2019

The French Intervention in the 2012 Malian Conflict: Neocolonialism Disguised as Counterterrorism.

Genevieve Jesse
Seattle University

The French Intervention in the Malian Conflict: Neocolonialism Disguised as Counterterrorism

Genevieve Jesse, International Studies

Faculty Mentor: Nova Robinson
Faculty Content Editor: Nova Robinson
Student Editor: Rachel Van Liew

Abstract

The international community's narrative of the Malian conflict (2012-2015) is overly simplistic. The United Nations, France, and the US focused solely on the terrorist aggression facing Mali and other West African states after the fallout of the Arab Spring—to the detriment of the Malian people's needs and long-term stability. This paper presents Malian, West African, and African perspectives in contrast to the Westernized narrative, in order to critically analyze the 2013 French intervention in Mali and the under-studied effects of colonial history in contemporary action in the Sahara-Sahel region. The paper juxtaposes the proclaimed "success" of the French counterterrorism intervention against the historical injustices of colonialism and the continuing effects of neocolonialism on development and inequality within and among states. This paper cautions against allowing states, such as France, to exert unrestrained military power for counterterrorist aims without considering the legality and necessity of such action in the context of each state. In the specific case of Mali, the French intervention prevented the resolution of the Kel Tamasheq rebellion against the Malian government and precluded regional powers from taking on the role of primary intervening authority, which continues to affect the resolution of violence and the integrity of the state.

Introduction

The 2012-2015 Malian conflict encapsulates the shortsightedness with which states and international institutions respond to internal disputes with widespread humanitarian, political, and security implications. Mali and the greater Sahara-Sahel region still face extremist threats and instability resulting from this conflict and connected volatile situations. Evaluating the factors that provoked the initial outbreak of conflict with those factors perpetuating instability throughout the Sahel in 2019 can inform potential solutions to this and similar conflicts. In this particular context, one of the central factors of the conflict is the historical background of the Malian state, which was a French colony from 1892 to 1946. French colonial rule had created a system that formally excluded people living in the northern regions compared to the southern regions that ultimately precipitated the 2012 conflict. Despite the clear connection between French colonial rule and the French intervention, analyses of the conflict and resulting intervention do not accurately portray the primacy of the historical ethno-political division in leading the northern Kel Tamasheq people to rebel against the Malian government in 2012. Western, and specifically European and American, responses to violence in Mali ignored the complexity of the national situation, choosing instead to focus on the terrorist groups that capitalized on the rebellion to infiltrate Mali's northern region and establish operational bases. This essay thus presents the historical and political context of the Malian conflict and analyzes regional and legal debates of France's third-party intervention.

It is necessary here to acknowledge that my own experiences and educational trajectory has been within a primarily Western-oriented context. Where this essay attempts to differentiate between Westernized narratives of sovereignty, violence, and peacebuilding, I, as the author, have been limited to solely researching local African perspectives.

Overall, this essay discusses France's influence in Mali and in West Africa in the twenty-first century with a specific emphasis on Mali's colonial history and France's current interests in West Africa. The primary contribution that this discussion makes is to build a connection between modern norms of counterterrorist operations and neocolonialist actions of exerting political, economic, or military influence over an independent state. This connection can potentially inform future analyses and critiques of third-party military interventions, as well as influence changes to the international security framework. This essay concludes that the French government, when executing the 2013 military intervention in Mali, not only violated Mali's sovereignty on the grounds of counterterrorism, but superseded regional authority over the conflict's resolution in order to expand French military influence in the Sahara-Sahel region.

The 2012 Malian Conflict

The conflict began on January 17th, 2012, when a northern separatist group called the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) rebelled against the government, located in the southern city of Bamako (Thurston, 2013). The government, headed by President Amadou Toumani Touré, quickly lost territorial control and authority to this rebellion, which was comprised primarily of ethnic Kel Tamasheq (sometimes referred to as "Tuareg") people (Bergamaschi & Diawara, 2014). This ethnic group and its insurgents claimed independence from southern Mali on the basis of historical disunity and institutional inequality between the Sahara (north) and Sahel (south) regions of the state (Heisbourg, 2013).

The map in Figure 1 shows the territory of Azawad that the MNLA wanted to become independent, as well as important cities that played a role in the conflict, such as Gao, Timbuktu, Mopti, and Bamako (Heisbourg, 2013).

