

Issue Brief

Threats to Peace and Security in the Sahel: Responding to the Crisis in Mali

DECEMBER 2012

This issue brief was drafted by Mohamed Mahmoud Mohamed Salah, professor of law, attorney-at-law, and researcher at the Centre for Strategies for Security in the Sahel Sahara Region (Centre 4S) in Nouakchott, Mauritania. It provides background information on the transforming peace and security landscape in the Sahel region, analyzes the threats, proposes responses, and suggests possible scenarios for the region in the future.

Originally written in French in June 2012, this English translation by Annie Jacobs aims to bring these insights from the Sahel region to a broader audience.

The views expressed in this paper represent those of the author and not necessarily the views of the International Peace Institute. IPI welcomes consideration of a wide range of perspectives in the pursuit of a well-informed debate on critical policies and issues in international affairs.

IPI owes a debt of thanks to its many generous donors, whose support makes publications like this one possible.

This issue brief provides a view from the Sahel on the current threats to peace and security in the region. As part of its project on peace and security in the Sahel-Sahara region, IPI's Africa Program has partnered with the Mauritania-based think tank, the Centre for Strategies for Security in the Sahel Sahara Region. The Centre 4S was established in June 2011 to help countries in the Sahel take the lead in transforming the region's daunting security and development challenges into opportunities. Originally written in French, this June 2012 research paper from the Centre 4S examines the principal threats to peace and security in the Sahel and their impact on development. It then offers proposals and recommendations for surmounting the current conflicts before presenting possible future scenarios for the region.

Background

In order to understand the security challenges confronted by the countries of the Sahel, it is necessary to begin with both the specific details of their geography and the tumultuous history of their development.

First, regarding the geography, it is important to recall that the Sahel region, which covers the expanse stretching from the Atlantic to the Red Sea and encompasses parts of Senegal, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Algeria, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Sudan, and Somalia, is more than 80 percent comprised of desert lands.

To speak of desert means to speak of areas without fixed community life and thus areas not, in fact, subject to the jurisdiction of states, which prefer to expend their often limited means of control in inhabited regions. Today, the population density of the Sahel remains in the vicinity of one inhabitant per square kilometer.

Another consequence of the geographic particularities of the Sahel is the strong correlation between the economies of the countries in the region and the variations in rainfall. Years of drought, such as those that have just passed, always result in a drastic reduction in cereal production and in subsequent problems of food security.

According to estimates from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), more than 16 million people in the Sahel are directly threatened by malnutrition in the wake of the 2011 drought. In this context, no country in the region can do without international emergency aid; but delivery of aid to the people presupposes that the states are able to guarantee the security of its passage.

The geographical context is not, however, the only source of problems for

countries in the region. History, particularly that of the recent decolonization of the states of the region, contains the seeds of certain elements that are conducive to these states' destabilization. The state is defined in international law as "a community which consists of a territory and a population that are subject to an independent, organized power,"¹ and in the eyes of international law, the definition of the population is relatively indifferent to the degree of cultural or ethnic homogeneity. But, in reality the sovereign state has emerged and established itself for the long term in the places where it has been carried by a national cohesion, which has itself been forged by history.

In the region of the Sahel, as elsewhere on the African continent, the territorial boundaries were drawn with the interests of the colonizing countries in mind, not according to the national cohesion of the peoples concerned. Since the early 1960s, these boundaries have been the basis for international recognition of sovereign states in the region. To avoid undermining the young state formations, which could lead to a cascade effect, the African Union and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) before it established the inviolability of the borders inherited from colonization as a founding doctrine. Reinforced by the validation of respect for the territorial integrity of states in Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, the new doctrine has partially fulfilled the task it was assigned—namely, avoiding or at least slowing thoughts of secession that might have resulted from an unpredictable recasting of the map of the continent. It was not, however, able to settle the question of the cohesion of diverse communities in a manner that would, in each state, make these communities into a nation.

This problem cannot be fixed by decree. Its solution develops gradually, by means of compromises that arise equally from law and from the art of politics, in the broad sense of that term. There are not many countries in the region that can today boast of conclusive results in the matter. If all are not confronted to the same degree with an absence of national cohesion, there are very few that have succeeded in surmounting this challenge by creating the terms and conditions of a credible social contract that is experienced as such by all

parts of the population.

