

**The Malian Armed Forces and its discontents: civil-military relations, cohesion and the resilience of a postcolonial military institution in the aftermath of the 2012 crisis.**

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation studies the dynamics of mobilisation and demobilisation of Malian soldiers and subaltern officers, the *militariat*, during the 2012 mutiny-turned-coup. It investigates how a postcolonial military institution, portrayed as incomplete and dysfunctional, shapes cohesion among its members, and how it outlives a crisis.

This study draws on civil-military relation theory, military sociology and postcolonial theory to understand the relationship between the soldier and the military institution. It uses mixed qualitative methods (detailed qualitative case-study and ethnographic participant observation) to address critical aspects of the sociological processes behind a subaltern coup.

It demonstrates key aspects of the postcolonial military institution: the inward-looking institutional strategies and the adaptation of neo-patrimonialist practices. It also validates the persistence and evolution of an institution's social processes at a time where the military institution faces external pressure for change. It shows the role of rumours and leadership in the mobilisation among soldiers, as well as how peer cohesion is being built on the military base to the detriment of unit cohesion.

It concludes that long-lasting coup-proofing strategies have been detrimental to the building of institutional cohesion. It argues that social processes have fostered resistance to institutionalised cohesion, allowing the persistence of a core/periphery dichotomy and neo-patrimonialism. It also discusses the institutional adaptation and resistance to new security imperatives.

**Keywords:** civil-military relations theory, military sociology, Mali, armed forces, *militariat*, coup theory, postcolonial theory, neo-patrimonialism, state institutions.

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# TABLE OF CONTENT

TABLE OF CONTENT .....	IV
TABLE OF FIGURES.....	VI
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	VII
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	VIII
GLOSSARY .....	IX
MAP OF MALI.....	X
<b>CHAPTER 1. THE 2012 COUP: UNDERSTANDING THE SOLDIER AND THE MILITARY INSTITUTION BEYOND EVENTFUL HISTORY .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. COUPS, THE SOLDIER AND THE INSTITUTION: UNDERSTANDING A CHALLENGING RELATIONSHIP .....	6
<i>Sociology of the Military Institution</i> .....	8
Civil-military relations theory.....	11
Theories of coups, mutinies and coup-proofing .....	14
The Militariat: understanding mutinies and subaltern coups .....	21
Rumours, civil-military relations and the militariat.....	24
<i>Military sociology and cohesion: the sociological production of the military institution</i> .....	29
<i>Postcolonial institution: core, periphery and neo-patrimonialism</i> .....	34
1.2. ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS .....	41
<b>CHAPTER 2. RESEARCHING THE MILITARY INSTITUTION: METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND PERSONAL JOURNEY.....</b>	<b>43</b>
2.1. METHODOLOGY .....	44
<i>Qualitative case-study</i> .....	48
<i>Ethnography of an institution</i> .....	55
2.2. SAMPLING .....	63
2.3. ETHICS .....	67
2.4. POSITIONALITY AND REFLEXIVITY.....	70
2.5. LIMITATIONS OF METHODS .....	74
2.6. CONCLUSION .....	76
<b>CHAPTER 3. THE MAKING OF A POSTCOLONIAL MILITARY INSTITUTION .....</b>	<b>77</b>
3.1. CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS AND THE COLONIAL LEGACY.....	80
3.2. INDEPENDENCE AND THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION.....	86
3.3. THE 1968 COUP AND THE PRAETORIAN STATE.....	90
3.4. THE 1991 COUP AND THE DEMOCRATISATION PROCESS .....	101
3.5. COUP-PROOFING AND THE PERSISTENCE OF INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES.....	106
3.6. CONCLUSION .....	111
<b>CHAPTER 4. THE MILITARIAT OF KATI: A SNAPSHOT BEFORE THE COUP.....</b>	<b>112</b>
4.1. KATI: THE PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS OF THE CIVIL-MILITARY GAP .....	114
4.2. MOTIVATION AND PEER COHESION: THE COMMUNITY OF STRIVING.....	123
4.3. FACING THE MILITARY INSTITUTION: THE INVISIBLE SECONDARY COHESION .....	139
<i>Secondary cohesion and rank</i> .....	139
<i>Secondary cohesion and discipline</i> .....	147
4.4. CONCLUSION .....	152
<b>CHAPTER 5. MANUFACTURING A COUP: THE MOBILISATION OF THE MILITARIAT AND THE STRUGGLING INSTITUTION. ....</b>	<b>153</b>
5.1. CHRONOLOGY OF RUMOURS AND EVENTS: A STEP-BY-STEP ACCOUNT OF THE MUTINY-TURNED-COUP .....	156
<i>The military collapse in the North</i> .....	156
<i>The Mutiny</i> .....	166
<i>The coup</i> .....	171

5.2. MOBILISATION IN FAVOUR OF THE COUP .....	175
<i>The militariat: civil-military relations and the anti-elite message</i> .....	175
<i>The collapse: the role of cohesion</i> .....	180
<i>The military institution: leadership and collapse</i> .....	192
5.3. CONCLUSION .....	198
<b>CHAPTER 6. TAMING THE BEAST: THE FAILURE OF THE JUNTA AND THE RESILIENCE OF THE INSTITUTION..</b>	<b>200</b>
6.1. A STEP-BY-STEP ACCOUNT OF THE JUNTA’S DAYS IN POWER .....	203
<i>The failing junta</i> .....	203
<i>The Transition</i> .....	208
<i>The re-establishment of the Constitutional order</i> .....	215
6.2. DEMOBILISATION .....	221
<i>Civil-military relations: the struggle of the militariat for civilian support</i> .....	221
<i>Primary and secondary cohesion</i> .....	232
The Countercoup.....	234
The Mutiny of 30 September 2013 .....	238
<i>The military institution: leadership and autonomy</i> .....	239
The challenged leadership of the junta.....	240
The autonomy of the military institution .....	248
6.3. CONCLUSION .....	258
<b>CHAPTER 7: THE EMPEROR’S NEW CLOTHES. THE POST-CRISIS MILITARY INSTITUTION .....</b>	<b>260</b>
7.1. CHRONOLOGY THE HISTORY OF THE ‘RISE IN POWER’ ( <i>MONTÉE EN PUISSANCE</i> ).....	263
7.2. PERSISTENCE AND CHANGES DURING UNCERTAIN TIMES. ....	267
<i>Civil-military relations and the militariat</i> .....	268
<i>Reforming cohesion</i> .....	276
Primary cohesion: new routines and reinforced units .....	278
Secondary cohesion and the legacy of indiscipline. ....	283
<i>The military institution: resistance to reform</i> .....	294
7.3. CONCLUSION .....	309
<b>8. CONCLUSION: THE SOLDIER AND THE INSTITUTION .....</b>	<b>312</b>
8.1. CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS .....	314
8.2. MILITARY SOCIOLOGY AND COHESION: PRIMARY AND SECONDARY COHESION .....	317
8.3. THE POSTCOLONIAL MILITARY INSTITUTION .....	320
8.4. A NEW BEGINNING? .....	323
<b>CHRONOLOGY .....</b>	<b>326</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>327</b>
<b>ANNEX I. LIST OF INTERVIEWS .....</b>	<b>343</b>
<b>ANNEX II. LIST OF GRINS (FOCUS GROUPS) .....</b>	<b>345</b>
<b>ANNEX III. ETHICAL REVIEW.....</b>	<b>346</b>
<b>ANNEX IV. INFORMED CONSENT &amp; STRATEGY .....</b>	<b>359</b>
<b>ANNEX V. CODE OF CONDUCT OF THE ARMED FORCES .....</b>	<b>361</b>
<b>ANNEX VI. LIST OF ARRESTS ON 21 MARCH 21<sup>ST</sup>, 2012 .....</b>	<b>368</b>

## TABLE OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1. TEA DURING A GRIN .....	59
FIGURE 2. RESTING DURING A GRIN IN KATI.....	60
FIGURE 3. GENERAL MAP OF BAMAKO. ....	78
FIGURE 4. MAP OF KATI MILITARY CAMP .....	114
FIGURE 5. A JAKARTA IN KATI.....	120
FIGURE 6. THE BERETS ROUGES DURING A PARADE, APRIL 2012. ....	126
FIGURE 7. STUDENTS AT THE PRYTANÉE, JANUARY 2016.....	128
FIGURE 8. PICTURE OF THE ‘MILITARY VALUES’ (LEFT SHEET) AND A SHORTENED VERSION OF THE ‘CODE OF CONDUCT OF THE MALIAN SOLDIER’(RIGHT SHEET). ....	148
FIGURE 9. TWEETS FROM THE PRESIDENCY ON NATIONAL UNITY, FEBRUARY 1 <sup>ST</sup> , 2012.....	160
FIGURE 10. PLACE DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE DURING PROTESTS ON FEBRUARY 2 <sup>ND</sup> , 2012. ....	162
FIGURE 11. TWEETS FROM THE PRESIDENCY, MARCH 8 <sup>TH</sup> , 2019.....	163
FIGURE 12. SEVERAL TWEETS FROM THE PRESIDENCY ACKNOWLEDGING THE MUTINY BUT DENYING A COUP. ....	169
FIGURE 13. TWEETS FROM THE PRESIDENCY DURING THE MARCH 21 <sup>ST</sup> COUP. ....	171
FIGURE 14. MAIN SITES OF THE COUP.....	172
FIGURE 15. VARIOUS STILLS FROM THE CNRDRE’S TV BROADCAST ON MARCH 22 <sup>ND</sup> , 2012. ....	174
FIGURE 16. CAPTAIN AMADOU HAYA SANOGO (IN UNIFORM) AT THE INAUGURATION OF INTERIM PRESIDENT DIONCOUNDA TRAORÉ (LEFT OF SANOGO), BETWEEN TWO ECOWAS EMISSARIES (DJIBRIL BASSOLÉ, TO THE LEFT OF TRAORÉ, AND ADAMA BICTOGO, TO THE RIGHT OF SANOGO). ....	209
FIGURE 17. DIVISION LINE, APRIL 2012 - JANUARY 2013 .....	213
FIGURE 18. THE MOST POPULAR STICKERS FROM THE 2012 CRISIS. ....	240
FIGURE 19. AMADOU HAYA SANOGO MEETING WITH FORMER PRESIDENT MOUSSA TRAORÉ.....	242
FIGURE 20. AMADOU HAYA SANOGO, WITH A BENET IN HIS LEFT HAND, AND INTERIM PRESIDENT DIOUNCOUNDA TRAORÉ.....	243
FIGURE 21. STILL OF SERGEANT OUMAR KEITA'S VIDEO.....	260
FIGURE 22. PRESIDENT KEITA REVIEW TROOPS DURING THE 2014 ARMY DAYS. ....	269
FIGURE 23. THE SPECIAL EDITION OF LE CLAIRON, FOR THE 2014 ARMY DAY CELEBRATIONS. ....	270
FIGURE 24. CIVILIANS DURING THE 2014 ARMY DAY PARADE. ....	272
FIGURE 25. STILL OF A VIDEO DURING A BATTLE IN GAO. MARCH 2013.. ....	277
FIGURE 26. STILL OF A VIDEO DURING A TRAINING. SEPTEMBER 2012.....	278
FIGURE 27. A HELICOPTER CRASHES ON KATI’S PLACE D’ARMES, FEBRUARY 19 <sup>TH</sup> , 2019.....	310

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AQIM: Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb

ATT: Amadou Toumani Touré

CMA: *Coordination des Mouvements de l’Azawad*, the umbrella group including the MNLA, the HCUA and the MAA

CMR: Civil-military relations

CNRDRE: *Comité national pour le redressement de la démocratie et la restauration de l’État*, the junta.

DDR: Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration

ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States

EUTM: European Union Training Mission

FAMa : Malian Armed Forces

HCUA: *Haut-Conseil pour l’Unité de l’Azawad*

IBK: Ibrahim Boubacar Keita

MAA: Mouvement Arabe de l’Azawad

MINUSMA : The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali

MNLA: *Mouvement National de Libération de l’Azawad*

MUJWA: Movement of Unicity and Jihad in West Africa

NCO: Non-commissioned officer

*Plateforme*: Plateforme des mouvements du 14 juin 2014 d'Alger

SSR: Security-Sector Reform

## **GLOSSARY**

*Baccalauréat*: The French-inspired high school diploma.

*Berets Rouges*: The members of the 33e Régiment Commando Para (33e RCP), or the Red Berets

*Cité Administrative*: The compound with all governmental buildings.

*État-Major*: Headquarters and Chief-of-Staff

*Grin*: Informal gatherings where Malians drink tea together, from Bambara.

*Tombouctou*: Timbuktu, in French.



## **Chapter 1. The 2012 Coup: understanding the soldier and the military institution beyond eventful history**

The first time I met Captain Amadou Haya Sanogo, I had to stand for hours outside his office, waiting for him to address a crowd of journalists. It was early April 2012, a few days after the coup, and the junta struggled to reassure Malians that it was in control. Protecting a dilapidated former colonial building in the heart of Kati military base, a posse of young soldiers, wearing plastic sandals and cheap sunglasses, intended to look tough and showing the universal desire of young military men as if they were the cast of an American movie. However, they remained very polite with the growing number of journalists waiting for the latest junta's statement. Finally, Sanogo came out. He looked tired. Very tired. He talked to the press. His tone was quiet, and he took the time to answer questions, both in French and English. His answers were laced with jargon, restating the same points made in previous briefings. Although his passion seemed to have disappeared already, he remained courteous. Every journalist thought he was nice.

The second time I met him, he was in a uniform that did not fit him. He was nervous and moved swiftly among the crowd. While being offered one of the most prestigious seats during interim President Dioncounda Traoré's inauguration, he had difficulty understanding the protocol. When an opposition leader walked beside him, he offered his hand as the politician walked away. Everybody knew it was not the right moment to have the press take a picture of him with an ex-junta leader. For Sanogo, this was his first public ceremony. Despite stating that he had been the head of state for three weeks, nobody gave him the honours paid to Traoré that day. It was unclear if Malians were satisfied with the outcome, relieved or indifferent. However, this sealed the beginning of the end of the putschists. It also provided a snapshot of the junta.

There was something more prominent than the character of Sanogo behind those events. I have covered coups in Guinea, Mauritania and Guinea-Bissau. In all three events, a scheming officer took control of the government in a well-planned coup plotted ahead of events, with a tightknit group of young officers that supported the coup. Dadis Camara in Guinea, Abdoul Aziz in Mauritania, and Mamadu Ture Kuruma in Guinea-Bissau all followed a specified pattern, even if their reasons to overthrow the elected governments diverged. Support from troops was earned before the events and was fuelled by many years of frustrations and grievances, while a praetorian faction would seize the initiative (Alozieuwa 2010; Camara 2000; Idrissa 2008; Jourde 2007). Nothing in the story of Sanogo fitted such a description.

At first, the events of 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2012 challenged the definition of a coup and blurred the clean conceptual borders between a coup and a mutiny. Nobody knew Sanogo before the events; he had no political support and he lacked understanding of the basic functioning of the state. Besides, his military knowledge worsened the security crisis in northern Mali. Sanogo turned out to be a divisive figure within the armed forces and despite leaving an imprint on the hierarchy, it appears that the Sanogo episode would leave very few traces in the military institutions, even if it had an impact in Bamako's political circle. The mobilisation of the junior officers, NCOs and soldiers remained circumscribed to a short period, and it appeared to have been a wave that pushed Sanogo into power and then retreated, leaving him high and dry, rather than a controlled movement. While Sanogo gained support, as much among Bamako's citizens than on the military base, he fell into oblivion a year later. When he was arrested and prosecuted for his role in the killings of soldiers, indignation was limited to a couple of isolated opposition politicians. Even in his stronghold, in the Ségou region, frescoes of the imprisoned general were repainted. It would be reductive to assume that Sanogo was the embodiment of a random populist anger.

The fading star of Sanogo, supported by a close-knit junta, is thus only one side of the story: the most glamorous one, from a long tradition of portraying troubles and conflict through the eyes of barbarism or clichés of the dark continent. While shining a spotlight on a struggling subaltern officer makes good headlines, this ignores the more shadowy figures, notably the institutions that allowed Sanogo to come in, take centre stage, and then retreat into the wings. While we were all watching the show, nobody paid attention to the theatre: the Malian military institution.

Theories on coups and mutinies assume that these two phenomena are sustained by inherent features of the military: the monopoly of violence and its organisational strength. However, the Malian Armed Forces have failed to master either of these. The coup happened in a time of challenge for the Malian military institution. Before the coup, the Malian Armed Forces (or FAMas, from its French acronym) faced a serious military challenge. In December 2011, a new rebellion was launched in the North, triggered by the return of several Malian combatants from Libya. The first attacks in January 2012 soon became a debacle, worsened by the coup disrupting the chain of command. In April 2012, two-thirds of the Malian territory was under the control of armed groups and their Islamist allies. A French-led intervention in January 2013 liberated the essential cities of the North, but since then, state legitimacy has not been reasserted in the North, and the security situation has deteriorated.

Several scholars have attempted to explain the crisis. Some saw it as a consequence of a regional deterioration of security (Galy 2013; Heisbourg 2014), in the context of the frailty of the rule of law in the Sahel favouring criminal networks (Bøås and Torheim 2013; Lecocq et al. 2013). Others look at it through the lens of a failed, state plagued with corruption and nepotism (Boeke and Schuurman 2015; Heisbourg 2014), unable to protect its sovereignty

and to impose the monopoly of violence (Lecocq et al. 2013; Whitehouse 2012). In a similar vein, the crisis has been described as shaped by a hollow democratic system unable to overview security matters (Van Vliet 2014) and a central government unable to meet the aspirations of its minorities (Heisbourg 2014), while rumours and lack of information has created a governance void to be exploited (Gavelle, Siméant, and Traoré 2013). Few attempted to look at the responsibility of the armed forces, and when they did, it remained through the lens of the balance of force, with a lack of political will and strategic void in combat (Berrera 2015; Boeke and Schuurman 2015; Notin 2014), an incapacity to adapt to new imperatives (Traore 2018), or an outdated military infrastructure (Boisvert 2016; Notin 2014; Touchard 2014, 2017).

Similar to the discussion on the coup, the military institution is absent from the conversation: the crisis is the result of a force imbalance caused by the wilful depletion of the armed forces, by a state obsessed with coup-proofing, a sets of policies and tactics to reduce the risk of a coup (Powell 2019) . On March 23<sup>rd</sup>, when I called a researcher on armies, I asked, ‘How can an army too weak to fight carry on a coup?’ It was easy to answer this question through the lens of the brutal use of force: soldiers did not have sufficient resources and skills to combat rebels, but they still held the monopoly of force, which is enough to challenge the government. However, it is harder to answer this question through the lens of an institution that was heavily coup-proofed. But his answer mesmerised me: ‘You will need to look more at Freud than Clausewitz to understand the FAMas and its discontents.’ He was not interested in using psychoanalysis to understand the crisis; what he meant is that there were more in-depth and long-standing issues in the 2012 crisis than the short-term focus on a single event that us, journalists, were having at the time. In other words, the researcher shifted my

attention to the long-lasting dynamics of the armed forces on which the rise of the junta was just the point of the iceberg.

These are the premises behind the research project. This thesis studies the relationship between soldiers and a military institution in times of crisis, and the dynamics of mobilisation during the 2012 mutiny-turned-coup led by Malian soldiers and subaltern officers, the *militariat*. It investigates how a military institution, portrayed as inadequate and dysfunctional, can shape both cohesion and discipline among its members, and how it outlives a crisis. Underlying this timely and country-specific question, this thesis reflects on more in-depth questions of African civil-military relations and the military institution in the postcolonial state: reorienting a discussion largely framed as one on defective institutions into one focusing on the sociological ties that it can foster, echoing discussions on practical norms and on neo-patrimonialism.

## **1.1. Coups, the soldier and the institution: understanding a challenging relationship**

This dissertation intends to participate in scholarly debates in three particular aspects. The first contribution of this thesis is to a theory of civil-military relations, and particularly to one of its subfields, theories on coups and mutinies. The literature on coups and mutinies has been mostly concerned with the causes of military coups, and more rarely mutinies. The literature has also been developing frameworks on the improvement of civilian control and, to a certain extent, on coup-proofing. Few studies have attempted to understand the coup as a sociological phenomenon inherent to the institution, within which mobilisation in favour of a coup occurs, as well as demobilisation once the momentum has drained away. This thesis studies the mobilisation and the demobilisation of soldiers as members of the military institution, with a particular focus on subaltern coups (i.e. those initiated by soldiers from the lower ranks), as in Mali. It also contributes to an increasing debate on the longer-term impact of coup-proofing from the view of the military institution, as well as on the relationship between counterterrorism and military involvement in politics. It also reflects on the role of rumours and narratives in shaping the process. Finally, it addresses the question of coups as part of a longer-term process.

A second contribution is to the literature on the Malian Armed Forces from a military sociological perspective. The thesis analyses the social dynamics within the institution, as well as the primary sociological product of the military institution: cohesion. It contributes to the work of several authors, who attempted to broaden the discussion on cohesion within non-Western armed forces through a particular case study that attempts to revisit the concept (Käihkö 2018a). This thesis focuses primarily on the soldier's level, as the internal crisis in the military institution was precipitated by their demands, and also discusses how civil-

military relations interfere in the process. It also examines the process of bottom-up dynamics and upward mobilisation in an institution that is mostly studied as relying on a top-down structure, where a functioning chain of command is supported by cohesion and discipline. Either way, this discussion deepens our understanding of the relationship between soldiers and their institution and clarifies the concept of a militariat, beyond a group solely interested in defending its interest through a coup.

The third contribution is to the literature on postcolonial military institutions. Military sociology, as well as most literature on armed forces, has been developed mostly through Western case studies. The current thesis is an attempt to enrich the field through a discussion on the particularities of the African military institutions. While military sociology often discussed the exceptionalism of the military in relation to the civilian sphere, there has been resistance in the field to study African state institutions. This discussion on postcolonial armies has often been seen from a defective point of view: African military institutions being often studied by military sociologists from the perspective of the civilian control of the military or through theories of a coup, without discussing the long-lasting practices within the institution. This thesis studies an African military institution *beyond* a crisis and deepens our understanding of its sociological processes. It modestly contributes to the decolonisation of a field where concepts of local appropriation and local particularities remained ignored by major security-sector reform initiatives (Abrahamsen 2016; Baaz and Stern 2017; Ball and Hendrickson 2009; Egnell and Haldén 2009; Schroeder and Chappuis 2014). It focuses on two aspects: the inward-looking design (i.e. the core vs. the periphery), and the neo-patrimonialist practices in a context of security-sector reform. The next sections will develop these points.

## *Sociology of the Military Institution*

Conversations on the military tend to be oriented on the balance of force. The rules of war have not changed over the years; anybody can tip the equilibrium in their favour. This dissertation acknowledges that the question of a force imbalance was at the core of Malian crisis, but discusses a significant aspect that has rarely been discussed with reference to African armed forces: military sociology. Military sociology relies on the findings of classical sociological thinkers, notably Max Weber's work about the state and its institutions, where a bureaucracy exercises a rational-legal authority in the name of the state, and which is characterised by: 1) a sharp division of labour; 2) a chain of command within which coercion is specified and restricted through rules; and 3) regular and continuous execution of tasks by civil servants qualified by education and training (Weber 1974). Since then, authors have complicated Weber's view of state institutions as 'multiple overlapping, and intersecting power networks' (Weber 1974), highlighting how 'the distinct organisational capacities' of the military institution are expressed through its capacity to organise violence and deploy it (Lottholz and Lemay-Hébert 2016; Mann 1986:2). This fits a vision of the state with an extended definition including all influential actors in the public sphere (Migdal 2001).

The military as a state institution has often been defined through a lexical field exposing its particularities over its commonalities with other state institutions. Military sociology sees the military as central to any society, as a formally organised entity or set of entities responsive to the governmental leaders heading a nation (or equivalent government) and whose functions concern the use of arms to defend that nation state or to further its policies in its relations with other nation state or large collective entities. (Siebold 2001:140).

Two important features have been influential in defining the military institution and its exceptionalism. The first is that the institution is based on the management of violence, and the social process to transform the warrior into a working element of a unit dedicated to the maximisation of lethal force. The institution gains this particular role from a Weberian state and its bureaucracy, having the monopoly of force, which gives the soldier having a clearly delineated, and unique role (Tilly 1994). The second feature is that it is a total institution that controls almost every aspect of the soldier's life as 'a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life' (Goffman 1961:11). The military institution, as a durable physical and psychological force, hovers over a soldier's life, as the soldier is constrained to live on military premises, which has an impact on his professional and private life, including his family (Caforio 2006b; Davies 1989; Goffman 1961). A total institution is 'greedy' as it absorbs the time and the life of its members, erasing the limits between private and working time (Druckman and Swets 1997). This aspect has been nourished by scholars studying barracks as a social space that, while created by the institution, has aspects beyond its control, creating alternative forms of social cohesion (Baaz and Stern 2008; Basedau and Elischer 2012; Eriksson Baaz and Verweijen 2014; Hoffman 2007; Lutz 2002, 2005)

Military sociology has developed a body of literature interested in several sociological aspects of the military institution: the profound control of the institution over a soldier's life (Huntington 1957), the impact of service on families (Caforio 2006b; Caiden and Shields 2006) and better social representation (Duncanson and Woodward 2015; Enloe 1980; Weibull 2005; Woodward and Jenkins 2011; Woodward and Winter 2004). Military sociology has devoted an extensive amount of literature on military culture (Coker 2007; van

Crevelde 2008; Long 2016; Soeters, Winslow, and Weibull 2006). Military culture is the ‘deep structure rooted in the prevailing assumptions, norms values, customs and traditions that created shared individual expectations over time among members’ (Soeters et al. 2006:70). Military culture is transmitted through its doctrine and the codes of conduct of the armed forces, enabling self-perpetuation of values and behaviours (Callaghan and Kernic 2003; Furst and Kummel 2011; Soeters 2014), but cannot be summarised only as a top-down process of clear rules imposed by the institution (Long 2016:15; Snyder 1989). There is an argument that doctrine and rational judgement cannot be wholly dissociated from the concept of cultural roles, shaping perceptions even within the military organisation (Long 2016, 15). Thus, military culture ‘provides a common set of evidentiary rules and logic of cause and effect that lead from ambiguous evidence to doctrine’ (Long 2016:17).

Several scholars have studied the military as an institution with its own organisational culture, where routines, uniforms and rituals foster the integration of the soldier into the military institution (Burk 2002; Caforio 2006b; Kurtz 2008). Culture provides values and points of reference for the members of an organisation (Long 2016:18; Soeters et al. 2006; Winslow 1999, 2004). There is a difference between an organisation as a ‘strong, cohesive group with a collective mind’, and one that contains multiple flexible groups, often with self-managing capabilities and perceived as an ‘adhocracy’ and several levels of organisational culture co-existing in the same institution (Minzberg 1979; Winslow 1999). The question of several co-existing cultures departs from organisational theory to the question of specific subcultures in the armed forces, often within a battalion, describing how culture can work on a more localised level. Scholars have identified three different degrees of cultural manifestation within the armed forces: integration, differentiation and fragmentation (Martin 1992:130; Winslow 2006). The integration level suggests the existence of a global culture,

which agrees with the pre-existing body of literature on military culture (Hofstede 1991; Soeters 1997; Soeters et al. 2006; Winslow 2006). There is also a second level, ‘differentiation’, which considers inconsistencies between different groups within the same army; this means the co-existence of several ‘sub-cultures’ loosely coordinated in the institution (Winslow 2006:73). In such a context, subgroups become ‘islands of clarity in a sea of ambiguity’, offering clear insights on how to behave to their members, often relying on a more informal culture than codified rules and making an organisation more flexible (Winslow 2006:69). Finally, fragmentation refers to an organisation with ‘inconsistent, unclear and dissonant cultural manifestation’ (Winslow 2006:76). In such a context, there is no authoritative voice in the organisation, and individuals are free to coalesce into groups, as part of a loose web of relationships representative of the chaotic nature of fighting.

This question of the level of culture remains at the back of my analysis, as this helps me to understand the complexity of the Malian armed forces and make sense of the institution. The upcoming chapters focuses on three different aspects of military sociology: civil-military relations, coup theories and the militarist.

### *Civil-military relations theory*

Military sociology has been obsessed, since its emergence as a discipline in the 1950s, with the idea of the military career as civil service based on self-sacrifice and lifelong commitment. This conversation on the exceptionalism of the armed forces has become a core element of military sociology and has been developed under the umbrella of the theory of the civil-military relations, which analyses the relationship between civilians and soldiers.

CMR draws on political science, sociology, and anthropology, and is concerned with how military and civilian spheres coexist while assuming a normative bias towards democratic

control. It is also concerned with how civilians and the military create meaning of the armed forces, therefore trying to understanding the symbolic role of the armed forces in the *politeia* (Moskos 1988:11). It is linked to the idea that war and its institutions are integral to the creation and the development of states, as they mobilise resources and have an influence on a state's future (Giddens 1985; Tilly 1994). It thus sees soldiers and civilians in a dynamic relationship, which it attempts to account for. CMR has framed the concept of the civil-military gap, which discusses similarities and differences between civilians and the military while remaining aware that the armed forces are 'a microcosm of society' (Callaghan and Kernic 2003; Janowitz 1971; Moskos 1988; Segal and Segal 1983:152; Soeters 2014). The concept of the civil-military gap also depends on the institutional framework of the armed forces, as the idea of the gap depends on several factors, notably on a military institution that is 'corporate (exclusive), bureaucratic (hierarchical), and professional (mission-oriented)' (Perlmutter and Bennett 1980:28).

Two scholars set the bases of a CMR theory. Samuel P. Huntington problematized the conservative nature of the US military institution, in comparison to a more 'liberal' civilian sphere, seeing a gap between military and civilian culture (Huntington 1957:189).

Professionalisation of the army, based on enlisted soldiers pursuing a full-time career within the armed forces rather than widespread conscription, remains the principle way to achieve civilian control. It underlies the issue of objective control, wherein the military sphere abide by democratic civilian overview without having to modify its core values by 'rendering them politically sterile and neutral', as opposed to subjective control where the military is kept under control through the imposition of civilian values (Huntington 1957:184). Civilian control does not equal democratic control, for Huntington, while control depends on the qualities of authority: level, unity, and scope (Huntington 1957:87). Beyond a normative

belief in the democratic control of the armed forces, Huntington's theory also assumes that the military institution rests on a strong hierarchy, with a robust chain of command sustained by cohesion and discipline (Huntington 1957).

Morris Janowitz challenged Huntington's views on civil-military relations with his convergence theory. Like Huntington, Janowitz studied a gap between the civilian and the military mind, but downplayed the importance of the military institution in sustaining this gap: his theory defends the idea of a convergence where both sides influence each other, thus rejecting the exceptionalism thesis (Janowitz 1971:32). He believed that the army was moving from an institutional model to an organisational one, departing from traditional military values while being staffed with civilians, thus slowly filling the gap. This sets up the institutional/occupational (I/O) debate, notably with the increasing role of part-time soldiers in Western forces and the incorporation of contractors alongside the importance of technological warfare (Callaghan and Kernic 2003; Moskos 1977, 1986, 1988).

Later authors reframed CMR theory to readjust aspects of the theory to a changing world, notably the rise of technological and counter-insurgency warfare, without changing the fundamentals of the theory, and the belief in the civil-military gap (Caiden and Shields 2006; Moskos 1988). Over the years, CMR gained a stronger understanding of the practices and relation, as well as how this relationship between civilians and the military create meaning within the armed forces (Caiden and Shields 2006; Feaver 2003; Lebel 2010; Moskos 1988; Rukavishnikov and Pugh 2018). A theory of the gap contains several weaknesses in terms of accounting for the difference within the army, not being able to explain the variety of individual narratives within the military institution, especially at the soldier level (Sowers 2005). Similarly, it tends to agglomerate civilians without concerns about which group of

civilians have contact with the army (Caiden and Shields 2006). There is thus an understanding of the existence of two isolated groups, but the porousness of borders between groups and how many borders there are have been left aside. Most importantly, it struggles to account for the diverging perspectives between upper and lower ranks, and little effort has been made to understand the complex political, social and economic dynamics that shaped the relationships between civilian and security elites, and especially how these connections affect the ability to implement security policy and security-sector reform (Ball 1981; Ball and Hendrickson 2009; Sedra 2010). In sum, a more complicated picture of the soldier kidnapped by a total institution emerged (Burk 2002; Caiden and Shields 2006). This became a central point of my argument, especially in Chapters 4 and 5, where a discussion of social cohesion and an anti-elite narrative shared with civilians have become sources of resistance to both military and civilian institutions.

### *Theories of coups, mutinies and coup-proofing*

Theories on coups rely heavily on military sociology and civil-military relation theory, but remain hooked on political science as they rely on concepts of power and legitimacy (Clark 2007; Luttwak 1979; McGowan 2005; Sutter 1999). Theories on mutinies have always faced ‘confusion over meaning’ (Dwyer 2017:15), as they were perceived as a phenomenon inherent to and isolated within the military institution, where theories of military sociology matter. This thesis takes a more holistic approach to the two phenomena as it attempts to discuss the Malian case of a mutiny-turned-coup.

From independence until 2004, West African countries have undergone 44 successful coups and 43 failed coups (McGowan 2005). Since then, we can add seven successful coups (Mauritania, Mali, Guinea-Bissau, Niger, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Togo), and at least four

attempts (the Gambia, Mali, Guinea-Bissau and Burkina Faso). The number of mutinies remains difficult to assess. Several aspects remain understudied, particularly the question that initiated this dissertation of why an army too weak to defend the state can still mobilise to undertake a coup.

Defining a military coup remains a difficult endeavour, especially as, since the Zimbabwean coup of 2017, there has been several ‘coups-non-coups’ that has launched important debates on the essence of a coup (Tendi 2019). Patrick McGowan provides a functional definition:

A coup d’État involves the sudden, often violent overthrow of an existing government by a small group – in contrast to ‘revolutions’ achieved by large numbers of people working for basic social, economic and political change. Thus, a coup is a change in power from the top that always results in the abrupt replacement of leading government personnel, but may or may not alter a state’s fundamental social and economic policies or entail a significant redistribution of power among political groups (McGowan 2003:342).

A coup is possible when the armed forces can carry the threat of violence: this remains an essential element that the literature has never challenged. Thus, a coup has been understood as an event in which existing regimes are suddenly and illegally displaced by the action of relatively small groups in which members of the military, police, or security forces of the state play a key role, either on their own or in conjunction with a number of civil servants or politicians (McGowan 2003:343).

This definition acknowledges the importance of security forces in the outcome, but also discusses the importance of civilian bystanders. Theories addressing the issue 1960-1990 understood coups as an example of strong military cohesion, discipline and ethos: coups were perceived as the affirmation of the military core values over weaker civilians ones (Decalo 1976; Finer 1976; Gutteridge 1969; Luckham and White 1996; Perlmutter and Bennett 1980).

Samuel Finer's *The Man on the Horseback* became an authoritative book on postcolonial coups, as he was one of the first authors to dedicate a monograph to the topic in 1962. His argument relies on a sociological analysis of the army and provides an inward-looking analysis from the military perspective. For him, multiple factors within the military institution favoured coups: centralised command, hierarchy, intercommunication, discipline, *esprit de corps* and so on (Finer 1976:25). His analysis relies on a belief in the top-down supremacy of the armed forces. Finer advanced, as a central argument, that coups are caused by feelings of a 'manifest destiny of the soldier' which would lead him to defend specific interests, may they be national, sectional, class, regional, corporate or individual (Finer 1976:47). Most precisely, the military may be motivated to intervene because of the soldier's 'state of mind who believes in its [i.e. the military's] superiority' (Finer 1976:60). These causes allow us to classify coups into three categories: programmatic, Plato-inspired Guardians and temporary mandates (Finer 1976:247). Finer's legacy to the literature has been to define coups as the act of a military using its institutional advantage to impact policies. Coups are a direct attempt by the military to influence politics by grabbing all state power, by virtue of the Weberian monopoly of violence exerted by the institution (Luckham 1971:23–24). The Malian case-study, as will be discussed, contained the narrative of saving the state from a corrupt elite, but revealed more complex dynamics beyond the military upholding 'superior' norms and values.

Contemporary authors have challenged several aspects of Finer's theories. A significant argument that was proven wrong was the assumption that coups are caused by weak political cultures, democratic institutions and civil society, as well as the incapacity of civilians to exercise control over the military (Finer 1976; Janowitz 1964:12). This has been proven to be a tautology, and the thesis of a cultural curse has been rejected (McGowan 2003). The conversation thus switched from culture to institutional capabilities. Concerning the state,

security forces have an institutional advantage. Literature assumed that the organisational skills of the military make them better at seizing power, but not necessarily at keeping it (Resteigne and Soeters 2009; Soeters, van Fenema and Beeres 2010; Thompson 1976; Perlmutter and Bennett 1980). Other scholars have focused on corporate interests or organisational loyalty to explain military involvement (Lee 2005; Nordlinger 1977). Recent publications, particularly from political scientists, tend to see armies as a hierarchical body that abides by the chain of command, law and regulations, therefore efficiently conducting a coup (Rukavishnikov and Pugh 2018:133). This scholarship has emphasised the role of professionalism, discipline and hierarchy, rather than the decline of political authorities.

An influential body of literature highlights that professionalisation does not necessarily strengthen objective military control nor decrease the likelihood of a coup (Auma-Osolo 1980; Clark 2007; McGowan 2006; Perlmutter and Bennett 1980:4–16; Pilster and Bohmelt 2012; Soeters and Van Ouytsel 2014). Besides, the success or failure of coup is not a guarantee of democratic control: coups cannot be summarised as a statement on democratic vitality, good democratic oversight or firm civilian control, as numerous exogenous factors influence the equation (Luckham 1994; N'Diaye 2000a:252, 2000b; Welch 1975). The professionalisation of the army does not mean objective military control; it does not deter the army from intervention unless it is 'accompanied by the military's complete satisfaction with civilian control'(Camara 2000:38). In sum, literature on coups emphasises the importance of the relationship between the armed forces and state institutions to understand the dynamics behind a coup; neither the qualities of the state or of the military institution can fully explain a coup. Scholarship thus abandoned the idea of the absolute organisational advantage of the armed forces, an important element in understanding the 2012 crisis in Mali.

Finer's work has emphasised the 'corrective coup', undertaken in an attempt to correct a regime's moral bankruptcy (Finer 1976; Luttwak 1979; Vangroff and Kone 1995). Belief in the moral superiority of the armed forces has become a relevant factor in explaining coups led by officers (McGowan 2005, 2006). Because 'colonial authorities blurred the lines in their pacific endeavour', African armies are said to have inherited the belief that their mission includes 'fixing' a nation's political system (Houngnikpo 2000:222). This introduced a debate about the normative nature of coups in which the armed forces can legitimately interfere in civilian control in cases where the government acts against the good of the nation (Caforio 2006a:99). In the 1990s, a new wave of democratisation coups were perceived as 'good coups' as men in uniform seized power and then initiated a democratisation process (Anene 2000:241; Luckham and White 1996).

The scholarship on coups has identified six non-limiting factors contributing to coups and that can be identified as weakness of the state: (1) unconsolidated or non-existent democracy; (2) lack of legitimacy; (3) no cohesive national identity; (4) institutional incapacity and inability to implement policies; (5) economic crisis; and (6) vulnerability to external intervention (McGowan 2005, 2006). This also can occur in case of a civil war or other forms of breakdown in authority such as an environmental catastrophe or a political crisis, which leaves the government unable to govern, and necessitates the intervention of the army, without the institution wilfully pursuing power (Caforio 2006a; Varol 2012). Either way, Finer's conceptual legacy of a 'good coup' carries the idea that these coups are unavoidable, and that the army has to intervene to end a crisis. In opposition to 'good coups' that empower civil society and facilitated the emergence of democratic institutions, scholars have framed 'bad coups' as those in which the interest and privileges of the army prevails over the

common good (Luttwak 1979; McGowan 2005, 2006; Sturman 2011; Varol 2012). These were framed as coups in defence of the interests of an elite or a minority.

The literature has devoted significant attention to strategies for coup-proofing (Böhmelt, Escribà-Folch, and Pilster 2018; Brooks 1998; De Bruin 2017; Quinlivan 1999; Roessler 2011; Singh 2014; Talmadge 2015). The primary strategy developed has been about compartmentalising members of the armed forces into several divisions in an attempt to impede coordination and cohesion during the coup process (Belkin and Schofer 2005; Böhmelt and Pilster 2015; Piplani and Talmadge 2015). This strategy is often complemented with the creation of an elite battalion directly controlled by the executive and acting as a safeguard for the regime (De Bruin 2017; Talmadge 2015). Other countries prefer to empower pro-government militias with informal ties to the regime as a strategy to ensure that the armed forces do not have the monopoly of force (Carey and Mitchell 2017; Carey, Mitchell, and Lowe 2013). Other strategies emphasise personal relations over a structural approach, by ensuring the promotion of officers on identity-based criteria and perceived allegiance to the regime rather than merit, therefore fostering the emergence of powerful groups sharing an interest in elite perpetuation (Enloe 1980; Horowitz 2000; Roessler 2011). The emphasis on coup-proofing has been in tension with attempts to with developing a strong military institution, as coup-proofing often means limiting the capacity for the army to use force (Belkin and Schofer 2005; Böhmelt et al. 2018; Böhmelt and Pilster 2015). Building professionalism has also limited impact if measures only target officers or a limited group, therefore sustaining cohesion between a few rather than a sense of belonging to the entire institution (Albrecht 2014; Albrecht and Moe 2015; Bell 2016; N'Diaye 2002). Either way, coup-proofing is entrenched in an understanding of coups as top-down phenomena in which solutions need to be imposed through the hierarchy. Coup-proofing, as will be discussed in

Chapter 3 and 4, was an obsession of the Malian government, even though there were no perceived strategic threats to Mali before the 2000s.

Beyond a normative view on the process of political involvement, the literature on postcolonial institution has emphasised that ‘African armies inherited the belief that their mission includes fixing the political system of their nation’, as ‘colonial authorities blurred the lines in their pacification endeavour’ (Houngnikpo 2000:222). Military involvement in politics is a colonial legacy, and while there have been attempts to professionalise the armed forces, reverting the inward-focus of the armed forces has proven complicated. Meanwhile, there remains a strong legacy of coup-proofing wherein the ‘frequent reshaping of security forces in line with the directives of new heads of state creates a loyal core’, but a ‘frustrated mass, of security forces, and external engagement in security-sector reform should be conducive to a professional army beyond the immediate reach of changing presidents’(Mehler 2012:50). Processes of coup-proofing often included tactics of strategic exclusions where ‘the mobilisational capacity to capture the capital city if excluded from state power’ remains central (Roessler 2016:272). It remains an exterior threat to the regime, either national or international (Bove and Celestino 2015; Bove and Nisticò 2014; Bove, Rivera, and Ruffa 2019; Ezrow and Frantz 2011).

Military involvement in politics is not temporary: the more coups happen, the more likely they are to reoccur; the military is reluctant to give up power once it tastes it; and military personnel involved in politics forget their ‘military ethos’ once in power (Kalu 2000:281–82). There is evidence, nevertheless, that many coups are part of a democratisation process, and that coups are more likely to sustain a democratisation process than a return to an authoritarian regime (Powell 2012, 2014, 2019). In sum, the involvement of the military

within a coup does not end when the military junta relinquishes power, just as it does not begin when they took weapons to seize civilian power. However, the literature has remained blind to the impact of a coup, be it subaltern or not, on the military institution. Coups leave a permanent legacy on the military institution, and military regimes will be involved in the redesign of all state institutions, including their own (Perlmutter and Bennett 1980:18). The literature on coups suggests robust social processes among the armed forces, and that is the cause of the challenge to the institution (Singh 2014). Within the normative view that the military needs to be controlled by civilian institutions, coups have always been dispelled as an anomaly of the military institution: they are studied through the normative lens of coup-proofing without attending to the social processes before and after the coup (Albrecht 2014). Thus, the literature mostly sees the coup as a malfunction of the military institution, rather than studying social interactions within it. This is an important aspect that this dissertation addresses, focusing on the sociological process rather than the end-goal.

#### *The Militariat: understanding mutinies and subaltern coups*

The literature on coup has also accounted for a phenomenon that was absent in the classical work: subaltern coups led by NCOs and junior officers, not senior officers, who focus on grabbing power rather regime change (Clark 2007; Dwyer 2017; Kandeh 2004; McGowan 2005, 2006). Subaltern coups do not challenge earlier findings on the importance of discipline and hierarchy on the likelihood of coups, but contrast with patterns observed during the first three decades of African independence of coups being an elite-driven process led by an exclusive and secretive group of high-ranked military staff (Kandeh 2004). The emergence of subaltern coups challenged several assumptions behind prior theories on cohesion, notably the impact of class and social identity.

The notion of the subaltern coup is particularly relevant for our analysis, as these highlighted divisions within the military institution. In those cases, even if the coup did not originate from the top of the hierarchy, the discipline and hierarchy remained an essential feature for success (Kandeh 2004). Either way, while a coup challenges a regime, it does not necessarily aim to challenge the system: the ‘major architects of African coups have been those with significant power, not [those] on the periphery of the system’(Jenkins and Kposowa 1992:290). The dynamics behind subaltern coups are not about subverting the state, and do not challenge the system of privilege that profits the top of the hierarchy, even when they have populist claims to increase civilian support (Kandeh 2004:207). They express interclass antagonism, populism and the expression of anger of a *militariat*, as a group with corporate and class grievances, with a strong connection to the working class (Kandeh 2004:13).

There are three conditions for a subaltern coup: 1) planning and execution must be the work of armed regulars; 2) the senior military must be the target; and 3) it must espouse populist rhetoric (Kandeh 2004:202). A successful coup, in this case, relies on the capacities of NCOs and junior officers to impose discipline on subalterns, and on the ability to gather a critical mass of supporters. The narrative confronts the *militariat* against a corrupted elite with intertwined interests, resonating with findings from African state institutions (Babatope 2002; Dwyer 2017; Kandeh 2004; Kposowa and Jenkins 1993; Mbaku 1994; Morrill, Zald, and Rao 2003). This also chimes with a dialogue on conflict and political order based on elites, with roots in the societies within which they are located (Ellis 2001:27). These are web-like societies where ‘no single strand of social control holds the societal fabric’, fragmented and heterogenous (Human and Zaaiman 1995:37–38). The subaltern coup is also linked to the idea of a praetorian state using the military to maintain elite privilege in a context of social

and political polarity with a non-consolidated middle class, and low political institutionalisation (Perlmutter 1969:383).

The question of the elite, as well as of the long-term impact of coups, reflects the struggle in the literature to account for a relationship between mutinies and coups. A coup, by definition, does not have the inward focus of a mutiny in regard to the military institution. Mutinies, which remained much less studied, are seen as a flaw of communication within the institution, not a weakness of the institution itself (Brown 2007; Dwyer 2017; Rose 1982). Few authors have attempted to conceptualise mutinies; they have been studied through a broad historical lens and were perceived as being a simple issue of discipline within the institution (Hathaway 2001). Mutiny has been conceptualised as ‘an act of collective insubordination, in which troops revolt against lawfully constituted authority’, seeking a way to petition a ‘non-functioning hierarchy through the rejection of discipline’ (Rose 1982:563) without challenging authorities (Dwyer 2017; Rose 1982:561). At the core of mutinies is the belief that the institution has not appropriately done its job in keeping control of its soldiers, either horizontally through cohesion, or vertically through discipline (Hathaway 2001; Dwyer 2017). Mutinies are thus perceived as a combination of material demands and shared values concerning perceived injustice (Dwyer 2017). Mutinies are spontaneous and usually originate from the lower ranks: they are unorganised protests based on common collective frustration (Dwyer 2017; Rose 1982). A mutiny is a bottom-up expression of grievances within ranks, which results in few premeditated or purposeful acts of indiscipline. Mutinies aim to influence power to meet materialistic demands and not at changing the system. It is therefore suggested frequently in conflict studies literature that mutinies are about grievances (Collier and Hoeffler 2011; Dwyer 2017:6). In many ways, a mutiny is a phenomenon of the military institution: it does not intend to subvert civil-military relations or to challenge the political

order, but to transmit a message by the use of violence. While a coup is often associated with an army's discipline and strong institutionalisation, a mutiny relies on lack of discipline and weak institutionalisation. The literature has addressed the problematic issue with mutinies as 'more than a breach of regulations; it is a negation of the military essence' (Rose 1982:562–63). It differs from a coup in terms of scope and scale: it merely aims at voicing and then resolving a demand without challenging the hierarchy and is initiated from the bottom, while coups tend to be top-down phenomena. Therefore, the literature has shown limited interest in studying instances in which a mutiny becomes a coup.

As political scientists have produced most studies of mutinies and coups, the focus remains on power: there are several accounts on the military's political behaviour, but few scholars have studied the military behaviour of the army from an emic perspective (Howe 2001:2). While the literature has addressed the question of how and why soldiers conduct coups or mutinies, there has been a significant gap in research to explain the sociological dynamics of a coup and the relationship between these and the outcome of the coup (Singh 2014:11). Besides, the literature, as discussed, still struggles to understand the dynamics within the lower ranks, and the longer-term impact of coups on institutions. This dissertation discusses sociological relationships ignored by the literature and analyses the meaning of the militariat once the coup is over, focusing on the relationships rather than trying to focus on a fixed identity or a class.

### *Rumours, civil-military relations and the militariat*

Civil-military relations theorists working on coups have highlighted the importance of civilian enablers to the success of a coup, as well as the importance of acknowledging that, despite the armed forces being in the driver's seat, coups do not happen in a political void: a

coup is an exchange between the civilian and the military spheres (McGowan 2003:343). Several scholars studied civilian support for the 2012 coup specifically. Prior to this coup, on several occasions Malians had expressed their dissatisfaction with a regime that appeared unable to answer their preoccupations, which explains the relative support for the junta (Van Vliet 2014, Heisbourg 2014). Others have noted that rumours were an important factor in sustaining civilian mobilisation. During the 2012 coup, rumours strengthened civilian support and spread a veil of legitimacy over the coup (Gavelle et al. 2014, Traoré 2015).

Rumours were not confined to the civilian sphere. When I first drafted this research project, I did not intend to discuss the role of rumours in mobilisation, as I wanted to focus on the mobilisation within the military institution. Engaging with rumours became necessary when I reread my own notes from 2012, seeing in my notebooks my own struggle to discern what were rumours or facts. During fieldwork, it became easier to concentrate on the facts, but nevertheless it was clear that rumours, true or false, shaped the perception of the actors during events, especially during the countercoup, when Green Berets attacked Red Berets on April 30<sup>th</sup> 2012. While this dissertation does not intend to study the transmission of rumours between the civilian and the military spheres, it argues that rumours within Kati's periphery became a factor in mobilisation and have shaped the outcomes. This is why I decided to focus on the process, acknowledging the transmission between the two spheres, but focusing on what was shared in Kati among soldiers.

Scholars involved in coups and mutinies have discussed the role of rumours, either as shaping the narrative of an elite in power that does not understand the lower ranks (Dwyer 2018, 112) or as a symptom of growing distrust between the hierarchy and ranks (Jackson and Albrecht 2010, 73). While seeing rumours as little more than background chatter, the literature

struggles to grasp how rumours are involved in the mobilisation of soldiers, and how they influence the dynamics of a coup. This is a point to which this dissertation intends to contribute.

Literature on anthropology has discussed in various ways how rumours are tied to social dynamics, often through contentious debates. Classic anthropologists have understood rumours as the cement of the social system and 'the blood and tissue of community life' when there is tension between the elite and the masses (Gluckman, 1963: 308): rumours are a 'social weapon' of those dominant within the system; tools to ensure that the weakest classes are reminded of their place; a mechanism to control 'competing cliques' and 'aspiring individuals' while simultaneously acting as a form of 'social bonding' (Gluckman, 1963: 309). Other anthropologists oppose this vision, seeing rumours as a narrative that allows subordinate groups to express their views in opposition to the dominant group, a 'weapon of the weak' (Scott 1985; 1990). Later anthropological work has deepened our understanding of rumours, acknowledging that they are more than incorrect or curtailed information as a mode of domination; they are socially constructed, performative and interpreted narratives that reflect beliefs about and views of the social environment (Brunvand 1981; Fine 1992; Kapferer 1990; Kroeger 2004; Perice 1997). Despite disagreement on the political impact of rumours, there is a common understanding that rumours reinforce social ties between the members of a group often considered as subalterns.

In the next chapters, the relationship between rumours and the subaltern is significant. I have already discussed the militariat, and how the literature has understood its mobilisation in favour of a coup and a mutiny as relying on the assumption of a powerless group that has corporate and class grievances (Kandeh 2004:13). Several ethnographic studies have

demonstrated that, when individuals fall into a position of subordination, they will use rumour and conspiracy theories as a mode of expression for their anxieties, suspicions, fears and expectations about those in power. Rumours allow individuals to make sense of a situation in times of uncertainty (Turner 2004). Rumours are powerful devices in regions where political rights are challenged (Huang 2017) and can erode existing 'networks of social knowledge,' thus entrenching polarisation (Appadurai 1998, 229). Finally, rumours allow the construction of a social memory in a dynamic process that links the personal with the collective, and shapes social cohesion (Finnstrom 2009, Renne 1993, White 1997, Sheper-Hugues 1992).

Rumours do not only solidify social groups, but also act as a 'collective problem solving' mechanism' (Osborn 2008, 23). Michelle Osborn has studied how rumours in Kibera during the 2007 post-electoral crisis contributed to escalating tensions on the basis of reinforcing the belief in a crisis to come, and therefore pushing groups into action. These groups might not have acted without that element (Osborn 2008). Her findings meet a significant body of literature that studies the role of rumours during political violence (Kirsch 2002, Steward 2004, Stoler 1992, Tambiah 1996, Raj 2009), as well as on rebellion or 'subaltern resistance' to topple governments (Appadurai 1998,2006; Das 1998, Guha 1983, Kirsch 2002). In a country where information is rare and often controlled, rumours have remarkable power and can be turned into narratives that justify political acts. In this sense, rumours are not only about shaping the perception of events, but also the perception of possibilities and building pressure for action.

The role of rumours as sustaining mobilisation during coups is a crucial aspect that literature on coups and mutinies has not engaged with, and that I intend to discuss in the following

pages, especially in Chapter 5, where I engage with rumours and calls for action; rumours pressured soldiers to act, while rumours of a second coup led by officers has convinced the 2012 junta to seek action before it is too late. These notions were intertwined in the mobilisation process of Kati, providing a case-study on how rumours have sustained a dynamic among Kati's soldiers during the events of March 22<sup>nd</sup>, transforming a mutiny into a coup.

*Military sociology and cohesion: the sociological production of the military institution*

Military sociology understood cohesion as the primary social production of the military institution (Janowitz and Shils 1975). Cohesion is a significant factor in effectiveness in combat and is implemented through the perspective of an institution that can control a soldier's social life (Ben-Shalom, Lehrer, and Ben-Ari 2005a; Janowitz 1971; Janowitz and Shils 1975; King 2007; Siebold 2007; Oliver et al. 1999; Kirke 2009, 2010). There have been multidisciplinary academic efforts to enrich the concept. Social psychologists, who were the first to frame the concept, initiated a conversation where the most significant impact comes from the micro-level (the unit), while sociologists and anthropologists have emphasised the role of organisational (meso-level) and institutional aspects of cohesion (the macro-level) (Cassidy 2005; Hofstede 1991; Kirke 2009, 2010; Soeters 2018; Winslow 1999, 2004). While debates remain on the primacy of one level over another, there is agreement on a standard model of cohesion based on primary and secondary cohesion (King 2007; Siebold 2007, 2018; Siebold et al. 2015).

Primary group cohesion includes both horizontal and vertical cohesion: it is the social connection that soldiers create with their peers (horizontal) or their direct leaders (vertical). Peer bonding refers to 'horizontal bonding among members at the same military hierarchical level (e.g., squad or group members)', while the bond with the leader (vertical bonding) is 'between military at different levels (e.g., between squad or group members and their leaders)' (Siebold 2007:287). Primary group cohesion relies on 'norms and habits', with 'expectations of loyalty and ready assistance to other members of the primary group' being an essential factor that would enforce reciprocal bonds between soldiers (Siebold 2007:289).

Secondary group cohesion relates to the sense of bonding that soldiers develop, and that is not peer-to-peer, and that directly relates to an institution providing ‘purpose and meaningfulness by delineating specific missions, directions, and information, including scheduling prioritised activities and assigning the resources to carry them out’ (Siebold 2007:299). Secondary cohesion is sustained through leadership and discipline (Caforio 2006b; Huntington 1957; Kümmel, Prüfert, and Albrecht-Heide 2000; Osiel 2001; Siebold 2007, 2018; Winslow 2004), but also through the diffusion of norms, culture and core values (Furst and Kummel 2011; Kirke 2009; Soeters 2018; Winslow 2004). Secondary group cohesion is divided into two different categories: organisational bonding, between personnel and their next higher organisations (e.g. company and battalion), and institutional bonding, between personnel and the armed forces as a comprehensive institution (Siebold 2007:287). This aspect of cohesion relies on broader social and political macro processes, which are not adequately controlled by the military institution (King 2007; Malešević 2010, 2017), incorporating elements of mainstream sociology and organisational theory (Soeters 2014; Soeters, Van Fenema, and Beeres 2010).

A significant debate remains on the origins of cohesion, between a behaviourist school highlighting social cohesion, and a constructivist argument emphasising the role of task cohesion. Social cohesion is the mutual emotional and organic bonding between individuals sharing a common life, while task cohesion is the process in which individuals become a group through the desire to achieve common goals, a theory that relies on several studies on collective action theory and social psychology and emphasises a vision of cohesion as an artificially-created process controlled by strong institutions (Johns 1984:85). Earlier military sociologists emphasised the primacy of task cohesion at the primary level, consolidating a belief in cohesion-through-action; cohesion is mechanic and artificially created through the

achievement of common goals, which is a central element of military effectiveness (Ardant du Picq 1880; Durkheim 1949; Janowitz and Shils 1975; Moskos 1976). In this model, task cohesion is maintained mostly through a top-down approach: fighters are divided into units, which creates combat cohesion, and the military 'total institution' cements it (Janowitz 1971). Janowitz summarised this thought:

cohesive primary groups do not just occur but are fashioned and developed by complex military institutions... the goals and standards or norms that primary groups enforce are hardly self-generated; they arise from the broader military environment.(Janowitz and Shils 1975:94)

This concept was preeminent during the Vietnam war, where the training emphasised the use of binomen and where units were reinforced by strong proximate solidarity (Moskos 1970). More recent authors have developed a constructivist approach, arguing that a goal-oriented unit is a significant factor in sustaining the chain of command (Ben-Shalom, Lehrer, and Ben-Ari 2005b; Kirke 2010; MacCoun, Kier, and Belkin 2006; Oliver et al. 1999) and that social bonds need to be 'periodically reaffirmed through repeated interactions' (King 2007).

This also led to several studies that asserted that small units with strong cohesion are more able to sustain fire and to survive, allowing the soldier not to feel alone, a critical factor for morale and a bulwark against battlefield stress (Ben-Shalom et al. 2005b; Henderson 1985; Kirke 2010:145; Moskos 1970:156). Social psychologists have deepened our understanding of task cohesion by studying how temporary task cohesion can be created through goal-oriented objectives (Ben-Shalom et al. 2005b). Task cohesion is at the core of coup theory, as it assumes that the military is better placed to plot a coup due to its organisational skills and ability to work in secret, small taskforces (Resteigne and Soeters 2009; Soeters, van Fenema and Beeres 2010; Thompson 1976; Perlmutter and Bennett 1980). The emphasis on task cohesion has been criticized for lacking empirical evidence (MacCoun et al. 2006), but also

(by social psychologists and political scientists) for its inability to account for social factors in the relationship among units, including leadership and culture (Käihkö and Haldén 2019; King 2007; Lehrke 2013).

A different set of literature has discussed more organic military cohesion with more emphasis on the role of values, culture and ideology beyond common goals, adding factors such as the role of warfare in a society and the impact of the mission of the armed forces (Janowitz 1964; Moskos 1975, 1976; Segal and Segal 1983:161). Recent scholarship has renewed the discussion on cohesion and criticized a literature that has understood the military institution as ‘networks of small groups, each unified around specific forms of practice and then coordinated with others, horizontally and vertically, through shared understandings of common procedures’ (King 2007:20). It counter-argues that cohesion depends on the performance of the military institution creating favourable interactions, slowly setting social practices and cultural differences as secondary, even irrelevant, factors (King 2006, 2007; Siebold 2007, 2018). The debate highlights considerable disagreement on the performance of the military institution in creating favourable interactions and social practices. While this remains a vibrant debate among military sociologists, the literature has nevertheless challenged the centrality of unit cohesion, criticizing the model as deterministic, denying the effects of other essential factors, notably overemphasising the role of the military institution as a provider of cohesion (Ben-Shalom et al. 2005; Kirke 2009, 2010; Savage and Gabriel 1976; Segal and Segal 1983:167). Despite critiques, this remains an obsession of security-sector reform programs who see building units as the first step of wider reform (Caparini 2015; Schnabel 2014).

This dissertation does not intend to position itself on debates about the relationship between cohesion and military efficiency, but rather intends to participate in a conversation on what cohesion means to contemporary non-western armed forces, beyond a scope that is ‘spatially and temporally so narrow that their discussion of cohesion was far from universal’ (Käihkö 2018a:24). It also contributes to furthering our understanding of the role of cohesion in a coup, as most of the literature has understood it as a quasi-mechanical process sustained by the military institution. Finally, it also participates in a conversation on the focus on primary cohesion for SSR programs, and the struggle for more sustainable policies to reform secondary cohesion.

*Postcolonial institution: core, periphery and neo-patrimonialism*

The literature on military sociology, as well as on civil-military relations, has been developed from Western experiences (Barkawi 2015; Barkawi and Brighton 2011). While these conclusions might be valuable for several countries, they neglect to provide answers from a society where the nexus between the state, war and society is not as clearly delineated (Malešević 2010; Tilly 1994). Meanwhile, as discussed, the inability to account for cohesion beyond a Western lens has created one-size-fits-all programs that cannot discern local particularities.

Several authors in the field of military sociology have attempted to study non-Western case-studies while struggling to account for experiences that might not fit existing theoretical frameworks (Auma-Osolo 1980; Caiden and Shields 2006; Luckham 1971; Rahbek-Clemmensen et al. 2012; Rukavishnikov and Pugh 2018). There have been some limited efforts to breach the permeability between the literature from civilian postcolonial institutions and military ones (notably on the question of bureaucracy), but few attempts have been made to maintain a discussion (Basedau and Elischer 2012; Decalo 1992; Luckham 1971). This follows a more general call from several authors for decolonisation of military studies (Barkawi 2015; Barkawi and Brighton 2011; Porter 2009). Efforts, in this sense, have been more visible from military social scientists in the Middle East (Ben-Shalom et al. 2005b; Pollack 2019; Porter 2009). Much less effort has been made to root the literature in an African perspective. This is an important aspect that this dissertation is working on. There has been, especially since the independence of many African countries, an ongoing discussion on the African military, trying to address the particularities without questioning the normative views of how we came to understand the military institution (Anene 2000; Assensoh and Alex-Assensoh 2001; Baynham 1988; Cawthra and Luckham 2003; Decalo 1976; Luckham

1971). The challenges facing postcolonial military institutions cannot only be seen as an inheritance from the colonial period: postcolonial institutions have features of their own (Debos and Glasman 2012:11). This touches upon a discussion on the hybridisation of security where formal and informal security actors converge into a new set of norms (Albrecht and Moe 2015:2).

Theorists on state institutions have enriched our understanding of postcolonial African case studies, and their findings are relevant to explain the military institution. Literature on an institutional framework is central to understanding how the military institution works. This literature on the postcolonial state emphasises the implosion of state capacities, the rise of neoliberalism and the loss of legitimacy of political institutions, which has created a dangerous vacuum of power that is being filled by several alternative sources of legitimacy (Ellis, Bayart, and Hibou 1999; Richards 1996, 2005; Rothberg 2003; Zartman 1995).

There are two concepts focused on in this thesis: core vs. periphery and neo-patrimonialism. The concept of core and periphery refers to more than the spatial allocation of powers inherited from the colonial era; it also reflects the inward-focused social structures that have sustained a division between a privileged social class and a distant, disadvantaged one that might not be necessarily geographically isolated (Boone 2003; Hyden 1983; Lund 2006; Migdal 1988). Catherine Boone's theory of institutional design over rural areas appeared far from a theory of military institution (Boone 2003), but she draws valuable conclusions on the capacity of state institutions to adapt to different realities, especially when they grow out of a centralised power core. Boone's study focuses on a geographical core and periphery, and the importance for citizens in their relationship with state institutions. While citizens at the core experience the benefits of state institutions, those at the periphery, which tend to be in rural

areas, have limited statehood. In these areas, authorities lack the ‘ability to implement and enforce rules and decisions’, and there is no ‘legitimate monopoly over means of violence’, thus leaving its inhabitants with a limited rule of law (Risse 2013:3). In this context, inhabitants of the core have the full benefits of citizenship, while those at the periphery remain subjects (Mamdani 1995). As a state institution, the Malian Armed Forces have enshrined this issue of the core and the periphery. This creates the concept of ungoverned space where the types of effective governance being practised in Africa ‘are the result of choices between the delivery of public goods and the realistic extent of capacity and power’ (Raleigh and Dowd 2013:2). While the literature has studied how the phenomenon has affected the delivery of public goods, including security, there has not been a discussion on how it affects the postcolonial military institution, especially in a context where a coup is led by a militariat. This enshrines a paradox, where soldiers are contesting officers that are part of the elite, while both sides are closer to the core than to the periphery. This is a complex relationship that this dissertation analyses, as this impacts the relationship among the different strata of the armed forces, but also civil-military relations and, ultimately, outcomes on the battlefield.

