Chapter 6. Sliding into Armed Conflict: Observing Mali's Crisis 2010-2012

"Only a few gunshots on a morning in March 2012 and a system that Westerners observed as a stable democracy yet the day before collapsed. This story has often been told: Out of a clear blue sky, Mali, a model democracy, becomes an easy victim of bandits, a revolting military, and cruel Islamists." (Wiedemann 2014: 69; translation R.B.)

In mid-January 2012, an armed conflict between the Malian central government on the one hand and a newly founded alliance of different ethnic groups based in northern Mali including the Tuareg as a driving force on the other hand broke out.[1] By the end of 2010, nobody expected such a quick development into large-scale violence, since the Republic of Mali, despite the fact that it ranks among the poorest countries and struggled with some internal political frictions in recent history, was indeed considered to pursue a democratic development with strengths and weaknesses but, overall, in a largely peaceful way (see e.g. Heyl and Leininger 2013: 73−83).

According to historical literature dealing with the formation of the Malian nation state (i.e. since its formal independence in 1960) and, before that, with the colonial era in Northwest Africa, there have always been voices from northern Mali, especially from the Tuareg community, expressing a desire to have a sovereign state on their own.[2] Nev-

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1   For a short glance at what happened during the armed conflict (i.e. from February 2012 on) see chapter 1/introduction.

2   As an ethnic group the Tuareg are divided into classes, confederations and tribes which are the building blocks of a hierarchical system. The present study does not show the totality of these categories and respective terms but refers to those that clearly appear in the text corpus, such as particular tribes like Imghad, Ifoghas or Chamanaman. By a majority, the Tuareg had traditionally led a life of nomadic pastoralists, at least until the second half of the 20th century. Therefore, irrespective of boundaries drawn by colonial powers (i.e. France and Italy), the distribution of the Tuareg includes five postcolonial states: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Libya, Mali and Niger. However, since the Sahelian droughts in the 1970s and 1980s, the Tuareg have more and more changed their way of life by practising agriculture or working as employees in villages and towns. From November 2010 to January 2012, i.e. the investigation period of this study, the Malian population was about 16 mil-

ertheless, even though there were secessionist ideas and ambitions within the Tuareg community, particularly in Mali and Niger, claiming an absolute national independence has never been an official topic on a political agenda since Malian independence (see Klute and Lecocq 2013: 123). However, in the beginning of November 2010, mainly Tuareg in northern Mali founded the "Mouvement *National* de l'Azawad" (MNA).[3] By exhibiting this kind of nationally apostrophised ambition, at least rhetorically, the MNA founders blatantly express a discontent concerning the stagnant political reform process and continuing discrimination of ethnic groups as well as growing insecurity in northern Mali (due to, in their view, drugs trafficking and the presence of foreign Islamist groups in the Sahelian zone). At the same time, as the founding statement makes clear,

> "The MNA declares that it adopts the way of political and legal action to invoke the entirety of laws and rights; it rejects violence in all its forms and condemns all forms of terrorism, be it by the state or by individuals; with all certainty, it wants to point towards the necessity to distinguish terrorism from legitimate resistance of the pacifist people of Azawad." (MNA 1.11.2010)[4]

the MNA presents itself as a non-violent movement engaging in political activities which aim at negotiating a form of autonomy for the population of Azawad *within* the Malian state (see MNA 2.11.2010; see also Klute and Lecocq 2013: 132).

A little more than a year later, media reports paint the following picture of the situation in Mali: "Tuareg rebels have launched attacks against three towns in the northeast part of Mali." (AFP/Maliweb 19.01.2012c). Firefights between the MNLA ("Mouvement National de Libération de l'Azawad") and the Malian military around the towns of Ménaka, Aguelhok and Tessalit caused casualties on both sides and among civilians.[5] Voices from the Malian military are presented as leaving no doubt about the necessary reaction to these attacks: "The Malian military will not allow anyone to touch on Mali's sovereignty. Our instructions are clear-cut: Protecting civilians and hunting the criminals with might

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lion people. The Tuareg part of the Malian population, at that time, was estimated at 500.000 to 1 million. In other words, within Mali, the Tuareg represent a rather small minority whereas members of the Mandé family of ethnic groups, especially the Bambara, constitute the majority (for an overview on Mali's ethnic diversity, including percentages of each ethnic group see Thurston and Lebovich 2013: 9–10; see also Shoup 2011: 295–300; Klute and Lecocq 2013: 123–124; for a map of the spatial distribution of ethnic groups in Mali see Appendix A.3.2).

3   Nota bene: Etymologically and geographically, "Azawad" (from Tamasheq, i.e. the Tuareg's Berber language) literally refers to a pasture region extending from vast territories in Mali to the *Aïr Mountains* in Niger and intervened by a system of wadis (i.e. temporarily dried-out riverbeds).

4   As for the case study on Mali, the text corpus is predominantly composed of French texts. All direct quotations from the text corpus that appear in the presentation of the case study results in the following sections were translated into English by Richard Bösch.

5   On January 20, media reports count 47 deaths (45 among the MNLA and two among the Malian military; see AFP/Maliweb 20.01.2012b). Only two days later, MNLA statements refer to 50 deaths on the Malian military's side and, moreover, 25 prisoners of war, 26 military vehicles conquered and 40 vehicles destroyed in the fights around Aguelhok as well as two dead and 13 wounded Malian soldiers and a number of deserted soldiers who joined the MNLA during the fights for Ménaka (see MNLA 22.01.2012b).

and main." (AFP/Maliweb 19.01.2012c). Other media accounts go one step further and characterise the incidences as "terror in Northern Mali" that has already induced the government to opt for a military offensive (see Le Matinal/Maliweb 24.01.2012b) in order to prevent an eventual independence of the northern regions, to preserve national unity and "to defend the Malian homeland" (L'Indicateur du Renouveau/Maliweb 24.01.2012a). In sum, coverage in mid-January 2012 leaves no doubt that the situation is perceived as being the beginning of a civil war.

Similar to the case of the Maidan protests in Ukraine, from a present-day perspective, the Malian crisis in 2010–2012 represents the (re-) beginning of a protracted social conflict, including confrontational frictions and fractionalisation between and within ethnic groups in northern Mali, a coup d'état and, ultimately, an armed conflict. As outlined in the case study below, the process of conflict escalation goes hand in hand with a deepening of already existing societal cleavages between major parts of the Malian population. In this context, MINUSMA's mission, which began by taking over responsibility from the ECOWAS-led AFISMA in 2013, does not only include to ensure security and to protect civilians but also to "support national political dialogue and reconciliation".[6] However, MINUSMA's impact is evaluated as rather ambivalent. Down to the present day, apart from the casualties among the ranks of the mission personnel, there is a high number of wounded and deaths among civilians, not to mention the number of internally displaced persons and refugees the ongoing conflict situation has brought about.[7]

In recent Malian history before 2011, there were indeed some critical periods where the territorial and political integrity of the country was challenged due to tensions between Tuareg groups in the north and other groups.[8] Yet, never before the conflict drifted into a comparable situation (i.e. including a coup d'état, a de facto division of the country and an international military intervention). Against this background, however, the

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[6]   By May 2021, MINUSMA's personnel involves 18.343 persons, mainly including military personnel (12.485) but also police forces, experts, UN volunteers and other civilian staff members (see UN 2021).

[7]   Since the beginning of MINUSMA in 2013, the mission personnel records 253 deaths (see UN 2021). Regarding civilians, it must be stated that the death toll stays continuously high: From January to May 2021 alone, a total of 307 attacks against civilians had been reported, in which 158 civilians were killed, 85 were injured and 125 were abducted (see UN Security Council 2021). In 2012, more than 400.000 Malians fled from the armed conflict in Northern Mali – about half of them stayed within the Malian borders, the other half moved to neighbouring countries. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in the beginning of 2021, 358.212 Malians are internally displaced, and about 5.9 millions of Malians are dependent on humanitarian assistance due to the ongoing armed conflict. And, as a recent challenge since 2020 on top, the Covid-19 pandemic acts as a catalyst of existing conflicts (see UNOCHA 2021; Dickow 2021). In August 2020, after public demonstrations, a military junta overthrew the president and its government. In May 2021 again, the military removed the transitional government. The situation remains unclear (see DW 2021). Against this background, there is no need to say that the 2015 peace agreement was implemented in a more than dissatisfying way (see UCDP 2020c).

[8]   This refers to the 2006–2009 rebellion and, before that, to the repeatedly emerging armed conflicts from 1990–1995, although already in 1992, the National Pact, which aimed at adequately integrating the Tuareg into the Malian institutions and society, was signed (see UCDP 2020c).

present case study on the "Malian crisis in 2010–2012" obviously concentrates on observing a process of conflict development within a period of investigation of a little more than a year. This may also lead to a better understanding of subsequent (i.e. post-January 2012) developments in Malian conflict history.

In brief, within a relatively short period of time (November 2010 to January 2012), the Malian political landscape changed in a drastic way. A latent conflict about the representation of the Tuareg and other ethnic groups in northern Mali in the political and economic system and the Malian society as a whole that, for a long time, has been observed as more or less treated and limited within political institutions turned into a situation that is either qualified as "rebellion", "armed struggle" or "armed conflict" (see UCDP 2020c). How exactly could the process of conflict escalation gather momentum? And how did, step by step, the violence option appear in the discourse? Based on the analysis of the text corpus, the following sections present the pooled results of the case study on the Malian crisis and thus contribute to answer the questions raised.

6.1   The Malian Crisis 2010–2012: Getting Hold of an Approaching Conflict

> "United we stand. One people, one goal, one faith."
> (*National Anthem, Republic of Mali*)

In line with this study's work plan and the case study on the Maidan protests, "Mali's crisis 2010–2012", too, is understood as a conflict system in its own right. To reconstruct the process of conflict escalation within the given time frame, Mali's crisis was observed as an evolving discursive space. And indeed, based on a close look at communication, the efforts of a fine-grained case study research permitted to identify a few marks defining the conflict's development, here understood as a conflict cascade. However, there is a multitude of accounts on how observers perceive the Malian crisis at any given moment within the period of investigation. The conflict system thus turned out to be a dynamic one where the attribution of issues, parties and actions is in motion. Based on the starting point that the "Malian crisis 2010–2012", too, represents a potentially endless field of relational references (see chapter 4.3), the present case study is seen as an approximation procedure which, of course, relies on an empirical basis consisting of a selected text data corpus.

In this case study, the analysed corpus of texts involves 689 documents that were collected according to the methodological approach.[9] First, there are official government documents. These mainly include speeches, statements, announcements, and press releases of the president's office that were released by the official web portal of the presidency of *Amadou Toumani Touré* (in short: "ATT"), who was president from 2002 to 2012.[10]

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9   For an explanation of the empirical working levels of this study see chapter 4.3.; for details concerning sources of the text corpus see Appendix A and figure below.

10   The official communication of the president's office is published in French, being the only official language in Mali. Due to the observation that Malian institutions are perceived as president-centred (based on the model of France, the former colonial power) and for pragmatic reasons,

Second, in order to capture the political contradiction to the central government that had been articulated by self-proclaimed representatives of the population in Northern Mali, this analysis drew on communication (i.e. statements, press releases etc.) of the newly founded *Mouvement National de l'Azawad* (MNA).[11] Third, according to the procedure introduced earlier, on working level II, Mali-based mass media, i.e. Malian newspaper coverage of the crisis, was also an essential part of the analysis. For this purpose, the compilation of the text corpus, again, drew on a pragmatic auxiliary means: In the Malian media environment, which can be considered as diverse, dynamic and free, web portals, or, more precisely, news portals play an important role as an easily accessible and aggregated source of information.[12] Hence, for various Malian daily or weekly newspapers and magazines being published in print (often in rather small numbers and with a circulation concentrated on urban areas), online news portals serve as an important additional publication platform.[13] For this case study's text corpus, a number of contributions from different Malian newspapers collected by "Maliweb" were taken into consideration (see figure below). Finally, the text corpus includes statements from different international non-governmental organisations that reported on the Malian crisis on a more or less regular basis, particularly from *Amnesty International* (AI), *Friedrich Ebert Foundation* (FES), *Human Rights Watch* (HRW) and *International Crisis Group* (ICG) and the *West Africa Network for Peacebuilding* (WANEP).

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the selection of official government documents was concentrated on documents published by the president's office in the narrower sense (i.e. without considering publications of other government agencies). Even though the mandate of ATT ended in 2012, the official website of his presidency is still available online, albeit with temporary interruptions (see website at www.maliatt2002-2012.net; Appendix A.1.2.).

11   At that time, the Tuareg were observed as the most apparent opposition group within the Malian political system (due to its past as backers of earlier rebellions). Even though the MNA claimed to represent the totality of the population in the Northern parts (i.e. *all* ethnically defined groups), the organisation was perceived as a *Tuareg* political organisation (see e.g. UCDP 2018c). The MNA (and, from October 2011 on, the MNLA) issued statements, press releases, speeches etc. via its own website, which is still available with occasional interruptions, even though the website's address has been changed a few times (see website at www.mnlamov.net). As an additional source to grasp voices from the opposition in the North, the text corpus also includes publications from "Toumast Press – Agence Touareg pour l'Info", a news agency acting as a mouthpiece for the MNA/MNLA (https://toumastpress.wordpress.com, accessed November 23, 2022).

12   During the period of investigation (2010–2012), according to *Freedom House*, for example, the freedom of the press in Mali was rated as "free", i.e. that the right to free speech is unconditionally protected. Moreover, Malian print media are ranked among the freest in Africa. At the end of 2011, there were some 300 FM radio stations and more than 50 privately run newspapers and magazines (see Freedom House 2011).

13   There are a few news portals operating similarly, i.e. selecting and (re-) publishing articles from daily newspapers and weekly magazines in different thematic sections or publishing reports and commentaries from their own journalist staff. According to this author's inquiries based on key word search requests on "crise malienne actualités" (Malian crisis news) via *google* and *duckduckgo*, "Maliweb", "Maliactu" and "Malijet", at that time (i.e. 2015/2016), were among the most viewed (see these news portals at www.maliweb.net, www.maliactu.net, and https://malijet.com, accessed November 23, 2022).

Table 19: Overview of the Text Data Corpus (Mali)

Source Type	Document Type	Number of Documents	Sample Period
Malian Government (presidency of ATT)[14]	"Actualités" and "Communiqués" of the presidency; speeches, messages of the president	221 documents (each between 400 and 1.500 words)	
Opposition in Northern Mali (MNA/MNLA)[15]	"Communiqués", press releases and other statements	107 documents (each between (150 and 1.500 words)	
Malian mass media, i.e. daily newspapers and selected international news coverage and news agency communication published by "Maliweb"[16]	daily contributions, i.e. articles, posts, etc.	332 documents (each between 400 and 1.500 words)	November 2010 – January 2012
International Non-Governmental Organisations (AI, FES, HRW, ICG, WANEP)[17]	articles, alerts, briefings, reports, chronicles, commentaries	29 documents (each between 50 words and 30 pages)	

(Own table)

On the one hand, all documents collected from one of these four groups of sources express very own observations that are specific products of respective modes of observation behind. On the other hand, although each source represents a separate perspective, they all have a stake in the (re-) production of the "Malian crisis" as a discursive field or, in other words, they all participate in the joint construction of the conflict systems plot.

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14   Malian government documents were gathered in January 2016. The respective government website had been available at http://www.maliatt2002-2012.net until 2017.

15   Documents from the political opposition in Northern Mali were gathered in January 2016. The websites are still available at http://www.mnlamov.net and at https://toumastpress.wordpress.com, accessed November 23, 2022, even though the respective archives cannot be fully accessed.

16   Malian and international media coverage was gathered in January 2016. The websites and respective archives are still available at https://www.maliweb.net, accessed November 23, 2022. Malian newspapers : Le 22 Septembre, L'Indicateur du Renouveau, Le Républicain, Lafia Révélateur, Le Zénith Balé, L'Indépendent, Le Combat, Le Potentiel, Le Matin, L'Aube, 26 Mars, Mali Demain, Nouvelle Libération, Le National, Le Matinal, Le Challenger, L'Essor, Le Pouce, Le Prétoire, Le Malien, Le Katois, Le Progrès, Le Canard Déchaîné, Waati, Le Coq, Le Scorpion, Mali Demain, Maliba Info, Journal du Mali, Ciwara Info, L'Inter de Bamako, Le Guido, L'Express; international media : Le Monde, Libération, The New York Times, Ouest-France, Jeune Afrique, Slate, El Watan, El Moudjahid, TF1 News, Radio France International (RFI) and international news agencies : Agence de Presse Africaine (APA), Agence France-Presse (AFP), Reuters, The Canadian Press, Xinhua.

17   Reports of international NGOs were gathered in January 2016. The websites are partly still available at https://mali.fes.de, at https://www.hrw.org/africa/mali, at https://www.crisisgroup.org, and at https://wanep.org/wanep, accessed November 23, 2022. See also Appendix A.1.2.

To provide assistance in order to navigate in the course of conflict and its presentation here[18], one of the main results of the sequential analysis of text data is highlighted at the very beginning: Based on a month-by-month analysis, there are a few observation spots that are strikingly often referred to as turning point events across the whole text corpus.[19] Sequencing these turning point dates reveals phases of conflict development that serve as guidance for the following sections:

Table 20: Phases of conflict development in Mali

Phase I	November 1, 2010	foundation of the MNA
Phase II	(to) August 26, 2011	death by accident of former Tuareg rebel leader Ibrahim Ag Bahanga
Phase III	(to) October 16, 2011	foundation of the MNLA
	(to) January 17, 2012	first fightings in northern Mali (Ménaka)

(Own table)

The following sections expose how the Malian crisis comes into being, or, theoretically speaking, how this conflict system absorbs more and more attention and resources from its communicative environment. In order to give an understanding of this development, the sequential mapping of the text corpus was translated into an iteratively generated analytical narrative. Its main threads are outlined as three paths of reading the conflict with different but overlapping foci, all of which based on the analysis of the text corpus. As it has been introduced in the case study on the Maidan protests earlier (see chapter 5.1), first, in the factual dimension, the key themes are portrayed (6.2). In this context, this section offers more than a simple register of discursive topics, it illustrates how themes show up, follow each other and link together chronologically. In a second step, the analytical focus lies on the temporality of the Malian crisis (6.3). Not to be confused with a chronology of events, the temporal dimension elaborates on how certain aspects of the past are actualised at a given moment of the conflict's present and, accordingly, how plans and ideas about the future are condensed in the here and now of

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18   Even though not being part of the text corpus, this study offers two maps intended to support its readers' navigation through the geographical vocabulary which appears in the text sources. One map shows the international and administrative boundaries of the Malian nation state, the other one shows a "simplified spatial distribution" of ethnic groups in Mali (see Appendix 2.1).

19   According to the work plan introduced in chapter 4, the sequential analysis was implemented via summarising monthly folders. Within the framework of MaxQDA, the texts in these folders were coded both in chronological order and in due consideration of their origin/source group. After the first step of the coding procedure (i.e. open coding of topics and subtopics) had been completed, the code system comprised 3.476 codings (i.e. passages in the text corpus that were attributed one or more codes; see Appendix A.2.3 for a MAXQDA extract displaying the management of documents in monthly folders/example: September 2011; see Appendix A.2.4 for a screenshot of codings referring to the factual dimension of communication.

the conflict. The temporal limits of pre- and post-conflict are thus variable, depending on those past events or future ideas being referred to as relevant to the conflict in the experienced present. In case study section three, the focus lies on the social dimension (6.4). In this context, the dynamics of emerging conflict identities and their relationship are illustrated. This chapter thus deals with the perceptions of each other and corresponding expectations in the course of conflict. In the synopsis section (6.5), the three paths of reading the conflict are combined, changing and/or dominant modes of observation behind are highlighted and critical moments of conflict development (i.e. escalating moves) are represented in detail.

6.2 "Azawad" – Both a Dream and a Nightmare is Coming True

Phase I (Nov 2010 – Aug 2011)

November 2010

The outset of the investigation period starts with a certain moment of surprise.[20] As per declaration published on November 1, 2010, the MNA presents its own act of foundation as an organisation unexpectedly arriving on the scene and claiming to represent northern Mali's population:

> "Today, we are declaring the birth of the National Movement of Azawad (MNA) which is a political organisation of Azawad that defends and approves a peaceful policy in order to achieve legitimate goals." (MNA 1.11.2010)

This declaration[21] does not only express a massive discontent in reference to 50 years of "anti-Azawad politics", denied development and discrimination of the population in Northern Mali, which is all attributed to successive Malian central governments over the years. It also directly addresses an international audience by bringing up the right to self-determination of indigenous people within the context of human rights and international law and by calling the international community for support. Also, it questions

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20   Please note: Chapter 6.2 is organised according to the following ordering principle. To enable readers to track the chronology in the presentation of the factual dimension of communication, the respective month is indicated at the beginning. Within each month-based subsection, the focal thematic points, as they have been derived from the analysis of the text corpus (via theme codes), are presented along source groups. Cross-references between topics and thematic codes from different source groups, which give an insight into the common fabric of discursive threads, are thereby made explicit.

21   The founding declaration of the MNA can be understood as the outcome of the "Congrès International de la Jeunesse du Sahara" (i.e. the International Congress of the Saharian Youth), which took place from October 31 to November 1 in Timbuktu and addressed the younger generation of different ethnic groups in Northern Mali and beyond (see MNA 2.11.2010; 11.11.2010a). The organisers of this congress, qualified as "constitutive" for the foundation of the MNA, *Moussa Ag Acharatoumane* and *Aboubacrine Ag Fadil*, were arrested later on but then, after forceful public protests supported by large parts of the population in the North, released a few weeks later (see Le Républicain/ Maliweb 16.11.2010a).

the lawfulness of contracts between companies from all over the world and the Malian government, especially concerning the extraction of natural resources in Northern Mali, since those contracts were concluded "[...] without prior consent of indigenous populations affected, as international law stipulates."

At the same time, however, this first document in the text corpus makes clear that the MNA, at the very moment of its formal appearance, choses "[...] the way of political and legal action to invoke the entirety of laws and rights" (MNA 1.11.2010) and, therefore, rejects violence in all its forms and tries to improve the situation of ethnic groups in northern Mali by politically fighting *within* and not against the Malian state. This becomes even more obvious when, in reaction to the arbitrary detention of two young Tuareg activists who organised the "International Congress of the Saharan Youth", MNA statements claim the adherence to universal human values, articled in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and the African Charter of Human Rights and People's Rights of 1981 (see MNA 7.11.2010).

Government statements at the beginning of the investigation period, in contrast, without mentioning the MNA at all, mainly deal with the topic of development. In this context, the government issues information on successful projects and achievements made in different fields of infrastructural development, such as consolidating relations to important international financial institutions[22] or launching EU-supported road construction projects intended to link the region of Timbuktu to the national transportation network.[23] According to government sources, these measures "[...] promise to develop all the potential of the Niger Delta and to boost competitiveness and societal integration of the regions affected." (GovMali 24.11.2010) Overall, the government's activities are outlined as part of long-term development efforts which had already been determined within an integrated development programme, the "Programme Spécial pour la Paix, la Sécurité et le Développement du Nord Mali (PSPSDN)".[24] Also, as the sources show, the government highlights that PSPSDN is in line with what was considered indispensable and collectively agreed, for the last time, within the context of the last peace agreement, the Algiers Accord of 2006.[25]

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22   In this context, meetings, and agreements as to the "Banque Internationale pour le Commerce et l'Industrie au Mali" (BICIM; regional branch of BNP Paribas Group), the "Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine" (UEMOA; economic and monetary union of French-speaking West African countries) and the "Banque Centrale des Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest" (BCEAO; central bank for the common "CFA-Franc" currency) (see GovMali 6.11.2010; 8.11.2010).

23   The road construction project "Niono-Goma Coura-Timbuktu" includes 484 kilometres of bituminised roads with a financial volume of 80 billions CFA-franc ($160 millions; exchange rate from November 2010) realised by the European Development Fund (EDF). The first construction phase (Goma-Coura-Léré, 165 kilometres) was, at the time, planed for a period of 25 months.

24   The "Special Programme for Peace, Security and Development in Northern Mali" (PSPSDN) is a government programme which includes measures of 32 billions CFA-franc (€48.6 million), co-funded by the Malian state and the EU. It started in mid-2010 and was conceived as a two-year programme.

25   The "Accords d'Alger pour la restauration de la Paix, de la Sécurité et du Développement dans la Région de Kidal" (for short in English: Algiers Accord) were concluded between the Malian government and the "May 23 2006 Democratic Alliance for Change", a Mali-based Tuareg rebel group, mainly composed of ex-combatants of the Tuareg insurgency from 1990 to 1992, including the

Some media reports immediately describe the founding of the MNA within well-known patterns of coverage by indicating an imminent threat to Mali's integrity (see also chapter 6.4 on the social dimension):

"Birth of the MNA in Timbuktu: A new rebellion or sabre rattling?" (Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb 4.11.2010a)

"The National Movement of Azawad: Conspiracy against the Republic" (L'Aube/Maliweb 11.11.2010b)

In essence, however, the analysed media reports take up the discursive thread of development. In this context, PSPSDN is not only presented as a development programme with different parts but as a kind of universal remedy to cure fragile statehood, especially in Northern Mali. Thus, the stated expectations on PSPSDN are

"[…] ensuring presence and the ability to deploy public administration on all levels. […] PSPSDN activities have to conduce to an intelligent organisation of space by state administration." (Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb 1.11.2010a)

Even though PSPSDN, for the most part, is about basic infrastructure and developmental measures, coverage is dominated by references to PSPSDN as a matter of security. In this context, on the one hand, articles deal with incidences such as transnational drug trafficking and small arms trade, which had been observed in the Sahelian zone for a long time. On the other hand, they highlight a recently growing threat by AQMI terrorism penetrating from outside Mali. However, both incidences are attributed to the topic of "criminal phenomena" in Northern Mali, including, for example, an increasing number of kidnappings, which have a devastating impact on Malian tourism.[26] At the same time, taking up the fragile statehood remarks mentioned earlier, media reports also show a belief that challenges in northern Mali can be effectively handled with military means, for example by a closer military cooperation with allied countries in West Africa (here especially with neighbouring Mauretania):

"Mauritanian troops arrived 80 kilometres north of Timbuktu [and joined] hundreds of Malian armed soldiers in military vehicles: Their defined goal is to fight for the

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later spin-off "Bahanga faction" (GovMali 24.11.2010; see also chapter 6.3 on temporal references). In short, the Algiers Accord includes clauses on a better participation of Northern populations in decision-making processes, an economic, social and cultural development of Northern Mali and on decentralised responsibilities for immediate security concerns (see also Thurston and Lebovich 2013: 43–49).

26   As Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb (11.11.2010a) states, for example, tourism in the town of Mopti (Dogon region) had usually been between 200 and 400 visitors per week. After the region was classified as a "zone red" by the French ministry of foreign affairs due to a growing number of kidnappings and attacks against French companies in Mali, the number of visitors declined to 65 visitors per week. In the years before, the Northern regions hosted several hundreds of thousands of visitors every year (see also AFP/Maliweb 15.11.2010b).

security of the populations by all means and to prevent terrorists from making advances and preparing attacks." (Le Républicain/Maliweb 8.11.2010b)

Furthermore, several reports consolidate the predominance of a media view on the situation which is in great part characterised by military considerations. In this view, president ATT's past career in the military is adduced as a certain proof of toughness in dealing with serious crises. On this, INGO reports, too, mention the president's military and diplomatic activities to cope with terrorism by forming international alliances (see e.g. ICG 1.12.2010).

December 2010

In December, the approaching turn of the year gives the occasion for a number of government speeches and announcements.[27] Most of them show references to 2010 as the year of the 50th anniversary of an independent Malian state and place emphasis on three main points. First, the statements appeal to appreciate the history of independent Mali as a success story, which led to a multi-ethnic and multireligious democratic and peaceful society:

> "For 50 years, our independent nation has been existing in peace, conviviality, and social cohesion." (ATT/GovMali 25.12.2010b)

> "We need to be proud of having built a unified and dignified nation, which is resolutely engaged in peace, democracy, and the rule of law, a nation respected and admired in Africa and the world." (GovMali 25.12.2010f)

In addition, government statements suggest that Malian authorities, despite all political, economic, and social challenges not yet tackled, have done and still do a lot to preserve the unique multicultural heritage and the prosperous Malian way of living together in diversity. Based on these documents, this could be seen, for example, in the importance attached to the encouraging of Mali's civil society (see GovMali 28.12.2010d), in measures taken to promote decentralised administrative structures in the fields of culture and education (see GovMali 20.12.2010; 25.12.2010k; 30.12.2010) or in view of a continuously growing communication network and a vibrant pluralism in Mali's media landscape (see GovMali 28.12.2010a; 31.12.2010b). Second, these backward- and forward-looking statements use religious language and exhibit references that are linked to the president personally:

> "Holy God, we pray for our president. Please keep him healthy and safe. May your divine protection be with him inside and outside the country. Give him all he needs to accept and fully accomplish the mission you trusted him with. […] Whatever the development of a nation may be, the fear of God, the reverence for life, the fear of shedding blood of your neighbour, compassion and love of your neighbour are the

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27   Every year, the office of the president publishes Christmas and New Year's greetings of the heads of public institutions, political parties, media companies, civil society organisations, religious communities etc. to the address of the president as well as the president's greetings in response.

> major values which are at the basis of a nation's stability and happiness. [Therefore] the development of the heart is at the heart of development." (Head of Protestant Churches/GovMali 25.12.2010b)

Third, as the analysed government documents also indicate, addressing development is intimately linked to the topics of security and peace. In this connection, development, security, and peace are presented as interconnected or even interdependent dimensions. Thereby, again, PSPSDN is portrayed as the key government measure that brings down challenges in these three dimensions to a common denominator:

> "The only and true battle that deserves to be waged is the one of development in an environment of peace and regained cohesion." (Chief of General Staff/GovMali 25.12.2010a)

> "[PSPSDN] includes an emergency component intended to link actual security risks to the resumption of local development processes in the Northern regions of Mali. [...] It will be complementary to ongoing and planned activities in the field of security, thus supporting governance and economic and social development." (ATT/GovMali 26.12.2010)

Finally, government documents in the early part of this phase leave no doubt on whom is to be considered the most important backer of peace, security, and development in Mali, especially in the North: the military. Therefore, the military is not only presented as the institution that invested the most resources "to preserve national unity and social cohesion" in the past but also as a guarantor being able to implement PSPSDN measures in the future (see GovMali 25.12.2010a; 26.12.2010).

With regards to the MNA, statements in this period mainly deal with the ongoing detention of the two young MNA leaders, a measure that entailed public protest in Timbuktu and other places in the North and, immediately afterwards, the dispersal of the protests by the police by force. Based on that, MNA statements again bring up the dimension of universal values by claiming the freedom of assembly, the right to a fair trial, and, more general, the right to self-determination as a people on its own (see MNA 15.12.2010; 23.12.2010). Moreover, in this segment of the text corpus, the quest for international support gets underpinned by referring to a long history and rich culture that is presented to be more relevant and real than modern states and their borders (here with reference to the historical relationship between Moroccan tribes and the Tuareg):

> "Time, obliviousness, and the arbitrary drawing of borders are not powerful enough to sweep aside the reality and relevance of kinship, cultural identity and spiritual values, which are shared among our people and the people of Morocco." (MNA 20.12.2010)

At the turn of the year, the analysed media reports do not react to MNA statements but are strongly influenced by the whistle-blowing website Wikileaks which published cables of US diplomats on Mali's performance in fighting terrorism. According to the media reception of these documents, the Malian government is not only presented as inefficient

in its fight against terrorism but also substantially incapable as to its military.[28] In the same way, French cables suggest that Mali falls down on the job of establishing security in the North. Following this, on the one hand, a few reports address this image of Mali's situation based on leaked information as being unjust and illegitimately promoted by western powers (especially the US and France), not least because it undermines any effort of economic development, as the example of tourism makes clear (see L'Aube/Maliweb 6.12.2010; Le Potentiel/Maliweb 21.12.2010a). At the same time, however, western criticism is accepted, too. According to respective comments, ATT is accused of not doing enough to achieve effective regional cooperation between states (i.e. at the level of West Africa) to fight terrorism in the Sahelian zone.[29] Likewise, ATT's often repeated strategy of development is presented as mantra-like and downplaying:

> "'Only development can block the way for criminals making trouble in the Sahel.' President ATT [does not] miss an opportunity *to again spread his truth* about the security situation in the Sahelian zone. [...] Mali was not only a victim of what's going on in the Sahel but also a hostage. [...]" (La République/Maliweb 17.12.2010; italics added)

Taken together, this phase of media coverage is characterised by collectively shared observations of a deteriorating security and threat situation in Northern Mali which is fuelled by three sources, whose potential interconnections remain unclear. This becomes particularly clear by looking at the reactions to an incidence on December 10 by which four soldiers had been killed and others seriously injured due to the explosion of a military vehicle hitting a mine. Thus, shortly after the incidence, the analysed media reports deal with expert opinions and a newly published study[30] according to which the number of AQMI Islamists can be estimated at as many as 300 individuals (born in Mali, Algeria and Mauretania) who are about to establish a logistical command and training camps in the region (see L'Expression/Maliweb 26.12.2010a). This, together with the continuing problem of kidnappings (see Le Potentiel/Maliweb 21.12.2010a) and the ongoing fight against a transnational network of narcotrafficking[31] become the most repeated issues to

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28   In this context, media reports refer to deficient weapons training and experience of Malian soldiers, and thus, to the inadequate outcome of US military support (see e.g. Le Matin/Maliweb 9.12.2010; Le Matinal/Maliweb 24.12.2010a). As a number of reports point out, however, ATT responds to these statements as follows: "Those who think that we have an army of amateurs only have to visit us. We wait for them and they will see." (La République/Maliweb 17.12.2010)

29   In the respective report, the international coalition against terrorism which had been established in the aftermath of 9/11 and the subsequent war in Afghanistan is presented as a positive example of international cooperation worthy of imitation (see Le Matin/Maliweb 9.12.2010).

30   Here, a former Malian secretary of defence, *Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga*, and at the time president of a Malian-based regional think tank "Observatoire Sahélo-Saharien de Géopolitique et de Stratégie (OSGS)", which published the respective study, is cited in detail.

31   In this context, media reports directly tie narcotrafficking in the Sahelian zone to the "Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro" or, according to its Spanish abbreviation, "Polisario", a movement seeking an independent state in Western Sahara, also claimed and de facto occupied by Morocco. According to L'Indicateur du Renouveau (Maliweb 24.12.2010b), for example, "the most important network of drug dealers [...] is composed of Polisario members by

illustrate an altogether deteriorating security situation. However, while these accounts remain vague on how these sources of insecurity might be linked to one another, there are, for the first time, statements suggesting a connection between AQMI and the Tuareg:

> "Kidal region [one of the three Northern regions], subverted by Tuareg irredentism, is also known as criminogenic and accidentogenic. [...] Today, it can be assumed that young Tuareg are trained by AQMI." (L'Indicateur du Renouveau/Maliweb 24.12.2010b; information in square brackets added)

Even though this assessment is countered by other discursive hints to a long history of Tuareg loyalty to the Malian state, especially among the ranks of the military[32], there is an increasing number of references showing unambiguous expectations about how to improve security, namely by military means. Against the background of these slogans, ATT's calm and development-oriented statements so far now gather a sharp tone, too:

> "The armed forces have to watch over the population and their property without scruples. [They] have to be on the alert permanently in order to hunt this new category of bandits who want to break the peace process in the northern regions." (Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 31.12.2010).

> "We want peace. I am a military officer and I know what war is about. I don't like to wage war but when I am forced to do so I will." (ATT as cited in La République/ Maliweb 17.12.2010)

INGO reports, too, focus on an "increasing Islamist activity" in the Sahelian zone, particularly concerning the Mali-Mauretania border. In this context, the case of seven French nationals, kidnapped in Niger in September by AQMI and most probably held in Mali, is mentioned. Thereby, the strategy of the French government is accentuated: Not accepting any of the terrorists' claims, such as the release of the hostages in reverse to a French withdrawal from Afghanistan (see ICG 1.12.2010). By and large, the analysed INGO statements share the view that "terrorist groups continue to organise themselves in the North of the country". On this, the FES Media Barometer, for example, holds that terrorist and criminal groups are using the internet to an unprecedented extent. In this context, it is critically stated that there is still no appropriate legislation regulating this kind of new media in sight (see FES 2010: 21).

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more than 90 percent". However, in this respect, security forces appear in a good light, as they successfully "smashed" Polisario by "getting hold of several drug barons".

32   As Le Temps d'Algérie and Le Potentiel (Maliweb 27.12.2010, 28.12.2010a) note, Tuareg Malian ex-rebels, like colonel *El Hadj Ag Gamou*, had not only been integrated into the Malian military (since the National Pact was signed in 1992) but also "dedicated themselves, body and soul, for their country whom they serve loyally". Furthermore, this becomes obvious, according to these sources, by the fact that Tuareg Malian soldiers are just as involved in the armed conflicts with Salafist groups fighting against secular states in the Sahelian zone since the 1990s.

January 2011

In reaction to the increasing international reception of Mali having a pressing problem of terrorism, government statements again try to patch Mali's image in the world (see the government's positive announcements referring to the 50th anniversary of an independent Malian state earlier in December 2010). In this regard, the president's address to the diplomatic corps deals with Mali having always been a reliable partner in international affairs. However, as ATT further explains, since the precarious security situation within the region cannot be attributed to a single national policy, Mali aims at cooperating more closely to counter global threats and insecurity in the Sahelian Zone.[33]

In the same context, for the first time in the investigation period, "smugglers of illegal migrants heading to Europe" are referred to as a security risk (see GovMali 3.01.2011). Despite political crises and conflicts in West Africa, Mali, however, is said to contribute its share to improve the difficult situation since it upholds democracy, the rule of law and is in great demand as an experienced mediator. Moreover, Malian politics of decentralisation are portrayed as an African role model (see GovMali 10.01.2011). Still, Malian authorities emphasise the crucial role of development, particularly on a local level, for example concerning the development of cultural centres in rural areas.[34] In this regard, the military is attributed, already since the independence, an important role as an agent of development, for example relating to agricultural development or the construction and protection of transport infrastructure. Also, the Malian experience in the long history of peacekeeping in West Africa and beyond is mentioned.[35] However, according to ATT, in the light of unprecedented security challenges, new tasks need to be added to the traditional functions of the military:

> "In the course of the last half century, our armed forces and security forces have courageously and resolutely accomplished their mission of defending the integrity of the national territory. [...] Once again, I insist on the rationale that fighting terrorism is not only about security. It is also about calling on the engagement and the implication of elected representatives, municipalities and populations on the spot." (GovMali 19.01.2011b)

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[33]   In this context, the already existing security cooperation between Niger and Mali is mentioned as a positive example (see GovMali 12.01.2011). Also, Mali is presented as being one of the moving forces of integration and cooperation within the UEMOA (see GovMali 22.01.2011).

[34]   In this context, ATT participates at the opening of one of the 13 "Centre de Lecture et d'Animation Culturel" (CLAC) established throughout the country (more precisely in Kati, Ségou, Yélimané, Yanfolila, Djenné, Banamba, Kidal, Koro, Ménaka, Niéna, Yorosso et Bafoulabé). He thereby points out the high potential of the CLACs network which is massively supported by the "Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie" not only for the cultural but also for the social and economic development of the country (see GovMali 27.01.2011).

[35]   According to these government accounts, already in the early days of independence, the Malian military was engaged in international peacekeeping operations. Moreover, the formation of peacekeeping capacities in cooperation with international institutions (such as the *Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre*, KAIPTC) has always played an important role in the formation of generations of Malian military personnel (GovMali 19.01.2011b).

In this sense, the analysed text pieces in this section underline that it is equally important to invest both in civil and military presence of state institutions all over the country. Therefore, ATT announces an immediate action programme (in addition to PSPSDN) to expand administrative, educational, and cultural infrastructure that is intended to be built up in the shadow of new military posts and internationally coordinated measures of air surveillance (GovMali 31.01.2011b). Finally, these measures are adopted to defend the Malian culture of living together against terrorism penetrating from outside Mali:

> "Islamists have an ideology which is not compatible with a solidary, open and human Islam that we know." (GovMali 31.01.2011b)

Referring to this and in reaction to media reports suggesting a liaison between AQMI and the Tuareg (see above; L'Indicateur du Renouveau/ Maliweb 24.12.2010b), MNA statements point out that a suchlike cooperation would be absurd, as, for example, the annual "Festival au Désert" in Timbuktu with its multigenerational and multicultural character shows.[36] Despite a continuously worsening security situation due to infiltrating terrorists, the festival had its 11th anniversary and, as in the years before, attracted a huge international audience (see MNA 5.01.2011). Furthermore, reactions from within the ranks of the MNA underline that the victims of AQMI's threats and violence are not only tourists and foreign employees of multinational companies but also the population in the North. Therefore, according to these sources, ordinary people have no sympathy for terrorists or any interest to harbour them. Beyond that, MNA statements accuse the Malian government to support the international "war on terror" in the region at the expense of the Northern population since there are more and more civilian casualties due to actions of the Malian military (see MNA 20.01.2011).

Taken together, MNA comments reject all accusations insinuating a cooperation with AQMI as a "deliberate disinformation". On the contrary, according to the MNA, the Malian government should be accused of a far too lax fight against terrorism or even a kind of tacit laissez-faire (see MNA 20.01.2011). Again, the authors of these texts emphasise to speak on behalf of the population of Azawad and present the following key claim in the direction of the international community:

> "[...] it is crucial and indispensable that the entire international community recognises the people of Azawad's right to self-determination." (MNA 20.01.2011)

However, based on the sources in January 2011, the Malian government had not reacted to any kind of offer for talks from the MNA's side up to that point.

