**FRICTION ALONG THE SAHELIAN FAULT LINE:
AZAWAD AND ETHNIC CONFLICT IN NORTHERN MALI**

Policy Briefing presented to:
Wayne G. Wouters

Andrei Belik, Nela Grebovic and Jeff Willows

Privy Council Office

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CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS

The Tuareg peoples – or alternatively, the *Kel Tamasheq* – are a territorially concentrated, mostly nomadic Berber ethnic group in the desert regions of northeastern Mali, southern Algeria, western Niger and parts of Libya and Burkina-Faso (See Appendix, Figure 1).[1] There are approximately 500,000 Kel Tamasheq in Mali,[2] and various factions of this population have revolted against the central government in Bamako four times since independence. The first of these uprisings occurred in 1963-64, and have been followed by armed conflicts from 1990-96, 2006-09,[3] and since January 2012. Consistent with the first, second, fourth and fifth of Edward Azar's propositions for social conflict, the first three rebellions were intrastate conflicts motivated by attempts to secure greater autonomy within the Malian state due to security issues stemming from socioeconomic marginalisation and threats to Kel Tamasheq identity.[4] Gurr's invocation of Huntington's assertion that ethnic conflicts are likely to occur along civilisational fault lines also appears germane to both the current and past ethnic conflicts in Mali.[5]

Though it is essentially a domestic conflict, the nature of the current Kel Tamasheq revolt appears unprecedented for three reasons. First, it has assumed overtly religious overtones through the emergence of the Kel Tamasheq-Arab, fundamentalist Islamic movement *Ansar Dine*, which seeks to impose Sharia Law throughout the whole of Northern Mali.[6] Second, the current rebellion involves actors with explicit involvement in international terrorism, as Ansar Dine is believed to be allied with *al Qaeda in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb* (AQIM) and its offshoot the *Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa* (MUJAO).[7] Third, it is also characterised by an overt secessionist movement manifested by the declaration of independence of the Republic of Azawad on 6 April 2012 (See Appendix, Figure 2).[8] Recent reports indicate that representatives of these groups concluded a joint agreement to form the Council of the Islamic State of Azawad on 26 May 2012,[9] while other sources suggest that the parties may have reneged on this agreement.[10] Nevertheless, the signatories have reportedly reached a *modus vivendi* with AQIM and Arab militias operating in Northern Mali.[11] Both the joint agreement and Azawad's declaration of independence have not been recognised by Mali or the international community.[12]

CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES AND IMPACT

Causes: The current rebellion has two main drivers: (1) the return of well-armed Kel Tamasheq soldiers to Northern Mali from Libya after the fall of Muammar Gaddafi, and (2) the Government of Mali's longstanding neglect of the region.[13] The first of these drivers constitutes what Heraclides refers to as an outflanking attempt; engendered by the heavy arsenals pilfered from Libyan arms caches and delivered to the MNLA and Ansar Dine. Manifested by a lack of economic development and a limited administrative presence, the second driver is consistent with Heraclides' claim that separatist mobilisation stems from a "perceived comparative disadvantage within the existing state."[14] As such, many Kel Tamasheq have turned to the illicit

economy while prompting those that fought in Libya to redress their grievances against Bamako by challenging and overwhelming the Malian Armed Forces since January 2012.[15] The foregoing factors are consistent with Collier and Hoeffler's claim that the level, growth and structure of income – or low per capita GDP, slow economic growth and extortionate earnings from primary commodities – pose significant conflict risk.[16]

Consequences: Led by former Libyan army colonel Mohammed Ag Najim,[17] the MNLA made particularly rapid advances against Malian Armed Forces following the coup d'état staged by the Captain Sanogo-led CNRDRE. Ansar Dine – originally on the side of the Malian Government – joined the MNLA in its efforts after the fall of Timbuktu.[18] Since this time, it is believed to have split into at least two rival factions with unclear objectives.[19] The foremost of these groups is led by Iyad ag Ghali; an instrumental figure in the Kel Tamasheq uprising of 1990-96.[20]