A second aspect that this dissertation discusses is neo-patrimonialism in the postcolonial state. Neo-patrimonialism is a system, as it involves several practices, from clientelism to corruption, in way to ensure that a privilege few retain power. A significant amount of scholarship sees state institutions as performative rather than having deep roots in society, with a strong bureaucracy applying practical norms that, despite not following formal rules, remain a regulated space with its own rules (Bayart, Poudiougou, and Zanoletti 2019; Hall and Taylor 1996; Olivier de Sardan and Blundo 2007). This has seen ‘state-centric’ as the inability of the state to penetrate society and ‘society-centric’ as the inability capacity to hold

the state accountable (Mamdani 1995:11). The concept of neo-patrimonialism is contested, and I use it in full awareness of these debates. It is used to frame the performative role of a postcolonial state where the ‘rise and fall of the postcolonial patrimonial system has contributed to the sedimentation of a political (dis)order’, explaining that it is characterised as a state that is ‘informal and personalised’ and relying on the concept of ‘Big Men’ acting as patrons (Bayart 2006:19; Chabal and Daloz 1999:1; Utas 2012). These ‘big men’ are part of a ruling elite and consolidate their networks of support through clientelist policies both in and outside the state (Azam 2006; Boone 2003; Reno 1998, 2011). They are ‘local strongmen tolerating the use of delegated state authority for private gain in exchange for their loyalty and help in reining in administrative costs’ (Reno 1998:21).

Neo-patrimonialism comes with an understanding of the state as not only weak, but essentially vacuous (Chabal and Daloz 1999:4). In most African countries, the state is described as no more than a façade masking the realities of deeply personalised political relations where there is ‘little distinction between private and public life’ (Chabal and Daloz 1999:16). Those questions may cause us to question state legitimacy. Beyond those points, the state is also the theatre of the emergence of ‘imagined ethnicities’ where existing ethnic affiliations should be differentiated from politics (Chabal and Daloz 1999:56). Building on these ideas, recent academic research has shed new light on the relevance of formal institutions, challenging previous scholarship. It has presented that, despite appearances, ‘big men’ are themselves constrained by the rules of institutions and bureaucracy while challenging formal institutions and the modern state (Cheeseman 2017:260; Erdmann and Engel 2007). In sum, there is a binding effect from the institution, despite the ‘fragility of formal institutions’ and the ‘centrality of personal network[s]’ (Cheeseman 2017:2). In other words, formal institutions are shaped by informal ones, and they conclude that the issue is not

about being institution-less (Cheeseman 2017:18). Newer scholarship challenges essential aspects of the postcolonial state that earlier writings on neo-patrimonialism have simplified, trying to unveil what they deem a catch-all concept, ignoring that, despite facing essential challenges in rooting itself in society, it can 'shape cultural identities and personal networks' (Cheeseman 2017:23). This is an approach that this dissertation follows, looking at practices as relationships between several actors with different interests, which creates a 'patrimonial market place' in which elites must negotiate progress with all actors (De Waal 2009).

This dissertation participates in a critique of a scholarship on neo-patrimonialism in addressing corruption as a more complex practice than the violation of norms in the postcolonial state, which comes from the perspective of political economists seeing corruption beyond the specificities of the economic activity (Polanyi 2001). Previously, research presented corruption as something that arises when the state cannot fulfil its duties (Scott 1972:26) or as a response to a lack of meritocracy and professionalism in the civil service (Evans 1995). Newer literature on corruption sees governance as a fluctuation between officiation norms and practical norms. Practical norms are caused by divergence between official regulations and practices, which can be tied to social and traditional norms (Olivier de Sardan 2015). It is important to understand that these norms emerge from patterns (Olivier de Sardan 2015), and through a pluralistic approach to norms offering a margin of manoeuvre for social actors to be able to act with agency (Giddens 1987). In this context, agency becomes 'the implementation of a capacity for selection from a limited series of (formally and informally) regulated options located in the open space between official norms, social norms and practical norms' (Olivier de Sardan 2015:21). The ideas of practical norms and agency are important to understand the mobilisation of soldiers, as their resentment against the elite is tied to a feeling of distrust, arising from a disregard of practical norms.

This also relates to literature on neo-patrimonialism that has highlighted how the debate has focused on the ‘other’ in the act of corruption, and tends to ignore the issue of the ‘self’, as well as of agency at all levels (Wedel 2012:456). Corruption is made possible by ‘zones of ambiguity between the presence and the absence of the law’ (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006:5). It is a systemic problem, and to fully understand the extent of it, we need to look at the pattern of participation and the link between the participant and the institution (Johnston 2005). It is also dependent on a shadow elite, which has a foot in the institution and connections to other institutions (Wedel 2012:478). Corruption is thus dependent on a ‘flexnet’, i.e. ‘close-knit networks that guard and share information’(Wedel 2012:480). This network has prominent tentacles within the state apparatus (Schneider and Schneider 2003, 2008). It is based on ‘flexians’, a personalised bureaucracy that has privatized information. Similarly to neo-patrimonialism, networks and power relationships matter, and there is a need to address the hybridity of the system (Bayart 2006; Bayart et al. 2019).

An important part of the literature has discussed the emergence of big men as warlords, emphasising the role of greed and grievance in conflict in the postcolonial state (Collier and Hoeffler 2011). In such a context, state capabilities can also be gained through war-making (Tilly 1985). This idea has relied on a discussion that sees modern societies as the ‘unintended consequences of the business of war’, where conflict and the organisation of force are important features of the modern capitalist state, and where power networks established in conflict persist (Cramer 2007:172; Harrison 2006; Verweijen 2018). These particular aspects are important to the dissertation, especially in the discussion over the fluidity of relations between militias and the armed forces in the next chapters, but also on

how the elite has used ‘brokers’ who used their social capital to perform security tasks  
(Themnér and Utas 2016).

## **1.2. Organisation of the thesis**

Chapter 2 presents the methods and the ethical challenges facing this research, notably the question of my personal journey from being a journalist in the middle of the action to an academic researcher. It presents how mixed methods, in this case the use of a qualitative case-study and ethnography, have contributed to answer research questions in a violent conflict that unfolded while conducting fieldwork. It discusses limitations as well as how researchers can adequately overcome these.

Chapter 3 provides an account of the post-independence military institution and civil-military relations before the 2012 crisis, delivering an argument on the institutional strength of the armed forces. This chapter delivers a historical account of the FAMas as well as several factual elements to ease comprehension in later chapters. It explains the obsession with coup-proofing, and how the military institution became alienated from security policy. It also addresses important legacies of the colonial era, including the concepts of core/periphery and neo-patrimonialism.

Chapter 4 discusses the soldier and the militariat and begins to address the immediate causes of the 2012 crisis. It describes the social dynamics of the Kati military camp that have been at the heart of the mobilisation in favour of the coup, as well as primary and secondary cohesion. It also intends to address how postcolonial institutions frame the soldier's life in practice.

Chapter 5 delivers a step-by-step account of the mutiny-turned-coup and describes how mobilisation occurred among the militariat. It addresses three issues behind the mobilisation. First, it discusses the emergence of an anti-elite message in an attempt to influence civil-

military relations through rumour and narrative. Second, it analyses how different forms of cohesion have limited combat efficiency, while bringing together the militariat. Finally, it assesses how leadership and the institutional superiority of the armed forces were irrelevant in the making of the coup.

Chapter 6 examines how the junta was short-circuited, and what led to the demobilisation. It explains how the militariat, as an interest-based mobilisation, is limited in its capacity to control civilian powers. It also addresses the importance of secondary cohesion in the process and discusses the institutional autonomy that was created. Besides, it addresses the role of international pressure and the incapacity of the junta to transform personal leadership into institutional leadership.

Finally, Chapter 7 focuses on the legacy of the crisis on civil-military relations and on the military institution. It studies the persistence of practices, and how the increasing international presence has influenced civil-military relations, cohesion and the military institution.

## **Chapter 2. Researching the military institution: Methodological considerations and personal journey**

‘I won't talk to you. I think you are a French spy.’ – A Malian officer.

‘I won't talk to you. I think you work for the UN.’ – A second Malian soldier

‘I won't talk to you. You are with the officers.’ – Another Malian soldier.

‘I just don't want to talk to you.’ – A lot of people.

At several occasions during fieldwork, I faced barriers and walls beyond the desire of an institution to preserve an ‘atmosphere of secrecy’ (Soeters 2014:3). Those barriers were often physical, but many were also psychological as I had to adapt to different actors, each with their own agenda, and shaped by ongoing events: heroes one day turned out to be renegades later, adding an ethical conundrum as the balance of power shifted. From the beginning, researching the armed forces is a difficult task, as researchers are often met with concealment, harassment or obfuscation, and their presence is often unwelcome (Spencer 1973:91). Moreover, this dissertation, as discussed in the previous chapter, is linked to my own experience: a journalist caught in a military crisis that nobody foretold.

This chapter intends to discuss two aspects before engaging with the object of study. The first part clarifies the methodological contribution of the thesis on how to capture unfolding events from the point of view of a secretive institution, explaining the methods used: a chronological case-study and ethnographic work. The second part is concerned with the intersection between research methods and my personal experience with the military institution, notably language, positionality and ethics.

## **2.1. Methodology**

In the first chapter, I explained that this dissertation studies the relationship between the soldier and the military institution in times of crisis. This question needs to be seen from two different angles. The first set of questions highlighted the need to understand the sociological processes that have mobilised and demobilised soldiers in favour of the coup, relating to understanding how this happened. These questions necessitate methods identifying sociological phenomena as they occurred. The second set of questions aims at understanding how the military institution is responsible for the process, relating to the arena, including civil-military relations in a postcolonial institution. The methodology that I have drafted intends to account for these two aspects.

As a prelude to these discussions, I have decided to use mixed qualitative methods. Mixed methods often refer to studies that bring together qualitative and quantitative methods to answer difficult questions while broadening a discussion that may be siloed in a single language. In social science, the ‘best protective device against being taken in by one particular language is to be brought up bilingually or trilingual’ (Schatz 2009:1). In this case, it became necessary to vary methods. First, mixed methods allow us to account for a situation where events remain contested and provide the ability to offer multiple ways to look into a single phenomenon (Schatz 2009:17). Second, it allows the researcher to ensure the veracity of the data in an institution that may be evasive or deceitful to protect itself (Soeters 2014). To address the complexity of the phenomenon I studied, I rely on a qualitative case-study and ethnographical methods.

Elizabeth Wood has attempted to account for complicated social processes during unfolding events, using methods similar to those I have used. In her book *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*, Wood combines qualitative data analysis and ethnographic work to explain how support among rural people for the leftist guerrilla during the civil war in El Salvador has challenged interpretations of collective action during a civil conflict. Her methods account for the two aspects of this research project: an evolving phenomenon, within which participants have changed their position over time. Her analysis is based on interviews from both sides of the conflict, drawing on process tracing and ethnographic work to deepen her analysis of dynamics within civilians supporting the insurgency (or not). Her methods are persuasive in studying collective action in a conflict in which realities and allegiances changed fast. She has crafted a convincing method to study *ex post facto* mobilisation and political culture within a group, notably the notions of participation, defiance and agency while providing a real sense of the institution that survives beyond events (Wood, 2010).

The main point that Elizabeth Woods addresses, and that this thesis wants to build on, is how to account for social mobilisation, or for this particular research project, mobilisation of members of an institution. The situation in Mali remains more contained than in Elizabeth's Wood's research, as the Malian military institution consists of a finite group of members. Besides, when I initiate the research, a stalemate in events had been reached: the coup was over and the armed forces were already moving on, unlike Elizabeth Wood, who had to adapt and build an iterative methodology to respond to new developments.

My research design is thus inspired by Elizabeth Wood's work. The first part of this thesis provides an historical account of the Malian military institution, establishing a base for the current research. The second part of this thesis uses a case-study to understand the

mobilisation into a mutiny, and then a coup. This second part deepens our understanding of collective action within rank-and-file soldiers and how it relates to hierarchy and civilian groups through ethnographic work. It also intends to look at the longer-lasting impact of the crisis.

The multiple layers of the project aim to draw on the advantages of each method to provide a more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon. It intends to highlight the mobilisation process behind the coup and to offer a dynamic perspective on a sociological phenomenon from the perspective of the actors involved: the soldiers. The dual aspect also increases the meaningfulness for policymakers by offering both a dynamic perspective and an ontological analysis. Each approach is intended to be complementary and reinforcing to the other, in a context where political science has developed more openness to interpretative approaches and where there is increasing criticism of positivist methods as biased (Bond 2018; Fujii 2016; Knott 2018; Thaler 2019). Further, multiple methods is part of a strategy of conducting fieldwork that ‘must be aggressively and imaginatively reinterpreted to meet the needs of the present’ (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:12).

The dual nature of this work meets what some scholars have defined as an ‘ethno-case study’, which employs ‘techniques associated with long-term and intensive ethnography but limited in terms of research time, engagement with the data and the extent of the findings’ (Parker-Jenkins 2016: 22). While researching, I was concerned with issues of access to the field and I regularly reassessed methods, as well as data-gathering and recording techniques, to record valuable data, while studying the soldier’s perspective. Ethnographic work values personal and collective accounts through long-term engagement and participant observation, as well as understanding positionality and subjectivity (Jack 2010, Mauthner 2002,

Hamersley 2012). Building a qualitative case-study avoided such long-term personal engagement but might not be able to address as thoroughly the emic perspective of the soldier. There is an apparent tension between two techniques with a different approach on the relationship between the researcher and the subject of study. Although, the two techniques were complimentary and re-enforcing the focus on the soldier perspective. The next sections will discuss more precisely what each of the techniques has allowed me to do, and how I combine them.

## *Qualitative case-study*

Within the next chapters, there are two inextricable phenomena that need to be discussed: events as a chain of factual moments, and the justification by actors for their actions. I initiated the research with a review of the literature on the military institution, assessing the Malian military institutions and mostly found in Chapter 3. I have complemented these findings with interviews with scholars and researchers, which I use as secondary sources from historians and political scientists who have shed light on the FAMAs before 2012. The second step of the research project was to carefully record events so as to create a timeline of the coup<sup>1</sup>, as well as of the overall crisis affecting Mali. While most of the elements of the timeline were uncontested, there were some episodes of the crisis that remained unclear and which required further investigation. Providing a chronology has limitations. In certain cases, such studies, while offering valuable insights into a phenomenon, can offer a path-dependant argument. In certain case, the focus on a single course of action leads to ignoring events that happened in parallel. Jeffrey Weinstein, in his book *Inside Rebellion*, advanced a discussion on the choice of violence by insurgent group, but struggled with side events (Weinstein 2007).

I was very concerned about designing a research project addressing the question of veracity and rumour. During the crisis, as a journalist, trying to discern rumours from events was a daily struggle. Rumours and lack of quality information were responsible for day-to-day decisions from actors, which have been obliterated in the broader narrative of events. In this context, rumours can be more powerful than radio stations, television channels or newspapers (Gavelle, Siméant, and Traoré 2013). Several events that I was studying involved actors

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<sup>1</sup> The reader will find at the end of the dissertation a chronology with all the main events discussed.

whose perception of themselves does not match their action, creating discomfort that sustains lies, half-truths and obliteration. This is why I focused on gathering metadata so as to understand issues while discerning what were rumours, inventions and evasions. Metadata can be defined as ‘spoken and unspoken expressions about people’s interior thoughts and feelings, which they do not always articulate in their stories or responses to interview questions’ (Fujii, 2010:232). There are multiple ways to access and identify metadata. The primary strategy was to interview people multiple times over an extended period. Multiple interviews enable the researcher to respond to the fear and suspicion likely to exist in post-conflict settings. Knowing that informants can face reprisals from the army or their neighbours, I have been careful in collecting metadata, following Fujii techniques, while ensuring anonymity and confidentiality protect my informants (Fujii 2010:240).

For this part of the project, I rely on methods, similarly to Wood, where I do not focus solely on facts, but take time to gather information on other elements surrounding events.

Investigating rumours necessitates a prolonged time investment. Wood spent more than a decade in the field, following processes as they happened rather than tracing them. From my previous experiences in Mali, I have cumulated an important amount of metadata from my experience as a journalist. This data, as well as documents and interviews cumulated as a journalist, have become important elements of this research, even if the PhD project itself was initiated in 2015. While I followed a main narrative, I have included all the contradictory narratives and accepted them as part of the process. My objective was to study a mutiny-turned-coup through the eye of the truth(s) of the militariat, and their truth(s) went beyond simple factual accounts of events. The process needed to be able to present how civil-military relations unfold, rather than a causal-deterministic relationship. I have designed the research project to use process-tracing ‘as the analysis of evidence on processes, sequences,

and conjunctures of events within a case for the purposes of either developing or testing hypotheses about causal mechanisms that might causally explain the case, or to find generalisable patterns for the sake of theoretical argument' (Bennett and Checkel 2014:7; Soeters 2014:92). I was enticed to use it in explaining 'intermediate steps in a process to make inferences about hypotheses on how that process took place and whether and how it generated the outcome of interest' (Bennett and Checkel 2014:60). Although, during writing, I found that it did not allow me to deal with the complexity of events, as the method limited to a contingent event bound in a causal relationship, and was likely to enforce a path dependency into what I came to realise were a sum of complex sociological phenomenon (Bennett and Elman 2006; Vennesson 2008:94).

In investigating events *ex-post-ante*, there is tension between methodologies used by historians and those of social theorists, as these groups ask different questions. Understanding social processes through history can easily lead to the fallacy of being unable to account for the heterogeneity of events (Sewell 2009:101). The question of causal heterogeneity remains a significant one for this dissertation, as an effective methodology needs to address events' potential for transforming social causality, and to realise that 'an eventful concept of temporality then assumes a causal dependence of later occurrences on prior occurrences and assumes that social causality is temporarily heterogeneous, not temporally uniform' (Sewell 2009:101). It is important to avoid committing another fallacy: teleological explanations. The most radical events also leave traces of continuity, building an eventful conception of temporality in which 'social relations are characterised by path dependency, temporally heterogeneous causalities, and global contingency' (Sewell 2009:102). Further, embracing eventful temporality is not abandoning sociology, or another social science for narrative history, as long as the analysis demonstrates by what processes macro-sociological structures

are converted into forms of consciousness and the probability of collective action (Sewell 2009:107). In sum, while using history in social sciences for research purposes, it is important to be conscious of how societies constitute multiple overlapping and intersecting socio-spatial networks of power.

Thus, I was concerned to avoid rigid causal determinism, acknowledging that structures shape people's practices and vice versa, and therefore that enough people coming together can change the overall structure while acknowledging the role of culture, boundaries and norms in shaping such events (Giddens 1985). In this logic, events can become anti-structural, and structure can become the cumulative outcome of past events (Sahlins 1999; Sewell 2009:199). In other words, events (re)define and (re)shape structures. Therefore, we can find a satisfying conceptualisation of sociological structures, as the 'outcome as well as the source of social conduct, that it enables as well as constraints, and above all that it can be transformed by human social practices' (Sewell 2009:205) and a phenomenon that is multiple, overlapping and transposable (Sewell 2009:211). This leads us to the question of 'unintended consequences', and the disruption between actions and their outcome, drawing on Wittgenstein's theory of language-game in which concepts do not need to hold a definitive meaning, and in which meaning comes from practice (Wittgenstein 2001). For him, different language games can be inter-connected, and action undertaken in one game 'may be subjected to interpretations of responses in other language games of which the initial players are at best dimly aware' (Sewell 2009:352).

My main data collection technique was semi-structured interviews with politicians, civil society, military members, observers, academics and journalists. I have also undertaken archival analysis, looking at media and documents that could provide insights into the crisis. I

also analysed personal data gathered prior to fieldwork: notebooks, footage and recordings of that period. I treated them as third-party material, understanding that data has been produced by a journalist involved in the crisis, rather than someone able to detach himself from events. I have also included discursive analysis. I listened again to the audio footage, coding it to see how the discourse about the role of the military has evolved, and tracing the evolution of the power divisions in their discourse. These techniques offered several analytical gains, notably allowing an adaptive method in times where findings were likely to challenge the conduct of further research. This also help me to note narratives that appeared unimportant during events, as well as to identify soldiers' preoccupations. Its flexibility also allowed me to account for rumours, which might be difficult to investigate using other methods.

Several authors have used similar methods to analyse the armed forces. John Nagl studied counterinsurgencies in Malaya and Vietnam (Nagl 2005). While being more deductive than Elizabeth Wood's work, Nagl studied how learning occurs without the military, providing an analytical framework and contributing to a theoretical debate on military culture, explaining diverse phenomena, notably the adaptation of armies to changing circumstances. His studies focus on the end result and his methods offers limited insight into the process itself, however. Other military scholars have also used similar methods, but focused on causal relationships, to study different aspects of armies (Soeters 2014:95); the implementation of military concepts by the military institution (Farrell and Terriff 2002); the 'production of knowledge and ignorance' by military organisations (Eden 2006); or decisions on procurement of weapons (Tessmer 1995). While these cases had a stronger focus on causality than mine, they all represent a method of investigation in which chronology needs to go beyond a list of factual events.

I have conducted interviews with 82 persons, meeting certain interlocutors on several occasions.<sup>2</sup> I have also conducted five *grins* intended to function as focus groups with soldiers.<sup>3</sup> Focus groups could be conceived as collective interviews, in that I set an appointed time, invited particular participants and controlled the interview process. Several interviewees were met on several occasions, offering an opportunity to pause and challenge (without being confrontational) the interviewee by re-asking questions and verify the truthfulness of certain delicate observations. To support their claims, interviewees provided evidence that I recorded as metadata. This process happens most of the time naturally, with interviewees bringing written statements, letters, pictures, pieces of uniform, pay stubs, weapons and other evidence without me asking for it. These have become serious metadata, sometimes contradicting the story and always stimulating a conversation, sometimes on the limit of an interlocutor's own perception of events. During interviews, I took notes, as I did not want to carry a recorder with me. I would type all interviews on the same day, often adding personal information and context, which would be recorded in the same document of the interview in way to ensure that all metadata is being preserved, including drawing in margins and, in rarer occasions, pictures, when I was able to take some.

Documents have become a pillar of the thesis by supporting arguments that were difficult to prove otherwise. I collected several documents during fieldwork. I was able to access reports, press releases and other official documents that have provided interpretations on the inner mechanisms of the institutions. Individuals have provided me with excerpts from diaries, personal letters, pictures and other evidence of military life beyond their own. With the rise of internet communications, I have also been able to use social media postings (Facebook,

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<sup>2</sup> See Annex I for the full list of interviewees

<sup>3</sup> See Annex II for the list of *grins* intended as focus groups.

Twitter, Instagram, etc.) and blogs to research certain aspects. For example, the Twitter account of the Presidency provides an accurate timeline of what the government was trying to communicate while events were unfolding. Communications through Whatsapp or SMS have allowed me to maintain a conversation, often challenging factual evidences in a non-confrontational way, leaving time for interviewees to verify their claims. Electronic communication has become a valuable archive that allowed me to revisit moments ignored by the media or the individuals. While transcribing interviews or classifying existing archival work, I would systematically identify gaps and omissions, and refocus upcoming semi-structured interviews and archival research accordingly. All information was digitalised.

For both interviews and documentation, I used a standard double triangulation method: at least three sources were needed to corroborate facts, opinions or events. In cases where I am still struggling with veracity, I made it clear in the text. I did not hesitate to challenge interviewees with existing evidence. Most of the time, interviewees did not modify their original statement, even when provided with evidence of an alternative account. I was struck at several moments to see how frankly interviewees expressed their own uncertainties.

Information was recorded in nVivo, and this is where nodes were built, allowing to focus on what have become the important thematic that were being developed. I would supervise this process while conducting research in the field, therefore constantly re-evaluating the direction of research. This became a process of reiteration and reassessment, often returning to the primary material while writing.

### *Ethnography of an institution*

As discussed, methods were chosen to allow me to understand the coup, as much in terms of mobilisation as demobilisation of the militariat. It nevertheless does not allow me to account for the relationship between the soldier and the postcolonial military institution. The use of ethnographic methods intended to answer several shortfalls of a mindful chronology, as noted earlier. While a chronology of events and rumours allows a presentation of the overall dynamics explaining the (de)mobilisation process, there is limited ability to acknowledge the personal journey that shapes mobilisation and to notice the ‘sensitivity of face-to-face interaction’ that participant observation allows (Schatz 2009:5). It also intends to account for ‘multiple Dimensions’ , and ‘to explain the manner in which the local and the translocal construct each other, producing at once difference and sameness, conjuncture and disjuncture’ (Comaroff and Comaroff 2003:172). Ethnographic methods and the long involvement they necessitate offers more in-depth perspectives and more capacity to challenge the main narratives, as well as providing tools with which to investigate military life and culture *in situ*.

Ethnographic methods, with their ability to lead to introspection, challenge the existing measure of key concepts (Collier and Adcock 2001) and provide new analyses of rare events (Mahoney and Goertz 2006). They are simultaneously rigorous, informal and improvisational, which in a situation that is volatile and ever-changing, offers an opportunity to provide accounts that would not be recorded otherwise (Gusterson 2008:113). Ethnography allows for embracing an emic perspective of the army, offering the best method to produce ‘detailed evidence of the sort that can flesh out, or call in to question, generalisations produce or meanings assigned by other traditions’ (Schatz 2009:10). Therefore, it is not so much about producing abstract knowledge, but ‘new ways of seeing and thereby challenging

existing, often hegemonic, categories of practice and analysis' (Schatz 2009:15).

Ethnography, in this context, aims to check analytic reasoning and pinpoint behavioural outcomes (Bayard de Volo and Schatz 2004). For the sake of my study, ethnographic methods aimed to go beyond the inherent bias of civil-military relation theory on the trickle-down effect of a disciplined institution and think critically about cohesion.

One of the strengths of the ethnographic methods for the current study is the ability to question mainstream narratives and to investigate events beyond narratives framed by my interlocutors, whose perception is influenced by worries about the outcome of ongoing events. Here, ethnography is a valid method with which to account for actors who have reasons to obscure their preferences and beliefs from public view, as when they are engaged in strategic interactions with other actors and thus stand to lose advantage should they reveal their preferences and beliefs, as in nearly all political and economic negotiation processes. (Wood 2010:126).

Ethnography also accumulates a different sort of metadata: routines, practices and other forms of behaviour. Ethnography has allowed me to investigate rumours and to discern how the institution is able to penetrate the daily lives of soldiers, as well as seeing how actors shape the institution. This is a technique used by several scholars investigating the neo-patrimonialist aspects of the postcolonial institution (Olivier de Sardan and Blundo 2007; Prasad, Martins da Silva, and Nickow 2019). Ethnography has the capacity to understand the concept of framing, which provides an insight into mobilisation. Framing implies that the actors 'define what they are fighting for and whom they are fighting against, often in binary us-versus-them terms' (Bakke 2013:39). It includes 'mechanisms such as the attribution of threat or, in more clinical terms, diagnosis of the ills that need to be cured and prognosis for

the solution, including the (re)stating and (re)imagining of a legitimate purpose' (Bakke 2013:39). Lisa Malkii's work provides a robust methodology with which to study narrative construction. She studies how Burundian refugees have created a narrative of dispossession and violence, which she calls a 'mythico-history'. Her work has providing useful insights for me on how to research the creation of a conventional narrative in a closed community, and how institutions and cultures have their own narratives, with the capacity to strengthen identities and the building of a mythico-history.

Ethnography has been used on the military institutions by several authors, notably for providing a critical perspective on complex operations (Ben-Shalom et al. 2005a). An ethnography of the military institution can offer a view of the 'constant policing, performing, and imagining of the boundaries between in and out' rather than the 'imaginary inside' (MacLeish 2015:11). It has also been used to study the impact of military culture on a crisis inherent to an army regiment through ethnography (Winslow 1997, 1999, 2004). Winslow's body of work has allowed me to identify flaw in other studies, and to provide a more profound account of the crisis from a soldier's perspective. The current research is inspired by her methods, as she convincingly explores both the question of mobilisation within an armed force and investigates the causes of the crisis (the torture and death of a civilian in Somalia) within a battalion. However, these methods remain limited to explain the impact of the battalion in a larger crisis, and how the broader institution has influenced the process, focusing exclusively on the dynamics of a small group.

In terms of ethnographic methods, I have focused on participant observations. The disciplinary features of the military bases are a significant impediment to research: the battlefield was inaccessible, and several professional areas are denied to researchers to

preserve national security (Soeters 2014:3). I had to comply with stringent rules in terms of accumulating material. Taking pictures was forbidden, as is common practice in any military facility. Even when I could, I still avoided taking pictures or making audio recordings in case I was subjected to a search or my material confiscated, relying instead on my notebooks and a pencil as my terrible writing is indecipherable.

I identified two different strategies, which became my daily routine. The first strategy was to sit with soldiers in the area of the base that is dedicated to family life. I first used existing contacts to generate invitations and initiate discussion. Then, I joined *grins* several times a week, casual semi-organised circles where men come together to drink tea and to discuss. Using *grins* to understand the social bonds between Malians is not innovative, as these ad-hoc gatherings are easily accessible for a researcher; they occur on street corners and membership remains fluid (Bleck and Michelitch 2015; Bleck and van de Walle 2018). When I started to sit in on *grins* in Kati, I would have tea without accumulating any material; I often tried to understand how relationships developed, as young civilians and other non-military would join groups. I have sat at different *grins*, with participants varying over time. On some occasions, women would join the conversation without drinking tea: the *grin* remains largely gender-segregated, although younger women were more likely to join. When I asked what were the commonalities between members of a *grin*, the soldiers sitting around the teapot would not be able to state any: they were from different units, ages and families. While living around the Kati Military base, they were not necessarily neighbours. Nobody could tell me how they met fellow tea-drinkers, but they could all tell me about each other's lives. Discussions, when I would not ask a question, would be about money. They discussed the cost of children's education, medication, transport, etc. They talked about spending, but rarely about revenue. *Grins* are an essential way to gain a sense of group-thinking, as discussions

tend to rally around a point of view and conclusions seems to be consensual and communal. I also tried to have more personal discussions with members of the FAMAs to complement discussions from a *grin* or address taboo issues. *Grins* became a handy tool to find meta-narratives and to build a ‘mythico-history’, as participants did not hesitate to talk about deserters or challenging issues in the third person. As stated earlier, I conducted five different focus group during *grins* where I set an appointment and invited people to discuss issues, with me leading the discussion. However, *grins* were uncontrolled events. I would sit with some men, and people were free to come and go: I did not control the conversation. Some *grins* were very interesting. Many would just be men sitting in silence, drinking tea. I counted seventeen different *grins*, although I am not sure when one *grin* ended and another began, as people come and go. My notes from the *grins* reflect this process: a stream of consciousness in which characters complete each other’s sentences.



Figure 1. Tea during a *grin*

*Grins* offered me a valuable opportunity to stay in the living quarters of the military base, to observe daily life and to build a steady relationship. While conducting my fieldwork in 2016,

soldiers were slowly being remobilised in the North, which means that since 2012, they mostly spent their life in the military base, overwhelmingly in Kati.



*Figure 2. Resting during a grin in Kati.*

Conducting ethnographic work in the professional areas of the military base was complicated. Before 2013, I walked freely around the base. In 2016, following the deterioration of the security situation, new rules applied (see Chapters 6 and 7). Observing the daily routine of soldiers was far more difficult. After a few weeks, I realised that when I was making an appointment with an officer, I was able to remain in the professional area and observe the daily work routines. This allowed me to contrast the new routines with those observed when I was covering the crisis in 2012. It also gave me a better understanding of what soldiers described, and I was also able to observe events such as a recruitment drive, a ceremony for the Army's day, several parades and training.

My daily routine was improvised and re-invented weekly. Every week, I would set myself some objectives, often for interviews, and between interviews, I would spend time on the military base trying to catch some *grins* as they happened. My routine consisted of showing up, and then seizing the opportunities when I could, as there was no way to know beforehand where soldiers would be. During the process, I had to struggle with a secretive institution, and I was constantly worried that a *faux pas* might restrict me to pursue my work. Smartphones became an important complement to my fieldwork, as I maintained the discussion through Whatsapp, while I would be able to follow the soldier's trail on Facebook and Twitter. This gave me a stronger sense of the routine, as we would exchange messages and keep a long-lasting contact. I did not intend to have a systemic approach to 'chatnography', as these discussions complement real-life discussions (Käihkö 2018b). I did not intend to evaluate the popularity of a post on Facebook or try to analyse the impact: my goal was simply to maintain a presence with informants. Ethnographic work was based on finding opportunities to engage with Kati's inhabitants, often having a discussion around tea, and just being present. In some cases, I would just go to the market. I spent about two to three days per week in Kati from January through December 2016. I recorded observations in field diaries, and re-organised these at night, as I added descriptions and analysed my daily observations. I then used Nvivo to classify notes and to understand patterns and build a relationship between independent observations. This process also allowed me to create life stories of personal encounters and to make sense of their daily routines, helping to focus on the perspective of soldiers. At the same time, methods used for the case-story sometimes emphasised the narrative built around soldiers rather than their own. While methods appeared to be contradictory, the ethnographic methods allowed me to focus the entire fieldwork on the soldier, even if this method became less important. It also offered me an opportunity to add

some reflexivity through discussions with soldiers who would add essential insights into the process that I am studying. Nvivo allowed me to strengthen the reiterative process, often identifying patterns that I have not observed myself. I also digitalised drawings and, when it was possible, pictures, to have a more comprehensive experience of the soldier and his family's existence. Besides, I would continuously go back to my notes, using it to compare and contrast data, often to challenge finding that I felt they were not clear enough.

My ethnographic work allowed me to develop two concepts based on practices of the Kati inhabitants. First, I shaped the concept of the 'community of striving' (see Chapter 4), which explains how Kati's inhabitants developed a social connection that needs to be separate from a more professional peer cohesion. 'Striving' is the English equivalent of *débrouille*, which also has a connotation of being resourceful. This concept intends to take into account the role of military families, which, in the Malian armed forces, is crucial. This idea is developed throughout the dissertation to explain social practice in opposition to the emergence of professional and institutionally-controlled cohesion, but also to state that military families are not by-standers: they participate in the relationship with the institution. The second concept is the 'militariat', which I have discussed in the first chapter. While this might be seen as soldiers, NCOs and subaltern officers, I intended to focus on practices rather than rank. This left me with a very fluid categorisation in which opportunities and connections matter (see Chapters 5 and 6 in the discussions of mobilisation and demobilisation).

## 2.2. Sampling

In the first chapter, I made it clear that this thesis is closely tied to my own personal journey. Being a journalist during the crisis offered me front row seat from which to observe the crisis, engage with actors and collect material. My personal experiences are inextricable from the academic process I have been through; research questions were raised from my engagement with the conflict and my earlier experiences as a reporter offered me a set of tools with which to open the closed doors of a secretive institution. The events brought out puzzles that were left unanswered by current scholarship.

Objectively, there are several justifications for Mali as a case study. The crisis was an open process that mobilised the lower echelons of the armed forces in what has come to be understood as a subaltern coup. However, events in Mali followed a different pattern than other coups in the region:<sup>4</sup> the coups in Mauritania (2008), Guinea-Conakry (2009), Niger (2010) and Guinea-Bissau (2012) have all happened behind closed doors and mobilised few members of the armed forces. In comparison, the case in Mali was more transparent and mobilised a larger number of members of the armed forces, giving more opportunities for me to discuss the relationship between the soldier and his institution. The selection of Mali comes also from the enduring legacy of the Malian military institution. The Malian Armed Forces, in comparison to other armies in the region, has a rich history and strong institutional features: a military culture, an institutional memory, codes of conduct, etc. While an important element of this thesis is to investigate what a postcolonial military institution is, it appeared to me that Mali had interesting features (see Chapter 3).

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<sup>4</sup> The coup in Burkina Faso (2015) has important features of similarity to the one in Mali, but occurred after this project was drafted.

My struggle when designing this research process was to find a research strategy to ensure that I will not confirm the bias that I, as an actor in the crisis, already had. Meanwhile, the research questions necessitated focusing on the military institution itself, which limits the number of actors to investigate. The research occurred from January 2016 to December 2016. I interviewed 82 actors from as many backgrounds as possible: politicians, civil society groups, officers, NCOs, soldiers, military widows, experts, military trainers, civil servants and others. Participation was sought and targeted. I selected participants according to my objectives, and continuously set targets, seeking out people that could help me fill or identify blind spots in my research. I also used the snowball technique, as interviewees would also refer me to other people, often to back up their statements. I also had three mentors, retired generals who knew the armed forces. While remaining critical of their influence over my research project, once I identified a gap, they were very useful in helping me filling it. Interviews were mostly conducted in Bamako and Kati but some follow-up interviews were done in Dakar, Washington and Paris. I have made an official demand of approval through the Army's department of public affairs, which was granted after six months of lobbying. In the meantime, no officers or soldiers asked the hierarchy's permission to meet with them. Even some of the highest officers in the *État-Major* met with me, knowing my motives, without asking me for the permission. Several possible interviewees refused to talk to me, I did not insist.

For the ethnographic work, I focused mainly on the Kati military base, but also conducted research at the Camp Djicoroni-Para, where the 33e Regiment of Commando Parachutistes (33e RCP) are based, nicknamed the *Berets Rouges* from their characteristic red berets, as well as at the *État-Major* (the offices of the chief-of-staff and all senior officers) and an

engineering corps camp. The selection of Kati for the ethnographic work was inherent to the selection of Mali as a case-study. Kati was the epicentre of both the coup and the military collapse. It is also the main base in Mali, where the military start and spend most of their career. All corps, including the *Berets Rouges*, spend their first years of training in Kati. Further, almost all of the military schools or main military offices are either in Kati or in the surroundings of Bamako, and several of their students remained housed in Kati while assuming their functions.

Kati is thus the heart of Malian military life. Participant observation was facilitated by contacts I already had before the fieldwork or who were introduced to me while conducting interviews. Once I was introduced, it became easier to approach people and to interact with them in a more informal way. During this part of the study, I singled out possible participants and used them as gatekeepers. They would introduce me to *grins*, allowing me to meet people during their spare time, as I thought being under the scrutiny of their superiors might alter answers. I have also spoken to members of specialised battalions that are not based in Kati, notably the engineer corps (my neighbours in 2011-2012), and members of other security forces: the Gendarmerie, the Garde nationale and the Garde présidentielle. Although, while their contribution to this thesis needed to be acknowledged, I decided not to emphasise their role. In sum, this dissertation is about the soldier, and I decided to limit the discussion on paramilitaries.

While trying to expand my network of relations, I identified two critical aspects that I felt I need to make a special effort with: gender and the generational gap. At the beginning of the research, I realise that my list of contacts did not contain a single woman. I did not intend to focus particularly on gender, but I thought that it was necessary to increase gender

inclusiveness. While women have been integrated into the Malian Armed Forces since the 1970s, they remained, before 2012 and beyond, absent from fighting roles, and were mostly assigned bureaucratic tasks. This does not mean they are not influential, but rather that they have a different role. This *de facto* segregation forced me to develop strategies to target women. This came naturally while spending hours waiting for appointments, being confined in a room full of female bureaucratic staff was an entire set of fieldwork in itself. As I needed to get permission from the military institution to conduct research, I devoted the waiting time to discussing this aspect. This is how I came to converse with military widows. It became clear to me that the marginalisation of women in the armed forces meant that investing too much time to this would divert my work from its original task, but I nevertheless took time to ensure their voice was heard.

My second issue was generational. I had very strong contacts with officers of all ages, whom it was easy to meet and discuss. I nevertheless struggled to meet middle-aged soldiers and NCOs. I made a special effort to reach out to the generation of soldiers recruited during the military dictatorship of Moussa Traoré and in the early days of the democratisation process. While not able to be as thorough as I would have liked in understanding the generational divide, I have made a consistent effort to address the issue. This allowed me to go beyond a strict categorisation and assess membership of groups in an iterative process, as well as the relationship of soldiers to their institution and the civil-military relationship.

### 2.3. Ethics

At the beginning of this chapter, I discussed how military institutions resist study. The complexity does not come solely from the military side: social scientists have also resisted building a relationship with military institutions. Either way, my position as a researcher has been complex, and research was a daily struggle. Access remained a paradox of the research project: it was all about ‘gaining entry while maintaining distance’ (Ben-Ari 2014).

Conducting interviews remained the easiest part, as I would be able to make an appointment and thus gain entry to a military base. Knowing exactly what I was working on made several interviewees more open to talking to me. As already discussed, the ethnographic part was more problematic.

There are real ethical issues that need to be addressed. Social scientists tend to see the study of the military as an ethically-loaded issue, and involvement with the military is on the premises that findings could be instrumentalised (Lucas 2008; Network of Concerned Anthropologists 2009). This issue raised with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the development of American human terrain system, which instrumentalised social scientists for the sake of the war against terror. This thesis was reviewed by an ethical board from the University of East Anglia.<sup>5</sup> The board agreed a strategy to provide anonymity and confidentiality to participants. Participants were all adults and able to consent, which limits the scope of ethical concerns. From this, I developed an informed consent strategy that would allow me to conform to the standards set by the ethical review. I also set rules prior to departure, on access, incentives, consent, risk, confidentiality and feedback.

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<sup>5</sup> See Annex III for the full Ethic Review and Annex IV for the informed consent strategy.

In line with the rules on anonymity and confidentiality, and as I was afraid that recorders could be confiscated on the military precinct, I took the precaution of basing my strategy on oral consent rather than written consent. I decided not to give anonymity to Colonel-Major Sega Sissoko, former director of the Museum of the Armed Forces, who passed away in 2015. In 2011, I sat for hours with him. He was recorded knowing that I would use this data publicly. Besides, as he was a well-known figure, it was impossible to anonymize him. I have no reasons to believe that what he said would bring any harm to him, his family or his legacy. Further, offering credit is a posthumous attempt to highlight the work of a man who dedicated his later days to the history of his own institution.

This research is about men and women who broke the law and transgressed norms to conduct a mutiny and support a coup. While I was able to meet with some of the individuals that were prosecuted prior to my fieldwork in 2016 as a journalist, nobody that I have met during the current fieldwork has been prosecuted for their role in the mutiny-turned-coup. Knowing that this remains a possibility, I have ensured absolute anonymity and confidentiality for those individuals, sometimes not even writing the name of the interviewees in my notebooks, and other times not recording their cell phone numbers in my phone.<sup>6</sup>

During interviews, the question of violence was inescapable. Institutionally-controlled violence is a fact: if it were not ‘socially well organised, wide-participation fighting would not be possible’ (Collins 2008:11). The Malian army has been at war since 2012 and have been itself a victim of violence. Through tears and personal testimonies, I have met several soldiers that have to face the daily burden of trauma. This is an inevitable problem of any

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<sup>6</sup> These precautions turned out to be unnecessary, as nobody searched my notes or my phone, and nobody questioned me on my research.

researcher entering the murky world of an institution that retains a lot of dirty secrets and dark corners, even when it proceeds in full legality (Ben-Ari 2014).

A real ethical conundrum that I faced related to violence against civilians. This research project is also about an army that has been accused of human rights abuses and indiscriminate violence by several human rights groups, including *Fédération Internationale des Droits de l'Homme*, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. An army is in the business of violence, and therefore there is a need to acknowledge that I faced people who are likely to have committed atrocities (later experiences brought me face-to-face with members of the armed forces who admitted the use of uncontrolled violence). During fieldwork, I also interviewed individuals that have or will be investigated for white-collar crimes.

During the research, I made it clear to respondents that they would not receive anything personally in return of their participation. I believe that most soldiers talked to me because I was introduced by a familiar face. Officers and more educated members of the armed forces talked to me, often believing that my research could help the current process of reforming the armed forces and believed that the outcome could benefit the entire institution. At the same time, with many officers I discussed issues other than the one addressed in this thesis.

Nobody ever asked me to contribute to the tea for the *grin*, although I did bring some of my own volition to express reciprocity. During the entire process, almost every participant spoke freely, often very critical of the military institution. Once I gained access, it was easy to have frank and direct conversations. I provided written excerpts of the thesis to some participants so they could provide me with feedback. I have also presented my results to several actors with the crisis, thus keeping alive the discussion. I did this cautiously, however, again mindful of safeguarding my participants' anonymity and confidentiality.

## 2.4. Positionality and reflexivity

There has been a struggle between sociologists and anthropologists on the essence of modernity, and how to account for multiple meta-narratives (Englund and Leach 2000; Giddens 1999:226). I struggled with several concepts that influenced how I would orient my research, notably ‘postcoloniality’. This was the result of iterative and inductive methods, as well as a constant struggle with reflexivity (Ruby and Myerhoff 1982). I intended, with these methods, to ensure that my interlocutor had a ‘measure of authority in producing an understanding of their life-worlds’ (Englund and Leach 2000:227). The struggle on positionality in military social science is a debate that entails several particularities of an institution, based on the disavowal of one’s identity, and where it is rare that questions of one’s personality emerge. In a context where it is taboo to question authority, it is difficult to deconstruct the power relationships that a researcher can have on this subject (González 2012; Winslow 2004). My methods included discussions with officers, with a certain confidence in their own voice, and with soldiers who did not have the same level of confidence. I needed adaptation and constant reassessment.

*Grins*, especially those that were not focus-groups, have been useful to address power dynamics, as the emergence of a collective voice offered an opportunity for the soldiers to blend with one another within the group’s narrative, thus indicating ‘the contexts which are relevant to their own practices and by interrogating basic analytical notions such as the concept of the person’ (Englund and Leach 2000:239). Having said that, I have, during the process of research, constantly reassessed the power dynamics, realising that different aspects of my identity challenged different interviewees.

I already discussed how much this research project had been conceived following my professional experiences. Working and living in Mali in 2011 and 2012, as well as several trips before and after this, represents both a strength and a weakness. Personal connections and mutual respect give a researcher the opportunity to go in-depth. However, for several of those actors, it also means that they see me as an ‘actor’ as I was involved in the events. In several occasions, I was introduced as a ‘journalist’ and had to insist that I was not anymore. I made it a point to make sure that every interviewee understood the difference between my former and current role to ensure the confidentiality/anonymity of the current work. While some of my informants clearly understood the different roles, I had a sense that many did not fully acknowledge this. On the other side, trust was established with several military sources, which I have used as anonymous sources for years. I came to the conclusion that many were talking to Marc-André, and did not actually differentiate between my functions.

Being a male can be an advantage to research in a masculine environment, but undermines a gender perspective, which impact remains limited as women are poorly integrated into the Malian army. During the research, it turns out that, as I spent a lot of time waiting for officers in offices, I had privileged access to women in uniforms, with many whom I saw on a daily base. Nevertheless, most soldiers were men, and this had minimal impact on the project.

Being a white foreigner was a more significant barrier, even if the Malian army is used to working with foreigners, particularly Western collaborators, and I was surprised to realise how normalised the conversation was. There was also a linguistic challenge. Most soldiers were fluent in French, but other could barely express themselves in French or felt uncomfortable using the coloniser's language and were more comfortable speaking in Bambara. I moved beyond this obstacle by getting introduced by gatekeepers and by nurturing relationships in the field. Spending a year undertaking this work, as well as having

lived in Mali previously, decreased the barrier. I was nevertheless very aware of the power dynamics of language. Conversations with soldiers were conducted in French. When I was in a one-to-one situation, I would paraphrase what they had said and vary my language to make sure that I understood well what they were telling me. In cases where I have more than one person in front of me, their colleagues helped them to formulate in French an idea initially expressed in Bambara. Once again, I would paraphrase what they would say. During a meeting, one soldier, who is used to me, said, 'Oh. He is Canadian. His French is not that good. But he is always making sure that he understands well. Talk to him slowly. He listens well'. This comment suggested that my strategy worked, and that they did not feel diminished.

During this research, I always felt that I was 'on probation': that a bad move could lead to me being banned from undertaking any further fieldwork or that my material would be confiscated, if I did not engage properly. Several interlocutors knew they had this power over me: I was on their territory and on their conditions. While I reiterated my strategy of informed consent, it appeared clear that whoever did not feel comfortable in talking with me would simply not do so. Several individuals simply ghosted me or ignored me, while others would accept my presence but would avoid answering my questions.

In the first sections of this chapter, I have discussed how my methods were shaped by an iterative process: data was constantly re-analysed, and research reoriented weekly to capture essential aspects that might have been left out. Reflexivity is a cornerstone of my research design: my previous inability to answer the research questions framed my journey, and therefore, challenging my pre-existing thoughts was crucial. This is where I believe the ethnographic work has been crucial for the success of my dissertation: discussing with

soldiers and their family around the base, including on my preliminary findings, as well as maintaining communication channels with senior soldiers has fed me with valuable discussions that reshaped my personal assumptions. This has been crucial in challenging my preliminary thoughts on the leadership of Captain Sanogo and the junta. These discussions have also been proven essential to understand the impact of corruption in cohesion, as my discussions with rank and files provided a different view on new recruitment than my own. Besides, cumulating meta-data along the way, bringing artefacts to create a discussion has allowed me to reposition myself, and forced me to question how my positionality can generate a bias continually.

## 2.5. Limitations of methods

At this point, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the current study, and the strategy that I have drafted to lessen their impact on findings. The main limitations have been addressed throughout this chapter: researching a secretive institution in difficult times where there has been a lot of suspicion about a stranger's research. As shown at the beginning of the chapter, there were suggestions that I was a spy, working with officers or any other bias that the institution or the soldier ascribed to me. I reiterate that this has been a daily struggle, and that this influenced the thoroughness of the research. This is why I did not emphasise the individuality of voices but attempted to focus on consent. In this context, accounts of clearly-defined individual agency remain limited.

There were some serious limitations due to the timing of research. During fieldwork, Mali remained in conflict. When I drafted the research project, I thought the security situation would improve; it worsened. The security situation limited my ability to conduct fieldwork and restricted me to the Bamako region. Prior to the PhD research, I was able to travel around the country and visit the military bases in the conflict area. I, therefore, draw on those experiences, and on the literature, to ensure that the data takes these realities into account. I also targeted military staff who were posted outside Bamako to ensure a variety of points of view, notably from military staff that were active at the front and could provide an alternative account to that of staff that never left Kati. But the geographical constraints limited my ability to meet with soldiers deployed at the front or to other military bases around Mali. This had a limited impact on the goal of the research, as I am mostly interested in mobilisation within the Kati military base in 2012-2016.

I have already discussed the issue of researching during ongoing events, in which participants might face consequences for their actions, and therefore might avoid talking about certain issues or tell me lies. For soldiers, there are several reasons to provide inaccurate accounts: hiding weakness, ensuring they will not be prosecuted and/or defending their own interest. I remained cautious throughout the study about this, and the combination of interviews and participant observation became the main safeguard, as it offered me different angles from which to look at the same phenomenon.

I was not free to move and struggled with the institution to find alternative ways to collect data. Participant observation remains difficult on a military base where loitering is not permitted. My limited access to the soldier's professional space is an important issue. I was forbidden to return to the front and to observe new combat routines while conducting research for this thesis. In 2016, the redeployment of Malian soldiers beyond the Sévaré line was limited, but has been slowly increasing since then.

## 2.6. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the methods used to conduct the research, and the barriers met encountered during the research. The reliance on mixed qualitative methods has allowed me to blend several methods, to ensure that as well as a factual account, metadata, including routines and power dynamics within the Kati military base, could be recorded. They also offer a significant safeguard to an ambitious research project conducted in difficult conditions, as I could look at the same phenomenon from different angles.

The research design enabled significant space to adapt to the volatility of events: I witness an institution that was forced to adapt. When I initiated the process, I could not have anticipated the upsurge of violence unfolding in front of me. Iterative and inductive methods provide me with an opportunity to react to events during the research, while several aspects changed swiftly once fieldwork was terminated.

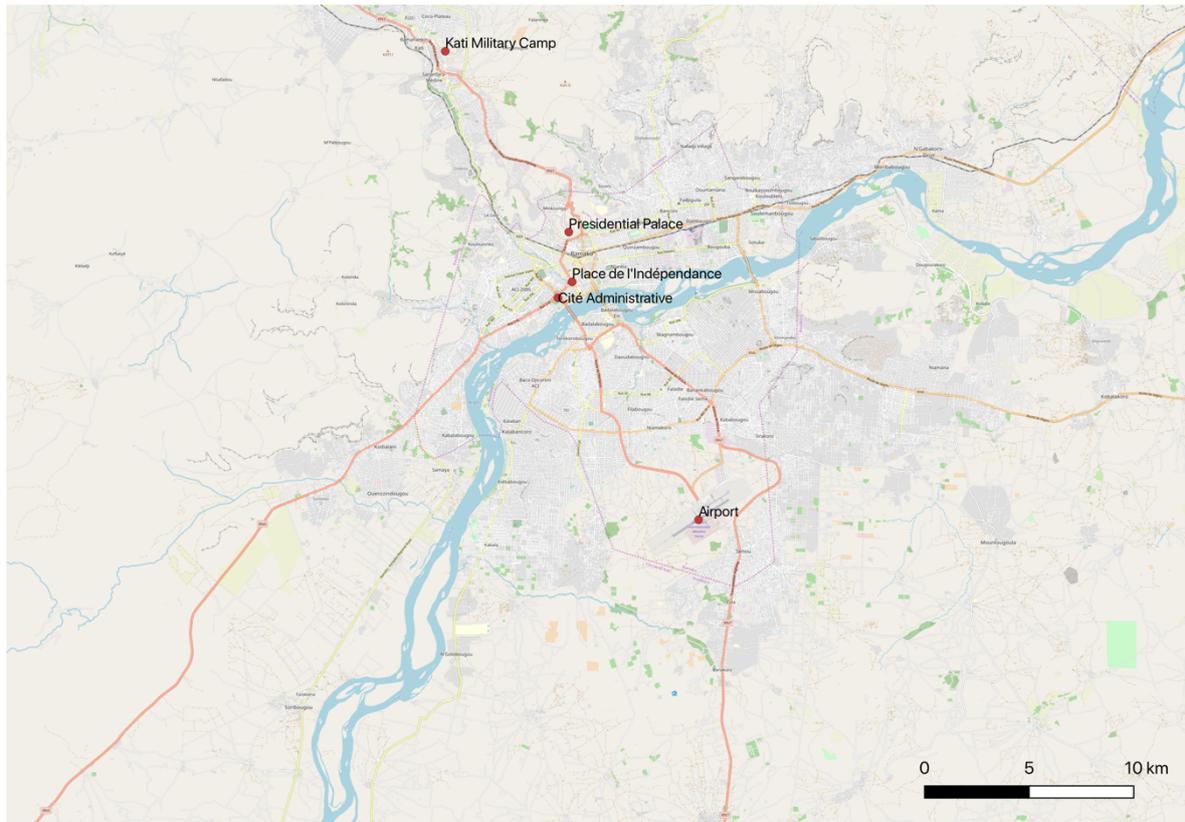
Several limitations remained and this dissertation has been a struggle: every piece of data gathered needed to be thoroughly planned, and still, faced many obstacles. Access was negotiated on a daily base and I had to be very careful to ensure I did not endanger the research project. I had to strictly adhere to the rules I set myself: no photos and no recording. Although I was exhausted by the relentless frustrations in terms of access, I was able to collect valuable data. This led to an iterative process, a bricolage, in which strategies needed to be rethought. Thus, the struggle, which is common for researchers of armed forces, is an important part of the dissertation. Using mixed, complementary methods has provided the necessary flexibility in a changing and secretive institution.

### **Chapter 3. The making of a postcolonial military institution**

Since 2011, I have spent hours listening to the stories of a retired officer, sipping tea while toddlers come in, his own kids from a third marriage to a much younger wife. The man would receive me in traditional garb and visits the mosque every day his busy schedule allowed. The retired officer would proudly talk about his father, a former French military man that helped shape the postcolonial Malian Armed Forces. He would also take the time to discuss his own career, from being a soldier to an officer and including being trained in the USSR in artillery, having survived the different regimes and retiring a decade ago. He has been very involved since the 2012 crisis, often without receiving monetary compensation: he truly believes it is his duty. This retired officer introduced me to his colleagues from all age groups; they would talk to me about duty, doctrine and the history of the armed forces. They had a strong sense of belonging to an institution, even after retirement. Discussions would last hours, and they would bring me pictures. I was never able to make them talk about the violence of the military dictatorship of Moussa Traoré: the penal colonies in the north, the repression of 1991, the arbitrariness of rule. Memories of camaraderie and devotion seem to have erased those of hardship.

The exhibit at Bamako's Museum of the Armed Forces exactly replicates this narrative. The museum showcases historic figures and their military legacy. An entire floor presents Samory Touré and the pre-colonial military leaders, surrounded by artefacts representing other ethnic groups and several important moments of pre-colonial history. Then, there are some pictures, presented with limited explanation, of independence: pictures of Army days, the airport and other military infrastructures. The exhibits remain silent on the period that followed

independence, except for a rusting Soviet airplane in the backyard of the museum, a rare visible sign of what happened between independence and now.



*Figure 3. General Map of Bamako.*

When I would visit the Kati military camp, soldiers would provide me with contradictory narratives on the military institution: they were not able to relate to this legacy that officers described. Their discourse would be centred on the hardship of the soldier: a basic salary that did not allow them to provide for their families, lack of accommodation, corruption within the institution, etc. They have not visited the museum. Thus, there is a significant cognitive gap between members of the armed forces on the institution they belong to, which impacted the 2012 crisis. While there are disagreements on nature of the military institution, all actors agree that there is one. This section is devoted to explaining how the literature, as well as the actors, have come to understand the military institution. It mostly relies on secondary sources.

While the next chapters are devoted to explaining how these dynamics have sustained the crisis and the recovery, this chapter discusses the legacies that shaped the institution before the 2012 crisis. It intends to set a base and to discuss the historical relationship between soldiers and the military institution, and contributes to a discussion on the trajectory of the postcolonial military institution being more than the natural evolution of colonial institutions, and gaining a life of their own (Debos and Glasman 2012:11). This section is also devoted to a study of civil-military relations, and how coup-proofing became a national obsession, building an institution preoccupied with inward-looking policies. It argues that the government has focused on coup-proofing strategies to the detriment of military efficiency, which has challenged the institutionalisation of the armed forces and sustained dependence on the power centre, discussing how the military institution intersects with the debate on the core and the periphery.

This chapter has four sections. The first section discusses civil-military relations before independence; the second studies these during the independence; the third analyses civil-military relations during the military dictatorship; and the final section focuses on the 1991 coup and the democratisation process.

### 3.1. Civil-military relations and the Colonial legacy

Inherent to any army is the social construction surrounding the act of soldiering, as war is a social fact, not a biological one, and draws on archetypes of the warrior constructed through social history (Malešević 2010:57). The myth of the warrior is central in developing the military institution, which intends to replace war as a history of deaths with war as a history of killers, forgetting the ingloriousness and the banality of everyday military life (Bourke 1999). The history of the military institution is about what has been remembered, but also how it constructs notions of forgiveness. At the core of the military institution is the question of a state-organised monopoly on violence, and how it can shape human beings into disciplined soldiers, whose primary role is to kill against their own instincts (Grossman 1995). In Mali, along the lines of what is being exhibited in the Museum, there is oral military history that predates the colonial experience and that sustains an argument that the military institution cannot be traced only to the arrival of the French colonial troops.

Theories of civil-military relations rely on how the modern state has been able to secure the monopoly of force and to professionalise the warrior (Centeno and Enriquez 2016; Malešević 2010, 2017; Tilly 1994). As Janowitz, Huntington and their followers have argued, an essential feature of the military institution from a sociological perspective is to create this professional soldier, who is socialised into the military institution and broken away from his former civilian life, in a process that creates a civil-military gap (Huntington 1957; Janowitz 1971; Rahbek-Clemmensen et al. 2012). Professionalisation entails the submission of the military to civilian powers, preferably democratic powers (Caiden and Shields 2006; Feaver 2003). This process of professionalisation is a work in progress: the individuality of members of the armed forces cannot be simply obliterated during initial military training to become an instrument of state coercion: they are part of a complex institution that creates a culture and

shares narratives to perpetuate a sense of belonging to that institution (Böhmelt et al. 2018; Owen 2012; Snider and Watkins 2000). As discussed in Chapter 1, scholars on postcolonial civil-military relations have devoted a significant amount of literature to coup theories, and there is consensus on the concept of military guardianship in which the position of armed forces have been crucial for the democratisation process (Luckham 1971; Luckham and White 1996). The 2012 crisis has challenged the foreign perception of Mali as having undergone a successful democratisation process, which was initiated by a coup, but that created a new era of professionalisation and submission of the military to democratically-elected civilian power (Gavelle et al. 2013). This section is devoted to understanding the history of civil-military relations in Mali since independence.

A history of civil-military relations starts with acknowledging the repressive nature of the military from the colonial era: colonisation was a military occupation in which the use of force was necessary to sustain a regime where Bamako would be at a periphery: civilians had to submit to the military, which defended a regime that collected taxes and did not hesitate to use violence to maintain itself. Mali became an area of interest to the French authorities after the Conference of Berlin as the Metropole increased its military presence to back its claim of sovereignty over the area. The French army, under the leadership of Colonel Louis Faidherbe, launched a military expedition to take control of the territory, fighting several local armies, including Samory Touré's and El Had Oumar Tall's armies (Philippe 2009). From 1857 until independence, French Sudanese subjects faced military occupation, as the entire territory was ruled by French military cadres, which provided geographic delimitations and organised the state, but which held mainly a strategic value in comparison to other colonies deemed more economically profitable (Courtin 2019; Mann 2013; Philippe 2009).

In terms of civilian-military relations, the French occupation forces initiated a regime under which military personnel assumed power; fewer civilians administrators were posted in French Sudan than in coastal colonial urban centres (Mann 2003, 2013, 2015). This minimal state presence left fewer schools and other state institutions than in neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal. The absence of strong economic interests also limited the capacity of the colonial state to offer viable civilian opportunities to its subjects. A militarised administration contributed to the normalisation of the military as a legitimate power (Courtin 2019; Hounnikpo 2000). This also enabled a belief in the military as a modernisation force, in opposition to customary and traditional powers. A significant aspect of colonisation was the weakening of existing local power relations, which in the case of French Sudan was in the hands of local chiefs (Mann 2006). This sets up a tension between colonial forces and customary powers on the question of legitimacy over the state and organised the entire French Sudanese population as 'subjects' that would not share the benefits of 'citizens' of Dakar or Abidjan (Mamdani 1995).

Civil-military relations changed from occupation to co-option when French Sudanese were offered positions within the colonial forces. Inclusion of the '*forces noires*' within the military institution came with the First World War, when France resorted to a recruitment policy in its colonies that was progressive in terms of geography, but also in terms of roles (Fogarty 2008). Ahead of WWI, three armies were created: the Metropolitan army, the North African army and the colonial army. During WW1, it was decided that 1-2% of colonial subjects should be conscripted. Those conscripted recruits joined the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais* whom, despite their name, gathered all the recruits from West and Central Africa. West Africans retained a subaltern role in the hierarchy of the colonial forces (Mann 2006:52).

Inequality in treatment became a significant factor in the independence movement, especially in Mali, where colonial authorities did not foster the emergence of a local civilian elite.

*Tirailleurs Sénégalais* returning from Europe after World War I, and later from World War II, demanded more civil rights, including pensions and more political rights. Blaise Diagne, the West African representative in the French Parliament, succeeded in petitioning for such privileges to the members of the armed forces (Mann 2006:70). While those newly granted rights were a source of pride for demobilised combatants, they also had a significant impact on the civil-military relations, notably by weakening the authority of traditional chiefs and local administrators, who perceived returnees as ‘unruly’ (Mann 2006:72). 2006:72).

Following World War II, several mutinies, led by soldiers denouncing unfair treatment, were organised. The most significant was the mutiny in the Thiaroye military camp, in Senegal, on December 1<sup>st</sup> 1944. At least 35 soldiers<sup>7</sup> waiting for their wage and bonuses, were shot by the French Gendarmes responsible for protecting the camp. Several Malians were in the camp, and this massacre left a significant imprint in the national psyche and radicalised a generation against French colonial forces (Mabon 2002; Mann 2006:116; Mourre 2017). Mutinies following World War II were not motivated by politics, but by ‘money, honour and an array of acute grievances’ (Mann 2006:117; Mourre 2017). Those tensions had an impact on the first generation of officers that framed the upcoming independence. The constant struggle for rights has become a source of comradeship among the military and the politicians that relayed their struggle at the political levels. Modibo Keita, who served as the deputy president of the *Rassemblement pour la Démocratie Africaine*, a coalition of Francophone African political leaders, carried these voices (Bleck and Michelitch 2015; Diarra 2000; Mourre 2017).

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<sup>7</sup> There are several indications that the number was higher than 100, but the French government only acknowledge 35 deaths.

In parallel, a new generation of officers emerged a decade before independence with more comprehensive training, notably with the creation in 1956 of the *Ecole de formation des officiers ressortissants des territoires d'outre-mer*, or EFORTOM, the first school dedicated to training colonial officers, in Fréjus, southern France. The creation of this school, as well as the inclusion of African soldiers in other French schools, boosted the number of African officers: in 1950, there were only 1 colonel, 3 commandants, and 59 lieutenants and sous-lieutenants. In 1960, these numbers had reached 4 colonels, 6 commandants, 31 captains and 157 lieutenants (Bangoura 2002:17). Ahead of independence, qualified officers and NCOs remained rare. Although a new generation of military leaders emerged from EFORTOM, which had a lasting impact, this new generation of officers, many of whom were recruited voluntarily rather than through a draft, held more benevolent feelings towards the colonial armed forces than their predecessors, who were drafted into the armed forces against their will and remembered the violent repression of the Thiaroye mutiny (Fogarty 2008; Mabon 2002; Mourre 2017). This met shortages in civilian institutions, especially in terms of local cadres: Mali lagged behind Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire in terms of the quality of public infrastructures, human resources and services, notably healthcare and schools (Amselle 1978; Diarra 1990).

While the French military institutions offered more inclusion of local forces, the purpose remained to protect the regime from threats within its borders; following WWII, several French Sudanese soldiers were mobilised to quench insurgences in Indochina and Algeria, where they would become familiar with violent counterinsurgency methods based on torture and extra-judiciary killings (Bournier and Pottier 2006:16). Having learned these methods, these soldiers later replicated them to defend an inward-looking regime at home (Walter

2017). Therefore, the main colonial legacy on the Malian Armed Forces has been one of controlling civilians, rather than civilian control over the armed forces. This set the tone for civil-military relations focused on an army reverberating with an obsessive desire to see the regime survive, later developed as a set of policies for coup-proofing.

