generally complicated issues in Mali due to the vast territory and the extremely long border the state shares with seven other countries (Moulaye 2011: 5). In 2011, Mali was ranked 175 of 183 in the UN Human Development Index, proving that Mali is one of the least developed states in the world (Hofbauer and Münch 2013: 13).

Economically, Mali fared well compared to its neighboring countries before 2012. Both the GDP and most economic branches grew moderately while the inflation rate was dropping continuously (Nicolau et al. 2011: 15f.). Mali is Africa's third largest gold producer and receives extensive international aid. As the money is not being channeled to the population, nepotism and corruption widen the gap between a small rich elite and the very poor majority, which often lacks access to basic resources. Both corruption and nepotism became endemic to such an extent that they were basically institutionalized, leading to a situation where one could for instance join the Army based on kinship and personal relationships instead of skills (Solomon 2013: 14).

The economic marginalization of the north of Mali is critically important to the stability of the state, especially when considering Mali's geo-political location. Further, both the multiethnic character and the mistrust towards politicians challenge the development of a shared national identity, which Mali largely lacks. As the state is particularly weak in the north, people there identify most with their immediate social group, which is mostly defined along ethnic lines. This is one reason why ethnic groups and non-state groups are strong in the north. Another important aspect is that the relationships between different ethnic groups and within these groups are sometimes conflicting, which further challenges a unified identity (Gourdin 2012: 7f.).

2.1. The Development of Democracy in Mali

To understand the events of 2012, it is necessary to understand the origins of the Malian state. As a former French colony, Mali gained independence in September 1960. The first President was Modibo Keïta, who introduced a policy of emancipation from France. This included the termination of military cooperation, the creation of a Malian currency in 1962 and the development of a centrally planned economy in cooperation with the former UDSSR and

China. Keïta established a single-party system which lasted until 1967. As he failed to consolidate the economy, Mali experienced food shortages, black markets emerged and the result were corruption and inflation. The result of the economic decline was a return of Mali to the Franc-Zone, but the move failed to improve the economic situation of the local population. This in turn led to increasingly radical political opposition and ultimately resulted in a coup led by Moussa Traoré, whose officers overthrew Keïta in November 1968 (Treydte et al. 2005: 4, 6f.). Traoré introduced the second republic in 1974, but single-party-rule prevailed and very few economic changes were made. Due to persisting systemic flaws, growing corruption among officers and external influences [117] the Malian economy suffered continuously under Traoré. Anti-governmental protests erupted and were met by violence which culminated in a massacre in Bamako in March 1991. That same evening, Lieutenant-Colonel Amadou Toumani Touré (commonly referred to as ATT) overthrew President Traoré. ATT asked a transitional government to draft the constitution for a third republic, complete with a separation of powers. The constitution was implemented in February 1992 and introduced a major opening of Mali's political process, including a multi-party system (Treydte et al. 2005: 7). After having been ruled by Moussa Traoré for two decades, Malians had begun to call for more democratic participation in 1989, with the end of the Cold War. When President Traoré was overthrown by Amadou Toumani Touré in 1991, democratic elections were subsequently organized (Arieff 2013a: 6). 48 parties took part in this first democratic election in 1992, ten of which entered the parliament. Today, there are over 100 registered parties in Mali, although usually only about a dozen are part of the government (Gourdin 2012: 10). It has hence been several years since Mali officially introduced a democratic political system, and Mali has often been referred to as a "model democracy" in Africa (Cisse 2012: 6).

The first democratically elected Malian President, Alpha Oumar Konaré, introduced a decentralization program in his second term. It was meant to provide solutions to demands of independence in northern Mali and to problems resulting from the outdated centralized government system[118]. Unfortunately, these changes only had limited impact on Mali's state institutions (Harmon 2014: 75f.).

[117] Such as the breakdown of the UDSSR and a change of focus in French foreign policy.

[118] In order to grant more autonomy to the north, local communal councils were empowered to negotiate their funding with NGO's without interference of the central government. The communities were also allowed to elect their councils, who would in turn receive limited authority over local health care, education and parts of the infrastructure.

Other central problems of Mali's political system were the heavy dependence of representatives on their parties, which resulted in a situation where representatives were much more loyal to their parties than to the electorate. Further, parties tended to trade influence for funding and bought votes, a serious problem related to the low voter-turnout in Mali and aggravated by the fact that falsification of identity cards is very common in Mali. There was virtually no transparency when it came to political funding, which enabled parties to easily enrich themselves. As judges were reluctant to follow up on allegations of political fraud, corruption went unhindered in Mali. Corruption even grew to such an extent that ordinary citizens eventually perceived the democratically elected regime as more corrupt than the previous dictatorship. Some interviewed Malians stated that corruption, which had been widespread under the dictatorship of Traoré, became fully institutionalized under President Konaré[119] (Harmon 2014: 77, 85).

Konaré stepped down after the legally permitted two terms ran out, and ATT was elected President in 2002, and then re-elected in 2007. Unfortunately, while calling himself a "soldier for democracy", ATT pursued a governing style which strongly relied on several political coalitions and fostered corruption (Arieff 2013a: 6). ATT's ruling system was heavily characterized by nepotism and fueled racial resentments, as only his close acquaintances would be appointed to important governmental posts. ATT's government also marginalized the political opposition, in stark contrast to his self-portrayal (Solomon 2013: 15).

The contrast between the international reputation of Mali's political system and reality became visible when there was no popular effort to defend democracy right after the coup in 2012. According to popular opinion in Mali, there had been no effective checks-and-balances system and politicians had generally done "as they pleased". Apart from this, the majority of Mali's newspapers were controlled by political parties, and corruption had grown rampant. Some analysts assume that ATT was heavily involved in drug traffic, even to such an extent that there might have been a pact of non-aggression between him and AQIM prior to 2012. It is even assumed that ATT's government benefited from KFR activities, for which Mali has become a hub in recent years (Papendieck et al. 2012: 7; Moulaye 2014: 10f.).

According to Harmon, obvious flaws in the political system and resulting inequality led to the Malian population losing faith in democracy and democratic institutions (Harmon 2014: 76f.).

[119] For more on how corruption affects African states see Burgis 2015.

This was reaffirmed by an opinion poll[120] a few months after the coup, which found that Malians had been suspicious of the state's institutions for some time. Political institutions were perceived as weak and ineffective, the judiciary as arbitrary, corruption was perceived as endemic and unemployment rates were too high. All this led to a loss of faith of the population in their government long before it was overthrown in early 2012. This lack of faith affected the political and the social sphere alike, as the poll showed that less than half of the interviewees expressed trust in the state's National Assembly, and less than 40 per cent of the interviewees thought that civil society organizations represented the general population (Cisse 2012: 6, 12, 26). By 2012, authority and legitimacy of the Malian state were therefore rather low in the eyes of its citizens. As the following chapters will show, this aggravated the situation for the already weak Malian state.

2.1.1. Governance: Authority and Legitimacy as Harbingers of Institutional Strength?

Mali's democracy, which was established in 1992, appeared comparatively stable before the coup d'état in 2012. This perception was clearly faulty, as it disregarded the immense rift which had developed between the population and the government. It also disregarded that Malian state structures were unable to stabilize the country's north, which constitutes about two-thirds of the state territory (Antil and Touati 2011: 60). Upon further investigation, the limits of Malian democracy become quite clear, and they are especially prevalent in the north-south divide of the country: Many inhabitants of the south see their region as the contributor to the state's economy, while they see the northerners at the receiving end of the economy. What is more, people in the south believe the money allocated to the north directly flows into the armament of violent non-state groups who pose a threat to stability. While people in the south tend to believe that the north receives too many advantages, the Tuareg, who mainly reside in the north, complain about not being taken seriously and are aggravated by the fact that the Malian state does not completely fulfill bilateral agreements. The Tuareg themselves are meanwhile often engaged in internal conflicts, and many of them are heavily involved in illicit trade and contraband (Plate 2009: 2).

Allegations of electoral fraud and regularly low voter-turnouts are other examples of the challenges the Malian democracy faces (Antil and Touati 2011: 61). According to an opinion poll conducted by Afrobaromètre[121], the vast majority of the Malian population did not trust

[120] Conducted among citizens in the district of Bamako who were at least 18 years old.
[121] Conducted a few months after the coup but prior to the Insurgency of AQIM and others in 2012; not conducted in the northern regions Kidal, Timbuktu and Gao.

state institutions, which they perceived as weak. They equally mistrusted politicians, who were perceived as incompetent. 58 per cent of the interviewees claimed they did not feel represented by any political party in Mali. This reveals a huge gap in terms of legitimacy, one of the most important indicators for the strength of a state. Mali clearly lacks the ability to emotionally tie its citizens to the state, which weakens the state and potentially strengthens non-state actors. While they still believed democracy to be the best form of government, most interviewees said that their faith in it was declining, as was their trust in the Malian military (Coulibaly and Bratton 2013).

Asked what they perceived as the main reasons for instability post-coup, Malians cited four main factors: A lack of patriotism and incompetence of the political class, weak state institutions and foreign terrorists. Immediately after the coup, the internal reasons were much more prominent than reasons related to terrorism. After the advance of AQIM and other groups in the north of Mali, however, foreign terrorists were perceived as the main source of instability by the vast majority of the interviewees, and corruption was a new factor among the top five reasons of instability (Coulibaly 2013: 2). Having been conducted in all parts of the country in 2013, the Afrobaromètre shows different foci among inhabitants of different regions. It shows that the closer the conflict, the more readily the people blame it on immediate factors such as non-state groups, as opposed to long term factors like weak political institutions (Coulibaly 2013: 4).

In 2014, another opinion poll[122] asked about the main challenges for the state. More than 85 per cent of the interviewees named insecurity as the main challenge for the state, closely followed by unemployment, which was mentioned by 80 per cent of the participants. While insecurity was of greater concern to those living in the north, southerners were more concerned about unemployment. Corruption, health provision and the education system were the next biggest challenges for the Malian government according to the interviewees (Fahlbusch 2014: 15).

These interview results show that many Malians appear to be aware of the main political challenges their state faces, as well as of the shortcomings of the political class. However, while they identified the problems, their comments left the author with the impression that they are too disillusioned by their government to trust that necessary political adjustments will be made. This shows that authority and legitimacy are areas of great concern for the strength of

[122] Held in various regions among Malians who were at least 18 years old.

the state, and the Malian government will have to work on these issues in the pursuit of long term stability.

2.1.2. A chronological Account of the Events in March 2012: Insurgency and Coup

After returning to Mali from Libya, the Tuareg started a series of attacks on Malian towns and security forces in autumn 2011 (Ronen 2013: 554). In January 2012, Tuareg rebels committed a massacre on Malian soldiers and civilians at Aguelhok, which was soon followed by public protests. The families of soldiers protested the conditions in the military and were enraged by the fact that the Malian government had failed to protect its soldiers. In the night from March 21st to March 22nd, a junior officer mutiny led by Captain Sanogo turned into a coup d'état. According to Henner Papendieck, the coup had initially been planned as a mutiny, and ended up a coup when it met no serious resistance. Prior to this night, the Malian Army had been attacked and defeated several times by non-state actors in the north, and the supporters of the coup felt that the government was unable to address the rising rebellion in an appropriate manner. Most senior officers did not participate in the coup and were taken into custody, but many ordinary soldiers, especially ethnic Tuareg, deserted to rebel groups which later overran all major towns in the north of Mali. Apparently, most of the Malian soldiers first defected to Tuareg groups and later joined the Islamists when the Tuareg lost ground against the former. From March 29th to April 2nd, a number of anti-governmental groups, most notably the Tuareg MNLA and the Islamist AQIM, took control of large parts of the north of Mali. Their offensive was staged from their long time hideout, the Adrar des Ifoghas[123]. On April 6th 2012 followed the declaration of an independent northern state called *Azawad* by the MNLA[124] (Arieff 2013a: 5; Gourdin 2012: 14; Lohmann 2012: 3; Walther and Christopoulos 2015: 514f.; Shaw 2013: 204; Qantara, Interview, 2012).

Following these events, then-interim President Traoré left office on May 22nd, leaving behind a vacuum of power. In September 2012, the Malian government finally recognized its inability to deal with the situation on its own and asked the IC for military support. The military mission AFISMA was authorized by UNSCR 2085 on December 20th, 2012. On January 11th, 2013, Opération Serval was launched by France to liberate northern Mali from the grip of the Islamists. The latter had by then largely pushed back the Tuareg groups, who had been the original instigators of the rebellion (Arieff 2013a: 5; Lohmann 2012: 3).

[123] The Adrar des Ifoghas is a mountain range in Northwest Mali.

[124] *Azawad* is a *Tamasheq* term and is a reference to the traditional pastoralist identity of the Tuareg.

2.2. An Overview of Civil War and internal Conflict in Mali: Sustainable Instability?

2.2.1. Tuareg Rebellions in Mali: Causes and Consequences

As explained in previous chapters, the Tuareg are an ethnic group who share their own language and tradition and mainly reside in northern Mali and Niger[125]. Traditionally nomadic pastoralists, they do not share a common identity with the rest of the Malian population. This has been a source of growing discontent among both groups, and the Tuareg traditionally feel discriminated against and marginalized by the southerners (Straus 2011: 6). The feeling of relative deprivation is mirrored in numbers: While the average poverty rate in Mali in 2004 was 64 per cent, it was between 77 and 92 per cent in the northern, Tuareg-inhabited regions – and this in one of the poorest countries in the world (Solomon 2013: 13). Another result of poverty and relative deprivation was that between the Tuareg rebellions, many young Tuareg left the region to join Gaddafi's "Islamic Legion", where they were paid to fight for Gaddafi. This experience also provided them with military training, combat experience and exposure to Islamist ideology[126] (Solomon 2013: 13).

There are prevalent differences among the Tuareg groups in the three northern Malian regions, with Kidal being known for being specifically prone to rebellions (Straus 2011: 6). One of the most prominent groups among the Tuareg are the *Ifoghas* who reside in the Adagh, a mountain range between the regional capital Kidal and the Algerian border. The *Ifoghas* played major roles in all Tuareg rebellions and were often the vanguard in ethnic tensions between the Tuareg and the Malian state.

The Tuareg harbor a long-lasting narrative about the betrayal they (the "whites") suffered at the hands of the Bambara (the "black" southern Malians), who allegedly betrayed them over political power. According to Harmon, Tuareg and Malians have two different, competing forms of nationalism which figure importantly in the outbreak of the Tuareg rebellions, including the one in 2012. In the perception of the Tuareg, they should never have been part of a Malian state, especially as they did not want to accept equality between themselves and southern Malians, let alone being ruled by the latter.

[125] They live to lesser extents also in Algeria, Burkina Faso and Libya.

[126] When the "Islamic Legion" was dissolved in the 9980ies, this left scores of Tuareg unemployed, as did the collapse of Libya's oil industry and Gaddafi's misguided attempt to invade Chad, which eventually led to the flight of many Tuareg who had fought in Chad. Tuareg communities were therefore home to numerous young, unemployed males, many of whom had military experience (Keita 1998: 14).

First developed among exiles and pro-Gaddafi fighters, a nationalist movement began to take root among the Malian Tuareg in the 1980's. The movement had four main pillars: The creation of an independent Tuareg nation state in northern Mali, resentment and desire for revenge against the nation state, secularism and socialism. The leader of those who championed these ideas was Iyad Ag Ghali, who began to look for Tuareg recruits in the late 1980's. This suggests that the Tuareg's lack of identification with the Malian state and the resulting low of legitimacy they attributed to the state is a long lasting issue which has remained unresolved for decades. Long term bitterness and resentment caused by national policies and attempts to impose a unified national identity further contribute to the complicated relationship between Tuareg and southern Malians (Harmon 2014: 8f., 14f.,16f.).

The north of Mali has experienced three Tuareg-led rebellions in its postcolonial history[127]. The first began in the middle of the 1960's, shortly after the state gained independence, and was followed by a rebellion which began in the 1990's. Both rebellions were met with violent repression, although the state later decided to switch its strategy to mediation.

In 1963 numerous Tuareg groups, mostly centered around Kidal, were antagonized by an attempt by the central government to change their nomadic lifestyle to a sedentary lifestyle. Some Tuareg perceived this as an attack on their culture, and the clans who had been favored by French colonial rule were disappointed that the Malian government did not uphold their privileges. Therefore, the Tuareg rebellion in 1963 was more a revolt of the "noble" Tuareg[128] than a rebellion of all Malian Tuareg, and only a relatively low number of Tuareg took up arms against the government. This rebellion was violently crushed and did not result in a peace agreement. Instead, it established feelings of resentment and antagonism between the Tuareg and the central government (Pézard and Shurkin 2015: 10f.).

In the decades after the first rebellion, the north of Mali faced several droughts[129] and was economically disadvantaged by the policies of the south. Many Tuareg had no other option than to leave their area of residence. Many of those who left Mali ended up in Libya, where they were radicalized by life in exile and military service. In this situation, some of the Tuareg living in Libya developed the desire to challenge the Malian government. In June 1990, these Tuareg attacked a military outpost in Ménaka under the leadership of Iyad Ag Ghaly. This time, Ag Ghaly's Mouvement Populaire pour la Libération de L'Azawad or MPLA wanted to represent

[127] See part II, chapter 2.2.

[128] See part II, chapter 2.1., the social organization of the Tuareg.

[129] According to Walter Schicho, between 40 and 50 per cent of the livestock was devastated during these droughts (Schicho 2001: 279).

the interests of the entire Tuareg community. Many Tuareg communities joined the struggle, which was much more efficient than the first rebellion[130]. This is likely one reason why the government under President Traoré eventually decided to start peace negotiations (Pézard and Shurkin 2015: 12f.).

The Tamanrasset Accords, which were signed in 1991, were some of the most significant milestones reached after the Tuareg rebellions. That same year, rebels had started to seek refuge in Algeria due to the ongoing conflict between the Tuareg and the Malian government. This concerned the Algerian government, which in turn offered negotiations in Tamanrasset. The Tuareg were represented by Iyad Ag Ghali at the negotiation table. The agreement included a ceasefire and promises of further development and decentralization in the north of Mali, among other things. While the Malian government made a lot of concessions to the Tuareg, independence was not among them. As both sides did not fully implement the accords, the agreement failed to end the conflict. The accords did, however, have an important impact on the forthcoming rebellion in 2012, as it was likely government repression which turned the Tuareg rebellion into a more violent movement.

The National Pact, a follow-up agreement signed in 1992, equally failed to restore stability between northern rebels and the government. The Tuareg gained the impression that the Malian government did not respect the peace agreements, which led to the creation of several anti-governmental groups. Among these groups was the first Popular Movement for the Azawad, which in turn gave birth to multiple follow-up groups. As a result, the Tuareg rebels developed a strong racist undertone against the southerners in the years to come. Feelings of relative deprivation, hatred and revenge led to the exodus of many young northerners to neighboring countries, and development policies which favored the south of Mali over the north exacerbated the conflict potential. Even though the National Pact gave more power to local leaders, proclaimed the integration of Tuareg into the Malian Army, reduced military presence in the north and furthered decentralization, it did not manage to establish peace. Conflict in the north of Mali remained, with rebel groups fighting the Army and each other[131] (Harmon 2014: 30ff.; Moussa 2005; Pézard and Shurkin 2015: 14).

The last Tuareg rebellion pre-coup took place from 2006 to 2009 and can more appropriately be described as a series of revolts (Straus 2011: 3). The rebellion began with the defection of about 150 Tuareg officers from the Kidal region, who took arms and vehicles with them. Tuareg

[130] Which was certainly in part due to the military training many of the Tuareg had received in Libya.

[131] Even though socio-political integration efforts on the part of the Malian government were relatively successful, they only reached a small number of Tuareg fighters.

rebels, who were said to have been armed by Algeria, then succeeded in taking the regional capital Kidal before being pushed back by Malian forces. Like the first rebellion, clan politics also lay at the heart of this rebellion to some extent.

Under international pressure a new peace agreement, the Algiers Accords, was quickly signed. This agreement transferred security to the Méharistes, which effectively meant a transferal of security to a Tuareg group. This development was deeply resented by southern Malians. Like previous agreements, the new accords failed to bring peace and the conflict continued[132]. A significant difference between the latest rebellion and previous ones was the simultaneous establishment of criminal networks in the north of Mali. During the last Tuareg rebellion illicit trade, especially in cocaine, began to take root in the region, and rivalries among cartels began to account for much of the fighting in Mali. The freshly re-branded AQIM was a new element to the conflict. When the Malian Army finally gained the upper hand many rebels fled to Libya, where they later cooperated with Gaddafi[133] (Harmon 2014: 30f.; Pézard and Shurkin 2015: 16f.).

By the time of the third rebellion, the Tuareg had already experienced repressive reactions to their previous rebellions. They had suffered from severe droughts which undermined their economic subsistence and had lost many young men who were recruited to join Jihad somewhere in the Middle East. The Malian government had repeatedly failed to address the problems of the Tuareg, who suffered from food shortage and economic deprivation. In total, the three Tuareg rebellions prior to 2012 led to three peace agreements. While all agreements basically require the same concessions from the Malian government, mainly socio-economic development and greater political autonomy for the people of the north, the agreements appear to have been equally redundant and ineffective. The agreements did result in some important gains, most notably in the context of decentralization and democratization, but they failed to achieve sustainable peace. Among their shortcomings is the fact that those who negotiated on behalf of the rebels only represented a minority among Mali's Tuareg population. Further, the central government still fundamentally lacks legitimacy in the north, especially because security forces are not inclusive enough of the northern population. While on paper the peace agreements established that northern Malians have the same

[132] Including the kidnapping of soldiers for ransom by rebel groups.

[133] Importantly, a minority of the fighters from the 2006 rebellion refused to accept the Algiers Accord and joined an armed Tuareg rebel movement in Niger in 2007, marking an instance of supranational cooperation between the Tuareg. However, the alliance was short-lived, as the Malian Tuareg preferred to divert their focus back to Mali (Pézard and Shurkin 2015: 18).

opportunities to participate in political processes as Malians from the south, it remains to be seen how this will be put into practice.

In the long run, the real and perceived neglect by the Malian government fueled existing anti-state sentiments and set the breeding ground for non-state actors to recruit and influence people. Among many northern Malians, the believe is still that the government is to blame for the fact that the peace agreements failed to implement sustainable peace, as it is said that the government simply did not follow through with the agreements. Existing deprivation and grievances were particularly exploited by AQIM, who recruited young males affected by dire living conditions (Adeyemi and Musa 2014: 11f.; Pézard and Shurkin 2015: xiiff., 1, 23).

All these developments worsened the situation of the Tuareg in Mali and fueled their desire for independence (Keita 1998: 25). The Tuareg's resentment of the Malian state, which fueled the insurgency in 2012, has hence been cultivated for decades. In the understanding of the author, this resentment is based on a mixture of ignorance, negligence and political and economic failures, topped off by conflicts of identity. When the Gaddafi regime fell and provided them with a heavy influx of arms and fighters, the opportune moment for the seizure of what some Tuareg perceive to be their rightful homeland appeared to have come at last[134]. This situation immediately turned a national issue into a regional one and yet again highlights that while no regional mechanisms were in place to prevent a further deterioration of the situation, such mechanisms would have been absolutely necessary.

2.2.2. Interrelations and Causes for Insurgency and Coup

As described above, President Amadou Toumani Touré (ATT) was ousted in a military coup in March 2012, shortly before the outbreak of the secessionist-Islamist insurgency. Even though both events occurred largely unrelated to each other as far as the actors were concerned, the events likely served as catalyzers for one another. While a preceding series of attacks on government forces encouraged the young officers who staged the coup, the coup in turn facilitated the seizure of territory by the rebels. As the ruling President was overthrown, Army structures broke down, which facilitated the military offensive of the insurgent movements. In the wake of the coup, the Malian government quickly lost control of about two-thirds of its

[134] Another possibility is, of course, that the Tuareg simply did not have anywhere else to go.

territory, particularly in the north. This territory fell to an alliance of non-state actors, among them AQIM (van Vliet 2014: 46)[135].

After having established the Mouvement de Libération de l`Azawad (MNLA), several Tuareg fractions, including former Gaddafi-officers who had benefitted from military training (Lye and Roszkowska 2013: 4), started the insurgency in late March 2012. Between January and February the Tuareg forces had already dealt a series of defeats to the Malian Army, which was basically overrun. Most notable were the events in Aguelhok, where Tuareg started to hunt down Malian soldiers and pictures of dead soldiers fueled the public to start demonstrations against the government. This episode was particularly cruel as the soldiers had their throats slit with their hands tied behind their backs. In total, the MNLA killed 80 Malian soldiers and the killing caused widespread outrage among the Malian population. Subsequently, shops and homes of Tuareg and Arabs were attacked in Bamako, and so was the Malian President, ATT[136]. ATT proved incapable of dealing with the soldier's families in a descent manner, which in turn angered his officers and sparked rumors about him cooperating with the rebels. Finally, a mutiny staged in Kuti on the evening of March 21st turned into a coup d'état. Officers stormed the presidential palace and the national broadcasting center, and the President and his high-ranking officials went into hiding. After two hours inside the palace, the dozen or so officers who had staged the coup decided to take power themselves. Politicians and senior military members loyal to ATT were arrested and the public did nothing to protest. The passiveness of the people was likely caused by the fact that approval for the government had been low for years (Solomon 2013: 15; Lecocq et al. 2013: 246f.).

A few days after the coup, the Malian Army was overrun by rebel forces in the major towns in the north: Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal. ATT resigned shortly afterwards, which resulted in a vacuum of power. In the meantime, a transitional government tried to uphold governing capacity while Captain Sanogo, who had staged the coup, controlled the military (Lecocq et al. 2013: 247).