The analysed media reports take up the topic of an increasing military presence in the North, which was a focal point both in government and MNA documents. In addi-

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36   According to its organisers, the "Festival in the Desert" gives a forum for both traditional and modern West African music and arts, particularly emanating from the Tuareg culture, which has its sources in several West African states (see MNA 5.01.2011). Hence, as the text passages outline, Tuareg could definitely not have any cooperation with Islamists, since AQMI rejects suchlike arts and culture by definition.

tion, reports centre around the issue of improving cross-border military cooperation as an adequate measure to fight terrorism and transnational organised crime.[37] Again, media attention mainly lies on the ongoing problem of kidnappings, especially concerning employees of foreign companies in Mali (see case of uranium mines; AFP/Maliweb 23.01.2011).

February 2011

Government statements at this stage are characterised by an effort to spell out its peace and security concept for Northern Mali both in terms of military measures and as infrastructural, economic, and social plans. Apart from the example of upgrading the Malian National Civil Aviation Agency by a military component (see GovMali 7.02.2011a), the president takes the opportunity on the occasion of a number of inaugurations (of infrastructure projects) and meetings with various stakeholders to point out his double-track strategy of security and development based on concrete examples.[38] When meeting the experts of the *Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre* (based in Accra, Ghana), for example, where Malian security forces, too, were trained in conflict management concepts and methods, ATT again highlights the nexus of security and development (see GovMali 7.02.2011c). However, public speeches in the context of the 50th anniversary in Kidal, capital of the region with the same name in the northeast and hotspot of earlier rebellions[39], once again emphasize the question of security as a rather military one: On the one hand, in the presence of tribal leaders and ex-rebels, the president explains that Northern Mali has an enormous economic potential and that PSPSDN is about bringing international partners, different parts of the population and state institutions together in order to boost local development, to fight poverty and, therefore, to eliminate breeding grounds of organised crime and extremism.[40] With an eye to former and actual efforts to achieve autonomy in the north, ATT adds (without naming the MNA) that is essential to

> "[...] dedicate all our energy to local development. Let us move on and not be destracted by other projects, whatever their advocates' rhetoric and arguments may be." (GovMali 7.02.2011d)

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37 See e.g. the media coverage of the upcoming opening of a liaison office for military affairs maintained by Libya and Mali. Already in October 2010, to tighten the good cooperation, Libya made Mali a present of two surveillance aircrafts to support security in Northern Mali (see APA/Maliweb 21.01.2011).

38 See e.g. ATT's meetings with representatives of the union of the economic chambers and the assembly of agricultural chambers (GovMali 7.02.2011b). As to inaugurations, see e.g. the one concerning the hydroelectric plant in Ouéléssébougou (GovMali 14.02.2011a) or the one concerning the hospital in Yanfolia (GovMali 2011b).

39 Nota bene: In 1963, the first post-colonial Tuareg rebellion broke out in Kidal.

40 In this context, government documents promote the slogan that peace pays off economically and point to examples of those who got involved into the peace process, gave up their weapons and earn their living with newly established jobs (see e.g. GovMali 9.02.2011).

At the same time, ATT's speech in Kidal, given within the framework of a "Flamme de la Paix" (i.e. Flame of Peace) ceremony, particularly appeals to values of the "Tuareg warrior" – honour, dignity, bravery and courage – in order to achieve a surrender of all arms.[41] Though, in case that this appeal would not be met, ATT points to the fact that the Malian military is capable and operational. This is even more stressed by the subsequent announcement of having commissioned new military vehicles to improve communication and deployment of Malian troops in the extensive northern regions (see GovMali 16.02.2011a).

By and large, government documents at that time portray Mali as a progressive multi-ethnic and multi-religious country, which respects human rights and is internationally recognised as a partner (especially by the EU). As such, according to the analysed statements, Mali would be preserved and defended in its integrity by the use of force in case of need (see GovMali 7.02.2011; 16.02.2011; 25.02.2011).

In this section, especially statements released by Tuareg groups are given foreground on MNA media platforms. These statements plainly contradict the rather positive presentation of the situation in Mali by the government. They hold that actual challenges can all be reduced to a single and longstanding cause: overcoming the colonial heritage, for example by doing away with borders inherited from colonial times, and thus taking into account of the Tuareg as people, on the one hand, spread over several West African but, on the other hand, feeling as a cultural if not national unity.

In this context, *Ibrahim Ag Bahanga*, a former Tuareg rebel leader, even though not yet formally adhering to MNA, appears as a prominent voice in publications close to the MNA.[42] Thus, Bahanga is cited with accusations against Malian authorities who would continuously nurture the northern population's mistrust and of have enabled terrorists from outside to get a foothold in Mali due to an overly soft security policy. Moreover, Bahanga alleges that negotiations with the Malian government have never brought off a political, economic or social success for the north. In this vein, Azawad, since the independence of the Malian state, experienced 50 years of occupation, inter alia enabled by France and bearing a huge number of victims among the population. Lastly, the more general suggestion that is regarded as imperative "to get rid of illegitimate and corrupt states" is followed by a unambiguous warning of the former rebel commander: "The situation in the

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41   In the aforementioned ceremony, a large amount of small arms were handed over to the Malian president in public and then burned, which is portrayed as the "strong moment" of the event (Gov-Mali 9.02.2011). Several times in Malian history, e.g. in the context of the 1996 peace agreement in Mali, Flame of Peace ceremonies were used to symbolically underline the parties' commitment to the peace process.

42   Nota bene: Bahanga, member of the Ifoghas Tuareg community, received military training in Lybia in the 1980s and became a rebel commander of the 2006 uprising, which led to the Algiers Accord (see above, subsection on November 2010). However, as the implementation of the peace agreement (especially concerning the creation of local security units in the north) was put on hold, the "Bahanga faction" defected and continued to attack Malian bases. In 2008, the Bahanga faction changed its name to "Alliance Touareg Nord Mali pour le Changement" (ATNMC). Fightings continued on a limited scale during the following years until January 2009 when the Malian military destroyed Bahanga's base near Tessalit and Bahanga fled to Libya (see Thurston and Lebovich 2013: 24–26, 39; UCDP 2018c).

regions of Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal could worsen very quickly" if the Malian government would definitely not respond to the offer of a true dialogue heading to the autonomy of Northern Mali, which was already presented in November 2010.[43] Accordingly, measures to "reorganise the military structure" of his former rebel unit – the ATNMC still not being part of MNA – would be adopted in case of need (see MNA 6.02.2011a).

Other MNA statements refer to the Flame of Peace ceremony on February 7–8 as a deliberate provocation of the people in Northern Mali. As a matter of fact, the Tuareg had believed in the peace process for decades; many surrendered their arms and tried to play a part in the political process. At this point, according to the sources, they learn that

> "the Malian government profited by the disarming of a large part of Tuareg and then granted its partner – AQMI – all chances to occupy and to entrench themselves in Tuareg regions." (MNA 6.02.2011a)

On top of that, Tuareg communities in different countries of the Sahelian zone increasingly find themselves under pressure since respective central governments stir up or, at least, tolerate hatred against them.[44] When it comes to Mali again, according to MNA statements, the time had come to unmask the "politico-folkloric spectacle" of Flame of Peace ceremonies and to confront the "true problem [the population of Azawad has] since 50 years: occupation" (MNA 19.02.2011a):

> "The people of Azawad has already offered thousands of martyrs for its liberty. […] Are we satisfied with what has been achieved after all these sacrifices? […] In reality, unification with Mali means 50 years of deliberate elimination of everything what distinguishes the people of Azawad in cultural, religious, social, political, economic, and geographical terms by calling existential right to its land into question." (MNA 19.02.2011b)

Furthermore, it is added that the time has come to tackle a national project for the culturally separate people of Azawad, to claim rights of sovereignty and self-determination as an indigenous people and to call for reparation of violated rights with reference to international law and the international community.[45] Hence, the case of Azawad is to be considered as an internationally relevant armed conflict, which needs to be treated within

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43   From November 5 to 13, 2010, a few days after the MNA declared its foundation, the ATNMC (i.e. the former Bahanga faction, see above) had an undisclosed meeting with Malian government officials in Tripoli, Libya. On this occasion, the ATNMC (not yet part of the MNA) delivered a "political document" outlining its propositions to solve the crisis in Northern Mali by dialogue which the government promised to continue but did not comply with (see MNA 27.01.2011).

44   According to the analysed MNA documents, this is particularly true for the situation of the Tuareg in Libya (see MNA 9.02.2011).

45   In this context, as the documents show, the MNA considers those international actors to be decisive who enable the ongoing "illegal military presence" in Azawad, which means, for example, those states who concluded contracts on the exploitation of natural resources or those international organisations providing funds for development projects, which do not reach out for the people's needs but directly go to government and stay there (MNA 19.02.2011b).

appropriate international institutions (see MNA 19.02.2011b). In all analysed MNA documents, the MNA is repeatedly described as legitimate representation of all parts of the population in Northern Mali. And, to reach its goals, the MNA more than once confirms to be first and foremost committed to a peaceful political struggle.

As the analysis of media coverage shows, MNA statements are picked up with great scepticism, especially concerning its commitment to non-violence (see above Bahanga's remarks on an eventual reorganisation of ATNMC's military structures). In reference to the Flame of peace ceremony on February 8, preliminary reports express a high degree of distrust, particularly since ATT invited ambiguous ex-rebels, like Bahanga:

> "[In Kidal, the president] will definitely talk about peace with those brothers who used to raise arms against their country. [...] Ibrahim Ag Bahanga who is just returning from his goldened exile in Libya. [The president] gives peace lessons to those who still prefer a dialogue of violence. [...] Bahanga, a multi-recidivist." (L'Indicateur du Renouveau/Maliweb 3.02.2011a).

One the one hand, media accounts in this section often refer to ATT's key message of development as being the most promising strategy to promote peace and security. Moreover, the president's strategy is more and more presented as a strategy intended to promote local development (see e.g. L'Indicateur du Renouveau/Maliweb 3.02.2011a; Maliweb 10.02.2011c). On the other hand, however, in the light of terrorist attacks against state representatives in neighbouring Mauretania[46], other media reports also place special emphasis on a military strategy in fighting terrorism. In this context, ATT's role as commander in chief of the Malian military is once again called to mind. As L'Indépendent/Maliweb (10.02.2011b) states in round terms, for example, ATT needs to urge "security forces and the military to be even more watchful and relentless".

March 2011

In March 2011, text analysis shows that government documents, at first, deal with international diplomatic activities of the president and his government. For example, statements address the meeting with the president of Guinea (among meetings with other heads of state in the subregion), which focused on how to strengthen cooperation in security affairs in order to stop drugs and arms trafficking and terrorism.[47] Beyond that, statements point out the government's and ATT's efforts within the context of conflict

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46   Media reports refer to AQMI terrorists who carried out a bomb attack on the Mauritanian president with the help of vehicles of Malian origin; the attack, however, was prevented in the end (see Le Républicain/Maliweb 3.02.2011b). Other reports speculate that the bomb attack has a relation to previous actions of the Mauritanian military (supported by French elite units) against suspected terrorists, which led to several victims (French hostages and Malian nationals) (see Le Combat/Maliweb 8.02.2011b; 15.02.2011).

47   As government documents further explain, the capability to chase and seize terrorists across borders is key: a Tunisian was said to be responsible for the attempted attack on the French embassy at the end of February. After having fled from police custody in Bamako, he was seized again one day later in Gao on his way to leave the country towards the northern border (see GovMali 2.03.2011).

resolution in Côte d'Ivoire, where loyalists of the outgoing president and supporters of the opponent, an ex-rebel, confront each other in the aftermath of contested presidential elections are in danger to tumble into a armed and bloody conflict.[48] Similarly, the increasingly critical situation in Libya becomes a regular topic in government statements. Here, too, ATT is involved as a member of the negotiation group of head of states and declares:

> "The situation in Libya is at a crucial moment, which is marked by ongoing combat having severe humanitarian consequences. […] this situation is an imminent threat and a huge burden for peace, security, and stability in the region as a whole." (Gov-Mali 21.03.2011)

On Libya, Malian government declarations refer to the findings of the AU-led mediation group and suggest that enforcing a no-fly zone by Western powers definitely contributes to an increasingly hostile situation. The same documents continue to say that it would be necessary to find peaceful solutions, which take legitimate concerns of the people in Libya into account. On the precarious humanitarian situation, two aspects are particularly addressed. On the one hand, the government issues a special communiqué on other reports dealing with alleged Malian mercenaries in Libya:

> "The Government of the Republic of Mali hereby clearly confirms that there is neither a direct nor an indirect link to mercenaries being recruited and sent to fight in Libya." (GovMali 5.03.2011b)

On the other hand, and linked to aforesaid, other government statements clearly state that everything necessary would be done to ensure a safe return of Malian nationals from Libya (see GovMali 21.03.2011).

A second focus of official statements in March 2011 is represented by announcements relating to the topics of modernisation and development: As ATT states on the national day of municipalities on March 17, a number of development projects within the context of decentralisation has proved to be successful.[49] Thereby, ATT repeatedly refers to the vital role of "development poles" which contribute to the expansion of infrastructure, for example concerning health care (see GovMali 14.03.2011b), as well as in arts and culture in general, even in sports.[50] In this context, appreciating the role of development partners, such as France (on the occasion of the new ambassador's first visit), China or within the

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48 As a member of the AU's Peace and Security Council (PSC), ATT was part of the international negotiator and mediator team meeting in Addis Abeba to find a way to politically deal with the conflict between loyalists of outgoing president Laurent Gbaghbo and supporters of contender Alassane Ouattara (see GovMali 11.03.2011).

49 In this address, the president brings together three causes under the umbrella of decentralisation as a development issue: the 50th anniversary of an independent Malian state, the 10th anniversary of a Malian decentralisation programme and the annual National Day of Municipalities.

50 In sum, as government accounts state, beginning in the year 2001, a total volume of 150 billion FCFA (at the time equivalent to €229 million) has been invested in 17.812 projects in municipalities including, for example, the construction of sports grounds for football and basketball as well as centres for arts and culture (see GovMali 17.03.2011b).

framework of ECOWAS, takes up much space in this section (see e.g. GovMali 25.03.2011). For instance, as the chief executive officer of the French Development Agency appreciates Malian domestic development policy, especially PSPSDN with its focus on peace and security in Northern Mali, the government highlights the following as the key statement of the event:

> "[My] organisation will accompany the Malian development efforts, which have top priority within the overall policy of good governance and an optimal management of the resources provided." (GovMali 17.03.2011a)

Like government statements, MNA accounts in this section, too, describe Libya as an escalating conflict. However, the Libyan situation serves as an inducement to send a message to the Tuareg communities both in Libya and in West African states in general:

> "The time has not yet come to liberate the land of the Tuareg, however, it is essential not to participate in the assassination of its people and not to betray it, and to stand on the side of the masses. […] not to be drawn into the decline of a despot." (MNA 5.03.2011a)

In addition, MNA representatives explicitly declare their solidarity with those "children, women and men" in Libya and the whole region who "scream out under great pain and stand up against oppression" (MNA 5.03.2011b). Moreover, the MNA particularly endorses the UN General Assembly's decision to suspend Libya from the Human Rights Council by citing the UN Secretary-General who speaks, at least in MNA's view, on behalf of oppressed Tuareg communities throughout the region, too:

> "We expect an immediate stop of violence against civilians and the full respect of rights and fundamental liberties, including freedom of assembly and freedom of expression." (Ban Ki-moon, as citied in MNA 8.03.2011).

Media coverage, as well, deals with the situation in neighbouring Libya. Here, the question of how close the relation between Tuareg in Libya and Mali really is gets addressed by the example of the Libyan consul general in Mali, *Musa al-Koni*, who left Mali early in March toward Paris: Al-Koni, who, according to discrediting media accounts, presents himself as an advocate of the Tuareg cause used to be in charge of recruiting Malian mercenaries to serve within the ranks of Gaddafi. Other media pieces place the weakness of Malian security forces which gets criticised increasingly open into the centre of attention. In this context, the increasing number of drug addicts, especially among youths, is not only blamed on a lack of perspective due to the miserable economic situation but also on the authorities' poor performance in securing borders against drug inflow and their eventual collaboration with drug dealers, respectively (see e.g. Le Flambeau/Maliweb 3.03.2011a). So, too, the unlawful chase of suspected Malian terrorists by Mauritanian security forces on Malian territory (see Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 3.03.2011b) as well as the uncertain fate of a number of foreign and Malian hostages in the hands of AQMI (see Le Combat/Maliweb 8.02.2011) serve to name and shame the Malian government's inaction and inability in the light of a worsening situation in Libya.

INGO reports in this phase particularly highlight the situation in Côte d'Ivoire where post-election violence had continued for several months, and the situation is qualified as being "at the brink of civil war" (WANEP 31.03.2011; see also government section above). According to eyewitness reports and investigations, property damages, assaults and even massacres are turning on migrants, including Malian nationals, too. Based on these sources, the mass exodus of both foreigners and Ivorians becoming refugees is expected to pose a cross-border problem in the West African regional context, including Mali (see HRW 31.03.2011).

April 2011

Taking up the issue of inaction, government statements in April try to oppose these accusation by documenting regular government business in the midst of a troubled regional environment (namely the crises and conflicts in Libya and Cote d'Ivoire), for example by reporting on the president's successful consultation with Malian political parties in order to appoint a new female prime minister from Timbuktu, *Cissé Mariam Kaïdama Sidibé* (see GovMali 3.04.2011a); by emphasising the stability of Chinese-Malian relations within the context of the inauguration of the new Chinese ambassador (see GovMali 8.04.2011); by reporting on the state visits to Liberia and after that to Sierra Leone (in celebration of the 50th anniversary of Sierra Leonean independence), which were used by its participants to mutually recognise their stable and democratic development in a world region that is rather marked by conflict[51]; finally, by favourably addressing new projects of decentralisation and regional development in Mali.[52] Beyond that, government statements bring up three issues in greater detail: First, the awarding of the "Kéba Mbaye Price for Ethics" to ATT who is honoured for

> "[...] the re-establishment of the rule of law, [...] his support for the unfolding of a free press, numerous humanitarian actions and mediation services in Africa and the world" (GovMali 18.04.2011)

and his abundant merits in view of Mali's development as a "model democracy with a respected constitution on all sides".[53] Second, government releases particularly point out the good state in which US-Malian relations are, concerning, for example, the many years

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51 The government statements in question explicitly refer to the interconnected civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone (from 1991–2002) which destabilised the whole region for a long time (see GovMali 29.04.2011a; 29.04.2011b).

52 On this, government statements mention institutional reforms concerning the division of administration units (see GovMali 12.04.2011) and measures to improve cross-border cooperation on using water resources of the Senegal River within the framework of the Senegal River Basin Development Authority (see GovMali 17.03.2011b).

53 As outlined within the statements, the Kéba Mbaye Price is awarded by a Senegalese foundation in memory of the Senegalese judge Kéba Mbaye (1924–2007), who was a member of the International Olympic Committee and president of the Court of Arbitration for Sport. The price honours extraordinary efforts to strengthen human rights, especially concerning the right to development (see e.g. GovMali 16.04.2011; 18.04.2011).

of cooperation with the Peace Corps[54], the joint US-Malian activities in combating HIV/AIDS[55] as well as a close military cooperation, especially in fighting terrorism, as the commander of the US Africa Command confirms (see GovMali 26.04.2011). Finally, the president's speeches to the address of Malian Christians on the occasion of Easter and to the workers' movement on May Day make clear that ATT expects all Malians to defend unity in diversity as "superior interest of the nation" (GovMali 30.04.2011).

What can't be found in the analysed government statements is any reaction to the first national MNA congress (since its founding in November 2011) which was held on April 15–17 in Kidal. In the light of this event, however, a MNA release states that the alarming situation of Northern Mali represents a consequence of "Malian occupation". In addition, as a broad hint to the Arab Spring, the document refers to "the wind of revolution blowing through the world" and bringing many people to determine their future on their own (see MNA 17.04.2011). Furthermore, it contains the following points (original citations, partly condensed): The MNA...

a) adheres to the people of Azawad's right to self-determination;
b) calls for the people of Azawad's support for the political project of the MNA;
c) confirms the priority of peaceful political combat (however including all legitimate methods for revolution and resistance);
d) calls for a serious dialogue with the Malian government about the principle of self-determination;
e) calls on the international community to fulfil its responsibility concerning the violation of rights;
f) supports those popular initiatives sustained by love and peace and thus against any destructive project of occupation;
g) condemns all forms of terrorism, refusing any presence (of terrorists) on Azawadien land;
h) calls on all companies or signatories of contracts dealing with Azawad's natural resources to review these illegal contracts;
i) calls on the International Red Cross and other humanitarian organisations to help Azawadien families fleeing from hostilities in Libya;
j) supports any popular revolution in the world, especially in North Africa, for freedom, democracy and human rights.

A second substantial MNA statement in this month pays attention to ATT's meeting with Arab tribal leaders from all Northern regions (i.e. Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal) on April 28.

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54   Nota bene: The Peace Corps is a volunteer programme run by the US government that started in 1962. Since then, it has places volunteer in 141 countries, including Mali. In April 2011, the government announces the arrival of 61 new volunteers who plan to work in different places of action, including Northern Mali (see GovMali 14.04.2011).

55   In this context, the government statements highlight that, on behalf of US president Obama, the director of the Global Health Initiative gives thanks to ATT personally for his campaign against infectious diseases, especially HIV/AIDS (see GovMali 21.04.2011). In this context, see also the governments massage on hosting a HIV/AIDS congress of young leaders Bamako (see GovMali 15.04.2011).

Thus, the intensification of development efforts in all regions, especially in the North, is recognised. At the same time, the document highlights criticism against the president who called for a meeting in this special constellation for the first time and who had never reacted to any communication form MNA' side up to that point (see MNA 29.04.2011).

In contrast, media coverage picks up the first national MNA congress in great detail, for example by extensively citing the original text on the MNA's claims (see above) or within the context of a contribution entitled "Northern Mali: An independence movement is born" (see MNA 17.04.2011). Although MNA publications do not mention "independence" but "autonomy" as a major goal, media commentaries continue to say that MNA claims are about independence efforts not only in reference to the territory of Azawad but also to parts of Niger, Algeria, Libya, Chad and even Sudan. However, these documents bring forward that there is a lot of scepticism concerning the true power of the "movement" (i.e. the MNA) and its commitment to non-violence (see Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 27.04.2011f).

The agenda of media coverage in April 2011 is basically determined by two further topics: First, articles revolve around the effectiveness of development efforts in the North. On the one hand, it is stated that there is a myriad of projects initiated, such as water retentions or solar powered well water pumps. On the other hand, however, those projects got stuck because of insufficient funding (see 26 Mars/Maliweb 12.04.2011). Nevertheless, according to these accounts, PSPSDN could give an answer to the "many forms of insecurity", denominated as "rebellions, hostage-taking by AQMI, illicit trafficking (drugs, weapons), intra and interethnic conflicts" (Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 13.04.2011).[56] Yet, according to insiders quoted in some of these media reports, there are actors who have no interest in improving the security situation because they are parts of the "insecurity business" that had established over the years, including actors from drug dealers to mediation experts to members of international aid organisations (see Nouvelle Libération/Maliweb 15.04.2011).

Second, media coverage addresses the perception of an increasing activity of AQMI in the north. Thereby, a pamphlet that had been distributed over night in Timbuktu served as central reference:

> "It's about you! You, the Arabs who know very well the terrain, the sand, and the desert and you who accepted to work for intelligence services. You who follow our movements in order to straightaway inform the Western powers so that they can better fight against us... This message is directly addressed to you: If you don't want your wifes and children to become widows and orphans, withdraw from the intelligence service. If not, woe is you!" (Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 20.04.2011)

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56   As other media reports in April 2011 make clear, interethnic conflicts, for example between Peuls and Tuareg disputing about land and livestock (see e.g. L'Indicateur du Renouveau/Maliweb 4.04.2011) or between Arabs and Tuareg competing on water resources (see e.g. Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb 18.04.2011a) are perceived as age-old conflicts which, at this time, get actuality (see also chapter 6.3 on the temporal dimension).

Further articles show that this unprecedented kind of intimidation of the population has an impact, as, for example, the media statement of the mayor of Bèr (a small village near Timbuktu) reveals:

> "[…] elements of AQMI are increasingly present in the towns of Northern Mali […]. AQMI is an important factor in the region. These people have funding. They invest in the population, in projects like well construction and caring about nomads in the region." (Le Combat/Maliweb 27.04.2011d)

In this context, some media accounts also assume that Malians returning from Libya with an enormous arsenal of weapons would most likely join AQMI and thus make terrorists even stronger (see e.g. Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 6.04.2011). So, against this background of a Malian state which indeed tries hard but still continues to be too weak in terms of counteroffers to its citizens in the North, the younger generation, according to the assessment of the media, is increasingly exposed to both recruiting efforts by Islamists and temptations of the drug trafficking business. Moreover, reports mention a clear tendency of the Malian and other governments in the region[57] to downplay or at least underestimate the growing anchoring of AQMI (see L'Indicateur du Renouveau/Maliweb 29.04.2011a). Taking up the issue of a growing AQMI presence, the monthly update of the ICG, too, deals with an increasing terrorist threat. As France mentions a "very elevated risk of hostage-taking" in its official travel information, the ICG confirms these warning and has indications of an increasing number of AQMI bases in Northern Mali (see ICG 1.05.2011).

May 2011

To begin with, the number of government statements relating to Northern Mali further decreases, from 20 documents in April to 12 documents in May. The main topics of these statements are strengthening military cooperation with neighbouring countries, Algeria, Mauretania and Niger, agreed upon within the framework of a meeting between high-level politician and militaries with ATT, in order to fight the common threat by terrorism, banditism, drug trafficking and kidnapping (see GovMali 2.05.2011); the installation of the new female prime minister Sidibé (see above) by the president while setting out her most important task: advancing ongoing development projects, particularly PSPSDN, with the utmost energy and treating food production as a security issue (see e.g. GovMali 9.05.2011a; 10.05.2011); May Day, the annual Muslim pilgrimage "Ziyara" (Arabic for "visit")[58] on May 7–8 as well as the commemoration of Mali's first independent president, *Modibo Keïta*, on May 16 – all these events are linked, in one form

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57   According to L'Indépendent/Maliweb (29.04.2011c), the Algerian government refuses any cooperation with Western countries to combat terrorism with reference to its own sufficient capabilities and strategies. However, only in a regional context, together with Mali, Mauretania and Niger, Algerian authorities plan to establish a close military cooperation (for the first activities within the framework of this cooperation see following section on June 2011).

58   In general, Ziyara can be understood as a Muslim pilgrimage *not* heading for Mecca but other spiritual Islamic sites. In Mali, Ziyara is usually associated with an annual meeting of Muslims in Hamdallaye (Mopti region, bordering region to Northern Mali).

or another, to appeals to national unity in government announcements (see GovMali 9.05.2011b; 17.05.2011). However, there are no references to those topics increasingly raised in MNA statements or media accounts, such as the return of heavily armed ex-soldiers from Libya or MNA's claims concerning autonomy.

In reference to the declaration of the national MNA congress (see above), MNA statements particularly deal with the historical background of its claims: Accordingly, they highlight the fact that the long history of Tuareg culture indeed, according to international law, justified the right to self-determination and to a state on their own at the time when Mali's independence came up to the horizon. Unfortunately, this circumstance had been ignored both by the French colonial and post-colonial governments as well as by the Malian government.[59] Since the population of Northern Mali is tired of long-term rights violations and grieving about the many victims of previous rebellions, the MNA offers a peaceful way of open dialogue in order to approach a right of self-determination for the people of Azawad. More precisely, the MNA intends to offer

> "[...] the organisation of a referendum in consultation with all structures of Azawad's civil society and foreign partners." (MNA 25.05.2011)

With regards to the violation of rights by the government, however, the MNA also provides concrete accusations. Therefore, the case of four persons arbitrarily arrested by the Malian secret service was followed by public protest. Among the arrested, for example, a radio journalist who planned an interview with the governor of the Gao region dealing with MNA's claims (see MNA 16.05.2011).

The analysis of media reports in May 2011 shows a kind of aha moment: First, there are reports pointing out that, after a certain span of non-reaction, the government finally acknowledges a potentially growing source of insecurity brought in by refugees and armed ex-soldiers from Libya (see e.g. AFP/Maliweb 3.05.2011a; Reuters/Maliweb 11.05.2011). Some announcements even put returnees on a level with potential rebels who would, as insinuated, immediately join Malian-based rebels in order to revive their old project of a "light-skinned" or Arab insurgence against the Malian state dominated by dark-skinned Africans (see Le Prétoire/Maliweb 11.05.2011).[60] In this context, the concept of "self-determination for Azawad" used in MNA statements is often interpreted as "independence" (see e.g. Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 4.05.2011b). Second, while trivialising the tense security situation, other media accounts refer to little support and low understanding of MNA's claims among Northern Mali's population, as ATT's public meetings with tribal leaders and politicians (see e.g. Le Combat/Maliweb 4.05.2011a; Nouvelle Libération/Maliweb 16.05.2011b) or surveys on the streets of Timbuktu (populated by Tuaregs, Arabs, Songhay) would show:

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59   As a proof of these early Tuareg activities, statements refer to letters addressed to French president *Charles de Gaulle*; see MNA 15.07.2011; see also chapter 6.3 on the temporal dimension).

60   In contrast, it bears mentioning that there are reports pointing out that returnees from Libya, up to that point, had preponderantly been workers form different economic sectors (see Reuters/Maliweb 11.05.2011).

"We have never been associated with an independent movement of any kind whatsoever. If that had been the case, we would have brought those sympathisers back to reason, since, for us, it is beyond dispute to question the integrity of the Malian territory. Mali is our common heritage. We received it like this from our ancestors." (Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 4.05.2011b)

Finally, some reports bring up the subject of *Osama bin Laden*'s death in connection with a US military operation on May 2, 2011 (in Pakistan) and possible repercussions in Mali. According to these authors, it must be feared that AQMI radicalises even more, having negative consequences on Mali's security situation, particularly concerning hostages still being in AQMI's grip (see AFP/Maliweb 3.05.2011b). In this context, it is also stated that AQMI grows in terms of numbers: Referring to French security service, there are at least 400 AQMI fighters who unimpededly establish further military bases and know how to gain the people's trust by aligning themselves with supporters of the Arab Spring (see El Watan/Maliweb 20.05.2011; Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 26.05.2011).

In reaction to the description of AQMI as increasingly gaining strength, some reports level criticism against the government, be it in terms of non-effective development efforts in the North (see Le Combat/Maliweb 4.05.2011a), concerning the fight against AQMI perceived as timid (see El Moudjahid/Maliweb 7.05.2011; Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 26.05.2011) or as to the late insight on the interconnectedness of different threats, such as terrorism and drugs trafficking (see Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb 21.05.2011). Others, in marked contrast, endorse the government's activities related to strengthening military cooperation with neighbouring countries to increase military and police forces available to fight against terrorism from 25.000 up to 75.000 (see L'Indicateur du Renouveau/Maliweb 18.05.2011; 23.05.2011c). Also, reports explicitly approve the announced reinforcement of PSPSDN in support of the EU (see Le Matinal/Maliweb 31.05.2011).

June 2011

In June 2011, there are no MNA statements and only a few government statements regarding the situation in Northern Mali. The latter point to a appreciable success of Malian development programmes. Therefore, letting security issues gain centre stage, PSPSDN is not only presented as being in line with UN's Millennium Development Goals but also as a Malian contribution to international "collective security" (see GovMali 14.06.2011; GovMali 24.06.2011). While a special emissary of French president Sarkozy stays in Mali, further government messages deal with the "excellent cooperation" between France and Mali as related to the common efforts to free hostages from the hand of AQMI and to fight terrorism, arms, and drugs trafficking (see GovMali 27.06.2011). Moreover, the Malian government announces to have used its voice in the AU high-level ad hoc committee on Libya to condemn the ongoing NATO aerial attack regarding its catastrophic consequences for civilian population.[61] Since some of Libya's neighbouring countries reject

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61   Nota bene: Based on UN Security Council resolution 1973, a NATO-led military intervention started in March 2011 and ended in October 2011; its main measures: imposing a no-fly zone by a series of air strikes.

Libyan refugees at their border, they are subject to Malian criticism, too (see GovMali 28.06.2011).

As NATO intervention in Libya has obvious and long term consequences for the situation in Mali (see above in terms of refugees), there is marked criticism in media coverage, too: Some articles hold that this intervention, albeit legitimised by UN security council, should be understood as a "terrorist project" since it worsens the humanitarian situation and has ultimately only one goal: inducing a regime change in order to satisfy Western oil and gas interests (see Le Potentiel/Maliweb 21.06.2011). In contrast, other voices clarify that is up to the Libyan people and countries in the region to tackle their problems on their own, for example by establishing a true concerted military action against AQMI:

> "Right now, our troops and Mauritanian troops are on the ground together for a couple of weeks. They conduct a common military operation against organised crime and against AQMI along the border between the two countries." (AFP/Maliweb 23.06.2011)

Already in early June, special forces of the four neighbouring countries – Algeria, Mauretania, Mali, and Niger – conducted concerted campaigns against AQMI bases in Mali and different border areas. However, the analysed media pieces make clear that military operations alone would not be enough. It would particularly be necessary to improve the situation by common development efforts across borders – compared to earlier media statements dealing with the nexus of development, security, and peace this a new hint. With that, the kidnapping business[62] as well as the booming drugs and arms trafficking would be deprived of its breeding ground (see El Moudjahid/Maliweb 1.06.2011).

INGO reports, too, point to the border areas of the mentioned neighbouring countries around Mali which had developed into a

> "[...] zone of lawlessness without any order, which made the Sahara attractive for terrorists." (FES 2011: 5)

Against this background, the international community, at that moment, indeed focuses on the increasing terrorist danger in Mali, especially as the Malian government seems to practice a standstill towards the threat emanating from AQMI. Rather, the Malian situation would require an "inclusive approach" not only taking the situation of the Tuareg and ethnic groups into account but also addressing, for example, "endemic corruption" in Mali (FES June 2011: 5).

July 2011

As it has been outlined in previous sections, government documents regularly refer to PSPSDN as the most important measure to improve the security situation in Northern Mali. Now, at the end of its first stage (July 2010 to July 2011), the government publishes

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62   Against the background of experience with Al Qaeda kidnapping around the world, US intelligence services long way before informed European partners, especially France, about ransom money being an important financial factor for the AQMI network (see El Moudjahid/Maliweb 1.06.2011).

its assessment of PSPSDN. In sum, a number of sub-projects are successfully evaluated, for example (see GovMali 27.07.2011):

- equipment and build-up of infrastructure for armed forces operating in respective zones;
- reinforcement of the armed forces' capacities, especially concerning training and mobility;
- buildup of infrastructures in favour of the administration (rehabilitation of remand prisons, courts, prefectures);
- contruction of basic infrastructures for a direct benefit of the population such as systems of water supply;
- support of private sector, e.g. to establish trading venues, cattle markets, and micro-finance for young people;
- setting up good governance standards on the administrative level and in territorial authorities.

However, as the government concedes, out of the three Northern regions (i.e. Kidal, Gao, Timbuktu), Kidal region had been the clear geographic focus of many PSPSDN projects. Taking up the issue of development efforts, further contributions complain about the French travel warning putting Mali in the international pillory and contributing to a further decline of important economic factors, especially tourism and artisan craftwork (see GovMali 14.07.2011; 29.07.2011). Beyond that, government statements point to issues intended to convey the impression of an active and prudent government: In July, 895 new police officers and 300 new gendarmes are brought into service (see GovMali 8.07.2011; 22.07.2011); international partners highly appreciate ATT's contribution within the framework of AU-led mediation group for Libya advocating for a political process that would be able to take "legitimate concerns of the Libyan people into account", for the rule of law and for human rights (see GovMali 7.07.2011); and finally, ATT on the occasion of a state visit to France citing former French president *Jacques Chirac* within the context of a vernissage at *Musée du Quai Branly* in Paris:

> "[The museum] proclaims that no people, no nation, no civilisation exhausts or grasps the human genius. Each culture enriches it with beauty and truth. Only in their continuously renewed expressions, the universal which brings us all together can be found." (GovMali 14.07.2011)

MNA statements in July 2011, too, refer to fundamental beliefs and values: According to these considerations, fighting for Azawad is about a "intellectual revolution" in which "universal democratic values" are defended (see MNA 15.07.2011). In this sense, MNA continues to declare itself to be the legitimate representation of the people of Azawad and says:

> "[…] the people of Azawad decided to wage a peaceful and merciless combat against the occupation." (MNA 16.07.2011)

Following these sources, this combat includes charging the violation of human rights that had happened during "Malian occupation" according to international law. Moreover, there is an explicit expectation that Western democracies should support the MNA in pursuing this goal which is a consequence of a common normative basis (see MNA 15.07.2011).

In July 2011, the very few media pieces dealing with the situation in Northern Mali do not pick up MNA communication. Instead, they focus on actions against AQMI, for example, concerning a successful military operation against a recently established AQMI basis near the Malian-Mauritanian border titled "Benkan" (Bambara for "unity"), carefully prepared by both countries in the preceding months. Yet, some Malian militaries are quoted as warningly saying that AQMI terrorists do indeed have a "veritable military strategy" and a huge amount of arms to which the Malian security forces would not have enough to counter (see AFP/Maliweb 19.07.2011).

Phase II (Aug 2011 – Oct 2011)

August 2011

In August, the keynote of government statements clearly changes: Now, the government voices declare that authorities are thoroughly willing and have the ability to react to a growing terrorist threat. To underline the government's firm intention, these sources invoke a push of regional and international cooperation initiated by Malian leadership and the adoption of a national policy of "fighting insecurity and terror, particularly in the North" including tougher measures which once again take the growing danger of illegal migration into account (see GovMali 14.08.2011).

Further government announcement state that these measures comprise, in addition to PSPSDN, the re-establishment of former military bases, the installation of new outposts, the deployment of additional brigades of police forces to the north as well as the establishment of health centres, schools, modern wells, new accommodations and offices for administration staff (see GovMali 11.08.2011). And finally, ATT once again uses a religious framework, at the end of fasting month Ramadan, to counter Islamist messages by publicly praying for "concord and community" both of Muslims and Malians (see GovMali 29.08.2011).

According to MNA documents in August 2011, the MNA is about to consolidate its organisation which, in line with the resolutions of the national MNA congress (see above April 15–17, 2011, Kidal), corresponds to state-like structure: In this view, MNA's "executive council", on its meeting on July 26–27, 2011, in Gao, decides to continue its "revolutionary work" by developing more effective structures, such as a network of regional offices, a revolutionary council, and, according to the often highlighted values of democracy, an independent judiciary (see MNA 6.08.2011).

As the news of Bahanga's death on August 26 (which, at first, plays no role in government communication) goes around, it is frequently picked up in MNA sources. Hence, Bahanga is depicted as "a cornerstone of the Tuareg community" and as "one of the bravest sons of Azawad" who had always fought for the Tuareg's good (see MNA 28.08.2011) and whose death is seen as a incentive to continue his way:

> "This death is a big loss which does not at all depress us but gives us a new breath, a new life, one reason more to sustain in our struggle to get respect for our violated rights and justice for all." (MNA 29.08.2011)

Media reports, too, deal with Bahangas death by accident. However, Bahanga is presented in a rather bad light, as, for example, AFP (Maliweb 27.08.2011b) notes:

> "The most radical of all Tuareg rebel leaders, Ibrahim Ag Bahanga, who never fully accepted to surrender arms died in an accident in the north-east of the country."

With this, media accounts do not only repeat and confirm that Bahanga, repeatedly named "the warrior", represents the most prominent Tuareg leader, particularly because he defected the 2006 Algiers Accord and sabotaged the peace process continuously in the aftermath. Already since the 1980s, Bahanga is also considered to be a pioneer in recruiting Tuareg rebels as mercenaries to serve the Gaddafi regime. Thus, at a time when Tripoli gets seized by anti-government forces and the Libyan regime stands on the brink of collapse, Bahanga gets focused as the person responsible for increasing insecurity caused by heavily armed mercenaries returning from Libya (see RFI/Maliweb 27.08.2011a). Finally, under the pretext of an alleged rebellion in the name of the Tuareg, Bahanga is accused of both making common cause with Islamists in the Maghreb and profiting from drugs and arms trafficking in the Sahelian zone (see L'Indépendent/ Maliweb 29.08.2011). Some media commentaries, in a religiously charged and blunt style, conclude that Bahanga had been served right by a deadly mine presumably posed by himself or, in other words, "battered to death by God's hand". Further media reports in August deal with PSPSDN stating that, against the background of worsening conflict in Libya, development components are more and more pushed to the background as opposed to security components (see Le Républicain/Maliweb 10.08.2011).

In INGO accounts, too, the self-accelerating breakup of the Libyan state serves as a background to go into the issue of refugees many of whom are supposed to be heavily armed combatants who would particularly join AQMI (see ICG 1.09.2011). As it has been mentioned in diverse media pieces dealing with Bahanga's activities (see e.g. L'Indépendent/Maliweb 29.08.2011), INGOs documentations also outline "increasingly blurring lines between organised crime and terrorism". Still, the Malian governments strategy to promote security and development via PSPSDN is highlighted as a promising positive example (see FES August 2011).

