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The World's Deadliest Peacekeeping Mission: How to Protect Civilians in Mali

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Declaration

I, Mari Furuseth Olsen, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

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ABSTRACT

Since 2012, Mali has experienced a rapid escalation of violence as political armed groups, including ethnic and jihadist rebel groups and transnational networks, fight for control and hegemony in the north and central parts of Mali. During the conflict, civilians have been victims of summary executions and enforced disappearances by perpetrating rebel groups and parts of the Malian defence and security forces. The violence led to the deployment of the ongoing United Nations peacekeeping mission, known by its acronym MINUSMA. The mission was deployed to a conflict where there was no peace to hold and has since its deployment in 2013 experienced a challenging and hostile conflict environment. This thesis sets out to explore and explain the violence against civilians in Mali carried out by rebel groups and government forces from the uprisings in 2012 until 2018. The thesis uses the threat-based scenario framework developed by the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI) in trying to identify the threats civilians in Mali have faced and how military forces have protected civilians in different times and different places throughout the armed conflict.

The thesis finds that the conflict in Mali can be divided into three different phases where each phase represents an escalation or a change in the violence against civilians. The first phase, from 2012 to 2013, was mainly characterised by armed rebel groups who fought for control in the north of Mali in a classic scenario of Insurgency. In the second phase, from 2013 to 2016, the violence against civilians escalated to a scenario of Government Repression after parts of the Malian armed forces attacked individuals perceived to be in opposition or affiliated with the rebel groups from phase 1. In the third phase, from 2017 to 2018, the violence evolved into a Communal Conflict in central Mali where the main motivation for targeting civilians was based communal identity, the desire for revenge and as act of self-protection and survival. Regarding the military's protection of civilians during these phases of the conflict, the thesis finds that both MINUSMA and other military forces have struggled with protecting civilians from imminent threat. The difficult geographic environment in Mali, the lack of resources and the many asymmetrical attacks on the peacekeepers have forced the mission to take on a defensive role, which has limited its ability to protect civilians.

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Map of Mali

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List of abbreviations

AFISMA	African-led International Support Mission to Mali
AQIM	Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb
CMA	Coordination of Movements of Azawad
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FFI	Norwegian Defence Research Establishment
GATIA	Groupe Autodéfense Touareg Imghad et Alliés
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MNLA	National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad
MUJAO	Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa
POC	Protection of Civilians
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The way wars are fought have transformed from interstate industrial wars to today's confrontation, conflict and combat amongst the people. In these "new wars", there are no longer accessible battlefields where armies engage. On the contrary, it is the people living in conflict areas who are the battlefield. In new wars, civilians are the targets and objectives to be won (Smith, 2006). In contemporary military operations, Protection of Civilians (POC) has emerged as one of the main objectives for military forces. POC is no longer only about avoiding "collateral damage" or securing the humanitarian space. Today, military forces are increasingly expected to protect civilians from a different range of perpetrators who deliberately target civilians and are responsible for most civilian casualties. This transformation has presented military personnel and policymakers with new challenges that remains largely unresolved and requires new thinking about the utility of force (Beadle, 2014, p. 3).

Ever since the mass atrocities in Rwanda, Bosnia and Somalia in the 1990s, United Nations (UN) peacekeeping has gone through various reformations to improve its military response in mass violence situations. One consequence when wars are fought about and amongst the people is the need to rethink how the military is structured and utilised in order to reach its mandate (Martinsen & Nyhamar, 2015). With an expansion of activities and a widening of mandates, UN peace operations strive for development and innovation. Peacekeepers are deployed to complex missions with politically difficult terrains where the peace is nowhere in sight. According to the Brahimi[1] Report, hundreds of thousands of civilians in UN mission areas are currently exposed to potential risk of violence, and UN troops deployed in such areas can only protect a small fraction. If an operation is given the mandate to protect civilians, it must also be given the resources to accomplish such a mandate (Brahimi, 2000). Important questions to ask are whether the UN have the capabilities to command, support and implement these more robust operations, and if the expansion of activities for the "blue helmets" will influence the mandate to protect civilians.

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[1] In 1995, Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, with Lakhdar Brahimi as Chair, to assess the shortcomings of the then existing peace operations system and to make specific and realistic recommendations for change. The panel was composed of individuals experienced in conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding (UN, 2000).

1.1 A change in peacekeeping missions

The UN peacekeeping is a multi-dimensional instrument designed to preserve peace and create political space for implementing agreements achieved by the parties to the conflict. The UN peacekeeping was born in the late 1940s but has evolved to become a large and institutionalised enterprise. Because of its many tasks, peacekeeping is difficult to define. It is, however, based on some principles developed by UN's second Secretary General, Dag Hammarskjold (1953-61), which are consent, impartiality/neutrality, and the minimum use of force. Since the 1980s, when peacekeepers got deployed in civil wars, these principles expanded. Regarding consent, peacekeepers only need the consent of a host government, not from other conflict parties such as insurgents. The peacekeepers impartiality changed from remaining neutral to making sure the rules of the peace process, and the UN Charter, was respected by all parties of the conflict. Peacekeepers could now use force in defence of the mission mandate, instead of the previous use-of-force-as-self-defence (Koops, Macqueen, Tardy, & Williams, 2015, pp. 2-3). For the peacekeepers, it is important to emphasise that the UN does not have its own armed force, but recruits from other regional organisations like the European Union (EU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union (AU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). States also contribute with troops to UN peacekeeping missions, which can be motivated by factors such as stabilising a particular conflict zone, improving their reputation in the international arena, or economic incentives (Koops et al., 2015, pp. 4-5).

1.2 Stabilisation or peacekeeping?

The UN missions in Central African Republic (MINUSCA), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and Mali (MINUSMA), together with AMISOM in Somalia and the mission against Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin (MJTF), all represent a new category of stabilisation operations under the peacekeeping doctrine, where the main task is to protect the government and its people against a perpetrator. First, they operate in ongoing conflicts where they are mandated to restore stability. Second, they operate alongside local security forces, who have the main responsibility for protection of government and citizens. And finally, they are mandated to use force in the case of expected attacks against them and those they are deployed to protect. The main difference between a stabilisation mission and a peacekeeping mission is that the aim in peacekeeping is to obtain a cease-fire and then

implement a peace agreement. In a stabilisation mission, however, the aim is to maintain order by managing the perpetrators. This shift in UN peace operations is a part of the reform from conflict resolution to conflict management (Coning, 2015, pp. 17-18). However, considering that stabilisation missions are under peacekeeping doctrine, this thesis will still refer to MINUSMA as a peacekeeping mission.

Given the difficult terrain described above for UN peacekeepers, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali, known by the French acronym, MINUSMA, together with the French Operation Serval, will be used as a case to study how the military protects civilians in practice. Six years into the conflict, the situation is still hostile and violent in the northern and central parts of Mali which originated in the conflict between the Tuareg population and the state. The conflict worsened after a coup in 2012 where different jihadist groups overtook the Tuareg control and position in the north. This resulted in a mass-migration of Malians to the south of the country, with the rebel groups following closely.

1.3 Research questions

With these tendencies in mind, the thesis will assess the effects of how the military has attempted to protect civilians during different phases of the conflict in Mali. In order to fully understand how a military force can be used more effectively to protect civilians, it is equally important to understand the threats civilians are faced with. Therefore, this thesis will be two-folded: The first part will provide a deeper understanding of the *type* of threats against civilians in Mali by examining the motivations and actions behind the main perpetrators. Second, the thesis will assess the military's efforts to protect civilians between 2012 and 2018. The two questions will be discussed by applying a threat-based scenario framework developed by the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI). This framework will help to understand and explain the nature of the threats civilians are faced through various times and areas and to assess the military's protection of civilians through existing military guidance on the most effective way to protect civilians in the various conflict scenarios.

The thesis will try to answer the following research questions:

- *What type of threats were civilians faced with in Mali during 2012 to 2018?*
- *What military measures have been taken to protect civilians in Mali during 2012 to 2018?*

By answering these research questions, it may be possible to identify the potentials and limitations of what a military force can and cannot do to protect civilians. For FFI, this research will ideally be included in the education of military personnel before starting a military operation. The threat-based scenario has been applied to various cases such as the Central African Republic, Syria and Sri Lanka. However, this is the first time the framework has been tested in line with the conflict in Mali.

1.4 Concepts

This section will briefly elaborate on the main concepts used in this study. First, I will define the term civilians, then what an armed conflict is, then what the concept of protection of civilians includes and finally explain what is considered an imminent threat in POC operations. These concepts will provide the reader with necessary terminology for understanding the context of the thesis.

1.4.1 Civilians

A civilian is an unarmed person who is not, or no longer, involved in hostilities. Whether there is doubt, the individual should be considered civilian and therefore be protected until proven differently (DPKO, 2015, p. 25).

1.4.2 Armed conflict

According to UNDP, an armed conflict is a "contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in one calendar year" (Melander, 2015).

1.4.3 Imminent threat

According to the UN, imminent threat of physical violence is considered imminent as soon as the mission has a reasonable belief that the potential perpetrator has the intent and the capacity to inflict physical violence against civilians. This type of threat is imminent from the time it is identified until such time that the mission can determine that the threat no longer exists (UN, 2015, p. 25).

1.5 Defining protection of civilians in UN peacekeeping

The Protection of Civilians (POC) is a concept within peacekeeping missions, civilian, military and police functions developed by the UN. The United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) defines POC as:

> All necessary action, up to and including the use of force, aimed at preventing or responding to threats of physical violence against civilians, within capabilities and areas of operations, and without prejudice to the responsibility of the host government to protect civilians (DPKO, 2015, p. 3).

The department further stresses that the host governments always hold the primary responsibility to protect civilians within their own borders, which they are obliged to under international human rights and humanitarian law. However, UN peacekeepers may protect civilians when the host government is incapable or not willing to do so (DPKO, 2015, p. 3). Furthermore, the POC mandate generally stresses the need for POC when civilians face an imminent threat. This entails that the violence will not necessarily happen soon, but that "the mission has reasonable belief that a potential aggressor has the intent and capacity to inflict physical violence" (DPKO, 2015, p. 25).

1.6 Why study protection of civilians in Mali?

The protection of civilians is one of the most important tasks for the military in violent conflict areas, however, civilians are still the largest group of victims. It is important to study the motivations behind the perpetrators and how to make the use of force more effectively

to protect civilians. Research on the type of threats civilians are facing in Mali, and necessary military actions, can be seen as theoretically and empirically important, as it applies a rather new theoretical framework developed by FFI for the first time. Seemingly, there is extensive research on protecting civilians, however, this type of research in Mali is limited, which justifies this as a research opportunity. Hopefully, the thesis will provide some contributions to the understanding of a complex conflict situation, with several actors, that could eventually destabilise a whole region and lead to mass-migration and an increase of terrorism. In addition, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched in September 2018 a strategy for Norway's contribution and participation in the Sahel for the period 2018-2020, illustrating that the region will be of greater interest for the Norwegian foreign and security policy. [2]

1.7 Outline of the thesis

This thesis is structured into six chapters. Whereas chapter 1 provided the introduction for the thesis, chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework that will be utilised in this research. For the purpose of this study, a threat-based scenario framework has provided the theoretical approach. In addition, the concept of new wars will be explained in this chapter. In chapter 3, an explanation and justification of my choice of methodology will be presented. The chapter will also address the research design, data collection method and its limits, and reliability and validity. Limitations concerning the use of secondary sources will also be addressed. This study is a qualitative study of the protection of civilians in Mali and will therefore be based on a single case. In chapter 4, the thesis will be placed into context by explaining the background for the Malian conflict. The background also presents the various actors and their grievances and how international military actors and MINUSMA got involved in the conflict. Chapter 5 presents the analysis of this research based on the two research questions. To answer the research questions set out by this thesis, the analysis has been divided into three different sections that address the most serious conflict scenario in each particular phase. Each phase will discuss the threats facing civilians at the time, as well as the military response to the protection of civilians. Chapter 6 is the final chapter in this thesis and provides concluding remarks. It builds on the analysis in chapter 5 and other elements throughout the thesis. This chapter also provides some recommendations on future threats facing civilians and how military forces can best be used to protect civilians in Mali.

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[2] https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/strategi_sahel/id2610507/

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

In the first part of the chapter, I will share some theoretical assumptions on the concept of "new wars", as this type of asymmetrical warfare fits well with the current conflict in Mali. In addition, I will explain and elaborate on the threat-based approach to protect civilians in conflict, developed by the Norwegian Defence Institute (FFI). In the second part, the conflict scenarios that will be applied to the case of Mali in chapter 5 have been given additional explanation. This framework will work as an analytical tool for analysing the protection of civilians in Mali. By utilising this framework, the thesis will answer the research questions concerning the threats facing civilians in Mali and the military efforts to protect civilians during the conflict from 2012 to 2018.

2.1 New wars

According to Rupert Smith (2005) industrial war no longer exists which is what conventionally is meant by "war". Today, the concept of "war" is about confrontation, conflict and combat amongst the people, in contrast to the previous interstate industrial war. In the modern "war amongst the people", there is no concealed battlefield where armies fight, and there are not necessarily armies on both sides. In contrast, the battlefields in these new wars are streets, houses, fields, and people everywhere. In any military activity, both in old and new wars, force is the main foundation. When employed, force has two immediate effects; it kills people and destroys things. A military force is composed by people, materiel and logistical support. These compositions act on the basis of their function of organisation, in relation to the opposite force, the context of the specific time and battle. Being able to respond and adjust is an important task for a military force whose enemy is not a passive target. To apply the military force with utility, it is important to understand the context of the activity, have a clear definition of the end-result, identify the target where the force is directed, and understand the nature of the force being applied (Smith, 2006, pp. 1-6).

2.2 Threat-based approach to protect civilians

Seeing that civilians are directly targeted in today's conflicts, Protection of Civilians (POC) has become one of the primary objectives in military operations. To get the most effective military response to threats against civilians, it is important to identify the particular threats

civilians are faced with and how the military should respond in different situations. When military planners design a military operation, it is crucial to acknowledge that perpetrators may need different capabilities for targeting civilians than targeting other armed opponents. If planners only focus on how to defeat a perpetrator without protecting civilians during the same operation, civilian lives are in danger. Thus, an understanding of the particular nature of threat against civilians, as well as to identify when a threat is changing, can avoid a high human cost (Beadle, 2014, p. 7).

The threat-based approach to protect civilians builds on insight from eight generic scenarios developed at the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI) (see figure 1). The framework was developed to complement the gaps of the existing United Nations POC policy (DPKO, 2015), as well as to implement guidelines, strategies and concepts on how UN operations most effectively can implement its POC mandates. The scenarios range from the least violent situations, Mob Violence, to the most violent scenario, Genocide. The scenarios aim to capture the full range of potential physical threats to civilians, and each scenario will describe a different type of threat, which requires a different kind of military response. It is, however, important to keep in mind that these scenarios may occur simultaneously or in different phases of a conflict (Beadle, 2014, p. 3).

The key source on these scenarios will be taken from one of the main researchers at FFI, Alexander W. Beadle's 2014 report "Protection of civilians – military planning scenarios and implications". Beadle builds his work on the already existing UN POC policy where his work aims to complement the UN guidance on POC. The threat-based approach is supposed to give practical advice and guidance for military units, focusing on the challenges military officers are faced with in military missions. The scenario-based guide is the first of its kind and focuses on what a military force can and cannot accomplish in certain situations on the basis of the particular threat facing civilians.

Each of the following scenarios outlined in figure 1 below are based on five parameters that describe the different aspects of possible perpetrators. These aspects are highly relevant for an international force whose goal is to stop violent attacks from the perpetrators. The first parameter reflects upon the strategic *rationale* for attacking civilians. This means understanding the perpetrators objectives for targeting civilians. For example, such objectives can include extermination of a group, to expel civilians from a certain area, using

force to control civilians and achieve their support, exploitation of civilians to ensure survival, and revenge amongst former victims in a post-conflict situation. For the military force, these aspects are used to analyse the perpetrators objectives in a conflict. Moreover, the rationale is used to distinguish the different scenarios explained in the following paragraphs. This is because the perpetrators motivation to target civilians is what determines the *type* of threat civilians are facing. Hence, in order to avoid threats against civilians, the military must try to match the perpetrators use of force.

The second parameter seeks to categorise the perpetrator and understand how they are organised. This can tell us something about their rationales and prepare the military for the full range of actors that can possible target civilians. The four main types of perpetrators are states, which are often responsible actors in Genocide, Ethnic Cleansing and Government Repression, rebel groups that are mainly present in Predatory Violence and Insurgency, communities or non-state actors in Communal Conflict, and finally individuals or loosely organised groups that are possible perpetrators in Post-Conflict Revenge.