### 3.2. Independence and the socialist revolution

The process of becoming an independent nation in Francophone Africa was a gradual one. The election of members of the National Assembly representing certain areas, citizenship for specific communities, and the referendum on French communities organised by De Gaulle in 1958, were all significant steps in devolving powers to civilians before the proclamation of independence. Mali declared independence from France on 20 June 1960 as part of a union with Senegal. In the same year, when the federation became unworkable as the two nations could not agree on a suitable mode of election or institutional design, Senegal declared independence from the federation on 20 September (Cissoko 2005), apparently due to a fracture between Modibo Keita, who developed pan-Africanist and socialist-leaning ambitions for his country, and Senegalese President Leopold Sedar Senghor, who was more accommodating to France and less revolutionary in his vision (Clark 1995:208).

On October 1<sup>st</sup> 1960, Malians first heard (via the radio) about the creation of the Armed Forces. Twelve days later, President Modibo Keita conducted the first army review. Colonel Abdoulaye Soumaré, born in Senegal to Senegalese parents, became the first Chief of Staff in December 1960, and the principal architect of the armed forces. He surrounded himself with four young officers: Captain Sekou Touré (who would become chief-of-state after Soumaré's death), Lieutenant Bougari Sangaré, Lieutenant Demba Diallo and Gendarmerie Captain Balla Koné. In total, on the day of the first review, the Malian army had around 1,300 men.<sup>8</sup>

While many military personnel felt strong ties with France, the new president chose to break with the colonial power. On 20 January 1961, President Modibo Keita convened French diplomats to convey his decision to them, that French military bases must be closed. From

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with the director of the Museum of Armed forces, Sega Sissoko. Bamako, December 2011.

June to September, the military bases of Kati, Ségou, Gao, Tessalit, and finally Bamako were slowly evacuated by French staff, who were then replaced by the new Malian Armed Forces.<sup>9</sup> Mali also abandoned a military agreement signed before independence and adopted a Malian Franc, rather than the Franc CFA (the regional currency of other former French colonies). Independence from France and the break-up of the federation with Senegal depleted already strained personnel. Following independence, some military personnel chose to remain in the service of France. While most were demobilised a few months later, this created suspicion among the political authorities of the support of the army for the newly elected government (Dembele 2003:23). Similarly, an unknown number of soldiers and officers decided to remain in Senegal after the break-up of the federation, as NCOs and officers' schools for the colonial army were all in Senegal. Malians wishing to pursue a career beyond basic recruitment training had to go to Dakar during the colonial era, and many Malians remained there.<sup>10</sup> The FAMAs faced a significant institutional challenge. Newly-independent Mali lacked experienced military leaders, having only one general and four captains, and required expertise to build an institution capable of establishing an army from scratch (Clark 1995:208). Several institutional design choices were rushed through, leaving a significant imprint to this day: military institutions were hastily replicated from the French models and relied heavily on the use of foreign trainers (Englebert 2000; Jacquemot 1983; Mann 2003, 2006; Sow 2010). New battalions often resembled existing French battalions. Among these, the airborne elite *33e Régiment des commandos parachutistes* – who did not have their characteristic red beret at the time – was created in 1961. Mali created several schools along French lines, including the *École militaire interarmes* (ÉMIA) in Kati in 1963, responsible for training officers. In 1960, similarly, core documents like the Code of Conduct, the

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with the director of the Museum of Armed forces, Sega Sissoko. Bamako, December 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid..

Military Code of Justice and the Doctrine, were written by inexperienced officers, replicating French documents.<sup>11</sup> For soldiers, there has been a price to pay for the pride of wearing the national flag: pensions and salaries were cut, which was a source of disgruntlement between the armed forces and the new government (Mann 2006).<sup>12</sup> While several military personnel expressed pride at serving the new army, the loss of privileges for others left a bittersweet legacy that undermined the first year of Modibo Keita's regime (Diarrah 2000; Jacquemot 1983; Philippe 2009).

President Modibo Keita implemented a socialist revolution, including collectivisation of farms and nationalisation of industries. In terms of diplomacy, the President broke ties with France and left the Franc CFA. In 1961, socialist allies filled the gap, notably the Soviet Union, China and Czechoslovakia, providing loans and aid to Mali. Modibo Keita's economic policies lead quickly to a worsening of economic conditions. Meanwhile, the President suppressed all political opposition and slowly became 'dogmatic and dictatorial', imposing a one-party system and cracking down on opposition leaders Hamadou Dicko and Fily Dabo Sissoko in 1962 (Martin 1976). Disastrous economic policies would erode the popularity and the legitimacy of the regime (Diallo 2016; Diarrah 2000; Philippe 2009). For the military, this was the beginning of a relationship that brought about military assistance: resources, weapons, training and cooperation (Amselle 1978; Diarrah 2000). However, this also challenged of the military leadership with civilian leaders, who mistrusted young officers trained in France and decided to subvert the chain of command. Mali's socialist revolution had a significant impact on civil-military relations. The socialist revolution intended to reorient the military institution into a people's army. The new Socialist regime implemented

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<sup>11</sup> Interview with the director of the Museum of Armed forces, Segha Sissoko. Bamako, December 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

political militias within the armed forces, a model used in Guinea, as the politically-trained military were grafted on at every level of the hierarchy to ensure the proper revolutionary mindset of the armed forces (Camara 2000; Pachter 1982). These politically-motivated staff reported on the behaviour of peers, NCOs and officers to the government, creating a double hierarchy. Civilian institutions were responsible for escalating tension between young soldiers and their leaders, undermining cohesion and discipline within the armed forces, which Modibo Keita judged as favourable, as he remained suspicious of the armed forces' political allegiance (Diarrah 2000).

The main legacy of the era was the creation of an engineer battalion, intended to assist with civilian infrastructure.<sup>13</sup> President Keita also attempted to impose new revolutionary values on the entire armed forces, forcing soldiers to work in collective farms. Several military personnel were arrested for being counter-revolutionaries as they refused to perform field labour, which was aggressively resented by soldiers (Diarrah 2000). For the military, independence was a missed opportunity for resetting colonial policies. Decisions were hasty and institutional design replicated existing structures. Government policies thus pursued an inward-looking military, inheriting uncontested frontiers that left the country without foreign challenges (Bangoura 1992). Modibo Keita, like most francophone leaders, continued the colonial policy of using the armed forces to track and target domestic opponents, an essential element of the repressive nature of the state under the socialist revolution, as well as an attempt at coup-proofing by short-circuiting the national armed forces (Bangoura 1992). Meanwhile, the new regime alienated both civilians and the lower echelons of the armed forces, strengthening a division between the elite and senior officers on the one hand, and subaltern officials and the militariat on the other.

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with the director of the Museum of Armed forces, Sega Sissoko. Bamako, December 2011.

### 3.3. The 1968 coup and the praetorian state

Early on November 19, 1968, armed vehicles surrounded Bamako's main buildings and roads. The public radio station Radio Mali broadcasted music. At 2 pm, the music was replaced with a statement from the military, which became the voice of the first Malian coup. Lieutenant Moussa Traoré, one of Kati's troop commanders, announced the dissolution of Modibo Keita's government, and the new rulers: the *Comité de Libération Nationale* (CMLN). The CMNL was composed of 14 junior officers.<sup>14</sup> This coup was generally well received by the population, as Mali faced a series of economic and political crises that had led to this military intervention in politics (Bennett 1975; Diallo 2016). Farmers supported the junta, having been ruined by the collectivisation process and governmental policies forced them to sell their goods below cost prices, resorting to the black market to feed their families (Diarrah 2000). Similarly, unionized workers who had seen their wages decreased also support the coup. Consumers, with the imposition of the non-convertible Malian Franc, faced substantial inflation, especially on imported goods, when it was devaluated (Diarrah 2000).

The 1968 coup confirmed the corrective role of the armed forces and the military control of civilian life: the military defended the state against usurper of power as soldiers believed in their superior ability to correct the problems facing the country (Finer 1976; Luckham 1971; Luckham and White 1996; Luttwak 1979; Vangroff and Kone 1995). The impact of the coup on Malian politics was considerable, as it shut down the socialist experimentation. Several political figures, including Modibo Keita himself, were thrown in jail and political activities

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<sup>14</sup> This includes four captains (future vice-president Yoro Diakité, Malick Diallo, Charles Samba Sissoko, Mamadou Sissoko), and ten lieutenants (Moussa Traoré, Kissima Doukara, Youssef Traoré, Amadou Baba Diarra, Filifing Sissoko, Tiécoro Bagayoko, Karim Dembelé, Joseph Mara, Missa koné, Mamadou Sanogo).

were banned (Diallo 2016). Moussa Traoré abandoned the most unpopular socialist policies, notably the collectivisation of farms, and the political overview by the regime militias.

This coup was not a coup undertaken by the army as a whole, but rather a small group of junior officers. The coup profited from the ‘organisational superiority’ of the armed forces, as well as the discipline and cohesion of the armed forces, as subalterns followed their putschist leaders (Rukavishnikov and Pugh, in Caforio 2006:133). There is no clear narrative about the organisation of leadership within the junta. The rise of Moussa Traoré cannot be explained by experience or rank: Traoré was one of the youngest, and not the highest-ranked among the original fourteen (Diallo 2016:41). The public narrative at the time was that Moussa Traoré came later in the process of plotting the coup, after being invited and convinced by junta members Yoro Diakité and Tiécoro Bagayoko (Diallo 2016:41) (Diallo 2016:41). There were rumours that he was selected at the last minute as the head of the CMNL (Diallo 2016:42), although several sources have questioned this. For example, Adjutant Soungalo Samaké wrote in his memoirs that he got Traoré’s call four months before the coup (Samaké 2007). During the coup, Moussa Traoré played a role in directing operations from the Place de la Liberté, according to his aide de camp (Samaké 2007). Traoré himself has never been clear about his early participation, which leaves room for speculation. Even if there is no agreement on how the coup was implemented, there is no doubt it was carefully planned among a secretive few. As Traore commented later, the coup-makers knew each other in the colonial army or national army, and some knew each other as children (Bennett 1975:250).

Within the army, the coup was popular from the beginning: soldiers saw it as opportunity to improve their living conditions, and to end the much-hated force labour in the farms (Samaké 2007:122-23; Traoré 1996:1). In the early days of the junta’s rise to power, several officers were imprisoned or forcibly retired, especially the older generation of officers perceived as

Modibo Keita's allies, and who retained a robust anticolonial feeling in opposition to the CMNL containing a majority of leaders trained in French schools like EFORTOM (Echenberg 1997). In sum, the coup challenged the existing military hierarchy, but did not subvert the order within the army: allies of the junta replaced supporters of the Socialist revolution, and no structural reforms of the armed forces were made (Echenberg 1997).

The 1968 coup transformed civil-military relations, as the military clique took over all crucial aspects of governance. Moussa Traoré imposed the authoritarian rule of the junta over the entire country, and he applied the principles of the praetorian state: a small military unit took control of the state to correct a political trajectory that they judged unacceptable, at a time when civilian institutions lacked legitimacy (Böhmelt et al. 2018; Perlmutter 1969:383). This is not the dominance of the military over civilian affairs, but the assertion of a relatively small military elite over all institutions, including the security forces.

The metamorphosis of Moussa Traoré from junta leader to authoritarian dictator unfolded in the public eye and was documented more thoroughly than the preparation of the coup (Diallo 2016; Diarra 1990; Jacquemot 1983). On 19<sup>th</sup> September 1969, Moussa Traoré took the title of President, therefore establishing the limits between the bicephalous, but artificial, separation between government and state implied by the creation of the CMNL. From then on, he slowly neutralised the other junta members and imposed himself as the sole leader. One of the first orders of Moussa Traoré banned political activities and increased military presence in areas that he perceived likely to challenge his rule. Under the leadership of Tiécoro Bagayoko, security forces clamped down on schools and universities as environments hostile to the new junta and a likely recruitment base for Modibo Keita's political militias (Diallo 2016).

Mali passed from a military regime to a one-party system following the June 2<sup>nd</sup> 1974 referendum, the first post-independence electoral exercise. 99.71% of Malians voted in favour of a new constitution that made official a one-party system, within which Moussa Traoré's party, l'*Union démocratique du peuple malien* (UDPM) remained the only political party authorised until 1992. Meanwhile, political purges continued to strengthen Moussa Traore's personal domination over the entire political system. On 27<sup>th</sup> March 1971, Traoré excluded two of his earlier allies, Yoro Diakité and Malick Diallo, and assumed all powers. On 28<sup>th</sup> February 1978, former CMNL members Kissima Doukara, Karim Dembele and Tiécoro Bagayoko were arrested (Diallo 2016). On March 8<sup>th</sup>, Colonel Charles Samba Sissoko and Lieutenant-Colonel Joseph Mara followed (Diallo 2016). At the end of the regime, only four putschists remained on his side as low-profile bystanders.

Economically, Moussa Traore's regime has enacted policies that have been shown to be detrimental to growth, leading to more poverty and isolationism (Diallo 2016; Diarrah 1990). While rejecting some of Modibo Keita's most unpopular measures, his government did not break away from Socialist economic policies, notably the nationalised industrial policies (Diarrah 1990), although he did not expand them either. Poor economic management aggravated the crisis. During the years 1972-1973, Mali faced the first of many severe droughts. While international donors offered assistance to the country, a significant amount of this money was lost in embezzlement and divert into the regime cronies' coffers, while the country lacked basic infrastructure, including electricity and asphalt roads (Jacquemot 1983). Moussa Traoré's regime also strengthened the gap between core and periphery: few resources were allocated outside Bamako, ignoring the north, notably the various penal colonies and particularly Taoudennit (Dembele 2003; Mariko 2001; Sangaré 2006). Disgraced civilian

administrators and the military cadre were moved away from the capital as punishment: either as gaolers (the military had taken over prison administration), or as prisoners, perceived as enemies of the regime.

The regime of Moussa Traoré was concentrated on its own survival. Despite coming from the armed forces, Traoré did not strengthen military institutions; like all state institutions, they were submitted to his personal rule, to the detriment of professionalisation. A praetorian military regime, in this case, does not privilege the military, but rather a clique: the military institutions faced the same challenges than other state institutions, plagued with poor economic governance; it became a regime of self-promotion that rewarded allies of the closed group (Bennett 1975). Decisions were not taken to favour the military institution, but to maintain the regime and ensure its control. By March 1969, the junta felt secure enough to name an officer holding the rank of major as Chief of Staff, although friction ensued with Captain Charles Samba Cissoko, the Minister of Defence, to whom he had to report. The junta might have solved this problem of status by promoting themselves, thereby bringing their political power into line with their military rank. Instead, they froze all promotions of officers, while promoting many other lower-ranked soldiers and NCOs in January and February 1970. This set a precedent of extraordinary nominations.

The normalisation of the military dictatorship did not mean that the military institution made substantial improvements in terms of capabilities and means. In 1974, Moussa Traoré oversaw the creation of the Malian Air Force, the most significant addition to the armed forces (Diallo 2016). In the long term, lack of resources in the country impeded any significant reforms of the military. While Modibo Keita looked to the Soviet bloc for aid, Moussa Traoré has diversified his sponsors by reaching out to both sides in the Cold War, re-

establishing diplomatic and military ties with France and building a relationship with the US (Diallo 2016). This aid included the acquisition of planes, tanks, artillery and equipment, as well as training. When training could not be provided, technical support was offered, notably by the USSR and Czechoslovakia. Gains in terms of equipment or infrastructure were thus tied to military cooperation with foreign countries and remained ad-hoc, increasing dependency on foreign actors (Bennett 1975). This suited the Cold War where military aid did not aim at increasing national stability or sustainable security-sector reform: military aid ensured the contributor's support at the international level, without concern for the impact on civil-military relations (Ball 1981, 1988; Ball and Hendrickson 2009; Luckham 1971; Luckham and White 1996).

Civilian and military powers were subsumed under the authority of Moussa Traore. Members of the armed forces appeared to be privileged; they were offered opportunities within Traoré's regime, making the army one of the only opportunities for ambitious youth to climb up the social hierarchy in Mali, as economic opportunities were limited (Berrubé 1995; Diallo 1990). During Traoré's years in power, members of the armed forces loyal to the President were offered positions as attachés into ministries, both as a reward for loyalty and as a way to control civilian institutions (Bennett 1975; Diallo 2016). Moussa Traoré, who first tightly controlled his junta and later his party under one-party rule, made sure that all power remained in his own hands. Any attempts to build strong state institutions were either hijacked or co-opted to ensure he had the final word on the functioning of those institutions (Bennett 1975; Konaté 2000). While the judiciary was non-existent, as courts of justice were mostly there to protect the elite and execute Moussa Traoré's decisions, so was the National Assembly and the Council of Ministers, who rubber-stamped any decision coming from the President's office (Bennett 1975). The armed forces were not free of suspicion: Moussa

Traoré tightly controlled the army and undertook several purges based on alleged conspiracies between former allies (Bennett 1975). In 1971, he launched his first purge that eradicated Captain Yoro Diakité, a rival. In 1980, there were five alleged attempted coups (McGowan 2006).

Moussa Traoré instrumentalised the army to ensure the survival of his personal authoritarian and praetorian regime, which relied on a policy of divide-and-conquer as a coup-proofing strategy. The *Sécurité d'État* became a powerful secret police unit. He supplemented the Presidential Guard with the *Berets Rouges* in the early 1980s (Bah 2010:29; Diallo 2016). At the time, Moussa Traoré used both the Presidential Guard and the *Berets Rouges* to ensure his security, using this double allegiance to increase competitiveness and to ensure that none of the alleged plots could become an effective coup. At that time, several officers were killed and/or sent to penal military colonies in the North (Dembele 2003; Mariko 2001; Sangaré 2006). This strengthened a legacy of competition among security forces: the Presidential Guard competed with the *Berets Rouge* to protect the president; the police and the gendarmes competed in civil protection; the National Guard and the armed forces competed to defend the sovereignty of the land; and the *Sécurité d'État* maintained pressure over the entire system. This coup-proofing strategy of dividing power and sustaining some elite groups was preserved till 2012, and the *Berets Rouge* received numerous privileges in terms of money, housing and honour (De Bruin 2017). Thus, this was not an attempt to ensure the efficiency of the institution, but more of a strategy to contain it.

The 1980s altered the power dynamic in the country, challenging the equilibrium of civil-military relations. The economy of the country faced hardship, with acute inflation following the re-introduction of the Franc CFA (Diarrah 1990, 2000). Moussa Traoré pursued Modibo

Keita's economic policies without any concessions to the changing global economy of the 1980s (Bennett 1975). Mali's economy, already facing challenges in 1968, was thus stuck with uncompetitive state industries, particularly the cotton industry, and disastrous state finances that left civil servants unpaid for months (Bennett 1975; Vangroff and Kone 1995:47). In such a dire economic situation, state employment and survival farming remained the primary sources of employment, but both were threatened by economic reforms necessary for the IMF structural adjustments (Vangroff and Kone 1995:47). International aid dramatically diminished during the decade as the Soviet bloc collapsed, depriving the country of a vital economic lifeline (Vangroff and Kone 1995:47). The end of the Cold War was also the end of a moral blind eye being turned to a repressive regime, in exchange for other forms of support, with increasing emphasis on respect of human rights and democratic norms (Konaté 2000; Sedra 2010:33).

In this context, social tensions grew. On 16 March 1980, a student leader, Abdoul Karim Camara, was arrested after multiple protests and calling for strikes. He died in detention, bringing about a wave of student protests that continued throughout for a decade, which were all violently repressed by Moussa Traoré's regime (Konaté 2000). In 1985, following an election in which the President was the sole candidate and was re-elected with 99.9% of the vote, the primary Malian worker's union announced a general strike (Fay 1995; Koné 1998).

Meanwhile, foreign military ventures appeared to have been a last resort for the regime to distract the public's attention from domestic problems. While the army at the time was the central functioning institution of the state, there is a meaningful debate on how they fared in military conflict. The Agacher Strip War, which led to direct combat between Burkina Faso and Mali, was the first international military test of the Malian Armed Forces since its

creation. In 1974, Mali and Burkina Faso skirmished for two days in this contested area, and this became a full-blown conflict in 1985. The war lasted a few days, from December 14 to 30th, but caused around a hundred deaths, including several civilians killed during the Ouhiyouya bombing by the Malian Air Forces. The climate between the two government was tense, but the situation did not last; the two countries turned to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for a solution. The ICJ ruling has applied ever since, and the two countries have never challenged it.

From a national perspective, this conflict had an impact on the national psyche. The nickname of the war, '*la guerre des pauvres*' (the war of the poor), represents how even Malians do not necessarily take pride in this victory. Despite the show of strength of the Malian Air Forces, no monuments in Mali commemorate the events. A narrative about victory that has been built, but the military themselves are not convinced, as fighters have a different story. 'I remember that when we were about to leave for the front, we realised that there were no batteries in the vehicles. We realised that our officers [had] sold them', explains a Burkina War veteran.<sup>15</sup> To achieve victory, Moussa Traoré had to rely on the 'generosity of the economic operators', which meant blackmailing industries and traders to provide anything that was missing: resources: gas, vehicles, and food.<sup>16</sup> At the end of operations, this did not boost national pride as those operators joined the growing crowd of groups disgruntled with the regime. Underpaid soldiers, who were already using weapons and uniforms to rob the population, also became disillusioned with the war and the military, waiting months to be paid. Rather than a show of force and a victory to celebrate, this conflict awoke feelings of abandonment among the armed forces. In recent years, a narrative of the

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<sup>15</sup> FAMA veterans (BKO-VET-01). October 2016.

<sup>16</sup> Economic operator (BKO-CIV-01). October 2016.

glorious past of the armed forces has been built around this conflict (Diallo 2016), but there are few factual achievements sustain the narrative. The Agacher Strip conflict has often been perceived as an attempt to draw attention away from the political climate and gather citizens around its party (Bah 2010). Similarly, while Moussa Traoré was purging his party, the war became part of the larger narrative of the fear of renegade social elements. In Burkina Faso at the time, Thomas Sankara was unfolding its social and political revolution. It appears that Moussa Traoré was fearful of such a movement arising in Mali (Diallo 2016).

Social movements increased in popularity as Moussa Traore and his few enduring loyal allies lost the confidence of the majority of the population. On March 22<sup>nd</sup> 1991, tensions peaked when Moussa Traoré ordered armed forces to shoot protesters, killing officially 28 persons, while the opposition claimed over a hundred deaths (Associated Press 1991). Protesters denounced both economic hardships and corruption, at a time when the Traoré regime had imposed several unpopular reforms to secure loans from the International Monetary Fund, including the diminution of civil servants which resulted in rising unemployment (Vangroff and Kone 1995:47). The 1980s saw the rise of well-organised civil society groups and charismatic leaders that became the leading political figures of the 1990s. Civil society, in the late 1980s, gathered under two sturdy political umbrellas: the *Congrès national d'initiative démocratique* (CNID), led by Mountaga Tall, and the *Alliance pour la Démocratie au Mali* (ADEMA) headed by future President Alpha Oumar Konaré (Baudais and Chauzal 2006).

The Traoré's military regime did not strengthen the military institution: its policies were about regime survival, favouring a clique over institution-building. Civilians and soldiers were both estranged, as civil-military relations were strained by inward-looking policies of an

administration. Meanwhile, as the survival of the regime was dependent on being close to Bamako, colonial policies of a core against a periphery were being strengthened

### 3.4. The 1991 coup and the democratisation process

While Mali faced significant social tensions, Moussa Traoré underestimated citizens' frustration and was ready to maintain his regime at all costs: he refused to concede to social pressure, telling his entourage that he was ready to lose everything, and proving it when he told the Presidential Guard to shoot protesters (Bah 2010: 29). He also ordered the bombing of the building of the most important working union, the UNTM, during a meeting on March 24<sup>th</sup> of the main political opposition and civil society leaders. These events, as well as violent reprisal orders from Traoré, were important factors in bringing about the coup (Vangroff and Kone 1995:47). On March 26<sup>th</sup>, after several days of riots and the killing of two of Moussa Traoré's aides (Associated Press 1991), 19 soldiers led by Amadou Toumani Touré, under the name of the *Comité de réconciliation nationale* (CNR), announced that they were taking power in order to offer Mali 'social justice' and 'total democracy' (Associated Press 1991).

The events of 1991 were a textbook democratisation coup (Anene 2000; Houngnikpo 2000; Luckham and White 1996; Vangroff and Kone 1995). The CNR established, in few weeks, a timeline for democratisation. From the beginning, the junta announced that it will not cling to power and provided frequent reassurance to Malians. Their leader, Lieutenant Amadou Toumani Touré, dubbed ATT, said the army should go back to the barracks once the transition was over (Harmon 2014, 2015). A week later, he announced the creation of the *Comité de Transition pour le Salut du Peuple* (CTSP) to supervise the transition to democratic government, headed by himself but including members of civil society. Unlike Moussa Traoré, these putschists initiated social dialogue with civilian groups: the new junta made a social pact with the unions, which led to the rewriting of the constitution and its adoption during a national constitutional conference, from July 29<sup>th</sup> to August 12<sup>th</sup>. On June 8<sup>th</sup> 2012, the transition was completed, and Amadou Toumani Touré turned power over to a

democratically-elected president, civil society leader Alpha Oumar Konaré. Mali had, in 1991, its first democratic elections. From then to 2012, literature suggested that Mali was a success story for democratisation (Harmon 2014; Vangroff and Kone 1995:45). Through its fast transition process and support of civil society, the army was said to have taken ‘the high ground’ (Vangroff and Kone 1995:47)

As in the 1968 coup, the exact story of leadership remains unclear, although there is some evidence that the coup was unplanned and that the leadership was improvised (Harmon 2014:72). ATT and his comrades appeared reluctant to stage a coup (Bah 2010). While the coup was conducted by members of the *33e Battalions des troupes aéroportés* (the *Berets Rouges*), the rest of the army remained indifferent to the coup, providing neither support nor resistance (Vangroff and Kone 1995). ATT was among the highest-ranked within the military; he was lieutenant-colonel, like six other putschists.<sup>17</sup> While his victory in the 2002 presidential elections might suggest that he patiently waited until the proper time to gain power, he disappeared from political life following the 1992 elections. The other members of the junta have resumed their military careers and have not been directly involved in the civilian government. The intervention of the junta and its disappearance made the 1991 coup a ‘good coup’, launching a democratic process and offering an opportunity for civilian control of the armed forces (Anene 2000:241; Luckham and White 1996). It nevertheless pursues a tradition of the ‘corrective coup’ where the military take it upon itself to correct the trajectory of the state.

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<sup>17</sup> The full list includes six lieutenant-colonels (Amadou Toumani Touré, Bakary Coulibaly, Tiécoura Doumbia, Ousmane Maïga, Cheick Oumar Diarra and Oumar ‘Birus’ Diallo), eleven commandants (Lassine Koné, Mamadou Konipo, Moussa Diabaté, Sada Samaké, Souleymane Yacouba Sidibé, Anatole Sangaré, Yaya Ouattara, Harouna Traoré, Lamine Diabira, Mohamed Coulibaly), one captain (Siaka Koné) and one squadron chief (Hamidou Sissoko).

Following the 1991 coup, civil-military relations were characterised by two phenomena: the rise of consensual politics and the marginalisation of the armed forces. The 1992 elections were made possible by the creation of a broad consensus among the political elite (Baudais and Chauzal 2006; Berrubé 1995; Vangroff and Kone 1995). For two decades, all presidents were current or former members of the ADEMA-PASJ, and the party, as well as its break-away parties, ensured control over the political process. This created a legacy of consensus, where diverging points of view were co-opted rather than confronted. The election of ATT was an example of that as he rose in his capacity as an anti-politician figure. ATT was widely known among the military, heading the *Berets Rouges* and the Presidential Guard subsequently, but was mostly unknown to the public until a few hours before the 1991 coup. When ATT left power, making way for the first democratic-elected and civil-society leader Alpha Oumar Konaré, he was internationally recognised as a democrat, but for Malians, he gained their respect by being truthful to his word and retreating from public life as soon as the transition was over (Pringle 2006). When ATT sought election in 2002, he did it as a civilian, after retiring from the army, and standing as an independent candidate. He strengthened his power through ‘consensual politics’ and did not officially align with one political party, an attempt to build a consensus among the political class and civil society. During his years in power, he pursued a strategy of reciprocal assimilation of elites, similar to that of the two previous autocratic regimes, to neutralise opposition parties, creating what many perceived as a corrupt system that left the security of the country ‘in [a] shambles’ (Baudais and Chauzal 2006). In this system, the clientelism system was adapted rather than abandoned (Van de Walle 2012, 2014). ATT pursued Alpha Oumar Konaré’s consensual policies, but determined the ‘diffusion of rampant corruption among ruling elites, transforming Mali into a predatory regime’ (Baldaro 2018:588).

Consensual politics and political negotiations also contained one of the threats that Moussa Traoré's regime was not able to deal with when a new Tuareg rebellion began, after three decades of violent peace enforcement. On 27<sup>th</sup> June 1990, Iyad Ag Ghaly and his *Mouvement Populaire de l'Azawad* attacked a Gendarmerie station in Menaka, beginning the rebellion. In 1991, the government negotiated with the rebels, and offer political solutions that, despite tension in 2006 and 2007, worked as appeasement mechanisms until 2011 (Lecocq 2010). Baldaro has explained how the system of consensual politics has succeeded in containing the Northern threat, further perpetuating the dichotomy between a core and the periphery:

From the start of the Malian Third Republic (1992), central authorities have attempted to manage conflict and limit violence in the north, implementing a strategy based on the redistribution of rents to the various social actors holding coercive capacities. This choice appeared to be a viable synthesis between the structural weaknesses of the state, and international pressures towards power-sharing and accountability vis-à-vis northern communities. Moreover, the central government would have maintained a leading position within the ruling network, thanks to its triple role as owner of resources, gate-keeper and 'good broker'. (Baldaro 2018:594)

Civil-military relations and the military institution, like all aspect of governance, were subsumed under the consensus imperative. This remained an important coup-proofing tactic, justified a lack of investment in military institutions. This launched a long-term process in which the Malian army faced several budget cuts and growing irrelevancy (Touchard 2014, 2017), transforming the FAMas into an army without a purpose. (Mann 2015). There is considerable evidence that the Malian Armed Forces were under-armed and had faced depletion since the end of the Cold War, and that was further increased, notably seen in the subsequent donor's reports that discussed technical skills and weapons (EUTM 2015). Resource allocation was significantly cut pro rata to the national budget, and the ministry of defence became a junior portfolio.<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, the government intended to develop an

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<sup>18</sup> Politician (BKO-POL-03). Bamako, Avril 2016.

image of itself as ‘a good student’ in the international community by providing military staff to international peacekeeping missions and to support the creation of the *École de Maintien de la Paix Alioune Mbeye*, devoted to offering training on peacekeeping, in 2003. The Malian government expressed on several occasions its desire to participate in the international security, but foresaw national security as no longer a priority for the armed forces.<sup>19</sup> Besides, to ensure local security (especially in the centre), the government increasingly relied on local ethnic militias, which had ties to military personnel without a strong connection to the institution (Boisvert 2015). Nevertheless, several political initiatives were implemented to ensure and improve the security governance of the country, including several decentralisation programs (Keita 2017). When foreigners started to be kidnapped in the North, hitting the developing tourist economy hard, the regime focused on non-military solutions, including negotiation with terrorists.

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<sup>19</sup> This aspect will be discussed further in the next chapter.

### **3.5. Coup-proofing and the persistence of institutional practices.**

The previous sections have discussed how regime survival impacted civil-military relations and the military institution, discussing how coup-proofing strategies have led to inward-looking strategies. An important process initiated during colonisation and remaining significant until the 2012 crisis, was how all the state institutions needed to lean towards the centre of power. The proclamation of independence realigned the question of the core and periphery, where institutions were created to make Bamako a central decision centre, as opposed to the periphery with limited access to power, an arrangement typical of postcolonial African countries (Boone 2003:200; Koné 1998; Sawadogo 2001). Postcolonialist centralist states have led to resistance to decentralisation (Boone 2003; Hagberg 2010).

French Sudan has developed at the periphery of the colonial system, where French Sudanese were all subjects, while inhabitants of more significant coastal urban areas, like Dakar and Abidjan, were citizens, as opposed to subjects living on the periphery of power (Hagberg 2010; Mamdani 1995). Four Communes were erected in Senegal by the French colonial administration in the nineteenth century: St. Louis and Gorée in 1872, and Rufisque in 1880, and Dakar in 1887. Residents of these communes became French citizens, whereas the rest of the population of the territory remained African subjects (Mamdani 1995). Colonial powers intended to develop a governance mechanism to account for the periphery, but these policies were abandoned after independence, as it became commonplace to concentrate power in the capital and centralise all state features, including security forces. (Olowu 2001:8). While Alpha Oumar Konaré showed an interest in political decentralisation, these efforts stalled under ATT (Crook and Manor 1998; Hagberg 2010; Koné 1998; Seely 2001).

The Malian Armed Forces, like all state institutions in Mali, faced this centralisation, leaving the periphery struggling for governance. Since independence, the Malian Armed Forces have been essential in preserving the hegemony of the south over the north, and ensuring the survival of the centralised state (Bayart et al. 2019; Hagberg 2010). It is important in terms of the subsequent discussion, to understand how the Kati military base (the main military base in Bamako), become part of a postcolonial institutional design that set core against periphery.

The idea of a periphery was reinforced through militarisation even after independence, as the only presence of the state in the North until 2012 was the sporadic and limited presence of security forces. The main imperative has been avoiding another rebellion among the Tuareg population. The sparsely populated north and its nomad population faced militarisation in prison camps at Taoudennit and Gao. The military became the administrators and rulers of the north, following patterns that resembled those prior to independence, in which locals were subjected to the arbitrariness and violence of military occupation (Baldaro 2018; Bøås 2012; Cline 2013). The administration pursued repressive policies against Tuaregs and the local population, eventually forcing several to flee to neighbouring countries (Boilley 1999; Deycard 2012; Lecocq 2002, 2010; Seely 2001). The army remained an isolated representative of the state, fulfilling the same role as in the colonial era: collecting taxes and securing the land. Schools and medical dispensaries were absent in the north (Lecocq 2010; Mann 2015). During this period, the army pursued an occupation strategy, with the creation of several defence positions intended to be temporary. Despite growing threats, this did not affect regiments and units within the armed forces, which retain its centre of gravity in Bamako. Meanwhile, assignments to the north were perceived as a punishment, particularly if staff were assigned to a penal colony or a military camp (Mariko 2001; Sangaré 2006).

This also led to challenges of the supremacy of force of the FAMAs in the periphery, notably through the support of armed proxies as a way to quench possible pockets of rebellion in the North (Baldaro 2018; Raleigh and Dowd 2013:9). The relationship between the South (the core) and the North (the periphery) within the Malian Armed Forces (dominated by southerners) an expeditionary force within its own country (Magassa 2017). The military institution was unable to ensure the monopoly of force over the territory, and lacked the proper tools to successfully maintain a presence: an expeditionary mindset capable of providing the tools to build a flexible army, able to adapt quickly to a new environment with resilience, cultural sensitivity and situational awareness (Cassidy 2004:74, 2006).

From 1960-2012, soldiers were dispatched to the north with limited capacity to patrol, constrained by both lack of resources and lack of pressure.<sup>20</sup> Reconnaissance was also limited as there were only a few military vehicles before 2012.<sup>21</sup> A core-centric military strategy also led to the inability of the military institution to develop an institutional memory over the events in the north. While the populations in the north resented the armed forces, Malian soldiers did not develop tools to understand the north, leading to poor situational awareness.

A soldier posted in the Kidal region before the crisis explained as follows:

We [i.e. soldiers] did not understand the north. Already, before the crisis, we were staying in the camp. We did not have [enough] fuel to go around. We would remain on the spot until our assignment was over.<sup>22</sup>

During interviews, soldiers and officers would often discuss the north as a ‘foreign land’. A soldier told me with a grin, ‘we were in a foreign environment’.<sup>23</sup> The integration of former

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<sup>20</sup> Military researcher. Bamako, November 2011.

<sup>21</sup> Grin 1.

<sup>22</sup> Soldier posted in Kidal (K-SOL-01). Kati, Avril 2016.

<sup>23</sup> Grin 3.

rebels in the 1990s was a significant improvement but led to distrust. Daily routines centred around the camp: soldiers expected orders from their superiors, making no effort to improve their awareness of the surroundings, which were a harsh environment for southerners, both in terms of climate than social interactions.<sup>24</sup> Postings in the North and the conditions there caused several mutinies and were a significant factor during the 1968 coup (Samaké 2007:122-123). The concept of a core and a periphery can also be seen in recruitment, where southerners represent the main source. In 2012, of fifty generals, only two were Northerners.

Africa Command said that that the trainees lacked ‘values, ethics and military ethos’, and that there were structural problems to resolve.<sup>25</sup> Increasing reports of serious security issues were ignored until the 2012 crisis (Traoré 2018). There was an unwillingness from politicians to strengthen the military when the international community expressed concern at Westerners being kidnapped and increasing jihadist activities. In 2002, the US government launched several initiatives to train Malians. In 2002, the Pan-Sahel initiative allocated 7.75 million US\$ to trained 800 soldiers in Mali, Mauritania and Niger. In 2003, the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCP) allocated 340 million US\$, and Mali became the second country of the region in terms of US military aid (Tankel 2018:246). Since then, several international initiatives from the US, Canadian, German and French governments have been launched, notably the Flintlock operation. In 2009, the US launched a special program to trained four units of 160 soldiers called *Échelons Tactique inter-armées*. The initial training was 30 days, starting on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009. This initial training was prolonged for 45 days, but trainers, who devoted most of the training time to basic tactical movements,

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<sup>24</sup> Grin 3.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Training of Mali soldiers said to lack ‘values, ethics and military ethos’, The Globe and Mail, 25 January 2013, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/training-of-mali-soldiers-said-to-lack-values-ethics-and-military-ethos/article7893675/>

were dumbfounded by the low level of trainees (Powelson 2013). The creation of the ETIA was an exception: participants were soldiers without clear affiliation to an elite unit. In other, similar training, the government often favoured the *Berets Rouge* and other elite battalions. The government's response to increasing external pressure to build up the security apparatus was twofold. First, it intended to pursue its strategy of coup-proofing by limiting the impact of training to the controllable elements of the army. Secondly, while acquiescing to international pressure and intending to be a 'good pupil', the government did not change its strategic outlook and refused to engage with the increasing security challenges (Traoré 2018). Foreign training attempted to develop these aspects from 2008-2011, but again this was limited to elite battalions, as the institution remained focused on defending Bamako over addressing the emerging Islamist threat.<sup>26</sup> The overall Malian military institution remained focused on static defence capabilities, based on the protection of military outposts.

In sum, the lack of interest in the north is both a flaw in institutional design, which members of the military institution consider necessary to maintain a connection to the core as a way to survive, and a wilful political decision to ignore the periphery's security issue. These issues will be studied further in subsequent chapters.

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<sup>26</sup> US trainers. Bamako, November 2011. Bamako, November 2011.

### 3.6. Conclusion

The chapter has studied how civil-military relations have evolved, as well as providing a history of the military institution, part of a national context where all state institutions have been subsumed to the personal leadership of an elite in opposition to a *militariat*, and in which fear of a military intervention in politics has led to coup-proofing strategies that aimed to contain the armed forces, rather than enabling them to pursue their defence mandate beyond the core. In this case, democratisation did not lead to the reform civil-military relations, but rather aimed to maintain a division of power established by the Traoré regime: the *Berets Rouges* continued to supplement the Presidential Guard, and the institutional division among different units was maintained. Civil-military relations were characterised by a regime who decided to contain the armed forces rather than control it, by favouring security policies that are not the prerogatives of the military institution.

Civil-military relations have been difficult since the independence of Mali. The two first coups both featured a restricted number of highly ranked officers taking control to ensure regime change. In both cases, the relative strength of the junta over the incumbent government was not equivalent to the strength of the institution. In this context, the Malian government decided to develop a coup-proofing strategy rather than truly develop adequate and thorough civilian control: it attempted to contain the armed forces by limiting its role in national security, by cutting resources allocated to it and continuing a strategy of dividing to rule. The consequences of the evolution of civil-military relations and of institutional design went beyond the strategic failure of the armed forces during the 2012 crisis. The next chapter presents a more detailed discussion on how these policies have affected the armed forces and paved the way for the 2012 crisis.

#### **Chapter 4. The *militariat* of Kati: a snapshot before the coup.**

The first call I got ahead of the 2012 military coup says it all: ‘*Ça chauffe à Kati*’ (things are getting hot in Kati). Kati is the third-most populous city in Mali, after Bamako and Sikasso, but there was no need to specify that soldiers of the *Camp militaire Souidiata Keita de la 3e region militaire* were getting impatient. The entire city is a metonym for the military base; even if most inhabitants are not affiliated with the armed forces, in the popular Malian psyche, Kati embodies the military. Kati is where soldiers start (and often finish) their career. It is a central and inevitable figure in the military life of a soldier. This chapter aims to deepen our understanding of the military institution and its soldiers, to understand social dynamics within the Kati military camp, and how can we understand the mobilisation of the *militariat* in the wake of the 2012 crisis. Rather than looking at the *militariat* from a theoretical point of view, this chapter intends to describe the dynamics that shapes it, especially in terms of cohesion and discipline. Thus, this chapter is dedicated to understanding the inner life of an institution prior to the crisis. The previous chapter addressed the question of civil-military relations, while this one intends to focus on the soldier and the sociological ties developed on the base (discussion of civil-military relations will continue in later chapters).

The first section studies the physical reality of the civil-military gap, situating Malian soldiers within the institutional/occupational debate, and analysing how the military institution shapes socialisation and the daily life of the soldier in relation to civilian life. The second section investigates motivation and peer cohesion, discussing the emergence of peer-cohesion among soldiers through the emergence of a community of striving. The third section focuses on the

inability of the military institution to build secondary cohesion, and how this resulted in a division that sustained the 2012 coup.

#### 4.1. Kati: the physical limitations of the civil-military gap

The Kati military camp follows the pattern of a traditional military base, with barracks and professional spaces, where members of the armed forces and their families work and socialise (Janowitz 1971). The experience of soldiers remained similar from independence until the 2012 coup: recruits from different regions in Mali, are isolated in Kati, with few chances to leave the military premises, similarly to the colonial recruits.<sup>27</sup> Soldiers were conveniently posted on the outskirts of the capital without being a threat: a significant difference from the camp of the *Berets Rouge*, Presidential Guard and National Guards, which were all in the suburbs of Bamako in the 1960s, but would now be right in the heart of the city.

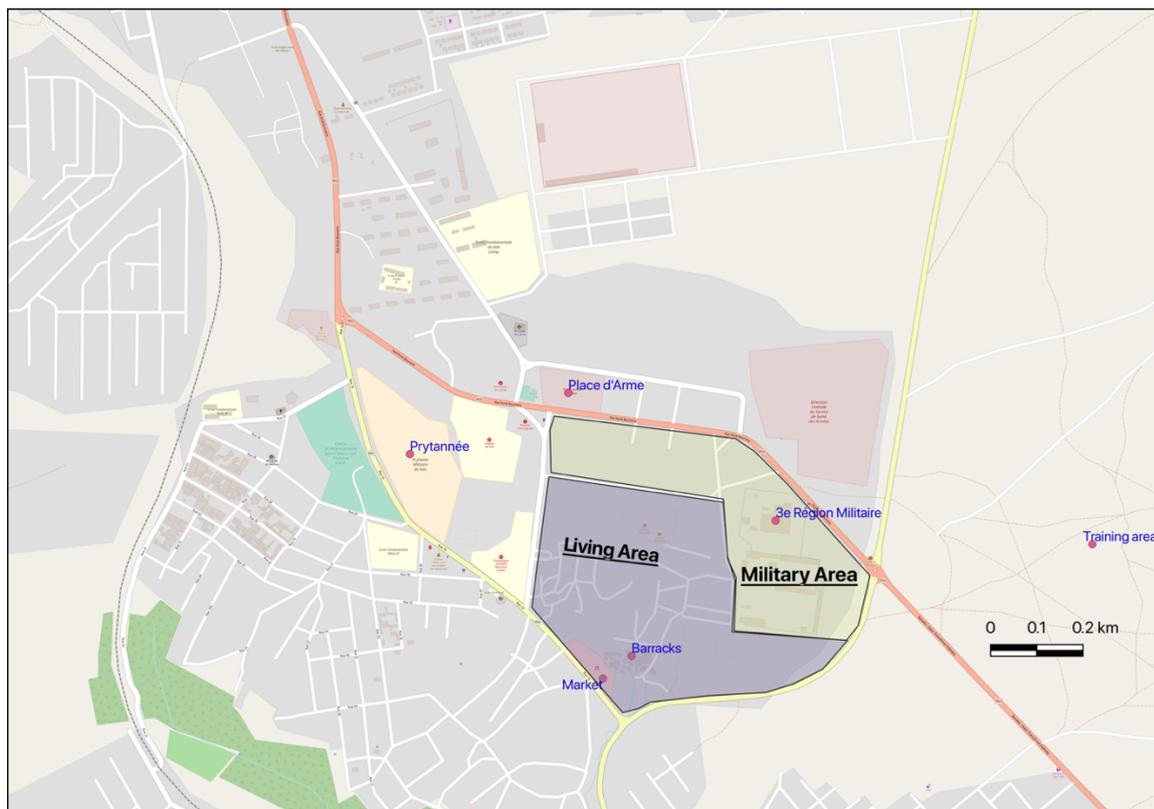


Figure 4. Map of Kati Military Camp

<sup>27</sup> Foreign Military Trainers (BKO-EX-01/BKO-EX-02). Bamako, October 2016

The physicality of Kati's military experience reverberates with Goffman's notion of the total institution, where the military institution takes control of the daily life of soldiers, as much during their leisure time as when they are on duty. Families that join a member of the armed forces are also isolated and socialised in a quasi-military life. Kati, as a traditional military camp, respects the mechanisms that earlier military sociologists described as the infrastructure sustaining the civil-military gap (Feaver 2003; Huntington 1957:189; Moskos 1988:11). In African countries, military camps were often perceived as a way to ensure that soldiers did not interfere with civilian life; therefore the camp is a tool of coup-proofing, and the isolation of Kati in the 1960s would have been considered essential (Mourre 2017; Parsons 1999).

Since 1960, the geographical surroundings of the camp have significantly evolved. To fully understand social cohesion in Kati, there is a need to understand how urban dynamics have evolved in Bamako, which has also changed the socialisation process of the soldiers. From a minor colonial post with an unknown population of no more than few hundred thousand inhabitants, to an estimated 3.5 million, Bamako faced an intensive urbanisation process that brought about never-ending expansion of its limits (Epstein 2010; Philippe 2009). In this context, nothing remains of the small isolated garrison of Kati.

On my way to the military base for field research, I came to realise that Bamako and Kati are each large enough to become a single metropolitan area, with no wasteland between them: the only sign that one has left Bamako's limits was a rusting sign on the roadside. The Soundiata Keita Military Camp is no longer isolated from Bamako, but it remains a military base with delineated borders. In 2012, at the time of the coup, light walls surrounded the main military facilities, but the entrance was not systematically guarded, and it was easy to go back and forth. For the inhabitants of the Kati Military base, this remains a virtual border that they cross without realising that there should be a boundary between the civilian and the

military. Military accommodation and social spaces were not delineated with barbed wire: only professional spheres were contained. There is, in appearance, a professional area on the base dedicated to the professional routine of the soldier, and a second area where the soldier spends his personal life. During those conversations, I would often ask where the boundaries of the military facilities were, hoping to gather data similar to the map-making process undertaken by Elizabeth Wood to collect data on how farmers have contributed to guerrilla warfare, including recording the meta-language used while her interlocutors drew maps (Wood 2010:376). Mapping the surroundings became irrelevant, however, as the GPS on my phone was not precise enough to map the backstreets and dead ends of the Kati military base.<sup>28</sup> I have never been able to gain a clear certitude of the official limits between civilians and the military dwellings.

The process of drawing a line between social and professional lives has been a concern of civil-military relation theorists, something that did not apply in Kati. Concerns around integration motivated Moskos and several followers to enrich our comprehension of the relationship between the military and the civilian, with a theory that intends to account for the changes that faced the armed forces, transforming from an institution that would isolate the soldier, to one that would understand the armed forces' need to rely on occupational soldiers (Moskos 1977, 1986). The armed forces, in such a context, become a social organisation that 'maintains levels of autonomy while refracting broader social trends', affecting legitimacy, role commitments, compensation systems, spouse, reference groups, the legal system, and post-service status (Moskos 1986:41). Later authors have deepened our understanding of the armed forces as an arena of socialisation, in which the professional soldier is increasingly

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<sup>28</sup> I also stopped using my smartphone as I had noticed on several occasions inhabitants worried that I would take pictures of them or that I would transgress the photography interdiction on a military base.

involved in the civilian sphere, adding complexity to a theory on the civil-military gap in terms of culture (Furst and Kummel 2011). In the literature on Western armed forces, the military base remains central to understandings of peer bonding, a process that happens within institutions but that cannot be isolated from the community, as it is understood that the community outside the military boundary profits from the presence of a military base (Hill Thanner & Segal, 2007; Lutz, 2002, 2005; Segal & Segal, 1983). The literature on Western military bases sustains communities, arguing that it delivers essential economic benefits to the community around it, as military families consume and invests in the community (Lutz 2002, 2005). It is an unequal relationship in many ways, as inhabitants of the base would often get involved in the community, but the community would never be invited into the camp (Hill Thanner and Segal 2007; Lutz 2002, 2005). In Western military sociology, military families receive several benefits from the armed forces. Families who wanted to supplement soldiers' wages could work in the community. The literature on the military family has captured the growing complexity of contemporary Western families, while maintaining the military base as a secluded social space fostering cohesion (McClure and Broughton 2000). On social obligations towards family and society, civil-military relation theorists would understand these as being a significant factor of cohesion that would influence how peer soldiers interact with each other (Janowitz and Shils 1975:94).

The Kati military camp's porous and invisible borders contrast with the aggressive and strict ones of a total institution; socialisation cannot be fully controlled by the institution. The selection of housing influences socialisation among soldiers, especially in an overcrowded neighbourhood, as the construction of new housing has been neglected. The allocation of housing follows written procedures and rules. During initial training, recruits live in a basic communal barrack with bunk-beds and little privacy. Then, once their three-month training is

completed, soldiers moved into the *celibarium*, single-room housing aimed at single soldiers. Finally, soldiers would be offered housing depending on their marital status, number of dependants, rank, unit, etc.<sup>29</sup>

Official guidelines are often overridden by practical norms, usually involving payment. In some cases, this can be a small bribe to the military bureaucrat responsible for the allocation of housing to ensure a faster process or better accommodation.<sup>30</sup> In other cases, the payment is made to the previous occupant, for example upon retirement. I was told that payments ranged between 10,000 and 100,000 CFA<sup>31</sup> depending on negotiation skills and the state of housing, as tenants would often improve basic amenities (the armed forces did not maintain what is officially recognised as military facilities). Therefore, among the inhabitants, these bribes/fees are not perceived as unfair or corrupt, but rather as an investment, cheaper than paying for housing outside the camp and transport back and forth. Clientelism will be discussed later.

Beyond contributing to a parallel economy, this shows how the physical practicalities of a soldier's life, despite the virtual delimitations of the camp, are not controlled by the institution. The selection of accommodation on the Kati military base, once basic training is completed, depends on a soldier's wealth. A soldier during a focus group explained it to me: 'If you have money, you do not stay on the base.' Soldiers do not see the point to pay for housing they see as inadequate. Most of those who can afford it rent a room outside the area allocated for the military, in the neighbourhood of the camp. While the government

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<sup>29</sup> Grin 1.

<sup>30</sup> Grin 4.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with military widows (KTI-WI-01/02/03). Kati, April 2016.

announced that 1,000 new social housing houses would be allocated to the military, none of the houses had been allocated at the time of the fieldwork.

On the other side, I was able to observe a fluid social life that a high-walled military base does not have. In Kati, choosing private housing does not mean that the soldier is not participating in Kati's social life. Socialisation occurs as people living on or beyond military grounds share the same mosques, markets and schools. As there are no clear delimitations between military housing and non-military housing, and as there are uniformed personnel circulating in both areas, there is an absence of visible boundaries between military-owned and civilian accommodation, although civilian accommodations would appear newer and better maintained.

A substantive number of illegal constructions blurred the lines between areas further. There were some agreed landmarks marking the border between civilian and military grounds: a big road, the market, a gutter. However, other limits were more challenging to grasp and when I asked how they knew this or that area was military ground, my interlocutor's answer would often be 'because I know the family'. While walking around Kati, I came to understand that, for them, the borders are delineated by human interactions. Interlocutors believed that they had a clear sense of what constitute the limits, even if another interviewee disagreed. These limits are virtual and mostly relational: this household is part of the military base not because it is within a particular range, but because the soldier can relate to whoever is living there. This contrasts with Western-based literature that emphasised physical borders between civilian and military life (McClure and Broughton 2000; Moskos 1986).

Soldiers living outside the military camp would visit their peers during a ‘grin’, an informal gathering on the corner of a street, occurring everywhere in Mali. While having tea during a grin with soldiers at Kati, some military would show up on their *jakarta*, affordable Chinese-made motorcycles that swarm around the capital. Many of the owners of these motorcycles would live beyond the area of Kati Sananfara, the neighbourhood surrounding most of the military-owned land and civilian-owned housing.



Figure 5. A Jakarta in Kati

These motorcycles, which became popular in the 2000s, have provided opportunities for soldiers and NCOs to visit Bamako more frequently, and in some circumstances, to live far from the military base.<sup>32</sup> The *jakarta* is a visible symbol of wealth, as the cost is prohibitive

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<sup>32</sup> It takes about 45-60 minutes to get to the city centre in a *Sotrama*, the privately-owned public bus, and then significantly more time for commuters to leave the clogged city centre and reach their final destination in a sprawling city. While the cost remains affordable (150 CFA), they do not run throughout the week and are not very reliable.

for soldiers who live on a meagre salary: the motorcycle cost roughly 350,000 CFA, and owners must also pay for fuel and maintenance.<sup>33</sup>

The *jakarta* offers opportunities for socialisation beyond Kati. When I was visiting officers, I would often meet younger soldiers and NCOs paying their respects to their leaders at home. Officers, who often owned cars, mostly lived in Bamako. Some of them would be offered housing in Kati and would maintain a presence in the area dedicated to officers' housing while having their family in their primary residence in Bamako. For officers, the surroundings of the Kati military base were a professional space. They had an Officers' Mess or other dedicated socialisation areas. Most of the interviews with officers that I did were undertaken in their houses in Bamako, not in the housing provided by the forces. For soldiers, living outside the camp is not an obstacle for socialisation: a grin would become an opportunity to sit with peers. One of them explained that he would stop to relax on his way home to Bamako, while another one would want to greet his fellow soldiers.<sup>34</sup> When a soldier stops, it is never for five minutes, and some of them would take hours to greet colleagues.

The literature on military sociology has abandoned the idea of the armed force as a 'total institution' that would control the life of its members by isolating the soldier, but also has not yet abandoned the idea that peer bonding comes from sharing space in a 'military community' (Mcclure and Broughton 2000). In Mali, the military barracks are an open space, and peer bonding is not limited by the infrastructure to those who have the resource to move around; however, for many soldiers who had limited resources, their entire social and

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<sup>33</sup> Grin 2.

<sup>34</sup> Grin 1.

professional lives were based in Kati. This set an important contrast between soldiers and officers. Soldiers with economic means were able to socialise outside the base and to offer alternative economic opportunities to their families. Officers would necessarily visit the base, but many do not and/or have not lived in the camp, as several were recruited as officers and posted in Bamako. Several officers coming to Kati did not bring their family or have their home on the base.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> The question of the physical between ranks will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

## 4.2. Motivation and peer cohesion: the community of striving

Military sociology is tainted with an underlying assumption based on the Western military institution: the soldier gives his life to the military, and the military is in charge all the aspects of a soldier's life. Therefore, the soldier's motivation is supposed to be a calling to serve, whereby the institution ensures that the soldier and his family are taken care of, limiting the impact of social pressure and re-enforcing the military community cohesion (Janowitz 1971; Snider and Watkins 2000). Soldiers around the Kati base told me otherwise: the struggle to make a decent living and to defend one's privilege is a daily task. This deeply affected the relationship of the soldier with his peers, as the struggle for economic survival antagonised institutional cohesion. In this context, Kati is a community of striving where the position of the soldier is necessary for the family's survival: becoming a soldier becomes a family's means of achieving a stable income. The family mobilises itself for the recruitment of the soldier, who then receive a monthly salary for the rest of his life, and the family has access to economic opportunities on the base. The process initiates strong primary cohesion among Kati's inhabitants, which becomes an essential impediment to secondary cohesion and discipline. This section addresses the sociological ties among the *militariat*, a significant form of peer cohesion that affects the entire military institution.

Social cohesion starts with recruitment. There are severe limitations in providing ex-post-ante explanations for motivation: motivations change over time. While conducting interviews, I found little evidence of a calling, either as a reason to join or as a reason to remain enrolled. The primary source of motivation for many soldiers was stable employment that would provide for their families.

‘There are two options for the youth: being a teacher or the military.’ (Bleck, Boisvert & Sangaré 2017). This was said by young man at a grin not related to the Malian army in 2013, and similar sentiments came out in different forms during the research. Joining the army is one of the options that allows young men, and more rarely women, to ensure stable finances. During a Malian Armed Forces campaign to recruit thousands of young Malians, many gave employability as their primary motivation. ‘There is no money... Joining the army is the guarantee of having money for the rest of your life. This is why I want to join,’ explained a young man in Bamako, while I was interviewing candidates during a massive recruitment event.<sup>36</sup>

This discourse meets one I heard among military staff enrolled in the army: ‘I have joined the army because it's good employment. You have a steady salary. There are not many opportunities like that.’<sup>37</sup> This young soldier, who enrolled prior to 2012, shamelessly stated that having a job is his primary interest before joining the armed forces. While unemployment remains high for the youth and opportunities are lacking, joining the security forces, which means lifetime employment and a steady salary, is an attractive option, even for those with no interest in combat. This appeared to be a central element to an economy of striving, or to use the French word soldiers often used *débrouille*.<sup>38</sup>

The question of employment is also one of being able to move on and up in life. When I asked members of a grin why they joined the army, employment and regular pay were common answers, but soldiers also have social status. One soldier explained that being in the

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<sup>36</sup> Recruitment event in Bamako. Bamako, 11 June 2016.

<sup>37</sup> Grin 2,

<sup>38</sup> *Débrouille* has several underlying meanings. It mostly highlights a struggle to make ends meet, but also entails ingenuity and resilience. The term can have a positive connotation related to overcoming adversity.

military simplifies daily life in a capital where corruption is commonplace: ‘When you wear the uniform, policemen do not worry you.’<sup>39</sup> Several explained how they are more likely to get civic identification cards faster or to expedite any bureaucratic procedure when they wear the uniform. There is also social recognition that goes with wearing a uniform, what a soldier explained to me as a ‘lightning rod’. ‘If you are military, in your family, nobody bothers you when you have a uniform.’<sup>40</sup> Another compared being in the army to having an insurance policy for the family, as this ‘keeps trouble away’.<sup>41</sup>

The uniform provides more than gains: it offers a social status and recognition for young soldiers. A soldier believed that the uniform helps him to be socially recognised as fully adult in a society where you become an adult only when you are married and have children (Bleck and Michelitch 2015; Boisvert, Bleck, and Sangaré 2019):

You are respected in the neighbourhood. People know that you have a good job when you have a uniform. If you want to get married, you need money. You might not have any as a military. But the uniform says that you will have money for the rest of your life.<sup>42</sup>

Beyond immediate gains, the uniform offers a symbolic authority, inherited from the colonial architecture of violence (Glasman 2014). A Tuareg fighter integrated into the armed forces in the 1990s summarised the general lack of calling to join the armed forces, saying, ‘It’s not an army of vocation. It’s an army of circumstances.’<sup>43</sup> He highlighted that the primary bond between soldiers is the common struggle for a better life.

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<sup>39</sup> Grin 2.

<sup>40</sup> Grin 1

<sup>41</sup> NCO (BKO-NCO-04). Bamako, October 2016.

<sup>42</sup> Grin 3

<sup>43</sup> Deserter (WAS-DDR-01). Washington, January 2018.

The motivation for joining the armed forces was different among elite groups. The grin with the *Berets Rouges* provided a different conversation on the reasons for their enrolment. Many expressed their desire to be a soldier, and several explained that they were coming from a military family, or were otherwise familiar with the army.<sup>44</sup> A recently retired officer, himself the son of an officer, agrees that being from a military family offers several advantages to achieve better integration into the military institution: ‘Sons of [a] military family are promoted faster. They understand better the institution. They gain responsibility position more easily. They are guided by their military parents, which would refer them to their friends.’<sup>45</sup>



Figure 6. *The Berets Rouges during a parade, April 2012.*

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<sup>44</sup> Grin 5.

<sup>45</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-05). Bamako, October 2016.

While talking to *Berets Rouges* and officers that have fought in the north, they would invite me to their home, speaking freely about their life, while showing me pictures and medals won by their parents. Similarly, when I was investigating the disappearance of the *Berets Rouges* from April 30<sup>th</sup> 2012 or the disappearance of the Green Berets on September 30<sup>th</sup> 2013, the families would receive me, and a uniformed brother or sister often welcomed me. On several occasions, I would ask their kids what they would like to do when they grew up, and they would tell me they wished to join the military. Meanwhile, while conducting focus groups with children in Kati, none of the soldier's kids wanted to be soldiers. An NCO explained it as follows:

I am coming from a military family. I always wanted to be a soldier. And I wanted to be a *Berets Rouge*. Since I was a kid. My father always made me understood to make the right choices. Like joining an elite unit. But that was not enough to succeed. Yes, you must be the best. But it is very important to advertise your skills and to play the games. Unfortunately, politics matters. It means having a big man that would let you in. It means sometimes to make a gift.<sup>46</sup>

Several expressed frustrations at the assumptions made about soldiers from military families, which were often that someone had bought them a place. A *Beret Rouge*, the third military generation in his family, believed that this might more of a curse than a help, as comrades also perceived that any promotion is tied to nepotism:

We face a lot of jealousy. Some people thought that all our merits have been paid for. During basic training, they would believe that we are corrupted. But they are simply not interested about the armed forces. They are just interested about being promoted. So, they do not take the responsibility positions.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Green Beret (K-SOL-01). Kati, February 2016.

<sup>47</sup> NCO (BKO-NCO-03). Bamako, June 2016.

There are clear institutional gateways to promotion, including being accepted into the *Prytanée militaire*, a military school in Kati. Established in 1923, it is the oldest military institution in Mali, and children start at around 13 years old, receiving six years of education. The examination is open to all citizens of Mali, and children that are accepted are offered boarding.



Figure 7. Students at the *Prytanée*, January 2016.

The *Prytanée* usually has the highest success rate in the national *baccalaureat* exams. It has also been a way for connected families to ensure that their children get a high-quality education, and possibly become officers in the armed forces, especially since 1991.<sup>48</sup> Military families put a lot of emphasis on being part of the school: it is in Kati, and therefore convenient. Military staff who attended the school themselves also prepare their children for

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<sup>48</sup> ‘ Le *Prytanée* militaire de Kati, école d’excellence de l’armée ’, Jeune Afrique, 26 August 2014, <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/45962/politique/mali-le-prytan-e-militaire-de-kati-cole-d-excellence-de-l-arm-e/>

it. For civilian children, this is often a way to be incorporated into the military, growing up in a military environment and befriending military children and their families. During the fieldwork, I encountered a significant number of graduates from the *Prytanée*, including two putschists.

Soldiers from the Kati military base, while assessing their initial motivation to join the armed forces, agreed that their commitment to the armed forces deepened as they became familiar with their role. A young NCO explained the situation: ‘When I enrolled, I wanted a job. So. I got a job. And my job is to protect Mali.’<sup>49</sup> He tried to explain the divergence between incentives to join and how things have changed since he joined the armed forces. This agreed with comments of several members of the armed forces, whose motivations did not meet the reality of being a FAMa. This does not contradict findings in military sociology that see the role of the military institution as transforming a civilian into a soldier (Caforio 2006a; Griffith 2007; Levy 2009; Soeters 2018; Soeters et al. 2010; Soeters and Van Ouytsel 2014).

It nevertheless sustains a discourse from the older military staff on the lack of initial aspiration in the youth. ‘We joined because we had a calling. The youth now has no interest whatsoever in fighting here. They want to join to get a paycheck. And will avoid in every way to defend the country.’<sup>50</sup> Another retired officer explained that, ‘[prior to the 2000s] when you would come to the army, it’s because you wanted to be part of the army, not just get a job.’<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> NCO (K-NCO-02. Kati, February 2016.

<sup>50</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-05), Bamako, October 2016.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

This also chimes with the language of senior military staff, who, as they explained, did not see much advantage to join the armed forces prior to 1991: they believe their conditions and wages were far worse than those of the recruits. The feeling that the new generation is not ‘good enough’ may last the whole career of the younger soldiers. This narrative fitted an important narrative from 2012, when soldiers simply did not want to fight in the north. Discussions of motivation reveal a generational gap among members of the armed forces, which impacts how they interact with each other. Motivations for recruitment remain questionable; most importantly, initial motivation might change after recruitment. Older and retired members of the armed forces are very critical of younger generations, which was expressed by undermining the recruitment process itself, and to diminishing the credentials of potential recruits:

There is an issue with the selection of men. They are scum [*racailles*]. Their family send them in the army and pay for the way to ensure they will have a job and no more problems. Wealthy families send their duffers [*ratés*]. The youth has no interest whatsoever in defending the country. They have no motivation for the armed forces. Not the way we did.<sup>52</sup>

A former head of school, also remains critical of the quality of recruits, rejected such claims. He dismissed the debate about motivation as biased, and dismissed the inter-generational tension:

We are expecting an 18-year-old man to be able to know what he wants from life. This is delusional. I heard that armies in the US used video games and movies to attract recruits. This is not military life either. Motivations change over time. [Lack of initial motivation] does not make a lousy soldier.<sup>53</sup>

A fifty-year-old NCO, who had been a Forest Guard (*Eaux et Forêts*) prior to joining the army, explained that he did not want to be in the army, and despised it at first. ‘I was

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<sup>52</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-02). Bamako, April 2016.