By the end of April 2012, an estimated 320 000 people had abandoned their residences in the wake of armed conflict between Malian Government Armed Forces and the MNLA, Ansar Dine and other armed groups.[21] As of 28 May 2012, it is believed that 144 934 are internally displaced,[22] and another 167 954 have taken refuge in Niger, Burkina Faso, Algeria and Mauritania (See Appendix, Figure 3).[23] Following the complete withdrawal of Malian Armed Forces from rebel-held areas, numerous human rights abuses have been carried out by members of the MNLA and Ansar Dine in the towns of Ansongo, Dire and Niafounke, and in the cities of Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu.[24] These include alleged acts of abduction and rape that have occurred mostly at the hands of Tamasheq-speaking MNLA soldiers and Arab militias.[25]

These groups have asserted their authority over the peoples of a prospectively sovereign Azawad by razing bars, hotels and other establishments associated with alcohol consumption and prostitution.[26] Ansar Dine has also reportedly converted public schools into madrassas for Koranic study, forced women to veil themselves, and banned male-female public interaction, football and listening to the radio.[27] In addition, both the MNLA and Ansar Dine have reportedly looted hospitals, medical facilities, government buildings, banks, schools, homes of local public officials and international aid offices and warehouses.[28] They have also pillaged churches, a bible school and a Christian radio station in Northern Mali since January 2012, which precipitated the exodus of much of its Christian population.[29]

Lastly, locals interviewed by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have reported several instances of deliberate and arbitrary beatings, killings and torture perpetrated by Ansar Dine and the MNLA.[30] In response, members of the Songhay *Ganda Koy* and *Ganda Izo* militias have committed atrocities in kind against Kel Tamasheq civilians.[31] As Mali's civil war is considered an armed conflict according to international law, members of all of these groups can be prosecuted for war crimes if they fail to uphold the terms stipulated in common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions.[32]

Impact: Despite the joint agreement concluded between the MNLA and Ansar Dine on 26 May 2012, there is evidence to suggest that Ansar Dine and AQIM exercise much greater authority in Northern Mali.[33] Partnered with AQIM, Ansar Dine has purportedly outmanoeuvred their MNLA counterparts, established Sharia Law in Timbuktu and possibly other areas, and commenced a

youth recruitment drive.[34] Complementing the findings of Collier and Hoeffler, if Ansar Dine and AQIM successfully marginalise the MNLA from other regions of Azawad, it would provide them with the policy space and secure operating base needed to expand their well-established and lucrative smuggling and kidnapping networks and establish a tax regime. This could provide these leaders with the revenue needed to better realise their terrorist aims. Therefore, the MNLA's vision of Azawad as a republic dedicated to the defense of women's rights and non-fundamentalist Islam could well remain a stillborn project subservient to Ansar Dine's aims. As such, the potential exists for future conflict in Azawad along ideological lines.

Mass migration of citizens from Kidal and Timbuktu (an estimated two-thirds of the latter's population)[35] – two of Azawad's three largest cities - in the wake of their occupation by Ansar Dine and AQIM soldiers begs the additional question of how these groups intend to direct a viable state in the emptying sands of the Sahara.[36] All of this occurs while the Malian state looks increasingly incapable of defending its territorial integrity. While the UN Security Council (UNSC) announced its interest in supporting the deployment of an African-led stabilisation force to Mali on 18 June 2012, this has yet to be backed by concrete action.[37] A UNSC intervention would seem a sage solution to proponents of Fearon, because it may deter other armed actors from launching violent sovereignty bids against regimes attempting to establish peace and reconciliation with the contending group in question.[38]

POLICY OPTIONS

A number of policy options for the Government of Canada's intervention in Mali have been assessed based on GC strategic alignment, impact, cost, issues and constraints. The risk of each particular option was weighed against Treasury Board of Canada's (TBS) Common Risk Impact Scale, which is used to assess risk based on likelihood and potential impact. The options considered are the following; while a full analysis is available in Table 1 of the Appendix:

Option 1: Status Quo. With this policy option, Canada takes no action regarding the situation in Mali. This will result in continued ethnic conflict and instability, and could set an adverse precedent for future Canadian intervention in ethnic conflicts. The Kel Tamasheq population in Mali remains at risk, and Canada may have to contend with an eventual refugee influx. Although this policy option is aligned with GC fiscal austerity and poses no additional cost, it has three associated risks: prolonged conflict, a potential refugee crisis, and the maintenance of an unfavourable 'policy laggard' reputation. Overall, this option is not recommended as it poses a very high risk.