The result is that, in several countries of the Sahel, the state continues to be perceived by certain parts of the national community as the state of the dominant ethnic group only—whether that group is in the majority or not. This perception has been nourished by political practices, such as patronage and nepotism, that have succeeded in reinforcing the feeling of exclusion among certain parties. The perception leads in turn to demands that can range from the simple sharing of political power to the recognition of self-rule, and even to secession and the creation of an independent state. The absence of true national integration constitutes favorable grounds for identity-based demands that, depending on the circumstances and the evolution of the balance of power between the state and the groups contesting the state, can be minimal or extreme. The attitude of the Azawad separatist movements in Mali, analyzed below, is a perfect illustration of this.

Similarly, it is necessary to emphasize how susceptible the Sahelian countries—which are completely or partially Muslim—are to the influence of jihadist movements, whose establishment and expansion are context-dependent. Here again, the more the central powers fail to satisfy the needs and aspirations of their peoples, the more recruits these movements get. The jihadists also benefit from the porousness of the borders and the states' inability to exercise consistent control over large expanses of their territory: they succeed in establishing transnational networks that, however fragmented, have an enormous disruptive capacity. As the crisis in Mali attests, the two types of threats—rebellions of identity and rebellions of autonomy or secession—are inherently tied to the formation of the postcolonial state and the appearance of Salafist and jihadist movements that can sometimes converge in the form of conditional alliances.

It must be emphasized, however, that these two phenomena are not unique to the Sahel.

Globalization—not only in the rest of Africa but equally in Asia, Europe, and particularly the countries of the former Soviet Union and the

1 Arbitration Commission of the European Conference on Yugoslavia cited in Malcolm N. Shaw, *International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 178.

Balkans—is characterized by an explosion of identity-oriented demands that, pushed too far, could result in a redrawing of the world map in accordance with the number of ethnic or other identity-based groups.

Seen from its own perspective, the Salafist jihadist movement can be interpreted as a reaction against the processes of economic and cultural standardization that accompany globalization. This is especially true as Salafism, manifestations of which are found on all continents, recruits primarily among youth estranged from their social milieu. Salafism seeks, as Olivier Roy has highlighted, to abolish national Muslim cultures (including the brotherhoods and the sects) in favor of a type of worldwide and therefore simplified Islamic culture.²

Still, the specific context of the countries of the Sahel leads the two phenomena evoked above to develop there as not only threats to peace and security but as factors that challenge the established states. In effect, to the extent that they can sometimes ensure the control of areas relevant to the jurisdiction of a state, the jihadist groups constitute rival political and military organizations.

Equally, this explains the facility with which the illicit trafficking of drugs, arms, and, more recently, hostage taking have developed. These aspects of transnational criminality are also not specific to the Sahel region. However, they take on a distinctive dimension there: while finding support in the aforementioned threats, they in turn reinforce those threats. All of these factors converge to make the Sahel the epicenter of a particular type of conflict.

Indeed, one can analyze the present conflicts as intrastate conflicts—to the extent that they do not set the states against one another but, to different degrees, set ethnic or religious groups, independent militias, and organized crime groups against each of the states.

On the other hand, these are “trans-state” conflicts: channels of communication between different, potentially or actually violent actors cross state borders. Given the contagion effect, the threats that such actors pose are a danger for regional, even international, stability.

Current Challenges

The countries most exposed to the conflicts briefly described above are Mali, Algeria, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, and Niger. Two other states, Chad and Nigeria, may become contaminated—to a certain degree they already are, but they have not yet been affected in the same manner.

From among the countries already in crisis as a consequence of the new threats to peace and security, Mali has emerged as the one affected the most, as it tends to become the point of interaction, even convergence, of all the destabilizing dynamics in the sub-Saharan region.

First of all, it is here that one finds in full effect the instability factor constituted by the absence of cohesion in the population that comprises the state. That population consists of a largely black majority, of which the rather urbanized Bambaras are the dominant group, and a Tuareg component, a nomadic people of Berber origins, that is present in most of the neighboring countries: Niger, Burkina Faso, Algeria, Mauritania, and Libya. The Tuareg people are marked, despite their dispersion and the stratification of their social organization (structured around tribes and castes) by a strong sentiment of identity that is symbolized, beyond a shared way of life, by the usage of a common language, Tamasheq. In Mali, although they are not the only inhabitants in the north, the Tuaregs are localized there, particularly in the cities of Kidal, Gao, and Timbuktu, situated on the Niger River. During colonization, this region was judged to be of little utility and did not truly interest France, which left there neither schools nor infrastructure of note.