<sup>53</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-05). Bamako, October 2016.

unfortunate. When we did the training, I thought that it was not for me. But I got used to it. And now I like it.’<sup>54</sup> He told this story in front of his colleagues, who agreed with him, and noted the difference between motivations at recruitment and how a later career can be framed. Several soldiers during grins emphasised that their expectations were different than what they have seen and that the military institution has succeeded in including them and transforming their view of military life.

The narrative of the older generation’s mindset prior to recruitment is challenged even by older military staff. Under Moussa Traoré, the youth wanted to be civil servants, not military staff, and recruits would often follow a father, creating a tradition of military families where the youngest would join the army.<sup>55</sup> This changed with democratisation and the structural adjustment that forced the state to reduce the number of civil servants, which limited the number of jobs that would offer lifetime job security, and therefore increased the appeal of the military career among civilians that might not otherwise have considered it.<sup>56</sup>

A retired officer had his own views about the motivations of Malian soldiers based on three succeeding generations, a theory reflected in several discussions over the course of the research. The first generation of soldiers following independence were professional: ‘They were squared. They are coming from military families. They either had a father or a grandfather that fought the great wars. And they had some training with the French.’<sup>57</sup> The second generation, according to them, came with a desire to join, and the positive attention they would receive under the first years of the military dictatorship. Employment

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<sup>54</sup> NCO (BKO-NCO-02). Bamako, October 2016.

<sup>55</sup> Sega Sissoko, Director of the Museum. Bamako, 2 February 2012

<sup>56</sup> Military Analyst. Bamako, 10 November 2011.

<sup>57</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-05). Bamako, February 2016.

opportunities were not an issue, and several entered the army because there were no other opportunities. Their motivation was not necessarily high, but the army controlled all aspects of military life and would take positions in all governmental branches, from top to bottom. 'From that period, the army still dispatched attachés to ministries.' Several joined the army not to pursue military ambitions, but personal civilian ambitions. He added:

In the early '80s, you wanted to advance in life? You went to the army. You wanted to get rid of your idiot brother that impregnated the neighbour? You sent him to the army. You wanted to marry the neighbour? You gave a position to her brother in the army. The army was a sort of miracle solution for many problems. The ambitious, the idiot brother and the brother of the beautiful girl are now all old schmucks who think that they are better than today's recruits who, even if they have other motivations to join the army, they still know that they could die [fighting against terrorists]. *Franchement, la vieillesse, ça gâte la tête.*<sup>58</sup>

The generation that joined after the 1991 democratisation process had more education than their seniors, several having university education or at least the baccalaureate, which is not required to be a soldier. They would join the armed forces for employment but come with their own ideas and an 'open-mindedness.' However, they recognised that they would have to deal with a 'lost' generation unable to compete with the motivation of their peers.

Another officer, who has observed recruits for over forty years, provides an analysis that also defended the newer generation:

Let's face it. There is a national emergency. Now, the recruits might know yet what they are coming to do it, but they know what's an army about. Are they the best recruits? We will see. But, before 2012, we had a wave of useless recruits who joined the armed forces at a time where even the politicians did not believe in it and had no clue on why it was needed. From the beginning, someone ambitious would know it was not the place to be.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-05). Bamako, February 2016.

<sup>59</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-06). Bamako, October 2016.

Beyond value judgements on generational motivations, these conversations highlight divergent practices. Older generation described their experience in joining the armed forces as hassle-free; they decide to join, they met basic requirements, and they were integrated. The younger generation faced a more competitive process and understood the social (and economic) added value of being part of the armed forces. Recruitment policies affect the relationship between a soldier and the institution. Joining the armed forces, for the younger generation, is an investment and a strategy in which a soldier has to use a combination of economic resources and social capital to ensure a successful recruitment process that would allow him to become a fully recognised adult in society. As such, this is a competitive process that involves investment from his relatives, and from which relatives would also expect reward.

The recruitment process is not complicated in itself as there are only three official criteria: 1) having an elementary school diploma; 2) running one kilometre; and 3) to have a clean medical certificate. The challenge is thus to be able to make the cut. A soldier explained to me how a soldier could ensure a position: ‘In 2010, there was 10,000 for 400 positions. We wanted to be in the army for employment. You need a bit of support to get in.’<sup>60</sup> Oumar Mariko, a controversial political figure, stated in the media in June 2012:

A recruit has to pay between one and two million CFA (2,000 to 4,000 US\$) to be recruited into the armed forces. We have seen physical handicap being recruited [...] in the army. I do not exaggerate.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> NCO (BKO-NCO-04). Bamako, October 2016. These numbers have been contested by several officers. It is important to keep in mind that there was a significant gap between those who applied, and those who were recruited, no matter the exact numbers.

<sup>61</sup> Oumar Mariko : ‘Le coup d’Etat nous a sauvés du mirage démocratique au Mali’. 27th June 2012. <http://www.michelcollon.info/Oumar-Mariko-Le-coup-d-Etat-nous-a.html>

Despite what he says, he does exaggerate: soldiers, during discussions, placed the number of bribes between 100,000 CFA and one million (250-2000 US\$). Others would talk about lists from the president's office. During interviews, soldiers often returned to the question of the 'son of' and the 'people who paid'<sup>62</sup>, acknowledging that recruitment and progress in the armed forces were dependent on a judicious combination of corruption and nepotism. While the impact of these practices on the hierarchy and the chain of command will be discussed in later sections, there is an investment in terms of financial and social capital for a potential recruit to be incorporated into the armed forces.

An NCO that became an officer following the 2012 crisis framed the question as mostly an issue of human resource management and the incapacity of the army to offer concrete and realist expectations for recruitment and promotion: 'There is no career plan. Everybody wants to be [a] general. So, all means are good to achieve it'.<sup>63</sup> Another one refocused the problem as arising from a lack of responsibility in the institutions for the individual:

A virtuous soldier, even if he is the first of his class, cannot advance if he does not have a protector to become more than an NCO. Some good officers would see the meriting NCO and support them. But it's not automatic. Many soldiers and NCOs are lost, to not say paralysed in the system. The institution does not provide support. Only individuals can.<sup>64</sup>

This created a culture of sponsorship, where a position of power nurtures the progress of a recruit. Connections are a crucial element of a soldier's career success. Before assessing the impact of the 'flexnet' and neo-patrimonialist networks, it is important to understand how, at the soldier's level, these practices are woven into the social life. This discussion reiterates

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<sup>62</sup> Grin 1 and 3.

<sup>63</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-07). Bamako, February 2016

<sup>64</sup> NCO (K-NCO-02). Kati, February 2016.

ideas from the first section of this chapter: the civil-military gap. While borders were porous between military and civilian life, cohesion follows a similar pattern where there are fluid borders between the professional and personal life of the soldier.

In the process of a soldier entering military life, families are not bystanders: they invest financially in a soldier's recruitment, and, once he is recruited, generate revenue for the household, as the soldier's salary is not enough. Families need the social relations cultivated in and around the bases to be able to earn this extra income. Sitting in on the grin, it became clear to me that almost all military wives needed to supplement the family's income. In some cases, it appeared to me that they earned more than their husbands, but I did not engage in this discussion, understanding that this would be a dead-end in a traditional society. There are several women in the military<sup>65</sup> who are married, often to another soldier: I interacted daily with them, as women are often the majority in offices, including the ones where I had to spend days to receive the authorisation to conduct research. These women were invisible during grins, most of them having to take care of children or housework, like civilian women. I found them in civilian areas, as well as areas dedicated to the professional life of the soldier. In the Kati military area, visitors often come onto the base to conduct different business: women brought meals, as there were no institutional catering facilities within the camp, and the youth will come to sell cell phone credit cards or other small items. Several also come to the camp to run errands for military staff. These civilians would greet the sentry, who would let them go without recording their ins and outs. As such, the limits of the camp do not distinguish between social and professional lives, just as it is difficult to see the lines between military accommodation and civilian neighbourhoods.

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<sup>65</sup> I was unable to establish a definitive number of women in the military, or the number of effective staff in the armed forces. From discussion, the number of female personnel is believed to be between 10 and 15%.

From the grins, while economic vulnerability meant that a soldier and his family live in the Kati military base, it also meant that household revenues were dependent on social relations in and around the military base. The importance of the community of striving was first brought home to me when the widows explained to me their struggle to keep their military housing, even though military rules state that a family should leave the precinct no later than six months after a soldier's decease: while they did not necessarily oppose receiving monetary compensation for moving outside the military camp, they would lose the economic opportunities available to them in the base. One was cooking meals in the camp, another selling fabric at the market, a third teaching at the local school. Between the lines, the president of the association of widowers also explained to me that living together allows them to mobilise quickly when there was a need. Before the coup, pressure from widows led to the first investigation in 2012 following the Aguelhok massacre. At the time, widows and their children, once the husband died, were expelled from the military camp.<sup>66</sup> For those that invested in improving housing provided by the armed forces, this meant losing their meagre economies. Then, widows had to struggle to get their widow's pensions, being often illiterate and unable to face the bureaucratic work involved. Widows also had to face the common fate of civilian widows in Mali, where the deceased person's family contest the legal basis of the wedding as a way to obtain the pension, making the widow and her children destitute (Van de Walle 2013).

These widows show how families are dependent on the economic and social opportunities that the military base provides. Thus, in Kati, aspirations and motivations are shared by the family, which, as a community, participates in the process of social cohesion, and has been a

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<sup>66</sup> Interviews with widows (KTI-WI-01/02/03). Kati, February and May 2016.

relevant factor in the mobilisation in favour of the mutiny-turned-coup. There exists a vast literature on the impact of poverty on developing states' armies, which also meets the postcolonial literature on state institutions in countries where a civil servant's salary is not enough to provide for his family (Olivier de Sardan and Blundo 2007). The literature on Mali has already discussed the intersection between poverty and state failure, and how this impacted military effectiveness (Bergamaschi 2008, 2013; Bleck and Michelitch 2015; Bøås and Torheim 2013; Caparini 2015).

The personal commitment of soldiers' wives and family proves that they are not simple bystanders. Moskos described the role of spouses and families in an institutional army as an integral part of the camp, as opposed to the occupational army, where housing is separate and families were not expected to be involved in military life (Moskos 1988).

Peer bonding, as an element of primary cohesion, is based on trust and teamwork, as well as 'norms and habits, with expectations of loyalty and ready assistance to other members of the primary group' (Siebold 2007:289). For a recruit, joining the armed forces is an attempt to be recognised socially and to improve one's situation. While having a uniform and employment would provide a soldier with economic benefits and social recognition, he would also need to meet the social expectations of this enhanced role. In the case of the Kati military base, the family are part of the primary group: they participate in the economic life of the military base, and are dependent on the position of the soldier, which is also dependent his family's revenue. This creates interdependence between soldiers and their community. The militarist has been presented as a 'class position with the army analogous to the working class within society as a whole' (Kandeh 1996:387). The analogy with a Marxist vision of the class is limited, as soldiers cannot be perceived as the proletariat in terms of its relations with modes

of production (Kandeh 2004:30). However, this fits well a group maintained in a subaltern position by a flexnet, in the wider field of civil-military relations where strong ties exist within an elite.

### 4.3. Facing the military institution: the invisible secondary cohesion

The first two sections of this chapter have provided an account of what makes the *militariat*. This section intends to study the relationship the group has with the wider military institution, and to initiate an argument for the next few chapters on how a group of soldiers and subaltern officers were able to mobilise in a coup. This section intends to reflect on a more particular concern underlying the three previous parts; the incapacity of the military institution to develop secondary cohesion, which led members of the armed forces into using practices that have been often discussed in the neo-patrimonialism literature.

Previous sections of this chapter discussed how the relationship between ranks was problematic on the first day of independence. It is important to highlight that the military institutions inherited a continuous challenge to its chain of command and discipline; events surrounding the 2012 coups are also part of that legacy.

#### *Secondary cohesion and rank*

The stand-off between Colonel Sékou Touré and Adjudant Soungalo Samaké is representative of tensions within the army that were revealed with the 1968 coup. Colonel Sekou Touré, the army chief-of-staff and a close ally of Modibo Keita, had the support of the older generations of colonial troops, including veterans from the World Wars, Indochina and Algeria conflicts, with little knowledge of intra-Malian dynamics (Decraene 1980:447). On the other side, younger generations have a much better grasp of social tensions within the country, notably having fought the first Tuareg rebellions in the north (Decraene 1980:447). This generation despised the closeness of the older military officers with the political class,

and the fact that the officer generation felt entitled to their privilege from their colonial era struggles, not realising that the youngest generation felt that they were abused by their seniors (Echenberg 1997). This division was made quite clear with the composition of the junta, and with the arrest of every officer deemed too close to Modibo Keita.

The pre-colonial institutions fostered this generation gap. On one side, an older generation of experienced military staff earned their privileges through a step-by-step process of recognition of their sacrifice on the battlefield. On the other, a generation that has emerged from an educated and elite class of soldier, with much less experience of marginalisation than their seniors faced. Moussa Traoré was too young to participate in World War II, which sets him apart from officers that became Modibo Keita's supporters in his decolonisation enterprise. However, Moussa Traoré is a product of the colonial school. Traoré went to school at the Ecole des Enfants de Troupe de Kati and joined the army in 1954, dispatched to the Congo on the first UN peacekeeping mission. He represents a generation that had the superior training of the decolonisation process without facing the pre-existing struggle, which modified their relationship with France, but that is much more educated than their seniors. He graduated from the French military school EFORTOM, where he socialised with other officers that would take control of the politics of their own country, such as Benin's Mathieu Kerekou, Togo's Gnassingbe Eyadema and Niger's Seyni Kountché, which led to conspicuous accusations against the French military to provide support to putschists (Echenberg 1997:217). This school would remain an essential element of decolonisation, even if attendees were provided with military training deemed inferior to that offered to French students (Echenberg 1997:220). It was perceived as an apparent attempt by the French armed forces to improve the quality of African officers at the end of the colonial empire, but also to ensure that the emerging soldiers would support the French ideology, a valuable element in

the upcoming Cold War where several African leaders were tempted to look to Socialist models, and succeeded as several corrective coups in Francophone Africa have been plotted by EFORTOM graduates (Echenberg 1997:221). The 1968 coup was a clash between an older generation that has been used to fighting the institution for their rights, and a younger generation that found it much more welcoming.

As discussed in the first section, the Malian Armed Forces faced several institutional shortages after independence, including a lack of officers. The officer's school, the *École militaire inter-armée* (EMIA) was created in 1962 in Kati, and transferred to Koulikouro in 1980. It aimed to train Malian officers. Over time, the EMIA gained a reputation around Francophone Africa and received several international students per year. On the day of Malian independence, the armed forces contained a single officer who graduated from a military school, the first army chief-of-staff, General Soumaré. In 2016, it was believed that 99% of officers attended war college, either in Mali or abroad.<sup>67</sup>

Literature has established already the important cultural difference between officers and soldiers, thus making them a class embodying more easily the norms of values of the armed forces transmitted through a different recruitment process and education (Huntington 1957; Snider and Watkins 2000). Senior officers tend to be more conservative, and their involvement in a coup is more likely to challenge the military institution rather than defend interests (Hunter 1998, Barany 2012, White 2017). In the case of Mali, soldiers and officers were being nurtured into a different institution. The previous section has discussed how living arrangements differed for soldiers and officers. This goes far beyond the question of socialisation and peer-cohesion: officers face a completely different professional experience

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<sup>67</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-04). Bamako, April 2016.

than soldiers. Therefore, officers and NCOs are nurtured in a parallel institution, as their recruitment is different, and their education follows a different pattern.

Entrance policies at the officers' school creates a different path from that of the soldiers. Generally, officers would start their military career at a lower officer rank, without being soldiers. Attending officers' school has become a necessary step to gain rank, and while several officers choose to go abroad, the main career path remains through the national officer school.<sup>68</sup> The officers' school focuses on leadership, providing students with general theoretical training (not specialised training as it is not tailored to a corps). Before training, most officers have never been on the field nor undergone soldier training, undertaking mostly theoretical training at the EMIA.<sup>69</sup> The EMIA has a different policy than most Western officer school standards, as it must educate students lacking military experiences, notably the civilian recruits or graduates from the *Prytanée militaire de Kati*. Training lasts three years. The first year aims to compensate for the lack of military experience, from marching to military life. The second and third years are devoted to leadership and command and remains mostly theoretical.

Every year, the EMIA takes in about 40-50 new students. The main criteria that would prevent soldiers' inclusion would be failing to hold the Malian *baccalaureat*, which is not necessary for joining the armed forces at a lower level. While there are no definitive rules on who and how many can be enrolled, in recent years, around a third of recruits have been university graduates, a third already military (mostly NCOs) and a third graduates from the

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<sup>68</sup> I interviewed two officers who started their training abroad without passing through national institutions. The oddity of those cases suggests that they are an exception, but still provided some insight into the institution.

<sup>69</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-05). Bamako, November 2016.

*Prytanée*.<sup>70</sup> In 2016, the EMIA had 36 graduates, including four foreign students. Until 1988, the officers' school was open only to experienced NCOs: civilians could not apply. When the *Prytanée* was revived in the 1980s, enrolment in the EMIA was dedicated only to *Prytanée* graduates from 1988 to 1991. In 1991, NCOs pressured the hierarchy, and as a result the officers' school established the 'third rule'. Even for the most talented soldiers, those rules make it hard for them to become an officer, as recruitment to officer schools is limited. Several NCOs or *Prytanée* graduates apply to join a foreign war college, although funding might be an issue. For potential officers with the best connections, securing a government-funded scholarship through the Ministry of Defence and entering a foreign school is important for a successful career. Training in Bamako or abroad are both for a privileged few. Entering the officer corps follows patterns discussed in the literature on neo-patrimonialism. While merit matters, patronage is necessary: whoever wants to enter to the EMIA needs to have a patron to offer tips on how to pass the exams and, most importantly, will ensure that the file will be passed to the right hands. An officer explained:

There was one rule for everyone before 1991. Then, there was several ways to be accepted. To get in, a recruit needed to have patronage to follow your file. An average citizen has no chance to get in. The problem of sponsorship only got worst after that. There are strong disparities between recruits.<sup>71</sup>

While the rules for becoming an officer are not exempt from criticism, there has been a consensus that the officer's corps in Mali remains quite strong (EUTM 2015). The EMIA has a reputation beyond the Malian Armed Forces: it receives several foreign students from neighbouring countries that may lack an officers' school. A foreign instructor noted:

The officer's knowledge of command is not bad. Often, when we do international training, they are the best. The problem is that knowledge stops at that level and is not transmitted. There is an enormous gap between officers and NCOs. Their knowledge is very theoretical. The officer's training assumes that

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<sup>70</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-05). Bamako, February 2016.

<sup>71</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-06). Bamako, October 2016.

all students have practical knowledge. But most of them, if not all, have only a theoretical knowledge.<sup>72</sup>

This question of inability to go beyond theory has become a leitmotiv in discussions, and as the education gap widens with soldiers, this creates tension. The difference is not solely about the education or recruitment process: it is also about different social experiences segregating the *militariat* from the officers. Young officers might enter the offices of the Kati military base, but did not mingle with soldiers or live on the base. Recruitment policies and career paths separate officers from soldiers, fostering a gap between ranks. In fact, the recruitment system and the policies surrounding the integration of young officers instituted a *de facto* separation between officers and lower ranks. Officers, through their daily activities, build their socialisation network focussing on upward mobility. The institution, since independence, has been unable to produce NCOs that could fill the gap, and weak NCOs, who were dependent on communication with the hierarchy for operational and tactical decisions, were a significant factor in the first defeat during the 2012 crisis.<sup>73</sup>

There have been some attempts to close the loopholes, both in terms of progression and in strengthening the skills of the NCOs, through the creation of an NCO school. The *École des Sous-Officiers de Banankoro* was created in 2001 to ensure that soldiers could ascend through the ranks. As of August 2017, 1,648 NCOs have been trained.<sup>74</sup> The criteria have not changed since 2001. There are three different ways to be accepted at the entrance exam, depending on the kind of recruit, but the administration can select whom to prioritise: soldiers, civilians and *Prytanée* graduates. Soldiers must fill the seniority and notation criteria, be over 18 years old and hold a technical aptitude certificate (this last is the main

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<sup>72</sup> Foreign Military Trainer (BKO-EX-01). Bamako, October 2016.

<sup>73</sup> Officer. April 2012.

<sup>74</sup> Communiqué DIRPA, 25 August 2017.

challenges for many who joined the army without any formal school diploma, and who are then limited in their capacity to get one). Any civilian can apply, as long as they fulfil the criteria. Civilians must be over 18 years old, have a baccalaureate and pass the physical exam. A third way is to graduate from the *Prytanée*, have the military brevet and be over 18 years old. All recruits need to pass an exam testing their physical condition, their technical knowledge and their civic values. Students are enrolled for 24 months. During fieldwork, many officers expressed a belief that the school was not able to train efficient NCOs.<sup>75</sup> A trainer explained to me that the selection process limits the capacity of the school to provide adequate training, as they must cover basic elements that an NCO should already know.<sup>76</sup> Another military instructor explained to me that complaints about the inability of the NCO school to fill its mandate have been plentiful, and the low numbers of trainees per year (thirty) are too few to make a difference among the thousands of NCOs needed: 'Maybe 5 out of 30 deserves to be there. The ones that succeed could be in the officer's training.'<sup>77</sup> For officers, as well as for international observers, the current system does not allow the NCO to rely the chain of command between officers and soldiers, leaving an important operational gap on the battlefield.<sup>78</sup>

Critiques of the NCO school meet those of the officer's school: soldiers are unaccounted for in the school's selection process, and many seats in the school are offered to *Prytanée's* graduates since it was re-established. On several occasions, older military staff explained that the privilege of the *Prytanée's* graduates since 1980 goes beyond offering more chances: it is a tight-knit group that has strong connections with politicians and other elites, that has

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<sup>75</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-05\_). Bamako, February 2016

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Foreign Military Trainer (BKO-EX-02). Bamako, June 2016.

<sup>78</sup> This will be discussed in Chapter 5.

continuously been privileged, and that would go to see the President himself for negotiating rank and condemning their non-*Prytanée* peers to a career cap.<sup>79</sup> This meets the idea of a flexnet as discussed in Chapter 1 (Wedel 2012:480).

In this process, officers were perceived by their subalterns as lacking merit. At several moments, the armed forces have faced extraordinary nominations, especially at the officer level, based on arbitrary decisions from the political leadership. The process of extraordinary nominations was, paradoxically, a common process in the armed forces. Irregular promotions undermined the merit of those who obtained their rank through work, which sustained a discourse of collusion between officers and the governmental elite. Under ATT, there was an inflation of positions at the officer level. President Moussa Traoré, in ten years, named 41 generals. Alpha Oumar Konaré named seven in eleven years, and Moussa Traoré, in 23 years, about ten. Several officers had no real military duties and were dubbed '*officier de salon*' (lounge officer).<sup>80</sup> Prior to 2012, it was not uncommon to see officers campaigning overtly for the re-election of ATT, being promoted afterwards, and then using privileges to ensure that their peers would be included in the armed forces, while ensuring the inclusion of recruits that were being sponsored by a member of the government.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, officers ensured that their relatives were selected. During fieldwork, I often heard that any officer has at least two children in the army.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Officer, (BKO-OFF-06). Bamako, February 2016.

<sup>80</sup> Officers (BKO-OFF-06, BKO-OFF-08). Bamako, February and April 2016.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. .

<sup>82</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-08). Bamako, October 2016; Grin 3.

### *Secondary cohesion and discipline*

While leadership failed, the institution was not able to correct the course, as it failed to influence soldiers through norms or coercion. From independence until 2012, there has not been a discussion of doctrine, or norms and values.<sup>83</sup> Meanwhile, discipline in the Malian Armed Forces agrees with the findings of the literature on military leadership, being personalised and based on due obedience rather than on due process (Basedau and Elischer 2012; Osiel 2001).

For military sociologists, the disciplinary nature of the military has remained a central theme in the literature on secondary cohesion: discipline, which can be variable, cements the vertical relations and ensure that the chain of command is respected, offering opportunities to reframe individual failures and ensuring the viability of the chain-of-command, and therefore being one the most preeminent features of the military institution (Caforio 2006a:243; Kümmel et al. 2000). The disciplinary architecture is where the institution can correct practical norms, and discipline young men through the enforcement of the soldier ethos, therefore creating a structure that will ensure the soldier will conform to the role of warrior, nurtured by both education and social pressure (Bourke 1999:72; Coker 2007:7; Malešević 2010). Discipline has been particularly emphasised by political scientists who, while participating in debates on civil-military relations, argue that law and regulations sustained by the chain of command are enough to keep the military under control (Rukavishnikov and Pugh 2018:133). In this context, coups and mutinies are perceived as a breakdown of discipline (Babatope 2002; Decalo 1976; Rose 1982), even if a new set of literature, as discussed in earlier chapters, has also explained that mutiny could be also interpreted as being

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<sup>83</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-06). Bamako, February 2016.

enabled by the disciplinary institutions (Dwyer 2017:5). In a report to the EUTM, an expert wrote that ‘the chain of command of the Malian Armed Forces was described by several respondents as being particularly dysfunctional due to a lack of discipline and of respect for hierarchical authority’(Caparini 2015:16).

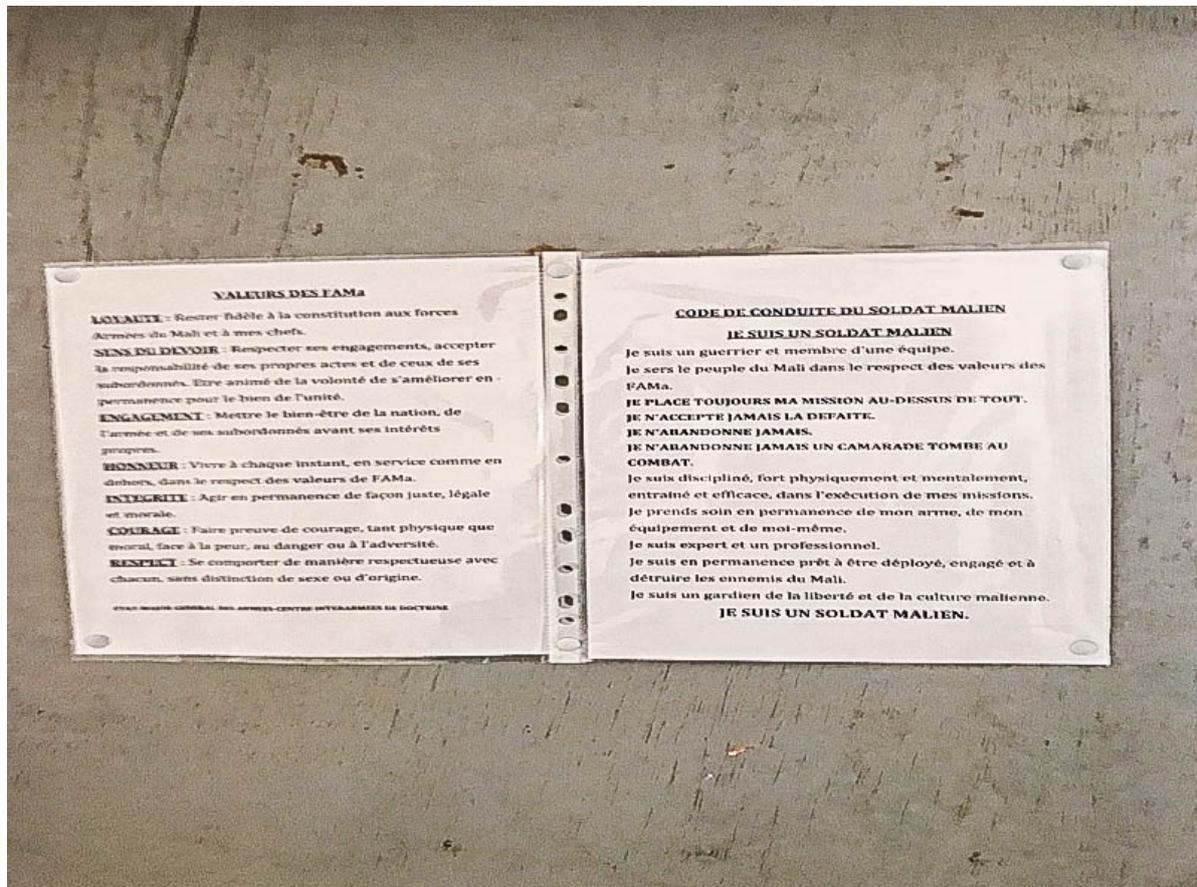


Figure 8. Picture of the ‘Military Values’ (left sheet) and a shortened version of the ‘Code of Conduct of the Malian Soldier’(right sheet).

During the focus groups and interviews, I often asked questions about discipline: officers often stated bluntly that there was a lack of discipline among soldiers. Soldiers, on their side, would always come back to the ‘Code of Conduct’, which they all can recite word-for-word. Abridged copies of the Code have been posted around the military facilities and it is part of a recruit’s training to memorize it. Although, as the Code reflects general rules such as ‘not accepting defeat’ or having to be ‘an expert and a professional’, it provides very little guidance on discipline itself. Guidance on these aspects would come from other documents,

including the Code of Military Justice or the full Code of Conduct of Security Forces<sup>84</sup>, which codifies discipline.

Discipline, in training, remains theoretical. The central theoretical part of the training is the memorisation of the code of conduct, which fits on the two A4 pages.<sup>85</sup> The code contains 37 short articles that enunciate general principles that a military member of staff should follow. I have seen these two sheets stapled to the walls of military facilities over Mali. During the focus group, this remained one of the primary pieces of learning that soldiers remember. ‘We spend days studying it. We had to be able to recite it word by word.’<sup>86</sup> Soldiers explained to me that the challenge, for many, was that their French was too poor to understand it, and sometimes, to even read it. So, they learned it without knowing what it meant.<sup>87</sup> On several occasions, many soldiers, when I would ask about a specific question on the military, would quote the code of conduct word for word, but could not use the code to provide an example.

During interviews, several sources highlighted a single event as an example of the failure of the armed forces as a disciplinary institution. In October 2011, a hazing event at Koulikouro’s officers’ school, the EMIA, led to the death of four Malian students and one Senegalese. The military police launched an investigation. Some sanctions were applied to the instructors that ‘let things happen’, but the culprits were never prosecuted. Meanwhile, the investigation team provided a report that made several serious accusations: manslaughter, use of alcohol

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<sup>84</sup> This three-page document is different than the one that could be seen on the walls of the military base in 2016 as it has 37 articles that provide more guidance, while not necessary addressing these issues in any greater detail. I have included this document in Annex V.

<sup>85</sup> See Appendix 5.

<sup>86</sup> Grin 2.

<sup>87</sup> Grin 2

and drugs, deathly negligence.<sup>88</sup> The importance of connections to the ‘flexnet’ is crucial: a soldier called his patron, a high-ranked officer who raised the alarm, and called other officers to rush to the EMIA and stop the deadly violence.<sup>89</sup> An investigation was launched by the *Gendarmerie* as ATT learned about the events from a news report and asked for an investigation. The report clearly stated that alcohol and drug consumption, as well as lack of supervision, were the source of the problem. The report also discusses several violent events, where individuals abused their positions of power and imposed brutal fear over recruits. Nevertheless, this event has never been resolved in court. At first, the military hierarchy imposed collective sanctions, as trainers and students were suspended. Meanwhile, all the students that were suspended were reintegrated or put into ‘internships’, away from public scrutiny<sup>90</sup>, while an invisible hand has erased most of the sanctions for the other participants.<sup>91</sup> In sum, despite a thorough investigation, there has been no real punishment. The events fit a pattern that several soldiers talked to me about: the brutal use of force to exert discipline. On several occasions during the grin, soldier talked to me about certain leaders hitting recruits or putting soldiers in goal for arbitrary reasons. Personalised leadership took over institutional leadership.

Military justice was inactive in 2012. Military courts under Modibo Keita and Moussa Traoré were used to prosecute opponents of the regime, who were punished by being sent to the north (Dembele 2003; Mariko 2001; Sangaré 2006). From 1991, the military justice system was simply abandoned, and most cases of breach of discipline, like the hazing, would be

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<sup>88</sup> Report of Investigation PV N.098, 18 October 2011. Amadou Sanogo was sanctioned as part of a collective sanction against instructors of the EMIA.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> The main organiser was sent to the US, another to France.

<sup>91</sup> Student Officer (PAR-OFF-02). Paris, October 2016.

solved ‘personally’, showing the importance of neo-patrimonialism and how individuals could shape the rules through their own will. An officer described the situation:

There was no justice. The hierarchy would decide what was right or wrong. When soldiers were abused, they had no recourse. The only option was to find a patron to intervene. Don’t look for military court documents. You will waste your time. Soldiers will have to acquiesce to the brutality or the randomness of action. This was the norm. Unfortunately. Officers would often have to intervene. Just like during the 2011 hazing.<sup>92</sup>

In the wake of 2012, it appears that soldiers understood the importance of respecting personalised power. A legacy of arbitrariness and personalised power had become a central weakness leading to the 2012 collapse. In 2012, when scores of soldiers deserted the front, there were no sanctions applied to them. Similarly, those that did everything to avoid the draft in the first place had even less reason to worry about sanctions. To date, no soldiers have been sanctioned for desertion from combat;<sup>93</sup> only soldiers who joined the rebellion were sanctioned and revoked *in absentio* from the armed forces: the ones who joined pro-government militias were not.

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<sup>92</sup> Malian Political Adviser (BKO-POL-01). Bamako, October 2016.

<sup>93</sup> Every military person found guilty of desertion during peace faces till three years of gaol, according to the Code of Military Justice. If this desertion occurs during wartime or during a state of emergency, this can be up to 10 years. If an officer deserts, he should be automatically dismissed.

#### 4.4. Conclusion

This chapter has presented the state of the Malian armed forces before the 2012 crisis. It focused on the experience of the soldier and the social dynamics shaping the *militariat*. The first section analysed the physical experience and daily routine of the soldier, discussing the ascription of roles in relationship to the civil-military gap. The second studied motivation and how peer cohesion is being constructed by the *militariat*, and how the community of striving creates social obligations strengthening primary cohesion among soldiers. The last section discussed how the military institution has been unable to provide secondary cohesion, and faces derelict leadership and discipline.

An important point of this chapter is to acknowledge the state of the armed forces before the 2012 events, beyond what was told later on. In 2013, after the French-led operation led to the liberation of the north, the headline of Malian newspapers spoke of ‘the return in force of the FAMas’ (*le retour en force*). A few years later, the laconic *communiqués* of the Ministry of Defence would speak of the ‘rise in power’ (*montée en puissance*). The semantic change in *communiqués* represents the struggle of an institution to understand its own rank: from the belief that everything was fine to the common understanding that the body was weak before 2012. This chapter argues that, while weapons, ammunition, uniforms and other resources were lacking, there were also inherent, institutional issues with the armed forces. First, an inward-looking military institution has led to a civilian control that is more interested in coup-proofing than in building capabilities of the armed forces. Second, the military institution, like postcolonial state institutions, follows a pattern of neo-patrimonialism with its centre of gravity around a core, to the detriment of a periphery, and where arrangements with the elite are fostering a divide between a *militariat* and other components of the armed forces. The existence of a *militariat* is the expression of a later division.

## **Chapter 5. Manufacturing a coup: the mobilisation of the militariat and the struggling institution.**

On March 21<sup>st</sup> 2012, angry soldiers and NCOs entered the Presidential Palace and found it empty: President ATT was nowhere to be found, and nobody seemed to be in charge. After few hours strolling around the colonial palace, soldiers declared a junta is the new government of Mali. This became known as the third coup in Mali.

The previous chapters depicted the nature of the discontent in the armed forces, first through the inherited institutional challenges of the colonial and postcolonial armed forces in a context of coup-proofing, and second on how, prior to the coup, the sociological life of the soldier has been organised. When Captain Amadou Haya Sanogo pledged to defend the state to justify his coup, he did more than put on hold his country's constitution and suspend the fundamental rights of Malians: he also intended to influence the relationship between institutions through a mobilisation around the soldier's resentment. His stance was enabled by the factors explained in earlier chapters.

This chapter intends to study the mobilisation behind the 2012 crisis, and the relationship between the military as an institution, the state and the junta. It intends to provide a step-by-step account of the mechanisms leading to the crisis, studying the process from the military collapse until the coup, and then to discuss the processes that sustained the crisis. This chapter has three objectives. First, it contributes to a vivid debate on mutiny and coups, which are perceived as two separate phenomena in the literature. It focuses on the issue of a 'subaltern coup' and the dynamics of mobilisation among the *militariat* that sustain it, including the role of rumours in supporting the process. Subaltern coups have been understood as those led by armed regulars who have 'neither the intellectual skills nor the

professional responsibility of the officer' (Huntington 1957:17–18). Coups lead by officers have been described as attempts to take control of politics, led by those who intend to become 'a political master instead of a political instrument'(Perlmutter 1977:26). In this context, subaltern coups have been understood as a 'retrograde political force that is more likely to terrorize society and felonise the state than rescue the latter from decomposition or establish legitimate political institutions'(Kandeh 2004:3). As discussed in Chapter 1, the literature has struggled to understand the conceptual uneasiness of a mutiny becoming a subaltern coup, especially in a context where discipline and cohesion have been deemed a relevant factor in the success of the mutiny (Dwyer 2017). This chapter studies contested claims from the literature on subaltern coups, suggesting that they are motivated by a desire to challenge the king rather than the rules, discussing how in the Malian context addressing the needs of the community has become more important than the discourse of overthrowing the government: soldiers were challenging a lack of leadership rather than the leadership itself. This was the result of a community mobilisation, rather than an attempt of a class to defend their own self-serving objectives. Second, this chapter intends to focus on sociological processes within the military institution, notably on discussing how primary and secondary cohesion has been working both for and against the coup, discussing how weak institutions can sustain cohesion and discipline. Third, it intends to understand the sociological breaking points in an institution bound by 'coup-proofing', and how sociological fractures between the institutions have interplayed, notably between NCOs and officers, and how these relate to relationships with civilians, in an attempt to understand what the concept of militarism entails for the Malian Armed Forces and for civil-military relations. Rumours have been an important element sustaining such dynamics.

The first section provides a chronology of events, with special attention to rumours and meta-data, as discussed in Chapter 2. It presents the collapse of the government as a double-layered phenomenon: a military defeat and a mutiny-turned-coup. There is a path to understanding the crisis: military defeats in the north brought about the mutiny, which subsequently was reframed as a coup, and which finally brought about more military defeats. The second section focuses on three aspects of the mobilisation. The first part of that section is concerned with the mobilisation of the militariat, discussing how rumours have shaped civil-military relations and how an anti-elite message has been built up. The second part focuses on cohesion and explains how, in the collapse, peer cohesion created on the military bases was detrimental to cohesion in combat, especially secondary cohesion. The third part of that section reflects on the issue of leadership within the military institution.

## **5.1. Chronology of rumours and events: A step-by-step account of the mutiny-turned-coup**

There are three important steps to account for in order to understand the end result. First, there is military collapse and the uproar that it generates, where misinformation and rumours spawn turbulence. Second, there is the moment where the uproar becomes a more sustained mobilisation that could qualify as a mutiny. Thirdly, the coup itself. This section revisits these three chaotic steps towards an outcome. This section is devoted to address how this mobilisation occurred.

### *The military collapse in the North*

The two previous chapters have acknowledged that there was a process initiated within Mali over several decades undermining the armed forces an institution for political purposes. One should assume that the trigger for transforming this situation into a full-blown crisis comes from regional destabilisation that changed the security situation within Mali. Within the literature, the exogenous causes of the defeat of the FAMas can be classified into two categories. The first category includes the porous borders of the vast and uncontrollable Sahel, which have favoured the emergence of transnational criminal and Salafist networks (Bøås 2012; Bøås and Torheim 2013; Marchal 2012). This meets the idea of a periphery, discussed in the previous chapter, that remains uncontrolled by the centralised state, which has made the northern part of the country an ungoverned space (Lloyd 2016; Raleigh and Dowd 2013) where power alliances are fluid (Desgrais, Guichaoua, and Lebovich 2018; Raineri and Strazzari 2015). The second category relates to the conflict in Libya, where combatants, often Tuaregs, were employed by Gadhafi, and which left the collapsing country with a heavy stock of weapons (Marchal 2012, Bøås and Torheim 2013, Bøås 2012). In sum,

the literature came to understand military defeat as the Malian institutions being attacked by better-armed external forces who took advantages of the vulnerabilities of an ungoverned/ungovernable space.

These exogenous factors explain military defeats but do not justify why the military institution was challenged from the inside. These two processes are linked. The crisis was initiated by the military collapse when a new Tuareg rebellion was launched. While several skirmishes between the armed forces and rebels happened as early as December 2011, the first battle happened on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2012 when the Tuareg rebels of the MNLA took Menaka, and several incidents of combat occurred in the Kidal region simultaneously. At the time, the government stated that it retook control of Menaka the following day, but there were no definitive accounts, as fighting lasted for more than a week, and the isolation of the combat zone led journalists to rely on the propaganda of either the government or rebels.<sup>94</sup>

Meanwhile, the Battle of Aguelhok started on January 18<sup>th</sup>. This battle became a critical psychological blow, as rebels took the town and slaughtered an unknown number of soldiers.<sup>95</sup> While images of the massacre were widely shared on the internet and social networks by supporters of the MNLA, including a lot of fake information, this had a profound impact on the members of the FAMAs and their families, with defence lines slowly receding in the upcoming weeks and numerous positions in the Kidal region being attacked and falling into the rebels' control (Notin 2014:69). Already, ahead of the army's protests against the government, the momentum in the theatre of war had been achieved, as several military positions were abandoned as the enemy approached.

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<sup>94</sup> Phone interviews with members of the MNLA. Bamako, 19 January 2012.

<sup>95</sup> Reports varied between 60 and 120 deaths. Interviews, February 2012.

Limited information was available at the time, and there is no definitive timeline of the fighting: officials remained silent during the events.<sup>96</sup> Nevertheless, several soldiers and NCOs came back from the north during this period as military positions were attacked: the violence of the Aguelhok assault and the inability to respond to the aggression created a wave of panic leading to desertion, which military discipline failed to contain. While the government intended to mobilise more soldiers to the front, soldiers and their family used their network to lobby against their deployment. Some used fake medical notes; others used their networks to be assigned to a position away from the front line. This led to the deployment of an overstretched minority of soldiers.<sup>97</sup> Recruits with no experience were mobilised to fill the gap, further weakening the front, while NCOs struggled to impose the chain of command effectively.<sup>98</sup> There were several signals that conditions in the north were difficult: only 45% of soldiers had weapons; soldiers did not receive new uniforms for 2-3 years; those on the front line had to sleep on the ground and find their own food, as the military hierarchy simply ignored their needs (Magassa 2017:221).

It was at this moment that rumours, in lieu of reliable information, became a significant mover of events, as rumours consolidated the narrative of an ATT-linked elite – as well as their alleged international and Tuareg allies - trying to undermine the interest of Malians. As discussed in Chapter 1, events were motivated by both facts and events; they sustained each other at different moments. Rumours and the difficulty to access verified information, played a role during the events of 2012, shared among the younger generations through social media, and among the older generations through SMS or phone discussions, which influenced the

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<sup>96</sup> Malian journalist (JOURNO1). February 2016.

<sup>97</sup> Widows (KTI-WI-01/02/03). February and April 2016.

<sup>98</sup> NCO (K-NCO-01). Kati, April 2016.

perception and the mobilisation of the local populations (De Bruijn, Pelckmans, and Sangaré 2015; Gavelle et al. 2013). During the coup, it appeared that ‘the representations and stereotypes in national mass media in the period following the coup d’état, notably the polarized political life in Bamako, the discourses on ECOWAS, and representation of the Tuaregs’ influenced the outcome of the crisis (Hagberg and Körling 2012:122).

This was notable from the beginning. All actors in Mali were struggling with the growing significance of social media in the Malian context. The Presidency had just started to use Twitter and Facebook a few times per week, often reiterating points made in press releases. The government had a minimal communication strategy and was unable to contain the intensive social media campaign of the MNLA, which proactively broadcasted pictures and videos via social media and outreach to journalists (Notin 2014:68) The population, with limited internet access, were widely sharing information and unchecked stories on social media. This process was strengthened by the diaspora, with better internet access, who transferred information to communities without internet access, during phone calls or through SMS, without verifying if the information had any basis in truth (De Bruijn et al. 2015). In this context, perception and rumours were significant in providing ‘new information flows into the practice of [the actor’s] political agency’ (De Bruijn et al. 2015:32). Events and rumours did not happen in separate realms: they reinforced each other, and the battle of interpretation became more relevant than the facts in terms of social mobilisation, primarily through a government whose communication strategy was minimalist (Gavelle et al. 2013), allowing to make several amalgamation between desire outcomes and the factual events (Stoler 1992). Most of the actors were not aware of all the facts during the process, which makes narratives more significant in terms of framing than the factual account of events that remained contested to this day. There was also several concomitant events that suggest a

‘causal heterogeneity’ that does not follow a linear process (Sewell 2009:101). Therefore, social mobilisation, in or out of the Kati military base, was also dependent on these processes.

The government responded to the crisis in the north through political means. The first attempt was to mobilise its networks to pursue its strategy of ‘consensual politics’ (Baudais 2006), which lead to consultations with several personalities close to the regime, from ambassadors to pro-Bamako Tuareg. French Foreign Minister Alain Juppé came to meet with ATT on February 26<sup>th</sup>. Meanwhile, ATT redoubled attempts to include opposition figures in the discussion, notably by naming two politicians, Tiebile Drame and Chogel Kokalla Maiga, in a commission intended to propose solutions.<sup>99</sup> He believed that a solution should be both diplomatic and political and should not emphasise the military response; there is no evidence that more resources were released to fight in the north<sup>100</sup>.



Figure 9. Tweets from the Presidency on national unity, February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012..

The Presidential account highlights that an association of Northerners condemns the ‘partition’ of the north, while the second Tweet says that religious leaders condemn violence.

<sup>99</sup> The Commission has not produced any outcome.

<sup>100</sup> Journalist (BKO-JO-01). Bamako, February 2016; Journalist interview with military officers, Bamako, January 2012.

Meanwhile, the ATT government decided to get involved in the ‘battle of the facts’ without supporting it with a coherent public relations strategy. An investigation was commissioned to report on the Aguelhok massacre.<sup>101</sup> The report was presented to the President on February 21<sup>st</sup> and mostly collected pictures and testimonies available on social media, even though the investigators went to Aguelhok. While the report intended to document the atrocities committed against the military, it did not attempt to provide explanations for the military failures; it gave credibility to several rumours circulating on social media on the invincibility and support of the enemy. An important point of the report was to link the MNLA to AQMI and drug traffickers; this was a political attempt to frame the discussion around armed groups, even if no clear evidence was provided at the time of their link with terrorist and criminal groups.<sup>102</sup> The government released communiqués, but did not release the report itself.

While the government was trying to ignore military defeats and emphasised the criminal nature of the rebels, the MNLA launched a propaganda campaign, bombarding journalists with press releases and social media posts. Communiqués from the period answered government communiqués directly: the MNLA refused to be associated with AQMI and intended to prove that it was the victim of the conflict (Boisbouvier 2012a).

Meanwhile, growing rumours were shared in Bamako and Kati, fuelling tension and slowly re-enforcing a narrative on the treason of the ATT regime and the vain sacrifice of soldiers. Two events embodied the expression of this tension ahead of March 21<sup>st</sup>. On February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012, protests sporadically emerged around Bamako and Kati in reaction to the violent

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<sup>101</sup>Journalist (BKO-JO-01). Bamako, February 2016. The Commission was headed by Ali Badara Diamanté, chief inspector of the civil security, and included 7 senior officers.

<sup>102</sup> Journalist (BKO-JO-01). Bamako, February 2016.

clashes in the north, and notably the Aguelhok massacre, as Malians shared videos of dead military personnel on Facebook. In Bamako, protesters lit fires and walked in the streets, but violence was limited: businesses were closed and the traditional protesting street, the *Avenue de la République*, was not the centre of the mobilisation.



Figure 10. *Place de la République* during protests on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012.

In Kati, more violent riots occurred. Several houses and businesses owned by Tuaregs, including a pharmacy and a clinic, were burned down. Riots targeted the Tuareg community, but several protesters in Kati held signs and shared slogans condemning the government for not providing enough weapons and resources to troops.<sup>103</sup> Tuareg families had to be evacuated from their homes and were offered shelter by security forces. Following these events, several Northern families left Kati.<sup>104</sup> While an anti-Tuareg rhetoric grew, there were

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<sup>103</sup> Protesters. Bamako, 8 February, 2012.

<sup>104</sup> Tuareg leader. Bamako, April 2012.

already several protesters with signs targeting the ATT regime for not providing resources to the military. ATT blamed specific politicians and two radio stations, including Radio Kadiya, owned by opposition figure Oumar Mariko, in an attempt to defuse conspiracy theories accusing him of fuelling the conflict to postpone the elections.

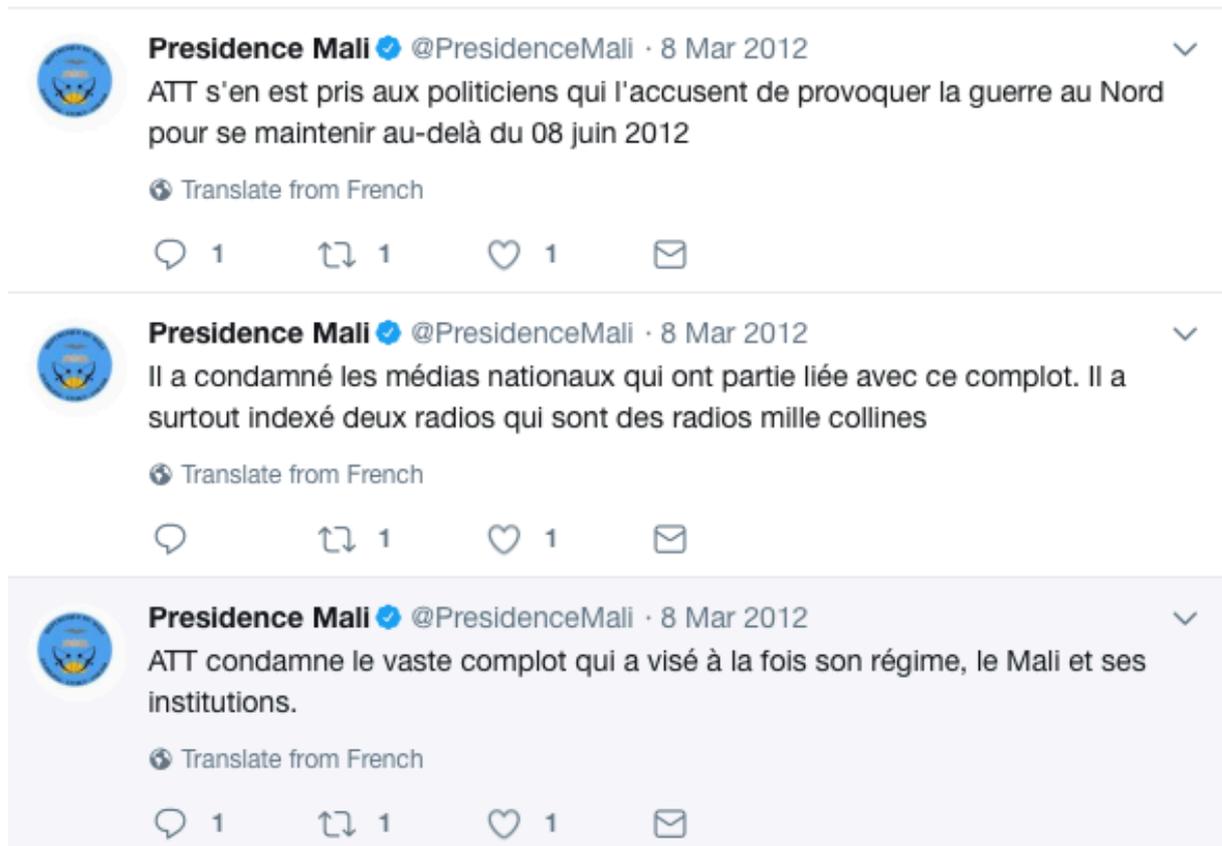


Figure 11. Tweets from the Presidency, March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

*The Presidential Twitter account tries to fight rumours that the government is part of a 'plot' to fuel the conflict in the North and stay in power after the electoral deadline.*

The second event moved away from targeting the Tuareg community towards blaming the government more directly for its failure to support the army. On March 8<sup>th</sup> (Women's Day), military wives took to the streets to protest against the government. Most of these female protesters tackled the 'lack of weapons' and demanded that their 'husband[s] should not be sent to the butcher shop'.<sup>105</sup> Military wives and children slowly increased the pressure

<sup>105</sup> Phone interviews with protesters. March 8th, 2012.

through discussing the likely fates of their husbands and fathers in the media and through social networks. From then on, military families were influential in echoing the political messages of the soldiers and the junta. While accusations of being remotely controlled have emerged, their role in the mobilisation was meaningful. These reverberated with stories of military wives opposing the deployment of their husbands to the north using fake medical certificates, or testimonies from widows who tried to cancel their husband's posting by interceding through the authorities.

The President's office denied any wrong-doing and refused to provide enough resources to defend the country or protect the troops. During these protests, it was rumoured that ATT declared that he would not talk to the military wives, but only military staff. However, there has never been any proof of this.<sup>106</sup> Kati soldiers later explained that they saw this as an invitation to talk to the President. This belief became significant in the unfolding of events on 22 March, regardless of the verity of the rumour.

At the time, there was a significant cognitive gap, re-enforced by rumours, between politicians and soldiers, which lead to further antagonisation. On one side, the ATT administration pursued a political strategy and refused to engage in a military solution. Meanwhile, the armed forces, as an institution, are forced to deal with the crisis by themselves, while defence lines were collapsing and soldiers dying. The next parts will address more precisely the causes of this collapse, and the failure of the military institutions. An important point of fracture at this moment was between the senior officers and their subalterns, where class sympathies emerging from prevailing norms and culture were a significant point of tension, as the political elite and senior officers ignored the complaints of

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<sup>106</sup> Grin 1. While I have never been able to prove that the President made such a declaration, soldiers constantly referred to it.

subalterns (Kandeh 2004:26). In sum, the militariat and the government clashed on their perception of events, further widening the existing gap between the two realms.

## *The Mutiny*

Rumours of tensions on the Kati military base were frequent weeks before March 21<sup>st</sup>. ATT himself, while talking to three delegates of the African Union, was recorded saying that things were moving fast in Kati and a mutiny was being prepared (Boisbouvier 2012a, 2012b). While civilians and military families had already voiced their frustration during several protests, it was only on March 21<sup>st</sup> that the military from Kati voiced their frustrations. Members of the armed forces said they were planning to hold a march on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, with the intention to end it at the bottom of the hill of Koulouba, where the Presidential Palace stands, and to send a delegation to discuss their concerns with the president, as soldiers understood that he had issued a tacit invitation.<sup>107</sup> The government, aware of rising tensions, decided to pre-emptively dispatch the Minister of Defence, to Kati General Sadio Gassama. He was chaperoned by the army chief-of-Staff, Gabriel Poudiougou, and by Colonel-Major Abderhamane Ould Meydou.<sup>108</sup> Officially, the trio were to discuss the situation in the North, promising more weapons and better support for veterans (Ahmed 2012), although tensions rose when they told soldiers that more of them would be deployed there. One of the Minister's aide's explained the situation: 'It is an accident. The Minister was tense. The discussion turned out to be angry. The Minister started to threaten the military. They did not appreciate it as he was not listening to them.'<sup>109</sup> A Major, among soldiers, start to insult the delegation (Boisbouvier 2012b, 2012a).<sup>110</sup> An argument followed, and Colonel-

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<sup>107</sup> Interviews on 22 March 2012.

<sup>108</sup> General Poudiougou, a close ally of ATT, was sacked a few months later. Ould Meydou, an Arab general that joined the armed forces in the 1990s following a DDR process, was also seen as pro-ATT. He was active in combat in the north in 2012. He was shot and wounded at his home in January 2015 and was named Timbuktu Governor in July 2017.

<sup>109</sup> Political Attaché (BKO-PR-01). Bamako, June 2016.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

Major Ould Meydou almost came to blows with a soldier.<sup>111</sup> While anger grew on both sides, the disgruntled crowd started to throw rocks at the delegation. The Minister's bodyguards responded by firing into the air and escorting their charges out of Kati, to go to the Presidential palace. Once the emissaries left, soldiers in the Kati military camp decided to open the magazine (Boisbouvier 2012b, 2012a). As officers had the keys to the warehouse, a first group of soldiers broke the doors and took firearms and ammunition. A second group went to the garage to seize four light tanks (BRDM) and two transportation trucks (BTR 6). Soldiers headed towards the city at around 13:00, but there is no clear narrative on what their first targets were. Many said they went around aimlessly, suggesting that they did not have a clear plan.<sup>112</sup> They bypassed the Presidential Palace hill. A participant described the situation:

We really wanted to talk to the President at that point. After all, during the Women's march, he said that he would only talk to us, not to our wives. We took his word. However, when we arrived, the doors were locked, and they shoot at us. This was when we decided to use the weapons.<sup>113</sup>

The first account of a reaction from the Presidential Palace came at 12:30. At that moment, a Council of Ministers was held in Koulouba. ATT broke the session to take a call from his minister, still in the convoy, heading to the Presidential Palace after being stoned. The Minister was reported to have stated:

Sir, the military wanted an investigation on Aguelhok. They demand the weapons that you have promised, including missiles and combat helicopters. Now, they are blaming you personally. They say they got hand on a satellite phone with your personal phone number as the last call. (Boisbouvier 2012b, 2012a)

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<sup>111</sup> Political Attaché (BKO-PR-01). Bamako, June 2016.

<sup>112</sup> Soldiers. March 2012.

<sup>113</sup> NCO (BKO-NCO-07). Bamako, February 2016.

ATT made two decisions. First, he dispatched his aide-de-camp Boureima Guindo to Kati with some of the presidential guards<sup>114</sup> to meet with mutineers, but they arrived too late to meet the mutineers.<sup>115</sup> Second, he sent away from Koulouba all non-necessary staff and most of his family.<sup>116</sup> This shows that ATT took seriously the threat of an attack on the presidential palace. Soon after, ATT received several calls from regional leaders, notably Burkina Faso's President Blaise Compaoré, Niger's President Mahamadou Issoufou and Benin's President Boni Yayi, as rumours of the events were shared in social media.

Around 14:00, a group of mutineers finally reach the ORTM, shooting into the air on their way. Meanwhile, a delegation reached the Prime Minister's office, at the *Place de l'Indépendance*. Mutineers demanded more weapons to fight in the North and did not frame their action as a coup (Ahmed 2012). *Berets Rouges* were positioned in front of the ORTM and the National Assembly, but did not engage with mutineers. Meanwhile, the President's office started to officially acknowledge that a mutiny was occurring, led by 'deserters and other soldiers who do not want to go to the front', through press releases and Twitter.

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<sup>114</sup> Not to be confused with the *Berets Rouges*.

<sup>115</sup> Political Attaché (BKO-PR-01). Bamako, June 2016.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.



Figure 12. Several Tweets from the Presidency acknowledging the mutiny but denying a coup.

Mutineers reach the bottom of Koulouba hill at around 17:30. They had machine guns, rocket launchers and BRDMs. The gates of the Presidential Palace were closed, and a Red Beret unit was responsible for defending the doors, while the official Presidential Guard evacuated when they realised that mutineers had rocket launchers. The *Berets Rouges* were said to be the first to shoot (which they did not deny), while the mutineers still hoped to negotiate. This was the moment that the mutineers started to hit the Presidential palace with artillery, targeting mostly the left wing of the building, where ATT's offices are located, suggesting that some well-informed military staff had joined the mutiny. ATT and his counsellors

evacuated for building 42, closer to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but still in the Koulouba compound (Boisbouvier 2012b, 2012a).

At 18:00, gunshots were heard at Gao, where mutineers fired into the air and arrested a handful of officers (the sole act that could be considered an attempted to challenge ranks at that time and which did not challenge the government itself). Other camps joined the mutiny, notably Sévaré and Kayes, but did not arrest officers at that time (Calimachi 2012). At 21:00, despite the passive resistance of the *Berets Rouges*, the gates at the entrance of the Presidency compound, at the bottom of the hill, yielded. The mutineers found the Presidential Palace empty. Among the last to remain with ATT was a former aide-de-camp and *Beret Rouge*, Abidine Guindo. He provided advice on operations and helped the President to escape with three other *Berets Rouges*, walking down the hill and climbing a wall at the back of the compound (Boisbouvier 2012b). The President was then brought to a Red Beret camp, a strategic place a few hundred metres from the American Embassy.

Among the crowd of disgruntled soldiers were several future members of the junta. Officially, they were there to talk to the President. At the time, they had not publicly expressed a desire to hold a coup and did not use the word ‘mutiny’ either.<sup>117</sup> They remain over two hours in the Presidential Palace without anybody contacting them or emissaries attempting to negotiate with them, and there are no records of discussions between the government and the military.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Putschist (EM-NCO-02). October 2016.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.



Figure 13. Tweets from the Presidency during the March 21<sup>st</sup> coup.

*After denying any abnormal activities, the Presidential Twitter account went silent from March 21<sup>st</sup> till April 13<sup>th</sup>, the date Dioncounda Traoré was named interim president.*

Up to this point, any explanation of how the frustrations in Kati turned into a mutiny follows a predictable pattern of the expression of long-lasting grievances through collective insubordination (Dwyer 2017). The absence of a ‘clear political objective’ other than conveying the mutineers' demands distinguishes this from a coup, which would need a clear policy-oriented goal (Dwyer 2017). At this time, there was no challenge to the government, but rather only to the hierarchy in Gao. From there, the future junta leader Amadou Haya Sanogo and the other putschists decided to meet at the ORTM, where they took the decision to take advantage of the power vacuum and initiate a coup.

### *The coup*

Rumours of a coup were already circulating early morning on March 21<sup>st</sup>. I received the first SMS suggesting a coup at 10:37 that day. While the military did not openly declare this until the early morning of March 22<sup>nd</sup>, there were some signs. The junta followed the usual process

of a coup by occupying and turning off the national broadcaster (Luttwak 1979), an essential condition to ‘making a fact’ (Singh 2014). However, the junta took several hours to decide to address the public, leaving Malians in the dark about who was in charge for few hours. By the afternoon, over 100 Malian military staff had reached the ORTM, which sent most employees home. The public broadcaster went black during the late afternoon, but broadcasts of Malian traditional dances started to be transmitted in the early evening, indicating that some technicians were still at the ORTM. Accounts said that some telecommunication soldiers supported the broadcast, but at least one civilian was inside the compound.<sup>119</sup> While the junta leaders were meeting at the ORTM, several politicians were arrested<sup>120</sup>.

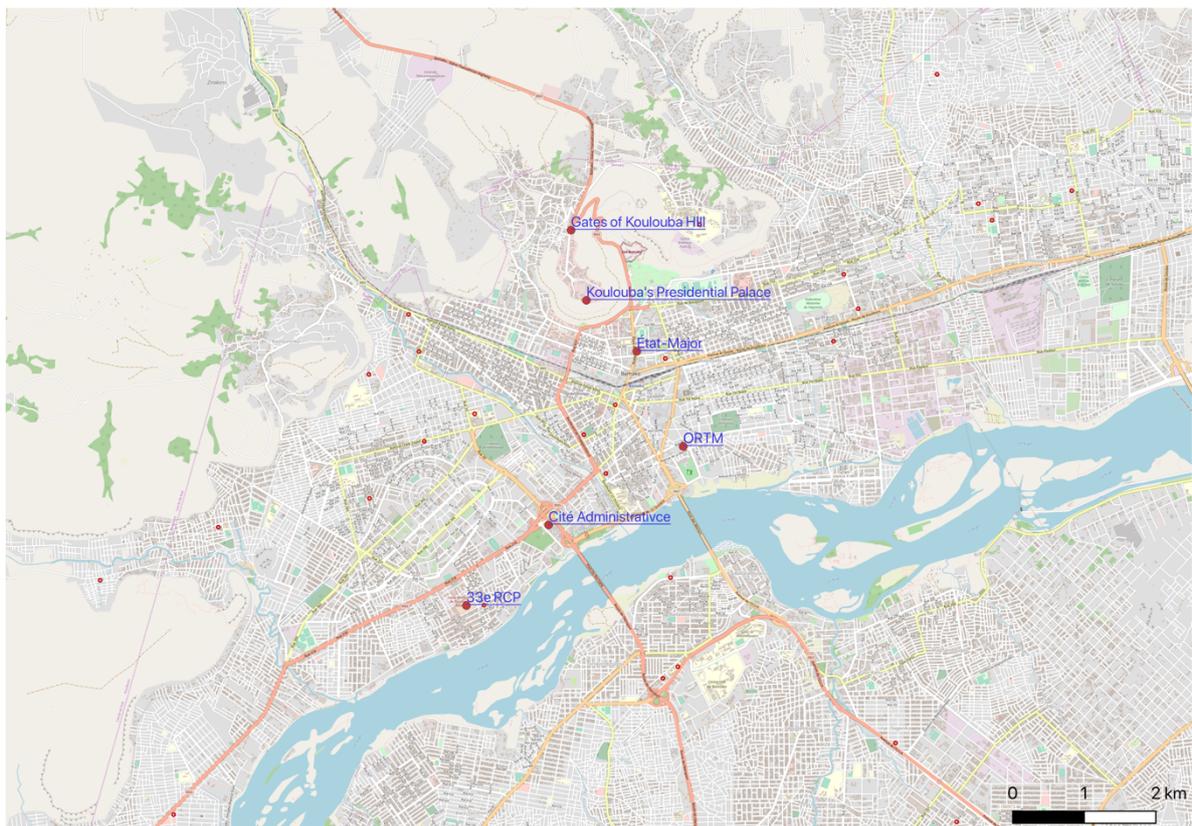


Figure 14. Main sites of the Coup.

