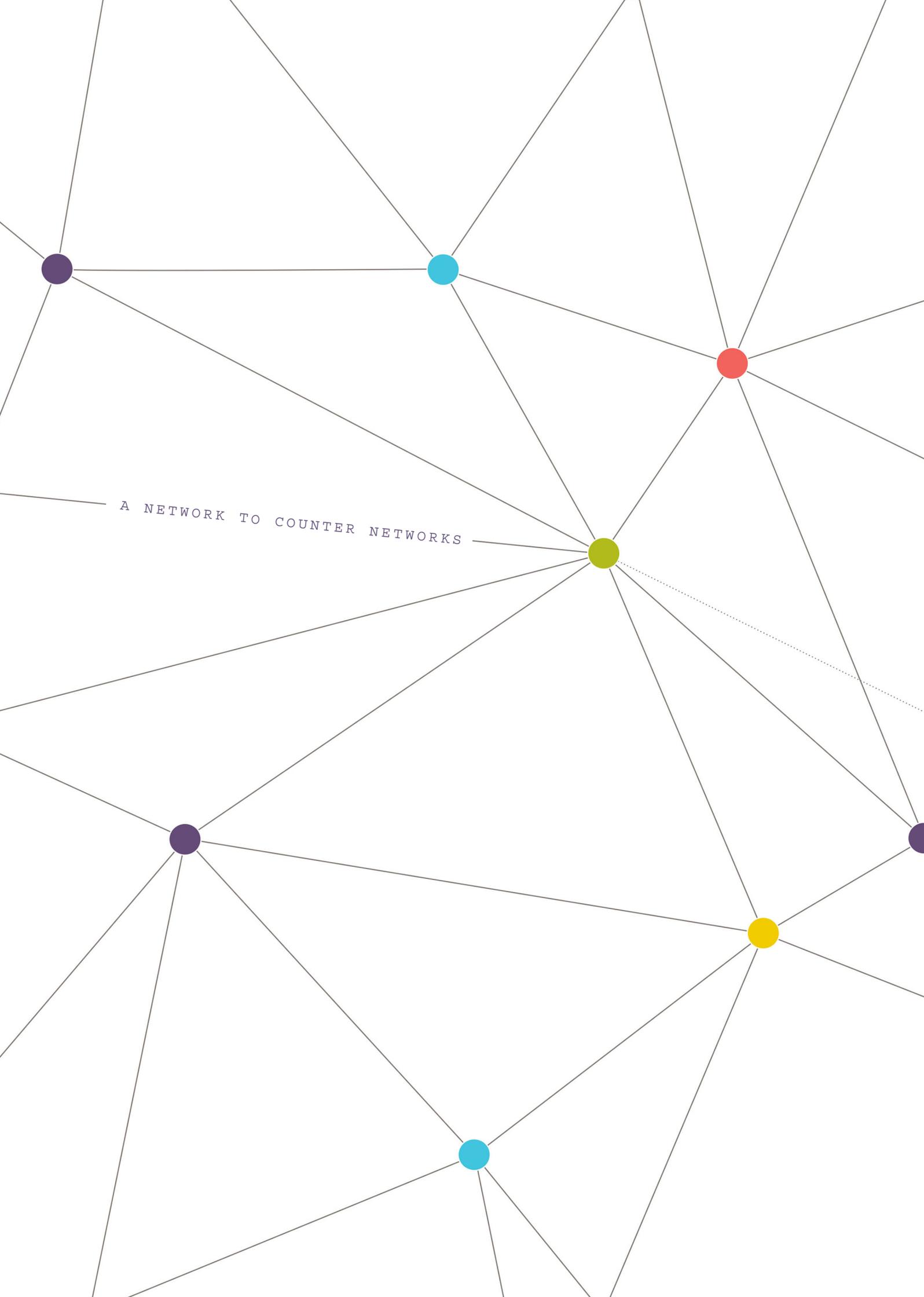


THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE  
AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL  
ORGANIZED CRIME

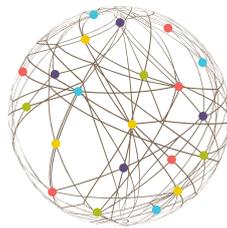
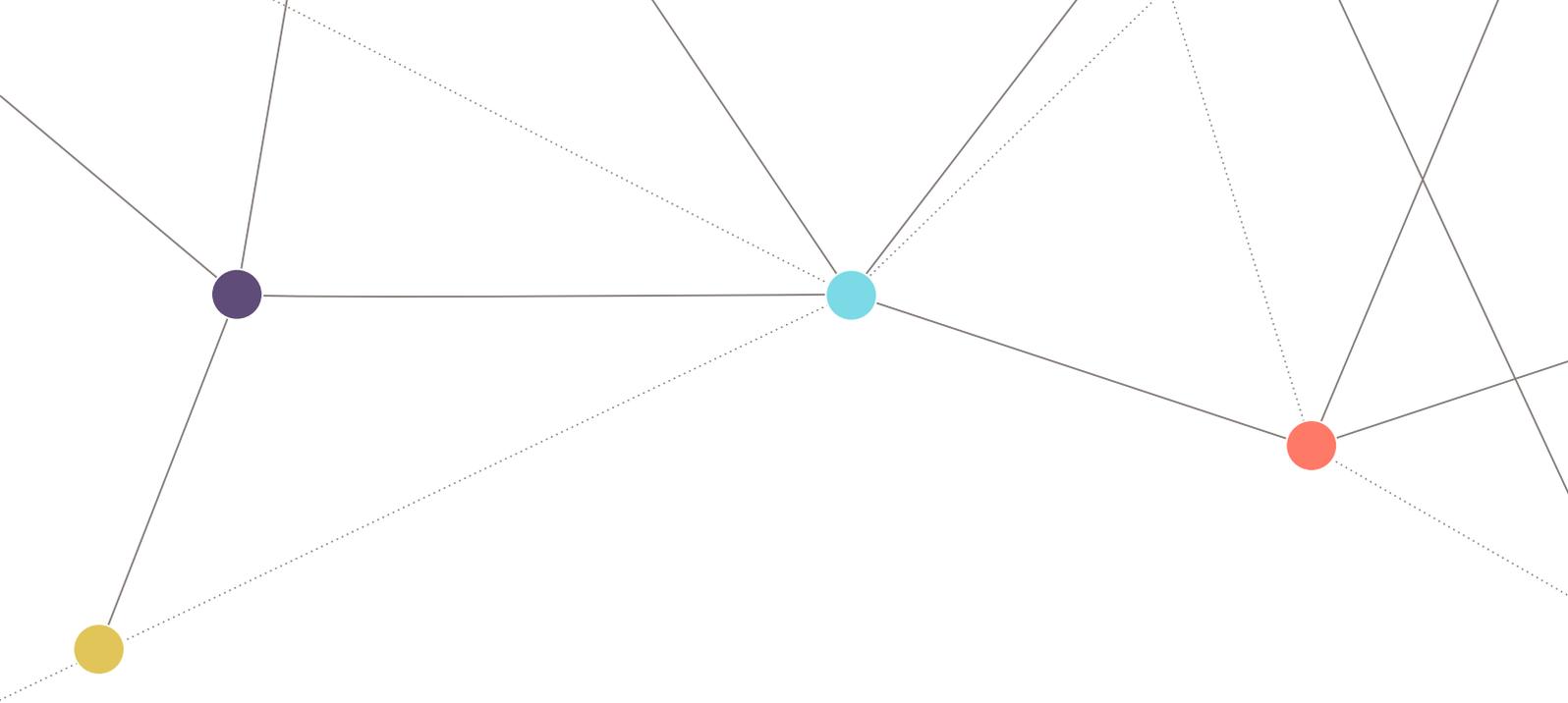
## Fragile Borders: rethinking borders and insecurity in Northern Mali



November 2016



A NETWORK TO COUNTER NETWORKS



# Fragile Borders: rethinking borders and insecurity in Northern Mali

---

Thomas Cantens and Gaël Raballand

---

November 2016



Cover photography by Albert Backer (Own work) CC BY-SA 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>), via Wikimedia Commons

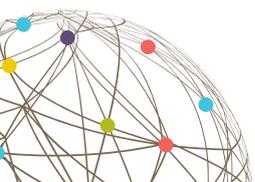
This document has been published in a previous French version at <http://www.frstrategie.org/publications/recherches-documents/>

The analyses presented in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions and policies of the World Bank, the World Customs Organization or its Members, or any institution to which the authors are affiliated.

© 2016 Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime. All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without permission in writing from the Global Initiative. Please direct inquiries to:

The Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime  
WMO Building, 2nd Floor  
7bis, Avenue de la Paix  
CH-1211 Geneva 1  
Switzerland



## About the Authors

---

Thomas Cantens is Doctor in Social Anthropology and Ethnology (EHESS, Paris); he is a researcher for the World Customs Organization (Brussels) and Associate Lecturer at the School of Economics of the University of Auvergne (Clermont-Ferrand). Contact: [thomas.cantens@wcoomd.org](mailto:thomas.cantens@wcoomd.org).

Gaël Raballand is Doctor of Economics, graduated from IEP Strasbourg, and Senior Public Sector Specialist for the World Bank.

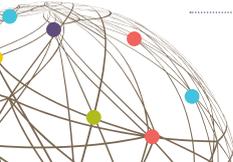


# Table of Contents

---

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>“A very very long border which can be a bit tough to live with”: Mali’s northern border .....</b>	<b>4</b>
An overview of the situation in northern Mali.....	4
The superimposition of “borders” in northern Mali.....	4
<b>The current crisis (2012-2015) and the failure of a security-based approach to border management.....</b>	<b>6</b>
A (relatively) consensual train of events in the current crisis.....	6
The failure of exclusively security-based approaches to border control.....	6
<b>The different types of cross-border traffic in northern Mali .....</b>	<b>9</b>
Migration and contraband; the border as a political and economic resource .....	9
Drug trafficking: “that’s their big earner” .....	10
The problem of assessing economic impacts.....	10
<b>The need to distinguish between different types of cross-border traffic.....</b>	<b>12</b>
Highly speculative links between the different types of traffic.....	12
The consequences of this speculation .....	13
<b>End of the centrality of the State.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Start by thinking beyond the State: the circulation of wealth related to borders and unequal enrichment.....</b>	<b>16</b>
How can current unequal enrichment be countered? .....	17
Which forms of collective wealth? .....	17
Circulation of wealth generated by the border: what are the scales of governance?.....	18
<b>Equality, the main condition for the restoration of the State border.....</b>	<b>20</b>
The weak egalitarian state: one of the criticisms made .....	20
Conditions for State credibility .....	20
<b>Is the “development” of border areas enough? The power of ideas .....</b>	<b>23</b>
Cooperation with Algeria .....	23
“Development”, security and terrorism.....	23
<b>Concluding remarks.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Endnotes .....</b>	<b>30</b>





# Introduction

---

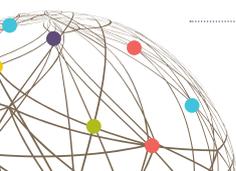
The route of the border in northern Mali,<sup>1</sup> as well as demands for self-rule, a Sahara-dominated geography extending over 10 countries and links between populations across borders, might suggest that the frontier is pointless and that “Saharan” populations have developed in a political space limited geographically by the desert and culturally by an essentially mobile lifestyle, whether based on trade or pastoralism. This is not the case, since the border, including its state-based definition, is logical in northern Mali at several levels: (i) technical (“the Sahara-Sahel as an area of fluid movements which are difficult to monitor”); (ii) political (“the creation of new borders defining a new State<sup>2</sup> or a new autonomy for a ‘cultural’ area”); (iii) economic (“the border as an economic opportunity due to price and tax differences between countries and the barrier it represents to action against fraudsters”); and (iv) symbolic, with the enterprising dimension of trade associated with fraud that contributes to the identity of the area’s youth (Scheele, 2009; Kohl, 2013). These different border regimes are very familiar to local populations, who know perfectly well where they are geographically (Brachet, 2013), and their references to a local or linguistic belonging do not preclude reference to their links to nations (*idem*).<sup>3</sup>

The 2012 crisis in Mali erupted in an area where border control was already considered to be difficult if not impossible.<sup>4</sup> It followed three other periods of crisis since the country’s independence, in 1962-1964, 1990-1996 and 2006-2009. The 2012 crisis involved a specific dimension, however: the loss of authority by the Malian State over two thirds of its territory, the administration of towns in the north according to religious laws, foreign military intervention and a considerable number of victims, disappearances or refugees. Malian government data indicate 360,000 displaced persons out of an estimated population of just over 1.2 million in the region.<sup>5</sup> Despite the heavy military presence in northern Mali since January 2013 (both foreign and domestic troops), both the government and all other stakeholders continue to regard the region as “insecure”; access to the northern towns of Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal remains complex with inhabitants living in a state of quasi-siege, movements of goods and people are subject to the threat of banditry, clashes still occur between armed groups and operations are still carried out by both Malian and foreign armies. So-called rebel groups and the Mali Government signed an agreement known as the Algiers Accord in June 2015, but its terms remain largely on paper.

This article raises questions regarding part of the solution to this crisis of insecurity, namely border management: how can the management of Mali’s borders in the three northern regions (Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal) be re-established or improved? Which border management options are available, and which organizational model should be adopted? Since the 2012 crisis, border management has emerged as a key issue linking two areas – security and development – which have not necessarily been tackled together beforehand.<sup>6</sup>

Cross-border movements in northern Mali take a variety of different forms, including individuals planning to migrate into Europe, armed groups, contraband goods and prohibited or restricted products<sup>7</sup> (drugs and arms). Whether isolated or coordinated, these cross-border movements generate insecurity on a number of levels: attacks against individuals, Malian officials and traders<sup>8</sup>, conflicts among traffickers<sup>9</sup> and conflicts among armed groups.<sup>10</sup> Besides these specific local effects, personal and property insecurity has a national impact. Insecurity limits the intervention capacities of both the Malian Government and donors, at the same time as it lends legitimacy to the perception of a “fragile” State: insecurity may thus become a risk for Mali if it is associated in the public eye with complacency towards armed groups in the north by certain elements of the political and administrative elite.

***"The techniques must form part of a political process to restore relations between the populations and stakeholders to ensure border security and control."***



Recent studies of northern Mali have adopted a particular tone; it is no longer a matter of discussing the existence of a “Tuareg nation”<sup>11</sup> or of criticizing the influence of foreign stakeholders (donors, Algeria, France, United States), but of describing the current situation. Few authors move beyond calls for reconciliation and propose specific solutions<sup>12</sup>, although a number of researchers have attempted to criticize and improve the conceptual framework of solutions already brought to the table (Reitano and Shaw, 2015; Briscoe, 2014), and this will also be the approach followed in this article.

This article argues that the answer is only marginally technical; the techniques must form part of a political process to restore relations between the populations and stakeholders to ensure border security and control in an area that has been abandoned by the Malian state authorities. It is therefore not enough for state civil and military services merely to occupy the land, an already complex process in itself. Border management will have to take account of the specific impact of the State’s abandonment of the land, i.e. the appearance or reinforcement of certain elites that have benefited willingly or otherwise from the climate of violence that has prevailed.

This analysis is the result of a series of around 30 interviews held in Mali in July and October 2015 (in Bamako) and October 2015 (in Timbuktu and Gao)<sup>13</sup>, put into perspective by a two-year posting as resident adviser with the Malian Customs authority from 2000 to 2002 and a dozen short stays in the Timbuktu area between 2002 and 2008.<sup>14</sup> In terms of basic methodology, however, this article is nevertheless marked by the fact that there are no up-to-date field data on northern Mali. This is true for most if not all publications subsequent to 2012, since the majority of authors, experts and researchers have found it difficult or impossible to visit northern Mali for extended periods, even though the situation has unquestionably changed since that date. The impact of the crisis and the succession of religious and then military administrations over people in the north is difficult to assess. What is more, the issues addressed – terrorism, trafficking in prohibited goods – are traditionally areas in which data are fragmented and should be treated with caution since they are second-hand, provided by informants whose motivation is always difficult to ascertain<sup>15</sup>. A positive albeit paradoxical point is that the lack of empirical data may force the “experts” to exercise restraint and provide an opportunity for local people, so long as they are encouraged to participate in debates on the management of their borders. This article also seeks to show why political imagination is required in a post-crisis context of this nature.

