Counter-terrorism and Militarisation in Libya and Mali

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Abstract

Militarism and militarisation are growing salient features of contemporary international politics and external interventionism. The use of military means is becoming more and more pervasive and embedded in peace, protection and governance practices. This article questions indeed how counter-terrorism narratives and operations led to the militarisation of the peace processes in Libya and Mali. While militarism is often rooted in agency-based explanations, bounded with national units and associated with essentialist readings of (ethnic, clan, or religious) disorder, this article approaches militarism from a global perspective. To do so, it analyses international mediations leading up to the 2015 Skhirat (Libyan Political Agreement) and Algiers agreements (Accord pour la paix et la réconciliation au Mali). It argues that militarisation in Libya and Mali results complicated from the socialisation of counter-terrorism principles and priorities, that provided new tools of inclusion/exclusion logics in peace processes and postwar order-building. The article reveals that a plethora of actors build upon counter-terrorism to reconfigure state power, by connecting global security priorities, and strategies, to exclusionary practices of peace and authority formation.

Keywords: international intervention, militarism, terrorism, war

Introduction

During the 2011's mass protests swept in North Africa and the Middle East, millions of people have confronted authoritarian regimes to seize sovereignty from despotic leaderships, bad governance and corruption. Despite important results have been achieved, forms and degree of militarism and miltarisation in countries such Yemen, Bahrain, Egypt, Mali, Syria and Libya have increased. Interestingly, the type of militarisation increasing in some of these countries is

not always captured by indicators of militarisation focusing on one state military strength (i.e. the state military expenditures, and capability). According to data provided by the Global Militarisation Index[1], Libya and Mali militiarised score has decreased between 2011 and 2016. What the index does not account for are the foreign military expenditures, the number of foreign military, paramilitary forces, special forces and technical advisers involved in the two countries. How then can we conceptualise the increasing military influence both in government and society, induced by external interveners in countries like Libya and Mali?

Militarism appears often rooted in agency-based explanations, and bounded with national units. Because of the emphasis on human security, contemporary interventions have been conceptualised as instruments of order. Militarism is then often associated with essentialist readings of (ethnic, clan, or religious) disorder. In sum, militarism is still often 'discussed rather as a local or regional issue'.[2] The global dimension of contemporary militarism holds indeed a special relevance. Although the agency of African multilateral institutions in controlling the African security complex has increased,[3] foreign interventionism is still of pivotal relevance in defining the African security governance. As pointed out by Kinsella, contemporary militarism 'is already taking form as a greater willingness of major powers to intervene forcefully in the domestic affairs of other states.'[4] Since 2011, the involvement of major powers (and Security Council veto powers) in African conflicts has multiplied. In 2013, the Security Council mandated eight peace operations in Africa. Britain, France and the USA have supported NATO intervention in Libya (2011), as well bilateral and multilateral interventions in Mali (2013).

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[1] 2016
[2] Thee 1977, 296
[3] De Coning, Gelot, and Karlsrud 2016
[4] Kinsella 2012, 116

France has launched *Opération Serval* in Mali (January 2013), *Opération Boali* in the Central African Republic (2013); contributed to the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (April 2014); increased her support to United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (December 2011), and used *Opération Licorne* to remove the incumbent, Gbagbo. Exactly because of the emphasis on the Responsibility to Protect, human security and state fragility, contemporary interventions have promoted a further securitisation and militarisation of the African continent. Militarism is even more embedded in practices of war and exploitation. In the post-cold war era, the normative alignment towards a cosmopolitan idea of justice has deeply modified the language of war, and moral discourses have been inglobated into the 'political armoury' of the warrior.[5] The language of human rights has institutionalised war as a peace practice,[6] and despite all the emphasised discontinuities with past violations of sovereignty and human dignity, the 'systemic occupation of the public space' operated by contemporary humanitarian interventions, 'is predicated on a history of colonial and postcolonial tyranny'– as Dabbashi put it.[7] The militarisation of the ongoing crises, and the role played by external interveners does matter indeed.

To capture the complexities of modern crises in Libya and Mali, this article questions how counter-terrorism (CT) narratives and operations led to the militarisation of the peace processes in the two countries. To do so, I first approach militarism from a global perspective, and I claim that counter-terrorism priorities and principles have provided new tools of inclusion/exclusion logics in peace processes. The article focuses then on the negotiations surrounding the 2015 peace agreements: the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) following the Skhirat peace process,

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[5] Burke 2004, 330
[6] Elshtain 2001, 5
[7] Dabashi 2012, 206

and the Malian Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation (APR) resulting from the Algiers process.