<sup>119</sup> ORTM producer. Bamako, July 2012.

<sup>120</sup> See Annex VI for the full list of arrests.

At 04: 45 on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, the junta told Malians their name: the *Comité national pour le redressement de la démocratie et la restauration de l'État*, or CNRDRE. Throughout the night at various points, cultural programs were stopped, and arguments could be heard in Bambara. It appears that the junta disagreed on the message. A technician said that the statement was written on the spot, at the ORTM, and that the leadership was still under discussion.<sup>121</sup> The statement starts with a voice speaking over a black screen, slowly showing the face of a soldier reading a communiqué, later identified during the broadcast as Lieutenant Amadou Konaré, while the camera zoomed out to show a crowd of about thirty agitated soldiers surrounding the reader. Konaré, reading with difficulty and referring to the junta as CNRDR or CNDR at different moments, explained that ‘because of the incapacity of the regime to efficiently fight terrorists’, the ‘armed forces and all security forces’ must ‘safeguard the constitution’ and to take responsibility for ‘ending the incompetent and repudiated regime of Mr. Amadou Toumani Touré’. He then announced that the constitution and all state institutions were suspended and that a unity government will be formed.

Once he has finished reading, a technician behind the camera states that he will take a couple of shots, and another voice is heard, saying that now the ‘chief’ is going to state ‘something’. In a cracked voice, visibly tired, Amadou Haya Sanogo briefly gives his instructions to the citizens in a statement that lasts about a minute, asking them to remain calm, to ‘respect the public good’ and asking the security forces to defend and ‘respect civilians’.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> ORTM producer. Bamako, July 2012.

<sup>122</sup> See video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5RVvBHPjstI&list=PLXOIYREiQhKm7tLhqHI2PS70TAmxnhw6-&index=2&t=41s>



Figure 15. Various stills from the CNRDRE's TV broadcast on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2012.

Shooting ceased during the night of the 21<sup>st</sup>, but looting occurred unsteadily all over the city for at least two days. The main target was the *Cité Administrative*, where computers, air conditioners, safes and some office equipment were stolen. Several other buildings, including the custom offices and some banks, were also looted.<sup>123</sup> While there is a possibility that civilians were involved in it, testimonies named 'men in uniforms' using their 'military vehicles', notably at the water agency office in ACI 2000, a few hundred metres from the *Cité Administrative*.<sup>124</sup> The ORTM, under the control of the military for the entire coup, had to reduce broadcasting to few hours daily, as cameras and other electronic equipment were stolen on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.<sup>125</sup>

While the circumstances of the transfer of ATT from the Baco-Djicorini military base to the Senegalese Embassy remain unclear, there was no attempt by the junta to communicate with the *Berets Rouges*, who stayed in their base throughout the crisis (Boisbouvier 2012b).

<sup>123</sup> Investigation. March 2012. A report from Associated Press quoted a businessman with ties to the junta who estimates that they stole between \$2 and \$3 million in the first three days after the coup (Callimachi 2012)

<sup>124</sup> Interview with a public agency director. Bamako, 27 March 2012.

<sup>125</sup> ORTM producer. Bamako, July 2012.

## 5.2. Mobilisation in favour of the coup

The events of 2012 resemble a mutiny initially, through within which lower rank armed forces members intended to send a message to their leaders and to the government (Collier and Hoeffler, 2005; Dwyer 2015:6). While the endgame of their actions became *de facto* a coup, their unplanned actions do not express the ‘manifest destiny of the soldier’ where the soldier believes he has to rectify the wrongdoing of individuals against the Republic (Finer 1976). Neither does it fit an idea in which the ‘organisational bureaucracy’ of the military provides them with a corporate advantage to regain control in times of chaos (Caforio 2006a:99; Huntington 1968). While the end result was a subaltern coup led by junior officers, there was little indication until the declaration on national television that the junta intended to depose the government (Clark 2007; Dwyer 2017; Kandeh 2004; McGowan 2005, 2006). The chain of events suggests that the president abandoned power to the mutinous military mob. This section is devoted to explaining the factors that contributed to the unfolding of events.

### *The militariat: civil-military relations and the anti-elite message*

A subaltern coup has been understood as a class-conscious revolt of soldiers against an elite who holds power (rather than the means of production, as in a Marxist revolution) (Kandeh 2004:15). As such, the 2012 coup had an important anti-elite message that met civilian aspirations, even if the soldiers framed it as a mutiny to demand means to fight. This part is devoted to studying this commonality between the militariat and civilians, and how populist claims have sustained the process of a mutiny-turned-coup. It is important to see that there were points of agreement between soldiers and civilians, despite the corporatist demands of the mutineers for more resources to fight in the north. The question of elite corruption,

including some military leaders, was a robust mobilising factor among the military and within the civilian sphere. In November 2012, a poll conducted in Bamako by *Malimètre* asked Malians what they believed had caused the crisis. 57.66% of respondents said it was the mismanagement of the crisis in the North by the government, while 41.56% believed that it was the weakness of political parties and 21.30% saw it as military unpreparedness (FES 2012). In following years, similar polls were conducted in other regions, and respondents consistently blamed the political class (Gavelle et al. 2013).

There are no quantitative data to provide similar insights from a strictly military perspective, but both civilians and military staff voiced their resentment against the President and his administration during the different protests and violent events. The junta played on a longstanding popular discontent regarding the political class and consistently described themselves as protectors of the constitution against a corrupt political elite (Van de Walle 2012:12). As described in Chapter 3, ATT had himself risen in politics as an anti-politician figure: he was a widely known figure among the military, heading the *Berets Rouges* and the Presidential Guard, but mostly unknown to the public until a few hours before the 1991 coup.

The political bargaining was perceived as increasing Mali's corruption and fed the population's growing disenfranchisement from the political class (Bøås and Torheim 2013). While being perceived as the saviour of the country in 1991, ATT was later portrayed as the gravedigger of Mali's democratic aspirations during the collapse. Among the military and civilians, an emerging discourse rose about his direct political responsibility for the weakness of the army (Alozieuwa 2013). Amadou Haya Sanogo, the leader of the junta, became perceived as an alternative to the perceived political chaos, or at least the political void left by ATT's inability to address the security crisis (Whitehouse 2012). The junta played on a

longstanding ‘popular discontent regarding the political class’ based on accusations of corruption (Van de Walle 2012). Popular opinion was said to be on the side of the junta, even if no serious studies have yet supported that claim (Hagberg and Körling 2012).

The political legacy of ATT and his administration was their inability to build a strong army or to contain the menace in the North, and thus led directly to the crisis. Ahead of the coup, the two main protests were about bringing attention to the fate of soldiers in the North. ATT did not make any firm commitment to solving the crisis, arguing that ‘the next elected government will be responsible for it’.<sup>126</sup> For the last few months of his presidency, ATT made few public appearances. During the women's march in Kati, there was a constant feeling that the ‘government does not care’ and that ATT was ‘invisible’.<sup>127</sup> Several military staff stated their concerns: ‘He sent us to die. We fight with machine guns while rebels had missiles.’<sup>128</sup> The junta itself blame his ‘ghosting’ as responsible for the coup, as the presidential palace was empty on March 21<sup>st</sup>, leaving the power to anybody who could pick it up. Similarly, the last Prime Minister named by ATT, Cissé Mariam Kaïdama Sidibé, was not even arrested by the junta, indicating the low visibility of the government at the time.

Rumours were an essential factor in constructing the myth of an elite plotting against the population, exacerbating the power dynamics unravelling during the process, as discussed in Chapter 1. Among soldiers and civilians there were persistent rumours of a plot to ‘sell Mali’. The most significant was the government’s secret armoury and their refusal to issue weapons to the military.<sup>129</sup> These rumours disappeared after the coup and the junta unveiled no hidden

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<sup>126</sup> Press Release. 13 February 2012.

<sup>127</sup> Interviews during a protest. Bamako, February 2012.

<sup>128</sup> Interview with Putschists. Bamako, April 2012.

<sup>129</sup> Several newspapers shared stories like this one: <<http://bamada.net/interview-damadou-haya-sanogojai-tue-des-mercenaires-sur-le-terrain-et-en-captures-avec-leurs-armes>>.

stores of weapons. There were also persistent rumours of an alleged ATT's plot to maintain himself in power despite the presidential elections schedule for April 2012. Several civilians and political parties supporting the coup supported a narrative that the cancelled elections would be rigged (Gavelle et al. 2013). These various rumours shaped public opinion, leading the population to believe that the state of Mali was endangered and the political elite wanted to 'sell' it, and that therefore the coup was necessary for the survival of the state, and to maintain regional asymmetry in favour of the south (Bayart et al. 2019:106). Later, the junta also echoed these rumours in several speeches, notably in the official morning broadcast of March 22<sup>nd</sup>. The language of the junta remained mostly about stopping ATT rather than undermining the democratic process, as even Sanogo contemplated becoming a presidential candidate during the transition, refusing to state that he would not be a candidate until few weeks before the elections.<sup>130</sup> In this context, rumours cemented a perception of a fraudulent elite determinate to rig the elections, as well as of a junta defending the people's constitutional rights.

The junta's narrative was empowered by the emerging vacuum of power and a government that did not fully commit to resolving the military collapse. However, in Kati, while the main argument for the mutiny was the lack of resources and support for troops sent to die in the north, civilian movements politicised their message and generalised it to all examples of corruption in Mali. Before March 21<sup>st</sup>, there had been attempts to politicise the uproar in Kati. Oumar Mariko, the leader of a minor opposition party (the SADI) sent several emissaries to Kati before the coup. He would also become a significant figure in the *Mouvement Populaire du 22 Mars* (MP22), the civilian platform defending the coup. Their presence was observed

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<sup>130</sup> Interview with Sanogo. Kati, 1 April 2012.

by several soldiers, and they continued to approach the junta with their aggressive anti-ATT and anti-elite stance.<sup>131</sup>

The populist aspect of the coup is undeniable: the junta intended to answer the ‘demands and aspirations’ of the mass to topple an elite, framing the militariat in opposition to an elite (Kandeh 2004:201). A convergence of interests between civilian and military explains how the coup was defended after the event but does not explain how the mobilisation occurred. Besides, there is still limited evidence of popular support for the coup. There was some convergence in civil-military relations, but the language of the mobilisation remained corporatist at the time: the militariat was out to defend its interests. At that point, even if the government and their close military allies were framed as a corrupt elite, there was no element showing that soldiers wanted to take over the state (Kandeh 2004:3). Civilians and soldiers, nonetheless, all believed that ‘consensual politics’ re-enforced the elite over the common good of the population. While the statement on national television was essential to ‘making a fact’ and to convince civilians and the military that were not involved (Singh 2014), a process was initiated to frame the coup among civilians: rumours shared through social media and SMS already framed the coup as a movement against the elite no matter the intentions of the junta. There is thus little evidence that the junta wanted to defend the interest of civilians at this point, but there was an eagerness from civilians to see the junta as embodying their interests.

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<sup>131</sup> Grin 1, 3 and 4.

*The collapse: the role of cohesion*

One of the first soldiers that I interviewed in the Kati military base, before the coup in 2012, provided me with a shocking quote: ‘If you die for the cause of Mali, you die for nothing.’<sup>132</sup>

I heard the same formulation several times in 2016, but I could never find out if soldiers were quoting someone. Another soldier described how little morale and trust in the institution he had, during the coup:

- Morale is the lowest.
- *Why?*
- We do not have bullets. We do have functioning weapons. Our training is inadequate. We have nothing.
- *It's the lack of resources that affects your morale?*
- No. It's that they are not giving them to us.<sup>133</sup>

Before, during and after the coup, members of the armed forces shared bluntly a harsh diagnosis of the military institution. During the 2012 crisis, the soldiers did not attempt solely to send a message to the civilian government: they meant to defend their own ‘military institution’. While the next section intends to study more precisely the larger institution, this part intends to study the militariat as a group within the military institution.

In Chapter 4, I presented the physical reality of the Kati military base: its centrality in a soldier's life was crucial in echoing the soldiers’ grievances. It also initiates a discussion on the community of striving, or the emergence of peer cohesion out of social obligations on the base. The mutiny-turned-coup was possible through the mobilisation of this community of striving, and the peer cohesion that was developed *in situ* through the economic and social interdependence of its inhabitants. While the previous part has studied how the mobilisation

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<sup>132</sup> Soldier. Bamako, February 2012.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

was framed as a reaction to a corrupted elite, this part intends to understand the sociological aspects that turned a military collapse into a coup, and how the strong social cohesion developed on the Kati military base was detrimental to primary and secondary cohesion for the entire military institution. This part thus discusses the paradox of a military institution that ‘failed its soldiers’ (in their own words), but which also initiated a process mobilising soldiers in favour of the coup. In other words, I consider why, in the absence of cohesion on the battlefield, the soldiers and subaltern officers were able to mobilise in Kati.

It is important to reiterate the points made at the beginning of this chapter and in earlier chapters: the armed forces have faced wilful depletion since the 1991 government became obsessed with coup-proofing rather than external threats. While resources are a vital factor in the collapse, this section intends to reflect on the sociological aspect of the military institution. The question of the relative strength of the Malian Armed Forces has been discussed widely by several military scholars specialised in military strategy: lack of situational awareness, lack of kinetic power, inability to take the initiative; and lack of cohesion (Barca 2013; Berrera 2015; Boisvert 2016; Galy 2013; Notin 2014).

While conducting fieldwork, there was consensus among the military specialists that cohesion was non-existent, although none went into the specifics.<sup>134</sup> In several reports and interviews, the absence of cohesion appears to mean task cohesion as an aspect of primary cohesion (Barca 2013; EUTM 2015). Task cohesion, as discussed in Chapter 1, is a central element of the basic military training: once a soldier can perform basic individual tasks, they learn how to work with his unit (Caforio 2010, Gualtiari and al. 1995). The integration into a unit allows the soldier to slowly increase their web of understanding of the military

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<sup>134</sup> Interview with foreign instructors (BKO-EX-01, BKO-EX-02). Bamako, October 2016.

institution: from unit to battalion, from battalion to regiment, and finally from regiment to the overall armed forces. Task cohesion is at the core of coup theory, as it assumes that the military is better placed to plot a coup through its organisational skills and its ability to work in secret, small taskforces (Resteigne and Soeters 2009; Soeters, van Fenema and Beeres 2010; Thompson 1976; Perlmutter and Bennett 1980). Therefore, strategies of coup-proofing, as discussed, often intend to undermine the ability for collective action within the armed forces, and this often ensures that cohesion remains limited to a few elite, loyal battalions.

Prior to 2012, the military institution became a critical impediment to the development of task cohesion, beginning in initial training at Kati. All soldiers shared a similar experience of training every working day for three months. Recruits wake up in the morning for the group gathering, where uniforms and posture were inspected, and they were then dispatched to different training activities. For the soldiers, most of the training consisted of marching and group formation exercises. Recruits from 2010 did have weapon-handling exercises but said they had no ammunition and did not learn how to properly shoot.<sup>135</sup> In 2008, recruits had a single shooting exercise.<sup>136</sup> Basic training is repetitive and does not contain much theory: ‘The training aims at fitting the soldier into military life. We do not expect much in terms of soldiering skills. The training aims at building discipline first.’<sup>137</sup> Another added that the training aims to create ‘a culture of subordination and install brute discipline’ based on fear of the leader.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Grin 1 and 3.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-05). Bamako, September 2016.

<sup>138</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-06). Bamako, October 2016.

While visiting the Kati military base, it appeared that a significant part of the training is how to circumnavigate the heavy bureaucratic military institution. In the first week, soldiers needed to ensure that they fill out the necessary paperwork to receive their allowance, or to secure housing and other services provided by the armed forces. Many soldiers were reliant on other soldiers, as their literacy skills were minimal, as well as their understanding of the bureaucratic hierarchy. At the end of the three months' training, soldiers are assigned to a unit and, for some, to a specialised training. Recruits shared a sense of disorganisation. A soldier recruited in 2008 explained that it took a week for recruits to know where to sleep and where to go. Another explained that there were no instructors waiting for them on the first day.

In appearance, there were no definitive training guidelines, while training varied according to corps, ranks, year, trainers and head of schools' inclinations to focus on a particular aspect. Training modules were mostly theoretical: military rules, military administration, or basic mathematics of artillery. Others were more practical: how to handle particular weapons, mechanics, tactical manoeuvre, etc.<sup>139</sup> Some specialisations necessitate more training than others. There was no standardisation of training, even within the same unit, and soldiers often compared different training they received, depending on available instructors. Soldiers found it difficult to piece their knowledge together. During a grin, a young soldier in the artillery explained that he was one day learning about different artillery pieces available from the army, mostly through theory. Then, the instructor was replaced, and the new one made trainees marching around.<sup>140</sup> A former head of school explains that this variety can be harmful, but also positive when an instructor is committed. 'There is no definitive binder containing all modules. Trainers play a crucial part in ensuring that this is followed.'<sup>141</sup> He

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<sup>139</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-06). Bamako, October 2016.

<sup>140</sup> Grin 2

<sup>141</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-06). Bamako, October 2016.

also explained that the main problem remains to retain trainers. 'There are not enough talents devoted to training. Training is perceived as a punishment. Good trainers do not stay.' He explained that trainers are also nominated randomly, and arbitrarily recalled for other purposes in other areas. This makes a broken training loop where education remains short-term: different recruits had different training, which creates fundamental gaps when soldiers are then allocated to various units with others, who may have learnt entirely different things.

Once training was over, there was no effort to synchronise training to experience or ensure that soldiers developed a common understanding of the task of soldiering. 'Task cohesion' means that soldiers, through the act of soldiering, can become united through common mission goals (Ben-Shalom et al. 2005a; Caforio 2006a; King 2006; Siebold 2007). Armed forces foster task cohesion in different ways: the buddy system, where the soldier is matched with another, more advanced soldier; the unit, the military family within which the soldier is assigned and where he would be posted; or the 'close leader', that imposes order and discipline while being present for 'his' soldiers (Janowitz 1971; Moskos 1975). All three necessitate building close and steady relationships with other soldiers through tasks.

During grins and one-to-one discussions, it became apparent that the soldiers did not spend this time conducting tasks with colleagues, but were bored and attempting to find solutions to meet their daily needs. Living conditions were harsh during basic training: no electricity and limited running water. Meals were poorly organised, and soldiers must rely on canteens run by local women. They stayed in rickety barracks, sharing beds in some instances. From these discussions, the training brought soldiers together, and their shared stories without much bitterness, often joking. However, they all agreed on issues of boredom and lack of purpose. 'Prior to the conflict, it was very boring around. Most of the day, we will wait for something to happen', explained a young soldier. Despite their boredom, soldiers

aggressively resisted deployment to the north, using all means, especially personal connections. This agrees with earlier discussions of nepotism and corruption. This phenomenon, which undermines merit and the respect for rules, creates a system where promotion and assignments were arbitrary, to the detriment of task cohesion.

Once training is over, the military suffers from a hectic approach to human resources. Before the 2012 crisis, promotions were individual. In January 2012, being dispatched to the north depended on lists, and soldiers were deployed personally, not by unit. A soldier in 2012, now an NCO, explained to me how training, prior to deployment, did not develop relationships that could be sustained at the front, either in terms of leadership or bonding with the members of his unit, whom he had not trained with prior to going to the North:

Saying that I didn't know the man [I was deployed with] is false. We have been living together for many years. But, in the front, we did not know whom to trust. Our chief was the first to leave. I thought it was a good chief. At the first test, we did not know who was surrounding us.

There have been significant concerns expressed about randomness and unpreparedness. A widow explained to me that her husband was deployed for 9 months in the North, in 2011. Then, her husband came back for a week and was redeployed in January 2012, supposedly for only three months. He never came back as he died during the Aguelhok assault. Before redeployment, she told me that she went to see some officers, but that they did not receive her. When her husband died, other soldiers who told her about his death.<sup>142</sup> Her story shows what several soldiers were trying to explain to me: assignments did not follow clear criteria, and soldiers were disposable. 'It was, and it remains in some sort, difficult to concentrate on your position. You don't know for how long you are nominated. People around you change as

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<sup>142</sup> Military widow (KAT-WI-01). Kati, February 2016.

fast as you are', explained a medical NCO.<sup>143</sup> Units was thus created and disbanded according to the latest crisis. This led soldiers, NCOs and even officers to disengage from their roles, as they could not plan long-term. For soldiers, this means that superiors do not invest in them, undermining the idea of readiness that lies behind unit cohesion.

Soldiers resisted deployment, as explained by a clerk from Kati:

When I told officers that they were affected in the north, this was perceived as a punishment. They were asking me what they did to deserve that. The names of many would be erased from the lists a few days later. This was a headache. We could not dispatch a unit: too many would find a way to be exempted.<sup>144</sup>

The erratic approach to human resources was acknowledged by several officers during interviews. One officer stated quite bluntly:

Among soldiers, there is simply no cohesion possible. They have been deployed in the front randomly. The NCO did not know them, and they did not know him. There was no [pre-deployment] training. The incapacity of the armed forces has become why nothing worked out in 2012. It is still an issue. We made some progress, but we failed at developing stable units that would work as a group<sup>145</sup>.

An NCO explained framed it this way:

When I arrived in the front [in January 2012], I had to command soldiers I did not know. I have seen some at the school. But I did not really know them. We never trained together. When it was time to combat, we had to deploy in a way for them to cover me. When I turned my back, they were not there anymore. We were under stress, even if we did not yet cross the enemy's fire. I simply could not trust them after that.<sup>146</sup>

This experience was corroborated by military staff of all ranks. As discussed in Chapter 1, task cohesion is not only about developing cohesion among soldiers of the same rank, but

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<sup>143</sup> An NCO (K-NCO-01). Kati, April 2016.

<sup>144</sup> Administrative officer (EM-ADM-01). Bamako, February 2016.

<sup>145</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-07). Bamako, February 2016.

<sup>146</sup> Officer. Bamako, 10 April 2012

also with immediate leadership; the leader is not only a part of the chain of command but also develops a personal connection with soldiers through action. When soldiers of all ranks faced random and arbitrary assignments, they are deprived from trust-building experiences that allow them to bond with their unit. A soldier's career is more dependent on his own initiative than the one that the institution creates from him, an officer explained to me, thus undermining cohesion.<sup>147</sup> At the front, soldiers talked of 'incomplete rotations' and poorly structured leadership.<sup>148</sup> While soldiers blamed officers for the situation, they ignored NCOs and their immediate leadership: they blamed officers higher up.

The failure to develop task cohesion before and during deployment was a significant factor in the collapse. A survivor of the Aguelhok massacre described how soldiers failed as a unit:

It was chaos. Everybody went their way. Some guys were more aggressive, ready to fight. To be frank, I was not among them. It's not all Malian soldiers that are weak like you the foreigners like to portrait us. But even if you are courageous, if you are alone, this is not working. This is what I learnt from Aguelhok.<sup>149</sup>

Soldiers did recognise that part of the failure was also due to a poor situational awareness, as soldier struggled to have an understanding of the terrain and of their 'enemy'. As discussed in earlier sections, soldiers understood the expeditionary nature of the operations, and the foreignness of the land. Another survivor of Aguelhok explained:

When we heard about the massacre, we panicked. We never heard about that. Why did they want to kill us? They are racist and wanted to get back their slaves. They refuse that we hold power. They are violent. And are not scared of everything.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Malian Officer (BKO-OFF-07). Bamako, February 2016

<sup>148</sup> Three letters sent by soldiers to a journalist. March 2012.

<sup>149</sup> NCO (BKO-NCO-03). Bamako, June 2016.

<sup>150</sup> Soldier in Kati. April 2013.

Soldiers posted in the north, mostly coming from the south, struggled to understand the enemy's motivation, expressing a lack of situational awareness. Their understanding of the enemy matched the one that was shared during the protests in Bamako; the enemy was 'racist' northerners refused to be ruled by a majority of black citizens, challenging a centralised state based on the rule of the majority over a minority; they ignored the history of repression in the north, as well as the terrain (Hagberg and Körling 2012). The institutionalised army, from that perspective was not able to challenge existing prejudices, and to provide tools for the soldier to understand its operational environment and its inhabitants: the government strategy in the north has failed to go beyond notions of the core and the periphery (Baldaro 2018; Raineri and Strazzari 2015; Wing 2016). An officer, born in the North to a Southerner military dad and a Tuareg mother, described how the military institution was not able to provide soldier's prejudice and nurture a strong situational awareness:

We needed intelligence. We need forces able to adapt to the area. Soldiers did not know the environment. This is a society that is difficult to understand, in opposition to the south where people come to you. When I moved to the south, it took me a while to get used to it. Until the army inhabits the North, soldiers will not be able to fight. In 2012, they were acting like a foreign body [*corps étranger*].<sup>151</sup>

For this soldier, the military institution does not offer the tools for the rank-and-file to be effective and responsive during operations. There was, from the beginning, an incomprehension on what were the tasks, undermining task cohesion. This shows a failure of leadership, which starts with the lack of diversity in recruitment practices, as discussed in the previous chapter, and which is not corrected during training. At that moment, rumours about the 'enemy' re-enforced existing prejudices.

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<sup>151</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-02). Bamako, June 2016.

Lack of leadership and discipline was crucial in the defeat of the Malian Armed Forces (Boeke and Schuurman 2015; Heisbourg 2014), two elements recognised as crucial in the literature on coups and mutinies (Alozieuwa 2010; Charlton 1992; Decalo 1976; Rose 1982). In this case, soldiers blamed the military collapse on the hierarchy, exposing the cognitive gap within ranks. During the fieldwork in Kati, numerous stories were shared by soldiers on a gap with officers, often highlighting the lack of concern from the hierarchy for the critical situation in the north. A young NCO described how in February 2012 many officers in Bamako seem to not be concerned with the situation on the military front:

One of my soldiers drove the wife of a Colonel during a shopping spree in Bamako. It was a brand-new SUV with military plates. At that time, our SUVs in the front were not even functioning; they had no gas and no spare parts. Officers were acting like we didn't see anything when we were asking for more resources or, simply asking for the bonuses we were entitled [to].<sup>152</sup>

At the front, stories of officers profiting from trafficking in their region or selling military equipment for profit were plentiful. There were several allegations, both from soldiers and the Malian press, about northern-based officers more interested in trafficking than the welfare of their soldiers.<sup>153</sup> A soldier explained to me that he knew officers in Bamako had ‘eaten’ per diems and bonuses of people at the front, including some allocations that soldiers did not know about.<sup>154</sup> Another one told me about officers refusing to send their children to the front, showing how officers defended their own interest, while understanding the situation being dire enough to not send relatives.<sup>155</sup> Accusations of corruption were also not as Manichean as they seem. There were several stories of officers exaggerating the number of troops of paper

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<sup>152</sup> Grin 5.

<sup>153</sup> Grin 4.

<sup>154</sup> Grin 2.

<sup>155</sup> Grin 3.

on the front to get more resources, which in some cases allowed soldiers to have better conditions. Some soldiers did not hesitate to defend a particular officer who they admit embezzled money from the budget, but that was justified as he was ‘generous’ with his soldiers.<sup>156</sup> Accusations of financial misconducts were also made against soldiers in the north. An officer explained to me how his subalterns sold weapons and ammunition during the crisis.<sup>157</sup> Corruption was judged by who was profiting from it: soldiers and officers perceived that it was acceptable when corruption would result in a win-win situation and when it would respect ‘practical norms’, notably for recruitment or rank progression.

Even in cases where there was a tacit agreement between ranks, the act of corruption did not favour the emergence of trust. From the battlefield, two soldiers expressed their lack of connection with officers: ‘We trusted NCOs, but we had the impression that officers were strangers [when they showed up]. They were disconnected [from us]’ explained one of them.<sup>158</sup> During discussions, soldiers often brought the issue of distrust and the lack of personal connections, as much vertically than horizontally, was crucial. Soldiers would spoke whole-heartedly about Generals Gamou, Ould Meydou or Dakouo, who were field officers and maintained a close connection with soldiers. A lack of connection was a recurrent complaint against the other officers, no matter how corrupted they were perceived.<sup>159</sup> At several moments during fieldwork, I heard comments about how the connection between NCOs or lower officers was not necessarily better than those with officers. An officer recognised this, but also justified himself:

A good leader would not go to the North with soldiers he does not trust. To command, you need to earn the trust of your men. Men need

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<sup>156</sup> Grin 3.

<sup>157</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-02) Bamako, June 2016.

<sup>158</sup> Grin 4.

<sup>159</sup> There have been several stories of corruption and embezzlement involving these three officers, but this has not had a significant impact on their popularity among soldiers.

to accept the leadership. It's like a chief of the family. During the coup, the soldiers preferred to follow [NCOs] and lieutenants rather than colonels. [...] Lieutenants and captains have self-proclaimed themselves commanders of battalions, and captains as saviours. Although, it was blind trust. They did not know them either.<sup>160</sup>

Beyond the inability to create a unit cohesion, there is an issue of the institution not being able to assert cohesion between ranks (Siebold 2007:287). While allegations of embezzlement and nepotism were frequent, there was also a focus on looking upward for privileges: soldiers focused on personal gains rather than performing tasks that reinforced the meritocracy. An officer concluded that, at all levels, members of the armed forces are concerned with personal gains, thus creating 'a regime where NCOs dream to become officers for advantages, to the detriment of imposing orders on the hierarchy'.<sup>161</sup>

For several soldiers, corruption and nepotism was lifesaving, notably in cases where officers intervened to stop the deployment of their *protégés*. Frustration with the hierarchy did not challenge this relationship; the wrath of soldiers was aimed at politicians and senior officers deemed too close to politicians. While unit cohesion was absent at the front, an alternative secondary cohesion was being framed. In this context, 'big men' were judged by their capacity to deliver public goods (Erdmann and Engel 2007; Olivier de Sardan 2015; Utas 2012). During the 2012 collapse, patrons offered a way for soldiers to avoid being deployed and weakened the front. Meanwhile, when officers were trying to discipline the front and deploy units, they were not able to counteract the shadow network of the *flexnet* and its capacity to shape deployment. Before the coup, the ATT administration, in its communiqués, in its tweets and in the Aguelhok report, tried to frame soldiers as 'cowards' who refused to fight. The gap between the militariat and officers can be accounted for from both sides.

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<sup>160</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-01). Bamako, February 2016.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

During the collapse, the gap was exacerbated, and in the absence of the formal military institution, the *flexnet* filled it. Practical norms and neo-patrimonialist networks, in this context, has been detrimental to the chain of command and the institutional discipline. These practices has been an important impediment to an operational cycle that would ensure a well-planned deployment.

### *The military institution: leadership and collapse*

As discussed in Chapter 1, military discipline has often been highlighted as a significant factor in the effectiveness of a coup (Agyeman-Duah 1990; Huntington 1968; Powell 2019; Singh 2014). In this context, subaltern coups are perceived as a rebellion against officers and the military hierarchy, intending to challenge positions rather than the system (Hansen 1982). This thus implies that the chain of command and the military institution remains unaffected by the change of names in the organisational chart. In the case of Mali, in 2012, the organisational skills of the armed forces appeared to have been irrelevant as, from the March 21<sup>st</sup> until they relinquished power, the junta sought a plan. While the impact of the impromptu leadership of Sanogo is undeniable, his style of leadership did not qualify him as a strong leader able to channel the forces and ensure that troops follow his leadership.

Leadership could have been an important factor in turning a spontaneous mutiny into a coup. Sanogo's role as the head of the junta allowed him to brand the coup, but his leadership style remained passive and he struggled to impose himself. The leadership of Sanogo differs from that of the two previous Malian coups, which were themselves quite different from each other. As discussed in Chapter 3, Moussa Traoré and his comrades carefully plotted their coup. While there are no clear indications from that period on how Traoré became the leader

of the coup, the 1968 junta had time to choose a leader as the coup was planned several months ahead. In contrast, Amadou Toumani Traoré's rise was reactive and less carefully prepared. He came to power during a crisis fuelled by civil society. His position as the former head of the Presidential Guard and incumbent head of the *Berets Rouges*, made him a key figure in the decision-making process. His higher rank among the putschists also strengthens the narrative that it was an unplanned, last-minute decision and that his nomination came after considering pragmatic and corporatist criteria: his seniority and experience. In terms of preparation, the rise of Sanogo echoes the rise of ATT. As explained, the CNRDRE was not prepared for the coup, and Sanogo was not the most ranked and he did not have a prestigious position in the armed forces (unlike ATT had).

In sum, the rise of Bolly, as his peers called him, is more ambiguous as, on the evening of March 21<sup>st</sup>, nobody knew that the mutiny would turn into a coup and that a leader would be needed. Several narratives emerged about him, on the morning of the 21<sup>st</sup>, having no idea he would become the junta leader. It appears that he did not foretell his family ahead of the coup, including his wife and children (Callimachi 2012). Sanogo told his parents, ahead of the coup, that he would leave for a peacekeeping training course due to start in April (Callimachi 2012).

The lapse between the end of the military action and the public announcement of the junta created a void that was filled with rumours about leadership on March 22<sup>nd</sup>. During the mutiny-turned-coup, most of the officers disappeared from the public eye out of fear of being arrested. Several rumours circulated about officers hiding, but also about the mutineers seeking a leader. An unfounded rumour about General Ould Meydou was shared, suggested that he chased an emissary with his belt, delegated by the junta to demand that he join the

leadership. The General was in Bamako, as he was in the morning of the 21<sup>st</sup> meeting with the mutineers, and then he appeared to have been hiding, like many other officers, in Bamako. Other rumours at the time also stated that the core of the junta had approached other generals at the ORTM.<sup>162</sup> A putschist said many did not pick up their phones:

Sanogo was indeed having a drink. He put his uniform to come to the ORTM. There were several prospect leaders, [notably] Yamoussa<sup>163</sup>. But only Sanogo picked up his phone that day.<sup>164</sup>

It is said to be sous-officier Seyba Diarra who finally suggested Sanogo as leader. Sanogo's sociable personality made him a viable candidate in the absence of a clear leader: Sanogo won by consensus. A putschist at the ORTM prior and during the TV broadcast described how this popularity became important to make Sanogo a leader:

Sanogo has always been very sociable, someone who talks well. People go to him. He is a social butterfly. Everybody knew him. It was a consensus. It came out very naturally that he should be the leader once we could not find a general who supports us.<sup>165</sup>

One of his colleagues described him in these terms: 'Sanogo is not a brain, he is their figurehead because he has the guts and charisma.'<sup>166</sup> In the days immediately following the coup, Sanogo did not suggest that his position as a leader was obtained through merit. Sanogo stated that 'the kids came to pick me up' as an explanation of how he became the junta leader.<sup>167</sup> Prior to the coup, Sanogo was working as a language instructor at several military schools and took five different language courses with the US Department of Defence,

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<sup>162</sup> Putschist (BKO-PUT-01). February 2016.

<sup>163</sup> General Yamoussa Camara, which would become Minister of Defense during the transition.

<sup>164</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-03). Bamako, April 2016.

<sup>165</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-07). Bamako, February 2016.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Interview with Amadou Haya Sanogo, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012.

something he generalised as ‘US training’, failing to clarify that this was not substantively combat-oriented training.

There were several rumours about how Sanogo spent the 21<sup>st</sup>, but he appeared to have joined the mutiny in the late afternoon. The captain had a very hoarse voice during his statement, and he was said to smell of alcohol. This sustained one of the rumours that Sanogo spent the day of the mutiny in a local pub in Kati, and that he was brought in when the ORTM became the epicentre of the junta.<sup>168</sup> While this rumour coincides with several others about his drinking habits, it mostly confirms that he was perceived as friendly and that his involvement was late in the day. These rumours also fit the testimonies of several soldiers. In Kati, several soldiers described Sanogo as someone who likes to sit with people of any rank, not hesitating to share a drink with anybody, which made him popular among soldiers who were never offered an opportunity to sit with an officer for a casual discussion.<sup>169</sup> While Sanogo was said to drink alcohol, which could be perceived negatively in a Muslim country, fellow soldiers did not see his habits negatively; indeed, during the grin, this was presented as a proof that he was the spokesperson needed at the time, as soldiers expected a humble leader who would speak on their behalf.<sup>170</sup> His recent dismissal from the EMIA, following the October 2011 deadly hazing process gave him credibility with ordinary soldiers who saw the disciplinary measures as unfair and ‘blindly imposed by a hierarchy who does not care about the facts’.<sup>171</sup>

The question of improvised leadership has consequences beyond the junta. While theories of coups have emphasised discipline and hierarchy as an organisational advantage of the

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<sup>168</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-07). Bamako, February 2016.

<sup>169</sup> Grin 2.

<sup>170</sup> Grin 3.

<sup>171</sup> Grin 3.

military institution in conducting the coup, the Malian coup demonstrates the importance of individual leadership over institutional leadership, beyond the selection of a junta leader. When officers were arrested it was mostly their own negotiation skills or relationship with soldiers that led to them being liberated, as there were no orders from the junta to liberate them.<sup>172</sup> Thus, there is evidence of permeability between the officers and the lower ranks, based on individual negotiation, that shows that the militariat cannot be seen as a rigid identity and that coups from below can also be understood as an intra-army dialogue between ranks. This also reflects the importance of the shadow network for the institution as a whole.

There is also evidence that the grievances of the putschists were also shared among officers. Rumours of a coup circulated before and remained after the coup. As soon as the protest erupted in February 2012, rumours of a coup were plentiful among civilians and military. The most persistent rumour was about a second coup, planned for a few days after the actual coup, to be led by senior officers and said to be coordinated by those who feared to lose the elections to the ‘other camp’.<sup>173</sup> Dioncounda Traoré, which was travelling abroad during the first coup, was rumoured to be among the planners of the hypothetical second coup. Similarly, IBK, who refused to join the non-partisan umbrella against the coup and was openly in conflict with ATT, was also said to be part of it. The putschists remained convinced that officers were planning their own coup against ATT, and several *officiers de salon* sent their family abroad ahead of the coup, showing that there was at least an awareness of an upcoming danger, which cannot be assimilated to knowledge of the upcoming coup.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-06). Bamako, October 2016

<sup>173</sup> Interviews during the coup. 25 March 2012.

<sup>174</sup> Officer. Bamako, April 2012.

Theories on coups have often discussed the role of elite perpetuation in the process (Enloe 1980; Horowitz 2000; Roessler 2011), which was not the case in March 2012. The mutiny-turned-coup thus revealed a sociological fragmentation within the military institution, but also some points of agreement as officers expressed their discontent with the situation in 2012. Several of them even expressed tolerance for putschists once the coup became a reality. The events show the multiplicity of leadership, and how several allegiances and visions of the institution were competing. The next chapter gives a more thorough account of the interplay between these lines of fragmentation during the transition.

### 5.3. Conclusion

This chapter has studied the mobilisation that led to the coup and the experience of the militariat in the process. Running through the chapter is the narrative that the mutiny became a subaltern coup in which soldiers challenged the military institution, as well as the government. A vital element of this chapter has been to discuss the limitations of theories of coups to explain how the military collapse brought about a mutiny, which became a coup. In the process, rumours have been a powerful device to feed an anti-elite resentment justifying the coup. This entrenched polarisation within a class that felt disempowered by political processes (Appadurai 1998, 229), and 'collective problem solving' mechanism' that justifies action (Osborn 2008, 23).. The result of the process initiated by the militariat's uprising has been a coup as the 'abrupt replacement of leading government personnel', which did not alter the 'state's fundamental social and economic policies' or 'entail a significant redistribution of power among political groups' (McGowan 2003:342).

In this mobilisation, there is the timely reaction to ongoing events – the military collapse in the north. The mobilisation pattern does not follow the ones of the two previous coups, and does not account for previous findings on the reoccurrence of coups (De Bruin 2017; McGowan 2003) : issues of leadership and planning suggest that the 2012 coup was almost accidental. This might fit a theory of the corrective coup that, when things goes out of control, the armed forces have a responsibility to defend the state, but does not allow to affirm the organisational superiority of the armed forces (Finer 1976; Luttwak 1979; Vangroff and Kone 1995).

Rather, the 2012 coup needs to be seen in a context of a struggling military institution, in which several divisions among members existed, and how informal networks compete with the attempt of an institution to build cohesion and impose a disciplined chain-of-command. In this context, the mobilisation of the militariat, in favour of the coup, is the product of the military institution with sociological divisions. The coup arose from below, targeting an administration and looking to influence governmental policies. Both these facts and the emerging narratives about the coup assume a weak military institution and Malian state. It is clear from those two perspectives that the junta's rise to power enabled them to influence politics, but without the support of the military institution, and with a minor impact on the overall institutions. In other words, the army does not move monolithically, and the 2012 coup is an example of how a phenomenon cannot be understood only as a clear, direct attempt at seizing power (Luckham and White 1996:17) or as the militariat's attempt to disrupt power. The following chapters intend to deepen this idea and studies the resilience of the military institution.

## **Chapter 6. Taming the beast: the failure of the junta and the resilience of the institution.**

In the early hours of March 22<sup>nd</sup>, Mali discovered the face of their new leaders. On April 12<sup>th</sup>, a more familiar face, that of former National Assembly President Dioncounda Traoré, took charge of the country. Finally, on September 4<sup>th</sup> 2013, a very familiar person was sworn in as the head of the country: former Prime Minister Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, or IBK. For only three weeks, the junta tried to rule the country but had to relinquish power, unable to assume the role of a government. A set of mechanisms was unleashed, returning Sanogo and friends to obscurity while struggling to retain influence in and outside the military institution.

While the previous chapter was concerned about how a mutiny became a coup, the current chapter intends to understand why the military junta was unable to seize control of the military institution, and, to a certain extent, the state. In other words, it intends to understand the process behind the resilience of the military institution against a militariat who attempted to use collective action in a way to subvert its functioning, and how it reacted to the coup. This is thus a conversation about the military institution, and mechanisms working against those studied in the previous chapter. It also discusses in more detail the concept of the militariat, and how the concept, crafted to frame a collective consciousness during a crisis, reflects poorly on a community of interests. While this could be a discussion about the military institution and the state, this is not the primary task of this chapter, as the focus is on the subaltern forces.

This chapter brings together two sets of literature already discussed: literature on institutions, and literature on coups and theories. It also draws on the literature of civil-military relations,

continuing the discussion of the previous chapter on the particularity of the military career and the civil-military gap. Furthermore, this chapter intends to enrich a discussion of the postcolonial military institution and to discuss the limits of the militariat as a class-based group emerging from the military institution. British political sociologist Robin Luckham, in his body of work on conflict and civil-military relations, has qualified the military as 'Africa's most important political institution' (Luckham 1971:187). For him, the military is a powerful political actor in independent Africa, either by influencing policies or seizing power. His views reflect a general understanding of postcolonial civil-military relations, from independences to the 1980s, where the military was a unitary actor with a common interest. In the '80s and '90s, a new series of coups brought a different perspective on why members of the armed forces seize power, toning down the sociological unity of the military institution.

As discussed in the previous chapter, it is in this context that scholars have analysed the rise of 'coups from below' in which subaltern groups can hijack an institution to pursue their interests without challenging the basis of power (Kandeh 2004). The military institution came to be understood in much more complex terms, and the idea that the military would defend the institutions 'beyond its own interests' has been rejected (Finer 1976:32). Olly Owen, in a similar vein, has written on how security forces are more than an instrument of state coercion, showing the complexity of the institution and the narrative they perpetuate (Owen 2012). A postcolonial military institution as thus been characterised as an institution that believes in its responsibility to fix 'the system' (Houngnikpo 2000). In Western Africa, there is a popular imagination hostile to the army, used for tax and repression, which creates an enduring legacy of suspicion towards the armed forces, and that also undermines the armed forces' ability to be a strong political actor (Idrissa 2008:88). While this literature focused on the formal,

postcolonial aspects of the military institution, it mostly ignores the neo-patrimonialist aspects of the institutions, which blurs the lines of what a subaltern coup means. This chapter discusses these aspects.

The first section presents a chronology of the demobilisation of the militariat that followed the coup. The second investigates civil-military relations, cohesion and finally the military institution.

## 6.1. A step-by-step account of the junta's days in power

We can divide the collapse of collective action from the soldiers of Kati into three phases. First, the period beginning with Sanogo proclaiming himself head-of-state and the junta attempting to form a government. The second phase covers the transition, where the junta was isolated from power circles but remained an inherent source of nuisance and a possible threat to the re-established constitutional order. Finally, the third phase includes the election of a democratic government, which terminated any legitimate claims of the junta and the putschists' claims to power.

### *The failing junta*

The last chapter presented how CNRDRE came to power through an 'accidental coup' (Thurston and Lebovich 2013:3). For observers, the chaotic hours leading up to the coup reverberated over the next three weeks while the junta struggled to gain control over the government. A strict timeline remains difficult to establish as there were almost no decisions taken by the junta during their short attempt to take control of the Malian state.

The junta made several attempts, following the coup, to move forward and to act as the executive. The junta's attempt to govern proved limited: no agenda was set, and it was not able to hold a minister's council that would enact executive powers. In the days following the coup, it was mostly in the street that action took place. On March 21st, the putschists became violent, using artillery and guns to force their way into the Presidential Palace and the ORTM, resulting in three deaths and about 40 injuries, mostly accidental.<sup>175</sup> On March 22<sup>nd</sup>,

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<sup>175</sup> My own notes. Numbers are contested. While these are the numbers most media used at the time, there has been no definitive account.

the junta announced a curfew to curb looting, some of which appeared to be carried out by rogue elements of the armed forces. While little looting occurred in the main commercial markets, the *Cité Administrative* and governmental agencies were ransacked with heavy weapons. Several testimonies blamed the military<sup>176</sup>. On March 24<sup>th</sup>, Sanogo state told that he was in ‘total control’.<sup>177</sup> The junta finally reopened the borders and abandoned Bamako for Kati.

On March 28<sup>th</sup>, Sanogo announced the adoption of a new constitution with 70 articles,<sup>178</sup> while pro-coup protests erupted around Bamako. On that same day, Amadou Toumani Touré made his first public intervention on French radio station RFI, saying that he is free and still in Mali. While Moussa Traoré and ATT’s coups were received, from abroad, with discreet support, the CNRDRE was met with harsh international condemnation and sanctions.

Neighbours, members of the West African State Economic Community and ECOWAS condemned the coup and imposed sanctions in the first few hours. On April 1<sup>st</sup>, sanctions on oil importations and weapons convinced Sanogo to meet the first ECOWAS demands to reinstate Mali's constitution and to organise free, open and democratic elections in which he would not participate. On April 2<sup>nd</sup>, ECOWAS judged that the junta had not met its demands and imposed more economic sanctions. After several discussions with the junta, ECOWAS convinced Sanogo to step down, while proposing support for an eventual military intervention. On 6<sup>th</sup> April, the captain stepped down. On April 8<sup>th</sup>, ATT submitted his resignation to ECOWAS. On April 9<sup>th</sup>, the Constitutional Court declared the ‘vacancy of

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<sup>176</sup> Personal investigation made in 2012. My own notes.

<sup>177</sup> Press Briefing. Kati, 24 March 2012.

<sup>178</sup> The document *Acte Fondamental de l'État du Mali* was mostly a copy-paste of the existing constitution, replacing all articles on the democratic elections of the President with articles stating the role of the junta. For the full document, see <http://mjp.univ-perp.fr/constit/ml2012.htm>.

power' necessary for launching a transition in line with the constitution. Finally, on April 12<sup>th</sup>, Dioncounda Traoré was inaugurated as Mali's new president.

During its three weeks in power, the CNRDRE was unable to pursue a political agenda and to convince the population or the international community of its relevance in terms of governance. From the coup until the return of the constitutional order, Sanogo struggled to offer leadership on policies, and ministries were left on their own as no executive decisions were handed down from the junta. All state departments were paralysed following the looting of their offices in the *Cité Administrative*. It took days before civil servants came back to work and, in some cases, weeks. The junta published no decrees, and the West African Central Bank, the BCEAO, refused to recognise the signature of the junta. The junta was never able to process payments. Another crucial governance failure of the junta was in terms of assuming the power of the commander-in-chief. From March 22<sup>nd</sup>-April 5<sup>th</sup>, the Malian army lost control of all major Northern cities at the hands of the MNLA and their then-unknown Islamist allies. The coup disrupted the chain of command, with many officers being arrested in Bamako and on the front. A few days after the coup, the junta had to pressure pro-coup soldiers to liberate their superiors and to resume combat, trying to re-impose the chain of command after subverting it.<sup>179</sup>

Unlike the junta, the opposition to the junta was organised: most politicians refused to be associated with the junta, confirming the junta's inability to convince the political class of the necessity of a coup. No significant political figures supported the junta. The leading political

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<sup>179</sup> A putschist (EM-NCO-02). October 2016.

figures,<sup>180</sup> including most of the presidential candidates from the aborted presidential elections, gathered under the name *Front du Refus (FDR)* and express their opposition to the coup through a joint communiqué. On March 29<sup>th</sup> protests at the Bourse du Travail erupted against the new constitution of the CNRDRE, a day after the first pro-junta protests. Pro-putsch supporters intervened, which led to clashes.<sup>181</sup> The junta sent members of the armed forces to arrest about 26 anti-putschists, six of whom were illegally detained in Kati for few days while the others were released. Meanwhile, a small clique of junta supporters stormed the airport to block an airplane carrying the ECOWAS leaders from landing.

The pro-junta mobilisation did not have the impact of 1991, where turnout from civil society and citizens was significant. Sanogo faced the opposition of major civil society groups, as well as political parties. He nevertheless sought supporters who could increase the legitimacy of his claim as a chief of state. He found some support through Oumar Mariko, leader of a minor Africanist party, the SADI, and an umbrella of leftist anti-globalisation parties and figures, including former Culture minister Aminata Traoré and union leaders. The *Coordination des Organisations Patriotiques du Mali (COPAM)* became the main umbrella, with several factions within, including the anti-imperialist *Mouvement Populaire du 22 Mars (MP22)*. These anti-ATT groups supported the coup on several different levels of involvement and contradicted the opinions of the junta on the next steps. Aminata Traoré, for example, welcomed the coup without voicing her support for the junta, seeing that the national elite had brainwashed citizens to defend the Western neoliberal order (Traoré 2001:13). The SADI network already had an agenda before the coup and tried to politicise the

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<sup>180</sup> These include Soumaila Cissé and Modibo Sidibé among the most significant presidential candidates to oppose the coup. Current president Ibrahim Boubacar Keita remained silent during the coup but did not support it.

<sup>181</sup> France 24, ‘ Une manifestation dégénère en affrontements entre pro et anti-putschistes ’, 29 mars 2012, <https://observers.france24.com/fr/20120329-affrontements-entre-pro-anti-putschistes-bamako-mali-touren-sanogo-bourse-travail>

events. Before March 22<sup>nd</sup>, the MP22 sent several emissaries to Kati to negotiate with soldiers.<sup>182</sup> While the junta was in power, the MP22 became a conveyor belt to boost support for the junta, even while the junta's policies remained vague. On March 29<sup>th</sup>, when a massive protest broke up in Central Bamako, gathering several anti-junta political figures together, some pro-junta supporters went to meet the protesters, which, as discussed, was a tense moment. At the same time, about a hundred pro-coup protesters gathered at the airport to protest against the visit of ECOWAS leaders, and therefore delay negotiations, showing how improvised the support for the junta was. During marches in support of the coup, children were to be found asking for their 500 francs.<sup>183</sup>

The junta was not able to win the hearts and minds of civilians. The junta, while in power, did not gain support beyond a close-knit group of supporters that welcomed the coup as an alternative to ATT, but this did not translate into sustainable support. The junta itself struggled to find a message that resonated with civilians, beyond ending the corruption of the ATT regime. It also adopted a hostile stance to political leaders in an attempt to mute the opposition, with low levels of violence in comparison to the two previous coups, in which hundreds of people were arrested and killed.

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<sup>182</sup> Interview with the MP22. Bamako, March 2012.

<sup>183</sup> Street interviews. Bamako, March 29<sup>th</sup>.

## *The Transition*

On the day of Dioncounda Traoré's inauguration, Sanogo was offered a comfortable seat in front of the podium while the new president was sworn into office, a symbolic image of the role he would seek in the upcoming months. The exact terms of Sanogo's withdrawal have never been made public, but he succeeded in three different ways in influencing the negotiating process. First, he made sure that, in the agreement, several powers usually devoted to the President will be transferred to the Prime Minister, notably the power to hold the Minister's council and to initiate decrees. Second, he ensured his involvement in the selection of a prime minister, notably defining criteria, such as not being a 'professional' politician. After negotiations, all actors agreed on Cheikh Modibo Diarra.<sup>184</sup> Finally, while the agreements ruled out any role in the government for Sanogo, he made sure that three of his military allies were nominated in the government.<sup>185</sup>

During the transition, members of the junta continued to interrupt politics and to exert pressure on the political process. During the night of April 16<sup>th</sup>, the junta arrested 22 political figures that constituted the FDR.<sup>186</sup> They were liberated a few days later. Meanwhile, the junta started to feel comfortable with the new bonuses that they gained during the coup. Several leaders of the coup started to travel around Bamako in luxury SUVs and bought several houses. Cars stolen during the coup reappeared in the streets of Bamako without much investigation as to who their new users were or how they had been acquired.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Diarra is an astrophysicist that worked for NASA and Microsoft. He was an outsider to Malian politics, from a powerful Ségou family that has substantial business and political influence. On a more symbolic level, he is Moussa Traoré's son-in-law. It was rumoured that Traoré has pressured Sanogo to accept Diarra. Diarra was a candidate for the 2012 cancelled presidential elections.

<sup>185</sup> Colonel Majeur Yamoussa Camara, Colonel Tiefing Konaté, Colonel Moussa Sinko Coulibaly.

<sup>186</sup> Modibo Sidibé, Soumaïla Cissé, Kassoum Tapo, Tieman Coulibaly

<sup>187</sup> Civilians. Bamako, 9 April 2012.



Figure 16. Captain Amadou Haya Sanogo (in uniform) at the inauguration of interim president Dioncounda Traoré (left of Sanogo), between two ECOWAS emissaries (Djibril Bassolé, to the left of Traoré, and Adama Bictogo, to the right of Sanogo).

On 30<sup>th</sup> April, shooting could be heard between the *Cité Administrative* and the *Place de l'Indépendance* in Bamako, starting at around 17:00. Groups of *Berets Rouges* were said to head into three directions: the Kati military base, the airport and the ORTM. During this episode, labelled the 'counter-coup', Green Berets attacked the *Berets Rouges* camp. There has never been a clear explanation of who initiated the exchange of fire. *Berets Rouges*, under the leadership of Colonel Abidine Guindo, former aide-de-camp to ATT, decided to storm the ORTM, the airport and the Prime Minister's office in what they said was self-defence as rumours spread of a crackdown by the Green Berets. The junta denied those rumours, stating that the *Berets Rouges* wanted to seize power in revenge for being short-circuited during the March coup. At the time, the junta stated that they sent two emissaries ahead of the skirmishes to tell the *Berets Rouges* that the rumours were unfounded.<sup>188</sup> Pro-coup politician Oumar Mariko, in an interview, declared that those emissaries were arrested by the *Berets Rouges*.<sup>189</sup> While I struggled to corroborate any of these versions without reaching a definite

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<sup>188</sup> Declaration of Sanogo. Kati. 1 April 2012.

<sup>189</sup> Personal interview with Oumar Mariko. 1 May 2012.

conclusion, the end result was the same: a violent clash between the Green Berets and the *Berets Rouges*.

In the evening, the junta announced the closure of international borders, although only Bamako's airport closed for 72 hours, while all land borders remained open. After a night of fighting, the official count was 14 deaths and 40 injured.<sup>190</sup> The *Berets Rouges* were disbanded following the clash. At the time, 140 *Berets Rouges* were said to have been arrested, even if unofficial accounts brought the number to 300. In 2013, three different mass graves were revealed, containing 30 bodies, including one in Diago in the surroundings of Kati, and containing the bodies of 20 *Berets Rouges* that went missing during the counter-coup. The counter-coup was the first public in-fighting within the military institution, and the most visible episode showing that the armed forces were not unified behind the junta.

Under the agreement negotiated with the junta, the transition was supposed to last 40 days. At the expiration of this period, when the crisis remained unsolved, tension rose again. The constant interference of the junta in the transitional government's decisions worried ECOWAS, which released a statement on May 15<sup>th</sup> accusing the junta of blocking the 'return to civilian rule' and threatened to re-impose sanctions.<sup>191</sup> At that time, the junta and pro-coup supporters were more visible. While several protests took place since the coup, on May 21<sup>st</sup>, a pro-coup protest turned violent as protestors, carrying a mock cardboard coffin representing interim President Traoré's death, burst into the Presidential Palace without being stopped by the FAMAs, who were responsible for security at the time. Traoré was stripped and beaten by the crowd. The crowd left the Presidential Palace after the Presidential Guard started to shoot,

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<sup>190</sup> Communiqué of the Government. 2 April 2012.

<sup>191</sup> ECOWAS press Release, 15 May 2012.

killing three protesters and wounding several others. While Traoré was first hospitalised in Bamako, he was transferred two days later to Paris. Three leaders of the pro-coup *Coordination des organisations patriotiques du Mali* (COPAM) and a newer pro-coup association, *Yèrè Wolo Ton*, were condemned by a court for causing ‘serious trouble to the public’ and were sentenced to six months in August 2012.<sup>192</sup> Military staff close to the junta, said to have guided the protest and let the protesters into the palace, have never faced charges.<sup>193</sup> After forty days, Traoré was reinstated, despite Sanogo expecting that the agreement conferred the leadership upon him.<sup>194</sup> On August 20<sup>th</sup>, a compromise was found: Cheick Modibo Diarra, who led the interim government, remaining Prime Minister, with a new cabinet consisting of 31 ministers, five of whom were viewed as close allies to Sanogo.

This was not the last direct or indirect political intervention made by the junta. They made several threats and exerted continuous pressure during the rest of the transition. On 11<sup>th</sup> December, about 20 soldiers arrested Prime Minister Cheick Modibo Diarra, allegedly at Sanogo’s command, as he was about to fly to Paris for a medical check-up. The junta said that he intended to flee. The military smashed his door down and he was brought to Kati military base. Later that night, the Prime Minister resigned during a national TV broadcast. At the time, tensions between the ex-junta and Diarra escalated, as the Prime minister agreed on November 11<sup>th</sup> to an ECOWAS military mission in Northern Mali, while the junta stood against foreign intervention and demanded more financial and logistic resources. On December 10<sup>th</sup>, Diarra also agreed to a military training mission from the European Union, EUTM. Before his arrest, Sanogo had publicly criticised the Prime Minister, calling him a

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<sup>192</sup> Amadou Amion Guindo, Younouss Hamèye Dicko et Rokia Sanogo

<sup>193</sup> Several testimonies at the time agreed that the junta was actively guiding the crowd, including giving alternative orders for security guards to allow protesters to access the presidential palaces.

<sup>194</sup> A Sanogo aide. 12 June 2012.

‘man of the outside’.<sup>195</sup> Sanogo denied that Diarra’s resignation was under coercion, stating that it was only ‘facilitated’.<sup>196</sup> The then army spokesman, Bakary Mariko, stated that Diarra was jeopardizing the transition by taking powers beyond what the agreements provided him with and planning to stay in power indefinitely.<sup>197</sup>

On 15 December 2012, Django Sissoko was nominated Prime Minister. While he reinstated the ministers that had been close to Sanogo, showing that the captain retained influence over the government. He also named ministers more representative of northern regions.<sup>198</sup> Sissoko is a long-standing politician respected by all political parties, as he held several ministerial seats or other governmental positions under Moussa Traoré, Alpha Oumar Konaré and Amadou Toumani Touré. He was described as a man ‘of compromise’ able to ‘bring people together’<sup>199</sup> while having strong support among the armed forces. Cheick Modibo Diarra had little support from political and military actors, which made him more pliable under the junta’s pressure. Sissoko had a reputation as an upright, neutral politician.<sup>200</sup> While the junta first greeted his nomination, they soon realised that the new Prime minister would not be as compliant to their desires as Diarra has been and that he had a strong network to support him.<sup>201</sup>

When Islamists groups attacked the town of Konna, this triggered the French intervention Serval on 11 January 2013, bringing about a momentum that allowed the transition to end in

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<sup>195</sup> Interview with Hamadou Sanogo. Kati, 2 June 2012.

<sup>196</sup> Phone Interview with Sanogo. 12 November 2012.

<sup>197</sup> Phone Interview with Bakary Mariko. 11 November 2012.

<sup>198</sup> These are Pr Messa Ould Mohamed Lady, Yaya Ag Mohamed Ali, Mme Alwata Ichata Sahi and Ousmane Ag Rhissa.

<sup>199</sup> Interviews. 15 December 2012.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

the presidential election. After the collapse of April 2012, the front reached a stalemate where the Malian forces, as discussed in the previous chapter, secured a cordon sanitaire around Sévaré. This stalemate was unlocked in January 2013. At that moment, there were reports of AQIM fighters moving towards Konna, about 50 km from Sévaré. On January 9<sup>th</sup>, two buses of jihadists arrived in the FAMa-controlled city, following some rockets being launched (Notin 2014:191). While the Sévaré-based forces sent reinforcements, an exchange of fire was initiated on the 10<sup>th</sup>, but the FAMAs quickly retreated to Sévaré. With the jihadists entering a government-controlled area, this alerted all authorities, fearing that this could lead to a collapse of the frontline, as there is no defense line between Sévaré and Bamako.

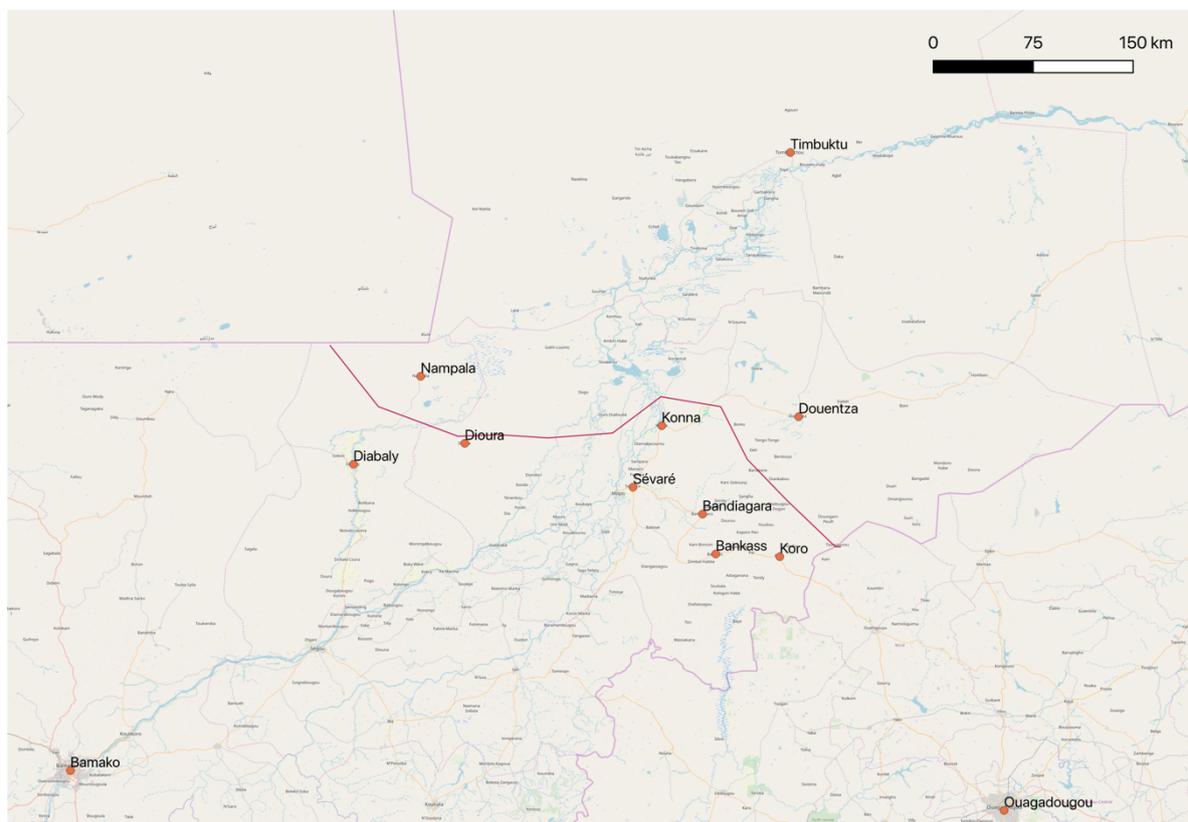


Figure 17. Division Line, April 2012 - January 2013

The FAMas went into panic mode, and the *Berets Rouges* were sent to the front, along with several regular units. On January 11<sup>th</sup>, Operation Serval was launched, after interim president Dioncounda Traore requested help from French President François Hollande to stop any progress towards the south. Meanwhile, the *État-Major* and the armed forces were quick to support the French-led military mission, sharing intelligence and dispatching troops; those posted in Sévaré and Markala played a significant role.<sup>202</sup> Various partners also sent troops to join the French-led operation, allowing the state to regain theoretical control of the north, with all big cities being retaken: Gao on 25<sup>th</sup> January and Timbuktu on 5<sup>th</sup> February. On 28<sup>th</sup> January, the MNLA also announced that they had retaken Kidal.

During this period, the junta became gradually isolated from political power. The junta and their political allies had spent the year before campaigning against any form of foreign intervention to regain control of Northern Mali. The overwhelmingly positive reactions of the population towards the French intervention destroyed the anti-Western rhetoric of pro-coup movements. The junta and its allies, including Oumar Mariko, were not able to transform the anti-ATT feeling into lasting political influence. As operations unfolded, the junta kept a low profile and disappeared from the public sphere. On February 13<sup>th</sup> 2013, Sanogo was named at the *Comité militaire de suivi de la réforme des forces de défense et de sécurité* by Dioncounda Traoré. While the Committee never produced any reports or got involved in reforms, it provided an official role and several advantages for Sanogo, as well as something to keep him away from politics. The transition ended on September 4<sup>th</sup> 2013 with the inauguration of Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (IBK). On 14<sup>th</sup> August 2013, Amadou Sanogo was promoted to General. On 27<sup>th</sup> November, he was arrested with 17 other members of the CNRDRE for the massacre of *Berets Rouges*, ending any role for the members of the junta.

