Operation Serval

Analyzing the French Strategy against Jihadists in Mali

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Similar to the events that occurred two years earlier in Benghazi, the crews of the four Mirage 2000Ds that took off on the evening of 11 January 2013 from Chad inbound for Kona in central Mali knew that they were about to conduct a mission that needed to stop the jihadist offensive to secure Bamako, the capital of Mali, and its population. This time, they were not alone because French special forces were already on the battlefield, ready to bring their firepower to bear. French military forces intended to prevent jihadist fighters from creating a caliphate in Mali. They also knew that suppressing any jihadist activity there would be another challenge—a more political one intended to remove the arrows from the jihadists' hands.

By answering the call for assistance from the Malian president to prevent jihadists from raiding Bamako and creating a radical Islamist state, French president François Hollande consented to engage his country in the Sahel to fight jihadists. Within a week, Operation Serval had put together a joint force that stopped the jihadist offensive and retook the initiative. Within two months, the French-led coalition had liberated the entire Malian territory after destruction of jihadist strongholds in the Adrar des Ifoghas by displaying a strategy that surprised both the coalition's enemies and its allies. On 31 July 2014, this first chapter of the war on terror in the Sahel officially closed with a victory and the attainment of all objectives at that time.

This initial success in the struggle against terrorists in the Sahel is explained by adherence to three main strategic principles: (1) clear political direction shaped at the

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This article is dedicated to the memory of Capt Mathieu Bigand (French Air Force, 1/3 Navarre Fighter Squadron), who took part in the first bombing mission of Operation Serval and died on 26 January 2015 during a Tactical Leadership Program mission in the service of his country.

highest political level, relying on a good understanding of the situation and its causes as a means of avoiding political traps; (2) a combination of economy of means, initiative, and concentration of forces displayed in the use of special forces who mentored local military forces and relied on support from airpower to track and destroy the enemy and weaken his will to fight; and (3) full use of "boots on the ground" to keep the initiative not only by holding the ground acquired by the special forces and the air campaign but also by focusing massive force on the point of enemy weakness during the final assault against the jihadist stronghold—and by shaping an exit strategy to avoid a quagmire.[1] After reviewing the roots of the conflict, this article analyzes how the French strategy proved successful by respecting major strategic principles to defeat the jihadists in Mali. It then examines the exit plan that sowed the seeds of long-term success.

The Roots of the Conflict

A Weak State with a Weak Army Unable to Secure a Huge Country

Twice the size of France, landlocked Mali is one of the poorest countries in the world, ranking 176th on the Human Development index.[2] Known for its corruption, it relied on a patronage system created by ousted president Amadou Toumani Touré from 2002 to 2012 through which the political elite enriched itself.[3] Despite the efforts of the US, French, and German special operations forces training program intended to create a military force designed for counterterrorism, Malian military forces were defeated and forced by jihadists to withdraw from the northern 60 percent of the country in spring 2012.[4] Moreover, since Mali's independence in 1960, its government has showed no interest in developing the northern part of the country. The lack of support and assistance during times of drought helps to explain the Arab and Tuareg populations' feeling of abandonment.

The Tuareg Rebellion

Representing approximately 5 percent of the Malian population, the Tuaregs are nomadic pastoralists whose area spreads all along the Sahel and into Mali.[5] Located predominantly in Tessalit, Gao, and Kidal, they practice a syncretic form of Islam that blends many forms of indigenous and pre-Islamic practices.[6] Marginalized for years, the Tuaregs have traditionally aspired to independence or autonomy; consequently, they have led numerous uprisings that were severely crushed by the central government in 1963, in 1990 under the leadership of Iyad ag Ghali, in 2006, and in 2011. From their perspective, the two agreements signed with the Malian central government in Tamanrasset (1992) and Algiers (2006) failed to bring greater autonomy or a larger role for local Tuaregs in security forces and economic development. Thus, political and economic marginalization represents the genuine roots of the Tuaregs' claims whereas religious beliefs and ethnicity have proven only secondary elements that complicate the problem.