The third parameter considers the strategies and tactics the perpetrators employ against civilians. This gives an understanding of *how* civilians are being attacked, as well as the perpetrators objectives. If civilians are victims of serious violations of the laws in international and internal armed conflict, they are defined as war crimes. War crimes are amongst other things defined as murder, torture, sexual violence, slavery and displacement of civilians for reasons other than security or military necessity.

The fourth parameter refers to the operational capabilities the perpetrators are likely to require in order to accomplish the objective to harm civilians. The main categories listed under capabilities may be advanced planning, top-down coordination of the violence, the ability of perpetrators to maintain support needed to harm civilians, freedom of movement on the ground for those performing the violence and finally the perpetrators are dependent on having relevant military units and weapons to go through with the violence.

The final parameter describes the expected outcome in each scenario when perpetrators succeed. This is often measured by people killed, displaced or violated in some way (Beadle, 2014, pp. 14-21).

Generic scenario	1. Type of actor	2. Rationale	3. Strategies and tactics	4. Relevant mil. capabilities	5. Expected outcome
GENOCIDE Halabja ('88) Rwanda ('94) Srebrenica ('95)	States, or the militarily superior actor	To exterminate a certain group	Destroy existence of a group through several, simultaneous mass-killings, deportation, camps, systematic rape to prevent reproduction	Command and control, freedom of movement for special/irregular units, sufficient small arms	Majority of targeted civilians killed (50+%), in relatively short time
ETHNIC CLEANSING Bosnia ('92–95) Kosovo ('99) Kyrgyzstan ('10)	States, or the militarily superior actor	To expel a certain group from a specific territory	Force targeted group to leave through threats, demonstrative killings, brutality, mass-rape, destruction of property	Command and control, freedom of movement for irregular units, regular units for military control	Only a few per cent killed, but vast majority of victims expelled (~90%) Destruction of victim homes and cultural buildings
REGIME CRACKDOWN Iraq ('86-89) Darfur ('03–) Libya ('11) Syria ('11–) ISIS ('13–)	Authoritarian regimes, or de facto authorities in an area	To control restless populations, on basis of real or perceived affiliation with opposition	Violently repress the population at large, through selective and indiscriminate violence, threats, mass-detention, rape as terror, massive destruction, occasional massacres	Command and control from regime, freedom of movement for regular forces, heavy weapons, special/irregular units in support	Mostly combatant deaths, gradual increase in civilian deaths due to heavy weapons and in accordance with intensity of fighting, large-scale displacement, widespread destruction of population centres
POST-CONFLICT REVENGE Kosovo (post-99) Iraq (post-03)	Individuals or mobs	To avenge past crimes on a tit-for-tat basis	Settle personal scores through criminal acts of violence, such as murder, arson, kidnapping, looting	Freedom of movement for individuals and small groups to access victims	Only a few killed (dozens, hundreds), but groups associated with perpetrator may flee after relatively little violence
COMMUNAL CONFLICT Ituri ('99–03) Iraq ('06–07) Jonglei ('09–)	Whole tribal, ethnic or sectarian communities (possibly with outside support)	To avenge the last round of violence and to deter further retribution out of self-defence	Attempts to coerce other community into submission through massacres, abductions, raids, destruction of homes and means of survival, often seeking to maximise violence	Freedom of movement to reach other communities, access to deadlier weapons and means of communication is associated with higher lethality	Relatively high number of people killed and abducted, especially women and children Livelihoods stolen or killed Temporary displacement in homogenous areas, more gradual withdrawal to 'their own' in mixed areas
PREDATORY VIOLENCE Renamo ('75–92) RUF ('91–'02) LRA ('94–)	Rebel groups (predatory behaviour)	To survive or make a profit by exploiting civilians	Coerce civilians into compliance through plunder, taxation, forced recruitment, opportunistic rape, brutality, especially against 'easy targets'	Freedom of movement to pick time and place of attack, operational secrecy, outside support, possibly central command	Temporary, but large-scale displacement in affected areas and disproportionately many relative to the number of people actually attacked Many abductions, especially of young adolescents
INSURGENCY FARC ('64–) Taliban ('06–) al-Shabaab ('06–)	Rebel groups (classic insurgents with political or ideological objectives)	To control populations upon which they depend and undermine trust in their rivals	Selective and indiscriminate violence, through threats, targeted killings, bombings, retribution, depending on their level of control	Freedom of movement to pick time and place of attack, access to indiscriminate and explosive weapons	Fewer killed and injured than in other scenarios, most due to indiscriminate weapons Gradual displacement from areas of heavy fighting

Figure 1: Threat-based scenario framework

2.3 Threat-based scenario framework in Mali

The second part of the theoretical chapter will describe the most relevant scenarios that can explain the different types of violence in Mali from 2012 to 2018 in more detail. Out of all the scenarios, this thesis finds that Insurgency, Government Repression and Communal Conflict are the most applicable to the case of Mali, and they will be explained in the following paragraphs. The analysis in chapter 5 will provide a more comprehensive explanation of why these generic scenarios may help to answer the research questions concerning the threats against civilians and the military efforts taken to protect civilians in the period from 2012 to 2018 in Mali.

2.4 Insurgency

In the scenario of Insurgency, perpetrators directly target civilians as a means to achieve a particular objective. The rationale behind targeting civilians in this type of conflict is to *control* a population rather than eliminate it. This control of a population is useful when collecting resources, obtaining information about collaborators, and building an alternative to the governments the perpetrators want to replace. The type of actors in insurgencies are armed, non-state actors. These actors target civilians to create insecurity, to undermine trust in the government, and seek to obtain control themselves. They often have a political agenda which they fight for by using both guerrilla warfare against government forces and violence against civilians. These non-state actors often fight against other non-state actors, government forces or an international force. Because they are often driven by a political agenda, they seek to undermine the established political authority in order to increase their own. They might do so by providing for social services in the areas they wish to control (Beadle, 2014, pp. 57-65).

Even though governments and other enemies are the primary targets of violence in Insurgency, civilians often end up with the highest number of casualties due to the fighting tactics such as car bombs, suicide attacks, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The targets for such attacks are often government military and political targets. The number of casualties is relatively small compared to other scenarios like Government Repression (see figure 1). The number of casualties will also increase with the intensity of fighting (pp. 57-65).

Because there are two or more parties in an Insurgency, the violence will often happen as a battle, not a one-sided attack against civilians. Seeing that insurgents are dependent on support from the local population, they also avoid targeting civilians too randomly. In this context, it is important for the insurgents to establish a secure environment for the local population in order to receive the resources they need, such as drugs and food. Civilians have, on the other hand, the highest risk of physical violence when the control of the insurgency group is shifting hands, either to other rebel groups or the government. If this happens, the insurgents often turn to violence in order to re-establish control over the situation. To attack civilians, insurgent groups are dependent on *freedom of movement*, that is why separating them from the local population is the most effective way of protecting civilians for the military (pp. 57-65). With regards to displacement, most people are likely to stay in the Insurgency areas but will flee if violence increases or if a particular form of rule, such as sharia, will be implemented. This means that physical safety is not the *main* concern for civilians living in insurgency areas but other contributing factors like livelihood and corruption might have an effect on displacement (pp. 57-65).

2.4.1 Military response to Insurgency

The role of the military in Insurgency will be quite limited. This is because the threat to civilians is not dominating the insurgents' agenda. Instead, the military is required to place its force towards defeating insurgents, instead of using force to protect civilians. The military must reduce civilian casualties caused by own actions, such as in air campaigns. The military should work on restricting the escalation of force, risky driving, and the use of close air-support. The former enemy-centric counterinsurgency operations targeted at deterring, defeating, and coercing insurgents through military activity alone, caused more harm than good to civilians. Today, the military operate with a "population-centric" counterinsurgency doctrine, which aims towards offensive, defensive, and stability operations to achieve legitimacy from the local population. The military's use of force will be greatest in the areas where government forces want to re-establish authority, while the insurgents, on the other hand, want to obtain control. In these situations, military forces can carry out "defensive" measures, like for example arrest insurgents and secure weapon caches. If, however, an area is under control of the insurgents, there is not much a military force can do to protect civilians from a protection-perspective. This is because insurgents already have little incentives to harm civilians under such conditions. If one looks at the traditional counterinsurgency-

perspective, on the other hand, the role of the military would be to defeat the insurgency and establish a legitimate central government but protecting civilians would be much more difficult in this situation (pp. 57-65).

2.5 Government Repression

In a Government Repression scenario, the host-nation's government is the main actor behind the violations against civilians. The regime responds with violence when it feels threaten, for example after many rebellions or protests. In this scenario, the perpetrators use force to control the population, and not to expel or exterminate them as is a scenario of Genocide. As mentioned, the actor is often an authoritarian state government that can be defined authoritarian because of its possession of means and the willingness to violently repress its own population. However, pro-government militias are often used to commit violence on behalf of the authoritarian regimes. The violence is likely to escalate over time, depending on the threat against the regime. This threat will often be insurgents, or believed affiliates with the insurgents, who oppose the regime. Often, communal identity may be used as a proxy for deciding who the potential threats are (Beadle, 2014, pp. 34-40).

The perpetrator will use a mixture of indiscriminate and selective violence. In territories where the government has complete control, the regime will employ a selective use of violence such as arrests, firing at protesters and execute members of the Insurgency or believed affiliates. In situations where the regime has some control, violence will be used in an indiscriminate way to "coerce a population into compliance" with raids, sexual violence, military presence and mass-detentions. In territories where the regime has lost control, they depend on indiscriminate use of force to fuel the insecurity. This is a tactic to take the control away from the insurgents and create an ever more ungovernable areas for the people living there. Tactic may include missile strikes and air bombardment. The latter is a situation where most civilians are killed, due to the random tactics and the brutality of the weapons used. Because insurgents rely on support from the people, the regime may also try to deliberately displace them. In this situation, buildings where civilians are located, such as schools and hospitals, become the main targets. If, however, the primary objective of the regime changes to expelling or destroying civilians instead of their homes, the scenario will have turned into the scenarios of Ethnic Cleansing or Genocide (pp. 34-36).

The perpetrators are dependent of coordination from above. The leadership must manage the denying of war crimes and to maintain support from the militias who implements the violence. Thus, war crimes must be concealed to avoid an intervention from the international community. Moreover, the perpetrators must be able to move freely to different territories because the violence may spread quickly. Heavy weaponry is also essential for the militias to use force against the threats. As mentioned, the intensity of the conflict is likely to rise gradually and not peak at the beginning. The number of people killed and injured is expected to be high, mostly by heavy weaponry such as IEDs, tank shells and air bombs. In addition, the number of people displaced and arrested will be high in this scenario (pp. 37-39).

2.5.1 Military response to Government Repression

A military force is crucial to protect civilians in a Government Repression scenario. Military operations must weaken the regime's ability to threaten civilians. A military force can protect civilians by deploying a highly visual military presence in the areas of conflict, which can lead to less use of weapons by the regime against its own population. Moreover, a military force can also limit the regimes access to weapons, but this might destabilise the relationship with the host-government and result in an early exit for the mission. If a military force is to replace the regime, a power vacuum may lead to other scenarios, such as Ethnic Cleansing or Post-Conflict Revenge. For example, after the Gaddafi regime was removed in Libya, the country experienced a Post-Conflict Revenge situation, where militias were fighting each other, and mainly black Africans were targeted (pp. 38-40).

2.6 Communal Conflict

The rationale or motivation in a Communal Conflict is primarily *revenge*, which is a driver of conflict for both sides. In addition, violence is used to survive and self-protect. The actors in this type of conflict are defined as communities, such as clan, ethnic or confessional identity. Violence in this scenario is not between rebel groups and governments, but group identities. This means that the distinction between civilians and perpetrators is almost impossible to identify. Therefore, when perpetrators deliberately attack communities, they also deliberately attack civilians (Beadle, 2014, pp. 44-50). There are many types of Communal Conflict, and the most common in rural areas is between clans within the same group. The main cause of conflict between these actors is economic competition because

groups may rely on the same resources for their survival. Other factors like local or national elections, and old and new settlers may have impact on the conflict. When it comes to strategies and tactics, the security dilemma is what makes a communal conflict violently dangerous. A security dilemma exists when there is a lack of official authority, and groups start to build up their own security by arming themselves. This act increases the perception of threat they pose to others and violence escalates. However, clans rarely have the logistical and economical means to fully exterminate the other group. Therefore, both sides often end up attacking as a way of coercing the other side to abstain from more attacks (pp. 44-50). When it comes to the types of attacks in this category, it may vary from plundering, abduction of women and children, instances of mass killings, to bombing of religious buildings or markets. Despite limited means and somewhat poor organisation, there is a massive potential for violence in this type of conflict. Violence may last for weeks or months, depending on the weather season and forces available. All these attacks in a Communal Conflict require freedom of movement to reach the victims and access to military means (pp. 44-50).

2.6.1 Military response to Communal Conflict

Because of the plundering and destruction of villages, civilians are faced with periodic threats of violent death. The military must protect people and their livestock because they are a means of survival. Because the threat to civilians will turn imminent when attacks are in preparation or under way, the most effective way for the military to protect civilians is through its presence. This presence will deny opportunities and prevent attacks by perpetrators. However, the military might end up only doing peacekeeping between ethnic groups, which could end up deterring the violence as the roles of protector and perpetrator change fast, and the military can be accused of partiality (pp. 44-50). To avoid attacks, the military can separate communities through curfews, checkpoints, roadblocks, walls or positioning of force between groups. If, however, the attack is underway, or the military force is located in a rural area with limited mobility, the military must react differently and try to "coerce" the perpetrators to cancel the attack by threatening them with consequences (p. 50).

2.7 Critique of the threat-based approach to protect civilians

It is important, however, to include some critical reflections on the choice of theory for this thesis. As the authors of the threat-based approach to protect civilians also acknowledge, the scenarios must be seen as general tendencies of a conflict. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the scenarios are likely to occur simultaneously, or the perpetrators may operate from a different motive than what fits the scenario which makes it challenging to establish a decisive threat against civilians and to give decisive advice on military actions to protect civilians. It is important to keep in mind that a conflict may rapidly transform in time and space, making it difficult to define the conflict-scenario in a precise manner. Thus, as conflicts develop and get more complex, the scenarios may be irrelevant to new emerging scenarios. As the authors themselves imply, "it is still unclear whether and how UN peace operations may provide protection against violent extremism, such as ISIS and Boko Haram" (Beadle, Kjeksrud, & Lindqvist, 2016, p. 8). However, by testing the scenarios on different cases, the framework will develop and raise attention to its flaws and possible gaps concerning the definition of scenarios. And, by recognising the main indicators of a conflict type and guiding the military efforts based on previous experiences with that particular scenario, might the best alternative military forces have at hand in complex operations.

2.8 Concluding remarks

To sum up, the theoretical chapter has elaborated on the threat-based scenario framework to protect civilians in conflict. This included a description of the various parameters used to distinguish the different types of conflict. In addition, the scenarios of Insurgency, Government Repression and Communal Conflict were elaborated on because they will be used as analytical tools to identify the threat against civilians between 2012 to 2018, and the military efforts taken to protect civilians during the conflict.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodological considerations

The Greek word *methodos* means to follow a specific path towards a goal. The social sciences are concerned with gathering information about the social reality and how to analyse information about various social phenomenon (Johannesen, Tufte, & Christoffersen, 2015, p. 29). In this chapter, the scientific methods used to collect data for this study will be explained, as well as limitations concerning the choice of methodology. The thesis seeks to answer the research questions presented in chapter 1 by analysing existing literature, news articles and interviewing.

3.1 Qualitative research methods

There are two main ways to conduct research in social sciences: quantitative and qualitative research. Quantitative research is concerned with the counts and measurement of things, whereas qualitative research refers to the meaning and understanding of phenomena in context-specific settings (Dalland, 2017, pp. 86-88). Given that I did not carry out any field work, but rather conducted a desk study based on an analysis of secondary literature, with some additional interviews, the most suitable approach for this study is qualitative research. A desk study can be based on both quantitative and qualitative data, however, considering the topic being researched and the research questions being of an exploratory character, I conducted qualitative research. The research is based on reports, news articles, academic books and journals, and as mentioned, some qualitative interviews. If I, however, were to do quantitative research on this topic, I could have made a statistical analysis of how civilians were affected by the conflict in Mali. But, considering that these statistics already exists and the fact that my aim is to identify the specific threats against civilians and the military response to this by following a given framework, the study must be conducted by performing a qualitative research study. Furthermore, the aim of the thesis is not to generalise but to say something about the military's protection of civilians in the case of Mali. A study by Foster (1995) suggests that a qualitative research process comprises six different steps which include developing general research questions, deciding on the unit of analysis, collecting data, interpreting the collected data, and finally writing an analysis based on the findings from the data collection (Bryman, 2016).