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<sup>202</sup> My own reporting February 2013.

### *The re-establishment of the Constitutional order*

On 4<sup>th</sup> September 2013, IBK was officially sworn in as the fifth President of Mali. In December, his party won the most seats during the legislative elections, 66 out of 147 seats, seven seats short of a majority. The election was recognised by the international community as ‘fair and democratic’ and was able to initiate two distinct processes: negotiations of peace agreements to end the civil war, and the re-establishment of state institutions. A UN mission, the MINUSMA, was launched in 1 July 2013 to support the entire process.

The elections officially ended the transition. However, the re-establishment of democratic institutions was difficult. In several regions, elections could not be held due to security concerns. IBK had a strong mandate, which provides him with the legitimacy to stand up to former putschists, and to reassert civilian control of the military. The former Prime Minister, who had already challenged ATT in the 2007 elections, won a decisive and barely-contested victory with 77.61% of the vote during the run-off. While the opposition denounced irregularities, his legitimacy was not contested. In February 2012, before the coup, internal polls were projecting a clear victory for IBK.<sup>203</sup> Thus, elections confirmed existing trends, and the junta was not, in the end, able to influence the voters’ decisions in the polling stations. Supporters of the coup did not make significant political gains. During the transition, the COPAM and MP22 hoped that the popularity of Sanogo would be reflected in the vote. Oumar Mariko, the leading political figure of the movement, and its party (the SADI), received only 2.57% of the votes in the first round of the presidential elections, and earned five seats during the legislative elections, one more than during the 2007 elections. Mariko believed that the junta would discourage other parties from participating, which could pave

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<sup>203</sup> Interview with a political strategist. February 2012.

his way to power.<sup>204</sup> Growing rumours that Mariko met with jihadist leader Iyad Ag Ghaly and Muslim leader Mahmoud Dicko made him very unpopular among troops.<sup>205</sup>

Similarly, the two most vocal leaders of the *Fronde du Refus* (FDR) were unable to capitalise on their strict anti-junta position during the transition. Former Prime Minister Modibo Sidibé received 4.97% in the first round of the presidential elections, and his party gained six seats. Soumeïla Cissé, ex-Minister of Finance and former presidential candidate under the ADEMA-PASJ flag in 1997, was eligible, with 19.44% of the vote, for the run-off, where he got 22.39%, therefore becoming the official opposition leader. His party gained 17 seats: this was 17 fewer than in 2007, but remained the second-largest party in Mali. The biggest loss was that of the ADEMA-PASJ. As Dioncounda Traoré was barred from running for president in compliance with the transition agreements, it was a less well-known party figure who ran, Dramane Dembelé, who got only 9.57% of the votes. The ADEMA-PASJ finished in third place in the legislative elections, having been the largest party since 1991, from 51 seats in 2007 to 16 in 2013. The elections did not bring any new leaders, with most figures emerging from the ADEMA-PASJ constellation (Soumeïla Cissé, IBK, Modibo Sidibé, Dramane Dembelé, etc.) and having, at a time or another, run as a candidate for the party. The ADEMA-PASJ was already unpopular during polls conducted before the coup.

On 14<sup>th</sup> August 2013, one of the first actions of the government was to promote Amadou Sanogo to general, which was the beginning of the end for the junta. On 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013, a new mutiny started in Kati. A small group of former pro-putsch soldiers took weapons to protest at their lack of promotion and wage arrears, feeling that they did not receive as much

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<sup>204</sup> Interview with MP22 members. Bamako, June 2016

<sup>205</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-08). Bamako, October 2016.

as other putschists, blaming Sanogo and his privileged friends.<sup>206</sup> While the events were framed as a mutiny, it turned out to be more of a struggle between two factions: one that received ranks, money and honours, and another that was left behind. The mobilisation was restricted to a few military staff only.

The small-scale mutiny became an opportunity to be exploited, especially by Sanogo's followers, who understood that they were losing influence and needed to find a way to justify themselves.<sup>207</sup> Sanogo loyalists decided to strike back to re-establish order unilaterally. One of the mutineers, Lassiné Keita, a first-class soldier, was arrested on the same night by pro-Sanogo soldiers.<sup>208</sup> His corpse was found on October 4<sup>th</sup> in the surroundings of the Kati military base. The corpse of Dramane Cissoko, another mutinous soldier, was dropped at Kati's morgue on the night of October 7<sup>th</sup>, hands and feet tied, and with several wounds to the chest and genitals.<sup>209</sup> The main target of the operation was Colonel Youssouf Traoré, one of the original putschists from March 2012. His body was found with his throat slit in late 2013, with several *gris-gris*, in a borehole on a property owned by Sanogo in December 2013. His bodyguard, Salif 'Ganda Koy' Maiga was found decapitated, as well as Traoré's driver. The *État-Major* and the Government sent a quick response with the Saniya Operation, coordinated by Lieutenant-Colonel Jean Elysée Dao and Kati's area commander, Prospère Morona. Lt-Col Dao stated that no bullets were fired during the Saniya<sup>210</sup> Operation, and the mission did not meet any resistance from mutineers or the pro-Sanogo faction.<sup>211</sup> In the

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<sup>206</sup> Communiqués from Mutineers 30 September 2013.

<sup>207</sup> Interviews with former putschists (BKO-JUN-01). Bamako, October 2016.

<sup>208</sup> Amnesty International Report. October 2013. Phone interview with Gaetan Mootoo, Amnesty International. 30 October 2013.

<sup>209</sup> Interviews with an investigator. October 2013. Autopsy report. Phone interview with Gaetan Mootoo, Amnesty International. 30 October 2013

<sup>210</sup> Epuration, in Bambara.

<sup>211</sup> Public declaration of Dao. 25 October 2013.

following days, about 30 soldiers were arrested and conducted to Camp 1 of the Gendarmerie, in Bamako. While numbers have never been made official, some of the alleged arrests were, in fact, military seeking protection, and many were freed without prosecution.<sup>212</sup> Many of them stated, before the arrival of the envoys to Kati, that they intended to surrender.<sup>213</sup> Those surrenders and arrests confused the families of the soldiers that were killed, as they believed them to be among the mutineers.<sup>214</sup>

The murder of Colonel Youssouf Traoré exposed growing friction among the ex-junta members, blurring the lines between personal conflicts and perceived inequality of treatment.<sup>215</sup> While responsibility, and therefore motives, have not been clearly delineated, families of the victims said that Fosseyeni Diarra took Colonel Youssouf Traoré and his entourage to Sanogo, and never returned.<sup>216</sup> Rumours following the events said that Sanogo killed Traoré. A former putschist believed that personal reasons were more dominant than corporate ones: ‘This is what killed Colonel Traoré. He used to be a close friend of Sanogo. But Sanogo believes Traoré betrayed him with his wife. It’s a very intimate conflict. There has been growing petty revenge before and during the mutiny.’<sup>217</sup>

The events led to the arrest of Sanogo on November 27<sup>th</sup> after numerous convocations that he turned down. His arrest was demanded by civilian justice, rather than military justice. From then, he would never be liberated.<sup>218</sup> On November 25<sup>th</sup>, the demand passed through the

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<sup>212</sup> Phone interview with Gaetan Mootoo, Amnesty International. 30 October 2013

<sup>213</sup> Daou’s declaration. October 25, 2013.

<sup>214</sup> Interviews with victim’s families. 12 December 2013.

<sup>215</sup> Former putschist (BKO-JUN-01). Bamako, October 2016.

<sup>216</sup> Interviews with victim’s families. 12 December 2013.

<sup>217</sup> Former putschist (BKO-JUN-01). Bamako, October 2016.

<sup>218</sup> Officer (EM-OFF-03). Bamako, October 2016. Bamako. Journalist (BKO-JRN-01). Bamako, November 2016.

office of Brigade General Didier Dakouo, a deputy army general. A restrained meeting of officers was called, chaired by Colonel George Modibo Keita, the military justice supervisor. The military operations were overseen by Colonel Abass Dembelé. On November 26<sup>th</sup>, a team including members from the Engineer corps, the Air Force and a US-trained elite team was gathered. They were not briefed about the nature of their upcoming mission. On November 27<sup>th</sup>, this team was sent to Sanogo's house in Kati at 6am. Sanogo was arrested at 10am without opposition. Several military staff at his home were also arrested and conducted to the Gendarmerie School, in Faladié.

Institutions quickly seized the initiative as an investigation was launched by judge Yaya Karambé.<sup>219</sup> Three mass graves were revealed. The first, in Diago, contained the bodies of 21 *Berets Rouges* from the counter coup. Several other former putschists were arrested after the mass graves were discovered, and 18 persons in all – including Sanogo – were eventually brought to trial.<sup>220</sup> General Yamoussa Camara, former minister of defence during the transition and IBK's personal chief of staff, was arrested on February 14<sup>th</sup> 2014. Ex-Army chief of staff Ibrahima Dahirou Dembelé was also arrested, but later released. During these operations, Sanogo and his closest allies were arrested and imprisoned away from Bamako, therefore ending possible threats to the IBK government. There is a debate on how much political pressure affected Judge Karambé's thoughts on his investigations on Sanogo's prosecution. At the time, the International Criminal Court (ICC) had already launched an investigation into allegations of torture and murder undertaken by the junta, as well as war crimes. Already, Karambé had started to investigate the slaughter of the *Berets Rouges* prior

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<sup>219</sup> The *juge d'instruction* Yaya Karambé holds two positions: investigation judge at the Economic and Financial section of the First Instance Tribunal in Bamako Commune 3, and an investigation judge at Bamako's Military Tribunal. Following this investigation, he was named Ambassador to Sudan.

<sup>220</sup> The trial started in November 2016, but it has yet to resume at the time of writing, in October 2019.

to the election of IBK but was limited in his investigations, fearing for his life. While not responsible for launching the investigation or the criminal pursuit of the junta, the government provided extra support to the investigation, offering personal protection to judge Karambé and his family, and ensuring he had enough resources to pursue his tasks. On several occasions, Karambé was accused of imposing the will of IBK, rather than acting on his own will.

## 6.2. Demobilisation

This chapter has shown how the junta slid away from centre stage into political irrelevancy. While there are several elements in the first part of this chapter that suggested that the junta was never in full control nor representative of the military, this second part intends to dissect, beyond the main narrative, the several mechanisms through which demobilisation among soldiers occurred. Theories of coups and mutinies have focused on mobilisation. This section intends to contribute to a phenomenon that literature has mostly ignored: what leads soldiers to oppose support a coup. The first part of this section reflects on the militariat and civil-military relations, and how the junta was unable to transform an anti-elite message into a capacity to govern. The second part focuses on primary and secondary cohesion and discusses how Sanogo failed to defend the demands of soldiers, and how infighting led to more fragmentation within the armed forces. The third part focuses on the military institution, building on two ideas mentioned in Chapter 5: autonomy and issues with Sanogo's leadership.

### *Civil-military relations: the struggle of the militariat for civilian support*

In the previous chapter, I presented how the mobilisation behind the coup was framed by subaltern officers and soldiers – the *militariat* – as a mobilisation of a group in defence of their interests, which are in contradiction to those of the elites. The notion of corporate interests and the ability to defend them has become a significant factor acknowledged by the literature on coups, especially in Africa (Decalo 1976; Nordlinger 1977:78; Wells 1974; Zolberg 1968, 1969). Decalo has studied coups from an institutionalist perspective, demonstrating that the main predictor of a coup is officers fearing a threat to their personal interests, either as the result of a restructuring of the military institution or the conditions of

service (Decalo 1976). In some ways, the military behaves ‘essentially as a trade union looking out for its interests’, and this influences its capacity to carry out a coup (Horowitz 1980:5–6). Therefore, the military sides with whom they expect to maximise their gains, from personal to social gains, something that has been often presented in theoretical models by the coordination game (Singh 2014:6). The success of a coup depends on its ability to mobilise resources for setting and coordinating expectations within the armed forces, or reaching a momentum where there are no incentives to ‘chicken out’ of the process (Singh 2014:8).

In the time between the coup and the election of IBK, there were efforts at building bridges between the putschists and civilians so as to transform the mobilisation into a lasting movement. In the first days after coup, there were signs that a populist agenda might be echoed among civilians. During the three weeks that the junta were in power, protests were organised in Bamako, calling ‘for the end of corruption’ and imprisoning the ‘criminal regime of ATT’. While the junta remained focus on demanding weapons, the MP22 attempted to widen the issue to include anti-elite rhetoric. On the eve of the coup, there was thus a convergence of messages between the junta and the most radical figures of the opposition.

Sanogo and the CNRDRE successfully transformed a mutiny into a subaltern coup. To be successful, subaltern coups, where leaders lack credibility and control over institutions, must rely on a balance of violence and popular support so as to ‘make a fact’ (Singh 2014:10). Underlying this idea is the notion that coup leaders need to convince people that they can provide the solution to the people’s problems, either through rational means or violence. Winning hearts and minds can be incompatible with mastering violence; there are no

advantages at bringing chaos in a coup, and there is a strong incentive among the armed forces to ensure that the pursuit of their interest will antagonise as few persons or groups as possible (Singh 2014:23). The 2012 junta failed to achieve either way of becoming a legitimate power, as well as failing to mobilise the entire armed forces.

Violence was not a significant element. While the 2012 coup was not devoid of violence, the use or the threat of use of violence did not allow the junta to shape civil-military relations. This does not mean that the coup was not violent: political opponents were thrown into gaol, and several military staff were killed during the coup, the countercoup and the September 2013 mutiny. The threat of violence had an impact on the crisis, and it would be preposterous to ignore that psychological control over means of violence, as uncertainty over the outcome led to several tense moments: from the political crisis following the arrest of Cheikh Modibo Diarra to the attack on Dioncounda Traoré. In the absence of the use of force, to ‘make a fact’, the junta thus needed to convince the public that it can gain popular support. Sanogo’s junta failed at persuading both civilians and the *militariat* that it could advance their interests. As discussed in Chapter 1, theories of a civil-military gap argue that, while debating the importance of the difference between civilian and military culture, there is solidarity among members of the armed forces (Diamond and Plattner 1996). This question is central to coup-proofing theories, as discussed in Chapter 1. The concept of containment, a preoccupation of theory on the civil-military gap, remains a prime element of a theory on the civilian control of the military, where civilian institutions must abide by the rule of law and democracy.

The 2012 junta first staged the mutiny to defend corporatist demands: mutineers were asking for more weapons and resources to fight in the north. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the junta failed in this aspect: the military collapse was accentuated by their seizure of power,

and their demands became even more pressing. The army abandoned weapons while fleeing the front. New orders of weapons were blocked. Lack of funds postponed payments, leaving several members of the security forces unpaid for weeks, leading to bitterness and mistrust towards the junta from both soldiers and civilians. The junta was unable to leave a durable imprint on politics and civilian institutions, but rather exerted its power as a nuisance in opposing policies. In both presidential and legislative elections, the residents of Kati, civilians and military, voted overwhelmingly massively for IBK, with participation rates even higher than the national average.<sup>221</sup> Electoral behaviour of the residents of Kati, military or not, was in line with that of the overall Malian population. While the junta successfully mobilised soldiers against the elite, it did not convince the wider population, which had its own grievances against the elite. Despite attempts to foster politicians from the fringe, the ideas that the militariat was defending did not become a popular movement within civilians. From the coup till its annihilation, the junta used rumours and framing as a tool to bring civilians onto their side, as discussed in Chapter 5. While these rumours found echoes within the population, the junta was not able to build a narrative that functioned to protect them.

Rumours played an important role in the build-up of tension. The junta did, at several moments, discuss a rumour that officers and *Berets Rouges* were planning their own coup few days later than the actual coup, as they were said to be ‘angry to lose influence over politicians’.<sup>222</sup> Rumours were contradictory. While being accused of supporting ATT during the coup, the *Berets Rouges* were also said to have refused to defend him on March 21<sup>st</sup>. They were also in charge of the protection of the ORTM and the National Assembly, but did not

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<sup>221</sup> During the runoff, on 189,609 voters (386,274), 170,172 voted for IBK, 19,437 voted for Soumaila Cissé. The results are more complex for the December 2013 legislative assembly, as the alliance between the RPM, IBK’s party, and ADEMA-PASJ won 58.52% of the votes in Kati.

<sup>222</sup> Interview with the junta. April 2<sup>nd</sup> 2012.

fight when the putschists came in. During the coup, the *Berets Rouges* also protected the Presidential Palace. When the putschists hit the Presidential Palace with precision, some said that the junta had intelligence from the *Berets Rouges* (Boisbouvier 2012b, 2012a). Rumours re-emerged during the counter-coup events. Notably, Colonel Abidine Guindo stated on public radio that he would not accept ‘the authority of someone less [lower] ranked than he is’.<sup>223</sup> While those rumours mostly link the junta to ATT and the democratisation political elites, the contradictory narratives highlight their importance in framing the *Berets Rouges* as the defender of ATT, and Sanogo as the saviour of Mali, rescuing it from a coup by the elite, strengthening a narrative about him as leader of the people.

The narrative of an international plot against Mali remained significant during the transition. The putschists and their allies continued to be suspicious of international intervention, reinforcing rumours that ECOWAS and France were plotting against Mali. The main rumour referred to a weapon embargo. During the first day of the coup, the ECOWAS leaders indeed agreed on an embargo for Mali. It was cancelled with the restoration of constitutional rule in April 2012. Weapons ordered by the ATT government remained in Conakry’s port out of fear that they could be used by the junta.<sup>224</sup> When the situation became public and Guinea’s government realised that there were no regional obligations to retain the weapons, they were released in October 2012. While this episode reflects more a bureaucratic misunderstanding than political will, this was constantly held up by the junta as an example of ECOWAS’s attempts to weaken Mali.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> ORTM broadcast. Public radio. 13 April 2012

<sup>224</sup> RFI, Les armes destinées au Mali toujours bloquées en Guinée par la Cédéao, 7<sup>th</sup> Septembre 2012 <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20120907-armes-mali-guinee-cedeao-afrique-ouest-toumani-toure>

<sup>225</sup> MP22 Press Conference. Bamako, 2 May 2012.

Another critical rumour related to the presence of ‘foreign mercenaries’, often described as ECOWAS nationals. During the countercoup, Sanogo stated in a public broadcast that mercenaries from Burkina Faso and Cote d’Ivoire had been arrested, showing images of alleged mercenaries on national television: this was proven to be untrue. Media owned by pro-junta political leader Oumar Mariko, one of the few still broadcasting during the countercoup, shared the message. There were never any arrests, but the junta constantly denounced the presence of mercenaries, with the subtle message that they are sent by ECOWAS leaders. Similarly, on social networks, there were rumours that ECOWAS and France supported the Tuareg rebels and the jihadists, conflating the Northern Mali situation with the NATO intervention in Libya into a regional plot to control the Sahel (Gavelle et al. 2013). This narrative aimed to diminish the responsibility of the FAMas and the junta for the collapse. The positive reaction to Serval destroyed (momentarily) the anti-foreigner rhetoric.

Rumours, in this context, capitalised on a foreign entity supporting the elite. Before and during the coup, as discussed in Chapter 5, there was strong rhetoric on an elite plot against Mali, in cooperation with the military hierarchy. While this was a mobilisation factor among soldiers of Kati in favour of the coup, this did not appear to influence the outcome of the transition. The idea of the junta embodying the emergence of a militariat defending the lower classes failed to materialise. There were common interests between certain civilians and soldiers in Kati, but this did not translate into legitimate leadership of the junta or their political allies. In other words, the junta did not succeed in ‘making a fact’. This rhetoric of an international plot was also an attempt by the junta to find scapegoat for its own inability to govern. The international community adopted a much stricter approach during the 2012 coup than in 1968 and 1991. In the case of Mali, the inability of the junta to secure support abroad while the country was facing a crisis that was acknowledged as a significant security threat to

the entire region, was crucial in forcing the junta to step down (ICG 2012:12). On March 22<sup>nd</sup>, when Mali's neighbours condemned the coup, it became clear that the junta was isolated. Rather than being able to reassure the international community, the junta, lacking clear understanding of foreign and national policy, was not been able to avoid sanctions (Whitehouse 2012). In 2012, the CNRDRE was met with harsh international condemnation and sanctions. Neighbours, under ECOWAS, were fast to criticise the coup and to impose sanctions in the few first hours. On March 22<sup>nd</sup>, the first wave of sanctions was announced by ECOWAS. On March 29<sup>th</sup>, a flight with five ECOWAS heads of state was forbidden to land in Bamako as protesters invaded Bamako's airport runway. This stunt led to more sanctions. On April 1<sup>st</sup>, Sanogo, realising that the sanctions on oil imports and weapons had severely hit the economy, accepted one of the ECOWAS conditions: to reinstate Mali's constitution. On April 2<sup>nd</sup>, ECOWAS judged that the junta did not meet their demands and imposed more sanctions, which it called a 'total embargo', notably freezing accounts at the West African Central Bank (BCEAO) and starving the regime economically.

The junta was unable to provide a strategy to appease international pressure. The junta failed to understand that Mali's economic governance relied on regional entities such as the Central Bank of West Africa (BCEAO), and the regional economic union (UEMOA). The BCEAO applied its own procedures, which did not leave any room for possible negotiation, notably in terms of who can access accounts and how to administer the state budget. The junta demonstrated at several moments its ignorance of existing mechanisms.<sup>226</sup> ECOWAS's role was more political and had the flexibility to respond to the crisis, which explains why its position evolved during the crisis, even if its primary tool of coercion had been economic sanctions. At first, ECOWAS had a clear agenda on the return of constitutional orders and

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<sup>226</sup> A BCEAO representative. Bamako, 1 April 2012.

was contemplating using force. On March 28<sup>th</sup>, the leaders held an extraordinary meeting in Dakar, which laid down its conditions. On April 5<sup>th</sup>, the army chiefs of staff met in Abidjan to draft a military operation concerning the North, and to support democratic elections. Once a transition was agreed by the junta, ECOWAS pressured the junta to commit to the rules agreed during the transition. ECOWAS adapted its position alongside events, but also prepared its standby force for a mission in Northern Mali.

This could have become counterproductive, as anti-foreign rhetoric was being used to inflate support for the junta. Oumar Mariko's SADI and the COPAM (and later the MP-22) played an essential role in framing the junta's anti-imperialist foreign policy, which includes French-bashing rhetoric and the framing of ECOWAS as an imperialist tool. While Sanogo was adamant in resisting any form of intervention from ECOWAS or the UN, notably during speeches, most of the resentment was framed by its allies, which argued that ECOWAS and the international community planned to 'weaken' Mali, often to steal its resources in the North. A typical communique would be framed in this way:

ECOWAS will not engage in the liberation of Northern Mali. His strategic objective, and the one of his sponsors, is to occupy Mali, from the South and the north, to impose a 'dialogue' with the islamoterrorists [...] and to put back the MNLA with the support of NATO, to open a military base and impose the independence of the Azawad.<sup>227</sup>

Rumours help to shape a narrative about the international community acting against the Malian state, but it is difficult to gauge how extensively such feelings were shared among citizens. According to a poll during the coup among Bamako residents, 71% of civilians saw that ECOWAS played a decisive role during the crisis, while 75% supported a French

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<sup>227</sup> Communiqué de la COPAM, 28 Septembre 2012.

intervention (Malimetre 2012). While this poll focused on Bamako, those numbers contrast with what was heard in the streets during the transition. In 2012, the junta and their supporters blamed the international community, mainly ECOWAS, for their setbacks. Meanwhile, rumours about the international community circulated on a daily basis, and arguably both ECOWAS and anti-French rhetoric worked in favour of the junta<sup>228</sup>.

It is also important to acknowledge that the threat of force, and of sanctions from the international community, was crucial in persuading the junta to step down. The junta was never able to exert a monopoly of force, and, as discussed in Chapter 5, this highlights the success of the coup-proofing measures established since the 1991 coup. ECOWAS was also a significant factor in the resignation of Sanogo. In this case, the success of the coup was not due to the presence of an ‘exterior guarantor’, but the presence of a foreign hinderer (N’Diaye 2018:252). The junta lacked diplomatic skills while confronting their regional peers. On April 26<sup>th</sup> 2012, another summit in Abidjan was called to discuss the political events in Bamako and to draft a roadmap to the elections. For the first time, the situation of the north appeared on the agenda and ECOWAS changed its language to talk about a military mission to defend Mali’s sovereignty, rather than protecting Bamako’s institutions. From then on, ECOWAS’s efforts were focused on an abortive military operation to end the Northern occupation. On July 7<sup>th</sup>, ECOWAS political representatives and some head of states met in Ouagadougou and discussed the situation in the north more seriously. This was the first meeting at which there was a clear desire to support the Malian troops in the north through military action.

ECOWAS chiefs of staff met several times, with the most serious meeting taking place on November 6<sup>th</sup> in Bamako, where a CONOPS was developed, paving the way for an aborted

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<sup>228</sup> Vox-pops with the population, 1 May 2012:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B5MST7nGNfk>.

operational plan. This meeting led to another West African political leader meeting on November 11<sup>th</sup> where ECOWAS approved a one-year 3,300-strong force to ‘wrest control of northern Mali from Islamist fighters’, as fears grow over risks they posed to the region and beyond.<sup>229</sup>

As discussed, ECOWAS sanctions were critical in forcing the junta to step down. Following that, the military representatives to ECOWAS, which were named by security ministers originating from the junta, adopted a rhetoric refusing an ECOWAS intervention. This lack of constructive dialogue led to stalemate during the ECOWAS chief of staff meetings. Malian representatives emphasised the delivery of weapons and technical support, while ECOWAS leaders were asking to provide operational plans prior to arms deliveries, which left the other ECOWAS military strategists sceptical of the planning abilities of the transitional government’s envoys.<sup>230</sup>

The junta failed to take control of civilian institutions. From the coup to the inauguration of Dioncounda Traoré, the junta only made two significant decisions in terms of governance. First, it attempted to impose a new constitution, replicating articles from the existing constitution, replacing the word government with CNRDRE and shifting sections around. Second, it moved the seat of government to Kati, which offered a secure environment against a possible counter coup, but also isolated the self-proclaimed government from the state structures, which were left without direction. The tone changed once the interim government was named. The three former putschists that joined the government had experiences and academic credentials. The ex-junta ministers had important political support prior to the coup

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<sup>229</sup> ECOWAS press conference, 11 November 2012. Abidjan.

<sup>230</sup> Interview with Soumeyla Bakayoko, Ivorian Army Chief of Staff. Abidjan, 11 November 2012.

and strong connections with the political elite.<sup>231</sup> When Sanogo and most of the members of the CNRDRE pursued a strategy of framing the government and foreign actors as a corrupt elite, they were not able to offer an alternative. During these attacks on Dioncounda Traoré and the arrest of Cheikh Modibo Diarra, the ex-junta exerted a power of nuisance, unable to respond to civilian demands or to frame governance. Research has shown that there are no consistent factors that lead to success for a coup, and that how an army succeeded in taking over governance follows more or less the rules of an election: whomever is able to get the majority of support, no matter what the strategy is (Singh 2014:77), is likely to succeed. In the case of the junta, it was not able to garner such support.

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<sup>231</sup> Journalist (BKO-JRN-01). Bamako, October 2016.

### *Primary and secondary cohesion*

Chapter 5 described social cohesion in Kati, a community where striving brings people together. This part pursues this discussion by pointing out why mobilisation was not sustained. From March 2012 till September 2013, there was no significant recruitment or training: soldiers were struggling to understand their role, as the institution itself was left completely disorganised. In terms of primary cohesion, the crisis reshuffled the dynamics on the Kati military base. As several military staff were evacuated from the front to Kati, the sympathy towards the junta diminished among the inhabitants of Kati military base, as higher ranked and/or combat-experienced soldiers joined the conversation and changed the dynamics.<sup>232</sup> The disruptive impact of the military defeat was significant: soldiers were left in the dark about their future.

The biggest cracks, during that period, appeared at the secondary cohesion level: tensions between different factions of the armed forces turned violent. Theories on coups have stressed cohesion, nurtured by the military institution, as a factor of success for a military coup (Luttwak 1979). Before the coup, other military and paramilitary corps remained quiet: there were no mutinies and when events unfolded, they simply followed orders. During the coup and in the days after, members of the *Berets Rouges*, the Engineers Corps and the *Garde nationale*, remained in their camp and did not publicly stand for or against the junta.

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<sup>232</sup> Interviews with soldiers. Kati, 23 April 2012. Le Monde, <http://afrique.blog.lemonde.fr/2012/04/01/les-putschistes-maliens-mesures-durgence/> 1er Avril 2012.

Similarly, the Gendarmerie<sup>233</sup> kept a low profile. While the Gendarmes were mobilised during protests, their lack of equipment and experience in crowd-control limited their impact. During the few violent protests, they intervened minimally, mainly attempting to remain neutral, although rumours at the time said that they did not support the coup.<sup>234</sup> The role of the Gendarmerie during the mutiny of September 2013 was crucial, as it assumed the role of a military police defending the government. During the transition, the Gendarmerie intervened once against followers of the junta, by disarming a special police unit, the *Groupement de Sécurité Mobile*, on 6 April 2013. Elements of the armed forces joined the operation later, when some policemen, deemed close to Sanogo, refused to disarm and to follow orders. The event led to about ten arrests and many casualties, mostly from the policemen side. At the time, many saw this as a (failed) test on Sanogo's ability to create feelings of solidarity with other security forces.<sup>235</sup> Further divisions were observed between Bamako policemen, where two different confrontations resulted in two shootings (26<sup>th</sup> September 2012 and 5<sup>th</sup> April 2013), which originated from tensions about privileges granted to some police officers deemed close to the junta. Therefore, the junta became a source of further discord and division, which led to in-fighting, further rumours and jealousy. Rather than being cohesive, the junta slowly alienated itself from the interests it intended to defend in March 2012. This can be seen in two important events: the countercoup and the September 2013 mutiny.

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<sup>233</sup> The Gendarmes are considered paramilitary as they are both under the Ministry of Defense and the Interior Minister.

<sup>234</sup> Foreign military attaché. Bamako, 6 April 2013.

<sup>235</sup> Politician. Bamako, 6 April 2013.

## *The Countercoup*

During the transition, the countercoup exposed fault lines based on organisational cohesion in the armed forces. As discussed in the first section, there is no definitive accounts of the events, but the countercoup was an critical instance in which several units of the armed forces came together to attack the *Berets Rouges*, based on a display of the organisational bonding between members of a company (Siebold 2007:287). Thus, responsibility for initiating combat remains unclear during the assault on Baco-Djicoroni camp: the *Berets Rouges* defended their own camp, under attack from the Green Berets. Rumours shaped a narrative before the events, sustaining momentum that convinced the junta that the *Berets Rouges* wanted to launch a countercoup, while the *Berets Rouges* believed the junta wanted to attack them. The narrative of the *Berets Rouge*, built upon the perspective of the other battalions of the armed forces, remains focused on the question of privileges; the 33e RCP was perceived as an elite battalion, deriving their privileges from their closeness to ATT, a former *Beret Rouges* himself. As discussed, their role before the ‘countercoup’ was limited to protecting ATT himself.

These events reveal how the *Berets Rouges* were a strong cohesive group, and how solidarity between the four battalions of the regiment turned out to be an asset. To become a *Beret Rouge*, members of the armed forces must pass a written and physical test. The written test is a significant barrier for several soldiers. In this case, while having a sponsor helps, as in the general recruitment process discussed in Chapter 3, it is less necessary, as a soldier needs to be already enrolled in the FAMas to be join the regiment. While there are some privileges associated with membership of the 33e RCP, notably better housing and the *prime de saut*

(jump bonus)<sup>236</sup>, there is no rush from other units to join the company. The *Berets Rouges* also has a visible organisational culture, with routines and symbols that are not shared with other battalions (Kirke 2009). The main attribute of the company, their trademark beret, is in itself a significant rallying symbol. During the *grin* with the *Berets Rouges*, they often talked to me about their pride at belonging to the company, expressed through taking care of their berets. ‘You don’t let someone else clean it. You take care of it’, explained one of them.<sup>237</sup> The uniforms of the *Berets Rouges* were always impeccable. *Berets Rouges* have their own initiation rituals. The ‘jump’ has become the initiation rite to become a *Beret Rouge*, and members often talked about this in interviews.

There were other advantages for *Berets Rouges*: the camp and housing were superior and more modern than those of other battalions, with green space. A soldier explained to me that it was their duty, as *Berets Rouge*, to take care of the camp.<sup>238</sup> Another explained to me how his heart was torn when he saw the camp being ransacked in 2012. Similarly, the *Berets Rouges* have their own code of conduct, mottos and songs, with clearer core values than the other corps.<sup>239</sup> As they are involved in more specialised activities than the other part of the military, they have developed their own written codes of conduct.<sup>240</sup> Other smaller units in the Malian Armed Forces have similar exterior symbols of unity, like the DAMI or the Delta force, but these lacked the visibility of the, notably because they were already on the frontline and were smaller units of fewer than a hundred men.

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<sup>236</sup> About 5 000 CFA per month in 2012.

<sup>237</sup> Grin 5.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Officer (DP-OFF-01). Djicoroni Para, October 2016.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

The sense of order and being ‘special’ was also reflected in daily routines. When visiting Kati, soldiers were posted at different positions, but it was difficult to understand how rotation worked. In the *Berets Rouge* camp, at the entrance, there is a board stating who has daily responsibility for these different positions. In the Djicoroni-Para camp, there is even a private museum dedicated to the history of the *Berets Rouges*, with pictures of all ages, the first parachute used after independence and other memorabilia. Every time I visited someone at the camp, he would make sure that I had seen the museum.

These features of an elite-battalion align with literature on a fragmented military culture, where the ‘quasi-mystical’ relationship that characterised elite troops becomes an ‘island of clarity in a sea of ambiguity’ (Winslow 2006:69). The strength of the bond was capitalised on, on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2013 when *Berets Rouges* and other security forces exchanged fire. In spite of being officially disbanded in April 2012, several *Berets Rouges* remained in their camp at Baco-Djicoroni, waiting for a new assignment. When it came, Army Chief of Staff Ibrahima Dahirou Dembelé stated, on state television, that they would be deployed as part of other battalions. *Berets Rouges*, supported by their wives and children, resisted their integration into other units. They were, a few days later, redeployed as *Berets Rouges*, after negotiations involving interim president Dioncounda Traoré and prime minister Django Sissoko.

The counter coup was not a clash between organisations. Rather, the *Berets Rouges* were attacked because the junta framed them as the privileged defenders of the ATT regime. Events exposed the importance of secondary cohesion within the ranks of the *Berets Rouges*, as they aggressively defend their company. Coup-proofing strategies, which have often emphasised the idea of building a robust elite battalion, failed to defend the government in

this case: but they also have shown the limits of relying on cohesion to avoid a coup (De Bruin 2017; Talmadge 2015). Some scholars have oriented their analysis on organisational loyalty as a factor explaining military involvement in favour of or against a coup (Lee 2005; Nordlinger 1977). In the case of the *Berets Rouges*, this made them the target of the resentment of the militariat.

### *The Mutiny of 30 September 2013*

The events of September 2013 have become the embodiment of the divisive role of the junta, when a faction of supporters of the junta challenged the perks that were not shared equally with them all. In previous chapters, a vital element is the description of how social cohesion on the Kati military base shaped the mobilisation. The September 2013 mutiny exposed fault lines in Kati, but also shows the limitations of an interest-base mobilisation, therefore drying up the support for the CNRDRE.

The mutiny of September 2013 contained a few members, but several lines of mobilisation appeared: families and colleagues of the disappeared were fully mobilised to make sure that the actions of the junta were known, using the same channels of mobilisation as during the 2012 coup. Late one night in October 2013, a few wives and siblings of soldiers, including some members of the armed forces, were gathered in a living room, to which I was invited. While families had the support of civil society groups, they were able to force an investigation, pulling every string in their network. The mobilisation in favour of the junta ended the day that the junta was perceived to act against the interest of the community. The mutiny of September 2013, when some soldiers asked for privileges only afforded to members of the CNRDRE, transformed the perception of the junta as self-serving. When the government launched Operation *Sanya* to arrest the members of the junta, there was no resistance in Kati.

The countercoup and the September 2013 mutiny both revealed important issues about cohesion. First, the junta was unable to rely on institutional cohesion. While able to mobilise in terms of interest-based solidarity, it failed to instrumentalise primary and secondary

cohesion. When it went against the interests of the community of striving, it was not able to use cohesion to defend its cause. Second, while the FAMAs struggled with all aspects of cohesion, the institution succeeded in creating strong organisational cohesion among some parts of the armed forces, even if these were fostered as a way of coup-proofing. However, these were unable to defend the regime.

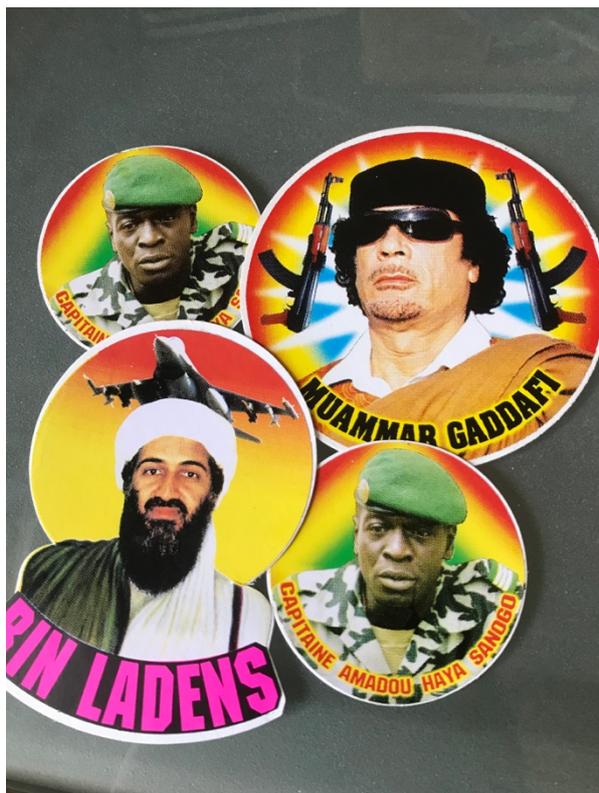
*The military institution: leadership and autonomy*

During a coup, the military cannot be defined as a single actor; there are struggles and dynamics within the armed forces that help explain a coup's outcome (Singh 2014:5). The military has organisational skills that provide them with an advantage for a successful coup, but this does not assist them in gaining political legitimacy (Luttwak 1979:147; Singh 2014), or how to transform mobilisation into durable governance (Perlmutter and Bennett 1980; Resteigne and Soeters 2009; Soeters et al. 2010; Thompson 1976).

As discussed in Chapter 1, the literature struggles to explain how to transform a comparative advantage into the ability to unite the entire armed forces. This part intends to look at the military institution as a whole. The Malian crisis offers two insights on the impact of the military institution on a coup. First, personal leadership, even if relying on shadow networks, remains difficult to impose on the military institution. Second, the military institution faced a considerable amount of autonomy, which is also tied to the postcolonial legacy.

### *The challenged leadership of the junta*

The junta struggled from the beginning with leadership. Chapter 5 explained how the leadership of Sanogo appeared to be accidental. Sanogo's leadership was personal and was not conferred from the institution. From the coup until the transition, soldiers emphasised the social skills of Boyi, rather than his leadership. He became a popular figure for soldiers. On motorcycles, during the coup, soldiers would have stickers showing Sanogo's face, between the faces of Osama Bin Laden and Muammar Gaddafi. This mixed with several idols of popular culture, from Madonna to Ronaldo, which, at the time of fieldwork, were much more prevalent than any military figures.



*Figure 18. The most popular stickers from the 2012 crisis.*

As self-proclaimed acting head of state, Sanogo was consistently addressing the press and the people in the Kati military camp: he talked to everybody and appeared truly committed to

maintaining communication channels. During the grins, the soldiers were quite adamant in explaining how the junta leader disappointed them, denouncing how he betrayed the cause in the name of his personal interests<sup>241</sup>. For soldiers, his personality was the main reason why he was chosen as a leader: he was listening to his peers and was respected as being ‘one of them’.<sup>242</sup> Sanogo, as junta leader, attempted to develop personal leadership rather than nurturing institutional leadership. On March 21<sup>st</sup>, the mobilisation in favour of Sanogo was tied to the need to have someone ‘in control’, something he was unable to do, as the junta was never able to impose its authority. While his leadership could have united the army, he remained a divisive figure.

The main struggle that faced the junta was to retaining popularity among soldiers. The Sanogo effect, which succeeded at the beginning, faded away during the transition. The junta arrested several military officers, but they were released. An officer explained that, ‘The history of the coup is the late-rallying of some more senior military. It was some sort of consensus. We also understood that it was better to join.’<sup>243</sup> An NCO also saw this growing consensus among troops, which brought further disillusionment.

There's no improvement since 2011. Sanogo has brought hope, even for NCOs and Officers. They would find themselves in his discourse. They felt that they were heard. When it was not acted upon, there has been a lot of frustration. [...] He had some popularity [from all ranks] in the beginning.<sup>244</sup>

While the lack of leadership slowly jaded the military, Sanogo's rhetoric remained more and more about ruling the country, and less on combating in the north or curbing corruption.

Sanogo's personal ambitions became obvious a few weeks after the coup. Amadou Sanogo

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<sup>241</sup> Grin 1 and 3.

<sup>242</sup> Grin 2

<sup>243</sup> Officer (EM-OFF-03). Bamako, June 2016

<sup>244</sup> NCO (K-NCO-01). Kati, Avril 2016

attempted to use neo-patrimonial shadow networks to build legitimacy and emphasise his personal leadership (Cheeseman 2017:2), in which he was supported by Moussa Traoré, who was also the father-in-law of the Prime Minister. He also received the blessing of the religious leaders, notably the very influential imam Mahmoud Dicko, who intervened in his favour with the newly-elected president. While concentrating all powers in his Kati headquarters, Sanogo attempted to present himself as a ‘big man’, trying to build a neo-patrimonialist network that would allow him to maintain his position. Sanogo’s leadership relied on ‘his informal abilities to assist people privately’ (Utas 2012:6).



Figure 19. Amadou Haya Sanogo meeting with former president Moussa Traoré.

Source: Mali Actu, <https://maliactu.net/sanogo-et-moussa-traore-deux-soldats-une-strategie/>.

Sanogo attempted to use cultural codes of leadership. During the inauguration of Dioncounda Traoré, he showed up with a *benet*, a wooden stick owned by traditional Bambara leaders, and praying beads. On several occasions, he used local marabouts. He was said to use the

services of Drissa Coulibali, who sacrificed a horse to increase support for the junta. Moussa Traoré was known to use similar tactics, notably by highlighting his ancestor Tiramakan Traoré Traoré (Bayart et al. 2019:32).



*Figure 20. Amadou Haya Sanogo, with a benet in his left hand, and interim President Diounkounda Traoré.*

There were several events and rumours, suggesting Sanogo did not relinquish the idea of returning to power. In June 2012, Sanogo was said to believe that he would regain power at the expiration of the 40-day transition. When he realised that this would not be the case, he is said to have prepared, with the junta, a coup, and recorded a statement at the ORTM.<sup>245</sup> In December 2012, when the junta arrested Cheick Modibo Diarra, rumours were circulating about another coup led by Sanogo that day. In January 2013, rumours spread of Sanogo

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<sup>245</sup> While many people, including an ORTM member of staff, told me about the tape, nobody has ever seen it (an ORTM broadcaster. Bamako, December 2012).

negotiating with Iyad Ag Ghaly to reach an agreement on the ‘division’ of the country. This later rumour differs from earlier rumours, which were about retaining power: this transforms a narrative of the junta as ‘defender of the constitution’ to one of ‘enemies of the Republic’, part of an escalation of rumours emphasising the self-serving nature of Sanogo. Those rumours do not say much about the junta itself, as there is no way to investigate their truthfulness, but they embodied the growing popular disillusionment with Sanogo’s ambitions. The failure of military leadership could not be complemented or made up for by the political negotiation skills of the junta. Sanogo, at several moments, announced that he would negotiate with the Tuareg rebels, while calling at the same time for their annihilation. Lack of leadership on the front has cost Sanogo support from other groups within the armed forces, which accused him of contributing to the defeat.<sup>246</sup>

The literature on neo-patrimonialism emphasises the capacity of the leader to reallocate resources to his network. The inability to redistribute the coup’s benefits became a challenge to the leadership of the junta, and both rumours and facts contributed to their incapacity to transform leadership into an enduring challenge to the state and the military institution. Sanogo was framed as making several personal gains from the coup. Before the coup, he had a tiny home in Kati, and nobody seems to know if he owned a car. In 2013, he had four villas in Baco-Djicoroni and five in Kati, and he was said to have furnished them with items looted from the *Cité Administrative*.<sup>247</sup> It was rumoured at the time that all the customs money was sent directly to Kati. He also had several cars. Some of Sanogo’s enrichment comes from ECOWAS mediators granting him the status of ‘ex-leader’ in June 2012, which came with funded housing, a car and a budget. This was the beginning of several privileges. On

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<sup>246</sup> Grin 4.

<sup>247</sup> Interviews, September 2013.

February 13<sup>th</sup>, Sanogo was named the head of the *Comité militaire de suivi de la réforme des forces de défense et de sécurité*. The decree of his nomination was made public, revealing that he would be paid 3,175 million CFA as monthly salary and able to access several more million CFA in expenses.<sup>248</sup> He was also promoted to General by Dioncounda Traoré, in the last days of his transition on August 14<sup>th</sup> 2013, which also comes with more money and resources. For several soldiers, this was too much: ‘We supported him because he was against corruption and ATT. But he did the same. He enriched himself.’<sup>249</sup> Even before his arrest, rumours of embezzlement were frequent, notably from disenchanted supporters that give him money in the hope of getting something in return (Diallo 2016).

The mutineers of September 30<sup>th</sup>, which included military staff close to the junta, blamed Sanogo’s clique for promotions and privileges, while the army was not offered anything.<sup>250</sup> One of his policies, dubbed the ‘Sanogo bonus’, was adopted by the transitional government and provided an extra 50,000 CFA per month for every soldier fighting on the front, established in September 2012. A soldier during a grin summarised the opinion of his peers:

The putschists had support from multiple people. It is when they got obsessed with power that everything changed. The end of the honeymoon came when Sanogo was named Colonel and got plenty of benefits. Same thing for his friends. For the soldiers, Sanogo did not want a better Malian army. He was just interested in taking the spot of the ones he pushed away.<sup>251</sup>

While Sanogo failed to lead the pro-putschists, he also failed to embody the norms and values of the military institution. His absence at the northern front, and his inability to address military problems in a convincing manner worked against him. In the first weeks of his public

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<sup>248</sup> Décret N°2013043/PRM. 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2013.

<sup>249</sup> Grin #5

<sup>250</sup> Journalistic interviews, November 2013

<sup>251</sup> Grin 2

involvement as the junta leader, he repeated that, if offered the means, the army will regain the north, even proclaiming himself ‘Mali's Charles de Gaulle’.<sup>252</sup> However, Sanogo never joined the front. The closest he came to Sévaré was on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2013, after Serval was launched, and then only for a few hours. The armed forces expected a military leader, which Sanogo could not provide. In an op-ed that was widely shared via social networks in 2013, an officer saying he is called ‘Capitaine Touré’ deplored the fact that ‘while soldiers died in the great desert’ to save Mali, Sanogo remained in the south enriching himself (Galy 2013:110).<sup>253</sup> When Sanogo was arrested for his involvement in the Diago massacre, his supporters did not mobilise.<sup>254</sup> During interviews, several explained that they felt Sanogo failed to be a military leader:

Sanogo has disappointed us. We thought we had a military leader. But he was more interested in having ranks and money than fighting. He never fought in his entire life. [...] He disappointed us when we realised that he was nothing beyond words.<sup>255</sup>

The ideas of the junta successfully mobilised the army during the mutiny, but it was unable to gain the legitimacy and the leadership necessary to influence policies. The accumulation of rumours created a narrative of instability, accentuating the junta’s lack of leadership. The rumours of the double-coup also accentuated a belief in the army that the outcome of the coup was accidental, and that leadership was not a significant element sustaining the process. The transition has crystalised the belief, among several members of the armed forces, that the events are not representative of the military institution, and that the junta does not represent more than itself. An officer defined this moment:

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<sup>252</sup> ‘Notre Pays doit se délivrer’, Le Monde 25th October 2012,

[https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2012/10/25/notre-pays-doit-se-liberer\\_1781012\\_3232.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2012/10/25/notre-pays-doit-se-liberer_1781012_3232.html)

<sup>253</sup> The publication director who published this op-ed was arrested. See details of the controversy:

<https://www.maliweb.net/armee/oeil-du-combattant-le-capitaine-sanogo-fait-encore-parler-de-lui-132617.html>

<sup>254</sup> A diplomat (BKO-DIP-02). Bamako, September 2013.

<sup>255</sup> A soldier (K-SOL-01). Kati, June 2016.

There was the belief that those buffoons, the junta, could not be fully responsible for their actions. Among the army, the narrative of a double coup answered the need of having someone who tries to make sensible actions. Those rumours might be false, but they represent the hope of the army that they are better than that.<sup>256</sup>

The narrative on Sanogo was one of a man that does not control his own fate: he was accidentally thrown into a position of leadership. As a former allied stated, ‘Sanogo was tricked by his destiny. He did not plan. He had good will. But it failed.’<sup>257</sup>

Members of the CNRDRE, who were not involved in the Diago massacre and the September 2013 events, were offered positions by the elected government, buying their compliance. Former transition Cabinet President Moussa Sinko Coulibaly was named as the head of the peacekeeping school. In 2016, Général Abdoulaye Koumaré, former Minister of transport and equipment, was named Spanish ambassador. Meanwhile, several ‘*Généraux de Salon*’ went into hiding and never returned to the armed forces, opening positions for new officers, who have advanced up the ranks through merit rather than collusion with the ATT regime. While the next chapter will discuss the post-transition period in more detail, it is important to state that some people used the coup to propel their careers, and some of Sanogo's allies survived the downfall of the junta.

Sanogo, rather than mobilising within the military institution, and therefore taking control of the chain of command and ensure that the army supported him, chose to aim for the control of civilian institutions. The result was that the junta ignored the military institution, and the military institution remained more or less unchanged.

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<sup>256</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-04). Bamako, April 2016.

<sup>257</sup> Putschist (BKO-JUN-01) .Bamako, April 2016.

### *The autonomy of the military institution*

While the junta attempted to control politics, the state apparatus was left without guidance.

This story was the same across all government departments. In April 2012, I spend an enormous amount of time sitting at the *Cité Administrative* with civil servants, in their looted offices, waiting for orders, without landlines or computers and sometimes without chairs. Offices of the Armed Forces were spared looting, although, they faced the same lack of oversight as civilian departments. While the junta focused on politics, this left the military institution in a position of autonomy. This section intends to focus on this aspect of governance during the coup: how the military institution cope with a junta that provided minimal guidance.

It is important first to assess the countershock of the coup on the military institution. During the 2012 coup, the arrest of several officers and the chaos that followed were a significant episode, in which officers and non-officers clashed, leading to the arrests of several field officers, and temporary chaos in the chain of command. An officer, based in one of the front's headquarters, summarised how the lack of sense of hierarchy had complicated the attempts of the soldiers to manage the conflict during these events:

The Coup was an earthquake. Individual NCOs felt that they had the power to put under arrest officers on duty in the north. Ourselves, here, we did not know what to do. We were too busy dealing with operations on the field to look at what was happening in Bamako [at the political level]. Relationship with Bamako was very complicated. We did not know whom to talk to. We were alone.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> An Officer (BKO-OFF-01). Bamako, February 2016.

In the background of the 2012 coup was a crisis in the governance of security, which ‘failing institutions’ sustained the mobilisation in favour of the junta (Keita 2017). The literature of coups has often emphasised the importance of the features of the military institution in the success of a coup. In the case of Mali, the military institution had autonomy: while the junta struggled for power, the military institution was forced to take important decisions due to this lack of oversight. During the coup, therefore, captains and lieutenants told themselves they had power. They imprisoned generals commanding the front. Men able to command a single section were then responsible for entire sections; lieutenants proclaimed themselves commanders of sections, regiments and battalions. There was an indiscriminate arrest of senior officers, while soldiers saw lieutenants and captains as saviours. An officer working at the *État-Major* explains how the situation completely undermined operations of the army chief of staff, and eventually destroyed the chain-of-command:

Our ego was touched. [The NCOs that seized power] withdrew my means to act on the front. A young NCO came to me to discuss it. He told me that he could ask Sanogo to receive me. I answered ‘I don't move for a Captain. He's the one who should come to me.’ If they respected us, the front would have remained!<sup>259</sup>

An NCO, posted in the front, shared a similar feeling. While he refused to say whether he was involved in arresting his superiors, he also highlights that there was substantial discomfort about rank that went beyond personal offices:

We put Colonel X. under arrest. Then, we realised that we needed directions from Bamako. But nothing was coming from Bamako. We could not do anything. In fact, we had no clue what to do, whom to talk to. Some of the guys never figured out before that moment what was the role of an officer. After 24h, we liberated the Colonel.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-08) Bamako, October 2016.

<sup>260</sup> NCO (BKO-NCO-01). Bamako, April 2016

The CNRDRE chose the offices of Kati's *Région Militaire* as their headquarters. For the junta, to make their office in Kati, about 20 kilometres from the government institutions, is a statement in itself: it wanted to be close to its supporters, therefore choosing isolation among friends rather than trying to break into the power centres in Bamako, as in the 1968 and 1991 coups. While the junta was struggling for control over the government, the military institution gained a relative autonomy from the government. When all focus was about the political game, the institution itself demonstrated resilience. The junta made several changes in the hierarchy to ensure the subservience of the military institution. Sanogo named officers that would favour him, as a way to gain legitimacy within ranks. Colonel-Major Yamoussa Camara was nominated as general secretary of the Ministry of Defence, Colonel Mathieu Dahirou Dembelé as army chief of staff, Colonel Ibrahim Fané as land force chief of staff, Colonel Moussa Sinko Coulibaly as the President Chief of Staff, and Colonel Sidi Alhassane Touré as the head of the secret services (*Sécurité d'État*). Those nominations are the first inclusion of higher officers in the coup: they all have strong credentials for these jobs and good understanding of the military institutions. However, these nominations came at a moment when the crisis was a challenge to leadership.<sup>261</sup> Their influence, while the junta was in power, was minimal, as the rebels in the north seized the initiative, and took advantage of the unclear leadership and chain of command.

Beyond nominations at higher levels, the junta's attempts to modify the hierarchy were detrimental to stability and cohesion. Further, the return of soldiers from the front challenged the junta's claims of being defenders of military glory. An NCO, who did not support the coup, framed the situation in those terms:

- During the coup, the military has come to realise that there is a need for a military solution and that nobody was able to manage it.[...]

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<sup>261</sup> Putschist. (BKO-OFF-02) Bamako, June 2016

They understood that politicians would not be able to solve the crisis. Some would support a coup. Others would just focus on their job.  
- *And then?*  
- They all went back to work.<sup>262</sup>

The junta was unable to achieve an ‘institution redesign’ that would provide an enduring legacy to the coup (Perlmutter and Bennett 1980:118). Once the shock of the collapse was absorbed, the military institution regained a semblance of order and operated with relative autonomy from the junta's leadership. There were, in 2012, six military regions.<sup>263</sup> During the transition, the first (Gao) and the fifth (Timbuktu) were inoperable; the majority of soldiers from those regions either deserted, were killed or returned to Kati (small minorities remained on the field and fought to the end). The junta focused on the Bamako region, thus managing the third military region, based in Kati, and trying to seize control of the *État-Major* in Bamako. This led to three regions operating with minimum orders from the hierarchy.

The 4th *Région*, Kayes, was ignored, as no particular security challenges arose in that area. Even during the mutiny-turned-coup, military from the region remained uninvolved.<sup>264</sup> When the *Berets Rouges* were disbanded, some members were reassigned to this region, knowing that they would be out of reach of the junta.<sup>265</sup> While there were tensions about resources, notably payments for soldiers, the integration of some disbanded *Berets Rouges* remained significantly free of tension, as soldiers from the area did not feel threatened by their new colleagues.<sup>266</sup> Soldiers in Kayes were more positive about their postings, and therefore had less connection with Kati and Bamako politics than their peers.<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> NCO (BKO-NCO-01). Bamako, April 2016.

<sup>263</sup> IBK announced the creation of new military regions in March 2018: Kidal (7<sup>th</sup>) and Sikasso (8<sup>th</sup>).

<sup>264</sup> ‘While the North is in turmoil, the South held its breath’, IRIN, 9 April 2012.

<sup>265</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-10). Bamako, October 2016.

<sup>266</sup> Interview with *Berets Rouges*. Grin 5

<sup>267</sup> Journalistic Interview. Officer from Kayes. March 2012.

The 2nd *Région* (Ségou) and the 6th (Sévaré) were responsible for defending the front. Before the coup, on the front, the General Kalifa Keita had been made chief of operations, and was arrested by the junta on March 22<sup>nd</sup> in Gao. The Army Chief of Staff, General Gabriel Poudiougou, who had been away from operation centres since January 31<sup>st</sup>, left operations to his subalterns. Communications were difficult with Bamako, and there are several accounts that the contact was even harder with field operations, with some companies forced to communicate through Morse code. Most operational decisions were taken by Colonel Major El Hadj Gamou and Mohamed Ould Meydou, which were close allies of ATT and former rebels integrated in the 1990s, resented by several soldiers. The role of Gamou was controversial: while fighting in Kidal, Gamou announced on March 31<sup>st</sup> that he and the 504 soldiers he was commanding had defected to the enemy. A few days later, Colonel Major Gamou was in Niger with his troops and announced that this was a stunt to save the life of his soldiers. Gamou later created his own militia, the GATIA, while still being officially a member of the FAMas. During this episode, Gamou was fighting alongside the troops he commanded: his leadership was personal, and allegiance arose from this very intimate connection. While answering orders, Gamou crafted a space for his own leadership. Gamou is a former commander of the 1990s rebellion who joined the Malian Armed forces in 1996. Most of the soldiers he was commanding were Tamasheq, like him; 300 Tamasheqs and 204 Southerners fled with him in Niger.<sup>268</sup> Gamou pursued a policy that grew during the 1990s and the 2000s, in which Bamako fostered the creation of militias to contain the Tuareg rebellion (Boisvert 2015; Raleigh and Dowd 2013).

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<sup>268</sup> Jeune Afrique, 'Comment Gamou a échappé au MNLA', 11 April 2012, <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/176577/politique/mali-comment-ag-gamou-a-chapp-au-mnla-et-ansar-eddine/>

General-Major Gamou's behaviour was spectacular, but not isolated. While de facto leaders of Bamako and Kati entangled themselves in politics, strong-willed officers assumed responsibility for the chain of command. In Sévaré, General Didier Dakouo took control of what had become the frontline following the ceding of the defence line to jihadist groups. Similarly, in Markala and Ségou, General Takni Ag Intikane reinforced the defence line in the north, and undertook training with willing staff.<sup>269</sup> In these two regions, military operations multiplied, while the junta did not communicate or send emissaries. Elite battalions were dispatched in the area and conducted operations, including several that were criticized for their aggression and brutal repression of civilians, with total autonomy from the chain of command.<sup>270</sup> Leadership at the time was limited to the *Région militaire*, and orders were, with difficulty, coming from Bamako.<sup>271</sup> At the same time, several members of the armed forces took the initiative to provide military training to militias in the Sévaré region, actively involved in shaping a local security governance strategy (Boisvert 2015). These episodes highlight the struggle between the core and the periphery. While the core struggled with politics, the periphery adapted to the field, pursuing the autonomy developed over the years, using their own networks (Bøås 2012; Desgrais et al. 2018; Raineri and Strazzari 2015). Again, this pursued personal leadership that interfered with the chain of command. The attempts of lieutenants to proclaim themselves section, regiment or battalion commandants during the coup were short-lived, as the officers they arrested were later released.

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<sup>269</sup> Visit to Markala, 7 December 2012.

<sup>270</sup> Human Rights Watch has documented events in which soldiers, notably of the DAMI, a US-trained special unit, tortured or killed civilians on the front line. See (Human Rights Watch 2012)

<sup>271</sup> A member of a special unit. Sévaré, 9 December 2012

Meanwhile, the military institution in the core pursued its agenda without guidance or governance actors. In the *État-Major*, despite a new chief of staff, most of the personnel pursued their work in disregard of the political chaos, with no orders or clear orientation emerging from the junta or the interim government.<sup>272</sup> An officer responsible for assignments explained that his daily tasks did not change:

Even before the crisis, we were understaffed. If there were no decisions being taken, we simply had to make effective the existing decisions. It was a very productive time for me: nothing new happened.<sup>273</sup>

An NCO attached to the *État-Major* in 2012-2013 explained that, for him, even if there was plenty to keep him busy, the whole *État-Major* absorbed the lack of leadership created by the coup and the transition, and this became an opportunity for junior officers to show initiative.

The [*État-Major* of the Malian army] remained in a total lethargy, bridled by fear and ridicule. It was about to implode, and it kept being that way in 2013. There was a lot of internal frictions, nonsensical internal fighting, incomprehensible brotherly conflicts, a total lack of trust and leadership. [...] Even the most decided leader would have to lead in a void. But people were doing whatever they could do. At the end, we could operate without much oversight.<sup>274</sup>

Another NCO explained more concretely that some officers were absent during the coup at the *État-Major* and in Kati. Orders were still leaving the *État-Major* from officers during the coup, but their reception depended on who was at the other end, highlighting the importance of shadow networks and personal leadership.<sup>275</sup> For several, the re-establishment of constitutional order returned order to the ranks, even if there remained ‘hiccups’ and issues with discipline.<sup>276</sup> Another NCO summarised the situation:

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<sup>272</sup> Officers (EM-OFF-01 and EM-OFF-02). Bamako, April and June 2016

<sup>273</sup> Officer (EM-OFF-02). Bamako, June 2016.

<sup>274</sup> NCO (EM-NCO-01). Bamako, June 2016.

<sup>275</sup> NCO (EM-NCO-02). Bamako, October 2016.

<sup>276</sup> Officer (EM-OFF-02). Bamako, June 2016.

It was not the usual logic of the army; it became a logic of resistance [...] where decisions were taken and imposed by whoever would take responsibility, and not following ranks and discipline.<sup>277</sup>

For him, at the *État-Major*, just like on the field, individuals took responsibility and assumed functions: orders that were perceived as incompatible with the military ethos by new leaders, or that were deemed incompetent, were corrected by more qualified subalterns from the *État-Major*. An officer at the front explained it as follows:

We did what we had to do. The orders were clear: protect the country. Communications were complicated, but the orders were applied. While there are none, we keep doing the same. This is how it works in the army.<sup>278</sup>

This officer describes the ‘parallel cognitive convention’ exerted by members of an institution. In the process, individuals were ‘thinking within and on behalf of institutions’ when the institution did not receive guidance from the government (Douglas 1986:224). In the *État-Major*, soldiers, officers and NCOs acted in the name of the institution while guidance was lacking from the hierarchy.

In sum, the junta was a temporary state that did not alter significantly the structure of the military institution, which was able to function despite the absence of oversight. Decision-making in the *État-Major* became vulnerable to the junta and political interference. An officer at the *État-Major* during the coup describes the events:

The *État-Major* became autonomous from the junta. The junta focused on taking control of the politics, which of course influenced the *État-Major*. We were not comfortable. But we retook control. [...] Especially when news came from the front [and no orders were coming from the junta]. We had the impression that the junta was overwhelmed, and that it could not face the strategic aspects of the crisis.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> NCO (EM-NCO-02). Bamako, October 2016

<sup>278</sup> Phone interview with an officer, 13 September 2012.

<sup>279</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-04). Bamako, Avril 2016.

Another officer also highlighted the isolation of the *État-Major*, and how the arrest of officers, at the beginning of the coup, created tension between the *État-Major* and the Kati-based junta:

Many officers were forbidden to go to Kati. Me, they let me pass. Like a good military [soldier], I was expecting guidance. It never came. There was nothing to take from them [...] I saw that the junta was mostly some youth lacking experience. I decided to stick to my vision of military professionalism. Sanogo did not know what to do with the north.<sup>280</sup>

Discussions with the several military personnel attached to the *État-Major* highlighted the lack of political oversight from the junta and the transitional government, while discussing how the chain of command adapted to the circumstances. Throughout, the junta's lack of strategic command and technical knowledge impeded the interim government's capacity to offer leadership in terms of security. 'The putschists have made us lose a lot of time. During the ECOWAS negotiations [for a regional mission in the north], they wanted to put themselves forward, not the security of the country', explained an officer during the French intervention.<sup>281</sup> This feeling was shared during the ECOWAS meetings in preparation for the operations that were never launched, as emissaries dumbfounded their military allies with their lack of preparation, since military diplomacy was left entirely to the junta.<sup>282</sup> The French-led intervention strengthened the role of the *État-Major*, as well as military professionalism, as operational contingences necessitated expertise that only the *État-Major* could provide. This will be discussed more precisely in the next chapter.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the Kati military base is a social space, which has allowed the soldiers there to develop strong peer cohesion, and where soldiers are socialised. The junta

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<sup>280</sup> Officer (K-OFF-01), Kati, June 2016.

<sup>281</sup> Officer. February 2012.

<sup>282</sup> Interviews during the Dakar and Abidjan summits.

attempted to make it a political space by making it a centre of decision-making, while the military base has always been kilometres away from the seat of government. This attempt to move the centre of power was powerfully symbolic. It was possible, for few weeks, to make Kati a centre of power where political discussions were happening, but the junta failed to seize control of state institutions, even those they belonged to. The junta failed to influence neo-patrimonialist networks that sustained both the core and the periphery, and their respective differences: offering the space for the military institution to operate through its own rules and standards, and allowing the front to continue to be ruled through the personal networks controlling the periphery. The military junta made no mark on either.