War on Terrorism as Exclusionary tool

Militarisation and international intervention are often conceptualised as belonging to opposite categories of war and peace, where militarisation increases violence, while foreign intervention reduces it. Militarism has often been conceived as a national phenomenon, because militarisation consists of 'the activities or preparations taking place within a society – weapons procurement, conscription, base construction, etc. – whereby the government becomes (presumably) better equipped to undertake military action against foreign or domestic enemies'.[8] Militarisation traditionally refers to the 'extension of military influence to civilian spheres, including economy and socio-political life'.[9] Moreover, militarised crises and deadlock in peace implementation are often associated to the interests of several types of spoilers that are not willing to negotiate. These interpretations are not always able to represent the complexity of contemporary militarism.

The militarisation of crises exploded in the wake of the Arab Spring is not just the result of localised and radicalised tensions, greed, grievance, community or religious distrusts. Militarisation results also from external attempts at imposing multiple and hybrid paradigms of authority-formation, peace- and security-building. This article approaches militarisation indeed as the extension of global military influence to civilian spheres, embedded in new, contemporary

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[8] Kinsella 2012, 105
[9] Thee 1977, 296

warfare, where militarisation denotes also the growing tendency to 'employ military over non military means of conflict resolution'.[10]

The post-9/11 US African Foreign Policy had already established the securitisation and militarisation of the Sahel and Horn of Africa. Third-party mediation, peacekeeping and counter-terrorism operations are different forms of intervention, that now increasingly overlap. A growing melting pot between political and security instances emerges with western reengagement in United Nations (UN) peace operations.[11] Not only multiple external actors increase the militarisation of the intervened country, but they also impact upon conflict resolutions: peace negotiations are not isolated domestic management systems, but rather exercises of 'organised complexity'.[12] When external actors intervene – being they mediators, facilitators, expert or training advisers – major problems arise from interferences and pressures exercised by different interveners, moved by several reasons and with different mandates and organisational structures. Interveners are not necessarily 'politically neutral'. [13] And this holds true also for non-state mediators. International organisations participate in mediation, not only because cooperation is the *raison d'etre* of multilateral organisations. They hold an organisational interest in the 'inherent desirability' of a particular mediation/outcome, as well in 'establishing a presence' in the conflict/mediation itself. The 'inherent desirability' of fighting terrorisms, and the socialisation of counter-terrorism norms has increasingly become an instrument of mediation and postwar order-building. Socialisation refers here to the formation, diffusion, and adherence to international norms, where a number of actors internalise norms or

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[10] Kinsella 2012, 105
[11] De Coning, Gelot, and Karlsrud 2016
[12] Zartman 2008
[13] Gelot and Söderbaum 2016, 8; Malito 2017

security priorities essential to reproduction of war itself.[14] The normative legitimacy provided by counter-terrorism has provided in contemporary peace processes a new tool of inclusion (winning coalition) and exclusion (dividing the opposition). Generally, in negotiations conducted through the formation of coalitions, two attitude exists: forming winning coalitions or dividing the opposition. As pointed out by Zartman, 'Parties seek either to aggregate other groups and parties into a growing winning coalition, or to divide opposing groups into smaller parts so as to absorb or merely to weaken them, or to confront other groups to defeat them or work out a deal with them.'[15] Negotiating with terrorists, is formally a 'non-question',[16] because it could provide legitimacy and recognition endangering the governments itself. However, under time of permanent state of exception,[17] the use of this precautionary rule has been extended to a larger spectrum of actors, exactly because of the permanent state of emergency created by the Global War on Terrorism. The marginalisation of those actors which do not conform to the rule and norm of the International Society it is not any longer specific about the relationship between governments and terrorists. States may endanger their existence even when they negotiate with insurgents that do not use terror, but that are associated with terrorists. Although, and because, the lines of demarcation between terrorists and non-terrorists are blurred and easily manipulable, the concept of terrorism has been used to transform enemies into something that does deserve any political recognition.[18] As result of such horizontal socialisation of counter-terrorism norms, a plethora of actors do appeal to counter-terrorism to advance different security and governance interests.

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[14] Alderson 2001
[15] Zartman 2008, 228
[16] Zartman 2008, 228
[17] Agamben 2006
[18] Malito 2017

Interventions and militarisation in Libya

Anti-government protests erupted in Benghazi on February 2011 and a civil war escalated in Libya once the armed rebellion clashed with the Libyan security forces. On 17 March 2011, the UNSC adopted the Resolution 1973, authorising all the necessary means to protect civilians and on 31 March NATO undertook the command and control of all military operations. The immediate consequence of external intervention in Libya was the destruction of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, with Gaddafi's assassination in Sirte, on October 20, 2011. The presence of external interveners in Libya had important long-term consequences on the formation of post-Jamahiriya authorities. Once NATO military operations terminated on 30 October, the Security Council did not authorise a stabilisation mission, but rather the formation of a political mission, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), to support the country's political and economic post-conflict transition. Although the International Community recognised the TNC as the legitimate Libyan authority, the Council did never have a unified military control on the ground. Civilian militias and brigades contested the TNC's authority. Elections were held in July 2012, and a new legislative body, the General National Congress (GNC), was formed and mandated to create a new democratic constitution. But many militia that controlled Libyan territories on the ground contested the legitimacy of the old structures still in place. Tensions emerged between '*thuwwar* (revolutionaries) and *azlam* (Gaddafi cronies)',[19] further aggravated by the passing of the 2013's Political Isolation Law, preventing those who served in the LAJ from holding public office in transitional institutions. The second stage of the Libyan civil war escalated in Spring 2014, once the Libyan Army led by General Haftar launched Operation Dignity against the