The first three sections of the article discuss the challenges posed by northern Mali’s border, including the situation along this border, a brief history of the 2012 crisis, the effectiveness of a security-based response to border management problems, and the differences between the various types of cross-border traffic. The following five sections avoid proposing any technical solutions, which would be at odds with the need for political imagination on the part of the Malian people themselves; instead, they merely lay out the potential conditions for such a solution and the conceptual issues which could be discussed in the course of the concomitant dialogue:

- (i) the reasons why it is conceptually and technically important to make a distinction between the different types of cross-border traffic (something which does not always necessarily happen at present);
- (ii) the importance of moving away from the idea that the State might “naturally” re-establish its presence along the borders, and a focus on the question “What can the State provide which others cannot?”;
- (iii) the need to look beyond the State *first and foremost* when considering border management issues, particularly in relation to the movement of wealth linked to the border and the unequal access to wealth caused by the prevailing insecurity;
- (iv) the need to explore how the Malian State can tackle the problem of inequality and avoid giving rise to fresh inequalities through its technical border management strategies;
- (v) the need to take account of the power of ideas, particularly in relation to terrorism, and to avoid drawing overly hasty conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the link between official development assistance and security.



# “A very very long border which can be a bit tough to live with”<sup>18</sup>: Mali’s northern border

As is the case for many other border territories,<sup>17</sup> the areas near northern Mali’s borders are economically marginalized regions in which low economic and demographic density is often exacerbated by distance from the capital and weak or not very effective public investment, frequently leading to poverty and unemployment rates that exceed those in the capitals.<sup>18</sup> In terms of governance, furthermore, the most capable members of the administration often do not wish to be posted to these distant regions, where endemic poverty raises the risk of government corruption and the enforcement capacity of the State is often weakened.

## An overview of the situation in northern Mali

Northern Mali has been marked by food insecurity since the 1972-1973 drought (Bosc *et al.*, 2010). This insecurity, associated with the seasonal nature of the economic difficulties of people whose livelihood is based on pastoralism and agriculture (the “lean season”), accentuates their vulnerability to external aid, thus reducing their political capacity. In economic terms, the three regions are similar: sparse population compared to other regions of Mali,<sup>19</sup> significant poverty, albeit no greater than in other regions of the country,<sup>20</sup> limited investment in paved roads compared to the rest of the country between 1994 and 2007,<sup>21</sup> and the importance of cross-border trade as a source of revenue both for imports of manufactured products and for exports of livestock.<sup>22</sup> Trans-Saharan trade represents a development potential (OECD, 2015<sup>23</sup>).

The three regions of Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal do not form a homogenous whole. The countries bordering Mali are different from one region to another and, as will be shown in greater detail below, they do not have the same foreign or economic policies or the same military capabilities and culture; the Kidal region borders Algeria and Niger, Gao has borders with Niger and Burkina Faso, and Timbuktu has borders with Mauritania, Algeria and Burkina Faso.

It should be noted that these regions are not particularly “dominated” by an “ethnicity”, “culture” or “language”. Peoples of Bambara, Bozo, Songhay, Peuhl, Moor, Arabic and Tuareg culture coexist. While language-based groups form in villages or other territorial units, this does not preclude dialogue between them. In the Timbuktu area, for example, children from Songhay villages are educated for some time in Tamasheq villages and vice versa. Language communities which are neither compartmentalized nor homogenous exist, together with very formal social borders within them, across which individuals move more or less freely; political “authority” over territories or land between groups of the same linguistic community, social stratification among Tuaregs for example, between *imajeren* (“nobles”), *imghad* (“vassals”) and *iklan* (“slaves”).<sup>24</sup> These different social distinctions sometimes represent the symbolic background to certain movements or even armed “rebels” or “militias”.

## The superimposition of “borders” in northern Mali

The term “northern Mali” which is generally used in public debate, the idea of an income-receiving Sahara, development programmes for the region’s eligible recipients<sup>25</sup> and the emphasis on a “Tuareg question” demonstrate the variety of approaches to political homogenization in this area, producing a multitude of different “borders” superimposed on the legal border.

The name of the first border area is Azawad, a term enshrined in the 2015 Algiers Accord as a geographic and cultural entity.<sup>26</sup> This new border is connected to the “Tuareg question”, which has troubled northern Mali since the colonial era,<sup>27</sup> and continued to dominate public debate before the crisis (Hagberg and Körling, 2012). In



the 1990s, the issue was debated in particular in terms of the existence or otherwise of a Tuareg “nation”.<sup>28</sup> Bourgeot and Boilley (2013) argue that there is no Tuareg “national sentiment”, while Claudot-Hawad makes reference to the presence of a unique political “body” among the Tuareg that may constitute a “Tuareg State”. This outline demonstrates the historic scope of a question that mirrors the ethnological or political dimensions. The stakeholders themselves now seem to have moved on from this debate. The principal anti-government movement in Mali, the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), refers to the “Azawad people” and their diversity,<sup>29</sup> despite the fact that it is led by Tamasheq speakers. Although the MNLA proclaimed the birth and independence of the state of Azawad in April 2012, this announcement was probably more intended to play a symbolic role to establish balances of power between armed groups in northern Mali and with the central government with a view to negotiations.

Bourgeot (2014) shows the extent to which the Sahara is an imaginary territory that needs to be organised to make it exist in reality, in particular through the 1957 French Common Organization of Saharan Regions (OCRS).<sup>30</sup> The OCRS project never saw the light of day, but its emergence in the public sphere shortly before African states became independent is at the very least a highly formalized testimony, in a not so distant past, to political thinking that foresaw strong autonomy for Saharan regions.

***"The Sahara is an imaginary territory that needs to be organised to make it exist in reality."***

The impact of this idealistic border is very specific. Under the Algiers Accord of 2015, the regions of northern Mali will benefit from regional autonomy, as potentially will all Malian regions, but their “Azawadi” unity may bring their political decisions together, and they have indeed already been granted a specific development plan under this agreement. The northern regions are, moreover, currently under specific administrative regimes. In 2014, for example, Kidal was a no-go area for the Malian army, and “demilitarized” zones were negotiated around towns.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, a new informal border has been established by the Konna Customs Administration (central Mali) to ensure that contraband, particularly fuel, is not sold on to the south of the country.

A second idealistic border has been claimed by armed groups, one of which is a supranational religious community with its own legal rules. The experience was very specific for the people of northern Mali between 2012 and 2013 in the towns of Timbuktu and Gao, but also applies in a broader sense. Evidence of a discussion on the organization of a “Saharan emirate” can be found in the correspondence which took place in 2012 between the Council of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Mokhtar Belmokhtar, the head of an AQIM brigade, with the latter expressly stating his wish to connect the Saharan emirate to a central emirate in Afghanistan without going through the regional level of AQIM.<sup>32</sup>

The borders of northern Mali are therefore not only subject to “disputes” over state borders, but also fall within infra-state perceptions (autonomy within a nation-State) and supra-state perceptions (a religious community) which all contribute to weaken the symbolic power of national law and the State.



# The current crisis (2012-2015) and the failure of a security-based approach to border management

## A (relatively) consensual train of events in the current crisis

The time sequence leading to the current situation is well-documented, and many academics and experts have outlined the details of the numerous armed or political groups and their provisional alliances and regular fragmentation.<sup>33</sup> The overall chain of events which led to the 2012 crisis is as follows: (i) the settlement in northern Mali in the early 2000s of former members of the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA), who engaged in economic activities involving smuggling, marriages and alliances with traditional leaders;<sup>34</sup> (ii) during the 2000s, an increase in smuggling with the no-fly zone over Libya and an increase in high-yield goods (cigarettes) from Gulf of Guinea ports, followed by a shift into drug trafficking, bringing in higher revenue but also giving rise to more powerful weapons;<sup>35</sup> (iii) a shift in the role of northern Mali for armed religious groups, from a mere bolt-hole to an economic interest area; (iv) the presence of armed groups under the al-Qaeda “global franchise” followed by further affiliations; (v) the re-emergence of protest movements focusing on the Tuareg question and the autonomy of northern Mali that were not satisfied by the previous agreements concluded in 1992 and 2006; (vi) the transfer of weapons and human resources from fighters fleeing the war in Libya;<sup>36</sup> and (vii) selective alliances between armed groups to ensure territorial domination in northern Mali by driving out the Malian army.

There is also a consensus, moreover, in the recognition that this train of events has been facilitated at best by the laxity shown by certain representatives of the Malian Government over the past five years with respect to the spread of armed religious groups and drug trafficking.

The current crisis follows other crises in northern Mali, but its brutality has called into question the effectiveness of the security policies implemented prior to 2012.

## The relative failure of exclusively security-based approaches to border control

Security approaches in Mali have viewed border control from an anti-terrorism perspective, turning border management into a military issue of controlling people (Tisseron, 2011; Chenu, 2013). The United States has invested significant resources since 2002.<sup>37</sup> While American efforts may have contained terrorism, they seem not to have achieved their initial objectives. General Carter Ham publicly recognized that the US army failed to train the Malian army because, in his view, the training was tactical or technical only, and did not focus on “values, ethics and a military ethos”.<sup>38</sup> While this cultural dimension is important, a second explanation is probably the gap between the resources invested, albeit significant in absolute terms, and the resources required to control such vast areas.<sup>39</sup> As regards the smuggling of licit products into Mali, it did not prove possible to seal the border with Algeria despite its official closure in January 2013: cross-border activity captured by satellite photography in 2014 is far from negligible (Bensassi *et al.*, 2017).<sup>40</sup>

One likely reason for this failure is that any solution to border control involving solely “technical and repressive” measures requires close cooperation between governments, political representatives and operational services, or in other words well-established mutual trust and shared national political visions of border management.

This mutual trust is not necessarily present at political level, however, with neighbouring countries and countries which are geographically distant but involved in local security issues (France, United States) still



sometimes being accused of having interests in the Malian crisis. Access to supposed natural resources in northern Mali is often cited to explain the manipulation of armed groups by foreign countries (Niang, 2013; Boilley, 2011; Claudot-Hawad, 2013; Deltenre, 2014; Grégoire and Bourgeot, 2011).

Mutual trust also presents a problem at operational level due to corruption, whether real or reputed. Operational border control is based on the capacity to collect intelligence, particularly where the areas involved are so vast, and to relay operational information among enforcement officials. Bekaye (2012), a Malian army officer, speaks of—and accepts—the lack of confidence foreign military personnel and officials have in the Malian authorities and their military and civil representatives, lamenting the corruption that makes Malian military and paramilitary forces unreliable allies in sharing information. Similarly, the results of the Joint Operational Army Staffs Committee (CEMOC)—the regional information coordination centre, bringing together representatives of Algeria, Mali, Niger and Mauritania since 2010 at Tamanrasset—appear to be very poor (Arieff, 2013).

A further reason for the failure of purely security-based approaches to border management relates to the fact that neighbouring countries do not necessarily share a common political vision of border control. Mauritania, which advocates offensive military action, has a 16,000-strong army, has rehabilitated 45 border posts and has made visas mandatory for all foreigners; Algeria has an army of over 500,000 troops;<sup>41</sup> Mali has an army numbering between 7,000 and 8,000, and successive governments have primarily sought to contain violent movements in desert areas while launching development programmes that have not been implemented.<sup>42</sup> The “border country” policy espoused by Mali since 2000 explicitly advocates dismantling of the border in favour of political rapprochement of the communities on either side,<sup>43</sup> and this policy is implemented by a National Borders Directorate (DNF) attached to the Ministry for Land Improvement. The very existence of this policy and this Directorate is evidence of the level of interest in this issue and its historical significance for the construction of the Malian State since 1992 and the associated vision of a border based on economic development and pan-Africanism.

As well as Mali’s neighbours, other countries and international entities are also involved in the Malian crisis and do not necessarily share a common vision of potential border management strategies. Morocco, for example, is an important investor in southern Sahara but is not a member of the African Union (AU), has difficult relations with Algeria and continues to be troubled by drug trafficking and terrorism (Boilley, 2011; Lounnas, 2013).

A great deal of diversity also exists at community level, since Mali belongs to at least three different regional political entities involved in border management, namely the AU, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the G5 Sahel.

The ECOWAS countries have however never developed a border management doctrine going beyond the monitoring of a number of trading posts. Civil border control is viewed as being geared towards taxation (collecting revenue), and their experience of enforcement and of combating illegal trafficking is limited, the coercive dimension continuing to be military rather than civil.

Despite the fact that the G5 Sahel has adopted a joint technical security programme,<sup>44</sup> its member states do not take the same approach to border security. According to a high-ranking Malian official, “Following the events of the 1990s, Mali relocated its police and Customs officials to the country’s interior; even though customs operations are a border service, they are now in the centre of the country.”<sup>45</sup> A Chad official from the Chad Lake region pointed out that the same was true for Cameroon and Nigeria, in contrast to Chad’s policy, which has always been to maintain a Customs and police presence along the border.<sup>46</sup>

***“Following the events of the 1990s, Mali relocated its police and Customs officials to the country’s interior.”***



The UN maintains a physical presence in the country in the form of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), but many other foreign armies are also present, including a number of African contingents (Togo, Chad, Senegal and Burkina Faso). A parallel is sometimes drawn by critics between MINUSMA operations and previous UN interventions in Rwanda or Darfur (Gowan, 2013) or Afghanistan (Lafourcade and Michailof, 2014). However, unlike previous UN missions (68 since 1990, including 23 in Africa), MINUSMA has a designated enemy (Chenu, 2013). Neither does MINUSMA *a priori* play any role in combating drug trafficking; its mission is to “support the implementation of the political and institutional reforms provided for by the Agreement, especially its Part II.”<sup>47</sup> There are three lessons to be learned from the failure of security-based approaches: (i) the practical impossibility of an exclusively security-based approach in view of the problems involved in monitoring such vast areas; (ii) the difficulty of ensuring the cooperation of intelligence services at regional and probably national level due to corruption<sup>48</sup> and mutual mistrust; (iii) the difficulty of coordinating technical solutions which are not always based on shared political visions of border management and security, given the differences in the historical development of national policies and working cultures of the officials in charge of drafting and executing border policies. In the words of a high-ranking Malian official, “Mali cannot manage its borders on its own,”<sup>49</sup> but neither can neighbouring countries manage these borders without Mali. Technical solutions can only be achieved on the basis of shared political visions of border control.



# The different types of cross-border traffic in northern Mali

---

Four types of cross-border movements on the edge of legality pass through northern Mali: (i) the transporting of “migrants”<sup>50</sup> since European anti-immigration policies caused North African countries to strengthen their migration policies (Trauner and Deimel, 2013) and have brought migrants into contact with networks of traffickers (Andrijasevic, 2010); (ii) the illicit transport of legitimate products, mostly basic necessities which are often subsidized by Algeria; (iii) the transportation of legitimate but heavily taxed products (cigarettes from Guinea), which appears to be declining; and (iv) the transportation of prohibited or heavily regulated products (drugs, arms). These revenue-generating movements are accompanied by the presence and circulation of armed groups, whether in connection with the above movements or not.