3.2 Research design

A research design outlines the framework for the research. In qualitative research, the research design depends on the researcher's subject and research question. A case study refers to the detailed analysis of one particular case, such as an organisation or a community. This type of study aims to provide an in-depth examination of a topic which is guided by a research question that stems from theoretical concerns (Bryman, 2016, pp. 60-64). According to Halperin & Heath (2016), a case study has the great advantage of allowing a case to be "intensively examined". Case studies are frequently used in comparative politics because they "address theory with a greater intellectual relevance, use concepts that are applicable to other contexts, and may seek to make inferences that apply to countries beyond the original case" (p. 205). Moreover, Lund (2014) argues that a case is an edited piece of reality where some features are emphasised and marked out, whereas others remain in the shadow. In other words, a case study is "not natural, but a mental, or analytical, construct aimed at organising knowledge about reality in a manageable way" (p. 224). Even though the purpose of a case study is to produce internally valid findings, a good case study may also generalise theory and concepts and engage with wider academic debates that may be linked to other contexts. A case study may both apply an already developed theory to test whether the original theory "works", referred to as deductivism, or seek to develop a new theory that can also apply to other contexts, referred to as inductivism (Bryman, 2016, p. 24). The latter approach is more common in International Relations, whereas the former is less applicable because a case study is only based on the analyses of one case, making it complicated to test theory (Halperin & Heath, 2016, p. 206).

By applying the threat-based scenario framework presented in chapter 2, this thesis hopes to identify the threats facing civilians in the different phases of the conflict, as well to explore the military efforts to protect civilians in the various phases. The aim of this study is to get a better understanding of how a military force can more effectively protect civilians by understanding the type of threat civilians are facing. According to Yin (2007), a case study involves five different stages: in the initial stage, the researcher develops research questions by asking "why" and "how". Then the researcher reflects on the theoretical assumptions behind the research questions, which will be the theoretical outline for further research. After this, the researcher limits the unit of analysis and decides on who or what to study. The strategy of analysis is based on theoretical assumptions and researchers conduct their study

based in on these premises. Finally, the researcher interprets the data against already existing theory on the field of interest (Johannesen et al., 2015, pp. 199-213).

3.4 Data collection

Research differ from ordinary observation when the researcher collects documentation, so-called data. According to Bryman (2012), there are different types of data and multiple ways to collect them. Primary data analysis occurs when the researcher responsible for collecting the data also conducts the analysis. In secondary data analysis, however, the researcher analyses already existing data instead of collecting data herself. Either way, the collected data have to be relevant to the research questions in the study. In this thesis, a combination of primary and secondary data analysis has been applied, including interviews and text analysis. A multi-method approach, known as triangulation, is often used in the study of a social phenomenon which enables the researcher to approach a research problem from different angles. Triangulation is a helpful method of identifying strengths and weaknesses in a research process because the method allows for findings to be cross-checked, and if the methods show the same results, the credibility of the study is strengthened (pp. 383, 717).

Due to the complex security situation in Mali and the limited timeframe for this thesis, a field trip to Mali was difficult to carry out. As I have no way of knowing what kind of information I could have gained access to if I had carried out field work in Mali, it is impossible for me to know whether this finally limited my research or not. However, due to the difficulties mentioned above, relying on secondary sources, while conducting a few interviews from Norway, was the most appropriate way to collect data for me during this research. As a result, the data retrieved from secondary sources, such as official documents, reports and newspapers, have made up a considerable amount of the analysis for this study and were completely necessary for conducting my research. The main sources I will use on exploring the military's protection of civilians in Mali are MINUSMA's reports to the UN Secretary-General on the situation in Mali from 2012 to 2018, in addition to other secondary sources such as reports from Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, as well as articles from news channels such as Al Jazeera and BBC.

Notwithstanding, it is important to keep in mind the limitations concerning the use of secondary sources. A text is produced to fit a specific context and is interpreted, which may affect the perspective of the text. It is important to reflect over who the text is written by,

who the target is, what is the aim of the text and when it is written (Dalland, 2012, p. 73). To rely heavily upon one main source may be problematic and affect the outcome of the study. The reports written by MINUSMA to the Secretary-General are written for and by the UN, with the intentions of documenting the actions of MINUSMA in Mali, but also, among other issues, to report on the security and development situation in the country. Notwithstanding, there are no other sources to my knowledge that present a more comprehensive description of the developments in Mali and MINUSMA's military efforts, which is why these reports are considered to be one of my main sources. The supplements of reports from humanitarian organisations and news articles gives the analysis a greater understanding of the situation for the civilians during the period 2012 to 2018.

As mentioned, I was able to get four interviews via e-mail and telephone from Norway. The interviewee's that were recruited to this study were encountered through the snowball method. This method of sampling is a technique in purposive sampling where the researcher gains access to people relevant for the study during the interview phase. The snowball effect occurs when the people involved in the initial phase of the study suggests other relevant participants (Bryman, 2016, p. 415). In the case of this thesis, my contacts at FFI provided me with the names of people relevant to my study and after talking to them, they gave me other relevant contacts. The participants in this study were both people in academic communities working on the same topic and people with military experience from Mali and MINUSMA. By applying the method of snowball sampling, I was able to conduct interviews with people whom I would have a difficulty reaching without a recommendation.

3.5 Semi-structured and open interviews

In qualitative research, the interview process is either semi-structured or open. The latter resembles a flexible conversation where the researcher asks open questions and the respondent responds freely. Semi-structured interviews have a more arranged structure but are still flexible. Semi-structured interviews differ from open interviews when the researcher prepares a list of questions in an interview guide for the respondent. However, the outline of the interview is not set, and the respondent may answer as he or she feels like. Before and during interviews it is important to conduct relevant research of the respondent, communicate clearly to avoid misunderstandings, and prepare and test any taping devices beforehand (Dalland, 2007, pp. 90-94). The interviews conducted for this study were open interviews, with only a few questions for the interviewee's to answer. By conducting the

interviews in this manner, I got more guidance and feedback on my thesis rather than clear answers. On the one side, I was able to get recognition of the analysis by my interviewee's by having a flexible conversation with them. This brainstorming was indeed helpful for me during the research phase and gave me ideas on how to go about the conflict in Mali and how to apply the theoretical framework. On the other side, the interviews did not provide me with much concrete material to include in my research, which can have limited the data collection. In hindsight, I could have incorporated the answers from interviewee's in my analysis to a greater extent by conducting semi-structured interviews with more detailed questions.

3.6 Interviews via telephone and e-mail

The interviews conducted for this study were carried out via e-mail, by telephone and in person. According to Bryman, telephone interviews are quite common in quantitative research, but not so much in qualitative research. The reasons for this may be because this type of interviews is not appropriate for everyone, and some groups have no or limited access to telephones. Second, time consuming interviews are difficult to conduct over telephone and the researcher risks that the respondent terminates the call. Third, technical devices such as a recorder might create difficulties for the researcher, in addition to poor telephone lines. Finally, the researcher may lose out on valuable information from the interviewee's body language (Bryman, 2016, pp. 484-488). I was able to conduct one telephone interview with a former military officer in MINUSMA. Because he lives abroad, this interview would have been difficult to conduct face-to-face, in addition to telephone interview being less time consuming and cost-free (pp. 484-488). In addition, I conducted two interviews via e-mail with two officers currently working in MINUSMA and one in-person interview with a Norwegian intelligence officer formerly based in Mali. As this thesis was my first encounter with the conflict in Mali, the conversations gave me a much-needed, in-depth understanding of the complex situation for civilians and peacekeepers in Mali. I believe these interviews have strengthened the overall validity of my research.

3.7 Analysis of qualitative data material

The collected data have been analysed with the method of triangulation. When triangulating, the researcher is comparing the results from different methods of collection. As mentioned, the majority of the data were mainly retrieved from written texts such as policy briefs,

academic reports and news articles, as well as other relevant secondary sources. The second part of the data was gathered by transcripts from interviews I conducted myself. During this phase, I compared my transcripts from the interviews with information from the secondary sources. By triangulating, I argue that the credibility of the thesis is higher compared to not measuring the differences between results. In contrast to an analysis of quantitative data, qualitative data analysis is more flexible and often more difficult to carry out because of the large textual material (Bryman, 2016, pp. 569-580).

There are less clear rules for analysing qualitative data because the analysis is conducted by the researcher. This means that the process is rather flexible and that problems such as interpretations by the researcher and the difficulty analysing large amounts of data may influence the analysis. However, there are well-established guidelines on how to analyse qualitative data, such as analytic induction, grounded theory and coding are often used by researchers. This thesis has applied the latter. When coding qualitative data, it is important to consider what category the data represents and what is the topic of the data is. Because the researcher is dealing with a large amount of text, it is important to code while collecting the data. This will help the researcher to remember the meaning of the data, especially when transcribing an interview with a respondent. When analysing documents, the researcher starts with reading through a text without interpreting it. After this, the researcher reads the text again, but this time he or she includes notes on observations relevant for the research. The notes are keywords that generate an index of terms that will help to interpret and theorise the data. When doing this, the researcher is coding. When the notes from the documents are ready, the researcher looks for connections between the codes and whether they generate theoretical ideas about the data (pp. 581-582).

I used coding to establish the content meaning of the interview transcripts. Besides taping the telephone interview, I also took notes. After the telephone interview, I transcribed the interview into a text and highlighted relevant sentences and paragraphs and commented on overall meanings to the different sections. As mentioned, all of my interviews were open, with a flexible structure. The telephone interview developed more into a conversation, where the respondent in addition to answering my questions, also added more relevant information. Before the interview took place, I sent my questions via e-mail. This was a way to prepare the respondent and allowing him to reflect on the questions. I also did two interviews via e-mail, where I sent the interviewees some general questions relevant for my analysis. In

return, I got well-elaborated responses to my questions, which made it easy to highlight sentences and paragraphs relevant for me. The last interview was conducted in person and had more resemblance to a conversation than an interview. I decided to only take notes and not tape the conversation in respect for the interviewee's former position working within the Norwegian intelligence service in Mali, which required more anonymity. In conjunction, the interviews gave me valuable insights which I used to cross-check with the existing literature.

3.8 Quality criteria

Establishing rigour in qualitative research is challenging in the sense that there are no developed criteria for evaluating qualitative research, nor a universally accepted terminology. In quantitative research, researchers apply statistical methods to measure validity and reliability. Validity refers to the "integrity and the application of the methods undertaken and the precision in which the findings accurately reflects the data" (Noble & Smith, 2015), and reliability refers to the consistency of the used analytical procedures. Debates about whether these terms may apply to qualitative research are ongoing in academia, and qualitative research method has been frequently criticised by quantitative researchers for "poor justification of the methods adopted" and "the findings being a collection of personal opinions subject to researcher bias" (Noble & Smith, 2015).

In the 1980s, Guba and Lincoln challenged reliability and validity as a method of ensuring quality in qualitative research. They introduced an alternative terminology for assessing qualitative research to ensure rigour; trustworthiness. With trustworthiness, the goal was to develop criteria equivalent to the quantitative criteria of internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity. With this term, researchers could replicate the same findings by applying a different analytical tool. By ensuring that the research is credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable, it is possible to say the research is trustworthy (Morse, 2015). To apply trustworthiness in qualitative data analysis, the researcher must incorporate methodological strategies such as; being aware of personal biases that may have an influence on findings, avoid biases in sampling and apply data triangulation to create more comprehensive findings (Noble & Smith, 2015). This research has aimed to achieve trustworthiness by emphasising methodological coherence and ensuring sufficient data to answer the research questions. By collecting and analysing data from both primary sources and secondary sources, the research has generated a broader understanding compared to if

only one method had been applied. However, as much as this research has tried to avoid self-bias, the research questions are prone to bias as the researcher selects what to include and what to exclude in the study (Bryman, 2016, p. 141). Therefore, it is impossible to say that this research is completely free of bias, because meanings and narratives are ingrained in our understanding of the world around us, and thus guide our preferences and understandings of the social domain. Nonetheless, by reflecting on how to reach scientific rigor, and that research is vulnerable to bias if the methodological standards are not endorsed, this research has greatly emphasised avoiding the production of research prone to bias (Hunstad, 2018, p. 26).

3.9 Limitations to the data collection

As all research has flaws, the main limitation of this research process has been the great emphasis on secondary sources. As mentioned, my restricted timeframe for this thesis and the complexity of planning a field visit to northern Mali due to security reasons, may have limited this research. Not conducting interviews in Mali may have limited the data collection, because I have no way of knowing whether these individuals could have contributed to my research or not. Furthermore, by experiencing Mali in person would have given me a greater understanding of the history of the conflict and the current situation for both the civilians and peacekeepers in the country. However, my best alternative was to collect data from secondary sources and conduct interviews from Oslo with current and former MINUSMA staff. I had more difficulty reaching civilians living in Mali, despite many attempts by e-mail. Preferably, the number of interviewees could have been higher and more diverse in order to achieve a greater extent of scientific rigor. However, the decision to mainly focus on secondary sources gave me the opportunity to dedicate my time to analyse the great amount of existing literature. Finally, I do not believe this approach has affected the credibility of this research, as I have applied a multi-method approach including both primary and secondary sources (Rudolph, 2018, p. 31).

Chapter 4: Background

To understand the context of the conflict in Mali, as well as the presence of MINUSMA, this chapter will briefly explain Mali's historical background, who the actors in the conflict are, and events leading up to the international military intervention in 2013. The chapter will also touch upon the regional dynamics of the Sahel, which are essential for understanding the conflict and actors in Mali. Finally, the chapter will explain the emergence of MINUSMA and the challenges to implement the robust mandate given by the UN Security Council in the highly volatile environment in Mali's northern and central parts.

4.1 The problems facing the Sahel region

Mali is located in the Sahel region, a semi-dry area south of the Sahara Desert. "Sahel" in Arabic means "shore" and can be defined multiple ways (Benjaminsen & Berge, 2000, p. 17). According to a report developed by The Organization to Advance Solutions in the Sahel, the region can be defined based on its ecology, with the Sahel stretching almost 4,800 miles from Senegal on the Atlantic Ocean to the Horn of Africa in the Red Sea (see figure 2). For more than hundreds of years, trade routes have gone through the Sahel, and from the 9th century to the 14th century, gold, salt and slaves were transported by camels between Africa South of Sahara, the Mediterranean countries, and the Levant. Ever since, smuggling in this region has been a major problem. Today, the weak states in the Sahel is argued to be the most problematic part of sub-Saharan Africa; including approximately 100 million of the world's poorest, with issues related to illiteracy and a population with the most rapid growth in the world (Potts, 2013, p. 7).
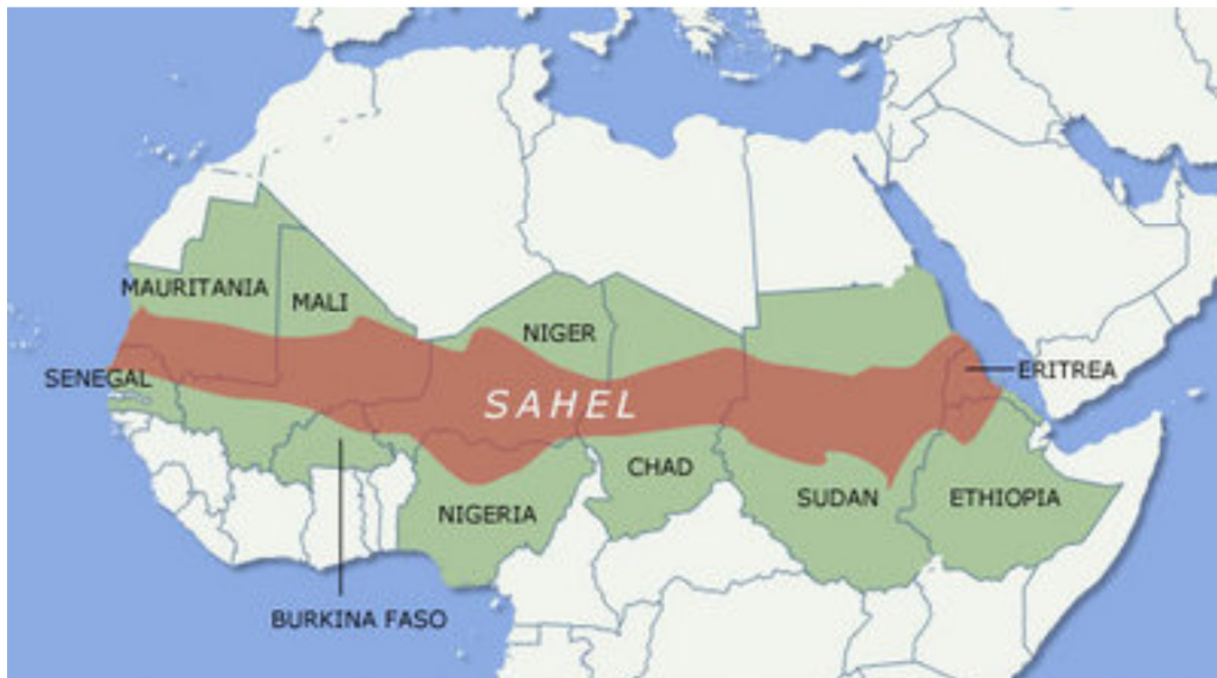
Figure 2: Sahel region map

Source: International Journal of Political Science

The same report argues that the Sahel, due to rapid population growth, with about 340 million people by 2050 will experience one of the major migrations in history. People in rural areas will start by moving to refugee camps and to the large cities. A scenario where over 100 million people will migrate to countries south of the Sahel or Europe is one reason the situation in the Sahel is a pressing issue for international actors (p. 24). In addition, the region is facing other challenges, including the spread of violent extremism and terrorism, which is already destabilising the whole region (Murphy, 2018). Moreover, criminal networks have taken advantage of the inaccessible and ungovernable areas of the Sahel, which has resulted in the establishment of an illegal economy based on narcotics from Latin-America and Chinese-produced weapons (Landinfo, 2016, p. 9). Smuggling routes in the Kidal and Timbuktu region are popular for traffickers, and 81,000 Kalashnikovs are estimated to be circulating in the Sahel and contributing to the ongoing proliferation of arms in the region. These arms have been used in the Chad conflict and the Lebanese civil war, to mention some. According to Sidibé (2013), carrying arms has become a normality for the inhabitants and weapons are used to stop disagreements within communities and used as self-protection. As mentioned, drug trafficking is also a widespread problem throughout the Sahel. The main actors in the drug trade are transnational network consisting of Algerians

and Moroccans, among others. In addition, local ethnic groups are also supposedly involved in drugs trafficking (Antil in Sidibé, 2013).