A consequence of this fact was that the Tuaregs, already little inclined toward urban life given their nomadic ancestry, remained, in a certain fashion, on the margins of the modernization processes that had started to emerge with colonization. In particular, they did not enjoy the benefits of the education that the *école de la République* (the school of the Republic) brought, even if it was colonial. They were often forced to the margins and, precisely for lack of an active and educated elite, did not take part in the wave of emancipatory ideas which began in the 1950s.

2 Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

Furthermore, when Mali achieved sovereignty in 1960, the Tuaregs were virtually absent from the political and administrative structures and organs of the new state. Although this was a direct consequence of their situation during colonization, the Tuaregs could only experience it as a frustration. To this were added the resentments that fed the Modibo Keita government's excessive reaction to the first rebellion at the start of the 1960s, despite the rebellion's limited number of participants and the situation of quasi-abandonment by the Malian state of its already especially deprived north.

The drought of the 1970s and 1980s increased frustrations significantly and contributed to the launch of the great rebellion of the 1990s. This rebellion had its share of dead and displaced persons, but its crowning achievement was the conclusion of a national pact in 1996, under the terms of which the rebel movements would accept their integration into the armed forces, the police, and the administration. In exchange, even if they did not acquire the status of "autonomous region" for the north, the rebels did receive promises for its development and obtained its decentralization.

The National Pact was not, however, truly implemented. Rebellion began to be spoken of again in the 2000s.

On July 4, 2006, an accord for the restoration of peace and security and for the development of the northern Kidal region was signed in Algiers. It recalled the achievements of the National Pact of 1992 that had recognized the specific characteristics of northern Mali and at the same time reaffirmed the commitment of the parties to the territorial integrity and national unity of the Republic of Mali. Measures were planned to secure better participation of the local peoples in the decision-making processes (a regional provisional coordination and monitoring council was also created) and to stimulate and accelerate the economic, social, and cultural development of Kidal. The accord envisaged a special investment fund intended for financing development activities such as livestock breeding, hydraulic energy, transportation, communication, health, education, and culture. Other initiatives were also anticipated: a program targeted at ending the isolation of the region via the paving of principal roads, the construction of an airfield in Kidal, the electrifica-

tion of the primary towns of districts and communes, telephone coverage, and the establishment of regional radio and a national television relay network.

A reading of the main clauses of the Algerian accord confirms the extreme impoverishment of this broader northern area known as Azawad. However, the Algerian accord of 2006 was not implemented any more than its 1992 predecessor had been. It must be noted that since the accord was signed the factors hostile to a durable peace have multiplied. First, there was the arrival of al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and its branches who found sanctuary in this virtual no-man's-land deserted by the regular army. At the same time came the return of illicit trafficking, particularly the trafficking of drugs, which provides income to both the rebellion and AQIM simultaneously and has found its place in the strategic realignment of the region. The brazenness of the trafficking is best illustrated by the Boeing aircraft loaded with cocaine that landed in the Malian desert in 2009 at an airfield specially prepared for this purpose and which, after having been unloaded, was burned to the ground.

The major event, though, was the Libyan crisis. Many Tuaregs, having fled Mali in the 1990s, were conscripted into the Libyan army and fought on the side of the militias of the former Libyan leader. After the fall of Gaddafi, they returned with arms of another kind; these were no longer the Kalashnikovs used in the guerilla tactics of the rebellion in the 1990s but were heavy weapons that could be used to invade the cities with the goal of expelling the regular army from them. The Tuaregs were not the only ones to benefit from the proliferation of heavy weapons resulting from the Libyan crisis. AQIM and its branches clearly did not miss this opportunity either.

It is, incontestably, this new situation that explains the change in the nature of the armed rebellion, which since April 2012 has succeeded in pushing the regular Malian army out of the entire the region of the north, sealing the division of the country into two zones.

Indeed, the rebellions of the 1990s and 2000s were not demanding the independence of Azawad, only the greater administrative and cultural autonomy of the region and a program of invest-

ment to accelerate economic and social development.