### 6.3. Conclusion

Chapter 5 was concerned with the mechanisms leading to the mutiny-turned-coup, focussing on mobilisation within the Kati military base. This chapter analysed the mechanisms that worked against the junta, and that exposed the resilience of the military institution. When I first returned to Kati in 2013, a soldier told me, ‘Sanogo did not seize power; he picked it up. Along [the way], he gave us a bit of pride.’ The junta succeeded in bringing attention to the harshness of the militariat’s conditions. For the soldiers, the coup brought important improvements, notably the Sanogo bonus.

Soldiers were loyal to the junta during the first weeks. The countercoup is a noteworthy episode where soldiers of Kati mobilised to protect what they felt, at the time, was a challenge to the interests defended by the junta. Their commitment was more than tacit support, as there were several violent clashes in the city, although when the September 2013 mutiny was initiated, this remained a contained conflict between two factions, without mobilising the entire Kati military base. At that time, soldiers felt compelled to remain neutral as many felt betrayed by the junta. The leadership of the junta was rebuked once supporters realised that they were focusing on their own privileges, rather a trickle-down effect to all soldiers. While several officers welcomed the junta as a shake-up against corruption, they were the first to dissociate themselves, understanding that Sanogo and his friends will not end corruption and nepotism. The 2013 mutiny was an opportunity for bystanders to short-circuit the members of the junta that refused to submit to the military institution.

The concept of a militariat as a community sharing an interest sustained the mobilisation, but this interest was not a significant factor in turning a mobilisation into an enduring

transformation of the military institution or of state governance. During the crisis, once the initial shock passed, the military institution demonstrated resilience, acting in chaotic, although autonomous, ways. At the base of this were members of the armed forces who decided to act in the name of the institution. Common interests were enough to create mobilisation, but this did not translate into a governance programme. While the junta attempted to rule by weaponising conspiracy theories in way to short-circuit its enemies, this did not sustain its legitimacy. This agrees with research on regime changes from comparative politics on regime change, which sees the importance of the elite's defection- the lame-duck syndrome- as a significant factor of success for revolutions, rather than the only result of mobilisation of interests against incumbents (Bunce 1999; Hale 2005).

Further, this chapter highlighted the complexity of decision-making in the military institution, an element that both coup theories and postcolonial theories have often oversimplified, as belief in the discipline and cohesion in the institution has often been seen as a unifying factor. In the Malian case, decisions were taken every day by members of the armed forces, who believed they were acting in the name of the institution, with personal leadership often overtaking institutional leadership.

This chapter has presented the story of 2012 coup as one of failures attributable to the junta: failure to rally factions, failure to gain political traction, failure to garner popular support, and failure to transform an interest-base mobilisation into a legacy. The next chapter intends to discuss more precisely the military institution after the coup.

## Chapter 7: The Emperor's new clothes. The post-crisis military institution

From 2012 onwards, there was constant white noise emerging from Kati; when the junta disappeared from headlines, the daily frustrations of the militariat remained audible. With the penetration of smartphones among the military, what used to be murmurs have been transformed into a trail on social media, with multiple videos and social media postings being shared during fieldwork, without any consequences. On January 2018, one of those videos went viral. The discourse of Sergeant Oumar Keita in this video became the first viral display of digital anger from a soldier, forcing the FAMAs to react.<sup>283</sup> The NCO denounces the corruption and the lack of resources for the FAMAs, as well as Sanogo's harsh conditions of detention.



Figure 21. Still of Sergeant Oumar Keita's video.

There was nothing in the tone or content that I have not heard before in a *grin*; soldiers have always expressed their frustrations to me quite frankly and did not seem to care about

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<sup>283</sup> Available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x\\_R6vZmyTPw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_R6vZmyTPw)

possible retribution from the hierarchy. What has changed is the reaction of the military institution. Sergeant Oumar Keita was arrested on January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018, and later punished for this video. This was the first case of military sanctions for a post on social media and became one of the most visible stories of the institution trying to control disgruntled soldiers. While soldiers continued to feel resentment and frustration after the end of the transition, they have not challenged the military hierarchy nor the civilian government, even though the post-transition era exacted a much more significant death toll on soldiers. Increasingly sophisticated terrorist attacks multiplied as soon as the armed forces were redeployed beyond Sévaré. Meanwhile, in the centre of the country, local clashes became a security conundrum, with military and civilian casualties quickly increasing. There were many reasons for the militariat to be angry.

Historically, a post-coup civilian government remains sceptical of armed forces and attempts to strike a balance between coup-proofing and security. In the case of Mali, significant security challenges forced the government to focus on defence, therefore allowing a major re-allocation of resources to the armed forces, changing the relationship between the government and the military institution. This chapter discusses the challenge of civil-military relations, as well as reforming the armed forces against the resistance of the postcolonial military institution. First, I present a chronology of the events following the transition, with a focus on soldiers. Second, as in previous chapters, I discuss civil-military relations, primary and secondary cohesion and the military institution. This thesis does not intend to discuss the details of a security environment that has faced numerous drastic changes since the 2015 Algiers Accords were signed. Similarly, this dissertation neither discusses alliance-shifting among armed groups nor the fragmentation of the conflict. It focuses on the journey of the soldiers and the military institution, rather than on the multiple actors of the conflict and their

relative force. It also addresses a simple question: what happens to the militariat as a community of interest when demobilisation is confirmed?

## 7.1. Chronology the history of the ‘rise in power’ (*montée en puissance*)

In the two previous chapters, the chronology focused on the militariat, and how they were able to influence events. From 2013 to 2017, the dynamics changed dramatically: the armed forces remained secluded in Kati, while outside forces took control of the agenda. While the FAMas were redeployed beyond the Sévaré line, this remained limited and was fiercely resisted by a growing insurgency, both in the north and the centre of Mali.

Operation Serval offered an opportunity for quick successes in the north. While Malian soldiers were involved in the operations, sometimes being very close to the frontline, their presence beyond Sévaré was minimal. The elections offered a political mandate to negotiate a truce, while the status of Kidal remained uncertain. After refusing elections, the MNLA finally accepted these, on the condition that they were not secured by governmental forces, while tensions with other armed groups emerged. Opération Barkhane was launched on August 2014, bringing together Opération Serval and Opération Épervier, which was launched in 1986 in Chad, creating a pan-Sahelian operation under the same command, and focusing only on counterterrorism and regional cooperation (Griffin 2016; Wing 2016). The new mission realigned the mission on counter-insurgency, as the MINUSMA replaced the French stabilisation mission in the north, but did not have the capacity to fight insurgent groups (Karlsrud 2017). This offered the basic arrangement to secure the north, until full deployment of the FAMas.

The FAMas slowly gained confidence and increased involvement in the North. On 4<sup>th</sup> June 2013, the Malian armed forces launched an attack against MNLA-controlled Anefis but did not pursue this as far as Kidal, which was allegedly its main target. This paved the way for

the Accord de Ouagadougou, signed on 18 June 2013 between the government and representatives of the MNLA and the HCUA. The agreements installed a ceasefire between the two sides, paving the way for elections and further negotiations. At the time, the FAMAs, determined to get revenge, made several attempts to break the stalemate, through skirmishes with armed groups, and with the increasing collaboration of local pro-government militias.

This violence broke out on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2014, when Prime Minister Moussa Mara made a controversial visit to Kidal. The Prime Minister intended to make the first visit by an official in the region since the 2012 crisis. Protests erupted in Kidal, but this did not curb Mara's willingness, sending extra military staff to secure the area. Poor planning of the visit led to violent combat between rebel groups and the FAMAs.<sup>284</sup> On 18<sup>th</sup> May, the Prime Minister announced that the 'Republic of Mali is now in war'.<sup>285</sup> This led to a humiliating defeat: 58 deaths, 48 injured and 51 prisoners on the army side, while the armed groups had five deaths and four injuries. The FAMAs were forced to abandon Kidal; only a small contingent of a dozen soldiers was readmitted in May 2018.

Mara was forced to resign after these events. The Prime Minister wanted to make a political point, being over-confident over the capacities of the FAMAs, after less than a year of foreign training.<sup>286</sup> For the armed forces, this was an essential episode of increasing political pressure to perform. On the military side, they showed the ability to sustain fire but still faced a defeat. The Algiers Agreements were signed in a context of tension, first on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015 between the government and pro-government armed groups, and then on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2015 with the

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<sup>284</sup> Retour sur une visite mouvementée, RFI, 21 May 2014, <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20140521-mali-moussa-mara-kidal-retour-une-visite-mouvementee>.

<sup>285</sup> 'Les autorités maliennes déclarent être 'en guerre' ' RFI, 18 May 2014, <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20140518-mali-affrontements-kidal-guerre-mnla-maa-morts-moussa-mara>.

<sup>286</sup> Interview with a politician (BKO-POL-03). Bamako, February 2016.

MNLA, the HCUA and a new movement, the MAA. The inability of the armed forces to change the balance of forces weakened the governmental party during the process, while several supporters joined pro-government militias (Baldaro 2018; Desgrais et al. 2018). After reaching a political agreement, the security situation deteriorated quickly, with an increasing number of attacks targeting the few Malian Armed Forces deployed, as well as their international allies. Neighbours also started to suffer. The 2015 coup in Burkina Faso triggered a succession of events that led to a complete destabilisation of the country, with an increasing number of terrorist attacks and growing inter-community violence. The Western part of Niger has also faced a significant increase in tensions since 2017. Meanwhile, attacks in Grand-Bassam (Côte d'Ivoire) and increasing reports of jihadist activities over West Africa finally proved that the Malian problem is regional.

In Mali, progress remained on paper, and security challenges became insurmountable for the FAMAs. During the battle of Kidal, the FAMAs were unable to seize the initiative.<sup>287</sup> Soon, a pattern emerged from the battlefield with the FAMAs being attacked from their weak positions in the north. On 5<sup>th</sup> January 2015, a military posting in Nampala was attacked by Islamist groups, killing eleven soldiers and injuring nine. Islamists opened fire on the soldiers, who fled and abandoned their weapons without fighting. This was the first lethal attack of many, setting a pattern. On 19<sup>th</sup> July 2016, a second attack against the same killed 17 soldiers, injured 35 and 6 soldiers were captured (they remain in the hands of the Islamists at the time of writing). Insurgents followed the same *modus operandi* of the year before, although with a broader number of fighters, including several deserters from 2011. The reaction of soldiers remained similar: after a first attempt to resist, they abandon their

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<sup>287</sup> Military Analyst (PAR-EX-01). Paris, Mars 2017.

weapons and fled.<sup>288</sup> In the meantime, terrorist attacks also hit southern Mali, changing the dynamics of far-away violence. A first attack hit *La Terrasse*, a popular bar among expatriates, on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2015, killing five people and injuring nine. On 7<sup>th</sup> August, an attack on a hotel in Sevaré killed five FAMAs, and six MINUSMA contractors. On November 2015, an attack on the Hotel Radisson Blu resulted in 22 deaths and 10 casualties on 20 November 2015. The year I conducted fieldwork, 2016, was a pivotal moment. That year, 157 military personnel were killed in combat. In 2017, it reached 339. At the same time, civilians became the targets of terrorist attacks, especially in the centre where a new focus of conflict was emerging, mixing local grievances and destabilisation (Lecocq and Klute 2019; Sangaré 2016). While the conflict remained limited during fieldwork, this became a new focus of conflict in 2017.

During my fieldwork in 2016, about a third of the FAMAs were deployed; in 2019 the number reached ‘about 50%’.<sup>289</sup> While soldiers gained experience through training, the number of casualties exploded as their redeployment faced daily attacks, which in 2016 were still limited. Several deaths occurred as a results of friendly fire and accidents. While resentment, like that expressed by Sergeant Oumar Keita, remained vivid among the armed forces, there was no mobilisation similar to 2012.

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<sup>288</sup> Military Advisor (BKO-POL-01). Bamako, October 2016.

<sup>289</sup> NCO (EM-NCO-01). Bamako, June 2016.

## **7.2. Persistence and changes during uncertain times.**

The previous section has presented, in comparison to previous chapters, the armed forces as shaped by events, providing a different account than previous chapters where the militariat was a major player. This section and its three different parts discuss the new relationship between the soldiers and the military institution once the coup was over. It presents the struggle of the military institution, and how, after the 2012 crisis, it was able to reassert itself in such a way that the militariat was muted, while older practices adapted to the newer context. This section is divided into three parts, following the themes of the previous chapters. The first part studies civil-military relations, the second focuses on cohesion and the last part discusses the military institution in itself.

## *Civil-military relations and the militariat*

Civil-military relations faced important improvements once the coup was resolved. This part is devoted to explaining how interior and foreign pressure changed the relationship, as well as how the militariat reacted to the new relationships, being able to use other channels to express their discontent.



*Figure 2. Pictures of the 2014 Army day celebrations.*

To begin, it is important to acknowledge the deepening of civil-military relations. The 2014 celebrations of army day, a national holiday celebrated annually on January 20<sup>th</sup>, was the first with IBK on the podium for the review of troops. During the event, a French battalion was discreetly parading, while Damien Boiteux, the first French soldier to fall in the field, was praised as a symbol of the sacrifice made by the international community for Mali. A small crowd gathered on the *Avenue de la République* to watch the parade. The parade was not without glitches: Malian soldiers did not walk in step; the few displays of weapons were poorly coordinated; students from the Prytanée filled holes in the parade; and, most importantly, there was very little security surrounding the events. Nevertheless, there was a sense of pride exuding from members of the armed forces.



Figure 22. President Keita review troops during the 2014 Army days.

*Le Clairon*, a promotional magazine edited by the armed forces, described the parade as a ‘sign of the newfound strength and cohesion’. Within the magazine, the communication department used multiple times the phrase ‘rise in strength’ (*montée en puissance*), abandoning the idea that it was there in the first place. This expression became standard in all

future communications, becoming a quasi-official slogan, officially acknowledging now that something was wrong before 2012.



Figure 23. The special edition of *Le Clairon*, for the 2014 Army Day celebrations.

Previous Army Days were public holidays that did not attract much public attention. The 2014 celebrations were a turning point in civil-military relations, as a crucial moment of the ceremony was about celebrating the fallen. These celebrations gained a new significance, highlighting a new message: *soldiers can die defending the country*. After many years of being contained through coup-proofing, the armed forces became one of the most significant

institutions of the Malian state. From independence, political regimes in Mali struggled to find a security role for the military, as discussed in Chapters 3 & 4, while succeeding governments oriented security governance towards threats to the regime rather than the security of the state. After 1991, the democratic government focused on containing the armed forces through coup-proofing, ignoring emerging security threats to the Malian state. The 2012 crisis forced the authorities to take security governance seriously. Besides, security threats were always perceived as coming from the periphery, but terrorist attacks in the capital and violence in the centre changed this.

It appeared that the structures of civilian control were re-established. The election of a government allowed it to take several decisions on the standstill since the coup, most notably in terms of defence. IBK named a former state security director and well-respected ex-minister, Soumeylou Boubeye Maiga, as minister of defence. This changed a trend set by Alpha Oumar Konaré and followed by ATT, who had mostly given this role to junior and unexperienced ministers. The president multiplied discourse on defence and visited armed bases on several occasions. The main policy statement over the military came with the *Loi d'orientation et de programmation militaire* (LOPM), which was adopted on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2015. While providing general orientation for the army for the next five years, it announced that 10,000 new personnel would be recruited, while pre-2012 recruitment drives remained far below 1,000 recruits.<sup>290</sup> The government added 1,230 billion CFA (about 1.9 billion euros and around 20% of the national budget for defence) between 2015-2019 to the military budget for recruitment and new resources. The army also spent 20 billion CFA on reinforced vehicles, trucks, and six super Puma helicopters. Six Super Tucano A-29 aeroplanes were ordered in 2016.

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<sup>290</sup> Loi d'orientation et de programmation militaire (LOPM), 22 February 2015



Figure 24. Civilians during the 2014 Army Day parade.

While the junta members were awaiting trial in gaol, the government delivered on their main corporatist demands: better resources for soldiers, more weapons to fight in the north, and increased support for families. Increasing spending on the military had a direct effect on soldiers. The ‘Sanogo bonus’, worth 50.000 CFA per month for per soldiers deployed to the front, was made permanent. All soldiers also saw their basic salary increased from 55,000 CFA to 75,000-100,000 CFA. They gained access to an accommodation bonus and free healthcare for the entire family in 2016.<sup>291</sup> Upper ranks also gained benefits and privileges. Several public housing programs were launched in Kati, as well as welfare programs. Widows and orphans received considerable resources as the military social services initiated new programs. The army received more funding and resources for fighting. While in 2012 it was common for soldiers to wear ragged uniforms and old boots, soldiers received several new uniforms and pairs of boots per year, starting in late 2013. During all *grins*, soldier expressed their satisfaction with these improvements.

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<sup>291</sup> Grin 1 and 2.

As resources allocated to the armed forces increased, as well as their overall importance in the national debate, defence became a source of public scrutiny. The increasing importance of security led to the revival of the Defence and Security Committee in the National Assembly. The Committee existed before the 2012 crisis but did not meet frequently. IBK's son, Karim Keita, was named president of the Committee in 2014. Officially, it has oversight of budget allocation and increases democratic control of the military.<sup>292</sup> For the sake of civilian control of the military, having a legislative committee is, in theory, a desirable way to 'devote more attention to national security matters' and to increase oversight and debates about all aspects of military life (Houngnikpo 2012). The commission was soon criticised for being used to keep the National Assembly under control and to act as a top-down organisation responsible for advertising the government's actions.<sup>293</sup> The nomination of Karim Keita undermined the credibility of the commission; accusations of embezzlement with state contracts and his inexperience with security issues were sources of complaint.<sup>294</sup> The creation of the Defence Commission is one of many examples of clientelist networks trying to maintain their control over the armed forces. From 1991 to 2012, being the minister of defence was a junior portfolio, as budget were small, and it was not an 'appealing' position.<sup>295</sup> In 2010, the military budget was 146.8 million USD (1.9% of the GDP). In 2017, this was 458.7 million USD (3% of the GDP, but about 22% of the national budget) (SIPRI 2019).

The national emergency and the significant increase in the budget brought the position into the spotlight, and actions of the Minister were scrutinised by the media. From September 2013 to July 2019, six different ministers of defence were nominated. Soumeylou Boubeye

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<sup>292</sup> Parliamentarian (BKO-PAR-01). Bamako, June 2016.

<sup>293</sup> Opposition leader (BKO-PAR-02). Bamako, October 2016.

<sup>294</sup> Diplomat (BKO-DIP-01). Bamako, October 2016

<sup>295</sup> Politician (BKO-CIV-03). Bamako, February 2016.

Maiga resigned on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2014 following the battle of Kidal, officially refusing to be blamed for the operation.<sup>296</sup> He also faced allegations of overbilling and fictitious markets, as documented by the auditor general. He was named General Secretary of the President, with minister's rank, in August 2016, and later Prime Minister, confirming that his sacking was more an attempt at political appeasement during a period of tension than a loss of confidence. He was then replaced by retired Colonel-Major Ba N'Dao, a military man with no political connections. N'Dao was allegedly sacked for resisting allies of the president's coterie, and replaced by Tieman Hubert Coulibaly, who was Minister of Foreign Affairs in the first IBK government in 2013. He was reassigned to the ministry of administration on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, following attacks on the FAMAs in Boni. His follower was Abdalla Idriss Maiga, who was already the minister of decentralisation, and then became Prime Minister in March 2017, without much involvement in the Ministry. He was succeeded by Tiena Coulibaly on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2017. Coulibaly, a former minister that served under IBK as prime minister, made several critiques of nepotism in the existing administration, notably of recruitment procedures, and appeared to be more visible than his predecessor. Finally, former putschist Ibrahim Dahirou Dembelé was named in May 2019. Four of these defence ministers were close allied of IBK for decades. All of them, when they were removed, were offered another job in the government despite allegations of financial misconduct. In the meantime, the government failed to deliver on weapons and ammunitions, and new vehicles broke down when poor quality fuel led to engine failure.<sup>297</sup>

Behind the illusion of civilian control, there is the firm grip of the existing neo-patrimonialist network over security governance, rather than the democratisation: all strategic positions

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<sup>296</sup> 'Un nouveau ministre de la défense a été nommé', AFP, 28 May 2014, [http://www.liberation.fr/planete/2014/05/28/le-ministre-malien-de-la-defense-demissionne\\_1028622](http://www.liberation.fr/planete/2014/05/28/le-ministre-malien-de-la-defense-demissionne_1028622)

<sup>297</sup> Foreign military facilitator (BKO-EX-03). Bamako, October 2013.

were offered to close allies of the president, and the creation of the legislative committee was more to mute debate than stimulate it, while allegations of profiteering were raised against the President's family. The nomination of Dahirou Dembele, who supported the junta and was arrested with Sanogo in 2013, came after all charges against him were abandoned, a symbol of how networks were able to co-opt some of the figures behind the mutiny-turned-coup.

In this context, civil-military relations changed. Historically, security was not a major electoral issue in the south; after 2012, it became one. Therefore, the increasing allocation of resources for the military was of interest to civilians, something that has been ignored before the crisis as donors mostly helped to secure the agenda of the Bamako government (Bergamaschi 2008, 2014). Meanwhile, new resources came from multilateral donors involved in the stabilisation of the country. In many ways, the government pursued its approach of accumulating resources for the core, while leaving the 'ungovernable' periphery to international donors, moving from development aid to defence aid (Mann 2015:247). The process did not re-enforce civil oversight or challenge existing elite networks over resources; rather, in several ways, the process re-enforced the elite that the junta was denouncing in 2012, while the investment in armed forces made any claims against the government baseless, as they could not deliver in terms of security, in a similar pattern as already describing under the ATT regime and its pliability in the face of international donors' agendas (Bergamaschi 2014). For the militariat, this meant more resources dedicated to soldier's interests, but also increasing pressure to comply with the norms of the institution. During *grins*<sup>298</sup> soldiers retained an anti-elite discourse, which was also echoed in Sergeant Keita's video. This was framed by soldiers as a benevolent elite, as soldiers discussed the

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<sup>298</sup> Grins 2 and 3.

improvements in their quality of life. ‘We have now things that nobody offered us before. This is what we were demanding,’ explained a soldier.<sup>299</sup> In their words, the division between the elite and the militariat still existed, but became bearable as the militariat’s interests were taken into account. In comparison to 2012, soldiers now had official channels through which to send a message to the hierarchy, but also increasing support from civilians, as defence became a significant electoral issue, while 68,9% of Malians expressed their trust in the FAMas in 2018 (FES 2018).

### *Reforming cohesion*

In 2012, when the frontline was retreating, few images emerged. While both armed forces and rebels were trying to win the battle of public opinion, it was difficult to see how the FAMas fared through the fog of war. When ATT commissioned a report on the massacre of Aguelhok, the report focused on the enemy, leaving little space to analyse the FAMas’ conduct on the battlefield. This changed with smartphones. A first damaging video shot in September 2012 depicted soldiers training without ammunition, making sounds with their mouths.<sup>300</sup> Online commentators ridiculed this. Later, during the 2013 French-led intervention, the FAMas were scrutinised by international forces and medias, focusing on a narrative of unprofessionalism and unpreparedness, with images leaked through the press.<sup>301</sup> There was an overwhelming consensus that the FAMas needed to improve.

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<sup>299</sup> Grin 2.

<sup>300</sup> Video available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cw\\_fwHTB26U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cw_fwHTB26U)

<sup>301</sup> See ‘The clown army of Mali: Techniques Analyzed’, Funker530, 3 October 2015, <https://www.funker530.com/clown-army-of-mali-techniques-analyzed/>



*Figure 25. Still of a video during a battle in Gao. March 2013..*

The previous part highlighted changing civil-military relations. This part intends to discuss the sociological journey of soldiers, and studies the continuity of old practices, discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, despite attempts to reform primary cohesion. While international donors initiated training programs accentuating tactical units, this part intends to discuss limitations of this approach. This follows a discussion of the challenge of rebuilding an army, and how cohesion remains challenging to achieve on a large scale in a context where civil-military relations remain controlled by an elite (Dietz, Elkin, and Roumani 1991; Enloe 1980; Krebs 2004, 2009, 2015; Simonsen 2007). This pursues a critique of the inability to account for social factors in the relationship among units, including leadership and culture (Käihkö and Haldén 2019; King 2007; Lehrke 2013).



Figure 26. Still of a video during a training. September 2012.

### *Primary cohesion: new routines and reinforced units*

Primary cohesion is a first step in the professionalisation of armed forces, as new routines and new pressure to reinforce units have become important points of reform. The new security imperatives have created new routines, and it is important to understand how the increasing securitisation in Bamako has reinforced primary units.

The first time I went back to Kati, after three years without visiting the base, I observed security upgrades that reinforced the professional limits of the military camp (Hill Thanner and Segal 2007; Lutz 2002, 2005). Around the base were high walls and barbed wire. Entrances were protected with sandbags, and armed sentries stood in active positions with helmets and flak jackets. The emergence of a new security infrastructure has led to a change of routine, starting with my own. At the gate, an officer asked me whom I was coming to meet. He called the officer, asked for my ID, noted the information, and let me in . Meanwhile, every vehicle that entered the facility was carefully searched before entering the

premises. This became a routine as I returned several times. The clerk at the door always asked for my ID, even if he remembered my name. I faced similar processes at all military areas. At the *État-Major*, all motorcycles had to stay outside the compound. Visitors then entered an antechamber where all belongings had to be scanned through in an airport-style x-ray before passing through a metal-detecting portico. Every time the portico rang, a soldier patted the visitor down. Visitors were then oriented to the reception desk and allowed to enter the base only if an appointment was confirmed. In 2012, I had entered the *État-Major* compound several times without speaking to anybody, wandering through buildings unchallenged.

There was a slow increment in defence infrastructure since 2012: first, armed guards in an active position, then the sandbags, following the counter coup. Higher walls were built in 2014 and the x-ray scanner appeared in 2015. While conducting research in 2016, I noticed new, stronger walls being built to reinforce existing ones. Living areas were not as secure: in Kati, they remained accessible to the public without this scrutiny, but high walls separated living quarters from professional areas. In 2016, the securitisation of buildings was not only for military areas: government offices, banks and official buildings had all armed security forces, mostly FAMAs. This state of emergency imposed a new routine on soldiers, who were requested to secure facilities, even in Bamako. In Kati, as well as on other sites, soldiers were assigned fixed positions and had strict rules concerning replacement. They often ate at their position, with the canteen ladies bringing them food. For the soldier, new routines remained tainted with repetition. Once training is completed, the role of the soldier remained to execute several routines within the camp, from performing maintenance to, in most cases, sentry duty, like the ones who recorded me when I entered the compound. Boredom plays a significant role in any military institution (Grossman 1995; Mæland and Brunstad 2009; Soeters 2014).

While in appearance nothing happens, peer bonding is being built while the soldier socialises with peers (King 2007; Mæland and Brunstad 2009; Siebold 2007). The process frustrated me, as in several instances, I observed soldiers exchanging on Whatsapp or playing Candy Crush. In Kati during the *grins*, the soldier complained that they have not learnt anything once they left basic training and that they were left ‘by themselves’.<sup>302</sup> At the same time, they recognised the modification of their routine, and that more concrete and planned tasks needed to be performed before the 2012 crisis. Security imperatives created new professional tasks.

New routines, as well as new physical barriers surrounding professional areas, have not changed the social dynamics of the base. Wives and children were still visiting the professional areas to pursue their business, as the ‘community of striving’, discussed in Chapter 4, remained part of the life on the base, without much concern for new security rules. Wives and widows continued to convey the social demands of soldiers, visiting superiors’ offices or, in some instance, protesting for better treatment. The new physical barriers did not alter the business on the military base, from meal preparation to cell phone credit cards. Prior to 2012, there were no differences between the social cohesion in the base and peer cohesion developed during professional activities. The new routines increased the significance of what is the social space and what is the professional space controlled by the institution (Siebold 2007:287), but new routines increased a sense of shared responsibilities between soldiers, and forced them to clearly delineate what is professional and what is private.

Fostering unit cohesion was the first impact of international training for the FAMAs; building institutional peer cohesion through the creation of units. The primary provider of training has

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<sup>302</sup> Grin 3.

been the European Union through its two training missions: the European Training Mission (EUTM) dedicated to training the FAMAs, while the European Union Capacity Building Mission aims at other security forces, particularly the Gendarmerie. Other institutions have provided training, which has been less comprehensive and more ad-hoc, including the MINUSMA. Barkhane offered a certain form of training through joint deployment with specific units. The EUTM initiated its work in 2013 by offering direct training to soldiers. It initially trained four battalions, the *Groupes tactiques interarmés* (GTIA), on a similar model to that used by America in 2009, but with more exhaustive 15-month training. Four other battalions followed a few months later.

The creation of the GTIAs was a direct attempt to reinforce peer cohesion. The training was tactical and remained focused on reinforcing basic soldiering skills. Training occurred as a unit, and was intended to reinforce unit cohesion through several exercises, including collective kinetic manoeuvres.<sup>303</sup> During training, units lived together and learnt how to perform tactical tasks as a group. After training, units were deployed as such, with only minor reshuffling.<sup>304</sup> This followed a pattern in security-sector reform in which international norms prevailed over local ownership; in this case, this meant that primary cohesion, as central to norms and routines nurturing loyalty and readiness to support other members of the immediate group, was prioritised over other aspects of cohesion (Bøås and Stig 2010; Rees 2002; Siebold 2007:289).

Despite acrimonious debates on a standard model of cohesion, scholars agree on the necessity of task cohesion and primary groups for military performance. It is vital that soldiers know

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<sup>303</sup> Foreign advisors (BKO-EX-01). October 2016

<sup>304</sup> Ibid.

each other if they are to cohere under the pressure of combat; they must be able to trust their colleagues, knowing how they will conduct themselves under fire. (King 2006:495; Siebold 2018:191). While foreign training attempted to solidify these aspects, the armed forces still struggled as an institution to sustain primary cohesion among members. There were substantial efforts to develop primary cohesion, but no initiatives to replicate the GTIA as a more permanent feature of the FAMas training, and no impact on the training of recruits, thus creating a ‘two-speed army’.<sup>305</sup> This left about 11,000 soldiers who were not reorganised or retrained<sup>306</sup> in comparison to about a thousand that were re-organised as specific units.<sup>307</sup> Practices established under the auspices of the EUTM were not adopted by the military institution. In 2016, new recruits faced a disorganised institution on their first days on the base as the armed forces had never greeted so many recruits at the same time. Logistics were a headache, from transportation to housing. Recruits from outside Bamako had to pay for their transport, and several showed up a few days before training, fearing that missing information might ruin their chances. Uniforms, shoes and other equipment were not available in the first days of training.<sup>308</sup> The roughly one thousand recruits accepted in 2016 were not nurtured in unit-focused training, as old practices remain. The international emphasis on unit cohesion was not integrated into army practices, and peer cohesion remained tainted with the randomness of a soldier’s trajectory. In this context, progress in primary cohesion remains limited until a more thorough reform of the military institution is implemented.

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<sup>305</sup> Military Analyst (PAR-EX-01). Paris, March 2017

<sup>306</sup> These include the *Berets Rouges* (35 RCMP), six motorized battalions (21, 22, 41, 61 and 62), two engineers battalions (26 and 34), one artillery battalion (36), and one command and support battalion (31).

<sup>307</sup> Military Analyst (PAR-EX-01). Paris, March 2017.

<sup>308</sup> Interview with international trainers (BKO-EX-01). Bamako, October 2016.

*Secondary cohesion and the legacy of indiscipline.*

When I discussed the new routine with soldiers, beyond being ‘busier’, they talked about being organised and working together.<sup>309</sup> Theory on task cohesion assumes that soldiers develop a strong connection with their peers and leaders, most likely NCOs, through engagement on the field (Siebold 2007). While the armed forces abide by the international agenda of building primary cohesion, they resist the reform of secondary cohesion, which was increasingly part of the discussion with international partners.<sup>310</sup> This section is dedicated to understanding how the military institution resisted reforms related to secondary cohesion and discipline.

During the battle of Kidal, the FAMAs faced a significant setback after launching an ill-prepared but aggressive offensive. Their redeployment beyond the Sévaré line led to multiple attacks. Since the first Nampala attack in January 2015, the Malian armed forces faced multiple defeats in which isolated units were attacked without any support from the hierarchy. The second Nampala attack in 2016 set a new pattern that was replicated in the north, among other places, at Kazay-Kazay on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2016, Boulikessi on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2017, Gourma-Rharous on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2017, Boulikessi and Mondoro on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019 and Indelimane on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019. In all these cases, a static armed force, entrenched in its post, faced increasingly complex attacks. In all cases, the same problems were found: missing or inoperable weapons; significant numbers of soldiers on unofficial leave (which makes authorities unable to account for the number of victims until days later); absence of officers in charge; lack of situational awareness; lack of mobility; and, most importantly, no

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<sup>309</sup> Grin 2.

<sup>310</sup> Interview with international trainers (BKO-EX-01). Bamako, October 2016.

support from the hierarchy at the moment of the attack (reinforcement would take hours or even days in some cases) and thus overstretched troops.<sup>311</sup> The FAMAs made significant tactical gains: they are now aggressive and stand their ground better, but this is not enough while confronted with an enemy that learns and adapts quickly. Meanwhile, in the centre, the FAMAs were accused of human rights violations, revealing several cases where their aggression was unleashed, turning communities against them and fuelling an insurgency.<sup>312</sup> In both cases, tactical gains were not transformed into strategic gains, and the relative ameliorations that were observed in early 2014 vanished.

During an interview, an officer who joined the junta after the coup and had a successful career since, strongly believed that there have been no significant changes after the coup:

The Armed forces have not made a coup. It stayed outside. Only the putschists got involved in the coup. It's a small group. The army has taken note. And then, it went on damage control. It was about managing the situation. But there have not been fundamental changes in how the army proceeds since. *Le vin a été tiré, il faut le boire.*<sup>313</sup>

His sense of order within the institution, which other officers shared with me, was significant in denying that there has been a major shift among the hierarchy following the coup. Another junior officer who was involved with the junta agreed that there had been no major shake-up in the hierarchy and commented that he found it difficult to understand the chain of command: 'The armed forces are rotting. There is no unified army. There is a nod that works. And a lot of free electrons that parasitize the system.'<sup>314</sup> For him, the GTIA, or the activation

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<sup>311</sup> Ibid.

<sup>312</sup> Human Rights Watch, Communiqué, 8 September 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/09/08/mali-unchecked-abuses-military-operations>.

<sup>313</sup> Malian officer (BKO-OFF-02). Bamako, June 2016.

<sup>314</sup> Junior Officer (BKO-OFF-03). Bamako, April 2016.

of some elite groups could not cure an institution lacking the structure to keep the several units together, particularly when this lack of structure was used as a tool by existing shadow networks.

During fieldwork, numerous officers shared criticisms of the lack of initiative to reform the hierarchy. There has been little effort from the army to work on the vertical institution and secondary cohesion. The persistence of old practices is not entirely negative: the re-establishment of the *Berets Rouges* shows that strong organisational cohesion is a significant contributor to military success. The exchange of fire on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2013, discussed in Chapter 5, is unique in the history of the FAMas, as the *Berets Rouges* did not oppose their deployment. A few days later, the first detachment of Red Berets was deployed to Gao. They have remained at the front since 2013. This focus on operational cohesion has contributed to tactical gains, with troops more aggressive and with better situational awareness, without changes at the operational and strategic levels (Tull 2019), although the benefits of such deployment were also limited by the inability to transfer secondary cohesion to other companies. During the battle of Kidal in May 2014, three GTIAs, two *Berets Rouges* battalions (which defended the front line and faced the most casualties) and the Delta forces were there to support the military operation. Despite the political pressure to act (already discussed), the chain of command could not be sustained, as there was a lack of coordination

and communication to back the operations and battalions were unable to work as a unified group.<sup>315</sup>

Old practices of personal leadership prevailed over institutionalised discipline, which sustained secondary cohesion. From 2013-2016, while there have been several serious breaches of discipline, military justice has not put any soldier on trial: a civilian court handled the junta.<sup>316</sup> During this period, soldiers have been sent to prison or sanctioned, notably for abandoning the front or other violations. Even if misconduct was scrutinised, punishment remains a case-by-case process: procedures of discipline were arbitrary, and often only followed through because a powerful individual ensured that it was so.<sup>317</sup> During *grins*, soldiers explained to me several cases of officers who were not afraid to resort to threats and physical violence. Officers know that they would not face sanctions for such behaviour, and that the hierarchy did not properly punish soldiers who refuse to follow orders. Soldiers explained that, in several cases of insubordination, they have seen officers beating a soldier; one officer slapped a soldier on the face for improperly wearing the uniform, another allegedly beat a soldier for saying something perceived as critical.<sup>318</sup> Soldiers talked freely about cases of verbal harassment and physical abuse from superiors, often phrasing them as jokes. This raises a question about the arbitrariness of discipline, again allowing individual leaders to interpret the norms of the institution. Discipline, in the words of the soldiers, remained personalised and arbitrary.

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<sup>315</sup> Military advisor (BKO-POL-01). Bamako, October 2016.

<sup>316</sup> Administrative clerk (K-ADM-01). Kati, February 2016; Foreign Military Advisor (BKO-EX-03). Bamako, October 2016.

<sup>317</sup> Military facilitator (BKO-EX-03). Bamako, October 2016.

<sup>318</sup> Grin 3 and 4.

A soldier from a *grin* sums up the situation like this: ‘The chief is always right’. Many soldiers stated that the number one rule of the Code of Conduct is to follow orders, but the Code, displayed around bases, has no such rule. Soldiers explained that, if they complain to their superiors, especially in cases of misbehaviour, they were more likely to be sanctioned than the person they were denouncing. Discipline, in this context, represents much more the personal application of terror by a superior (a ‘big man’) than a codified rule of law. Michel Galy has described a rare case of public discipline that did not become a mutiny:

Each time that the militaries are demanding for their rights to be respected, they are being qualified as revolutionaries, and often arrested, added Amadou. This gendarme from Markala knows what he talks about; in 1994, he and 800 other students protested in a Malian newspaper that their salary had been stolen by one of their chiefs. In response to that, they were fired. They had to fight for two years to get back their rights and be reintegrated (Galy 2013:101).

This case resonates with the case of Sergent Keita, the Youtuber that faced sanctions for speaking out. Soldiers have internalised the arbitrariness of discipline and tacitly acknowledged that power is personal, and not institutionalised. During discussions with soldiers, nobody shared stories on how to fight for their rights, saying instead ‘this would not change anything’ or ‘nobody cares about us’. For the soldier of Kati, the mobilisation of the ‘community of striving’ remains the most efficient way to carry a demand to the hierarchy, from ensuring steady payments to the inclusion of children in the *Prytanée*. Officials have adopted policies to appease the ‘community of striving’, as wives and widows have three protests during my fieldwork in 2016, even if they were more contained than the 2012 protests.

Soldiers discussed a culture of subordination based on brutal violence and fear of the leader, limiting the likelihood of honest relationships between officers and soldiers. Soldiers feel that

initiative is unwelcome. An officer explained that there is a sense of impunity among members of the armed forces: there are likely to be no harmful consequences for wrongdoing:

In the front, there are no mechanisms to instil discipline. Deserters cannot be judged, as their superior is not among them to note their absence. There is an impunity climate where desertions or failure to comply with the rules are never sanctioned, and, in the few cases, remain judged case by case. Then, this provides an opportunity for the ones that could be sanctioned to use someone they know to ensure that no sanctions will be applied. At the end of the day, it's total impunity.<sup>319</sup>

Sanctions, and the mechanisms inherent to their imposition, are central to military discipline. The logic of punishment and discipline implies the presence of a bureaucracy: a Foucauldian panopticon monitoring soldiers' behaviour (Foucault 1975). The bureaucratic nature of the armed forces has been analysed by several authors, nothing how it can be coercive or enabling, but always highlighting the need for an overseeing body that, beyond the capacity of the bureaucracy to process individual sanctions, can police the overall architecture (Soeters 2018:247; Wilson 1989:163).

In the case of the Malian Armed Forces, the burdensome bureaucracy is essential in counteracting discipline, and integrates practical norms (Bayart et al. 2019; Olivier de Sardan 2015; Olivier de Sardan and Blundo 2007), where practices inherited from the colonial era reproduce the performative aspects while distorting the outcome they were intended to produce. For soldiers, the bureaucracy has been an important factor in ensuring that sanctions were not applied. An officer explained that sanctions often get lost in the bureaucracy. During a grin, soldiers explained that, when an officer sanctioned a subaltern, the most common way to avoid trouble is to ensure that sanctions get 'lost' within the bureaucratic apparatus. As soldiers are often reassigned to new units, the bureaucracy struggles to transmit procedures to

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<sup>319</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-01). Bamako, February 2016.

new leaders, and this can be instrumentalised for the benefit of the sanctioned soldier. ‘For the ones that do not have an auntie to cancel sanctions, you can always pay an administrative clerk to lose the file’, explained an administrative clerk.<sup>320</sup> During discussions, stories of soldiers and officers stealing weapons, cars and other resources were plentiful. For example, A soldier, who allegedly bought a bag of rice on credit for the entire platoon, was sent to the Bamako camp prison for 25 days, without a proper trial and on the decision of a superior, when a commander refused to honour the debt. The soldier said he left the camp, and now lives right beside the military base, without the armed forces making a real effort to arrest him.<sup>321</sup> Similarly, stories of soldiers leaving the front without requesting official leave were also numerous, with authorities always struggling to know how many soldiers were on the bases when there were attacks.

The bureaucracy does not enforce the rules but complies with the power relationship of neo-patrimonialist networks discussed earlier: a patron can always erase what an abusive leader has tried to set up. On paper, Mali has a military justice system that allows for the prosecution of the military for several serious crimes, with a criminal code and the infrastructure to support it, including military police. In practice, at the time of research, no trials have been carried out since 2011.<sup>322</sup> In some instances, investigations have been launched. During fieldwork, I have been several times to the *Cour d’Appel*, where the military tribunal was supposed to sit, but military prosecutors have not been attached to any military trials. This agrees with the literature on the postcolonial institution as disorderly, and reliant on power which is ‘informal and personalised’ (Chabal and Daloz 1999:1), while still

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<sup>320</sup> Administrative Clerk (EM-ADM-01). Bamako, July 2016.

<sup>321</sup> ‘The Soldiers who won't Fight’, 6 April 2018 <https://mg.co.za/article/2018-04-06-00-the-soldiers-who-wont-fight>

<sup>322</sup> A civilian court heard the trial of Sanogo. Meanwhile, at the time of writing, several cases, notably for corruption and petty crimes, have been heard, and detailed in the press.

having, on paper, a set of rules and norms that appear to be randomly applied. In the case of the armed forces, this led to obedience to personal leadership as the only way to ensure protection against arbitrariness (Osiel 2001).

In 2012, several allegations were made in Sévaré about torture and killing of civilians. In the following years, the FAMAs have been accused on multiple occasions of extra-judiciary killings, arbitrary arrests, torture and rape (Human Rights Watch 2017). While the Gendarmes initiated investigations in 2016, there have been no arrests. Among members of the armed forces, there is no institutional capacity to counterbalance the fear and culture of personal leadership. An officer described the situation in these words:

We are facing a situation where there have been several measures to ensure tactical gains and aggression. Short-term gains have been overemphasised over a more strategic focus. This is why we are losing the war on terror. We need reform. We need the institution to control the soldier. So far, the only thing we do is to increase their aggression. The institution has failed to provide tools to professionalise the soldiers, and to implement a chain of command based on the respect of rules, rather than fear and personal leadership.<sup>323</sup>

Disciplinary measures, in this context, are not there to ensure that the soldiers respect the rules: they continue to be tied to personal leadership. They perpetuate a culture of obedience to personal leadership, rather than fostering institutional leadership. The concept of individual leadership over institutional leadership goes beyond the issue of arbitrary discipline, as there have been several cases of leaders that have personalised leadership, where the limits between militias and the military chain of command remained unclear, as some officers overtly assumed leadership in pro-government militias. The battle of Kidal, and the creation of pro-government militias, which became a feature of the 2015 peace agreement, fits a long

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<sup>323</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-10). Bamako, October 2016.

tradition of the government fostering local militias for military gains (Boisvert 2016). For soldiers, allegiances are becoming fluid, and the creation of militias ensures personal loyalty over institutional leadership or ideology (Ahram 2011:9; Jentzsch, Kalyvas, and Schubiger 2015). The most visible case of this has been the Delta force, an elite unit led by General Gamou, constituted of loyal men who followed him to Niger in 2012. During the Serval operations, in February 2013, Gamou was stopped in Anefis, not following orders from Bamako, in an attempt to retake control of Kidal. In 2014, during the battle of Kidal, his units were on the front line. From then on, Gamou became a military leader for the pro-government armed group GATIA (and signatory of the 2015 Peace agreement), as well as an officer of the armed forces. He has not been considered a deserter. Several of his loyal soldiers have been integrated into the GTIA-8, and received training from the EUTM as such, while being involved in 2018 in combat as members of the GATIA with weapons from the FAMas. Similar accusations have been made about General Ould Meydou, who maintained strong ties with pro-government Arab militias and was the target of an assassination attempt in Bamako in January 2015, allegedly for shady business dealings.<sup>324</sup> In both cases, soldiers followed their leader, no matter what their affiliation and despite Article 6 of the Code of Conduct which clearly forbids armed forces to be part of a militia or organised crime and faced no punishment from the military institution. Several members of the armed forces have provided support to different militias since 2012.

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<sup>324</sup> Journalist (BKO-JO-01). Bamako, February 2016.



Figure 5: Two FAMas training a militia in Sévaré, 11 December 2012.

Enduring practices also affect trust within ranks. The *Berets Rouges* remained on probation as a threat to the regime. In 2016, three companies out of four were deployed beyond the Sévaré border. Deployment would last 10-12 months, and while they crossed the Sévaré line, they needed to leave their weapons before proceeding, a clear sign that they remained untrusted by the organisation. Coup-proofing, in this context, remained significant as rumours of a coup emerged after every decisive defeat in the battlefield, even though there has been no mobilisation similar to those of 2012.

There is an argument to be made that some form of primary cohesion has been built, even if there remain signs that social cohesion remains a significant factor, interfering with institutional cohesion, and even if clientelism and shadow networks have adapted to the new context. As such, building task cohesion was not a magic wand that sustained the entire cohesion architecture (Perlmutter and Bennett 1980; Resteigne and Soeters 2009; Soeters et

al. 2010; Thompson 1976). In this context, the SSR packages failed to acknowledge the social factors, notably leadership and culture, that impeded the creation of secondary cohesion (Käihkö and Haldén 2019; King 2007; Lehrke 2013; MacCoun et al. 2006). In this context, the few reinforced units could not counteract the wider vertical social dynamics.

### *The military institution: resistance to reform*

The previous chapters studied the mobilisation and the demobilisation of soldiers. In the background, there was a military institution, crafted to remain weak as a coup-proofing strategy. The previous section analysed the inability of the institution to fully integrate the soldier using secondary cohesion, focusing on sociological dynamics within the armed forces. This section focuses on the challenges of the institution, and how it failed to implement the lessons learned from the crisis, as well as resisting increasing external pressure for reforms.

At the core of the mutiny-turned-coup, beyond issues of resources, there were frustrations among soldiers regarding the lack of resources allocated to the armed forces, but this did not extend to questioning their belonging to the institution. Mali, following 2013, became the focus of an important international initiative to increase the efficiency of its security governance (Keita 2017). These actions are part of broader security-sector reforms (SSR) strategies, which often emphasise quick fixes over long-term strategies (Caparini 2015; Schnabel 2014). While the 2012 crisis was a national crisis with few repercussions for neighbouring states, the new security environment has become a regional issue, involving multiple stakeholders and forcing the Malian security governance to adapt. While the Malian Armed Forces had a long tradition of receiving military aid, the relationship changed as the agenda re-centred on national interests. In this context, the government could not ignore the new security situation, as the ATT administration had done in previous years: it faced significant international pressure (Bergamaschi 2014). International donors made a priority of successful democratic elections to re-establish military cooperation, notably France, European countries and the US. An elected government enabled the launch of new SSR programs, in the hope of erasing the threat of a weapons embargo. The growing participation

of international actors has increased scrutiny of, and pressure on, Mali's management of the crisis. While ATT paid limited attention to the growing worries of the international community, the IBK government had to cope with international pressure from the beginning. The engagement of international organisations (MINUSMA, the EU, ECOWAS) and national governments (France, Serval, Barkhane) in Mali reinforced the pressure on all Malian actors to increase capabilities. In 2014, the G5-Sahel, a coordination mechanism between the five Sahelian states (Mali, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Chad and Niger), and supported by France and the UN, was created to establish a joint command between countries affected by what became a regional crisis. Despite international pressure, the Malian military institution has resisted involvement. The EUTM stated several times that its mission is to support reforms demanded by the armed forces.<sup>325</sup>

The armed forces have resisted what they perceive as 'invasive and paternalistic behaviour of external actors', but remained dependent on the aid (Tull 2019:405). In the meantime, the institution struggled to label its core values. The state of the update of the doctrine remained unclear: some told me that the *État-Major* was working on a new one, while many others denied any progress.<sup>326</sup> The need for more sustained institutional reforms in the armed forces was insisted upon by international partners. The FAMAs were enthusiastic about the support for basic training to soldiers, but resisted other attempts at a more thorough security-sector reform.

The EUTM slowly extended its activities into several aspects of the armed forces in 2016: human resources management, logistics and planning. In cooperation with the *État-Major*,

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<sup>325</sup> Foreign Trainer (BKO-EX-01). Bamako, October 2016.

<sup>326</sup> Officers (BKO-OFF-04, BKO-OFF-05). Bamako, October 2016.

they facilitated training at all levels, depending on need (Barca 2013; Lopez Lucia 2019). In January 2019, EUTM stated that it trained 12,000 members of the FAMAs, many through drills.<sup>327</sup> It also attempted to computerize human resource management, via million-dollar funding provided by the Canadian government: the program failed and, at the time of writing, had been re-contracted to a Malian firm.<sup>328</sup> So far, there is still no final official number of soldiers in the Malian army: uncertainty that is crucial for the misappropriation of resources by field officers. Meanwhile, the EUTM supported the creation of an Advisory Task Force to reform strategic planning. Most of their recommendations, including decreasing the number of military regions or the creation of a strategic planning unit, have been ignored.<sup>329</sup>

Beyond the apparent resistance to change, the military institution faced considerable pressure to perform. In the first part of this section, I have discussed how new resources and political pressure increased the interest of civilians in defence, while attacks were moving from the periphery to the core, thus changing the entire civil-military relationship in a country where policies tended, before 2012, to limit the strength of and resources allocated to the military. For soldiers, this has meant that clientelist practices have increased with attention to the armed forces. The government has increased resources dedicated to the armed forces, while launching a recruitment drive. While the armed forces were estimated at 12,000 members in 2012, this is set to double by 2020 (Touchard 2014). Despite the arrival of new recruits, as well as an uninterrupted state of emergency, clientelist practices, which pre-date the crisis, persisted in the military institution, reinforcing the network of dependence between civilians and members of the armed forces. The modes of operation do not appear to have changed since 2012, and corruption practices fit a pattern where small acts by petty bureaucrats are

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<sup>327</sup> Email with a EUTM adviser. 12 January 2019.

<sup>328</sup> The work remains incomplete as of November 2019.

<sup>329</sup> Military Analyst (PAR-EX-01). Paris, March 2017.

more visible to recruits, as this represents small amounts on several occasions, as opposed to higher-ranked bureaucrats who receive larger amounts on rarer occasions (Gupta 1995).

Massive recruitment campaigns launched since 2013 followed different rules than those faced by 2012 mutineers. Before 2012, recruitment campaigns were much smaller in terms of target numbers of recruits and public interest than those following IBK's election. These recruitments were ad-hoc and did not occur every year. As they were not widely advertised, a recruit needed to know someone to prepare his application ahead of the relatively short window within which the army accepted applications. Potential recruits, at the time, needed support to get beyond recruitment.<sup>330</sup> Following the 2012 crisis, recruitment in the armed forces became a source of public scrutiny. Since the end of the transition, the Ministry of Defence has launched several recruitment drives. In 2013, fewer than 3,000 soldiers were recruited. In May 2016, during my fieldwork, a new campaign recruited 3,000 new members; in 2017, another campaign aimed at 5,000 recruits. The Ministry of Defence has multiplied the advertisement in media and social network. The basic criteria to join the army were the same as before 2012: Malian citizens; aged 18-23; single; without a criminal record. In 2016 and 2017, candidates needed to provide a birth certificate, a clean criminal record, a citizenship certificate, a hand-written demand with a 200 CFA fiscal stamp, a copy of their identity card (or the receipt of an ID demand), a declaration that they are single and childless, two identity pictures and a medical certificate.

When I arrived on one of the recruitment sites in Bamako, in April 2016, several thousands of men (and a few women) were waiting in line to be recruited. Their recurrent fear was about not having the right documents. Among the youth lining up, many did not have a national ID

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<sup>330</sup> Grin 4.

card.<sup>331</sup> Some looked much older than 23 years old. At the end of the line, the recruitment team decided on the spot if a file can be accepted or not, having all the necessary documents. The list of documents has been a source of tension in prior recruitment drives. Many Malians do not have birth certificates (Bleck and Michelitch 2015), and this constitutes a serious barrier, especially for potential recruits from outside Bamako where, in some circumstances, civil registries were destroyed during the conflict, setting barriers for those at the periphery of the state (Boone 2003; Mamdani 1995). Once their file is approved, candidates filling all requirements will be asked to participate in a physical test of running 1km. The main objective criteria are thus physical and medical tests, as no diplomas were required, even if recruitment attracts university graduates. Motivation is not taken into account as there were no interview processes or letters of motivation demanded. Existing soldiers acknowledged the underlying corruption and nepotism of this process. While I was not able to observe all the steps of the process, I have heard sharp critiques of the process from soldiers. During the *grin*, soldiers recruited before 2012 saw ties to previous practices, only being surprised by the scale of it: from the logistics involved to the level of corruption. At every level of the army, there was frank discussion of corruption undermining the overall process. Discussions with military staff here are a paradox: everybody says it is there, but everyone denies being part of it, highlighting the importance of the ‘other’, and rarely of the self on discourse about corruption (Wedel 2012:456). A soldier recruited in 2008 explained the practical norms (Olivier de Sardan 2015):

To ensure that you are in the army, you would have to pay between 1 and 2 million CFAs. For women, they can ‘just sleep’ with a superior. There were people who were disabled that were recruited, as they pay their way in.<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> They did not. The Ministry of Defence accepted receipts (*récépissé*).

<sup>332</sup> NCO (K-NCO-02). Kati, February 2016.

Other testimonies fixed a lower amount to pay to be recruited, at around 300,000 CFA.<sup>333</sup>

There seems to be no stable price for admission, and that the cost would depend on relations involved in the process, as well as a recruit's readiness to pay. A former putschist sees the price as depending on a recruit's bargaining power:

Some people pay 200,000 CFAs. However, they are not sure to get in. I know people who indebted themselves to pay for their entrance. But they were not on the final list. Either they paid a person that is not higher enough in rank, or they got out-bid by someone else. It is a gamble. You never know if you'll get in until you are in. Some persons know that, once you paid, it is easy to ask for more money. So, they will ask for more money.<sup>334</sup>

Another officer said that some do not pay any fees but have a sponsor that is powerful enough to put them on the list, often a family member.<sup>335</sup> This also describes a fluent relationship in the 'flexnet' between the corrupter and the corrupted where power dynamics are variable depending on leverage and information (Johnston 2005; Wedel 2012). This dynamic process has been revealed as essential for the soldiers where different kind of capital (social, economic or symbolic) can be brought in to ensure employment as an occupational soldier. The issue of corruption is not only about being on the final list: it is at every level of the process, and several people take advantage of it, even civilian authorities. For many, the main issue is missing papers in their files, such as medical certificates or identity papers. Soldiers said that they paid extra, as the civil administration would not provide them with the necessary papers. Others explained that they paid a civil servant to obtain fake documents i.e. documents produced by the state, and therefore official, but produced without following

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<sup>333</sup> Grin 3.

<sup>334</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-07). Bamako, February 2016

<sup>335</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-04). Bamako, April 2016.

administrative rules, playing on this idea of the ‘zone of ambiguity’ (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006:5). Several members of parliament and ministers have also tried to influence the process. Before 2012, recruitment officers received lists from such well-placed persons. Some lists were rumoured to come from places as high as the First Lady’s office.<sup>336</sup> In 2016 and 2017, allegations of lists from members of the government or military were also frequent.

During the interviews, there was a constant questioning of the impact of corruption on the quality of recruits. A soldier explained that he really wanted to get into the army, and that a minister intervened in his favour without him paying money, simply because he believed that he would be an excellent soldier.<sup>337</sup> Another one told me that he paid the money because he was motivated, and that an uncle in the military gave him the money to be done with it.<sup>338</sup> Motivated youth are thus able to enter the army, but the corruption nevertheless limits the recruitment of some talented recruits that trust the system and/or have no sponsors. A training officer explained,

I think we are facing an issue of talents. How do you select the brave ones? The born fighters. The Malian army does not know how to attract them. Courage does not come from training. Only discipline can be taught.<sup>339</sup>

Since the 2012 crisis, in the Kati military base, there is a shared belief that clientelist practices have increased. ‘There are many names that appear on the final lists that failed the physical test. I could not explain why,’ said one of the soldiers.<sup>340</sup> During another *grin* another soldier added, ‘some people did not participate in the physical test, the written exam

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<sup>336</sup> Journalist (BKO-JRN-02). Bamako, February 2016.

<sup>337</sup> Soldier (PAR-OFF-01). Paris, October 2016

<sup>338</sup> NCO (K-NCO-03). Kati, October 2016.

<sup>339</sup> Officer (K-OFF-02). Kati, July 2016.

<sup>340</sup> Grin 2.

or the medical visit. But their name was on the definitive list. How can this happen?'.<sup>341</sup>

Another soldier commented, 'It was frustrating to watch. Personal relations are everything.

Some perfect fits were rejected, while others failed the physical test and were on the list.'<sup>342</sup>

While, as discussed in Chapter 4, soldiers admitted that there has been corruption and nepotism in their own recruitment: the main complaint against the new generation lies in the change in practical norms that are being used.

Another recurring discussion was the medical failures of the new recruits. The week I tried to observe recruitment, there were two deaths during the physical test. In June 2016, two weeks after the beginning of their basic training, four recruits died the same week of health issues, and this despite having a medical certificate, passing the physical test and having an extra medical consultation before they began training.<sup>343</sup> In Kati, this was perceived as a sign of corruption and nepotism, transforming a culture of 'sponsorship' into one of imposing unfit candidates. Very few soldiers condemned corruption and nepotism: in their language, it is something that a motivated recruit must take into account as part of their entry strategy. While they believed it was increasing, they also expressed a sort of resilience towards it. Among soldiers, recruitment is rigged, but the unfairness was framed as coming from not following the 'rules'.<sup>344</sup>

Beyond having fit candidates for the job, recruitment campaigns, before and after 2012, also share an inability to take into account the diversity of Mali. This is also a direct impact of clientelism. While recruitment does not occur necessarily in Bamako, lists originate there. An

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<sup>341</sup> Grin 4.

<sup>342</sup> Grin 3.

<sup>343</sup> 'Mort de 3 recrues', MaliJet, 13 Juin 2016, <http://malijet.com/actualite-politique-au-mali/flash-info/158187-armee-malienne-mort-de-4-recrues.html>

<sup>344</sup> Grin 3.

instructor explained that recruitment makes it very difficult from non-Bamanans to be included. ‘Majority ethnic groups of southern Mali [the Bambara, Soninke and Malinke] are overrepresented. Minority ethnic groups stand no chances, especially if they do not know anybody’<sup>345</sup>. During the focus group, no soldiers came from the north, even if some would identify as such. The case of B., a young soldier, illustrates the issue. While identifying himself as a northerner, he was born in Bamako, as were his father and mother. During the focus group, he explained that he has not even visited the Hombori region, even though he described himself as ‘from’ there. During the recruitment campaign, the recruitment was tainted with tension outside Bamako on the question of representativeness. In Timbuktu, on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2016, potential recruits protested in the city against a process that they judge to be rigged, as only ten recruits from Timbuktu were retained out of the 1,000 national candidates, and there was no proof that these candidates were even from the region.<sup>346</sup> The marginalisation of Northerners also comes with the issue of the national language. Officially, the armed forces operate in French, which would ensure fairness to all linguistic groups. Malians learn French in school and setting a linguistic requirement would be a sign that the enlisted soldier has done a minimum of schooling. In the FAMAs, there is no minimum education requirement and many recruits read and write with difficulty. Many of the recruits do not speak French, which is supposed to be the language of instruction, and receive basic training in Bambara. This is a problem for the integration of Northerners.<sup>347</sup> For recruiters, the language and the education issue become a barrier to ascend in the armed forces, which current recruitment procedures do not address. During the *grins*, I met soldiers and NCOs struggling to understand French and thus dependent on their colleagues.<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>345</sup> Officer (EM-OFF-01). Bamako, April 2016.

<sup>346</sup> ‘Manifestation contre le processus de recrutement, Sahélien.com, 30 Mai 2016, <http://sahelien.com/mali-manifestation-contre-le-processus-de-recrutement-dans-larmee-a-tombouctou/>

<sup>347</sup> Military recruiters (BKO-REC-01). Bamako, May 2016.

<sup>348</sup> Grin 2.

This sets creates a fault-line within the armed forces, between younger, educated urban recruits and their less educated seniors. A retired officer framed this recruitment issue as one of discipline. While he recognised the importance of literacy, as several older soldiers cannot progress because they have poor French and struggle to read documents, he also saw the new generation as antithetic to the army's goals:

If I had to recruit, I would not recruit anybody from Bamako. They have diplomas. When they come to the army, it is to command. Not to be commanded. To command, you need to learn to obey. Those young *Bamakois* come for job opportunities. The urgency is to fight terrorists. You do not need a diploma for that.<sup>349</sup>

While the Ministry of Defence has always drafted strategy to ensure quality and representativeness among recruits, these criteria are not being respected, and practical norms prevail. Recruitment practices, even in cases where the recruits shows some value, undermines any attempts by the soldier to claim that his career is based on merit and professionalism, as the literature on civil service and corruption has concluded (Evans 1995). New recruitments were rejected by the current generation the same way older generations looked down on the generation that supported Sanogo. In Kati, in 2016, mass recruitment was resented, perceived as corrupt and unworthy by older soldiers.

Discussion of rank included similar practices. Soldiers again needed a combination of paying capabilities and sponsorship to advance. While the number of positions available decreases as a military progress, survival in the armed forces is a long-term strategy in which the capacity to mobilise resources is necessary to survive hierarchical attrition. On several occasions,

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<sup>349</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-04). Bamako, April 2016.

members of the armed forces conflated corruption and nepotism: good connections mean paying less, and vice versa. The sponsor can be someone well-placed that can be paid to advance one's career. In the upper layers of the hierarchy, corruption and nepotism also rely on an exchange of services. Personal stories suggest that negotiation and timing matter, highlighting the importance of routine, rather than a one-off act, often implying small-scale negotiation and exchange of services. During interviews, members at all levels of the armed forces explained their struggle in fighting daily bureaucracy. An NCO explained that, even if he received foreign training on his own initiative, he would have to provide 'gifts' to the administrative clerks who would handle his file to ensure that the proper paperwork would get through.<sup>350</sup> An officer explained to me that he would often offer a bottle of perfume or a little present to the secretary of a higher-ranked general to ensure that his reports would be prioritised, and that he would be perceived as more competent.<sup>351</sup> For him, this was a strategy for promotion, and while such practices appeared to be of little impact on the more important things, this revealed that behind small actions, there is a profound distrust of the institution to support personal advancement.

Soldiers, NCOs and officers do not believe that there has been an improvement since 2012, and the routines of clientelism have not been modified. Fighting corruption and nepotism was a critical element of the discourse of the junta, and an essential element of the anti-elite rhetoric inflating the sense of the militariat. Within the military, the putschists took drastic decisions in 2012, sacking over 600 civilians and military staff from state schools. Among them, 64 students of the NCO school and an unknown number from the officer's school were

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<sup>350</sup> NCO (BKO-NCO-02). Bamako, June 2016.

<sup>351</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-03). Bamako, April 2016.

removed for having fake diplomas.<sup>352</sup> Beyond this stunt, however, there were no visible changes. Meanwhile, there have been extraordinary nominations since 2013, such as those of Amadou Haya Sanogo, El-Hadji Gamou or Abdramane Ould Meydou, two former rebels fighting in the North in the 1990s, received their five stars at the same time, while other officers were also promoted by Dioncounda Traoré: Didier Dacko, Kéba Sangaré, Gaston Damango, Néima Sagara, Abdramane Baby and Mamadou Sissoko (as known as Samarek). While each case follows its own logic, they have strengthened the belief that merit is not enough for promotion. A putschist that became an officer following the coup had a similar reflection about the need to boost military merit:

I was lucky enough to do the *Prytanée*. My family was not from a military background. But the army became my family. It helps. But that's not enough to ensure progression, even if you are the best of your promotion.<sup>353</sup>

This officer had several features in common with another former putschist:<sup>354</sup> they each have a strong resumé that included foreign training, and each held a high position while in their thirties. They both claimed to have climb up the ranks by merit, but both also acknowledged that merit is not enough. All military staff condemned clientelism, but did not refrain from undertaking it, as 'this is the only way to advance'.<sup>355</sup> The feeling that meritocratic or automatic promotion is not possible justifies the notion that any means is acceptable in order

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<sup>352</sup> More details on this case and the court procedures that followed, can be found on: <http://maliactu.net/mali-exclus-arbitrairement-de-lecole-des-sous-officiers-de-banankoro-en-2012-une-cinquantaine-de-militaires-reclament-justice-et-reparation/>

<sup>353</sup> Putschist (BKO-JUN-01). Bamako, October 2016.

<sup>354</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-02). Bamako, June 2016.