Reinforced by the return of former mercenaries of Mu'ammar Gadhafi with heavy weapons and ammunition from Libyan stores, leaders of the different Tuareg factions formed the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MLNA) in October 2011.[7] It is important to note that this group, under the leadership of aristocratic tribesmen from Kidal, represents neither all of the Tuaregs nor all of the northern populations. Divisions between Tuaregs mainly rely on their status within that aristocratic society and are central to explaining the numerous factions within the Tuareg ethnicity.

Jihadist Groups

Formerly known as the Salafist for Preaching and Combat Group, al-Qaeda in the Maghrib (AQIM) traces its roots to Algeria, as reflected by the citizenship of its leaders. Successful and brutal Algerian counterterrorism actions pushed AQIM into neighboring countries where it developed a very lucrative campaign of kidnappings for ransom.[8] Originally from Gao, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) is a terrorist group known for smuggling, whereas Ansar al Dine is a Salafist group created by Iyad ag Ghali, the famous Tuareg aristocrat who turned Islamist after the turn of the century. AQIM shares with these main allies its goal of replacing all of the governments of "Sahelistan" with proper Sharia states.[9] Those jihadist groups, which found favorable ground in the radicalized Wahhabi communities that spread in northern Mali, consider Sharia an option as provided by the declaration of the chairman of the Malian Islamic High Committee on 19 January 2012.[10] Thus, the Tuaregs' political claims developed a religious dimension.

The Faustian Pact

Between January and April 2012, the MLNA, under the command of Mohamed Ag Najem and Bilal Ag Acherif (two former colonels in Gadhafi's army) and allied with the three jihadists groups, conquered much of northern Mali. This series of defeats for the Malian army led to a strategic retreat south of the Niger loop and to a military coup in Bamako on 22 March 2012. Among the Malian defeats, it is interesting to note that current Malian general El Hadj Gamou, a lower-cast Tuareg who integrated the Malian armed forces after the Tuareg uprisings in the 1990s, fiercely defended the city of Kidal against mujahedeen forces in early 2012. Nevertheless, he was forced to withdraw with his troops towards Niger.

Following their agenda, Islamists sidelined the secular MLNA since they had little interest in the idea of a free and secular Azawad and implemented strict Sharia law in the conquered area.[11] Thus, the MLNA, rewarded for its Faustian pact with the jihadists who took control of Azawad, unilaterally proclaimed a cease-fire. Concerned by the unwillingness of the Malian military to restore democratic institutions, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) reacted with an economic boycott that succeeded in coercing the putschists into installing House Speaker Dioncounda Traoré as president of Mali in accordance with the constitution. Because negotiations with the ji-

hadists failed, ECOWAS, the African Union, and Malian military experts adopted a joint strategic concept of operations to deploy West African forces in order to restore the integrity of Mali.

The French Strategy in Mali and Its Implementation

Clear Political Direction

The jihadists decided to take the initiative as pressure grew with the adoption of United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 2085 authorizing the deployment of an African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA), which sanctioned the taking of all necessary measures to restore the territorial integrity of that country.[12] Two columns of around 80 and 30 vehicles, most with a weapon platform and 5–6 crew members, moved towards Konna and Diabaly, following two parallel axes.[13] Realizing that the jihadists were within a day of Bamako, President Traoré formally requested assistance from France, which acted on 11 January under Article 51 of the UN Charter, which provides for the right of countries to engage in self-defense—including collective self-defense—against an armed attack.[14] It is possible that the "Dakar speech" of President Hollande, explaining that France was done with its intrusion in African internal affairs, and the inaction of French troops in Central Africa in December 2012 might have led the jihadists to believe that France would not act.[15]

For months—and despite doubts from its allies—France used diplomacy in a vigorous effort to build an African solution to an African problem.[16] That solution, although causing concern about its military efficiency since it relied only on African forces, involved embracing a French "leading from behind strategy" without committing fighting forces. Thus, France would avoid economic and political disadvantages because it was still perceived as the former colonial power in West Africa.