The rebel offensive was conducted by the MNLA, Ansar Dine, AQIM and MUJAO. The independent state of *Azawad* was proclaimed by the MNLA on April 6th, 2012. After having defeated the Malian Army, the three latter groups quickly turned against the MNLA and

[135] The outbreak of the insurgency was also indirectly facilitated by the Arab Spring, as scores of jailed Islamists were freed from prisons after autocratic leaders were forced to step down in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya (Lefèvre 2012: 924f.; Lohmann 2013: 1).

[136] Rumors about him failing to adequately support the military spread and he ended up being publicly beaten by military wives, which severely damaged his already weak image.

pushed them back. Subsequently, AQIM built its stronghold in Timbuktu, Ansar Dine in Kidal and MUJAO in Gao (Lye and Roszkowska 2013: 4). Of four Malian military units stationed in the north, three had defected to the MNLA[137]. International forces did not fight against the insurgency until January 2013, when Mali's interim President issued a plea for help to France and ECOWAS because of the advance of the Islamists. The French-led intervention started on January 12th, 2013 and quickly drove the Islamists out of the main northern cities (van Vliet 2014: 49).

Contrary to earlier rebellions, this time there was no public support for the government. Reasons hereof are manifold and range from the government's failure to provide human security and end corruption to widespread mistrust of the judicial system and generally high levels of poverty (van Vliet 2014: 50). As has been outlined before, it can be stated that the government had lost its legitimacy in the eyes of many citizens, or was at least at high risk of doing so. This observation is emphasized by low participation rates in democratic elections and high illiteracy rates, which make public participation (especially in French) very difficult (van Vliet 2014. 54f.)[138].

The insurgency in 2012 surpassed all previous rebellions in terms of preparation, equipment and scope, which is part of the reason for its success. The remaining question is who masterminded it, and according to the journalist Andy Morgan, this might have been Ibrahim Ag Bahanga, a notorious rebel leader. After having staged an attack on the Malian Army in Nampala in 2008, he was chased out of Mali in 2009 and lived in Libya until his death in 2011. Shortly before his death, he re-founded the MNLA and spent years building a weapons arsenal in preparation for a rebellion[139] (Papendieck et al. 2012: 5).

2.3. Ungoverned Territories: The North as a Pariah to Stability

To gain a comprehensive overview of the background of the insurgency and the coup, it is necessary to take a thorough look at the north of Mali and its history. Northern Mali has been a hub of permanent exchange between different peoples for centuries, but the region has also

[137] Even though it was reported that many former soldiers defected to the MNLA, the MNLA was apparently unable to defend itself against AQIM, Ansar Dine and MUJAO once these groups turned against them (Lecocq 2013: 24). Although one cannot identify the exact seize of these groups, it is clear that the three groups which ousted the MNLA must have been considerably stronger than the MNLA, even though the MNLA had welcomed many Libyan Tuareg and Malian Army defectors in its ranks.

[138] Illiteracy and the lack of political understanding are so prevalent that many Malians believe a political party to be something similar to a family unit. What is more, basically no political representative is being trusted by the Malian people (Wiedemann 2012: 7).

[139] It has to be pointed out here that it is unclear to which degree the Tuareg rebellion was centrally planned.

been characterized by various insecurities. Among these were inter- and intra-communal insecurities, sanitary and alimentary insecurity, as well as social and military insecurity. Power struggles between and within tribes were particularly common causes for conflict (Moussa 2005). What is more, the area is characterized by the presence of smuggle and trafficking, both of which are key factors for power and wealth in the Sahara and decrease the influence of the government. Non-state groups and alliances are constantly evolving in the region, cross-border trafficking has been overlooked by the authorities of both Mali and Algeria for years and international cocaine smuggle through West Africa grew immensely after 2005, mostly due to the increasing war against drug traffic in Latin America. All of these factors complicate and destabilize the situation in northern Mali (Raineri and Strazzari 2015: 250ff.).

Over the last two decades, social and racial gaps between the main ethnic groups in northern Mali have widened. These gaps are most prevalent between the Arabs and the Tuareg and the "black African" Songhay. Songhay nationalism emerged during the 1990's and explicitly countered Tuareg nationalism, which further increased the ridge between the two groups (Lecocq et al. 2013: 344f.). Mali is officially a Muslim country, but especially the Kidal region, which is mainly inhabited by Berber tribes (many of whom are Tuareg), is known for its lasting resistance against Muslim influences[140] (Moussa 2005).

The north is the Malian region least penetrated by state influence. The three sub-regions Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal have largely been outside governmental control for years. One example hereof is the fact that after 2012, many of Mali's border posts have not been operational at all, and with only one border post every 60 km an actual border is effectively non-existent (Raineri and Strazzari 2015: 251f.). The north covers about two-thirds of the entire Malian territory and is home to only nine per cent of the population, with Timbuktu and Kidal mainly being desert territory. As mentioned before, most of the conflicts in the north had their origin in the Kidal region, including the Tuareg rebellions in the 1960's and the 1990's (Straus 2011: 2, 4; Moussa 2005). In terms of economy, the northern region is extremely poor, with poverty rates between 77 and 92 per cent in the three major northern towns (Solomon 2013a: 433).

The majority of the population in the north is Songhay, who mainly live along the Niger River. Tuareg and Arabs are a minority in the north, where they only constitute about five per cent

[140] The Berber inhabited the area long before it was exposed to the influence of Islam and before Arabs migrated to the region. There are still significant resentments between the Berber and the Arabs in North Africa due to diverging identities and the fact that the Berber were the 'original' inhabitants of the region (ICG Niger 2003: 2f.).

of the population (Harmon 2014: 173). The infrastructure in the north is scarce and so is economic development. Marginalization and relative deprivation caused by lack of economic opportunity and poverty have been fueling local grievances for years (Straus 2011: 2, 4). These grievances are likely the reason why parts of the local population cooperate with non-state groups, whom they supply with resources and information. Some locals are also involved in the KFR business and in illegal traffic. Income opportunities created by illegal business are much better than in local employment, which creates fertile conditions for these businesses to grow. Even though the Malian government recognized this threat and started investing in the region in the 1990's, it has so far been difficult to counter illegal networks (Straus 2011: 2). Instead, smuggle became the only income source generating fast and high incomes; enabling criminal gangs to gain political leverage and military power. Countering these networks is made more complicated by the deep entanglement of the concerned groups, whose cooperation grew over time and is hard to untangle for outsiders (Lacher 2012: 4). Illegal traffic and criminal groups have been fostering in northern Mali for decades and they appear to have been established by tribal groups and state representatives alike. The latter even seem to have cooperated with AQIM, as they reportedly benefited from their role in KFR negotiations with the group (van Vliet 2013: 146f.). The complex networks of ethnic groups, smugglers, terrorists and government officials, who are apparently all involved in illegal traffic, follow a centuries-old tradition, as trade routes in the Sahara and Sahel have already been used by the Songhay empire as early as in the eleventh century (Hofbauer 2013: 30).

Tensions in the north of Mali are aggravated by harsh ecological conditions, which make water and arable land scarce resources and living conditions harder than in the rest of the country (Straus 2011: 11). The north is mainly characterized by desert landscapes and mountains, both of which make human life difficult. In combination with the dry climate causing severe droughts, the environment is rather hostile to humans and life in general. This means many people struggle with survival, which makes them prone to resort to any option, including crime (Gourdin 2012: 4). Also, parts of the territory are basically inaccessible (Gourdin 2012. 4), which makes state penetration and a defeat of non-state groups in this area very difficult.

Another challenge to state-imposed security in Mali and the north in particular is the steady flow of arms within society. Mali's culture endorses the carrying of privately owned weapons, irrespective of socio-economic backgrounds. The north is the main circulation point for weapons in Mali, most of which are being trafficked from neighboring countries. Additionally, many weapons arrived in the area during the Tuareg rebellion in the 1990's, or they were

robbed from insufficiently guarded caches and military bases (Kornio 2011: 7, 9ff.). A culture of private gun ownership makes state control and the implementation of security measures harder, especially in the light of frequent rebellions, like the ones which occurred in the north.

2.3.1. Illegal Traffic: Exploiting the northern Power Vacuum

It is not exactly clear when northern Mali started to become a hub for illegal economic activities, although the development of illegal traffic is generally said to have started in Mali throughout the 1970's. What is known is that inhabitants of the Sahel have always depended on trade, mobility and regional markets for survival. It is therefore no surprise that smuggle could easily gain a foothold in Mali (Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime 2014: 1f., 13).

The north of Mali faced a large influx of weapons with the beginning of the Tuareg rebellion in the 1990's. The weapons mostly came from Liberia, Sierra Leone and Chad (Straus 2011: 4). As arms began to flow to the area, some local actors decided to engage in illicit traffic instead of armed rebellion, which probably set the stage for the development of the networks as they exist today. Most sources state that smuggle started with cigarettes which were transferred from Sub-Saharan Africa to North Africa and Europe. According to Lacher, cigarette-smuggle started in the 1980's and laid the groundwork for increasing illegal trade[141]. The business became so big it unsettled the local economy, which in turn further deteriorated the security situation (Lacher 2012: 4). Drugs like cannabis and cocaine followed later and then weapons and other goods. Nowadays estimates say the largest trade in the region is in cocaine and oil (Straus 2011: 6). The two main drugs which are transferred through northern Mali are Colombian cocaine going to Europe and Moroccan cannabis going to North Africa and the Middle East (Lacher 2012: 5). In the 1990's, the flow of goods was followed by a flow of illegal immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa to Europe, which added growing population pressure to the area (Lacher 2012: 5). As state penetration has been low for decades, illegal traffic eventually became an integral part of economic life in the north for lack of alternative income sources (Straus 2011: 14; Lacher 2012: 19).

Un-affiliated northern Malians also appear to benefit from the illegal activities of AQIM and others. According to Solomon, fighters receive a monthly payment of $400 plus $600 for the

[141] As this chapter shows, it is not entirely clear when the smuggling business started in northern Mali. It is in any case only several decades old.

enlistment with AQIM, and residents are paid high sums for supplying AQIM fighters[142] (Solomon 2013: 14). While the specific numbers mentioned by different analysts vary, it is likely that AQIM pays high sums to its employees to win them over or gain leverage over them. While many locals (and analysts) believe a direct involvement of AQIM in drug traffic to be extremely likely, this has not been ultimately proven, as field research is very difficult, if not impossible. Stephen Harmon, for instance, suggests that AQIM benefits from charging fees on transit and protection instead of directly participating in smuggle (Harmon 2014: 150). Drug trafficking is in any case a decidedly lucrative business in the Sahara and it provides a means of (financial) upward mobility for people who work in it (Raineri and Strazzari 2015: 257).

Prior to Opération Serval, most of the drugs trafficked through Mali entered via Mauritania and went from east to west in Toyota convoys. These convoys were armed and some cars even had tank capacity (Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime 2014: 7), which gives an impression of the equipment of the respective actors.

Weapon flows are another major problem in the area. Arms traffic originates from conflicts in west and eastern Africa and crosses through the regions of Kidal and Timbuktu. The number of Kalashnikovs believed to be circulating in the Sahel was estimated to be more than 81.000 in 2012. There is a variety of weapons circulating through the area, from machine guns to mortars and anti-tank weapons. A special security risk emanates from the high availability of small arms, large quantities of which are in private possession (Sidibé 2012: 27). Security in the north is so fragile that many people felt forced to flee the countryside for towns, where they have often been struggling with unemployment (Sidibé 2012: 77).

Criminal networks in the north of Mali not only developed parallel to the state, but a significant number of high-ranking political and military state officials also seem to have been involved in illegal business themselves (Lacher 2012: 1). Some Malian officials seem to be willing to cooperate with criminal groups or at least tolerate criminal acts committed by political allies (Lacher 2012: 3). Some sources even argue that the Malian state was penetrated by illegal traffic to an extent that it was “hollowed out” (Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime 2014: 2). One example hereof is the military, where ethnicity-based units had been formed under ATT. Some of these units became heavily involved in smuggling, as smuggle rings

[142] Even though it is impossible to verify exact numbers.

are traditionally run by specific ethnic groups. This especially concerned the Arab militias, which were heavily involved in cocaine traffic (Harmon 2014: 148).

Besides lacking efficient government initiatives against smuggle networks, another problem is the cultural interpretation of smuggle. As smuggle is an important means of subsistence for the population, it is culturally valued as a way to gain independence and self-determination. For those who make a living of it, illegal traffic serves to defer unreliable policies and other external influences (Gutelius 2007: 70). Even though many people seem to make a living of all sorts of businesses related to non-state groups such as AQIM, the majority of those who generate profit from smuggle are the traffickers, as Mali is mainly a transit country (Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime 2014: 6). It is not entirely clear whether the Malian government was directly involved in smuggle or not, but it is clear that ATT ignored the smuggling activities and did not contain them (Harmon 2014: 149). This is evidenced in the amount of trafficked drugs – the annual amount of cocaine trafficked through West Africa is believed to be worth between three and 14 billion Dollars[143] (Moulaye 2014: 11). According to Moulaye, some of the traffic networks are now strong enough to seriously threaten governments and state integrity, disrupt economies, fuel conflict and destroy the social fabric in West Africa (Moulaye 2014: 11).

The developments outlined in these chapters clearly show that northern Mali does indeed qualify as an ungoverned territory. The lack of security forces and state penetration, the absence of borders, the residence of violent non-state groups and the existence of elaborate smuggling networks are clear evidence that northern Mali was, and still is to this date, an ungoverned area, with all the consequences. This paved the way for violent non-state groups like AQIM, who have managed to make northern Mali their safe haven for over a decade.

2.3.2. Authority: Mali's Lack of Law Enforcement Capacities

As pointed out in the previous chapter, state structures in Mali are especially weak in the north, where armed forces are few and ill-equipped and the level of state penetration is low. A clear sign hereof are porous, hard-to-control borders between Mali and its neighbors Algeria, Niger and Mauritania (Sidibé 2012: 13). Permeable borders facilitate the development of illegal trade networks and these networks involve regional and international actors who destabilize the region by way of their business and rivalries (Antil and Touati 2011: 63).

[143] The variation in numbers shows the difficulty of identifying the exact volume of trafficked goods.

The power vacuum caused by non-state groups and lacking security forces can best be observed in the developments in northern Mali. When armed groups began to attack Tuareg trade networks in 2007, the latter began to establish militias to protect their assets. As the government feared to lose all control in the north, ATT decided to transfer responsibility for security in the north to non-state actors, which in this case meant government support for Arab and Berabiche militias. This effectively involved the Malian government in a proxy-conflict with the northern Tuareg. This system also allowed for the infiltration of illegal traffic in state structures and was further fueled by corruption (Guidère 2014: 11). To sum up, the lack of law enforcement capacities led to the development (and in part government funding) of several non-state militias, it fueled anti-governmental sentiments among the population of the north, it allowed for the spread of corruption and for the growth of illegal traffic.

In the recent past, the Malian government showed neither the will nor the capacity to expand its influence where it was underrepresented. Especially the north has been neglected by politicians who prefer to concentrate on the easier-to-govern south, where 90 per cent of the population live and economic opportunities are more promising (Gourdin 2012: 5). In consequence, the monopoly of force has never been fully executed by the state in northern Mali. This political failure to reinforce the strength of state institutions and to create human security eventually led to opportunity and grievance among certain segments of society, fueling the development of the secessionist-Islamist insurgency.

2.3.3. An Assessment of the Malian Armed Forces

The Malian Armed Forces are comprised of an Army and a small Air Force and Navy, and they are supplemented by paramilitary forces and a Gendarmerie. All of the military branches are controlled by the Ministry of Defense and Veterans (Library of Congress, Mali, 2005). In the beginning of the 1990's, at the end of the Traoré dictatorship, Mali had one of the most capable armies in the region. Unfortunately, not only did the two following Presidents, Konaré and ATT, refrain from updating the equipment, but they also led corruption go freely, with severe consequences for the efficiency of the Army (Harmon 2014: 92).

Therefore, in 2012, immediately prior to the coup, the Malian military had long been affected by low morale and its equipment was outdated and dysfunctional. The Army had 7,350 troops and it had one armored regiment, five or six light motorized infantry regiments, one airborne regiment and two artillery regiments. Due to Mali's geographical position, the Army is naturally the dominating branch in the military. With only two fighter jets and four assault helicopters,

the Air Force has very limited capabilities and the Navy's ability to become fully operational appears questionable. All in all, the Malian military displayed a "*fundamental lack of combat capability*" (IISS, 2013: 519; IISS, 2012: 443).

The number of troops stationed in the north in 2012 was estimated at about 2.000 soldiers in the Gao region, 1.700 in the Timbuktu region, and 1.500 in the Kidal region. At the same time, the National Guard had around 400 soldiers stationed in the Gao region, 450 in the Timbuktu region and 350 in the Kidal region. The National Guard is responsible for the upholding of security and has a special unit among them, the Méharist. They are specialized in operations on camelback, which makes them an excellent security tool in the desert. Many Tuareg joined the Méharist after the rebellions, making them the dominant ethnicity in the unit. Other than that, the National Gendarmerie had between 150 and 275 officers in each of the three regions, which were supplemented by between 27 and 79 national police officers per region[144] (Sidibé 2012: 51). As Annette Lohmann explained in her paper from 2011, security and state forces were basically non-existent in northern Mali outside of cities (Lohmann 2011: 5). This is underlined by the fact that the Malian Army never once attacked AQIM, even though the latter resided on Malian territory. Hence, some researchers suggest that both politicians and military personnel secretly cooperated with AQIM and benefited from its illegal activities (Harmon 2014: 92).

The Malian armed forces have been severely weakened by ATT's dividing style of government. While officers were being courted, lower ranks barely received equipment and funds, which spurred resentments. While many leading officers were welcomed into his party by ATT, some of the disregarded soldiers staged the coup in 2012 (Solomon 2013: 15; Solomon 2013a: 431). Just like other sectors of government and society, the Malian Army was severely affected by corruption, nepotism and fraud. Soldiers could buy their way into the military and promotion was based on favoritism rather than on performance, which had negative effects on the capabilities of the military. Next to a lack of competent personnel, the Malian military struggled with severe equipment-shortages. The political focus of the government had been on development aid while Mali's military capabilities were neglected. Further, big parts of the military budget were channeled to high-ranking generals, who were overpaid and often unqualified friends of ATT. Having been one of the most powerful militaries in the region by

[144] These numbers appear to be from 2012, but it is difficult to verify the exact date. Nevertheless, the numbers serve as an indicator for the security presence in the respective regions and prove the weak extent of state penetration.

the end of Traorés government, most of the Malian equipment had since been stolen, sold or was no longer serviceable. One example hereof was the helicopter fleet, which counted 32 helicopters in 1991 and only two serviceable helicopters in 2012 (Harmon 2014: 92)[145].

When the insurgency began in 2012, Malian armed forces performed poorly, displaying no ability to handle the uprising. They were ill-equipped and only had very limited manpower to deal with the challenge (Adeyemi and Musa 2014: 13). As has been mentioned before, numerous Malian soldiers defected to the rebels when the insurgency began. This is not only a symptom of ethnic and cultural division, but also a strong sign of the low morale among the troops. For example, one Malian soldier of ten years defected to the MNLA to become one of its commanders during the insurgency. This same soldier claimed that about 60 per cent of the MNLA's weapons were acquired from the Malian Army after the latter had fled during the rebel surge, yet another display of low morale (Cline 2013: 622f.)

The collapse of the Army in the face of an insurgency is a symbol for the neglect of the north. The necessity of government involvement in the north should have been self-evident after previous Tuareg rebellions and the continuous evolvement of AQIM. Worse than the abandonment, the Malian state also pursued a policy of actively outsourcing security issues in the north to non-state actors for several years (van Vliet 2013: 146).

2.3.3.1. Counter-Terrorism Initiatives in Mali

Based on the premise that terrorism constitutes the biggest threat to peace and security in Mali, the state adopted a new law on Counter-Terrorism in July 2008. This was the first time terrorism was explicitly included in Mali's legal code, and offenses for taking part in activities linked to terrorism were henceforth punishable by death or life sentences (Zoubir and Dris-Ait-Hamadouche 2013: 105f.). In an effort to reduce instability in northern Mali, the government under ATT launched the Special Program for Peace, Security, and Development in Northern Mali (PSPSDNM) with the goal to improve the development of the region. The idea was to implement an effective administration, fight illegal traffic and work with the population to decrease instability[146]. Unfortunately, the PSPSDNM, which was equipped with little over $60

[145] After the events of 2012, the Malian Army was still affected by incompetence, corruption and nepotism. In spite of having received training from Western forces for years, the Malian Army today is still more part of the problem than part of the solution (Boeke and Tisseron 2014: 36).

[146] The five components which form the program are security (to strengthen national security, especially in the north), improved governance, development, communication (which intends to mobilize the population) and management (coordination of the program).

million, was unable to stabilize the north, partly because, as stated by Global Security Watch, by the time it was implemented non-state groups which aimed to counter governmental efforts had already consolidated themselves in the area (Zoubir and Dris-Aït-Hamadouche 2013: 106).

In general, it can be stated that Mali's law enforcement capacities were quite limited immediately prior to 2012. Previous chapters already established the corrupt and ineffective character of the government, and the last chapter clearly showed how limited the capacities of the Malian security forces were. Combined with the fact that about 2/3 of the state's territory were ungovernable and outside state control, it becomes obvious that Mali displayed severe shortages in major areas of state performance prior to the failure of the government in 2012. As has been shown before, Mali has also been prone to several violent conflicts in the recent past, all of which involved the Tuareg, an ethnic group who is directly affected by the living conditions and the security situation in the north of Mali. The following chapter is going to investigate the last category of state weakness, administrative capacity.

2.4. Capacity and Legitimacy: Analyzing the Administration

In the context of capacity, the degree to which social services are being provided by the Malian state will be evaluated according to three basic components of the social sector: Education, health care and infrastructure, all of which indicate the capacities of the state administration.

2.4.1. The Provision of Social Services

The most conclusive data on education in Mali prior to 2012 were generated by Oxfam and concern the year 2008. That year, 61 per cent of all Malian children between the ages 7 to 12 were enrolled in primary schools[147]. This means that of little more than 3 million school-aged children (ages 7 to 15), almost one third was not enrolled in primary school. Among the children who were enrolled in primary school, only 54 per cent completed school between 2006 and 2007, and only 35 per cent in the Timbuktu region. School enrollment rates are much lower for higher education, as only 7 per cent of all Malians between 13 and 15 went to secondary school in 2008. Access to education was another general problem, specifically for children living in rural areas, girls and children from nomadic families (Pearce et al.: 2009: 12).

[147] 53 per cent of all eligible girls were enrolled, while 68 per cent of all boys were enrolled in primary school.

The average teacher-pupil ratio was 1: 51[148] (Pearce et al.: 2009: 4, 7, 12, 22). Thus, classes were huge (to include several grades being taught in one classroom), teachers were often poorly qualified and schools suffered from equipment shortages. Inefficient financial policies also weakened the educational sector in Mali, although reliable data hereof are hard to come by. What is more, parents were often reluctant to send their children (especially girls) to school and were further hindered by unofficial education fees or costs for uniforms and school books (Pearce et al.: 2009: 7f., 13, 18; Library of Congress, Mali, 2005).

A shortage of desks, overbooked and overcrowded classrooms and a lack of study materials led to corruption. Students sometimes had to pay teachers for private lessons to be able to study. Often, students did not receive the money for scholarships and teachers had to accept bribes because of their low salaries; if they were paid at all. Funds for education were sometimes given to businessmen who invested them rather than channeling them into the education sector. As students and faculties sometimes went on strike, there have been entire "failed school years" ("années blanches"). All this culminated in a crisis in 1991, when violent protests broke out in Mali's secondary schools (Harmon 2014: 73). When new policies led to a reform of administrative decentralization in the late 1990's, local authorities received considerable autonomy in education and health care, but the educational sector in Mali still displays significant shortages (Paul 2011: 13).

As one of the poorest countries in the world, Mali's health sector faces several challenges, especially because of inadequate sanitation and malnutrition. In 2000, between 45 and 48 per cent of the total population were estimated to have no access to clean drinking water, and 31 per cent were estimated to lack access to sanitation services. In the early 2000's, medical facilities and medicine were in short supply in Mali. The state invested very little in the health care sector, and diseases such as malaria, hepatitis and cholera are accordingly prevalent in Mali (Library of Congress, Mali, 2005). In 2009, only 57 per cent of the Malian population were living within 5 km distance of a functioning health facility (Paul 2011: 17).

The infrastructure in Mali is severely underdeveloped in terms of transport and communication, which in turn hinders further economic development. Roads are especially perilous outside of urban areas because of their poor condition and banditry, particularly at night (Library of Congress, Mali, 2005). In general, Mali faces a sharp developmental divide between the poor north and the richer south, and most of Mali's natural resources are

[148] The general literacy rate among adults in Mali was 23 per cent in 2008, which was among the lowest literacy rates in the world.

concentrated in the south (Briceno-Garmendia 2011: 4). Mali's road density is among the lowest on the entire African continent and lacks behind even in populated areas (Briceno-Garmendia 2011: 11). Another problem in terms of infrastructure in the north is the gap between expectations and reality. The Kidal region benefited from infrastructural investments after the Algiers Accords, but the inhabitants of the region compare their living standard to the situation of the population in neighboring countries such as Algeria and Libya. This results in unrealistic expectations and leads to a negative perception of their own living situation. On the other hand, important projects such as a road between Kidal and Algeria or an airport have indeed not been built, to the dismay of the population (Papendieck et al. 2012: 4f.).

As the general level of social service provision proves, Malians have very little reason to respect the legitimacy of their state. In the light of lacking services in basically all essential areas, it is no wonder Malians have reservations against their government and the ruling elite[149]. While this concerns southern Malians, those living in the north have even less reason to perceive their government as legitimate[150]. Until recently, at least in the south human security was provided to a certain degree. As the last chapters will show, the south is now increasingly in the grip of instability, which gradually makes it less secure for civilians. The Malian state therefore gave its citizens little incentives to be loyal to it and identify with it, both before and after 2012.