September 2011

At the beginning of September, in the light of the precarious situation in Libya, ATT takes the opportunity to link two issues in government announcements: First, the president expresses solidarity with the Libyan people fighting for democracy, justice and the rule of law while, at the same time, attaching great importance to unity and integrity of the Libyan state whose breakup would have severe consequences for the whole region and,

therefore, has to be stopped by international support (see GovMali 2.09.2011; 5.09.2011). Second, with a view to the Malian committee on constitutional reform[63], ATT clarifies:

> "There are articles which we consider as cardinal — these articles won't be changed at all. This particularly refers to those articles concerning Mali's independence and sovereignty, its territorial integrity, the multi-party system, its national unity, and the two-term principle for the presidency." (GovMali 6.09.2011)

On September 22, on the occasion of the 51st anniversary of the independent Malian state, government statements once again focus attention on a "Mali's considerable process of modernisation and development". Based on these sources, three important projects had been realised with support from partners all over the world, especially China: a hydroelectric plant combined with a water reservoir for agricultural use in Djenné; the modernisation of the central international airport in Bamako; and the "China-Mali Friendship Bridge" across Niger in Bamako (see e.g. 12.09.2011; 19.09.2011). Again, the second stage of PSPSDN (July 2011 – July 2012) which is intended to be an accelerated one is mentioned as key building block of modernisation and development (see GovMali 22.09.2011a).

The latter is immediately picked up by MNA statements who consider PSPSDN to be "a programme of militarising Azawad" since it mainly includes the establishment or upgrading of military facilities designed to intimidate the population of Azawad instead of pushing forward genuine development measures. Moreover, MNA sources state that AQMI bases in close proximity to Malian military are not really fought against (see MNA 2.09.2011). Against this background, the MNA finds itself constrained to call upon the international community and Mali's development partner to draw back support, especially concerning PSPSDN. The MNA even releases two concrete requests for help to the address of international organisations: first, a request is directed to the International Red Cross and other aid agencies in reference to "Azawadian families" forced to flee Libya for security reasons but rejected at the Malian borders (see MNA 12.09.2011); second, MNA makes transparent to have approached the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.[64] On this, the MNA draws attention to the fact that

> "the Tuareg in Azawad have experienced oppression and marginalisation — under the silence of the international community, whereas the objective of the Tuareg community actually is to gain greater autonomy and to improve our conditions of life in the Sahara, notably in Azawad." (MNA 13.09.2011)

Finally, MNA documents in September 2011 (just as government statements) include expression of solidarity in the direction of "revolutions of the people" in North Africa and

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63   According to ATT's own remarks, the members of this committee had not been appointed on the basis of expert knowledge but primarily due to their patriotism (see GovMali 6.09.2011).

64   Nota bene: The Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was established by the Human Rights Council, the UN's main human rights body, in 2007, as a subsidiary body of the Human Rights Council.

all other corners of the world where people fight for "freedom, democracy and human rights".

After media coverage had rather been positive about PSPSDN up to that point, in September 2011 reports begin to be spilt in two factions: On the one hand, there are still those appreciating the government's development efforts in the North (be it via PSPSDN or other Malian programmes) as promising or already successful.[65] On the other hand, quite a few media accounts are straightforwardly critical: Some assume that PSPSDN is either ragged or rogue since it prefers one region (Kidal) over others (Gao, Timbuktu) and, beyond that, organises the appointment of leading positions based on ethnic affiliations. This practice would lead to institutional blockades or even to new inter-ethnic confrontation, for example between Arabs, Tamasheq and Songhay communities (see Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 2.09.2011). In addition, PSPSDN projects are criticised for being implemented, in general, with very limited participation of affected locals.[66]

Other critical media reviews of the government are further on based on Wikileaks publications concerning new US and Algerian cables again suggesting that Malian authorities are not only incapable but also unwilling to effectively fight AQMI (see Le Combat/Maliweb 14.09.2011a). In addition, the Sahelian zone, with Mali at its centre, is increasingly portrayed as a zone of limited statehood and deliberate non-intervention and, as a consequence, as one of the most important hubs for international drug trafficking[67] and an arena of armed conflict between rival and heavily armed drug cartels (especially *Saharian* branch/Polisario against *Sahelian* branch; see AFP/Maliweb 15.09.2011).

The second focus of media reports in September 2011 is targeted at recent MNA communiqués. These are characterised as manifestations of "separatism", as "start of a new rebellion" or as "secession" and denigrated as incoherent, anti-democratic, anti-development and Gaddafi-financed (see Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 14.09.2011b; 14.09.2011c; Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb 16.09.2011). At the same time, according to the same reports[68], the MNA gains more and more support among the population:

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65   In this context, sources refer inter alia to the example of an economic reintegration programme for young people which had already reached 2.306 individuals (based on a total of 10.000 individuals targeted). This, as an implicit reaction to MNA voices, is presented to be a contribution to satisfy the concrete needs of municipalities in the North and thus has nothing to do with building military bases and prisons (see e.g. Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 14.09.2011b; Le Prétoire/Maliweb 29.09.2011).

66   As Le 22 Septembre (26.09.2011) notes, for example, the permission to use a new water well had been given to members of different ethnic communities from different regions – a regulation that necessarily provokes confrontation given the fact that different ethnic communities had been using different wells for centuries.

67   Again, reports suggest that the growing convergence between terrorism and organised crime or, more concretely, the massive financing of terror by drug trade could nowhere be better observed than in this region (see Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb 16.09.2011b).

68   Already in the beginning of May 2011, the newspaper Lafia Révélateur performed a survey dealing with the MNA which had shown that the MNA, up to that point, is widely unknown by the general population in Northern regions (see above Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 4.05.2011b).

> "We did conduct a poll among community leaders and notables in Timbuktu. After a few months, the follow-up says that there is obviously much more support." (Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 14.09.2011b)

Further accounts in this section can be described as being rather questioning or puzzled about who is really behind the foundation and funding of the MNA (see Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 14.09.2011b); about MNA supporters raising Azawad flags on Malian administration buildings and, at the same time, declaring to be proponents of non-violence (see Le Combat/Maliweb 19.09.2011); about 600 Tuareg soldiers returning from Libya with their families and their future field of activity in Mali (see Le Républicain/Maliweb 16.09.2011c); about the Malian government actively inviting "home comers" and encouraging municipalities to take adequate measures in order to generously reintegrate returnees from Libya (see Le Combat/Maliweb 19.09.2011; Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb 26.09.2011).

On this, from an INGO perspective, an HRW report published in early September gives further insights: According to the report, the situation for people of Malian origin in Libya becomes increasingly precarious. Under the new authorities, people are persecuted, arbitrarily arrested, and ill-treated as "Tuareg mercenaries" only because of their skin colour. Alike, thousands of long-term migrant workers are suspected of having worked for Gaddafi and are at that point exposed to hostilities both from the new rulers and the Libyan population (see HRW 4.09.2011).

Phase III (Oct 2011 – Jan 17, 2012)

October 2011

At the beginning of October[69], government statement once again use the fit occasion of an inauguration of a development project (in this case, an irrigation project in Atlona, Ségou region, Southern Mali, realised as part of a US-Malian cooperation) to document a positive perception of Malian development efforts by external players, such as US envoy Daniel Yohannes[70] and thus to counter growing criticism:

> "In the course of the audience, Mr. Yohannes was full of admiration for the [Malian] head of state because of the great progress that had been achieved in Mali in many domains in the last years." (GovMali 15.10.2011a)

Moreover, government statements highlight two important international meetings: a conference of riparian states of the Niger river on water management (see GovMali 17.10.2011) and a meeting of ATT with the Algerian president Bouteflika on strengthening cooperation in fighting terrorism as well as the purchase of military transportation vehicles made in Algeria for the Malian military (see GovMali 26.10.2011). According to

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69   Strictly speaking, as introduced earlier, phase III begins with the turning point event, i.e. the MNLA's founding statement on October 16, 2011. By maintaining a month-by-month systematics, the preceding mode of representation of results is continued.

70   Daniel Yohannes was, at that time, president of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), a US foreign aid agency, i.a. supporting the irrigation project in Atalona (see GovMali 15.10.2011a).

the announcements, as participants of these meetings had characterised the situation of their countries in the region as "interdependence" (GovMali 18.10.2011), the awareness of being dependent on each other and thus of being forced to cooperate on the basis of international agreements grows (see GovMali 28.10.2011). Finally, with a view to returnees from Libya, the government explains its helping hand policy:

> First and foremost, this is about giving a helping hand to all daughters and sons of the country without any exclusion by approaching all groups of Libyan militaries of Malian origin, to assist in a situation of personal distress." (GovMali 24.10.2011)

Based on this slogan, a high-level government delegation sets out for Kidal region to meet ex-combatants returning from Libya. These, in turn, immediately go on record as saying that they had come in peace and would conformingly integrate (see GovMali 24.10.2011).

According to the analysed MNA statements, after repeated offers for talks had been ignored by the Malian government, the MNA issues "a last and final appeal" and gives the government a month-long ultimatum to react. Therein, the authors renew MNA's principal claim "to have serious and peaceful negotiations on the self-determination of Azawad". They also argue that the recent multiplication of military presence in northern Mali would be perceived as intimidation and terrorisation of the population and thus would lead to a militarisation of Azawad, even with the help of international development assistance. Based on the analysed MNA documents, for the first time, the MNA accuses the government of encouraging sections of the population in southern Mali to settle in the north in the shadow of a clandestine militarisation. Against this background, the international community is again invited to meet its responsibility to protect peace and security in the region (see MNA 4.10.2011).

However, this last and final appeal, too, remained unanswered which urged the MNA to finally change its strategy – on October 16, the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) was founded. In its first communiqué, the MNLA declares to be a new kind of coalition movement, emerging from the MNA which had already existed for one year and the ATNMC[71] of the deceased legendary leader Bahanga:

> "This new organisation has the objective to lead the people of Azawad out of the illegal occupation of Azawad's territory by the Malian state. Since decades, Mali fuels insecurity in the region." (MNLA 16.10.2011)

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71   Even though the authors of MNLA's founding statement use "Mouvement Touareg du Nord Mali" to designate the Bahanga faction, "North Mali Alliance for Change" (French abbreviation: ATNMC) established as a more common name. Nota bene: Already in November 2010, the ATNMC had passed on a political document to the Malian government offering to solve the stand-off by dialogue (see MNA 27.01.2011). However, as this offer had remained unanswered against all confirmations, in February 2011, Bahanga threatened the government with reorganising the military structure of the ATNMC in case of need (see MNA 6.02.2011a; see also above chapter 6.2/ phase I/ February 2011).

Even though the newly founded MNLA declares to be still prepared for a peaceful dialogue with Malian authorities, military facts are set at the same time: As *Hama Ag Sid-Ahmed*, spokesman of the political bureau, makes clear, the MNLA declares war on the AQMI:

> "The terrorist leaders will quickly become aware of the Tuaregs' return. Once chased from their corners, the terrorists will finally leave. First military operations will take place in the near future." (MNLA 30.10.2011)

In this context, the MNLA also admits having been reinforced by parts of the returning ex-combatants from Libya who joined the MNLA with a considerable number of weapons. Moreover, the MNLA says to calculate on a confrontation with both AQMI and the Malian military since, according to MNLA sources it is obvious that there is "a secret agreement" between AQMI and the Malian government or, in other words, "a double game" of the Malian authorities (see MNLA 30.10.2011).

In media reports, too, the government is increasingly blamed for "doublespeak" or, at least, "closing eyes". Still, Wikileaks publications on US doubts about Malian credibility in fighting terrorism produce enough material for critical coverage (see also September 2011 and November 2010 earlier in this chapter). In addition, confirmations and promises, made by the president personally, too, are simply not followed by actions and any measurable implementation (see Le Républicain/Maliweb 31.10.2011d). In contrast, there are also contributions exposing the good state of US-Malian relations and dealing with the large US military support in terms of arms exports to fight terrorism which is handed over during a public ceremony by the end of October.[72]

However, the main topics of media coverage in October 2011, especially after the definite fall of the Gaddafi regime[73], are the emergence of the MNLA and the massive return of ex-soldiers from Libya. As to the latter, various reports hold that there are at least 400 ex-Libyan soldiers of Malian origin accompanied by additional hundreds of people[74] reaching northern Mali at that time (see e.g. RFI/Maliweb 16.10.2011; Le Malien/Maliweb 19.10.2011c). Furthermore, it is stated that these ex-soldiers are "armed to their teeth" with modern weapons from the Libyan military (see Le Combat/Maliweb 26.10.2011) and are thus well-equipped "for a guerrilla war against regular armys" à la Al Qaeda. In other words, it is feared that weapons and soldiers fall into AQMI's hands (see L'Indicateur du Renouveau/Maliweb 22.10.2011b).

In the aftermath of MNLA's founding declaration reports follow in quick succession: Referring to northern Mali's immense geography (about 800.000 km²), some media voices try to appease the situation by saying that this movement (i.e. the MNLA), even

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72   According to Xinhua/Maliweb (29.10.2011), US arms deliveries to Mali at that time reach a total of 9 million US-$, including 44 pickups, 18 trucks, 6 ambulances, radio unites, and charging units.

73   Nota bene: The occupation of Gadaffi's native town Sirte by Libyan rebel forces on October 20, 2011, is commonly mentioned as the fall of the regime as such.

74   Some newspapers refer to approximately 700 Malian civilians from Libya arriving in the region of Timbuktu in the beginning of October alone. However, according to the reports, there were not enough capacities to care for them (see AFP/Maliweb 12.10.2011; see also Le Combat/Maliweb 10.10.2011a).

if reinforced by a few hundred fighters, would not by able to lead northern Mali to independence due to its sheer size (see L'Indépendent/Maliweb 20.10.2011d); besides, the security situation is described as "satisfactory" since the Malian military is increasingly present and even provides humanitarian aid (see Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 5.10.2011). Other accounts observe an immediate rebellion looming (L'Express/Maliweb 21.10.2011) or speak of a "proliferation of liberation movements" causing nothing but instability in northern Mali which is already considered as a "no man's land" where, in the absence of a legitimate public order, Islamists as well as drug and human traffickers assert their interests according to the law of the strongest.[75]

Another recurring element in some media contributions is the danger of re-erupting old conflicts between ethnic groups in the north, triggered by the combination of the newly founded MNLA and returning ex-combatants from Libya. In this connection, the question of how the way towards independence led by the MNLA would be organised is raised, especially without taking the largest section of the population in the north into account: the Songhay (see L'Indépendent/Maliweb 20.10.2011d). Moreover, even within the Tuareg community, there are competing tribes (e.g. Ifoghas, Imghad, Chamanaman) with different commitment to the peace process (i.e. based on the Algiers Accord) and varying understandings of how involved members of the northern communities should be in Malian state institutions, such as the military (see L'Express/Maliweb 21.10.2011c). And finally, the ex-soldiers in the Libyan military of northern Malian origin are not depicted as a homogenous group. According to respective sources, there are different subgroups going back to different units under partly competing commanders in the Libyan military – their mere presence in one and the same region alone poses an enormous conflict potential (see Le Combat/Maliweb 22.10.2011a).

In sum, media coverage increasingly portrays the situation as a simmering conflict situation full of tensions. *El Hadj Ag Gamou*, Imghad Tuareg leader and colonel of the Malian army[76], in reaction to rumours about the imminent foundation of the MNLA, puts it straight in a newspaper interview:

> "We have to pay attention in order not to create a climate of insecurity or tensions between the different communities who want to develop themselves and live in peace. [...] We are children of this country, and we have our families living here. We want to protect them, and we want everybody to know that the colours of our flag are green, yellow and red [i.e. the official Malian flag colours]. No other flag will be raised over Mali. Those who want to add a different flag will have to walk over the dead bodies of Imghad leaders and soldiers." (Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb 10.10.2011b; brackets added R.B.)

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75   In this context, two other newly founded "independence movements" in Azawad that have not appeared in the analysed media accounts or other sources are mentioned: the "Front Démocratique pour l'Autonomie Politique de l'Azawad" and the "Front Patriotique Arabe de l'Azawad" (see Maliweb 25.10.2011b).

76   From 2007 to 2009, *El Hadj Ag Gamou* was one of the Malian commanders successfully fighting against the rebel group led by Bahanga (an Ifoghas) that had turned away from the peace process (see above section on February 2011).

In the course of this, the background conditions are steadily repeated: With the fall of the Gaddafi regime heavily armed soldiers, partly having served in the Libyan military for decades, mainly Tuareg including their families, seek refuge in northern Mali. Three groups of actors court the favour, i.e. the manpower, arms and loyalty, of these ex-soldiers: First, an increasingly influential AQMI (see L'Indicateur du Renouveau/Maliweb 22.10.2011b); second, the newly founded MNLA which continues to attract further ex-Libyan army units, besides the Bahanga faction (see L'Express/Maliweb 21.10.2011c)[77]; finally, the Malian government which makes preparations (see above "helping hand policy", making use of PSPSDN, too) in order to receive and integrate Libyan refugees, e.g. by arranging meetings of mayors and tribal leaders or by organising additional humanitarian aid, and to gain control of the situation (see Le Républicain/Maliweb 18.10.2011; Le Combat/Maliweb 26.10.2011). As a consequence, public expressions of loyalty to the government are reported, particularly on the part of Imghad Tuareg being integrated in Malian political and social institutions (see above; Mali Demain/Maliweb 28.10.2011c) and on the part of refugees from Libya who explicitly repudiate AQMI (see e.g. AFP/Maliweb 12.10.2011; Le Prétoire/Maliweb 13.10.2011a; see also GovMali 24.10.2011). At the same time, stories of Tuareg deserters from the Malian military get published (see L'Express/Maliweb 21.10.2011). Also, some contributions express concerns about the proper conduct of Malian presidential and parliamentary elections planned for 2012 and, for the first time within the analysed text corpus, about the beginning of oil extraction in northern Mali planned for 2012, too (see Le Pouce/Maliweb 31.10.2011e).

In INGO accounts, too, the events following in quick succession in October are taken up, i.a. by the short and crisp ICG analysis below:

> "Concern over possible Tuareg rebellion stoked by reported return of over 400 fighters from Libya, coinciding with series of attacks in the North." (ICG 1.11.2011)

Therefore, both the number of incoming ex-soldiers from Libya mentioned in different media reports and the increasing danger of a "Tuareg rebellion" get confirmed. At the same time, the MNLA remains unmentioned while the "series of attacks in the North" is associated with an imminent rebellion (instead of considering AQMI). Indirectly referring to the consequences of a rebellion, AI (11.10.2011) deals with the decision of the Malian government to postpone a draft law on the abolition of death penalty (which would be applied in cases of high treason, e.g. desertion). And finally, FES discusses the problems of arms influx to northern Mali and its disastrous effects on society:

> "Carrying arms got deeply anchored in communities, not as an occasional or event-related implement but as an indispensable companion to secure oneself in realising commercial, agricultural, breeding and fishing activities." (FES October 2011a: 38)

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77   On this, a commentary from Maliweb (25.10.2011b) points out that, at that point, a window of opportunity had opened for autonomy movements which lack representation in population since these groups sniff a chance to get oneself a military wing to enforce the change they want.

According to these sources, the general availability of illegal weapons in the region causes a climate of mistrust, insecurity, fear and, ultimately, fragile states. Against the background of this analysis, beyond the already existing quadripartite cooperation between Algeria, Mauretania, Niger and Mali and the bilateral cooperation with the US and France to fight illegal arms and drugs trafficking and terrorism, INGO voices firmly propose to involve ECOWAS to approach a regional solution (see FES October 2011a: 35–39).

November 2011

For November 1, the MNLA had called on all ethnic groups in the regions of Kidal, Gao, and Timbuktu to come out for peaceful public protests to claim self-determination and, for the first time in a rather explicit wording, "the liberation of Azawad" or, in other words, Azawad's independence. Seemingly unimpressed by fears and threats expressed in government statements and media reports to the address of the MNLA before, the movement declares that Azawad has to be liberated from occupants (i.e. Malian authorities) who had left the north to AQMI, drug dealers and bandits. According to the analysed sources, the demonstrations on November 1 indeed had a relatively huge attendance of several hundred mainly young people in different places. Hence, they resulted in arbitrary arrests for some protesters, e.g. in the region of Kidal (see MNLA 3.11.2011f). This reaction, marked as a violation of freedom of expression and other democratic rights, prompts MNLA leaders to send an appeal to the international community asking to finally consider "the question of Azawad". Moreover, in an "open letter to the Malian people", the MNLA once again justifies its commitment to the self-determination of Azawad with cultural[78] and historical reasons: As far back as the 19th century, the people of Azawad, had revolted against the French colonial power to defend its right to exist.[79] Given the fact that Azawad, after 50 years of independence from France, has to be considered as an unfree and dependent entity, fighting for self-determination is still necessary, the more so as the UN Charter and respective AU documents clearly confirm these rights (see MNLA 14.11.2011). Against this background, MNLA voices, at that point, believe the time had come "reanimate relations between the two people [i.e. Azawad and Mali] with warm-heartedness" (see MNLA 3.11.2011g; brackets added R.B.).

MNLA statements, too, deal with the consequences of the Libyan civil war. Sources in this section suggest that Tuareg and others returning from Libya to northern Mali should first and foremost be regarded as victims:

> "In Libya, the Tamasheq [i.e. Tuareg] people has become a scapegoat. It is blamed by all belligerents. The National Transitional Council views it as a supporter of the former Gadaffi regime. The pro-Gadaffi faction accuses it of supporting the popular revolution in the country." (MNLA 14.11.2011; brackets added R.B.)

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78   At various points in the text corpus, Azawad get represented as a coherent cultural entity. Here, once again, Azawad is characterised as a "socio-cultural, historic and economic continuum", basically including the Malian desert and, beyond that, ranging from the *Aïr Mountains* in Niger to Tanezrouft in Algiera (see MNLA 6.11.2011).

79   Nota bene: In the "Bataille de l'Epée" near Timbuktu in 1893, the French colonial army had been temporarily defeated by Azawad fighters (see also chapter 6.3 on the temporal dimension).

On this, the MNLA documents add that the Tuareg, in general, had never been mercenaries but official members of the Libyan military. The mercenaries story, in turn, is rejected as a deliberate campaign of disinformation aimed at discrediting the Tuareg and their cause (see MNLA 14.11.2011). Similarly, since there had been massive false information on the issue in the national and global public, the MNLA puts the record straight on behalf of ex-soldiers returning from Libya saying that they "have absolutely no intention to play along the game of AQMI" (see MNLA 28.11.2011).

MNLA announcements in November, despite all strong and clear words concerning self-determination, offer a bit of a non-confrontational or even conciliatory tone. Nevertheless, government statements do not show a direct reaction, neither to the demonstrations on November 1 nor to the open letter to all Malians. Instead, the president in person answers back to media reports addressing the fear of a postponement of presidential and parliamentary elections in 2012 due to deteriorating security situation (see above October 2011):

> "Get this straight to everybody's mind: we need to continue preparing the 2012 elections actively in order to have a successful change within the framework of transparent and impartial presidential and parliamentary elections and in accordance with the constitutional time frame. Whatever the situation may be, a new president of the Republic of Mali will definitely be elected." (GovMali 24.11.2011)

To the address of the media, ATT gives an additional piece of advice in return: Media work may be guided by "honesty, impartiality, moderateness, prudence, a sense of responsibility in collecting, processing and distribution of information" (GovMali 24.11.2011). According to other statements, the government underlines its firm intention to fight terrorism and improve the situation in northern Mali by way of strengthening cooperation with the four neighbouring countries and boosting PSPSDN, i.e. improving concrete living conditions in terms of security (especially presence of military and police) and economic development (particularly infrastructure and microfinance) for people on a local level (see GovMali 21.11.2011; 30.11.2011b).

However, in contrast, a few days later, the government reports that there had been a "terrorist attack" near Timbuktu on November 25 ending up with five European tourists kidnapped and one directly shot dead (see GovMali 26.11.2011). From the president's perspective, this has to be seen as an "attack on national security and stability". In an urgent appeal, without mentioning MNLA or AQMI at all, ATT thus makes clear:

> "We need to decisively engage to stay united in this challenge and to silence our spiteful and useless political quarrels. More than ever, we have to close our ranks on the basis of our fundamental objectives namely defending territorial integrity, national unity, social cohesion, and protection of property and persons. No Malian, whatever the origine, region or conviction may be, will ever accept to abandon these principles." (GovMali 27.11.2011)

In contrast to ATT's gentle breeze of threat towards those calling Mali's unity into question (see quote above, last sentence) most of the media reports in this section, after the

MNLA- initiated protests on November 1, describe Mali as standing on the brink of a new armed conflict in the north, as evidence in various reports suggests (see table 21).

Table 21: On the brink of a new armed conflict in the north

Indication	Source
a Libyan military unit, the "Bani Walid Division" (including heavy armament) joins the MNLA	El Watan/Maliweb 1.11.2011a
another movement, founded at about the same time as MNLA, the "Front Patriotique Arabe de l'Azawad" joins the MNLA	El Watan/Maliweb 1.11.2011a; see also Maliweb 25.10.2011b
in the aftermath of the demonstrations (Nov 1) further units of the Malian army are deployed to the north	El Watan/Maliweb 1.11.2011a
initimdated and threatened parts of the population in the north flee to the south; rising nationalism both in Mali and Azawad	Le Combat/Maliweb 4.11.2011a
virtually not one day without attacks on strategic aims of Malian infrastructure, especially military bases, and lootings	Le Combat/Maliweb 4.11.2011a; see also Le Combat/Maliweb 3.11.2011b
attack on the brigade in Aguel Hoc (Kidal region) with one death, Nov 1)	Le Prétoire/Maliweb 14.11.2011a
attack on the Malian army engineer camp in Aneffiss (Gao region), Nov 26	Le Malien/Maliweb 30.11.2011c
kidnapping of three European employees of a humanitarian organisation near the Algerian-Malian border	L'Aube/Maliweb 8.11.2011
kidnapping of two French geologists in Hombori (Mopti region, part of southern Mali), Nov 24	L'Indépendent/ Maliweb 25.11.2011a
kidnapping of five European tourists near Timbuktu, one shot dead during the confrontation, Nov 5	AFP/Maliweb 27.11.2011b
thousands of ex-soldiers, including special forces, of the Libyan military already having entered (northern) Mali and perturbing the sensitive balance of security	Mali Demain/ Maliweb 9.11.2011a ; Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 16.11.2011a
separatists no longe exclude an armed confrontation	Le Prétoire/Maliweb 10.11.2011
further Libyan army units joining the former Bahanga-faction and thus the MNLA	Le Combat/Maliweb 14.11.2011b
France deploys further troops, including attack helicopter units, to northern Mali to fight terror	TF1 News/ Maliweb 25.11.2011a
Cooperation between riparian states to fight terrorism in view of increasing number of kidnappings perceived as failed	AFP/Maliweb 27.11.2011b
incidences altogether (kidnappings, combat-related deaths etc.) can already be seen as state of war	Le Républicain/ Maliweb 28.11.2011b
ex-rebels, e.g. *Iyad Ag Ghaly*, declaredly turn away from the peace process	Le 22 Septembre/ Maliweb 28.11.2011f

Indication	Source
further high level soldiers desert from the Malian military, e.g. colonel *M'Bah Ag Moussa*; not clear if deserters join MNLA or Islamist groups	L'Essor/ Maliweb 29.11.2011f

(Own table)

In sum, media accounts picture a highly precarious situation in which, "in the manner of a bad remake of 2007, [...] the hatchet gets digged up again" (Le Combat/Maliweb 4.11.2011a) and northern Mali gets rapidly "afghanised" (El Watan/Maliweb 1.11.2011a). On the one hand, this situation is presented as a consequence of state absence or even "a veritable state failure in the north" (Le Républicain/Maliweb 3.11.2011). For example, according to the mayor of Bèr (Timbuktu region), PSPSDN resources reaching municipalities are "ridiculously little" in view of the challenges ahead (see Le Prétoire/Maliweb 17.11.2011d). As Le 22 Septembre (Maliweb 21.11.2011) notes, the settlement of Libyan ex-soldiers in different places in northern Mali would be "a serious mistake in terms of security policy" since the Malian state does de facto not exist outside the big towns in the north (see Le Potentiel/Maliweb 22.11.2011a; L'Inter de Bamako/Maliweb 22.11.2011b).

On the other hand, media comments qualify oil discoveries in the north (and the planned beginning of extractions in 2012) as an additional external factor fuelling not only domestic conflict about the exploitation of natural resources but also provoking Western desires and interests being at work in the region. It is assumed that Western states pursue a strategy of destabilisation in Libya and Mali to present themselves as a stabilising force later on and to ensure access to oil, gas and rare earths (see Le Combat/Maliweb 3.11.2011b; 4.11.2011a). From this perspective, kidnappings, transnational drug trafficking, the civil war in Libya, the rise of AQMI and, not least, the onset of a new (Tuareg) rebellion are developments tolerated, enabled or even promoted by Western, especially European countries[80] (see Le Potentiel/Maliweb 29.11.2011e).

Alike, INGO reports reflect observations of a deteriorating security situation. For ICG, continuing incidences of kidnapping give enough proof to set the highest warning level red for Mali (see ICG 1.12.2011). Concerning the conflict situation in Libya and its severe consequences for the Malian situation, HRW puts into play that *Saif Al Islam Gaddafi* had maybe entered Mali accompanied by Libyan ex-soldiers. Against this background, the Malian government is called upon by the UN to do everything to extradite Gaddafi's son, accused of war crimes, to the International Criminal Court (see HRW 1.11.2011).

December 2011

Again without mentioning the MNLA, government announcements pick up both the alignment of several units of ex-soldiers from Libya with rebel groups and the increasing

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80   As Nouvelle Libération (Maliweb 28.11.2011d) reports, the EU confirms its financial support for Malian development programmes, especially those adopting measures to improve the security situation and to promote civil society engagement in the north, in other words, PSPSDN measures.

number of desertions from the Malian military. From the authorities' perspective, its "policy of the helping hand", too, proves to be successful, as more and more expressions of loyalty by Tuareg commanders and soldiers (Imghad *and* Ifoghas[81]) from within the ranks of the former Libyan military towards the government would show (see GovMali 3.12.2011). One of these occasions is held in the presence of UN and AU representatives who had been sent to Libya and Mali as special envoys and negotiators (see GovMali 11.12.2011a; 30.12.2011b) and fulsomely presented in the following announcement:

> "The spokesman of the former Libyan army's soldiers descendant from the Ifoghas community confirmed the engagement of his brothers in arms for peace, security, and development of Northern Mali. The president welcomed the courageous initiative of the representatives of the Ifoghas community to support the process of peace and stability." (GovMali 22.12.2011)

Just as if in reaction to media reports in November 2011 focusing attention on the poor security situation and criticism of the government for it, government statements in December give priority to the presentation of successful actions: In this context, the security cabinet adopts measures to intensify police and military measures, for example to protect transportation axes and tourist hotspots. Consequently, according to the government, the kidnappers of the two French geologists on (see above on November 24) could have been arrested on December 8 (see GovMali 12.12.2011). In addition, the president's messages by the end of the year foreground positive results achieved, for example expressed by European and international development partners characterising Mali as a "model democracy"[82] or concerning the successful implementation of development projects (transportation infrastructure, telecommunications, employment programme, both within and beyond the context of PSPSDN) or, finally, concerning the proactive measures to counter an increasingly critical food supply due to a situation of prolonged draught in many parts of the country (see GovMali 30.12.2011b; 31.12.2011).

According to its announcements in December, MNLA's backing in Azawad continuously grows. It's not just that the MNLA refers to increasing support among the population and further deserters from the Malian army. Besides, a former secretary of the Malian government and Knight of the Malian Legion of Honour, *Hama Ag Mahmoud*, publicly declares his adherence to the MNLA:

> "Hama Ag Mahmoud declares that he offers all his experience to the MNLA in the interest of the people of Azawad, to achieve self-determination and the restauration of its disregarded rights." (MNLA 20.12.2011b)

Furthermore, according to Mahmoud cited in MNLA documents, it is crucial to put the cards on the table: In his view, the MNLA and the Malian state should organise self-deter-

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81   In this context, it bears mentioning that expressions of loyalty by Ifoghas members (see also GovMali 22.12.2011) could not have been expected to a greater extent since the Ifoghas, at that point, are still regarded as supporters of the Bahanga faction sabotaging the peace process.

82   These are the words of the German parliamentary president, *Norbert Lammert*, on the occasion of a state visit to Mali (see GovMali 8.12.2011).

mination of Azawad in order "to prevent a civil war". In this context, further statements emphasise that the MNLA has both a basic political structure of local civil cells already working and a full-grown military structure including a high command. Now, all these forces are called upon to organise a "strong mobilisation of all Azawadians to take part in the liberation of Azawad" (MNLA 9.12.2011).

In other MNLA publications in December, particular reasons are given as to why the population of Azawad should support self-determination and thus the MNLA at this specific time: First, the MNLA has evidence that the Malian government tolerates the resurgence of ethnic self-defence militias, as, for example, the "Ganda Koy"[83], which, together with special forces of the Malian army (e.g. the "Kokadie legion"), would already plan and implement ethnic expulsion of Tuareg in the north (see MNLA 28.12.2011). However, compared to the time of the rebellion in the 1990s, when Tuareg and Arabs had become victims of massacres still going unpunished, the situation is presented to be completely different: In 2011, the Tuareg would dispose of the means to fight back in a comprehensive way, both in terms of military capabilities[84] and political and legal knowledge concerning international (humanitarian) law (see MNLA 22.12.2011). Second, as the last 20 years of world history would show, many people successfully achieved independence, with East Timor being the latest example. Also, against the background of the Arab Spring[85], the international situation should be seen as favourable for those revolutions aiming at freedom and democracy (see MNLA 23.12.2011). Finally, according to the statements, support for the "Azawad project" had never been broader than at this point in time due to the obvious fact that mismanagement and corruption had finally destroyed Malian state institutions. Now, a campaign of disinformation and intimidation is to be expected, for the following purpose:

> "Since this apocalyptic policy had already been tested from 1991 to 1996, the Malian regime and its reactionary strategists firmly believe that they can reconcile the Malian people with its government by brandishing a flag of racial and ethnical war and thus deferring the date of the fateful next elections for a long time." (MNLA 28.12.2011)

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83   Nota bene: "Ganda Koy" means "masters of the land" in Songhay. It refers to a Songhay self-defence militia founded in the beginning of the 1990s in reaction to a worsening security situation within the framework of the Tuareg rebellion at that time. According to Thurston and Lebovich (2013: 23–24), Ganda Koy "reflected a strong racial animus toward Tuareg and the presence of 'white' populations along the Niger Bend. The Ganda Koy, operating with the complicity or possibly assistance of the Malian army, conducted mass killings of Tuareg and Arab civilians." As part of the peace process in the 1990s, Ganda Koy was dissolved in 1996 but reorganised itself formally in July 2012.

84   At this point, MNLA documents mention concrete weapon systems at the movement's disposal, e.g. short-range, surface-to-surface and surface-to-air missiles. In addition to earlier statements on weapons and equipment substantially enhanced by incoming ex-soldiers from Libya, MNLA voices also refer to captured weapons from Malian military bases (see MNLA 23.12.2011).

85   On this, there is a direct reference to an ATT statement in early December: "The Arab Spring could turn into very rough winter in our country." (GovMali 2.12.2011a)

The analysed media accounts in December can be divided in two main groups: On the one hand, there are contributions hanging on to a rather neutral and analytic reporting standard. On the other hand, there are those accounts directly reacting to MNLA announcements or actions, adopting political positions, offering clear interpretations in an unclear state of facts, and issuing recommendations of action.

The first group includes reports about local initiatives, for example in Gao, who try to ease rising tensions between ethnic communities, especially between dark-skinned sedentary groups (e.g. Songhay, Peuls) and light-skinned nomads (e.g. Tuareg, Arabs) (see Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb 1.12.2011a). Other accounts question MNLA's asserted power by elaborating on its internal heterogeneity and thus doubting the "hypothesis of a new rebellion" (see L'Indicateur du Renouveau/Maliweb 7.12.2011b). Moreover, in contrast to many presentations, the group of ex-soldiers from Libya would be much less numerous and dangerous than commonly thought (see Le Prétoire/Maliweb 22.12.2011a). Still other contributions deal with the precarious security situation and retrospectively explain it by referring to the Algiers Accord of 2006 which had not been fully implemented, for example concerning the installation of composite security forces in northern Mali which had never been realised.[86] And finally there are media pieces about how civil society expresses itself with differentiated views on the situation in northern Mali: One example is a report about solidarity protests of young Malians (including members of ethnic groups living in the north) in Bamako on December 8 in order to support the government (see Mali Demain/Maliweb 15.12.2011b). Another example is the coverage of the congress of the "Party for National Rebirth" in Bamako on December 10–11 on "the crises in the Sahelian zone".[87] According to Le Malien (Maliweb 17.12.2011), the participants of the congress (i. a. representatives of different civil society organisations and other political parties) conclude by speaking up for a "democratic and inclusive governance" and thus recommend to locally involve all ethnic groups in politics and administration in order to create collective security and to solve the crisis in the north.

In the second group, too, reports refer to specific events, particularly attacks against Malian military and civil facilities in order to spread big messages and recommendations of action: So, reporting about an attack on police stations in Bourem and Tarkint on November 28 serves as a prelude to bring out the comment that ex-soldiers from the Libyan military are responsible for the situation in the north – which is unbearable for true Malian patriots (see Zénith Balé/Maliweb 2.12.2011d). In the same way, an unconfirmed announcement about a Malian military convoy, i.e. a massive redeployment of

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86   This point is attributed to *Ibrahim Boubakar Keïta* ("IBK") who declared to run for president in 2012 (additional information beyond the text corpus: IBK finally became president in 2013) and increasingly criticises ATT openly. As Le Zénith Balé (Maliweb 10.12.2011b) states, IBK makes a plea for rediscovering the basic values of the Malian society, i.e. tolerance and peace, but also for a reorganisation of the military in the light of drug trafficking and terrorism.

87   Nota bene: The "Parti pour la Renaissance Nationale" (PARENA) is a Malian political party created in 1995 by activists promoting democracy. During the mandate of ATT, the PARENA ranks among the smaller Malian political opposition parties. In the 2007 presidential elections, its candidate only combined three percent of votes.

troops, beginning to move towards the three northern regions gets released with a comment saying that "now all ingredients are there to set the whole region on fire". This, in turn, gets linked to the information that the Malian military command increasingly disapproves the president's strategy (see Nouvelle Libération/Maliweb 6.12.2011b). Likewise, the attack on a PSPSDN construction site for a military base in Abeïbara on December 3 whereby workers had been threatened with death by alleged Tuareg rebels in case they would continue their work is followed by an extensive assessment: There is a majority of people in Mali who do not agree with the president's lax course in northern Mali and, in general, with far-reaching concessions that have been made to the Tuareg since the beginning of the 2006 peace process. According to the perspective of these sources, the Tuareg represent a minority among the ethnic groups in the north and, then again, all ethnic groups in the north taken together represent a minority in Mali as a whole. In sum, these considerations would lead to the inescapable insight that a whole country is taken as a hostage by a very small group of people (see Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 7.12.2011c; 7.12.2011d).[88] Finally, against the background of this atmosphere, there is a number of reports using explicit war rhetorics which thus correspond to similar rhetorics in government and MNLA communication (see above e.g. GovMali 27.11.2011; MNLA 23.12.2011):

> "From now on, given the accumulation of attacks and kidnappings, Northern Mali is almost a war zone." (Le Zénith Balé/Maliweb 2.12.2011d)

> "The highest [Malian] authorities seem to adapt the motto saying: 'If you want peace prepare for war'. (Novelle Libération/Maliweb 6.12.2011b)

> "[ATT], as never before, stands with the back to the wall. In his situation, only one solution seems to open up: war, nothing but war!" (Waati/Maliweb 8.12.2011b)

> "War to impose peace – Instead of making oneself understood among groupuscules that not give a damn about the future of Mali, ATT has to impose peace. This works out by a cleansing of the Northern part of the country." (Waati/Maliweb 8.12.2011b)

This rhetoric is accompanied by reports blaming networks of drugs trafficking and Islamist groups as originators of attacks and kidnapping and thereby again referring to links between Polisario[89] and AQMI (see AFP/Maliweb 15.12.2011a; Le Malien/Maliweb 20.12.2011). In this vein, the accusation of pursuing an overly lax strategy in northern Mali gets reinforced. All the more, as Algeria which is presented as having an ambivalent relation to AQMI deploys anti-terrorist units on Malian territory[90] while AQMI de facto seems to become stronger day by day (see Le Prétoire/Maliweb 22.12.2011a), resulting in headlines like the following:

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88   Media coverage on the "Tuareg attack" on the street between Kolokani and Tioribougou (southern Mali) on December 11, too, fits this frame (see Le Républicain/Maliweb 15.12.2011c).

89   For background information concerning Polisario see above Phase I/December 2010.

90   An ICG report (2.01.2012), too, mentions the presence of Algerian anti-terrorist units in Mali as a important factor fuelling a further escalation of the situation in northern Mali.