Today, the principal player in this change from rebellion to secession is the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA). Created on October 16, 2011, this movement is a product of the fusion of the Tuareg Movement of Northern Mali (MTNM), which directed the rebellions of 2006–2009, and the National Movement of Azawad (MNA), a purely political organization begun in November 2010 with the purpose of peacefully recovering “the specific rights confiscated from the people of Azawad.” The MNLA has subscribed, since its creation, to a politics of liberation and independence that is reinforced by its recent military successes. On the side of this important actor, but far from representing the entirety of the Tuareg peoples today, are those who align themselves with jihadist Salafism. Truly amorphous and loosely bound, this entity clearly has its roots in the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) that has officially taken the name al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

While this movement is directed by former combatants of the Armed Islamic Group of Algeria, it recruits to a large extent among the Mauritians and the Malians. Its establishment in the Malian north and within the confines of Algeria, Mauritania, and Niger has strengthened since 2003 and constitutes a threat to all of these countries. Indeed, AQIM does not limit itself to a simple military presence. More and more, the movement transforms itself via relationships with the people to whom it renders services, using revenue derived from different types of trafficking activities. Some members have also intermarried with tribes in the region.

However, as detailed above, the jihadist movement does not indicate a single group but several movements that are not all aligned, to the same degree, with the Azawad cause. Among these forces, there is first of all Ansar Dine, which is led by Iyad Ag Ghali, a former Tuareg militant who converted to Salafism in the mosques of Mauritania in the 2000s. Founder of the Azawad People’s Movement (MPA), he played a decisive part in the conquest of the northern cities. While the Ansar Dine movement formed an affiliation with the MNLA during the subjugation of Kidal, it is with

other Salafist groups that it captured Timbuktu.

Relations between the MNLA and Ansar Dine remain unsettled. The MNLA identifies itself as a secular movement defending the cause of the Azawad peoples, which knows that it can have the recognition of the international community only if it is not classified as “Salafist.” On the ground, however, the balance of military force is largely in favor of the Salafist groups that must, consequently, be handled carefully; the contradictory positions expressed by the MNLA towards those groups originate in this context. Indeed, two days after having concluded an accord with Ansar Dine in which the two movements agreed to join together to form the Transitional Council of the Islamic State of Azawad, the MNLA announced that the final communiqué diverged from the agreement that had been reached and that they had serious differences with the Salafist organization on the topic of the application of Sharia.

In addition to Ansar Dine, it is necessary to take into account another Salafist organization, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO). A breakaway from AQIM, this group is led by Sultan Ould Badi, an Arab from Mali’s Gao region, assisted by the Mauritanian Mohamed Khya, alias Qoulqoum. Furthermore, it must be emphasized that all of the Salafist movements meet together for consultation, which reinforces their influence as compared to the secular movements.

To add to the confusion, the announcement on May 28, 2012, of the creation of a new armed group, the Northern Mali Liberation Front (FLNM), must be highlighted. The FLNM seeks to combat the efforts of Islamist movements to implement Islamic law. It is difficult to say, at this time, who is really concealed behind this group and what the importance of its creation is. One thing is clear: at this point in the evaluation of the balance of power on the ground, the tilt is in favor of the loosely affiliated jihadist grouping that has used the space left vacant by the central Malian government as the point from which it spreads out toward the other countries in the region. In this context, these movements’ exploitation of activities characteristic of transnational criminality (trafficking of drugs and arms, abduction and holding of Western hostages—not only in Mali but also in Niger and Mauritania) appear only as a consequence of this

anomaly: these nonstate groups' control of certain important portions of the territory of a state.

The contagious effect of these groups, which today operate from northern Mali, varies according to their nature and objectives. While the MNLA claims to serve as a sort of secular voice for the demands of the Azawad peoples who have always felt marginalized if not completely excluded from the development process in Mali, the shock wave created by its recent radicalization—symbolized by the proclamation of Azawad independence—appears manageable. Indeed, the mixed, even hostile, reactions that it provoked among the Tuaregs in Niger, who, as a result of their historically turbulent relationship with the central government were supposed to be the most favorably inclined towards this declaration, show that the Tuareg question can still be addressed by means of negotiation and within the framework of the existing state. Niger has, it is true, made efforts to integrate a part of the Tuareg political elite into its political and administrative structures. The sitting prime minister of Niger, Brigi Rafini, is a Tuareg. Similarly, one of the advisors to the president is none other than Rhissa Ag Boula, an emblematic figure in the two Tuareg rebellions that shook Niger from 1991 to 1995 and again from 2007 to 2009. Ag Boula has clearly counseled the Tuaregs in Niger against any attempts to imitate the MNLA.