4.2 The growth of Islamist extremism in the Sahel

Islam was spread in the Sahel around the 9th century (Ba & Bøås, 2017). Knowledge about the Islamic laws was crucial when managing trade relations with Muslim traders from the north who settled in the region (Cooper, 2018). Ever since, Islam has been present in the region. The region is today home to violent Islamic groups such as Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Boko Haram, who threatens the stability in the region. Also, in 2018, US military identified the creation of the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, who pledge alliance to ISIS (Campbell, 2018). Attacks by these groups have killed tens of thousands of people and displaced millions. In Mali, the AQIM is most dominant Islamic rebel group. This group have supplied fighters to the wars in Iraq, Palestine and Afghanistan between 2004 and 2006 and established operations in other countries. The AQIM, together with Ansar Dine, have taken advantage of the large, ungovernable areas, which has become jihadist training sites for neighbouring countries. The recruited fighters are estimated to number between 200 to 800 young men, often Tuaregs, Arabs, Fulani and Moors, due to their knowledge of the desert, in addition to other Sub-Saharan Africans (Sidibé, 2013, pp. 76-77).

However, even though the US military often refers to the Sahel as being "the new front in the war of terrorism", Western involvement should be handled with caution and balance in a region where the majority of the Muslim population opposes US policy in the Middle East. International Crisis Group (2005) supports this argument, and states that "fundamentalist Islam has been present in the Sahel for over 60 years without being linked to anti-Western violence". But considering that attacks on MINUSMA personnel in Mali and other terrorist attacks on Western targets in Algeria and Mali by Al Qaeda affiliates, terrorist groups in the Sahel have increasingly threatened Western interests. According to the Head of UN's Office on Drugs and Crime in West-Africa, Pierre Lapaque;

> The explosion of militant groups that has plagued Mali since 2012 is still unlikely in
> the rest of the region. Rather than networks controlled by the jihadist groups fighting
> elsewhere, there is a web of members and ex-members, sympathizers that jihadist

groups can call on (Pierre Lapaque in the Washington Post, written by (Pujol-Mazzini, 2018).

Hence, the threat to Western interests, notably the terror threat and the potential wave of refugees fleeing to Europe caused by the violent conflict in northern Mali, is what makes the Sahel a pressing issue for Western policy makers.

4.3 Ethnic groups in the Sahel

There are various ethnic groups living in the Sahel region in Mali; the Songhay, the Tuaregs, the Bambara and the Fulani to mention some. In Mali, the ethnic diversity is a fundamental aspect of the population dynamic with over 12 linguistically defined ethnonational groups. The Bambara language is spoken by 46% of the population, followed by Fulfude, which is spoken by the Fulani, with 9,6% and Tamacheq at 3,5%, which is a language of the Tuareg (Leuprecht & Roseberry, 2018, pp. 12-13). The Songhay and the Tuaregs have both controlled and formed Timbuktu, which has been referred to as a "place of mystery" by Westerners ever since the 14th century (Benjaminsen & Berge, 2000, p. 62). Myths concerning Timbuktu as an "unreachable place" with large amounts of gold disseminated amongst adventurous Europeans in the 1800s and many aspired to be the first European discovering Timbuktu. However, many of the travellers died from diseases or got plundered or even killed by the nomadic people living in the desert, such as the Tuaregs (p. 11).

Despite of their many differences, both the Songhay and the Tuaregs have a hierarchical formation, consisting of a class and caste system. Most Songhay have been settled along the Niger river and are allegedly composed of fishermen from the ethnic group of Sorko, hunters from the groups of Gow and Do, who all speak the common language of Songhay and make a living from agriculture, mostly rice farming. Tuaregs are one of several ethnic groups of Berber decent originating from North Africa. In addition, a larger proportion of the Tuaregs are originally descendants of slaves captured among the black population in Mali. Because the Tuaregs are a nomadic people, their main source of income has traditionally been cattle, camels, goats and sheep, in addition to trade, plunder, and transport (pp. 62-70). Another important ethnic group are the Fulani, who are spread across Western Africa. This group is a nomadic, but also agro-pastoralist group, meaning they are farmers who also own livestock. Livestock keepers such as the Tuareg and the Fulani migrate with their livestock

during the seasons (p. 69). The Dogon are another group who mainly live in Mali and Burkina Faso and number between 400,000 and 800,000. The Dogon are known for their culture and traditional religion, which they have protected from the strong forces of Islam in the areas they live (Shoup, 2011, p. 87).

4.4 Rebel groups in Mali

There are many diverse rebel groups in Mali with different aspirations. To understand the conflict in northern Mali it is important to understand who the actors in these areas are. Thus, this section will present an overview of the most prominent ones within the following armed fractions: ethnic rebel groups, pro-government militias, and Islamist jihadist groups. It is important to keep in mind that these groups have often changed in alliances, making the factions complex and sometimes difficult to separate.

4.4.1 Ethnic rebel groups

The secular Tuareg groups and the Islamist Arab groups are the main ethnically based rebel groups in northern Mali. Even though the groups share the same historical context with various rebellions towards the Malian state, they differ in, among other things, economic and political agenda. The Mouvement National Pour la Libération de l'Azawad (MNLA) is an important political and military group in the north, consisting mainly of Tuaregs. The group was formed in 2010, when Mouvement National de l'Azawad (MNA) and Mouvement Touareg du Nord-Mali (MTNM) merged, together with the Tuareg fighters returning from Libya after the intervention in 2011. The goal of the MNLA has always been to create an independent state for all peoples of northern Mali, which they refer to as the "Azawad". In the 2012 rebellion, the MNLA successfully pushed Malian forces to retreat from the north and declared the establishment of the Azawad republic in the northern villages and towns of Aguelhoc, Lere, Tinzaouatene, Tessalit, Kidal, Timbuktu and Gao. However, shortly after the creation of the Ansar Dine, a Tuareg group with proclaimed connections to AQIM, the MNLA was unable to unite the Tuareg and Arab fronts. The MNLA lost its influence in the rebellion and eventually became an enemy of the Ansar Dine and its objectives for the northern cities. Ansar Dine, with the help from the AQIM and the Movement for Oneness and the Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), wanted to impose Sharia law in the Azawad, thus renouncing the initial political objective of the MNLA to attain an

independent state of Azawad. The northern parts were now in a security crisis based on an Islamic order, with new religious rules (Chauzal & Damme, 2015).

4.4.2 Pro-government militias

Although the Malian government formally governs northern Mali, they use local militias to exercise power in remote desert areas. Some have even argued that the Malian government has "outsourced" security to whom they refer to as "patriotic forces" in the north (Roger & Thienot 2015). The use of pro-government militias has supplied several African conflicts to achieve a military or political goal that the conventional armed forces struggle to achieve on their own. Using such militias is often cheaper, more flexible than other forces, have greater knowledge of local communities, which allows them to operate more effectively (Boisvert, 2015, p. 274). The Ganda Koy, meaning the masters of the land, is a self-defence group that was created under the Tuareg rebellion in the 1990s by former Malian soldiers as a reaction to the Tuareg rebellion. For them, the rebellion had created a deep resentment towards the Tuareg community. The purpose of Ganda Koy's creation was to protect the Songhay from Tuaregs and Arabs. After the peace agreement in 1996, the Ganda Koy-fighters agreed to disarm, with most members returning to their civilian life.

In addition, the Groupe Autodéfense Touareg Imghad et Alliés (GATIA) was formed in 2014 by Tuareg and Arab communities who were opposed to the separation and the creation of an Islamic state in the north. Besides being a response to the growing insecurity in the north, the formation of the GATIA was also based on a rivalry between the noble Tuareg clans of Kel Ifoghas and the Tuareg vassal clans, Imghad. The conflict started after the independence in the 1960s, when the vassal classes of the Tuareg and Arab society gained most authority and became elected officials, whereas the noble groups were largely left out. The division of the Tuareg clans became clearer after the rebellion in 2012, when the noble Ifoghas group favoured the Islamist Ansar Dine, while the vassal Imghad supported the secular Tuareg groups (McGregor, 2015b).

4.4.3 Islamist jihadist groups

90 percent of Mali's population are Sunni-Muslims and mostly practice Sufi Islam[3]. Some, however, belong to the more conservative direction of Wahhabism[4] that was introduced to the country around 1940, but has grown in the past thirty years after Malian students came back from Saudi Arabia with influences from Wahhabism (Skelton, 2015). Various Islamist jihadist groups have been present in northern Mali as a result of spillover from the civil war in Algeria in the 1990s (Benjaminsen & Ba, 2018, p. 5). The main organisation responsible for terror attacks in the Sahel-region, referred to as the "mother" of several violent Islamic groups, is the AQIM. The group was formed in the Algerian civil war in the 1990s and is a faction of the Algerian terrorist group GSPC. Their aspiration is mainly to create an Islamic caliphate in the north. The AQIM is present in northern Mali and Timbuktu, but also Algeria, Libya, Niger and Burkina Faso. The group has launched several attacks towards the Malian army, government officials, and MINUSMA and the 2015 terror attack on the Radisson Blu hotel in Bamako (Boeke, 2016). The AQIM has received its finances through kidnapping foreigners and earning millions of Euros in ransom, besides being involved in smuggling of cigarettes and drugs (Benjaminsen & Ba, 2018, p. 6). The Ansar Dine is a Tuareg Islamist rebel group from the Ifoghas tribe in Kidal. The group cooperated with the AQIM in capturing the northern territories in 2012 but was pushed back during the French intervention in 2013. They have launched various attacks on the military and other officials. After keeping a low profile since 2013, the group has expanded in the southern areas from 2015 (Landinfo, 2016, pp. 21-22).

A different Islamist group operating in central Mali, mainly Mopti, is the Kouffa, also known as Katiba Macina or the Macina Liberation Front. The group mainly consist of nomadic Fulanis from pastoral groups. The Kouffa has become increasingly visible in their fight against the state and the traditional authorities and is considered to be the most prominent group in the region (Tobie, 2017, p. 7).

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[3] Sufism is known as "Islamic mysticism" and characterised by values, ritual practices, doctrines and institutions (Skelton, 2015)

[4] Wahhabism is an Islamic doctrine and religious movement described as «ultra conservative» and «fundamentalist» (Skelton, 2015)

4.5 The history of Tuareg frustration with the Malian government

Mali gained independence with the country's first president, Mobido Keita, in 1960. Keita was inspired by socialist ideas regarding industrialisation and modernisation in agriculture. The nomadic Tuaregs were looked upon as an obstacle to this development. Keita argued that "sedentarization of nomads was important in order to develop the new nation and to convert nomads into "productive" citizens" (Benjaminsen, 2008, p. 828). Consequently, the Tuareg way of life was considered backward and was labelled "le Mali inutile" (the useless Mali). For the Tuareg population, Keita's policies were perceived as a new and different form of colonialization. Some even argue that these modernisation policies, with frequent confiscations, humiliations and violence, were far worse for the Tuaregs than the French colonial administration (Baye in Benjaminsen, 2008, p. 828).

As a result of these policies, Tuaregs did not develop a feeling of being Malian. The anti-nomad policies proceeded with the military government of Moussa Traoré in 1968. Tuaregs had little influence over the national and local politics which were controlled from the south. The droughts of 1970s and 1980s resulted in more marginalisation of Tuaregs as many men were forced to migrate to neighbouring countries to look for work. In addition, aid money directed at the drought-affected people in the northern Mali were embezzled by government officials in Bamako and used in the constructions of private "chateaux de la sécheresse" (drought castles), causing even more frustration (Benjaminsen, 2008, p. 829). Many young Tuaregs migrated to Libya, where Gaddafi's ideology, which was based on Islamism and socialism, politically radicalized many of the Tuareg men. Some of them ended up as professional soldiers in Gadhafi's army and fought wars in Palestine, Lebanon and Chad. In Libya, the Tuaregs developed a sense of belonging to a united Tuareg nation across the Sahel and the aspiration to restore the Tuareg culture and take back their land flourished. The planning of the Tuareg rebellion started among these people who had gone into exile in the 1970s (Jalali, 2013).

4.5.1 The first Tuareg rebellion: 1962-1964

The first Tuareg rebellion started in 1962 after Mali's independence from France. Some Tuaregs wanted to create an independent state of Azawad, composed of Tuareg-populated territory in the north of Mali, Niger and southern Algeria. As mentioned in the section above, Tuaregs were marginalised by the modernisation policies initiated by Mali's first president,

Keita. The rebellion started in 1962 with attacks on government targets. By 1963, the attacks escalated and the situation for the Tuaregs in the north became more insecure. Because the Malian authorities chose to repress the rebellion and not address the root causes, tensions sustained for many years (Chauzal & Damme, 2015). The rebellion did not, however, illustrate a coherent leadership by the Tuaregs, nor a coordinated strategy. The Tuaregs were reliant on camels for their transportation during the rebellion, in addition to old and small arms. As a result, the Tuareg community failed to mobilise, with speculations of as few as 1,500 Tuareg fighters (Global Security, n.d.).

4.5.2 The second Tuareg rebellion: 1990-1996

This rebellion started on 28 June 1990, when a group of 50 Tuareg rebels stole large amounts of weapons and 12 four-wheel-drive vehicles from NGOs in a prison in Menaka. Six Tuaregs were freed from the prison, whereas 14 people were killed in the rebellion. The attack provoked a campaign of indiscriminate violence form the Malian army towards nomads. Consequently, civilian nomads with no connection to the rebels were massacred. This led to the Malian army creating hundreds of new rebels when young Tuaregs fled to avoid the massacre. In addition, the Malian army did not make a difference in its massacres between the Tuareg and the Moors, turning the Moors into rebels as well. Therefore, the second Tuareg rebellion turned into a nomadic or pastoral revolt instead of just being a Tuareg rebellion (Benjaminsen, 2008, p.830).

The rebellion led to a Peace Accord between Bamako, MPA, and the FIAA. The Accord gave the north a special status, including more political and administrative power to local populations. It also agreed to decrease the presence of the Malian army in the north. However, the Accord was never implemented because President Traoré was removed in a coup led by Lieutenant Colonel Amadou Toumani Touré (ATT) (Benjaminsen, 2008, p.830). However, the rebel groups continued with banditry after the fall of Traoré. The new transitional government was not able to control the army, which resulted in more violence against civilians and large amounts of displacements. In 1994, however, the government reorganised the armed forces, appointed a new minister of defence and excluded military unites that were associated with excessive use of violence. The control over the armed forces led to further work on the peace process, which resulted in intercommunity meetings

between rebel groups at the grassroots. The rebellion ended 27 March 1996, when 3,000 hand weapons from rebels were burned in Timbuktu (p. 831).