Unsurprisingly, France wished to stick to the initial multinational plan with a few adjustments. According to President Hollande, the objectives were to help the Malian military forces stop the jihadist thrust towards Bamako and repel them, assuring the security of the civilian population; to help Mali recover its territorial integrity and sovereignty; and to facilitate the implementation of international resolutions by a quick deployment of two complementary missions: AFISMA and the European Union Training Mission in Mali (EUTM).[17] Consequently, as was the case 30 years ago in Chad against Libyan forces, France intended only to halt the jihadists and contain them in a first phase. Then, once Malian military forces were fully trained by the EUTM, French forces would back a Malian counteroffensive supported by AFISMA to repel the jihadists.[18]

On 12 January, after the initial French counteroffensive, President Hollande decided to adapt the initial strategy by seizing the initiative.[19] Hence, after stopping the jihadist offensive, French forces along with the remains of the Malian forces would liberate northern Mali without waiting for the African coalition to develop.[20] That political

decision was far riskier for France since casualties could be heavier. In fact, considering the casualty-averse nature of public opinion, a dangerous option that would put the operation in jeopardy could quickly lose both domestic and international support. One element that weighed heavily in this decision was the desire to destroy the jihadists before they could quit the battlefield and slip out of reach.[21] Indeed, "Seize the initiative and never decrease the pressure on the jihadists" was the French forces' motto. Within a few days, relying on 75 percent on its allies for the first force projection, France would produce enough military power to complete that task by retaking the Niger loop.[22]

Avoiding Political Traps

Clearly, France had adopted a tailored, flexible strategy that took into consideration all of the context and difficult local issues throughout the operation. The first trap to avoid was isolation and the ghost of colonialism. On the diplomatic stage, France gained the support of every African country in the area, including Algeria, albeit discreetly.[23] The AFISMA deployment process speeded up, Mauritanian borders were closed, and Chad sent more than 1,000 of its best troops for desert operations. On 17 January, the first several hundred African soldiers from AFISMA arrived at Bamako. Thus, France succeeded in internationalizing this cross-border conflict, and African countries took on their share of the burden.

Building a coalition is always a challenge, as reflected by the European Union's lack of consensus regarding getting involved on the Malian front line (the major European countries acted bilaterally to bring logistics support to the French operation).[24] France succeeded in bringing most of the Sahel's countries into a coalition. The fact that each country brought its own agenda, perspective, interests, strategy, command structures, rules of engagement, and caveats could have led to tensions and weakened the coalition. In fact, however, French leadership avoided that classical trap by fully assuming the command and conduct of the operation and by imposing its strategy during the offensive phase on its African allies, who gave the French carte blanche. As a result, France enjoyed unity of effort and was able to adapt quickly in a clearly changing environment when consultations among allies were not necessary to make decisions.

French leaders also wished to avoid the trap of losing domestic political support if the populace did not believe that such an operation was of vital interest. With the exception of a few individuals of little influence, members of all political parties quickly expressed support for the French operation. Because that support could have collapsed, though, Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian played a key role by explaining the military operations to the media and aggressively labelling jihadists as France's worst enemy. Subsequent opinion polls showed that popular support was strong.[25] Furthermore, by using a small footprint and relying on highly efficient means—namely, special forces and air assets—France kept its human losses at a level acceptable to the public. In fact, the French had many advantages that improved their strategy's chances of success, including reasonable political objectives, a favorable battlefield (tracking jihadists in open terrain was

easier than doing so in an urban area), support of citizens who had suffered from jihadist abuses, the Malian army's knowledge of the environment, and years of collecting intelligence on jihadists, which proved of key importance in the targeting process.