## Migration and contraband; the border as a political and economic resource

---

The border is an important resource for local populations who take advantage of differences in taxes or production between different countries. There are many examples of this around the world.<sup>51</sup> In the case of Mali, the northern region has been historically connected at economic level with Algeria (Scheele, 2011), whose subsidized products are smuggled in. The same mechanisms are in place: transport and fuel and several food products such as semolina, flour and pasta are heavily subsidized in Algeria, and some of the goods routed towards the south of the country ultimately turn up in Mali (Scheele, 2012). While officially less than two million US dollars’ worth of goods are imported from Algeria to Mali, it has been estimated that this amount stood at USD 150 million before the 2012 coup d’état (Bensassi *et al.*, 2017).<sup>52</sup>

The Malian customs revenue loss would therefore be around USD 50 million at most (using the year 2011 as an example, with a tax burden of 30%), i.e. some 5% of annual revenue targets.

In this context in which alternative economic activities and the return on public investment are limited, there is often an implicit social contract manifested in the half-hearted suppression of informal trade and smuggling so that border populations can benefit from the respective income and job creation. It would be very difficult for the Malian Government to subsidize northern Mali as much as Algeria does, i.e. close to USD 50 million in direct subsidies for goods in 2012 (Bensassi *et al.*, 2017). In addition, even if officially efforts are made to tackle smuggling, the authorities’ real position is ambivalent at best. As Meddeb (2012) has shown in the case of Tunisia, smuggling was “tolerated” by the central authorities even during the Ben Ali regime because it allowed populations in the south of the country to create income and employment. It might be thought that this same approach was also traditionally adopted in Mali.

Migrants represent an economic resource whose financial contributions are equivalent to the public development aid the country receives.<sup>53</sup> Migration is furthermore a moral and political issue for Mali. The country has the legal apparatus to suppress illegal migration but governments do not apply it because they have been historically hostile to any coercive approach to migration, adhering to a pan-African vision by accepting non-Malian migrants who have been rejected by European countries (Dembele, 2010; Trauner and Deimel, 2013).<sup>54</sup> Migration is a trump card for Malian diplomacy and an area in which the country can negotiate with European states on an equal footing (Trauner and Deimel, 2013): the Malian authorities have power (Malian consulates in EU countries must recognize as Malians undocumented migrants who should be expelled).<sup>55</sup>

In view of the gravity of the migration issue in Mali, its political history and the economic perspectives opened up by migrants, the Malian Government is highly unlikely to support technical measures that may associate the battle against migration with the suppression of other trafficking.



## Drug trafficking: “that’s their big earner”

---

Drug trafficking is a very different matter from the two previous types of traffic. Mali is essentially a transit country; cocaine arrives in Mali from South America, either by sea through African ports or by direct flights, transiting Mauritanian and Malian desert areas on its way to Europe, either by air or through the Sahara and the Middle East (cf. UNODC, 2015). Mali is not the only transit country with desert areas to be involved in drug trafficking. Drug routes also pass through Niger, but the French military presence ensuring security for the exploitation of uranium is likely to be a deterrent to drug traffickers and religious groups and the establishment of caliphates (Grégoire, 2013). Military intervention in northern Mali has very probably forced drug traffickers to go elsewhere or to relocate their resources,<sup>56</sup> but they will almost certainly occupy northern Mali again if the military presence is reduced.<sup>57</sup>

Mali is not a “narco state” and it is quite fanciful to think that it could become one. Apart from certain known cases or anecdotal evidence, the data are insufficient to define the quantitative scope of the problems.<sup>58</sup>

While caution must be exercised with respect to any quantitative estimation of drug trafficking, we can make a distinction between drugs traffic and other forms of traffic. The amount of money in circulation in northern Mali suggests that drug trafficking generates significant profits,<sup>59</sup> which are concentrated in the hands of a small number of players. Furthermore, drug trafficking is underpinned by material resources that distinguish it from other trafficking, particularly heavy weapons, which means that its impacts are significant. Drug revenues may thus foster highly structured collusion and corruption among state officials at a higher level than smuggling, which generates lower profits and involves more local corruption.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, drug revenues place those involved in positions of power (vote buying, supply of basic necessities)<sup>61</sup> and allows them to enjoy a quasi-monopoly position based on money laundering, either because their resources are newer than the others (particularly valuable in transport), or because they can reduce the profit margins of their legal activities.

## The problem of assessing economic impacts

---

Regardless of the nature of the price to be paid by economic agents for security, which may differ between “transport charges” and the price of the escort (for all types of trafficking), insecurity comes at a cost which may represent a barrier to market entry for those who have no access to legal and illegal means of security. The economic impacts of trafficking are difficult to assess for at least two different reasons.

Firstly, it is not clear at this stage whether local groups that profit from drug trafficking do so directly as international players or continue to be local stakeholders, providing “services” (transport links, escorts) on which they levy a “tax”, or whether clans or villages levy “charges” on traffickers on their territory (Boilley, 2011; Tisseron, 2011).

Secondly, the economic cost of insecurity in relation to the situation prior to the crisis is very real but difficult to assess; even if the price of security is added to the final price of products, thereby reducing people’s purchasing power by the same amount, it cannot be ruled out that those who levy a form of taxation ensure the local redistribution of part of the proceeds of the latter or remove other taxes.<sup>62</sup> The actual circulation of money connected to the price of insecurity is almost impossible to quantify.<sup>63</sup> Finally, some stakeholders have provocatively pointed to the positive effects of drug laundering; drug money “could be wisely invested”. The benefits of drug trafficking have also represented a “social opportunity” for persons of low social status in very hierarchical societies (Tinti, 2014).

Be that as it may, it is very likely that a form of taxation is already imposed on illegal traffic in the territories crossed by the traffickers. This price of security contributes to the survival and reproduction if not the burgeoning of armed groups. The habitual nature of this form of income, secured by individuals for their own



benefit but also for that of certain populations, is a political difficulty and economic obstacle to eradicating drug trafficking or ensuring a policy of shifting from informal to formal activities.

A border management policy in the north of Mali must therefore take account of the following four facts and their consequences in relation to the crisis. Firstly, it is very difficult for a state to shift from tolerating smuggling to regaining control of the situation. A question of credibility but also of institutional governance arises in reducing smuggling and ensuring better border control.

Secondly, opposition to the restoration of state authority will be all the stronger if economic operators who remained active in the north and who were linked to drug trafficking have been able to support their economic position by laundering the proceeds of trafficking.

Thirdly, the population of northern Mali has passed through a long period without the State, which is considered to have “abandoned” the population to its fate. Restoration of “state authority” is therefore not only conceptual but is also a very practical process on the ground, during which officials will renegotiate their authority with local people.

Fourthly, the regions of northern Mali will experience a high degree of political autonomy, though this is as much an opportunity as a risk if public opinion and decision-taking were to be hijacked by certain people with greater financial capabilities.

It should be noted that the aim of the following sections is not to propose technical border management measures, but to discuss the prerequisites for a debate on the subject. A crisis situation also represents an opportunity to display political imagination, and the latter is fundamentally at odds with the promotion of individual technical measures.

On the other hand, it is not unrealistic to propose issues which could be discussed within the framework of political and technical debates on border management. On the basis of various meetings with administrative representatives (at central level in Bamako, but also at local level in Timbuktu and Gao), it would appear that the current situation is both radically new and difficult to grasp due to the lack of reliable information, and these two factors represent a significant barrier to collective debate. At the same time, a number of border security projects have already been implemented by donors (United Nations agencies, International Organization for Migration, European Union, France, Germany, the Netherlands etc.), the Malian authorities and the G5 Sahel countries.<sup>64</sup> While these projects have their own specific features, they are all based on official policies, analyses of the situation and sometimes border management models.

The following sections therefore discuss the fundamental assumptions which are currently held and which have been either voiced during meetings or identified as the backdrop for ongoing security and border projects borders.

***"Firstly, it is very difficult for a state to shift from tolerating smuggling to regaining control of the situation."***



# The need to distinguish between different types of cross-border traffic

Armed groups, smugglers, migrant traffickers and drug traffickers all benefit from three parameters: (i) the border in the sense that it sometimes<sup>65</sup> forms a barrier to pursuit by armed or civil forces; (ii) the physical characteristics of the Sahara area, which are relatively homogenous and do not create preferred border crossing points; and (iii) in particular from the scale of the two preceding advantages. These parameters, which are common to a number of different types of illegal traffic, may justify the implementation of technical security responses, whether on a collective or individual basis.

The implementation of joint technical measures to contain or repress the various types of traffic may however present a problem. In Niger, Kohl (2013) describes the problems facing transport agencies in the town of Arlit following the implementation of an indiscriminate security-based response; drivers – in general – are concerned about the risks they run due to intensified repression by security forces, and refuse to engage in goods transport or drop off migrants en route.

As a general rule, the control of cross-border movements is never based initially on legal or technical options. It is not possible to control everything that crosses any border, and there is little reason why that should become possible in Mali. The officials concerned therefore make choices informed by their professional know-how, the resources available to them and their individual motives. If everything which is illegal must by definition be punished, control cannot be exercised with equal urgency and resources, particularly in a post-conflict situation. Border control must therefore be based on a combination of political and economic choices, informed by partial data as to the assessment of risks.

## Speculative links between the different types of traffic

Two links are often made between the different types of illegal traffic which tend to downplay their differences and stifle debate on the negative impacts of a uniform technical response.

The first relates to the fact that the smuggling of legitimate goods and trafficking in prohibited products (arms and drugs) share a common factor, namely transport and logistics. The (formal and informal) transport networks that support trafficking are flexible as to the choice of cargo (no means of transport are specific to a type of cargo, and trucks and light pickup vehicles are standard means of transport which are used by all traffickers). This link between all the different forms of traffic may seem logical and appear to justify an indiscriminate security response to transport networks. In actual fact, different types of trafficking coexist in an area in which knowledge of transport and information on local populations is vital. In Algeria, Niger and Libya, *afrod* is the generic term for all such trafficking carried out on the fringes of the regulations (Kohl, 2013). Cross-border “traders” and transporters who are in daily contact with the authorities act as intermediaries with officials on behalf of anyone who asks them to do so.<sup>66</sup>

The second link is made between drugs and terrorism, as seen in references to “narcoterrorism”; the connections between armed religious movements such as AQIM and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and drug trafficking (Lacher, 2013) are such that the term “jihadist” is often replaced with “narcoterrorist”.<sup>67</sup>

These two links remain speculative. As far as the first is concerned, Lacher (2012) and his interviewees believe that there is a link between the smuggling of legitimate and prohibited goods. Others dispute these links on various grounds, for example because smugglers of legitimate products come from tribes which have



never been involved in trafficking drugs, or because the economic systems are so radically different. A high-ranking official from a northern region described two separate organizational systems in the Timbuktu region and along the border with Mauritania, for example; convoys of between 10 and 20 pickup trucks carrying drugs travel between Mauritania and the Middle East, masterminded by traffickers who buy new vehicles and sell them after only two or three operations, while at the same time similar but second-hand vehicles owned by individuals outside any organizational structure make several trips each day between the border with Mauritania and the town of Timbuktu.<sup>68</sup> Cocaine or heroin which transits through Mali has been seized from individuals at Bamako airport or the border with Guinea, or found hidden in shipments of legal goods exported to Senegal by rail. No cocaine or heroin has been seized in the north of the country, although interviewees who live in the area or who live in Bamako but originally come from the north report that drugs are dropped from planes.<sup>69</sup>

The link between drugs and terrorism is also tenuous. Lacher (2013) refers to the links between military or administrative officials and traffickers and the involvement of a number of MUJAO leaders in drug trafficking operations, but these appear to be individual and opportunistic initiatives rather than a well-established policy. Reitano and Shaw (2015) question the links between armed religious groups and drug traffickers. Salem (2014) reports that a jihadist brigade waged a campaign against drug traffickers by burning their cargos on the instructions of Belmokhtar (Salem, 2014, pp. 42-45).

## The consequences of this speculation

---

These links between different types of traffic pose two problems in relation to border management. The first of these problems is that the links are merely speculative and questionable, potentially opening up the way for undifferentiated technical responses.

Secondly, and as mentioned above, each type of cross-border traffic presents different political challenges.

Thirdly, these links convey an impression of generalized insecurity based on the potential for illegal action, with each type of traffic linked to another presenting an economic, moral or political risk or hazard which is deemed to be more worrying; smuggling is linked to drugs and drugs are linked to terrorism, which is the ultimate threat.

Finally, these links raise an ethical dilemma faced in connection with any solution. Individual choice as a principle and the mobility of stakeholders between one type of trafficking and another as an assumption cannot be sidelined as a potential element of the solution for managing borders. Some of the parties involved may abandon certain forms of trafficking due to social pressure. Scheele (2013) notes that participation in drug trafficking networks is marginal (probably in terms of the number of those involved). Drugs furthermore continue to be perceived as "haram", and Scheele rightly points out that making them socially prestigious is difficult if not impossible.<sup>70</sup> It is therefore doubtful whether most of the parties involved (traffickers, carriers, guides, etc.) intend to continue to engage in drug-related activities in the long term.

Briscoe (2014) notes that "crime did not engender terrorism" (p. 15), and points out that we should not forget the "differences in terms of seriousness between illegal acts and the general absence of any perception of unlawfulness" (*idem*, p. 15 and p. 16). Any debate on border management and the formulation of a technical response to border-related insecurity should probably be based on an attempt to distinguish between the different types of cross-border traffic rather than the links between these latter.



## End of the centrality of the State

"We stayed despite the danger, but you left" is how a senior Malian Customs official summed up citizens' recriminations against customs officials in the cities of Douentza or Konna. He added, somewhat emotionally, that "those who remained in these areas have had a hellish time".<sup>71</sup>

There are two ways of thinking about the restoration of State authority at borders. The first is that the State is naturally entitled to fulfil its role as the guarantor of security and its presence at borders should be "a given". The second way of thinking probably drives much of northern Mali's population: in areas where borders have never presented obstacles to their movement, the State, which these populations have seen operate poorly before and during the crisis, is only legitimate if it delivers what other security stakeholders, non-state armed groups such as "militia", "rebels" or "Islamists" cannot.

The result of the current crisis is that the nation State is no longer explicitly the central figure of governance in northern Mali and especially at the borders. The Malian state has neither the monopoly of security nor the monopoly of delegating security to others.

In addition, not all non-military armed groups are against the government.<sup>72</sup> Former Malian governments did not discourage the raise of militias to counter the rebellions that occurred in the north. The Malian government reportedly used paramilitary forces to suppress the "rebels" claiming to be Tuareg groups.<sup>73</sup> There are conceptual divisions—cultural, historical, linguistic—cutting across Malian society as in any society, but they have taken specific forms in the current crisis, sometimes violent and structured in the shape of armed groups according to "ethnic" or "social status". The principle was to use the customary social order of the north to turn the "subordinates" against their "masters" (Chena and Tisseron 2013).<sup>74</sup>

The main consequence of this set-up of security and insecurity stakeholders is not so much "rampant insecurity" but rather, and this is where things become more complex, that one person's insecurity is another's security<sup>75</sup>: certain "rebel" groups described as threatening by some and thus legitimizing the creation of local militias also performed a security role for others.<sup>76</sup> The Malian army is also involved in this play on perceptions, seen as a threat by some people not affiliated with militant groups, and as a security guarantee by others. The resentment of part of Mali's population against the army is real and longstanding: Gutelius (2007) reminds about the 2006 crisis in which the number of civilian casualties in the north in 1990-1996 was believed to have been much higher than casualties among combatants. Just consider some very recent examples. In December 2015, the murder of three young Timbuktu residents, including a Tamasheq presenting a programme on a Christian radio station, has caused certain allegations against the Malian army to resurface on social media, with one of the suspected murderers being a soldier. Additionally in December 2015, a final operation by the French army was also criticized for causing casualties within a group, the Imghad Tuareg Self-Defence Group and Allies (GATIA), which was an armed pro-government group, whereas the French army claimed that it had acted against AQIM militants.<sup>77</sup> The fact that these were rumours did little to change their effect: in a security context where secrecy is the rule, information asymmetry between actors is a weapon that can also be turned against those keeping the secret, including the State, its armed forces and foreign forces.