Option 2: Quiet Diplomacy. This policy option means Canada does not take any immediate action, while waiting for official UN, European Union, and United States positions. It allows Canada to facilitate, mediate and establish best practices in order to reduce conflict. Once official positions are available, Canada should act in unison with other actors. This will contribute to effective global governance and international security and stability, as per the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade's (DFAIT) strategic priorities. Furthermore, this option is aligned with GC priorities of fiscal austerity and maintaining partnerships. By following quiet diplomacy, Canada will have additional time to assess the

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situation and act in agreement with leaders in the international sphere. However, there is a risk that conflict and instability in Mali continues until key international positions are reached while Canada's policy laggard reputation worsens. Although this option may require further investments or reallocation of GC international funding based on external decisions of proposed action, quiet diplomacy has been given the lowest risk rating of all possible options and is the recommended approach.

Option 3: Official Development Assistance and Capacity Building. With this option, Canada would provide Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Mali in order to improve government capacity and provide effective representation for the Kel Tamasheq population. It would be coordinated by the Privy Council Office (PCO) and implemented by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in conjunction with DFAIT. Aligning with GC priorities of maintaining partnerships and promoting international best practices, this option may enable Mali to deliver effective programs and services for its entire population. Though Mali is considered one of CIDA's countries of interest, Canada has suspended all bilateral aid to the Government of Mali since 26 March 2012 due to the recent coup d'état. Based on the current situation, this option requires an examination of alternative delivery mechanisms, and a reallocation of funding from other CIDA priorities. Effectuating this option requires a value-for-money study, which creates time constraints. Due to the degree of investigation required to implement this policy option, it has been given a moderate risk rating and is not recommended.

Option 4: Integration Program. This policy option centers on effective integration of the Kel Tamasheq population into Mali, focusing on government representation and mutual respect. Social integration policies would be implemented in Mali, and facilitated through information sharing with Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). The integration policy would focus on establishing commonalities between the citizens of Mali. International engagement is part of CIC's International Strategy as part of "fostering an integrated society," and coordination would be carried out by PCO. As the situation has potential refugee implications for Canada, the sharing of best practices on integration programs could prove beneficial to both Mali and Canada. However, previous integration programs in Mali have failed. A new model for integration programs would need to be developed; requiring a significant net-new financial and human resource investment from Canada. With an unknown likelihood of success and possible time constraints associated with developing a new integration strategy, this policy option has been assigned a high risk rating according to the TBS guide and is not recommended.

Option 5: Recognition of Azawad Sovereignty. This option means that Canada would independently recognise Azawad's independence and assist the Kel Tamasheq in their sovereignty bid. Although this option could potentially dissipate the current conflict, cause other countries to side with Canada, and assist Canada in relinquishing its policy laggard reputation, it causes a number of negative consequences. Following this option may precipitate a domino effect with Kel Tamasheq populations in neighbouring states. Canada is also likely to receive negative press for such a policy decision as other countries have made official stances against it. Although this option can be carried out within Canada's existing Department of National Defence (DND) budget, it would require reallocation of funding. This policy option poses a very high risk for Canada and is not recommended.

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2   Amnesty International, *Mali: Five Months of Crisis – Armed Rebellion and Military Coup.* (London: Amnesty International Publications, 2012): 6; Joshua Project, "People in Country Profile," accessed 10 June, 2012, http://www.joshuaproject.net/people-profile.php.

3   Baz Lecocq, *Disputed desert decolonization, competing nationalisms and Tuareg rebellions in northern Mali* (Leiden, Boston: Brill E-books, 2010): 182, 220-221, 295; Stephen A. Emerson, "Desert Insurgency: lessons from the third Tuareg rebellion," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 22(2011): 678

4   U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Mali," accessed 10 June, 2012, http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2828.htm; Minorities at Risk Project, "Data – Assessment for Tuareg in Mali," College Park, MD: Center for International Development and Conflict Management, 2009, accessed 10 June, 2012, http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/assessment.asp?groupId=43201; Edward E. Azar, "Protracted International Conflicts: Ten Propositions," in Edward E. Azar and John W. Burton (eds.), *International Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1986): 28-30.