4.5.3 The third Tuareg rebellion: 2006-2009

The third rebellion in the north occurred similar to the second rebellion. This time, fighting started when 150 Tuareg officers who were reintegrated in the Malian army, abandoned their military quarters in Kidal, Ménaka, and Tessalit with weapons and army vehicles. They launched a series of attacks on government outposts to seize hold of arms and supplies. Based on lessons learned from the second rebellion, President Touré wanted to reach a peaceful agreement with the parties of the conflict. Successfully, a peace deal was created in July 2006 and signed in 2007, and as a result the conflict decreased. Meanwhile, a Tuareg rebellion was on the uprising in neighbouring Niger, which eventually led to a series of attacks on towns and government forces. Back in Mali, the rebellion was increasing again when Tuareg fighters initiated several strikes on isolated government positions in May 2007, attacking supply convoys, kidnapping Malian soldiers, and mining roads with IEDs. The conflict resulted in dozens killed or injured and government soldiers were held captive (Emerson, 2011, pp. 673-675).

4.5.4 The fourth Tuareg rebellion: 2012-2018

According to Bøås & Torheim (2013), the conflict in the northern Mali follows a pattern where the level of conflict varies a great deal, from peace to intense fighting. In 2012, Tuareg soldiers returned to Mali with weapons and fight experience after the fall of the Gaddafi regime in Libya. They returned to a country with a high level of unemployment and poverty. The security situation had reduced the distribution of development aid and the general circulation of goods and people in Mali and therefore also other economic activities like agriculture, livestock keeping and trade. In addition, the loss of income from the tourist industry after the many hostage situations involving Western tourists also created difficulties. The Tuaregs created the rebel movement MNLA and declared Azawad as the new state in northern Mali in April 2012. The territories included Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal, comprising approximately 2,2 million inhabitants. This was the start of the fourth Tuareg rebellion (Bøås & Torheim, 2013).

After a short period, the MNLA lost command over its territory when the Islamic rebel group, AQIM, proclaimed authority in the north. Simultaneously, the Malian army fled from the north to carry out a coup in Bamako on the 21st of March 2012. The coup started with riots close to the capital Bamako that turned into a coup d'état that overnight toppled the Malian government, suspended the constitution, as well as increased the conflict in the north of the country. With the Malian army leaving the northern parts, the situation got even more chaotic and insecure. During this period, there were many reported incidents of murder, rape, and internal displacements. Eventually, the power vacuum was filled by three different Islamic groups, the AAD, the AQIM and the MUJAO, that established new religious rules with regards to clothes and banning secular activities like smoking and playing football, as well as removing bars and clubs in the north (Chauzal & Damme, 2015).

4.6 International military intervention

The events described above led to the involvement of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union (AU), and the UN, which eventually led to the deployment of an African peace support operation. This operation comprised 9,600 personnel known as the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA). This operation, however, was delayed while armed movements in the north advanced their offensive towards Bamako and the interim authority. In 2013, France intervened in Mali after an appeal from then Malian President Dioncounda Traoré. According to the Malian president, France had "the moral and political obligation to accept and honour the request for intervention" (Wing, 2016, p. 72). The Operation Serval consisted of around 4,000 deployed troops and aimed to assist Mali take back control of the lost territories in the north and to eradicate the jihadist groups. The operation was supported both by Malians and back in France, and many regarded then President Francois Hollande as a "folk hero". The operation was an immediate success. French warplanes bombed the Islamic rebel groups in the north, while the Tuareg rebels returned to their former position with the government and retook cities on the ground (Taylor, 2015).

Simultaneously with the election of Mali's current President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita in July 2013, French troops changed its mission to focus on the broader Sahel, with only 1,000 troops remaining in Mali. The situation in the country was stable and left with promising outlooks after the successful French intervention. However, soon after the election the conflict pattern was reversed and Tuareg and Islamist rebels returned to fight against

government and French forces. The difference this time was that the conflict had become a regional issue, as Nigeria claimed Boko Haram had been fighting in Mali and returned with weapons and fighting skills (Taylor, 2015).

4.6.1 The entrance of MINUSMA

On 1 July 2013, six months after the first deployment of AFISMA, the operation became integrated into the much larger United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) (Lotze, 2015, p. 854). MINUSMA is one of the most complex deployments the UN has been involved in in terms of the physical deployment and its mandate. The peacekeeping mission was to support the political process after the French chased the terrorists away and seek to secure the northern areas of Mali. Under chapter 16 of the UN charter, MINUSMA was given the mandate to assist the Malian government with stabilisation missions, including the re-establishment of state authority; support the electoral and political process; to protect civilians; promote human rights and to support humanitarian assistance. Chapter 17 allowed for MINUSMA to use all necessary means to implement these mandates (Tardy, 2013, p. 1).

MINUSMA was given a robust mandate, by allowing the use of all necessary means to carry out its mandate. A robust mandate means that MINUSMA may use force in defence of the mandate. In practice, this implies that MINUSMA can use force as a tactic to implement the mandate and towards those who oppose the implementation of the mandate. The reason for the robust mandate was that the conflict in Mali was characterized by asymmetric attacks, forcing the peacekeepers to defend themselves (Tardy, 2013, pp. 1-2).

The first task that awaited MINUSMA on Malian soil was to secure and supervise the national election on July 28th and August 11th, 2013. This was successfully done with no major security obstacles and participation rates were high. President Ibrahim Boubacak Keita won with 77% of the votes. However, implementing the rest of MINUSMA's mandate has proven to be complicated. This, however, must be seen in the context of the challenging conflict dynamics on the ground, and the fact that there was no peace to keep in Mali at the time when MINUSMA was deployed.

4.6.2 Over-realistic mandate?

Six years into the conflict, there are still severe challenges and criticism facing MINUSMA and its mandate implementation. First, the peacekeeping mission has been criticised for the mission itself. MINUSMA was until 2015 operating on less than half of its capacity and lacked critical enablers, like aviation assets. The mission has suffered from poor coordination among forces from different nationalities and a blurring of roles (Vermeij, 2015, p. 4). Second, there has been little progress in the north-south political process. A peace agreement between the Tuareg rebels and the government was signed in 2013 but was put off just a couple of months later, illustrating the fragility of the peace process, which still is a challenge today. Third, the ongoing lack of state authority has made the peace process difficult and created a huge power vacuum. Last, the volatile security situation in both northern and central Mali with a high number of asymmetric attacks on the MINUSMA force has presented the mission with great challenge (Lotze, 2015, p. 862). The fact MINUSMA has the highest number of casualties of all UN peacekeepers in 20 years illustrates how its mandate to protect civilians may have been over-realistic because of the hostile conflict environment (Coning, 2015).

The "Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, resulting from the Algiers Process" (the "Bamako Agreement") signed by the Malian government and an alliance of Tuareg-led rebels in 2015. The agreement was designed to stop the volatile conflict in the country and unite the north-south that has been a source of instability since the independence in 1960. Three years after the signing, obstacles such as terrorism and organised crime are stalling the implementation of the agreement in the north. In the central region of Mopti, intercommunal violence has further complicated the violent situation. MINUSMA is, however, lacking a clear mandate for this region. The situation is civilians in Mali today is critical and they greatly need protection. By June 2017, MINUSMA's head of mission, Mahamat Saleh Annadif, announced that MINUSMA's priority was to speed up the implementation of the peace agreement and continue to play a strong political role. In lack of better alternatives, the peace agreement will be the best defence against terrorism and the return of a legitimate authority in northern Mali (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017).

As of March 2018, MINUSMA had 11,791 military personnel and 1,737 police personnel from 53 different countries. The peacekeepers were deployed in 13 different locations in the

northern, eastern and western sectors. Since the first Tuareg rebellion and until today's difficult implementation of the 2015 peace agreement, Mali still faces many challenges. These are challenges for MINUSMA and the Malian people to tackle together, despite of the challenging context. This will be further discussed in the analysis in chapter 5.

4.7 Concluding remarks

To sum up, this background chapter has explained the complexities facing the region of Sahel, especially regarding the rise of Islamist extremism, mass-migration and criminal networks. Being a hub for these challenges, Western states have increasingly tried to prevent Mali from further destabilisation. Considering that the history of the Tuareg rebellions are of importance when analysing the recent conflict in Mali, this chapter has explained the rebellions starting from the 1960s to provide the reader with the necessary context. In addition to the Tuaregs, this chapter has outlined the background and objectives of the different actors in the conflict, which will be of great importance for understanding the analysis. Finally, this chapter has described the violence leading to the entrance of the French Operation Serval and MINUSMA and shed light on the challenges facing the mission and its limits to implement the mandate to protect civilians.

Chapter 5: Analysis of case study

The previous chapter gave an overview of the conflict in Mali and the complexity of the setting in which MINUSMA and other military personnel operates, and the challenges regarding the robust mandate to protect civilians. This chapter seeks to analyse the threats facing civilians in Mali, as well as the military's efforts to protect civilians. The analysis will use the threat-based scenario framework developed by the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI) outlined in chapter 2. The analysis will use both empirical descriptions and secondary literature and first-hand knowledge from open interviews with scholars and military staff. This knowledge is based on their own experience from working with MINUSMA in Mali, which provides the analysis with important insight. This will provide the groundwork for answering the research questions of this study:

1. *What type of threats were civilians faced with in Mali during 2012-2018?*
2. *What military measures have been taken to protect civilians in Mali during 2012-2018?*

FFI argues that the threat-based scenario framework can create a better understanding of how a military force can be used more effectively, can provide a structured and generic way of analysing the threats to civilians, and help to identify and prioritise the most imminent threats facing civilians and the most appropriate response (Beadle et al., 2016, p. 6). The analysis is divided into three phases that represents a change in the violence against civilians: the 2012 Tuareg Insurgency with the MNLA, AQIM and Ansar Dine at the forefront; followed by a Government Repression scenario where parts of the Malian armed forces executed, and abducted civilians based on their ethnicity; leading up to a deadly and overlapping scenario of Insurgency, Government Repression and a Communal Conflict between the Dogon and the Fulanis in central Mali.

The first part of each phase will analyse the different threats against civilians by establishing the perpetrators motivation to attack civilians. Knowledge about the main characteristics of the conflict and factors that may have an influence on the mandate implementation, is essential before applying a military force to protect civilians in a crisis. An analysis of this kind is important because perpetrators may differ in their rationales for targeting civilians

and "each particular rationale usually favours certain tactics" (Beadle et al., 2016). By applying the threat-based approach developed by FFI, the three phases will provide a deeper understanding of the motivation and actions of the main perpetrates in the particular conflict scenarios and analyse the military's efforts to protect civilians based on military guide provided by the FFI. The military guide includes clear instructions for what a military force can and cannot do in different conflict scenarios. Ultimately, the aim of the analysis is to identify important lessons on what a military force is capable of achieving with regards to protection of civilians in different conflict scenarios. This will be important lessons for MINUSMA itself and similar UN peacekeeping missions elsewhere (p. 3).

5.1 Insurgency

The events from 2012 are often referred to as the "Mali crisis" and represents the start of the contemporary conflict in the country. The first phase of the conflict, from March 2012 to January 2013, was complex and multidimensional with several actors and rebel groups. The crisis started with Tuareg rebels fighting for the liberation of the Azawad in the north. Due to the poor government control of this Tuareg rebellion, the military carried out a coup d'état against the democratically elected president which led to further chaos. This power vacuum gave the Tuareg rebels the opportunity to declare an independent state of Azawad in the north, in alliance with the Islamist group of Ansar Dine. In addition, other Islamist jihadist groups attempted to take over Mali and impose the law of Sharia. The perpetrators motivation for attacking civilians during this phase of the conflict can best be described in terms of Insurgency, due to the Tuareg fight for political power in the north and the violence against civilians caused by both the military, the Tuaregs and the Islamist rebel groups. In the absence of a military effort to protect civilians during this phase, violence was used as a way to control the population by all the rebel actors involved in the crisis, which is a classic example of the use of violence during an Insurgency.

5.1.1 Tuareg and Islamist rebel groups fight in northern Mali

As mentioned in chapter 4, the Tuaregs have been fighting for independence since the 1960s. The failure of the Malian government to implement previous peace agreements containing promises of integration of Tuaregs into government and security services, resulted in a high level of political grievances amongst the Tuareg minority in northern Mali, and was one of the main factors leading up to the crisis in 2012 (FOI, 2012, p. 5). In phase 1, the Tuareg rebels were united in the Movement National pour la Liberation d'Azawad (MNLA) and their political objective was to establish a secular republic in the north of Mali, called the Azawad (Caparini, 2015, pp. 5-6).

Taking this into account, January 2012 marks that start of the Insurgency with attacks by the MNLA on several cities in the north of Mali. The attack on the Aguelhock garrison where the MNLA with the assistance from Ansar Dine executed 153 soldiers, shocked Bamako

(FIDH, 2012, p. 5). With little resistance from the Malian army, the MNLA successfully drove the security forces out of important cities like Kidal and Gao, where they also executed numerous military officers, violating international humanitarian law. Sexual violence became widespread and there were reported over 50 cases of rape or attempted rape during this period in Gao and Timbuktu. This statement is from a 19-year-old women:

> On Sunday 1st April 2012 around 8pm a vehicle bearing the MNLA flag, with fighters on board, pulled up outside our door near me and my 19-year-old cousin. The rebels asked us to fetch them some water. When we went back into our yard, the two men grabbed us and ordered us to undress at gunpoint. While one of them raped me in the yard, the other one pointed his gun in the direction of members of our family, keeping them at bay. Each of them raped me in turn. My cousin was saved because she was heavily pregnant (FIDH, 2012, p. 14).

The above example illustrates how violence was used as a means to control the civilian population by using strategic violence. This tactic is common in insurgencies, because rebel groups often wish to prevent the population in collaborating with the enemy by scaring them.

As a response to the intense violence during this period, self-defence groups were formed by people not belonging to either the Tuaregs nor the Arabs in the Timbuktu and Gao. Their aim was to counter the attacks on the Malian soldiers and other members of the population. The Songhay militia groups, Ganda Koy and Ganda Iso, attacked Tuareg camps and executed several people, including civilians. The presence of these militias only worsened the already volatile situation and increased the threat against civilians by the enhanced use of indiscriminate attacks such as IEDs (p. 19).

The lack of ability to stop the rebellion by President Touré and his armed forces created a deep dissatisfaction within the military, who felt humiliated and poorly equipped to tackle the Tuareg rebellion (Francis, 2013, p. 2). On March 22, a fraction of the Malian military carried out a coup d'état against the elected president, Amadou Toumani Touré. The man behind the coup, Captain Hamadou Sanogo, argued the reason for the coup to be the poor military command from the government in dealing with the Tuareg and Islamist insurgents in the country's north, leading to deaths and "the potential loss of more than half of the national territory" (Schepers, 2012). The military coup created a power vacuum that gave

the MNLA the opportunity to further expand its military control over the northern parts. The secular Tuareg rebel group entered a military alliance with the Islamist group Ansar Dine and the Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), who also had strategic interests in the area (Francis, 2013, p. 2). This led to a rapid military victory and in April, the spokesman of the MNLA stated that:

> Mali is an anarchic state. Therefore, we have gathered a national liberation movement to put in an army capable of securing our land and an executive office capable of forming democratic institutions. We declare the independence of Azawad from this day on (Francis, 2013, p. 2).

This declaration of northern Mali as an independent state worsened the political domain for the newly, self-declared military junta, which illustrated their lack of ability to handle the now increasingly more violent conflict with the Tuaregs. International pressure led to the junta handing over political power to an interim government led by President Dincounda Traoré in April 12th, 2012. Notwithstanding, reports by Human Rights Watch in July 2012 revealed that the junta who were part of the coup, called the Green Berets, continued to have an influence on Malian politics and security forces because of their charismatic captain, Sanogo. They were accused of torture and forced disappearances against soldiers and officers from the armed forces who were opposed to the coup, called the Red Berets. The goal of the Red Berets was to carry out a counter-coup. They attacked the state radio and television, together with an airport in Bamako and the Kati military camp before they were shut down by the Green Berets (Human Rights Watch, 2012b). The increased fighting mentioned above resulted in increased threats to civilians. In the scenario of Insurgency, rebel groups often fight for political power, as in this case. Even though government forces or other rebel groups are the primary targets of attacks, civilians are still attacked to prevent the population to collaborate with the enemy, like the government and other rival groups.