Does this mean that the demand for independence, for the moment confined to Mali, is doomed to fade? It would be imprudent to respond categorically to this question. In reality, everything depends on the evolution of all the other destabilizing dynamics. They have only to lead to a weakening of the Nigerian state in order for demands for independence to be foreseeable there as well.

At the vanguard of these dynamics is the veritable industry of abducting and holding hostages emerging in Mali, which is connected to the growing influence of AQIM. Indeed, the presence of the Salafist groups is by far more destabilizing than the identity-related demands of the Tuaregs. To those demands, placed in their true context, political solutions can still be found.

The jihadist groupings establish themselves by developing a discourse and a practice of non-coexistence with “impious” governments.

Furthermore, they potentially have a sphere of influence that, because it coincides with that of Islam, is greater than one of ethnic affiliation. Proof of this is found in the ties that AQIM forms with movements such as Boko Haram in Nigeria for exchanging information and transferring technical knowledge about attacks.

The consequences for human development throughout the territory concerned are simply devastating. First, by maintaining a permanent climate of insecurity, these jihadist groups prevent the state from accessing the areas in which the people have the greatest need for infrastructure and basic social services (schools, clinics, etc.). The isolation of these areas is accentuated accordingly. Second, this insecurity directly and heavily impacts tourist activity and thus those who earn their living from that activity. Third, it leads the state to allocate to security a portion of the resources necessary for economic development. Fourth, the insecurity leaves people, abandoned to their fate, no other choice but to integrate themselves into that informal economy issuing from the alliance between the jihadist movements and the mafia-style groups—along with all that implies for the three-pronged moral, civic, and political agenda.

Finally, in the extreme cases, such as the clashes that led to the conquest of the northern cities, the phenomenon manifests itself in the dislocation of tens of thousands of people, fleeing the fighting toward the bordering countries: Mauritania, Niger, and Burkina Faso.

Responses to the Peace and Security Threats

The developments outlined above highlight the particularity of the conflicts that shake the Sahel region and the multifarious nature of the threats to peace and security that these conflicts bear. They also pinpoint northern Mali as the place where the destabilizing dynamics crystallize. The responses to these threats must, for the sake of efficacy, first focus on this epicenter of northern Mali.

In this context, it seems appropriate to separate the question of Tuareg demands from the questions relating to the establishment of jihadist movements in the region.

NEGOTIATING WITH THE TUAREG

The first question can and must be resolved through political negotiation between the central government and the representatives of the Tuareg peoples. At present, the obstacle to adopting this approach lies in the double crisis of legitimacy and authority that has affected the Malian government since the coup d'état of March 22, 2012. At its inaugural meeting in June 2012, the Support and Follow-up Group on the Situation in Mali established by the African Union's Peace and Security Council emphasized "the continuing fragility of the institutions within the...process for the restoration of constitutional order, following the coup d'état of 22 March 2012, as evidenced by the physical assault on the Interim President, Mr. Dioncounda Traoré."³ It is thus necessary to reinforce the authority and the powers of the transitional government so that it may, under the auspices of the African Union, ECOWAS, and other countries concerned (Algeria, Mauritania), commence negotiations with the MNLA and with the other Tuareg representatives that will lead to an accord that fully addresses the problems and that would, this time, be supplemented with mechanisms for ensuring compliance. The accord must, of course, include a real renunciation by the rebels of any armed action.

At the same time, it is essential to heal the open wounds of the parties and create conditions for a lasting trust between the north and south. A joint reconciliation commission comprised of experts must be established. On the political level, the government and the administration need to be open to the Tuareg representatives. Indeed, the reconciliation process must extend to all who accept the path of dialogue and put down their weapons, including Salafist elements.

A COORDINATED RESPONSE TO AQIM

As for the fate of AQIM and its various branches and allies who adhere to a practice of separation from the state authorities of the region, it is clear

that the answer can be determined only by coordinating the efforts of all the states in the region, along with the support of the entire international community.