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[19] Sharqieh 2013, 1

interim GNC. In reaction, a coalition of revolutionary forces, Libya Dawn, mobilised against the Army. In January 2015, the UN convened a peace talk at the UN Office in Geneva. A ceasefire was agreed upon, and in December representatives of Libya's two opposing governments (GNC and House of Representative, HoR) signed in Skhirat the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA), that outlined the formation of a Presidency Council, a Government of National Accord (GNA) and a cabinet.[20]

The LPA was signed under strong international pressures,[21] but it was deadlocked from the very beginning. The HoR-GNC rivalry is fed by a wider regional tension: UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar's proxy war about respectively, countering or supporting, the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood (Justice and Construction Party, JCP). So far, the HoR has not endorsed the unity government formed by al-Serraji in 2016. Although the HoR signed the agreement, in January some members started delaying the endorsement of the new unitary government. The reasons for such failure should be found in the very nature of the process.

An Exclusionary Peace Process

The Libyan peace process, hosted by Morocco and facilitated by UNSMIL, pursued the declared aim of countering radical Islamists. By doing so, it attempted to create more a technical order as a substitute to a negotiated one. Two aspects should be considered. First, as openly admitted by the then UN Special Representative to Libya, Bernardino León, the UN did not aim at promoting any reconciliation in Libya, but rather at fragmenting existing alliances, and forcing a new

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[20] In particular, it established that: the prime minister was responsible of forming the new government; the HoR should have endorse it; and the Presidency Council also had to assume the functions of the Supreme Commander of the Libyan army.

[21] Author's interview with Libyan politicians and activists 2016

leadership. The political mission resulted more complicated by the coexistence of two orientations: countering terrorism and building peace. As pointed out in the Special Report of the SG in February 2015, the UN had to prioritise ending the conflict. While UNSMIL was mandated in 2011 to assist the transitional process, the resurge of conflict completely changed the situation. To this end, the negotiations were managed in a way that the LPA became 'the only alternative available', as stated by a UNSMIL official.[22] UNSMIL strategy was that 'of fragmenting the country's main political and military coalitions and promoting the formation of a new alliance of 'moderates' from both camps'.[23] The aim was that of breaking the alliance between mainstream Misratans and the most radical Islamists.[24] Counter-terrorism hence proved to be decisive in forging an agreement that was not inclusive of all the key stakeholders. The issue of participation requires further attention. The UN promoted the participation of a multi-layered constituency to the talks. Such multi-level participation (made of representatives of militias, political parties, municipalities and civil society), served as leverage on the main parties that were unwilling to negotiate.[25] UNSMIL organised different and multiple talks with political parties on one side, municipal and local councils on the other. But such high participation did not necessarily make the agreement more inclusive. Many Libyan actors participated because interested in accrediting themselves as credible partners of a decentralised, multi-level reconstruction. The GNC did not participate at the July's initialing ceremony, while the delegation to Skhirat was not even officially mandated by the GNC to participate, while the HoR was reticent in entering any negotiation. As noted by León, UNSMIL strategy 'was starting to

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[22] Author's interview with UNSMIL officials 2016
[23] "Transcript of SRSG León Press Conference before the Opening of the Libyan Dialogue Session in Geneva" 2015
[24] "Full Text of Email from UN Libya Envoy Bernardino León to UAE Foreign Minister" 2015
[25] International Crisis Group 2015a, 4

bear fruit', as demonstrated by the fact that municipal councils within Libyan Down (as Gharyan and al-Zawiya), decided to back the dialogue, abandoning the former coalition. While the HoR and GNC were reticent in participation, they perceived the UN's move as a 'divide and rule' strategy, where the inclusion of lower level constituencies was a way to undermine their own authority. [26] While the LPA was signed in December 2015, the parities did not agree to any substantive implementation. In particular, the HoR did not endorse the GNA and it rather support the rival government led by Abdullah al-Thinni in the eastern city of al-Bayda.