5   Ted Robert Gurr, "Peoples Against States: Ethnopolitical Conflict and the Changing World System – 1994 Presidential Address," *International Studies Quarterly* 38 (1994): 356-58.

6   Amnesty International, 9.

7   BBC Monitoring Middle East, "Azawad republican movement official on crisis in northern Mali," May 23, 2012, accessed May 28, 2012, http://www.lexisnexis.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/hottopics/lnacademic/?shr=t&sfi=AC00NBGenSrch; BBC Monitoring Middle East, "Mali on way to become global security threat – Algerian paper," May 10, 2012, accessed May 28, 2012, http://www.lexisnexis.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/hottopics/lnacademic/?shr=t&sfi=AC00NBGenSrch.

8   Radio France Internationale, "Mali: Briefing - Tuareg separatists, Salafists forge alliance," May 30, 2012, accessed May 31, 2012, http://allafrica.com/stories/201205311313.html.

9   Radio France Internationale; Amnesty International, 7.; The Australian, "Islamic state born in Mali's North," May 28, 2012, accessed May 29, 2012, http://www.lexisnexis.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/hottopics/lnacademic/?shr=t&sfi=AC00NBGenSrch.

10   IRIN, "Briefing: Ruptures and Repercussions in Mali," Accessed 18 June, 2012, http://www.irinnews.org/print report.aspx?reportid=95550.

11   Amnesty International, 10.

12   Jemal Oumar, "Mali: Breakaway Azawad Forms Interim Government," Accessed 20 June, 2012, http://www.eurasiareview.com/19062012-mali-breakaway-azawad-forms-interim-government/.

13   Amnesty International, 6; Africa News, "Mali; 'Drastic Increase' in Rapes in North, Says Rights Activist," April 24, 2012, accessed May 27, 2012, http://www.lexisnexis.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/hottopics/lnacademic/?shr=t&sfi=AC00NBGenSrch.

14   Alexis Heraclides, "The Ending of Unending Conflicts: Separatist Wars," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 26 (1997): 679-707.

15   Amnesty International, 6; Africa News.

[16]   Collier, Paul and Anke Hoeffler. "Greed and Grievance in Civil War." *Oxford Economic Papers* 56 (2004): 23.

[17]   Amnesty International, 9.

[18]   Human Rights Watch, "Mali: War Crimes by Northern Rebels," April 30, 2012, accessed May 31, 2012, http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/04/30/mali-war-crimes-northern-rebels.

[19]   Ibid.

[20]   Africa News; Amnesty International, 9.

[21]   Ibid., 5.

[22]   OCHA, "Mali: Complex Emergency – Situation Report No. 6," May 29, 2012, accessed June 6, 2012, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Mali_SitRep6_final.pdf: 2

[23]   Ibid.

[24]   Human Rights Watch.

[25]   Ibid.; Africa News.

[26]   Ibid.; Human Rights Watch.

[27]   Radio France Internationale; Amnesty International, 18.

[28]   Human Rights Watch; Amnesty International, 8.

[29]   Amnesty International, 5, 22; Human Rights Watch.

[30]   Human Rights Watch; Amnesty International, 15-17.

[31]   Amnesty International, 20-21.

[32]   Human Rights Watch; Amnesty International, 15.

[33]   BBC Monitoring Middle East, "Azawad republican movement official on crisis in northern Mali"; BBC Monitoring Middle East, "Mali on way to become global security threat – Algerian paper."

[34]   Radio France Internationale.

[35]   Amnesty International, 23.

[36]   BBC Monitoring Middle East, "Mali on way to become global security threat – Algerian paper."

[37]   UN News Centre, "Security Council examining request for UN mandate for African troops in Mali," accessed 20 June, 2012, http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=42266&Cr=+mali+&Cr1=.

[38]   James D. Fearon, "Separatist Wars, Partition, and World Order," *Security Studies* 13 (2004): 414-15.