The numerous rebel groups involved in the Mali Crisis during phase 1 complicated matters and created a more dangerous environment for civilians. Only months after the MNLA declared northern Mali as an independent state, the Tuaregs were challenged by the AQIM and Ansar Dine, who emerged as the main military power in the alliance with the MNLA. The Islamist jihadist groups seized control over the liberation of the north and replaced the newly declared Tuareg republic with the "Islamic State of Azawad", often referred to as a

"terrorist state" (Francis, 2013). This resulted in imposed Sharia laws in cities like Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal. People who consumed alcohol, couples accused of infidelity, people not dressing according to Islamic codes and women who did not wear the veil, were severely punished. However, as a way of gaining acceptance of the Sharia rules, Ansar Dine distributed food, money and ensured security to the population by managing patrols (FIDH, 2012, p. 7).

As the Islamist jihadists moved towards southern Mali and captured the city of Konna in January, rebel groups in the north continued attacking civilians, including executions, rape, and looting (p. 4). In an Insurgency, civilians are often more disposed to physical violence when and in areas where the rebel group's monopoly is being challenged, either by government forces or other rebel groups. As illustrated in the example above, violence intensified when the AQIM and Ansar Dine gained control over the northern areas and the MNLA, resulting in increased attacks towards civilians. Regional and international actors demanded a response to the situation which was what led to the French intervention, known as Operation Serval, on January 11th, 2013 (Francis, 2013, p. 3).

The scenarios where rebel groups are the main perpetrators of violence against civilians, as illustrated with the MNLA and the AQIM in the examples above, can both be characterized as Insurgency and Predatory Violence, according to the threat-based framework. However, the scenarios differ in the rebel groups' motivations for targeting civilians, their strategies and tactics, capabilities of the perpetrator, and the expected outcome for civilians. What characterises phase 1 as Insurgency rather than Predatory Violence is how rebel groups targeted civilians to control the population to achieve their political agenda to create an independent state in northern Mali. Civilians were subjected to selective violence and rebel groups' use of IEDs killed hundreds of civilians in the areas torn by conflict. (Beadle et al., 2016, p. 9). In a Predatory Violence scenario rebel groups do not have the same political aspiration, but they rather attack civilians as a way to ensure their own survival or to gain economic profit, which differs from Insurgencies (p. 9).

5.1.2 How civilians were affected by the violence committed in phase 1

During the first phase of the conflict in northern Mali, tens of thousands of civilians were forced to flee to the southern parts of the country and neighbouring countries. Under the

control of the Islamist jihadists in the north, Human Rights Watch argued the situation for the civilians to be worsening;

> Stonings, amputations, and floggings have become the order of the day in an apparent attempt to force the local population to accept their world view. In imposing their brand of Sharia law, they have also meted out a tragically cruel parody of justice and recruited and armed children as young as 12 (Human Rights Watch, 2012a)

This quote illustrates the brutal environment for civilians imposed by the rebel groups in the areas they fought to control in the Insurgency. Human Rights Watch further stressed that Tuareg, Islamist and Arab rebel groups all committed numerous war crimes during phase 1, including execution, rape, use of child soldiers and plundering of hospitals (Human Rights Watch, 2012c). The Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Fatou Bensouda, who stressed that the severe attacks against civilians to be qualified as war crimes, also supported this (FIDH, 2012, p. 6). For the MNLA, the main motivation for attacking civilians was to ensure control of the northern parts. Even though fighting was mainly between the Malian military and the separatist Tuaregs, the MNLA carried out attacks on civilians as a strategy to achieve the goal of liberation. These strategies were often bombings, killings and threats, which also resulted in over 400,000 refugees and internally displaced persons in phase 1. For the Islamist jihadists, the objective was not to fight against the Malian state, but to take part in the smuggling and trafficking business in Mali's northern areas and to expand their influence across the Sahelo-Saharan region (Caparini, 2015, p. 6). In the case of Insurgency, civilian casualties will be lower than in other scenarios because fighting is mainly between opposing rebel groups and militias, and not between civilians. However, as noted above, the presence of intense violence forces many civilians to flee the areas where conflict is most present. The number of people fleeing is likely to rise gradually with the intensity of the conflict.

5.1.3 From Insurgency to Post-Conflict Revenge

As mentioned in chapter 2, the conflict scenarios are likely to overlap and occur simultaneously, which was the case in Mali during phase 1. The intense violence during the Insurgency led to the deployment of the French Operation Serval in 20 December 2012, which created a Post-Conflict Revenge-scenario between individuals in northern Mali. In

this scenario, the targets are often former perpetrators or people accused of being affiliated with former perpetrators. The scenario is likely to be triggered if a former perpetrator is overthrown, for example by a military force. Revenge in post-conflict areas may occur if there is a weak state capacity to ensure security for the inhabitants. In Mali, the French troops had chased the Islamists away within a couple of months after its deployment, even though this was a short-term success. The months after the French military exit was characterised by individuals and unorganised groups that were motivated by revenge and self-protection. Executions, looting and sexual violence were present in the aftermath of the conflict and the French military exit. In Timbuktu, individuals were reported looting the properties owned by Tuareg and Arab traders whom they believed to be collaborating with rebel groups. Also, 2,000 ancient manuscripts from Timbuktu's Ahmad Babu Institute were burned down by the AQIM (Harding, 2013). These examples illustrate that the most serious threat against civilians after the French exit was the fear of being affiliated with former perpetrators, which is common in a Post-Conflict Revenge scenario. The threat towards civilians will also increase in this scenario if rebel groups return and regain some control of the conflict area. This allows for the rebels to organise the violence for strategic purposes, which can escalate into the deadlier scenario of Ethnic Cleansing.

Phase 1 is also characterised by increased communal tensions because of the fighting. After being victims of numerous traumatic experiences, the everyday life of the people in the north changed dramatically, and some lost family ties and traditional values that has impacted the social life (Allegrozzi & Ford, 2013, pp. 9-11). In fact, research conducted by Oxfam after the French exit in 2013 revealed how fear, mistrust, loneliness and betrayal were present amongst ethnic various groups in Mali. Violence as an act of revenge between ethnic groups deepened the social relations and worsened the conflict (pp. 11-16). Especially for the displaced persons, the fear of tensions and conflict if they returned home were highly present. According to the study, a Tuareg refugee stated that: "I don't think we will be welcomed back, because the people who stayed behind have pillaged our shops, ransacked our houses, taken our land and killed our brothers" (p. 21). Besides Tuaregs, Arabs also fled from areas in the north in fear of being associated with the Islamist groups. In Timbuktu and Gao, there were reports of revenge attacks against innocent Arabs, who were beaten up and killed. Given that the Post-Conflict violence is perpetrated by individuals or loosely organised actors, fear and distrust grow amongst the people because there is no notorious

perpetrator, as described above. Uncoordinated attacks on civilians characterises this scenario and is what makes it difficult to stop a Post-Conflict Revenge scenario.

Attention must also be given to the lack of state authority after the 2012 insurgency which created a power vacuum in the regions of Kidal, Gao, and Timbuktu, as well as parts of Mopti and Ségou, and is an important explanatory factor to the Post-Conflict Revenge scenario in the second half of phase 1. The Jihadist and Tuareg separatists still occupied larges areas in the north, and as a consequence, state functions like security and justice were absent and allowed for the rebel groups to fill. As a result, the threat of IEDs was high during this phase, and since March 2012 to October 2013, there were 53 confirmed casualties from such attacks (MINUSMA, 2013, p. 7).

On June 18, the transitional government signed a peace agreement with the armed rebel groups in the northern regions on Mali. Even though the security situation was fragile, the peace agreement led to a much more stable environment, with only some isolated incidents between armed groups. These events reduced the threat against civilians and ended the first phase of the conflict (MINUSMA, 2013, p. 5).

5.1.4 The assessment of military operations to protect civilians in phase 1

When the conflict first broke out in Mali, there was no international force employed to protect civilians from the various rebel groups during the break-out of the Insurgency. However, the regional concerns for spill-over effects resulted in the deployment of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The immediate mission was to force the junta to "immediately relinquish power to the rightful Government so that the country could return to constitutional normality", in addition to urge the MNLA to disarm (Haysom, 2014, pp. 1-5). The mission also had a stated purpose to protect civilians, however, there were no protection activities established nor any monitor measures taken to identify threats against civilians (p. 11). By December 2012, the violent conflict reached a point where the Security Council authorised an African-led mission whose goal was to help national authorities to take back Mali's northern territories. The African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) was a peace enforcement mission deployed by the African Union in January 2013, with a mandate to contribute to the rebuilding of the Malian Defence and Security Forces, support the Malian government in recovering its northern

territories, and to assist the Malian authorities to protect civilians, among other tasks. AFISMA was six months after its deployment rehatted into MINUSMA (Guffey, 2012).

In practice, AFISMA prioritised chasing terrorists, notably the AQIM, Ansar Dine and MUJWO, and other rebel groups who were affiliated with these groups. The French Operation Serval supplemented the mission in January 2013, after Ansar Dine captured the city of Konna, only 680 kilometres from Bamako (Guffey, 2012). The mixture of violent extremism and terrorism and the separatist Tuareg insurgency, forced the involvement of international actors. The Operation Serval prioritised the violent jihadist groups and in April, just a couple of months after its deployment, the French troops withdrew, as they had successfully taken back Mali's northern territories with little resistance from the Islamists. Terrorist groups were not eliminated but fled to the mountains north of the Kidal region. Consequently, fighting decreased for a period and the operation was considered successful (Guffey, 2012).

In an Insurgency, the role of an international force to protect civilians from imminent threat is quite limited because of the selective violence from the rebel groups. However, as mentioned in chapter 2, military forces are most effective in insurgencies when used to "hold and control areas that are wrested from insurgent control" until the authorities establish a permanent presence (Beadle et al., 2016, p. 24). With Operation Serval, the only military force with a POC-mandate, the first strategic move was to block the Islamists towards the south (Spet, 2015, p. 69). By trapping the insurgents in the northern areas, French troops could destroy the enemy. Based on French intelligence, the rebel groups in the north would not "stand and fight", which could imply that the jihadists especially lacked the resources to fight against a well-coordinated operation like Serval. In addition, France achieved a "surprise-effect" by intervening shortly after the uprising of the conflict and kept a fast military progress, which made it difficult for the rebel groups to organise themselves and follow the intervening forces. The fast speed of the French military measures can be illustrated by orders given by President Hollande to "destroy those in front of you and go fast", in addition to the military training given by French General Bernard Barrera, who argued for a more offensive type of warfare to destroy an enemy:

> I wanted an offensive maneuver while sending a maximum number of troops north. Audacity, the taking of the initiative, joint and combined arms maneuver, the

integration of everything to attain "one sole goal, Victory,"—as our motto and emblem say (Shurkin, 2014, p. 10).

The French emphasis on a complementary response with air campaigns and boots on the ground was essential "of closing with the enemy on the ground" (pp. 11-12). Regarding protection of civilians, Operation Serval sought to engage in minimal urban combat, with the goal of minimising the attacks on civilians caused by the operation itself. Local forces where given the responsibility to operate in cities whereas the French troops focused their efforts on monitoring the enemy and preventing them to get a hold of weapon supplies from urban areas (Durhin, 2017). However, even though a military force must ensure to not harm civilians in their own operations, the French troops reportedly bombed positions in northern Mali in 2013, resulting in six civilians killed (Amnesty International, 2013).

Seemingly, the threat to civilians appears to increase when control is challenged or shifting hands, either by the government or other rebel groups. As illustrated with Mali during the first phase, the violence intensified at the time AQIM and Ansar Dine excluded MNLA from the northern areas, which resulted in the involvement of foreign military troops and local authorities. Because the rebel groups depended on freedom of movement to control more territory and access the population of which they operate and threaten, Operation Serval arguably limited the rebels' freedom of movement with its military presence, which may have limited the attacks on civilians (Beadle, 2014, pp. 57-65). However, as the conflict moves over to a Post-Conflict Revenge Scenario when Operation Serval ends, it is evident that the accomplishments of Operation Serval were only short-term.

5.1.5 Concluding remarks on phase 1

The attacks on civilians by both the MNLA and the Islamists groups to create an independent state in the north illustrates how the perpetrators motivation for targeting civilians is related to a political goal, which is common for Insurgencies. The number of civilian casualties is relatively low in the first phase, and according to International Crisis Group, there were 265 reported deaths in 2012, where 47 of them were civilians, 122 soldiers and government officials, and 99 militants (Ploughshares, 2018). Compared to the other scenarios there are fewer killed in an Insurgency due to a mass-migration from the areas of intense fighting, which corresponds well with the crisis in Mali 2012 and the situation for civilians during

that period (Beadle et al., 2016, p. 12). Given the high amount of displacements and selective violence such as assassinations with the use of IEDs, the first phase of the conflict in Mali can be defined as an Insurgency scenario.

In addition, the intense Insurgency left the northern areas in a scenario of Post-Conflict Revenge after the French troops left Mali, illustrating how the conflict scenarios often overlap. Communities and ethnic groups were filled with fear and mistrust towards one another, and certain regions experienced a high amount of revenge attacks such as executions, sexual violence and looting. Members of the Tuareg and Arab ethnicities were especially targeted as being former 'perpetrators' and 'collaborators' of the insurgency. The Post-Conflict Revenge mostly occurred in the areas where fighting hit hardest during the 2012 crisis, and in the places where many of the 500,000 displaced persons were returning home. Considering that the attacks were conducted by individuals and loosely organised groups and the number of casualties were relatively low, the situation between April and July 2013 corresponds well with a Post-Conflict Revenge scenario. Finally, the violence against civilians decreased and changed character after the signing of the peace agreement between the transitional government and the rebel groups, in addition to the Operation Serval that managed to chase the rebel groups away for a short period.

5.2 Government Repression

The aftermath of the Insurgency from phase 1 continued over to the second phase of the conflict that takes place between 2013 and 2016. The beginning of phase 2 was characterised by the scenario of Government Repression because of the chaotic situation after phase 1. The main perpetrators of violence were now parts of the Malian armed forces rather than the rebel groups from phase 1. Their motivation to attack individuals was to fight back the people affiliated or in opposition with the rebel groups from phase 1, notably the MNLA and the AQIM. Acts of Ethnic Cleansing were reported as many Tuaregs and Arabs were executed or abducted by the Malian army. As a response to the Government Repression, insurgency groups increased their violent attacks against the Malian army, rival rebel groups and civilians, which led on to a new uprise of Insurgency. The increased tensions in the northern areas prompted the implementation of MINUSMA in July 2013, that had a robust mandate to protect civilians and restore security in the north. The UN forces experienced an intensified conflict in phase 2 after some months of stability at the end of phase 1. Although MINUSMA conducted patrols, trainings and supervisions, the mission's task to protect civilians was limited in phase 2 seeing that most of the attacks were directed at the mission itself.

5.2.1 The threats facing civilians in phase 2

In the beginning of the second phase, the transitional government with Boubacar Keita as President, was elected on 11 August 2013. Despite the signing of the peace agreement at the end of phase 1, between the transitional government and the rebel groups, the MNLA, HCUA and MAA suspended their involvement in the agreement, resulting in increasing tensions in the north.

Violent repression by the Malian government has come in waves depending on the Tuareg uprising. During the first Tuareg rebellion in the 60s, the Keita regime responded with extreme violence. Ever since, the rebels have been left with lasting grievances towards the Malian state. While the Malian government launched an offensive to take back control of the north in 2013, Malian soldiers violently attacked civilians based on who they were, and not for what they have done. A report by the International Federation for Human Rights

claims the Malian army has been responsible for many of the attacks against Tuaregs and Arabs in the second phase of the conflict. The attacks were based on a fear that Tuaregs or Arabs could be rebel infiltrators in communities (Doyle, 2013). Amnesty International supported these claims, and documented that civilians were tortured, killed and placed in detention by Malian security forces after the French troops ended their Operation Serval in beginning of 2013 (Amnesty International, 2013, p. 5). Even though attacks of this kind by state security forces can be described as Ethnic Cleansing, their motivation to attack was not to *expel* a certain group, but rather to *control* the people they believed to be affiliated with the Islamists in the north. It's possible to argue, however, that the examples below illustrate how violations similar to Ethnic Cleansing was the *outcome* of the scenario rather than the *motivation* for the perpetrators per se.

For example, in March 2013 the Malian army was accused of torturing over 50 people who they believed to be MUJAO members. One of the victims of the torture said: "we were held one by one in the air by two soldiers, whilst a third poured water onto our mouth, nostrils and ears, we were asked to confess that we were MUJAO members" (Amnesty International, 2013, p. 13). In Sevaré, Malian soldiers executed 20 people, where the bodies were "buried hastily, notably in wells", according to the BBC (Doyle, 2013). Reports concerning the maltreatment of the Malian army against civilians during this period are many, and a woman in northern Mali stated that:

> For the Malian army, all 'fair-skinned' people are the same. Arabs, Tuaregs, Bellas…. The military believe that they are at the heart of the uprising and therefore the problem. They want to get rid of them once and for all. (Prata, 2013).