Presidential elections were scheduled for April 2012 with the purpose of replacing Touré. Before this could occur, Captain Ahmadou Sanogo of the Malian military, frustrated with the government's inability to prevent the northern rebellion, successfully led a coup d'état against the Bamako government on March 21, 2012 (Heisbourg, 2013). Soon after the coup, the Algerian government led conflict resolution talks in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso and installed a transitional government with the head of Mali's national assembly, Dioncounda Traoré, as temporary president (Stigall, 2015).

In April 2012, the MNLA moved south and conquered the major cities of Gao, Kidal, and Timbuktu in its pursuit to gain complete control of the northern half of Mali (Stigall, 2015). The MNLA claimed independence of Azawad on April 6, 2012 (*A Touraeg State at our Borders*, 2012). In the following weeks, Islamic extremist groups, including Ansar al-Dine, the Movement for Uniqueness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), took primary control of the north from the MNLA while both integrating and fighting amongst each other (Marchal, 2013). The Algerian government continued to facilitate peace in Mali, together with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) led by the President of Burkina Faso, Blaise Compaoré ("*Member States*," 2012). In July 2012, ECOWAS asked the United Nations to permit a regional intervention in Mali and secure peace, but the UN's forces were prevented from intervening until September 2013 when the situation had drastically deteriorated ("*Member States*," 2012). Further clashes occurring closer to Bamako in January 2013 provoked an international response to release the capital's one million inhabitants from Islamic extremists control (Chivvis, 2016). As a result, France led a rapid-response military intervention on January 11, 2013 (Bannelier & Cristakis, 2013). This intervention consisted of approximately 4,500 French troops under the name Operation Serval (Bannelier, 2013; Charbonneau & Sears, 2014). The operation's military aims were "to secure

Bamako, stop the terrorist offensive, strike the enemy's rear bases and prepare for the arrival of African forces" (Heisbourg, 2013, p. 11). ECOWAS forces arrived eight days after the French intervention and helped liberate the northern towns that were under extremist control on January 20, 2013 (Heisbourg, 2013).

Under ECOWAS, Algerian, and Mauritanian leadership, the preparations for democratic elections began immediately after control was established in the north. Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta was elected the new President of Mali in August 2013, and the country began implementing conflict resolution actions with invested regional governments and non-terrorist internal actors (Bøås, 2013). The French maintained a military presence after the new government was in place; then they transitioned into a regional counterterrorism operation on July 13, 2014 called Operation Barkhane (Bannelier & Cristakis, 2013). Amidst this transition, a reconciliation process occurred between the Bamako government and the northern groups that remained separate from the violent extremist groups. On May 15, 2015, the Coordination of Azawad Movements, the Platform of Armed Groups, and the Malian government signed a peace accord, officially ending the internal conflict and providing guidelines for democratic elections of local representatives throughout the entire state (Nyirabikali, 2015).

Overview of Existing Literature and Importance of this Paper

The bulk of the literature regarding foreign involvement in Mali takes a Western perspective of the Malian conflict and the French intervention. This "Westernized" approach takes for granted theories about state formation, sovereignty, and institutional capacity from the Westphalian tradition, wherein states have a monopoly on the use of force. Due to a lack of contextual understanding, no Western-oriented scholar comprehensively presents the Malian conflict along its various axes: national-international, international-regional, ethnic-political, local insurgents-Islamic extremists, northern Mali-southern Mali, colonialism-neocolonialism, and terrorism-counterterrorism. Therefore, an analysis of the decolonization process from a non-Western, African-centered perspective enables greater understanding of the disconnect between the international community's and West African interpretations of internal conflict dynamics and the 2013 French intervention.

The Western-oriented literature mentions the conflict's complexity, but does not distinguish between the conflict's internal aspects and the regional forces driving the terrorist groups into Mali. Some Malian scholars question the French military's intentions as a neocolonialist intervention with inevitable, long-term repercussions, as a result of

this oversight. Neocolonialism, defined for the purposes of this essay as political coercion and indefinite military occupation of a sovereign state, informs African scholars' views of French involvement in the Sahara-Sahel. Africa's intellectual tradition incorporates historical experiences of colonization and contemporary understanding of neocolonial economic, political, and social policies that protect international actors' interests. Neocolonial policies can be implemented in areas that were never formally colonized, but neocolonialism is still foundationally connected to the process of decolonization. Decolonization includes recognizing oppressive policies and seeking to establish independently-controlled political, economic and social systems. This essay presents the regional analysis of the French intervention in contradiction to the Western-dominated narrative of the positive merits of third-party interventions against terrorist threats. In the interest of validating the African governmental sovereignty and authority, this essay demonstrates the negative implications of prioritizing counterterrorism norms over resolving internal conflicts within the international security structure.