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APPENDIX

Figure 1: Homeland of the Tuareg (Kel Tamasheq) peoples
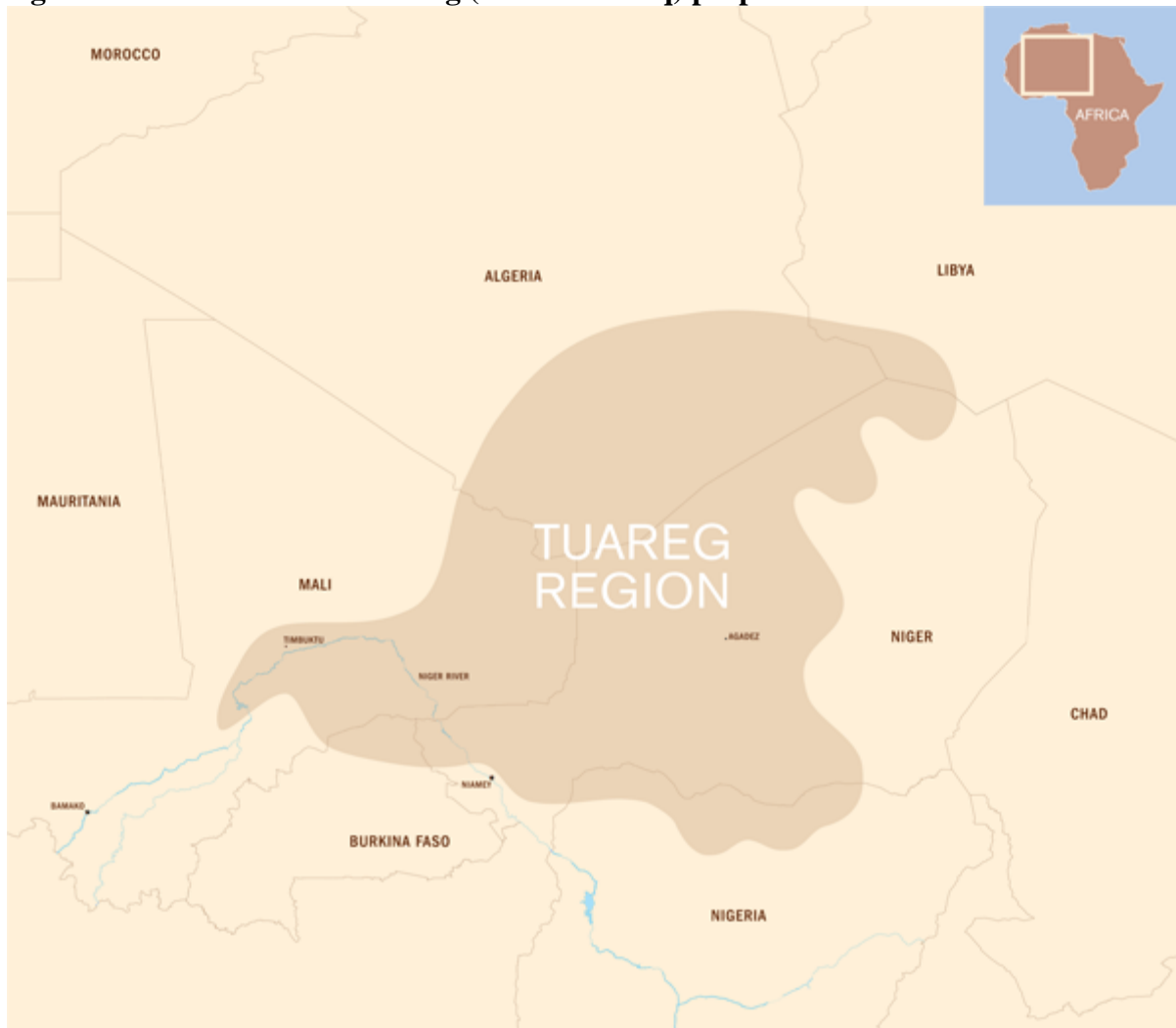
Source: National Museum of African Art, Washington D.C. (2012) accessed May 31, 2012, http://africa.si.edu/exhibits/tuareg/index.html#SlideFrame_9.