"In Northern Mali, it's AQMI who governs." (Le Républicain/Maliweb 13.12.2011a)

As an entirely new element in the text corpus, media reports in December deal with two newly founded Islamist groups: "The Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa" (MU-JAO), presented as breakaway faction of AQMI already active in kidnappings in Niger and Mali (see AFP/Maliweb 12.12.2011a) and "Ansar al-Dine" (Arabic for "Defenders of Faith"), a jihadist movement, too, that is presented as a locally founded Islamist movement, surprisingly initiated, according to media accounts, by *Iyad Ag Ghaly*, a Tuareg (Ifoghas) from Kidal who had already been active in the 1990s rebellion (see Le Prétoire/Maliweb 27.12.2011; see also above, section on November 2011, and below, chapter 6.3/Media and INGOs).

January 2012

The analysis of the last government documents within the investigation period paints the picture of a government that attends its ordinary business and acts in an unperturbed and solution-oriented manner. This is backed up by the example of ATT's state visit to India which involved the conclusion of a new economic agreement particularly including investments in the agricultural sector (see GovMali 9.01.2012). Another example is the the government's presentation of an emergency response plan for food supply and animal feed in case of an eventual shortage[91], a scenario that is, at that point, understood as a general security crisis, too (see GovMali 6.01.2012).

Still without any direct reference to the MNLA, the government presents itself as resolutely acting in view of the situation in northern Mali. In this sense, ATT, in his New Year's address, explains that the security situation in the north, after the incident in Timbuktu on November 25 (four European tourists kidnapped, one killed by the kidnappers), is under control. "An immediate answer" would be given to this challenge by cooperating even more closely with riparian countries in the Sahelian zone and by accelerating PSPSDN. With the measures adopted, according to ATT, Mali can pass the next important test for the resilience of its democracy, namely the elections in 2012 (see GovMali 6.01.2012). And besides, notwithstanding the general "security psychosis" (GovMali 5.01.2012), tourists would begin to return to Timbuktu.[92]

On January 17, the government's assessment of the situation changes abruptly. Against the background of the incidents in Ménaka, the ministry of defence writes:

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[91]   As L'Indicateur du Renouveau (Maliweb 14.12.2011b) notes, already in December, Oxfam had published a report that was picked up in many media accounts. Therein, Oxfam sounds the alarm since the Malian production of food had decreased by 25 percent (see also GovMali 31.12.2011 and, on the occasion of the national annual farmers convention, GovMali 9.05.2011a).

[92]   Later on, even after the attacks on Ménaka, the government points out that the region of Timbuktu, despite security concerns, was able to host the "Festival au Désert" on January 12–14, 2012 (see GovMali 19.01.2012a). On this, some media accounts highlight that even *Bono*, the international rockstar, participated in the festival (see AFP/Maliweb 15.01.2012a). A short video of Bono's performance at the festival can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N1n_3OsJZlU , accessed March 23, 2020.

> "[…] Around 6 a.m., assailants involving soldiers returned from Libya joined by other units that became known as National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad attacked the town of Ménaka in the region of Gao. The counterstrike of army and security forces supported by a squadron of combat helicopters and army aviators registers the following results: On the side of the assailants, 6 vehicles destroyed, numerous deaths and injured persons, assailants arrested. On the side of the military one death is deplored." (GovMali 17.01.2012)

In fact, this the first official announcement in which Malian authorities explicitly refer to the MNLA. In the days that followed, the responsibility for the attacks is attributed to the MNLA, the "secessionist movement" founded in November 2011. Moreover, government sources speculate about an eventual involvement of Islamist groups. According to further statements, however, the situation had been brought under control by the Malian military reinforced by army units from other regions.[93] As the government assures, in that very moment, the whole region gets combed through thoroughly in order to guarantee security again (see GovMali 19.01.2012a).

MNLA statements in January 2012 issued until the attacks on Ménaka on January 17 basically deal with giving arguments to justify the main goal of the newly founded MNLA – liberating Azawad from Malian rule – to the address of the Malian society and the international community. To this end, the MNLA published *Moussa Ag Assarid*'s detailed declaration of accession[94] from which, in place of many other points brought forward, the most referred to are presented here (see MNLA 3.01.2012b; numeration taken over from the original declaration):

1. the non-consideration of nomad children in Malian education programmes since 1960;
2. the omnipresent corruption in Mali;
3. a general militarisation of Mali's administration;
4. the poor management of Mali's school system;
5. the violation of treaties signed by Mali, such as the "Pacte National" (1992);
6. a policy of splitting ethnic communities in order to pretend problem solving in Northern Mali;
7. an outrageous laxity of the Malian state concerning the fight against terrorism;
8. a constitutional referendum at taxpayers' expense imposed by the head of state.

For Assarid, the quintessence of his engagement for the MNLA is that there is a deep desire for independence across society in northern Mali which feeds on the perception that

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93   This conflicts with MNLA statements and media reports claiming that the area around Ménaka is controlled by the MNLA (see e.g. MNLA 17.01.2012; L'Indicateur du Renouveau/Maliweb 18.01.2012c).

94   Nota bene: *Moussa Ag Assarid*, born 1975 in a Tuareg camp between Timbuktu and Gao, is a writer, a politician, a journalist and a comedian holding both a Malian and a French citizenship. From 2011 to 2016, he served as MNLA's representative in Europe, based in Paris. Assarid's best-known book is entitled "Y a pas d'embouteillage dans le désert!", or in English: There are no Traffic Jams in the Desert!

the peace process, all the fine speeches about cultural diversity, and development efforts had not brought a true improvement of living conditions in the north. In this context, the Tuareg's everyday life (e.g. concerning water supply, health care system, education, life expectancy) remains at a "medieval level" and PSPSDN should be seen as "a farce" (MNLA 3.01.2012a; 10.01.2012). In addition, the frequently invoked democratic culture of dialogue and exchange and the idea of equality before the law is not existent. Instead, an attitude of order and obedience, intimidation, and contempt towards the population in the north prevails within the ranks of the central government (see MNLA 1.01.2012; 12.01.2012). Furthermore, according to Assarid's declaration, the Malian government is a clandestine beneficiary of social imbalance and insecurity in Azawad since it is involved in cross-border crime and it tolerates terrorists and, as a consequence, the expulsion of Tuareg from the northern regions (see MNLA 9.01.2012).

According to the analysed documents, the road ahead for the MNLA at that moment is quite clear. Inspired by the Arab Spring, at this point, the timing is seen as being proper "to express Azawad's forces and to take control of its own destiny" (MNLA 8.01.2012a). In other words, all ethnic groups in the north, especially the younger generation are called upon to unite and to risk "the noble cause of revolution", not only in its armed dimension but also, and even more important, as a political and social "revolution of mentalities" (MNLA 10.01.2012) to overcome a system that had been built on lies, the Malian state:

> "It's up to us, brothers and sisters of Northern Mali, Songhay, Arabs, Peuls, Kel Tamasheq, to liberate our Azawadian people from the burden of ignorance and the central power of Bamako. […] To be clear to all Northerners regardless of the ethnic group: there is no half peace and no half war. Some cannot live in peace while others are at war. Don't forget that our history and destiny are linked by blood, by our land and by our common relations to the rest of the world." (MNLA 3.01.2012b)

Furthermore, against the background of massive Malian troop movements to the north, MNLA statements consider all efforts to solve the situation through dialogue as eventually failed. As MNLA spokesman *Hama Ag Sid-Ahmed* confirms, armed conflict is imminent:

> "Dialogue broke off. Malian authorities are just deploying tanks and thousands of soldiers to the North. We are in a recrudescence of an armed conflict between Bamako and the Tuareg." (MNLA 9.01.2012)

In this context, further MNLA statements again come up with doubts as to the "car accident story" of Bahanga's death on August 26 (see e.g. AFP/Maliweb 27.08.2011b). Accordingly, Bahanga was allegedly killed by Malian special forces from an ambush – a fact which had been perceived as an extreme furtiveness and provocation way beyond the Tuareg community alone. In sum, the MNLA makes clear that the movement is ready to constitute Azawad as a state of its own with a functioning government and including all spheres of political, economic, and social life. To this end, the MNLA, at this point in time, already disposes of a political and military organisation which make it possible to provide law and order for the population of Azawad, especially protection against vi-

olence. In other words, after its declaration of war against AQMI in October (see above section on October 2011; MNLA 30.10.2011), the MNLA confirms to be able to confront the Malian military as well as to create a bulwark against AQMI terrorism which had already absorbed Libyan arms and fighters.[95]

MNLA releases in the days prior to the attack on Ménaka on January 17 leave no doubt about MNLA's perception of the Malian government's actions in the beginning of January. They are understood as "Mali's declaration of war against the people of Azawad" (MNLA 12.01.2012) and thus provoke countermeasures:

> "President Amadou Toumani Touré straightforwardly reveals his preference for a violent confrontation to the detriment of political dialogue. […] solely the president and the local militia under his control bear the heavy responsibility of triggering a violent upheaval in Azawad. […] Now, the people of Azawad will claim the right to self defence in reaction to this military invasion." (MNLA 12.01.2012; see also Introduction)

Moreover, ATT and his administration are not only accused of having consequently rejected any offer of dialogue but also having conjured up a violence-prone and chaotic atmosphere in order to present itself as the only legitimate ordering power later on: by medial and diplomatic manoeuvres insinuating a link between MNLA, AQMI and drug traffickers; by inciting and arming parts of civil society (e.g. the Ganda Koy citizens' militia); by permanent patrolling of combat aircrafts and deliberate attacks on civilians by the military and other security forces, e.g. raids, confiscations, personal humiliations (see MNLA 14.01.2012). Against this background, the MNLA states to be determined to defend itself and to recapture Azawad:

> "After severe hostilities including the use of heavy weapons, since a few hours, the town of Ménaka is under control of the movement's military command." (MNLA 17.01.2012)

As pointed out in the analysed sources, the MNLA presents itself convinced about having conducted a prudent military action in Ménaka without any civilian victims. There is a commitment to continue this kind of actions as long as Mali and the international community recognise Azawad (see MNLA 17.01.2012). And finally:

> "These actions have only one objective: regaining peace and justice for the Azawad community and stability for our region." (MNLA 17.01.2012)

By the end of the investigation period, the analysis of media coverage suggests that there is far less clarity and definiteness in assessing the situation than in the weeks and months before. First, there is a number of reports dealing with AQMI: Following L'Indicateur du Renouveau (Maliweb 4.01.2012), for example, AQMI attacks on military bases shoud be seen as a definitive proof that fighting terrorism had been largely unsuccessful in Mali.

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95   By its own account, the MNLA has approximately 1.000 soldiers and 40 well-trained officers under its command (see MNLA 9.01.2012).

Hence, AQMI had finally managed to make the Sahelian zone a safe haven for terrorists. Moreover, according to this source, even the massive armament of Western militaries also operating on site is not able the change the situation significantly, as continuing kidnapping shows. With regard to the Malian troop movements to the north[96], media accounts even cite AQMI threats against the Malian government and Western countries (whose nationals are still kidnapped by AQMI):

> "We issue a warning to France, UK, the Netherlands and Sweden: If you authorise this operation [Malian troop deployment to the north], this means the death of your nationals for whom you have the responsibility." (AFP/Maliweb 13.01.2012)

As it is depicted in government and MNLA statements, too, media reports confirm that small and highly mobile AQMI units are able to move freely while carrying a huge amount of Libyan arms along to Mali (e.g. surface to air missiles) which could be applied straightforwardly (see Libération/Maliweb 7.10.2012). Furthermore, other accounts sketch the danger of AQMI getting increasingly stronger by incoprorating more and more ex-soldiers from the Libyan army[97] and then becoming a part of a resurgent Tuareg rebellion in the north (see Nouvelle Libération/Maliweb 11.01.2012) which aims at creating an Islamic state (see Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb 12.01.2012b).

Other media accounts, however, do still *not* establish a link between AQMI and an MNLA-led rebellion. In contrast, by bringing up an interview with the newly joined MNLA spokesman and well-known France-based writer Assarid (see abvove), for example, it is stated that the MNLA, at its core, constitutes a political movement, in which the idea of an eventual cooperation with terrorists is completely rejected as a deliberate disinformation (see Ouest-France/ Maliweb 10.01.2012; see also above MNLA declaration of war against AQMI). In the same vein, there are media reports pointing to the "Festival au désert", which took place with high security measures and, unfortunately, very few international guests. Yet, the festival is presented as a cultural festival strongly identified with the northern populations and as a significant symbolic event "to say no to terrorism", as a young Tuareg participant framed his motivation (see AFP/Maliweb 15.01.2012a).

And finally, besides those media contributions applauding the government for demonstrating military strength (especially via troop deployment to the north; see

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96   Just on January 15, media reports tell about "500 soldiers, 200 military vehicles and 4 combat aircrafts" that are to be deployed to the north (see Ankamali/Maliweb 15.01.2012b; see also MNLA statements referring to "thousands of soldiers and tanks"; MNLA 9.01.2012).

97   On the one hand, there are reports in this last phase dealing with returnees from Libya (e.g. a unit led by colonel *Ewazague Ag Emakadey*, former part of the Libyan military's high command, numbering at least about 300 soldiers) who declare their loyalty to the Malian state, even in a public forum (see e.g. Mali Demain/Maliweb 3.01.2012a). On the other hand, representatives of the returnees from Libya, estimated at a number of 13.965 children, women and men at that time, express their dissatisfaction about the "catastrophic conditions of their returning and reception in Mali" (Le Républicain/Maliweb 3.01.2012b) which even reinforces the latent suspicion against returnees who are by a large majority members of the Tuareg (see e.g. Nouvelle Libération/Maliweb 11.01.2012).

Ankamali/Maliweb 15.01.2012b), there is a number of reports critical of the government, too: For example those pointing to the observation that development efforts via PSPSDN indeed had been funded by enormous sums but, in turn, had not brought the expected progress due to misappropriation of funds by local persons in charge.[98] Following the analysed media sources, all of this leads to the current situation of the MNLA whose claim of self-determination, at this point, is more present and supported than ever before (see Le Prétoire/Maliweb 12.01.2012a). Based on this assessment of its own strength, on January 17, the MNLA risks the attack on the Malian state.

The day after the attacks on Ménaka, there are contradictory media announcements about what happened (and still happens) on the ground. According to some reports, the Malian military has gained control in and around Ménaka. Other reports tell the same about the MNLA. Spokesman Assarid in Paris, for example, is cited as officially claiming the successful attack for the MNLA while, at the same time, government voices are cited as referring to a massive Malian defence that led to a "shameful defeat of the insurgents" who are anyway not supported by a majority of the population in the north (see L'Indicateur du Renouveau/Maliweb 18.01.2012c). So, in the light of the first MNLA attack on January 17, future expectations to the address of the lax Malian government become increasingly clear:

> "We are supporters of a heavy-handed method, of a state's legitimate use of violence in order to restore its authority and preserve the national unity. […] The time of hollow words is over. ATT has to proceed to concrete acts or to resign. To be continued." (Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb 18.01.2012d)

With this media commentary including a clear expectation of stronger measures to be taken towards those disputing national unity, the portrayal of the key themes of the conflict discourse ends. The detailed illustration of these themes, set within conflict communication, is based on the first part of codings of the text corpus. Building on this, the following section on the temporal dimension of conflict communication adds another facet.

6.3 The Temporality of an Unfinished Independence

> "The temporal dimension is constituted by the fact that the difference between before and after, which can be experienced in all events, […] is extended into the past and the future." (Luhmann 1995: 77–78)

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98   In this context, it is reiterated that various actors who offer "good offices" (e.g. intermediaries, mediators, negotiants) may have no interest in sustainable security in the north but rather in continuing or even fuelling conflicts in order to be able to offer their services further on and to protect their lucrative business (see Le Prétoire/Maliweb 12.01.2012a).

Communication about the Malian crisis, too, includes ever specific characterisations of the present.[99] Thereby the present, or, more precisely, the experiencing of the present from different observing perspectives is structured according to varying differentiations of before and after. This section highlights the central tags of the Malian crisis's temporal dimension based on the analysed text corpus.

Based on the analysis of the text corpora, the overview of codings in the temporal dimension shows one common thread running through: the actual communication in the here and now of the conflict is full of historical references and references addressing the future which more or less explicitly revolve around the topics of self-determination, autonomy/ heteronomy and independence. Thereby, various aspects of the topic area get actualised: from the Malian independence in 1960 and its development since then to a latent request of self-determination of ethnic groups living across national borders to independent media in a democratic society. On this, it can also be noted as a preliminary point that many statements show a certain expression of incompleteness and unfinishedness attributed to actors.

The following sections show the development of communication in a temporal dimension with a view to three conflict phases and, in addition, on the basis of three separate presentations of sources group codings. In doing so, it becomes evident how certain aspects of the past are actualised at a given moment of the conflict's present and, accordingly, how plans and ideas about the future are condensed in the here and now of the conflict.

A Malian Success Story: "Peace, conviviality and social cohesion"

Phase I (Nov 2010 – August 2011)

Based on the analysis of government documents, communication in the temporal dimension, in phase I, is characterised by continuous discursive references to the "cinquantenaire", the 50th anniversary of the independent Malian state.[100] Already beginning in June 2010, Mali celebrated its jubilee along a number of occasions throughout a whole year (i.e. officially until June 2011). In addition to what has already been outlined in the previous chapter, the narrative of Mali being a fifty-year success story serves as a discursive baseline for many government statements on Mali's present situation issued during phase I. Hence, statements attributed to the government show four main threads of temporal references: (1) modernisation and progress; (2) cultural diversity; (3) global values and international cooperation; (4) heroism and patriotism.

(1) Referring to the achievements of the last 50 years, government statements use the term "modernisation" to outline the Malian "nation-building" in the political, economic

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99   The ideas expressed in these lines as well as the introductory citation to this subsection quite similarly appeared at the beginning of chapter 5.3 within the context of the case study on the Maidan protests.

100   Together with Senegal, Mali achieved its independence from France in June 1960 by forming the "Federation of Mali" (including present-day Senegal and Mali). In August 1960, Senegal withdraw form the federation to constitute a nation state of its own. In September 1960, Modibo Keïta became the first president of the Republic of Mali (see Thurston and Lebovich 2013: 18–19).

and social sector. Often-cited examples include the expansion of jurisdictional infrastructure (see GovMali 6.11.2010), the promotion of the freedom of the media (see GovMali 28.12.2010a), the functionality of the state of law (see GovMali 21.06.2011a) and, as a consequence thereof, the holding of democratic elections in accordance with the constitution (see GovMali 13.06.2011a). On this, without citing concrete numbers, the president himself states:

> "To this day, the recorded results from different branches and sectors are remarkable. They have to be entirely attributed to the people of Mali, which has every reason to be proud." (GovMali 20.12.2010)

Looking back at the positive development of the last 50 years within the context of cinquantenaire seem to be an indirect reaction to both MNA statements and media reports which point to the Malian state's lack of action concerning the poor development in the north. Thus, it had been possible to talk along "the best from the past" while orienting development towards the socio-economic progress of all parts of the Malian nation (see GovMali 31.12.2010b; 4.01.2011). In this context, as government documents highlight, development efforts had been initiated and led to success not just since PSPSDN. Even before, there had been holistic approaches combining the development of basic infrastructure (water, energy, health etc.) with security aspects.[101]

(2) In a second dominant thread during phase I, historical elements of a common Malian cultural heritage get linked to the present situation. This becomes obvious, for example, on the occasion of a cinquantenaire ceremony in Tarkint (Gao region) on December 16, 2010, where a camel race is hold in the presence of ATT.[102] As government reports on the event outline, ATT associates remarks on the camel, the "mystic desert animal" that symbolically represents the human struggle against the forces of nature, with an explicit appreciation of the population in the north:

> "[This solemnity] is about honouring the women and men of the desert who cultivate among themselves the values of endurance, bravery, courage, resilience, and fidelity. They share these values with their inseparable companions: the camels." (GovMali 16.12.2010)

Similarly, the president addresses the population in Kidal on February 8, 2011, in the run-up to the Flame of Peace ceremony (see above chapter 6.2/phase I/February 2011). Following ATT's speech, people in Kidal region, whether light-skinned or dark-skinned, "embody those values in their culture [...] and thus have a special place in the national community" (see GovMali 7.02.2011). Beyond these examples of explicit appreciations of Malian "partial cultures" in public speeches, there is a continuous narrative of cultural

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101   At this point, ATT mentions the circumstances of the 2007 presidential elections. According to ATT, he managed to get another mandate because a majority of Malians was convinced of his ideas about Mali's future development, e.g. within the framework of the "Projet pour le Développement Economique et Social" (PDES) (see GovMali 4.05.2011b).

102   The presidency offers a reward of up to one million CFA-franc for the winner of the camel race (see GovMali 16.12.2010).

diversity being an essential trait and value enshrined in Mali's history, society and politics: This includes, for example, references to a policy of decentralisation (as part of a development strategy) implemented for 10 years. Beyond symbolic actions[103], this policy consists of promoting culture, broad in scope and decentralised (see support of cultural centres, CLACs, in rural areas; see above, chapter 6.2) which is literally qualified as an African role model (see GovMali 17.03.2011b). According to government documents, this becomes obvious when looking at the history of the biennials, i.e. the national cultural festival taking place every two years at varying locations. As it is highlighted, the biennials, since the first in the 1960s, are crucial for the celebration of the Malian culture, because they represent

> "the most beautiful occasions to exchange and to give rise to fraternal feelings, social cohesion and the stimulation of cultural and artistical creativity." (GovMali 20.12.2010)

As a visible symbol of cultural and, in this context, linguistic diversity, government sources point out that a new version of the national anthem had been released within the framework of the cinquantenaire festivities including eight of the languages spoken in Mali. As ATT makes clear, this is to raise awareness about the fact the Malians are heirs of a long-standing cultural treasure (see GovMali 31.12.2010a). This precious treasure consists of different parts that should be preserved as a whole, as references to the major importance of religious traditions show (e.g. the annual Muslim pilgrimage "Ziyara" on May 7–8; see chapter 6.2/phase I/May 2011; see also GovMali 9.05.2011b). Likewise, long way before the founding of the Malian state and even before European colonialism, science, especially philosophy, had been playing a key role in Malian and West African culture and history (see particularly the manuscripts of the historical university of Timbuktu; Gov Mali 22.06.2011). Finally, ATT illustrates this point within the framework of a state visit to France on the occasion of a vernissage dedicated to the Dogon culture in the Quai Branly Museum in Paris in July 2011:

> "We celebrate a vision of the world, which proclaims the complementarity of cultures and not the clash of civilisations." (GovMali 13.07.2011)

Hence, as government statements repeatedly recall, the multicultural Malian self-image is necessarily opposed to any idea of a supposed inevitable "clash of civilisations".[104]

(3) The third thread of temporal references in phase I is about Mali's international relations. Therefore, in view of its understanding of cultures outlined above, government

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103   On December 30, 2010, the Malian council of ministers, for the first time, met outside of the capital to set a practical example of decentralisation. On the occasion of the Biennale 2010 (see details below), it took place in Sikasso and discussed the topic of decentralisation (see GovMali 30.12.2010).

104   Although not quoted explicitly, this expression was most probably used to refer to Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, published in 1996 and elaborating on the subsequently much-contradicted thesis of an inevtiable and violent confrontation of cultures.

statements characterise Mali as a kind of cosmopolitan society that is naturally linked to the world and engaged in cooperation with many international partners. In this context, the analysed documents mention cross-border relations of communities within West Africa, rooted in history, ethnicity, and migration, particularly with regard to Senegal, Liberia and Sierra Leone since these countries became independent at about the same time in the 1960s (see GovMali 18.04.2011; 29.04.2011a/b). At various points within the text corpus, government documents refer to the history, size and grandeur of past epochs, such as the time of the Mali Empire (1235–1670)[105], and the obligation of current generations to feel as heirs and thus as guardians of this heritage (see e.g. GovMali 16.04.2011).

Beyond that, a number of references deal with the good relations to France, the former colonial power, other Western states and states in West Africa, for example within the context of fighting terrorism in the Sahelian zone or the further development of regional integration within the framework of ECOWAS and qualify Mali as a reliable and open-minded partner (see GovMali 22.01.2011; 31.01.2011b). As such, Malian authorities understand Mali (at least since 1991) as being on a clear path of democratisation (see GovMali 16.04.2011), integrated in a network of longstanding cooperation with a number of international organisations (see GovMali 4.01.2011; 14.04.2011) and signatory of all relevant UN conventions and treaties (see GovMali 21.06.2011b). In this context, on several occasions during the anniversary year, government statements point to the unique Malian historical contribution to modern human rights: the *Charter of Kouroukan Fouga* of 1236, one of the oldest human rights documents.[106] And finally, a remarkable point against the background of claims concerning the autonomy of northern Mali: to the address of the entire diplomatic corps at the beginning of the year, the government announces its firm intention to further support the foundation of a Palestinian state and speaks in high terms of the Palestinian leadership having struggled for a long time to peacefully settle the conflict with Israel (see GovMali 3.01.2011).

(4) Finally, in phase I, the most emphatic temporal references are those recalling heroism and evoking patriotism. According to the analysed documents, the tendency to refer to patriotic heroes as landmarks of the own history goes back to the *Battle of Logo Sabouciré* (Kayes region, south-eastern part of Mali) of 1878 when Malian troops revolted against "French penetration" for the first time and, at great cost of life, failed (see GovMali 16.12.2010). Any other mention of the Malian independence in phase I bristles with references to a long way of great suffering and sacrifice that had finally led into an independent Malian state. As ATT states to the address of the younger generation on the occasion of the biennials 2010, these sacrifices have to be paid honour and respect:

105　Nota bene: The Mali Empire covered an area from the actual Senegal, Gambia to parts of Guinea-Conakry, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso and most of the Malian territory. During the 15th century, the Songhay Empire (11th century-1591) gradually superseded the Malian Empire as hegemonic power in West Africa.

106　See e.g. GovMali (16.12.2010, 7.02.2011d). Nota bene: Proclaimed as the constitution of the newly established Mali Empire in 1236, the *Charter of Kouroukan Fouga* or *Manden-Charter* contains fundamental principles, such as equality of human beings or the integrity of the human body. In 2009, the charter was inscribed on the *Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity* of the UNESCO.

"Our thoughts once again turn to those who courageously and determinedly opposed colonial penetration and foreign domination with might and main. Those who resisted accepted the ultimate sacrifice in the name of liberty, honour and dignity. They deserve our eternal tribute, our appreciation and admiration." (GovMali 20.12.2010)

Based on that, according to other government statements, learning from the past means that "the Malian people has to reconcile with itself" and "should not build its future on feelings of revenge" (GovMali 20.12.2010; see also GovMali 7.02.2011d).

At the same time, the analysis revealed a golden thread running through cinquantenaire appreciations: the military is presented as a backbone of the independent Malian state and thus as part of the self-image of its leaders, beginning with the first president, the "father of the nation", Modibo Keïta[107], up to ATT (see GovMali 17.05.2011; 14.06.2011; 14.08.2011). In this context, the documents highlight a military or even belligerent tradition which formed the great empires in West Africa prior to colonial times. Malian patriotism is therefore still shaped by a certain pursuit of former greatness. In this sense, the Malian military represents a bearer of this legacy and, "in perfect harmony with the people", serves as guarantor of independence (see GovMali 25.12.2010a).[108] According to the Malian government, the following dates are particularly importnant for the military's self-understanding (see table 22).

Table 22: Key dates for the military

1964	Ifoghas Tuareg rebellion, Kidal region; military gets tasked with "defending the integrity of the national territory"
1968	coup d'etat of the military; seizing power by a military comitee; well received by population due to poor economic situation
1972/ 1973	severe droughts in the Sahelian zone; military assures provision of food and water by air in the northern regions
1991	17 military officers (including ATT) arrest the president and suspend the constitution as a consequence of mass protests for democracy
1991/ 1992	Tuareg rebellion; military as guarantor of the new constitution; conflict leads to peace agreement, the "National Pact"
2006	military is confronted with a mutiny, then a rebellion in Kidal region; conflict management combines dialogue and military measures leading to peace agreement "Algiers Accord"

(Own table based on GovMali 19.01.2011b)

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107 Modibo Keïta (1915–1977), a socialist, served as Mali's first president from 1960 until his overthrow in the military coup of 1968. A major politician in the post-World War II period, he was mayor of Bamako in the late 1950s (see Thurston and Lebovich 2013: 38).

108 In addition, the Malian military had also been engaged in the Panafrican cause, i.e. in supporting liberation movement in the whole of Africa, for example in Algeria, South Africa, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Congo (see GovMali 19.01.2011b).

In sum, it can be stated that the military is not only understood as a practical instrument to defend territorial integrity and national unity but also as a key symbol of identification and integration embodying the Malian state, beginning with its foundation to its successful socio-economic development to its consolidation as a multicultural society:

> "Our military has reached maturity. It proved to be a melting pot of our national identity." (GovMali 19.01.2011b)

Furthermore, as ATT argues on the occasion of the cinquantenaire and Flame of Peace ceremony in Kidal on February 7–8, those "fallen on the field of honour" and "died a hero's death for their home country" have to be highly valued since they contributed to peace, in Kidal region and beyond (see GovMali 7.02.2011d). Appreciating the military combined with patriotic pleas to continue the way of reconciliation is a recurring element in phase I, at last when commissioning new policemen and gendarmes in July (see GovMali 8.07.2011; 22.07.2011).

Phase II (Aug 2011 – Oct 2011)

The beginning of phase II is marked by the death of Ag Bahanga which is, in the first place, not commented by the government (see also chapter 6.2/phase II). Instead, government documents describe the here and now as an increasingly critical situation due to a growing number of terrorist activities and a worsening crisis in Libya. In the course of this, three historical contexts get activated. First, government releases point out the imperative to continuously develop democratic institutions, obviously as a reaction to critical comments on the government's constitutional reform plans. According to these statements, ATT highlights that he would definitely not run for president again (which would anyway be illegal) – a circumstance that should be seen as giving proof of politicians not at all aiming at the preservation of power. Therefore, the development of the democratic system follows an intrinsic motivation and can only succeed with the participation of all social and political players in Mali (see GovMali 6.09.2011).

Second, the commemoration day of September 22 (51st anniversary of the independent Malian state) gets used to celebrate the inauguration of the China-Mali Friendship Bridge across Niger in Bamako. As ATT's addresses (and the reporting on it) around this day show, this symbolic date in Malian history does not only serve to present an important infrastructural project of modernisation. Against the background of a project that had been realised with Chinese investments only, it is also used to document a new form of independence or, in other words, a kind of emancipation from dominant Western investments and economic relations (see GovMali 22.09.2011).

Finally, third, governments statements, in their temporal dimension, too, include implicit reactions to the imminent breakup to the Libyan state as well as autonomy claims in northern Mali articulated by the MNA. In this context, ATT's speeches appeal to unity by using the symbol of the river to refer to the Niger as lifeline, as source of inspiration, as defining momentum of a Malian identity including north and south at all times. In this spirit, the Niger is understood as the cradle of former empires, such as the Mali Empire (1235–1670), the Songhay Empire (11th century-1591) or the Bambara Empire (17th

century-1861), all of which were larger and united more ethnic groups than the modern Malian state (see GovMali 17.10.2011).

Phase III (Oct 2011 – Jan 2012)

In phase III, the analysis of government documents shows a growing tendency to put temporal discursive references in a context of defence and self-justification. Historicising reactions to MNLA's and some media's allegation that the president could use constitutional reform efforts to soften limitation for presidential power and to undermine democratic rights and freedoms give evidence of this: ATT refers to the fundamental role of independent judges as an assurance for checks and balances as well as "free and transparent elections [...] to build a democratic society in which stability, peace and national cohesion continuously grows" (GovMali 22.11.2011). In view of the very beginning of democratic Mali, in 1991/1992, ATT is presented as an unconditional promoter of democracy, especially fighting for free media (see GovMali 24.11.2011; 2.12.2011a). Furthermore, government statements suggest that Mali's partners in the world have trust in the stability of the Malian democracy, which had always been supported on its democratic way. On this, for example, the German parliamentary president, *Norbert Lammert*, gets quoted with praising words on Mali's exemplary democratic development on December 8/9.[109] Likewise, the documents highlight the positive mention of *Adama Dieng*, special UN envoy representing the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, on December 22 presenting Mali as a model for Africa, especially concerning its history of peaceful transitions of power (see GovMali 22.12.2011; 6.01.2012). According to these government releases, lessons learned from the past are the only motivation for constitutional reforms, for example within the context of fighting against electoral fraud (e.g. voting by procuration) or to increase voter participation beyond the big cities (see GovMali 11.12.2011a; 19.12.2011).

A further example: As if to proof that the Malian government is able to recognise claims from different parties and to balance between groups of interest, government documents point out different examples of former engagement in successful conflict resolution, such as dealing with cross-border problems by regional cooperation, e.g. concerning the prevention of droughts and food shortages within the context of the Niger Basin Authority[110] or the Liptako-Gourma Authority[111] (see GovMali 31.12.2011) or economic cooperation within the framework of the UEMOA, whereby the Malian govern-

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109   In this context, Norbert Lammert explicitly mentions the positive role of the GIZ (i.e. the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit) within the framework of development projects in northern Mali (see GovMali 8.12.2011).

110   Nota bene: The *Niger Basin Authority* was founded in 1980. Its members are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Niger and Nigeria. According to government statements, member states found Niger Basin Authority as a result of the common insight that extreme climate conditions induce strong interdependence between countries (see GovMali 18.10.2011).

111   Nota bene: The *Liptako-Gourma Authority* was founded in 1970. Its members are Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. The regional organisation seeks to promote development in the contiguous areas of the shared Sahelian zone and, therefore, includes common research on securing food supply in critical climate-induced situations (see GovMali 25.11.2011).

ment is presented as a driving force (see GovMali 30.12.2011a). Beyond that, the analysed government releases foreground examples documenting Mali's lasting engagement to promote the values of freedom, democracy and human rights in the world: Mali's commitment within the UN and before the global public both in favour of West Saharan peoples' self-determination and the recognition of a Palestinian state (see GovMali 28.10.2011); Mali's efforts within the context of mediation initiatives to assure not only the Libyan people's "inalienable rights" but all peoples' desire to freedom and democracy in times of the Arab Spring[112] (see GovMali 2.12.2011a).

Third and finally, as the Malian government gets increasingly blamed for inaction and incompetence due to a growing number of terrorist attacks and kidnappings in the north, authorities also refer to the violation of longstanding cultural values to justify the adoption of measures:

> "In our country, hosting a visitor is a sacred cause. We feel sad and deeply grieved by these shameful and outrageous acts." (GovMali 27.11.2011)

Hence, attacks on foreign workers and tourists (e.g. in Hombori or Timbuktu, see above chapter 6.2/phase III/November 2011) are not only considered as singular criminal acts or isolated terrorist incidences but as attacks on Malian culture and history as a whole. In this context, Malian culture once again gets presented as open-mined and welcoming and, therefore, as paving the way for Mali' democratic development.[113] As government sources make clear, authorities present themselves as being determined to defend this kind of Malian culture, even with military means, as it happened in the context of the 2006 rebellion, in order to protect and preserve independence, stability and peace. This is what ATT pointedly repeats on the occasion of the 51st anniversary of the Malian military, two days after the MNLA attacked Ménaka (see GovMali 19.01.2012d).

"50 Years of Colonisation and Invasion of Azawad"

Phase I (Nov 2010 August 2011)

> "For centuries, ethnic groups that today inhabit these lands have known to live together and to fairly deal with their complementarity." *(MNA 15.11.2010)*

Based on the analysis of documents issued by the MNA, communication in the temporal dimension, in phase I, is also characterised by continuous discursive references to the 50th anniversary of the Malian state. However, in stark contrast to government statements, these last 50 years are presented as "decades of suffering" during which "the people's identity was threatened with extinction." (MNA 1.11.2010)

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112   However, as ATT notes, Arab Spring uprisings in the subregion could indeed have serious consequences for security policy and thus could change into a hard winter (see chapter 6.2/phase III/ December 2011).

113   On this, the world-famous Festival in the Desert gets once again mentioned as a positive example of a general appreciation of Mali's rich and diverse cultural life, especially the Tuareg part of it, by Malian themselves. In addition, despite many security concerns in advance, the festival could take place without any incidences (see GovMali 19.01.2012).

In sum, the text corpus shows a coincidence of contrasting temporal references running through the presentation of the respective present. Firstly, in the sense of this section's opening quotation, there are many statements referring to the time prior to Malian independence and European colonisation: These statements, for example, deal with the unity of "all children of Azawad" who have always stood up for human rights and values "in continuation with the values of the ancestors". According to these sources, Saharan and West African peoples, especially the Tuareg, have always founded their political and economic power related to the control of caravan routes[114] on mutual respect of peoples and cultures, for example between sedentary agriculturalists and nomadic pastoralists (see MNA 15.11.2010). Following this, Azawad, in its huge geographical extension, hosts "one of the world's most ancient civilisations" incorporating an immense cultural heritage, as the evolution of *Tifinagh* and Arabic writing systems and language cultures as well as manifold modes of social and economic life adapted to environmental conditions show (see MNA 25.05.2011).

Secondly, MNA statements extensively present the perception of Azawad which, since European colonisation and during independent Mali, has always been defrauded of its rights and its future. This view gets particularly stressed as a reaction to the overly positive presentation of Malian history on the occasion of 50th anniversary celebrations documented in government releases (see e.g. MNA 19.02.2011b). Following other MNA accounts, Azawad's traditional authorities, i.e. tribal and religious leaders, already during French colonial rule declared that Azawad would be unwilling to permanently submit to foreign rule. Thus, immediately prior to the withdrawal of the French colonial power from Mali, tribal leaders, nobles, and tradesmen appealed to the French president, *Charles de Gaulle*, in order to speak out against an integration of Azawad into a new independent Malian state without consulting Azawad's population and to claim full sovereignty (see MNA 25.05.2011). As MNA releases further outline,

> "These letters and a number of other documents that are secretly kept in the archive of French colonial history do indeed, today more than at the time, bear testimony to our aspiration to liberty and emancipation, but also to democracy and every people's right to sovereignty in general." (MNA 15.07.2011)

Against this background, it is also argued that French (and other European) colonialism in Africa, by arbitrarily drawing boundaries and thus deliberately violating cultural spaces, took advantage of the divide and rule principle. From this point of view, as the argument continues, "assimilation and acculturation" of Azawad's population within the Malian unitary state and society ultimately represents another form of colonialism (see MNA 25.05.2011). In retrospect, the Tuareg consider this process as massive ethnic discrimination or even as an "attempted genocide" (see MNA 15.11.2010).

Overlooking phase I, there is a number of text passages within the MNA part justifying the foundation of the MNA and Azawad's resistance in general by referring to

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114   As mentioned earlier, the sources repeatedly highlight the close ethnic, cultural and thus historical relationship between Azawad and Morocco (see lettre of Malian Tuareg to Moroccan King, Hassan II; MNA 20.12.2010; see also chapter 6.2/ phase I/ december 2010).

a profound trauma inscribed in Azawadians' collective memory: After disappointed expectations at the end of French colonial rule (see above), the trauma commences, according to the analysed MNA documents, with the first Tuareg rebellion against the just established Malian central power under its first president Modibo Keïta. Supported by the first president of independent Algeria, *Ahmed Ben Bella*[115], Keïta rigorously crushed the rebellion while accepting "thousands of deaths" (see MNA 15.11.2010). Hence, as the MNA (19.02.2011b) holds, resistance against a "forced integration into the Malian state", against a "violation of historical rights", against "marginalisation and degradation of Azawad's cultural heritage" must be considered as a virtually logical and necessary consequence.[116] Further incidences brought forward as negatively shaping Azawadians' collective memory nearly correspond decisive government dates mentioned earlier (see Gov-Mali 19.01.2011b). From a government perspective, those dates were presented as positive milestone events for the development of the Malian state, especially with due regard to "the achievements of the military". From an MNA perspective, these events are presented under opposite circumstances (see table 23).

Table 23: Key dates from an MNA perspective

1963/1964	suppression of the Tuareg revolt (Adagh, i.e. Ifoghas), Kidal region; thousands of Tuareg victims; extradition (supported by *Ben Bella*, see above) of Tuareg leaders who fled to Algeria
1973	Malian government uses dramatic droughts in the Sahelian zone as a "weapon of war" (against Tuareg): poisoning of wells and food; misappropriation of international aid; forced migration, leading to erosion of traditional economy, decimation of livestock, hundreds of thousands fleeing to Libya and Algeria
1990	increasing number of attacks and massacres of (Tuareg) civilians in Mali and Niger; Tuareg and other ethnic groups discriminated, stigmatised, and increasingly threatened; beginning of armed resistance
1991	failure of *Tamanrasset Peace Accord* (January 1991): continuation of hostilities, *Massacre of Léré* (May 20): militaries execute Tuareg and Moor civilians in public without verifying identities (their families taken as hostages for more than a year)
1992	*Massacre of Gossi* (May 14): 12 foreign and domestic aid works assassinated by Malian military; *Massacre of Foïta* (May 17): 48 herdsmen and their animals arbitrarily killed by Malian military; hundres of thousands forced to give up properties and livestock, fleeing (to Mauretania, Algeria, and Burkina Faso); even after conclusion of the *National Pact*: returning refugees still exposed to attacks, arbitrary confiscation of property, especially livestock

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115   Nota bene: Ahmed Ben Bella (1916–2012), an Algerian politician and revolutionary, was the first president of independent Algeria from 1963 to 1965.

116   In this context, even tough the Festival au Désert is presented as a multicultural and cosmopolitan event, MNA voices consistently point to the festival as a primarily Tuareg-organised cultural event in Azawad (see e.g. MNA 11.11.2010b; 6.01.2011; 19.01.2011).