Historical and Political Context

French Colonial Rule and Decolonization

In 1892, France took control of the territory that includes present-day Mali and parts of Mauritania, Senegal, Niger, and Burkina Faso, and administered the region as French Soudan (Ghosh, 2013). The colonial government administered French Soudan from the more environmentally-hospitable Sahel area, while the northern Sahara area remained semi-undefined, collectively administered with three other European powers, and ruled by local groups (Sèbe, 2013). The nomadic Kel Tamasheq revolted against all French efforts to consolidate Kel Tamasheq, Songhai, Fulani, and Bambara people into a confined territory (Lecocq, 2014). In exchange for political support, the French allowed the northern Kel Tamasheq to enslave Black and Arab southern groups that they considered racially and ethnically inferior (Harmon, 2014). The Kel Tamasheq still rebelled against the colonial state in 1916 and 1962, securing the ire and distrust of the French government (Harmon, 2014). The independence movement between 1946 and 1968 resulted in the French Soudan's northern groups coming under the control of the post-colonial democratic Malian government (Harmon, 2014; Sèbe, 2013). Modibo Keïta, the first president of Mali, thus blamed the 1963 Kel Tamasheq rebellion on the French because the French had politically supported the Kel Tamasheq's feelings of superiority and potential for autonomy during the colonial period (Harmon, 2014). French sympathies toward the northern nomadic populations, along with

"uncontrolled socio-economic and cultural disruptions, stemming from inadequate political systems," remained a legacy of the colonial period (Harmon, 2014, p. 214). Many Malians refer to this legacy when explaining the continued tensions between northern and southern groups in the present (Sèbe, 2013).

During the Algerian independence movement towards the end of the colonial period, France's indiscriminate violence and torture campaigns led sympathetic African leaders, including those in Mali, to unite against French attempts to maintain colonial-era hierarchies and underdevelopment, thereby creating the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (Maiangwa, 2013). After gaining independence, Mali, Algeria, and other Francophone countries used both violence and regional economic collaboration to expel French influence and power from North and West Africa. Despite calls for democracy and economic liberalism in the immediate post-colonial period, Bruno Charbonneau claims that the participation of African soldiers in the French colonial military had distorted the line between "colonizer" and "colonized," ultimately making violence acceptable in colonial spaces (2013). This violence—contextually defined as both an act that destroys and "a pedagogical tool that works to control narratives of space and identity and as a politically enabling device that affects agency"—favored continued French military presence in North and West Africa (Charbonneau, 2013, p. 111 & 85). African leaders had few resources to consolidate and secure their newly defined territories against internal and external threats to sovereign unity other than collaborating with the French military, thereby affirming the permanent influence of the French military in independently sovereign states (Charbonneau, 2013). The Republic of Mali's admission to the United Nations on September 22, 1960 and inclusion into Western narratives of state sovereignty ultimately reinforced France's military bases—or "collaboration"—among fellow UN member states in Africa (Joly, 2013).

A similar situation occurred in Chad in the 1980s. Upon the Libyan occupation of Chad, France launched Operation Épervier ("Sparrow Hawk") and brought 1,200 troops to N'Djamena, the capital of Chad (Stapleton, 2013). Even after the Organization of African Unity helped establish a ceasefire, the French stayed in Chad and prevented a transfer of power from Hissène Habré to Idriss Déby (Stapleton, 2013). They ultimately allowed Déby to take power, but many internal and external actors accused the French government of dismissing the needs of Chadians so that an authoritarian leader could maintain power for France's benefit (Maclean, 2018). By supporting this leader, French troops were able to remain in Chad and maintain a military base at N'Djamena.

Postcolonialism in the Twenty-first Century: Security Policy and Counterterrorism

Tony Chafer describes French postcolonial policy: "French governments under the Fifth

Republic adopted a multi-layered approach to maintaining the special relationship with Africa, combining an array of 'official' policy instruments with a complex range of unofficial, family-like, and often covert ties" (2018, para. 48). France's system of official and unofficial postcolonial relations with former colonies facilitated the expansion of foreign military operations in the global counterterrorism movement of the early 2000s, starting with intelligence operations against Mokhtar Belmokhtar and other individuals connected to Al-Qaeda in 2002 (Hammer, 2018). In the contemporary context, France justifies its pre-positioned troops and military capacity to intervene under the United Nations' notions of necessarily providing support to states deemed incapable of maintaining sovereignty and control. Critics and scholars conceive of French military involvement as part of the broader contemporary era, in which international institutions such as the United Nations can revoke states' sovereignty when deemed necessary. One scholar asserts that after 9/11 and the United States' push for a global "war on terror," a redefinition of sovereignty emerged, whereby states have to adhere to certain counterterrorism obligations in order to remain sovereign states (Ramos, 2013). The argument for sovereignty as the definitive aspect of a state's freedom to act within its own boundaries is an inherently Western construction of state capacity and violence.