Aware of the fact that one of the major issues which led to the success of the jihadists in 2012 was the internal struggle between some Tuaregs and the Malian government, the French avoided the deadly trap of feeding a local insurgency by turning Tuaregs against the forces of Operation Serval. Their first move was to accept the support of the MLNA—but discreetly because the population of southern Mali might interpret such action as treason. The second move proved to be the effective use of Colonel Gamou, who took part in the liberation of Tuareg cities. In the contested area where Tuaregs were settled, France prevented non-Tuareg Malian forces from trying to liberate Tuareg cities, where they could have been considered invaders rather than liberators—not to mention the fear of retaliation for Tuareg support of the jihadists. Hence, Chadian forces replaced Malian forces for the liberation of Menaka (along with the Niger armed forces) and Kidal (with French special forces). The presence of Tuaregs in the coalition meant that the jihadists were losing their main support. Undoubtedly, French troops and their allies improved their chances of success in the long run by implementing that strategy.

Last, rather than engage in classic nation building, France sought to bring security to Mali by containing the jihadist threat. The idea was to provide conditions that would allow Mali to rebuild by itself on a reliable foundation. Far from nation building, France simply wanted to restore the status quo. Between the coups of 1992 and 2012, Mali was close to a constitutional democracy in which presidents of the Malian Republic as well as mayors and representatives were democratically elected. That key element, combined with an economy that could be fostered by international support and the lack of grounds for insurgency (except in the Tuareg area), explains France's choice not to interfere in Malian internal affairs. The only exceptions were (1) the pressure that France put on Traoré, the interim president of Mali, to organize presidential elections in July 2013 and (2) its prevention of Malian troops from liberating the Tuareg areas, both of which were intended to sow the seeds for a long-term political solution.[26] Within that context, France could concentrate on its counterterrorism mission and avoid the loss of energy and political weight that would come from interfering in Malian internal political struggles.

Economy of Means, Initiative, and Concentration of Forces

Given President Hollande's concern about a surprise attack before the arrival of AFISMA, planners spent weeks using satellite imagery and intelligence gathered by French special operations forces to prepare 64 target folders for the purpose of destroying jihadist command and logistics centers.[27] Relying on its network of permanent overseas operations bases in Ivory Coast, Senegal, Chad, Niger, and Burkina-Faso, France used the speed and reactive ability of airpower, combined with its daring special forces, to stop the offensive. After an initial attack of two Malian Mi-24 helicopters on a gathering of jihadists inside Konna, two French Gazelle attack helicopters dashed towards that town and

destroyed numerous pickups on the afternoon of 11 January 2013. This showing of full French commitment surprised the jihadists and boosted the morale of Malian land forces.[28] In the evening, fighter aircraft from N'Djamena destroyed the Ansar Dine command center and some logistics centers in and around Konna. The psychological effect proved devastating on the poorly motivated mercenaries fighting for the jihadists.[29] The air campaign continued with strikes on numerous logistics and ammunition stores in Gao and Tombouctou conducted by four Rafales en route to N'Djamena. After arrival, they combined their firepower with six Mirage 2000Ds to conduct strikes all over the area under jihadist occupation and wherever support of the special forces was required.

On 14 January, the second column of jihadist pickups reached Diabaly on the western axis without being engaged due to the late arrival of the two Mirage 2000Ds from Chad.[30] A daring combination of special operations forces' attack helicopters and fighter aircraft engaged the pickups for two nights and succeeded in stopping the second axis of the attack, thus terminating the initial jihadist offensive.

On 17 January, a combined force of 400 Malian fighters and 40 French special forces supported by French Mirages retook Konna. Without a doubt, the entrance of Malian forces at the head of the column contributed to boosting the morale of the entire nation, as reported on the TV news. Within a week, that force retook all of the towns on the road towards Gao where a daring joint assault defeated the last jihadists who didn't flee. Leading his elite troops, the famous Malian colonel Hadj Ag Gamou, who had remained loyal to the central government, was first to liberate the town.

On 30 January, France decided to send 30 special forces commandos to secure MLNA-controlled Kidal, a key town where many former fighters of Ansar Dine had just created a new movement that they claimed was not a terrorist organization. A few days later, Chadian forces joined in capturing Kidal, thus respecting Tuareg sensitivity and liberating an important community with few resources. Unlike the plan for Afghanistan, the liberated Malians would not build a Western-like democracy but reinstall an acceptable political system.