Already, the African Union, supported by ECOWAS, is planning to ask the United Nations Security Council to pass a resolution authorizing the use of force.⁴

The experiences of NATO in Afghanistan and of the United States and its British allies in Iraq, however, caution prudence each time an external intervention into Islamic territory is considered. Even if the comparison is not reasonable, it must be kept in mind that jihadist Salifism feeds on the spirit of the martyr attacked by the infidels. Thought must therefore be given to who would intervene directly, by what means, and toward what ends.

If there must be an intervention, it would be expedient for the countries concerned to be supported, discreetly but effectively, on the logistical and military levels by the UN, while remaining the principal actors. It must be noted that the majority of these countries have already indicated their availability in this regard. Côte d'Ivoire has said that it is ready to send 900 soldiers; Senegal would be able to supply 150; and Niger could contribute at least 600 soldiers, who bring the advantage of a solid knowledge of the area. It also appears that Nigeria is disposed to participate in this shared effort.⁵

Although it may seem that no decision has yet been taken in the matter, Mauritania, which has previously led military operations against AQIM in Malian territory, would also be able to take part in this common enterprise.⁶ Uncertainties persist, however, regarding Algeria, which is generally hostile toward any foreign military intervention in the area. Nonetheless, it is important to emphasize that, even if logistically the decision for implementation has not yet been made, Algeria, Mauritania, and Mali have already established a joint command

3 African Union, "Inaugural Meeting of the Support and Follow-up Group on the Situation in Mali: Conclusions," communiqué, June 7, 2012. The inaugural meeting in Abidjan was organized under the auspices of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), African Union, and United Nations.

4 Ed. Update: In October 2012, the Security Council adopted Resolution 2071, in which it accepted the idea of military intervention in principle but requested an actionable plan from ECOWAS and the African Union. While preparations for intervention are underway, the idea remains hotly debated. UN Security Council, *Resolution 2071* (October 12, 2012), UN Doc. S/RES/2071.

5 These offers were tabled in late April/early June 2012. See, for example, "Mali : des pays africains pourraient participer à une «force» d'intervention avec l'appui de l'ONU," RFI, June 1, 2012, available at www.rfi.fr/afrique/20120601-mali-pays-africains-pourraient-participer-une-force-intervention-appui-ONU. ECOWAS has since offered to contribute 3,300 troops.

6 Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz has since spoken out against military intervention.

staff for possible military operations of this sort.⁷

Any intervention must be limited in duration, but it is also essential that it be followed by complementary initiatives that can be sustained over time.

First of all, if each state is to be vigilant and focused on guaranteeing the security of its own territory, it would be desirable to put in place joint patrols that are better adapted to the fight against transnational criminality, particularly those facets involving terrorism and illicit trafficking of drugs and arms.

In this context, the efforts of the subregion must be supported by and coordinated with those of the whole international community to form a three-pronged global strategy directed at the subregional, regional, and international levels. That cooperation must not, however, be limited to military and police domains. It must extend to all that have the potential to reinforce the institutional capacities of the states in the region, including their legal and judicial capacities, so that their court systems are sufficiently equipped to confront criminality in all its forms. To this end, legal and judicial personnel will need to be trained, and countries that have not yet incorporated the provisions of the United Nations conventions against illicit trafficking into their domestic laws should do so as rapidly as possible, particularly the convention against illicit trafficking in drugs.

Next, efforts must be engaged to dry up the sources of terrorism that develop in states lacking operating procedures adequate to meet the needs and the aspirations of their populations. It is when the state ignores the demands of its people for freedoms and rights as well as their concrete economic and social needs that it creates a terrain favorable to extremism. In this setting, security and development challenges must be seen as interdependent. In other words, it is appropriate to enlarge the scope of security, which implies, simultaneously, economic security threatened by poverty; food security confronted by famine; public health security threatened by disease; environmental security thwarted by pollution, ecological degradation, and the diminution of resources; personal

security threatened by different forms of violence; community security threatened by instability and civil unrest; and political security threatened by tyranny and repression.⁸

Even if all cannot be realized at once, it is essential that high-impact social development plans (commencement of large roadwork projects; construction of housing, schools, and clinics) are launched promptly and that jobs are found, particularly for the youth who the jihadist movements target as potential recruits.