While focusing on the exclusion of radicalists form the negotiation, the institutional architecture envisioned by the LPA laid however on a sandy soil. The international mediation divided the negotiation into small, manageable procedural issues,[27] such as: the creation of new interim authorities, the legalisation of its resulting bodies, the definition of their duties, the implementation of legal procedure. But main confrontations concerned the formation of a legitimate postwar authority, contested between two rival centers of power, in Cyrenaica and Tripolitania. Substantial issues that had escalated the conflict – definition of post-Qaddafi's legitimate authorities, cabinet formations, reciprocal boycott, or the lack of a security agreement and reform – remained unaddressed. In the provisions concerning the nomination of ministries and deputy ministries for instance, the LPA has established rules that remained empty boxes, because based on consultations between House of Representative (HoR) and State of Council, that presupposed at least a minimum form of collaboration, and mutual recognition between the parties. As noted by Maghur, some LPA procedural aspects have now made the agreement

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[26] International Crisis Group 2015a
[27] "Secretary-General's Report on UNSMIL." 2015, 5

implementation impossible, given that no unanimity can be achieved within the Presidential Council (PC).[28] For instance, a fundamental disagreement among GNC and HoR concerned the security arrangements. LPA's art. 8 established that the Council President and Deputies enjoyed a veto over senior military and security appointments. This article, *de facto* marginalised the role of Haftar and the Libyan Army in the unitary government. The GNA then used a series of nominations and alliance formation to bolster its security structure, bypassing the gap left by an agreed security reform. In April, Swehli, a former pro-GNC hardliner, was appointed to the High State Council; Khaled Sherif, ex-member of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, was nominated Deputy Defense Minister. In May 2016, the Presidency Council appointed two Haftar opponents to key roles: Barghathi was nominated Defense Ministry and Jadran was confirmed as commander of the Petroleum Defence Guards. But the move of nominating Haftar's enemies to key roles had its own limits. As pointed by a UN Senior Advisor in Libya, 'The underlying mistake was that of thinking that a political agreement could be achieved without a security one'.[29] 'The political process can facilitate a security track, but our interlocutors have a political master behind'.[30] The lack of a negotiation on fundamental political and security questions, left spaces for those that were not satisfied with the agreement to become spoilers, and to contest the international process, and to continue war as the only viable way to gain empirical forms of legitimacy.

CT narratives served in Libya also as tool of post-agreement exclusive order-building. While the LPA left many actors dissatisfied, the security concerns raised by ISIS's presence provided to different actors a new terrain for conquering empirical legitimacy, and for contesting

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[28] Maghur 2017
[29] Author's interview with UNSMIL officials 2016
[30] Author's interview with UNSMIL officials 2016

the LPA. Once ISIS was able to gain a foothold in Sirte in early 2015, different actors used counter-terrorism to simplify interpretations of the crisis and to wage war. Once the Presidency Council (PC) arrived in Tripoli on March 2016 there was any structural military base on the ground to sustain it. The former GNC threatened to attack the new authority, and the PC relied on the security provided by militia that had a military control on the ground, and that opposed both Haftar and the HoR. In May 2016, the PC created a joint operation to coordinate the fight against terrorism. Misratan militia forces allied with the GNA led an offensive to retake Sirte. The GNA's Ministry of Interior organised under central security forces both the Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade and the Abu Salim Brigade. The Bengazi Defence Brigade that fought ISIS under the GNA's Defense Ministry, was formed to protect the Benghazi Revolutionaries Shura Council, a coalition of forces that included also Ansar Sharia. The Derna Revolutionaries Shura Council fought ISIS but allegedly included also al-Qaeda supporters. In the wake of a security reform, or political agreement on the reorganisation of central military forces, the new government relied on the security services provided by single militias. This opened the road to the reshuffling of alliances and identities, and hence new contestations. The PC's reliance on local militias in Tripoli fed eastern suspicions about the presence of radical groups. Many army officers working for the Presidential Council in Tripoli felt that Misratans had monopolised the PC security.[31] Since in January 2014, the US State Department had designated Ansar al-Sharia as a terrorist organisation, General Haftar has attempted to position himself as the only credible ally in the War on Terror. The suspicion of collaboration between PC and radical elements enabled the HoR and Haftar's LNA to attack a wide range of enemies.