2006	beginning of Tuareg rebellion in Kidal region due to ongoing violation of National Pact: disarming of Tuareg followed by increasing presence of AQMI; government pretending peaceful dialogue while deploying military

(Own table based on MNA 15.11.2010; 20.01.2011; 15.07.2011)

Taking MNA sources in phase I together, the following picture emerges: the Tuareg and other ethnic minorities have been completely absent in Malian institutions as well as in political, social, and economic life until the 1990s (see MNA 15.11.2010). Even though the National Pact (1992) by which the three northern regions Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu were granted a special status, has not changed this perception. Moreover, the ongoing non-recognition of "war crimes and crimes against humanity"[117] has led to a growing climate of repression and denial of the northern population's rights. Against this background, Azawad's history since Malian independence is presented as "50 years of colonisation and invasion" (MNA 20.01.2011; see this subsection's title).

Particularly as a result of the Flame of Peace ceremony on February 8, strong statements raising the topic of revolution gather momentum, for example within the framework of the Tuareg's youth organisation:

"The Tuareg movement must draw consequences from decades of armed conflict. [...] As the Tuareg have demonstrated several times, they have means to liberate their territory, to establish Tuareg institutions and to get rid of illegitimate and corrupt states having no right to subdue the Tuareg people." (MNA 6.02.2011a)

Other general MNA statements, however, slightly qualify the revolution talk by referring to the Arab Spring which brings "a global turn of eras for the history of humankind" and thus can break "mental and emotional prisons". Therefore, the MNA declares to stand in solidarity with those opposing occupation, repression, and the violation of rights (see MNA 5.03.2011) and to join the ranks of "a universal and intellectual revolution of democratic values in favour of Azawad's cause, to the end." (MNA 15.07.2011)

Phase II (Aug 2011 – Oct 2011)

In phase II, MNA statements predominantly refer to the sudden death of Bahanga. In this context, apart from worshipping Bahanga as a popular Azawadian hero, the basic tone of the releases is the following: Already in the past, Bahanga made many sacrifices, the last one being his own life. Therefore, every "Tuareg warrior" should follow Bahanga's example and give full commitment to the cause of Azawad (see MNA 28.08.2011).

Further statements also testify bitterness and depression: For the past 50 years, Azawadians have felt unwelcome in their own country. But that's not all, now they even become suspected of making common cause with terrorists (see MNA 2.09.2011). As *Moussa*

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117   As a subsequent statement points out, the MNA submits a list of dossiers on human rights and international law violations committed during "Malian occupation of northern Mali" to international human rights organisations. With this, the MNA aims at bringing a lawsuit at the International Criminal Court (see MNA 15.07.2011).

Ag Achartoumane, MNA person responsible for external relations once again makes clear, Azawad's values are freedom, democracy, and independence from any form of colonisation. Based on that, the MNA seeks "to achieve more autonomy and better living conditions". Moreover, the MNA brings charges against the international community which has not only ignored decades of marginalisation and repression but also the most evident violation of the Algiers Accord, particularly when it comes to the implementation of a broader autonomy for the northern regions (see MNA 13.09.2011). Even though MNA documents in phase II stick to basic belief that the question of Azawad's autonomy cannot be considered as a militarily solvable problem but as a political one, statements nevertheless show a growing vehemence (see MNA 2.09.2011).

Against the background of this tense atmosphere which becomes increasingly tangible in the weeks before October 16, representatives of different Tuareg tribes (including the Bahanga faction) and other ethnic groups based in northern Mali agree that Azawad's voice would be best consolidated by founding a new umbrella organisation integrating even more parts of the Azawad's population: the MNLA (see MNLA 16.10.2011).

Phase III (Oct 2011 – Jan 2012)

Based on the analysis of the text corpus, releases of the newly founded MNLA in phase III show strong temporal references while being particularly directed to three groups of addressees: "the people of Mali", "the people of Azawad" and the Malian government.

First, in an "open letter addressing the people of Mali", the MNLA appeals to the Malian population (obviously not including the population of Azawad) in the strongest terms to "reanimate relations between the two people with warm-heartedness" in order to mutually support themselves in achieving true self-determination. Furthermore, according to this letter, looking at the common history supports one conclusion: 50 years of political games, of cheating the Malian population and its military, of deliberate measures to the disadvantage of Azawad's population, of armed conflict with countless victims now has to end (see MNLA 3.11.2011g).

Second, several texts pointedly address the population of Azawad by promoting the unity of all ethnic groups in northern Mali. Especially the younger generation is presented as being able to head for an independent Azawad which recognises and incorporates the political, social, and cultural continuum of different but related parts of Azawad, even beyond the Malian borders (see MNLA 6.11.2011). Azawad's youth, according to these sources, which had not been involved in earlier rebellions and can thus be seen as "unburdened", is called upon to overcome the lethargy of previous generations:

> "Don't let yourself be fooled about that: small solutions, such as a calculated integration of some into the Malian public service, promises concerning the promotion of our officers, the quota system regulating the recruitment within the Malian military, all of it based on principles of corruption, inequality, injustice would not compensate the proliferation of terror, discriminations and atrocities of all kind experienced by our people for 50 years." (MNLA 8.01.2012a)

Furthermore, when reflecting the preceding year (see arbitrary detentions of those protesting for self-determination, denial of drought and food shortage in 2010 season,

sudden and mysterious death of Bahanga), more than ever, standing up in unity is a basic condition to fulfil the only request of northern populations: living in peace and freedom (see MNLA 14.11.2011; 9.01.2012). In sum, MNLA documents in this phase offer many references expressing a certain now or never feeling: Some statements confirm that "thousands of Tuareg" had already returned to Mali (and Niger) before and in the very moment of the Gaddafi regime's fall in October (see MNLA 28.11.2011); other statements extensively outline the story of prominent deserters from the Malian military, such as the example of Hama Ag Mahmoud (see above chapter 6.2/phase III/December 2011; see also MNLA 20.12.2011b).

Hence, those points in favour of fighting for Azawad's self-determination right at this particular time which are derived from a (world) historical perspective are presented as the most important ones: As continuous resistance towards Islamisation and, later on, towards French colonial power shows, the history of Azawad and its people can be characterised by a resistant basic attitude towards external powers.[118] Even though this heroically glorified resistance and further rebellions in Mali's recent history had been unsuccessful, the situation at that time, according to MNLA accounts, can be considered as more favourable than ever before. On the one hand, as the Arab Spring accelerates, it boosts democratic developments all over the world. On the other hand, looking at the last two decades, a number of new nation states emerged and were recognised.[119] Against this background, the international community is expected to be vigilant with regard to developments in Azawad as well as in Catalonia or in the Basque region. And finally, based on MNLA voices, for the first time, a majority of Tuareg (as well as other ethnic groups) declares to be in favour of self-determination and presents itself confident enough to wage a promising struggle, both by making use of international law and international organisations as well as adequate weapons, if necessary (see MNLA 23.12.2011; 3.01.2012b).

Third, in the last weeks before the armed conflict starts, there are statements to the address of the Malian government showing temporal references in a new confrontational quality. Therefore, the main allegation is "institutional racism" being a longstanding reality while the "Malian democracy" is depicted as a pure façade (see MNLA 3.01.2012a; 8.01.2012b). Over decades, as MNLA documents illustrate, a structural division of society was pursued which led to a political, economic, social, cultural, linguistic stigmatisation and discrimination and, ultimately, to a reinforcement of ethnic rivalries (see MNLA 10.01.2012). In this context, numerous government speeches about respecting cultural diversity turned out to be hollow words. While, for example, the *N'Ko* script developed in 1949 was massively promoted, the thousands of years old *Tifinagh* script was not at all integrated into the Mali's constitution or cultural heritage (see MNLA 10.01.2012). The systematic exclusion of nomad children from Malian schools represents another exam-

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118   On this, an MNLA source explicitly mentions the example of the *Kaocen Revolt* (1916–1917) when Tuareg from the Aïr Mountains in Niger rose up against French colonial power during World War I (see MNLA 23.12.2011).

119   At this point, the document lists recent examples of recently established nation states in Africa and beyond: Namibia (1990), Eritrea (1993), Montenegro (2006), Kosovo (2008), Timor-Leste (2002), South Sudan (2011).

ple drastically paraphrased in MNLA documents as a form of "cultural eradication of a people" (MNLA 3.01.2012b).

In sum, based on the analysed MNLA statements, even with a favourable view on two decades of a democratically constituted Mali, the overall assessment is clear-cut and tough: Billions in investments in the north have left no positive marks, especially with a view to water supply, health care and education (see MNLA 3.01.2012a; 10.01.2012). Likewise, those who expected that Malian war crimes within the context of past rebellions would be dealt with and a national reconciliation would be encouraged have been deeply disappointed.[120] And finally, democratic Mali has never been a reliable and credible contracting party (see MNLA 1.01.2012): The National Pact has never been implemented while denial, repression and violence endure.[121] Therefore, according to MNLA accounts, the rebellion of 2006 was a logic and in a way necessary consequence. And this history, at this point, repeats itself when looking at the sparse implementation of the 2006 Algiers Accord (see MNLA 15.12.2011). To prevent a negative déjà-vu for the population of Azawad, the MNLA calls up to be vigilant and able to defend oneself: Efforts are undertaken to reactivate ethnic defence militias and special forces (Ganda Koy, Kokadie legion; see above chapter 6.2/phase III/December 2011) in order to proceed against civil society and the autonomy movement (see MNLA 22.12.2011; 28.12.2011). In addition, the security situation deteriorates from day to day since Malian security forces let drug traffickers and AQMI do as they like (see MNLA 26.12.2011; 28.12.2011). At the same time, Malian authorities, and media fuel a climate of distrust and suspicion:

> "National and international media accuse the Tamasheq and Azawad as a whole of being terrorists, drug traffickers, mercenaries and slave traders. [...] These amalgamations are wrongfully used because they are effective to silence the claims of one side and strengthening the power of the other side." (MNLA 3.01.2012a)

And finally, on the day when Ménaka gets attacked (January 16), MNLA voices express a sobering observation that is used as a quasi-justification: For years, MNA/MNLA issued offers of dialogue associated with a strong commitment to a political solution.[122] Yet, these offers have always been ignored or rejected. Therefore, according to an MNLA spokesman, the signs point to armed struggle to ensure Azawad's future:

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120   In this context, two publications dealing with Malian war crimes are mentioned: *Les rébellions touarègues*, Anne Saint Girons (2009) and *Tuaregs. Voix solitaires sous l'horizon confisqué*, Hélène Claudot-Hawad (1996) (see MNLA 15.12.2011; 22.12.2011).

121   In this context, for example, the portrayal of northern Mali's history as a success story on the occasion of a photo exhibition ("Kidal 1960–2010") within the framework of the cinquantenaire is perceived as one-sided and provokes the expression of traumatic experiences. As the MNLA (3.11.2011c) holds, there is no reason at all to celebrate with regard to oppression, denial, humiliation, everyday violence, torture and lives lost.

122   To underline the commitment to non-violence and to finding political solutions, the MNLA presents itself as being in one line with the anti-Apartheid movement in South Africa. By citing *Nelson Mandela*, it seeks to earn legitimisation credit for its own goals: "For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others." (Nelson Mandela, as cited in MNLA 8.01.2012a).

"Fighting means to dare winning. The fight has just begun." (MNLA 8.01.2012a)

Media and INGOs

Phase I (Nov 2010 – August 2011)

In addition to that what has already been outlined as the factual dimension of media accounts in phase I, the text corpus shows some recurring temporal references: First, even though the analysed media statements do not agree with the self-declared aims of the MNA, the narrative of its foundation as a consequence of discrimination and oppression in Azawad for decades gets extensively portrayed. At the same time, however, it is presented as a "complot against the Republic", or, in other words, as high treason (see L'Aube/Maliweb 11.11.2010b).

Second, concerning the ongoing issue of kidnappings which take up much room in coverage, media reports in phase I especially show their discontent with European countries' repeatedly downgrading assessment of the security situation in northern Mali. In this context, some reports argue that kidnappings, in most instances, did not take place on Malian territory. Other reports point out that travel warnings, especially French ones, can also be understood as a political punishment in reaction to an overly "peaceful" Malian strategy in fighting terrorism in the Sahelian zone (see e.g. AFP/Maliweb 15.11.2010; Maliweb 10.02.2011c).

Third, media accounts address a number of historical background factors accounting for the ever-deteriorating security situation. Sources point to the rising tensions between Peuls and Tuareg (e.g. which trace back to historical conflicts between nomads and sedentary population. In this context, reports react to alleged attacks by Tuareg members within the Malian military against Peuls populations (see L'Indicateur du Renouveau/Maliweb 4.04.2011). In addition, "Malian mercenaries"[123] heavily armed from Libyan arsenals are presented as being responsible for the aggravation of the situation (see Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 13.04.2011; AFP/Maliweb 3.05.2011a). Finally, as other media accounts bring up, the MNA corresponds to "a political return of armed bandits" linked to the "May 23 Alliance" respectively the Bahanga faction. And Bahanga is accused of sabotaging the peace agreement which led to an increasingly growing influence of AQMI in Sahelian zone (see Le Prétoire/Maliweb 3.05.2011c; El Watan/Maliweb 20.05.2011). After the death of Bahanga, as mentioned earlier, reports indeed show a certain satisfaction and confidently express expectations towards the government as to dealing with MNA in the future:

> "This man has always been considered as the public enemy number one. However, Koulouba Palace never wanted to eliminate him. Now, as he was blown up by a mine, he had probably dropped with his own hands at the Malian-Algerian border before, all Malians can breathe a big sigh of relief. This means that a crime never goes unpun-

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123   As it becomes clear, "Malian mercenaries" represents a terminology that is strictly rejected by the MNA/MNLA but indeed appears in government documents (see e.g. GovMali 5.03.2011b; MNLA 14.11.2011, 3.01.2012a).

ished. *Authorities will have to retain this lesson: Never again let another Bahanga ridicule the nation*." (L'Indépendant/Maliweb 29.08.2011; italics R.B.)

On top of that, MNA's goals are presented as incomprehensible and ignoring history: Mali, not only being a huge country concerning its geography but also in view of its immense cultural heritage as the cradle of former empires (Mali, Songhay, Bambara) has always been integrating different cultures and showing a "legendary tradition of hospitality" (Maliweb 10.02.2011c). Against this background, the idea of releasing a part of country from its political and cultural connection in order to be independent gets branded as completely senseless (see Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 4.05.2011b).

Phase II (Aug 2011 – Oct 2011)

In phase II, as illustrated earlier (see chapter 6.2/phase II), the basic tone of media coverage towards the government gets more critical. The government is thus made responsible for the critical security situation caused by past neglect, for example concerning dilettante implementation of PSPSDN or laxism in fighting terror (see e.g. Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 2.09.2011; Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb 16.09.2011a). At the same time, historical references to the "problematic history of the north" intend to reduce the responsibility of the young Malian state for the current situation. On this, reports suggest that there has always been a notorious insecurity in northern Mali, even before French colonial rule during the times of the West African empires. The reasons for this are rivalries deeply rooted in hierarchical structures of tribal societies in the north. As these rivalries continued to be fought during colonial times, so they are presented as the basis of the 1960s and 1990s rebellions and, ultimately, the current insecurity. This basic conflict, according to the analysed media sources, was further exacerbated by droughts and food shortages in the 1970s and 1980s (see Le Combat/Maliweb 23.09.2011; Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 28.09.201).

As if to prove the existence of ongoing intra and interethnic rivalries in northern Mali, some reports pick up the dissent within the Tuareg community, as an interview with *Deyti Ag Sidimo* shows. Sidimo, member of parliament from Tessalit and former companion of Bahanga, advocates for an implementation of the Algiers Accord and strives against MNA's claims for self-determination:

> "I am a man of words. Today, nothing urges us to take up arms. We fight for the entire application of the Algiers Accords. We think that the government makes every effort in this sense." (Le Prétoire/Maliweb 13.10.2011a)

However, shortly before the imminent foundation of the MNLA[124] on October 16, affirmations of this kind are suspiciously received by media coverage. As reports dealing with the attack on the PSPSDN military base under construction in Abeïbara on October 2 show, besides concrete evidence pointing to an AQMI and drug trafficker involvement,

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124   Beginning in September, MNA statements show a growing vehemence as to the true implementation of the Algiers Accord and an eventual enforcement of northern regions' autonomy (see MNA 2.09.2011; 13.09.2011).

the Abeïbara incidence immediately gets associated with an armed conflict between Tuareg rebels and the Malian army in 2008. At that time, the Bahanga faction initiated an attack that led to 32 deaths and many casualties (see e.g. L'Indicateur du Renouveau/Maliweb 6.10.2011b).

Phase III (Oct 2011 – Jan 17, 2012)

The foundation of the MNLA, documented by MNLA's founding declaration, marks the beginning of phase III. This is accompanied by a number of media publications critically picking up both MNLA statements and government releases. In this context, the foundation of MNLA reflexively gets pinned down into a historical context by using different temporal references to explain its emergence.

As suggested earlier in phase II, there are reports arguing that competition, rivalry and enmity is an essential feature of Tuareg history and culture, particularly when it comes to striving for a common goal, such as autonomy or independence in modern times.

> "The Tamasheq [i.e. the Tuareg] are inherently vicious among themselves." (Le Combat/Maliweb 22.10.2011a)

Following the explanations outlined in media accounts, the Malian government has always used the divide and rule method when addressing the hierarchically structured tribal Tuareg community. Accordingly, by political patronage and clientelism, the traditionally leading factions (Ifoghas and Chamanaman) have been successively disempowered while other factions (e.g. Imghad) have been favoured.[125] In conjunction with that, media contributions point to the fact that recently returning Tuareg fighters from Libya and those who remained in Mali and supported the National Pact have continued to compete with each other since the rebellion in the beginning of the 1990s and onwards.[126] In view of these intra-Tuareg antagonisms presented as unsolvable, it is once again underlined that the constituents of Azawad taken together or in isolation would never be able

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125   According to Le Républicain (Maliweb 31.10.2011d), for example, Imghad representatives explicitly support PSPSDN and benefit from its measures.

126   See particularly *Iyad Ag Ghaly*, an Ifoghas and former rebel leader of the "People's Movement for the Liberation of Azawad" (MPA) who signed the National Pact and then supported the government in fighting other Tuareg rebel groups. During the 1990s, Ghaly had grown increasingly religious, gradually approaching extremist Islamist ideologies. Offering himself as an important intermediary in hostage negotiations in the 2000s, Ghaly became a relevant partner of the Malian government and later a Malian diplomat (cultural attaché in Saudi Arabia, 2007–2010). Expelled by Saudi authorities in 2010 for interactions with suspected extremists, he returned to Mali and was again asked by the government to continue negotiations with AQMI and to intercede with Tuareg returnees from Libya. On the other side, *El Hadj Ag Gamou*, an Imghad and former rebel leader of "Revolutionary Liberation Army of Azawad" (ARLA) who integrated his units into Mali's security forces in 1996 and later became a loyal colonel of the Malian military (see L'Indépendent/Maliweb 20.10.2011d; Le Combat/Maliweb 22.10.2011a; Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb 12.01.2012b). In this context, media accounts also speculate on which of the two former rebel factions may first join AQMI (see Le Prétoire/Maliweb 22.12.2011a).

to exist as a viable entity on its own, such as Kidal region which is considered home by a vast majority of Tuareg:

> "Kidal will need Mali more than Mali needs Kidal." (L'Indépendent/Maliweb 20.10.2011d)

In addition, as media contributions during phase III hold, a new rebellion would *not* have unanimous support by all ethnic groups in northern Mali, for example by dark skinned Songhay or Peuls.[127] On the contrary, actual events are expected to bring about rising mutual distrust and interethnic tensions, especially between light and dark-skinned populations in the north, as rumours about the resurgence of "Ganda Koy" units show (see Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb 1.12.2011a; see also above chapter 6.2/Phase III/Dec 2011; MNLA 28.12.2011). In this way, media coverage gives the assessment that, in the light of public demonstrations in favour of Azawad's independence on November 1 in Kidal and Ménaka[128], there could be violent clashes between rebel groups and the Malian government but shows itself convinced that there would not be a broad rebellion supported by a majority of the population in the north.

> "Rebellions in Azawad are as old as the Niger river." (Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb 3.11.2011d)

In contrast, other media accounts take the emergence of the MNLA much more seriously by referring to "the return of old demons" (Maliweb 25.10.2011b) and by recalling the disastrous consequences of past rebellions in northern Mali bringing out nothing but pure barbarity and total destruction.[129] To explain how this precarious situation came about, it is argued that both the National Pact and the Algiers Accord included a fatal waiver of sovereignty on the part of the Malian central state. Interpreted as a kind of political withdrawal, particularly the demilitarisation of the northern regions is thus presented as being one of the main reasons for insecurity at that time.[130] However, media accounts also put long-term foreign interferences into play: On the one hand, Mali gets criticised for its ongoing laxism concerning the fight against terror by Western countries (see Le

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127   In this context, the tribal leader of the Kounta, an ethnic group of Arab origin living in Northern Mali, declares that the Kounta will continue to support peace and security in Mali and, thus, will definitely not provoke any kind of armed conflict (see Le Combat/Maliweb 16.11.2011c).

128   One year after the foundation of MNA, on November 1, 2011, pro-independence marches take place in all three capitals of the Northern regions, Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu (see El Watan/Maliweb 1.11.2011a).

129   To substantiate their assessment, some articles pick up quotations from *Dying for Azalai*, a book published in 2010 and written by *Noumou Ben Diakité*. The author witnessed past rebellions in northern Mali and portrays their disastrous consequences by illustrating personal life stories of people subsisting on the salt caravan from Taoudenni to Timbuktu. In Tamasheq, the salt caravan is called "Azalai".

130   In this sense, considering the peace agreements as structural causes of insecurity in the north is a repeated standpoint in media reports (see e.g. L'Essor/Maliweb 4.11.201b; L'Inter de Bamako/Maliweb 22.11.2011b; Le Zénith Balé/Maliweb 10.12.2011d; Le Prétoire/Maliweb 12.01.2012a).

22 Septembre/Maliweb 18.01.2012d); on the other hand, the MNLA is able to unaffect-edly maintain an office in Paris (see L'Indicateur du Renouveau/Maliweb 18.01.2012a). Furthermore,

> "The European Union [...] has pursued its plan of destroying and destructuring North-ern Mali for a long time. The Tuareg rebellion and its offspring, drug trafficking and the presence of AQMI, are created by politics of Western, especially European countries." (Le Potentiel/Maliweb 29.11.2011e)

> "Whenever insecurity assumes shape in the region, one gets the impression that France can be found behind this situation and, moreover, that oil in the region stimulates the voracious appetite of Westerners." (Le Combat/Maliweb 19.10.2011a)

Besides such accusations, media coverage during this phase gets increasingly dominated by explicit criticism against the government and the president who had not been able to adequately face the growing crisis in the north in the preceding years and, therefore, had been continuously losing consent among most Malians (see Mali Demain/Maliweb 5.12.2011a; Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 7.12.2011c). Although ATT's intention to preserve his heritage of a president of peaceful dialogue by the end of the term can be seen as un-derstandable, the seriousness of the situation would require a strategy of a heavy hand against old and new threats (AQMI, drug trafficking, returnees from Libya, citizens' mili-tias, MNLA). From this point of view, further concessions would only instigate a civil war like conflict following the Iraqi example. This is presented as an assessment in media cov-erage that is also shared by *Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta*, regarded as a ATT's potential successor in office.[131]

In sum, according to the analysis of the media coverage's temporal dimension in phase III, the foundation of the MNLA and its claims are presented as a pure provoca-tion when related to concessions made to northern populations in the last decades. In this context, ATT's answers to the crisis – accelerating development efforts via PSPSDN, pursuing a strategy of dialogue and welcome towards returnees from Libya, and imple-menting a territorial and administrative reorganisation[132] – are not seen as convincing: the president is no longer given credit for controlling the situation of the north which had been neglected for years and, at that point in time, reaches an explosive point.

Finally, in view of the temporal dimension of the analysed documents, INGO reports present a rather short but nuanced assessment. On the one hand, as, for example, FES publications show, it is recognised that the Malian government pursues a long-term in-terest to seek for a constructive resolution of the situation in the north which is docu-mented by a number of concrete measures over the years:

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131   See Le Prétoire/Maliweb (5.12.2011b), Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb (7.12.2011c) and Waati/Maliweb (8.12.2011b). Nota bene: Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta served as president of the National Assembly of Mali from 2002 to 2007. In 2013, he was elected as president of Mali.

132   According to ATT's plan, Mali should overcome colonial partitions of its territory by adapting ad-ministrative and territorial units to different sections of the population, for example by creating new and smaller regions to bring administration nearer to the population.

"Mali is permanently working on resolving the old Tuareg conflict. The installation of Tuareg units within the Malian army is a positive sign which shows the implementation of the 2006 peace agreement [i.e. Algiers Accord]." (FES June 2011: 5; brackets added R.B.)

On the other hand, discontent with democratic institutions in Mali had been steadily rising in the preceding 20 years, as an FES study on decreasing voter participation illustrates. Also, this insight gets confirmed by rather unsuccessful mediation efforts between civil society and the government supported by FES initiatives in the years before.[133] Ultimately, according to a FES report which also gets picked up in media repeatedly, the situation should be taken very seriously since the 2012 elections are right on the doorstep. As these presidential elections combined with a vote on constitutional amendments are intended to be hold against the background of a tense situation in the north and the country as a whole, the FES assesses the situation at this point as decisive moment in Mali's democratic development (see FES October 2011; see also Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb 18.01.2012d).

6.4 The Social Dimension: United We Stand?

As demonstrated in previous chapters (6.2 and 6.3), within the discursive arena that is reflected by the text corpus, conflict topics and themes get differentiated from non-conflict ones (factual dimension).[134] Likewise, the here and now of the conflict gets differentiated from non-conflicting parts of the past and the future (temporal dimension). As outlined above within the context of the Maidan protests (see beginning of chapter 5.4), considering the evolution of the Malian conflict as a conflict system in its social dimension means approaching the text corpus providing that conflict identities are constituted within communication itself and thus undergo an evolution. Recalling Luhmann (1984: 426–436; see chapter 4.1), identities are understood as stable structures of expectation appearing regarding four interconnected layers: persons, roles, programmes, and norms.

As the analysis reveals, the text corpus, at different points in time, includes different references, for instance, to members of the Tuareg community [persons] such as potential "rebels" or even "enemies" of the Malian state [roles] pursuing their goal of "autonomy" or "independence" [programmes] in order to make "the right to self-determination" a reality or to "liberate the oppressed people of Azawad" [norms]. The synopsis section (chapter 6.5) draws on these layers in greater detail. However, in preparation for this, the following sections build on an examination of how discursive addresses got differentiated and repeatedly actualised through the conflict discourse.

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133   A few years in succession, the FES organised conferences on security and democratic governance in the Sahelian zone. These conferences included participants from governments *and* civil society, as the last one on a grand scale in 2009 showed. Media reports, too, refer to INGO activities (see Le Malien/Maliweb 17.12.2011).

134   The chapter heading makes recourse to Mali's motto taken from its national anthem: "United we stand. One people, one goal, one faith." (see also quotation at the beginning of chapter 6.1).

Phase I (Nov 2010 – Aug 2011)

As mentioned in the chapters above, the beginning of phase I is marked by the foundation of the MNA. The founding declaration expresses a certain kind of pioneering spirit by highlighting the fact that the MNA is a political organisation which, for the first time, claims to represent the three northern regions including all ethnic groups and to lead the "legitimate resistance of the peaceful people of Azawad" (MNA 1.11.2010). In phase I, MNA representatives see themselves as Malian citizens who do not claim independence but more autonomy within the Malian state including a true implementation of democratic rights, especially concerning freedom of expression:

> "Long live Mali, long live the Malian motto [i.e. 'United We Stand'], and long live freedom of expression!" (MNA 2.11.2010; brackets added R.B.)

In this regard, releases emphasise that the MNA represents a lawful organisation pursuing legal activities. In addition, as MNA sources hold, the MNA emerged from an initial congress in Timbuktu on October 31/November 1, 2010, that had been approved by Malian authorities. Furthermore, the arbitrary detention of congress organisers in the aftermath is clearly seen as compromising Malian laws (see chapter 6.2/phase I/November 2010). Thus, the MNA presents itself as adhering to Malian rights and promoting universal values of democracy and the rule of law (see MNA 17.11.2010). To address potential supporters, MNA statements highlight that all inhabitants of Azawad, irrespective of their ethnic background, are called upon to join the political fight of the MNA.[135] These statements also attach great importance to present the MNA as an entirely new organisation founded by a younger generation of well-educated Azawadians with international experience who are determined to get over the "unsuccessful bungle" of older generations who had poorly tried to stand for Azawad (see MNA 11.11.2010a).

In phase I, according to the analysed text corpus, there is hardly any reaction in the government's communication dealing with the MNA. At the same time, the president, its government as well as Malian state institutions in general are presented as a monolith, represented by ATT as a person. Accordingly, PSPSDN gets introduced as ATT's plan against growing insecurity in the Sahelian zone without any alternative (see e.g. GovMali 24.11.2010).

As it has been outlined earlier, media coverage represents a kind of projection surface. In the case study on Mali, this surface reflects observations of communication both by the government and by opposing voices, especially from Northern Mali, which can help to gather the process of emerging and changing identities in conflict. Now, a common feature of the analysed media reports is that the political contradiction that stepped forward by the foundation of the MNA straightaway refreshes and thus reproduces long-known patterns of contrast in coverage, such as Northern vs. Southern populations, underdeveloped vs. developed regions, and, not least, loyals to the regime and, based on the

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135   However, as MNA releases also show, approaching the target group in these documents oscillates between addressing the Tuareg (alone) and addressing the population of northern Mali as a whole (see e.g. MNA 7.11.2010; 11.11.2010a).

experiences in the past, potential rebels. In this context, headlines like "Birth of the MNA in Timbuktu: New rebellion or sabre rattling?" (Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb 4.11.2010a) or "The National Movement of Azawad: Conspiracy against the Republic" (L'Aube/Maliweb 11.11.2010b) come about at the beginning of phase I after the publication of MNA's founding statement. Therein, an imminent rebellion is announced. Also, the MNA gets presented as an organisation controlled by external actors and aiming at the destabilisation of Mali. In this context, following the analysed media accounts the MNA, encouraged by international attention, already calls for an international conference on the status of Azawad (see L'Aube/Maliweb 11.11.2010b; Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb 25.11.2010a). Other media pieces, however, focus on the MNA as a genuine Malian foundation which emerged due to the significant concessions (e.g. as to demilitarisation of the north) made by the government during the peace process.

Beyond these first impulsive reactions to the emergence of the MNA, media releases particularly reproduce an already existing dichotomy with many variants in the discourse: north versus south. Whereas "southern Mali" gets rarely presented as such, "northern Mali" represents an omnipresent figure of speech (see below examples from the beginning of the investigation period/ phase I):

- PSPSDN, presented as a national programme to promote peace, security and development *in northern Mali* (Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb 1.11.2010a);
- *the north* as plaything of Western interests (in raw materials)[136] and extremist groups (see Le Républicain/Maliweb 3.11.2010);
- *the north* as a precarious tribal territory where even factions of the same tribe conduct armed conflicts (see Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 8.11.2010a);
- a growing number of kidnappings of Malian and foreign nationals *in the north* by terrorists and/or other armed groups (see Le Républicain/Maliweb 8.11.2010b; Le Républicain/Maliweb 22.11.2010; Maliweb 29.11.2010);
- *the north* as safe haven for AQMI which is considered an ideological and military threat; *the north* as a region from which international development partners and terrorists withdraw since it is an area of operation for international military engagement (see Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb 11.11.2010a; Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 15.11.2010; Maliweb 24.11.2010);
- the situation in *the north* makes whole Mali a "hostage" (see Maliweb 25.11.2010b).

Analysed documents in all source groups in phase I exhibit a mostly negative connotation of the north and the population of Azawad respectively seen in an implicit opposition to the rest of Mali. One striking feature is that government documents tend to use an additional wording (later on adopted by the media) which further broadens the geographical focus. In this sense, the texts describe security problems and challenges in "the Sahelo-Saharan region" or "the Sahelo-Saharan strip" (see e.g. GovMali 25.12.2010d; 3.01.2011;

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136   According to Le 22 Septembre (11.11.2010a), already in November 2010, a considerable number of French, Canadian and US military advisors are based in Mali to train the Malian military in anti-terror strategies.

16.02.2011a) and, at the same time, underline a common responsibility of all neighbour-
ing countries and the imperative of cross-border cooperation:

> "The president revisits the security situation in the Sahelo-Saharan zone. He again
> insisted on the necessary cooperation between the countries [in the region] in order
> to overcome insecurity in this region which is exposed to plagues such as terrorism,
> drugs trafficking and other illicit activities." (GovMali 16.12.2010)

As it is pointed out at various points, the military and other security forces are attached
vital importance to fight these "plagues", for example when ATT frequently and publicly
honours the heroic dedication of the military in the past (see e.g. GovMali 26.12.2010;
31.01.2011b). Likewise, for the future, ATT intends to use the military as an executing in-
strument to guarantee peace, security and development, as intended within the context
of PSPSDN which is essentially associated with the president personally (see GovMali
7.02.2011d; 16.02.2011a).

In MNA statements during phase I, too, the troublesome north appears as a promi-
nent figure of speech, slightly modified within the wording of a discriminated and
marginalised Azawad. Here, Azawad and its population gets often equated with the
Tuareg while other ethnic groups based in northern Mali, do not appear in the first
place. This becomes obvious in a public MNA appeal to the Moroccan king asking for
"protection of his threatened brothers and sisters" in Mali while referring to the common
Berber or Amazigh kinship (MNA 20.12.2010).[137]

Media accounts, too, associate the "precarious north" with its population, especially
the Tuareg, in two different ways: On the one hand, they appreciate that Tuareg ex-rebels
support the US, France and Malian security forces in tracking hostages held by AQMI
and fighting against Islamist groups in the region.[138] On the other hand, other reports
suggest the opposite by referring to Tuareg militants, such as Bahanga, who continue to
fight against the Malian state, as it could be witnessed by the end of December when sev-
eral Malian soldiers died due to alleged rebel landmines (see AFP/Maliweb 10.12.2010b).
Also, Tuareg fighters are accused of having a share in the profits from kidnapping ac-
tivities (see Le Potentiel/Maliweb 21.12.2010a) as well as willingly recruiting new AQMI
fighters form within their own ranks (see L'Expression/Maliweb 26.12.2010. By and large,
however, the Wikileaks documents (see also chapter 6.2/phase I/December 2010) have

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137   Nota bene: "Berber" is often used as an umbrella term for indigenous ethnic groups in North
      Africa and West Africa, including Morocco and Mali, having a common origin. Since "Berber"
      traces back to the Latin appellation "barbarians" it is nowadays rejected as a devaluating term im-
      posed by others. Rather, members of the Berber ethnic groups call themselves "Amazigh", which
      also refers to the common origin of their language. However, a large part of the kinship mem-
      bers (especially those living in Morocco) had lost their mother tongue over centuries in favour of
      Arabic (see Shoup 2011: 53–58). For a map of a simplified spatial distribution of ethnic groups in
      Mali see Appendix A.3.2.

138   As provided within the framework of the Algiers Accord, Tuareg units had indeed joined the
      fight against terrorism, for example against the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (French
      acronym in use: GSPC), a terrorist faction founded in Algeria in 1998 during the Algerian civil war.
      In 2007, GSPC merged in the newly founded AQMI (see Maliweb 7.12.2010; Le Temps d'Algérie/
      Maliweb 27.12.2010; see also MNA 6.01.2011a).

the strongest impact on the character of media coverage since they pave the way for a growing thread of reports critical of the government. Based on Wikileaks information, accusing the government of playing a "double game" by only pretending to fight terror while cooperating with AQMI terrorists secretly is taken particularly serious:

> "The authorities of Bamako [are accused of] collaborating with AQMI while playing on two fields: First, by trying to discredit the Tuareg by assimilating them with Islamists and, moreover, by trading with AQMI in order to assure a certain percentage of eventual ransom money." (Maliweb 7.12.2010)

> "The population is stunned as never before about its highest authorities playing a double game concerning their engagement in fighting AQMI which, at the same time, take up quarters in the North of our country." (Le Potentiel/Maliweb 21.12.2010a)

Other leaked information published by the media affirms that US diplomats consider Malian authorities not only as incapable but also unwilling to effectively fight AQMI. Therefore, US military aid for Mali could possibly be seen as a bad investment (see Le Matinal/Maliweb 24.12.2010a). At the same time, some media still provide a favourable platform for the presentation of the government's justificatory remarks:

> "No country can succeed on one's own in eradicating threats like terrorism, especially in a region where borders are rather porous. [...] Today, the US and its allies face an acid test in countries like Afghanistan where Al Qaeda gives them a hard fight since many years. We need to have the same alliance against AQMI in the Sahelo-Saharan strip." (Le Matin/Maliweb 9.12.2010)

Against this background of an increasingly split media coverage, the FES – highly recognised for its support of Malian civil society from INGOs' side – offers a broad insight in its annual Media Barometer. The FES assessment points out that there is an extraordinary pluralism in the field of Malian newspapers, radio, and television, backed up by a clear legal basis of freedom of speech and press.[139] At the same time, the FES report addresses a number of restrictions concerning these fundamental rights in the actual practice of media work (see FES 2010):

- journalists while doing their work are harassed, intimidated or even life-threatened, for example by religious groups but also by state actors;
- sources do not enjoy complete legal protection;
- there are no laws regulating competition in the media sector;

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139   In particular, according to the FES, the radio section of Malian media develops at a great speed: 498 licences have been distributed, 300 of them broadcasting in different regional languages, with the result that nearly the whole Malian population is well provided with radio service. In addition, as the basic infrastructure in Mali steadily grows, internet access and web usage develop positively, too. In this context, newspapers, radio, and television are boosting factors since they provide their programmes online in parallel (see FES 2010: 6).

- and no laws penalising political interference;
- basic journalistic principles such as accurateness and impartiality are often neglected;
- self-censorship due to social and economic reasons is a common practice;
- there is too much "event journalism" and not enough journalistic background research and reportages.

In sum, according to the FES, there is a growing deficit of moral integrity among Malian journalists and press organs.

During phase I, MNA documents show an increasing effort to counter one-sided representations of the MNA as an organisation of Tuareg only in government and media publications. Hence, it is pointed out that the MNA declares itself as an organisation representing "the people of Azawad" as a whole and embodying its desire to

> "[…] to be the framer of its future by taking its matters in hand, for a definite and sustainable solution of its problems in economic, political or security affairs." (MNA 20.01.2011)

Moreover, further statements reject any accusation, especially against the Tuareg, of being involved in terrorist activities as a deliberate disinformation (see MNA 11.01.2011; 20.01.2011; see also chapter 6.2/phase I/January 2011).

Based on the analysis of the text corpus, three incidences can be seen as especially important with a view to the evolution of conflict identities (i.e. persons, roles, programmes and norms): (1) The Flame of Peace ceremony on February 7–8, (2) the MNA congress on April 15–17 und (3) the reaction to returnees from Libya against the background of dealing with AQMI terrorism.

(1) For Malian authorities, the Flame of Peace ceremony on February 7–8 in Kidal is of central importance as a symbol and ritual of the peace process that is intended to forge a common identity, especially in the anniversary year. From the government's perspective, participants of this ceremony, be they representatives of the Malian government or former rebels, show their commitment to the peace process. And what's more, as it is announced, the population perceives the cremation as

> "a victory of peace, achieved by the people of Kidal who are definitely determined to close the sad chapter of armed conflict." (GovMali 9.02.2011)

Even though a majority of the population in the north supports the peace process, government voices point to the observation that "the former leader of the armed bandits, Ibrahim Ag Bahanga" and those supporting him still refuse the peace process, and, even worse, are held in high esteem by large parts of the population. At the same time, the "honourable values of the Tuareg warrior", their culture and way of life rank among the most important basic Malian values (see GovMali 7.02.2011d; see also L'Indépendant/ Maliweb 10.02.2011b). Concerning media coverage of the Flame of Peace, again, accounts are at least twofold (see also chapter 6.2/phase I/February 2011): Those sharing the government's argument, appreciating the president's authority and qualities, particularly as

a former general, and praising the Malian policy (see e.g. Maliweb 10.02.2011c); and others, openly criticising ATT for his immoderate concessions to former rebels and demanding tougher action in the north (see e.g. L'Indicateur du Renouveau/ Maliweb 3.02.2011a; 8.02.2011a).

Reactions to the Flame of Peace ceremony from Tuareg youth groups published on MNA channels mirror these latter media voices. They show an obvious frustration about the government's non-reaction to the offer of a political dialogue to resolve the situation (e.g. made by Bahanga's ATNMC as early as November 2010) which is then used to justify the threat of resuming the armed conflict (see MNA 6.02.2011a). Yet, some MNA sources include efforts to counterbalance these rather young and Tuareg-dominated voices from Azawad

> "The movement condemns the false political montage offered by the Malian president intended to delude the international community about the reality of the question of Azawad and to draw off the attention of Azawadiens from the true problem they have since 50 years which is the occupation." (MNA 19.02.2011a)

These statements highlight that the MNA is determined to finish a struggle that had begun 50 years ago and to finally and *peacefully* fulfil the legitimate desire of a people of its own (see MNA 19.02.2011b; italics added).

(2) As presented earlier in chapters 6.2 and 6.3, the first national MNA congress held on April 15–17 represents a central reference point for a number of speech acts related to each other and showing elements of roles and programmes which make up conflict identities. In particular, the much-cited closing statement of the congress documents MNA's main objective in black and white: the autonomy of the northern regions, not their independence, is meant as a "national project", including "all sons and daughters of Azawad", which means all ethnic groups of Azawad although Tuareg voices may have been the loudest ones before (see MNA 29.04.2011).