This quote illustrates how the motivations for the Malian army was to get control over different communities they believed to be affiliated with the rebels in the north, which is the core characteristic in a Government Repression scenario. To control these communities, the examples above show how the military conducted acts of Ethnic Cleansing against civilians. The motivations for the attacks cannot be fully described in line with the scenario of Ethnic Cleansing because 'cleansing' of certain communities was not the priority for the army, but instead they carried out these violations to fight back the insurgency groups, especially the Tuaregs and the Islamists.

On 17 May 2014, after a visit by the Prime Minister and other officials of the Malian government to Kidal, heavy fighting broke out between the MNLA and the Malian security forces. Members of the MNLA threw rocks at the Malian security forces. Reportedly, the MNLA were opposed to the official visit to Kidal, an area they argued to be under their control (Panapress, 2014). My informant working with intelligence within the UN claimed the Malian security forces fired arms towards a huge crowd of civilians, resulting in 11 civilian deaths. The situation worsened the conflict between the government and the rebels, and the government of Mali saw these events as a declaration of war. Consequently, on 21 May, the Malian Army launched a series of military strikes in Kidal. Both light and heavy weaponry was used, resulting in 36 deaths, 93 wounded and many civilians killed. Abuses by the Malian army and pro-government militias continued throughout 2016. In fact, over 300 persons were arrested and many of them illegally detained only in 2016, in addition to torture, kidnappings and extortions (MINUSMA, 2015).

The GATIA, a self-defence group consisting of Tuareg and Arabs with no aspiration for separation nor the formation of an Islamic state, defended the northern Mali together with the Ganda Koy and Ganda Iso during this period. These groups were allegedly integrated into the Malian army; however, these allegations were denied by the army who states that "the militia does not act under the orders of the Malian army" (McGregor, 2015a). On the other hand, international organisations strongly believe the self-defense groups had close ties to the Malian army who supported and financed the groups (IRIN, 2014), (International Crisis Group, 2016). In fact, the human rights violations committed by these pro-government groups towards the rebel communities describes the repressive nature of the Malian army during this phase of the conflict.

The outcome of the violations committed by the Malian security forces were in the first half of the phase: 26 executions, 11 enforced displacements and over 50 cases of torture, in addition to other civilians killed in attacks (Human Rights Watch, 2015). The government and pro-government militias' activities in the first half of phase two were mainly based on the government's perception of increased threat to its own survival from the rebel groups. This led to selective and indiscriminate attacks towards civilians in areas controlled by the opposition, which often occurs in a scenario of Government Repression. The violent actions by the Malian state only fuelled the continued conflict and the desire for revenge by opposition groups and communal tensions. Mali's northern areas were still ungovernable,

which is a major explanatory factor that leads the conflict over to a new period of Insurgency in the second part of phase two.

5.2.2 New outbreak of Insurgency

In 2014, overlapping with the serious situation of Government Repression, Human Rights Watch reported that rebel groups were on the rise yet again, but this time with more sporadic attacks than during the 2012 crisis. An increase of IEDs by both jihadists and Tuareg separatists during the three months after the deployment of MINUSMA, illustrated how rebels had reorganised themselves and recovered the ability to operate systematically. This was especially clear in the regions of Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu. For example, in Kidal, the security situation worsened in 2014 after multiple attacks against civilians by the MNLA in particular (Human Rights Watch, 2014). In line with the scenario of Insurgency, attacks often take place in populated areas against politically symbolic or military important areas, which corresponds with the rebel groups increased attacks in the northern areas (Beadle et al., 2016, p. 20)

Attacks also increased in central Mali, with the Islamist group Macina Liberation Front executing five men who they believed to be affiliated with the army. The fear for Islamist rebel groups led to government officials, such as teachers, mayors and judges fleeing the central areas. A local Mayor states that:

> My people are afraid; these armed men move through the villages all the time trying to recruit our youth and turn us to their religion. Even yesterday people called me in alarm to say the jihadists had come because God had directed them to this or that village. My people feel under pressure from all sides – if they tell the army, they will be executed as informants; if they don't, the army will think they are collaborators (Human Rights Watch, 2015).

Even though the attacks by the rebel groups were mostly directed at the Malian security forces, Human Rights Watch also documented several executions of civilians. During 2016, Islamists executed 21 civilians whom they accused of being informants for the Malian government and affiliates of the French counter-terrorism operation. In scenarios of Insurgency, peaks of violence against civilians often presents itself as revenge towards

perceived collaborators of the government or other rival groups. In addition, MINUSMA troops were more than frequently attacked by rebel groups. During November and December 2014, IEDs killed five peacekeepers. On several occasions, MINUSMA called on Operation Serval to assist "in situations of imminent and serious threat". Among other things, Serval evacuated wounded peacekeepers and assisted with the response on attacks on MINUSMA troops in Ménaka (p. 5). During 2016, however, 23 peacekeepers were killed and 108 wounded by rebel groups. The Islamist AQIM conducted most of these attacks (Human Rights Watch, 2017, p. 2). The attacks on MINUSMA can be explained with the same motivation as described above; MINUSMA cooperated with the Malian government and was therefore considered an enemy by the rebel groups. Bearing in mind that the force was deployed with the mandate to use all necessary means to defend its mandate to protect civilians, MINUSMA represented the opposing part, together with the Malian government in the south, who worked against the rebel's aspiration for an independent north.

5.2.3 Rebel groups fight over smuggling routes

Meanwhile, a Predatory Violence scenario intensified alongside the Insurgency in northern Mali over the smuggling routes in Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu. Considering that the somewhat central authority in northern Mali had collapsed during the crisis in 2012, rebel groups now fought to control the criminal networks in the area. As already explained in chapter 4, northern Mali has been, and still is, an important region for smuggling cigarettes, drugs and migrants. In fact, in 2016, 30, 000 migrants passed through northern Mali with the help of criminal networks in an attempt to reach Europe (Molenaar & Damme, 2017, p. 4). Before the crisis in 2012, Kidal in particular was controlled by rebel groups, both the MNLA and the AQIM, who collected rents and taxes on the goods that passed through the area (Tinti, 2014, p. 16). For the AQIM, however, smuggling had become the financial backbone of their organisation and civilians were frequently recruited and used as smugglers. For example, reports showed that civilians were offered 7 million CFA to deliver 150 kg of cocaine to Libya. In addition, Islamists offered a monthly salary of $600 to young men wanting to become jihadi fighters, which equals 10 times Mali's minimum wage (Smith, 2014). These actions illustrate how rebel groups wanted to control the local population to assure their own survival or profit, which is the primary motivation for attacking civilians in a Predatory Violence scenario.

Neither the former French Operation Serval nor MINUSMA had a specific mandate to prioritise counter-trafficking in the areas where criminal networks were operating, resulting in a poor military response to the issue. Consequently, the illicit drug and criminal networks continued to flourish. According to a report published by the Global Initiative, the regional and international military forces committed a huge mistake by not including a counter-trafficking strategy. The peacebuilding mission overlooked that organised crime was "integral to the erosion and the eventual collapse of the Malian state" (Tinti, 2014, p. 17). Hence, Mali's instability continued to be linked with the criminal networks controlling the northern areas.

With the scenarios of Government Repression, Insurgency and Predatory Violence overlapping and occurring at the same time, communal tensions grew from the insecurity connected to the sporadic attacks throughout the second phase of the conflict. Even though communal tensions had been existing for a long time, attacks based on community belonging intensified during phase 2. On 19 October 2014, nine Arabs were kidnapped by Tuaregs in the region of Gao. Just a couple of weeks after in Timbuktu, nine Arabs were killed by Tuaregs. These episodes eventually led to the outbreak of a Communal Violence scenario, in what leads to phase 3 of the conflict (p. 3).

5.2.4 Assessment of military operations to protect civilians in phase 2

The most serious scenario in the first part of phase 2 was Government Repression, whereas Insurgency, with some tendencies of Predatory violence, increased in the second half of phase 2. In April 2013, the United Nations Multidimensional Stabilization Mission in Mali, known by the French acronym MINUSMA, was established by the Security Council and deployed in July the same year. The force incorporated AFISMA into the new peacekeeping mission. The aim of the mission was to support the political process in Mali and ensure for security in the north, including a protection of civilians' mandate. This entailed that MINUSMA troops could "use all means necessary to ensure the protection of civilians in immediate danger of physical violence" (MINSUMA, 2013). The EU led military mission, EUTM-Mali, also had a protection of civilians' objective. However, the mission did not have a combat role, but a training-only mandate (World Peace Foundation, 2017, p. 3). France also launched Operation Barkhane on August 1, 2014 to take over from Operation Serval. Operation Barkhane was a counterterrorism mission covering the five countries of Burkina

Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauretania and Niger. However, the French operation did not include a POC-mandate and will not be included in this analysis (Larivé, 2014). Therefore, the only military force with a mandate to protect civilians in phase 2, was MINUSMA.

In the scenario of Government Repression, civilians are targeted by a government because of their real or perceived affiliation with rebel groups or the political opposition. An international military presence may limit the government's ability to use violence against its own population, which is essential for reducing the threat against civilians. Without a military response, a Government Repression scenario may escalate into the more fatal scenarios of Ethnic Cleansing and Genocide, where the expected outcome will be deadlier and more devastating. As mentioned in chapter 2, a military force must defend and secure areas where the opposition is located to prevent violent clashes and to protect civilians (Beadle, 2014, p. 20).

During phase 2, MINUSMA provided security for civilians by conducting patrols, maintaining checkpoints and contributed to an overall de-escalation of tension in Kidal in phase 2. In 2016, MINUSMA conducted 351 patrols in the north and used its aviation assets to monitor remote areas. Illustrating its military presence in this way was a major part of MINUSMA's POC-strategy during this phase. In addition, MINUSMA monitored tensions between communities and ethnic groups in the north by conducting protection assessments missions where tensions were high. This can be seen as a strategy to reduce the growing tensions between communities that became more salient during the second phase. In Timbuktu, for example, MINUSMA engaged with the local authorities as a way of reducing the threat against civilians. MINUSMA organised trainings on human rights for over 700 state and non-state actors and the Malian military.

Despite of these attempts to protect civilians, MINUSMA was regularly targeted and attacked by rebel groups during phase 2, which had an enormous effect on its capacity to protect civilians in the north and centre of the country. This further limited MINUSMA's outreach and operations. Because many Malians lacked understanding of what MINUSMA was deployed to achieve, in addition to the force taking sides with the Malian government by supporting the political process in the country, the force may have constituted a risk rather than a deterrent which has exposed civilians to more threats of violence. For example, reports documents that revenge attacks occurred against civilians believed to be affiliated or

cooperated with MINUSMA. In addition, the violent and sporadic attacks with the use of IEDs especially, forced MINUSMA to use a great amount of its capacity to secure UN locations and government officials, instead of being stationed in villages to protect civilians where they live (Razza, 2018). Even though civilians were not the primary target for rebel groups using IEDs, they posed a major threat to local communities using the roads and in the areas that have been mined. The dilemma for MINUSMA to protect civilians from the violence perpetrated by the host-government also complicated the situation, even though the government refused to have any connection with pro-government militias, such as GATIA, who continued to violate human rights in the north. The ongoing attacks on MINUSMA continued to limit its efforts to protect civilians during the scenarios of Insurgency and Predatory Violence in the second part of phase 2.

Besides the complex security situation for MINUSMA, the mission was also limited because of its lack of human and logistical resources, especially lack of aerial capabilities with only three military helicopter units and two fixed wing unites. The largest contingent of troops was from other West-African countries and lacked training and equipment. These troops were based on the front line with the most difficult task whereas European forces were focused on surveillance and intelligence. Not to mention the complicating matter of the sheer size of Mali, which is almost three times the size of Iraq and mostly covered by desert (Cohen, 2017).

By the end of phase 2, the Security Council extended the mandate of MINUSMA until June 2017 in the resolution 2295 (MINUSMA, 2016).

5.2.5 Concluding remarks of phase 2

To summarise, the start of the second phase was characterised by Government Repression, resulting severe human rights violations from the Malian army and pro-government militias. Eventually, the second half of phase two developed into a classic Insurgency scenario, including clashes between armed rebel groups in the north, where the rationale for the rebel groups was to control populations and undermine the enemy. However, the fight over the criminal networks also adds a Predatory Violence component to the second phase, where both the Tuareg and Islamist rebel groups fought to control over the large smuggling routes, resulting in large-scale displacements, abductions and illegal taxation of civilians in the area.

For MINUSMA, however, the mandate to protect civilians was difficult to implement because of the many attacks directed towards the UN forces. MINUSMA was forced to hold a defensive role in order to protect their own troops. Consequently, MINUSMA engaged in some, however limited, patrols, human rights trainings as a way of preventing future violations, and monitoring of communal tensions by conducting protection assessments missions in fragile areas.

Finally, phase 2 also illustrates how more than one scenario in the threat-based scenario framework may occur simultaneously. While Government Repression represented the most serious violations during this phase, the situation was complicated by both Insurgency and Predatory Violence, even though the latter occurred in a more geographically limited area. Communal clashes after the brutalities caused by Insurgency and Government Repression, represents the shift in the violence against civilians. The outbreak of violence in central Mali also explains a geographical "transfer" from the north to central Mali, which leads the analysis into the third and final phase of the conflict.

5.3 Communal Conflict

The brutalities of Government Repression and Insurgency described in phase 2 led to the outbreak of a full-scale Communal Conflict in the third and final phase of this analysis. In the scenario of Communal Conflict, the perpetrators motivation for attacking civilians is based on communal identity, the desire for revenge and as an act of survival or self-protection (Beadle et al. 2016). The Communal Conflict in central Mali is between two communities: the Dogon and the Fulani. Since 2017, fighting between these two groups have claimed hundreds of civilian lives and forced displacements. Although communal tensions have existed in Mali for a long time, the long-lasting conflict since 2012 has taken a toll on the communities' relation to each other. In addition to this, jihadist groups have increased their attacks on civilians and the peacekeeping force. Despite the presence of MINUSMA, Mali was still suffering from increased violence in 2017, which is still present in the writing of this thesis (Kleinfield, 2018, MINSUMA, 2018). The challenges described in phase 2 regarding MINUSMA's complexities with implementing its mandate to protect civilians, are still present in phase 3. The peacekeepers continue to be one of the main targets for rebel groups and they are forced to take on a defensive military role. As a result, communal tensions have increased, and the conflict level is more severe than ever before.

5.3.1 Communal Conflict between nomadic pastoralists and settled farming communities

As mentioned, the scenarios of Insurgency and Government Repression have fuelled communal tensions in central Mali. People living the rural areas in central and northern Mali are discontent and frustrated with bad governance and corrupt government elites who control their way of life from Bamako. The central regions of Mali have been in the shadow of the conflict in northern Mali. In the absence of authority in these regions, jihadist rebel groups have settled and fuelled the Communal Conflict. These groups have gradually gained more control by establishing small groups in the central Mopti region. Jihadist groups have experienced increased support among the rural population and the nomadic herders for being a better alternative to the national government (Benjaminsen, 2018).

The actors in the Communal Conflict in phase 3 are the Dogon and the Fulani. The former community are traditional hunter fighters who derives from the ethnic group called Mande from the south of Mali. The Fulani are an ethnic nomadic pastoralist group comprising 25 million members all over West Africa. In Mopti, the conflict can be said to have a communal dimension because the people organise themselves based on a shared identity that includes but, not is not limited, to ethnicity (Ursu, 2018, p. 24). In central Mali, the Fulani have been under attack by the Dogon, represented by the group Dan Nan Ambassagou, for presumably cooperating with the Islamist jihadist groups and perpetrating violence against groups such as the Dogon and Bambara and the Malian armed forces. The Dogon community are associated with and supported by the Malian army (The Defense Post, 2018). The Fulani, on the other hand, are accused of denying the Dogon communities access to fields and local markets, and continue to loot, attacks villages and ruin livelihoods (Kleinfield, 2018).