<sup>355</sup> Officer (BKO-OFF-01). Bamako, April 2016.

to advance and that all's fair in love and war. 'You have to pay. That's all. It's the way it is.'<sup>356</sup>

This acceptance of the 'rules' goes beyond the army. A soldier explained to me that his father's second wife came to him, angry at her son not being taken by the army:

His son was among the first in the physical test. But he did not give enough money to be recruited. She made four years of drama. Now, her son is a merchant and he makes much more money than I do. But my stepmother is still mad at me. She says I did not help her son.<sup>357</sup>

An NCO that became an officer following the 2012 crisis framed the question as an issue of human resource management and the incapacity of the army to offer concrete and realist expectations for promotion: 'There is no career plan. Everybody wants to be a general. So, all means are good to achieve it.'<sup>358</sup> Another refocused the problem as due to a lack of responsibility of the institutions for the individual:

A virtuous soldier, even if he is the first of his class, cannot advance if he does not have a protector to become more than an NCO. Some good officers would see the excellent NCO and support them. But it's not automatic. Many soldiers and NCOs are lost, to not say paralysed in the system. The institution does not provide them with support. Only individuals can.<sup>359</sup>

This suggests that the institution has not been able to sustain the constant progression needed by soldiers, and this has remained a source of frustration for those ones who could not find a way to address the lack of opportunities. In a *grin*, while soldiers were not excited about

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<sup>356</sup> Grin 4.

<sup>357</sup> Soldier (KAT-SOL-01). Kati, October 2016

<sup>358</sup> Retired Officers (BKO-OFF-07; BKO-OFF-09). Bamako, February 2016

<sup>359</sup> NCO (KAT-NCO-02). Kati, February 2016.

going fighting in the North, they nevertheless explained that, since they were recruited in 2010, they had remained in Kati after their initial three-months training, and could not see how to progress.<sup>360</sup> Throughout, there is a lack of trust that the institution recognises merit, and social mobility depends on factors other than performing one's tasks well. Thus, the question of nepotism and corruption in promotion challenges the credibility of rank, as well as presenting a system in which an individuals' actions matter more for one's career than respect of institutional norms, and where the ability to survive depends on one's network, rather than on following official rules.

This complements the earlier discussion of the inability of secondary cohesion to cement primary cohesion and reveals an institution that is unable to affirm its official norms, as well as operational cycles. While recruitment and promotions mimic the process of a modern military, the underlying dynamics of rank attribution go against the usual process of making the soldier's experience uniform: it consolidates advancement as an individual practice and sustains a suspicion within the armed forces of the real capacities of other members at all levels, as even practical norms appear to be negotiable (Olivier de Sardan 2015).

The literature has addressed the issue of clientelism adapting to regime change, including democratic rule (Van de Walle 2014). For Mali, the allocation of new resources in the armed forces appears to have normalised the process and has transformed an elite that was perceived as predatory during the coup into something that appears more benevolent, despite increasing allegations of corruption and nepotism. Meanwhile, practices remained diverted by a network of relations that pursues its own interests. Recruitment policies that intend to increase the armed forces' capacity for situational awareness have been co-opted by existing networks,

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<sup>360</sup> Grin 5.

thus reinforcing the core over the periphery. Further, while the soldiers that mobilised in favour of the coup in 2012 denounced corruption, new recruitments have brought a new wave of soldiers that, from their first encounter with the military institution, see it as a strategy for professional progression.

### 7.3. Conclusion

This chapter has presented the changing relationship between the soldier and the military institution in times of reform. Following the 2012 crisis, civil-military relations have changed, as the increasing importance of security governance has transformed the civilian control of the military. Nevertheless, while several reforms of the military institutions have been undertaken, the sociological impact has remained limited on the soldier and on their experience of the military institution. While there have been substantial changes in soldiers' primary cohesion, there have been few attempts to transform secondary cohesion, as the military institution has remained impermeable to change.

This chapter thus highlights three aspects. First, the idea of a militariat remained tainted by interest: the mobilisation of 2012 was never replicated, and civilian rule has not been challenged as corporatist interests prevailed over class identity based on opposition to an elite. The interest-based militariat has changed with the recruitment of a new generation with a different profile, while a new dialogue has enabled new channels of discussion with a civilian government. While some individuals have been able to gain from the coup, the State's power relations have not been significantly altered. While the coup itself did not leave a legacy, the militariat succeeded in pressuring civil-military relations and governance to improve its conditions. Second, SSR packages emphasising the primary unit have offered quick tactical gains, but failed to provide a sustained reform of secondary cohesion, leaving unaddressed important institutional factors that would limit the ability of the army to work as a single organisation, including discipline and leadership (Käihkö and Haldén 2019; King 2007; Lehrke 2013). Third, practices of the postcolonial institutions are well anchored in social dynamics in the armed forces. Real change, including the ability to answer security challenges from the periphery, cannot be addressed without addressing the domination of the

core over the ‘ungovernable’ periphery, and ensuring that institutional rules are able to replace practical norms fully. Practices have, so far, been resilient to reforms.

This chapter, along the previous ones, has focused on the social processes that have been occurring in Mali in a moment a new security environment that pressured the armed forces. On 19<sup>th</sup> February 2019, a brand new helicopter crashed on the Place d’Armes of Kati during preparations for the Army Day celebrations. The helicopter was to be showcased for the President IBK’s review of troops, the first of his second mandate.



Figure 27. A helicopter crashes on Kati’s Place d’Armes, February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

Source: Bamada.net, <http://bamada.net/mali-crash-dun-helicoptere-de-larmee-a-kati>.

The crash was a failed attempt to illustrate the ‘*montée en puissance*’, being one of the latest additions to the army’s new material. But, as discussed, the armed forces still struggle to rise despite the new resources allocated. Celebrations of the 2019 Army Day had a different tone than those in 2014, with increasing fears for security and an exponentially growing death toll among members of armed forces. Soldiers were now used to paying tribute to a line of coffins on that same square, a vivid reminder that they risk their life in their profession.

While reforms have yet to show results, the soldiers of Kati, from the newest recruit to the most senior, know that death is part of their job.

## 8. Conclusion: The soldier and the institution

The incursion of the military into government has been a disaster for our country and the military over the last thirty years. The *esprit-de-corps* amongst military personnel has been destroyed; professionalism has been lost. Youths go into the military not to pursue a noble career but with the sole intention of taking part in coups and to be appointed as military administrators of states and chairmen of task forces. As a retired officer, my heart bleeds to see the degradation in the proficiency of the military.

– Olegun Obasanjo, 1990

Older uniformed men in Mali often echoed the words of the former Nigerian President, himself a former soldier, embodying the challenges of civil-military relations in West Africa. In Mali, Colonel-Major Sega Sissoko, late director of the Museum of the Armed Forces, shared with me a sense of the glorious past of the Malian Armed Forces. Throughout his life, Sissoko fought to convince those around him that the military institution had a glorious history, with its own identity and strength. On various occasions, senior members of the Malian Armed Forces embraced a belief in the professionalism and honour of older generations, forgetting that the newer generation faced a security challenge that had not been encountered before 2011.

There has been a comprehensive narrative of African armed forces struggling between the honour of the colonial past and a present of ‘infamy’ (Edgerton 2002), fostered by a literature that often blurs the lines between rebels and state soldiers (Reno 2011:1). This dissertation is a cautionary tale about the complex equilibrium of civil-military relationships and how soldiers relate to the military institution. While most of the literature understands coups and mutinies through the lens of defective institutions, I have refocused the conversation to look at social mobility and how the military institutions foster a complex web of relationships,

while evolving in a postcolonial context. A coup cannot be understood as an event that ends when soldiers return to barracks; militaries need to commit to the military institution and abide by civilian controls. While certain aspects of the mobilisation in favour of the coup appear to be time- and country-specific, this dissertation questions several elements of theories on African civil-military relations, military sociology and the postcolonial military institution.

## 8.1. Civil-military relations

This dissertation is an assessment of the social dynamics within an institution under stress. In terms of civil-military relations, it refocuses the discussion on the relationship between civilian powers and armed forces, enriching theory through an empirical case-study of complex social relationships. The dissertation acknowledges the legacy of Samuel Huntington, who saw the military institution as shaped by two forces: a functional imperative stemming from threats to the society's security and a societal imperative arising from the social forces, ideologies and institutions dominant within that society (Huntington 1957:2). At the root of a theory of civil-military relations lies the assumption that the armed forces are grounded in society, and these relationships shape the armed forces. Along similar lines, I have studied the longer-term sociological impact of coups on civil-military relations, with a particular focus on community. The later chapters contribute to the field by widening the discussion of how the military institution outlives a coup, analysing how the rank-and-file cannot only be framed as agents of the state or anti-elite revolutionaries (Lehrke 2013:147), but as social actors with sometimes conflicting interests.

The concept of a *militariat* (to explain the soldier as a class with common interests, in opposition to officers that are part of the economic and political elites) has been useful in understanding the 'rebellious forces' that emerged during the mutiny (Kandeh 2004:13), as presented in Chapter 5. However, this notion provides a limited understanding of how demobilisation occurs once the coup's momentum has subsided. Despite attempts to challenge governance, the relationship between the soldier and the Malian military institution is bounded by membership of an institution, and a complex web of social relationships based on mutual responsibilities, which remained significant after the coup, as discussed in Chapter 7. Civil-military relations theorists, especially scholars concerned with coups, have

overlooked the question of the motivations of soldiers and their supporters. The waves of coups in West Africa since the late 1990s have revealed the complexity of the narrative of so-called 'failed states'. While there is a growing emphasis on international pressure and norms in terms of the suppression of coups, notably including 'professionalism' (Alozieuwa 2010; McGowan 2005, 2006), it is essential to understand the social dynamics affecting soldiers. Discussions of mobilisation and demobilisation of the militariat need to go beyond circumscribing subaltern coup-makers into a self-interested clique contesting a ruler (rather than rules). An important contribution of my dissertation is to acknowledge the militariat as a dynamic group that cannot be delineated only through either a state-centric or an institutional approach.

Soldiers understand the complexity of governance, and while personal ambitions always influence the process (Captain Sanogo being a good example), the mobilisation of soldiers was also undertaken in defence of the institution they belong to, as well as of their community. While the theory has often centred on the role of leadership in influencing mobilisation, this dissertation has argued that sociological mobilisation goes beyond the personal ambitions of a small group: the individual and their community also shape the process, notably through rumours that may strengthen the narrative against an unconcerned elite. From the case studies examined in this thesis, we can conclude that social dynamics behind the mobilisation and demobilisation in Mali show the importance of the community in mobilisation, and that the notion of a militariat is also about responding to a community's grievance and social obligations. It also acknowledges the role of rumours in mobilisation, and how they sustain the dynamic of a coup.

An important implication of these findings is for discussing policies with which to avert a coup (coup-proofing). Coup-proofing strategies and a belief in the professionalisation of armed forces is not enough to prevent coups, as longer-term dynamics are also involved (Agyeman-Duah 1990; Camara 2000:38; Luttwak 1979). Coup-proofing has followed a pattern in which a need for containment (or at least ‘demilitarising the heart of the state’) and increasing professionalism has been identified (N’Diaye 2018:167), with often important implications for the efficiency of the armed forces themselves or its leadership (Powell 2017). As discussed, professionalism is not a guarantee against praetorianism (Perlmutter 1969:384). Theories on coup-proofing focus on civilian control of the armed forces, assuming that military and civilian interests are divergent, but offer no guidance on the dynamics within the armed forces, an important element of the discussion in the later chapters.

The Malian authorities have been obsessed with coup-proofing (Powell 2017), but strategies often present coup-plotters as self-interested actors. A contribution made by this thesis is an acknowledgement that personal interests and the interests of the militariat matter, but that soldiers are also defending a vision of the military institution. The scholarship on coups and on coup-proofing often suggests that military institutions, as well as states that face coups, are somewhat incomplete or even failed (McGowan 2005, 2006). The 2012 mutiny-turned-coup sends a message that a coup is not only about the ‘military’s complete [dis]satisfaction with civilian control’ (Camara 2000:38), but also about defending a normative vision of a military institution that could fare better.

## **8.2. Military sociology and cohesion: Primary and Secondary Cohesion**

This dissertation contributes to several discussions in the field of military sociology, which understands the military institution as relying on a chain of command sustained by cohesion. One contribution of this thesis here is to move the conversation beyond a vision of a ‘failed’ institution, making an empirical contribution to a debate that often remains theoretical. Morris Janowitz and Edward Shils (Janowitz & Shils 1975) have laid the ground in their work on the importance of cohesion for combat successes during World War II. Other scholars (as discussed) have completed our understanding of the role of cohesion in combat, but have rarely delved into the complexities of it for non-combat roles. While I acknowledge the limits of my own findings, in that I could not fully account for the behaviour of soldiers in battle, I identified several processes influencing primary and secondary cohesion among Malian soldiers: how the military institution fosters primary cohesion among soldiers, but has struggled to build functioning vertical cohesion. I have made a case that members of the institution are more than mere conveyor belts, but rather develop social relationships that can either undermine or nurture other relationships, including those with the hierarchy or with civilians. These findings contribute to a contentious debate on cohesion, as much from a theoretical perspective as an empirical one, adding a detailed case-study of a process that remains understudied in the field of military sociology from the perspective of non-Western armies (Käihkö 2018a:24).

Primary cohesion exists in the Malian military institution in several forms. I have shown how a complex web of interests and social obligations nurtures a ‘community of striving’, the term I have coined to explain important aspects of the relationships on a military base. When mobilised in action, the motivation and experience of soldiers cannot be reduced to personal

interests, even if this is a critical component, as in any armed force. Adherence to the military institution is, in several cases, motivated by a desire to fulfil social obligations. Once the threshold of the military base is crossed, soldiers develop a more complex relationship with the military institution, often demonstrating their attachment to the *purpose* of the institution. While their behaviour is motivated by the social pressure their military career entails, members of the armed forces also develop a sense of belonging to, what I have conceptualised as, a ‘community of striving, which allows the entire military family to build a relationship with the military institution and which influences how soldiers are involved with that institution. Chapter 5 presented how primary cohesion and the idea of a community of striving become significant elements sustaining the social dynamics that led to the 2012 coup. Despite struggling with the act of soldiership, the soldiers of the FAMas are part of an institution that shapes their behaviour and that fosters social cohesion. Understanding the aspirations and daily routines of soldiers has allowed the growth of strong social cohesion on the base, which impacts primary cohesion in combat.

Another contribution made throughout this dissertation relates to the challenging relationship between primary and secondary cohesion. Previous studies of subaltern coups have focused on a lack of secondary cohesion and the institution’s inability to sustain vertical cohesion between different ranks, either through bonding or discipline. The absence of secondary cohesion is, in itself, an important factor in explaining why mobilisation in favour of a coup has not been able to become an enduring phenomenon. The dissertation has discussed the challenge of building secondary cohesion in the military institution for combat purposes. Before and after the coup, the focus of military institutions has been on material satisfaction and short-term tactical gains. While the military institution has been able to perpetuate an organisational cohesion for some, notably the Berets Rouges, it struggled to develop elements

that would foster strong secondary cohesion: military culture, discipline, norms and values. As discussed, leadership remains personal rather than institutional, while there have been few initiatives to challenge this position. The enduring legacy of personal leadership sustains a culture of impunity, undermining the discipline that sustains the cohesion of the military institution. It also deepens what this thesis has identified as a gap between the NCO and officers, a significant factor behind the 2012 crisis, as officers' sense of professionalism and institutional leadership is not reciprocated in lower echelons.

Finally, in terms of military sociology, this dissertation has shown the limits of the current strategy on re-enforcing task cohesion during security-sector reform (SSR) initiatives. While this strategy has allowed some tactical gains to be made, significant issues remain, which security-sector reform initiatives must address to make the military institution more sustainable. Therefore, one of the contributions of the dissertation is to identify conflict created by how SSR faces limitations when it transfers practices based on a normative view of an institution, rather than fully acknowledging the presence of social dynamics that are much more complex than theory suggests. The policy implications of this discussion are significant in a field where programs often try to bulldoze existing dynamics rather than build on them, ignoring relationships that might improve results in the battlefield.

### **8.3. The postcolonial military institution**

The 2012 crisis was a wake-up call from a military institution that had not encountered significant external challenges since Mali's independence. From 1960 until 1991, the army was mostly responsible for defending a dictator's regime, while conflict resolution was not based on the use of force, but on complying with international norms and diplomacy. From 1991 to 2012, the political class framed soldiers as the parasites of a praetorian state. In this context, politicians judged that the military institution needed to be short-circuited and the soldier needed to be contained. In the background of this dissertation is the challenge of a postcolonial military institution whose purpose was reconsidered when a new security paradigm emerged. Since 2012, soldiers were killed defending the security of the state. This new pattern of civil-military relations did not eradicate practices inherited from the postcolonial period. Two aspects were crucial to my analysis: conflict between the core and the periphery, and neo-patrimonialism.

The concept of core/periphery is a significant part of the postcolonial literature, as much from a theoretical as an empirical perspective. In the closing chapters, this dissertation has captured how the postcolonial state has re-affirmed the core over the periphery through its practices and has argued that military sociologists need to take the concept seriously.

Practices in military institutions are oriented towards the centre of power, and any member of the FAMA from a recruit to a five-star general needs to be aware of this tropism for advancement. Because the military institution was, from 1991 to 2012, constantly reminded of its role in protecting the core, soldiers have internalised this notion in all parts of their careers. The military institution's obsession with the core is detrimental to its role as security provider for a country that also has a periphery. As discussed, the periphery represents more than a geographical reality: this is also a political reality.

In this context, the remote reality of the geographical periphery re-enforced this argument about the importance of maintaining a strong relation with the core of the state apparatus. The 2012 collapse is not merely a strategic failure: it is the failure of an institution to build relationships with the periphery and to fully engage in its security, while devoting all its attention to a 'core' where power is located. This also realigns a discussion on the Malian Armed Forces as a 'failed institution' with one that has now met an incapacity to adapt to a challenge that it was not designed to take into account. Chapter 7 presented how reforms were challenged because they were not able to reorient this obsession with the core. Tensions between the core and the periphery have been an essential element of the Malian conflict, but procedures within the military institutions still remain focused on the Bamako-centric nature of the institution.

The connection between a core and a periphery complexifies the concept of a militariat as a class in opposition to officers, considered to be part of an elite. The militariat might be seen in opposition to that elite, but they are, like the elite, citizens of the core, in opposition to subjects of the periphery (Mamdani 1995). Mutinies and coups remain processes that target the core of the postcolonial state. Soldiers remain poorly linked to the periphery and therefore espouse and re-enforce the flaws of postcolonial institutions. This explains their lack of situational awareness and expeditionary mindset. Alongside the case studies, I have presented how 'inward-focused social structures' impact the military institution (Boone 2003). Questions of core and periphery remain estranged from military sociology. One of this dissertation's contributions is to address how this relationship affects the military institution and to identify the practical implications of a concept through which to understand a postcolonial institution.

The second contribution of this dissertation to postcolonial scholarship is to describing neo-patrimonialist practices within the Malian military institution. In the final pages, I provided an empirical study of practical norms as the difference between official regulations and practices in the armed forces (Olivier de Sardan 2015). Neo-patrimonialist practices, despite being challenged in 2012 by the coup, proved adaptable. Practical norms influence the social dynamics of the Malian military institution, strengthening social obligations. Clientelism and personal leadership take precedence over official norms. Recent efforts to increase professionalism and to strengthen the military institution were limited by old and new practical norms, shaped by different levels of clientelism and corruption that created tensions between actors. A superficial reshuffling of military leadership does not mean that practices disappear: rather, they evolve. The clientelist networks, or *flexnet* (Wedel 2012:480), have found new opportunities and have been resistant to attempts to fight corruption. In the final pages, notably Chapter 7, I presented how social dynamics within the military institution have been impervious to reform. This dissertation offers a thorough case study of the resilience of neo-patrimonialist practices.

Scholarship on the postcolonial state and military sociology rarely meet; few authors have attempted to discuss how the armed forces, as a state institution, have evolved, beyond a discussion of failed institutionalism (Perlmutter 1969:383). One of the important contributions of my work is to blend two areas of scholarship and provide a case-study on how debates that can be perceived as theoretical have a strong impact on policy and on the real life of the military institution.

#### 8.4. A new beginning?

Since I conducted my fieldwork in 2016, there have been several developments in Mali. In 2019, the demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) process was initiated; this process aims to reintegrate thousands of deserters into different bodies of the security forces, and includes several former rebels who have either foreign military training (in the case of those who had been in the Libyan armed forces) and combat experience. This is an opportunity to shake up existing practices, even if similar past efforts at reforming the FAMas have not been able to tackle the many issues that led to the 2012 coup. Meanwhile, General Sanogo and his fellow putschists are still waiting for their trial to resume, an indication that the coup and the junta remain a threat; and multiple initiatives supporting multilateral and regional actors, including the G-5 Sahel, have increased the pressure on Mali to reform its military.

Despite these developments, the military institution has not changed much. At the time of writing, the army has not been able to undertake visible reform addressing its discontents. Since the end of my fieldwork, the number of deaths among the FAMas has continued to rise sharply. In November 2019, 221 soldiers died in the most lethal month in FAMas' history.<sup>361</sup> On November 21<sup>st</sup>, the Minister of Defence and former junta member General Ibrahim Dahirou Dembele made a compelling case to the National Assembly for more resources and discussed the challenges of a 'young army' in need of an 'operational upgrade'.<sup>362</sup> Numbers for the first months of 2020 were even worse. In the streets, Malians expressed their impatience to political leaders, participating in multiple protests demanding effective security

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<sup>361</sup> With the possible exception of the 2012 Aguelhok massacre as final numbers remain contested.

<sup>362</sup> "L'État-major des armées explique les pertes de l'armée malienne par la jeunesse de ses soldats sous-équipés", Opex 360, 23 November 2019, <http://www.opex360.com/2019/11/23/letat-major-des-armees-explique-les-pertes-de-larmee-malienne-par-la-jeunesse-de-ses-soldats-sous-equipes/>

improvements and blaming France and other foreign allies for failing to contribute to national security. Malians, both civilians and members of the armed forces, demand urgent change.

While I am doing the last edits on this dissertation in August 2020, a new coup has been staged, this time with senior officers and support from all the armed forces, following several massive protests around the country.

When I first designed this research, I thought of Sanogo as a figure that channelled history, carried by a Hegelian *Weltgeist*, as I focused on an event that lasted few weeks, ignoring the longer-term crisis. Now, in recalling the conversation with Colonel-Major Sega Sissoko pointing out something more fundamental to the psyche of the armed forces, I am aware of the need to look beyond the events and understand the dynamics.

This is what this dissertation has achieved: understanding mutinies and coups as more than temporary crises, to see these phenomena as longer-term dynamics. In this context, the military institution does not only stage a coup: it also changes. As the international community focuses the discussion on fast and quantifiable results based on quick and easy fixes, it has struggled to account for longer-term challenges and more complex processes. The 2012 crisis, both as a military collapse and a coup, did not happen in a void; it was the result of long-lasting institutional and sociological processes. There is no moving forward without fully acknowledging this truth.



## Chronology

### 2012

January 17<sup>th</sup>: Battle of Menaka  
January 18<sup>th</sup> : Battle of Aguelhok  
February 2<sup>nd</sup>: Protests in Bamako and Kati.  
March 8<sup>th</sup>: Women's march in Bamako.  
March 21<sup>st</sup>: Coup d'État  
March 28<sup>th</sup>: Adoption of the new constitution by the CNRDRE  
March 29<sup>th</sup>: March at the *Bourse du Travail*  
April 6<sup>th</sup>: Sanogo's resignation.  
April 8<sup>th</sup>: ATT's resignation  
April 12<sup>th</sup>: Inauguration of Dioncounda Traoré.  
April 30<sup>th</sup> : Counter-coup  
May 21<sup>st</sup>: Pro-coup protest in Bamako  
December 11<sup>th</sup>: Arrest and resignation of Prime Minister Cheikh Modibo Diarra.  
December 15<sup>th</sup>: Nomination of Django Sissoko as new prime minister.

### 2013

January 9<sup>th</sup>: Attack of Konna.  
January 11<sup>th</sup>: Operation Serval launched.  
January 25<sup>th</sup>: Liberation of Gao.  
January 28<sup>th</sup>: The MNLA retakes Kidal.  
February 5<sup>th</sup>: Liberation of Timbuktu  
February 13<sup>th</sup>: Sanogo is named at the *Comité militaire de suivi de la réforme des forces de défense et de sécurité*  
June 18<sup>th</sup> : Ouagadougou Agreements.  
July 28<sup>th</sup>: First round of the Presidential elections.  
August 11<sup>th</sup>: Run-off of the Presidential elections.  
September 4<sup>th</sup>: Inauguration of IBK.  
September 30<sup>th</sup> : Mutiny in Kati.  
November 27<sup>th</sup>: Sanogo's arrest.

### 2014

May 17<sup>th</sup>: Prime Minister Moussa Mara visits Kidal  
May 21<sup>st</sup> : Battle of Kidal

### 2015

January 5<sup>th</sup> : 1<sup>st</sup> Nampala Attack  
March 7<sup>th</sup> : Attack against La Terrasse  
May 15<sup>th</sup>: Signature of the Algiers Agreements by the government and the *Plateforme*.  
June 20<sup>th</sup>: Signature of the Algiers Agreements by the CMA.  
August 7<sup>th</sup> : Attack against Hotel Le Byblos, Sévaré.  
November 20<sup>th</sup> : Attack against Radisson Blu, Bamako.

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## ANNEX I. List of Interviews

Code	Title	Date	Location
BKO-PUT-01	Former Putschist	February 2016	Bamako
BKO-PUT-02	Former Putschist	April 2016	Bamako
EM-OFF-01	Officer	April 2016	Chief of Staff Office
EM-OFF-02	Officer	June 2016	Chief of Staff Office
EM-OFF-03	Officer	October 2016	Chief of Staff Office
EM-NCO-01	Non-commissioned Officer	June 2016	Chief of Staff Office
EM-NCO-02	Non-commissioned Officer	October 2016	Chief of Staff Office
EM-ADM-01	Administrative Clerk	July 2016	Chief of Staff Office
K-OFF-02	Trainer and Officer	July 2016	Kati
K-OFF-01	Officer	June 2016	Kati
K-NCO-01	Non-commissioned Officer	April 2016	Kati
K-SOL-01	Soldier	February 2016	Kati
K-ADM-01	Clerk	April 2016	Kati
K-NCO-02	Non-commissioned Officer	February 2016	Kati
BKO-Off-01	Officer	February 2016	Bamako
BKO-NCO-01	Non-commissioned Officer	April 2016	Bamako
BKO-OFF-07	Retired officer	February 2016	Bamako
BKO-OFF-08	Retired officer	October 2016	Bamako
BKO-OFF-02	Officer	June 2016	Bamako
BKO-OFF-03	Junior Officer	April 2016	Bamako
BKO-OFF-04	Officer	April 2016	Bamako
BKO-OFF-05	Officer and Former head of school	February and October 2016	Bamako
BKO-OFF-06	Officer	October 2016	Bamako
BKO-OFF-09	Officer	January 2012	Bamako
BKO-EX-01	Foreign Military Trainer	October 2016	Bamako
BKO-EX-02	Foreign Military Trainer	October 2016	Bamako
BKO-DI-01	Political Officer	October 2016	Bamako
BKO-DI-02	Diplomate	October 2017	Bamako
PAR-OF-01	Student Officer	October 2018	Paris
BKO-EX-03	Foreign Military Facilitator	October 2019	Bamako
PAR-OF-02	Student Officer	October 2020	Paris
BKO-OFF-07	Officer and ex-putschist	February 2016	Bamako
BKO-CIV-03	Politician	June 2016	Bamako
BKO-CIV-02	Former Political Attaché to the President	June 2016	Bamako
BKO-CIV-01	Economic Operator	October 2016	Bamako

BKO-JRN-01	Journalist	February 2016	Bamako
BKO-JRN-02	Journalist	June 2016	Bamako
BKO-VET-01	Veteran	October 2016	Bamako
K-NCO-03	Non-commissioned Officer	October 2016	Kati
BKO-JUN-01	Ex-Putschist	October 2016	Bamako
BKO-NCO-02	NCO and former eau et foret	October 2016	Bamako
BKO-PR-01	Political Attaché	June 2016	Bamako
K-SOL-01	Soldier posted in Kidal	April 2016	Kati
BKO-NCO-03	Non-commissioned Officer	June 2016	Bamako
BKO-NCO-04	Non-commissioned Officer	October 2016	Bamako
BKO0-POL-01	Military Political Advisor	October 2016	bamako
BKO-OFF-10	Officer	October 2016	Bamako
K-SOL-02	Interview with a soldier	June 2016	kati
BKO-PAR-01	Interview with a parliamentarian	June 2016	Bamako
BKO-PAR-02	Interview with a parliamentarian	October 2016	Bamako
BKO-DIP-01	Interview with a diplomat	October 2016	Bamako
PAR-EX-01	Military Analyst	March 2017	Paris
KTI-WI-01	Military Widow	April 2016	Kati
KTI-WI-02	Military Widow	April 2016	Kati
KTI-WI-03	Military Widow	April 2016	Kati
WAS-DDR-01	Deserter	January 2018	Washington

## ANNEX II. List of *Grins* (focus groups)

Number	Participants	Date	
Grin 1	Soldiers in Living Quarters (6)	April 2016	Kati
Grin 2	Soldiers in Living Quarters (5)	April 2016	Kati
Grin 3	Soldiers in Living Quarters (9)	June 2016	Kati
Grin 4	Soldiers on the base (9)	June 2016	Kati
Grin 5	Berets Rouges (8)	October 2016	Bamako

## ANNEX III. Ethical Review

### 1. OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Describe the purposes of the research/project proposed. Detail the methods to be used and the research questions. Provide any other relevant background which will allow the reviewers to contextualise your research or project activities.  
**Include questionnaires/checklists as attachments, if appropriate.**

My research project aims at studying the causes of the Malian military collapse and the following coup from a rank-and-file perspective. More precisely, it aims at studying the endogenous causes of the 2012 events, and to understand the impact of the tensions between rank-and-file soldiers and the hierarchy in way to circumscribe the dynamics involved in the process.

The project provides two main contributions to academic research. Its first contribution is to enrich a civil-military relation theory by studying the cohesion and discipline within rank-and-file soldiers in a postcolonial army, providing a better understanding of the impact of endogenous tension within ranks. The second contribution is empirical and aims at increasing contextual knowledge of the 2012 crisis in Mali, as emerging narratives over events remain contested, notably a narrative based on fragmentation within the army.

This project is divided in two parts using two complementary methods.

1) *Methods for inductive process tracing*

- Semi-structured interviews with several actors: political actors, civil society, military members, observers, academics and journalists;
- Mapping of the actors during the crisis: establishing a network analysis of who has been involved.
- Archival analysis: articles and news footage (including my own archives), transcript from the investigation on Amadou Haya Sanogo, police reports.

2) *Methods for ethnographic work and interpretative methods*

- Semi-structured interviews with soldiers, senior members and veterans (similar to Wood's methods).
- Focus group: The goal will be to compare and contrast how a "group culture" differs and frame memories and understanding of the army.
- Participant observation: Participating in daily life on the base, and observing daily trainings. Assessing difference between military and civilian culture in terms of occupation, geographical separation and organization of daily life, routine and professionalization.
- Discursive analysis: re-listening to the audio footage, coding it and see how the discourse about the role of the military has evolved, and what is the evolution of the power cleavages in their discourse. Secondary data will be used from veteran's interview done in 2012, and from archival analysis, mostly done in the colonial and postcolonial archives.

## 1. OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

## 2. SOURCES OF FUNDING

The organisation, individual or group providing finance for the study/project. If you do not require funding or are self-funded, please put 'not applicable'

This research is funded through a University studentship.

## 3. RISKS OR COSTS TO PARTICIPANTS

What risks or costs to the participants are entailed in involvement in the study/project? Are there any potential physical, psychological or disclosure dangers that can be anticipated? What is the possible benefit or harm to the subject or society from their participation or from the study/project as a whole? What procedures have been established for the care and protection of participants (e.g. insurance, medical cover) and the control of any information gained from them or about them?

It is not anticipated that there will be any physical dangers relating directly to the involvement in the research project. The risks and costs are anticipated primarily to the possibility of my use of the data, which describes people or the armed forces in such a way that it causes them detrimental reputational, and ultimately financial effects.

### **Risks for civilian participants and members of the military hierarchy during interviews**

All interviews will be made anonymous and confidential. Possible issues will be discussed with interviewees prior to the meeting, on the basis of a description (provided orally or by email during the arrangement of the interview) of the research. These particular interviewees are anticipated to be sophisticated policy actors or members of bureaucracies, and therefore able to make their own judgement as to the information they wish to impart. I will thus make everything to be

They will be given the information and opportunity to assess and discuss possible consequences of the research, and to provide consent accordingly.

Informed consent will not refrain me to constantly reassess possible harm. However, given the sophistication of the actors with whom I will be working, I will take their own estimation of harm to shape my own understanding, and take their own aims. I will offer to share the transcripts or notes with interviewees, and give them a limited time period to redact statements (three months). In particular, in the event that they seek anonymity, but the content of their work makes it possible to identify them, I will specifically raise the point with them, discuss it, and follow their lead on use of data.

Interview will be conducted in the interviewee's office or any space that is deemed secure enough by the interviewer and the interviewees. I do not intend to use a recorder.

### 3. RISKS OR COSTS TO PARTICIPANTS

If I do, I will encrypt data, and keep recordings on the cloud, erasing as fast as possible physical traces.

#### **Risk for rank-and-file participants from the armed forced**

All interviews will also be made anonymous and confidential. I will seek to be clear about my role and purpose with any participants in the research. Issues will be discussed with subjects in person. I will discuss with them openly, and throughout the research, the possibility of doing harm, since participants are better placed to evaluate risk than myself. I intend to constantly remind participants that they can withdraw from the study, and make several follow-up visits to ensure their willingness into the project. I intend to explain clearly and in simple words the process to participants, as many of them are likely to not be literate.

In this case, all participations will be anonymous and confidential to advert any possible harm.

To ensure the confidentiality and the anonymity, notes will be coded, and kept safely in physical form, as it might be difficult to ensure the safety of digital recordings during travels.

#### ***Positionality:***

There is a risk that many of the actors and interviewees conflate my position as a researcher with the one I held before as a journalist. I intend to make clear the purpose of my new activities, and ensure that long-lasting personal relationships established while working as a journalist have a minimal impact on how participants relate to my research. This will be overcome by insisting on discussing ethics at the beginning of any correspondence or discussion, with the intention of clarifying the standing of the interaction. I will henceforth highlight my potential contribution to research to civil-military relation theory, and will identify key areas of military and civilian culture that will elucidate theory.

There is also a risk that some participants in the ethnographic process confuse me with donors as most of the foreigners intervening in those issues in recent years have been mandated by a national government. I also intend to reaffirm my independence, and that there is no political or fundraising agenda behind my activities.

In all cases, I will reiterate my academic background, and will ensure that gatekeepers from well-established institutions do present me as an academic researcher.

*(Please note this box will expand as much as you need to complete this section).*

#### 4. RECRUITMENT/SELECTION PROCEDURES

How will study/project participants be selected? For example will participants be selected randomly, deliberately/purposively, or using lists of people provided by other organisations (see section 11 on Third Party Data)?

Participants during the process tracing phase have been selected for their role or position in relation to the military collapse, or their extensive knowledge of the Malian military. I already have their contact from prior professional experiences. Once again, I intend to make clear the purpose of my new functions. In the event that I obtain any contact details through a third party source, I will refer those so identified to the source of the information – and will ask permission from the source/referrer to do so.

Concerning participants in the ethnographic phase of the research project, I intend to use a snowballing technique through contacts I already know, and then carefully select new participants, looking at possibilities to be introduced to new gatekeepers. In case of obtaining contact details through gatekeepers, I will also refer those so identified to the source of the information – and will ask permission from the source/referrer to do so. I will ensure that participants are aware of their option to withdraw from the study. For people included by chance in events, for example, I will seek to ensure that, as soon as possible, they are aware of my purpose and role. I will clearly outline the conditions of the process that have been listed in the oral consent form strategy, also offering them an opportunity to be ignored from my activities. To ensure confidentiality, I intend to avoid using the higher hierarchy. Although, while looking for new sources, I am likely to interview Non-Commission Officers (NCO) or lower-ranked officers in way to be introduced to rank-and-file soldiers, as they share facilities and socialize with their subordinates. Before to process, I will ensure that: 1) NCOs are not interfering with the study in any negative ways (notably by selecting the soldiers that would provide comments in their favour); 2) make sure that they understand clearly the goal of my research as they are also among the population that I intend to study.

#### 5. PARTICIPANTS IN DEPENDENT RELATIONSHIPS

Is there any sense in which participants might be 'obliged', to participate – for example in the case of project beneficiaries, students, prisoners or patients – or are volunteers being recruited? If participants in dependent relationships will be included, what will you do to ensure that their participation is voluntary?

I am concerned that some participants might feel obliged to participate in the study during the ethnographic part of the research, as this part of the research will be done on a military neighbourhood. I will therefore contact participants personally without interference with the hierarchy, and will ensure that they understand my independence towards any Malian institution. I intend to constantly reiterate that participation is voluntary, and to explain that this will remain confidential and anonymous. I will respect the will of participants to ignore me, to opt-out, or to withdraw their contribution later on. I will also attempt to minimize the intervention of my gatekeepers in way to avoid unnecessary peer pressure.

*(Please note this box will expand as much as you need to complete this section).*

#### 6. VULNERABLE INDIVIDUALS

Specify whether the research will include children, people with mental illness or other potentially vulnerable groups. If so, please explain the necessity of involving

## 6. VULNERABLE INDIVIDUALS

these individuals as research participants and what will be done to facilitate their participation.

No vulnerable individuals will be interviewed during the process.

*(Please note this box will expand as much as you need to complete this section).*

## 7. PAYMENTS AND INCENTIVES

Will payment or any other incentive, such as a gift or free services, be made to any participant? If so, please specify and state the level of payment to be made and/or the source of the funds/gift/free service to be used. Please explain the justification for offering payment or other incentives.

I do not intend to offer any payments or other incentives during the process.

## 8. CONSENT

Please give details of how consent is to be obtained. Participants must be aware of their entitlement to withdraw consent and at what point in the study/project that entitlement lapses. A copy of the proposed consent form, along with a separate information sheet, written in simple, non-technical language **MUST** accompany this proposal form as an **ATTACHMENT**.

### **For interviews during process tracing:**

Consent will be obtained, initially, during the interview itself orally, having had the purpose explained and an information sheet provided. The sheet is attached. It will then be confirmed by email after the event, having shared the written-out transcripts with the interviewees. This will give the interviewees time to reflect on the information they have provided, and to redact as appropriate. Email confirmation will be considered sufficient permission.

### **For interview with rank-and-file soldiers:**

There is a huge suspicion associated with written and formal documents. The form in itself could compromise the confidentiality of the study. More importantly, many participants face literacy challenges, which make me believe that they will not read it carefully. There is thus need to have a dynamic process that will ensure that participants understand their consent.

Therefore I intend to use an oral consent checklist with exhaustive oral explanation for my research project. This will be viewed as a process, which must be revisited throughout, with a constant reiteration of the points of the checklist during the research relationship. Consent will be sought at several moment during research. I will also announce my presence in any specific event I attend, through a combination of methods (including publicly introducing myself as a researcher, prior emails to participants and several discussions ahead of field research with possible gatekeepers). I attached in an appendix to this form a checklist for the oral consent strategy.

## 9. CULTURAL, SOCIAL, GENDER-BASED CHARACTERISTICS

What consideration have you given to the cultural context and sensitivities? How have cultural, social and/or gender-based characteristics influenced the research design, and how might these influence the way you carry out the research and how the research is experienced by participants? For example, might your gender affect your ability to do interviews with or ask certain questions from a person of a different gender; might it affect the responses you get or compromise an interviewee? How might your position /status as a UK university based researcher affect such interactions?

Mali is an open society where harsh criticisms are shared without fear of retribution, and this in spite of a legacy of coups and authoritarian regimes in the past. In many occasions, I have seen civilians and military criticizing their leaders in front of my camera, stating their name and position. This trend minimizes any risk that participants can face during the study, without deresponsibilizing me from ensuring that confidentiality and anonymity are fully respected. All means should be taken to ensure this.

Military culture emphasized respect for the hierarchy and seniority. Although this is not relevant to the study, for the good functioning of the overall research, it will be necessary to properly greet upper rank members of the military. This will be done during process tracing,

## 9. CULTURAL, SOCIAL, GENDER-BASED CHARACTERISTICS

and will be conducted in such a way that rank-and-file soldiers do not see me as too friendly to their superiors. Similarly, I intend to pay respect to veterans (i.e. visiting them and presenting myself), which are not necessarily part of the hierarchy, to ensure that I respect local customs.

Level of literacy is an important factor during the study, as several rank-and-file soldiers face major challenges in reading and writing. I intend to use simple French, and to avoid the use of written documents in way to minimize impact on research. I am also worried that my status as a white male in higher education might be threatening for Malians who are struggling with French. I intend to compensate by talking slowly, using easy-to-understand words, and actively listening to interviewees. I will also as much as possible to make use of my basic Bambara, and I will adopt a humble attitude towards participants.

I wish to include a gender component in the study as I know several women in the military. Although, women are marginalized in the Malian Armed forces, often being ascribed bureaucratic functions. I will nevertheless attempt to outreach to them.

## 10. CONFIDENTIALITY

Please state who will have access to the data and what measures which will be adopted to maintain the confidentiality of the research subject and to comply with data protection requirements e.g. will the data be anonymised?

My supervisors (Ben Jones, Yvan Guichaoua) and myself will have access to the data. They will agree to keep the data as confidential, and not pass it on.

During process tracing, empirical and interview data will be kept confidential. Names and identifying features will be removed from transcripts and notes, which will be coded and kept securely in both physical and digital form. The key will be kept separately, and likewise securely. I do not intend to use recording device. A recorder can be easily stolen or confiscated, leaving a risk that data is used. A recording device attracts unnecessary attention and can be perceived as a sign of wealth.

During the ethnographic work, confidentiality is one of my main concerns in a country where intimacy cannot be guaranteed, and where the community can always trace where I am. The most effective way to protect confidentiality appears to offer anonymity from the beginning to participants, and then cumulate interviews, so it will be difficult to trace back life history to a particular individual.

## 11. THIRD PARTY DATA

Will you require access to data on participants held by a third party? In cases where participants will be identified from information held by another party (for example, a doctor or school) describe the arrangements you intend to make to gain access to this information.

I intend to use some third party data. None of third party data concerns participants directly, nor will identify participants. I intend to ask for data about the number of rank-and-file soldiers, and other valuable statistics that are unlikely to be sensitive. I will made an official

## 11. THIRD PARTY DATA

request with the Malian Armed Forces, although all data is already from the public domain, and already freely accessible to any citizen.

Similarly, I intend to get access to records of the investigation on the coup. I will make an official request to the Prosecutor. Records are public, and can be consulted by any concerned citizen on demand, and therefore do not need special protection from my behalf.

## 12. PROTECTION OF RESEARCHER (THE APPLICANT)

Please state briefly any precautions being taken to protect your health and safety. Have you taken out travel and health insurance for the full period of the research? If not, why not. Have you read and acted upon FCO travel advice (website)? If acted upon, how?

### **Health**

I will subscribe to the University's insurance, even if my spouse's insurance covers all my health cost, including air evacuation.

I have consulted a travel nurse at the UEA medical centre. I already have all the vaccinations needed. Vaccination is up-to-date, and I intend to adhere to a malaria prophylaxis prescribed by the nurse. As I have been recommended, I will carry a first aid kit, including a thermometer, disinfectant, Band-Aids and other medical items.

I have lived for a year in Bamako in 2011-2012, and have travelled several times since then. I already have a European-trained general practitioner in Bamako, and I am registered in a private medical clinic. I have visited those medical facilities in the past. I am also familiar with health care procedures in Mali, including emergency and repatriation procedures. I also have a dentist.

### **Safety**

I have read and reacted upon FCO travel advice. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office advises against all but essential travel in Bamako. All research activities will be in Bamako, with no travel outside the capital. While the UK offers limited consular services, the Canadian embassy (which I am a citizen) offers extensive services and support, including providing support to British nationals. There is a French military presence in Bamako, and an agreement between France and Canada for the protection and the evacuation of nationals. France and Canada both maintain a military presence. Travel plans will be updated according events and FCO travel advices.

I have a long experience in conflict and post-conflict countries as a journalist based in West Africa from 2005 to 2015, and I have lived in Bamako in 2011 and 2012. I am therefore familiar with Bamako, and have an extensive network of professional and personal relations to support me. Bamako is considered a family duty station by most Embassies. Nevertheless, I have established a safety strategy in my security assessment, which I included in appendix.

## 13. PROTECTION OF OTHER RESEARCHERS

Please state briefly any precautions being taken to protect the health and safety of other researchers and others associated with the project (as distinct from the participants or the applicant). If there are no other researchers, please put 'not applicable'

I do not intend to work with other researchers.

### 13. PROTECTION OF OTHER RESEARCHERS

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### 14. RESEARCH PERMISSIONS (INCLUDING ETHICAL CLEARANCE) IN HOST COUNTRY AND/OR ORGANISATION

The UEA's staff and students will seek to comply with travel and research guidance provided by the British Government and the Governments (and Embassies) of host countries. This pertains to research permission, in-country ethical clearance, visas, health and safety information, and other travel advisory notices where applicable. If this research project is being undertaken outside the UK, has formal permission/a research permit been sought to conduct this research? Please describe the action you have taken and if a formal permit has not been sought please explain why this is not necessary/appropriate (for example, for very short studies it is not always appropriate to apply for formal clearance).

No research permits are necessary to conduct research in Mali. During the process tracing, I will not need any prior approval of the authorities. I will use this time to meet with the Malian Armed Forces Chief of Staff to describe my project and ensure the Armed Forces written support. I already discussed with several members of the Armed Forces of the project, and they have provided oral support. I will also permission from the Ministry of Defence.

I am in the process of applying for a one-year multi-entry visa for Mali, which has been granted to me at several occasions in the past.

### 15. MONITORING OF RESEARCH

What procedures are in place for monitoring the research/project (by funding agency, supervisor, community, self, etc.).

I intend to communicate every Monday morning with my supervisors, with more substantive meetings when needed. Ongoing issues will be discussed. I intend to hold a more in-depth mid-term meeting halfway in the field research to discuss the overall state of the research process, and to eventually readjust my strategy in way to improve ethical standards ahead of the ethnographic work.

### 16. ANTICIPATED USE OF RESEARCH DATA ETC

What is the anticipated use of the data, forms of publication and dissemination of findings etc.?

The main purpose of the data is to be used for my thesis. I might use data for other academic proceedings, including peer-reviewed articles or conference presentation. Data will not be make available to other researchers, and their use in other forms will respect concerns raise in this application.

## 17. FEEDBACK TO PARTICIPANTS

Will the data or findings of this research/project be made available to participants? If so, specify the form and timescale for feedback. What commitments will be made to participants regarding feedback? How will these obligations be verified?

Feedback will be offered during and after the research projects to participants.

For process tracing, transcripts will be made available to interview participants, and they will be given the opportunity to redact the transcript within three months. I will offer a possibility to receive my thesis by email, for whoever is interested.

I intend to make a presentation in French for the Armed Forces in way to increase knowledge about military social sciences.

For rank-and-file soldiers, I intend to offer in-person feedback. Since the level of literacy is low, and few used a computer, I will made several visit, and ensure that the process is being done.

## 18. DURATION OF PROJECT

*The start date should not be within the 2 months after the submission of this application, to allow for clearance to be processed.*

Start date	End date
January 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2016	January 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2017

## 19. PROJECT LOCATION(S)

Please state location(s) where the research will be carried out.

**Bamako, Mali. Possible interviews in Dakar, Senegal.**

## ANNEX IV. Informed Consent & Strategy

### **Written information sheet for consent (to be translated in French)**

This will be emailed with a personal email explaining why the participant has been selected and what are the researcher's particular expectations for the meeting.

#### *Researcher:*

This study is conducted by Marc-André Boisvert, PhD candidate at the University of East Anglia, United Kingdom. The research is funded by the University of East Anglia.

Email: [m.boisvert@uea.ac.uk](mailto:m.boisvert@uea.ac.uk)

Phone number: to be determined

#### *Nature of the research:*

The research aims at studying the causes of the Malian military collapse and the following coup from a rank-and-file perspective. More precisely, it aims at studying the endogenous causes of the 2012 events, and to understand the impact of the tensions between rank-and-file soldiers and the hierarchy in way to circumscribe the dynamics involved in the process.

#### *Participation*

The participant will be asked constantly asked or feedback. Questions during the process are more than welcomed.

#### *Procedures:*

Participants will be interviewed for about 30-60 minutes.

#### *Consent:*

By accepting this interview, the participant agrees to take part in the above University of East Anglia research project. The participant has had the project explained and he/she has read and understood the Information Sheet, which he/she may keep for records. He/she understands that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:

- Be interviewed by the researcher
- Allow the interview to be audio taped, if necessary
- Make myself available for a further interview should that be required

The participant understands that any information provided is confidential, and that no information disclosed will lead to the identification of any individual in the reports on the project, either by the researcher or by any other party.

The participant understands that the researcher will do everything he can to prevent my identity from being made public. There is nevertheless a risk that information might be divulged.

The participant understands that participation is voluntary, that he/she can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that he/she can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

#### *Withdrawing procedure*

The participant can withdraw from the study without any justification. He/she will be able to do so within three months of the meeting. I will leave all my contact information to participants to ensure that they can do so.

#### *Information act*

He/she consents to the processing of his/her personal information for the purposes of this research study. The participant understands that such information will be treated as strictly

confidential and handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Data collected during interviews will be used for my PhD dissertation, and academic proceedings.

### **Check List for Oral Informed Consent**

Participants will be briefed on all of this point, and will be remind at several occasions during interviews. Participants will received a card with basic information on how to contact the researcher.

1. *Researcher:* This study is conducted by Marc-André Boisvert, PhD candidate at the University of East Anglia, United Kingdom.
2. *Purpose of the Research:* The research aims at studying the causes of the Malian military collapse and the following coup from a rank-and-file perspective. More precisely, it aims at studying the endogenous causes of the 2012 events, and to understand the impact of the tensions between rank-and-file soldiers and the hierarchy in way to circumscribe the dynamics involved in the process.
3. *Selection:* I will explain to every participant why I select them, and why I what are my expectations from the process
4. *Procedures:* Participants will be briefed on the length of the interview (30-60 minutes), and on ongoing participant ethnography activities.
5. *Confidentiality and anonymity:* All information provided by participants will remain confidential and will be anonymized, including name or rank/position. No information that I disclose will lead to the identification of any individual in the reports on the project, either by the researcher or by any other party. The researcher will be done to prevent identity from being made public.
6. *Voluntariness:* Participants are volunteers, and should not be pressured to participate. Participant can choose not to participate in part or the entire project. They can also withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.
7. *Feedback and questions:* The participant's feedback and questions are welcomed, and this even after the interview. I will constantly re-emphasize during interviews these issues.
8. *Selection:* I will explain to the participants the reasons I select them, and what I expect from them.
9. *Modification/Retraction:* The participant can modify its statement or withdraw from the study without any justification. He/she will be able to do so within three months of the meeting. I will leave all my contact information to participants to ensure that they can do so.
10. *Risk:* The researcher will try to ensure anonymity and confidentiality through diverse procedures to ensure that no confidential information are being divulgated. Although, there is a risk that some information be divulgated.
11. *Benefits:* I cannot promise that I can offer any direct benefits to participant.
12. *Use of data:* Data collected will be used for Mr Boisvert's Phd dissertation, and academic proceedings target to an academic audience.

## ANNEX V. Code of Conduct of the Armed Forces

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**Date:** 1/10/1997

### **CODE DE CONDUITE DES FORCES ARMÉES ET DE SÉCURITÉ DU MALI<sup>363</sup>**

#### **TABLE DES MATIÈRES**

##### **NOTE INTRODUCTIVE**

###### **TITRE I**

Des devoirs des Forces Armées et de sécurité envers l'état (Article 1 à 6)

###### **TITRE II**

Des rapports entre les Forces Armées et de sécurité et les populations civiles (Article 7 à 15)

###### **TITRE III**

Des rapports entre les Forces Armées et les Forces de Sécurité (Article 16 à 20)

###### **TITRE IV**

Des Forces Armées et de Sécurité et les droits de l'homme, le droit international humanitaire (Article 21 à 37)

##### **NOTE INTRODUCTIVE**

Au Mali, comme dans toute jeune démocratie, le respect des droits des citoyens et des lois de la République, ne peut pleinement se réaliser que grâce à un rôle redéfini des Forces Armées, dans le but de les intégrer davantage dans la construction nationale.

Cette oeuvre prend en compte notamment, les rapports fonctionnels entre les Forces Armées et les différentes composantes de la société civile et du pouvoir politique.

Dans bon nombre de pays, beaucoup d'expériences démocratiques ont tourné court, parce que les relations entre les autorités civiles et militaires n'avaient pas été harmonisées sur la base du respect mutuel et de la complémentarité.

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<sup>363</sup> This is the document provided by the *État-Major*. It contains several typos that, at first, made me doubt of its legitimacy. Two other officers confirmed that this was the original document.

Aujourd'hui au Mali, cette harmonisation est d'autant plus nécessaire que le pays se trouve dans la phase de consolidation de la culture et des institutions démocratiques. En effet, le renforcement du processus de la démocratisation ainsi que l'application du Pacte National pour la paix au Nord qui figurent parmi les objectifs majeurs du gouvernement de la République du Mali, ne sauraient aboutir qu'avec le concours effectif des Forces Armées et de Sécurité.

Il est donc indéniable que ces forces restent à cet égard un pilier essentiel du pouvoir de la République, car elles garantissent la sécurité, l'intégrité territoriale et la souveraineté nationale, et de ce fait permettent au pouvoir politique de s'affirmer.

Après plus de deux décennies de régime militaire et à un moment où s'est effectuée l'intégration des ex-combattants dans les forces régulières suite à la rébellion touarègue au Nord du Mali, il est nécessaire de faire jouer un nouveau rôle à l'Armée dans le nouveau contexte socio-politique. Pour cela, il est important d'initier un processus de promotion de la confiance entre l'institution militaire et la société civile.

C'est donc dans cet esprit que s'est tenu le Séminaire sur les Relations Civils-Militaires, pour permettre aux autorités militaires et civiles d'entamer une nouvelle ère de rapports symbiotiques dans la construction nationale.

Organisé par le Gouvernement malien, en collaboration avec les Nations Unies, à Bamako, en Juillet 1996, le Séminaire a recommandé l'élaboration d'un Code de Conduite des Forces Armées dans le processus démocratique en tenant compte des rapports fonctionnels entre les populations civiles et les Forces Armées.

Ledit Code, élaboré par le Gouvernement du Mali avec l'appui du Programme des Nations Unies pour le Développement (PNUD) a fait l'objet d'un atelier d'experts tenu à Bamako, en octobre 1997 avec comme objectif principal son enrichissement.

Le présent livret de poche, portant Code de Conduite des Forces Armées et de Sécurité de la République du Mali, est le fruit de la coopération exemplaire entre notre pays et la Communauté internationale dans son ensemble, le système onusien en particulier. Le Gouvernement de la République du Mali se félicite tout particulièrement du concours remarquable du Programme des Nations Unies pour le Développement et du Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies aux Droits de l'homme, dans le parachèvement de ce projet.

Destiné à l'usage de toutes les composantes des Forces Armées et de Sécurité du Mali, le style retenu est volontairement simple et direct, agrémenté de dessins pour en faciliter la compréhension, et répondant par là même à l'un des principes clefs

de l'éthique militaire, faite essentiellement d'ordre et d'instructions.

A ce effet, le présent document intègre une multitude de normes internationales de droits de l'homme tirées de nombreuses sources internationales y relatives.

Le Ministre des Forces Armées et des Anciens Combattants.

## **TITRE I**

### **Des Devoirs des Forces Armées et de Sécurité Envers L'État**

ARTICLE 1.- L'Armée de la République est au service de la Nation. Sa mission est de préparer et d'assurer au besoin par la force des armes, la défense de la patrie, de la forme républicaine, des acquis démocratiques et des intérêts supérieurs de la nation.

ARTICLE 2.- L'Institution militaire est à la disposition du pouvoir politique établi conformément à la Constitution.

ARTICLE 3.- Les militaires en activité sont appelés à servir, de jour comme de nuit et partout. L'état de militaire exige en toute circonstance discipline, loyalisme et esprit de sacrifice.

ARTICLE 4.- Les militaires sont liés par le secret professionnel, sauf dérogation accordée par le Ministre chargé des armées.

ARTICLE 5.- Il est interdit aux militaires d'évoquer publiquement des questions politiques, sauf autorisation du Ministre chargé des armées.

ARTICLE 6.- Les personnels des Forces Armées et de Sécurité ne doivent pas appartenir à des milices ou à des groupes de crime organisé.

## **TITRE II**

### **Des Rapports entre les Forces Armées et de Sécurité et les Populations Civiles**

ARTICLE 7.- Les Forces Armées et de sécurité doivent respect, protection et assistance aux populations civiles.

ARTICLE 8.- Les relations entre les Forces Armées et de Sécurité et les populations civiles doivent être harmonieuses et empreintes de confiance réciproque.

ARTICLE 9.- Dans leur relations avec les populations civiles, les militaires

doivent éviter tout acte ou comportement pouvant déshonorer l'uniforme.

ARTICLE 10.- Les missions des Forces Armées et de Sécurité sont exécutées conformément aux règlements en vigueur.

Dans l'emploi des forces, l'autorité politique et les autres forces sociales doivent:

- respecter la neutralité politique des Forces Armées et de Sécurité;
- proscrire les campagnes et propagandes politiques et syndicales dans les casernes.

ARTICLE 11.- L'Etat fera en sorte que toute décision d'employer les Forces Armées et de Sécurité à des missions internes soit conforme aux lois et règlements en vigueur. Ces missions seront accomplies sous le contrôle effectif des autorités administratives.

ARTICLE 12.- Les Forces Armées et de Sécurité ne doivent pas recourir à l'usage de la force et des armes à feu pour la dispersion des réunions illégales, mais non violentes. Toutefois, lorsqu'il s'agit de réunions violentes, elles doivent recourir à l'usage de la force minimale, et traiter les populations civiles de façon humaine dans le respect des lois en vigueur.

ARTICLE 13.- Les Forces Armées et de Sécurité doivent s'abstenir de provoquer ou de participer à des actes de pillage, dégât de denrées, de marchandises ou autres effets et à tout acte illicite de nature à porter atteinte aux intérêts économiques du Mali.

ARTICLE 14.- Le service national, les débats fréquents entre civils et militaires et les campagnes de sensibilisation et d'information favorisent la compréhension entre les Forces Armées et de Sécurité et les populations civiles.

ARTICLE 15.- Les Forces Armées et de Sécurité contribuent dans la mesure de leurs compétences au développement économique et social du pays.

### **TITRE III**

#### **Des Rapports entre les Forces Armées et les Forces de Sécurité**

ARTICLE 16.- Les Forces Armées et de Sécurité sont utilisées pour les besoins de sécurité interne et externe du pays. Dans l'exécution de leurs missions, ces forces entretiennent des rapports permanents:

- en temps de paix;
- en temps de troubles, et
- en temps de guerre.

ARTICLE 17.- En temps de paix, le maintien de l'ordre est une mission de police. Les Forces Armées et de Sécurité collaborent en matière d'échange de

reenseignements, de formation des personnels, de mission de police et de préparation à la mobilisation.

ARTICLE 18.- En temps de trouble, le maintien de l'ordre est assuré par la Police, la Gendarmerie et la Garde Nationale. Les Forces Armées interviennent sur réquisition, en tant que dernier recours, pour appuyer les Forces de Sécurité.

ARTICLE 19.- Le maintien de l'ordre incombe à l'autorité civile et relève exclusivement du Ministre de l'Intérieur. L'autorité militaire ne peut agir que sur réquisition de l'autorité civile conformément à la réglementation en vigueur.

ARTICLE 20.- En temps de guerre, la Gendarmerie Nationale et la Garde Nationale participent d'office à la défense opérationnelle du territoire aux côtés des Armées.

#### **TITRE IV**

#### **Des Forces Armées et de Sécurité et les Droites de L'Homme, le Droit International Humanitaire**

ARTICLE 21.- Le recrutement et la mobilisation des personnels des Forces Armées et de Sécurité seront en accord avec les obligations et engagements de respect des droits de l'home et des libertés fondamentales stipulés dans la Constitution de la République du Mali.

ARTICLE 22.- Les Forces Armées et de Sécurité doivent bénéficier d'une formation appropriée en matiere de Droit Constitutionnel, Droit de l'Homme, Droit International Humanitaire et de tout autre instrument juridique international visant la protection des droits fondamentaux de la personne humaine.

ARTICLE 23.- Les militaires jouissent de tous les droits et libertés reconnus aux citoyens sous réserve des limitations qu'impose le Statu Général des Militaires.

ARTICLE 24.- Les opinions ou croyances philosophique, religieuse ou politique sont libres. Elles ne peuvent cependant être exprimées qu'en dehors du service et avec la réserve exigée de l'état de militaire. Cette règle ne fait pas obstacle au libre exercice du culte dans les enceintes militaires.

ARTICLE 25.- La responsabilité des militaires demeure entière s'ils violent les droits de l'homme dans l'exécution d'ordres manifestement illégaux.

ARTICLE 26.- Les Forces Armées et de Sécurité doivent éviter de porter atteinte à la vie ou à la intégrité physique des personnes en toute circonstance, sauf cas de légitime défense puor soi ou pour autrui.

ARTICLE 27.- Tout individu a droit à la sécurité de sa personne et à la liberté de mouvement. Son arrestation doit être conforme aux procédures prescrites par la loi. Il doit être informé au moment de son arrestation des chefs d'accusation retenus contre lui.

Il doit être présenté devant l'autorité judiciaire dans le respect des délais prescrits par la loi.

ARTICLE 28.- Les militaires doivent accorder aux membres de leurs familles, à l'intérieur comme à l'extérieur des casernes, le droit de jouir des droits et libertés fondamentales reconnus à toute personne civile.

ARTICLE 29.- Les réfugiés, les non-nationaux, les apatrides, les mineurs, les personnes appartenant à des minorités, les femmes et les personnes âgées, ne doivent souffrir d'aucune discrimination en raison de leur statut.

ARTICLE 30.- Pendant les périodes d'état d'exception (état de siège ou état d'urgence) les actions des Forces Armées et de Sécurité doivent être conformes à la loi et aux normes internationales de droits de l'homme.

ARTICLE 31.- Dans tous les cas, sont formellement interdits: en toutes circonstances le meurtre, la torture, le châtement corporel, la mutilation, les outrages à la dignité humaine, les traitements cruels inhumains ou dégradants, y compris la flagellation et les coups et bastonnades, la prise d'otages et la punitions collective et tout acte visant à détruire l'intégrité physique et morale des individus.

ARTICLE 32.- Il est interdit aux personnels des Forces Armées et de Sécurité de dépouiller tout blessé, malade, naufragé ou mort ou d'exercer des violences dans des zones d'opération. Ils doivent porter aide et assistance à tout blessé, malade ou naufragé.

ARTICLE 33.- L'emploi d'insignes distinctifs et emblèmes, défini par les Conventions de Genève comme étant en violation des lois et coutumes de la guerre, est prohibé.

ARTICLE 34.- Pendant les troubles internes, les militaires rendent compte à l'autorité hiérarchique, de l'utilisation des armes à feu. Les militaires s'identifient au préalable, font des sommations claires avant d'utiliser l'arme à feu.

ARTICLE 35.- Après l'utilisation des armes à feu, les militaires fournissent à toute personne blessée, une assistance médicale. Les familles des victimes sont tenues informées, une enquête est ouverte si nécessaire sur l'incident, et un rapport dressé.

ARTICLE 36.- Les enquêtes doivent être menées dans le strict respect de la loi. Au

cours de leurs enquêtes, les Forces Armées et de Sécurité doivent traiter les victimes de violations de droits de l'homme avec compréhension et considération. Aucun individu ne doit être obligé à témoigner contre sa propre personne.

ARTICLE 37.- Le présent Code de Conduite sera enseigné, diffusé et appliqué au sein des unités des Forces Armées et de Sécurité et fera l'objet d'une large sensibilisation des populations sur tout l'étendue du territoire de la République du Mali.

Source:

Ministère des Forces Armées et des Anciens Combattants

## **ANNEX VI. List of Arrests on 21 March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2012**

### **Civilians:**

Modibo Sidibé, former Prime Minister, 2) Soumaïla Cissé, presidential candidate, 3) Babaly Bâ, CEO of the CMS bank, 4) Adama Sangaré, Bamako's Mayor, 5) Maître Kassoum Tapo, Mopti's member of Parliament and well-known human right lawyer, 6) Tiéman Coulibaly, leader of opposition party UDD, close to ATT, 7) Bani Kanté, former presidential adviser, 8) Natiè Pléah, former interior minister, 9) Bakary Togola, president of APCAM et deputy president of PDES, 10) Dianessy, Bafoulabé's MP and member of URD, 11) Jeamille Bitar, president of the Conseil économique, social et culturel (CESC) and Presidential candidate for the Union des Mouvements et associations du Mali (Umam), 12) Abdoul Wahab Berthé, public service minister, 13) Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga, foreign affairs minister, 14) Sidiki Konaté, minister of communication and government spokesperson, 15) Agatham Ag Alhassane, Agriculture minister, 16) Marafa Traoré, minister of, 17) Mohamed El Moctar, minister of tourism.

### **Militaries:**

1) Général Mamadou Diagouraga, head of the police, 2) Général Sadio Gassama, former defence and veterans minister, 3) Général Hamidou Sissoko, former personal adviser to ATT, 4) Général Kafougouna Koné, ancient MATCL, 5) Col Mamadou Traoré, former head of civil protection, 6) Général Broulaye Koné, former head of the National Guard, 7) Général Mady Boubou Kamissoko, ancien head of the Gendarmerie nationale, 8) Général Gabriel Poudiougou former army chief of staff, 9) the head of the Bamako's brigade fluviale, 10) Général Bamba, general secretary of the Ministry of Defense, 11) Général Souleymane Yacouba Sidibé, head of peacekeeping school.