Debates in International Law on Military Interventions

Challenging Western notions of sovereignty in a non-Western context underlies debates on France's motivations and legal grounding for intervening in the Malian conflict. It is important to note that even when accepting the validity of international intervention to combat global terrorist threats, international law does not support the French intervention. The two international legal principles that are typically cited in justification of the French intervention in Mali are first, the Malian government formally inviting France to intervene, and second, the UN Security Council passing a resolution allowing multilateral forces to intervene in the conflict (Bannelier, 2013). Karine Bannelier and Theodore Christakis (2013) take these legal principles in tandem to support the legal intervention of France in the Mali conflict, also claiming that either of these two principles provide sufficient justification when applied individually. In contrast, Dan Stigall (2015) suggests that the French government relied on contestable principles of international law that governed third party military intervention. Stigall's argument stems from different interpretations of "intervention by invitation" and the United Nations Security Council's "implied authorization," which he says are "less defined" in international law, especially in the use of military force (2015, p. 223).

First, the Malian government's invitation cannot stand as sufficient grounds for the French intervention. International law explicitly states that external intervention by invitation

is unlawful when "the objective of this intervention is to settle an exclusively internal political strife in favour of the established government which launched the invitation" (Bannelier, 2013, p. 870). Before the French intervened, their support of the Malian government in Bamako was explicit within UN Security Council Resolutions 2012 and 2085, which laid out support for "the Armed and Security Forces of Mali" under the "authority of the State of Mali" (Stigall, 2015, p. 51). Debates on the French intervention generally conclude that the democratic elections that France encouraged in 2013 were not fully legitimate, because rebelling groups and displaced persons were excluded from voting (Blyth et al., 2013). It is also important to note that ECOWAS leaders agreed to prevent the Interim President Dioncounda Traoré, the Prime Minister, and other members of the transitional government from contesting the 2013 presidential election; this undermined Dioncounda Traoré's legitimacy as president. The Malian government's questionable legitimacy in 2012 and 2013, due to the coup d'état and the lack of free, fair, and transparent democratic elections supports the conclusion that the invitation to intervene was meant to import legitimacy to the state government over all internal actors—extremist or rebellious. Thus, while international law may allow third parties to intervene in internal conflicts at the request of the legitimate government, the limit to Traore's presidency imposed by ECOWAS and other West African leaders negates the French government's justification for deploying troops to Mali in January 2013.

The French Intervention as Neocolonialist

Soon after French troops were deployed to Mali in January 2013, then-president François Hollande (2013) noted in a television broadcast that the French military intervened in Mali in order to support the Malian army against the terrorist aggression that was threatening "all of West Africa." Hollande references the movements of AQIM, MUJAO, and Ansar al-Dine throughout the Sahara-Sahel, but makes no mention of the non-extremist insurgent groups such as the MNLA. Thus, he ignores Mali's internal rebellion and assumes that all extremist groups had universal objectives within Mali and the broader region. His statement more closely represents France's colonial experience in attempting to quell any group opposing state authority than an accurate understanding of group dynamics within Mali in 2012. The French government and international communities held incorrect beliefs, primarily that since 2012 all armed groups existing in Mali are Islamic extremist groups with broad strategic interests in the region and the world. Furthermore, French security policy in Mali mirrors prior French military engagement in Algeria and in Chad. In both instances, references to African "tribes" or religious affiliations of participating groups "convey already formed explanations to understanding the conflict thus an implicit programme of action that a priori authorizes

violence"(Charbonneau, 2014, p. 118). The focus on combatting ideological extremism was easily extrapolated to target all armed groups within Mali.

The Kel Tamasheq and the MNLA were conceived as part of the "terrorist threat" in Mali due to the persistent French colonial stereotype that the Kel Tamasheq are "a war prone, nomad, and anarchist population" (Lecocq, 2014, p. 90). Though research on the Malian conflict specifies that the rebel groups do not all represent radical Islam or violent extremist groups, or the objectives of violent extremist groups seeking to impose Sharia law, this belief remained part of the French narrative (Marc, Verjee, & Mogaka, 2015). Religious extremism in West Africa had been rising throughout prior decades, and it did not specifically or intentionally cause the Mali conflict (Harmon, 2014). In fact, the extremists' strict interpretation of Islam is at odds with local tradition in the Sahara-Sahel, and there was no documented proof that the armed groups in Mali were homogeneous just because they were "homegrown" (Sèbe, 2013; Marc, 2015) .When the French intervened in 2013, the armed groups were still undergoing internal changes, including splintering into different factions and joining with other local groups, and the internal conflict was unresolved (Stigall, 2015).