***"The result of the current crisis is that the nation State is no longer explicitly the central figure of governance in northern Mali and especially at the borders. The Malian state has neither the monopoly of security nor the monopoly of delegating security to others."***

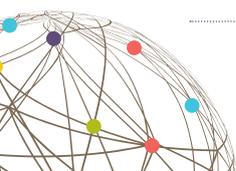


In general, interviewees have shown little or no knowledge of a distinction between the State as a concept and the state as an actor. In other words, the Malian state - in the sense of the government, its army and administrations - is represented as one of the actors and, sometimes, as the one creating insecurity and instability (corruption, past failures of the Malian army, support for armed militias to counter the rebellion, economic abandonment of northern Mali), although this representation is not offset by a claim for more State or a stronger State with greater presence.

Moreover, existing projects or Malian policies do not aim to “impose” the State’s presence, despite the multitude of laws “on paper”: “we are not dressed (i.e. no uniform), we are not armed, but our texts are harsh”, said a Malian officer based in Timbuktu.<sup>78</sup> There is plenty of evidence: absence of administrative enforcement by customs and tax services,<sup>79</sup> symbolic presence (in terms of personnel) of these services in the northern regions, local officials (prefects, teachers,...) who do not actually occupy their positions in the field, presence of informal checkpoints tolerated by Malian military or government services, establishment of security zones where the Malian army must share or reduce its powers, establishment of an informal border to the north of Mopti to prevent the contraband supplying the north from reaching the south of the country. In addition, if a state actor is unable to impose itself then there is little chance that the control services as a whole will be able to do so: an official of the Directorate for Trade and Competition reported that traders stood up to him when he tried to carry out checks on them, arguing “Customs waved me through but you won’t?”<sup>80</sup> “Education” is a keyword in the discourse of donors and officials: educating importers so they pay taxes, educating people to cooperate with security forces, educating Malian officials about problems of corruption and ethics. However, as acknowledged by a Malian officer based in Gao, “education is the last resort when all else fails.”<sup>81</sup>

In the absence of the State “imposing” its presence, the question arises as to how the State is going to re-establish itself in northern Mali and at its borders: on what grounds will it do so and what else will it offer?

To answer this question it is necessary to start by thinking beyond or without the State: which collective functions that could be the subject of a collective agreement are not currently performed by armed groups, what possible role could the State play in safeguarding these functions and under what conditions?



# Start by thinking beyond the State: the circulation of wealth related to borders and unequal enrichment

What is in question at the borders of northern Mali is not insecurity per se. No one is considering insecurity as a political project: all the armed stakeholders claim to provide security and are fighting among themselves to gain at least a monopoly on clearly defined areas: armed religious groups have temporarily rolled out their political plan of administering city administrations where they provided security through Islamic police and courts, while armed non-religious groups also intend to provide security in certain areas;<sup>82</sup> even drug traffickers have a stake in relative security and stability insofar as it is provided by actors favourable to them. This struggle to seize a monopoly on security proves that insecurity is not a political project for anyone.

What creates a problem is more precisely enrichment linked to cross-border traffic. It is not illegal enrichment –which implies a relationship not challenged by the law and the State, therefore difficult in the current situation - but rather unequal enrichment, meaning unequal access to the enrichment process. This unequal enrichment allows economic quasi-monopolies and access to political power to emerge;<sup>83</sup> it is the condition for the reproduction of the relationships between the traffic in illegal products, the survival of armed groups and smuggling of legal goods. It is an obstacle to the establishment of a free and collectively controllable economy<sup>84</sup> and it reduces equal access to political positions by allowing a few to accumulate wealth “chrematistically.”<sup>85</sup>

The political project of border management would benefit from including equal access to enrichment-related cross-border trade, where security is only one of the conditions. The management of Mali’s northern borders should (i) ensure equal access to economic opportunities generated by the border, in terms of transport, trade, logistics, intermediary services, (ii) encourage a shift by some of the economically active players involved in drug trafficking and armed groups to legal activities, or at least, to trade in legal products, (iii) build a socially acceptable relationship between individual enrichment and collective wealth generated by border activities.

***"Border management is carried out through a collective decision on what the border as an economic resource must bring to the community and the share that goes to those who are the border entrepreneurs."***

Border management is carried out through a collective decision on what the border as an economic resource must bring to the community and the share that goes to those who are the border entrepreneurs. It is indeed a form of collective bargaining. It is worth recalling that any tax measure is a negotiation on many levels: whether in a transparent and collective bargaining manner in a democratic debate or whether it entails negotiations by tax collectors to reach a tax burden acceptable to tax payers and, by so doing, ensure that they do not evade taxes. The latter situation prevailed prior to the crisis. Faced with the impossibility of controlling everything, customs officers reached the pragmatic decision to “negotiate” acceptable tax burdens on cross-border traders rather than apply the Customs tariff fully and take the risk of increasing smuggling. This negotiation could become an opportunity for corruption in some cases, but there is no evidence that corruption was less prevalent under strict law enforcement conditions.

So, this article is not a place to pre-empt the choices that primarily fall within the scope of a democratic discussion<sup>86</sup> but simply to present the range of possible options at a time when people will, through their regional assemblies, gain access to political decision-making.



## How can current unequal enrichment be countered?

---

In interviews on drug trafficking, recurring references are made to the laundering of income from trafficking, particularly through real estate and transportation. The parties involved refer to construction work or house purchases by notorious traffickers (“Cocainebougou”, “City of cocaine” in Gao and their equivalents in other northern cities).

The state’s fight against money laundering calls for technical solutions in an environment where conditions are not conducive to their actual implementation. Indeed, this action requires a legal framework for cooperation between the different administrations, investigation teams with very deep technical knowledge, professionals (banks, notaries, casinos and gambling establishments, auditors, etc.) sensitive to laundering issues, forced to contribute to the fight against money laundering and sanctioned if they do not, and finally state capacity to direct financial flows to formal systems where they can be controlled. This strategy is already in place, with the National Financial Information Processing Unit (CENTIF) dedicated to combating money laundering. According to its 2013 annual report, CENTIF received 128 suspicious transaction reports between 2008 and 2013, equivalent to 16 to 35 per year, all from the banking sector (for a total of 6 billion CFA for 2013), of which 21 were forwarded to the prosecutor.<sup>87</sup> The low number of suspicious transaction reports (STRs) reflects the lack of real involvement by the financial and non-financial professionals that may be affected by money laundering.<sup>88</sup> An assessment of forms of money laundering should be conducted.<sup>89</sup>

The banking sector certainly has a role to play in border management. In addition to transaction flow arguments - which are probably not so valuable in a context where the informalization of the economy already ensures high speed movements of cash capital – the basic physical security that banks provide can foster the free expansion of business. Traders in the town of Kidal thus complained of not having a bank branch in town to safeguard their funds.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, this formalization of the banking sector is a necessary condition for the monitoring of capital flows. While it is certain that laundering of drug trafficking revenues can break free from the banking sector or use it without arousing suspicion, the lack of banking services in the economy clearly does not facilitate the fight against money laundering.

## Which forms of collective wealth?

---

Along with combating illegal and unequal enrichment processes, it is important to consider the possible forms taken by the relationship between individual wealth and collective wealth linked to cross-border movements and how new forms could prevent current processes of unequal enrichment and money laundering.

A non-coercive form of relationship between individual wealth and collective wealth is the possibility of giving.<sup>91</sup> While understanding the collective wealth of a community is difficult to assess with accuracy from a tax-focused perspective, at the local level communities know each other’s wealth. Holder (2004) gives the example of public discussions in the cities of Djenne and Kani-Gogouna where “citizens mainly speak of money by making tax levies, but discussed by tax payers who, in fact, are in no way the subjects of a tax administration” (p.74). To some degree this would entail (i) formalizing what already exists in the form of tax euergetism where everyone “gives” according to the surrounding social requirements and (ii) strengthening this formalization through greater transparency concerning available economic data (product prices, intensity of traffic, estimated profits, etc.) which would make it possible to identify and share the level of social demands on everyone’s contribution to the community. Transparency probably already exists between merchants of the northern cities who are few, who use the same suppliers and the same routes and even help each other with loans.<sup>92</sup>

It is difficult to envisage the collection of public revenue without considering the way it is used. The two technical questions (collecting and spending) should probably be correlated in a discussion on the circulation



of wealth as part of crisis resolution. In the expenditure area, it may be interesting to think beyond the usual forms. The “public domain” in the broadest sense is, for example, one possible form of collective wealth. The establishment of a public or collective domain in the sense of citizens’ participation in the management of common resources could be used for border management by restoring national or regional transport investment to eradicate the investment of drug trafficking proceeds in transportation, or by establishing public warehouses in border areas, along the same lines as the Malian warehouses in the ports of Abidjan and Dakar.<sup>93</sup> The management of that public domain can involve central government and taxes, or take the form of cooperatives where everyone’s contribution is negotiated locally.

## **Circulation of wealth generated by the border: what are the scales of governance?**

Taxation has often been seen as a means to create more demand for transparency, democracy and accountability by “statesmen” (Deléchat et al., 2015). Based on this rationale, local taxation has been particularly promoted because it provides a link between individuals in physical proximity and is therefore more capable of establishing a culture of transparency and rigour in public spending. Yet we have little empirical data to prove the likelihood of this local virtuous circle.<sup>94</sup> One could go as far as adopting the opposite rationale: the proximity of individuals can lead to an inclusion of tax relationships in the local authority relationships that predated them, especially in areas (towns, villages, camps) where political elites would not have been chosen according to their fiscal programme but following social “traditional” criteria (rank, heredity title, etc.). Although tax, in the broad sense of the relationship between individual wealth and collective wealth, remains highly relevant at local level, this is essentially because the “budget”, the collective money, is a way to structure social dialogue around economic issues. The “budget” is a very real part of the community as an ideational entity.

The question, which links the circulation and redistribution of wealth to cross-border trade, is the level of governance over that wealth. The city - the marketplace for cross-border movements - has become a relevant tier of governance after the crisis, but it is likely that it was also before. The example of customs, a State actor *par excellence* in the regulation of wealth exchanged at borders, speaks volumes. Customs is trying to “contain” smuggling, controlling what goes into the city’s perimeter and what comes out: there are effective forms of negotiation to force merchants to pay something, but less than what they should actually pay (short of what is applied in Sikasso, for example, on the border with Côte d’Ivoire). However, customs checks goods leaving the city by setting up roadblocks on routes leaving Timbuktu and Gao and going south. If goods cross the border, an additional tax is applied to them to equalize the fiscal pressure on goods entering the area through Sikasso and Kayes. This example shows that state border governance is already in place in the city.

Furthermore, customs, which is a national player, actually has strong local involvement. It is anchored in the monetary flows of the Malian state at the local level. Local administrative officials in the Timbuktu and Gao Governorates are currently complaining that customs does not collect revenue.<sup>95</sup> In fact, a specific budget heading has been created in the national budget for local state authorities, but the money must actually be made available locally in the treasury offices. These offices are supplied with money by the tax authorities (customs and taxes). When the local treasury coffers are empty, local treasury offices have to make a “call for funds” to treasury offices located in other regions or in Bamako. This process is expensive, it requires

***"Local taxation has been particularly promoted because it provides a link between individuals in physical proximity and is therefore more capable of establishing a culture of transparency and rigour in public spending."***



administrative follow-up and takes time. This experience of transferring money between local, regional and central levels makes Malian officials rather pessimistic about the process of the Algiers Accord, with a Malian official saying about the planned process: "The money will take a beating before it comes back."<sup>96</sup>

Finally, the operating conditions of officials in northern Mali (little equipment sent to the north, also on the pretext of insecurity; the idea that one is "transferred to the north by discrimination or as a sanction"), means that these officials maintain local support and some eventually make speeches similar to the northern politicians who want independence or autonomy "we have to get out of the Bamako mind-set as all the directorates there (i.e. directorate central services) are useless", noted a senior official working in northern Mali, during a joint meeting.<sup>97</sup> So there are, in fact, close links, predating the crisis, between national services (Customs, taxes) regulating wealth and often assessed from a national perspective and local government services (Governorate, prefecture, etc.) concerning the flow of money to the local level and the local close links being forged and asserting their identity against the central level or on its sidelines.

The question of the scale of governance is paramount. The autonomy of taxation areas<sup>98</sup> will raise specific problems for the taxation of cross-border trade income. We will have to find a spatial level in which the circulation of wealth produced by cross-border trade is politically conceivable, between the scale of the border city, a commercial hub with its surrounding dependant villages, and that of the national and international levels which alone can bring the investment necessary for major investment to the northern regions. This linkage of financial governance tiers has a strong symbolic dimension in terms of reinstating a relationship with the community, increasing the demand for transparency not so much towards administrations but between citizens, and showing people living in the south of the country that the northern economic elites are actually making a contribution.<sup>99</sup>



# Equality of treatment, the main condition for the restoration of the State border

---

Niger organizes convoys for long distance journeys to the borders (Kohl, 2013), as does Mauritania for transit to its Moroccan border. “Customs escorts” (a customs brigade escorts a convoy of lorries from the border to the customs posts) have often been criticized for being a waste of time, a source of corruption and costly. However, in the exceptional circumstances of insecurity in northern Mali and in the context of the restoration of peaceful relations between citizens and the state’s repressive apparatus, such escorts to and from the Malian border (“traditional” escorts only followed the flow of imports) could be organized regularly in cooperation with the Algerian, Mauritanian and Niger armed forces.<sup>100</sup>

The border control authorities (customs, police) could negotiate a “transitional State”: protection of cross-border activities in exchange for reduced control over them, for a limited time. For this transitional State to apply, attention has to be paid to criticisms of the current State and the apparent paradox of calling for a transitional state on the one hand, making some exceptions, and, on the other, criticizing the Malian state that has already generated inequalities, particularly by making exceptions in northern Mali.<sup>101</sup>

## The weak egalitarian state: one of the criticisms made

---

One of the major criticisms of the Malian authorities by the economic operators encountered is that they sometimes have incentives to breach the law and do not favour compliant economic actors. For example, some traders did not wish to benefit from exemptions or measures to reduce the assessment or taxation of their activities available to economic actors in the northern regions. An operator from the Kidal area explained how he had “paid for a licence, [and had] not followed the rule that said he was exempt ...” but he laments the fact that “the state encourages people not to report what they pay under a direct tax scheme<sup>102</sup> by handing out contracts to those operating under a flat-rate system.”<sup>103</sup> Incentives for traders to formalize are currently low, which creates a strong competitive disadvantage with some of them operating under a direct tax scheme. The same observations have been made by customs officials: after the National Pact of 1992, financial facilities were granted to veterans in the form of financial loans. These funds were used to launch their transport businesses. The loans were not repaid and imported vehicles were not cleared through Customs, upon instructions from the government.

According to private sector representatives, national authorities should be more selective in awarding contracts and should also intervene in nominations for elected office, whether for a member of parliament or representatives of regional and national chambers of commerce. State intervention clearly aims to exclude from public procurement and elected office anyone whose income—in terms of being an economic operator—is “opaque”. This poses two major problems. The first is that excluding an individual does not prevent that individual from putting forward a candidate linked to him. The second is the definition of “opacity”: administrative boundaries (ongoing investigations, suspicious transaction reports?) or judicial ones (but at what stage of the proceedings: judicial inquiry or after conviction?).

## Conditions for State credibility

---

If the state were to be re-established as a major player in border security, state actions would therefore have to refrain from anything that might give the appearance of a breach of equal treatment or differentiation schemes. There are three situations that are problematic from this point of view.