As if, at first glance, directly reacting to the first national MNA congress, ATT had the first meeting ever with Arab tribal leaders from all Northern regions on April 28. Even though, this meeting is welcomed in MNA sources (see e.g. MNA 29.04.2011), overall reactions remain highly sceptical since ATT does still not face up to MNA claims in general but turns towards claims of a specific ethnic groups only. Moreover, according to the MNA, this kind of privileging one group at the expense of others contradicts ATT's earlier appeals to unity in diversity (see e.g. ATT's Easter speech; GovMali 24.04.2011). According to media coverage, ATT assumes that the MNA represents a largely unknown, rather virtual, and thus a hardly relevant organisation. A number of media releases do not share this implicit conclusion and warn their readers not to underestimate the MNA (see Le Combat/Maliweb 4.05.2011a; Lafia Révélateur 4.05.2011b; Le 22 Septembre/ Maliweb 5.05.2011b). Morover, the MNA congress' closing statement which calls Azawad a widely supported national project arouses media criticism in substance: Referring to interethnic rivalries and even armed conflict in northern Mali, for example between Peuls and Tuareg on land and livestock or between Tuareg and Arabs over water resources, a number of reports have doubts about the alleged broad backing of the MNA in Azawad's pop-

ulation.[140] As the following and other statement from tribal leaders repeatedly suggest (see also chapter 6.3), relations between tribes and ethnic groups have always been tense, in this situation more than ever.

> "However, when the Arabs or other ethnic groups pressure us into a reaction, we will react with utmost rigour. The others are not the only ones possessing weapons." (Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb 18.04.2011a)

According to Le Combat/Maliweb (21.04.2011a), AQMI threats against a single ethnic group, for example against the Arabs (by means of a pamphlet distributed in Timbuktu and neighbourhoods) breeds additional discord and thus an incentive to rearm. Further media accounts can be characterised as fuelling the atmosphere, for example by continuously label the MNA cause as one of "independence" instead of autonomy (see e.g. Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 27.04.2011f) or by imputing racist motives to the MNA as an organisation of light-skinned Berbers or Arabs against dark-skinned Africans (see above May 2011/Le Prétoire/Maliweb 3.05.2011c).

In contrast, by referring to the context of the Arab Spring, MNA voices claim to promote "an intellectual revolution of democratic values" and to bring it "to an end" (see MNA 5.03.2011; 15.07.2011). As mentioned earlier (see chapter 6.2/phase I/May 2011), from an MNA perspective, the time has come to move on from "50 years of endless rebellions" and to enter into a dialogue with the Malian government:

> "We, the National Movement of Azawad, ask the Malian government [...] to organise a referendum in consultation with all structures of Azawads's civil society and foreign partners. [Let us] give preference to the peaceful way of solving this crisis under best conditions and by preventing any aggression against Azawadians." (MNA 25.05.2011)

However, as a precondition to enter a true dialogue, the MNA presses the Malian government to take over responsibility for the great sacrifice Azawad made in prior decades (see MNA 15.07.2011). In addition, the MNA shows itself convinced to be able to continue its "revolutionary work" within Azawad-wide structures while being guided by principles of democracy and hoping for international support to realise these democratic values in Azawad (see MNA 15.07.2011; 6.08.2011).

This taken into consideration, government announcements regarding the mid-term review of PSPSDN, which is very much considered to be an ATT project, can be read as a reaction to the MNA-proclaimed "intellectual revolution" backed up by international

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140   Media reports in April 2011 refer to two concrete incidences approving the latent and violence-prone conflict between ethnic groups in northern Mali: First, as it came out after a few weeks of investigation, on March 22, 2011, members of Peuls attacked a Malian military base in Ansongo to liberate one of their combatants (who was imprisoned because of illegal possession of arms). For several weeks, however, it had been tried to lay the blame for the attack at the feet of the Tuareg (see L'Indicateur du Renouveau/Maliweb 4.04.2011). Second, reports deal with increasing violent confrontations between Arabs and Tuaregs in Temberemtt/Gossi (Gao region) over water resources in early April (see Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb 18.04.2011a).

support (see GovMali 13.07.2011; 11.08.2011). Therefore, PSPSDN has especially been successful because of its massive international support:

> "The head of state appreciated all actors involved in the execution of PSPSDN. In particular, he gave thanks to international development partners for their significant contribution." (see GovMali 27.07.2011)

In an overall picture, phase I includes government statement that repeatedly present the Malian state institutions as credible and reliable by referring to external actors, such as international development organisations, which place great confidence in Malian authorities. On this, especially reports on the awarding of an international ethics price to ATT and other external appraisals for his policy of promoting human rights and Mali's democratic development are obvious examples (see GovMali 18.04.2011; 21.04.2011; 29.04.2011b; 14.06.2011; 20.07.2011; 1.08.2011a).

(3) Beginning in March 2011, the topic of Libyan returnees becomes increasingly present; (self-)descriptions in all source groups refer to it, particularly because it can be linked to the long-burning issue of growing insecurity in the light of AQMI terrorism. The Malian government, for example, does not want to be associated with alleged "Malian mercenaries" engaged in Libya, neither in the present nor in the past (see GovMali 5.03.2011b). Hence, the government expresses a certain feeling of loyalty to those Malians who emigrated the country long ago and now should be given the possibility of a "safe return home" (GovMali 21.03.2011). As ATT points out in his Easter speech, here too, "unity in diversity is a superior interest of the nation" (GovMali 30.04.2011). On top of that, as often mentioned during phase I, the multicultural historical legacy and present has to be preserved under all circumstances (see GovMali 29.07.2011).

In MNA releases, too, right from the beginning, solidarity with Libyan returnees, being members of Tuareg tribes in their vast majority, is presented as a high value (see MNA 5.03.2011a/b). By putting themselves into the context of the Arab Spring, the MNA portrays solidarity with Libyan returnees as a reaction to the global "wind of change" which breaks "mental and emotional prisons" (MNA 17.04.2011). A few months later, MNA statements finally state that the "glimpse of a new era" and thus the time for change has come in Mali, too, and frame slogans like the following:

> "The MNA is our choice, the peaceful intellectual and political struggle is our right, and Azawad is our home." (MNA 15.07.2011)[141]

As other statements suggest, this slogan and further messages are intended both to ensnare Libyan returnees and to induce Western governments and societies to support MNA's democratic project (see MNA 16.07.2011). At the same time, the government, too, urgently and critically appeals to Western countries: it condemns the ongoing NATO aerial attacks on Libya and its catastrophic consequences for civilians and complains

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141   In its French original, this slogan rhymes and can thus easily be memorised : "Le MNA, c'est notre Choix, la lutte politique pacifique et intellectuelle c'est notre Droit, et l'Azawad, c'est notre Toit!"

about Libya's neighbouring countries who reject refugees from Libya (see GovMali 28.06.2011).

In media coverage on the developments in Libya, the dominating voices are those focusing on threatening and dangerous scenarios of growing insecurity in Mali and the Sahelian zone due to a massive influx of ex-soldiers from Libya and their families, such as the following:

> "When the Libyan revolution turned into a rebellion, Muammar Gaddafi opened arms depots and called all his supporters to provide themselves in order to combat insurgents. This is how mercenaries including Malians seized an substantial amount of weapons and ammunition [...] which has already entered Mali, particularly the north. To what purpose? To supply growing networks of drug traffickers in the Malian desert? For a new rebellion? For the benefit of AQMI? Or simply to hand them over to NGO in exchange for some CFA-Franc? We know nothing about it!" (Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 6.04.2011)

In this context, reports show the major concern that Libyan returnees would find themselves new areas of activity within the framework of fragile statehood in the north, such as drug trafficking and supporting AQMI (see Nouvelle Libération/Maliweb 15.04.2011; Le Combat/Maliweb 18.04.2011b). Some media remarks consider the Libyan developments as a root cause of Mali's destabilisation (see L'Indicateur du Renouveau/Maliweb 29.04.2011a) that has made the MNA a beneficiary:

> "Why did the initiators of this movement choose this precise point in time to revive the desire for self-determination of the peoples of Azawad? Because a sufficient amount of arms has come from Libya?" (Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 27.04.2011f)

Several media comments, however, present AQMI as the major threat: Therefore, terrorists do most probably have surface-to-air missiles at their disposal, a circumstance that alarms both countries in West Africa and Western powers (see Reuters/Maliweb 11.05.2011). According to the Malian council of ministers by the end of May cited by the media, new movements promoting autonomy in the north (i.e. MNA) do not pose the primary threat but terrorism (see Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb 21.05.2011). Moreover, especially AQMI's methods are seen as deeply troubling: people are forced to quote the Kuran in arbitrary inspections in the streets; teachers and other public servants are offered triple salaries if they declare to support AQMI; new supporters are deliberately recruited among all ethnic groups and tribes – and this all the more so as the government is said to have no means to counter these activities:

> "The actual strategie of the Malian state seems to be: As long as you don't attack neither my civilian population nor my military, I close my eyes before you." (Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 26.05.2011)

In sum, notwithstanding a certain success in pushing back the advance of AQMI on the government's side[142], sceptical media comments prevail by the end of phase I. In the light of Bahanga's death, accusations from the media against the government reach a new peak: ATT is presented as an accomplice of terror since he had granted privileges for Bahanga who at least temporarily coquetted with Islamists (see L'Indépendent/Maliweb 29.08.2011). Against the background of these frequent accusations, ATT occasionally gets cited in the media as distancing himself by saying that AQMI members could not be seen as true Muslims since they are involved in kidnapping, drug trafficking and mercenarism (see Le Républicain/Maliweb 10.08.2011) and referring to other countries which face similar challenges with transnational terrorism (see RFI/Maliweb 27.08.2011).

The analysed INGO sources clearly confirm the sceptical view expressed in media coverage. According to their regular reports, AQMI establishes new military bases in the north while at the same time incidences of intimidating civilians and kidnappings by AQMI increase (see e.g. ICG 1.05.2011, 1.07.2011). Following an FES assessment, the Malian government does not show any political will to face this development. The international community, in turn, is presented as being obsessed with AQMI terrorism while ignoring latent interethnic conflicts and not having a grandstand view on the region as a whole:

> "Western support, to date, has concentrated on strengthening the capacities of security forces in the countries of central Sahara which has not permitted to resolve the complex security situation. Only an inclusive approach taking the complexity of the conflict system into account and based on regional and international mechanisms will permit to achieve a truly peaceful situation in northern Mali and central Sahara." (FES June 2011: 5)

At the end of phase I, INGO reports, too, express deep worries about "a danger of destabilisation due to hundreds of returnees from Libya" (ICG 1.09.2011) or even see the democratic development of Mali at risk (see FES August 2011).

Phase II (Aug 2011 – Oct 2011)

In phase II, conflict communication in its social dimension can be followed up along three reference topics: (1) unity and division, (2) a more present state, and (3) solidarity.

(1) Taking the widespread perception of an escalating civil war in neighbouring Libya as a starting point, the analysed government documents in phase II not only stress the Malian government's support for the "legitimate claims of the Libyan people" but also the importance of unity and integritiy of Libya for Mali's stability. Using the metaphor of the Niger river that geographically unites south and north and historically figures the common lifeline of big and diverse empires, official voices firmly state that Mali's unity can never be up for discussion (see GovMali 6.09.2011; 17.10.2011). In marked contrast,

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142   As, for example, AFP (19.07.2011) reports, the advancing AQMI has been fought back by the Malian army supported by the Mauritanian military in Wagadou Forest near the Mauritanian-Malian border. This joint military operation resulted in 17 deaths (15 AQMI fighters, 2 Mauretanian soldiers). Morover, as AFP adds, the Malian military repeatedly engaged in emergency food assistance for the northern regions.

MNA statements pay tribute to Bahanga for his exemplary commitment to the cause of Azawad's unity and self-determination (see MNA 28.08.2011). Comments on Bahanga's death from the media's side, however, convey a certain feeling of satisfaction, especially because Bahanga had always been characterised as an outlaw who gets away unpunished with divisive and violent actions against Mali's unity (see e.g. L'Indépendent/Maliweb 29.08.2011).[143]

Yet, Malian authorities, too, are confronted with the accusation of deliberately advancing cleavages and division. According to representatives of Arab groups, the government acts in an amateurish and divisive manner, especially concerning a fair participation of ethnic groups in PSPSDN:

> "[...] the programme had a bad start because Koulouba [i.e. the building of the presidency] was once again blinded by its amateurism, its laxism and its divisive spirit. [...] Under no circumstances, communitarian and regionalist considerations should intervene in the implementation of this programme, since PSPSDN belongs to Mali and not the benefitting localities." (Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 2.09.2011)

The MNA, by the time one year old, is considered to jeopardise Mali's unity in most media accounts. This becomes particularly obvious in reports about highly symbolic public actions, such as hoisting the Azawad flag on an administration building in Ansongo (Gao region) by young MNA activists which was immediately interpreted as a strike against state authority (see Le Républicain/Maliweb 16.09.2011). Government announcements do usually not pick up these kinds of minor incidences. Instead, to react and send messages, they use occasions such as the inauguration of the China-Mali Friendship Bridge across Niger in Bamako (see chapter 6.2/phase II/September 2011) when ATT quoted Isaac Newton within the context of international understanding but addressed to his own population, especially in the north:

> "We build too many walls and not enough bridges" (GovMali 22.09.2011)

At the same time, further media accounts give prominence to the historical observation that the danger of division or, in other words, precarious unity represents an ancient topic. Conflict-laden rivalries between hierarchically organised tribal societies and their economic systems (sedentarism vs. nomadism) have always been passed on (see Le Combat/Maliweb 23.09.2011). A topic of growing attention in the media in phase II: religious authorities increasingly appear as potential reconcilers. By referring to the common values of Islam – understanding, equality, solidarity, and mutual help – media voices thus address religion as a remedy to build bridges between north and south or between ethnic groups in the north (see Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 28.09.2011).

(2) The perception of northern Mali as a territory where state structures are not as present as they should be is a common thread in the course of the conflict discourse.

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143   Among the analysed government documents, there is *no* comment similarly denouncing Bahanga. In contrast, as Le Combat (Maliweb 19.09.2011) reports, a few weeks later, a government delegation is sent to the north to do a visit of condolence to Bahanga's family, to establish contact to his faction and to convince them from being loyal to the government as a better choice.

At one point or another, government statements, MNA/MNLA announcements, media accounts and INGO reports qualify fragile statehood as a key problem of the north. The question of how to react to this situation, of course, is answered in different ways depending on different perceptions about the causes. MNA statements, for example, steadily complain about a growing militarisation of northern Mali disguised as development efforts via PSPSDN but still threatening and intimidating the population (see MNA 2.09.2011). These perceptions are also bluntly published in media accounts:

> "This is a project of militarisation of the whole region. There will be military training camps and fightings between Western powers and AQMI. And a consequence, our population will come under attack from both sides. We thus risk to have collateral damage which brings our movement to refuse PSPSDN." (Le Combat/Maliweb 19.09.2011)

At the same time, government releases demonstrate a striking continuity concerning ATT's firm beliefs: peace and security represent the backbone of any form of development; poverty and underdevelopment is not an inevitable fate; and northern Mali is well on the way because state is coming back (see GovMali 21.09.2011). Nevertheless, the fact that drug traffickers and terrorists can still easily attack military bases, for example on October 2 in Abeïbara, nourish media speculation on insufficient communication between the Malian government and the Malian military and, in the light of an increasing number of incidences showing a loss of control, about the general inappropriateness of a strategy that aims at bringing the state back in by measures of security policy (see Le Prétoire/Maliweb 6.10.2011a).

Taken together, a number of passages across all text sources in phase II show references to the goal of a comprehensive and present state, especially in the domains of security, economic development, health care, education and basic infrastructure. On the one hand, media accounts mirror government voices that are convinced about PSPSDN being a working instrument to reach this goal, as, for example, the cue to the concept of "development poles" (Le Républicain/Maliweb 18.10.2011) illustrates.[144] On the other hand, at this point, there are still those media reports expressing the view that there is not much success in building up state structures in the north because Malian authorities had been tolerating opposed developments that led to the foundation of a new and even more militant organisation, the MNLA, and made AQMI increasingly stronger (see e.g. L'Express/Maliweb 21.10.2011c).

(3) At various points in the analysed text corpus, solidarity appears as a central signifier which conveys elements of relations between actors and thus evolving conflict identities. The MNA, for example, repeatedly presents itself as the only representation of the people of Azawad and complains about UN institutions which do not show enough solidarity with MNA's fight for freedom and democracy as well as against decades-long

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144   In this context, media reports quote the director of PSPSDN, *Mohamed Ag Erlaf*, who reacts to the accusation of having established an unfair participation of ethnic groups in PSPSDN (see above e.g. Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 2.09.2011). According to Erlaf, PSPSDN pays particular attention to the principle of transparency and does not allow any privileging of regions, localities or companies, or, in short, any form of discrimination (Le Prétoire/Maliweb 6.10.2011a).

marginalisation and oppression or, in short, against any form of (neo-)colonialism (see MNA 13.09.2011). Elsewhere, media reports quote a message of solidarity from Malian Chamanamas members (i.e. one of the Tuareg tribes) to tribe members among Libyan returnees:

> "The Chamanamas prepare for receiving their brothers from Libya. [...] The Chamanamas community engages in strengthening social cohesion among the community in particular and with all other Malian communities in general." (Le 22 Septembre/ Maliweb 26.09.2011)

With regards to returnees from Libya in general, some media articles speak of a good supply situation and security environment, at least in Timbuktu region, and emphasise the great deal of solidarity on the part of Malian authorities (see Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 5.10.2011). Others outline that refugees from Libya who were promised comprehensive solidarity by the Malian government, once arrived in northern Mali, feel disillusioned, unwelcome and mistreated (see Le Combat/Maliweb 10.10.2011a).[145] According to RFI (Maliweb 16.10.2011), observations even suggest that reception, treatment and supply of refugees happens in a differentiating way, which means, for example, that it makes a considerable difference if refugees are members of Ifoghas, Imghad or Chamanamas (i.e. Tuareg tribes).[146] Finally, the government states that its "helping hand policy" towards returnees from Libya can be taken for granted and, at the same time, is guided by the principle of reciprocity: solidarity with refugees in exchange for loyalty to the Malian state (see GovMali 24.10.2011).

In sum, as the analysis of phase II within the context of these three reference points (unity and division; a more present state; solidarity) shows, communication conveys the impression of missed chances:

> "The National Movement of Azawad, while giving preference to a peaceful political way, reiterates its appeal to the Malian government to respond to its claims [...]. The MNA will grant itself the right to use all necessary means to implement the right to self-determination of the people of Azwad." (MNA 4.10.2011)

Especially as this "last and final appeal" of the MNA (see above), including both the offer to engage in dialogue and the threat to take other measures, comes out, the militance in conflict communication from all sides seems to reach a new level.

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145 As more and more units of Libyan ex-soldiers including their families reach Mali (such as colonel *Ewazague Ag Emakadeye*'s unit including 700 civilians), AFP (Maliweb 12.10.2011) and Le Prétoire (Maliweb 13.10.2011) report that Malian humanitarian aid leaves much to be desired. Moreover, according to these sources, since nobody wants to make an ex-Libyan military unit an enemy, a quick integration would be desirable.

146 As HRW (4.09.2011) adds, ethnically connoted discrimination between light-skinned and dark-skinned ethnic groups is accentuated by the massive influx of light-skinned Libyan refugees. To top it all, according to Lafia Révélateur (Maliweb 28.09.2011), national and international aid agencies find themselves in a kind of competitive situation since they quarrel about where to locate best development investments.

Phase III (Oct 2011 – January 17, 2012)

October 2011 – the foundation

The representation of the conflict discourse in its social dimension in phase III follows in four monthly sections, beginning on October 16 after the foundation of the MNLA. At this point, on October 16, as the "last and final appeal" of the MNA provokes no reaction not to mention a recognition on the part of the government, MNA leaders present themselves forced to set up the MNLA "in order to create a future for the people of Azawad" (see MNLA 16.10.2011). Furthermore, this step is presented as necessary since only the new and broader movement would be able to help the people of Azawad out of their state of emergency and thus to make their liberation possible. This liberation could also take place with the help of Libyan ex-soldiers and deserters from the Malian military, as MNLA spokesman of the political bureau, *Hama Ag Sid-Ahmed*, clarifies later from a Tuareg perspective:

> "The Tuareg have adapted themselves by creating the MNLA. A new dynamic has taken form in relation to the military due to the influx of Tuareg soldiers from the Libyan and Malian army." (MNLA 30.10.2011)

In addition, the MNLA declares to make comprehensive efforts to collect the many weapons in circulation before they would fall into the hands of bandits and terrorists. Also, its leaders maintain their offer to enter into a serious dialogue with the government. At the same time, as the same MNLA statements show, Malian officials are once again accused of secretly supporting terrorists and playing a double game (see MNLA 30.10.2011).

Following the analysed media releases, UN observers confirm that the most imminent danger in West Africa arises from the huge amount of weapons circulating and partly falling into the hands of AQMI and drug traffickers (see AFP/Maliweb 17.10.2011). Other media pieces once more allege that Western powers, especially France, seem to be interested in fuelling insecurity in northern Mali as part of a neo-colonial strategy to ensure their share of Malian gas and oil (see Le Combat/Maliweb 19.10.2011a; see also chapter 6.2/phase I/January 2011). Besides the foundation of the MNLA and its declared goals, further media reports in October focus on Libyan returnees: For example, colonel *Hassan Ag Mehdi*, liaison officer within the office of the prime minister and Chamanamas member, goes on media record as saying that returnees immediately have to be taken care of and that, ultimately, "Mali will be defended to the last drop of blood" (Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb 20.10.2011a). Also, several reports assume that even in Kidal region where a new rebellion is rated as being most likely only a minority would support it (see L'Indépendent/Maliweb 20.10.2011d). Likewise, *Wadossane Ag Simitala*, a former member of parliament from Kidal, speaks out in an interview:

> "The independence of Azawad is too complicated since each group only aspires its individual interests. The arabs don't like instability because their businesses won't develop. The Peuls and the Songhay are very present within the administration. All these classes and ethnic groups won't accept the independence of Azawad. If this

continues as far as a referendum (like in South Soudan), Arabs and Songhay will vote no and more than half of the Tamasheq will do so, too." (Le Combat/Maliweb 22.10.2011a)

INGO reports, in turn, do still not mention MNLA as a source of instability. Instead, an imminent alliance between returnees from Libya and AQMI is presented as the most important danger. ICG, for example, discerns a connection between 400 ex-soldiers arriving in Mali and, shortly thereafter, an increasing number of attacks against state institutions in the very same northern district (see ICG 1.11.2011). According to a commentary on Maliweb (25.10.2011b), all of this takes place under the eyes of a lax government which is not able to control the borders, communicates poorly what happens and does little to stop the multiplication of dangerous forces equipped with Libyan weapons. Indeed, against the background of daily reports about new arrivals from Libya having lost their mother tongue, living in severely restricted areas and being shepherded by government delegations and abundant food supply, suspicion and fear grows (see Le Combat/Maliweb 26.10.2011). In this context, for example, a delegation of Imghad returnees from Libya express their loyalty to the Malian state within the framework of special visit to the president in Bamako (see Mali Demain/Maliweb 28.10.2011c). What is more, according to Le Pretoire (Maliweb 31.10.2011b), groups of returnees from Libya with different tribal backgrounds veritably court the government, i.e. for money and positions. Despite a certain success in receiving and enclosing Libyan returnees, a worsening of the security situation is expected:

> "I am indeed in fear for peace and stability in this region. [...] If [the Malian state] handles the situation badly, we have open war and we will suffer. There is a huge amount of weapons already circulating. The Malian state established a programme to collect these weapons. If weapons from Libya now come in on top, I am deeply worried about my country." (Ighlass Ag Oufene, ex-governor of Kidal, as cited in Le Combat/Maliweb 22.10.2011a)

Following Oufene in the above-cited interview with newspaper Le Combat, there is even reason to fear an open war. Other newspaper articles refer to the assessment of the situation by the FES which says that AQMI should be considered the predominant and most serious threat to peace and security in Mali since the terrorists took best advantage of the already existing massive proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Sahelian zone (see Le Pouce/Maliweb 31.10.2011e). According to the FES, however, this problem can only be addressed with the help of ECOWAS and its conflict management mechanisms (see FES October 2011).

November 2011 – month of no return

In the beginning of November, analysed statements from all source groups appear to be totally under the impression of the demonstrations on November 1 that took place in many localities in the north, initiated by the MNLA. Around these activities, the most important claim is once again framed: from MNLA's perspective, Azawad's autonomy would be "a better solution for all, both the population of Azawad and for the rest of Mali" (see

MNLA 2.11.2011). In this context, the MNLA invokes the right to self-determination of indigenous people which is documented in the UN system and in basic legal AU documents. Therefore, the people of Azawad is presented as being entitled to make use of this right. Its implementation, in turn, then legitimately resides with the MNLA, a dialogue-oriented, peaceful, and growing social movement that clearly represents the people of Azawad (see MNLA 3.11.2011a; 6.11.2011; 28.11.2011).[147]

As illustrated on the banner carried on November 1 in Kidal, Mali and Algeria are perceived as bloodily digging their talons into the territory of Azawad which is directly associated with the MNLA.[148] Thus, for example, the MNLA condemns the fight against terrorism of both countries in the Sahlian zone as a pretext to intensify the repression of the Azawad's population (see MNLA 3.11.2011a; 21.11.2011). In addition, as the MNLA (14.11.2011) brings forward, government and media have been fuelling a campaign of lies for quite some time presenting MNLA members as terrorists and/or mercenaries without any principles (see MNLA 14.11.2011). Furthermore,

> "Growing inequalities and poverty, the exacerbation of identitarian frustrations, a context of violence and generalised suspicion towards the people of Azawad are the basis of Malian power. The people of Azawad is alarmed about the non-consideration of these problems and wonders about the role of human rights organisations, the media, and the reason why the international community stays silent in the face of a disappearing people." (MNLA 3.11.2011a)

And, because the MNLA holds that there are no trustworthy partners, neither in the Malian government nor in the international community, the MNLA directly addresses "the Malian people" in an open letter:

> "Why is it that poverty and hunger kill Malian children all day long while the state pours billions in armament which is afterwards deployed on the territory of Azawad? Why is it that the Malian people accepts to get into dept just to buy weapons serving to fill death lists of innocent brothers in Azawad?" (MNLA 3.11.2011g)

In view of the revolution in Libya, the MNLA continues along the lines set earlier by the MNA and declares its full support, solidarity, and compassion, especially with the victims. On its own account, the MNLA adds that these victims had fallen "on the field of honour and human dignity in the name of democracy and justice" (MNLA 3.11.2011b). Other statements also make clear that returnees, too, would join the great project of unity in diversity represented in the people Azawad:

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147   According to the MNLA (14.11.2011), the already elected members of parliament from within the ranks of ethnic groups and tribes in the north do not at all represent the people of Azawad since they do not enough to promote the common goal of self-determination.

148   Video footage of the November 1 demonstrations in Kidal including the protest posters above can be found on YouTube (under the heading of "Marche Azawad à Kidal 01/11/2011"; see also MNLA 28.11.2011).

"Our compatriots come back home with a package of projects: developing their areas; bringing security to all parts of Azawad's population: Songhay, Tuareg, Arabs, Peuls, and to their belongings; fighting against banditry, concerning for example car thefts by armed small gangs out of control; huge campaigns to raise awareness in order to fight against any form of indoctrination by AQMI; and the restoration of social network on a local level in order to bring about the unity of the people of Azawad!" (MNLA 28.11.2011)

Broadly speaking, the government, as before in relation to the MNA, does not react to announcements or actions of the MNLA, as, for example, its non- reaction to the massive demonstrations in different places in the north on November 1 shows. Yet, some government releases can be understood as in a sort responding to activities associated with the MNLA. Only a few days after the demonstrations, ATT, for example, prays for peace and unity in all conflicts in the context of his hadj to Mecca (see GovMali 5.11.2011).[149] Likewise, ATT's praise of the judges, his commitment to checks and balances and the pointer to ATT's earlier engagement in favour of free media can be seen as reply to MNLA's allegation that Mali, at least for the people in the north, does not represent a functioning democracy (see GovMali 22.11.2011; 24.11.2011).

Figure 11: Demonstrations in Kidal on November 1, 2011

(See Le Républicain/Maliweb 6.11.2011)

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149   During November, ATT receives exuberant thanks from media's side for having taken requests and concerns of the Malian people to Mecca during his hadj (see e.g. Le Guido/Maliweb 29.11.2011c).

By the end of November, however, ATT comes to an unprecedented and far-reaching conclusion: Against the background of hundreds of ex-soldiers from Libya, masses of weapons circulating in the region, and an increasing number of attacks and kidnappings, Mali as a whole is under attack and its unity is threatened as it has never been before (see GovMali 21.11.2011; 27.11.2011). As ATT further adds,

> "With open arms, we receive all those within a framework of preserving peace and security in our country. [...] Just to clarify matters, we will never accept foreign arms inundating the Sahelo-Saharan strip and attacking our countries. [...] Let us stay united, regardless of our ethnic affinity, the colour of our skin or our convictions, for a united and indivisible Mali, for one goal and one faith. We will not accept to drift into confusion which is part of the bandit's methods. Whatever happens, we always have to close ranks in order to isolate the criminals." (GovMali 27.11.2011)

In contrast to government statements, media reports in November extensively deal with the MNLA by reporting, commenting and directly addressing MNLA voices. The MNLA-initiated demonstrations in Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal on November 1 are immediately dubbed as "claiming independence" while ex-soldiers from Libya "create a situation of pre-rebellion where the noise of boots and arms can already be heard" (El Watan/Maliweb 1.11.2011a). Moreover, the MNLA is portrayed as nothing else but an alliance of militant groups boasting about their military capabilities (e.g. after having incorporated the "Bani Walid Division" from Libya). Against this background, it should not be surprising that the Malian military deploys troops to the north. In this perspective, the north already became a "no man's land" ruled by Al Qaeda due to Western powers as string-pullers in the background which seek to display their economic interests (see Le Combat/Maliweb 3.11.2011b).[150] Some media accounts even allow leaders from northern Mali to express their views on MNLA demonstrations as well as on the question of Libyan returnees (the following four quotes are taken from Le Républicain/Maliweb 3.11.2011c):

> "Mali is one and indivisible. What actually happens in this part of the country [i.e. the north] is not that massive. However, we should not be so casual about it either." (Nock Ag Attia, representative of Diré, Timbuktu region)

> "There has not been any official declaration on the basis of which we could speak about a rebellion. People need to know what really happened [...] The MNLA's method is peaceful." (Attaye Ag Mohamed, university lecturer)

> "Weapons must be handed over, peace has to be achieved by integration. [...] We certainly do not need a war right now." (Hamadou Kisso Cissé, representative of Mopti, Mopti region, neighbouring on the three northern regions)

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150   The idea that especially European powers would pursue a plan of destabilisation and destruction of northern Mali gets pointedly taken up again by the end of November by Le Potentiel (Maliweb 29.11.2011c): "The Tuareg rebellion and its offsprings, drugs trafficking and AQMI presence, are creations of Western countries policies, especially of European countries. The fireman-pyromaniac policy of Europe today turns against their own innocent nationals who often pay with their lives for the cynicism of their governments."

> "These are Malian brothers and sisters. [...] However, they have to be disarmed. [...] Mali is a peaceful country where we have freedom of expression. This march is legitimate as long as it takes place within the framework of our constitution." (Hamidi Hama Diallo, representative of Mopti)

As the analysis of media accounts shows, there are also rather opposite views on how dangerous the situation is as a result of the MNLA demonstrations: On the one hand, there are reports which do not see a rebellion rising because the MNLA could, at best, be considered as a virtual social movement not having enough widespread support (see Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 9.11.2011b). Alike, a contribution in Le Combat (Maliweb 16.11.2011b) deals with prominent individuals from northern Mali, i.e. high ranking officials in Malian military or administration, who openly distance themselves from the MNLA project. Another article published in Le Républicain (Maliweb 18.11.2011) emphasises that the vast majority of Tuareg feel closely connected to the Malian nation and thus dismiss the MNLA as a small and irrelevant group of rebels.

On the other hand, in contrast, further media reports describe a "explosive situation in northern Mali" because "separatists do not exclude armed confrontation" (Le Prétoire/Maliweb 10.11.2011). The government, too, is subject to criticism because of its glowing welcome to heavily armed Libyan ex-soldiers while the north becomes a war zone where "all ingredients are there to unleash a new rebellion" (Le Potentiel/Maliweb 22.11.2011). According to the Le Républicain (Maliweb 28.11.2011b), attacks and kidnappings by jihadists (and not the MNLA) account for the de facto state of war in northern Mali (see Le Républicain/Maliweb 28.11.2011b). In this atmosphere (unmentioned by the government), a parliamentary delegation sets off for the north "to create a framework for dialogue" and finally finds itself encircled by four groups of "elements armed to the teeth":

> "Elements of the National Movement of Azawad (MNA) who recently organised a demonstration in Timbuktu, a group of armed elements from Libya, a group of discontented elements coming from within the ranks of Ibrahim Ag Bahanga and a contingent of elements lead by Colonel Assalat, a deserter from the Malian Army. These four groups merged in order to create the National Movement of Liberation of Azawad" (L'Indépendent/Maliweb 24.11.2011b)

As L'Indépendent outlines, these four groups understand the Malian state as a forced assimilation of different peoples. After the talks, the leader of the parliamentary delegation, *El Hadj Baba Haïdara* (vice president of the Malian parliament), gets further cited as having upheld legitimate representation as a basic principle. Therefore, it is reported that she insisted on the way of dialogue to further explore the claims of the MNLA and its true support among the population in the north (see L'Indépendent/Maliweb 24.11.2011b). In sum, as for example ATT's appeal to the military shows, there is a growing concern about a division of Mali and, at the same time, an increasingly militant language. ATT reminds the Malian army of their most important duty which is to defend national unity and territorial integrity. Also, he urges his compatriots "to proof

their unity in order to defend their home country" (Le Challenger/Maliweb 28.11.2011c) and calls out:

> "People of Mali, wake up! It's high time. Don't accept what becomes apparent: the partition of the national territory. United, towards a common goal, one faith, we will prevail!" (Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb 28.11.2011f)

More cases of desertions from the Malian military being subjects to media reports reinforce an impression of turmoil and fear within the ranks of the government. Above all, this is due to a growing number of desertions in favour of AQMI and new Salafist organisations that are said to be about to be founded in the environments of Ag Ghaly and colonel Ag Moussa ("Bamoussa") (see Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb 28.11.2011f; L'Essor/ Maliweb 29.11.2011g).

December 2011 – closing ranks

Many statements, releases, reports, commentaries in December 2011 have in common that they deal with the material and ethical consolidation and self- assurance of certain groups and actors in a situation perceived as being precarious.

Government releases, for example, include a strikingly large number of positive statements on Mali's performance, especially from external third parties: an approval of the Islamic Development Bank for Mali's sustainable investments in infrastructure (see GovMali 2.12.2011b); an appreciation of Mali's policies to promote human rights and its good relations to international organisations by the UN (see GovMali 11.12.2011a); an assessment of "Mali as model democracy" by key bilateral development partners (see president of German parliament, Norbert Lammert; GovMali 8.12.2011); self- congratulatory statements of the government on the ongoing preparation of the 2012 elections (see GovMali 19.12.2011) as well as on promoting art and culture (see GovMali 21.12.2011). Other striking announcement are those documenting loyalty of different groups to the Malian state or government.[151] As, for example, ex-soldiers from the Libyan military and Imghad members declare

> "We are officers of the Libyan army; we only know how to be soldiers. [...] We make ourselves available for the Malian state, with all our equipment." (GovMali 3.12.2011)

Responding to this, ATT stretches out his helping hand to "all children of Mali", highlights the high degree of trust the peaceful community of the Imghad enjoys in Mali and states

> "Mali is united, it belongs to us all. As a democrat and patriot, we can talk to each other and solve our problems." (GovMali 3.12.2011)

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151 As, for example, a pro-government demonstration of solidarity organised by young people from the north around the independence monument on November 9 shows, this also resonates in media coverage (see Mali Demain/Maliweb 15.12.2011b): "This is an act of civic engagement and a commitment for peace which has to be appreciated by all people of good will, just as the president, the prime minister and her government are to be appreciated for their fight against terrorism and banditry in the North."

In a similar way, other government releases document expressions of loyalty from an Ifoghas unit under command of colonel Ag Emakadeye in the presence of UN and AU representatives (see GovMali 22.12.2011; see also chapter 6.2/phase III/December 2011) and refer to the concrete example of Amassouss where members of different Tuareg tribes (Imghad and Kel Rela in particular), sedentary ethnic groups (Songhay and Peuls) and Libyan returnees life together peacefully (see GovMali 30.12.2011b). Lastly, ATT uses public speeches to convey the message positive impression of unity: in his Christmas address, he overwhelmingly thanks Malian Christians for being part of a "perfect synergy" between brothers and sisters of all religions in Mali and for always supporting problem solving in a constructive spirit (see GovMali 24.12.2011); in his New Year's address, ATT once again pictures the vision of Mali which maintains the highest ethical standards but, in the light of a difficult situation and huge challenges, has to mobilise all forces and energy:

> "We are still fascinated, beyond the moment and line of the horizon, by the image of a country whose human capital is of high quality, the image of a people living in peace, security and a prosperous environment, a people in accord with the nations of the world, dedicated to democratic values, freedom, and justice. The construction of this image and the concern about its preservation have mobilised our forces and our energy in the service of the people of Mali." (GovMali 31.12.2011)

The fact that mobilising "our forces and our energy" can also stand for a massive deployment of troops to the north, however, goes unmentioned in government information in the first place. As media reports then announce, the redeployment of troops had already started in the beginning of December which brings the newspaper Nouvelle Libération (Maliweb 6.12.2011b) to bluntly speak of war preparations.

In MNLA publications, too, the reinforcement of the own ranks is presented in detail, especially when it comes to deserters from the Malian military.[152] In addition, as MNLA arguments are picked up increasingly positive in the conflict discourse, more and more rather unexpected supporters of a free Azawad appear on the scene, for example

- two further high-ranking deserters, colonel Ibah Ag Mossa and captain Mohamed Ag Assaghid, both members of the Malian military's special forces in Kidal, one of the very few mixed units in accordance with the Algiers Accord, joining the MNLA (see MNLA 3.12.2011);
- Songhay representatives from Tessit, Gao region, and Gourma, Timbuktu region, coming out in favour of a free Azawad (see MNLA 9.12.2011);
- Ibrahim Ag Mohamed Assaleh, member of parliament from Bourem, Gao region: National Pact had never been implemented, a new rebellion can be justified (MNLA 15.12.2011);

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152 However, according to L'Indicateur du Renouveau (Maliweb 7.12.2011b), analysts of the *Institut Francais de Géopolitique* doubt the representation of the MNLA as a united and powerful organisation: "This is a bluff. One cannot take a movement seriously that appears from one day to the next. [There is] a lack of cohesion among Tuareg. Not all agree with MNLA's actions."

- representatives of the younger Songhay generation and even ex-members of the Ganda Koy militia join the MNLA (see MNLA 15.12.2011).

For the MNLA, it is particularly worth mentioning that *Hama Ag Mahmoud*, a former Malian minster, ranks among its most prominent supporters by the end of the year. This example is also used to illustrate the broad basis of MNLA support in the population:

> "With this announcement, the MNLA shows more than ever before that it does not represent a movement of youths or combatants but, instead, a movement made up of the civil society as a whole, with its leaders at its head. So, for example, Hama Ag Mahmoud, well-of intellectually, financially, and materially, at the same time shows that joining the MNLA is a question of principle and conception and not a business." (MNLA 20.12.2011a)

In another statement, Ag Mahmoud, clan chief of the Kel Ansar[153], appeals to the unity of the Tuareg in concert with other Azawadian peoples. Furthermore, while the most important goal for the Tuareg has to be Azawad's self-determination, a war should be prevented under all circumstances (see MNLA 20.12.2011b). In sum, according to further MNLA messages by the end of the year, the signs point to independence. Up to that point, the convention of speech on MNLA's side had been the narrative of striving for autonomy. Against the background of an international environment shaped by a climate of revolution due to the Arab Spring, the maxim at this point changes to "It's now or never!" (MNLA 23.12.2011).

As mentioned earlier (see chapter 6.2/phase III/December 2011), media coverage in December mirrors the growing militance of communication, transports war-like rhetoric and thus heats up the relations between the different sides. As, for example, Le 22 Septembre (Maliweb 1.12.2011a) reports, participants of a meeting between representatives of Songhay, Peuls, and former members of Ganda Koy[154] declare that there is a serious risk of falling back into a 1990s situation of civil war including a confrontation of light and dark-skinned communities:

> "In the actual situation, a resort to identitarian, ethnic or communitarian aspects is dangerous. We have to separate the wheat from the chaff. In all circumstances, we must prevent the confrontation of different ethnic groups and communities living on our land." (Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb 1.12.2011a)

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153   Nota bene: The Kel Ansar represent one of biggest Tuareg tribes in Mali. Its members are predominantly located in the Timbuktu region and the Bourem cercle respectively.