The international community condoned the French intervention on behalf of the Malian government through the counterterrorist narrative, which unjustifiably homogenized the armed groups actively engaged in Mali. Joshua Hammer (2018) notes that some Malians attacked the overall French intervention as neocolonialist, "and lashed out at former president Nicolas Sarkozy for his central role in the NATO attacks that had unseated Qaddafi [in Libya] and destabilized the region" (p. 197). Malian author Aminata Dramane Traoré (2013) wrote of the French insistence on military intervention: "Paris has just sent to the Security Council a resolution in support, he claims, at the request of the interim president, Dioncounda Traoré, for a military intervention in the North […] the planned deployment will be African only in name, since it was designed to serve the interests of France in the Sahel" (p. 92-93) . This and other Malian perspectives of the conflict recognize France's historical and current imposition into Mali's national affairs, as well as Western powers' culpability in sparking the "terrorist aggression facing all of West Africa". These perspectives were overlooked at the moment of intervention.

After intervening, the French transitioned Operation Serval into the broad counterterrorism effort Operation Barkhane, thereby reinforcing Malians' criticism regarding France's neocolonial, long-term interests. Heisbourg believes that when the French were calculating the cost-benefit of intervening, Mali was most likely seen as a "convenient location for positioning forces in the relatively low-cost 'light footprint' mode which has served France so well" in protecting its economic, financial, and political interests and investments in West and North Africa (2013, p. 10). Traoré wrote again to her friend Boubacar Boris Diop two days after French troops landed in Mali, stating: "They have simply stolen our country from us,

Boris. I am Malian and I say forcefully and loudly that they have stolen Mali, under the pretext of protecting it from jihadists"(2013, p. 127). Like Traoré, many Malians were aware of the need for security during the 2012 conflict and the subsequent power struggle over northern Mali, but they neither wanted nor accepted prolonged French occupation (Traoré and Diop, 2013).

Regional Responses to the 2012 Conflict

Powerful actors in North and West Africa, the African Union, ECOWAS, and regional hegemons like Algeria and Nigeria had active interests in Mali. ECOWAS (along with support from non-ECOWAS members Algeria, Chad, and Mauritania) was prepared to deploy approximately 3,300 troops to support a multilateral United Nations stabilization and peacekeeping force in October 2012 (Fomunyoh, 2013). Though Algeria, Mauritania, Chad, Libya, Morocco, and the fifteen ECOWAS members had collaborated on a resolution outlining such objectives at an October 2012 conference, the UN Security Council claimed that information about a regional military force's objectives and means was lacking. Consequently, the UNSC refused to authorize an ECOWAS or African Union-led peacekeeping or operational force (United Nations Official Document: Resolution 2056, 2012). UN Resolution 2085 came close to authorizing force in Mali in December 2012, calling on all member states to "provide coordinated assistance" to Malian forces in the fight to maintain the territorial integrity of the state and to hamper the threats posed by terrorist organizations (Stigall, 2015). Though, this resolution only uses the phrase "all necessary means" in reference to the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) as a potential military force (Stigall, 2015). This phrase is typically accepted as the legal and principled justification for third-party military interventions, but the French military never received such clearance.

Algeria and Tunisia openly rejected the 2013 French deployment because both governments feared protracted French involvement in the region, and they also had concerns that a French-led intervention would inspire retaliation against Western powers or Western-affiliated North African governments (Ammour, 2013). France's push for hasty elections in 2013, as discussed earlier, also demonstrates its political neocolonialist agenda; the French government benefited from a Malian state with the semblance of a democratic government that agreed to ongoing French military presence. Senegalese author Boubacar Boris Diop summed up the French intervention, writing in June 2013, "of all the European powers, France is the only one to have never been able to resign itself to decolonize and Operation Serval will evidently comfort it in its reactionary stubbornness" (p. 132).