The first is the specialisation of certain officials in their home territories.<sup>104</sup> On the one hand, this inherently categorizes officials based on their origin. On the other, officials who do not belong to these territories depend heavily on public servants who do. It is undeniable that the conditions for controlling the Saharan border areas are specific, complex and challenging. Therefore, it is likely that specific solutions will have to be found to (i) develop and enhance the training given to civil services (Customs, police) to operate in the Saharan environment<sup>105</sup> and (ii) put in place career development incentives for an official in northern areas (bonuses, faster promotions, etc.).<sup>106</sup>

The second potentially unequal situation in which the State plays an important role is the “integration” of members of armed groups into military and paramilitary bodies. Although no-one we spoke to reported problems with the “integration” process, it is by no means clear that the officially-supported rationale of “wiping the slate clean and making a fresh start”, in the words of a senior Malian official, is still viable. On the one hand, integration does not exclude transitional justice processes. On the other, “integration” is a one-time process that can also be considered an incentive to revolt and, if applied systematically, as not taking account of the legitimacy attached to each revolt. Chad, a country marked by numerous rebellions, did not conduct this type of policy. Cameroon considered “tribalism” as a political threat to national unity; however, the “tribe”, or at least in a broad sense “region of origin”, is a legitimate criterion of identity. The accusation against “tribalism” is not, in this case, based on claiming one’s tribe or region, but on situating the confrontation between individuals within the cultural reference framework of confrontation between “tribes”. Accordingly, very early in its history, Cameroon “organised”, by law, the geographical distribution of staff positions between “natives” of different regions to take account of the levels of development of regions, particularly in terms of education. This distribution is applied to the appointment process and to administrative competitions. Mali has had a more culturally-based policy, promoting the concept of the “national language”, through primary education in the local language and radio news reports in local languages, and compulsory study of a national language other than their mother tongue for university students, but this seems inadequate. This comparison with Chad and Cameroon does not constitute an endorsement for Mali, but it does show that other countries are also concerned about the differences between regions or by rebellions and took account of them differently in their legislation or public policy.

***"The second potentially unequal situation in which the State plays an important role is the “integration” of members of armed groups into military and paramilitary bodies."***

The third potentially unequal situation managed by the State is the use of “elites” as key actors in democratic dialogue. Several people we spoke to called on donor representatives to go into the field and not to rely on “intermediaries”. The issue of “brokers” or development “brokers” is not new in development anthropology (Oliver de Sardan and Biershenck 1993). There may be some comfort for donors in relying only on the local elites (traditional leaders, local representatives) or national elites (central government) because it is then easy to assign them part of the public aid.

However, external assistance, which is crucial for Mali and of which Malians already have a great deal of experience at local level, is expected to be the guarantor a form of equality of access to resources and decision-making as to its use. If this were not the case, people would have no reason to hope that the State or donors would be involved in forms of emancipation and progress.<sup>107</sup> This does not mean that the State or donors are the only guarantors of that political and economic emancipation, or even that they are successful. It does, however, mean that the problem should be brought back to the Malian situation while bearing in mind the objective of national unity, peace and security: the State or donors do not have a monopoly on this goal but they should not have to risk being suspected of not participating. On many occasions, representatives of donors and Malian public services reported their use of “traditional authorities”



as community representatives.<sup>108</sup> Paradoxically, this strategy is part of a desire to promote democracy: local communities are invited to participate, but through their “elites”. They represent, for example, some of the “new actors”.<sup>109</sup> that were not included in the first Malian national border policy established in 2000. However, the role of the “traditional authorities” was challenged before the crisis and the traditional hierarchies of the Tamasheq tribes were already being severely questioned: existence of new urban elites sending remittances locally, disputed association between administrative authority perceived negatively and traditional authority perceived as acting on its own account rather than on behalf of the people for whom it was supposed to be “responsible”. The risk, raised by some natives of the Timbuktu region, is that support by the international community and the Malian state sometimes strengthens the traditional hierarchies the people were in the process of freeing themselves from. The analysis offered by a senior Malian official from the north of the country was that “the state has transferred to communities a power they did not have, and the communities have created their own power and run it like it was their own little corner shop.”<sup>110</sup> As such, it may be noted that AQIM leaders had also pursued a policy of alliance with the tribes through their traditional elites and marriages.<sup>111</sup>

To consider how to arrange border management and “greater regionalization”, there are probably lessons to be learned from Mali’s experience of decentralisation. In Mali, decentralisation was a specific phenomenon, linked to the dynamism of society after the fall of Moussa Traore in 1991 and the Tamasheq movements that intensified demands for decentralisation (Ouedraogo 2003).<sup>112</sup> This is evidenced by many non-governmental parties and organisations. Expectations have not been met, and decentralisation has attracted much criticism on the grounds that the “development” component is believed to have prevailed over the “democracy” component according to the analysis by Languille (2010) who supported decentralisation in Mali in his capacity as the European Union representative.<sup>113</sup> Smoke (2003) had generalised the finding at the African level: decentralisation increased central government control through national decentralisation agencies. According to Hetland (2008), the old boundaries have been redrawn so that some traditional or economic elites obtain positions as Mayors; decentralisation as it was conducted was not a “democratic institution” and was unlikely to become so. The problem is not so much decentralisation per se but its implementation: has decentralisation improved governance or simplified and pacified it by including it in traditional relationships and promoting the appearance of “brokers” in development? This question could also prompt answers about the current political process and the importance given to certain elites in places where the state, in contrast, might offer people hope of emancipation.



# Is the “development” of border areas enough?

## The power of ideas

---

The development of border areas probably takes two forms: one is the improvement of formal trade relations with Algeria, while the other involves “development” policies carried out, especially by foreign donors with a view to fighting terrorism. However, whereas cooperation with Algeria falls within the scope of formal relationships to be improved or a legal framework to be changed, public policies that combine development and security raise more questions.

### Cooperation with Algeria

---

Mali and Algeria have signed trade and transport agreements.<sup>114</sup> The implementation of these agreements seems limited in that they do not provide any particular advantage to foreign trade operators. A free trade area agreement is being negotiated between the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) and Algeria. The agreements themselves are not necessarily known and confusion sometimes arises between trade and barter. For example, Scheele maintains that Algerian law prohibits all exports to Mali with the exception of dates and handicrafts (Scheele 2009). In fact, before the official closure of the border in 2013, Algerian law did not prohibit the export of goods to Mali with the exception of food products whose prices are subsidized by the Algerian state.<sup>115</sup> On the other hand, it is true that the law on barter prohibits bartering involving anything other than certain goods such as dates, tea, etc.

Algeria has incentives to increase trade with Mali. In fact, Malian (and Nigeriens) consumers are used to Algerian products. Impetus by the Malian and Algerian Governments is probably necessary to provide favourable conditions to Algerian and Malian operators on both sides of the border and to respect both countries’ laws on foreign trade which themselves offer numerous facilities. The growth in the establishment of subsidiaries of Algerian and Malian banks on both sides of the border and the provision of storage zones for export products are needed.

The opportunities offered to the informal sector by Algerian trade regulations are greater than the problems posed. Indeed, what is important in this field is not so much the formal framework and procedures but the difference between the official exchange rate and the black market. This difference encourages operators to use cash acquired on the black market and not to fulfil any subsequent Algerian formalities (domiciliation, etc.).

Finally, a formal framework—a “bilateral committee” exists between Mali and Algeria for the discussion of trade issues; it involves the Algerian authorities and the Consulate of Mali in Tamanrasset. However, the committee does not seem to produce the desired results, and it is important to understand why in order to make it active so that it serves as a local forum for discussions on practical problems faced by Malian traders. That said, the fact that the export of one product from Algeria is partly informal does not necessarily mean that the importation of the same product is conducted in a completely informal manner in Mali. The difficulties encountered in Algeria have not deterred traders from northern Mali and cannot alone explain smuggling into Mali.

### “Development”, security and terrorism

---

There is currently a consensus in the solutions put forward to eradicate the phenomenon of armed religious groups: a combination of “development” and “security”. This combination should be investigated; its understanding is often built on two biases.



The first bias is moralistic, it consists of thinking that people wish, by nature, to be on the side of right and law. This assumption has underpinned many interviews with Malian officials: public security policy in the border regions is thought to have the support of the people; at local level, populations would demand security and fight against all forms of crime. But this ideological ownership is really not clear for the reasons explained previously: mistrust of people towards State services and the national army, operational presence of armed groups which already perform security functions, and, in some cases, people gain financial benefits from the passage of prohibited goods (by collecting passage fees or through the redistribution of wealth by individuals who organise it locally). In addition, the “ideological” ownership of smuggling by certain populations reflects difficulties in linking the local effects of cross-border traffic to their national impact. In other words, it is appropriate to question development policies that do not provide a material contribution equal to or higher than revenue generated by trafficking, insofar as it is uncertain that transboundary populations look at trafficking beyond its economic characteristics. This is not to deny the possibility that people prefer legal government or international support rather than illegal support for a higher amount. However, one should not overestimate the “immoral” value of some trafficking in goods, especially if they are not used or consumed locally (arms, drugs).

The second bias is the opposite of the first, being an economics-based one. It consists in the belief that individuals act only to maximize their material welfare, beyond any ethical imperative. This gives rise to a second assumption that economic development, by reducing poverty, could prevent membership of armed religious groups.<sup>116</sup> Donors abide by a simple causal relationship between poverty and violence. The idea that has sometimes inspired, in part, the US TSCTP programme with USAID since 2005 is that by increasing the prosperity of the people, at least by focusing on “social transfers” wells, health centres, community radio, etc., people will become less susceptible to “terrorism”. This exaggerates the impact of a well on young people with access to international media: digging a well or waterhole certainly improves living conditions, but not enough to make them sufficiently affluent so as to remove all desire for adventure, progress or radical change. Almquist Knopf, former Assistant Administrator for Africa at USAID, voiced scepticism about the impact of development programmes to counter religious extremism (Tinti, 2012). In the current crisis, the same representations are beginning to emerge: cross-border trafficking is represented as an outlet for young people who are “idle”<sup>117</sup> and then these groups join traffickers linked to jihadi groups; the solution would consequently be to employ these young people to divert this traffic (Lafourcade and Michailof, 2014). The question should rather be to ask why individuals are choosing to partner with groups committing crimes publicly and claiming violent acts. It should be recalled that the establishment of radical groups such as AQIM in Mali relied on social alliances, goodwill and marriages, indicating a moral tolerance by certain elites towards radical religious groups. Thinking that poverty leads to violent acts does very little justice to the ethics of the poorest populations. A second question is whether these same young people would currently join these religious groups after the experience of living under the administration in Gao and Timbuktu? In the end, nothing is less certain. It was actually the inhabitants of Gao and Timbuktu who rose up against the religious administration of their city.<sup>118</sup> Is this not the main problem for reconciliation: the belief that some people—because they are smugglers—may unknowingly or unhesitatingly become “terrorists”? A “developer” cannot ethically uphold the concept of determinism of violence.

The power of ideas is often overlooked by donors (Rodrik 2006, Easterly 2010, 2014) and this is probably even more true when it comes to religion. The relationship to religion in Mali deserves special attention as to its

***"The relationship to religion in Mali deserves special attention as to its effects on democratic dialogue. Since 1991, Malian public debate has been marked by the liberalization of expression permeated by religious categories eligible for organizing social life."***



effects on democratic dialogue. Since 1991, Malian public debate has been marked by the liberalization of expression permeated by religious categories eligible for organizing social life (Gutelius 2007). This calling has been experienced by the people of the north in an extreme way. With cities being run by religious bodies, some had proclaimed, for example, the elimination of taxes. The Malian office of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung foundation, which regularly conducts opinion polls published in the Malian media, confirms and, in a way, reinforces religious values as the organiser of social life, including “reconciliation”: 36% of respondents consider adherence to religious values a feature of Malian society (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2014, p 7) and 67% of respondents primarily trust religious leaders for “reconciliation”, over the Malian Government and traditional leaders in Gao, Kidal and Menaka (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2015, p. 30). Although it is problematic to take religious values into consideration in an opinion poll, this type of survey shows the growing importance of religion in the lives of Malians. This importance has also been mentioned by many analysts (Holder 2012 Bourdarias 2013, Al -Karjousi 2013 Chena and Tisseron 2013 Boukars 2015), including the importance of Wahhabism among traders.<sup>119</sup>



## Concluding remarks

---

Before the current crisis, Soares (2012) noted the pessimism of Malians despite the impression of an economic upturn. Likewise, in 2015, although all those we spoke to expressed their deep attachment to the Malian nation and their commitment to contribute to solutions to the crisis, none showed optimism about improving the short-term situation. The defeat of the Malian army, persistent insecurity throughout the country as demonstrated by the events in Sévaré in August 2015 and in Bamako in October 2015 and the multiple attacks and less publicized conflicts in the north, the impression of starting again, since the National Pact, with a new Algiers Accord, are all elements that can weaken faith in the possibility of productive democratic dialogue that is not solely perceived in terms of sharing powers and income-generating functions between elites. A national of the Kidal region also said “it is not the people who are voting, it is the state that is voting”<sup>120</sup> in the sense he felt that everything would be decided in Bamako between the central government and the northern elites.

The main risk would be that (i) given the complexity of the situation and failures including a safe approach to borders, (ii) given the low demographic weight of the northern regions compared to the southern ones and (iii) arguing based on the principle of greater empowerment, the Malian political authority and state departments tacitly accept the progressive development of an informal border between north and south, containing the “north’s problems” in the north of the country. All things considered, this reflects the current situation where the north is under a military-style administration and the south under a civilian administration. Mali Customs has a symbolic presence in the northern regions and is established in Konna where its agents control flows to the south. The informal border established following the conflict is necessary, but it must remain temporary. There is a risk of creating informal borders for reasons of security or stability, based on cultural representations and benefitting specific groups.<sup>121</sup> The temporary balance could be supported by new economic elites anxious not to share power with the northern regions.

***"All things considered, this reflects the current situation where the north is under a military-style administration and the south under a civilian administration."***

The main question is probably this: do the people of northern Mali have enough confidence in the guarantee of emancipation that the Republic’s central state can bring to local democratic processes? The question is crucially important for the relationship to taxation regardless of its forms or the success of technical solutions that place the content of the approach before any policy on border management.

The role of the international community is important. Development money is a resource sometimes represented as being disputed between the “state” (i.e. “Bamako”, the statesmen), the traditional authorities losing the material support underpinning their authority, and the population. Monitoring the use of the resource represented by development money is an issue that repeatedly crops up among non-state actors. This poses the problem of civil intervention by donors in northern Mali. It is essential to monitor the progress of actions undertaken with development money to avoid challenges with respect to harnessing the financing. As such, international organisations should probably opt for the risk of a field presence rather than see their funding become a source of frustration for citizens.