154   In contrast to MNLA releases about former Ganda Koy members joining the MNLA mentioned earlier (see MNLA 15.12.2011), some media accounts hold that self-defence militias à la Ganda Koy are again on their way to be established. Moreover, these units would recently call themselves "freedom brigade" fighting against criminal gangs, AQMI and the MNLA (see Nouvelle Libération/Maliweb 13.12.2011b). In this context, Tuareg integrated in Malian state functions and representatives of sedentary ethnic groups express their concerns about the resurgence of militias, about the comeback of a militarised Malian state in the north and about a still growing influence of AQMI (see Le Prétoire/Maliweb 22.12.11a)

In parallel to imminent ethnic confrontation and division, media accounts do also describe a deepening geographical division of the country in north and south which is knowingly pressed ahead or, at least, tolerated by Malian authorities. According to Nouvelle Libération (Maliweb 6.12.2011a), for instance, the government is not even able to allocate PSPSDN funds where they are really needed (see Nouvelle Libération/Maliweb 6.12.2011a). Furthermore, Le Progrès (Maliweb 2.12.2011a) doubts that the government has the capabilities and the will to take action against terrorists who "dictate the law in northern Mali". Since ATT has no majority for his policy and measures concerning the north, the newspaper Waati (Maliweb 8.12.2011b) even issues the concrete recommendation to change his policy drastically and "to impose peace by war": towards drug traffickers who "settle their bloody scores on Malian soil" (e.g. concerning Polisario; AFP/Maliweb 15.12.2011a); towards "Tuareg in war fever" (Le Prétoire/Maliweb 27.12.2011) and towards new Islamist groups like Ag Ghaly's Ansar al-Dine and an increasingly aggressive AQMI committing open attacks, for example on PSPSDN sites (see L'Indépendent/Maliweb 30.12.2011).

January 2012 – the tapering

The last phase right up to the first attacks and hostilities initiated by the MNLA can be characterised by government releases that pointedly show an unimpressed and non-responsive attitude regarding communication from the MNLA. In this spirit, government announcements report about ATT and government officials being part of the celebrations on the occasion of the opening of the second nationwide television channel TM2. Thereby, it is emphasised that ATT's policy of promoting free media in Mali can be seen as successful (see GovMali 3.01.2012a). In addition, following government sources, the security situation should not be assessed as that bad since tourism in Mali can still take place, as the example of Timbuktu would show (see GovMali 5.01.2012).[155] Also, Malian authorities admit that there are indeed new threats by kidnapping, AQMI, and heavily armed returnees from Libya.[156] At the same time, however, Mali's democratic development is considered to be immune to these threats. In particular, the preparations for the 2012 elections are highlighted not only as an important milestone in Mali's development but also as unthreatened and completely safe date (see GovMali 6.01.2012).

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155   Media accounts, too, take up this thread by referring to the 'Festival au Désert' that takes place on January 12–14 despite the difficult security situation. A contribution published by AFP (Maliweb 15.01.2012a) collected voices from the festival, for example the one of a Tuareg student who sees attending the festival as a "duty to say not o AQMI terrorism." AFP also quotes the festival director, Manny Ansar: "It is very important, despite everything what is going on, that the event takes place" and Alous, a hotel owner: "We have to do everything to bring tourists. If not, there will be no entrance fees, and the youth of Timbuktu wouldn't have anything to get their teeth into and this is an open door for everything."

156   On this, for the first time, an article in Le Républicain (Maliweb 3.01.2012b) provides a total number of returnees from Libya of 13.965 (including soldiers, workers, students etc. and family members) while, at the same time, pointing to their poor conditions, e.g. concerning schooling. According to the "Association of Malian Emigrants from Libya and the Maghreb", more than 600 children, at that time, after 8 months in Mali, had still not been schooled.

MNLA publications in this very last phase of conflict development read like a compressed compendium of justifications for being engaged in the MNLA, especially complemented by an element of personal testimonies and stories. In this connection, Ag Mohamed Assaleh, member of parliament from Bourem once again gets a say (see also section on December 2011 above) and complains about the Malian democracy being a façade because people from the north cannot participate equally but are exposed to massive discrimination as to language, politics and economy.[157] Azawad, a country characterised by openness and hospitality at all times, gets further described as defencelessly confronted to terrorism (see MNLA 3.01.2012a). As Ag Mohamed Assaleh concludes, explaining growing insecurity in the country only by Libyan returnees is not far-reaching enough:

> "The return of ex-soldiers from Libya has only nurtured dissatisfaction that was already there and has been growing over the preceding years. If you content yourself with analysing the returning of the ex-soldiers as point of departure, you're wrong and you show that you don't want to understand the things as they are." (MNLA 3.01.2012a)

The personal testimony of Ag Assarid (see chapter 6.2/phase III/January 2012) declaring his "inevitable commitment to the MNLA" picks up well-known accusations directed at the government: an omnipresent corruption, the militarisation of the north, the violation of peace agreements, a policy of division[158], laxism against terror[159], and an imminent constitutional coup by ATT. For Ag Assarid, it is particularly important to emphasise the topic of education, especially concerning the de facto exclusion of children in the north from the Malian education system. AG Assarid underlines his motivation by a quote from Victor Hugo,

> "Each child you educate represents a man you liberate." (MNLA 3.01.2012b)

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157   Referring to this, other statements speak of a "multidimensional division of the country" which gets perpetually substantiated by "pedagogical repetition in the political discourse" (MNLA 10.01.2012).

158   On this, MNLA documents present a recent example concerning a quid pro quo between the government and members of the Arab community: some Arab individuals allegedly involved in drug trafficking had been released from prison and then started to participate in the campaign against the MNLA (see MNLA 7.01.2012).

159   At the very beginning of the year, there are reports about an AQMI attack on the military basis in Inhalil, Kidal region, which resulted in destroy buildings but no human loss (see L'Indicateur du Renouveau/Maliweb 4.01.2012). In this context, both MNLA documents and media accounts harbour the suspicion that the Malian government somehow cooperates with AQMI or, at least, tolerates its actions due to strategic reasons (see above chapter 6.2; see also e.g. MNLA 30.10.2011; Le Républicain/Maliweb 31.10.2011d). In January 2012, statements again point out that the MNLA had been confronting AQMI for a long time, which is even true for Bahanga who had been ambushed and assassinated (see MNLA 9.01.2012). Moreover, secretly cooperating with AQMI should be seen as betrayal of neighbouring countries (see MNLA 12.01.2012).

and makes obvious that his commitment is dedicated to the recognition of indigenous people, which means their right to education and cultural development, while this should not be considered as contradictory to the concept of a modern nation state. It is also remarkable that Ag Assarid's personal story including his condemnation of terrorism and his call to particularly join the political movement of the MNLA gets picked up in media reports in detail:

> "The current power holders in Mali are just manipulating and betraying the whole population of Mali in general, particularly in northern Mali. And I think that we don't have the right to stay passive any more. Before I came to a decision, it was important for me to do an investigation which took me one year and two months. I'm engaged in the cause of the Tuareg people without forgetting all those who share the same suffering." (Le Prétoire/Maliweb 5.01.2012b)

Another example of a much-cited basic MNLA statement is the one of *Mossa Ag Attaher*, MNLA spokesman, when addressing the younger generation.[160] According to Ag Attaher, it is eminently important that the younger generation of the population in the north which had not been involved in earlier rebellions says no to a system of institutionalised subjugation. At that point in time, following the MNLA spokesman, a historical opportunity has to be taken:

> "Azawad's youth is invited to burst open chains that impair its action. It is called upon to resist, fight, win, act and develop a vision, to offer a dignified destiny for Azawad's immense territory, the inventive spirit of its people and the rapid deterioration of the situation. This vision means gaining a free will. This grandiose project is based on political cleverness, a competent economic analysis, an audacious promotion of culture, and a patriotic determination fostering the common good of all communities living on the Azawad's territory" (MNLA 8.01.2012b)

Further statements again refer to the broad support of the MNLA among the different ethnic groups in the north which, all together, had to accept the many "martyrs for freedom and democracy" in the struggle so far (see MNLA 8.01.2012b) while the Malian political elites had lost sight of people and their problems in northern Mali:

> "Azawadians need a leader emanating from their own ranks and asking questions that enrage people. The social issue represents the most dangerous question for the unity of the Republic. The majority of Malian authorities are completely disconnected from reality in the desert zones. [...] The unity of the Republic, indealised to drunkenness in political discourses, in a social dimension, is a myth and a lie." (MNLA (10.01.2012)

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160   Nota bene: The Belgian-educated Ag Attaher is a former secretary-general of the syndicate of Malian high school and university students. After 2004, he became an educational and public health activist in northern Mali. Ag Attaher is a cofounder of MNA and MNLA and served as a one of MNLA's spokesmen in Europe (see Thurston and Lebovich 2013: 39).

In view of the developments in this very last phase, MNLA releases finally call for rejecting the irresponsible action of the Malian government towards both the Malian people and the people of Azawad, if necessary with the support of international organisations, such as ECOWAS, AU, EU, the Arab League, UN security council, and NATO (see MNLA 12.01.2012). Not only did the government deliberately fail in responding a dialogue offered in the preceding months, but it also makes an effort to further discredit the MNLA. And, at the same time, the deployment of troops to the north gets accelerated, which is, from an MNLA perspective, perceived as a military invasion and thus a declaration of war that legitimises acts of self-defence (see MNLA 12.01.2012; 14.01.2012), as it happens on January 17 in Ménaka:

> "This massive troop deployment which upsets the civil population was understood by the movement as an invitation to war, issued by the Malian authorities." (MNLA 17.01.2012)

Whereas the MNLA considers its first military strike as a kind of wake-up call for its cause of peace and justice for Azawad directed at the Malian government and the UN, the Malian government immediately assigns responsibility to the "secessionist movement of the MNLA".[161] Also, government sources reject rumours about the MNLA having gained control as a result of a number of attacks. According to the government, the Malian military powerfully and successfully fended of the attacks and still has the situation under control (see GovMali 19.01.2012a). In media coverage, too, there are contradictory or, at least, inconsistent eyewitness reports. As, for example, one resident of Ménaka puts the following on record,

> "The rebels were not successful in invading the town. They fired at us from distance. An the army reacted." (Le Canard Déchaîné/Maliweb 18.01.2012a),

and, therefore, confirms the government version, while another resident interviewed by the same newspaper doubts this assessment:

> "The Malian army and the assailants combated against each other with morters in order to gain control of the town." (Le Canard Déchaîné/Maliweb 18.01.2012a)

Remarkably enough, without directly reacting to these dramatic developments, ATT seems to commemorate the 51st anniversary of the Malian military on January 19 without ruffle and excitement. In his speech, ATT refers to the necessary military cooperation between neighbouring countries in order to fight terror and to the imperative adaption of the military to the actual challenges (see GovMali 19.01.2012d).[162] In the days prior to the attacks of Ménaka, media reports once again put forth the urgent challenges in

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161 It bears mentioning that, prior to the first attacks, the government scarcely ever addressed the MNLA in a direct approach.

162 According to ICG (1.12.2011), the command of the Malian military already stated in December 2011 that fighting AQMI would only be effective and thus successful if a close cooperation between neighbouring countries, i.e. Algeria, Mauretania, and Niger, could be made possible. As

their view: AQMI with its decentralised and mobile units (20–30 soldiers, simple communication via frequencies, separation of hostages to different places[163]) is difficult to combat, despite latest surveillance technologies at hand. Moreover, according to certain media accounts, neither regional cooperation nor Western countries' interferences are obviously able to force back terrorists, although sources agree that AQMI comprises only about 500 combatants (see Libération/Maliweb 7.01.2012). According to Le 22 Septembre (Maliweb 12.01.2012b), it is also necessary to prevent new Islamist organisations as, for example, Ansar al-Dine initiated by Ag Ghaly, from establishing an "Islamic state", including sharia law and cadis, i.e. Islamic judges (see Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb 12.01.2012b). However, as Le Canard Déchainé (Maliweb 16.01.2012) mentions based on military sources, troop deployment to the north is primarily aimed at fighting secessionist aspirations of MNLA, not fighting AQMI. In the same way, the ICG assessment in the beginning of January does not observe any reinforcement of anti-AQMI measures but, in the light of an incidence with the involvement of Polisario resulting in several deaths, mentions the government's determination to no longer tolerate violent clashes between competing drug traffickers (see ICG 2.01.2012).

Overlooking the conflict discourse at the end of phase III against the background of what has already been observed in the preceding chapters, it can be stated that the text corpus provides a huge number of characterisations and attributions related to persons, roles, programmes, and norms that altogether compose a vis-à-vis of conflict identities. These conflict identities have evolved up to this point and particularly dualised along the major question of whether more autonomy or even independence for the northern regions is supported or not. Thereby, they have been filled with attributions of actorness ranging from individuals to organisations to institutions. Now, the synopsis section complements the picture by relating evolving identities with the conflict system's escalating moves.

6.5 Synopsis: The Fabric of Escalating Moves

"The fact dimension, the temporal dimension, and the social dimension cannot appear in isolation. They must be combined. They can be analyzed separately, but in every real intended meaning, they appear together." (Luhmann 1995: 86)

In keeping with the synopsis section of the case study on the Maidan protests (see chapter 5.5), the preceding chapters presented three paths of preliminarily reading the conflict development within the context of the Malian crisis 2010–2012 according to Luhmann's dimensions of meaning.[164] Now, the many hypotheses of different ranges that have been iteratively gained and condensed during case study research and then cast in form of the

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    Mali promotes this kind of cooperation to increase security in the whole region, the EU supports this joint action with 62 million Euro.

163   Following an article in Le Canard Déchainé (Maliweb 16.01.2012), AQMI threatens Malian authorities with killing the hostages in case of a continuing troop deployment to the north.

164   The ideas expressed in these lines as well as the introductory citation to this subsection quite similarly appeared at the beginning of chapter 5.5.

chapters above are brought together in a synoptical view. Hence, the following chapters identify critical elements of conflict development, i.e. *escalating moves* (A-C) consisting of *structural couplings* and *normative shifts*, and, linked to that, pursue the gradual formation of firm conflict identities against the background of a world societal grounding of contradictions.[165]

6.5.1 The Conflict's Groundwork (Phase I, Nov 2010 – Aug 2011)

As outlined in the preceding chapters, right from the beginning of the Malian crisis in November 2010, "nation" and "development" appear as key references within the analysed communication. During phase I, the whole text corpus shows the quality of both terms as signifiers with high connectivity. In this regard, the two notions compose the discursive focal point of that what is being observed and communicated as appearances of political power in world society. More precisely, one part of communication can be considered as mirroring a political system of world society structured by segmentary differentiation and thus placing the existing Malian nation state (i.e. its unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of its authorities) as alpha and omega of any reasoning about legitimate political power. At the same time, another part of communication reflects the perception that political power gets also attributed within processes and structures beyond the nation state, in the form of globally shared norms (e.g. concerning principles of self-determination and democratic governance) or stratificatory dynamics of power distribution including the formation of privileged centres and peripheries (e.g. as to developed and left behind regions in the Malian central state). As the analysis of phase I exposes, contradictions emerge from political communication with competing modes of differentiation behind.

In this context, MNA's founding declaration which repeatedly refers to the term nation can be seen as a twofold piece of political communication. On the one hand, the declaration announces the birth of a *national* movement of Azawadians that intends to politically fight for its aims *within* the Malian state, therefore insinuating the recognition of the Malian state as a legitimate framework for MNA's political actions:

> [The MNA represents the] political organisation of Azawad that defends and approves *a peaceful policy in order to achieve legitimate goals*." (MNA 1.11.2010; italics added)

On the other hand, the MNA understands itself as a political organisation which legitimately represents the people of Azawad. Based on that, it views itself as being entitled to invoke international law, especially the global human rights regime, in order to put the right to self-determination as a people into play. In sum, as the analysis of phase I in this respect shows, both MNA and government statements fit into the narrative of upholding self-determination as a nation as one of the highest values. However, when pointing to

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165 Please note: The synopsis chapters of both case studies (5.5/6.5) use a number of tables and charts of contrasting grey colour compared to the main text body. These tables indeed refer to and pick up elements of the continuous text, but they do not necessarily contain duplications of it. In other words, they are to be considered as substantial parts of the case study's analysis.

unity, sovereignty, territorial integrity and social cohesion, the former refers to Azawad while the latter refers to Mali as a whole:

> "How many human lives, material and amount of money has been sacrificed by the daughters and sons of this country *in order to preserve national unity and social cohesion?*" (GovMali 25.12.2010a; italics added)

Media coverage, for its part, adopts both MNA and government views understanding themselves as political representatives, or, to put it another way, as power holders deriving their legitimacy from different bases. Hence, media communication in phase I does not only include observations of political power which exclusively reflect structures and functions of the Malian political system. It also includes the observation of competing political power resting on ethnic categories and normatively backed up by legal considerations being part of a global political reference frame, i.e. the human rights regime.

The analysis of government statements and partly media reports reveals another mode of observing the political momentum of the conflict discourse in phase I: communication with reference to 'development'. Therefore, statements dealing with this topic line up in a kind of salvation story promoting the message that, within the context of development policies, everything can be achieved, including an expansion of economic, social and political infrastructure automatically leading to peace and security (see e.g. GovMali 24.11.2010). A second consideration arising from statements dealing with development is a firm belief that the key objective of development consists in enabling states to be equally present in every corner of the country or, in other words, to effectively project central state power without exception as to geography or domain. This can particularly be shown by various passages on PSPSDN, for example:

> "[...] ensuring presence and ability to deploy public administration on all levels. [...] PSPSDN activities have to conduce to an *intelligent organisation of space by state administration.*" (Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb 1.11.2010a; italics added)

Taken together, right from the beginning of the investigation period and then during the whole phase I, patterns of communication show an understanding of development as a process of building up capabilities to project power from a developed centre to an underdeveloped periphery. Now, the centre, i.e. democratically elected power holders executing Malian state functions, understands itself, for the sake of its legitimacy, as being committed to develop the periphery, i.e. regions in northern Mali characterised by socioeconomic underdevelopment and insecurity. In this sense, the logic of development corresponds to a logic of political power projection aiming at adjusting deficits of power and state presence in the periphery. Each communication in the discourse that questions this specific differentiation of centre and periphery is thus described as opposing the categorical claim of the nation's unity and even more so as an open contradiction to a comprehensive claim to power by the Malian authorities in society, economy, culture, education, health, basic infrastructure etc. (see e.g. GovMali 9.02.2011; 27.07.2011).

Beyond this idea of political differentiation into centre and periphery in a domestic state context, communication dealing with development in phase I also shows a global

dimension. In this context, the analysis of both discursive working levels makes clear that there is a common feature of self-observation including the perception of Mali as an object to a global power structure of centre and periphery, too. This is particularly obvious in those discursive sequences where European states are referred to as "Westerners" who would only pursue egoistic interests in the region or when Mali gets addressed as a target country for various international development programmes (italics added):

"[The French Development Agency] will *accompany the Malian development efforts*, which have top priority within the overall policy of good governance and an optimal management of the resources provided." (GovMali 17.03.2011a)

"The head of state appreciated all actors involved in the execution of PSPSDN. In particular, he gave thanks to *international development partners for their significant contribution*." (see GovMali 27.07.2011)

"*Countries supporting the occupation of Azawad's territory* [i.e. Mali's international development partners, see above] are considered as countries supporting colonisation and directly participating in robbing the riches of a people under oppression, occupation and racism." (MNA 19.02.2011b; brackets added R.B.)

"Azawad turned into an *object of regional and international interventions*, each having its interests and agenda." (Le Républicain/Maliweb 3.11.2010)

"*Western support*, to date, has concentrated on strengthening the capacities of security forces in the countries of central Sahara which has not permitted to resolve the complex security situation. Only an inclusive approach taking the complexity of the conflict system into account and based on *regional and international mechanisms will permit to achieve a truly peaceful situation in northern Mali* and central Sahara." (FES June 2011: 5)

Thus, in view of communication on political power along the topics of nation and development, competing modes of differentiation find their discursive expression. Against this background, contradiction in communication becomes gradually obvious along the conflict system's dimensions of meaning, illustrated as follows (table 24 shows quintessence from chapters 6.2, 6.3, and 6.4).

Table 24: Dimensions of conflict development/phase I

Dimension	Poles of Contradiction		
factual	preserving the Malian central state; national unity, state sovereignty and territorial integrity equally important	versus	insisting on self-determination as a universal democratic value
	promoting and enhancing development efforts as major security policy		underdevelopment, insecurity, and repression as result of (inter-)national power politics
temporal	preserving a rich multicultural Malian heritage		politically recognising the cultural and historical uniqueness of northern populations / of "Azawad"
social	political elites mainly originating from Bambara ethnic group, shaped by a spirit of struggling for independence and nation building		minority (ethnic) groups advocating for self-determination within a federal state; redefining nation as an ethnic category
	political elites promoting a unitary and strong state		categorical division of "northern" and Malian population

(Own table)

Contradictions and conflict identities are two sides of the same coin. As the analysis of phase I shows, conflict identities begin to show up and become manifest on four interconnected layers (based on Luhmann's understanding of identity, see chapter 4.1). Hence, in communication, persons, roles, programmes, and norms emerge as parts of evolving identities. In this sense, in the moment when the founding statement of the MNA appears on the discursive scene, a first setting of dualistic conflict identities begins to develop, kicked off by the question of how the project of "national self-determination" claimed by a new organisation from northern Mali, the MNA, is received. According to the analysis of subsequent communication and taking both discursive working levels into account, the release of MNA's founding statement constitutes a programmatic act based on normative considerations and coming along with the attribution of roles to persons. The following table presents two key discursive corridors of conflict identities that can be condensed based on the analysis of communication in phase I.[166]

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166   The table below represents a compilation of keywords on identity layers based on self-attributions *and* mutual ascriptions from all source groups. Therefore, for example, the category of roles attributed to one thread contains a broad range of notions some of which also appear in the other thread if attributed so based on the analysed communication.

Table 25: Conflict identity layers/discursive corridors phase I

programmes	promoting development efforts in Mali, especially in northern regions; strengthening the unitary state; militarising the north; neo-colonialism; cultural assimilation	claiming self-determination of population in northern regions; fighting for autonomy of Azawad; questioning the unitary state
roles	loyals to the regime; pro-PSPSDN; supporters of the peace process; collaborators of criminals (kidnappers, drug traffickers, bandits, terrorists)	anti-government activists; activists in the cause of freedom; people in need of help and living in insecurity; marginalised and oppressed people potential rebels; collaborators of criminals (kidnappers; drug traffickers; bandits, terrorists);
persons	ATT; government members; majority of population in the country; government officials of neighbouring countries and Western countries; representatives of international development organisations; certain parts of Libyan returnees	MNA members; members of former Tuareg rebel units (e.g. Bahanga faction); major parts of Tuareg population in the north; light-skinned population; "all sons and daughters of Azawad"; certain parts of Libyan returnees
norms	unity and political stability; cultural diversity; development and security; progress and peace; heroism and patriotism	democracy, esp. self-determination and rule of law; justice and peace; solidarity and hospitality; importance of kinship; heroism and patriotism; historic responsibility

(Own table)

Now, against this background, escalating move A can be outlined as follows: First, it consists of a structural coupling of two subsystems of political communication. One circles around an overarching development mission which is presented as an essential trait of Mali's identity as a sovereign unitary state. The other one deals with the attribution of legitimate power based on a different mode of self-observation, i.e. ethnic and cultural categories.

On one side, communication in the conflict discourse refers to the Malian state as a political centre which produces collectively binding decisions and projects effective state power in terms of development measures, both in a geographical sense and concerning all domains of social life. Thereby, during phase I, peace and security, too, are discursively pinned down to the target corridor of development. This can especially be seen with regard to the Flame of Peace Ceremony on February 7–8, 2011, in Kidal. The ceremony which is closely linked to the peace process (by recalling the peace agreements, i.e. National Pact and Algiers Accord), appears as a ritual event in the context of the 50th anniversary celebrations of Malian independence. Within this framework, communication about the peace process gets enqueued in a narrative of an overall positive political, economic, and social development since Malian independence which is, despite some throwbacks, still considered to be able to absorb challenges ahead, especially by means of PSPSDN:

> "Only development can constitute an adequate answer to these different threats [...] This programme has to provide urgent solutions to the challenge of re-establishing peace and security in order to resume development measures serenely. This programme is also a project of reconstruction and reactivation of local economy. It is a broad field of investments which will create jobs and prosperity on a local level." (ATT's speech in Kidal on February 7, 2011; GovMali 7.02.2011d)

On the other side, however, communication referring to the history of the Malian state since its independence addresses the ongoing disregard of political rights of certain ethnic groups in favour of others. Particularly within the context of communication on MNA congress on April 15–17, 2011 in Kidal, the analysis of the discourse reveals that political power is not only attributed in terms of defined functions within the Malian state apparatus but also as alternative forms and sources of legitimate political power, such as ethnicity. This is especially obvious when the MNA gets apostrophised as a "national project" of ethnic groups in Northern Mali and thus as a political entity with ambition to change the long-established basis of power; when the idea of involving a vibrant civil society in forms of direct democracy gets articulated; and when the topic of international recognition by involving international institutions appears.

> "We, the National Movement of Azawad, ask the Malian government [...] to organise a referendum in consultation with all structures of Azawad's civil society and foreign partners." (MNA 25.05.2011)

Thus, communication around the above-mentioned examples (Flame of Peace ceremony, MNA congress) shows how newly appearing forms and categories from different subsystems of political communication (ethnicity, civil society, international recognition), at some point, get understandable for each other, link up and are attributed political relevance, i.e. a binding and formative effect on what is perceived as political power subsequently. In this sense, referring to ethnic groups as a legitimate basis of political participation and power claims only comes into view as global legal standards and democratic norms are simultaneously addressed in the discourse.[167] Though, the very same global norms and values also appear, albeit in a different derivation, in form of the development policies of the Malian central state which are presented as being largely designed according to the guidelines of Western international development partners.

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167   With regard to global legal standards and in particular to the right of a people to self-determination as a cardinal principle of international law, one could also argue that the conflict discourse shows a coupling between a political and a legal subsystem of communication. However, as the analysis reveals, when it comes to the concept of self-determination, communication clearly ranges within a political dimension rather than referring to legal categories. More precisely, self-determination of a people is presented not so much in the sense of a legal right but rather as a constitutive element of reasoning about the seminal political structure of world society. Against this background, the sparse explicit references to a (global) legal system of communication have not been followed up, at least in phase I. In phase II, however, there is growing evidence substantiating legal communication at a different level (see below chapter 6.5.2).

"The head of state appreciated all actors involved in the execution of PSPSDN. In particular, he gave thanks to international development partners for their significant contribution." (GovMali 27.07.2011)

And, finally, the example of how the situation in Libya appears in the discourse, too, shows a coupling of communication from the above-mentioned two subsystems: When addressing the issue of Libyan returnees (i.e. ex-soldiers from the Libyan army and their families and other refugees with a Malian origin), one part of communication brings forward both patriotic feelings by highlighting the important homecoming of Malian nationals to their mother land while, at the same time, feelings of strong ethnic kinship incite the unconditional reception of these Libyan returnees in their northern Malian homeland (see e.g. MNA 5.03.2011a; GovMali 21.03.2011). Other parts of communication address the issue of Libyan returnees, also associated with "Malian mercenaries" and potential terrorists[168], as a threat to national security and stability, not only in Mali:

"The situation in Libya is at a crucial moment. [It] is an imminent threat and a huge burden for peace, security and stability in the region as a whole." (GovMali 23.03.2011)

"When the Libyan revolution turned into a rebellion [...] mercenaries including Malians seized a substantial amount of weapons and ammunition which has already entered Mali, particularly the north. To what purpose? [...] For a new rebellion? For the benefit of AQMI?" (Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 6.04.2011)

With this, the stability of the Malian nation state again appears as a fixed point of reasoning about and organising political power. On top of this, as discursive sequences deal with the topic of NATO aerial attacks on Libya and, relating thereto, with the Arab Spring, there is also communication mirroring a differentiation pattern of political processes according to a centre and periphery scheme. This becomes clear as, for example, the Western military intervention in Libya gets criticised or as a potential sequel of the Arab Spring in Mali is insinuated:

"The members of the contact group declare to be deeply concerned about the ongoing aerial attacks lead by NATO. They also pointed a finger at the disastrous human-

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168   Although references to terrorism frequently appear in phase I, from an analytical point of view, they are not followed up as substantial political communication in a strict sense here for two reasons: First, in various passages, the terrorism label rather appears in combination, as when, for example, the security situation in the north is described as being threatened by "drug traffickers and terrorists" (see e.g. GovMali 2.05.2011; Nouvelle Libération/Maliweb 15.04.2011); alternatively, other passages combine terrorism with a banditry and kidnapping business. Thus, these references are not considered as clues to a specific and deeper understanding of terrorism as such and, related to it, competing modes of differentiating political power in world society behind the mere phenomenon. Second, according to the analysis of the text corpus in phase I, these references, in most instances, do not attribute programmes, roles, persons, and norms related to a distinct terrorist identity but are part of an abstract description of limited statehood as a background condition in the Sahelian zone which enables all kinds of criminal phenomena.

itarian situation created by the conflict." (AU Libya mediation group with ATT being a member; as cited in GovMali 28.06.2011)

"We are at the outset of a global change for humanity. Following the tragic and painful incidences that stirred up Maghreb countries and the Middle East, we, the National Movement of Azawad, join the painful cries of the children, women and men who denounce oppression and the hunger for power that dominates certain political elites in these countries." (MNA 5.03.2011b)

To sum up, it can be stated that political communication here, i.e. communication about what and who is attributed the ability to shape political processes in an enduring and binding manner, plays out against the background of more or less implicit and different images of centre and periphery. In other words, there is communication which attributes, for example, coercive capabilities, access to resources, knowledge on development, authority to decide and sovereign status to different centres of power. At the same time, these overlapping threads of communication become increasingly understandable for each other which, in turn, motivates contradictions. If, for example, an ethnic group as such is presented as a legitimate holder of political authority, the idea of assigning political authority and power on the basis of free and fair general elections is indeed understandable and thus communicable. Notwithstanding, it constitutes an open contradiction in relation to the established centre and the existing modes of power distribution.

The structural coupling of communication described above comes along with changing structures of expectation, i.e. with a normative shift of the discourse. Some normative elements appearing in the discourse were already mentioned within the context of conflict identities earlier in this section (see table on identity layers, especially the norms column, above). Regarding the development of the discourse as a whole, in phase I, the following normative shift can be stated: Passages from different discursive corners mirror a kind of collectively shared insight that the idea of a democratic, multicultural, and prospering Malian society is and had always been a fiction. As the analysis of the text corpus shows, the often-cited process of development is not necessarily seen as being hand in hand with the process of growing democracy. Therefore, the development narrative in large parts exhibits statements on improvable if not insufficient success (see e.g. GovMali 7.02.2011d; 26 Mars/Maliweb 12.04.2011) or even refers to development as a coercive process opposed to true democratic and cultural self-fulfilment, especially from the perspective of an ethnic group in the "problematised north" (see e.g. MNA 19.02.2011b; Le Combat/Maliweb 4.05.2011a). Furthermore, as phase I brings forward, there are descriptions considering the Malian central state as the anchor of Malian politics and setting its authority, sovereignty, and integrity as absolute values. However, there is a competing characterisation of the political process referring to the universal democratic principle of self-determination. Moreover, alternative democratic variants, such as decentralised modes of governing like regional autonomy, are put into play. In this context, references to the Arab Spring appear, too. However, it is not only illustrated as a positive effect of a global dynamic of democratisation (e.g. "global wind of change", "breaking prisons"; see MNA 17.04.2011; see also chapter 6.4/phase I). With regard to the unstable situation

in Libya, the Arab Spring is also referred to as a source of insecurity and war which is discursively brought to market as a global political process of democratisation pushed forward by Western military interventions to defend human rights. The Malian policy of development, too, gets occasionally picked up as a facet of political communication about (more or less voluntary) democratisation in world society.

In brief, the normative shift of the discourse during phase I is constituted by the collective insight that development and democratisation/self-determination are *not* necessarily two sides of the same coin. Also, as the analysis suggests, a basic element of the evolving conflict identities seems to be a feeling of being robbed of ambitions: By the end of phase I, there is a growing number of indications showing that both voices attributed to the anti-government side (pro Azawadian autonomy) and those attributed to the pro-government side (pro Malian national unity) do no longer believe in being able to realise their respective unfulfilled plans and expectations with the means that had been applied up to this point in time.

Against the background of escalating move A elaborated above, observations referring to violence in the conflict discourse in phase I affect three points: First, references to violence appear when it comes to reflecting the Malian history since its independence. In this context, there is a number of passages not only mourning for the victims of rebellion and armed conflict (see particularly tables in chapter 6.3) but also claiming accountability for the violence committed, be it by acknowledging "war crimes" of the Malian military or by putting rebel leaders like Bahanga who fled from justice on trial. While this could be seen as part of legal communication at first glance, the analysis demonstrates that, especially when the discourse shows tones of heroism and patriotism, references to past experiences of violence represent a form of time-transcending political communication with a broad impact. Thus, putting heroes or victims into play is linked to discursively transcending the validity of power claims and use of (military) force throughout history up to the conflict's present.

Secondly, as the text corpus in phase I reveals, there are several observations of violence appearing in the context of terrorist threats and attacks but also, and related to it, drug trafficking and kidnapping to be retained. However, as mentioned earlier, only a few references to concrete violent incidences show up.[169] They do so within a rather abstract depiction of a generally deteriorating threat and security situation. In other words, it can be stated that there is a discursive disparity between attributing terrorism by fre-

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[169]   Among the rare examples in phase I: In June 2011, media articles refer to joint operations of Algerian, Malian, Mauritanian and Nigerian militaries against organised crime and AQMI in different border areas (see e.g. AFP/Maliweb 23.06.2011); a Tunisian responsible for the attempted bomb attack on the French embassy at the end of February 2011 flees from police custody but gets seized later on his way to leave the country (see GovMali 2.03.2011); French nationals, kidnapped by AQMI and held in Mali, are considered as victims of both terrorism and organised crime (see ICG 1.12.2010; FES 2010); besides tourists and foreign employees of multinational companies, civilians in the north are described as everyday victims of both AQMI threats/terror and the war on terror led by the Malian government (see MNA 20.01.2011).

quently using the label of "AQMI terror" and the rather rare de facto quotation of concrete incidences.[170]

Lastly, references to (non-) violence particularly appear within the context of descriptions of the MNA. As illustrated earlier, already in its founding statement, the organisation declares itself to be part of a non-violent political movement (see MNA 1.11.2010). However, the often-repeated MNA commitment to non-violence is followed by communication from different discursive sides that expresses a high degree of distrust, especially among media accounts in phase I (see exemplarily Lafia Révélateur/ Maliweb 27.04.2011f). Yet, the non-violence values attributed to the anti-government side get questioned by MNA statements, too:

> "Why shouldn't Bahanga issue a warning to the Malian state and threaten to resume hostilities? [...] Since a few months, Bahanga and other leaders of the movement implement a reorganisation of military structures in certain zones in the northern regions." (MNA 6.02.2011a)

Up to his sudden death which marks the beginning of phase II, Bahanga is frequently mentioned as an individual symbolically displaying the propensity to violence and the defiance of the pro-autonomy movement as a whole.

6.5.2 Religion, Ethnicity, and Loyalty (Phase II, Aug 2011 – Oct 2011)

With Bahanga's death at the beginning of phase II, the discourse further substantiates an already existing tendency of religious communication.[171] The mode of differentiation behind this kind of communication is one that basically operates along the question of how salvation can be achieved or not (see also chapter 3.1). In this context, for example, Bahanga is presented as being both on the right path, as a heroic martyr, and on the wrong path, thus rightly "battered to death by God's hand" when he dies because of a deadly mine (see L'Indépendent/Maliweb 29.08.2011). Likewise, communication involving religious attributes can also be detected on different sides of the discourse when values attributed to Islam – concord, community, understanding, quality, mutual help – or religious authorities are presented as societally relevant at this point in time (see e.g. Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 28.09.2011). Thereby, particularly solidarity and charity are highlighted as guiding religious values and duties. And finally, as AQMI gets increasingly

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170   As illustrated above, in phase I, passages including references to AQMI terror and the like do not ground enough material to detect a fundamentally alternative form of political communication in the conflict system analysed here. If at all, one could assume to see rudimentary pieces of communication following an economic logic coupled with political communication when the government gets accused of profiting from drug trafficking and kidnapping (attributed to terrorists) in the northern regions.

171   Already in phase I, there are sporadic references to religious communication, for example when the government refers to the annual Muslim pilgrimage Ziyara as a precious and common cultural treasure (see GovMali 9.05.2011b) or when it is recalled that religious authorities already by the end of French colonial rule pointed towards the cultural autonomy of Azawad (see MNA 28.05.2011).

addressed as a serious and relevant actor having a political agenda how to achieve collective salvation, religious considerations definitely become a major point of reference in the discourse.

As mentioned earlier, in contrast to phase I, phase II shows growing evidence substantiating a logic of legal communication in the discourse, too, for example as the Malian legal system is described as being in need of further development. In this context, unity, integrity, and stability of the nation state are presented not just as political but as legal categories while, at the same time, the need for constitutional reform is highlighted from within the legal system itself (e.g. to improve representation in rural areas in elections; see GovMali 6.09.2011). This thread of communication appears in correspondence with other parts of communication addressing the build-up of state structures and functions in the north by the MNA on grounds of legal principles, such as freedom (from neocolonial structures) and democratic governance (see e.g. MNA 6.08.2011; Le Républicain/ Maliweb 16.09.2011). Deceased Bahanga, too, becomes part of this kind of legal communication: On the one hand, he gets characterised as the warrior par excellence who ultimately gave his life for Azawad. Following this discursive thread, the heroic narrative supports the idea of a right cause based on universal legal principles (i.e. particularly self-determination as a people). On the other hand, however, the same Bahanga is presented as a person who repeatedly disregards and threatens peace agreements, in other words, as a renegade deliberately breaching legal frameworks that had been concluded in mutual consent. Beyond that, parts of legal communication can also be seen when the topic of humanitarian aid appears. In this context, humanitarian aid for Libyan returnees, be they considered as Malians (by the government) or as Azawadians (by the MNA), is outlined to be both a moral *and* legal obligation. Related to that, the violation of universal rights in the past and the non-response to humanitarian needs of refugees at this point in time are linked up: in both cases, the international community is attributed a certain part of legal responsibility, especially for not having been supportive enough of those obviously struggling for freedom and democracy in Mali and the region as a whole (see e.g. MNA 29.08.2011; HRW 4.09.2011; AFP 12.10.2011). In sum, when looking at these overlapping discursive references to both the legal qualities of the Malian nation state and the ramification of the global legal framework, phase II shows modes of differentiation carrying contradiction.

Overlooking phase II, legal communication is also closely related to political communication. This can again be seen when the topic of refugees is dealt with. So, the Malian policy of a 'helping hand' towards returnees from Libya in need (i.e. a moral and legal obligation, as mentioned above) appears as being linked to a principle of reciprocity including the idea that solidarity has to be earned by political loyalty (see e.g. GovMali 24.10.2011). The same principle again shows up in a different reference frame: When Malian Chamanamas (i.e. one of the Tuareg tribe factions) declare their unconditional support of returning faction members from Libya, the commitment to showing solidarity with refugees appears as an ethno-political obligation (see e.g. Le 22 Septembre/ Maliweb 26.09.2011). And finally, once again in a different reference frame, democracy as such is presented as being dependent on conditions. Following this rationale, the struggle for freedom and democracy, as it could be watched by the example of Libya's precar-

ious situation, is outlined as being accepted only when basic structures of society and state stability are not jeopardised.

Overlooking passages attributed to political communication in the analysis of phase II, it can also be stated, contrary to phase I, that AQMI gets increasingly perceived as a powerful political actor in its own right. In this context, both the government and MNA are presented as more or less open collaborators of terrorism or, at least, as inactive and incapable bystanders of a growing threat by AQMI.[172] Following this discursive thread, the problematic history of "the north" associated with notorious insecurity due to tribal competition and "fragile statehood" as a key problem of the Sahelian zone are presented as main reasons enabling AQMI to gain a foothold and absorb political power in northern Mali. Here again, the analysed communication reveals and reinforces an underlying thinking within the framework of centre and periphery. Thereby, political communication referring to a domestic state context overlaps communication drawing on a global dimension, both interconnected when the topic of PSPSDN gets reiterated: PSPSDN is portrayed as a politically motivated development programme aiming at a comeback of control provided by the central state, especially by means of deploying security forces against terrorist threats. The political dimension in communication about PSPSDN gets particularly obvious as power-related measures of the programme are controversially outlined, for example as "returning of administration and affirmation of state presence" (GovMali 21.09.2011) and, at the same time, in terms of a ongoing "militarisation to threaten and intimidate the population" (MNA 2.09.2011).[173] Furthermore, the way Malian development efforts are dealt with gives another insight into an altering self-observation of the political system of communication in world society. As, for example, Chinese-Malian projects (e.g. the China-Mali Friendship Bridge) and EU-funded activities (e.g. PSPSDN) are frequently mentioned in parallel, this does not only represent a mere documentation of possible alternatives in international development cooperation; rather, the analysed communication suggests that there are discursive elements of a changing reflection on which entities are to be considered global reference points of development. In this perspective, communication shows markers of a reconstitution of the relation between centre and periphery, i.e. the relation between those entities and spaces where decisions on development are made (Western powers vs. China) and others where these decisions are nothing but implemented (Mali resp. its northern regions).