Boots on the Ground

As expected in all good strategic planning, in case the initial containment did not succeed, quick-reaction forces in Chad and Ivory Cost were sent to Bamako on the afternoon of 11 January to prepare for a possible emergency evacuation of all French and European citizens. However, before the buildup of African forces that would counterattack, the mission changed from securing Bamako and containing the jihadist offensive to quickly liberating the Niger loop. Two elements prompted that evolution of the initial plan: the success of the air strikes and the results of the thrust of the French special forces and the remains of the Malian elite forces.

Consequently, on 16 January a column of Malian and French troops that gathered at Bamako began its advance without fighting towards Tombouctou. Despite the early success, President Hollande, aware that the French media would soon describe the situa-

tion as a quagmire, pushed the military to increase the tempo of operation and quickly retake one of the major northern towns. After time-compressed planning for D-day had been advanced on numerous occasions, an airborne operation retook Tombouctou on 26 January without any opposition from jihadists, who had fled earlier.

By early February, only a small mountainous area remained under control of the jihadists. However, it soon became their stronghold where, after all of those retreats, they found shelter. Despite little fighting, conventional land forces that had advanced in the face of logistics problems would shortly confront the enemy. During a visit to the Emirates, President Hollande said that he intended to "destroy [the jihadists] or hold them captive if possible."[31] The framework gave some freedom to the military, and after a heavy air strike on the night of 2 February, forces proceeded towards the Adrar des Ifoghas. This decisive battle would show that radical jihadists were determined to fight to the death. A combined force of the French brigade Serval, including 800 Chadians and Tuaregs from the Malian army (Gamou's men) supported by fighter aircraft and attack helicopters, would destroy the jihadists' stronghold within two weeks. This success relied on a simple joint tactic of using foot patrols to force the enemy to break cover and expose himself to the firepower of fighter jets or artillery.[32] Only three French soldiers died during heavy battles involving close combat. Firepower, concentration of effort, and massive power proved essential to defeating an extremely motivated enemy.

Despite a few desperate attacks before the official end of Operation Serval on 31 July 2014, no more major battles took place, and France adapted its strategy to improve security within the liberated areas. Land forces proved essential by carrying out stabilization missions to prevent jihadists from returning to these areas.[33] During that time, special forces and air assets monitored, tracked, and destroyed the last jihadists in Mali. As described previously, France utilized an efficient military strategy that led to success, but aware of the possibility of obtaining tactical success without strategic victory, it settled on achievable goals almost from the beginning of Operation Serval.

Achievable Goals and the Long-Term Solution for France

The French exit strategy for Operation Serval can be summed up as follows: a multinational solution, a political process, and the containment of terrorists at a manageable level. The first key element of the French exit strategy took shape before the operation with the passage of Resolution 2085 and the deployment of AFISMA to bring security to Mali, both of which were prompted by the jihadist offensive. France avoided a quagmire and a unilateral commitment by formulating an exit strategy that included a progressive withdrawal that would occur simultaneously with the transfer of responsibility for security and stabilization to a UN-sponsored peacekeeping force drawn from ECOWAS and supported by EUTM. Furthermore, France used economic leverage through a donors' conference on Mali organized by the African Union on 29 January that produced contributions totaling $453 million.[34]

Bringing legitimacy to an elected government in Bamako proved essential. Despite the US government's commitment to democracy, it hesitated to recognize an illegitimate government brought to power by a coup that translated into reluctance to refuel French fighter aircraft during its initial phase. This situation certainly pushed French political leaders to maintain pressure on Malian authorities to quickly organize elections, which were successfully held on 28 July and 11 August 2013, leading to the selection of Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta as president.[35] In Kidal the democratic process had been fully completed, bringing hope for a negotiated solution between Tuareg rebels and the Malian central government.