# Bibliography

---

2013. "As French Force in Mali grouped together, U.S. admits missteps." *New York Amsterdam News* 104 (5): 2-2.
2014. "Mali: African Gold Mali's young sensation." *Engineering & Mining Journal* (00958948) 215 (6): 122-125.
- al-Karjousli, Sufian. 2013. "Irregular fighting organizations in Mali: Sahelian fighters sliding towards jihad." *Strategic (Stratégique)* (2): 231-239.
- Amy Niang. 2013. "The season of "boom" in the Sahelo-Saharan space. Proto-revolution, and sociopolitical disintegration and reconfiguration." *Contemporary Africa (Afrique contemporaine)* 1/2013 (245): 53-69.
- Andrijasevic, Rutvica. 2010. "DEPORTED: The Right to Asylum at EU's External Border of Italy and Libya1." *International Migration* 48 (1): 148-174.
- Andrew Bourgeot. 2014. "Sahara: geostrategic space and political issues (Niger)." *NAQD* 1/2014 (31): 153-192.
- Arieff, Alexis. 2013. *Algeria: Current Issues*. Congressional Research Service.
- Aristotle (322). *Politics*.
- Ayadi Lotfi, Nancy Benjamin, Sami Bensassi, and Gaël Raballand. 2013. "Estimating informal trade across Tunisia's land borders." *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper* (6731).
- Bekaye, Samake. 2012. "Paris-Tripoli-Timbuktu. What an officer of the Malian army asks France." *Outre-Terre* 2012/3 (No. 33-34): 479-489.
- Bensassi, Sami, Anne Brockmeyer, Matthieu Pellerin, and Gael Raballand. 2017. *Algeria-Mali Trade: The Normality of Informality*. Middle East Development Journal (forthcoming).
- Boccanfuso, Dorothy, Massa Coulibaly, and Luc Savard. 2008. "An analysis of economic and social impacts of economic reforms and development assistance in Mali - A micro-macro framework." *The European Journal of Development Research* 20 (3): 519-545.
- Boilley, Pierre. 2011. "African Geopolitics and Tuareg rebellions. Local Approaches, global approaches (1960-2011)." *The Year of the Maghreb (L'Année du Maghreb)* (VII): 151-162.
- Boilley, Pierre. 2013. "The Malian Fractures" *Spirit (Esprit)* 2013/5: 124-127.
- Bosc, Pierre-Marie, Marie-Hélène Dabat, and Élodie Maître D'hôtel. 2010. "Which sustainable development policies are there in Mali and Madagascar?" *Rural economy. agriculture, power supply, territories* (320): 24-38.
- Boukhars Anwar. 2015. *Corridors of militancy: the Sahel-Sahara Border Regions*. FRIDE.
- Bouquet, Christian. 2003. "The artificiality of borders in Sub-Saharan Africa. Turbulence and fermentation on the margins." *Les Cahiers d'Outre-Mer. The Bordeaux Geographical Journal* 56 (222): 181-198.
- Bourdarias, Françoise. 2013. "Political Representations and religious practices of Mali."
- Bourgeot, André. 1994. "The Tuareg body dislocated or Political Unimagination (The Disjointed Tuareg Body, Political Unimagination gold)." *Cahiers d'Etudes africaines*: 659-671.
- Bourgeot, André. 1995. "The Tuareg societies." *Nomadism, identity, resistance*.
- Brachet, Julien. 2013. "Sahel and Sahara: neither uncontrollable nor uncontrolled." CERI Sciences Po.
- Brautigam, Deborah, Odd-Helge Fjeldstad, and Mick Moore. 2008. *Taxation and State-Building in Developing Countries: Capacity and Consent*. Cambridge University Press.
- Briscoe, Ivan. 2014. *Crime after-Jihad: armed groups, the state and illicit business in post-conflict Mali*. Conflict Research Unit, the Clingendael Institute.
- Cattaruzza, Amaël, and Jean-Arnault Dérens. 2015. "Creating a border in the post-conflict: the case of Northern Kosovo and Mitrovica." *Herodotus (Hérodote)* (3): 58-75.
- Chena, Salim, and Antonin Tisseron. 2013. "Loss of Equilibrium in Mali." *Contemporary Africa (Afrique contemporaine)* 245 (1): 71-84.
- Chenu, Marie-Georges. 2013. "Mali between the UN and Europe."
- Claudot-Hawad, Helene. 1994. "Self-Righteous Evolutionism or a One-Way Ethnology." *Cahiers African Studies*: 673-685.
- Claudot-Hawad, Helene. 2013. "The "Tuareg issue": what are the challenges?" *The war in Mali. Understanding the crisis in the Sahel and Sahara: stakes and shadows*: 125-147.
- Cline, Lawrence E. 2013. "Nomads, Islamists, and soldiers. The Struggles for Northern Mali" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 36 (8): 617-634.
- Delarue, Jocelyne, Sandrine Mesplé-Somps, and Jean-David Naudet. "The Sikasso Paradox: Does Cotton Reduce Poverty?"
- Deltenre, Damien. 2014A. "Management of mineral resources and conflicts in Mali and Niger." *NAQD* 1/2014 (31): 223-246.
- Deltenre, Damien. 2014b. "Management of mineral resources and conflicts in Mali and Niger." *Naqd* 31 (1): 223-246.
- Deléchat, Corinne, Ejona Fuli, Dafina Mulaj, Gustavo Ramirez, and Riu Xu. 2015. *Exiting From Fragility: The Role of Fiscal Policies and Fiscal Institutions*. International Monetary Fund.
- Dembele, Djibonding. 2010. *Mali and irregular migration*. European University Institute. Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies.
- Doumbia-Gakou, Assa, Mr. Vinima Traore, Abdul Siaka Kdiawara, Johannes G. Hoogeveen, Yele Maweki Batana, Brian Blankespoor, Sebastien C. Dessus, Cheikh Diop Hamala, Judite Fernandes, Julia Lendorfer, Yishen Liu, Kristin Cart Mathieu Francois Joseph Pellerin, Harris Selod, Gael JRF Raballand, Souleyman Traore, and Johannes G. Hoogeveen. 2015. *Mali - Geography of poverty in Mali*. Washington D.C. : World Bank Group.
- Easterly, W. 2014. *The Tyranny of Experts: How the Fight Against Global Poverty Suppressed Individual Rights*. Basic Books.
- Easterly, William. 2010. "Democratic accountability in development: The double standard." *Social Research*: 77,4:1075-1104.
- Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Office Bamako. 2014. Mali-Meter "What do Malians think?" 5.
- Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Office Bamako. 2015. Mali-Meter "What do Malians think?" Special Issue for Gao, Kidal, Menaka.
- Gearon, Eamonn. 2013. "MALI AND THE MIDDLE EAST: VIABLE SOLUTIONS." *Middle East Policy* 20 (3): 134-144.
- Gowan, Richard. 2013. "Diplomatic Fallout: Is Mali the Next Darfur for U.N. Peacekeeping?" *World Politics Review (Selective Content)*: 1-1.



- The World Bank Group. 2009. *World Development Report 2009: Reshaping Economic Geography*. World Bank.
- Gregory E. 2013. "Islamists and Malian Tuareg rebels: alliances, rivalries and ruptures (French)." *EchoGéo* (On the spot): 1-14.
- Gregory, Emmanuel, and André Bourgeot. 2011. "Disorder, powers and territorial recompositions in the Sahara." *Herodotus* 142 (3): 3-11.
- Gutelius, David. 2007. "Islam in northern Mali and the war on terror." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 25 (1): 59-76.
- Gutelius, David. 2009. Testimony before the Senate committee on Foreign Relations Subcommittee on African Affairs, "Examining the U.S. Counterterrorism Priorities and Strategies Across Africa's Sahel Region", November 17, 2009.
- National Institute of Statistics. 2010. *Statistical Yearbook*. Bamako, Mali.
- Hagberg, Sten, and Gabriella Körling. 2012. "Socio-political turmoil in Mali: the public debate following the coup on 22 March 2012." *Africa Spectrum* 47 (2-3): 111-125.
- Harvey, Nick, and Julien Tremblin. 2012. "Tuaregs hard hit by Mali conflict." *New Internationalist* (452): 11-11.
- Hetland, Øivind. 2008. "Decentralization and territorial reorganization in Mali: Power and the institutionalization of local politics." *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift-Norwegian Journal of Geography* 62 (1): 23-35.
- Holder, Gilles. 2004. "The city as a political status. Public Places, assembly and citizenship practices in Mali." *Journal of Africanists* (74-1 / 2): 56-95.
- Holder, Gilles. 2009. "Between re-Islamization of the nation and secularism of the state. The construction of a religious public space in Mali" *Islam, new public space in Africa*: 237.
- Kaminski, Bartłomiej, and Saumya Mitra. 2012. *Borderless Bazaars and Regional Integration in Central Asia: Emerging Patterns of Trade and Cross-Border Cooperation*. World Bank Publications.
- Kisangani Emizet F. 2012. "The Tuaregs' Rebellions in Mali and Niger and the US Global War on Terror." *International Journal on World Peace* 29 (1): 59.
- Kohl, Ines. 2013. "Afrod, the Tuareg business with the border. New conditions and new challenges" *African politics* 4/2013 (No. 132): p. 139-159.
- Lacher, Wolfram. 2012. *Organized crime and conflict in the Sahel-Sahara region*. Flight. 1: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Washington, DC.
- Lacher, Wolfram. 2013. *Challenging the myth of the drug-terror nexus in the Sahel*.
- Lafourcade, Olivier, and Serge Michailof. 2014. "Stabilize Mali." *Debate (Le Débat)*, 2014/2 (No. 179): 180-189.
- Languille, Sonia. 2011. "Mali: the decentralization policy at the time of the "Paris Agenda" for the effectiveness of aid." *African politics (Politique africaine)* 120 (4): 129-152.
- Lounnas, Djallil. 2013. "The Regional Fallouts of the French intervention in Mali." *Mediterranean Politics* 18 (2): 325-332.
- Meddeb, Hamza. 2012. "Run or die: Running El Khozba and daily domination in Tunisia of Ben Ali." PhD, Institute of Political Studies, Paris.
- Michel Louis. 2009. "Europe-Africa cooperation in Mali." *Forced Migration Review* (32): 62-63.
- MINUSMA - OHCHR. 2015 *Joint report on violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed during the events of Kidal, 16, 17 and 21 May 2014*.
- OECD. 2015. The Malian region of Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu. National and regional perspectives. Paris.
- Olivier de Sardan, John Smith, and Thomas Bierschenk. 1993. "Local development brokers." *Bulletin of APAD* (5).
- Oluwadare Abiodun Joseph. 2014. "The African Union and the Conflict in Mali: Extra-Regional Influence and the limitations of a Regional Actor." *Journal of International & Global Studies* 6 (1): 106-120.
- Ouedraogo, G. Hubert. 2003. "Decentralization and Local Governance: Experiences from francophone West Africa." *Public administration and development* 23 (1): 97-103.
- Padis, Marc-Olivier. 2013. "Position. What France is doing in Mali?" *Spirit* 2013/3 (March / April): 9-11.
- Plato L. Brisson (2011). *Plato Complete Works*. Flammarion.
- Raballand, G, and E Mjekiqi. 2010. "Nigeria's Trade Policy Facilitates Unofficial Trade and Impacts Negatively Nigeria's Customs Efficiency and Economy." *Putting Nigeria to Work (Washington, DC: World Bank)*: 203-26.
- Reitano, Tuesday, and Mark Shaw. 2014. "People's perspectives of Organized Crime in West Africa and the Sahel." Institute for Security Studies Papers (254): 20 p.-20 p.
- Reitano, Tuesday, and Mark Shaw. 2015. Fixing a Fractured State? Breaking the cycle of crime, corruption and conflict in Mali and Sahel. *The Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime*.
- Recut, Denis and Olivier Walther. 2013. "The Sahel-Sahara in Mali news: an invitation to think the mobile space." *Geography Annals (Annales de géographie)* 2013/6 (No. 694): 595-618
- Reuter, Peter. 2014. The Mobility of Drug Trafficking. In *Ending the Drug Wars. Report of the Expert Group on the LSE Economics of Drug Policy*, edited by John Collins: LSE IDEAS.
- Rodrik, Dani. 2014. "When Ideas Trump Interests: Preferences, Worldviews, and Policy Innovations." *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 28 (1): 189. doi: 10.1257 / jep.28.1.189.
- Salem, L.O.M. 2014. *Bin Laden of Sahara: In the footsteps of jihadist Mokhtar Belmokhtar*: Fine Martinière books (De La).
- Scheele, Judith. 2009. "Tribes, states and fraud: the Algerian-Malian border region." *Rural Studies (Etudes rurales)* (184): 79-94.
- Scheele, Judith. 2013. Traffic or trade? Economic exchanges in contemporary Sahara. <http://www.sciencespo.fr/ceri/fr/content/dossiersduceri/trafic-ou-commerce-des-echanges-economiques-au-sahara-contemporain?d02 : CERI Sciences Po>.
- Shorey, P. 1969. *Plato. Plato in Twelve Volumes* (MA, Harvard University Press, London ed.).
- Sidibé, Kalilou. 2012. "Criminal Networks and Conflict-Resolution Mechanisms in Northern Mali\*." *IDS Bulletin* 43 (4): 74-88.
- Sloterdijk, P. & O. Mannoni. 2012. *Rethinking tax: for an ethics of democratic donation*: Libella Maren Sell-Editions.
- Smoke, Paul. 2003. "Decentralization in Africa: goals, dimensions, myths and challenges." *Public administration and development* 23 (1): 7-16.



- Soares, Benjamin. 2012. "On the recent mess in Mali (Respond to this article at <http://www.therai.org.uk/at/debate/>)." *Anthropology Today* 28 (5): 1-2.
- Tinti, Peter. 2012. "What has the US already tried in Mali?" *Christian Science Monitor*.
- Tinti, Peter. 2014. *Illicit Trafficking and Instability in Mali*. Geneva: The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.
- Tisseron, Antonin. 2011. "Geopolitical tangles around the fight against terrorism in the Sahara." *Herodotus* 142 (3): 98-107.
- Trauner, Florian, and Stephanie Deimel. 2013. "The impact of EU migration policies on African countries: The case of Mali." *Migration International* 51 (4): 20-32.
- Weiss, Thomas G., and Martin Welz. 2014. "The UN and the African Union in Mali and beyond: a shotgun wedding?" *International Affairs* 90 (4): 889-905.
- World Bank. 2009. *World Development Report 2009: Reshaping Economic Geography*. Washington DC: World Bank.