Aftermath and Ramifications

Hollande and the French government mitigated international concerns outside of Africa over any neocolonialist intentions by establishing counterterrorism as the primary motivation for intervening in Mali. Operation Barkhane was viewed as a reorganization of France's prepositioned troops in Africa, and it addressed the expanded territory in which terrorist groups operated (Hicks, 2017). Although 1,000 French troops were planning to remain in Mali under Operation Barkhane, Hollande only met with the governments of Cote d'Ivoire, Niger, and Chad to discuss plans for Operation Barkhane's expansion (Fini Serval, Voici Barkhane, 2016). The French government continued to dictate plans to the Malian government without taking into account the Malian citizens' open belief that "the question of the North is, obviously, the most urgent to resolve. Detonator of the crisis, it remains the main threat to its settlement" (Le Mali Après Serval : éviter La Rechute, 2014). By ignoring the internal conflict, the French intervention gave power to the Malian government and shut down dialogue with armed groups in the north and real peace talks with all representatives of northern Mali (Le Mali Après Serval : éviter La Rechute, 2014). The argument for counterterrorism consumed the French and Malian governments and prevented any legitimate contest of state authority.

Policy Recommendations

The French and Malian governments' simplified analysis of the terrorist groups' threats to Mali's boundaries excluded numerous voices from the national decision-making structure. The current Malian President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta must increase the representation of all political, ethnic, economic, religious, and social groups within the government—as long as the state maintains control over security solutions. The question of northern Mali and its major ethnic groups' claims to autonomy, including the Kel Tamasheq, the Songhai, Arabs, and the Fulani, necessitates a reconsideration of Mali's national identity to accommodate the rights of all ethnic, religious, political, and social groups.

As Mali reconfigures its internal affairs in relation to various groups, international, regional, and national actors must revisit the details of the 2012 conflict, the northern rebellion, and Mali's capabilities in addressing remaining terrorist groups. Jonathan Sears recommends that any assistance given to Mali, including political, economic, developmental, or military, also "appreciates Mali's dynamic and sometimes contentious indigenous social regulation mechanisms" (Sears, 2013, p. 444). The French government must also acknowledge its turbulent history in West Africa and the illegality of the Malian intervention, in order to transition from military assistance to other forms of aid, because its military does not have the full consent of each represented group in Mali to remain. Following the rationale for removing

the French military from Mali, any future French monetary or political assistance to the state "should not assume that the authority of the Malian nation-state is uncontested, particularly in light of Mali's regional, urban, rural, and identity-based cleavages" (Sears, 2013, p. 445). France can still assert its national interests by combatting terrorism in the Sahara-Sahel through recognized "soft" counterterrorism methods, such as programs that attempt to de-radicalize individuals and promote economic stability (Khalfan, 2016). France's colonial history must always factor into contemporary action in North and West Africa.

The Malian case demonstrates the need for more effective collaboration among regional authorities when crises occur. In order to build on the recommendation for increased representation, North and West African authorities and the African Union should expand their current institutions to include representatives who can attest to various groups' needs and claims. Nevertheless, in order for these institutions to act efficiently and effectively, the international community and the United Nations must accord these bodies with legal mandates to use "all means necessary" when agreed upon by the states in question, the African Union, and the representative bodies. Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and Niger already have political mechanisms with regular consultations at the ministerial level, intelligence mechanisms, and military mechanisms (Okereke, 2016). These countries are also in the process of implementing a regional security strategy, developed at the 2011 high-level conference on Security, Development and Partnership, but they will need external support and recognition to act without oversight or intrusion from international actors (Okereke, 2016). Thus, the efforts made to address regional security and development concerns should be prioritized and supported by external partners. Regional bodies at the national and local level will be most effective at adequately representing the needs of West African peoples and states, and the international community must forgo any further stereotyping of these nations as underdeveloped or without recourse to address regional, national, and local issues just to justify military, political, and economic intervention.

Conclusion

As this essay has demonstrated, the Malian conflict includes more complex dynamics than terrorist threats and general instability. The French government's continued simplification of the security concerns in West Africa has ramifications for counterterrorism operations and third-party military interventions in sovereign states. In taking control of the stabilization process in Mali, the French government hinders national and regional West African abilities to institute long-term order throughout the Sahara-Sahel. With continued French presence in West Africa, the greatest threat facing West African states is local, national,

and regional backlash to French neocolonialism and militarization of the region. The policy recommendations above are beginning steps for Mali, France, and African authorities to replace the pattern of neocolonialism with accountability, equal representation, and resilience.

References

"Le Mali Après Serval : éviter La Rechute." (January 30, 2014). Journal Du Mali. Retrieved from http://www.journaldumali.com/2014/01/30/le-mali-apres-serval-eviter-la-rechute/. Ammour, L.A. (2013). Algeria's role in the Sahelian security crisis. *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development.* 2(2), art. 28. DOI: http://doi.org/10.5334/sta.bp

Bannelier, K. & Christakis, T. (2013). Under the UN Security Council's watchful wyes: Military intervention by invitation in the Malian conflict. *Leiden Journal of International Law* 26(4), 855-74.