In view of the analysed communication on the topics of religious values, legal obligations, ethnic solidarity versus political loyalty, a growing observation of AQMI as an powerful actor and Mali being object to development, here again, different modes of differentiation see their discursive light: stratificatory (religion, development), segmentary (solidarity, loyalty), and functional (legal obligations, political power, Islamic religious

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172   When, for example, the PSPSDN-related military base in Abeïbara gets attacked on October 2, 2011, the MNA is immediately accused of being responsible even though the evidence points to AQMI. Likewise, more than once, the government gets accused of being laxist or even collaborative towards AQMI (see e.g. L'Indicateur du Renouveau/Maliweb 6.10.2011b).

173   In phase II, as many passages of both PSPSDN appreciation and critics show, the controversy about the power political dimension of the programme as an instrument to re-establish state presence and fight AQMI in northern Mali repeatedly and broadly appears in the discourse (see e.g. Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 2.09.2011).

values). Against this background, contradiction in communication can be exposed along the conflict system's dimensions of meaning (added to the table introduced in chapter 6.5.1 in bold text below):

Table 26: Dimensions of conflict development/phase I-II

Dimension	Phase	Poles of Contradiction	
factual	II	promotion of freedom and democracy within existing Malian nation state structures	reform and rebuilding of state and nation from the ground up
		alternative geo-political orientations in development relations	claiming compliance with humanitarian principles from international community
	I	preservation of Malian central state; national unity, state sovereignty and territorial integrity equally important	insisting on self-determination as a universal democratic value
		promoting and enhancing development efforts as major security policy	underdevelopment, insecurity, and repression as result of (inter-)national power politics
temporal	II	great West African empires in history as example	getting rid of colonial structures
	I	preservation of rich multi-cultural Malian heritage	recognition of cultural and historical uniqueness of northern populations/of "Azawad"
social	II	loyal citizens abiding by nation state's rule of law	loyal tribe members abiding by ethno-political affiliations and obligations
		faithful Muslims supporting the country's unity	community based on heroic narratives and models
	I	political elites mainly originating from Bambara ethnic group, shaped by a spirit of struggling for independence and nation building	minority ethnic groups advocating for self-determination within a federal state; redefining nation as an ethnic category
		promotion of a unitary and strong state	categorical division of "northern" and Malian population

(Own table)

As outlined earlier in chapter 6.5.1, there are two main discursive corridors in which conflict identities gradually develop. In phase II, both new elements appear in these corridors and others from phase I continue to be addressed and developed. This process is

structured in itself according to a few guiding issues: positions on how the Malian political system can be developed and on development as such; positions on terrorism and AQMI; and positions on deceased Bahanga, his life's work and Libyan returnees as potential sources of danger (added to the table introduced in 6.5.1 in bold text below):

Table 27: Conflict identity layers/discursive corridors phase I-II

programmes	II	reforming from within: constitutional reform; adapting and reinforcing PSPSDN; highlighting Islamic values as common ground; **receiving Libyan returnees as nationals;** pretending fight against terrorism; repressing northern populations by militarisation of development	calling on international community to observe; making PSPSDN more just; upholding tribal above national law; **receiving Libyan returnees as Azawadians collaboration with terrorists; potential instigation of a new rebellion**
	I	promoting development efforts in Mali, especially in northern regions; strengthening the unitary state; militarising the north; neo-colonialism; cultural assimilation	claiming self-determination of population in northern regions; fighting for autonomy of Azawad; questioning the unitary state
roles	II	law-abiding citizens; faithful Muslims; clandestine collaborators of terrorists	activists in the cause of democracy and human rights; open collaborators of terrorists; **new and old rebels**
	I	loyals to the regime; pro-PSPSDN; supporters of peace process; collaborators of criminals (kidnappers, drug traffickers, bandits, terrorists)	anti-government activists; activists in the cause of freedom; people in need of help and living in insecurity; marginalised and oppressed people potential rebels; collaborators of criminals (kidnappers; drug traffickers; bandits, terrorists)
persons	II	Malian population; international development partners from the West and China; **AQMI members**	Azawadians; tribe members; international observers; **AQMI members**
	I	ATT; government members; majority of population in the country; government officials of neighbouring countries and Western countries; representatives of international development organisations; **certain parts of Libyan returnees**	MNA members; members of former Tuareg rebel units (e.g. Bahanga faction); major parts of Tuareg population in the north; light-skinned population; "all sons and daughters of Azawad"; **certain parts of Libyan returnees**

norms	II	concord, community, understanding, solidarity as national values with religious connotation	international solidarity among supporters of democracy; solidarity and loyalty with ethnic connotation
	I	unity and political stability; cultural diversity; development and security; progress and peace; heroism and patriotism	democracy, esp. self-determination and rule of law; justice and peace; solidarity and hospitality; importance of kinship; heroism and patriotism; historic responsibility

(Own table)

Taking together the analytical building blocks presented above, escalating move B can be described as follows: It consists of a structural coupling based on the finding that communication from different subsystems, particularly on religious values, political loyalty and ethnic solidarity, joins up, gets understandable from different sides and, yet, produces new reasons for contradiction.

First, there is communication from a religious background suggesting that certain values associated with Islam, especially concord and community, do not only represent guidelines on the right track through life in view of salvation for fellow believers but are also important when it comes to collectively define pillars of national unity. From this perspective, on the one hand, both Bahanga (frequently portrayed as a symbol for a history of rebellions) and AQMI members (representing a new threat for the status quo) are presented as political *and religious* renegades. On the other hand, however, Bahanga is often attributed a quasi-religious status of a martyr of freedom.

Therefore, second, the way these topics are referred to does indicate that they are part of political reasoning as well. More precisely, they are addressed within the context of an obligation for Malian nationals not to endanger unity, sovereignty, and state integrity in difficult times by hasty ambitions of change. In the same vein, other parts of communication deal with unity as closely related to political loyalty. On this, one understanding is that the nation represents the ultimate reference frame of a citizen's loyalty; the other side considers the ethnic group or cultural affiliations as key reference of an individual's loyalty and solidarity (see remarks on dealing with Libyan returnees).

Third and finally, when referring to certain elements of the developing conflict identities illustrated above, communication dealing with religious values, political loyalty and ethnic solidarity includes a few legal categories, too. Thus, the discursive topics of constitutional reform, PSPSDN, and autonomy are embedded in explicit legal considerations which draw on different if not contradictory sources (e.g. global standards, national sovereignty and rule of law, culturally passed on norms).

To sum up, it can be stated that the analysis of phase II reveals a structural coupling of religious, political, and legal communication appearing within the continued factual threads on development/PSPSDN and democracy/autonomy and the newly articulated perception of AQMI as a powerful actor on its own. This development generates parts of discursive guidelines which show up as binding and enduring obligations for indi-

viduals, or, to put it another way, as changed structures of expectation. Nevertheless, these obligations result from different subsystems of communication following competing modes of differentiation as, for example, the multiple contradictions within and between the expressions of "faithful citizen" and "democratic tribe member" show.

Now, the structural coupling outlined above therefore comes along with changing structures of expectations or, in other words, with another normative shift of the discourse. In addition to what has already been said about the discursive corridors in which conflict identities develop, especially concerning the norms part, the normative shift of the discourse as a whole in phase II can be described as follows: As solidarity appears as a key normative concept brought into the discursive field from different sides, it becomes obvious that solidarity is increasingly understood as a value with conditions attached. More precisely, the idea of solidarity as a human value as such, for example in form of charity and solidarity towards Libyan returnees, fades out from the discourse while solidarity gets increasingly addressed as a value that is not absolute but in real action dependent on religion, citizenship, or kinship.

Together with the identification of escalating move B, there are a number of observations pointing to perceptions of violence in phase II: First, violence or the use of force, respectively, gets addressed as a kind of structural danger or potentiality. In this context, mentioning the re-establishment of former military bases, the installation of new outposts and the deployment of additional brigades of police forces to the north, all of which presented as parts of PSPSDN, reinforces the impression of a viable threat of using violence. Repeatedly, these statements are discursively pinned down within the context of a militarisation of the north (see e.g. GovMali 11.08.2011; MNA 2.09.2011).

Second, when it comes to people of Malian origin in Libya coming back to Mali, described both as "heavily armed Tuareg mercenaries" and "Libyan returnees fleeing with their families", the situation is characterised as a worsening crisis driven by persecution, ill-treatment and discrimination based on the people's skin colour, from new Libyan authorities and Malian border officials (see e.g. GovMali 6.09.2011; MNA 12.09.2011; HRW 4.09.2011).

Third, based on the analysis of the text corpus, there is ultimately only one incidence corresponding to a direct military confrontation during phase II. As referred to earlier, the attack on the PSPSDN military base under construction in Abeïbara on October 2 is broadly described as an illegitimate act of war. Even though statements refer to evidence pointing to AQMI as being responsible, the MNA gets immediately associated with this incidence.

Finally, the imminence of collective violence especially crystallises when Bahanga is referred to as a major icon of the conflict. Both the perception of Bahanga as a brave warrior and martyr of freedom and as a collaborator of terrorists and saboteur of peace rightly "battered to death" shows that the use of violence may be legitimate in certain conditions that, by the end of phase II, begin to appear on the horizon. As cited earlier, too, in a "last and final call"

"[…] the MNA grants itself the right to use all necessary means to implement the right to self-determination of the people of Azawad." (MNA 4.10.2011)

At the same time, in contrast, there are reaffirmations from different discursive sides to be willing to find a nonmilitary political solution to existing contradictions (see e.g. L'Indépendent/Maliweb 29.08.2011; MNA 29.08.2011).

6.5.3 A Failing Democracy (Phase III, Oct 2011 – Jan 17, 2012)

As outlined earlier in detail, the beginning of phase III is marked by MNLA's founding statement on October 16. With this, the conflict discourse once again gathers pace (as to thematic scope and clocking). When it comes to its world societal framing, the analysis of conflict communication revealed the following main points: (1) a shared characterisation of the complex conflict situation as a market of insecurity and (2) a growing confrontation of two political agendas that are both explicitly legitimised as democratic projects, albeit with different frames of reference.

(1) Already in phase I and II, Mali and its neighbouring countries get frequently referred to in terms of a regional focus that is attributed analytical relevance as such.[174] In phase III, this kind of regional approach to the conflict situation appears even more often, for example when the imperative to fight arms trade, drug trafficking and terrorism in the Sahelian zone having Mali at its centre is highlighted (see e.g. FES October 2011; GovMali 30.11.2011b). In this context, several statements describe a danger of a self-perpetuating regional conflict system including parties acting like market players. Thus, either AQMI or MNLA members are presented as being invested in the business of drug trafficking and kidnapping. Similarly, the Malian government (and others in the region, e.g. the Algerian) is not only portrayed as a clandestine beneficiary of social imbalance and insecurity in northern Mali and the Sahelian zone but also as a driving force deliberately inducing insecurity and chaos in order hide its illegal businesses and, at the same time, to be able to appear as the only law and order power later on. Following the same logic but on a different level, Western and especially European countries are attributed a strategy of destabilisation both in Libya and Mali in order to present themselves as a stabilising force later on and to ensure access to oil, gas and rare earths.[175] Finally, in the same vein, intermediaries, mediators, or negotiants from international organisations providing "good offices" are also characterised as having an interest to continue the conflict, offer their service and protect their influential and lucrative business (see pointedly e.g. Le Prétoire/Maliweb 12.01.2012a). Therefore, it can be stated that one key discursive thread in phase III displays the representation of an intensifying conflict system driven by economic motives and perspectives of growing profit. This can be seen as part of economic communication in world society reasoning about markets and stakeholders which operate and become manifest on a regional level.

(2) The analysis of the text corpus in phase III shows a broad support from different discursive angles of the idea that political power has to be based on democratic values and

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174   For explicit references to the region as an analytical category see e.g. Le Matin/Maliweb (9.12.2010), HRW (31.03.2011), GovMali (14.08.2011), and FES (June 2011).

175   Both logics and ideas are already sporadically present in earlier phases but most outspoken in phase III (see pointedly Le Combat/Maliweb 19.10.2011a; 3.11.2011b; Le Potentiel/Maliweb 29.11.2011e; MNLA 9.01.2012; 14.01.2012).

thus on democratic processes. However, the discourse oscillates between two competing democratic projects and the respective rationales stepping forward in conflict communication.

On the one hand, one part of the discourse shows a focusing attention on the government as a democratic actor. In this regard, the positive perception of the Malian government from the outside plays a central role. Besides highlighting the importance of a steady alliance with the US, phase III exhibits a number of accentuations of Mali's good relations to neighbouring states (in West Africa), international organisations/development partners (e.g. UN, EU, AU) and European countries, especially France and Germany. In this context, Mali's exemplary development as a "model democracy" is repeatedly emphasised.[176] The image of a credible, reliable and democratic partner gets further substantiated by presenting the Malian government as a caring problem solver, inter alia, in view of measures to strengthen security in close cooperation with riparian countries to protect transportation axis and tourist hotspots; provisions to prevent draughts and food shortages, for example by consolidating transnational water authorities and maintaining close international cooperation in the agricultural sector with India; rhetoric countering the "security psychosis", for example by disproving the hypothesis of an eminent rebellion.[177] A second discursive thread to support this image deals with Mali as an active promotor of freedom, human rights and democracy in the world, as presented by the examples of West Sahara, Palestine, and Libya. In correspondence with these external activities, the internal situation gets described as a functioning democratic system which still guarantees the upcoming 2012 elections and the transition of power to be in perfect order and in constitutional time frame, even against the background of an unstable environment.[178]

On the other hand, there is a complementary part of the discourse developing a different kind of democratic project, a project which is presented as being born out of misery and necessity. In this context, the idea of supporting new democratic structures within the framework of northern Mali or Azawad is based on the rationale that the Malian system proved to be a dysfunctional democracy based on decades-long clientelism, political patronage and institutional discrimination. Thus, as conflict communication exhibits, the self-observation of citizens in northern Mali is predominantly

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176   See e.g. Le Républicain (Maliweb 31.10.2011d), GovMali (15.10.2011a; 28.10.2011; 11.12.2011a).

177   For references to the latent interethnic and intra-community conflicts among Azawadians and, as a consequence thereof, for references to the lacking democratic basis of the MNLA in view of Azawad's entire population see chapter 6.4/phase III or exemplarily GovMali (12.12.2011; 6.01.2012), MNLA (22.12.2011), Le 22 Septembre (Maliweb 1.12.2011a), L'Indicateur du Renouveau (Maliweb 7.12.2011a).

178   Besides huge parts of the analysed communication representing a rather positive account of the Malian democracy in this phase (see exemplarily GovMali 28.10.2011; Le Pouce/Maliweb 31.10.2011e; Lafia Révélateur/Maliweb 7.12.2011c), the aforementioned unstable environment, ironically enough, is also understood as a long-term consequence of the peace agreements which are considered both a democratic achievement and a political withdrawal leading to a fatal retreat of the state in northern Mali (see e.g. Le Zénith Balé/Maliweb 10.12.2011d). On top of that, to handle the unstable political situation, voices attributed to the Malian youth argue in favour of a more democratic, i.e. a more inclusive governance (see Le Malien/Maliweb 17.12.2011).

characterised by the absence of a democratic state power, even worse, by a perception of being objects to competing undemocratic powers creating northern Mali a "no man's land" without sustainable security and socio-economic perspectives.[179] Linked to that, there is a number of references attributing responsibility to the international community, i.e. the UN system, when it comes to the unpunished violation of peace agreements and democratic rights and the continuously deterioration of security in West Africa.[180] Against this background, the idea of two separate people, the Malian and the Azawadian, living in friendship side by side, each based on democratic legitimisation of political power and self-determination gets increasingly pronounced.[181]

As the prospect of a self-determined political entity of Azawad gradually takes discursive shape in phase III, conflict communication step by step covers some prerequisites. First, concerning structural issues of an eventual state of Azawad, it is mentioned that state-like structures and functions, such as regional administrative facilities or military forces, are already there. At the same time, this assessment is discursively linked to the younger generation of Azawadians which is described as a new democratic basis able and ready to shape the future irrespective of ethnic borders and unburdened by the past (see MNLA 9.12.2011; 8.01.2012a; 9.01.2012). Second, again linked to the younger generation, the Azawadian democratic project is attributed increased prospects of success because the political and legal knowledge of international humanitarian law (e.g. concerning self-determination or self-defence) is not only available as an abstract argumentative resource. By advocacy work of professionalised representatives, it does also materialise as Azawadian concerns in international debates on democracy promotion.[182] Third, based on the previous point, actual cases of successful legal struggles for self-determination worldwide become a part of the conflict discourse. Thus, referring to the progressive dynamics of the Arab Spring and, beyond that, to the newly independent states all over the world (with East Timor and South Sudan being the most recent examples at that time) makes Mali and Azawad discursively emerge as further hotspots of international attention (see MNLA 23.12.2011). Finally, the project of a self-determined Azawad is closely linked to the idea of creating a democratic bulwark against AQMI and other newly founded Islamist groups heading towards the establishment of an Islamic

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179   See particularly MNLA (30.10.201; 3.11.2011f; 10.01.2012), Le Républicain (Maliweb 31.10.2011d), Le Prétoire (Maliweb 12.01.2012a), and FES (October 2011).

180   In this context, it is remarkable that, for the first time, both the Malian and the Azawadian people are presented as victims of an unjust political system and a perceived disregard of the international community who both deserve true self-determination (see MNA 4.10.2011; 3.11.2011g; 1.01.2012).

181   However, as mentioned earlier (see chapter 6.4/phase III/October 2011), the broad support or, more precisely, the democratic legitimisation of an Azawadian project of self-determination including all ethnic groups gets called in question from time to time (see e.g. Le Combat 22.10.2011a).

182   As outlined earlier (see chapter 6.2/phase III/January 2012) by the example of Moussa Ag Assarid, this kind of advocacy is closely related to what is understood to be a necessary condition of success for any democratic project: its recognition by the international community (see MNLA 22.12.2011; 12.01.2012; 17.01.2012).

state in the Sahelian zone, having Azawad at its centre.[183] At the same time, the Azawa-
dian bulwark is also discursively associated with a kind of naturally grown resistance
towards illegitimate external powers, be they religiously or racially driven or motivated
by a (neo-) colonial mission.[184]

Overlooking both political agendas emerging in conflict discourse in phase III, it
should be noted that, even though both projects are presented as being deeply rooted
in democratic ideas, initiatives drawing on the repertoire of peaceful democratic instru-
ments and methods (e.g. negotiation, mediation, constitutional reform, referendum) ul-
timately failed. In other words, armed conflict represents the destination of a develop-
ing relationship between two conflict parties who explicitly found their political action
on democratic principles.

In sum, taking a closer look at the world societal framing of communication in phase
III reveals additional modes of differentiation simultaneously at work. The market
metaphor which prominently appears in descriptions of the conflict situation clearly
points to economic communication based on a functional reasoning about stakeholders
and profits. Even though woven into the overall flow of conflict communication, this
part of the discourse follows a different logic than those parts of communication dealing
with the legitimisation of political power through democratic principles. Those parts,
in turn, are characterised by a discursive build-up of two political agendas or, in other
words, two democratic projects both opposing and correlating with each other. This
could also be read as a kind of competition between two ways of legitimising political
power. To put it in a short headline: 'model democracy' versus democratic freedom
fighters. Both agendas show elements of a demonstration of evidence including re-
peated appeals to democratic principles, proof of democratic processes and calling up
reputes and witnesses able to attest democratic qualities (see e.g. recognition by inter-
national actors). Therefore, these parts of communication can be considered as largely
mirroring a political system of world society structured by segmentary differentiation
and thus focused on political power legitimately exercised by democratic procedures
of an existing nation state. At the same time, the very same parts of communication
reflect different approaches on the principles guiding democratic processes of allocating
political power including elements of stratificatory differentiation (e.g. concerning the
international recognition of Azawad's self-determination request). These competing
modes of differentiation operating in communication are at the centre stage of newly

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183   See particularly Le Républicain (Maliweb 13.12.2011a), Le Prétoire (Maliweb 27.12.2011), AFP (Ma-
liweb 13.01.2012) and Le 22 Septembre (12.01.2012b). In this context, the Festival in the Desert
is brought up as a symbolic event representing Azawad's open and diverse culture which per se
stands against Islamist ideologies (see e.g. AFP/Maliweb 15.01.2012). Remarkably enough, after
the attacks on Ménaka by the MNLA, ATT, too, adopts the same argument and example (i.e. Festi-
val in the Desert) to underline that Mali with its open-minded, welcoming and deeply democratic
culture represents this very bulwark and will defend its independence, peace and stability, if ne-
cessary, by the use of military force (see GovMali 19.01.2012).

184   For a historical perspective on this, see chapter 6.3/50 Years of Colonisation and Invasion of Aza-
wad/phase III. Here again, as statements make clear that the MNLA sees itself in line with the
anti-Apartheid movement in South Africa, the discourse gets enriched by a strong historical ex-
ample (see MNLA 8.01.2012a).

arising contradictions and thus of a boosting conflict development in the course of phase III. Based on the analysed conflict communication, these contradictions can be exposed along the conflict system's dimensions of meaning (added to the table introduced in chapter 6.5.1 and expanded in 6.5.2 in table 28).

Table 28: Dimensions of conflict development/Phase I-III

Dimension	Phase	Poles of Contradiction		
factual	III	democracy as inclusive society within functioning state	versus	democratic self-determination only within new state structures
		insecurity as manageable Malian policy problem		fighting root causes of lucrative insecurity business
	II	promotion of freedom and democracy within existing Malian nation state structures		reform and rebuilding of state and nation from the ground up
		alternative geo-political orientations in development relations		claiming compliance with humanitarian principles from international community
	I	preservation of Malian central state; national unity, state sovereignty and territorial integrity equally important		insisting on self-determination as a universal democratic value
		promoting and enhancing development efforts as major security policy		underdevelopment, insecurity, and repression as result of (inter-) national power politics
temporal	III	Mali's grown reputation as model democracy since independence		peaceful and successful independence movements worldwide as role models
	II	great West African empires in history as example		getting rid of colonial structures
	I	preservation of rich multi-cultural Malian heritage		recognition of cultural and historical uniqueness of northern populations/of "Azawad"

Dimension	Phase	Poles of Contradiction		
social	III	Malian unity endangered by criminals		MNLA acting on behalf of Azawadian people as a whole
		supporters of government of national unity representing "all children of Mali"		supporters of self-determination and democracy for Azawad and Mali
	II	loyal citizens abiding by nation state's rule of law		loyal tribe members abiding by ethno-political affiliations and obligations
		faithful Muslims supporting the country's unity		community based on heroic narratives and models
	I	political elites mainly originating from Bambara ethnic group, shaped by a spirit of struggling for independence and nation building		minority ethnic groups advocating for self-determination within a federal state; redefining nation as an ethnic category
		promotion of a unitary and strong state		categorical division of "northern" and Malian population

(Own table)

As the analysis brought forward, between these poles, conflict identities continue to consolidate and become more exclusive within two main discursive corridors. Taking up this development of phase I and II, the process accelerates in phase III and is guided by two competing ideas of how a democratic state and society should essentially look like (added to the table introduced in 6.5.1 and expanded in 6.5.2 in table 29).

Table 29: Conflict identity layers/discursive corridors phase I-III

programmes	III	preventing unprecedented and imminent state disintegration/division; holding criminals (drug traffickers, terrorists) accountable; strengthening Mali's democratic development continuing forced assimilation of different ethnic groups in Malian state; degradation of democratic principles	convincing people of Azawad's autonomy/independence; gaining more supporters; abolishing a system of institutionalised subjugation; preparing self-defence against military invasion representing a minority position among ethnic groups of northern Mali; risking ethnic confrontation; invoking Islamist forces
	II	reforming from within: constitutional reform; adapting and reinforcing PSPSDN; highlighting Islamic values as common ground; receiving Libyan returnees as nationals; pretending fight against terrorism; repressing northern populations by militarisation of development	calling on international community to observe; making PSPSDN more just; upholding tribal above national law; receiving Libyan returnees as Azawadians collaboration with terrorists; potential instigation of a new rebellion
	I	promoting development efforts in Mali, especially in northern regions; strengthening the unitary state; militarising the north; neo-colonialism; cultural assimilation	claiming self-determination of population in northern regions; fighting for autonomy of Azawad; questioning the unitary state
roles	III	defenders/keepers of Malian home country, pro-government & anti secessionist incompetent & overstrained authorities; betrayed Malian population	proponents of Azawadian democratic self-determination implemented by MNLA criminals without principles; terrorists; militant rebels plunging Mali into chaos
	II	law-abiding citizens; faithful Muslims clandestine collaborators of terrorists	activits in the cause of democracy and human rights open collaborators of terrorists; new and old rebels
	I	loyals to the regime; pro-PSPSDN; supporters of peace process collaborators of criminals (kidnappers, drug traffickers, bandits, terrorists)	anti-government activists; activists in the cause of freedom; people in need of help and living in insecurity; marginalised and oppressed people potential rebels; collaborators of criminals (kidnappers; drug traffickers; bandits; terrorists)

persons	III	ATT/Malian authorities; representatives of international (development) partners; Malian nationals (including northern population); those declaring loyalty to the Malian government among Libyan returnees	MNLA members & supporters; majority of tribe members; those declaring adherence to MNLA among Libyan returnees; deserters from Malian military; defectors from Malian authorities
	II	Malian population; international development partners from the West and China	Azawadians; tribe members; international observers
	I	ATT; government members; majority of population in the country; government officials of neighbouring countries and Western countries; representatives of international development organisations; certain parts of Libyan returnees	MNA members; members of former Tuareg rebel units (e.g. Bahanga faction); major parts of Tuareg population in the north; light-skinned population; "all sons and daughters of Azawad"; certain parts of Libyan returnees
norms	III	defending democratic principles by force (national integrity) and justifying human sacrifice by higher cause (order, stability)	achieving democratic principles by force (self-determination) and justifying human sacrifice by higher cause (dignity, freedom)
	II	concord, community, understanding, solidarity as national values with religious connotation	international solidarity among supporters of democracy; solidarity and loyalty with ethnic connotation
	I	unity and political stability; cultural diversity; development and security; progress and peace; heroism and patriotism	democracy, esp. self-determination and rule of law; justice and peace; solidarity and hospitality; importance of kinship; heroism and patriotism; historic responsibility

(Own table)

Taking together the world societal framing, the poles of contradiction represented in three dimensions of meaning, and the development of two conflict identities outlined above, phase III gives rise to escalating move C which can be described as follows: It consists of a structural coupling of economic communication related to the idea of an insecurity market and political communication reflecting two ideas of legitimising political power within a democratic framework. First, communication on political agendas based on democratic principles appears as a kind of counter-programme vis-à-vis those parts of communication describing a protracted situation of different stakeholders benefitting from insecurity but, at the same time, being locked-in in that very situation. In other words, political communication understands and correlates with economic reasoning insofar as it offers perspectives to break through a perceived deadlock (quotations below see also in chapter 6.4/phase III):

"Azawad's youth is invited to burst open chains that impair its action. [...] This vision means gaining a free will [...] based on a patriotic determination fostering the common good." (MNLA 8.01.2012b)

"We are still fascinated, beyond the moment and line of horizon, by the image of a country whose human capital is of high quality, the image of a people living in peace, security and a prosperous environment, a people in accord with the nations of the world, dedicated to democratic values, freedom and justice." (GovMali 31.12.2011)

Second, as outlined earlier in this section, the two political scenarios pointedly developing in the course of phase III are indeed competing but, at the same time, based on the common idea of democratic representation. Or, to put it in the analytical language of this study, they are discursive representations from two different subsystems of political communication getting structurally coupled. One attributes political power in terms of existing structures and processes, especially elections, within a democratic constitutional nation state that is observed as a model democracy, both by its political elites and from outside. The other one deals with political power as an expression of self-determination as a people understood as the very core of a democratic community. This part of political communication observes the people of Mali (and Azawad) as still being on its way to fulfil a mission of struggling for freedom and fighting against oppression, a mission observed as being part of a global development towards democracy. It can thus be stated that the analysis of phase III reveals an additional structural coupling of economic and a twofold political communication leading to a further densification of the conflict discourse.

The structural coupling of escalating move C comes along with changing structures of expectation and thus with a final and curial normative shift of the discourse. In addition to what has been indicated about the further development of conflict identities earlier, the normative shift of phase III can be described as follows: The struggle for freedom, justice, and self-determination or, in short, for democracy, discursively referred to as a noble cause, can be accompanied by the (not so noble) use of force. Therefore, within the context of both preserving and achieving democracy, the use of force gets increasingly presented as a reasonable and legitimate means of choice, for example relating to self-defence or the maintenance of stability and order.

"A people [i.e. the Malian] dedicated to democratic values, freedom and justice. [...] the concern about its preservation has mobilised our forces and our energy in the service of the people of Mali." (GovMali 31.12.2011)

"These actions [i.e. the attacks on Ménaka] have only one objective: regaining peace and justice for the Azawad community and stability for our region." (MNLA 17.01.2012; brackets added R.B.)

To substantiate the identification of escalating move C, particularly concerning its normative shift, the following and last part of this section presents a number of crucial observations pointing to perceptions of violence during phase III.

First, right from the proclamation of MNLA's foundation on, the situation is presented as a simmering conflict full of growing tensions. As, for example, statements on the pro-MNLA demonstrations on November 1, 2011, in Kidal show, these tensions can easily become manifest as violent actions when arresting protesters gets observed as an arbitrary act or even as a deliberate violation of freedom of expression. Such incidences then get discursively put on a par with past experiences of violence, such as "war crimes" during earlier rebellions and an "institutional racism" towards parts of the population in the north which has always experiences the Malian state as a vehicle of forced assimilation (see e.g. MNLA 3.11.2011f; L'Indépendent/Maliweb 24.11.2011b). Beyond that, growing tensions are also associated with the concrete danger of re-erupting old conflict between ethnic groups and thus a kind of "afghanization" of the north (see El Watan/Maliweb 1.11.2011a). This is reinforced by a growing number of voices applauding the government for demonstrating strength or even claiming a heavy-handed strategy[185] to restore authority and preserve unity "to the last drop of blood" (L'Indépendent/Maliweb 20.10.2011d; see also Le Prétoire/Maliweb 5.12.2011b; Le 22 Septembre 18.01.2012d). So, the overall impression is that of a tense and violence-prone atmosphere whereby two democratic projects, Azawad's autonomy and Mali's unity, are described as being threatened like never before against the background of a whole region on the brink to be set on fire.

Second, in such an atmosphere, the topic of militarisation plays a crucial role in how the potentiality of violence gets observed. Based on the analysis of the text corpus, militarisation clearly points to the widespread perception of a multiplication of military presence in the north. On the one hand, this is attributed to an increasing troop deployment to the north in previous months (via PSPSDN measures) and even more so to a massive redeployment of Malian military that starts in the beginning of December which is altogether seen either as an intimidation and terrorisation of Azawad[186] or as a measure to protect transportation axes and tourist hotspots (see GovMali 12.12.2011). On the other hand, discursive observations of militarisation include announcements referring to MNLA's growing military capabilities and efforts to mobilise the population of the north to take part in its liberation (see MNLA 22.12.2011; 28.12.2011). Furthermore, in this context, Libyan returnees are presented as "ex-soldiers armed to the teeth" or, in other words, as an incarnation of an imminent rebellion (see Le Combat/Maliweb 26.10.2011; El Watan/Maliweb 1.11.2011a). Together with the repeatedly appearing assessment that the availability of illegal weapons in the region reached an unprecedented level and the observation that more and more Tuareg commanders (Imghad and Ifoghas), both from the Malian military and among Libyan returnees, declare their adherence to the MNLA while others are still loyal to the Malian government, this creates a climate of mistrust, fear and insecurity (see FES October 2011a; GovMali 3.12.2011; MNLA 3.12.2011).

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185   The postponement of a law on the abolition of the death penalty in Mali is a striking example. The death penalty can be applied in cases of high treason or desertion (see AI 11.10.2011).

186   On this, the permanent patrolling of combat aircrafts and deliberate attacks on civilians by security forces (raids, confiscations etc.) are mentioned (see Nouvelle Libération/Maliweb 6.12.2011b; MNLA 14.01.2012).

Third, crucial observations pointing to perceptions of violence are indeed linked to AQMI which is presented as the predominant and most serious threat to peace and security in Mali and beyond (see Le Pouce/Maliweb 31.10.2011e; AFP/Maliweb 13.01.2012). As the analysis of the conflict discourse in phase III shows, terrorist attacks on strategic aims of Malian infrastructure (e.g. military bases or administrative buildings), kidnappings and lootings are presented as growing in numbers and severity, with the attack on November 25 (5 European tourists kidnapped, one shot dead) being the most cited.[187] As the analysis also shows, the accusation suggesting a toleration of AQMI by the government or even a cooperation with terrorists is in itself perceived as a violent and terrorist act. On top of that, information on newly founded militant Islamist groups (Ansar al-Dine, MUJAO) in December, on a presumable reinforcement of AQMI by Libyan units, and a growing perception that neither regional cooperation nor Western countries can prevent the Sahelian zone from becoming a safe haven for terrorism, causes an omnipresent feeling of being surrounded by imminent violence within a multiple fronts scenario.[188]

Fourth, and finally, phase III exposes more and more explicitly militant or even war-prone rhetoric suggesting that the use of military force can be understood as an exceptional and necessary evil to achieve better and truly democratic conditions, some selected examples from the text corpus:

"There is a serious risk of falling back into civil war." (former Ganda Koy leader; Le 22 Septembre/Maliweb 1.12.2011a)

"If you want peace, prepare for war." (Nouvelle Libération/Maliweb 6.12.2011b)

"ATT has to impose peace by war." (Waati/Maliweb 8.12.2011b)

"There is no half peace and no half war. Some cannot live in peace while others are at war." (MNLA 3.01.2012b)

"[Troop deployment to the north corresponds to] an invitation to war." (MNLA 12.01.2012)

"Attacks [on Ménaka] are attacks on Malian culture and history. Mali is prepared to protect and preserve independence, stability, and peace." (GovMali 19.01.2012d)

In other words, against the background of many sporadic violent incidences attributed to different sides (see e.g. kidnappings, lootings, assaults, attacks), the development of the discourse in the very last episode appears to anticipate war-like conditions or even an outright state of war.

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187   See e.g. GovMali (26.11.2011), Le Combat (Maliweb 4.11.2011a), and ICG (1.12.2011). See also detailed table in chapter 6.4/phase III/November 2011.

188   To get an impression of this feeling see particularly AFP (Maliweb 12.12.2011a), Le Prétoire (Maliweb 27.12.2011), L'Indicateur du Renouveau (Maliweb 4.01.2012), MNLA (9.01.2012), Nouvelle Libération (Maliweb 11.01.2012), Le Canard Déchaîné (Maliweb 16.01.2012).

6.6 Summary

As outlined in summary of the case study on the Maidan protests in Ukraine 2013/2014 (see chapter 5.6), the analytical narrative on Mali's crisis 2010–2012 presented here offers a reconstruction of a process of conflict escalation which builds on three dimensions of meaning in the discourse (factual, temporal, social) and identifies major moments of conflict development (escalating moves). The case study does *not* claim to offer an absolute timeline and a causal explanation of events on Maidan but gives an insight into the collective creation and experiencing of a conflict based on documented text-based communication that had been published within the period of investigation.

Following the multi-step analysis introduced in the work plan (chapter 4.4), the process of conflict escalation was observed along three phases. The golden thread of the conflict discourse is represented by a succession of three escalating moves (A-C). Recapitulating the salient key words, the following figure offers an overview on the results of the case study on Mali's crisis in terms of phases, escalating moves, the world societal background of communication and observations of violence appearing in the respective context.

Now, recalling the basic research question of this study – How do conflicts escalate? – this analytical narrative can be understood as a possible answer to the question of how the situation in Mali at that time escalated. Based on the results of the present case study, it escalated as a succession of escalating moves identified while observing the discourse as representation of an evolving conflict system. As demonstrated, this conflict system continuously irritates its environment, incorporates communication, and draws on a communicative reservoir that is filled with contradictions ensuing from competing modes of differentiation between and within world society's subsystems. Thereby, new communication gets not only simply added to an existing spectre of the conflict discourse but, by importing further contradictions, opens avenues for new ramifications of the discourse. Each conflict phase shows specific observations of (il)legitimate violence (see extreme right column in table above) which can be seen as embedded interim results of the discourse and, at the same time, as constitutive elements of its further progression.

As similarly outlined in summary of the case study on the Maidan protests earlier (see chapter 5.6), in an overall view, the present analytical narrative (including all tables on poles of contradiction and on layers of conflict identities) consists of a multitude of analytical observations derived from the text corpus or, in other words, of iteratively gained hypotheses on the process of conflict escalation in the context of the Mali's crisis from November 2010 to January 2012. The following sections present a most condensed answer to the research question on the basis of this study; they are drastically reduced in case study details and represent the essence of the second-order observation perspective adopted here; and they are to be understood as a kind of reading aid to go through the table above.

The situation in Mali in 2010–2012 escalates in an environment characterised by a country respectively a region that had already been shaken by armed conflict experienced as pointing beyond Mali (as e.g. concerning the Malian independence struggle or a number of rebellions associated with cross-border ethnic communities since its inde-

pendence). Against this background, political communication conveys the perception of Mali (in the world) and Azawad (within the Malian and world context) being objects to external power dynamics that operate according to a centre-periphery model (see chapter 6.5.1). This finds its pointed discursive expression in a cluster of communication identified as escalating move A: Therein, communication about power and influence unfolds as a contrast between two ideal type political structures: an almighty unitary development state (backed up by a centralised global structure of aid and development) and an ethno-culturally oriented democracy (based on a global principle of self-determination). As these political alternatives become articulated and thus understandable for each other and able to be contradicted (i.e. structurally coupled), the idea of a democratic, multicultural and developing Malian society gets increasingly labelled as a political fiction (normative shift). Observations referring to violence in phase I are particularly linked to legitimising the use of military force in the past (and in perspective in the future) within the context of upholding legitimate power claims and heroically fighting either for or against the Malian independence and the consolidation of the Malian state respectively.

Building on this, in phase II, the discourse seems to merge communication from different frames of reference. Religious values, legal freedom rights and political loyalty get articulated as alternative and competing sources of that what is considered to be the basis of social coexistence (in a country or society). Referred to as escalating move B, these alternatives encounter, get debated and thus become mutually understandable and able to be contradicted (i.e. structurally coupled) in communication. Moreover, as communication in this context deals with conditions about if and how membership and solidarity should be granted (e.g. towards Libyan returnees or towards those opposing the Malian government), this comes along with a normative shift (see chapter 6.5.2). In this discursive environment which is collectively described as a situation of growing insecurity, the use of violence gets addressed as a legitimate means not only to create physical security but also to underline the validity of the respective religious, ethnic, legal, or political criteria of coexistence (as outlined by the observations of "discriminated and illtreated Libyan returnees" or "an increasingly militarised north").

Finally, in phase III, the conflict discourse gets increasingly consumed by a competition between two democratic rationales: self-determination/international recognition versus model democracy/state sovereignty. This competition plays out against the background of what is observed as a market of insecurity. Escalating move C therefore describes a cluster of communication in which political communication on legitimate power (already inherently contradictory) encounters economic communication on how the actual situation corresponds to a market in which stakeholders instrumentally act according to their expectation of profit (see in detail chapter 6.5.3). As communication in this cluster gets pointedly articulated, mutually understandable and thus able to be contradicted (i.e. structurally coupled), the conflict discourse carries out a further normative shift with an instrumental character. Therefore, achieving or defending democracy is observed as a noble cause that can indeed be accompanied by using (military) force as legitimate means of choice. Observations of violence in phase III, as opposed to the very beginning of the investigation period, represent the use of military force against institutions, properties/material things and against people as a deliberate choice, as an ultima ratio to fight for a legitimate aim: realising one's idea of democracy.

Table 30: Overview escalating moves (Mali)

turning point event	phase	escalating move			'world societal communication' spelled out in terms of...	key observations of (il)legitimate violence
			structural coupling	normative shift		
Nov 1, 2010: foundation of MNA	I	A	two latent narratives get politically outspoken: almighty unitary development state vs. ethno-cultural democracy	realisation of democratic, multicultural, and positively developing Malian society as a political fiction	political power as result of a centre and periphery model, be it in (self-) observation of Azawad-Mali or Mali-world relations	unpunished historic wrongs (war crimes during rebellions); sporadic military operations to counter insecurity; indications to military build-up from different sides
Aug 26, 2011: death of former rebel leader Ibrahim Ag Bahanga	II	B	merging of religious values, legal freedom rights and political ideas of loyalty in communication	membership/solidarity (among citizens, towards Libyan returnees) as a conditioned value	religious, legal and political communication producing different frames of reference and thus contradiction as to what substantiates state and society	reinforcing security forces, militarisation of the north; persecution, ill-treatment and discrimination of Libyan returnees; attacks on PSPSDN (military) bases
Oct 16, 2011: foundation of MNLA	III	C	economic communication (insecurity market) melts with communication on the legitimacy of political power	struggling for the noble cause of democracy can include the use of military force	understanding actors to the conflict as stakeholders motivated by economic incentives; two competing democratic rationales: international recognition and state sovereignty	protests involving violent incidences; parallels to past experiences of violence (during earlier rebellions); militarisation (growing military capabilities on all sides); threat of violence as ultima ratio to fight for legitimate aims (both stability/order and self-determination); growing number of attacks on infrastructure, kidnappings, lootings, mainly attributed to Islamist movements

(Own table)