Figure 2: Boundary of the Proposed State of Azawad – Territory Occupied by members of the MNLA, Ansar Dine and al Qaeda in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb as of April 5, 2012

Source: Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection (2012), accessed May 31, 2012, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Azawad_Tuareg_rebellion_2012.svg.

Figure 3: Malian Armed Conflict and Population Movement as of May 29, 2012
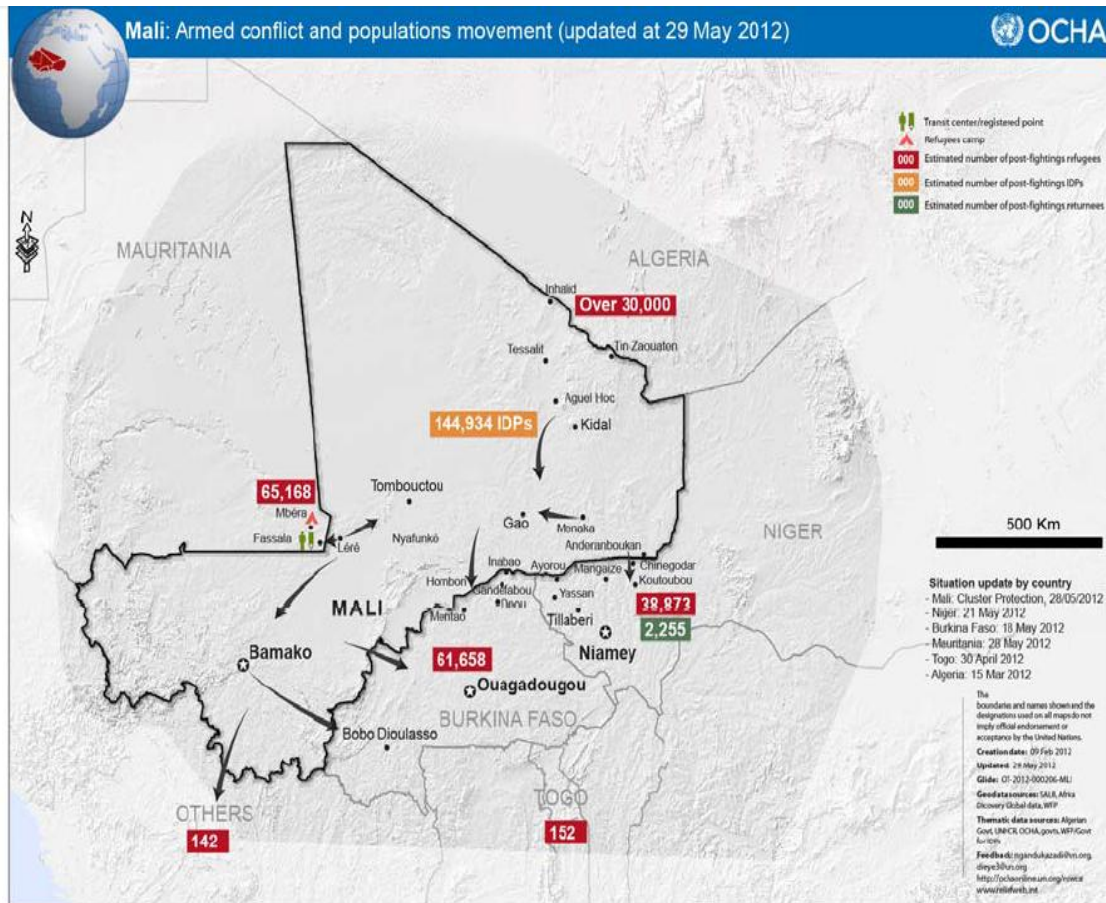
Source: OCHA, "Mali: Complex Emergency – Situation Report No. 6," May 29, 2012, accessed June 6, 2012, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Mali_SitRep6_final.pdf: 2.