Bergamaschi, I. & Diawara, M. (2014) The French military intervention in Mali: Not exactly *Françafrique* but definitely postcolonial. in B. Charbonneau & T. Chafer (eds.) *Peace operations in the Francophone world: Global governance meets post-colonialism* (139-141). London: Routledge.

Blyth, F., Snyder, M. R., Van Laer, T., Hirsch, J. L., Cano, L., Reid, G., Bassiouni, B. & Abbink, J. (2013). Is the French military the best counterterrorism response in Mali? IPI Global Observatory. https://theglobalobservatory.org/2013/05/is-the-french-military-the-best-counterterrorism-response-in-mali/.

Bøås, M. & Torheim, L.E. (2013). The international intervention in Mali: "Desert blues" or a new beginning? *International Journal* 68(3), 417-23.

Boukhars, A. (2013).What's next for Mali and Algeria? *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. Retrieved from http://carnegieendowment.org/2013/01/23/what-s-next-for-mali-and-algeria-pub-50736

Chafer, T. (2018). Decolonization in French West Africa. *History of Sudanese Nationalism - Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History.* Retrieved from http://africanhistory.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277734-e-166.

Charbonneau, B. (2013). "Franco-African sSecurity rRelations at fFifty: Writing vViolence, sSecurity and the gGeopolitical iImagery". In T. Chafer & A. Keese (eEds.), *Francophone Africa at Fifty* (75-89). United Kingdom: Manchester University Press.

Charbonneau, B. & Sears, J. (2014) Faire la guerre pour un Mali démocratique : L'intervention militaire Française et la gestion des possibilités politiques contestées. *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 47(3): 597-619.

Chivvis, C.S. (2016) *The French war on Al Qa'ida in Africa*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

"Fini sServal, vVoici Barkhane." (May 31, 2016). *Journal Du Mali*. Retrieved from http://www.journaldumali.com/2014/07/14/fini-serval-voici-barkhane/.

Fomunyoh, C. (2013). Mali's three interwoven crises, *Hampton Roads International Security Quarterly*, 81. Retrieved from http://login.proxy.seattleu.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.proxy.seattleu.edu/docview/1266807421?accountid=28598

Ghosh, P. (January 15, 2013). Mali: When France ruled West Africa. *International Business Times*. Retrieved from http://www.ibtimes.com/mali-when-france-ruled-west-africa-1015854.

Harmon, S. (2014). *Terror and insurgency in the Sahara-Sahel region*. London: Routledge.

Heisbourg, F. (2013). Surprising little war: First lessons of Mali. *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 55(2), 7-18.

Hicks, C. (March 02, 2017). Operation Barkhane: Why France chose Chad as key counter-terrorism partner. *African arguments*. Retrieved from http://africanarguments.org/2014/09/03/operation-barkhane-why-france-chose-chad-as-key-counter-terrorism-partner-by-celeste-hicks/.

Joly, V. (2013). The French army and Malian independence. In T. Chafer and A. Keese (eds.) *Francophone Africa at fifty* (75-89). United Kingdom: Manchester University Press.

Khalfan, O. (2016). Africa's issues in international politics: Terrorism among the first challenging situations in this second decade of the new century: Navigating into Libya, Mali, Nigeria, and Somalia. *African Journal for the Prevention and Combatting of Terrorism*, 5. Retrieved from http://caert.org.dz/Publications/Journal/Journal-no-5.pdf

Kimenyi, M.S. & Routman, B. (July 29, 2016). The second coming of France in Mali and the challenges of continental leadership in Africa. *Brookings*. Retrieved from https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2013/01/18/the-second-coming-of-france-in-mali-and-the-challenges-of-continental-leadership-in-africa/.

Kpognon, P.D. (November 12, 2012). ECOWAS determined on its two-pronged approach to resolving Mali's crisis." CEDEAO. Retrieved from http://news.ecowas.int/presseshow.php?nb=311&lang=en&annee=2012.

Lecocq, B. (2014). *Disputed desert: Decolonization, competing nationalisms and Tuareg rebellions in northern Mali*. Leiden: Brill. Retrieved from https://ebookcentral.proquest.com

Le Mali après Serval: Éviter la rechute." (January 30, 2014). *Journal Du Mali*. Retrieved from http://www.journaldumali.com/2014/01/30/le-mali-apres-serval-eviter-la-rechute/

Liberte-algerie.com. (2012). Ouyahia: "l'Algérie n'acceptera jamais une remise en cause de l'intégrité territoriale Du Mali: Toute l'actualité sur liberte-algerie.com. Retreieved from https://www.liberte-algerie.com/actualite/ouyahia-lalgerie-nacceptera-jamais-une-remise-en-cause-de-lintegrite-territoriale-du-mali-106000.