# Endnotes

---

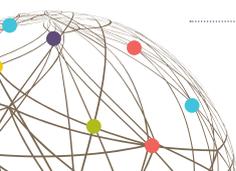
- 1 In an article on the history of modern African borders, Bouquet (2003) refers to the fact that the borders were marked out by the colonial powers using “a ruler and pencil” (p. 181) and have not been changed significantly by the transition to independence of the individual states, with their route remaining more “geometrical than African” (pp. 189-192). This is particularly apposite for the borders in northern Mali.
- 2 For the purpose of this article, the word “State” shall be capitalized when referring to a concept; the non-capitalised word (“state”) shall be used to refer to a specific nation-state.
- 3 This does not rule out the possibility that members of cross-border communities may hold several passports or identity documents issued by different countries (meetings in Algiers (April 2013) and Bamako (October 2015)).
- 4 Kisangani 2012, p. 89: “Controlling smuggling in Sahel is unrealistic (hidden outs that are inaccessible, smuggling activities date back to pre-modern times)”.
- 5 Scale of the 2012 crisis (source: note by the Malian Ministry of Humanitarian Action, Solidarity and the Elderly dated November 2012, <https://wikileaks.org/saudi-cables/pics/015f7995-1270-45d4-8673-ccb0391825ec.jpg>)
- 6 During a meeting held in Bamako in October 2015, a high-ranking Malian official responsible for drafting border policies claimed that, “Everyone involved has been a lot more interested in the border issue and border management policies since the 2012 crisis”. He also stressed that the previous Malian border policy, drafted in 2000, had failed to take sufficient account of security issues. A zone commander posted to a northern region admitted that he found it difficult to get to grips with border management: “the very idea of borders is new to us” (meeting in October 2015).
- 7 The commonly employed term “prohibited goods” will be used in the remainder of this article.
- 8 In January 2010, clashes took place between Nigerien armed forces and AQIM members (suspected of launching an attack on a market in a border town) along the border between Mali and Niger. Source: [https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/10NIAEMEY11\\_a.html](https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/10NIAEMEY11_a.html).
- 9 In 2010, the US Embassy reported a conflict over smuggling routes and reprisals in the aftermath of an ambush of drug traffickers and an alliance between the Imghad and Telemis communities against the Kounta and Ifoghas. Source: [https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/10BAMAKO52\\_a.html](https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/10BAMAKO52_a.html).
- 10 In December 2015, a fresh confrontation occurred between MNLA members and individuals presumed to belong to AQIM, claiming victims among the MNLA. The military camp in Gao was also attacked. Clashes take place on a regular basis, and the members of different groups use digital media (Twitter and news sites such as mnlamov.net) to keep track of fights or killings by individual groups or the Malian army, or mistakes by foreign armed forces. It is hard to verify this information, but its dissemination – particularly when it relates to the actions of armed forces – has the overall effect of reinforcing the sense among the Malian population as a whole that the region is insecure, to say nothing of the acts of violence committed on its say so.
- 11 Cf. the debate between Bourgeot (1994) and Claudot-Hawad (1994), which continues to this day. The issue remains a significant one, since the historical organization of the Saharan region forms the basis for modern-day claims regarding the legitimate autonomy of northern Mali.
- 12 Cf. Boilley (2013), Padis (2013), Grégoire (2013). Boilley (2013:126) calls for “political and institutional imagination to reform the State, which is jaundiced by corruption, to move towards greater autonomy in managing the regions”.
- 13 These meetings involved a variety of contexts; formal, with politicians and administrative staff or representatives of the private sector and donors (both one-on-one and group meetings), and informal, with citizens of northern Mali, supplemented by a number of visits to markets, particularly in Timbuktu.
- 14 Thomas Cantens served as a resident adviser.
- 15 Cf. also Tinti (2014), the author of a recent report on drug trafficking in Mali, who argues that focusing on quantities masks the need for analytical work on the political and social impact of trafficking itself.
- 16 High-ranking official from the Timbuktu Governorate, Timbuktu, October 2015.
- 17 This relates only to land borders, since border crossings at maritime ports or airports do not follow this rule.
- 18 The World Development Report 2009 shows, for example, how investment in infrastructure in such regions is not economically justified due to insufficient traffic (World Bank, 2009).
- 19 The three regions together represent around 9% of the total population of Mali, the remaining regions each accounting for some 14% of the population. 2009 census data (the latest available, the most recent being projections): Timbuktu, 674,793 inhabitants in 121,662 households; Gao, 542,304 inhabitants in 90,205 households; Kidal, 67,739 inhabitants in 12,643 households.
- 20 Cf. Doumbia-Gakou et al. (2015). Determining the relative poverty of the north and the south is a political challenge which was raised at many meetings. Delarue et al. (2009) have analysed the significance of methods for collecting poverty-related data on the basis of estimates for the Sikasso region in Mali.
- 21 Cf. Doumbia-Gakou et al (2015). Investments in Mali’s roads are linked to its supply ports, and the Ivorian crisis has hastened the opening up of transport routes towards Senegal.
- 22 In terms of livestock, the three regions account for over 40% of sheep and goats and around 20% of cattle (plus the very great majority of camels), and livestock represents the third largest export revenue for Mali after gold and cotton. Other crucial revenue sources are remittances sent by officials who originate from the region and revenue from members of development aid projects supported by the regions’ foreign donors. The Timbuktu area, which benefits from the flooding of the Niger, produced 22% of national rice output in 2009/2010, though cereal production in general represents 7% of national output. The rice yield in 2009/2010 was around 6.7 tonnes/ha in Timbuktu. The consumption norm is 61 kg per inhabitant per year. The population of the Timbuktu region thus consumes around 41,000 tonnes of rice per year. The region is therefore very probably self-sufficient in rice, which forms the basis of meals in the region. The Gao region accounts for over a third of national fish production (National Statistics Institute statistical yearbooks).
- 23 This document, drafted by the OECD in October 2015 in connection with the International Conference for the Economic Revival and Development of Mali held in Paris, outlined the development potential for northern Mali.
- 24 For the organization of Tuareg societies, cf. Bourgeot (1995); for a brief but detailed description of the various “communities” and their “conflict”, cf. the summary by Sidibé (2012).



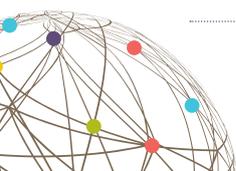
- 25 The National Pact of 1992 between the Malian Government and the “United Movements and Fronts of Azawad” enshrines “the unique status of northern Mali”. Since 1994, Germany has cooperated on a major development programme known as the “Northern Mali Programme”. In 2010, the Malian Government launched the “Special Programme for Peace, Security and Development in Northern Mali (PSPSDN)”, backed by a number of donors and presented as a joint security and development policy against terrorism (<http://www.jeuneafrique.com/179914/politique/mali-att-lance-sa-strat-gie-anti-aqmi-de-d-veloppement-du-nord/>). The Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali signed in June 2015, which emerged from the Algiers process between the Malian Government and an alliance of different movements, recognized Azawad as a “socio-cultural reality shared by different populations in northern Mali”. It also established a “development zone for the northern regions” with advisory and funding bodies.
- 26 Cf. Chapter 5 of the Algiers Accord of 2015.
- 27 The term “Tuareg question” refers in particular to the events of 1991, 2006 and 2012, which involved Tamasheq speakers lodging claims with the central government for the political autonomy properly due to a cultural or geographical community.
- 28 Bourgeot (1994) and Claudot-Hawad (1994).
- 29 Cf. the MNLA’s founding declaration of 1 November 2010.
- 30 Act No 57-27 of 10 January 1957 creating a Common Organization of Saharan Regions.
- 31 In August 2015, a “security zone” extending 20 kilometres around Kidal was decreed by MINUSMA. The strict curtailment of military presence is nothing new; Article 6 of the Tamanrasset Agreement of 1991, concluded by the Malian Government and the Popular Movement of Azawad and the Arab Islamic Front, stipulated that, “The Malian Armed Forces will avoid grazing areas and densely populated areas in the sixth and seventh regions.”
- 32 [http://hosted.ap.org/specials/interactives/\\_international/\\_pdfs/al-qaida-belmoktar-letter-english.pdf](http://hosted.ap.org/specials/interactives/_international/_pdfs/al-qaida-belmoktar-letter-english.pdf).
- 33 Cf. for example Gearon (2013), Kisangani (2012) and Lounnas (2013).
- 34 The goal of concluding alliances with local “tribes” lies at the heart of the AQIM fighters’ political strategy, cf. the AQIM documents found by Associated Press in Timbuktu in 2013 [hosted.ap.org/specials/interactives/\\_international/\\_pdfs/al-qaida-manifesto.pdf](http://hosted.ap.org/specials/interactives/_international/_pdfs/al-qaida-manifesto.pdf).
- 35 One of the reasons is also the sale of international cigarette brands in Algeria since 2005 and the setting up of factories producing them under licence.
- 36 The Tuaregs of the Gaddafi Islamic Legion are often cited in connection with the current crisis, but Gaddafi had already sent back many Tuaregs from the Libyan Legion following the setbacks in Chad (Kisangani, 2012).
- 37 The Pan-Sahel Initiative to secure the borders of Niger, Chad, Mali and Mauritania (2002, USD 8 million, no economic dimension), the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCI) (2005-2009, USD 490 million, including USAID, Department of Defense and Department of State), the creation of the Europe-based US Africa Command in 2008 (AFRICOM) and the Flintlock regional joint exercises with the US Army.
- 38 Cf. the article published in the New York Amsterdam News in 2013, “As French Force In Mali Regroups, U.S. Admits Missteps.” New York Amsterdam News 104 (5):2-2, which reports on a speech made by General Ham at Howard University.
- 39 As an American expert said, “without considerable resources devoted for a very long time, external intervention is likely to fail to change the long-term security environment” (Cline, 2013:630). The TSCTP programme invested roughly the same amount over five years as the annual cost of the French Operation Barkhane.
- 40 These approaches also failed in other national contexts because certain Customs and police officers were corrupted by the smugglers. Megoran et al. (2005) show that, even in a region where minefields had been laid on the border between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan and where rows of barbed wire had been placed (the Ferghana Valley in Central Asia), smuggling continued in broad daylight with the consent of local authorities and the aid of officials posted on the border.
- 41 Figures for Mali and Algeria from <http://www.globalfirepower.com>.
- 42 2010, Special Programme for Peace, Security and Development in Northern Mali (PSPSDN).
- 43 In the official “National Borders Policy” drafted in 2000 by the National Borders Directorate, the Malian Government sets out its concept of a “border country” as promoted by the Malian President Alpha Oumar Konaré. “A border country is a territory inhabited by a number of different peoples whose economies, societies and cultures are interlinked to a large extent, despite the fact that they are separated by a division between two states” (p. 39). The political objective is stated clearly: “the active principle of border countries should be the integration of these peoples, based on a strategy of dismantling State borders” (p. 39). In January 2005, during a meeting in Accra (Ghana), the ECOWAS foreign affairs ministers acknowledged the progress made by Mali in this area and incorporated the policy into the Community-level Cross-Border Initiatives Programme.
- 44 The G5 Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad) adopted a Priority Investment Programme in 2014, which covers 33 projects to be implemented between 2015 and 2017 costing a total of EUR 11 billion under four different headings (security, governance, infrastructure and human development). EUR 1.575 billion has been earmarked for the security heading. The G5 Sahel has a Security and Defence Committee which met in N’Djamena on 18 November 2015, in the presence of French and American observers.
- 45 Meeting in Bamako, October 2015.
- 46 Meeting in Bol (Lac Chad, Chad), December 2015.
- 47 UN Resolution 2227/2015. Part II of the 2015 Algiers Accord concerns, in particular, the policing and taxation duties that will be delegated to the regions. As regards the involvement of the African Union, cf. also Communiqué PSC/PR/COMM.2(CCCXLI) of the 341th Meeting of the AU’s Peace and Security Council (2012). The AU has been reluctant to intervene in Mali following the reduction in its role in Libya despite its diplomatic efforts (Weiss and Welz, 2014).
- 48 “Corruption” is taken to mean both actual corruption by certain government agents and the reputation for corruption of a State service which generates mistrust in relation to that service. In that respect, corruption has a dual effect, whether perceived or real.
- 49 Meeting in October 2015.
- 50 The term “migrant” must be used with caution. Most people classified as such are ECOWAS nationals, which means that their presence in Mali or Niger is not unlawful. Some settle there on a temporary basis to build up funds that will allow them to emigrate towards North Africa and Europe. It is also true to say, however, that people classified in this category plan to migrate out of Africa along a route which leads towards northern Mali and the Maghreb countries. They are viewed by the European countries as potential “economic migrants”, which is why the term is placed in inverted commas.



- 51 Mitra and Kaminski (2012) have shown how Kyrgyzstan has become a re-export platform for Chinese goods in Central Asia, particularly to Kazakhstan or Uzbekistan (becoming one of the country's principal economic activities). Ayadi et al. (2013) have estimated that the amount of informal trade across Algerian and Libyan borders with Tunisia is greater than or equal to formal trade. These volumes are explained in particular by tax differences or fuel subsidies in Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. Finally, due to a restrictive policy of bans on imports to Nigeria, the value of smuggling from Benin to the Lagos region of Nigeria has been estimated at several billion dollars (Raballand and Mjekiqi, 2010).
- 52 Bensassi et al. (2015) take the view that "informal trade is very important in supplying northern Mali and allowing regions in the north to benefit from prices lower than if supplies came from the south of the country. This situation could contribute to explain why the poverty level is so low in northern Mali, especially in Kidal." Combating the smuggling of legitimate goods and seeking to apply a policy of strict collection of duties and taxes involves a risk: increasing the price of basic necessities and impoverishing the poorest to obtain tax revenue which is low compared to national income. Even prior to the 2012 coup and at the height of its activity, the Malian Customs service collected no more than a few million dollars, with goods being cleared for an average of 20% of their actual value for around half the flows (Bensassi et al., 2015). Given the environment in which they are operating, the Customs service has therefore never managed to succeed in collecting the "exact" revenue on the northern borders.
- 53 Cf. an African Development Bank publication from 2006, [http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/70000012\\_FR\\_Transfert%20des%20fonds%20FR.PDF](http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/70000012_FR_Transfert%20des%20fonds%20FR.PDF). Mali facilitates formalities for "Maliens from abroad", which are dealt with by a special ministry, and the Customs service also has an office dedicated to the respective formalities.
- 54 Holders of ECOWAS passports do not need visas within the ECOWAS area.
- 55 Bearing witness to Mali's importance to European anti-immigration measures, in 2008 the EU established a pilot centre for Africa in Mali to provide information on and to manage migration. Its purpose is to inform migrants of the dangers of illegal migration in order to bring about a shift in the traditional treatment of migrants by controlling the border (Michel, 2009). The effect of this centre appears to be limited.
- 56 Kohl (2013) reports that some of them have arrived in Arlit.
- 57 Finding primary sources of information is certainly difficult, and only the information circulating in the grey area of the public domain can be reported: interviewees in Timbuktu (October 2015) stated that cocaine trafficking had been severely disrupted following the intervention of the French army. However, the impact of this disruption should not be overestimated in the medium term. Reuter (2014) is very cautious with respect to incentives that lead drug traffickers to change routes or places of activity in transit countries. He questions the argument of the "balloon effect", which is often cited by critics of US anti-drug policies; the fact that getting tougher on drug trafficking merely displaces it temporarily to another location. It is therefore very difficult to foresee the long-term consequences of an enhanced control policy and to anticipate the level of control to be imposed in order to obtain results. Reuter's considerations must be viewed in the general context of lack of reliable empirical data on drug trafficking in transit countries.
- 58 Those involved in combating drugs are also very cautious when it comes to estimating quantities.
- 59 "That's their big earner (drugs)", said an economic operator in northern Mali interviewed in July 2015, referring to many players in the transport sector. Many cases of drug traffickers with significant financial capabilities are cited, as demonstrated by the purchase price of houses in northern Mali.
- 60 This is one of the major and most frequent complaints against representatives of preceding governments, military personnel and senior government officials, ultimately without any evidence being provided in court and no legal conviction. The fact that no convictions have been handed down does not constitute proof in itself, since the extent to which it can be viewed as "proof" depends on the level of trust placed in the judicial system.
- 61 The involvement of local elected representatives – at least prior to 2012 – in drug trafficking is often reported. In April 2013, the Mayor of Tarkint (Gao region) was arrested for involvement in drug trafficking, with the story widely reported by the international media. After 2015 and in view of the higher level of regionalization enshrined in the Algiers Accord of 2015, it cannot be ruled out that traffickers back candidates or win elections. Briscoe (2014, p. 28) refers to a number of cases of local elections disrupted by kidnappings, allegedly perpetrated by military and economic leaders with links to drug trafficking.
- 62 The armed intervention of the Macina Liberation Front in August 2015 promoted the imam Hamadou Diallo, or Hamadou Koufa, who in January 2013 may have taken part in overrunning Konna and declared "there are no more police chiefs, no more assistant police chiefs, no more mayors, no more taxes and levies, no national identity cards ..." <http://www.ortm.info/le-flm-revendique-la-prise-dotage-de-sevare-qui-est-hamadoun-kouffa/>.
- 63 Tinti (2014) notes with respect to figures on drug trafficking that "the wide circulation of these figures in numerous overviews and reports has given these numbers a degree of specificity and authority they were never intended to have" (p. 3).
- 64 This relates in particular to projects making a more or less explicit link between security and development, such as the G5 Sahel Priority Investment Programme, bilateral donor programmes such as the Danish Border Security and Management programme, the German Northern Mali Programme, the French projects Security and Development in Northern Mali and Support for Cross-Border Cooperation in the Sahel, the UN's "rapid impact" projects, the PSPSDN backed by the EU until 2012, the EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel, which was presented in 2011 and which is based on the "securitization of borders" according to the EU's special ambassador for the Sahel (Security and Defence Partners review edited by the French Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development, Number 275 of February 2015, page 4), the UNDP's Border Management and Border Communities in the Sahel project and the US Security Governance Initiative and Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund (in its regional version, the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP)).
- 65 This may be less true, since the countries in the area tend to accept the right of foreign military forces to pursue suspects on their territory.
- 66 Al-Karjousli (2013) cites a person encountered in Timbuktu or Gao, the type of trader who has experienced life in refugee camps and who has established an "Azawadi" identity there and built up an address list for his business. He is not versed in armed combat but he is an unavoidable intermediary in re-provisioning his area and organizing camps, and also in resolving conflicts as a clan leader who intermediates with local authorities.
- 67 In particular by representatives of the French Government following the French intervention in Mali ([http://malijet.com/videos/actualite\\_en\\_video/58753-laurent-fabius-narco-terrorisme-au-mali-une-menace-pour-l-ensem.html](http://malijet.com/videos/actualite_en_video/58753-laurent-fabius-narco-terrorisme-au-mali-une-menace-pour-l-ensem.html)), or the French opposition with Mr. Copé ([http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2013/01/11/intervention-francaise-au-mali-union-sacree-entour-de-la-decision-du-president-hollande\\_1816017\\_3212.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2013/01/11/intervention-francaise-au-mali-union-sacree-entour-de-la-decision-du-president-hollande_1816017_3212.html)) or Mr. Diaconda Traoré, Interim President of Mali in June 2013 (<http://www.humanite.fr/monde/l-unesco-decore-hollande-pour-la-guerre-au-nord-du-543166>).