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[31] International Crisis Group 2016, 13

While counter-terrorism has often been used by incumbents or international actors to chase

own opponents, also insurgent forces, such the LNA led by Haftar, used counter-terrorism

arguments to fight political and military rivals: not only Salafi-jihadi groups, but also political

islamists (militia aligned with JCP and Misrata), salafi-linked groups (Ansar al-Sharia) and

forces affiliated with the GNA Defence Ministry. Haftar has repetitively called on Western

countries to lift an arms embargo on Libya enforced since the aftermath of the revolution in

2011. What is more, the European security interests in controlling migration and terrorism, have

been constantly evoked to attract foreign power assistance. As emphasised by Mohammed

Bazaza, Operation Dignity's spokesman in Beida, 'There are two rival programs jostling for

power in Libya…The Islamic state and the civil state. If we don't react now, [Libya's] terrorists

are going to come across the Mediterranean to a place near you.'[32] Counter-terrorism arguments

have also been socialised by regional and global actors interested in justifying their own

interference. During his first visit to Europe, al Sisi called for an international support to the

LNA.[33] In 2016, French special forces supported Haftar's LNA in Benghazi, helping to regain

control over the city. After three French soldiers died in a helicopter incident, France admitted

her presence in Libya as essential in fighting against terrorism.[34] In August 2016, the United

States launched Operation Odyssey Lightening, an anti-ISIS offensive led by pro-government

militias. The US strategy was that of supporting local proxy forces to chase the groups out of

Sirte, while also conducting direct-action operations against individual leaders. During the five-

month operation, the US Africa Command launched 495 airstrikes,[35] that were crucial in

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[32] Pelham 2015

[33] "Egypt's Al-Sisi Kicks off First Tour of Europe" 2017

[34] "Des forces spéciales françaises en Libye" 2016

[35] US Africa Command 2016

enabling the GNA 'to make a decisive, strategic advance'[36] against ISIS in Sirte. As result of such militarisation, 2,500 people were killed in six months of fighting. While radical groups have used deaths in custody and extrajudicial killings, the contending parties have not been immune from torture and deaths in custody, indiscriminate use of violence, deliberate destructions, systematic abductions, detentions, torture and executions.

Interventions and militarisation in Mali

The recent crisis in Mali escalated in 2012, when 2,500 Tuareg fighters returned from Libya, after serving in Gaddafi's forces. The rebellion led by the *Mouvement National pour la Libération de l'Azawad* (MNLA) culminated with the occupation and declaration of independence of the norther territory of *Azawad*. In March 2012, President Amadou Toumani Touré was ousted in a military coup led by Captain Amadou Sanogo. The mutiny was justified as necessary to regain terrain against the northern rebellion. However, MNLA's occupation of northern Mali was short-lived. By November 2012, Al Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) took control of Timbuktu and Tessalit, Ansar Dine of Kidal, and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) seized control of Douentza, Gao, Menaka, Ansongo and Gourma. Militarism in Mali has often been associated with illiberal practices coming from sectarian conflicts and Islamist radicalisation.[37] This crisis in particular, has been widely represented as the outcome of a dangerous liaison between Tuareg rebels al-Qaeda and Islamists.[38] Yet, for two fundamental reasons the Malian crisis cannot be understood 'through

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[36] Tomasevic and Torbati 2016

[37] For a critical reading of the 'internal-external'/localist/foreign labels attributed to Tuareg and Islamists in Mali see Bøås & Torheim, 2013.

[38] Cristiani and Fabiani 2013

tropes of Sahelian terrorism'.[39] On the one side, the militarisation of the region is not a recent

event, neither the result of atavic sectarian politics. Since independence, Bamako's central

government has perpetuated political exclusion and administrative militarisation of the north.

Also the 1991' democratic and liberal transition had a militarised profile. Defined as

'demokalashi',[40] a combination of democracy and Kalashnikov, and 'parasovereignty',[41]

decentralisation fuelled a clientelist politics of patronage,[42] and corruptive processes of

'consensus politics' between political and economic elites corrupted officials and donors.[43] On

the other side, the expansion of Wahhabist and Salafist interpretations of Islam in 2000s, was not

accompanied by terrorist activities as the counter-terrorism narrative seems to suggest. Data from

the Global Terrorism Database (Fig.1) shows that the number of terrorist incidents in Mali

significantly increased after 2013, i.e. after the starting of stabilisation and counter-terrorism
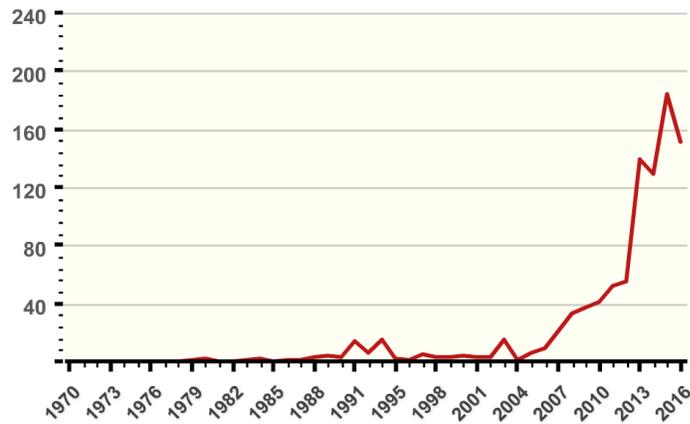
operations.