Undoubtedly, the resolution of this internal conflict is the key for solving the long-term terrorist issue in the Sahel. For months France succeeded in preventing the physical retaliation of the Malian central government towards Tuaregs by keeping Malian troops from massing in Tuareg areas of population. The Tuaregs were initially accepted by the southern population; as time passed, however, pressure arose from the street, and the Malian army was dispatched everywhere in the country. The dilemma lies in the tension between the Tuaregs' will for autonomy and the respect of Malian territorial integrity. France displayed a determined reluctance to become involved in Malian internal matters since the beginning of Operation Serval. Of course, actions lead to reactions, and France knows that the jihadists could return if the Tuareg claim for autonomy doesn't find a solution. As the former colonial power, France has much to lose in all of its former colonies by interfering in internal Malian affairs. Balancing the short term with its grand strategy, France prefers to rely on a Malian compromise that for once has a reasonable chance for success since neither side wishes the jihadists to return.

With the destruction of the terrorist stronghold in Adrar des Ifoghas, France knew that the beginning battle was won but not the war. Hence, a decision had to be made about what to do after the deployment of AFISMA- and EUTM-trained Malian troops. The solution would entail a light but enduring force with two missions: (1) act as a quick-reaction force to support AFISMA and the Malian forces and (2) hunt terrorist groups throughout the Sahel.

Because jihadist activity was not limited to Mali, France decided to call for a regional response and successfully gathered into a coalition all of the countries affected by that plague. One of the key advantages of that organization proved to be the capacity to share intelligence—a central factor in the fight against terrorists since it helps coalition forces hunt and defeat them. The main trap to avoid was losing the support of local populations by conducting nondiscriminate strikes in areas where civilian casualties would occur. Thanks to the geography of Mali and the lack of natural support from the local population, French fighter aircraft were able to conduct strikes on high-value targets in places where civilians would not sustain injuries. For instance, the death of Abou Zeid, one of the three most important jihadist leaders, in an air strike demonstrated the effectiveness of the high-value target process to suppress jihadist leaders.[36]

That strategy has proved reasonable and efficient, balancing effectiveness and sustainability. Fighter aircraft, elite infantry troops, and special forces relied on remotely

piloted aircraft to monitor terrorists' tracks and destroy them whenever possible. If France can maintain the support of its people for this humane and inexpensive operation, in all likelihood the terrorists will not return.

Conclusion

Operation Serval completely fulfilled President Hollande's reasonable objectives. The French never intended to create a new, fully democratic, and prosperous Mali; more pragmatically, they sought to stop the jihadist expansion in the Sahel. France did not fall into the common strategic traps in that kind of conflict—namely, imperialism or unilateralism, blurred objectives, weak leadership, interference in local internal political debates, erosion of internal support, and lack of understanding of the local culture and history.

The efficiency of the military operation stemmed from its main strategic principles and the fact that the political leadership allowed French forces to choose the best means and ways to succeed. Special forces and airpower were of central importance in stopping the jihadist offensive and in liberating occupied Mali. There was no chance that French strategists would fall into the "Billy Mitchell syndrome" by believing that war can be won only from the air.[37] Nevertheless, some individuals might argue that "precision [air] strikes in fact accounted for France's success, whereas the value of the ground campaign was marginal and needlessly risky."[38] As is usually the case, the truth certainly lies in a balanced analysis, and the worst lesson learned would call for building a generic modus operandi from a specific, contextually dependent operation.

France was playing with a number of contextual advantages that need to be considered during the designing of strategy for future operations. For years jihadists kidnapped French citizens in the Sahel, triggering strong support campaigns in the media, which can explain why French domestic opinion deemed the operation necessary and just. The same issue led France to gather intelligence on terrorists for years—a process that proved critical when Operation Serval needed to strike the jihadists' logistics capacity.