- 68 A visit in October 2015 to the market in Timbuktu showed that basic necessities such as sugar, flour or pasta were being traded by individual importers (“Moors” or “Arabs”) using pickup trucks and obtaining their supplies from Mauritania.
- 69 In the well-known “Air Cocaine” case in 2009, the wreck of a Boeing 727 jumbo was found in the northern Mali, which had probably transported cocaine between Colombia and Mali. People living in northern Mali claim that aeroplanes continue to drop drugs in the region. This information cannot be verified, but it helps to sustain the image of the northern regions as a platform for the international cocaine trade.
- 70 When Gao was retaken by the French army, rioters destroyed a property belonging to Baba Ould Cheikh, the mayor of Tarkint who had been arrested for drug trafficking (source: article by Thierry Oberle, Le Figaro, 21 February 2013 “Gao: in the tracks of the drug barons”).
- 71 Interview, Bamako, July 2015.
- 72 As an example of an “official” headline, the Joint report on violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed during the events in Kida on 16, 17 and 21 May 2014 mentions the presence of “a group of armed men mostly belonging to the Tuareg imghad community, under the direct control of the General of the Malian armed forces, El Hadj Ag Gamou.” (MINUSMA - OHCHR, 2015, p.12).
- 73 See [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO85\\_a.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO85_a.html).
- 74 Cline (2013) refers to a racial conflict between whites and blacks that is thought to date back to the colonial era. The current crisis has not eliminated these instances. Harvey and Tremblin (2012) cite the case of a Tuareg female psychiatrist attacked by her neighbours, who were relatives of Malian soldiers killed by rebels belonging to Tuareg groups. Some Malian contacts, who introduced themselves as Tamasheq, also expressed their frustration at the scorn or lack of knowledge they felt was emanating from southern populations towards the “whites” in the north. Then, during the current crisis, many Tuareg families of “fair complexion” left the city of Bamako to find refuge in Morocco, Mauritania and, closer to home in Burkina Faso.
- 75 Interviews with four Songhai and Tamasheq residents, known before the crisis of 2012 and who have never been involved in political groups.
- 76 Security bulletins issued by various international actors in Mali refer to actions by armed groups against petty crime at the local level (including cattle rustling). This was confirmed by interviews with residents of the Timbuktu area in October 2015. A resident of Gao also recounts how, in 2012, a youth movement requested support by the MUJAO against MNLAs militants accused of looting. This security request to the religious administrators in the city of Gao was also reported in the media (<http://observers.france24.com/fr/20120709-mali-gao-nord-manifestation-jeunes-mnla-mujao-nous-pas-bouger-resistance-islamistes-patrouilleurs>)
- 77 <http://www.malipresses.info/2015/12/31/fahad-ag-almahmoud-secrtaire-general-du-gatia-nous-avons-retrouve-des-materiels-des-forces-speciales-francaises-avec-des-terroristesbarkhane-a-tue-nos-combattants-a-menaka/>
- 77 <http://www.malipresses.info/2015/12/31/fahad-ag-almahmoud-secrtaire-general-du-gatia-nous-avons-retrouve-des-materiels-des-forces-speciales-francaises-avec-des-terroristesbarkhane-a-tue-nos-combattants-a-menaka/>
- 78 Interview in Timbuktu, October 2015.
- 79 Interviews in Timbuktu and Gao, October 2015. The presence of Customs on the ground is “symbolic” say the interviewees. For now, it is limited to signs at barriers without officers, and to meetings with importers to “educate” them about the fact that they will have to pay taxes sooner or later.
- 80 Interview in Timbuktu, October 2015.
- 81 Interview in Gao, October 2015.
- 82 In press releases available on its website, the MNLAs regularly refers to its “security positions” (e.g. <http://mnlamov.net/actualites/465-communique-sur-l-attaque-terroriste-a-talahandak.html> , or <http://mnlamov.net/actualites/431-un-poste-du-mnla-a-ete-attaque-par-des-elements-terroristes-a-talabit.html> )
- 83 See, for example, the finding by Tuesday Reitano and Mark Shaw (2014) on the increase in illegal trade and investment of profits from that traffic in political and social life.
- 84 “Collective control” does not necessarily imply state control.
- 85 Plato uses the term “chrematistic” (χρηματιστικός) to designate a category of citizens four times in the Republic. It is translated in French as “traders” or “businessmen” in Brisson (2011) and in English by a general term “moneymakers” or “moneyed men” by Shorey (1969). In any case, in Plato, the term refers to the group of those who are engaged in producing or managing the wealth and that are neither warriors nor the magistrate guards, but chrematistics not subject to a specific development. The term was placed in a theoretical perspective in Aristotle’s Politics (1257 and later). Aristotle makes a distinction between a “natural” chrematistic related to those who acquire in order to gain support for themselves, and a reprehensible chrematistic who accumulates wealth in the monetary form and strives for limitless wealth. Aristotle evokes the infinity of the object pursued by any art: medicine that aims to attain infinite healing, agriculture in its pursuit of production. However, the practical conditions for the pursuit of art, says Aristotle, are the limits of that art; this applies to all arts except for trade. In trade, the pursued object, money, is a means, a condition of the exercise of the art, so the more we accumulate money, the more money we can accumulate. For Aristotle, long distance trade is included in the bad chrematistic. Aristotle mentions and condemns this endless means of accumulation for ethical and political reasons.
- 86 The NGO “Publish What You Pay”, present in Mali, encourages more fiscal transparency, especially with regard to major contributors, namely companies involved in the mining industries, but also aimed at citizens for “local taxes” and collection of the TDRL (regional and local development tax) <http://www.publishwhatyoupay.org/fr/members/mali-2/>
- 87 Source: CENTIF Annual Report Mali, 2013. UEMOA countries adopted this type of intelligence unit in the early 2000s following a directive from the Union. For comparison purposes, Senegal’s CENTIF received 112 reports of suspicious transactions in 2013, while Côte d’Ivoire’s received 198 in the four years from 2008 to 2011, between 24 and 81 per year. In contrast, TRACFIN, the French equivalent, received over 17,000 in 2009 and over 36,000 in 2014.

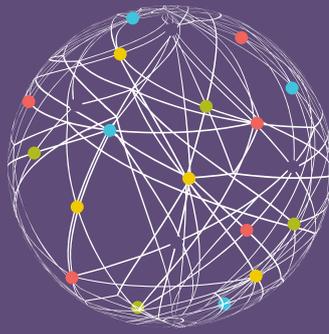


- 88 Particular vigilance with respect to suppliers of services and goods to MINUSMA, a major “client” for the Malian private sector. Considering the quasi-monopoly situation of some service providers in northern Mali, there is a risk of contracts for MINUSMA being won by economic players with formal activities used for money laundering. Moreover, it seems that MINUSMA operations are not subject to Customs monitoring, either for statistical or control purposes (United Nations operations are generally tax-free, however national statistical monitoring could be useful).
- 89 As such, it is often referred to as the hawala system of “transfer” with the United Arab Emirates as a destination of funds and source of goods flows aimed at laundering suspicious funds.
- 90 Interview in Bamako, July, 2015.
- 91 Sloterdijk (2012) calls for a review of our relationship to tax and to encourage voluntary participation, making taxation the heart of political and societal relations.
- 92 Upon different grounds but in similar contexts in Chad and Cameroon (fewer dealers importing in one sector, significant informalization of their financial operations), it appeared that importers would not necessarily engage in competition but rather joined together (transport, access to financing, pooling of orders), which reduced the secrecy of transactions between them. More transparency in the value chain could therefore face no resistance on the grounds of secrecy and competition.
- 93 Warehouses or zones under Customs control could be developed on the outskirts of urban centres in order to protect stocks of goods. Indeed, given the topography, smuggled goods are stored in nearby centres of consumption and sale, in villages or neighbouring sparsely populated areas. This type of storage necessarily relies on specific relationships with the residents of the storage areas and therefore includes the risks inherent in all informal relationships not secured by a supra-individual institution: strong dependence on relationships with residents, risk of volatility. It is therefore likely that some merchants would prefer greater security of their stocks in safe warehouses. It is equally likely that this type of warehouse does not attract some of the traders who continue heading to informal storage settings for fear of being identified, recorded, evaluated and ultimately taxed.
- 94 See Brautigam (2008) concerning the “proximity” relationship that is thought to make citizens more discerning in matters of taxation.
- 95 Interviews with the Timbuktu and Gao Governorates, October, 2015.
- 96 Interview, Bamako, July, 2015.
- 97 Statement by a senior official stationed in a northern region, made at a joint meeting where this recrimination received broad backing. October 2015.
- 98 The Algiers Accord provides for the transfer of 30% of national revenue to the regions. It will be a dual transfer, in excess of 30%, as some revenue collected at national level will be transferred directly to local level. It now seems difficult to assess the scope of such a measure, even though Customs duties and taxes are not involved. In other African countries where such a facility exists, the time taken for on-lending of funds from the Central Bank to the regions is sometimes an argument for the representatives of these regions to block the transfer of revenue collected at the regional level and use it locally, even creating specific taxes and instructing the staff of the national administrations established locally to levy them on their behalf.
- 99 In July 2015, one of the people we spoke to, an economic and political player in northern Mali and a native of Kidal, noted “we live on taxes from other regions.”
- 100 Cooperation of this kind exists between Niger and Chad.
- 101 These exceptions are particularly obvious in the application of Customs tax or tax exemptions in general.
- 102 Common tax regime which requires all activities to be declared and tax to be calculated based on them.
- 103 Special tax regime which permits certain tax obligations to be fulfilled by paying a flat-rate sum to the state, provided that the activity does not exceed a certain turnover. This turnover is declared by the tax payer.
- 104 One thinks of guides, drivers or even appointments of high-ranking officials based on their origin.
- 105 The G5 Sahel Priority Investment Programme envisages the “construction of a regional centre for acclimatizing to desert combat”. Officials from civilian administrations should benefit from a tailoring of the centre to civilians or courses for civilians in the existing centre, following the same philosophy of “acclimatization” to Saharan conditions. The questions raised by the Saharan environment relate not only to the physical environment and the course it follows, but also to the management of human resources in areas far from the capital or major urban centres, and management of relations with populations, particularly for permanent Customs posts or police stations.
- 106 Malian officials raised the case of their Mauritanian colleagues who are better equipped when they intervene in border areas.
- 107 The role of traditional Authorities is a colonial construction, not in its role of local authority but in establishing a relationship between a given territory within the country and the figure of the central state: Boilley (1999) recalls that traditional leaders were re-established by the French colonial authority and that France has done the same in Cameroon by empowering local leaders or even by creating local chiefdoms, to different degrees, to carry out the tax collection. This helped to make the traditional local authority represent a political intermediary with the national state authority.
- 108 “We seek out for the most influential figures” (“nous cherchons les personnalités les plus influents”) (to support the work of the administrative authorities), according to a Malian official involved in the implementation of border policy, Bamako, October, 2015.
- 109 Interview with DNF, Bamako, October, 2015.
- 110 Interview in Bamako, October, 2015.
- 111 See AQIM documents found in Timbuktu and published by the Associated Press (2013).
- 112 The decentralization project in Mali began in 1994 and took various forms: local elections, decrees on skill transfers for education, hydroelectric power and healthcare (2002). The Algiers Accord in 2015 provides for the establishment of Regional Development Agencies (Article 40).
- 113 Languille notes that the relationship between donors and the Malian authorities has gone in the opposite direction from what was expected: the Malian authorities are mere “managers”, fulfilling donors’ requests. In 2010, some 15 aid agencies were supporting decentralization, either directly or through the National Local Government Investment Agency (ANICT).



- 114 Order No. 75-71 of 12 November 1975 ratifying the agreement on road transport of goods, in return for payment, between the Democratic Republic of Algeria and the Republic of Mali, signed in Bamako on 30 June 1975 (OJ No. 99 of 12 December 1975, page 1056). Decree No. 83-341 of 21 May 1983 on the ratification of the trade and tariff agreement between the Government of the Democratic Republic of Algeria and the Government of the Republic of Mali, done in Bamako on 4 December 1981 (OJ No. 21 of 24 May 1983, Page 977), Presidential Decree No. 01-80 of 29 March 2001 ratifying the trade and tariff agreement between the Government of the Democratic Republic of Algeria and the Government of the Republic of Mali, signed in Bamako on 11 July 1996 (OJ No. 20 of 8 April 2001, Page 3).
- 115 Order No. 75-71 of 12 November 1975 ratifying the agreement on road transport of goods, for consideration, between the Democratic Republic of Algeria and the Republic of Mali, signed in Bamako on 30 June 1975 (OJ No. 99 of 12 December 1975, page 1056). Decree No. 83-341 of 21 May 1983 on the ratification of trade and tariff agreement between the Government of the Democratic Republic of Algeria and the Government of the Republic of Mali, in Bamako done on 4 December 1981 (OJ No. 21 of 24 May 1983, Page 977), Presidential Decree No. 01-80 of 29 March 2001 ratifying the trade and tariff agreement between the Government of the Democratic Republic of Algeria and the Government of the Republic of Mali, signed in Bamako on 11 July 1996 (OJ No. 20 of 8 April 2001, Page 3).
- 116 The case of “terrorism” based on religion seems more obvious and the same reasoning is put forward for “rebellion”, especially by Azam (2001) who interprets the relationship between government and rebels in economic terms of material resources (products, services, finance). This type of modelling takes scant account of the territorial and ideological dimension of rebellion. A rebellion can take place across an area of little interest to the government, which prefers to contain the rebellion within that area rather than fight it. A rebellion may also rely mainly on ideology to justify action which is not intended to overthrow the government but to impose ideas that, in the long term, will bring it to power.
- 117 The term “Ishumar” is a Tamasheq neologism for the term “unemployed” as well as an inversion of the term “imushar” representing a Tamasheq fraction often characterized locally as being particularly rebellious against modernity and religion.
- 118 In 2013, the Timbuktu manuscripts were “saved” by residents who used smugglers (<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/ist/?next=/history/Race-Save-Mali-Artifacts-180947965/>). Many acts of resistance were reported but unfortunately very few have been systematically documented.
- 119 The relationship towards religion for “reconciliation” stood out very clearly in an interview with a very prominent Malian figure in Bamako in July 2015. On the issue of how to envisage the role of the military and paramilitary forces in border management – especially cooperation with the public on security issues – although there were many disputes between forces and border populations and between these forces themselves, one of the replies was the public call for the religious values of reconciliation : “we can only forgive our enemy his murders if we are convinced of the existence of an afterlife in which he will be truly and finally judged.”
- 120 Bamako, July 2015.
- 121 Cattaruzza and Derens (2015) demonstrated this for the city of Mitrovica (Kosovo), where an informal border was established. A convergence of goals between international agencies concerned with “stability” and some local groups with an interest in fuel smuggling, based on access to health facilities, ensured their political clout beyond the city alone and out into the surrounding villages.





THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE  
AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL  
ORGANIZED CRIME

[www.globalinitiative.net](http://www.globalinitiative.net)



A NETWORK TO COUNTER NETWORKS