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[39] Charbonneau 2017, 3
[40] Lecocq 2010, 322–82
[41] Klute 1999
[42] Hetland 2008
[43] Esquith 2013

Figure 1 Terrorists Incidents in Mali, 1970-2016

Source: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). (2016). Global Terrorism Database [Mali]. Retrieved from https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd

Multiple forms of intervention have indeed widely complicated the domestic landscape. Various actors, including bilateral and multi-lateral organisations, global and regional organisations are involved in Mali militiarised politics. Both regional and international actors used the fight against radicalism to expand their military presence in Sahel.[44] The US War on Terrorism agenda in Sahel preceded the explosion of terrorist activities in Mali. The US was already present in the region since 2002, investing in knowledge-formation processes through prosecutorial skills training, cross-border security analysis, and criminal investigation techniques. The US initiatives focused on capacity assistance programs such the 2002 Pan-Sahel Initiative, and the 2005 Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership. Although the US evidently failed in its pre-emptive strategies, it widely contributed to establishment of a military infrastructure in the region.

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[44] Wing 2016

The UN deployed in Mali the first peace-keeping operations that holds counter-terrorism functions.[45] In the aftermath of the 2013 crisis, the SC authorised the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), a peace support operation that complement classical peacekeeping functions with more 'robust' use of military means.[46] MINUSMA assumed a 'stabilisation' mandate that had a twofold nature: re-establishing state authority[47] and fighting terrorism. At the same time, the Malian government requested the French assistance to regain control of the North. As observed by Karlsrud, MINUSMA was not only the first peace keeping operation deployed *in parallel* with French operations: the UN was actually at war in Mali.[48] As peace enforcement operations are instrumental in creating state authority and state-building, UN operations hold a hybrid character that socialise and internalise counter-terrorism principles and priorities. In October 2013, MINUSMA undertook a review of its mission concept, implying a military reconfiguration towards a more 'flexible' posture.[49] 'Integrated' efforts, in security and stabilisation operations implies an increased mobility, particularly with respect to convoy escorts, long-range patrols and aviation capabilities. UN troops became in a way sort of 'transformers' able to assume different configurations of power: half-way peace-keepers, the other half counter-terrorists. Moreover, militarisation holds a mechanical property: the UN has trained 850 Malian police officers with counter-terrorism functions; collaborations have been established between individual police officers with local authorities in investigation. Despite its presumed impartiality, the UN 'technical' alignment with

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[45] Karlsrud 2015
[46] United Nations Security Council 2016
[47] United Nations Security Council 2013, 7
[48] Karlsrud 2015
[49] United Nations Security Council 2015

the central government deepened existing resentments and north-south tensions. In the view of many armed groups, the 'UN sided with the government'.[50]

France expanded her military presence in the Sahel in 2011, in parallel with a growing interventionism in Ivory Coast's and Libya' s crises. In January 2013, France militarily intervened following the Malian government request of military assistance. *Opération Serval* had multiple goals, among those, that of neutralising Islamists in the northern regions of Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal. This implied that French troops could not be impartial players. In January 2013, the contested city of Kidal controlled by AQIM, was retaken by French, Malian, and Chadian troops. While a year before (June 2012) MUJAO defeated the MNLA in Gao, the French air attacks disabled AQIM and MUJAO's capacity to launch attacks, while enabling the MNLA's capacity to come back in 2013. *Opération Serval* was concluded in June 2014, but during the 2014 summer, the French president announced the re-organisation of the French presence in the region through *Opération Barkhane*, a 3,000-force based in Ndjamena and mandated to conduct counter-terrorism operations over five countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger). In the meanwhile, in May 2014 when the Malian prime minister Moussa Mara attempted to visit Kidal, armed clashes exploded between the Army and the MNLA. Conflict continued, and the Army was defeated. International troops during this renewed stage of conflict did not support Mali's request of support. French and MINUSMA troops were not military involved. But far away from not interfering with the conflict, their 'neutrality' rather facilitated MNLA's victory. And more generally, with *Opération Barkhane*, France remodelled her entire military involvement in West Africa under the banner of fighting terrorism.

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[50] Author's interview with Libyan politicians and activists 2016; International Crisis Group 2015b

Militarised peace process

In June 2013, the government, MNLA and The High Council for the Unity of Azawad (HCUA) agreed on a preliminary peace deal, the Ouagadougou Preliminary Agreement, consisting of a cease fire and the organisation of presidential and parliamentary elections. A second stage of negotiation started in January 2014, under the initiative of an internationally mediation team lead by Algeria. Between May and June 2015, the Malian parties – Government of Mali, Coordination of Azawad Movement (CMA), and the Platform of Armed Groups ('The Platform')– signed the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation ('the Algiers Agreement').[51] The agreement recognised the Azawad denomination, but also the Malian unity and national territorial integrity.[52] Counter-terrorism narratives served in Mali as tool of exclusive order-building, meant to marginalise a wide range of opponents in the peace process. The security concerns raised by the presence of AQIM and MUJAO have been used to normalise and legitimise the country's (and region's) militarisation.