Moreover, France was not alone in its endeavor, enjoying support from numerous sources. All of the countries surrounding Mali were involved in preventing jihadists from using safe havens and from conducting cross-border operations. Considered the Malian leadership's last hope, France received carte blanche from that desperate government, allowing French leaders to quickly adapt their strategy to seize the initiative in a changing situation. Finally, the principal support came in the form of key intelligence on jihadists provided by the Malian population, who saw the French troops as their liberators after months of persecution from the jihadists.

Culture also played a significant role in the victory. France has a long history in Africa and knows how to fight in its "backyard" as well as against jihadists. For example, French colonial troops and the Foreign Legion, which fought insurgents in Africa and Afghanistan for decades, launched the final assault in the Adrar des Ifoghas in February 2013.[39]

Finally, geography proved advantageous for French forces. Mali's proximity to France and to numerous military bases of the French network in Africa facilitated air strikes and rapid power projection. Furthermore, chasing jihadists in the desert or striking them from the air in their isolated strongholds proved far easier than in an urban area.

Regardless of that initial success, the fight against jihadists is not over. France can sustain a small footprint operation in the Sahel with its air assets and special forces backed by the French army's quick-reaction forces. It receives support from the United States and all countries that share concerns about the threat from these terrorists. Choosing to become less involved would seriously jeopardize France's position in West Africa where it is still seen as a strong and reliable ally.

Notes

1. Col Géraud Laborie, "The Afghan Model More Than 10 Years Later: An Undiminished Relevance," *Air and Space Power Journal–Africa and Francophonie* 4, no. 3 (3rd Quarter 2013): 49–60. The second principle was similar to the one implemented during the initial phase of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

2. "Mali," United Nations Development Program Human Development Reports, accessed 24 June 2015, http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/MLI.

3. "Corruption Perceptions Index, 2013," Transparency International, accessed 24 June 2015, http://www.transparency.org/cpi2013/results. Mali ranked 127th on the 2013 corruption perception index.

4. John T. Bennett, "Pentagon: All U.S. Elite Commandos in Mali 'Accounted For,'" *U.S. News & World Report,* 23 March 2012, http://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/dotmil/2012/03/23/pentagon-all-us-elite-commandos-in-mali-accounted-for; and Adam Nossiter, Eric Schmitt, and Mark Mazetti, "French Strikes in Mali Supplant Caution of U.S.," *New York Times*, 13 January 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/14/world/africa/french-jets-strike-deep-inside-islamist-held-mali.html?pagewanted=2. "According to one senior officer, the Tuareg commanders of three of the four Malian units fighting in the north at the time defected to the insurrection 'at the crucial moment,' taking fighters, weapons and scarce equipment with them. He said they were joined by about 1,600 other defectors from within the Malian Army, crippling the government's hope of resisting the onslaught." Nossiter, Schmitt, and Mazetti, "French Strikes in Mali."

5. "Mali," accessed 31 January 2015, http://www.axl.cefan.ulaval.ca/afrique/mali.htm.

6. "Though the Tuareg are Muslim, women traditionally do not wear the veil. Despite the diversity of Malian society, inter-ethnic and inter-religious tolerance has been the norm. This is, in part, attributed to the presence of syncretic forms of Islam that blend Islam, including Sufi variations, with traditional practices and beliefs." Dona J. Stewart, *What Is Next for Mali? The Roots of Conflict and Challenges to Stability* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute and US Army War College Press, 2013), 27, http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB1185.pdf.

7. Jean-Christophe Notin, *La guerre de la France au Mali* (Paris: Éditions Tallandier, 2014), 61–62. About 400 to 1,000 Tuaregs who fought for Gadhafi returned to northern Mali to

resume the fight for independence as well as to contain the jihadists' influence. See also "Crisis in Mali," International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, accessed 31 January 2015, http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/index.php/crises/crisis-in-mali.

8. "Kidnapping for ransom and facilitation of drug trafficking have helped AQIM rake in an estimated $100 million." Freedom C Onuoha and Alex Thurston, *Franco-African Military Intervention in the Mali Crisis and Evolving Security Concerns* (Doha, Qatar: Aljazeera Center for Studies, 19 February 2013), 3, http://studies.aljazeera.net/ResourceGallery/media/Documents/2013/2/19/201321984326956734FrancoAfrican_Intervention_Mali.pdf.