According to Benjaminsen & Ba (2018), many Fulani pastoralists, often young men, support the jihadist groups because of their "anti-government sentiment". They view the state as a corrupt and unfair institution that "extracts rent from the rural peasantry, and because the development model imposed by the state has not responded to pastoral priorities" (Benjaminsen & Ba, 2018, p. 3). Jihadist groups have deliberately created communal tensions to recruit fighters and legitimise their presence. By creating such tensions, the jihadists have taken the role of being the protectors of the Fulani, which has resulted in numerous new jihadists. A message from one jihadist group was:

> We are not your enemies. We are your brothers. Who are your enemies? It is MINUSMA, the Malian army, the coalition forces against Mali. We ask you to act against them when it is still possible. If not, it is you who will lose at the end (Ba & Benjamin, 2018, p. 9)

This message was unsigned but is believed to belong to the most active jihadist group in the central region of Mali is the Katiba Macina, led by Hamadoun Koufa. As said in the message, jihadist groups wish to be an alternative protector of the rural population and draws a picture of the Malian government and MINUSMA as enemies. This overlapping scenario of rising extremist rebel groups and Communal Conflict characterises the threat to civilians in this phase and complicates this particular conflict scenario (Razza, 2018).

The motivation behind the Communal Conflict has mainly increased based on the desire for revenge between the Dogon and the Fulani. The two communities hold different positions in the central regions and have diverse objectives. As mentioned, the Dogon are associated with the Malian government, whereas the Fulani are associated with jihadist groups. These groups therefore compete over power and influence in the region. As stated in chapter 2, the scenario of Communal Conflict becomes dangerous for civilians when each round of fighting is likely to provoke revenge. Violence may become a way to survive for rival groups and could be used as a method of self-defence (Beadle et al, 2014).

According to reports from MINUSMA, civilians, especially women and children in central Mali are victims of targeted attacks and intercommunity clashes. The number of casualties in 2017 was 949, which is higher than any previous years. The first half of 2018 reports over 750 deaths, suggesting that 2018 will be remarkably deadlier (Reeve, 2018, p. 18). The violence has also resulted in the internal displacement of 77,046 civilians. One of the deadliest attacks in phase 3 was on 23 June 2018, when the Dogon and the Fulani clashed in a small village in the Koro district, leaving 16 civilians killed. This attack triggered the displacement of 3,000 Fulani to Birga - Fulanih, where they were surrounded by Dogon rebels who prevented them to get food outside the village (Razza, 2018, p. 15). The use of IEDs was also high during phase 3. In the Mopti region, the use of IEDs has increased since 2017, and from January to June 2018, 76 civilians were killed from IEDs in this area alone. The rebel groups who place out the IEDs do not necessarily wish to harm civilians but aim for military targets like MINUSMA. However, due to the large population in central Mali, the IEDs are difficult to avoid (Razza, 2018, p. 10). In line with the scenario of Communal Conflict, the expected outcome of casualties is high in this type of conflict.

For some civilians, however, the jihadist rule in central Mali has been more productive than the Malian government. This statement is from a civilian living under jihadist control:

> The jihadists are good administrators. They have cancelled all the taxes and fines that government officials charged the poor population. They also cancelled the fees that landowners charged herders for access to the "bourgoutiere" [grazing zone]. They said all land belongs to God and it's free for everyone to use it. But they delineated areas for pasture and areas for farming. They have resolved disputes over resources

that lagged in the courts system for decades. Today there is no more conflict over natural resources and everyone is happy for that (Center, 2018, p.14).

The perception of communities with no corruption and a better management of natural resources is why some individuals see jihadists as a better alternative than the Malian state. However, the violence and strict sharia-laws following the Katiba Macina has resulted in a restricted way of life for women in particular. The violence has increased by women who send their sons to join jihadist groups as a way of protecting the family (Center, 2018, p.13). The large availability of small arms and more heavy weaponry has also intensified the violence, as well as complicated the protection of civilians for the military forces (Razza, 2018, p.14).

Moreover, the continuing power vacuum in central and northern Mali after the 2012 crisis is another important explanatory factor for the intensified Communal Conflict in phase 3. The Dogon group, Dan Nan Amassagou, was established due to the lack of state protection. They have supposedly received weapons and training from the Malian government and committed violent attacks on Fulani civilians. The coordinator of the group, however, claim: "the Dogon never attack, the Dogon defend themselves". Another member of the group, however, states that: "we will only have peace only if the Fulani are not around". Statements like these may contribute to cycles of violence and revenge. If an armed community group violently attacks another group intending to destroy this group, the perpetrators motivation changes to the scenario of Genocide, which is a much deadlier conflict scenario. The actors in the scenario of Genocide are, however, often states and not rebel groups. But, if one party gains a clear military superiority the fighting may escalate fast into *acts* of Genocide.

Phase 3 also illustrates clear tendencies of Ethnic Cleansing perpetrated by the Malian security forces during the Communal Conflict. In June 2018, 25 bodies were found in mass graves buried by Malian soldiers. Since 2017, the Malian army have been involved in 60 executions, many of them civilians (Desmazes, 2018), in addition to enforced disappearances, torture, and arbitrary arrests. As the Malian forces have supposedly supported the Dogon community, they have committed acts of Ethnic Cleansing against the Fulanis by supporting and being part of brutal attacks, which has made it impossible for the Fulanis to remain in their villages. The high number of people killed is characteristic for cases of Ethnic Cleansing and represents the expected outcome of this scenario.

5.3.2 Increased insecurity with Presidential elections

In weak states like Mali, elections can create more insecurity because individuals often vote based on ethnic, religious or regional belonging. Often, a majority group gets elected and this again fuels further conflict between the majority and the minority in the country (Bøås, 2016). During phase 3, Mali held Presidential elections on August 16, 2018, and President Keita was announced as the winner. However, the electoral process created more violence and threats against civilians than peace. Malian defence and security forces, with the help of MINUSMA, had 6,000 troops deployed at various polling stations. On June 2, however, there were reports about a political demonstration from opposition leaders in Bamako. The demonstration resulted in 16 demonstrators and one police officer injured. On 29 July, rebel groups in Mopti, Ségou and Timbuktu destroyed 50 polling stations. In these areas, they killed three civilians and six members of the Malian armed forces in violence during the electoral process (MINSUMA, 2018 p. 18).

Finally, on 28 August 2018, 34 traditional leaders of Fulani and Dogon communities signed an inter-community peace agreement in Sévaré. Despite this agreement, intense violence has continued due to flourish in central Mali, mostly because of the flawed agreement: First, village chiefs were unable to influence the peace process on the ground. Second, while the Dan Nan Amassagou got on board in the process, the Fulani militias have been left out. Third, some members of the Fulani community have denounced the agreements because they believe the Dan Nan Amassagou should be tried at the International Criminal Court. Time will show whether the Malian government will change its approach from the current narrow state dialogues to a broader national dialogue that will create a long-lasting peace between the Dogon and the Fulani (Sangaré, 2018). With a lack of such a peace agreement, phase 3 is therefore still present in the time of writing this thesis.

5.3.3 Assessment of military operations to protect civilians

In a scenario of Communal Conflict, the military must act decisively to protect civilians, either in the short to intermediate term. As mentioned in chapter 2, a military presence per se could have a stabilising effect on the violence but cannot solve the underlying conflict. The deadliness increases in this scenario when communities have access to small arms.

Hence, one long-term solution for this conflict can be disarmament, even though this solution does not address the roots of the conflict.

During phase 3, MINUSMA initiated several steps to protect civilians during the Communal Conflict, such as patrolling and intervening as a strategy to protect civilians from imminent threat. In the towns of Kouakouro and Koro, the presence of Malian security forces and MINUSMA forces resulted in a decrease in the number of incidents. Moreover, MINUSMA provided the government forces with intelligence, training, logistics and air transport. From 11 to 24 June, MINUSMA conducted Operation Furaji 11 on the Douentza-Hombori axis in the Mopti regions, which successfully led to a reduction in the number of attacks against civilians. The same type of operation was launched in Kidal including 300 deployed peacekeepers patrolling day and night. In addition, MINUSMA started an integrated justice and reconciliation project in the Mopti region, which aimed to prevent further conflicts between the Dogon and the Fulani. This initiative led to the signing of an intercommunal peace agreement between the two communities to end violence in the Mopti region. However, the deal was rejected by the Dan Nan Amassagou, who claimed to not be involved in the process leading up to the agreement (MINUSMA, 2017).

Despite the efforts initiated by MINUSMA, over 300 civilians were killed in 2018 only. As illustrated in the previous phase, MINUSMA continued to be one of the main targets for rebel groups, which resulted in a focus on self-protection and a passive presence for the mission. In the Ménaka and Mopti regions, MINUSMA and the Malian defence and security forces had a limited presence and capability to respond to threats against civilians (MINUSMA, 2017). The lack of a clear mandate in the central regions limited MINUSMA's ability to respond to the threats facing civilians. Because MINUSMA was initially deployed to stabilise the conflict in the north and support the peace process, the force was requested by the UNSC, as late as in June 2018, to "prioritize its resources and efforts to focus on political tasks". This means that even though civilians now face the greatest threats in the central regions, the area is not of strategic priority for the mission because there is no formal political process to focus on. Considering the size and importance of the mission, redefining priorities and mandates continuous to be challenging (Razza, 2018, p. 16-17).

On 2 October 2018, the Security Council further extended MINUSMA's mandate by its resolution 2423 until June 2019 (MINUSMA, 2018).

5.3.4 Concluding remarks on phase 3

To summarise, phase 3 has been, and still is, characterised by an extreme volatile situation of overlapping conflicts, with Communal Conflict in central Mali being the most alarming one. Violence perpetrated by jihadist rebel groups and acts of Ethnic Cleansing carried out by the Malian army fighting alongside the Dan Nan Amassagou also identifies the violence during this phase. The Communal Conflict between the Dogon and the Fulani has resulted in almost a thousand killings between 2017 and 2018, and the situation in Mali is more insecure than ever before. To protect civilians, MINUSMA and Malian security and defence forces have tried to keep a presence in the areas of conflict by conducting patrols. However, seeing that MINUSMA does not have a clear mandate for the central regions, the protection of civilians has been limited. MINUSMA and the Malian armed forced continue to be one of the main targets for rebel groups and are therefore forced into a passive mission with an increased focus on self-protection.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This study has analysed the protection of civilians in Mali. For a military force to protect civilians, there is a need to have a better understanding of the perpetrator behind the violence. In doing so, the thesis set out to answer the following research questions:

- *What type of threats were civilians faced with in Mali during 2012 - 2018?*
- *What military measures have been taken to protect civilians in Mali during 2012 - 2018?*

The research questions have been operationalised by analysing secondary literature and interviewing experts on the field. In this chapter, the main findings of the study will be presented, in addition to some considerations of the contribution of the study and the limitations of this study.

6.1 Summing up the study

The analysis has used the threat-based scenario framework developed by FFI to differentiate and explain the types of threats against civilians and determining the potential role of a military force. To answer the first research question, the thesis finds that the conflict in Mali can be divided into three different phases that each represents a change in the violence perpetrated against civilians. Since 2012, the conflict in Mali can best be described as a complex and multidimensional security crisis, with multiple conflict scenarios overlapping at the same time.

During phase 1, from 2012 to 2013, the conflict was largely characterised by the classic scenario of Insurgency. The violence was mainly perpetrated by the MNLA and AQIM fighting against the Malian state, as well as against each other, for the liberation of Azawad in the north. In this phase, the threat to civilians mostly occurred during clashes between the two groups. The immense use of IEDs and other asymmetrical attacks were the main threats to civilians during this first phase. The violence decreased for a short while after the French Operation Serval chased the jihadists away, as well as the signing of the peace agreement between the transitional government and the rebel groups, which marks the end of phase 1.

In phase 2 between 2013 and 2016, the violence against civilians changed into a Government Repression scenario where parts of the Malian security and defence forces were the main perpetrators of violence. Civilians were now targeted if they were believed to be affiliated with the rebel groups from phase 1. This resulted in numerous acts of ethnic cleansing towards the Tuareg and Arab population. To fight back, rebel groups increased their attacks on the Malian armed forces, rival armed groups and civilians, leading in to a rise of Insurgency. The shift in violence against civilians from phase 2 to phase 3 comes with the escalation of clashes amongst communal groups, which represents new threats to civilians. This shift also characterises a geographical transfer from the north to the central parts of Mali.

The third and final phase between 2017 and 2018 represents a scenario with multiple overlapping conflicts. These conflicts consist of a rising Insurgency and Government Repression with acts of Ethnic Cleansing, which has fuelled a brutal Communal Conflict between the Dogon and the Fulani in central Mali. Phase 3 represents the period with the most civilian casualties and an increased use of IEDs. Violence against civilians mostly occurred during clashes between the two communal groups. However, civilians were also directly targeted because of their communal identity or as acts of revenge. Although parties in the conflict signed a peace agreement in 2018, peace is not yet achieved, and attention must be given to the violence in central Mali that is still killing many civilians in the time of writing this thesis.

The second part of the research question was regarding the military's role and efforts to protect civilians in Mali. This thesis found that although the military efforts to protect civilians in Mali between 2012 and 2018 have been generally challenging for the military forces, the French Operation Serval managed to chase the rebel groups in phase 1 away, and thus reduced the threats against civilians. This victory was, however, short-term, as rebels quickly re-entered the cities of northern Mali after the French operation changed its mission to contemplate the broader Sahel. The on-going UN peacekeeping mission, MINUSMA, known as the world's deadliest peacekeeping mission, has struggled to protect civilians since its deployment in 2013. First, regardless of the robust mandate to protect civilians, the UN mission has been under-equipped, poor managed and passive. The troops have been "forced into a defensive posture" because of the many attacks against MINUSMA itself. Seemingly, this has undermined MINUSMA's ability to deal with the broader range of security and

protection challenges in peacekeeping. Second, MINUSMA was deployed to an area of the size of France, which has limited the force's ability to protect civilians in rural areas. The lack of access and communication with people in need has created an insecurity amongst the population in what MINUSMA is actually there to accomplish. Finally, the lack of a clear mandate for the central regions has created a dilemma for the peacekeepers, whether to focus on the political process in the north or the increased hostile situation in the centre that is killing most civilians. To have an effect, peacekeeping missions need a clear strategy, a political process and a clear exit strategy. In the case of MINUSMA, there is no exit in sight because the violence is deterring. On a final note, however, it is impossible to say whether the situation in Mali could have been far worse without the presence of MINUSMA. The conflict in Mali consists of a number of loosely linked conflicts, which makes it difficult to implement one military strategy to protect civilians.

6.2 Contribution of study and reflections of further research

The thesis has sought to contribute to identify the threats facing civilians and how the military can be used more effectively to protect civilians in Mali. The thesis has found that "knowing your enemy" is essential before implementing a peacekeeping force. By using the threat-based approach, the thesis has hopefully contributed to a better understanding of the perpetrators behavior in the conflict and shed light upon the challenges related to the protection of civilians in Mali. With regards to MINUSMA, is clear that the mandate to protect civilians has proven limited. The challenging conflict dynamics on the ground must, however, be seen in context with the fact that the peacekeeping force was deployed to a conflict where there was no peace to hold in the first place. If MINUSMA is to stay in Mali and better protect civilians, its mandate must be reviewed by the UNSC and be given additional resources to protect civilians.

Looking ahead, attention should be given to the current Communal Conflict in central Mali, because according to the threat-based scenario framework, this conflict carries the greatest potential for further escalation and the biggest threat to civilians. This is because a community that perceives themselves to be under immense threat may find that extermination of the rival community to be the only answer for their further existence, which can escalate to Ethnic Cleansing or Genocide. Also, the threats facing civilians from jihadists groups and Tuareg separatists should not be downplayed, as they continue to control large

areas of northern and central Mali. As illustrated in the analysis, MINUSMA have not been able to protect civilians because of the shifting conflict environment consisting of overlapping conflicts. This shows that the rebel groups cannot be combated by military power alone, but rather with a combination of power and politics where representatives from all groups are welcomed. This will give Mali a comprehensive solution which is grounded in the Malian context.

6.3 Limitations of the study

On a final note, any study has its limitations and so has this one. Regarding the researcher, my lack of in-depth knowledge about Mali and the lack of a military background before writing this thesis, has potentially limited my analysis. In addition, my thesis could have been strengthened by carrying out a field trip to Mali and not relying heavily on secondary sources. However, due to lack of time and difficulties of planning a field visit to a new country with no contacts, I was not able to go. I believe, however, that my thesis was strengthened by utilising the comprehensive framework provided by FFI, which allowed me to explore in detail the characteristics of the violence perpetrated against civilians in Mali and the military efforts implemented to protect them.

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APPENDIX

Interview Guide

1. What type of threats have civilians been faced with in Mali during 2012 and 2018?

2. What military measures have been taken by MINUSMA to protect civilians in Mali during the same period?

3. What are the challenges facing MINUSMA in Mali?

4. There has been a change in the violence against civilians during 2012 to 2018. Is it possible to place the violence into different phases based on the characteristics of the violence that has targeted civilians? If so, what phases?