First, for coping with the changing security concerns, the Malian government used counter-terrorism to set the benchmark of inclusion and exclusion in the postwar order. Since the signing of the Ouagadougou Agreement, the mediation team clarified that only 'Malian and non-terrorists' were admitted negotiating. Ansar Dine, AQIM and MUJAO were non-acceptable interlocutors, even though responsible of much of the conflict that the process wanted to redeem.

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[51] In November 2013, the Arab Movement of Azawad (MAA), MNLA and The High Council for the Unity of Azawad (HCUA) merged into the CMA (later joined by a faction of the *Coalition du Peuple de l'Azawad*, CPA, and a splinter group of the *Coordination des Mouvements et Fronts Patriotiques de Résistance*, CMFPR-II). While the CMA advances self-determination rights, the Platform focuses on economic and social claims. In parallel to the formation of the CMA, *Groupe Autodéfense Touareg Imghad et Alliés (*GATIA), *Coordination des Mouvements et Fronts Patriotiques de Résistance* (CMFPR–I) and splinter groups of the CPA and the MAA joined into the Platform.

[52] It addressed five issues: i) national reconciliation; ii) decentralisation of governance; iii) North development strategies; iv) security sector reforms; v) fighting against terrorism.

At the same time, counter-terrorism also provided the strategic ground making military victory possible. Also, some insurgents appealed to the counter-terrorism lexicon to justify their military presence. French *Opération Serval* had already created an opportunity for the MNLA to military advance in Gao. As reported by Flood, 'a tacit alliance' existed between French forces and MNLA against the AQIM-linked militias: 'the reconquest of northern Mali has been an ad hoc, complex affair involving a host of stakeholders with divergent interests'.[53] The MNLA indeed socialised the counter-terrorism normative predicaments to conquer the credibility, and legitimacy, proper of a respected partner in the peace process. To do so, the MNLA advanced a militarised narrative by invoking foreign intervention as a tool for the protection of civilians. Since the first communiques released by the group in 2010, the MNLA claimed to be pivotal to any lasting solution against terrorism.[54] By positioning as the 'only credible and inevitable ally' in the fight against the Islamists,[55] the MNLA also used counter-terrorism arguments to warn foreign actors from violating Azawad's territory.

At the same time, as counter-terrorism was instrumetalised to marginalise the position of a wide range of opponents, it also facilitated the factionalisation of the political sphere. From a pure quantitative perspective, a high number of actors participated in the Malian negotiation. Between the crisis outbreak in 2011 and the starting of the international negotiation the northern insurgency fragmented in a plethora of actors. In 2011, five actors marked the northern Mali political scene: MNLA, Ansar Dine, MUJAO, AQIM, the Signed-in-Blood Battalion and the Islamic Movement for Azawad. With the ban of some terrorist organisations, a dramatic shift in

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[53] Flood 2013, 7
[54] MNLA, Mouvement National de Libération de l'Azawad 2010
[55] Barducci 2013

allegiances occurred during the negotiation.[56] Once the UN cristalysed a legitimacy line between insurgents admitted to the negotiation table, Ansar Dine's dissidents formed a new group, The High Council for the Unity of Azawad (HCUA). As reported by Sköns, a number of groups have been created to enter the negotiations. In 2017, a total of 11 groups (MNLA, HCUA, MAA1, CMFPR I, MAA2, CPA, CMFPR II, GATI), and 2 coalitions dominated the scene (Platform and CMA). What is more, from a qualitative point of view, the 'Malian non-terrorist' distinction, did not have the effect of empowering 'acceptable interlocutors' as opposed to the non-acceptable. It rather increased the government's control on the process itself.

Between 2012-13, paramilitary groups of sedentary population such the Ganda Koy and Ganda Iso received training from the Malian Army to contrast the Tuareg, which the central government could not effectively oust from the northern territories. The two militias merged during the conflict and created *La Coordination des Mouvements et Front Patriotique de Résistance* (CMFPR), in order to advance their interests during the peace talks. Under government pressures, two groups (which never participated before) joined the process: MAA and the CMFPR.[57] Countering the Tuareg separatist demand, and negotiating for regional autonomy as opposed to separatist claims, the two groups' decision to join the talks increased the government leverage on the process. As claimed by Ibrahim Maïga, the government 'encouraged' their participation into negotiation to counter the MNLA's position; it also supported a Tuareg militia, the *Groupe Autodéfense Touareg Imghad et Alliés* (GATIA), in order to fight the MNLA, and divide the already divided Tuareg front.[58] For Chauzal and van

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[56] Sköns 2016

[57] Secular organisations, opposed to Islamist groups, these groups are differentiated from terrorist organisation as 'self-defence' group, that call for autonomy, but defend the unity of Mali.