Similarly, action to contain the sources of arms proliferation is critical. This, too, risks taking time as it is clear that post-Qaddafi Libya, one of the important origins of this proliferation, is far from being stabilized and that it is itself the hostage of armed groups that refuse to return to order.

In any event, a viable solution must be found to the problem of integrating the Tuaregs who have returned, armed, from Libya back into their country of origin. Such a solution presupposes that attractive propositions are made to them in exchange for their disarmament.

Finally, the drug-trafficking networks that hijack the roads of the Sahel region must be identified and dismantled.

Possible Scenarios

OPTIMISTIC

An optimistic scenario would consist of two elements: (1) rapid restoration of the authority and legitimacy of the Malian government, so that it can make the decisions required, and (2) agreement on the part of the international community, particularly the group of states concerned, to provide the Malian government with the support it needs.

However, this highly desirable scenario is not necessarily the most likely. Indeed, it would not be unreasonable to fear that the crisis of authority resulting from the March 2012 coup will persist in Mali and that, for its part, the international community will be slow to respond appropriately.

First, within Mali there are signs that the coup

⁷ A joint military command was set up in April 2010. See, for example, "Saharan States to Open Joint Military Headquarters," BBC News, April 21, 2010, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8633851.stm>.

⁸ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 1994: New Dimensions of Human Security* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), ch. 2.

leaders do not intend to withdraw from the political scene. This is despite calls from the international community, and the African Union in particular, for the military junta to cease interfering with the transitional government so that the latter can exercise all of the responsibilities devolved upon it. The result is a weakening of the authority of the transitional government, incapable of making the most basic decisions.

Second, in the international context it must be recalled that all of the states of the subregion do not share a common understanding of the principles and methods of external intervention in the territory. Algeria, in particular, has not yet overcome its original reservations about this type of intervention. However, the lasting success of an international action in this matter assumes agreement by Algeria. It must be added that the more time passes, the more the costs of an external intervention will rise.

PESSIMISTIC

Unavoidably, pessimistic scenarios are also foreseeable. The first is a sort of “Afghanization” of northern Mali in which one would have an Islamic state dominated by AQIM and its branches, ensuring the financing of its needs via taxes levied on illicit trafficking and ransoms obtained in exchange for the liberation of hostages. This situation would be consistent with the logic behind the creation of *Si-Qaida* in the Islamic Maghreb, which was officially conceived of with a view to the establishment of an Islamic state in this area. However, it presupposes a unity and cohesion within the movement that suggests it would be able to form the equivalent of a government equipped with the minimum centralization required to impose its authority. Nonetheless, it is not certain

that all the jihadist movements agree to go from a stage of coordination to one of fusion. In any event, if this scenario were to be realized, it would be characterized by a permanent state of insecurity for the neighboring states.

First of all, the territory of the new Islamic state would become the training ground for all the terrorists in the region and even on the continent. According to the president of Niger, in northern Mali there are already Afghan and Pakistani jihadists from different networks, including Boko Haram in Nigeria.

Then, just as the Taliban in Afghanistan justified the drug culture by the need to finance Jihad, the leaders of the new Islamic state in northern Mali will align themselves with the mafia-style networks there (particularly the drug networks) to maintain their own troops.

The second scenario is the “Somalization” of Mali. This would be a truly failing state, without any stable authority over the long term. The violence that batters the north (which would, because of the inconsistencies between the different factions, become not a state but a space with several masters) could, then, contaminate the south; consequently, the country would become caught in a perpetual war from which no victor would emerge. This would be a catastrophic scenario that clearly would not be without repercussions for neighboring countries and in which the ultimate winners would be the agents of organized crime.

In order to avoid the worst, everyone must understand that a possible collapse of the Malian state would pull the peace of the entire region along with it and, beyond that, international peace and security.

The **INTERNATIONAL PEACE INSTITUTE (IPI)** is an independent, international not-for-profit think tank with a staff representing more than twenty nationalities, with offices in New York, facing United Nations headquarters, and in Vienna. IPI is dedicated to promoting the prevention and settlement of conflicts between and within states by strengthening international peace and security institutions. To achieve its purpose, IPI employs a mix of policy research, convening, publishing, and outreach.



777 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017-3521, USA

TEL +1-212-687-4300 FAX +1-212-983-8246

Freyung 3, 1010 Vienna, Austria

TEL +43-1-533-8881 FAX +43-1-533-8881-11

www.ipinst.org