Maclean, Ruth. (Feb 9, 2018). After 25 years, a breakthrough for victims of Chad dictator Hissène Habré. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/feb/09/trust-fund-established-for-victims-of-former-chad-dictator-hissene-habre.

Maiangwa, Benjamin. (2013). West Africa's terrorist challenge and the dynamics of regional response. *Insight on Africa* 5(1), 1-18.

Mali – déclaration du président de la république, François Hollande (12.01.13). [*Mali – declaration of the president of the republic*, François Hollande (01.12.13)]. Retrieved from https://at.ambafrance.org/Intervention-au-Mali-Declaration

Marc, A., Verjee, N., & Mogaka, S. (2015). *The challenge of stability and security in West Africa*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

Marchal, R. (2013). Military (mis)adventures in Mali. *African Affairs*, 122(448), 486-97. DOI: 10.1093/afraf/adt038

Massalaki, A. (2014). France's Hollande warns of Islamist threat in West Africa. Reuters. Retrieved from https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-africa-islamist-idUSKBN0FN2MO20140718.

Mattoon, A. (2017). *Civil wars and third party interventions in Africa*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.

Member states: Economic community of West African states. http://www.ecowas.int/member-states/

Nyirabikali, G. (2015). Mali peace accord: Actors, issues and their representation. SIPRI. Retrieved from https://www.sipri.org/node/385.

Okereke, C. N., Iheanacho, J., & Okafor, C. (2016). Terrorism in Africa: Trends and dynamics. *African Journal for the Prevention and Combatting of Terrorism*, 5. Retrieved from http://caert.org.dz/Publications/Journal/Journal-no-5.pdf

Ramos, J. M. (2013). *Changing norms through actions: The evolution of sovereignty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rédaction Nationale. (2012). Un etat Touraeg à nos frontières ["A Toureg State at Our Borders"]. *Liberté Algerie.* Retrieved from https://www.liberte-algerie.com/actualite/un-etat-touareg-a-nos-frontieres-106005

Rédaction Nationale. (2012). Alger et Bruxelles se penchent sur la crise au Mali. [Algiers and Brussels lean toward the Malian crisis]. *Liberté Algerie.* Retrieved from https://www.liberte-algerie.com/actualite/alger-et-bruxelles-se-penchent-sur-la-crise-au-mali-108520

Rédaction Nationale. (2012). Le Mali, futur Afghanistan du Sahel? [Mali, future Afghanistan of the Sahel?]. *Liberté Algerie.* Retrieved from https://www.liberte-algerie.com/actualite/le-mali-futur-afghanistan-du-sahel-110674

Sears, J.M. (2013). " Seeking sSustainable lLegitimacy: Existential cChallenges for Mali." *International Journal* 68, no. (3),: 444-453.

Sèbe, B. (2013). A fragmented and forgotten decolonization: The end of European empires in the Sahara and their legacy. In T. Chafer and A. Keese (eds.) *Francophone Africa at fifty* (75-89). United Kingdom: Manchester University Press.

Security Council, United Nations. (2012). United Nations official document: Resolution 2056. United Nations. Retrieved from http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2056(2012).

Stapleton, T. J. (2013). *A military history of Africa*. Santa Barbara, California: Praeger.

Stigall, D. E.(2015). The French military intervention in Mali, counter-terrorism, and the law of armed conflict. *Military Law Review*, 223(1). Retrieved from https://ssrn.com/abstract=2604235

Thurston, A. (2013). Mali: The disintegration of a 'model African democracy.'" *Stability, International Journal of Security and Development*, 2(1), Art. 2. Retrieved from http://doi.org/10.5334/sta.aq

Traoré, A. (2012). *Comment meurt l'autre moitié du Mali.* Bamako: La Sahélienne.

Traoré, A. D. & Diop, B. B. (2013). *La gloire des imposteurs lettres sur la Mali et l'Afrique*. Paris: P. Rey.

Notes

 "La France, a la demande du president du Mali et dans le respect de la charte des Nations Unies, s'est engagée hier pour appuyer l'armée malienne face à l'aggression terroriste qui menace toute l'Afrique de l'Ouest". [France, at the request of the president of Mali and in respect of the United Nations Charter engaged in war yesterday to support the Malian Army against the terrorist aggression that menaces all of West Africa].