[58] Chauzal and van Damme Thibault 2015

Damme,[59] it is 'Bamako's divide- and-rule policy that led to a 'tribalisation' of the northern conflict'. By giving to some rebel leaders a disproportionate influence in the negotiating processes (Iyad ag Ghali for instance), Bamako fed existing divisions across tribal and ethnic lines.

Fragmentation, in critical conjunction with international pressures for concluding a peace accord, created a leverage on the government's capacity to lead and influence the negotiation. International mediation supported the exclusionary logic of the government, and they do not help the parties in valuing the necessity of negotiating. For the International Crisis Group, France and Algeria[60] exercised a sort of 'diplomatic authoritarism',[61] with the result of reaching an imposed pacification, signed only by the government and by a coalition of force widely perceived as pro-government.[62] As noted by several policy analysts, pressures from the International Community influenced the 2013 negotiation and decision to hold elections. As highlighted within the ECOWAS Peace and Security Report, for the International Community 'the priority was to avoid at all cost an armed confrontation over Kidal and to quickly organise the presidential election in order to ensure that Mali would be headed by a more legitimate authority and interlocutor'.[63] In such untenable shape, the process was predestined to further foment the country instability.

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[59] 2015, 34

[60] Algeria's involvement is also very problematic, because Azawad's independence would have important implications for the sanctity of their borders as well.

[61] International Crisis Group 2015b

[62] International Crisis Group 2015c

[63] ECOWAS 2013, 2

Conclusions

When the International Community military intervene to manage a sovereignty crisis, it implicitly promotes the idea that she 'can do better'. Both interventions in Libya and Mali culminated in a militarised crisis, where imposed peace agreements with exclusionary logics have been accompanied by growing organised violence. Whether the international use of violence is authorised for regime change (Libya) or protection (Mali), the politico-military consequences are equally important. Militarisation results complicated from the externalisation of global and regional interventionism, as well from the socialisation of external norms and security priorities. The War on Terror is a total war where no mutually hurting stalemate may be achieved. Following the militarisation of modern conflicts, also international mediation come under growing constraints. As the Malian and Libyan cases reveal, turning a pacification into a peace process might be challenging. Even when contending parties sign a deal, peace may still be missing. And foreign interveners, do not always facilitate mutual understanding. They rather contributed to the militarisation pattern.

While Gelot theorises how African diplomats and policy-makers have systematically 'anchored'[64] counter-terrorism objectives to the protection of civilians, this article reveals that both incumbent, insurgents, global and regional interveners across Libya and Mali build upon counter-terrorism to reconfigure state power, by connecting global security priorities and strategies to exclusionary practices of peace and authority formation. In Mali, CT priorities were employed to fragment and weak a larger group of insurgents. Some of them (Ansar al Dine) bypassed the veto posed on non-acceptable interlocutors to forge new political identities; others (MNLA) used this veto and benchmark to advantage their own negotiating or military position.

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[64] Gelot 2017

In Libya, some insurgents (Haftar) embraced the War on Terrorism to actually conquer legitimacy in fighting a broad range of enemies. It is exactly because of ISIS that regional and global interferences have become normalised in Libya.

Processes of state- or order-formation based on violence and exclusion are not anything new in modern history.[65] Yet, externally-driven formula of exclusion create more violent contestations and oppositions since they are imposed by external legitimacy- and order-makers. The vast majority of ordinary people have been excluded by these processes. And exclusion is, by itself, 'a self-proving hypothesis': because 'one cannot negotiate with a faction because they are terrorists, and so they become real terrorist because they are excluded'.[66] Such exclusion has, in different ways, important consequences also on 'acceptable interlocutors'. While many international actors pressured for an agreement in Algiers and Skhirat, internal parties lack confidence in the deal.[67] Many parties, participants and sponsors were more interested in the process than in peace itself.[68] The idea moving the Algiers negotiation was very similar to the idea pursued by the Skhirat process: that of starting the process and forcing the others to join the agreement.[69] In sum, external facilitators did not engage at all with conflict resolution. They rather exerted pressures on competing parties for signing a deal that would only guarantee an apparent, and precarious perception of short-term security. At the turn of 2017, little progress in implementing both the Libyan Political Agreement and the Algiers Agreement have been reached, and no conditions for peace implementations have been credibly put in place.

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[65] Marx 2005
[66] Zartman 2008, 254
[67] "Open Letter to the UN Security Council on Peacekeeping in Mali" 2017
[68] Boutellis and Zahar 2017
[69] Author's interview with Libyan politicians and activists 2016

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