2.5. Conclusion: Mali: a weak State in 2012

As the previous chapters showed, the Malian state displayed severe shortcomings in all of the four investigated categories of state weakness: It has a history of conflicts (which mostly occurred in relation to the Tuareg question and have never been fully pacified), it has vast ungoverned areas and incapacities both in terms of law enforcement and administrative capacities. Not surprisingly, the state also severely lacks in terms of authority and legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens. So far, the results of this work clearly indicate that Mali was a weak

[149] Indeed, a survey conducted among rural Malians in the area surrounding the former „border" between government-held and rebel-held territories in 2012 showed that the people's main wish was for the government to provide these essential public services. The state's failure to do so was also their strongest reproach against the government. Instead of analyzing the macro-level of state politics, the villagers took more interest in the micro-level and the reality of their day-to-day life, which was severely constrained by the lack of public services (Bleck and Michelitch 2015: 599, 607ff.). These findings strongly underline the structural weakness of the Malian state.

[150] See part II chapter 2.2. and part III chapter 2.1.1.

state prior to the coup in 2012. However, as this assessment is crucial to the outcome of the study, it will be verified with additional data.

As is the norm in many African states according to van Vliet, a separation between state and government does not appear simple when analyzing Mali, where there has never been a sort of "top-down" governmental style but rather governance by informal networks (van Vliet 2013: 140). This, of course, makes the search for the origin of shortcomings and a correction of ineffective policies harder.

In the 2011 Failed State Index, Mali was ranked on position 76 in the category of states under warning. The Failed State Index assigns scores to categories which the Fund for Peace defines as relevant in terms of state weakness. The higher the scores on a scale from one to ten, the more critical the situation. The categories are divided into social, economic and political and military indicators: *Mounting demographic pressures* refer to situations where the government is challenged to meet its social obligations due to natural disasters or epidemic outbreaks. *Massive movement of refugees or IDP's* refers to difficulties resulting from large-scale displacements, which equally strain the social system and possibly pose security threats. *Vengeance-seeking group grievance* refers to the circle of violence and instability among different groups and between these groups and the state. *Chronic and sustained human flight* refers to depopulation caused by large-scale migration, and this is the last of the social indicators. Among the economic indicators, *uneven economic development* refers to inequality resulting from the different degrees to which ethnic or religious groups are able to participate in the economic system. *Poverty, sharp and severe economic decline* is basically self-explanatory and includes unemployment- and poverty rates, which naturally strain the social and economic fabric of a state. Among the political and military indicators, *legitimacy of the state* refers to underrepresentation of the population and corruption, while *progressive deterioration in public services* refers to the state's ability to provide health, education and sanitation services. *Violation of human rights and the rule of law* refers to a just and transparent judicial system and the degree to which it respects human rights. *Security Apparatus* refers to whether or not the state has the monopoly on the use of force and also includes the potential existence of non-state groups. *Rise of fractionalized elites* refers to a deadlock among national leaders, and *intervention of external actors* refers to a situation where external actors try to fill a power vacuum and take over the functions of the state for their own gain (Fund for Peace 2011: 28).

In 2011, Mali scored 8.8 out of 10 points in *mounting demographic pressures*, 5.3 in *movement of refugees or IDP's*, 6.0 in *vengeance-seeking group grievance*, 7.3 in *chronic and sustained human flight*, 6.7 in *uneven economic development*, 7.8 in *poverty and sharp or severe economic decline*, 5.5 in *legitimacy of the state*, 8.2 in *progressive deterioration of public services*, 4.9 in *violation of human rights and rule of law*, 7.1 in *security apparatus*, 4.5 in *rise of factionalized elites*, and 7.2 in *intervention of external actors* (Fund for Peace, Fragile States Index, 2011). Among these, four scores are especially relevant for this research: *Vengeance-seeking group grievance, legitimacy of the state, progressive deterioration of public services* and *the security apparatus*. According to the Fund for Peace, group grievance refers to a situation where tensions between groups threaten state stability. Mali rightly scored a 6.0 in this category, which is a reasonable score considering persistent Tuareg resentments. In terms of legitimacy of the state, Mali scored 5.5. Looking at the lack of public support for the government in 2012, Malian politics clearly faced severe challenges in terms of legitimacy. In terms of public services, Mali's score of 8.2 confirms that public services in Mali (here: education, health care and sanitation) display severe shortages in quantity and quality. The same goes for the security apparatus and the monopoly of force, where Mali scored 7.1 (Fund for Peace, Fragile States Index, 2011). Mali's extremely poor performance in the social welfare sector was especially emphasized in 2010, when the country was ranked 160 in 169 in the Human Development Index (Paul 2011: 13).

The findings in the previous chapters and the data from the Fragile States Index and the Human Development Index show that Mali could rightly be considered a weak state in the years prior to the insurgency and the coup d'état. In 2005 and 2006, Mali was ranked on spot 81, also in the category under warning. In 2007, it was ranked on spot 91, on spot 89 in 2008, spot 83 in 2009 and spot 79 in 2010 (Fund for Peace, Fragile States Index, 2005-2010). Mali has therefore been in the category of states under warning for several years before the events in 2012; yet its rank only changed marginally and it never moved into categories of higher alert before.

An Overview of Mali's Ranking in the Fragile States Index from 2006 - 2015														
Year	Rank	Demo-graphic Pressures	Refugees and IDP's	Group Grievance	Human Flight and Brain Drain	Uneven Economic De-velopment	Poverty and Economic Decline	State Legitimacy	Public Services	Human Rights and Rule of Law	Security Apparatus	Factional-ized Elites	External Inter-vention	Total
2006	81	8.5	4.2	6.0	8.0	6.8	8.5	4.6	8.6	4.7	4.5	3.5	6.7	74.6
2007	91	8.5	4.4	6.1	7.9	6.6	8.7	4.7	8.6	4.6	4.8	3.7	6.9	75.5
2008	89	8.5	4.4	6.1	7.4	6.6	8.5	4.7	8.6	4.6	5.9	3.7	6.6	75.6
2009	83	8.7	4.6	6.5	7.4	6.9	8.3	5.3	8.4	5.2	6.5	4.0	6.9	78.7
2010	78	8.7	4.8	6.3	7.5	7.0	8.1	5.4	8.5	5.0	7.0	4.0	7.0	79.3
2011	76	8.8	5.3	6.0	7.3	6.7	7.8	5.5	8.2	4.9	7.1	4.5	7.2	79.3
2012	79	8.8	5.5	6.0	7.3	6.4	7.5	5.3	8.0	4.6	7.1	4.5	7.0	77.9
2013	38	9.3	7.6	7.6	7.8	6.8	8.1	6.0	8.5	6.5	8.1	5.0	8.0	89.3
2014	36	9.0	7.5	7.5	8.1	7.1	7.9	5.9	8.6	6.8	8.0	4.9	8.5	89.8
2015	30	9.1	7.8	7.6	8.4	7.4	8.2	6.0	9.0	6.7	8.7	4.9	9.3	93.1

This table is based on Information obtained from the Fragile States Index 2006 – 2015.
It shows that, unsurprisingly, *Security Apparatus* and *External Intervention* were the categories which deteriorated the most after 2012.

While there was no outright conflict in Mali immediately prior to the secessionist-Islamist insurgency, there was latent tension in the north, which, coupled with three previous rebellions and the fall of the Gaddafi regime, offered potential for the outbreak of conflict. Largely ungoverned territories covered about two thirds of Mali's territory and have been used for illegal activities for decades. This was especially dangerous as the Tuareg, probably the single social group most likely to ignite large-scale conflict in Mali, were deeply involved in these illegal activities.

In terms of social welfare provision, Mali appears to have been constantly underperforming. Capacity and legitimacy are important indicators of the degree of acceptance the government receives from its population. As education, health care and infrastructure are underdeveloped in Mali, the people do not receive many benefits from the state and hence do not necessarily feel dependent on the government in this context. The north performs especially poorly here, as social service provision has been shown to be much weaker in the north than in the rest of the country. While the Malian military had been weak for many years, a lack of law enforcement is equally most persistent in northern Mali, where the government lost control and influence to non-state groups and did nothing to (re)claim its power.

It can therefore be established that Mali was indeed a weak state before 2012. While state performance was relatively weak in all sectors, state weakness was especially prevalent in the north, where structures parallel to the state had been established. The north was an ungoverned area and the state did not provide the northern population with essential services, thereby making the people more susceptible to other actors. Conflict had also been prevalent in the north, at least in a latent form. While Mali as a whole was a weak state before 2012, it

was even weaker in its northern part (the proclaimed *Azawad*), where the weakness of the state climaxed in the insurgency.

The division between the north and the south might be the most outstanding feature of the Malian state. As the findings here show, Mali appears to be suffering from a cultural, economic, geographic, political and security-related divide, which effectively separates the state's north from its south[151]. This is essential for this study and for the overall security situation in Mali and its region.

This said, Mali provided some very favorable conditions to AQIM and other non-state groups. AQIM used the lack of state penetration to influence the population and establish itself in the region over the course of several years. They participated in illegal activities to generate financial revenue, which enabled them to operate independently of donors. They used the vast ungoverned spaces to establish bases for training while staying mobile and thereby avoiding government detection. They took advantage of the secessionist-Islamist insurgency, the fall of the Gaddafi regime and the coup d'état and managed to establish themselves as a governing authority, thereby exploiting the power vacuum the state had been leaving for decades. In short, when AQIM took advantage of the Tuareg rebellion, they gained a more insurgent-like character. They aimed at establishing governance systems and ruled over a certain territory (if only for a short time). This shows that AQIM not only exploited the weakness of the Malian state to achieve its goals, but also adapted its strategy and ways of operating by doing so, changing from a primary terrorist group to an increasingly hybrid group with clear characteristics of an insurgency movement.

[151] The division is basically running along a line a little north of the town Mopti.

3. Algeria's Role in the Region and its Influence on Mali

There are numerous reasons why Algeria can be called the most important state of reference for Mali: Algeria and Mali share a long border in a hard-to-control desert territory, they cooperate extensively on security-related issues, and AQIM is originally an Algerian group who pushed into Malian territory years after its creation. Algerians also constitute the majority of the leadership of Islamist groups in northern Mali, and Algeria has the most powerful military in the region together with Morocco (Strachan 2014: 9; Lounnas 2013: 331). Basically all political issues related to security in northern Mali concern Algeria, which is why Algeria's interest in these topics is to be expected.

Naturally, the Algerian government always wanted to avoid the development of a lawless zone in northern Mali. Algiers sees this as a potential threat to its national stability and to its plans to consolidate its political and military hegemony in the region (Papendieck et al. 2012: 14). As Larémont points out, there cannot be stability in the Sahel-Sahara region without Algerian consent, as "*Algeria has the most effective military force in the region and it has the most capable human intelligence network*" (Larémont 2013: 4). A detailed look at the development of security threats and related policies in Algeria is therefore essential to understand the extent of security interdependence between Algeria and Mali. This will later be complemented by a description of the cooperation between Mali and Algeria in terms of security.

Algeria is a country with a complicated history of colonialization, a fight for independence and a civil war. Algeria only gained independence from French colonial rule in 1962[152] (Hajji 2009: 13). The state has been autocratically ruled by President Abdelaziz Bouteflika since 1999, which is both cause and symptom of the inflexible, stagnant political system of the country. Bouteflika holds on to power by mastering a delicate equilibrium between the military and political elites while he presides over a system that is based on corruption and favoritism. As the government controls the political and the media sector, it was no surprise that Bouteflika won the last elections in 2014 (Huber et al. 2014: 3). Bouteflika belongs to a clan that is the successor of Algeria's ruling clan, the Oujda clan, which further assures his claim to power (Ouaissa 2014: 2). Apart from his tight control over political parties and the media, his success in the election might be attributable to the fact that the Algerian people perceive stability as the main political achievement after the brutal civil war. The Algerian population is afraid of

[152] 1962 was also the year that Islam was declared the religion of the state in the constitution and it was stipulated that the head of the state has to be a Muslim (Hajji 2009: 13).

violent conflict, although resentments and general dissatisfaction with the state also run high among the population (Kellner 2012: 1)[153].

Algerian society has been profoundly influenced by events in other Muslim countries such as the Afghan *Jihad* against the Soviet invasion in 1979. The Islamic Revolution in Iran made Algerian Islamists believe that they, too could establish a theocracy in their home countries and it fueled Islamist attitudes. Algerian men participated in the thousands in the war in Afghanistan and the Algerian government estimated that about 1.500 of them returned to Algeria after the war. After their return, former Mujahedeen were mostly unemployed and isolated. This was especially critical because of generally high unemployment rates, economic recession and a lack of perceived national identity (Hajji 2009: 15). The challenges these circumstances presented to the Algerian government were obvious. Not only did the government have to consolidate the economic and the political sector; it also had to deal with a disenfranchised group of battle-experienced militants in a society where levels of relative deprivation were high and feelings of national identity were low. In order to avoid a political crisis caused by economic and identity-related issues, the government, which did not identify any of the respective groups as possible threats to its power, felt compelled to open the political process to new parties. This was the decisive step that enabled the rise of the FIS, which will be described in another chapter (Hajji 2009: 15).

Algeria also experienced a challenge with the outbreak of the Iraq war in 2003. About 1.200 Algerians joined the Sunni-insurgency in Iraq, and most of them appear to have fought with AQI. During this time the GSPC, a predecessor of AQIM, was already under pressure in Algeria and therefore tried to associate itself with AQI (Hajji 2009: 36f.). The recurring experiences of exposure to militant Islamism (even if the conflicts were not set in Algeria) show how vulnerable Algerian society remains to violent Islamism.

The Algerian people's refusal to risk violent conflict appears to be one of the main pillars of the state's stability, combined with its external role as a regional security actor and its

[153] In 2012, Algeria was home to a population of about 37 million people, 66 per cent of which lived in urbanized areas (Achy 2013: 7; BTI 2012: 2). Algeria is predominantly Muslim and the official and most spoken language is Arabic (BTI 2012: 7; WDE 2006/7). Economically, Algeria performs above average compared to other African countries (BTI 2012: 20). Yet, as the country is struggling with poverty and social inequality, relative economic success does not necessarily translate into stability. This is evidenced by the fact that 23 per cent of all Algerians earned less than two Dollars a day in 2010 according to the World Bank. The same year, more than 21 per cent of Algerians under the age of 25 were unemployed (BTI 2012: 21).

economic performance in the hydrocarbon sector (Huber et al. 2014: 3, 4). The following chapters will describe these developments in greater detail.

3.1. The History of Algerian Colonization

French colonial rule[154] had a huge impact on all aspects of Algerian society and state: The administration was completely dependent on France and the targeted marginalization of Muslims was one of the most influential aspects of colonial rule. During 132 years of French colonial rule, Algeria was treated like a French entity[155] (Kudo 2010: 24). Politically, Algeria depended completely on France, as the Algerian state was seen as an integral part of the French state and there were no intentions to lead Algeria towards independence (Bouveresse 2008: 109, 121f.). Elections in Algeria were rigged and French officials controlled the Algerian government. There was a huge gap in development and education between native Algerians and French residents, which basically resulted in a class system in which the natives were being looked down upon and treated accordingly (Meredith 2005: 45). "*Die Stadt des Kolonisierten ist eine ausgehungerte Stadt, ausgehungert nach Brot, Fleisch, Schuhen, Kohle, Licht. Die Stadt des Kolonisierten ist eine niedergekauerte Stadt, eine Stadt auf Knien […]. Der Kolonisierte ist ein Neider. Der Kolonialherr weiß das genau […]. Die Ursache ist die Folge: [M]an ist reich weil weiß, man ist weiß weil reich* [156]" (Fanon 1981: 32f.).

The only concession colonial rulers made to native Algerians was the permission to follow Islamic rule under the Qu'ran. Apart from remaining subject to Islamic law, Algerians and their customs were being overruled by the French in virtually every aspect of life (Weil 2003: 2; Meredith 2005: 45f.).

French colonial rule in Algeria was also characterized by ethno-political sentiments, especially when it came to Islam. Apart from ethnically and religiously driven politics of de facto-segregation, French colonial rule was characterized by extreme brutality towards Algerian civilians. The French used violence to suppress the Algerian people to such an extent that sometimes whole cities were destroyed (Ghilès 2010: 1; Meredith 2005: 45f.). Torture and violence were used to contain the nationalist Algerian insurgency that arose during French colonial rule in the mid 1950's. The intimidation of rebels was used as a political threat against

[154] Colonial rule in Algeria was established in 1830 and ended in 1962 (New York Times, In France, a War of Memories over Memories of War, 2009).

[155] Article 109 of the French Constitution of 1848 clearly stated that Algeria was part of French territory.

[156] "The city of the colonized is a starving city, starving for bread, meat, shoes, coal, light. The city of the colonized is a crouching city, a city on its knees […]. The colonized is envious. The colonizer knows this very well […]. The cause is the effect: You are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich"; translation by the author.

the entire population (Kudo 2008: 402). Naturally, 132 years of French rule had a lasting impact on Algerian society. Algerian Muslims were underrepresented in the decision-making process and deprived of equal rights and opportunity. This was reinforced by the dismantling of the traditional tribal society, which changed the social structure of Algeria (Kudo 2010: 28, Meredith 2005: 45).

The war for independence was mainly coordinated and fought by the *Front de Libération Nationale* or FLN. The fight for independence took France by surprise, even though France had created fertile ground for conflict by depriving native Algerians of economic opportunities and political rights[157]. The idea of the FLN was to reunite the nationalist movement in order to fight against colonial rule. The FLN had a military arm, the Armée de Libération Nationale (ALN), which fought the war for independence under the command of Houari Boumedienne. The FLN was ill-equipped and had to fight with a random collection of weapons they were able to gather. Their targets included government buildings, security personnel and cooperators with the French administration. White civilians were not supposed to be targeted. Many of the attacks failed, but the government still reacted strongly and basically dismantled the FLN. After the FLN recovered in 1955, it started attacking civilians and became increasingly brutal. The French government responded by drastically increasing the number of security forces on the ground and by arbitrarily punishing Algerian civilians. These developments led to a vicious circle of extreme violence which heavily affected civilians, who became direct targets. As France regarded Algeria as an indispensable part of its territory, it was not prepared to concede to the FLN and the civil war went on for years [158] (Meredith 2005: 46ff., 51): "*Die Unterdrückungsaktionen, weit davon entfernt, den Elan zu brechen, beschleunigen noch den Fortschritt des nationalen Bewußtseins. Von einem bestimmten Stadium der Bewußtseinsentwicklung an verstärken die Blutbäder in den Kolonien dieses Bewußtsein; sie*

[157] As Frantz Fanon wrote: "*In seinem Innern nämlich erkennt der Kolonisierte keine Instanz an. Er ist unterworfen, aber nicht gezähmt. Er ist erniedrigt, aber nicht von seiner Niedrigkeit überzeugt. Er wartet geduldig, daß der Kolonialherr in seiner Wachsamkeit nachlasse, um sich auf ihn zu stürzen*" (Fanon 1981: 44):
"In his score, the colonized does not recognize any authority. He is subordinated, but not tamed. He is humiliated, but not convinced of his insignificance. He waits patiently for the vigilance of the colonizer to fade, so that he can attack him"; translation by the author.

[158] France captured and illegally imprisoned FLN-leader and founding member Ahmed Ben Bella (who had been sentenced to eight years of imprisonment for a FLN raid in 1949 but escaped by sawing through his prison bars in 1952) in 1956, causing an international controversy and strengthening popular support to the FLN. In 1957, Algiers became subject to military rule as the fight had turned into urban warfare. The battle for Algiers was won by France (Meredith 2005: 52f.).

machen deutlich, dass zwischen Unterdrückern und Unterdrückten keine Frage gelöst wird, es sei denn durch Gewalt[159]" (Fanon 1981: 60).

During the late 1950ies the violence intensified and the leadership of the FLN was battling internal conflicts and suffered the loss of several thousand members. Meanwhile, the French military, so close to winning the war in Algeria, began to seriously question the French political elite, which was struggling with turmoil and internal conflicts. The military feared that politicians would give up on Algeria and start peace negotiations when the FLN executed three French soldiers, which outraged the military. The governor of Algiers left the country soon afterwards for good, and mainland France was still struggling with its internal political crisis. The French government installed a blockade on Algeria and cut off all communication with the state (Meredith 2005: 54ff.).

France finally signed a cease-fire agreement with the FLN in 1962 and the latter created its political bureau that same year. After a struggle for power, Ahmed Ben Bella became the first Algerian President after colonization. He was, however, overthrown in a coup by his former supporter, minister of defense and vice President Houari Boumedienne in 1965, and the latter held on to power until his death in 1978. During his Presidency, Boumedienne increasingly centralized power in the hands of himself and his closest advisors. Even though he lacked popular support, Boumedienne eventually managed to install a firm, authoritarian rule (Meredith 2005: 44ff.; Encyclopaedia Britannica, National Liberation Front, 2008; Encyclopaedia Britannica, Houari Boumedienne, 1998).

After the fight for Independence and with the rule of President Benjedid came numerous political and economic reforms which fundamentally changed Algeria. Both the economy and the political sector were liberalized, which led to considerable political turmoil, including a disenfranchised population and heavy competition between political parties. Organized crime also began to spread, and unrest rose in urban areas, where some people began to rally for the idea of an Islamist state. In this situation, the Algerian youths started to become more rebellious and grew increasingly disenfranchised (Martinez 2003: 10).

The consequences of a long period of colonialization, violent repression and a long struggle for independence can still be felt in contemporary Algeria. As reported by multiple sources, civil society was heavily affected by colonial rule and the violence employed by both Algerian

[159] "The acts of suppression, far from containing the enthusiasm, accelerate the progress of a national consciousness. At a certain state of consciousness, the bloodbaths in the colonies reinforce this awareness; they make it very clear that no question will be resolved between the suppressors and the suppressed unless by violence"; translation by the author.

nationalists and French rulers. When colonial rule ended in 1962, Algeria faced the challenge of becoming a functioning, autonomous state again. The administration had to learn how to operate independently, and the people had to reconcile decades of discrimination, inequality and violence. These were the preconditions at the birth of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria. As the following chapters will show, political and social reconciliation pose a continuous challenge to the state, with consequences for national and regional security.

3.1.1. Governance: Authority and Legitimacy of the Algerian State

Much of the Algerian state's legitimacy is derived from the war of independence and Algerian state institutions are usually accepted as legitimate by the population (BTI 2012: 5). While one of the main sources of state legitimacy is the struggle against French colonialism, the Algerian population is very young and people under the age of thirty (who account for two-thirds of the population) did not experience the fight for independence. As these people grow in numbers, the basis for the legitimacy of the government is increasingly questioned (Achy 2013: 7). Accordingly, recent years saw an upsurge in disenfranchised Algerian youths, whose numbers constantly grow due to dissatisfaction with social conditions, especially with regards to unemployment. Social riots started with an uprising in Kabylia in 2001 and have since been re-occurring. Further evidence of an undermining of the state's legitimacy and its authority are the long term existence of Islamist groups and the development of clandestine support structures among ordinary Algerians (BTI 2012: 6f.). Another obstacle to the legitimacy of the government is set by the character of elections in Algeria, which are, despite secrecy of the ballot and universal suffrage, neither free nor fair. Political parties which oppose the ruling government are excluded from elections, which are as a result dominated by like-minded parties. Another problem is that true power in Algeria has been held by clans within the Army, the intelligence service (DRS) and the political elite for decades. As these circles were equally involved in profitable economic sectors, the Algerian people[160] perceived them as an economic mafia. The power of these people decreased significantly in the early 2000's, with the result that the role of the President was strengthened (BTI 2012: 8f.; Arieff 2013: 3). Now, the power held by "le pouvoir" is the most important restrictive instrument to the executive power of the President (BTI 2012: 16). The President is surrounded by a clandestine circle which is deeply involved in economy and politics and which generates tremendous financial benefits for itself (Houdret et al. 2008: 6).

[160] Who tellingly call this elite "le pouvoir" or "les décideurs". In spite of his severe illness, Bouteflika was re-elected as President in 2017 (Spiegel Online, der kranke Mann von Algier, 2017).

These are obviously difficult preconditions for the acceptance of the state by the Algerian people. As the examples of Mali and the Arab Spring have shown, bad governance usually does not go unnoticed by the people. The fact that much of its legitimacy derives from the fight for independence is likely both blessing and curse for the Algerian government: On the one hand, the peoples' fear of violence and memories of the fight against colonialism cause them to accept the government. On the other hand, increasing numbers of younger Algerians remember neither the black decade nor the fight for independence. Building legitimacy on a legacy might thus prove to be insufficient to hold onto power in the future. The situation has become more precarious for the Algerian government since 2014, as declining oil prices have severely affected the state's revenue since then, which is particularly worrisome in a state which largely depends on imported goods. Also, President Bouteflika fell seriously ill, which makes the political situation more difficult (Arieff 2013: 3, 12; DW, Algeria's Bouteflika, 2014; France 24, Chute des Cours du Pétrole, 2016; Le Monde, l'Algérie s'inquiète, 2015).

The author is of the opinion that the political situation in Algeria bears potential for conflict and instability, which the government will surely try to avoid by all means. It is worrisome that, in a wider region that is affected by several cases of state weakness, the superficially strong state of Algeria appears to be ruled by an autocratic government which holds onto power in spite of its increasing weakness. However, should Algeria be destabilized, this would certainly affect the entire region and put additional stress on the perspective of the formation of a potential RSC.

3.2. Civil War and Internal Conflict

While Algeria was the stage for a brutal civil war in the 1990's, this was an extraordinary period which does not necessarily reflect on the state's general stability. Still, when the state was analyzed by David Laitin and James Fearon, they found that Algeria's propensity for the outbreak of civil unrest was relatively high due to a large population, high poverty rates and dependency on the oil sector. As Algeria is rather homogenous in terms of ethnicity and religion, uprisings would likely have economic or other causes (Fearon and Laitin 2006: 1f.). As has been pointed out in the previous chapter, the dependency on the oil sector is currently particularly troublesome for the Algerian state.

3.2.1. The Black Decade: Islamism and Violence

As a response to protests over social and economic inequalities, then-President Benjedid introduced political reforms in 1989 which legalized political parties and opened the governmental system. The first regional elections after the reform where held in 1990, and several small parties took part. At the same time, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), which associated itself with a number of small, armed militias who were opposed to the government, became increasingly popular by generating followers in Mosques. With growing popularity, the FIS successfully demanded parliamentary elections and defeated the ruling FLN in the regional elections of 1990. National elections followed in 1991 and led to another victory of the FIS. In fear of another FIS-victory in run-off elections, the Minister of Defense decided to stage a coup d'état in 1992. Martial law was imposed and the military regime installed a President of its liking, Mohamed Boudiaf. The FIS was banned, Islamic parties were violently repressed and communal assemblies were dissolved. All this happened to assure the military would not lose its power.

Initially, the population did not rise up, likely because of the experiences of violence in the fight for independence from French colonial rule. After a while though, an insurgency began in the course of which irregular attacks were perpetrated against civilians, and President Boudiaf was assassinated in 1992. Two movements then emerged from the FIS: The AIS and the GIA, which was one of the predecessors of AQIM**.** As described in part II, chapter 1.1., the GIA employed terrorist tactics by killing many foreigners, carrying out kidnappings and attacking the oil sector; it was a hardline fraction and called for Jihad against the Algerian regime. The AIS (Armée Islamique du Salut) was built as a self-defense unit of the FIS and was more moderate than the GIA (Fearon and Laitin 2006: 18-21; Hajji 2009: 16f.).

In 1993, the number of Islamist fighters in Algeria was estimated to be as high as 27.000. The GIA became increasingly radicalized and started to kill anyone who opposed its ideas (Hajji 2009: 19). The GIA started a largely urban Islamist uprising which escalated over the course of the following decade, leading to more than 100.000 fatalities (Fearon and Laitin 2006: 22). Algeria experienced this bloody conflict (called civil war by many analysts, as this study will also proceed to do) between 1992 and 1999 (BTI 2012: 5). The conflict still remains in the collective memory of many Algerians and continues to affect contemporary Algerian society and culture (Achy 2013: 12; Jeune Afrique 2014: 67). Some analysts follow the assumption that widespread fear of renewed violence was the main reason why the Arab Spring did not affect Algeria as much as it affected neighboring countries (Huber et al. 2014: 3). Drawing from

reports about the Black Decade, Algerians appear to be tired of conflict and violence, and this has consequences for non-state groups such as AQIM, as the Algerian population does not appear supportive of any actor who could potentially ignite violence. This is especially the case with Islamists, since a lot of the violence during the Black Decade was inflicted by acts of terrorism or guerilla warfare, which the government managed to weave into a narrative against Islamism (ICG Algeria 2015: 2). The traumatic experience of violence in Algeria's past therefore has implications for non-state groups who threaten to disturb national stability. It appears that the government uses the traumatic episode of the black decade as a means to strengthen its rule by reminding the people who provides them with security.

Although the author believes the main goal of the Algerian government is to stay in power, Algeria is still a relatively stable state compared to other African states. What will happen after Bouteflika's long reign is uncertain, as is usually the case with long standing autocrats. However, in terms of national security, the Algerian military conducted a successful Counter-Terrorism campaign against AQIM in 2010 and managed to seriously reduce the size of the group (Strachan 2014: 8). The Algerian military is, as was pointed out before, generally a force to be reckoned with in the region, and it is also deeply involved in Algerian politics.

3.3. The Existence and Scope of Ungoverned Territories in Algeria

There is only one geographic region where the authority of the Algerian state is questionable, which is along its southern neighbors in the Sahel-Sahara region (BTI 2012: 5). This is an area that is very hard to fully control due to its geography, and the Algerian military only maintains a relatively limited presence there, as CT-operations concentrate on the northern regions Kabylia and Algiers (Ammour 2012: 5).

However, Algerian security forces are comparatively strong and experienced in Counter-Terrorism, and the majority of the country's territory is under state control. Contrary to the Malian state, there seems to be little potential for a power vacuum in terms of executive control in Algeria. While the author believes that a political transition after Bouteflika might be challenging, it appears unlikely that the military could lose control, unless in the case of severe public conflict or civil war.

Like Mali, Algeria was affected by the fall of the Gaddafi regime, as scores of weapons and ammunition were smuggled into the country and the border between Algeria and Libya became largely uncontrolled (Strachan 2014: 7). This is a good example of how even relatively

stable states can be affected by regional dynamics. The implosion of the Libyan state has wide effects on its neighborhood partly because the region lacks a unified approach to the security challenges which resulted from the fall of Gaddafi.

3.3.1. The Strength of Algerian Law Enforcement Capacities

Algeria, contrary to Mali, does not suffer from weak security forces. Law enforcement capacities in Algeria are considerably better developed than in Mali; especially with regards to the military, as Algeria's defense budget is the largest on the entire African continent (Globalsecurity, Algeria – Military Spending, 2017). Algeria's army is the second largest land force in North Africa; second only to Egypt's army. However, Algeria's military also displayed severe weaknesses in the recent past. Algeria purchases military equipment from Russia, China and the United States but tries to refrain from over-spending due to socio-economic issues. One important feature of Algerian defense policy is the Counter-Terrorism cooperation with the United States (Globalsecurity, Algeria – Military Spending, 2017; Globalsecurity, Algerian Army, 2017; Brahimi, Algeria's Military Makeover, 2016).

Algeria's security forces are proficient in combatting irregular groups such as AQIM. Due to necessity, both the military and the government had to focus on the development of corresponding capacities, as their ability to hold onto power depended on successful action against these groups in the past[161].

Separation of powers is almost non-existent in Algeria, where the executive de-facto holds the monopoly on power, centralized in the hands of the President and a view high-ranking officers. While the judiciary is officially independent, it is in practice also subject to this authoritarian system (BTI 2012: 13).

3.3.2. The Algerian Armed Forces

Measured by size, equipment and experience, Algeria owns one of the most potent military forces in its immediate neighborhood, thus being an important regional military power in North Africa (Jeune Afrique 2014: 67; Larémont 2011: 259; Ammour 2012: 2). After the civil war, Algerian police forces were reinforced, growing from 120.000 in 1999 to about 200.000 in 2012 (BTI 2012: 5; Achy 2013: 12). In an attempt to preserve internal stability, police forces were backed up by the Army (Armée Populaire Nationale, ANP) with approximately 140.000 members on active duty and 100.000 in the reserves in 2012 (Achy 2013: 12). The Algerian

[161] See chapter 3.2.1.

military benefits from significant institutional independence (Hachemaoui 2011: 123) and plays a dominant role in politics and the Algerian economy. The military appears to be one of the best-functioning institutions of the state, which ensures its far-reaching influence (Houdret et al.: 2008: 9; Kervyn and Gèze 2004: 5).

The Algerian military is divided into several branches: The Army, Navy, Air Force and the Territorial Air Defense Force. In 2012, Algeria spent almost five per cent of its GDP on its military, putting it on eighths spot of military spending among countries worldwide (CIA World Factbook Algeria). In 2010, Algeria had a total of almost 150.000 active soldiers, a reserve of the same size and a Paramilitary Force comprising almost 190.000 men. The Algerian Army also has deficiencies in some areas, such as training for instance (Cordesman et al. 2010: 49ff.). Another persisting problem is the lack of conventional combat experience, next to internal problems such as corruption and nepotism (Cordesman et al. 2010: 85).

The Algerian military is closely linked to economic decision makers in the country and has great influence on the administration. This is evidenced by the fact that one former President was forced to resign under pressure from the military, and another former President was murdered by the military altogether (Houdret et al.: 2008: 9; Robert 2000: 47).

While apparently being fully integrated into the Algerian administration, the great influence of the Algerian military derives from the latter's important role in the construction of the modern Algerian state. After the war of independence, the era of military dominance began with the coup d'état by Houari Boumédienne, when a security state was established. The ensuing civil war was followed by a decades-long state of emergency which lasted until 2011[162]. These developments show just how much influence the military has in Algeria. Although having officially withdrawn from the government in the early 2000s, the Algerian military keeps ruling from behind the scenes and makes sure not to lose its influence (Ammour 2012: 5; Strachan 2014: 6).

3.3.3. Algerian Counter-Terrorism Efforts

The Algerian military is not only very experienced in CT, but also the best equipped, best trained and largest CT-force in the region (Huber et al. 2014: 14). A central part of the Algerian CT-campaign against the FIS and the GIA was to create dissension within Islamist movements.

[162] When the government was forced to lift it in the wake of the Arab Spring (BBC, Algeria ends 19-year-old State of Emergency, 2011; Al Jazeera, Algeria repeals Emergency Law, 2011).

While this succeeded in minimizing the immediate threat to the state, it made the movements scatter into multiple smaller, harder-to-control groups (ICG Islamism 2004: ii). Accordingly, small and scattered groups have been the main challenge for the Algerian military and the state's monopoly of force over the past decades. Algerian CT reduced the number of anti-state fighters between 1990 and 2010 by the thousands (BTI 2012: 5).

According to Kervyn and Gèze, the Algerian approach to counter the FIS had four main phases which comprised political and military measures. The first phase was political manipulation with the aim of preventing the FIS from winning elections, the second phase was to ensure that the entire political, military and media apparatus was in line with those in charge, the third phase was a brutal repression of civilians with the aim to contain support for Islamist groups, and the fourth and final phase was the actual CT-campaign, a hard line approach against whoever was labeled a supporter of Islamist and militant groups. This phase was also described as "terrorizing terrorism", and the name indicates the brutal methods employed by the regime (Kervyn and Gèze 2004: 4, 11). While the security forces heavily reduced the number of Islamist cells, the brutal policy also had severe repercussions on civilians, many of whom were themselves victims of systematic suppression, torture and murder at the hands of the government. To this day, this still influences their perception of the security forces and makes them susceptible to threats of violence and repression (Kervyn and Gèze 2004).

Some analysts argue that the hardline Algerian approach to Counter-Terrorism drove groups like AQIM out of Algeria into neighboring countries such as Mali, thereby causing the regional expansion of what was originally an internal Algerian problem (Strachan 2014: 9). One of the outcomes of the nationally effective CT-campaign was indeed the dispersion of the Islamists, who were pushed southwards and started cooperating with organized criminal groups. This also turned the focus of the cells towards the "far enemy", as their agenda was internationalized and they began to make money with KFR (Steinberg and Weber 2015: 59). While the regionalization of the terrorist threat certainly remains problematic, the previous chapters show that Algeria's law enforcement capacities are strong and in relatively good shape. Not only does Algeria have a well-equipped conventional military force, but their expertise in CT is especially relevant in this context. The government's four phases of combating terrorism clearly show that the state does not refrain from undercutting the rights of its population, which is likely a sign of weakness. However, the Algerian military capabilities are strong, which is why the state is able to control the majority of its vast territory.

3.3.4. Le Concorde Civile: An Approach to end radical Islamism in Algeria

After having been elected President, Bouteflika introduced a program of national reconciliation to enable the country to cope with the remnants of the civil war. His amnesty law, known as the "Concorde Civile" was passed by both parliament and senate in 1999 and was approved by the population in a subsequent vote with more than 98 per cent. The Concorde Civile offered several ways out of judicial prosecution for those willing to denounce violence. Depending on the severity of their crimes, members of armed non-state groups could receive amnesty from prosecution, a suspension of punishment or a reduction of their punishment (Robert 2000: 50)[163]. It is unclear how many people exactly sought amnesty under the Concorde (media reports vary between 1.500 and 5.500). The lack of a clear record also fuels assumptions that the law might have been a cover-up for former government agents and undercover operations (Mellah 2004: 80).

Even with the Concorde Civile established, government repression and killings continued and kept the population afraid (Kervyn and Gèze 2004: 12). After the introduction of the Concorde Civile, the Algerian government had an official reason to crack down on those who refused to renounce violence, so the law gave the government's CT policy greater legitimacy (Martinez 2003: 5).

All in all, it appears that Algeria is largely dealing with its own problems in terms of security. The state certainly claims to be a regional hegemon and does not want to see its power vanish (ICG Algeria 2015: 2, 10). The author therefore gained the impression that the government is mostly concerned with holding on to its power. This is partly done by utilizing the violent past to intimidate the population and underscore the government's claim to legitimacy. However, while the Algerian military is strong and has respectable Counter-Terrorism capacities, the CT-approach can so far only be called successful on the national level. The fact that the security threat, which, as the previous chapters show, has been developing in Algeria for decades, spilled over into Algeria's neighborhood is not only a long term disadvantage for Algeria, but for the entire region. Once again, this is both proof of the lack and of the necessity of a regional framework.

[163] Despite the public vote, the Concorde Civile caused a lot of public resistance for various reasons. Some people perceived it as a carte blanche for terrorists and former undercover government agents, both of which were reported to have perpetrated atrocities against civilians. According to Salima Mellah, the implementation of the law was extremely opaque, as it lacked public documentation. Even though it is believed that only a few thousand former militants accepted the offer, it was sold as a great success in CT by Bouteflika (Mellah 2004: 80; Kervyn and Gèze 2004: 12).

3.4. Conclusion: The Influence of Algeria on stability in Mali

In order to establish in how far Algerian policies and its security situation potentially affect Mali and the region, this chapter will give a quick assessment of the strength of the Algerian state based on the findings in previous chapters.

In the 2011 Failed State Index, Algeria ranked on spot 81. It scored relatively stable in the social category, which comprises demographic pressure, IDP and refugee movements and chronic human flight as well as group grievances. This category sums up pressures on the population caused for example by lack of opportunity, violence or displacement. In terms of legitimacy of the state, Algeria is rated rather negatively, which probably reflects the authoritarian governance-style and serious problems with corruption. The deterioration of public services scores moderately and basically refers to what is described a social service provision in this paper. The violation of human rights still appears to be a serious problem in Algeria, which is a general feature of autocratically ruled states. The capability of the security apparatus scores 7.2 points, but the Index does not specify why it is ranked rather badly (Fund for Peace, Fragile States Index, 2011).

Besides the findings in the Fragile States Index, the previous chapters clearly show to what extent contemporary Algerian politics and society are still being influenced by their past. Memories of repression, violence and especially religiously related violence and terrorism are still present, making Algerians extremely suspicious of possible threats to stability. The fear of instability also seems to contribute a great deal to the stability of the government, which largely appears to be gaining legitimacy by presenting itself as capable of providing security.

All in all, the Fragile States Index places Algeria in the category of states to be watched (Fund for Peace, Fragile States Index, 2011). While Algeria displays internal weaknesses in important areas, the author believes that the military and security sector are not part of these weaknesses. On the contrary, it appears that the Algerian government is using the terrorism threat to justify an autocratic security state, especially by blurring the correlations between CT, Jihadism and stability. It is therefore the military which enables the government to hold on to its power, in an effort to conceal the actual weakness of the state (Ammour 2012: 6).
Taking a detailed look at the state of Algeria, the author gained the impression that the state is indeed much weaker than it first appears, and the fate of the militarily supported government seems to be inextricably linked to the fate of the state. This leads to the conclusion that the main interest of the Algerian government is self-preservation and the justification of

its claim to rule. Bearing in mind that AQIM and its predecessors are originally Algerian groups, this had grave implications for Mali, as evidenced in 2012: The effectiveness of the Algerian military, successful CT-campaigns and a population who rejects violence (and is critical of Islamist violence) have created an inhospitable environment for AQIM in Algeria. Unfavorable conditions basically pushed AQIM out of Algeria, and the group ended up in Mali. Many members of the non-state groups which staged the secessionist-Islamist insurgency in Mali were (and still are) Algerian, but Algerian politics also play an official role, as all relevant peace negotiations concerning stability in northern Mali have been mediated by Algeria.

It is naturally in Algeria's interest to prevent the establishment of any kind of safe haven in northern Mali. As mentioned before, the main interest of the Algerian government appears to be regime survival, and this is very much a realist imperative which indicates several things: First of all, Algeria would not accept a limitation of its influence in Mali. Second, the Algerian government would likely sacrifice Malian stability for its own ends if necessary; and third, Algeria will always want to have considerable influence in two regions (and potential RSC's); North Africa and West Africa. Algeria is therefore unlikely to accept any major developments in its neighborhood that could threaten to undermine its influence. However, it needs to be kept in mind that Algeria is currently weakened, which will have negative effects on its ability to project influence onto its neighbors. In the light of RSCT and the fact that Mali is part of a *proto-complex* (ECOWAS) which does not include Algeria, this offers plenty potential for conflict.

4. The Influence of Libya after 2011 on the Events in Mali

The devastating impact of the fall of the Gaddafi regime on stability in northern Mali has a prominent role in the literature on the Arab Spring. It is often stated that the return of Libyan-trained, heavily armed and well-equipped Tuareg fighters to northern Mali after the fall of Gaddafi ultimately tipped the balance of power in favor of the insurgent and terrorist groups. Indeed, it appears that Libya played a decisive role for stability in the Sahel-Sahara zone ever since the fall of the government (Lacher 2013a: 2; Haysom 2014: 2)[164]. As the events in Libya and Mali have been linked in the literature many times, it is indispensable to take a more detailed look at the correlations in order to fully understand the events.

[164] It is, however, important to understand that this was also the case before the fall of his regime, as Gaddafi had notoriously interfered with regional policies, especially concerning the Tuareg (Ronen 2013: 550).

The ruling system in Libya had been personalized by Gaddafi for four decades so that there was virtually no alternative to him as head of the government[165]. This is also why the failures of his government were directly linked to Gaddafi and could not be detached from him. It was therefore no wonder that protests in Libya centered around the demand for freedom as opposed to demands focused on specific political ideologies (Brahimi 2011: 605f., 610). Gaddafi had built his rule on a network of tribes, militias and mercenaries, which were very ideological and extremely loyal. The numbers of his fighters were estimated to range between 12.000 and 18.000 men. When Gaddafi's regime fought for survival, it did so with the help of the tribes Gaddafi had supported and utilized for many years, and as the main beneficiaries of Gaddafi's rule, these tribes fought for their own survival as much as Gaddafi himself did (Brahimi 2011: 612f.). As will be shown in the following chapter, one of these tribes were (members of) the Tuareg.

4.1. The Relationship between Gaddafi and the Tuareg

Muammar al-Gaddafi had built an ethno-political strategic partnership with members of the Tuareg for decades before his regime fell in early 2011. Tuareg from Sahelian countries had migrated to Libya for years, and their influx increased especially at the end of the twentieth century, with thousands of Tuareg being integrated into Libya's security apparatus – some even into the Special Forces. This integration of the Tuareg ultimately led to a strong alliance between the latter and the Gaddafi regime. While the regime benefited from the Tuareg's intimate knowledge of the desert, the Tuareg desperately needed socio-economic opportunities, as they were notoriously disenfranchised in their countries of origin (Ronen 2013: 544, 546, 551). While the exact number of Tuareg fighters under Gaddafi was never established, it is clear that they were an important part of his security strategy, as they were apparently among his most loyal guardians. Libyan Tuareg fighters were among the groups which fought for the survival of the regime when the Arab Spring broke out in Libya. Not only had the Gaddafi regime offered the Tuareg ways out of poverty and marginalization, which they usually faced in their home countries. In Libya under Gaddafi, the Tuareg were allowed to move and work freely, and many of them even received Libyan identity cards. Also, Gaddafi himself had publicly emphasized his respect for the Tuareg and their nomadic lifestyle, which suggests that there was likely a high degree of personalized loyalty from the Tuareg towards Gaddafi. Just like Gaddafi, the Tuareg had always disregarded official state borders, as they

[165] In the opinion of the author, the only possible exceptions were his sons, but they were also forced to flee.

preferred to move freely among the Sahelian countries. Gaddafi's idea of a united Africa held great appeal for the Tuareg and Gaddafi also showed sympathy for the Tuareg's fight against the Malian government. When the regime fell, both Tuareg fighters and civilian Tuareg found themselves thrust into the insecurity and violence of civil war, with no one left to protect them and their interests. Confronted with threats to their security and socio-economic hardship, many Tuareg decided to migrate back to their countries of origin, where they were not threatened by rival militias (Ronen 2013: 545ff., 551). As they had been influenced by the revolutionary ideas of Gaddafi, the Tuareg's idea of their own nation state was strongly reinforced by their time in Libya (Ronen 2013: 549). It is interesting to note that, while Gaddafi was strongly opposed to Islamist movements, AQIM's evaluation of the Tuareg came to the same conclusion as Gaddafis'; both viewed the Tuareg's disenfranchisement as an ideal starting point for recruitment (Ronen 2013: 551).

4.2. The Outbreak of Violence and the Fall of Gaddafi

The entanglement of Libyan and Malian security is especially interesting because Libya and Mali do not share a border, and other states which also faced the return of militarized Tuareg elements (most notably Niger) did not experience conflict in the wake of Gaddafi's fall. As shall be seen, Libya did not only look to Sub-Saharan states in terms of diplomacy and trade (mainly because it isolated itself from other Arab states), but Gaddafi also actively interfered in politics which concerned the Tuareg. This enabled him to become a crucial negotiator between the governments of Niger and Mali and several Tuareg groups. Gaddafi often negotiated an end to conflicts he had previously stirred, and it was mainly Libya's economic strength in the region which enabled his interference in external politics (Guichaoua 2015: 326f.). The following chapters are going to investigate how exactly the downfall of the Libyan government influenced Mali's stability, accompanied by an analysis of whether and why Libya should be part of Mali's RSC.

In the wake of the Arab Spring, demonstrations in Libya started in Benghazi on February 15th 2011. Even though the Arab Spring had by then already affected Tunisia and Egypt, political analysts and politicians alike appeared to be surprised by the fact that the movement gained momentum in Libya. They had estimated that fear of brutal government responses would undermine public resistance. However, once open resistance started, the regime of Gaddafi lost control over the eastern part of the state and several important towns within no more than ten days. The advancing rebels appeared to have the momentum for the first three weeks,

before the government launched a counter-offensive which took back many important sites. Government forces then proceeded towards Benghazi, which the Army needed to recapture from rebel forces. Five weeks into the conflict, after members of the Gaddafi family had stated that the uprisings would be crushed brutally and mercilessly, the United Nations decided to take action and adopted UNSCR 1973 on March 17th, 2011. The intention was to protect Libyan civilians; and France, Great Britain and the USA began air strikes only two days after the adoption of the resolution (Northern and Pack 2013: 113f.). It was indeed the UN-, NATO- and Arab League- approved establishment of a no-fly zone which tipped the power balance in favor of the anti-government rebels. The uprisings in Libya ultimately lasted eight months and culminated when Gaddafi was killed by a mob in Sirte on October 20th, 2011. In Gaddafis' system of governance everything had been focused on himself his state apparatus had exercised extremely tight control over the population. The end of Gaddafi's rule hence marked the first time Libya experienced a political void in decades[166]. Henner Papendieck, probably one of the best-informed experts of Mali, states that the fall of Gaddafi was the trigger for the developments in Mali in 2012. He also claims that French security forces gave the Tuareg mercenaries the promise that they would not be bombed if they were to leave Libya immediately[167], which is what the Tuareg[168] did. After the common enemy had been killed, the only unifying element among the various rebel groups in Libya vanished, which gave way to an immense power vacuum and a prolonged civil war (Pack 2013: 5, 7; Sawani 2013: 53f.; van Genugten 2011: 63f., 68; Qantara, Interview, 2012).

For the Tuareg, this meant facing threats and repression from rival militias who had fought against the Gaddafi regime during the rebellion. As a result, thousands of Tuareg left Libya, many of whom ended up in Mali. The returning Tuareg fighters came back from a civil war which they had lost; they were heavily armed and had just lost the only state that had given them a home. It is therefore unsurprising that they started a series of violent clashes, the first of which occurred in October 2011, when they stormed Takalut, a Malian village located approximately 35 km from Kidal, which is a traditional hub for Tuareg rebellions (Ronen 2013: 554). After having attacked the desert town of Ménaka, the Tuareg declared that they would 'free' the northern cities of Mali, and they soon underlined this claim with their takeover of Tessalit, a garrison town, on March 11th, 2012 – eleven days prior to the coup d'état. The Tuareg

[166] This was exacerbated by the fact that the state did not even have a constitution in place.
[167] This information could not be confirmed.
[168] The number of returning Tuareg fighters was estimated to be as high as 4.000, although the number of those who participated in the rebellion was likely around 1.000 (Chivvis 2016: 61f.).

subsequently declared the establishment of the *Azawad* in April 2012, thereby claiming control of about 65 per cent of the Malian territory. It is an interesting fact that at that time, the Tuareg declared their state to be secular and wanted to partner with western governments in the fight against Islamist terrorism – most likely to increase their chances of survival, as the author believes. However, as there was no international support for the Tuareg project, the latter started negotiations with the Islamist group Ansar Dine, although the negotiations failed due to sectarian and political differences (Ronen 2013: 554f.)[169].

4.3. Repercussions of the Events in Libya on the Sahel-Sahara Region

The inability of states to control the Sahel-Sahara region is one of the main harbingers of insecurity for the Maghreb and Sub-Sahara Africa, especially for the states which share most territory in this area; Algeria, Mauritania, Libya, Niger, Mali and Chad. While smuggling and trafficking are two of the main economic traits outside state control which developed in this region, there is also considerable socio-cultural value to the region, which is a zone of cultural and socio-economic interaction between Arab- and Black Africa. The Sahel zone has always been characterized by extensive intercommunal trade, which was essential for the survival of local communities. Historically, the Sahel-Sahara region is an area of high food insecurity because of the extremely arid climate. This frequently leads to tensions between different tribes and ethnicities because of forced migration. Coupled with extreme poverty, weak infrastructure and high unemployment rates, this ultimately paved the breeding ground for the expansion of illegal traffic (Zoubir and Dris-Aït-Hamadouche 2013: 99f.; Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, 2014: 1, 4).

As this chapter will show, the fall of the Libyan government under Gaddafi was of particular relevance to the Sahel-Sahara region. The role of Libya had become increasingly important in the area for decades. Muammar al-Gaddafi was killed in October 2011, and his fall had severe consequences for stability in Algeria, Niger, Mali and Libya, with particularly devastating outcomes for the two latter countries. Some of the reasons hereof were the development of several brutal militias and the sudden lack of control over former members of the security forces, many of which were foreign Tuareg. These fighters seized the opportunity and emptied Gaddafi's weapon caches, which raised their operational capacities. In total, 21 of 47 ammunition storages have been damaged during or after the conflict between the regime and

[169] It is unknown to the author in how far these events influenced the ouster of the MNLA by Ansar Dine and AQIM. This is also very unlikely to be verified due to the clandestine nature of the group.

the rebels, and a vast amount of weapons have been seized by civilians and militias. Among the weapons which were looted were surface-to-air missiles, mortars and several antitank missiles. Small arms were readily available after the lootings and fell under the responsibility of individual fighters, whereas light weapons fell under the control of battalion commanders. It is, however, unclear how many weapons exactly were looted, as an official inventory did not exist. The UN estimated that the amount of weapons smuggled across and from Libya after the Arab Spring was in the low tens of thousands (Strazzari 2014: 56, 58).

It is important to point out that Libyan weapons appear to have circulated in the region even before the uprising against the regime began. Nevertheless, all neighboring governments reported an increase in arms smuggling when the conflict in Libya escalated (Strazzari 2014: 59f.).

Larémont argues that the Tuareg's return to Mali could have been foreseen because of previous Tuareg rebellions against the Malian state (Larémont 2013: 1; Shaw 2013: 204; Guichaoua 2015: 325). Not surprisingly, one of the non-state groups which appears to have acquired looted Libyan weapons is the MNLA, which played a prominent role in the Islamist-secessionist rebellion in Mali 2012 (Cline 2013: 622). AQIM also acquired some of the looted Libyan weapons, among them heavy weaponry and explosives (Lohmann 2011: 2).

Under Gaddafi, the Tuareg enjoyed a certain kind of support because this allowed him to utilize them. He supported the creation of a Tuareg state[170] because he intended to use this state as his proxy. He therefore also supported the establishment of training camps and the development of an independent movement, especially because he believed it to be a good way to counter one of his main rivals, Algeria. The Tuareg had been integrated into Gaddafi's security forces since the 1980's and Gaddafi made the Tuareg fight several wars for him. Tuareg were also integrated in some of the governments' most important military battalions, including some which led the most brutal repressions against rebel forces in 2011. The relationship between the Tuareg and Gaddafi was mainly opportunistic, and when Gaddafi's regime fell, the Tuareg were quick to return to their states of origin, mainly Mali and Niger. It appears that about 3.000 fighters returned to Mali alone, bringing with them about 600 all-terrain vehicles. Many Tuareg left Libya after Gaddafi's death for fear of being associated with him (Zoubir and Dris-Ait-Hamadouche 2013: 121; Smith 2013: 184; Kohl 2014: 430).

[170] Made up of Tuareg from Algeria, Mali, Niger and Libya.

Next to the returning fighters, another destabilizing factor for the north of Mali were the approximately 30.000 refugees who migrated from Libya to Mali (Shaw 2013: 204). Annette Lohmann even states that the UN estimated that about 200.000 migrant workers, some of whom had never even been to their home countries before, returned to Niger, Mali, Mauritania and Chad. This of course presented an additional source of socio-economic instability to these states (Lohmann 2012: 4). Libya's southern borders span approximately 1,400 kilometers in length, and they have gone uncontrolled ever since the death of Gaddafi. Although representatives of the Libyan government announced the closure of the borders in 2012 due to the increase of illegal traffic, this announcement remained lip-service and the region has been controlled by Tebu and Tuareg groups after the uprisings. While the Tuareg largely control the western part of the border, the Tebu control the eastern part, and both groups cooperate in smuggling. One example hereof is the smuggling of alcohol, which is in high demand after it had been forbidden under Gaddafi. Both Tebu and Tuareg now run an alcohol smuggling network from Niger to Libya (Kohl 2014: 434). The lack of border control and resulting increase in illegal traffic is a good example of the transnationality of the threat which emanates from Libya, the regional dimension of which is so wide-ranging that it does not only affect neighboring states, but also other states in the region.

4.4. Conclusion: Libya's regional Dimension and its Effects on Mali

As has been pointed out in the previous chapters, Libya strongly influences stability not only in Mali, but in several states in the region; particularly those who share a border with Libya. While this has come to the forefront after the fall of Gaddafi's regime, it needs to be outlined that Libya's regional influence had been considerable for decades. This, in turn, was mainly due to Gaddafi's style of governance and his meddling in foreign affairs. So, while during the rule of Gaddafi Libya mainly influenced the region in a pursuit to create useful proxies, the situation has changed since 2011: Libya still influences the region, but at this time it mainly exports violence and chaos. The Libyan civil war is host to a multitude of violent non-state groups, many of which have an Islamist background. Returning Tuareg, armed and trained in Libya, influenced the events in Mali in 2012, but one of the most worrying threats in Libya today is surely the expansion of radical Islamism (The Wall Street Journal, Chaos in Libya, 2016).

Looking back at past decades and at contemporary events, it can thus be stated that Libya has influenced stability in the entire region, and particularly in Mali, for a long time. Therefore, it

needs to be expected that Libya will continue to play an important role in the region. Ungoverned borders shared with Algeria, Niger and Chad, smuggling networks, an ongoing civil war, political relationships[171] (Haysom 2014: 5; ICG Algeria 2015: 14) and the connection to the Tuareg are strong, historically grown regional developments whose remnants will remain for some time[172].

When looking at the influence the events in Libya (and Libyan politics under Gaddafi) had on Mali, it is clear that an RSC without Libya would make little sense for Mali, at least at present. This is problematic as Egypt, Libya's neighbor to the east, has a lot of interest in stability in Libya and shares few links with Mali. Further, Libya and Mali do not share a border, and if Libya was stabilized, a situation where no threats would spillover to neighboring countries (including Mali) could certainly be imagined. If, however, Libya wants to play a similar role in the future as it did in the past, it will continue to get involved in regional affairs, and this will eventually affect Mali. What is more, Algeria is indispensable to Mali's RSC, and it is questionable whether it would make sense to exclude Libya from a Regional Security Complex that includes Algeria. The question whether Libya should be a part of Mali's RSC is therefore complicated: Looking back at the past, the answer is certainly 'yes', but in the future it depends on whether Libya will be stabilized (in which case it depends on its foreign policy) or whether it will further descend into chaos - in which case it would also need to be part of an RSC, although that would probably not be enough to contain the violence, either.

5. Mauritania: Shared Threats and Security Cooperation with Mali?

Mauritania is a large country with only 3.2 million inhabitants and a political history characterized by a series of coups d'état. Being extremely poor, Mauritania lacks the resources to control all of its territory and its administration is chronically underfinanced[173]. The current President of Mauritania, Colonel Abdel Aziz, first deposed his predecessor in a military coup before winning the presidential election in 2009. He has been ruling the country ever since then (Rao 2014: 4f.). Mauritania faces challenges with regards to poverty and corruption

[171] Such as the rather cool relationship with Algeria.

[172] In this context it is interesting to point out that Algeria and Libya advocated for the exact opposite; while Algeria always supported Mali's territorial integrity and tried to contain the Tuareg, Libya under Gaddafi supported the Tuareg idea of an independent state (ICG Algeria 2015: 18).

[173] Mauritania is one of the poorest countries in the world with a very low level of socioeconomic development, ranking 159th in the 2011 Human Development Index. Almost half of the population lives on less than $2 a day and both poverty and general education remain challenging areas for the government (BTI 2014: 15, 22). As is observable in all chapters of this part of the study, these conditions can to some degree be found in the majority of the states described here.

(Olsson and Olsson 2016: 125ff.). Due to weak state institutions and a lack of social services, long standing ethnic and tribal tensions and the inability to exercise the monopoly of force, Mauritania can be classified as a weak state[174] (Boukhars 2012: 1, 7). Although Mauritania has well-established Islamist parties, these parties generally reject violence and particularly AQIM (Thurston 2012: 15). In accordance with the general security situation in the region, Mauretania acknowledges worrisome security developments and is very concerned by the threat posed by terrorist groups in its neighboring countries, above all Mali (Olsson and Olsson 2016. 125).

This short description already reveals how much the states of Mali and Mauritania have in common and in how far they share the same socio-political challenges. This suggests that they also share the same security threats, which means that it would make sense for both states to cooperate in terms of security. In any case, the analysis of these questions is made more challenging by the fact that sources on the topic are generally hard to come by. The author can therefore not claim that the following descriptions are all-encompassing.

Mauritania is the neighbor Mali shares the longest border with, and both states are equally affected by the extreme climate and difficult geography. Given that, at first glance, Mauritania and Mali share some features which majorly contribute to instability, it appears necessary to take a more detailed look at the situation in Mauritania. This is especially so because the conflict in Mali in 2012 is reported to have been a "major wake-up call" for Mauritania (BTI 2014: 2). To find out whether Mauritania plays a role in the analysis of regional security cooperation, the following chapter will give an impression of security policies and stability in the state. It will also analyze whether and to what extent the security situation in Mauritania influences the situation in Mali and vice versa.

5.1. Supranational Ungoverned Territory and its Consequences

Just like the other states examined so far, Mauritania is a territorially huge state which incorporates vast desert territory. It shares over 5.000 km of borders with its neighbors Algeria, Western Sahara, Senegal and Mali. The majority of this border land is shared among Mauritania and Mali. Much like the north of Mali, the Mauritanian desert is largely

[174] In 2010, Mauritania ranked on spot 39 in the Failed State Index, on spot 42 in 2011 and on spot 38 in 2012, all of which indicate that Mauritania is at greater risk of state failure than Mali (Fund for Peace, Fragile States Index, 2010-2012). In 2011, the Mauritanian government faced the challenge of avoiding the outbreak of protests akin to the so-called *Arab Spring,* especially after a Mauritanian citizen set himself on fire in Nouakchott on January 17th, 2011 (Olsson and Olsson 2012: 138).

uncontrolled by the state and has therefore been a hub for illegal trade and smuggle for years. Some researchers even argue that the Sahel has become the first choice of non-state groups and criminal networks when looking for a safe haven (Rao 2014: 12). Some accounts have described the lacking monopoly of force on the part of the state in very serious terms, declaring that, at times, the state even appeared to be absent in the capital Nouakchott. This allegedly led to situations where criminal networks could organize the transit of their cargo as they wished, as the government largely ignored these activities (Antil 2006: 587f.). Among the trafficked goods are not only drugs and cigarettes, but also small arms. In some cases, violent non-state groups such as AQIM, which has been conducting attacks in Mauritania for some years now, are closely connected to illegal trafficking activities (Pézard and Glatz 2010: 19). Malian and Mauritanian Tuareg are also reported to be involved in arms trafficking. It is indeed possible that many of the weapons which circulate in Mauritania are originally from Mali. In turn, weapons of war mainly find their way to Mali from Mauritania and Guinea (Pézard and Glatz 2010: 36, 47, 51).

Between 2007 and 2009, AQIM has declared its responsibility for a rising number of kidnapping incidents of both Mauritanian and foreign citizens (Pézard and Glatz 2010: 19). Incidents like these led to rising fears in the IC that Mauritania might lose control over the majority of its territory altogether, especially because the state has been inherently weak for decades[175] (Pézard and Glatz 2010: 2, 6). When the military ousted the elected President in 2008, Mauritania was expelled from the AU and many western institutions and states withdrew financial and military aid to the country. However, as other actors such as the Arab League decided to step up their investment in Mauritania, withdrawal of western support did ultimately not affect the state very much. In any case, most international actors resumed their normal relationship with Mauritania in 2009, when General Abdelaziz, who had staged a coup a year before, won democratic elections (Pézard and Glatz 2010: 10ff.). After the change of government AQIM declared total war on Mauritania, whose government it perceived as heretic and treacherous (Pézard and Glatz 2010: 25).

The Mauritanian government appears to be well-aware of the risk it faces in uncontrolled territory, and it has taken several steps to counter this. Next to deploying more troops to the area, the Mauritanian government has also enhanced its cooperation with neighbor states. Not only has border control personnel since undergone better training, but Mauritania,

[175] The state experienced 13 coups d'état between 1978 and 2007, the year when the first democratic presidential elections were held.

Algeria, Niger and Mali also employ joint mobile patrols to better control their borders (Pézard and Glatz 2010: 30f.). In spite of these efforts, it remains a fact that the respective territory is simply too vast to be completely controlled, and this will inevitably continue to offer possibilities for traffickers, terrorist groups and insurgent movements in the future. One of these groups is AQIM, who appears to be well aware of the advantages offered by Mauritania's geography.

5.2. AQIM in Mauritania: Expanding its Presence?

Risks of Mauritania moving towards religious extremism are generally considered rather low, and AQIM's activities seem to inspire little enthusiasm among the Mauritanian population (Pézard and Glatz 2010: 27f). While AQIM has carried out some attacks in Mauritania over the last ten years, they were only few and certainly not high-profile attacks (Pézard and Glatz 2010: 24). In general, it appears that AQIM prefers to stage attacks in Mauritania while operating from Malian territory (this alone allows for conclusions concerning AQIM's preferred safe haven). Not only does the general Mauritanian population not find radical Islamism very appealing, but AQIM cells, which have apparently been few in Mauritania so far, were also quickly dismantled by the police. However, it is still undeniable that the security situation in Mauritania is slowly deteriorating, as the state appears to be more and more affected by the same threats Mali has been facing for some years. According to the author, this makes sense in the light of ongoing military operations in Mali, which make Mali a less favorable territory for terrorists. In general, while AQIM is spreading insecurity, it is not powerful enough to destabilize Mauritania, at least not yet (Pézard and Glatz 2010: 24, 27ff.). It is in any case important to note that the Mauritanian government is well aware of the terrorist threat, which has been on the top of its foreign policy agenda in recent years (Olsson and Olsson 2016: 126).

The impression of gradually deteriorating stability in Mauritania is affirmed by a Bertelsmann investigation from 2014, which clearly states that while officials have so far managed to contain the threat, radical Islamists do pose a security threat to Mauritania. While these groups tend to be geographically concentrated in Mali, a rising number of their members is supposed to be of Mauritanian nationality, a growing number of whom also joined AQIM. Some reports already state that Mauritanians make up the second largest national group in both AQIM and MUJAO, which is problematic for Mauritanian officials as these persons can legally cross between Mali and Mauritania (BTI 2014: 2, 5, 7). However, as other reports claim that the number of Mauritanians joining AQIM and other groups is relatively small, the exact

extent of involvement of Mauritanian nationals in such groups remains unclear. What is certain is that so far, attacks on Mauritanian soil have been few and rather unprofessional (Rao 2014: 9f.). Also, the vast majority of Mauritanian citizens reject Islamism (Thurston 2012: 15), so it would be very hard for AQIM to foster deeper ties in Mauritanian society. Anouar Boukhars states that there is a connection between criminality and violent extremism in a sense that the former often seems to proceed the latter. However, as many traffickers do not share Islamist ideologies, there have also been conflicts between Islamists and criminal networks because of diverging political agendas (Boukhars 2012: 16, 18).

The Mauritanian state has difficulties controlling its territory, and the border with Mali is a continuous source of instability. But the Mauritanian government also takes effective counter-measures against radical non-state groups, most notably by attacking the latter on Malian territory and keeping them from entering Mauritania. The government of Mauritania also strategically expands the infrastructure in remote areas to increase its control. Still, Mauritanian authorities often chase unidentified vehicles across the Malian border, and the region is generally reported to be "under constant security threat" (BTI 2014: 6). The potential for radicalization among Mauritanian youths is also a persistent concern for state officials, who aim to contain Islamist recruitment (Rao 2014: 8)[176] but struggle with high unemployment rates and poverty (Olsson and Olsson 2016: 125).

Considering the regional dimension of the issue, it is clear that the threats Mali and Mauritania face are interrelated because the respective non-state groups use the same conditions to their advantage. The fact that they can easily cross between the two states facilitates activities for political, commercial and ideological groups alike, and these groups will be hard-pressed to give up these advantages. As relocating is also not that easy for illegal groups, the limited governance of some desert territories and the activities of certain non-state groups in these areas can only be contained in a comprehensive approach. For as soon as these groups are being flushed out of one of their host state (Mali), they will settle for the next best solution, which might be Mauritania (at least for traffickers who need access to a harbor). This makes these ungoverned territories a regional concern, as it has to be expected that terrorist groups, traffickers and insurgents will shift their residence within the region when they encounter too much pressure.

[176] Another factor which adds to the vulnerability of the region are the thousands of refugees who fled Mali for Mauritania in the wake of the 2012 events, but this cannot be investigated in detail in this context (BTI 2014: 7).

5.3. Mauritanian Security Forces

The Mauritanian Army has about 15.000 troops and most of its weapons were completely outdated in 2010. Mauritania has a small Navy and a small Air Force, but its forces are basically un-deployable due to a lack of transport aircraft. The Mauritanian Army also has little combat experience, and force readiness generally seems to be at a low level. As the equipment is also mostly outdated, Mauritanian security forces are not ready to protect and secure the state's territory (IISS, 2012: 338). However, compared to its small means, Mauretania does channel a lot of the state's budget into the security sector and the government seeks to implement security cooperation with Arab and Western states (Olsson and Olsson 2016: 126f.).
Next to the three main branches, Mauritania's security forces consist of a police force (which includes the anti-terrorist unit), a Gendarmerie, a National Guard and a Special Guard which is responsible for the protection of the President. One of the main shortcomings of the security forces is the reported lack of control of weapons caches. Instead of destroying old weapons, the security services often sell them to civilians. Many of these weapons also find their way to non-state groups such as AQIM, which clearly shows that the government does not sufficiently control its stockpiles (Pézard and Glatz 2010: 13ff.). Although guns can easily be acquired, Mauritanian authorities report few incidents of violence involving the use of firearms (Pézard and Glatz 2010: 16), but they do recognize a trend of rising criminality due uncontrolled weapons proliferation (Pézard and Glatz 2010: 22).

When Mauritania pledged to contribute 1,800 troops to MINUSMA to stabilize Mali, it was unclear whether this move was supported by the majority of military members. However, while coups d'état have occurred frequently in Mauritania's past, Colonel Aziz largely appears to be supported by his military, which has only shown minor frictions in the past (Rao 2014: 11).

Overall, the author gained the impression that the Mauritanian state is committed to the fight against terrorism, and in many ways this seems to be implemented successfully. One example hereof are severe punishments for crimes associated with terrorism and the anti-terrorist bill, which was ratified in Mauritania in 2009 (Pézard and Glatz 2010: 30). This impression is being reinforced by Annette Lohmann, who states that Mauritania has become very active in the fight against AQIM and also cooperates with Mali in this context (Lohmann 2011a: 10).

In terms of regional organizations, Mauritania has been a member of the Arab League since 1973. It is also a member of CEN-SAD, which Libya established in 1998. Mainly an economic

community for its 28 member states, CEN-SAD also deals with defense and security issues, albeit not on a level that gives it a lot of influence. Also important in this context is the fact that Algeria is not a member of CEN-SAD (Pézard and Glatz 2010: 34f.; Small Arms Survey, CEN-SAD, 2012). Mauritania is also a member of the *G5 du Sahel* and generally occupies the role of a mediator in the region (Olsson and Olsson 2016: 125). In accordance with this, Mauretania generally seeks to play an active role in the politics of the region (Olsson and Olsson 2012: 140). As has been mentioned in part III chapter 1.1.2., Mauritania has dropped out of ECOWAS several years ago.

5.5. Conclusion: How Mauritania and Mali influence each other's Stability

Even though sources dealing with security in Mauritania are few, the previous findings allow for some important conclusions with regards to the research topic. First of all, it is clear that Mauritania's security situation does not only depend on its relationship with one, but with several other states. For instance, Mauritania shares a long border with the Western Sahara. Mauritania and Mali also share some defining links in terms of security, most of all the issues of ungoverned territory and its consequences. The vast desert land shared by Mali and Mauritania is, as has been pointed out, basically impossible to control by a state, especially by weak states which lack the respective resources[177]. The third state in this border land is Algeria, and while it has been established that security presence is relatively weak in the Algerian south, it is also clear that the GSPC has been flushed out of Algeria by CT methods. AQIM and its affiliates are the most potent terrorist groups in the region, and they will seek to stay geographically close to Algeria for as long as the Algerian state remains their official target. This leads to a situation where security measures in Mali do not make sense without considering the situation in Mauritania and vice versa: With Algeria as the most powerful military actor in the triangle, non-state groups are most likely to seek a safe haven in one of the other two states. If, however, one of these states decided to unilaterally expel these groups, the most likely result would be a relocation of these groups to neighboring states. Mauritanian policies allow for the conclusion that, while certainly putting an effort into internal stabilization, Mauritania's regional ambitions seem to be limited. While many regional issues in West Africa may be resolvable without Mauritanian participation, this is certainly not the case with Mali. As has been made clear in the previous chapters, Mauritania and Mali are indispensable for each other in terms of security, and sustainable stability for both states will

[177] Mauritania and Mali recently set up a project to enhance border control which is being financed by the government of Japan (Olsson and Olsson 2016: 128).

not be reached without cooperation. Therefore, when considering the regional scope of the Malian conflict, it is clear that Mauritania needs to be considered in this context.

6. Niger: Shared Concerns or just Neighbors?

Mali and Niger share a number of determining characteristics, among them their colonial past, their relatively young existence as an independent nation state, many years of autocracy before officially becoming a democracy and several military coups (Pézard and Shurkin 2015: 62).

Niger is one of the biggest countries in Africa and shares 5.700 km of border land with its neighbors, most of it with Nigeria, Chad, Libya, Algeria and Mali (ICG Niger 2013: 1). The geographic location of Niger already explains the strategic relevance of the state in this context. Similarly to Mauritania and Mali, Niger is extremely poor, and poverty is aggravated by high demographic growth rates. Even though the economy is growing modestly, the Nigerien state faces challenges when trying to meet the basic needs of its citizens[178]. As many people in Niger suffer from endemic food insecurity, a lot of Nigeriens undertake seasonal migrations to neighboring countries such as Libya and Nigeria. This indicates the urgency of effective state administration and services. Another similarity with Mauritania and Mali is the fact that much of Niger's territory is basically uninhabited and hard to control for the government. Even though Niger shares borders with states that have experienced conflict in the past and present, Niger has not experienced a spillover effect so far (ICG Niger 2013: 1f.). The Nigerien state is reported to be corrupt and suspected of being infiltrated by organized criminal networks, which makes the development of an efficient administration and economy more complicated (ICG Niger 2013: ii).

6.1. Threats and Security Challenges in Niger and their Effects on Mali

Niger shares several security challenges with its neighbors, particularly with Mali. Among them are the facts that both states are an epicenter of illegal trafficking and that both suffer from a conflicting north-south divide (Pézard and Shurkin 2015: 62f.). In order to find out if and how

[178] In the 2010 Fragile States Index, Niger is ranked on spot 19; it is ranked on spot 15 in the 2011 Index and on spot 18 in the 2012 Index. This means that Niger is categorized as a severely weaker state than both Mauritania and Mali (Fund for Peace, Fragile States Index 2010-2012).

far Mali and Niger are connected to each other in the security realm, the following chapters will analyze the most important common threats in Niger and Mali.

6.1.1. The Tuareg in Niger: A remaining Challenge to Stability?

About 10 per cent of the Nigerien population are Tuareg; they form the third largest ethnic group in Niger. Akin to Mali, Niger has a long history of conflict with its Tuareg, although the Nigerien Tuareg identify with both their nationality and their tribe[179]. Niger also suffers from a structural north-south divide, albeit a less serious one than Mali. While a lack of opportunities and relative deprivation among young Tuareg are of growing concern to the Nigerien government with regards to recruitment possibilities of radical groups, the Tuareg in Niger are generally better integrated in their home society than the Tuareg in Mali (Prevost 2012: 2). The propensity for instability caused by Tuareg demands still exists in Niger, but it has been better managed than in Mali (ICG Niger 2013: ii, 27).

As Tuareg from Mali and Niger have previously cooperated during their uprisings, it needs to be asked why the Tuareg rebellion in 2012 only concerned Mali. One main difference between the two states in this context is the ability and will of Niger to meet Tuareg demands and better integrate them to a certain degree, an opportunity the Malian state largely missed out on. When Nigerien Tuareg returned home from Libya, their state of origin was better equipped to deal with them than the Malian state. What is more, Nigerien Tuareg might have been discouraged from starting a rebellion by the way their most recent uprising had been crushed in the past (Lins de Albuquerque 2014: 1f.). Although it appears that the Nigerien government has better control over its Tuareg population (for now) the Tuareg question has been a common denominator between Mali and Niger for decades. As a continuous source of instability, it is worthwhile taking a detailed look at the Nigerien Tuareg in this context.

Niger experienced a Tuareg rebellion in the 1990's, after some Tuareg had mobilized and set up a military organization in Libya beginning in the 1980's. After then-President Saibou had invited the Tuareg diaspora to return to Libya, Tuareg who followed his call saw themselves confronted with a military regime they did not support. The relationship between the Tuareg who had lived in Niger and the Nigerien government had already been tense, and the Tuareg had been invited back to reduce these tensions. Unfortunately, the relationship between the Tuareg and the government did not improve after the Tuareg returned. Ultimately, a massacre

[179] This is a big difference to the Malian Tuareg who do not appear to identify very much with their host state; see part II, chapter 2.2. and part III, chapter 2.2.1.

perpetrated by the Nigerien Army against civilian Tuareg sparked the outbreak of the rebellion in 1990. The rebels called for the establishment of an autonomous federal state in northern Niger, and the rebellion was essentially a seven-year-long low intensity conflict, which led to enhanced mistrust between the Tuareg and Nigerien security forces. After years of negotiations, peace agreements were signed in 1997 and 1998. They gave the Tuareg rights of greater economic and political participation and also proclaimed increased measures of decentralization. Further, several leaders of the rebellion were appointed to public offices, which gave the rebels greater political representation[180] (ICG Niger 2013: 9f.).

Conflict between the Tuareg and the Nigerien government did not break out again until 2007, when a Tuareg group staged a series of attacks on Nigerien security personnel. The reason for the attacks was the growing frustration with insufficient implementation of the peace agreements from the 1990's, and the attackers were soon joined by Tuareg from different backgrounds, which turned the issue into a more political one. The rebel movement again demanded greater socio-political integration and participation, but this time it did not gain a lot of civilian support and was heavily crushed by the Nigerien military. It was ultimately Muammar al-Gaddafi who negotiated an end to the conflict in 2009, albeit without the signing of a formal peace agreement (ICG Niger 2013: 11ff.). The current Nigerien President Issoufou has undertaken a number of measures in an effort to sustainably appease the Tuareg, among them the appointment of a Tuareg Prime Minister and enhanced economic support (ICG Niger 2013: 28).

While the Malian crisis has so far not spread to Niger, the government certainly fears this possibility, especially since there are historic links between rebel movements in both states. One example hereof are Nigeriens who supported the MNLA in Mali in 2012, where they took up arms fueled by a combination of conviction and opportunism. Also, Tuareg troops in both Mali and Niger defected to rebel movements in recent conflicts. What is more, Malian and Nigerien Tuareg widely share the same grievances (Basedau and Werner 2007: 5). Nigerien Tuareg leaders, however, do not support separatist goals within Niger, as they fear this would lead to more violence in the future[181] (ICG Niger 2013: 30, 32).

[180] The Tuareg rebellion in Niger displays several parallels to the ones in Mali. The Tuareg were obviously radicalized during their time in Libya and, as both states face the issue of ungoverned territories, some of the solutions to the conflict will likely be similar as well.

[181] This is not the case with all Tuareg, as some of them continuously believe in their right to autonomy and remain ready to fight for it if necessary.

In this context it needs to be mentioned that the Tuareg in Niger are not a united front. Just like in Mali, some of them are loyal to the Nigerien government, while their protests are on the other hand also supported by some people from other ethnic backgrounds (Basedau and Werner 2007: 4). Meanwhile, the Nigerien government continues to pursue the demilitarization and integration of the Tuareg, although both goals are being challenged by instability and economic hardships (ICG Niger 2013: 33). The challenging nature of long term appeasement of all Tuareg groups became more evident in 2007, when the Mouvement des Nigériens pour la Justice (MNJ) began attacking security posts and infrastructure surrounding uranium mines. The MNJ was founded in the same year and has since been the main violent proponent of Tuareg rebellion. Its goals are to achieve better socio-political integration and economic participation for the Tuareg, especially with regards to uranium mining. While the Nigerien north and north-east have never been completely at peace, the year 2007 marked the beginning of a new quality of regular attacks (Basedau and Werner 2007: 1f.). Still, a peace agreement was reached in 2009 and has largely been respected by both sides of the conflict (Koepf 2013: 1).

The history between the Nigerien state and its Tuareg shows that both parties maintain a delicate balance, which could easily tip to one side and cause renewed conflict. It appears therefore all the more astonishing that the Malian conflict from 2012 did not spill over into Niger. Even though tens of thousands of Nigerien Tuareg returned to Niger from Libya after the fall of Gaddafi's regime, Niger did not experience a level of violence similar to that of Mali (Pézard and Shurkin 2015: 66f.). The Tuareg conflict in Mali was about legitimacy and authority, and it carried a great deal of a "at the right spot at the right time" -momentum. In Niger, the population is generally more geographically mixed than in Mali, and there is no hub of Tuareg residency like Kidal. The division between the south and the north is also not as severe in Niger, where the capital city is much easier to reach in terms of logistics. Importantly, the Tuareg are generally better integrated in Niger than they are in Mali. In the face of turmoil in Libya, the Nigerien government also reacted by tightening security measures and confiscating weapons, whereas the Malian government failed to react to the new challenge (Pézard and Shurkin 2015: 67f., 74f.).

This study will not be able to determine conclusively why Nigerien Tuareg did not join their Malian counterparts in rebellion, as they have done previously. The author assumes that it could have been because the Nigerien Tuareg ultimately lacked motivation (as they do not appear to perceive their host state as illegitimate as the Malian Tuareg do) and because they

were too few in numbers and had no support of other non-state groups, therefore lacking sufficient momentum.

6.1.2. Ungoverned Territory as a future Challenge

The south-west of Niger is largely outside governmental control and serves as a home for violent non-state groups. Secessionists, Islamists and traffickers use this area to their advantage, with resulting instability. One example of the instability is that the Nigerien government clashed with the Algerian GSPC, the forerunner of AQIM, as early as in 2003, on Nigerien soil. AQIM did not directly operate on Nigerien territory before 2010, but instead used “subcontractors” to kidnap and transfer hostages to the group in Mali. In 2010, AQIM changed its strategy and began to directly attack Nigerien and western targets on Nigerien territory. Although AQIM’s manpower in Niger is likely very limited, the attacks had a profoundly negative impact on the economy and particularly on tourism in Niger (ICG Niger 2013: 34ff.).

In order to avoid further instability in the future, the Nigerien government implemented its lessons learnt from the events in Mali in 2012 and quickly stepped up its security presence in the lesser controlled areas of the state. The government also offered extended help to their Tuareg minority in the wake of these events (Koepf 2013: 1).

It is hard to find sources on security related issues concerning Niger, but it has become clear that the Nigerien state does need to prevent its north, particularly its border regions with other vulnerable states such as Mali, Libya and Nigeria, from becoming a lawless area. A corridor of Islamist groups, from the IS to AQIM and Boko Haram, would most likely go through Niger, and this needs to be prevented.

6.2. A short Overview of the Nigerien Security Forces

The Nigerien Security Forces consist of the Nigerien Armed Forces (FAN) and the National Intervention and Security Forces (FNIS). In 2012, the Army had 5,200 troops and was mainly equipped with light weapons. Niger has a small Air Force and no Navy (IISS, 2012: 447). While in relatively good shape compared to neighboring security forces, the Nigerien forces also suffer from shortcomings and logistical problems which reduce their capabilities. They further do not have a sufficient number of officers, which makes larger operations very difficult. One of the main problems with the Nigerien Army is that it is well-known for having committed violence against civilians in the 1990’s and 2000’s. Another source of conflict is that the

Nigerien Army is perceived to prefer the recruitment of certain ethnicities, although this is difficult to verify. However, it appears that nepotism is prevalent in the Army, which results in inequalities and frustration among the troops. What is more, it appears that the military is not fully controlled by the Nigerien government, which is a serious issue. Military interference is a common occurrence in Nigerien politics, and the Army played both constructive and destructive roles in the past (ICG Niger 2013: 19f., 21).

6.3. An Important geostrategic Location: Neighborhood Effects

When the conflict in Mali broke out, the Nigerien government quickly chose to engage militarily[182]. Nigerien troops were dispatched to Gao and Ménaka, and Niger allowed the US and France to use its territory as an operational base. The reasoning behind this policy is the governments' perception that AQIM poses a direct security threat to Niger. In order to contain this threat, the government is apparently willing to face the risks associated with military engagement, among them financial strains, internal political criticism and the increasing possibility of becoming a target of terrorist and insurgent groups (ICG Niger 2013: 34, 38f.).

Niger is influenced by all of its neighbor states and the events within them, yet one state of particular importance in this context is Libya. As in Mali, the situation in Libya majorly reflects on stability in Niger. This, in turn, allows for conclusions on the scope of Libyan politics in the entire region. When Niger faced Tuareg revolts between 2007 and 2009, Gaddafi effectively negotiated an end to the conflict without supporting Tuareg separatism (ICG Niger 2013: 34). This is a major difference to his action with regards to the Malian Tuareg, whose quest for independence Gaddafi had supported for years (Zoubir and Dris-Ait-Hamadouche 2013: 121; Smith 2013: 184; Kohl 2014: 430).

When the Arab Spring and violence broke out in Libya in 2011, this changed the equation for both states, as Gaddafi relied on Tuareg from Mali and Niger to protect his reign. When the regime fell, Nigerien fighters and tens of thousands of migrant workers left Libya to return to Niger, causing concerns for the national government. Years later, the south-west of Niger is still home to non-state groups and criminal networks which fight over territorial control. The area is largely outside government control and is reported to be a safe haven for terrorists who flee from Mali (ICG Niger 2013: 34f.).

[182] This was not self-evident, as they were against military engagement in Libya.

Nigeria, Niger's southern neighbor, is always a reason of concern for Niger, as violence from Nigeria has regularly spilled over into Niger due to strong socio-cultural and economic ties between the respective populations. The elevated profile of Boko Haram is therefore another security concern for Niger, albeit one it does not (yet?) share with Mali (ICG Niger 2013: 40f.).

6.4. Conclusion: The Security-Interrelation between Mali and Niger

Finding sources about stability in Niger was as challenging as finding sources concerning Mauritania, but some important conclusions can be drawn from the previous chapters. While Mauritania and Mali largely share the problem of ungoverned territories and the existence of violent non-state groups and criminal networks in these areas, the main challenge shared between Mali and Niger is the Tuareg issue. Mali and Niger also form a triangle with much stronger Algeria, which also shares in the desert border land. Importantly, Niger also shares a border with Libya, which has played an important role with regards to Tuareg conflicts in both Mali and Niger in the past.

As has been established before, the Tuareg in Mali and Niger share a similar history of conflict and the same permanent grievances. The main grievance is certainly the perceived gap between the Tuareg's demands and the concessions of the respective states. So far, neither Mali nor Niger has been fully committed to implementing bilateral agreements with the Tuareg; and the Tuareg ask for more autonomy than the states are willing to grant them. While both states seek to control the Tuareg, they are unwilling or unable to provide state services which would facilitate life for the Tuareg. While the Nigerien government proved able to handle the issue in a more constructive way, the Tuareg question still remains a constant threat to stability. And while the past indicates that the Tuareg of both states do influence each other, violence in Niger did not break out in 2012, although the Tuareg rebellion in Mali would have been a perfect opportunity to take up arms again. That led to the question why the Nigerien Tuareg did not resort to violence, and maybe the current equilibrium between the Tuareg and the Nigerien government is stronger than it appears.

It is in any case essential to make analytical distinctions between the three main groups who project potential threats to the states in the region: The Tuareg, who are ethnically and politically motivated, terrorist groups such as AQIM, who are ideologically and politically motivated, and networks of traffickers, who are financially motivated. While Mali and Mauritania largely share the terrorist threat (they also both harbor criminal networks, but these do not actively attack or destabilize the states as such), Niger and Mali share the Tuareg

threat. Thus, Mali and, to a lesser extent, Mauritania are safe havens for terrorist groups which seek to destabilize the region, while Niger and Mali share an identity-based conflict which is deeply rooted in both states. While the Tuareg have been an integral part of Mali and Niger for centuries, AQIM and its affiliates only use Mali and Mauritania as their (temporary) host states and do not share ties with these states as such. According to the author, this makes the challenge for Niger and Mali comparatively more serious, because identity issues are persistent and cannot be rooted out with a military campaign. It does, however, also make the challenge both states face a more individual one. The Tuareg issue will likely stay in the confines of their home states, and while they may seek greater autonomy or even their own state, the destabilization of their host states is not a goal in itself for them – another important difference to AQIM. It is also unclear whether the Tuareg question needs to be resolved mutually. It rather seems like a national question, especially after the Nigerien Tuareg did not join the Malian Tuareg in 2012.

During the research the author gained the impression that the Nigerien Tuareg prefer national integration over ethnic cooperation; they appear to be realist actors who follow the most viable option to achieve their goals. Also, when Gaddafi fell, the Tuareg returned to their respective host states, and the Malian Tuareg operated independently of the Nigerien Tuareg[183].

The question remains in how far the border between Libya and Niger will play a role for the stability of Mali in the future. With growing conflict and violence, it is to be feared that Islamist groups might succeed to establish sustainable links among each other, and these would have to go through Niger. As Niger also shares a border with Nigeria, it is also threatened by the presence of Boko Haram (Chivvis 2016: 5), leading to a situation where Niger is caught in a Jihadist triangle between AQIM in Mali, Boko Haram in Nigeria and the Islamic State in Libya. While Niger is not yet directly affected by these groups yet, its geostrategic location could prove to be fatal in the future. While the stability of Niger is hence important for both West and North Africa, it remains questionable whether Niger would specifically need to be included in a regional security framework for Mali. If so, it would certainly invite considerations about whether Chad and Nigeria need to be included as well, and this would make the concept much more complicated, as it would widen the prospective RSC. Considering that Chad borders the Sudan and the Central African Republic and regarding the hegemonic aspirations of Nigeria,

[183] It needs to be mentioned in this context that there was at least one group (the Niger-Mali Tuareg Alliance or ATNM led by Ibrahim ag Bahanga) which consisted of both Malian and Nigerien Tuareg and harbored pan-Tuareg feelings, but it did not reach its goals and was dissolved in 2007 (Pézard and Glatz 2010: 58).

the possible establishment of an RSC which would include all of these states appears unrealistic.

While Mali is the main *referent object*[184] in this context, the states which were introduced in the preceding chapters may be classified as *referent objects* as well. Although their survival is not acutely threatened (with the example of Libya), they all face security challenges by *functional actors* (non-state groups) to some degree. The remaining question is whether the states can be both *referent objects* and *securitizing actors*. This appears to be the case, at least when one does not make considerable distinctions between governments and states (Buzan, Waever and de Wilde 1998: 40, 42).

[184] A *unit* which is threatened in its survival but has a claim to survive.

IV Part Four

The last part of this dissertation is going to examine whether the hypothesis posed in this work held up or not. It will then proceed to answer the research question. Finally, it will give an impression of what is happening in Mali after 2012, in order to draw a conclusion and finish the dissertation with some recommendations for sustainable stability in Mali.

1. Validation of the Hypotheses

1.1. Validation of Hypothesis I:

Hypothesis I states that "Mali did not have a Regional Security Complex in 2012 and presently still does not have one because of insufficient mutual security cooperation among the states in the region. While some states in the region face the same threats, neither individual states nor region sufficiently tried to counter these threats in a concentrated effort before and after the events in Mali in 2012".

As explained in the first part of the dissertation, Regional Security Complexes are not to be defined according to geography per se, but according to the degree of security cooperation, shared threats and security interdependence between different states in a region. Regional Security Complex Theory is based on the assumption that the tendency of threats to travel easier over short distances than over long ones results in a situation where states in the same region emerge as their main mutual points of reference in terms of security. States belonging to Mali's RSC would thus be defined according to the level of mutual cooperation with regards to security threats, as strong and durable links between states are essential to construct an RSC and to distinguish an RSC from other groups of states. This also means that the Malian RSC would not necessarily include neighboring states but could include states which do not share a direct border with Mali. These states could join the RSC because they would share the same security threats and increased security interdependence with Mali (Buzan and Waever 2003: 27, 28).

In order to qualify as an RSC, a group of states or entities must possess a degree of security interdependence which is sufficiently elaborate to establish them as an interconnected set, which in turn distinguishes them from other Regional Security Complexes. RSC's define themselves as substructures of the international system by relative intensity of internal security interdependence between the units belonging to an RSC and by their distinction from

other RSC's. RSC's are therefore functionally defined regions or clusters of states, and this definition does not necessarily have to be identical with the geographic understanding or definition of the respective region. Historically developed fears, friendships, conflicts and mistrust among a group of units are all comprised in the definition of an RSC. The RSC is the structure which moderates and mediates the actions and interactions of and between these units (Buzan and Waever 2003: 48, 50f.).

As the analysis in this work shows, security cooperation between Mali and its neighbors is not sufficiently established to constitute an RSC. This work took a detailed look at official regional organizations and cooperation between individual states (which are not necessarily institutionalized). As was shown, ECOWAS is by far the most established and effective organ of regional cooperation with regards to Mali and West Africa. Nonetheless, even ECOWAS displays significant shortcomings in regional security cooperation in general and particularly in the case of Mali. Being underfunded and understaffed, one of ECOWAS' main shortcomings is its inability to act independently. ECOWAS is too dependent on aid from international organizations such as the UN to operate as an autonomous RSC. Further, while the Nigerian hegemony does not constitute a contradiction to the development of an RSC, it has the potential to halt further development towards one. If Nigeria, which faces several serious challenges in terms of security, becomes more conflicted or a failing state, this could easily render ECOWAS immobilized or even unravel the organization. Maybe most importantly, security dynamics within ECOWAS appear to be rather unstructured. Individual states share several links with other states and, most notably, with non-state actors. However, no pattern of security cooperation emerges which appears stable enough to distinguish ECOWAS from other groups of states in terms of security. This is especially so because non-member states such as Algeria, Chad and Cameroon are involved in the security of several ECOWAS-member states to some degree[185]. Nevertheless, being the strongest African REC and having acted on behalf of security before, ECOWAS should certainly be called a *proto-complex*[186].

When focusing on Mali, the question of an RSC in West Africa is particularly complex. Mali is strongly connected to several other states, which are in turn not always connected to each other. Instead, they share security concerns with third states which would more likely be

[185] Algeria is particularly important for Mali, while Chad and Cameroon play an important role for Nigeria and the fight against Boko Haram (Beumler 2015: 209f.; Chivvis 2016: 5).
[186] See Buzan and Waever 2003, page 239.

classified as belonging to other security systems[187]. This shows that it would be difficult to define the exact boundaries of a potential RSC. Mauritania, Algeria and Libya would definitely need to be part of an RSC with Mali. Except for Mali, none of these states is a member of ECOWAS. A possible inclusion of Niger is a more complicated issue, as Niger would certainly widen the scope to include Nigeria and possibly Chad, with which Niger shares security concerns (IISS, The Fight against Boko Haram, 2015). One problem with regards to an RSC for Mali is therefore the question of geographic demarcation. Where would the RSC stop, and where would the next RSC begin?

To solve these mutual geographic and security challenges, it would actually make sense to include northern Mali in an RSC with its three northern neighbors, while the south of Mali could form an RSC with the southern neighbors. This is likely unachievable (and potentially not desirable) in an institutionalized form, as it would probably require the division of Mali. It might, however, be achievable in the form of security cooperation on a less institutionalized level[188]. If the states to Mali's south and those to Mali's north each formed an RSC and Mali was to remain an insulator state, the two geographically distinct parts of the country could each cooperate with "their" RSC. Alternatively, if parts of West and North Africa were to form a giant RSC, there could be a southern and a northern *subcomplex* (see part I, chapter 1), which could each deal with their respective security issues and figure out how to best stabilize Mali among them[189].

As there is no coherent picture of a sufficiently functioning cooperation between the states which actually influence security in Mali, the author holds that Mali did not have an RSC in 2012. Instead, Mali is part of ECOWAS, an organization which lacks sufficient capacity for an RSC and does not include the states which matter most for security in Mali, namely Algeria and Libya[190]. In line with Buzan and Waever, these criteria would make Mali an insulator state, and the author believes that this remains an accurate analysis. As the last chapter of this study

[187] In this context, an RSC with Algeria would probably need to include Tunisia and Morocco; at least if the negative peace between Algeria and Morocco is not seen as an ideal state, especially since it undermines the activities of the Arab Maghreb Union (The Economist, Open that Border, 2010; Stratfor, Bad Blood still flows between Algeria and Morocco, 2016). In any case, the question of how to resolve the tensions between Algeria and Morocco over the Western Sahara (Arieff 2013: 13) remains. An RSC with Libya would probably look towards Egypt and Tunisia, which are all threatened by Jihadists who are affiliated with each other to some degree (Chivvis 2016: 5). It is questionable whether Algeria and Libya could be integrated into one RSC, depending on their willingness to cooperate.

[188] See part III, chapter 1.1.2.; regional organizations do not usually line up with RSC's.

[189] RSCT states that *subcomplexes* are especially common in big RSC's with many member states (Buzan and Waever 2003: 52).

[190] This leads to the question of whether ECOWAS maybe even plays a counter-productive role in the case of Mali.

will show, this situation did not change much in the years following 2012, which is why Mali still does not have an RSC.

1.2. Validation of Hypothesis II:

According to hypothesis II, "insecurity was 'imported' into Mali due to the absence of an RSC. This refers especially to Algeria and Libya, as both states' policies had a negative influence on stability in Mali. On the other hand, had Mali had a functioning RSC, the failure of the Malian state in 2012 could have been prevented".

This hypothesis has been proven to some extent in the course of this work. The findings prove that a good part, while not all, of the instability which came to the forefront in Mali in 2012 was actually imported from other states. This began with the GSPC and AQIM, who moved to Mali after having been pushed out of their state of origin, Algeria, by security forces. The Malian government then left AQIM to consolidate itself in the area for years, and it did not counter the establishment of criminal networks on its territory either. Economically, socially and ethnically flawed internal politics allowed for the development of elaborate illegal structures on Malian territory. Meanwhile, resentment and deprivation had been fostering among Mali's ethnic minority, the Tuareg, for decades. This long-simmering, low-intensity conflict completely changed its dynamics when the Gaddafi regime, which had previously hosted and trained many of Mali's Tuareg, fell. Many of these Tuareg, who had to flee Libya for fear of repressions, were battle-experienced and well-equipped. They had just lost the war over their second home state and they were likely aggressive and aggravated. When they returned to Mali, they began attacking government institutions in the north. They soon connected with other violent non-state groups and the coup by Captain Sanogo ultimately presented them with an opportunity to begin a full-scale military offensive. When this happened, neither the Malian government nor any other state in the region found an effective response to the rebels. After African efforts proved insufficient it was the IC, most notably France, who found a decisive military response to the secessionist-Islamist insurgency.

However, the Malian state also contributed majorly to its own demise. By ignoring criminal networks and terrorist groups and by completely neglecting the northern part of its territory, destabilizing influences could easily develop. Overall, the Malian government displayed severe shortcomings in the areas of authority, capacity, legitimacy and conflict prevention for decades.

One can therefore establish that hypothesis II is partially correct. AQIM and its affiliates are serious threats to security, and they were clearly flushed into Mali by Algerian security initiatives. The longstanding marginalization of the Tuareg on the other hand is clearly a home-made problem, which the Malian state could have handled much better (especially in comparison to Niger). Nevertheless, the Tuareg were majorly empowered by the politics of Muammar al-Gaddafi, whose demise was ultimately an accelerator to the Tuareg's military advance (and very possibly also the cause). Hence, the combination of failed policies at home and bad neighborhood effects in a weak region was the cause of the secessionist-Islamist rebellion in 2012.

A functioning RSC would maybe have accepted the responsibility to push the Malian government towards a security strategy for its northern territory. In any case, an RSC would have had the responsibility (and possibly the means) to stop the rebel advance and to react much stronger to the coup once the conflict in Mali had broken out in earnest. An RSC cannot stand by while one of its member states unravels. That is precisely one of the functions of an RSC, as member states seek to reduce threat potentials in their neighborhood. The capture of territory by insurgents in northern Mali was caused by a series of dynamics which had long been in the making and spiraled out of control when the Tuareg returned from Libya. An RSC could have contained the GSPC and AQIM in the first place, just like it could have contained the Tuareg threat after the fall of Gaddafi. The culmination of events led to the failure of the Malian state in 2012, and sufficient links and security cooperation would have been the accurate way to prevent this crisis.

All in all, the author therefore holds hypothesis II to be valid as well. Although the weakness of the Malian state did, in the long run, have more influence on the security situation than might have been clear at first sight, the influence of some neighboring states also played a decisive role in the destabilization of Mali. And while it is impossible to predict what could have happened if Mali had had an RSC, it is likely that an RSC could indeed have prevented or contained the insurgency movement in 2012.

1.3. Validation of Hypothesis III:

Hypothesis III claims that "the absence of an RSC and the internal weakness of the Malian state enabled AQIM and affiliated groups to occupy Malian territory and to threaten to control the entire state. Also, the development of AQIM and its affiliates from terrorist groups to an insurgency movement was the crucial element (or trigger) that led to the failure of the Malian state".

The first part of this hypothesis has certainly been proven. While other factors such as the fall of Gaddafi and the ensuing migration of militarized Tuareg also played a role, it is undeniable that the weakness of both the region and the Malian state led to a situation where the respective non-state groups were largely free to act as they pleased. They met no major obstacles when they established their safe haven and pursued their economic activities in northern Mali, and it would have been the responsibility of the state (foremost) and the region to contain this development. This did not happen for a multitude of reasons, among them corruption, lack of conscientiousness, and financial incapacity. All of these reasons lead back to the weakness of the state and the region, and both were largely responsible for the mainly uncontested occupation of Malian territory by non-state groups[191].

Since Mali proved unwilling or unable to fight AQIM appropriately, it would have been the responsibility of an RSC to either make Mali act or act itself. The containment of widespread criminal networks would in either case have been a top priority for the entire region.

The second part of this hypothesis is not as easy to answer. Ultimately, it has become very clear in the course of this work that the failure of the Malian state was caused by multiple factors. Next to a considerable bad neighborhood effect, there was also an "at the right spot, at the right time" momentum with the culmination of coup and insurgency. However, terrorist groups per se cannot sustainably threaten governments, as this requires insurgent qualities. The crucial challenge for states which host these groups is therefore to counter the evolvement of insurgency movements at an early stage, and this did not happen in Mali. Weak states can handle asymmetric terrorist attacks to a much larger degree than they can handle insurgent operations, which are much closer to conventional military operations. Insurgents operate more akin to a regular army than terrorist groups, but another crucial difference is their dealing with the local population. Insurgents aim to consolidate their power in a specific territory, which means they substitute the government to a certain degree. This makes it increasingly hard to fight them, as they may have created dependency and even loyalty and trust between themselves and the local population (see part I, chapter 4.1.2.).

The case of Mali is actually a prime example for what can happen when different groups form an insurgency movement. Had the governmental neglect of the north and the resulting establishment of terrorist groups and other non-state groups not culminated when the Tuareg

[191] As has been established in part I, chapter 4.2., strong states would not tolerate a loss of the monopoly of force and the development of ungoverned areas on their territory; see also Chivvis and Liepman 2013: 9.

returned after the fall of Gaddafi, the latent but growing instability in Mali could have persisted for years without leading to state failure.

It is of course impossible to determine in how far the rebels were motivated to push forward with the military offensive by the coup d'état. However, the coup on its own would not have led to state failure, and the rebel offensive would likely have been equally successful without the coup, considering the poor condition of the Malian Army. This also explains why Mali was called a "posterchild of democracy" and was not on the agenda of the IC as a potential threat to regional peace. The Malian government and state had been seriously weak for decades, but they had found a way to meddle through. This would probably have gone on for a while, as most actors in charge appeared to benefit from the status quo to some degree. The government and the traffickers benefited financially, AQIM had a safe haven and there was no protest among the population. The biggest exceptions were two particular groups, the Tuareg and the military, especially lower-ranking troops. This was a crucial combination, as the military thus lacked the motivation to protect the state from its main threat. There is no information about this in the sources, but the author believes the return of the Tuareg from Libya was a game changer for AQIM. The group never before engaged in a conventional military offensive to this extent, and it did not have the resources to attack state forces in this manner on its own. However, when the Tuareg returned, AQIM had the opportunity to join them in their cause[192], and the (short-lived) cooperation of several groups led to the development of an insurgency movement. Had it not been for this movement, which used conventional means to attack state forces and then proceeded to claim administrative authority and set up its own government, the Malian state would surely not have been pushed over the edge. Therefore, the assumption of the third hypothesis is correct. However weak the Malian state was, there were no signs of its demise in late 2011. The emerging insurgency movement completely changed the equation, and the Malian state would still be in complete disarray, had it not been for the intervention of international troops.

2. Answering the Research Question: Which Factors led to the Failure of the Malian State in 2012?

As intended, the work on the hypothesis gradually uncovered the reasons for (temporary) state failure in Mali in 2012. It comes as no surprise that it was the combination of several factors which led to the demise of the Malian state. However, as it is hard to gain conclusive

[192] It is also possible that the Tuareg needed the support of groups like AQM for their military offensive.

information on both non-state groups and the respective governments, it was not clear from the beginning how exactly state failure was caused in Mali.

One assumption in this work was already proven right: There can, and there should be, early-warning systems. This is evidenced in the combination of long term and short term factors of Malian state failure. The latent weakness of the state is the most impactful long term factor per se. For decades, Mali had a corrupt government, suffered from insufficient administrative and executive capacity and faced severe infrastructural challenges, most notably in the north. The most important element of state weakness in this case was the lack of will or capacity of the state to fight violent non-state groups on its territory. Several external factors had a negative influence on the situation on Mali, especially with regards to Libya and, earlier, Algeria. And while a bad neighborhood can have devastating influences on an already weak state, the long term reasons for Mali's state failure were largely homemade. A weak and unmotivated military, a significant disenfranchised minority whose demands were never met, and a vast and largely ungoverned territory which allowed for the settlement of criminal groups were the most important long term factors. In this situation, which was characterized by latent instability, two main short term factors led to a culmination of the situation and eventually to state failure. These factors were the return of the "Libyan" Tuareg groups to Mali after the Arab Spring and the coup d'état led by Captain Sanogo. Both factors contributed to the Malian Army's failure to hold territory in the face of an insurgency.

The weakness of the Malian state had been persistent for decades without any serious attempt to contain it, be it by the IC, by the region or by the state. It should be clear that a state as weak as Mali is easily threatened in its existence, because state institutions will likely not be able to counter serious attacks to a sufficient degree. This task could then be taken on by the region, but the case of Mali shows that neighborhood alone is not enough to make other states act. This is exactly why an RSC is necessary, especially in regions with weak states: States which cannot cope with threats on their own need reliable partners who prevent the worst before the situation gets out of hand. The Malian state failed because it had established good preconditions for violent-non state groups over decades. While the state per se probably could have existed in this delicate equilibrium of instability for a long time, it was obvious that it would not be able to handle any serious security challenges on its own. Considering the precarious situation in northern Mali, it was maybe only a matter of time before something was bound to happen. The fact that, with the Tuareg advance, a homegrown and ethnically-based movement ultimately triggered the offensive which pushed the state over the edge was

probably a coincidence, but it does not mean that these events could not have been contained and prevented.

The case of Mali is therefore an excellent illustration of what can happen when weak states are left to their own devices. As Mali is, unfortunately, rather the rule than the exception, the IC needs to be ready to deal with these cases in the best way possible. According to the author, the best way would be to establish Regional Security Complexes akin to those conceptualized by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever. The establishment of RSC's should be encouraged and it should be followed by the implementation of comprehensive preventive measures[193]. Terrorist groups, insurgency movements and state weakness share a complex relationship, and they need to be contained to prevent state failure. This is a challenging task, but it will only grow more difficult to handle the longer the situation persists. Prevention is key to state stability, to avoid violence and contain conflict. The sooner this lesson is learned, the quicker the respective decisions can be implemented – and the more likely they are to succeed.

3. Mali after 2012: Recent Developments and Threat Assessment

As the following chapters will show, Mali is still far from achieving peace and stability – it might on the contrary just be on the brink of a prolonged asymmetric conflict of a different nature than in 2012. Indeed, it looks as if conflict dynamics in Mali are changing dramatically at the time of this writing, which will be explained in the following.

3.1. The Aftermath of the Islamist-Secessionist Insurgency: Opération Serval

Several months after the swiping military advance of the rebels into the north, the Malian government recognized that it would not be able to handle the threat on its own and called for international support. This was mainly caused by a renewed rebel offensive which suddenly headed south, roughly in the direction of Bamako. This caused panic among the Malian government, which requested immediate help. In January 2013, AQIM, Ansar Dine and MUJAO rapidly advanced south- and westwards and finally took the cities Konna and Diabaly. Shortly before, Mali's interim-President Traoré had officially requested international military help, and Opération Serval was initiated on January 11th, 2013 (UN, MUNISMA, 2016; Boeke and Schuurmann 2015: 801; Chivvis 2016: 93f.).

[193] There naturally needs to be an intrinsic motivation for the establishment of an effective RSC, as anything else would not work.

The French Opération Serval began on January 11th, 2013, and it was well-received among the Malian population. The Operation was divided into two phases: The first ten days were allocated to securing Bamako, halting the terrorist offensive and preparing for the arrival of African troops. The second phase focused on the re-establishment of the territorial integrity of the Malian state and CT. The official goals of the operation were to fight and defeat the rebels in order to restore the sovereignty and stability of the Malian state (Ehrhart 2015: 46; Heisbourg 2013: 11). Admittedly, these goals were unlikely to be completely achieved; they are to be interpreted in the light of the situation in Mali prior to 2012, when there was no complete sovereignty of the Malian state either.

The Operation included raids, airstrikes and several thousand boots on the ground, some of which came from non-ECOWAS-member Chad, whose troops are especially trained for desert combat. The French soldiers at times also fought in cooperation with Malian troops, and rebel-held northern towns fell quickly, mostly in a matter of days (Harmon 2014: 209f.). Interestingly, the French also cooperated with the MNLA (after the latter had distanced themselves from Ansar Dine) to fight the groups they considered the bigger threat, mainly the radical Islamists of MUJAO and Ansar Dine. While the Islamists in some instances fled the area before the arrival of the French troops, sometimes French troops encountered heavy resistance, including ambushes and suicide bombings. Nevertheless, the military operations continuously moved further north and pushed the Islamists out of Mali. The fact that many fighters were simply driven out of Mali[194] resulted in the continuation, and relocation, of the threat. Opération Serval was successful in Counter-Terrorism[195] and took the safe haven away from the non-state groups, which made it a good starting point for follow-up missions (Chivvis 2016: 12, 16, 161). This was further confirmed by reports that Islamists had found refuge in Algeria, although likely not with the consent of the Algerian government (Harmon 2014: 211ff.; Boeke and Tisseron 2015: 35).

Only a few days after the beginning of Opération Serval, on January 16th, Mokhtar Belmokhtar and his *Al Mourabitoune* infamously attacked the Algerian In Amenas gas facility, allegedly as revenge for the French intervention in Mali[196]. It is however very unlikely that the planning for this attack had not begun before the French intervention had been set into motion (Chivvis

[194] Official estimates state that French forces killed a maximum of 700 fighters, which is roughly a third of AQIM and its affiliates at the time they headed south in January 2012 (Chivvis 2016: 143).
[195] Christopher Chivvis claims it was Counterinsurgency, see Chivvis 2016: 156.
[196] The attack can be seen as a hint that Algeria is likely not as strong as it presents itself. It prompted the Algerian government to close the border with Mali, which in turn hindered civilians to flee Mali.

2016: 109). Importantly, In Amenas is geographically close to a region in Libya beyond state control, and it is likely that the attacks had been planned there (Harmon 2014: 214f.). Fighting in Mali did not end until March 2013, and while the Malian Army had supported the fight in Timbuktu and Gao, the fight in Kidal, the last region where the fighting continued, was conducted by French and Chadian troops. In May 2013 a suicide bomber attacked a Nigerien Army base in Arlit and killed dozens of Nigerien troops. Similar to the In Amenas attack, this attack was believed to have been staged in Libya, and while French troops had dealt a significant blow to AQIM in Mali, this proved that radical Islamists were still active in the region (Harmon 2014: 217).

After Opération Serval had come to an end, the European Union Training Mission to Mali (EUTM) began in April 2013, with a focus on training and advising Malian troops in order to build stronger military forces (Harmon 2014: 219). In the frame of EUTM, lower military ranks are provided with training to improve their effectiveness, while the defense ministry is also being reformed to increase its efficiency. The goal of the training was the establishment of eight self-supported, yet united battalions, with a focus on CT and stabilization capabilities. The soldiers were especially trained in offensive operations, reconnaissance, defense and area control (Chivvis 2016: 146f.). EUTM is still operating in 2016, and Germany decided to commit hundreds of additional troops to help stabilize Mali in late January 2016 (L'Express, Mali, 2015; Deutscher Bundestag, MINUSMA und EUTM Mali, 2016). Also in April 2013 began the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), which followed the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA). MINUSMA consists of thousands of peacekeeping troops and explicitly authorizes a French intervention force. MINUSMA faces challenging tasks from stabilization to the re-establishment of state authority, including Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of former fighters (DDR)[197]. The majority of MINUSMA's troops are stationed in the north of Mali, with a lighter presence in southern cities. It cannot only be argued that, facing this enormous task, the mission is understaffed, but much of the personnel is also ill-equipped and poorly trained. In practice, the majority of the MINUSMA-troops were West African and Chadian forces who had already been there – they merely changed their berets. Deployment commitments of individual states vary over time, and it was certainly a setback when both Nigeria and Chad withdrew their troops in summer 2013. Faced with the threat of AQIM and like-minded groups, the UN stressed that MINUSMA was neither a CT-mission nor a peace enforcement mission, which

[197] EUTM is in charge of Security Sector Reform, or SSR.

hints at the limited offensive capacity of the mission (Kühne 2015: 125f.; UN, MINUSMA, 2016; Chivvis 2016: 141).

As for Germany, the German parliament decided to deploy troops for a contribution to MINUSMA in late June 2013, about two months after the mission had been authorized. On January 28th, 2016, the German parliament decided to send a high number of additional troops to Mali to reinforce their contribution to MINUSMA (Bundeswehr, die Bundeswehr in Mali (MINUSMA), 2016).

On June 18th, 2013, the Ouagadougou Accords were signed between the Malian government and secular Tuareg groups, who were represented in the High Council for the Unity of the Azawad (HCUA). The Accords reached a ceasefire agreement and called for the re-establishment of state authority in Mali's north, continuous peace negotiations and national elections, among other things.

Peaceful presidential elections were held in July 2013, and a relatively high number of the eligible electorate cast their vote. Since September 4th 2013, the President of Mali is Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta (IBK), who had previously served as Prime Minister under Alpha Konaré (Harmon 2014: 225). Further, a "road map" for transition and peace was also agreed upon in 2013, which included both military and socio-political goals that need to be achieved in order to stabilize the state[198] (UN, MINUSMA, 2016; Chivvis 2016: 147ff.).

It remains to be seen whether the new government will successfully implement much needed reforms to consolidate the Malian state. This also needs to include the fight against terrorists, insurgents and criminal networks and setting an end to corruption. The long standing grievances of ethnic minorities also need to be addressed in a sustainable manner, and the legitimacy of the government would greatly benefit from sustainable democratic reforms.

Even though the IC generally appears to have shifted its focus from military engagement to political restoration (Harmon 2014: 220), a renewed surge in Islamist violence began in 2014. Not only have northern towns since then suffered from suicide attacks, but rocket and IED attacks have also become quite regular (L'Express, Mali, 2015; L'Express, Derrière l'Attentat au Mali, 2015; Jeune Afrique, Mali: Pourquoi le Sud est menacé, 2015; Boeke and Tisseron 2014: 32). In late February 2013, then-U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton defined the fight against

[198] In late 2014, the MNLA, the HCUA and other Tuareg groups decided to form a military cooperation with the goal to protect civilians in the north, mainly from governmental forces. The groups affirmed their interest in stability and emphasized that they would adhere to the peace agreements (RFI, Mali: Les Mouvements de l'*Azawad* créent une Coordination militaire, 2014).

terrorism, a strong democratic government and an improved humanitarian and economic situation as the primary objectives for Mali (Harmon 2014: 220). However, judging from the previous analysis, the reformation of the Malian military and the general weakness of the Malian state will be the main challenges for stability in Mali, and it will likely take years to rebuild these institutions.

Peace agreements between different Malian conflict parties were signed in May and June 2015, and it was hoped that they would contribute to the stabilization of the state. However, the Tuareg were under considerable international pressure to sign the agreements, and they wanted to distinguish themselves from the groups who were unwilling to denounce violence by signing it. Mistrust between the Tuareg and the Malian government remains strong, and tensions between different rebel groups increased immediately prior to the peace deal. The peace agreements which have been signed so far are therefore just the beginning of a process to reach long term stability, and the following chapters will show that the threats from violent non-state groups persist, albeit in a different form (Bundeswehr, die Bundeswehr in Mali (MINUSMA), 2016; DW, Tuareg-Rebellen unterzeichnen Friedensabkommen, 2015; The Guardian, Mali's Peace Deal, 2015; UN, Signature de l' Accord pour la Paix et la Réconciliation au Mali, 2015).

3.1.1. After Serval: Opération Barkhane

Barkhane is the name of the follow-up mission to the previously described Opération Serval. While Serval was tasked with the hunt of terrorist groups (CT), Barkhane aims at preventing the establishment of new Jihadist strongholds, spanning territory from Libya to the Atlantic Coast. The operation is conducted by about 3.000 French troops in cooperation with troops from Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso. The headquarters of the Operation are in the Chadian capital N'Djamena, and the mandate allows the troops to operate across borders in the frame of Counter-Terrorism. One focus is to train the participating troops in Counter-Terrorism, which is also what the mandate has been built on [199]. Also, the responsibility for security has officially been shifted back from the French to the Malian government and the UN. As it appears, France also expects Algeria to cooperate in the context of the operation, yet another sign of the relevance of Algerian participation in regional security

[199] In comparison to Opération Serval, troops deployed in Opération Barkhane already stated that the terrorist groups had adapted their strategy to better deal with the military offensive against them (France 24, France expands its African anti-Jihadist Warfront, 2014).

issues (Marchal 2015: 30; Ministère de la Défense, Opération Barkhane, 2015; BBC, France sets up anti-Islamist force in Africa's Sahel, 2014; Chivvis 2016: 154).

While there is still a presence of international troops on Malian territory, it is clear that this conflict cannot be resolved by military means alone. Right after the election in 2013, the MNLA declared that the establishment of an independent *Azawad* remained its primary goal, and that it would again resort to violence to achieve this goal. In line with this, many violent non-state groups from the north refused to take part in a peace process with the Malian government (Kühne 2015: 121).

In terms of regional measures, only few steps have been taken to improve security cooperation since 2012. Among them was the establishment of new committees of CEMOC, the General Staff Joint-Operations Committee, which had been founded by Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Algeria in 2010. Unfortunately, CEMOC, which was based on the idea that the participating states combat their shared threats together, proved to be ineffective early on. CEMOC was supposed to enhance intelligence cooperation with regards to Counter-Terrorism and the fight against trafficking networks, but cooperation proved to be difficult from the start, especially because the Malian government was hesitant to share information (Zoubir and Dris-Aït-Hamadouche 2013: 117f.).

One of most recent developments is certainly the agreement on enhanced security cooperation in the Sahel among Mali, Niger, Chad, Mauritania and Burkina Faso. The group is called the G5 Sahel and the headquarters are stationed in Mauritania (Reuters, G5, 2016; Le Monde, G5 du Sahel, 2014). The G5 Sahel held their second meeting shortly after the attack on the Radisson Blu in Bamako in November 2015, and the members agreed to create a joint military force and a defense committee to improve their Counter-Terrorism efforts. As the Chadian President Idriss Déby pointed out: "*Nous sommes tous Sahéliens, nous sommes confrontés aux mêmes problems. Nous n' avons d'autre choix que d'unir nous efforts*"[200] (RFI, Terrorisme, 2016). More recently, Nigerien President Issoufou also underlined the importance of regional cooperation. He pointed out that state failure in Libya and Mali is clearly linked to the new wave of violence in Mali's south and further declared that Mali's neighbor states could not expect to be left unaffected by insecurity in Mali (Maliactu, Mali: Sahel, 2016). Their main

[200] This translates to "we are all from the Sahel, we are all confronted with the same problems and we have no other choice but to unite our efforts". Translation by the author.

policy approach in this context is to fight poverty, which the member states view as the root cause for terrorism and organized crime (Le Monde, G5 du Sahel, 2014).

While the Sahel-Sahara states are thus aware of the nature of the threat they face and acknowledged that regional cooperation will be necessary to efficiently counter this threat, they did so far not implement institutions which proved capable to handle the issues without help from other states.

3.1.2. The Resurgence of Violence

One major shortcoming of Opération Serval was that the terrorist and insurgent groups which had destabilized Mali were not actually defeated, as many of their members went underground, hid among the population or fled to neighboring countries (Kühne 2015: 122). After a while, the respective groups therefore returned to their activities: MUJAO took hostages in February 2014, and Belmokhtar had already merged his "Signatories with Blood" battalion with MUJAO militias in August 2013. He formed a new group by the name of *Al Mourabitoune*, who were apparently responsible for both the In Amenas attack and the hostage taking in the Radisson Blu in Bamako in November 2015[201] (L'Express, Derrière l'Attentat au Mali, 2015; Chivvis 2016: 162). In May 2014, fighting broke out between the Malian Army and the MNLA in the Kidal region, triggered by a visit from the new Prime Minister whose intention had been to demonstrate government presence in the north (Kühne 2015: 122f.; L'Express, Derrière l'Attentat au Mali, 2015).

It can generally be said that asymmetric violence in the form of terrorism is on the rise in Mali. What is new is that this especially affects the south, with the hostage taking in the Radisson Blu as the most prominent example. There have been other attacks in Bamako and other cities, and not only do these attacks display the inefficiency of peace agreements (Jeune Afrique, Mali: L'Application de l'Accord d'Alger, 2015), but they are proof of a worrisome development that threatens to completely change the equation in Mali, where several new violent non-state groups appear to have been established in the recent past (L'Express, Mali, 2015; L'Express, Derrière l'Attentat au Mali, 2015; Jeune Afrique, Mali: Pourquoi le Sud est menacé, 2015; Jeune Afrique, Mali: Une Menace terroriste omniprésente, 2015; Jeune Afrique, Terrorisme, 2015).

[201] On November 20th, *Al Mourabitoune* took hostages in the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako, leaving at least 27 dead. The group claimed the attack was supported by AQIM (RFI, Mali: Al-Mourabitoune diffuse une Photo des Assailants du Radisson, 2015).

While Mokhtar Belmokhtars' AQIM-affiliated *Al Mourabitoune* appears to be responsible for a number of these attacks (Le Figaro, L'inquiétante Détermination d' al-Mourabitoune, 2016), some observers state the most powerful groups, especially AQIM, appear to be less active than the newly formed ones. However, AQIM attacked UN military barracks in northern Mali in February 2016 (Jeune Afrique, Mali: Le Camp de la Minusma, 2016), and the author believes that the group is likely to be at least indirectly involved in some of the terrorist attacks in the south. It is especially alarming that AQIM also perpetrated an attack in the capital of Burkina Faso in January 2016, causing dozens of fatalities and proving that the group is still able to conduct high-profile attacks. On March 13th, 2016, AQIM perpetrated an attack in the Ivory Coast and killed more than 20 tourists (Jeune Afrique, Attentat au Burkina, 2016; Neue Zürcher Zeitung, Attacke auf Hotels in Côte d'Ivoire, 2016).

One theory is that AQIM might have become an umbrella for several splinter groups which operate independently and do not necessarily notify AQIM ahead of their operations (IPI, Local Networks Key to AQIM's West African Expansion, 2016). In line with the assumption of the author, Dr. Michael Barak from the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) asserts a strategic shift of AQIM. *Al-Mourabitoune* and AQIM merged back together in December 2015, and since then the group focused on attacking tourism venues in populated areas in West Africa. AQIM also increased the number of terrorist attacks, which is a clear sign that the group regathered strength and should not be written off too hastily (ICT, Signs of Change in Strategy for AQIM, 2016). Also, the fact that AQIM now operates in a growing number of South-West African states (ICT, Signs of Change in Strategy for AQIM, 2016) indicates that the instability which culminated in Mali in 2012 is already spreading across the region.

Corresponding to the heightened military presence since Opération Serval, insurgent-like groups now have a harder time operating in northern Mali, which is why smaller, more terrorism-focused groups are on the rise in the south of the country. Significantly, these groups are often joined or formed by natives who blend in with the local population. The new groups appear to be small, with different origins and goals, and their diversity constitutes a considerable obstacle to the apprehension of the members. One example hereof is Amadou Koufa's Front de Libération du Macina, a mainly Peul group whose narrative is built on ethnicity and Islamism. His group has only recently come to the forefront of the Malian conflict, and it is believed to be linked to Ansar Dine. Operating along the Malian borders with Mauritania, Burkina Faso and the Ivory Coast, the Macina-group tries to destabilize an area that has mostly been unaffected by terrorism in the past. Akin to Boko Haram, the group brutally attacks

smaller villages on both sides of Mali's southern borders, which makes persecuting them harder for the Malian military. Amadou Koufa, the leader of the group, is a well-known preacher from Mopti, and the goal of the group is the establishment of a Kalifate in Mopti. The group uses feelings of marginalization among the Peul minority in Mali to generate supporters, thus mixing religious ideology with ethnicity-based issues of identity[202] (FAZ, Terror in Mali, 2016; Le Monde, Deux Groupes Djihadistes, 2015; Jeune Afrique, Mali le Front de Libération du Macina, 2015; Zenn 2015: 3ff.).

While there is not much information about these newer groups yet, there is equally little information about the whereabouts of Mokhtar Belmokhtar and Iyad Ag Ghali, the most important terrorist leaders in Mali, who are probably currently in hiding (FAZ, Terror in Mali, 2016; Jeune Afrique, Mali: Pourquoi le Sud est menacé, 2015). While the south of Mali is thus at threat of being destabilized as well, instability is still pervasive in the north, where rebel groups keep trying to enforce their will upon the populatio[203] (Tagesschau, Bundeswehreinsatz in Mali, 2016).

The development towards more urban-centered terrorism in Mali is particularly worrisome. Not only does it lift the conflict to another level, which is potentially more dangerous to civilians and harder to conquer, but it also shows that there are different causes for groups to take up arms. Some of these causes (or at least the reasons they put forward for recruitment), as can be observed in the Macina-group, appear to have their roots deep in the Malian state and history, as opposed to more generalist (Jihadist) agendas like AQIM's. While there was, until recently, a much more stable situation in the south than in the north, it looks as if the south of Mali might become significantly destabilized, which would make nationwide stabilization efforts harder and would likely affect the entire region. If terrorist attacks continue in the south, especially in Bamako, the state will become much closer to becoming a long term failed state. A failed state in the heart of West Africa would obviously constitute a regional security challenge due to the history of conflicts and coups d'état as well as the residency of terrorist groups and trafficking networks in the region. Therefore, while it has so far certainly been in the interest of Mali's northern neighbors to stabilize the state, this is also becoming increasingly important for its southern neighbors, who already face security challenges due to instability in Mali's south.

[202] In this context, it needs to be pointed out that information on the Macina-group is very scarce, with some sources even questioning the name and the actual existence of the group as a fixed organization.
[203] And schools remain closed due to security concerns.

To emphasize the importance of preventive action against state failure, the author correlated the data from the Fragile States Index (FSI) from Mali's neighboring countries with the events in 2012. While the reasons hereof can be manifold (especially in the case of Libya), it is noticeable that none of the states investigated in this thesis had a positive development in the FSI after 2012. On the contrary, the stability of these states seems to either stall or deteriorate. This is most noticeable in Mauritania, which shows a dramatic deterioration in its ranking in the FSI. Both Mauritania and Niger show drastic deterioration in the categories of *refugees and IDP's*, *factionalized elites* and *external intervention*, all of which were likely aggravated by the events in Mali in 2012.

As mentioned, these numbers cannot be attributed to the events in Mali in 2012 per se, but they do provide for an interesting observation in the context of this study.

An Overview of Algeria's Development in the Fragile States Index from 2006-2015														
Year	Rank	Demo-graphic Pressures	Refugees and IDP's	Group Grievance	Human Flight and Brain Drain	Uneven Economic De-velopment	Poverty and Economic Decline	State Legitimacy	Public Services	Human Rights and Rule of Law	Security Apparatus	Factional-ized Elites	External Inter-vention	Total
2006	72	6.0	6.6	7.1	5.6	7.4	3.5	7.5	7.6	7.5	6.8	6.4	5.8	77.8
2007	89	6.1	6.7	7.0	5.6	7.3	3.5	7.3	7.0	7.4	6.4	5.9	5.7	75.9
2008	80	6.1	6.8	7.2	5.9	7.3	4.0	7.5	6.8	7.6	6.7	6.2	5.7	77.8
2009	73	6.7	6.7	7.7	6.2	7.3	4.6	7.7	6.7	7.6	7.0	6.7	5.7	80.6
2010	71	6.7	6.5	8.2	6.1	7.1	5.1	7.5	6.5	7.6	7.5	6.8	5.7	6.8
2011	81	6.4	6.1	7.8	5.7	6.8	5.2	7.1	6.1	7.5	7.2	6.8	5.3	78.0
2012	77	6.1	6.5	8.1	5.4	6.5	5.5	7.2	5.9	7.4	7.1	6.8	5.5	78.1
2013	73	5.8	7.0	7.8	5.1	6.2	5.8	7.4	5.9	7.7	7.4	7.3	5.2	78.7
2014	71	5.7	6.7	7.9	5.0	5.9	6.1	7.5	6.1	7.4	7.5	7.3	5.7	78.8
2015	67	5.7	6.4	8.2	5.1	6.0	6.4	7.8	5.8	7.1	8.0	7.7	5.4	79.6

An Overview of Libya's Development in the Fragile States Index from 2006-2015														
Year	Rank	Demo-graphic Pressures	Refugees and IDP's	Group Grievance	Human Flight and Brain Drain	Uneven Economic De-velopment	Poverty and Economic Decline	State Legitimacy	Public Services	Human Rights and Rule of Law	Security Apparatus	Factional-ized Elites	External Inter-vention	Total
2006	95	6.0	2.1	5.5	4.0	7.3	5.1	7.5	4.5	8.1	5.5	7.9	5.0	68.5
2007	115	6.2	2.6	5.6	4.0	7.3	5.3	7.4	4.5	8.1	5.3	8.0	5.0	69.3
2008	111	6.2	4.0	5.6	4.0	7.3	5.3	7.4	4.5	8.1	5.6	7.0	5.0	70.0
2009	112	5.9	4.2	5.8	4.0	7.1	5.5	7.1	4.2	8.1	5.4	7.1	5.0	69.4
2010	111	5.7	4.3	5.8	4.2	6.9	5.3	7.3	4.2	8.3	5.2	7.1	4.8	69.1
2011	111	5.5	4.6	6.0	3.9	6.9	4.6	7.3	4.3	8.3	5.9	7.0	4.4	68.7
2012	50	5.8	5.1	7.0	3.9	7.0	5.5	8.1	7.6	9.0	9.0	8.0	9.0	84.9
2013	54	5.5	5.4	7.4	4.2	6.7	5.0	8.4	7.3	9.0	8.9	8.0	8.8	84.5
2014	41	5.7	5.7	7.5	5.5	6.4	6.1	8.5	7.4	8.7	9.2	8.1	9.0	87.8
2015	25	5.4	7.4	7.8	6.4	6.1	8.0	9.8	7.5	9.0	9.3	9.1	9.5	95.3

An Overview of Mauritania's Development in the Fragile States Index from 2006-2015														
Year	Rank	Demo-graphic Pressures	Refugees and IDP's	Group Grievance	Human Flight and Brain Drain	Uneven Economic De-velopment	Poverty and Economic Decline	State Legitimacy	Public Services	Human Rights and Rule of Law	Security Apparatus	Factional-ized Elites	External Inter-vention	Total
2006	41	9.0	5.9	8.5	5.0	7.0	7.8	7.1	8.2	7.1	7.6	7.9	6.7	87.8
2007	45	8.7	6.2	8.0	5.0	7.0	7.8	6.8	8.1	7.1	7.4	7.9	6.7	86.7
2008	47	8.4	6.2	8.0	5.0	7.0	7.8	6.6	8.1	6.9	7.2	7.6	7.3	86.1
2009	46	8.7	6.2	8.2	5.0	7.0	7.8	7.0	8.5	7.1	7.9	8.0	7.3	88.7
2010	39	8.5	6.4	8.0	5.2	6.8	7.7	7.5	8.3	7.3	7.9	7.9	7.6	89.1
2011	42	8.2	6.8	7.8	5.5	6.5	7.3	7.3	7.9	7.0	7.9	7.9	7.9	88.0
2012	38	8.0	6.5	7.5	5.4	6.3	7.6	7.6	7.9	7.3	7.7	8.1	7.6	87.6
2013	31	8.5	8.3	7.2	5.7	6.5	8.0	7.7	8.4	7.4	7.8	8.2	7.9	91.7
2014	28	8.4	8.8	7.2	6.0	6.8	7.7	7.4	8.6	7.7	7.7	8.5	8.2	93.0
2015	26	8.6	8.5	6.9	6.3	7.1	8.0	7.9	8.9	8.0	7.4	8.8	8.5	94.9

An Overview of Niger's Development in the Fragile States Index from 2006-2015														
Year	Rank	Demo-graphic Pressures	Refugees and IDP's	Group Grievance	Human Flight and Brain Drain	Uneven Economic De-velopment	Poverty and Economic Decline	State Legitimacy	Public Services	Human Rights and Rule of Law	Security Apparatus	Factional-ized Elites	External Inter-vention	Total
2006	44	9.4	4.3	8.5	6.0	7.2	9.0	7.9	8.5	6.5	6.7	6.0	7.0	87.0
2007	32	9.2	5.9	8.9	6.0	7.2	9.2	8.2	8.8	7.1	6.7	6.0	8.0	91.2
2008	22	9.5	6.0	9.2	6.0	7.2	9.2	8.4	9.1	7.9	7.5	6.7	7.8	94.5
2009	23	9.5	6.4	8.5	6.3	7.6	9.2	8.7	9.5	8.2	7.4	7.1	8.1	96.5
2010	19	9.6	6.5	8.0	6.5	7.8	9.2	8.9	9.7	8.5	7.3	7.6	8.2	97.8
2011	15	9.8	6.6	7.8	6.2	7.9	8.9	8.9	9.5	8.2	8.0	8.6	8.7	99.1
2012	18	9.3	6.9	7.7	6.0	7.6	8.6	8.4	9.2	7.9	8.2	8.6	8.4	96.9
2013	18	9.8	7.9	7.8	6.3	7.9	8.4	8.1	9.5	7.6	8.3	8.9	8.5	99.0
2014	19	9.3	8.2	7.5	6.6	7.9	8.1	7.8	9.3	7.3	8.4	8.9	8.6	97.9
2015	19	9.6	7.9	7.5	6.9	8.4	8.2	7.5	9.3	6.8	8.7	8.9	8.1	97.8

These tables are based on Information obtained from the Fragile States Index 2006 – 2015.

Once again, it becomes clear that a regional initiative is required. Considering the "insulator-nature" of Mali, one possibility for a regional initiative might be to have the smaller countries to Mali's south and the larger ones to its north each form regional security initiatives in order to stabilize both parts of the country.

4. Conclusion: What State Weakness and RSCT reveal in the Case of Mali

A few years ago, Wolfram Lacher stated that a lack of efficient regional security cooperation has been a key factor for the destabilization of the Sahel-Sahara zone for a long time. Consequently, he emphasized the need for a new regional framework of security cooperation, which would have to include Sahel and Saharan states (Lacher 2013a: 1).

According to the findings of this study, the failure of the Malian state in 2012 was possible due to a combination of factors. Some of these factors concern the internal weakness of the state. These are lacking authority, capacity and legitimacy as well as a succession of conflicts, most notably with the Tuareg. The presence of destabilizing actors such as AQIM also contributed majorly to the failure. However, certain regional weaknesses also enabled the failure. Among them are the residency of terrorist groups and organized criminal groups in ungoverned territories. Further, the fact that Algeria pushed its terrorist threat over the border into Mali

and the consequences of the fall of Gaddafi's regime in Libya were also regional shortcomings. A stronger, united region could have taken action to prevent the Malian state from failing, which clearly did not happen. Ultimately, the weakness of both state and region enabled different terrorist groups and the Tuareg to form an insurgency movement which overran the north of Mali.

Every case of state failure is different, but the case of Mali delivers some indicators for an early warning system: As has been laid out in part I, chapters 4.1. to 4.1.2., insurgencies are usually a far greater conventional danger to state stability than terrorist groups. Accordingly, the interception of the development of terrorist groups to insurgency movements is an important step in the prevention of state failure. This leads to the following conclusions: Terrorist (and insurgent) groups need to be monitored closely. Their means of finance, recruitment and weapon proliferation need to be intercepted to prevent them from gaining strength. Also, these groups need to be denied the possibility to set up safe havens, which is why ungoverned territories need to be surveilled. It is irresponsible to wait and let a threat grow until it's too late. This would be a classical case for a regional initiative. Re-establishing a state's monopoly of force and preventing civil war and violence would also be tasks of a regional dimension. Further, the weak state itself needs to be monitored by its region. Its performance in authority, capacity and legitimacy should be evaluated regularly, so that support can be given before it is too late.

While this study was able to describe the interplay between regional weakness, state weakness and terrorism in the case of Mali, much remains to be done. For instance, the architecture of an RSC needs to be worked out in order to prevent spillover effects. Another important element is to reliably monitor increases in terrorist activities on the ground, which would require the ability to precisely distinguish the different groups and their activities from each other. Also, detailed studies on the interplay between terrorism and organized crime and the consequences for the region would be a great step forward.

In the case of Mali, it is exceedingly important to understand that both North and West African states play important parts in the stabilization of the state and the entire region. The author believes that intensive regional cooperation could have prevented the failure of the Malian state in 2012, and that regional cooperation remains indispensable to solve the continuous vicious circle of regional instability. Non-state actors such as AQIM and the Tuareg do not think in terms of nation states and borders, which makes them a cross-regional threat. Therefore, as long as the affected states are unwilling to understand that regional challenges can only be

countered in a regional effort, the threats emanating from non-state actors will not be countered effectively. All countries in North and West Africa need to analyze in how far their national stability or instability interacts with other states in both regions, and they need to strengthen security links and contain the threat accordingly.

This also points at an important practical and analytical challenge in this context. As has become clear in the course of this work, countering regional instability in West Africa mainly means stabilizing the Sahel-Sahara Zone.

The state with the biggest direct influence on Mali is certainly Algeria (Lacher 2013a: 3), while Libya also played an important role, especially after the so-called Arab Spring. Neither of these two states is a member of ECOWAS, Mali's main point of reference in terms of regional stability. Establishing a cooperation between the states which are most engaged in stability in Mali will be challenging, as the formation of a durable RSC becomes more complicated the more states are included. However, Mali is situated in the heartland between North and West Africa[204] and is therefore crucially important for stability in both regions. If there can be no unified region-wide initiative among the countries which have the biggest influence on stability in Mali (certainly Mauritania, Algeria, Libya and possibly Niger), then the "two halfs" of Mali should be dealt with by two different groups of states according to their geographic location and influence[205]. It is, for instance, essential to contain the establishment of a consolidated Jihadist-belt stretching from Libya over Niger to Mali and Nigeria. Such a development can already be anticipated, as it is highly desirable for the local terrorist groups. It also needs to be made sure that, should Mali be stabilized, violent non-state groups cannot simply relocate to neighboring states offering similar conditions, such as Mauritania. Therefore, not only do current developments have to be taken into consideration, but future developments need to be anticipated to avoid spillover effects.

Mali does cooperate with other states in terms of security, most notably with ECOWAS members. The problem is that Mali does not sufficiently cooperate with the states which have the main influence on its stability, as these states are not members of ECOWAS. Mali clearly needs an RSC, but members of this RSC would need to be selected based on their influence on Mali and their capability and will to form a mutual security cooperation, not on institutional

[204] As previously noted, it does qualify as an insulator state according to RSCT.
[205] So far, initiatives such as the G5 Sahel are steps into the right direction.

or regional affiliation. This RSC should then try to counter the failure of its member states so as to prevent destabilizing dynamics which could harm the region and beyond.

5. Recommendations: How to move towards sustainable Stability

As Silvia Danielak put it, "*understanding the protracted Mali 'crisis' is an exercise in detecting complex interlinks that extend beyond the Malian State*" (Danielak 2015: 135). This expression perfectly fits the findings of this research and underlines both the complexity and the geographical scope of the challenges Mali faces. As far as effective stabilization of Mali and the region is concerned, several useful suggestions can be inferred from this research. The majority of these suggestions will focus on long term stability, which has to be the ultimate goal. However, short term solutions will also be required, most notably in the form of further CT and COIN measures. While Counter-Terrorism efforts need to focus on the dismantling of terrorist groups, Counter-Insurgency is a wider approach which is also concerned with winning over the support of the population (Boeke and Tisseron 2014: 33). This is particularly important for Mali with regards to increasing the state's legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens. In the case of Mali, CT and COIN are required to stabilize the country and both approaches complement each other. While further CT needs to focus on terrorist groups operating in Mali and in the region, socio-political COIN-measures need to increase the acceptance of the state among the population, both in the north and in the south. Trust needs to be built between the people and the state, but also between different ethnic groups. This will be particularly important on the community level, which should be the basis for the socio-political tissue that is required for sustainable political participation. Political development and integration on the community level is of course a civilian engagement which cannot be done effectively by military forces. Instead, it requires experts on state building, political institutions and the country itself. These experts can in turn only work effectively if their security is being provided, which means that COIN essentially needs to be an integrated approach which combines civilian and military forces. This poses several challenges and shows the complexity of any successful COIN initiative. It is also evident that such initiatives would require a lot of time and cannot produce sustainable results within a short time. Rather, this is grassroots community building which would have to involve the local population so as to enable them to develop their own communities and political representation. This approach cannot simply be imposed on the Malians, but would have to be inclusive of their culture and ideas, which makes it all the more

challenging for foreign personnel. Hence, successful COIN in Mali (and elsewhere) needs to start by building and consolidating communities, while at the same time providing security. COIN is therefore a much more complicated and long lasting approach than CT, but both will be necessary to appease Mali sustainably.

As AQIM and its affiliates depend on their involvement in drug trafficking to a large extent (Detzi and Winkleman 2016: 231), it will also be essential to fight organized crime in West Africa to deprive terrorist groups of their financial resources. Detzi and Winkleman offer incentives on this topic, such as better integration of interagency cooperation (Detzi and Winkleman 2016: 234f.).

It has become clear that Mali will not be able to stabilize itself without external help in the near future. However, the presence of European states like France is no solution for long term stability either, as they do not share the regional culture, have different approaches to politics and can easily stir up old feelings of colonialism, which could potentially be exploited by militant non-state groups. Hence, the most promising long term approach would be the development of a Regional Security Complex. This would take a lot of time and resources, and it is debatable whether a cooperation between several weak states will have positive effects on the security situation in the short term. However, building an RSCT might be the most sustainable approach and appears more promising in the long term than in the short term.
This approach should be accompanied by national or bilateral initiatives. For instance, Mali could learn how to better deal with its Tuareg population from Niger, and it would be in Niger's interest to allow Mali to benefit from its own best practices. Such an initiative is extremely warranted now, as the division between the Tuareg and southern Malians appears to be deeper than ever before (Kühne 2015: 121). For Niger, such an effort could potentially contain conflicts because the ease with which the Tuareg swept into Mali and proclaimed the *Azawad* might inspire other Tuareg to do the same elsewhere (Shaw 2013: 207).
Also, populations across borders are often culturally and ethnically linked (Danielak 2015: 140), with the Tuareg in Mali and Niger as a case in point. As these groups share the same roots and often the same customs, the respective states need to cooperate to strengthen stability among these peoples. Maybe, on a continent affected by colonialism like Africa, it is time to consider politics that go beyond states and state borders. There might be a chance that peoples which are separated by national borders could present a potential for stability. Instead of dividing them, governments should think about measures to strengthen the social cohesion among

these groups (without undercutting the state). One way to do this might be to grant certain rights of autonomy and protection in exchange for durable peace agreements between the state and the respective peoples. This would be a complicated approach[206] but bilateral agreements between governments and peaceful population groups could foster the potential for enhanced regional stability.

While terrorism and organized criminal networks are dangerous, their combination, which is prevalent across the Sahel-Sahara region and in Mali in particular, makes them even more dangerous. Both groups can learn from each other and acquire sophisticated skill sets. This problem particularly affects Mali and Mauritania, and special attention should be paid to the possibility that the respective groups could flee to Mauritania if they were completely expelled from Mali. In order to prevent the possibility of a future safe haven and hotbed of instability, foresight and prevention are key. This is in the interest of a stable Malian state and a stable region. Effectively combatting illegal traffic also requires a broad, regional initiative, which would have to include several states from Nigeria to Guinea and Morocco (Ammour 2012:7).

Mali and the region (both North and West Africa) face a number of serious threats, and they have been facing them for some years now. It is important to analyze and understand these threats, as this study has done. However, it is also important to recognize when policies are insufficient or inefficient. Some of the threats in the region may be contained by national efforts, but this mostly works for stronger states and always includes the risks of a spillover effect[207]. This is why the region, and Mali in particular, urgently need to be integrated into a Regional Security Complex. While institutionalization does not automatically lead to the development of an RSC (Buzan and Waever 2003: 238), it appears as if West Africa needs some kind of institutionalization or organization to bring about a unified effort. ECOWAS does not suffice to stabilize the region. Indeed, during the Malian crisis in 2012, ECOWAS had been called to stabilize Mali, but it was incapable of taking significant action because of a lack of trust between the organization and different political factions within Mali (Harmon 2014: 215). Mali itself has had a reputation of being insufficiently committed to Counter-Terrorism for a while (Thurston 2012: 15), which makes it harder to find incentives for other states to

[206] Especially because it should be avoided that other population groups feel disadvantaged.
[207] As the case of the GSPC in Algeria shows.

intervene in Mali. Especially Algeria and Mauritania have been frustrated with Mali, as they believed Mali was not tough enough on AQIM[208] (Harmon 2014: 187).

Also, ECOWAS members were generally afraid to cause a national backlash and rising Islamism at home if they were to intervene in Mali (Marchal 2015: 29f.).

In any case, it has become abundantly clear that Mali will not be able to handle its security challenges on its own in the foreseeable future. Further, it can reasonably be assumed that the respective non-state groups, once they have been pushed out of Mali, would probably move to another state in the region. Therefore, security threats in Mali should be seen as a regional problem. Most countries in the Sahel-Sahara region are not sufficiently prepared to deal with terrorism or insurgency movements[209]. It will therefore require a regional approach to effectively combat violent non-state groups and to stabilize the region.

While ethnically motivated movements will remain an issue in some of the countries in the region, Jihadism and organized crime will likely prove to be the most pervasive challenges. The latter will be resilient in their quest for cost-effective trafficking-routes to Europe, where most of their drugs are being sold. As there is a lot of money in this business, the groups will likely find ways to surpass border controls and to protect themselves from state forces. The Jihadists, on the other hand, can benefit from the smuggler's need for safe passage, but that is not the main reason why they will remain a long term threat. More importantly, they are now experiencing a time when they will find more possibilities to develop than a few years before. Groups like the so-called Islamic State and Boko Haram lifted the portfolio of Global Jihadism to a decisive degree. While AQIM is not particularly media-savvy and does not rely on social media for recruitment to the same extent the IS does, the international scope to which the IS and, to a lesser extent, Boko Haram have broadcast their activities creates the impression that the Global Jihadist Movement is much stronger than a few years ago. This means that Jihadist groups will generally have an easier time finding recruits and cooperating or merging with other radical Islamist groups. A consolidated territory stretching from Libya to Nigeria would be an expansion of power for terrorist and insurgent groups. For those forces (mainly states) who seek to counter these groups, such a scenario would be the ultimate nightmare.

[208] Another example why the region and Mali urgently need an RSC is that Algeria had been asked to intervene in Mali in 2012, but the government refused before secretly contributing to Opération Serval. One of the reasons hereof is likely that the Algerian government feels threatened by instability in Mali, as it is particularly afraid of a spillover into its resource-rich south (Junk 2015: 85). This is a perfect illustration of the inconsequential nature of national versus regional politics, as it was largely Algeria's CT-campaign that drove AQIM into Mali in the first place.

[209] Certainly not once the groups present existential threats to the states.

The case of Mali is unique in the sense that every case of state failure is a unique case which always requires special attention to details. These details can vary greatly between different cases and it is indispensable to investigate them in order to completely understand each case. However, Mali is also representative of a number of states which share some of the same preconditions, especially on the African continent. State failure can have numerous causes, but one way to prevent it is to contain the establishment of the actors who actively seek it, most notably insurgent groups. Regions can only go so far in their effort to stabilize weak governments, but they can be committed to the fight against asymmetric forces. It is essential to contain these actors to achieve long term stability, and this requires an early definition of the threat potential of each of these groups. This requires monitoring, police and military work. It also requires long term commitment and the acknowledgement that this is a complicated undertaking which might need a lot of resources and time to succeed. What is more, the infrastructure of these groups should be undermined before the groups begin to establish themselves. Arms traffic, unmonitored financial flows and areas outside governmental control are maybe the most important incentives to these groups. To counter these factors, each group needs to be studied individually to understand their strategy and goals, which in turn offers the possibility to anticipate some of their behavior.

Mali failed because it had offered conducive conditions for too long, and there was no region to enforce a containment of the threat. When this latent instability was suddenly met by a trigger in the form of a combination of an insurgent movement and a coup d'état, the state basically imploded. Without responsible RSC's[210], preventing state failure in weak states will become an increasingly difficult challenge in the future. Looking at conflicts caused by non-state groups in the Middle East and Africa, it becomes clear that the issue of terrorist groups and insurgent movements is one that will only gain in relevance. Stories like the one in Mali will repeat themselves if there is no comprehensive effort.

Angelika Spelten argues that the case of Mali in 2012 was unfit for the use of preventive measures as it would have been impossible to foresee the advancement of the Islamist-secessionist insurgency. Spelten argues that the acknowledgement of the weakness of the Malian state would not have increased the chances to take effective action. She outlines correctly that the IC had long overlooked Mali's shortcomings because it had seen Mali as a

[210] And while RSC's do not necessarily need to be institutionalized, it might be recommendable to institutionalize them, as it would smoothen mechanisms.

successful example of a grassroots democracy for too long. Spelten is also right about the highly complex chain of events which actually led to the near failure of the Malian state in 2012 (Friedensgutachten 2015: 139ff.). However, she disregards that, while long in the making, some of the most obvious symptoms of these causes could have been dealt with rather quickly, as Opération Serval proved. The Islamist-secessionist insurgency was strong enough to intimidate the Malian army, but it would have been unable to deal with a contingent of ECOWAS troops, whose mere presence might have been able to prevent the string of events which occurred in 2012. As a follow-up, a dismantling of the smuggling networks or targeted CT-offensives against AQIM would have made the situation considerably easier for the Malian army.

The author believes that preventive measures would have been effective if the region had been monitored for several years prior to the events. This would have raised awareness concerning the fragility of Mali's north and, in a best-case scenario, would have led ECOWAS or the AU to act against non-state groups in the region. Contrary to the argument of Spelten, the complexity of the challenge does not necessarily diminish the chances of success for preventive measures. In a highly complex situation, it is necessary to identify the most pressing challenges. In the case of Mali, those were the returning Tuareg, AQIM and the weakness of the Malian army, all of which could have been addressed by a deployment of regional forces before the insurgency unfolded (Friedensgutachten 2015: 139ff.). Admittedly, this would have required frequent and thorough measures of monitoring and analysis.

The IC or the UN are unable to stabilize all weak states, and this would probably not be the most efficient idea either. As this work shows, weak states need an RSC more than anything. They need other states which share certain cultural, ethnic and political preconditions to monitor the threat level on their territory so as to counter any dangerous development. This approach is based on prevention, and it aims to establish a situation in which reactionary policies will no longer be necessary to protect states from third actors. So far, prevention is an issue that is largely being disregarded by the IC. This needs to be corrected: In order to ensure their own safety, states need to invest in preventive measures for states in their region who are weak enough to constitute a threat to stability. These measures could include strategies against money laundering, cooperation in police work or setting up mutual border posts. This is the only way to prevent state failure with regards to terrorist groups and insurgency movements. If functioning regional frameworks (whether they would be called Regional Security Complexes or not) could be established to implement early warning systems and mechanisms for prevention, this would be a big step toward the stabilization of weak states.

Regional answers are likely best-suited for this endeavor. Weak states are often unable to prevent their demise or improve their situation, and in this case prevention is key.

Preventing the development of consolidated territorial links between terrorist groups such as the IS, AQIM and Boko Haram will require serious, regional efforts. No state in the region will be able to deal with these challenges on its own (with the possible exception of Algeria), as the example of Nigeria is showing. In order to save the region from descending into chaos, the states in West and North Africa, as well as those who share parts of the Sahel-Sahara Zone and the IC in general, need to understand that they cannot treat Mali as an isolated issue. Instead, regional initiatives are required to fight the expansion of all violent non-state groups in the area. These regional initiatives should come in the form of an RSC. Anything less will not suffice to stabilize Mali and the region.

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