Table 1: Policy Options for the Government of Canada

Policy Option	Description	GC Strategic Alignment	Impact	Constraints / Issues	Risk Likelihood	Risk Impact	Risk Rating	Cost
Status Quo: No action	Canada takes no action regarding the Mali situation.	Fiscal Austerity	Continued ethnic conflict and instability in Mali. Could impact Canadian stance or set precedent on Canadian intervention in future ethnic conflicts. Population in Mali remains at risk. May have refugee influx thereby requiring scale-up of refugee intake/assessment in the region.	Canada maintains "policy laggard" reputation. Conflict and instability prolonged. Potential refugee crisis. Against Stephen Harper's June 2011 quote: "We know where our interests lie...and we take strong, principled positions in our dealings with other nations, whether popular or not...and this is what the world can count on from Canada." (Taken from CIC International Strategy, Pg 20).	High	Very High	Very High	No additional cost.
Quiet Diplomacy	Take no immediate action. Wait for official United Nations, European Union and United States positions, and act in unity. Quiet diplomacy allows both sides to facilitate, mediate, and establish best practices in order to prevent conflict. Mediation will contribute to effective global governance, and international security and stability, as per DFAIT's strategic priorities.	Contributing to effective global governance / Fiscal Austerity / Maintaining Partnerships	Allows Canada further time to assess the situation and act in agreement with leaders in the international sphere. Conflict and instability in Mali continues until official international position reached. Strong strategic alignment with Government of Canada (GC) priorities. Will reinforce integrity of Mali and prevent radical Islamist state in Sub-saharan Africa.	Canada maintains "policy laggard" reputation.	Low	Moderate	Low	May require further investment or reallocation of international funding based on international consensus on proposed action. To be determined.
Official Development Assistance and Capacity Building: PCO/DFAIT/CIDA	Canada to provide Official Development Assistance to Mali in order to improve government capacity to provide effective representation. To be implemented through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in conjunction with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT). The Privy Council Office (PCO)would coordinate all international activities as PCO has functional responsibility for cross-departmental issues.	Maintaining Partnerships / Promotion of International Best Practices	Mali may be better able to deliver effective programs and services for the entire population, ensuring that Tuareg population is better represented in the political sphere. Mali is considered a country of interest to CIDA.	Canada has suspended all aid going to the Mali government as of March 26, 2012 due to the recent coup d'etat and attack on democracy. This represents more than 90% of CIDA's present envelope for Mali. (http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/acdi-cida/ACDI-CIDA.nsf/eng/JUD-329155B-JRZ). Would require re-allocation of funding from other CIDA priorities. Would require examination of alternative delivery mechanisms due to suspended inter-governmental relations. In order to re-allocate funding, there is a requirement for investment in a value-for-money study as Canada's direction is to ensure accountability and efficiency. Time constraint caused.	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Re-allocation of funding from other countries of interest would be required.
Integration: PCO/CIC	Effective integration of Tuareg population into Mali, focusing on government representation and mutual respect. Implement social integration policies focusing on commonalities between all Mali citizens instead of focusing on differences. International engagement is part of Citizenship and Immigration Canada's International Strategy 2011-2015. Coordination done through Privy Council Office (responsibility for cross-departmental issues). CIC International Strategy Objective 3 is "Fostering an integrated Society » (Page 13). As part of this objective, Canada is often called upon to deliver briefings and presentations on the "Canadian Model" for effective integration programs. This can be applied to both new migrants into the country, but also for integration of long-standing citizen groups into a particular state.	Maintaining Partnerships / Promotion of International Best Practices	As the situation has potential refugee implications to Canada a sharing of best practices on integration programs could prove to be beneficial as well as a viable option for Canada's involvement in the present Mali situation.	Integration programs have been attempted in Mali already and have failed. Would require new model, not reuse of previous attempts. Significant net-new financial and human resource investments would be required. Time constraint caused. Unknown likelihood of success. Net-new resource investments required are against Canada's current strategic direction.	Moderate	High	High	Significant increase in funding would be required.
Recognition of Azawad Sovereignty/ Independence	Recognize Azawad independence and assist Tuareg population in quest for sovereignty.	Not aligned with GC Priorities	May cause other countries to side with Canada. Conflict may dissipate. Canada may break "policy laggard" reputation.	Likely to cause domino effect with Tuareg groups in neighbouring states; high likelihood of them seeking independence from respective countries. Canada may receive negative press for such a decision as other countries have made official stances against such a policy option.	Very High	Very High	Very High	Within existing Government of Canada international allocation.

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