9. Dr. Geoff D. Porter, "AQIM's Objectives in North Africa," *CTC Sentinel*, 1 February 2011, https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/aqim%e2%80%99s-objectives-in-north-africa.

10. Isabella Lasserre and Thierry Oberlé, *Notre guerre secrete au Mali* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2013), 179; and Gilles Holder, "'Mon pays S.A.': un certain retour sur la démocratie exemplaire du Mali et sa déraison islamique," Sciences Po, Center for International Studies, July 2013, http://www.sciencespo.fr/ceri/en/content/mon-pays-sa-un-certain-retour-sur-la-democratie-exemplaire-du-mali-et-sa-deraison-islamique.

11. Bilal Ag Acherif, "Déclaration d'indépendance de l'Azawad," RFI, 6 April 2012, http://scd.rfi.fr/sites/filesrfi/documentMNLA.pdf. *Azawad* is the Tuareg name given by MLNA to the area it declared independent and that comprises the Malian regions of Timbuktu, Kidal, and Gao, as well as a part of the Mopti region.

12. "Resolution 2085 (2012)," S/RES/2085 (2012), United Nations Security Council, 20 December 2012, http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2085%20%282012%29.

13. Notin, *Guerre de la France au Mali,* 158.

14. "Chapter VII: Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression," Charter of the United Nations, accessed 25 June 2015, http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter7.shtml.

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19. Notin, *Guerre de la France au Mali*, 222.

20. Shurkin, *France's War in Mali*, 9.

21. Ibid.

22. Jean-Pierre Chevènement et Gérard Larcher, *Rapport d'information n°513 (2012–2013) fait au nom de la commission des affaires étrangères, de la defense et des forces armées par le groupe de travail* "Sahel" (Paris: Sénat, 16 April 2013), 20, http://www.senat.fr/notice-rapport/2012/r12-513-notice.html.

23. Notin, *Guerre de la France au Mali*, 233.

24. "The US Department of Defence (DoD) has been supporting the French operation with five C-17 Globemaster II cargo planes (in addition to the same kind of plane dispatched by the Royal Canadian Air Force and by the UK's Royal Air Force). The Italian Air Force has committed two C-130J Hercules aircraft and one Boeing KC-767A tanker to Mali as well. Other heavy lifters are being provided by Germany, Denmark, Belgium, Spain, Netherlands and the UAE." Gary K. Busch, "The Logistics of the War in the Sahel," *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 2, no. 2 (12 June 2013): 3, http://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.bh/.

25. "63% and a few days later 75% of net surfers agree with the operation." Notin, *Guerre de la France au Mali*, 208.

26. President François Hollande, "Remarks to the Malian People," Bamako, 2 February 2013, http://www.elysee.fr/videos/discours-avec-le-president-de-la-republique-du-mali-depuis-la-place-de-l-039-independance-a-bamako-mali/?input-search=&input-type2=2&input-date1=15%2F01%2F2013&input-date2=01%2F03%2F2013&input-theme=#inner-content.

27. Notin, *Guerre de la France au Mali*, 176.

28. "The pilot (Lt Damien Boiteux) of one of those helicopters will die a few minutes after its landing at Sevare-Mopti, and the second helicopter will be forced to land in enemy territory due to damage." Ibid., 182.

29. Ibid., 199. According to Gen Didier Castres, the operation commander.

30. Ibid., 243.

31. Alain Barluet, "Mali: François Hollande en président de guerre," *Figaro*, 15 January 2013, http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2013/01/15/01003-20130115ARTFIG00657-mali-francois-hollande-en-president-de-guerre.php?pagination=17.

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effort-in-afghanistan-earning-respect-of-u-s-troops-1.96007. From October 2001 to December 2014, French forces took part in Operation Enduring Freedom and the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan.