THE POLITICS AND POLICY OF DECENTRALIZATION IN 1990s MALI

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

A. Statement of the Problem

At the end of the Cold War, the government of Mali, like governments across Africa, faced increased pressure from international donors and domestic civil society to undertake democratic reforms. In one notable policy shift, French President François Mitterrand made clear to his African counterparts at the June 1990 Franco-African summit, that while France was committed to supporting its former colonies through the economic crisis that gripped much of Africa, it would give aid more liberally to countries that embraced democratic reforms. Within Mali, workers' and students' unions increasingly voiced their displeasure with the single-party regime of President Moussa Traoré while pro-democracy forces continued to press their demand for multiparty elections. Ultimately, in March 1991, the head of the presidential guard, then Lieutenant-Colonel Amadou Toumani Touré (popularly known as ATT), arrested President Traoré in response to nationwide protests that followed the government's violent suppression of student demonstrations in the capital, Bamako.

ATT oversaw the yearlong transition to democracy as leader of the *Comité de Transition pour le Salut du Peuple* (CTSP) that included civilian and military representatives. As did many Francophone African countries undertaking democratic transitions at the time, the CTSP invited delegates from civil society, government, and the military to draft a new constitution for the country at Mali's National Conference held from 29 July to 13 August 1991. Alpha Oumar Konaré, one of the leaders of the democratic movement in Mali, was elected president in April 1992, and, after his investiture in June, he quickly moved to make decentralization one of the

priorities of his administration. Approximately six months after his inauguration, in January 1993, Konaré created the *Mission de Décentralisation* (MD) by presidential decree and tasked it with designing reforms that would transfer significant power from the central government to new subnational governments. According to Isaline Bergamashi (2008, 219), decentralization became "the biggest output of Konaré's two electoral mandates" from 1992 to 2002 and "dominated" his national development strategy. Multiple scholars cite the Konaré administration's concerted push for decentralization in Mali as a notable example of the latest wave of decentralization on the African continent.

The primary objective of this thesis is to understand why the Konaré administration aggressively pursued decentralization reforms in Mali. It will assess the local, national, and global forces that prompted the new government to implement decentralization reforms in the 1990s and consider how the administration's political motivations for decentralization impacted those reforms. Though a large body of literature has developed around the decentralization of state institutions in Mali, much of the literature approaches decentralization from a "technocratic" viewpoint "in which decentralization is equated with the task of designing appropriate institutions" (Heller 2001, 136). Within this framework, it is largely taken for granted that the state transfers power and resources to subnational governments through decentralization because government leaders recognize the benefits that should theoretically flow from these reforms. The most widely recognized benefits of decentralization include improved governance and development, which are the stated objectives of "virtually all decentralization reforms" undertaken across Africa (Ribot 2002, 7; see also Boone 2003b). In reality, however, decentralization is a complicated political process, and government leaders promote decentralization reforms in response to multiple political imperatives that impact the design and

implementation of reforms. According to Dele Olowu and James Wunsch (2004, 29), "any analysis of decentralization policies… in Africa must be rooted in an appreciation of the political realities that produce such policies." In Mali, I argue that while donor support for decentralization helped to spur the reforms forward in the 1990s, the overarching reason Konaré pursued decentralization was to legitimize the Malian government during a period of economic and political crisis.

B. Justification for Research

A more complete understanding of *why* the Konaré administration embarked on decentralization reforms in the 1990s is necessary to better understand the reforms and their impact. Recent USAID reports have evaluated the status of the implementation of decentralization reforms throughout the country and the impact the reforms have had on democratic governance and service delivery (see Wing and Kassibo 2010 and Coulibaly, Dickovick, and Thomson 2011). A number of scholars have also assessed the impact these reforms have had on local communities and local politics (see Fay 2000, Djiré 2004, Gaasholt 2003, Hetland 2008, and Mauxion 2012). However, like much of the literature on decentralization in Africa, recent scholarship on decentralization in Mali "tends to neglect the political underpinnings" of these reforms (Ndegwa and Levy 2004, 284).

This thesis focuses on one small aspect of decentralization, and I am very aware that there are multiple "intervening factors" that impact decentralization and its outcomes including the larger historical, political, social, and economic context (Oxhorn 2004, 301). However, I believe an in-depth understanding of the political reasons *why* the Konaré administration pursued ambitious decentralization reforms is of interest to multiple stakeholders. Political scientists are

generally interested in understanding why the governments of developing countries like Mali increasingly sought to decentralize in the 1980s and 1990s even though decentralization seems to run counter to the preference of many leaders to maintain centralized control of power and resources. Policy makers are interested in the subject because, as Jennifer Seely (2001, 519) points out, not only does the political context impact the design of decentralization reforms, but "political considerations can affect the extent and implementation of decentralization" and, ultimately, impact outcomes. Political analyses of decentralization complement policy analyses and can offer additional insight into the success or failure of reforms that policy analyses conducted from a "normative, administrative standpoint" might miss (501). According to Philip Oxhorn,

> motivations do not always determine outcomes but the multiple and contradictory motivations for decentralization shed light on the complexity of the process and suggest that we should not be surprised to find multiple and contradictory outcomes as well… decentralization… almost always has been pursued by national elites for a mixture of reasons, including strengthening democracy, directing attention away from national demands for democracy, making government more efficient, and reducing state expenditures. National leaders have often held several of these objectives simultaneously and pursued decentralization as a favorite strategy to address a series of highly distinct objectives. (2004, 301)

Finally, I believe this research is timely considering that current President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (popularly known as IBK) has proposed increased decentralization as one way to solve the political crisis in Mali and address the "Tuareg problem," which reached another crisis point in 2012. Decentralization had "progressively lost steam as mobilizing project" under ATT's administration between 2002 and 2012, but it has since reemerged as a dominant theme within national discourse. Both Malian and international observers have argued that consolidation of the decentralization project is necessary to foster national reconstruction and reconciliation in the country following the 2012 Tuareg rebellion and coup d'état (see

Association des Municipalités du Mali (AMM) 2012; Sy 2012; Wing 2012; Armstrong 2013). The transitional government identified decentralization as a necessary step to reunify Mali in its "Roadmap for the Transition" (*République du Mali* 2013), and, at an international donor conference, "Together for a New Mali," held in May 2013, donors, "stressed the need to establish genuine democracy and decentralization" as they pledged approximately $4 billion in foreign assistance to the country (Stamatoukou 2013). Most recently, in April 2014, Ousmane Sy, who led decentralization efforts under the Konaré administration as director of the MD and later led the *Ministère de l'Administration Territoriale et des Collectivités Locales* (MATCL), was appointed *Ministre de la Décentralisation et de la Ville* within Prime Minister Moussa Mara's new government. Since then, the so-called "father of Malian decentralization" (Segbedji, 2014a), has moved steadily ahead with reforms designed to strengthen decentralization in the country.

C. Literature Review

At the most general level, decentralization is defined as the transfer of power or authority from a central government to subnational units of government or subnational governments. The literature makes important distinctions between different types of decentralization. *Deconcentration* is the weakest form of decentralization in which some power is transferred to subnational units of government that remain accountable to the central state. *Devolution*, or *democratic decentralization*, is the most complete form of decentralization. It produces subnational governments rather than just reproducing subnational units of the central government at local and intermediate levels. Ideally, through devolution, a central government grants

significant decision-making power and the financial resources necessary to implement those decisions to subnational governments that are accountable to the population through elections.

As Jesse Ribot (2002, 2) has written, "the underlying developmentalist logic of decentralization is that local institutions can better discern, and are more likely to respond to local needs and aspirations" thereby producing better governance and development outcomes. However, while deconcentration and devolution may "share equity and efficiency objectives" (2-3), scholars agree that the actual impact of deconcentration is to increase the power of the central state. Some scholars have rejected the classification of deconcentration as a valid from of decentralization for this reason. According to Olowu and Wunsch (2004, 4), "decentralization reforms only make sense if they lead to… effective local governance," and devolution is the only form of decentralization that has the potential to do so. For this thesis, though, at times, I generally use the term decentralization as I discuss the different decentralizations that have occurred in Mali since colonization, I am careful to distinguish between the kinds of structures produced by these various decentralizations.

In the 1980s and 1990s, decentralization became an increasingly popular concept not only on the African continent, but in developing countries around the world. Political elite of developing countries, scholars, and development practitioners became excited about the promise of decentralization reforms, which, promoted by international discourse, were increasingly designed as devolution. In Africa, some scholars argued, decentralization would address many of the problems governments faced, including "ethnic conflict, political inefficacy, administrative weakness, and economic stagnation," by tapping into "a vast reservoir of energy and potential" at the grassroots (Wunsch and Olowu 1990, 3).

However, it is important to remember that the decentralization reforms introduced across Africa since the end of the Cold War are only the latest wave of reforms to be adopted on the continent. According to Ribot and Phil René Oyono (2005, 206), "decentralization reforms have occurred in Africa under colonial rule, military regimes and democratic governments." As Mahmood Mamdani (1996) has argued, the decentralized state is one of the major legacies of colonial rule in Africa. Both the British and the French ruled their colonial subjects through African intermediaries at the local level who administered systems of forced labor and taxation designed by European administrators. Termed "decentralized despotism" by Mamdani, the colonial powers developed these deconcentrated systems of administration to "stabilize" their "alien rule" (3).

Following World War II, the French and the British created some local and regional governments in their African colonies and ultimately moved to devolve significant powers to these governments as a last attempt to preserve their control, but these efforts came too late to save the colonial system. Initially, it seemed that the African leaders who came to power after independence might carry on the decentralization reforms initiated during the late colonial period. However, the single party and military regimes that emerged not long after independence quickly moved to recentralize power. As Mamdani (1996, 26) has argued, in many of these newly independent states, "the antidote to a decentralized despotism turned out to be a centralized despotism." Where leaders introduced decentralization policies during the immediate post-colonial period, most "were merely attempts at window dressing increasing centralization" (Olowu and Wunsch 2004, 34).

Here, a note on centralization is necessary. In countries all over the world, periods of decentralization are followed by periods of centralization. In Africa, Mamdani (1996, 291) has

called this the "seesaw of African politics." According to J. Tyler Dickovick (2012) decentralization and (re)centralization are so linked that they should be studied together as one larger process. Most scholars agree that central governments "typically prefer not to decentralize power… they prefer to limit subnational actors and maximize their own power and discretion over resources" (6). In Africa, following decolonization, leaders were able to create systems of centralized power within the newly independent states as the population rejected the rule that had been imposed by local chiefs under the decentralized colonial system. However, this centralization of power would not hold. We will see some of the reasons scholars posit that governments opt to decentralize power further on in this literature review.

In the 1980s and 1990s, as African governments adopted Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) and undertook democratic transitions, they also increasingly implemented decentralization reforms. As Richard Crook and James Manor (1998, 1-2) argue, this was, at least partially, a surprising development because attempts to decentralize during the immediate post-independence era "had been vitiated by distrust and interference from above." However, as proponents of decentralization point out, unlike previous decentralization efforts in which leaders designed reforms "to manage local populations," and the subnational units of government created through decentralization "were expected to carry out orders passed down" from the central state, the reforms that gained traction in the late 1980s and 1990s "focused more on democratization, governance, pluralism, and rights" (Ribot and Oyono 2005, 205). Though they acknowledge that recent efforts are partly "a continuation of past approaches," Olowu and Wunsch (2004, 38-9) argue that the decentralization of the late 1980s and 1990s included "for the first time since the late colonial period the possibility of local institutions that are genuinely participatory and responsible to the local community."

Decentralization reforms quickly became "the centerpiece of the modernizing-democratic discourse of developing world state elites and the international development community" (Heller 2001, 135). And, as development agencies and international donors became increasingly preoccupied with the potential for decentralization to improve governance and development outcomes, they seemed to forget that governments also pursue decentralization reforms for political reasons. Within this context, governments themselves also began to deemphasize the politics of decentralization. According to Ribot (2002, 7), with the most recent wave of decentralization reforms, emphasis "shifted from the political justifications – national stability, garnering popular support, 'petty politicking' and so forth – …to the developmental value of decentralization."

As a constituent colony of French West Africa, Mali experienced the same colonial system of administration discussed above that was implemented in colonies across the continent. After independence in 1960, the socialist government of Modibo Keita and, later, the military regime of Moussa Traoré reversed any progress that had been made towards devolution in the late colonial period as they sought to consolidate power in the central government. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Moussa Traoré's government seemed to take small steps toward decentralization as he introduced development councils throughout the country to "provide local people with the opportunity to participate in the administration of the district." However, the government "proved reluctant to relinquish its prerogatives and change the system" so the councils, dominated by members of Traoré's party, were given no funding with which to work. (Coulibaly and Hilhorst 2004, 3) This remained an acceptable outcome to these reform efforts for Traoré's government until the pro-democracy movement gained strength in Mali in 1990 and

forced Traoré to renew his calls for increased decentralization as a last effort to liberalize without introducing multiparty democracy.

The decentralization reforms introduced by Alpha Oumar Konaré's government following the democratic transition are an early example of decentralization reforms on the continent designed as devolution. Decentralization in Mali began in earnest in January 1993 when President Konaré created the *Mission de Décentralisation* (MD), the government agency tasked with designing and implementing decentralization reforms, and the National Assembly adopted the foundational law that defined the vision for decentralization in Mali. According to law No. 93-008, elected councils would "freely administer" subnational governments to be created throughout the country (Article 5). These *collectivités territoriales* include *communes* (i.e., urban and rural municipalities) at the local level and *cercles* (best translated as districts) and regions at intermediate levels. The law broadly defines the "mission" of these new governments to promote local and regional economic, social, and cultural development (Article 3), and mandates that every transfer of responsibility from the central government to subnational governments that falls within this mission "must be accompanied by a concomitant transfer... of resources necessary to the normal exercise" of those responsibilities (Article 5).

The relatively participatory process through which municipalities were created was an especially impressive innovation of the decentralization project in Mali. The MD sought to engage communities in the design and implementation of decentralization from the early stages of the reform process and established *Groupes régionals d'Étude et de Mobilisation* (GREM) and *Groupes locals d'Étude et de Mobilisation* (GLEM) to communicate with Malians at the local and regional levels. When it came time to divide the country into municipalities, the MD gave villages and *fractions* significant authority to form municipalities through a process called

decoupage, and only made the final decision of how villages or *fractions* should be combined into a municipality if community representatives could not reach an agreement themselves (SNV 2004, 49).[1] In 1996, the National Assembly approved the creation of 682 new municipalities, in addition to the 19 urban municipalities that Mali had inherited from previous administrations. Two additional municipalities were created in 2002, and, today, the country is divided into 703 municipalities, 49 districts, the special district of Bamako and eight regions.[2] Mali held its first municipal elections in 1998 and 1999, and "represents one of the first and most successful countries in Africa to implement free multiparty elections at the local level" (Mauxion 2012, 29). Subsequently, municipal elections were held in 2004 and 2009, and, following the 2012 coup d'état, municipal governments remained the only directly elected governments in Mali.

However, despite the success the government met with in the early stages of the reform process, recent reports lament the inability of the Konaré administration and the ATT administration that succeeded it to fully consolidate decentralization. According to Cheibane Coulibaly, Tyler Dickovick, and James Thomson (2010, 49),

> in Mali's democratic context, decentralization and local governance progressed in terms of decentralizing some formal authority in a relatively bottom-up process in the 1990s, but [the] consolidation of decentralized governance has lagged, especially in the areas of local autonomy and downward accountability. The central state continues to exercise a degree of top-down authority, despite the fact that sub-national governments are now independently elected and have had public service responsibilities decentralized to them. The fiscal autonomy of sub-national governments is particularly limited.

According to a recent report by the MATCL, the delayed transfer of responsibility and resources from central government ministries to subnational governments has been the "Achilles heel" of the decentralization process in the country (2011, 41). Because the government has failed to

[1] *Fractions* are the administrative unit for nomadic communities established under the French colonial system that correspond with villages. Because there is no direct English translation, I will use the word *fraction* throughout this thesis.

[2] See the appendix for maps of municipal and regional divisions in Mali.

redistribute financial resources to subnational governments as envisioned by decentralization reforms, and the majority of municipalities have little capacity to generate their own revenues, many municipalities have struggled to significantly improve public services provision. According to Susanna Wing and Bréhima Kassibo (2010, 20), the decentralization project in Mali has become "little more than legal texts with only very partial implementation."

As in Mali, the initial enthusiasm that greeted many decentralization efforts across the African continent in the early 1990s has since waned, and there has been a "frequent cry that decentralization has failed Africa" (Olowu and Wunsch 2004, 264). Ribot and Oyono (2005, 206) believe that the latest wave of decentralization reforms in Africa is "in fetters," and has not delivered "promised enfranchisement and improvements." Reforms that were designed as *devolution* have instead led to *deconcentration*. Governments have achieved some success in terms of the stated goals of improving democratic governance and stability, and "public services seem to have modestly improved in some cases," but there is no clear evidence that decentralization has had a positive impact on development across Africa (Dickovick and Riedl 2010, 71).

As stated earlier, this is likely because governments pursue decentralization for a combination of developmental and political reasons, but scholarship surrounding these recent decentralization reforms tended to discount the political pressures that lead governments to decentralize. More recently, as the decentralizations of the 1990s have come under increasing criticism, the focus has once more begun to shift as scholars again emphasize, and many development agencies have begun to acknowledge, that a government's decision to decentralize is informed by a number of motivations, many of which may not be primarily concerned with strengthening local governance or improving democracy and development (Manor 1999; Ribot

2002; Oxhorn 2004; Dickovick and Riedl 2010). According to Crook (2003, 78), "different governments have different political purposes and motives for introducing decentralization," and "these intentions are embodied in the structure… of decentralization or, more subtly, are revealed in how the system functions" after decentralization is implemented.

Many scholars have attempted to generalize the motives that push governments to decentralize across countries. According to Dickovick and Reidl (2010, 10), a "government may choose to decentralize to build governing legitimacy and shore up electoral support as its power wanes." Governments may also promote decentralization to strengthen the larger regime, and many decentralization initiatives of the 1990s were part of the democratization agenda to strengthen newly established democratic regimes (9). Decentralization has been explained

> as an outcome of pressure from economic crises; a means for central governments to shed fiscal and administrative burdens; a failure of central administration; an emulation of reforms in other developing countries; a result of populist political success; a result of donor pressures and conditions as part of structural adjustment and other programmes imposed from the outside; as a response to subnational splinter groups and pressure to appease and incorporate local elites; and as the consequence of particular relations between central and local authorities. (Ribot 2002, 7)

In Mali, it is clear, as many scholars argue, that decentralization reforms developed by the Konaré administration at least partly evolved as a direct result of democratization and should be considered as an attempt to consolidate democracy in the country (Olowu and Wunsch 2004, 19; Wing and Kassibo 2010, 4). The latest decentralization efforts have their origin in the National Conference and the 1992 Constitution that established the Third Republic as a multiparty democracy. The civil society representatives who participated in the National Conference found that General Moussa Traoré's government had been "inefficient, incompetent, and oblivious to the needs of the nation" and that "state intervention in rural areas had only reinforced central power" (Rawson 2000, 265; see also Ouedraogo 2003 and Wing 2010). Thus,

the 1992 Constitution recognized "freely administered" subnational units of government to be created by later law, and the final report of the National Conference recommended that Mali pursue decentralization to "change the way state business was conducted across" the entire country (Rawson, 265).

According to Robert Pringle (2006, 43), U.S. Ambassador to Mali from 1987 to 1990, "decentralization is correctly regarded as the heart of Mali's democracy." However, as scholars like Dickovick (2011, 8) argue, "while many decentralizing processes occur alongside transitions from authoritarian rule, … democratization alone" does not lead to decentralization. Taking a more measured view than his predecessor, David Rawson (2000, 265), U.S. Ambassador to Mali from 1996 to 1999, asserts that "the new political context" in Mali following the overthrow of Traoré necessitated decentralization reforms. Specifically, decentralization was one way the Konaré administration sought to legitimize the new regime and break with the "predatory and authoritarian" neocolonial regimes of the First and Second Republics of Mali led by Modibo Keita (1960-1968) and Moussa Traoré (1968-1991), respectively (Kassibo 1997, 2).

In the case of Mali, observers have also largely accepted the central tenet of Seely's (2001) thesis that the Konaré administration committed to significant decentralization reforms to address the demands of Tuareg separatists who led Mali's Second Tuareg Rebellion that persisted at varying intensities from 1990 to 1995/96 (see Idelman 2009; Wing and Kassibo 2010; Coulibaly, Dickovick, and Thomson 2010). Pringle (2006, 20) has criticized Seely's thesis, arguing that "though it was successfully deployed to do so," Malian decentralization reforms in the 1990s were not "*invented* to deal with the Tuareg problem" (my emphasis). However, most scholars agree that the drive for decentralization that originated at the National Conference was at least "reinforced by the Tuareg rebellion" (Ouedraogo 2003, 100).

According to Coulibaly, Dickovick, and Thomson (2010, 10), one of the political realities which has hindered the decentralization process in Mali is that the Malian "decision-making elite at the time of democratization" were not committed to the "full establishment of a highly decentralized state." In addition to these more "noble and pragmatic" motivations theorized above, they suggest that a "more venal" incentive for the Konaré administration may have been "to provide electoral outlets for [the] rank and file" of Konaré's political party and ensure its place as the dominant political party in Mali (10-11). They also posit that state elites might have viewed decentralization as a way "to expand opportunities for patronage and rent collection" by "extend[ing] formal governance down to the local level" (11). Additionally, many Malians and actors in the international community share the opinion of observers who posit that the Konaré administration at least partly pushed decentralization to please international donors and take advantage of international support (see Félix 1996 and Kassibo 1997). According to Ribot and Oyono (2005, 211), decentralization in Mali, as in many developing countries, has been "talked of, designed and even implemented as a kind of theatrical performance for donors."

This literature review seeks to define decentralization and contextualize Mali's latest attempt at decentralization for the reader. It defines some of the terms that the reader will see throughout the thesis and provides a brief history of decentralization efforts in independent Mali with a particular emphasis on the decentralization reforms adopted by the Konaré administration in the 1990s before introducing some of the government motivations for those reforms posited by multiple scholars. The centrality of these reforms to the Konaré administration's agenda cannot be understated, and I believe this thesis will contribute to a better understanding of the process of decentralization in Mali.

D. Methodology

I used a combination of primary and secondary sources in my research. I drew on Malian government documents and reports from donor governments, NGOs, and IGOs to understand the structure of decentralization and the status of those reforms in the country today. To better understand the political context in Mali at the time the government adopted decentralization reforms, I conducted a content analysis of Malian newspapers from the early to mid-1990s. My analysis was limited to newspapers available at Indiana University and other US institutions, but I was able to access the state-owned daily, *L'Essor Quotidien* and the state-owned weekly, *L'Essor Hebdomadaire*, from 1990 to 1994 as well as two private-owned newspapers, *Le Républicain* from 1993 to 1995 and *Les Échos* from 1990 to 1994.

Prior to the fall of the Traoré government, *L'Essor* was controlled by the unitary party, the *Union démocratique du Peuple malien* (UDPM), and, though marketed as *la voix du peuple*, served as a mouthpiece of the government, largely reporting on government decisions, official speeches, party meetings, and trips made by party officials. Though *L'Essor* remained a decidedly pro-government publication following Mali's democratic transition, the newspaper was granted more independence and also began to run political commentary in addition to publishing the full text of official speeches made by President Konaré and covering official visits and meetings. Today, *L'Essor* remains the most widely read newspaper in Mali. It is the only newspaper with national coverage and is distributed in all major cities (IREX 2012, 247).

Neither *Les Échos* nor *Le Républicain* can be categorized as objective publications, and each had its own decided political perspective. Originally founded in 1989 as a biweekly newspaper, *Les Échos* transitioned to a daily publication in 1991. The paper is a publication of *Jamana*, a publishing cooperative founded in 1983 by Alpha Oumar Konaré, and was a strong

advocate of multiparty democracy prior to the fall of the Traoré dictatorship. Today, *Les Échos* remains one of the major newspapers published in Bamako. Though the publication included opinion pieces and political commentary critical of the Konaré administration following the implementation of multiparty democracy, it was sympathetic toward the government, Konaré, and his political party, ADEMA.[3] Malian politician, Tiébilé Dramé, a member of the opposition party, the *Congrés national d'Initiative démocratique* (CNID) in the early 1990s, founded *Le Républicain* in 1992. According to its own research at the time, the newspaper was the most widely sold weekly newspaper in Mali and was perceived as having a decided slant toward the opposition (*Le Républican* 11 August 1993). It remains a widely read newspaper in Bamako today. All of these newspapers are published in French, and, though the accounts from the newspapers are largely limited to elite perspectives from the capital, Bamako, these are the perspectives that informed government decisions and reflected government attitudes in the early 1990s. As Claude Fay (1995, 19) has written, in the 1990s, the national political "scene" in Mali could be understood as the *scène politique urbaine*.

Finally, it must be noted that my experience as a Peace Corps volunteer in a rural municipality in Mali from 2005 to 2007 and continued informal contact with friends in that municipality, its regional capital, Sikasso, and Bamako has also informed by understanding of decentralization in Mali. In fact, my experience as a Peace Corps volunteer initially motivated me to study decentralization in the country. That said, I have not visited Mali since a short trip over the summer of 2011, and my research is limited by a lack of formal fieldwork and direct interviews with past and present Malian government officials that would have proven invaluable

[3] The full name of Konaré's political party is the *Alliance pour la Démocratie au Mali – Parti Pan-Africain pour la Liberté, la Solidarité et la Justice* (Adema-PASJ). I will refer to the party as ADEMA, as it is know in Mali, throughout this thesis.

to my research. While I am acutely aware of these limitations, I believe this thesis provides a thoughtful political analysis of decentralization in Mali.

D. Organization

Chapter two provides an overview of state building and decentralization efforts under the French colonial administration while chapter three takes a closer look at decentralization efforts under Mali's first and second presidents, Modibo Keita and Moussa Traoré. The fourth chapter begins with a discussion of Mali's democratic transition in 1991 before it turns to an in-depth analysis of why the Konaré administration embarked on significant decentralization reforms in the 1990s. I investigate the external and internal pressures that led the Konaré administration to institute decentralization reforms and consider the impact of those motivations on decentralization in Mali. Chapter five concludes the thesis. It discusses policy lessons and offers recommendations to donors that seek to promote decentralization in Mali and other developing countries. It also briefly considers IBK's efforts to promote decentralization as a way to strengthen his government and address the Tuareg problem.

CHAPTER 2

State Formation and Decentralization under the French Colonial Administration

This chapter explores the creation of the Malian state beginning with the establishment of the French colonial administration in West Africa. It also considers efforts made by the French colonial authority to decentralize power following both world wars as a way to maintain control of their West African colonies. It is necessary to explore the system of administration established by the French and the colonial power's attempts at decentralization to understand the state established in Mali after independence and the half-hearted decentralization efforts pursued by presidents Modibo Keita and Moussa Traoré. As Bréhima Kassibo (1997, 7) has written, both of these presidents applied the colonial model of administration in independent Mali "without a break" from 1960 to 1991. Additionally, though officials within President Alpha Oumar Konaré's administration (1992-2002) and other advocates of decentralization have tried to claim that the recent decentralization efforts in Mali are deeply rooted in an "institutional heritage handed down from the major state institutions constructed" by the pre-colonial empires that existed in the region (SNV 2004, 15), the state structures that exist in Mali today were developed from those inherited from the French colonial administration. As Mahmood Mamdani (1996, 4) has argued, the institutions developed by the colonial powers in Africa, "remain more or less intact" today.

A. Establishing the Colonial Administration

French Soudan, the French colonial territory that became the Republic of Mali in 1960, was one of eight colonies, or territories, that made up France's largest colonial holding in Africa,

Afrique Occidentale Française (AOF). Originally administered as part of the colony of Senegal, the French recognized Soudan as a colony under a military governor in 1892. A year later, after the final defeat of Amadou Tall, by then, the de facto leader of the Tukulor Empire, the French replaced the colony's military administration with a civilian one (Imperato and Imperato 2008, xxix).[4]

Between 1895 and 1904, France worked to establish the AOF as a super colony with a civilian administration through a series of decrees that federated its landlocked West African colonies like Soudan with its more prosperous coastal colonies like Senegal and Guinea (Chafer 2002, 27). Paris had incurred massive expense to expand its control in West Africa and, reluctant to provide continued financing for the colonies, viewed this federation as the only way to ensure the self-sufficiency of it's West African holdings (McNamara 1989, 82). The French created the Government General in 1895 "as the overarching authority in West Africa" and located it in Dakar to "decentralize decision-making from the *métropole*" because "only a senior official on the spot would be sufficiently aware of events and conditions in the colony to make informed policy choices" (Conklin 1997a, 23).

Though the Governor General reported to the Minister of Colonies in Paris, he had significant autonomy to tax the colonies and create policies for the entire federation of territories. According to Mamdani (1996, 56), "so long as a colony could balance its books, its administration remained a highly decentralized affair." Thus, the *raison d'être* of the new administration in the AOF quickly became the "rational economic utilization of the [federated] colony's resources" (Conklin 1997a, 39). This would ensure that French West Africa became

[4] Amadou Tall was the eldest son of El Hadj Umar Tall, the founder of the Tukulor Empire that encompassed large areas of modern-day Mali, Senegal, and Guinea. Upon his father's death in 1864, Amadou became leader of the Segou Tukulor Empire centered on the modern-day Malian city of Segou. He tried to consolidate the constituent parts of the Empire that had been inherited by his brothers and cousin, but failed. However, as the French conquered the Empire, Tukulor leaders began to defer to Amadou before he was forced to abandon the Empire entirely.

self-sufficient and that the colonies' natural resources and tax revenues would be available to the *métropole*. According to Aurelien Mauxion (2012, 49), during the early decades of colonial rule in French Soudan, "administrators were primarily concerned with keeping the colony at peace, monitoring activities of political and religious leaders, and registering the population in order to efficiently collect taxes."

To do this, the French civilian administration adopted a system of territorial administration originally organized by the military as it conquered the AOF territories. Outside of the Four Communes of Senegal – Saint Louis, Gorée, Rufisque, and Dakar – where France had a long history of contact and sought to implement assimilationist policies considered to be "the logical outcome of the French *mission civilisatrice*," the military had adopted a protectorate system of administration (Lewis 1962, 129). While the Four Communes enjoyed "the same municipal prerogatives and rights as French communes," and its residents who were recognized as citizens gained representation in the French National Assembly by the mid-19th century (Diouf 1998, 673), the newly conquered inland territories were subjected to "an essentially paternalistic administrative regime… in which the colonial power ruled through African intermediaries" (Chafer 2002, 30).

The military initially established protectorates over the smaller African states they encountered through treaties, and grouped the territories they conquered into colonies. The colonies were divided into *cercles* administered by a French military officer as *commandant de cercle*. *Cercles* were further subdivided into provinces, *cantons*, and villages administered by provincial, canton, and village chiefs. Initially, the military practiced indirect rule through this protectorate system, and, seeking to respect the "comparable divisions in the precolonial political order" as much as was possible within the "hierarchy of French administrative units," legitimate

rulers were granted autonomy as provincial, canton, and village chiefs as long as they collected taxes and recruited labor for the French (Conklin 1997a, 111).

Though this protectorate system "offered a pragmatic solution to the problem of governing at minimal cost," the military was forced to establish a more centralized administration in some parts of the AOF. In Western Sudan, the French abandoned the protectorate system as they slowly conquered the large pre-colonial states established by El Hadj Umar Tall and Samori Touré in Western Soudan because they would not tolerate the continued rule of these powerful adversaries after their defeat (Conklin 1997a, 111). Consequently, the French implemented a more "direct" system of administration in these areas, removing provinces from the administrative structure and dividing all *cercles* into *cantons* of approximately equal size (112). The French gave little consideration to pre-colonial political units as they created the *cantons* and appointed *canton* chiefs who were loyal to the French rather than legitimate in the eyes of the population.

As the civilian colonial administration established itself throughout the AOF, it adopted this system of "direct" administration. Even in territories like Dahomey and Guinea, where protectorates were the norm, newly appointed civilian governors independently began to implement "direct" administrations. From 1902 to 1907, under the leadership of Governor General Ernest Roume, what was left of the protectorate system was further dismantled as the French divided all pre-colonial states that had been constituted as protectorates into "*cantons* of uniform size" (Conklin 1997a, 113). According to Mamdani (1996, 83), though it was not entirely successful, "the key object of French policy" became "to flatten all mediation between the village and [the colonial administration] to one, the village chief" as a way to consolidate French rule over its subjects.

Subsequently, Governor General William Ponty, worked to further secure "exclusive policy-making powers" within his office and limit the role of African chiefs in the territorial administration (Conklin 1997a, 109-10). Thus prior to World War I, the governor general came to hold "truly viceregal powers," at the "apex of a highly centralized administrative pyramid," in which the lieutenant governors of the various territories only had "limited autonomous administrative authority," and became, in effect, "the principal resident subordinates of the governor general" (McNamara 1989, 30-31). The governor general appointed the French *commandants* who served at the *cercle* level of administration and were accountable to the lieutenant governors of the territories. In turn, these *cercle* commanders carefully controlled the *canton* chiefs who presided over a system of forced labor and conscription that village chiefs helped to administer at the local level. French *commandants* were able to ensure that *canton* chiefs complied with the system of taxation and forced labor and were able delegitimize some of the customary authority held by chiefs by the brutal implementation of the *indigénat*, "the regime of administrative sanctions" that *commandants* could apply to colonial subjects to "inflict swift punishments for any challenge, real or perceived, to their personal authority and that of the colonial state" (Mann 2009, 334).

As has already been stated, the French sought to efficiently extend economic and political control in the AOF through this hierarchical system that "deliberately sapped the traditional powers of the chiefs in the interest of uniformity of administration" (Crowder 1964, 201). The establishment of this territorial administration was also either driven by, or at least justified by, the French civilizing mission, "the official ideology of the Third Republic" that had helped to justify the acquisition of a vast African empire (Conklin 1997a, 11). Though this "direct" administration did not reflect the assimilationist policies implemented in the Four Communes,

colonial administrators believed that it freed their AOF subjects from the "feudal potentates" who ruled the pre-colonial empires (Ponty quoted in Conklin, 110). As David Rawson (2000, 269) has written, "the centralizing ethos of French colonial administration coupled Cartesian logic with republican rigor, Roman law, and French civilizing mission," and "the French notion of effective administration and social service delivery paralleled its top-down notions of political control and influence."

This "direct" administration initially adopted by the French civilian administration in the AOF is often described in the literature as highly centralized. This is an accurate assessment in that it "provided for a system of hierarchical rule from the central government down to the villages" (Olowu and Wunsch 2004, 31), and each level of administration in the colonies was ultimately accountable to the central power, the Government General in Dakar, which was, in turn, accountable to the colonial ministry in Paris. The *canton* chiefs at the lowest levels of the administration had almost no political autonomy, and the central authority sought to manage rural affairs and strengthen central roles by delegitimizing customary authorities and any pre-existing local governments (Ribot 2002, 5). Yet, it must also be noted that this system of "direct" administration established by the French is still best classified as a deconcentrated system of administration, albeit a weak, highly centralized, authoritarian one. With echoes of Mamdani (1996), Heller (2001, 132) has written that the history of colonial rule is "largely a history of decentralized authority," in which "local despots" were tasked by the administration with maintaining order and extracting revenues. As we will see, the French further decentralized power to "local despots" after World War I and World War II in an attempt to preserve French control over the AOF.

B. World War I

The weaknesses of the colonial administration in the AOF became apparent during World War I as African subjects actively resisted recruitment into the French army and *évolués* began to demand political equality for all Africans in French West Africa. This led successive governors general to question the established policy of "divest[ing] chiefs of their authority" to "maintain all power in their own hands" (Conklin 1997a, 174), and the colonial administration adopted a "new" theory of *association*, similar to British indirect rule and the protectorate system originally adopted by the French military in the AOF territories. Unlike previous policies, *association* "encouraged the retention of native institutions and implied a large degree of administrative autonomy" for *canton* chiefs (Betts 1960, 122). Today, many of the policies that emerged from *association* would be classified as deconcentration. Mamdani (1996) refers to the policies established during this era as "decentralized despotism."

In 1917, territorial governors in AOF were directed to reappoint customary chiefs as *canton* and village chiefs, and Governor General Joost van Vollenhoven ordered the governors to "rigorously … delegat[e] decision-making power and bring the administration as close as possible to the administered population" because it was "the only way" to "reconcile the interests of the dominant power with those of the local people" (quoted in SNV 2004, 15; Wing and Kassibo 2010, 2; and Diawara 2011, 436). Additionally, two years later, in 1919, the French established *conseils des notables indigènes* at the *cercle* level of the administration that were made up of African members appointed by the governor of the colony and chaired by the *commandant de cercle* (Chafer 2002, 30). At the local level, a 1920 decree envisioned the eventual "transformation of all African communities into *communes* with municipal responsibilities" (Conklin 1997a, 192). As part of this reform, a few urban areas, including

Bamako and Kayes in Soudan, were accorded the status of *communes mixtes*, which meant they were governed by a council of Europeans and educated Africans and led by a mayor appointed by the colonial administration. In rural areas, the administration created village councils with the intention that those villages would ultimately become native *communes*, run by an administrator-mayor in consultation with a council of elders.

According to a recent study of decentralization in Mali, the French implemented these policies because they recognized "that, due to geographical constraints and specific cultural features, decentralization was a management model," which would "produce better results" in the AOF (SNV 2004, 15). Rawson (2000, 269) also highlights the practical reasons the French introduced these reforms and notes that attempts by the administration to "impose uniform codes" throughout the territory had "[given] way to local practices" because a scarcity of human and monetary resources severely limited the ability of the colonial administration to adequately administer large territories like French Soudan. Additionally, not unlike modern day advocates of decentralization, idealists at the time argued that the policies that grew out of *association* "would lead to improved local wellbeing," while the French government justified the reforms "in terms of local self-determination" (Oyono and Ribot 2004, 206).

However, as Mamdani (1996, 16-17) has rightfully pointed out, "the organization and reorganization" of the state during the colonial period was primarily "a response to a central and overriding dilemma" of colonization, namely "how a tiny and foreign minority [could] rule over an indigenous majority." *Association*, which he equates with British indirect rule, was nothing but "a mediated – decentralized – despotism" designed to control the large subject population of the AOF. As Conklin argues, the French colonial administration's emphasis on *association*

following World War I and its efforts to transfer greater power to customary authorities and local councils was

> motivated more by a desire to contain the *évolués*… and to reestablish 'discipline' among their subjects in general, than by any intrinsic interest in either African civilizations or democracy… Dakar 'reinvented' an ostensibly African form of democracy as part of its bid to reassert republican hegemony in the federation (1997a, 175).

During the War, the Government General in Dakar had become increasingly alarmed by the demands of the growing number of educated African *évolués*, the majority of whom lived in the Four Communes and other urban areas, that they be recognized as French citizens and share power with the French. Blaise Diagne, the first black *député* to represent the Four Communes in the French National Assembly, had made the question of French citizenship the central issue of the 1914 elections, and, once elected, he successfully forced the National Assembly to grant French citizenship to African residents of Saint Louis, Gorée, Rufisque, and Dakar by urging African *originaires* of the Four Communes not to enlist in the French army unless their citizenship was ensured (Lambert 1993, 244-45).

The passage of the 1915 law that granted French citizenship to the *originaires* of the Four Communes worried colonial administrators, but more alarming was the reputation Diagne gained by the end of the war "as spokesman for the rights of all Africans [in the AOF] against a demanding and authoritarian colonial administration" (Conklin 1997a, 156). Diagne had begun to demand the enfranchisement of African subjects throughout the AOF, something the French viewed as "nothing less than the urban *évolués* bid for the peasants' allegiance and an attempt to discredit the collaborating chiefs in the eyes of the rural masses" (157). Diagne's efforts were especially troubling because there had been significant resistance to the recruitment of *tirailleurs* for the French army from the rural African population without his interference. African subjects

passively resisted recruitment, and there were sporadic revolts against the administration throughout the war. While these revolts were directly triggered by the recruitment of *tirailleurs*, they were also a response to "the overly zealous application" of the French direct administration that had removed customary chiefs from power and stripped others of their authority (148).

The policies introduced through the aegis of *association* following the war directly addressed these challenges to French rule. French administrators sought to counterbalance the demands of the *évolués* and maintain their control by returning some authority to customary leaders in rural areas and creating a handful of *communes* governed by municipal councils in urban areas beyond the Four Communes. Many of these moves towards decentralization were never fully implemented. After 1920, no additional communes were created until after World War II, *cercle* councils only ever held consultative authority in relation to the colonial administrators, and many of the village councils that should have been created to support, or, perhaps, check *canton* and village chiefs never materialized.

However, there was no need to fully implement these reforms and ensure a voice for Africans in their governance once it was clear the reforms had checked Diagne's demands for political equality for all Africans in the AOF. *Évolués* were somewhat appeased with the seats they gained on municipal and *cercle* councils, and the customary chiefs the French appointed as *canton* chiefs, who "gained real power and wealth as French intermediaries" at the expense of local populations, did not revolt against the French administration again after 1918 (Conklin 1997b, 75). The interwar years were by no means untroubled, and the colonies, like the rest of the world, were greatly impacted by the global depression, but the small steps the colonial administration took toward decentralization following World War I allowed France to maintain control throughout its West African territories. These reforms ensured the collaboration of rural

chiefs and, to a certain extent, the urban *évolués*, who gained some authority through municipal councils. As Mamdani has argued, *association*

> was never just a commonsense, pragmatic, and cost-efficient administrative strategy that utilized local personnel to fill its lowest tiers. Its point was to create a dependent but autonomous system of rule, one that combined accountability to superiors with flexible response to the subject population, a capacity to implement central directives with one to absorb local shocks. (1996, 60)

C. World War II

World War II irrevocably changed the relationship between France and its African colonies. International attitudes towards colonization had changed, the French government was forced to acknowledge the significant role Africans had played in the War, and French-educated *évolués* increasingly began to push for equal rights within a growing nationalist movement. Mamdani (1996, 102-103) argues that the potential of *association* "was exhausted in the aftermath of the Second World War" because "nationalist movements successfully linked urban protest against racial exclusion in civil society to rural movements against" the broad powers of local chiefs.

Unwilling to let their West African colonies go, the post-WWII French government made efforts to decentralize a degree of power to African populations through municipal governments and territorial councils within the colonial administration. Olowu and Wunsch (2004, 32), emphasize that reforms introduced by the British and French across Africa after World War II came close to the ideal-type decentralization, devolution, in that they at least established an "outline of a system of local government," the vitality of which is demonstrated by "the base it provided for many of the leaders who rose to challenge the colonial system." Nelson Kasfir (1993, 24-5) agrees, noting that "for different reasons some colonial administrators and

nationalists fighting for independence jointly supported the introduction of a Western model of local government" in the late colonial period.

Though French efforts fell short of those of the British, the French did create additional urban *communes* across the AOF prior to independence. In Soudan, the French established Mopti and Segou as mixed *communes* in 1953 and established Sikasso as a mixed *commune* the following year. In 1955, the French granted the municipalities of Bamako, Mopti, Kayes, and Segou status as full *communes*. Under this designation, these local governments were administered by elected councils that appointed a mayor and enjoyed the full range of authority accorded to municipalities in France (Kassibo 1997, 3). In November 1956, municipal elections were held for the first time under a system of universal suffrage in the AOF, and, two years later, in 1958, the French designated the towns of Gao, Kati, Kita, Koulikoro, Koutiala, Nioro, San, and Timbuktu as mixed *communes* while Sikasso was promoted to full *commune* status in 1959 (SNV 2004, 15-16).

Most studies of decentralization in Mali are primarily concerned with the creation and functioning of local governments and, thus, focus on the creation of these urban municipalities under the French Fourth Republic. However, it is also important to note that the 1946 constitution that established the Fourth French Republic as the *Union Française* also called for the significant transfer of authority to territorial assemblies in each of the colonies of the AOF. Though these territorial assemblies became national assemblies at independence, at the time they represented nascent subnational governments within the larger French Empire. The more liberal first draft of the constitution of the French Fourth Republic would have granted territorial assemblies, elected under a system of universal suffrage, considerable authority to administer the territories and would have replaced the governor general with a resident under-secretary of state

(Chafer 2002, 65). However, an October 1946 law ultimately directed that territorial assemblies be elected by a double electoral college to ensure European representation, and only gave these bodies consultative power to the lieutenant governor of the territory, in effect, preserving the power of colonial administrators in the AOF (66).

The creation of these territorial assemblies and the eventual establishment of additional municipalities throughout the AOF flowed from the "reformist intentions" of the new French government established at the 1944 Brazzaville Conference (Chafer 2002, 50). According to Mauxion (2012, 50), at the conference, "Charles de Gaulle promised Africans a greater voice in French and colonial post-war politics" because African "participation in the war effort, which coincided with the progressive urbanization of the colonies and the increasing importance of a French-educated African elite" obligated "France to significantly reconsider its position in Africa." However, the participants at the Brazzaville Conference – the governors general of AOF and French Equatorial Africa, lieutenant governors, *cercle* commanders, and other administration officials – also agreed that, though changes needed to be made to the colonial regime, the "overriding priority for France was to retain its colonial empire" (Chafer, 56). Reviving the French *assimilationist* ideal that the colonies would ultimately become a part of France, the final resolution of the Conference stated that,

> the aims of the work of colonization which France is pursuing in her colonies exclude any idea of autonomy and any possibility of development outside the French empire bloc; [and] the attainment of self-government in the colonies even in the most distant future must be excluded (quoted in Lewis 1962, 129).

Thus, despite initial attempts to restructure the relationship between the *métropole* and French African colonies immediately following the War and decentralize a degree of power to local and territorial councils, the desire to maintain the French empire, made change slow to materialize. The governor general in Dakar and the lieutenant governors in each of the territories

continued to dominate the colonial administration and control the budget-making process in the AOF. And,

> because the political activities of African deputies were centered on Paris, this militated against achieving the objective De Gaulle had set at Brazzaville of guiding colonial populations towards managing their own affairs (Chafer 2002, 153).

However, while French administrators and *députés* were trying to slow the introduction of reforms that would devolve power to local governments and territorial assemblies, it quickly became clear that post-war France would not be able to finance the assimilationist reforms, like equal citizenship rights, pay, and benefits, that might hold the French Empire together. The African representatives in the National Assembly increasingly lost hope in *assimilation*, and, as their disillusionment grew, began to "attach increasing importance to political autonomy" (Chafer 2002, 154). Although French representatives succeeded in delaying its passage until 1955, African representatives in the National Assembly introduced the municipal reforms that would eventually create additional *communes* throughout the AOF in 1951 (144). And, within the AOF, more radical political parties and civil society groups increasingly called for independence, especially as they observed the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu and the start of the Algerian revolution in 1954 (Chafer 2002, 154).

With their control slipping away, the French finally overcame years of inertia when the National Assembly passed the *Loi Cadre* in 1956. Though this package of reforms ultimately led to the independence of the AOF territories, it was designed to devolve a significant degree of power to territorial assemblies as a last effort to keep the AOF "firmly in the French sphere of influence" (Chafer 2002, 186). According to McNamara (1989, 33), it reversed the "highly centralized federal system" of colonial administration in the AOF. Territorial assemblies became elected by universal suffrage and governors transferred much of their authority for the day-to-

day management of the territories to them. Chafer (2002, 186) notes that the reforms ensured that the French would maintain control of monetary policy, higher education, language policy, foreign affairs, and defense. However, as McNamara (71) asserts, under the *Loi Cadre*, for the first time, the colonial administration became responsible to members of the territorial assemblies elected by the population.

Whichever the case, these reforms did not remain in place for long. Approximately a year after the reforms came into full effect in the AOF, a coup attempt in Algiers in May 1958, led to the promulgation of a new constitution establishing the French Fifth Republic. A referendum was held on the constitution, and French colonies were given the choice of establishing themselves "as internally-autonomous republics within the [French] Community" or becoming independent and losing French assistance (Lewis 1962, 130). Initially, only Guinea opted to leave the French Community and lose all French support. The remaining AOF colonies chose to maintain their connections to France, but, by 1960 each of the AOF colonies had chosen to become independent states.

D. Conclusion

The two waves of decentralization during the colonial period were initiated by the French following both world wars as attempts to maintain control within a volatile political context. During the first wave of decentralization, the French worked to quiet the demands of the French *evolués* for the political equality of Africans in the AOF and ensure the allegiance of chiefs within the colonial administration by strengthening the deconcentrated system of administration. The decentralization reforms enacted by the French in the late colonial period went further than

these initial reforms and came closer to devolution, but they were far from perfect and slow to materialize.

The French were hesitant to grant increased autonomy to local and territorial governments lest it lead to the independence of AOF colonies. When the National Assembly finally granted a significant degree of authority to the territorial assemblies through the *Loi-Cadre* it was "more of a question of government facing up to the inevitable than skillful planning for the future" (Chafer 2002, 186). That said the French did grant significant autonomy to subnational governments during the final years of its control, and the territorial assemblies and some of the local councils established by the French after World War II provided the "institutional grounds for the development of political debate and activities" across the AOF territories prior to decolonization (Mauxion 2012, 50). According to Rawson (2000, 269), in the 1990s, "many local authorities" viewed the decentralization reforms introduced by Alpha Oumar Konaré's administration "as a process of recapturing the authority and responsibility their predecessors exercised" during the late colonial period.

CHAPTER 3

Decentralization in the Post-Independence Era, 1960-1991

Ironically, instead of building on the decentralization reforms that emerged in the late colonial period, post-independence leaders across West Africa moved to centralize power within authoritarian regimes. In Mali, "the three first decades of postcolonial rule" from 1960 to 1991 were "characterized by highly centralized and top-down administrative systems" (Mauxion 2012, 48). Initially, newly independent governments across Africa accepted the decentralization that, though imperfect, had been implemented by the colonial powers in the 1950s, but they soon moved to shut down the political space that had been opened up during the late colonial period through decentralization reforms (Mawhood 1993, 7).

A number of factors led the leaders of newly independent states in Africa to begin to reverse course. For one, many of these leaders "believed the only way to demonstrate the reality of political independence was through rapid economic development," best achieved through central state planning, to which autonomous local authorities would be "irritants at best, if not obstacles" (Olowu and Wunsch 2004, 33). Many leaders also supposed centralization as necessary to ensure the stability and unity of their multiethnic countries. Additionally, it must be remembered that though decentralization became a popular policy in the late colonial period, the "colonial state that African nationalists sought to control was not modeled on Western 'universal,' democratic and liberal values, but was a particularistic creation of European imperialism" (Chafer 2002, 233). As Kasfir has made clear,

> the political culture bequeathed by colonialism contained notions that authoritarianism was an appropriate mode of rule and that political activity was merely a disguised form of self-interest, subversive of the public welfare. Since decentralized government rests on the premises of democratic expression of local

> interests and the existence of alternative governments, which are likely to express different views on policy from time to time, clearly, much of the colonial legacy was highly dissonant with the idea of decentralization. (1993, 33)

A. The First Republic

After breaking from the short-lived Mali Federation through which a united Senegal and Mali gained independence from France in June 1960, Modibo Keita and the Malian political elite founded the First Republic of Mali in September. The 1960 constitution created the independent Malian republic as an "indivisible, democratic, secular, and social" state (Article 1) and established a system of government under which the National Assembly, the successor of the colonial territorial assembly, whose members would be elected by universal suffrage through multiparty elections, appointed the President. Notably, the constitution also recognized *collectivités territoriales,* or subnational governments – regions, districts, *fractions*, municipalities, and villages – that would be "free to govern themselves by elected councils" (Article 41). However, President Modibo Keita and leaders of his party, the *Union Soudanaise-Rassemblement Démocratique Africain* (US-RDA), soon abandoned the "democratic ambitions" of this first constitution "for the *de facto* imposition of US-RDA as [the] single-party," and committed themselves to the development of Mali along socialist lines (Mauxion 2012, 52).

This decision had implications for the subnational governments envisioned by the constitution. Though Keita and US-RDA leaders espoused an "ideological commitment" to the devolution of power to local governments recognized by the constitution, their commitment was "balanced against the larger and more centralized 'interests of the Republic'" (Rawson 2000, 270). As Mamadou Diawara (2011, 437) has written, the national motto adopted by the new Republic of Mali – "one people, one goal, one faith" – just did "not anticipate a space for"

significant decentralization in the country. A 1966 law recognized all thirteen urban municipalities inherited from the colonial administration as full *communes*, and elections were held in these municipalities in June 1966, but the government never created additional municipalities or allowed villages and *fractions* to administer themselves through elected councils as envisioned by the constitution (Kassibo 1997, 3). Additionally, according to John Hazard (1969, 9), the Minister of the Interior had to approve all decisions made by popularly elected municipal councils, while the larger Council of Ministers approved all municipal budgets.

As Keita and his allies realized that the development of the largely rural country would depend on the success of the socialist revolution in rural Mali, US-RDA leaders worked to "radically transform" villages and *fractions* by establishing party and state structures down to the local level that were controlled by the center (Hopkins 1969, 457). Under the principle of democratic centralism, the party structures that the US-RDA established at the village level were to provide a forum for Malians to express their needs and expectations; however, they were ultimately subject to decisions made by the "highest executive organ of the party," the *Bureau Politique National* (BPN), led by Keita (Martin 1976, 30). In addition to these party structures, Malian leaders created "a highly centralized and top-down state apparatus" to execute "their economic and political agenda" throughout the country (Mauxion 2012, 53).

The State operated through deconcentrated administrative units of the central government, not dissimilar from those established by the French colonial administration. Just prior to independence, in 1958, the US-RDA-controlled territorial assembly had removed *cantons* from the administrative structure of Soudan because the majority of *canton* chiefs, members of the opposition party, the *Parti Soudanais Progressiste* (PSP), were viewed as

collaborationists who continued to support the colonial power (Kassibo 2007, 11).[5] However, though this move was designed to signal a break with the French colonial administration, after independence, the Keita administration simply instituted *arrondissements*, administered by a *chef d'arrondissement*, loyal to the US-RDA, in their place. As under the French administration, the *arrondissements* were grouped into *cercles*, which were in turn grouped into regions. The *chef d'arrondissement* was appointed by the *commandant de cercle* who was appointed by the regional governor, selected by the central government and instructed to work closely with the regional party (Hazard 1969, 10). As Mamdani has argued,

> Even if there was a change in the title of functionaries, from chiefs to cadres, there was little change in the nature of power. If anything, the fist of colonial power that was the local state was tightened and strengthened… [as post-colonial states] centralized coercive authority in the name of development or revolution. (1996, 26)

In Mali, though councils headed by a chief operated in each village, they had limited powers and "were little more than the people in the villages with whom the government could deal" (Hopkins 1969, 462). As under the colonial administration, village and *fraction* councils and chiefs were largely relegated to the role of assisting the central administration with tax collection. According to Abdoulaye Sall (1993, 3), under Keita, the "omnipotent and omniscient" agents of the central state – the regional governors, *commandants de cercle*, and *chefs de arrondissement* – controlled power at the local level. For instance, when farmers passively resisted the implementation of a centrally-planned cooperative farming system by producing what they could eat and selling any surplus on the black market, the state set rigid production quotas for every village, and *arrondissement* and *cercle* officials were authorized to

[5] Fily Dabo Sissoko, one of the founders of the PSP, was a canton chief before he was elected to National Assembly in 1945. The PSP advocated for the gradual independence of Mali from France and sought to protect the influence of the canton chiefs during the final years of colonial rule. The PSP dominated post-World War II elections in French Soudan until it lost to the US-RDA in 1956.

subject village chiefs and farmers "to all kinds of humiliations," if they failed to meet the centrally imposed quotas (Sy 2009, 55).

As Mali struggled to cope with economic and political crises of the period, the Keita regime became progressively radicalized and increasingly sought to concentrate power within the central party. In March 1967, US-RDA leaders split over the implementation of a monetary accord with France through which the French agreed to support the faltering Malian Franc and Mali agreed to devalue its currency and cut government expenditures. After devaluing the Malian Franc by 50 percent, Keita moved to appease the radical faction of the party that opposed the monetary accord by dissolving the BPN of the US-RDA and creating the *Comité National de Défense de la Révolution* (CNDR) to oversee both the party and the government. A few months later, in early 1968, Keita activated a *Milice populaire* "to uncover corruption and purify the party." However, this militia of young US-RDA radicals made quick work of alienating a large portion of Malian citizens as they "conducted searches of home and person at will, detained many on the least pretext, and engaged in torture." (Imperato and Imperato 2008, lxxxix) Not surprisingly, eight years after US-RDA party leaders established the First Republic of Mali, the overthrow of Keita's regime by a group of army officers in late 1968 was met with broad popular support.

B. From Military Dictatorship to the Single Party Rule of the Second Republic

Malians initially supported the arrest of Modibo Keita by then-Lieutenant Moussa Traoré and a group of military officers in November 1968, but the *Comité Militaire de Libération Nationale* (CMLN) that took control of the government only reinforced the highly centralized, authoritarian character of the state in post-colonial Mali. In December, the CMLN issued a

decree that suspended the 1960 Constitution and replaced it with the *Loi fondamentale*. This Fundamental Law authorized the fourteen-member CMLN to "define, guide, and control the general policy of the Republic" by decree, and they appointed Committee chairman Moussa Traoré as military head of state (Delaborde 1968, 628). Though the law stated that Article 41 of the 1960 Constitution with its ideal of administrative autonomy for subnational governments would remain in effect, the CMLN moved to appoint all local posts, including the mayors and councils of urban municipalities that had previously been elected (Seely 2001, 509). Traoré never tolerated challenges to his authority – political activity was banned, protests were quickly quashed, opposition leaders were arrested, and, when necessary, members of his own government were purged – but "throughout his tenure [Traoré] constantly resorted to pseudo-democratic gestures, namely formal elections, as a justification for his rule" (Villalón and Idrissa 2005, 52).

The implementation of the largest of these "pseudo-democratic gestures" began in 1974 when the CMLN drafted a new constitution to establish the Second Republic of Mali as a civilian, single-party state under the *Union Démocratique du Peuple Malien* (UDPM). According to Traoré, the multiparty system introduced by the 1960 constitution had been a complete failure because, in practice, it only benefited the US-RDA. Unlike Keita's regime, Traoré argued, the new single-party system would permit the consideration of different opinions because Mali did not want a "totalitarian party, which admits no argument" (quoted in Bennett 1975, 264). The constitution passed by referendum in June 1974 and allowed the CMLN to rule for an additional five years before a civilian administration was introduced.

In March 1979, Traoré was chosen as secretary general of the UDPM, he stood as the only presidential candidate in the June 19 elections, and won 99.89 percent of the vote with a

reported 94.3 percent of the electorate voting (Novick and Rundblad 1979, 28). Traoré was thus able to "acquire a certain democratic legitimacy," while the military continued to support his government and play a substantial role in the new civilian regime (Rondos 1979, 39). This situation is exemplified by the government reshuffle following the elections, in which Traoré removed four army colonels, powerful former members of the CMLN, from his government and appointed a 15-member cabinet composed primarily of civilians, only to make the colonels members of UDPM's Central Committee (Imperato and Imperato 2008, xxxviii).

This new "civilian" dictatorship only made superficial efforts at decentralization that allowed the single party, with the support of the military, to "retain complete control over the management of public affairs from the national to local level" (Mauxion 2012, 55). Unlike the 1960 constitution, the constitution of the Second Republic did not include provisions for the principle of self-administration through subnational governments. Instead, it stipulated that *collectivités territoriales* would be "created and administered by the law" (Seely 2001, 509). Thus, before the transition to civilian rule, in 1977, the CMLN-controlled government introduced administrative reforms to redraw the boundaries of *arrondissements*, *cercles*, and regions and establish local councils throughout Mali. In 1981 and 1982, the UDPM-led government created these councils as development committees at the regional and *cercle* levels of administration. However, the committees only exercised consultative power vis-à-vis government-appointed bureaucrats, UDPM members dominated the committees, which were appointed by the central government, and the governors and *commandants de cercle* tightly controlled committee actions (Mauxion 2012, 59). According to Robin-Edward Poulton and Ibrahim ag Youssouf (1998, 27), within this system "party cadres, as much as the local administration officials" were controlled by the central decision-making power and used as "a vehicle for decentralized plunder across the

country."

Again, the decentralization reforms introduced as the CMLN prepared to transfer power to the civilian administration are best described as deconcentration. They were a way for Traoré to consolidate the political power of the new single party by expanding the reach of state and party structures. The development committees created by the reforms never held any real power, and the Ministry of the Interior resisted giving them any influence over public policy. For instance, despite continued promises made by Traoré and other top party members to create the *Fonds de Développement Régional et Local* (FDRL) to finance the initiatives of regional and local development committees, the central government never issued the legal texts that would have defined the functioning of the fund and used fund reserves to finance its own priorities (Félix 1996, 2).

By 1990, the Traoré regime came under significant pressure to allow multiparty elections in Mali. The international context had changed; the Berlin Wall fell in late 1989 and bilateral donors like France and the United States, the former of which had supported Traoré since he came to power in 1968, began to stress that they would no longer finance authoritarian regimes. On the African continent, in February 1990, Nelson Mandela was released from prison in South Africa, and, closer to home, Benin introduced democratic reforms through a National Sovereign Conference. Within Mali it seemed the population would no longer tolerate the corrupt, repressive, single-party regime through which Traoré and his cronies enriched themselves at the expense of ordinary Malians.

According to Pascal James Imperato (1991), Traoré's dictatorship had been able to survive the devastating economic crisis that gripped Mali during the 1980s because it held pseudo-democratic elections while maintaining a special place for the military in its regime.

Additionally, with significant assistance from donors, Traoré was able "to support a large bureaucracy of close to 50,000 employees" (27). With the introduction of SAPs, however, Traoré was forced to work to eliminate unprofitable national companies that had originated with Keita's socialist republic and "stem the flow of new entrants into the civil service." Theoretically, the private sector should have been able to absorb former government employees, but, in the late 1980s, socio-economic conditions only deteriorated, and groups like students, merchants, and workers reacted by voicing their displeasure with the inability of the government to grow the economy and create employment, not to mention its failure to provide basic social services.

In June 1990, the national context worsened further as a group of "barely armed rebels" from the *Mouvement Populaire de Libération de l'Azawad* (MPLA) attacked the town of Menaka, in the region of Gao, near the Niger border, instigating what is known in Mali as the Second Tuareg Rebellion (Lecocq and Klute 2013, 3).[6] The Tuareg, who felt they had been progressively marginalized throughout the post-independence era and willfully ignored by the Traoré regime during the devastating droughts of the 1970s and 1980s, launched the rebellion to demand autonomy (some rebels even wanted independence) for northern Mali. Traoré was forced to deploy two-thirds of the total strength of the military, about 4000 men, to the troubled northern region, and, while a large part of Mali's armed forces struggled to stop approximately 200 Tuareg rebels in the North, pro-democracy movements gained strength in Bamako and other major cities (3). In October, the *Comité Nationale d'Initiative Démocratique* (CNID), the *Alliance Démocratique du Mali* (ADEMA), and the *Association des Élèves et Étudiants du Mali* (AEEM) formed in Bamako and, backed by the national workers' union, the *Union Nationale*

[6] Under Keita, the Malian military violently suppressed the First Tuareg Rebellion (1963-64). They poisoned wells, indiscriminately killing civilians and cattle in addition and publicly executed local chiefs and religious leaders (Lecocq 2010).

des Travailleurs Maliens (UNTM), a body that had previously acted as almost an extension of the single party, immediately set to work to pressure Traoré to allow multiparty elections.

In the face of these growing calls for multiparty democracy, Traoré and top party leaders attempted to maintain their power by organizing regional and national discussions on decentralization, with the stated objective of devolving significant power to local governments across Mali by 1991. In an effort to strengthen his position as his popularity waned, Traoré argued that full-blown democracy could not be implemented overnight and that the best way to begin the process of democratization in Mali was to build on the administrative reforms introduced in 1977 rather than allow for the creation of opposition parties (*L'Essor* 9 May 1990). Accordingly, the National Seminar on Decentralization passed resolutions advising the government to define the "transferable functions" that *collectivités territoriales* would exercise under increased decentralization and to gradually establish rural communes from *arrondissements* while maintaining the local and regional development councils the government had previously established at the regional and *cercle* levels of the administration (*L'Essor* 9 Mai 1990). However, Traoré's tactics only strengthened the opposition's rejection of his single-party regime, and, as reported by *Les Échos* (11 to 25 May 1990), the newspaper founded by Alpha Oumar Konaré in 1989, the Malian public saw through the National Seminar on Decentralization as an attempt by Traoré and his allies to evade calls for democracy.

Traoré continued to stress the complicated nature of democratization in his public remarks. In a speech to the opening session of a meeting of the National Council of the UDPM, he highlighted the importance of democratization "within the [single] party," arguing that a model of democracy cannot simply be imported wholesale from another country (*L'Essor Hebdo*. 30 June-1 July 1990). Two months later, the National Council of the UDPM decided to

continue discussion of the possible adoption of multiparty democracy to their next meeting scheduled for March 1991 (*L'Essor* 27 August 1990). Within this difficult context, Traoré grew desperate to quiet pro-democracy groups, and, in early January 1991, his government signed the Tamanrasset Agreement with the Tuareg rebels. Among other things, the agreement was intended to facilitate the return of government troops to the capital, and a few days after government representatives and rebel groups signed the ceasefire, Traoré appointed General Sekou Ly, a stalwart supporter of the regime, as Minister of the Interior. Ly quickly moved to "suspend ADEMA, CNID, and AEEM from all political activities," arresting prodemocracy leaders and blocking ADEMA and CNID from holding scheduled meetings (Imperato 1991, 27). On January 21, 1991, the military used grenades and tear gas to break up student protests in Bamako and several regional capitals, killing up to five protestors (Turrittin 1991, 101).[7]

Unfortunately for Traoré, Malians perceived the hastily crafted Tamanrasset Agreement to be a capitulation to rebel demands, while the military was becoming "increasingly split between supporters of the regime and dissenters," further damaging the tenuous position of the dictatorship (Villalón and Idrissa 2005, 54). Many in the military hierarchy did not like the terms of the Tamanrasset Agreement (Diarrah 1996, 42), and rank-and-file soldiers "were sure they hadn't won only because they hadn't received enough weapons from Bamako" (Poulton and ag Youssouf 1998, 60). In addition to a ceasefire, the terms of the agreement included the demilitarization of the North, an exchange of prisoners, integration of rebels into the Malian armed forces, and the vague notion of a "special status" for the North that would give the northern regions some undefined degree of autonomy. These terms were not immediately shared with or explained to the Malian people, and, when it came to light that the government had

[7] Jane Turrittin (1991, 101) reports that four to five protestors were killed, but according to newspaper articles from the time, official government figures put the number of protestor deaths at two (*L'Essor* 28 January 1991).

agreed to a *statut particulier* for the North, an arrangement that granted the North significant autonomy along with a government guarantee to allocate 47 percent of the special investment budget to the region over the next four years, Malians were enraged. The government sought to represent this arrangement as an integral part of a comprehensive decentralization scheme (*Les Échos* 11 January 1991), but it came too late to salvage the government's credibility as pro-democracy demonstrations intensified in major cities across the country.

On March 22, 1991, following sporadic pro-democracy protests and strikes throughout the month, General Traoré declared a state of emergency and deployed the military to quell a pro-democracy protest in Bamako that had turned violent. Though reports vary, at least 30 protestors were killed and many more injured over the course of the day. Outraged, the public responded with continuing demonstrations on March 23. According to reports, five women were killed in front of the Ministry of Defense as they protested government violence against students and at least 65 people died after they were trapped in a building fire in Bamako's commercial district (Turrittin 1991, 102). Elsewhere, the Minister of Education was beaten to death by student protestors (Imperato and Imperato 2008, xlviii). As violence worsened, Traoré finally agreed to meet with representatives of AEEM, CNID, ADEMA, and the UNTM on the third day of protests. He agreed to lift the state of emergency and release political prisoners, but the pro-democracy coalition rejected these concessions and demanded President Traoré's resignation, the dissolution of the National Assembly, and the drafting of a new constitution (Clark 1995, 212). Finally, in the early morning hours of March 26, two days before the scheduled UDPM meeting at which the National Council was to take up the issue of multiparty democracy, the commander of the presidential guard, then Lieutenant Colonel Amadou Toumani Touré (ATT), arrested Traoré and top members of his administration. In an effort to restore the image of the military,

the *Conseil de Réconciliation Nationale* (CRN), led by ATT and a group of military officers, suspended the constitution and dissolved the UDPM (Diarrah 1996, 27). A few days later, the CRN and the pro-democracy coalition jointly announced their intention to quickly organize democratic elections.

C. Conclusion

Though presidents Keita and Traoré at times took timid steps toward decentralization, in practice, these governments only applied limited deconcentration in their administrations, and the subnational units of government that were the products of these limited reforms remained accountable to the central government. This was not unique to Mali. Across Francophone West Africa, following independence, "even where democratic local government was written into the constitution or given special legal protections, the reforms led to growing central government control" (Ribot 2002, 6). However, as Julien Félix (1996, 2-3) has emphasized, it is still important to remember that, though the idea of decentralization pushed by Konaré's administration "proceed[ed] from an obvious rupture with the political-administrative system born at independence," decentralization was by no means a new idea.

For the first time since Mali's late colonial period, the reforms introduced by the Konaré administration were designed as devolution in that they created autonomous subnational governments across the country. Perhaps development practitioners and the Malian political elite had reason to place increased hope in the potential of the decentralization reforms introduced by Konaré's democratic government to produce improved governance and development outcomes. However, in addition to the developmentalist goals of decentralization, there seemed to be a collective amnesia that all decentralization reforms – whether

deconcentration or devolution – are also driven by political imperatives. The following chapter provides an analysis of the political factors that influenced the Konaré government's decision to decentralize.

CHAPTER 4

Development of a new Decentralization Policy under he Konaré Administration

Mali's transitional government, led by Amadou Toumani Touré (ATT), followed suit of multiple francophone African countries and convened a National Conference in late July 1991 to draft a new democratic constitution. Across francophone Africa, national conferences, which brought together representatives of civil society and government, became the primary means by which civil society attempted to institute multiparty democracy at the end of the Cold War. A part of the so-called democratic third wave, Mali, often coupled with Benin as having one of the most successful democratic transitions through a National Conference, was the only state to first experience a coup d'état and establish an interim government before holding its National Conference (Wing 2008, 62). Multiple commentators argue that Mali's transition was especially extraordinary because in a little under two years the political system was transformed "from a highly authoritarian regime to one which ha[d] all the trappings of a liberal democracy," (Vengroff 1993, 541).

Over the course of two weeks from 29 July to 13 August 1991, participants in Mali's National Conference discussed major issues facing the nation and approved a draft constitution, a charter for political parties, and an electoral code. Multiple scholars have analyzed Mali's National Conference, so I will not go into detail here (see Diarrah 1996 and Wing 2008); however, it is necessary to review the conclusions of the Conference as relates to decentralization. Using language similar to that of Mali's 1960 Constitution, the 1992 Constitution drafted by the Conference recognizes *collectivités territoriales* (i.e. subnational governments), "freely administered" by elected councils, to be defined by later law. Though this

constitutional language is rather vague, the National Conference specifically recommended the elimination of constraints that had hindered past decentralization efforts in Mali and supported the transfer of significant authority to redefined, decentralized governments as a way to promote local development (Diarrah 1996, 35). In Susanna Wing's (2008, 81) words, the National Conference "paved the way for decentralization," as Conference participants "overwhelmingly agreed that democracy would depend on the incorporation of local interests and concerns into government." The Constitution was approved by referendum on January 12, 1992 and, in April, Alpha Oumar Konaré was elected the first president of the Third Republic of Mali.

Though, as Toumani Djimé Diallo (1995, 11) has written, the conclusions of the National Conference and the 1992 Constitution made it "incumbent upon" Konaré "to ensure the profound transformation of the national territorial administration" through decentralization, it was largely left to Konaré's administration to determine the design of decentralization reforms and how and when to implement them. Understanding why "ambitious" decentralization reforms came to hold such "political centrality" for Konaré's administration in the 1990s is crucial to understanding the process of decentralization in Mali (Villalón and Idrissa 2005, 61). It appears that the Konaré administration sought to consolidate democracy through decentralization within a difficult political climate that made it difficult to accomplish little else. The following cartoons, published around the anniversary of Konaré's first year in office, demonstrate the extreme pressure Konaré was under during the early years of his administration. The cartoon from *Le Républicain*, depicts President Konaré as he struggles to carry Mali while fighting the Tuareg separatists in the North and dragging the country's political, social, and economic problems with him. The more dramatic cartoon from *Les Échos* depicts Konaré struggling to pilot the sinking ship of "Mali." While the boat might pitch, he hopes it would not sink.

Figure 1: ***Le Républicain*** 9 June 1993

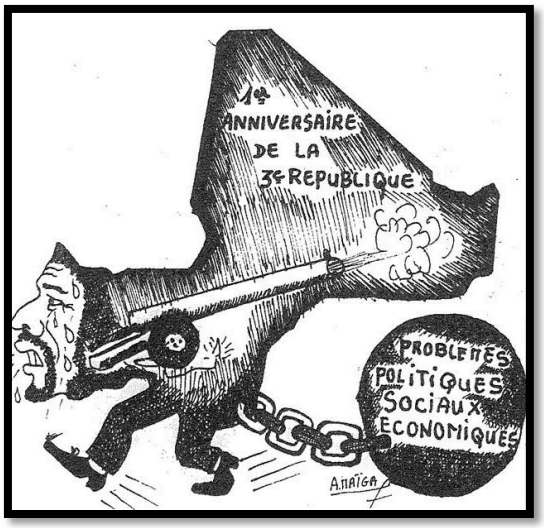
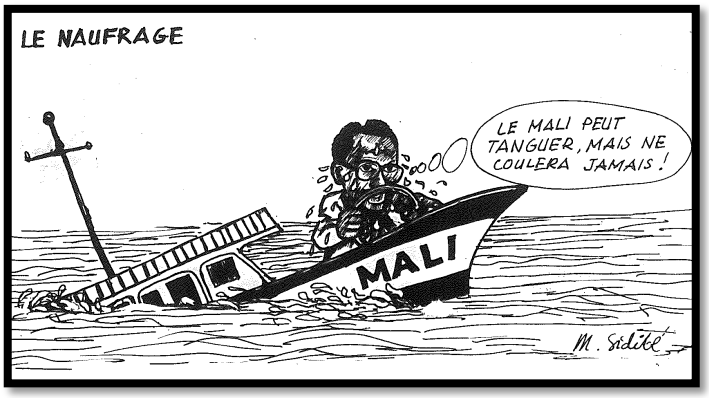


Figure 2: ***Les Échos*** 4 June 1993



It is evident from these cartoons that Konaré struggled to keep the new democratic regime afloat in the early years of his presidency and faced the same intransigent challenges that had contributed to Traoré's removal from power in 1991. As the government tried to contain resurgent violence in the North, it was unable to immediately spur economic development and found it difficult to address the mistrust of the state by Malian citizens that had grown throughout Traoré's rule. Konaré's first two prime ministers were forced to resign over public discontent with the inability of the new government to improve living standards as it continued to implement donor-prescribed austerity measures. Within this difficult political economic climate, decentralization became more than a theoretical exercise to strengthen democratic governance and spark development. The Konaré administration aggressively pursued decentralization reforms as one way to build its legitimacy in the face of multiple challenges threatening the stability of the new democratic regime.

A. External Support

Before discussing the internal political and economic forces that helped drive decentralization in Mali, it is necessary to address the argument that the primary reason the Konaré administration implemented decentralization reforms was because donors promoted, or even required them as a condition of foreign assistance. While international discourse absolutely impacted decentralization in Mali, and donors have since provided significant financial support for decentralization in the country, there is little evidence that an overriding reason Konaré's government adopted the reforms in the 1990s was to satisfy donors. Today, donors strongly encourage decentralization in Mali through a wide range of projects, but their support was less forthcoming in the early 1990s.

According to Manor (1999, 24), at the time, "the World Bank and International Monetary Fund tended to lag behind governments in less developed countries" that embraced decentralization. And, while bilateral donors were quicker than the international financial institutions (IFIs) to recognize the promise of decentralization reforms, they "tended to support decentralized institutions once they were created rather than pressuring recipient governments to experiment with decentralization" (25). Additionally, though the promise of decentralization to promote development and improved governance became a popular concept in international development circles as early as the 1980s when donors increasingly began to shift their emphasis from large-scale development programs to grassroots projects, largely rhetorical support for the reforms cannot completely explain why the Konaré administration pursued decentralization so aggressively in the 1990s. Donor support impacted decentralization reforms in Mali, but it did not dictate decentralization policies. In fact, Isaline Bergamaschi (2009, 223) argues that decentralization is an exceptional policy in Mali because in a country where the "mentality of aid

dependence" has checked the government's "ability to come up with nationally owned" development policies, decentralization stands out as one of the few programs for which the Malian government developed a national vision.

Julien Félix (1996) has argued that the IFIs supported decentralization reforms in Mali because they believed the reforms would promote the further disengagement of the central state from the economy to the benefit of the private sector (see also Ribot 2002). However, though theoretically, decentralization fits within the context of neoliberal reforms prescribed by SAPs, the World Bank and the IMF had not established explicit policies to promote decentralization by the early 1990s, nor was decentralization a conditionality of the 1990 SAP agreement that the Konaré government had inherited from Traoré. IMF and World Bank officials designed Mali's 1990 SAP (1) to increase incentives for the private sector through deregulation and the restructuring of the tax system; and (2) to improve public resources management by reducing the size of the civil service and addressing corruption (World Bank 2007, 7-8). The IFIs tacitly supported decentralization efforts, but they were hesitant to make decentralization a conditionality of loans. As Nelson Kasfir (1993, 43) has argued, a priority for IFIs at the time was to "remove unproductive government officials from" overburdened state payrolls, and "decentralization [would] likely expand employment without guaranteeing the funds to make new local governments effective."

While the IFIs were hesitant to push decentralization, bilateral donors, other multilateral donors, and NGOs were more supportive of decentralization reforms, which, according to Félix (1996), they saw as a way to promote local development. The *Mission de Décentralisation* (MD) would have struggled to carry out its mission without the access to international experts and financial assistance it received from mostly bilateral donors. According to Bergamaschi

(2008, 235), though "political visions for the project [were] very strong on the Malian side, implementation modalities were initially weakly defined and dependent on external financial sources." According to one USAID assessment, between 1993 and 1998, donors including Canada, the European Union, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) committed over $6 million to finance MD operating costs and programs (Lippman and Lewis 1998, 14). USAID, for instance, "fully support[ed]" decentralization by 1991, working with the municipal governments inherited from the previous regime and financing MD-sponsored local and regional study and mobilization groups (GREM and GLEM) on decentralization after their creation (13).

When compared to the approximately € 120 million the European Commission gave to support decentralization in Mali from 2000 to 2009 (Pousse 2012, 1), this $6 million over five years does not seem significant, but the Konaré government would have had a difficult time financing decentralization efforts without it. Especially because, as Robin-Edward Poulton and Ibrahim ag Youssouf forcefully argue, donors provided "virtually no financial support" for Mali's young democracy and expressed,

> nothing but skepticism as the new President and his inexperienced ministers struggled with the problems of rebellious Tuaregs, revolting students, recalcitrant youth groups, subversive political opponents of democracy, an antagonistic civilian administration, a suspicious military, an empty treasury and a taxation system which had not functioned for [several years] (1998, 67).

That said, I must reiterate that the implementation of decentralization reforms in the 1990s was not designed as a "theatrical performance" to meet donor demands (Ribot and Oyono 2005, 211). Though bilateral donors were quicker than the IFIs to recognize the promise of decentralization, they also approached large-scale decentralization reforms with caution. According to Ousmane Sy (2009, 111), who directed the MD throughout its lifetime and was

later appointed to lead the *Ministère de l'Administration territoriale et des Collectivités locales* (MATCL), the international specialists with whom the MD worked recommended that the government implement decentralization slowly and create test municipalities to assess the risks of devolving significant responsibility to autonomous subnational governments before establishing local governments throughout the country. As we know, the MD rejected these recommendations and created 682 new municipalities throughout the country by 1996.

Donors did not push decentralization reforms as strongly in the early 1990s as they do today, and donor support cannot explain the Konaré administration's indefatigable support for the reforms as the MD worked to establish legal texts and organize the creation of new municipalities throughout Mali. It appears that Konaré "seized on an internationally popular idea to accomplish his own particular ends within the context of rapid political and economic changes" (Oxhorn 2004, 299). As his regime came under increasing criticism in the late 1980s, President Traoré had tried to use decentralization to liberalize while maintaining control of the single-party. Konaré regarded decentralization as a way to consolidate the new democratic regime and strengthen the credibility of his administration in the face of seemingly intractable challenges.

B. The *Crise Sociale*

According to the former Director of the MD, Ousmane Sy (2009, 64), Konaré and his top advisors believed that decentralization was "the first step in the construction of a new Mali," of which ADEMA's pro-democracy militants "had long dreamed." Specifically, decentralization would widen the democratic base at the local level and make democracy meaningful for all Malians, thus "deepen[ing] the democratization process begun in 1991" (110). Clearly, Konaré

and his administration embraced the theory that decentralization would strengthen democratic governance; however, I argue that they proceeded with the implementation of decentralization reforms to boost the legitimacy of the new democratic regime within a difficult political environment. Despite international praise for Mali's transition, the foundations of the Third Republic "were weakened to the extreme" by "the Tuareg rebellion in the north, corporatist disputes, student revolts, [and] peasant demands," all of which contributed to Mali's *crise sociale*. Within this context, the resource-constrained Konaré administration initiated sweeping decentralization reforms to set the new government apart from the "predatory and authoritarian" regimes of the First and Second Republics, positioning decentralization as the "principal battle horse" through which to build government legitimacy to address the multiple crises that plagued the administration and strengthen the young democracy. (Kassibo 1997, 2)

Upon his inauguration, Konaré immediately had to find ways to constructively engage students, civil servants, merchants, workers, farmers, and other civil society groups that had gained a voice with the collapse of the previous regime and perpetuated the *crise sociale* during the early years of the new administration. After thirty years of authoritarian rule, many of these groups, distrustful of state institutions and government intentions, continued to organize strikes, demonstrate in the streets of Bamako, and demand improvements in their particular economic situations, what they perceived to be "the benefits of democratization" (Félix 1996, 11). For instance, rural Malians, represented by groups of farmers, herders, and others, who felt that the Traoré and Keita governments had ignored rural issues while extracting resources from villages to finance the development of towns and cities, demanded low-cost inputs and price supports for agricultural products. However, while they spoke of the necessity of improving rural incomes, they were hesitant to embrace the idea of a national strategy for rural development and did not

want to continue to pay taxes to the State, further hindering the government's ability to act (*L'Essor* 6 August 1991). In some instances, tax collectors were barred from entering towns and villages, and visits by administration officials, including Konaré, who spoke of the need for "all taxpayers [to] pay their taxes to replenish state coffers" drained by the previous regime, were unable to diffuse the situation (*Les Échos* 21 May 1993).

In Bamako and other urban areas, workers, merchants, students, and unemployed graduates organized strikes and public demonstrations to demand the improvement of their economic situations. The Malian press most closely covered protests led by the *Association des Élèves et Étudiants du Mali* (AEEM) not only because AEEM demonstrations were extremely disruptive, but also because the student union had gained significant credibility from the role it played in Traoré's overthrow. Students frequently took to the streets to demand the fulfillment of promises made to them by the transitional government, including increased stipends for university students and the extension of stipends to high school students (Smith 1997, 250). On April 5, 1993, AEEM demonstrations grew entirely out of control as students set the National Assembly on fire and vandalized Jamana, the cultural cooperative founded by Konaré in the 1980s. In addition, protestors vandalized the private homes of President Konaré, the defense minister, the education minister, and top civil servants in the Ministry of Education (Diarrah 1996, 278). The protests rocked the new government and forced the resignation of Konaré's first prime minister, Younoussi Touré, a few days later.

While the demands of the student movement were largely specific to AEEM members, as Claude Fay (1995, 2) has written, they were significant on a larger scale because they expressed "the discontent of a sacrificed clientele" that reflected the general attitude of the public towards the State. The new government was caught in a difficult situation. It lacked the financial means

to address the demands of each special interest group directly, and, though Konaré had been a well-respected leader of the pro-democracy movement, his government did not have the legitimacy to negotiate an end to protests, strikes, and other forms of resistance by these groups. Traoré had completely bankrupted the state, and the IMF was withholding vital funds because the government was having a difficult time implementing the terms of Mali's SAP in the face of public discontent. Additionally, the breakdown of the patron-client system that had helped to keep Traoré and his colleagues in power and the inability of the previous regime to deliver even the most basic public services left civil society unwilling to trust the young Konaré administration's promises. To make matters worse, throughout the transition, the political parties that formed from the pro-democracy movement had consistently expressed their firm belief that pluralism would resolve many of Mali's economic problems (Imperato 1991, 26). However, Mali's economy contracted during the first years of Konaré's administration, making it even almost impossible for the government to address the public demands that proliferated after the transition or demonstrate that IMF-mandated reforms would eventually lead to economic growth.

The violent student protests that led to the fall of Prime Minister Touré's government in April 1993, were followed by continued protests and strikes by teachers, civil servants, and workers, some of which, ironically enough, were organized to protest the inability of the State to guarantee security in Bamako. Unable to address the *crise sociale*, the Konaré administration made the swift implementation of significant decentralization reforms, launched in January 1993, its central strategy to try to reclaim the credibility of the state. President Konaré was intent on restoring the "authority of the state… 'not with muscles, but by the application of the law'" (*Le Républicain* 9 June 1993), and, as Félix (1996, 13-4) has argued, the government saw

decentralization as a way to consolidate democracy and give "new legitimacy to the State" by drawing citizens into the decision-making process in a constructive manner.

President Konaré's 1993 Independence Day speech makes clear that the government, with few other options, sought to use decentralization to legitimize the new democratic regime in the eyes of Malians and respond to the multiple crises gripping the country. At the beginning of the speech, Konaré recognizes that Mali is at a difficult point in its history, but seeks to point out that Mali is not alone by referring to all of Africa as "a land of despair" in an "anguished world." He urges Malians to "fight harder," while at the same time he asks for their patience, reminding "peasants, workers, the unemployed, students, businessmen, civil servants, and members of the military," that because of the financial constraints on the state, not all of their problems can be addressed at the same time. Konaré addresses unpopular measures, including the privatization of key economic sectors and the necessity of reducing government expenditures in the face of a shrinking GDP; however, he also points out that "soon, democracy will feed on the decentralization of public power," a project that Konaré believes will be "formidable work for the entrepreneurs of [Mali]." (*L'Essor* 23 September 1993) Approximately two months after this speech, the MD set the GREM and GLEM to work to "explain [decentralization reforms] to the populations of the 12,000 villages of Mali" (Sy 2009, 100).

The perceived urgency of implementing decentralization reforms to legitimize the new democratic regime was reinforced, a few months later, by the resignation of Konaré's second prime minister, Abdoulaye Sekou Sow, on February 2, 1994. After less than a year in office, Prime Minister Sow left amidst disagreements with his party following the fallout from the devaluation of the CFA in mid-January and renewed strikes and protests across the country. Despite his best efforts to work with AEEM, Sow felt that another "confrontation" with the

group similar to the *événements* of April 5, 1993 "seemed inevitable" (*Les Échos* 4 February 1994). A few days after Sow's resignation, students again staged violent protests in Bamako, attacking the education minister's house to demand increases in their stipends.

In response, newly appointed Prime Minister Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (IBK), the man credited with quelling the violence that plagued the first years of the Konaré administration, quickly formed a new, no-nonsense government. He closed all secondary and post-secondary schools, arrested student leaders, and closed several radio stations that had close ties to AEEM and opposition parties. As IBK remained unyielding in the face of criticism and labor strikes, and the press talked of little else than the negative impacts of devaluation, it is no coincidence that Ousmane Sy gave an interview to *Les Échos* (18 February 1994) to highlight the work of the MD. In the interview, Sy explained that decentralization will enable local populations to manage their own affairs and lead their own development and that the Council of Ministers recently expanded MD's mission for three more years to "attack the implementation" of the reforms. Over the next year, the MD drafted the *Code des Collectivités Territoriales* (Law No. 95-034) that, approved in April 1995, defined the governing bodies of municipalities, *cercles*, and regions and the responsibilities they would exercise and worked with localities across Mali to create 682 new municipalities.

During the first few years of Konaré's administration, the government seemed to be perpetually on the defensive. While the administration struggled to implement the widely unpopular SAP agreement and balance the competing priorities of civil society, decentralization stood out as one of the few proactive, government-owned policies the administration was able to introduce. At the *concertations regionals*, meetings organized by IBK's government in August and September 1994 to broaden public debate beyond Bamako and break the *crise sociale*, of the

major issues discussed, decentralization stood out as the only proactive domestic policy issue. The other major domestic issues participants debated were largely problems facing the country: the "problem of the North," the academic crisis, continuing insecurity, and the consequences of structural adjustment and the devaluation of the CFA (Diarrah 1996, 287). Within an intractable political climate in which the government had a difficult time achieving little else, the Konaré administration not only recognized the promise of decentralization reforms to strengthen democratic governance in Mali, but used them to build the legitimacy of the new government.

C. The "Problem of the North"

Most commentators agree that the Second Tuareg Rebellion, the conflict that played out in northern Mali from 1990 to 1996, also drove the Konaré administration's decision to speedily implement large-scale decentralization reforms across the county. Scholars like Jennifer Seely (2001) go so far as to imply that the Konaré administration designed and implemented decentralization reforms to coopt the Tuareg rebels and their supporters into a unified Mali. While I would argue that the "Tuareg problem" was *one of multiple* issues the Konaré administration sought to address through decentralization, there is no doubt that the government also pursued decentralization reforms to fulfill the terms of the National Pact, the peace agreement signed between Tuareg rebel groups and the transitional government in April 1992 following the collapse of the Tamanrasset Agreement. Speaking to the press following a national workshop on the early development of what became one of Mali's key decentralization laws, Ousmane Sy asserted that one of the priorities of the MD was to incorporate "the spirit and contents of the [National] Pact" into the government's decentralization policy (*L'Essor* 28 June 1993).

The conflict in the North posed "an immediate and potentially serious challenge" to the new Konaré administration (Villalón and Idrissa 2005, 60). It completely destabilized northern Mali, threatened the unity of the Malian state, and, as demonstrated by the role it had played in the fall of Traoré's regime, had the potential to disrupt politics in Bamako. Furthermore, "three years of fitful battle [had] only demonstrated the Malian army's incompetence against the nomadic warriors and its frustrated brutality against civilian populations" (Rawson 2000, 276). Thus, to bring an end to the conflict, the Konaré administration had little choice but to follow through on the significant commitments made by the transition government in the National Pact to integrate ex-rebels into the Malian military and administration, demilitarize the North, repatriate the population displaced by the conflict, create special development funds for the North, and recognize the "special status" of the three northern regions of Gao, Timbuktu, and newly-created Kidal. This "special status" would enable the North to exercise significant autonomy through elected governments to be created at the local, district, and regional levels.

Though, as Rawson (2000, 276) has argued, the National Pact's "timeline was unrealistically tight," and the government had few resources to dedicate to its implementation, when Konaré assumed the presidency, many were hopeful that the Tuareg Rebellion would be brought to a swift resolution. In 1993, the creation of development funds for the North seemed a distant dream, but the *Commissariat au Nord*, the agency created within the President's office to implement the National Pact, was "a hive of activity," and, that February, an agreement was reached to integrate over 600 militants into the military and administration (Poulton and Ag Youssouf 1998, 68). The government also set in motion decentralization reforms through which it would seek to honor its commitment to grant the North increased autonomy.

Seely (2001, 502-3) has argued that the Konaré administration's decentralization policy "began as a means to placate the rebellious Tuareg regions with promises of political autonomy," and that the administration "extend[ed] decentralization to the rest of the country… to legitimate [the government's] commitment to [the] devolution [of] power in the North in the eyes of the Tuareg separatists" (516). However, this is not completely accurate. If anything, Konaré's administration worked to grant increased autonomy to the North through decentralization as a way to make some of the promises of the National Pact more palatable to the rest of the Malian population. As Poulton and Ag Youssouf (1998, 101) have written,

> the promise, in the 1992 National Pact, of a significant degree of autonomy for the North, a "special status," caused a good deal of unease in Mali mainly because its meaning had not been defined. No one denied the need to reform the socio-political structures of governance, but the creation of the Region of Kidal with such a tiny population, and satisfaction of demands for greater autonomy for the three northern Regions, were difficult to sell in the south. The re-organization of the North was made politically acceptable in the rest of Mali by the commitment of the elected democratic government to decentralize the whole of Mali.

It is also important to remember that though the necessity of ending the Tuareg Rebellion drove decentralization forward, "the depth of commitment to the project suggests that it has much deeper roots" beyond the Tuareg issue (Villalón and Idrissa 2005, 62). The National Conference conceived decentralization to be "the antidote to the administrative centralism" of Traoré's corrupt regime (Rawson 2000, 284), and, as I have shown, Konaré's administration committed itself to decentralization to strengthen the new democratic regime and build the legitimacy of the government and his administration in the face of social discontent.

Additionally, the decision by the Konaré administration to grant increased autonomy to the North through decentralization rather than through a "special status" did not legitimize the government's commitment to the National Pact for the Tuareg rebels. In fact, by proposing to meet its commitment to increased autonomy for the North through nationwide decentralization

reforms that were only in the early stages of development, Konaré's government was actually delaying the "*commune, arrondissement, cercle*, [and] regional assembl[y]" elections in the North that, according to the National Pact should have been "organized six months after the signature of the [agreement]" (article 73). Additionally, Tuareg negotiators had made clear from early on in peace negotiations that they wanted a "special status" for the North, something that decentralization could not deliver. At talks for the failed Tamanrasset Agreement, representatives of the rebellion rejected the idea of decentralization because they felt it only disguised increasing government centralization (*Les Échos* 24 June 1994). Even after Traoré's overthrow, Tuareg negotiators continued to reject the idea that proposals to decentralize the entire country would adequately address their demands for increased autonomy. At the National Conference, Tuareg representatives pushed for the inclusion of a "special status" for the North in the Constitution, arguing that it was "the most important clause of the Tamanrasset Agreement," and that only a "special status" would correctly recognize the "cultural, sociological, and geographical" specificity of the northern regions of Mali (*L'Essor* 7 August 1991).

Though Seely's thesis that decentralization reforms in Mali were designed primarily to address the "Tuareg Problem" is a little strong, by undertaking to meet the terms of increased autonomy for the North through nationwide decentralization reforms, the Konaré administration reinforced its commitment to the swift implementation of those reforms. The only way the government would succeed in convincing the Tuareg rebels that it was committed to granting the North autonomy through decentralization was to quickly implement reforms that would grant a significant degree of autonomy to subnational governments throughout Mali. As Seely (2001, 516) has argued, and we have seen in this thesis, "historically, all Malians had been misled by governmental promises of decentralization, so more than words were necessary to prove the

government's commitment to the plan." Coupled with the administration's need to strengthen its legitimacy to end the *crise sociale*, the necessity of ending the conflict in the North helped to drive the swift implementation of decentralization reforms in Mali in the 1990s.

D. Additional Considerations

Without attempting to investigate their claims, or even clearly explaining them, Chéibane Coulibaly, Tyler Dickovick, and James Thomson (2010, 10) suggest that Konaré's administration might have had other political incentives for implementing decentralization beyond its "noble and pragmatic" motivations. Clearly, the administration saw decentralization as a way to consolidate democracy and was driven to implement decentralization reforms to meet the terms of the National Pact and to strengthen its legitimacy so that it could address the *crise sociale*. However, these authors posit that the administration might also have had "more venal" reasons for introducing decentralization reform, and that these considerations might help to explain why decentralization in Mali has not lived up to expectations.

The first of these other considerations the authors suggest might have helped to drive decentralization in Mali was the administration's desire to strengthen the partisan power of ADEMA and guarantee its place as Mali's dominant political party within a complex, evolving party system. This idea seems to come from Dickovick's (2011, 7) theory that governments decentralize "to develop or strengthen regional bases for the future" when presidential partisan power at the national level is in decline. While it is difficult to argue that the partisan power of ADEMA was in decline in the early 1990s – ADEMA won the presidency and the overwhelming majority of seats in the National Assembly during the 1992 elections and remained Mali's leading political party until the end of the decade – we have seen that Konaré struggled to

address the *crise sociale* during his first term in office, which was marked by the "gradual emergence of a serious political crisis" (Villalón and Idrissa 2005, 62). Opposition parties, "frustrated with their inability to match the organizational strength and popular familiarity of" ADEMA, frequently attacked Konaré for trying to establish ADEMA as Mali's dominant party *à la* Traoré (Wing 2008, 155). Early in Konaré's presidency, "opposition deputies boycotted the vote in the National Assembly to protest their perceived lack of political influence," while many believe that parties like CNID provoked the student movement to organize the disruptive public protests that almost caused the collapse of the new government (Villalón and Idrissa, 63). In 1997, the *crise politique* reached such a head that opposition parties boycotted that year's legislative and presidential elections because the government had declined to reform the "winner-take-all" party list system for legislative elections that made it difficult for smaller parties to win seats in the National Assembly.

Within this challenging context, it would make sense for Konaré to want to build partisan support for ADEMA at the local level, and especially in rural areas, through decentralization reforms. Perhaps Konaré wanted "to provide electoral outlets for [ADEMA's] rank and file" (Coulibaly, Dickovick, and Thomson 2010, 11). However, I have a difficult time believing that this was one of the primary drivers of decentralization because the MD designed municipal elections and municipal and *cercle* councils and regional assemblies to include a diversity of parties and interests. Depending on the size of a municipality, the population elects between 11 and 45 municipal councilors through a proportional list system that guarantees at least one seat to parties that win 5 percent of the vote. The councilors then elect a mayor as well as representatives to the *cercle* council from amongst themselves by majority vote. Unlike the "winner-take-all" legislative elections, this system gives even the smallest parties the chance to

be represented on municipal councils, and, because there are multiple parties competing in each municipality – in 2009 there were an average of 6.78 party lists registered in each municipality – it makes it difficult for a single party to win the majority of votes required to control the mayor's office.[8]

If a primary driver for Konaré in promoting decentralization had been to significantly strengthen his party's power at the local level, the MD could have worked to design local elections that would have guaranteed ADEMA's primacy on municipal councils. While it might have proven difficult for the government to amend the electoral code originally adopted in 1992, the MD could have designed a system of government that included the direct election of mayors and *cercle* and regional councilors. ADEMA did win a staggering number of municipal council seats – 6,244 out of 10,545 – in the first nationwide municipal elections in 1998/99, but that was to be expected. With "it's origins in several parties [that] became clandestine organizations after the seizure of power by Traoré in 1968," ADEMA emerged from the transition as one of the only political parties with "established organizations in every *cercle* and *arrondissement* in Mali, and in many rural villages and urban neighborhoods" (Vengroff 1993, 546). However, controlling 59 percent of nationwide municipal council seats did not guarantee ADEMA control of mayors' offices. In municipalities where ADEMA won only a plurality of the vote, opposition parties could cooperate to claim the mayor's office and seats in *cercle* councils and regional assemblies. After the devastating 1997 legislative elections, boycotted by the opposition, there were "high levels of participation by opposition parties in [municipal] elections and in the new commune-level governments" established in 1998 and 1999 (Seely 2001, 517).

Coulibaly, Dickovick, and Thomson (2010, 11) also suggest that state actors – both the political elite active in Konaré's administration and well-placed bureaucrats – may have helped

[8] Numbers for the 2009 election calculated from results reported by MATCL.

to push decentralization forward to "expand opportunities for patronage and rent collection" by "extending formal governance down to [the] local level." While possible, again, I am not convinced that this was one of the primary drivers of decentralization in Mali. First, as I have argued above, it appears that Konaré and top members of his administration were trying to escape the patronage system that had helped to support Traoré's regime, if, for no other reason, the government simply could not afford it. As Villalón and Idrissa (2005, 61) have argued, despite serious setbacks, "under President Konaré the challenge of building a new democratic state was taken up seriously from the beginning of his presidency," and decentralization was one of the "innovative measures" introduced by the administration to strengthen the young democratic regime. Secondly, "well-placed bureaucrats" outside of the Konaré administration's inner circle were not supportive of decentralization and, thus, played a limited role in the design and early implementation of decentralization policies.

President Konaré, Sy, and other advisors created the MD as a semi-autonomous, twelve-member board to prevent bureaucrats in the Ministry of Territorial Administration from obstructing reforms as they had under Traoré, and the MD was given increased power throughout its lifetime to overcome the resistance of officials from across the government who opposed the implementation of decentralization reforms. According to Sy (2009, 97), at an early meeting convened by the MD to explain plans for decentralization to ministries and agencies from across the government, government officials called the reforms unrealistic. They argued that the reforms were too complex, would be ineffective, had not delivered results when attempted in the past, and could seriously threaten the unity of Mali. In 1994, after the MD was moved to the office of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Territorial Administration wrote a letter to newly appointed Prime Minister IBK to express the concern of the territorial

administrators throughout Mali – the governors, *commandants de cercle*, and *chefs de arrondissement* – that they would be replaced by the new municipal, *cercle*, and regional governments proposed by decentralization (102). As Poulton and Ag Youssouf (1998, 29) have written, many officials within the public administration were "entrenched against change, against reform, against any threat to their personal hegemony."

The decentralization pushed by the Konaré administration was not primarily designed as "a power play" through which the ADEMA-controlled government sought to "build up its footholds at the subnational level, either for future electoral purposes or for opportunities to increase its leverage by extending patronage down to actors at the local level" (Dickovick 2013, 10). However, that is not to say the central government did not "foresee advantages from decentralization." In the years following the transition, in which the survival of the new democratic regime remained in question, Konaré and his administration saw decentralization as a way to make democracy meaningful for everyday Malians and strengthen the legitimacy of the new government to address the *crise sociale* and the Tuareg Rebellion.

E. Conclusion

Clearly, political motivations drove the speedy design and implementation of decentralization reforms in Mali in the early 1990s. A former UNDP economist, MD Director, Ousmane Sy was "an articulate spokesman for a highly theorized argument about the imperative of decentralization for 'democracy,' 'development,' and, indeed, 'modernity'" (Villalón and Idrissa 2005, 62). Today, as the newly appointed Minister of Decentralization, he remains a strong proponent of decentralization reforms, and the promise of those reforms to strengthen democracy and development. However, the necessity of building legitimacy for the new

democratic government and ending the Tuareg rebellion were the primary drivers of decentralization during Konaré's first administration. These motivations kept decentralization reforms at the top of the government agenda and impacted the design of reforms and the sequence in which they were implemented. As Dickovick and Riedl (2010, 56) have written, because the primary goals of decentralization in 1990s Mali were to build the legitimacy of the democratic regime and stabilize the situation in the North, the MD focused more on democracy than "service delivery and development" as intended outcomes. Thus, in the 1990s, while the MD did a commendable job creating municipal governments and promoting local elections, it devoted little effort to developing effective systems that would ensure the transfer of financial resources from central ministries to subnational governments, which would enable those governments to carry out their new development functions.

As the political situation in Mali evolved and the crises that plagued the government during the first shaky years of Konaré's presidency became less acute, the central government's need to push decentralization forward also weakened. According to Wing and Kassibo (2010, 16), "decentralization progressively lost steam as a mobilizing project and discourse" under ATT's administration (2002-2012) "because the political returns to national politicians in invoking decentralization" also fell. However, this political shift happened before ATT's presidency. Seely (2001, 517) argues that, "after a big show of commitment to decentralization and its speedy implementation in the early days of Konaré's presidency, the reform lost some momentum when the Tuareg threat subsided." While I must reiterate that the Tuareg threat was only one driver of decentralization in Mali, Seely is correct in her observation that decentralization reforms lost momentum in the late 1990s. After the local government elections of 1998 and 1999, the MD was again absorbed by the Ministry of Territorial Administration and

shortly thereafter disbanded. Ousmane Sy was promoted to Minister of Territorial Administration, but he was less able to push through reforms as head of this unwieldy ministry than he was as leader of the small, but powerful MD. This shift in central government support for decentralization in the late 1990s left the country with partially implemented reforms, which can and should be praised for strengthening democratic governance at the local level, but left local governments without the tools necessary to promote effective development.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions

My objective in this thesis was to understand why the Konaré administration initiated significant decentralization reforms in 1990s Mali and consider how the administration's motivations for decentralization impacted those reforms. Though why a central government decides to pursue decentralization is just one part of a larger political process, it is an important factor that, until recently, has largely been neglected by the literature on the wave of decentralization that began in the 1980s and 1990s. Mali offers a good case study because, like many African governments it embraced significant decentralization following its transition to democracy in 1991, impressively instituting "functional and irreversible" reforms, but, ultimately, failing to consolidate them (MATCL 2011, 27). As Jesse Ribot and Phil René Oyono (2005, 209) have argued, this is a common pattern across Africa, where, despite the hope that the latest wave of decentralization would usher in devolution, like past attempts, recent policy changes have mostly led to deconcentration. Across Africa, "a lack of decentralization in the fiscal and administrative dimensions has hindered local autonomy," even in countries like Mali that hold regular local government elections.

Under President Konaré, the government successfully created local governments and established regular elections that attract significant participation. In a country where the turnout for presidential elections in 2002 and 2007 did not reach 40 percent and turnout for the 2002 and 2007 legislative elections was a dismal 26 and 32.19 percent, respectively, the turnout rate for the 2004 municipal elections was 43.06 percent, while, in 2009, 44.61 percent of voters

participated in municipal elections.[9] However, approximately twenty years after the Konaré administration initiated decentralization reforms, the central government still does not make adequate financial transfers that would enable local governments to effectively exercise the significant responsibilities transferred to them in sectors like health, education, and water, and local governments have little capacity and few opportunities to raise their own revenues.

The line ministries that control these sectors have resisted the implementation of resource transfers mandated by law, and successive prime ministers have been unable to push the ministries to make them. Though local governments have assumed many of the functions transferred to them under the law, it is "mainly with external funds" that some local governments have been able to make significant investments in these sectors (Particp GmbH 2012a, 135). Additionally, agents of the central administration continue to exercise *tutelle*, or oversight over municipal and district councils and regional assemblies, in many cases limiting the authority of subnational governments. For instance, prefects, who serve at the district level of administration, must approve municipal budgets and multi-year development plans before they can be implemented. According to Moussa Djiré (2004, 6), this supervisory role was given to prefects to ensure that municipal government decisions conform to Malian law and provide inexperienced councils someone they could turn to for advice and support. However, some of these administrators have a tendency to impose their will on municipal councils. As a former prefect in Sikasso told Chéibane Coulibaly, Tyler Dickovick, and James Thomson (2010, 22), he believed that his supervisory role gave him *fonctions régaliennes* over municipal governments.

[9] Voter turnout for the 2002 and 2007 presidential elections was 38.57 and 36.24 percent, respectively. Numbers for national-level elections come from the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), http://www.idea.int/vt/countryview.cfm?id=145. Numbers for voter turnout for municipal elections come from MATCL (2011, 37).

Many countries continue to consistently end up with deconcentration rather than the devolution promoted by central governments as a way to strengthen democracy and development because, "no matter what the official justification, decentralization is largely driven and continually shaped by politics and institutional dynamics" (Eaton, Kaiser, and Smoke 2011, 1). This has clearly been the case across Mali's history since colonization. As we saw in chapter 2, the French twice introduced decentralization reforms in French West Africa – after World War I and World War II – to maintain control over their colonies. Idealists at the time argued that the reforms implemented in the AOF after World War I "would lead to improved local wellbeing," and the French government justified the reforms "in terms of local self-determination" (Ribot and Oyono 2004, 206). However, as Alice Conklin (1997) has argued, the French were more concerned with containing the demands of the *évolués* for political equality and the revolts of rural subjects against the colonial administration than they were with implementing a more representative administration. Thus, once the political situation quieted somewhat, and it became clear that *canton* chiefs installed through the reforms would collaborate with the colonial administration and *évolués* were somewhat appeased by the seats they gained in newly-created municipal governments, the colonial administration left its plans to decentralize power within the colonial administration partially implemented.

After World War II, the government of the French Fourth Republic was ultimately forced to implement decentralization reforms by growing demands for political autonomy from African *députés* in the National Assembly and demands for independence from more radical political parties and civil society groups in the AOF. In 1955, the National Assembly finally approved municipal reforms introduced by African *députés* in 1951 to create more municipalities across the AOF, and, a year later, the National Assembly adopted the *Loi-Cadre*, reforms that devolved

a significant degree of power to territorial assemblies established in each colony after the war. However, this final attempt to preserve the colonies as part of the French empire failed, and all colonies of the AOF declared their independence by 1960.

As chapter 3 shows, the progress made towards decentralization in the late colonial period was reversed following independence as the leaders of newly independent states across West Africa tried to consolidate their power. Mali's first president, Modibo Keita established a highly centralized, authoritarian system as he tried to create a socialist state, and, in 1968, Moussa Traoré, the army officer who overthrew Keita and quickly established a military government, further centralized power in Mali. However, after Traoré established a single-party, civilian state in 1979, decentralization again became an official government policy. The government established development councils at the *cercle* level of administration across Mali, but they were dominated by members of the single-party and only ever held consultative powers to government administrators because the Ministry of the Interior, unwilling to cede power to regional and sub-regional party leaders, resisted giving the councils any real influence. This remained an acceptable outcome to Traoré and his close advisors who relied on "pseudo-democratic gestures" to justify their rule (Villalón and Idrissa 2005, 52), until the pro-democracy movement gained strength in 1990. Under increased pressure from the pro-democracy movement, the government redoubled its push for decentralization reforms as a way to liberalize without introducing multiparty democracy, but these efforts came too late to save the crumbling regime.

After the transition, it appears that, unlike previous regimes, the Konaré government truly viewed decentralization as a way to build democracy in the first shaky years of the Third Republic. Konaré was a democratizer. However, similar to past reform efforts, government

support for the implementation of decentralization reforms in the 1990s was driven by political imperatives and emerged from its need to strengthen its legitimacy and bring the Tuareg rebellion to an end. Within this climate, Mali's *Mission de Décentralisation* (MD), constituted in 1993, focused more on designing structures that would promote democratic rather than "service delivery and development" outcomes (Dickovick and Riedl 2010, 56), and, as the political situation in Mali evolved, and the government's need to aggressively push decentralization reforms weakened, the fiscal and administrative dimensions of decentralization in Mali were left incomplete.

Facing very different circumstances when he came to power in 2002, Amadou Toumani Touré's (ATT) administration saw no need to reinforce the decentralization efforts introduced by the Konaré administration. Ten years after orchestrating the coup d'état that finally removed dictator Moussa Traoré from power in 1991 and overseeing Mali's yearlong transition to democracy, ATT still enjoyed broad popular support in Mali. Though his status as an independent candidate did raise "legitimate concerns," support from the political establishment, which perceived ATT's independent status "as useful for overcoming the party squabbles that had characterized" Konaré's term in office, saw him elected in 2002 and again in 2007 (De Jorio, 2012).

Throughout his two administrations, ATT famously sought to bring all political parties together to govern through consensus, and most of Mali's major political parties joined a coalition behind his policies. However, consensus became so important to ATT that it became a goal in and of itself (De Jorio, 2012), and, in his efforts to please all, some reforms and policy initiatives, including decentralization, were left by the wayside. According to Whitehouse (2012, 17), "Touré's 'rule by consensus' became a euphemism for the suppression of political debate

and a trend towards absolutism." While Konaré had been largely criticized for the "exclusionary methods" of his administration during his presidency, as De Jorio (2012) writes, after ATT's administration took over, Malian professionals "waxed nostalgic" for the "openness of public dialogues and the enthusiasm for citizens' participation," under Konaré.

My analysis shows that decentralization is not a technical, development intervention that can be easily implemented and evaluated to show that it produces desired outcomes. It "is a multidimensional process that proceeds with successes and setbacks," and, as such, "is subject to the continuous process of modification reflecting changes in social, political, and economic conditions" (Parker 1995, 43). Because intergovernmental relations are not static, periods of decentralization are followed by periods of recentralization (Dickovick 2012), and, according to Ribot (2002, 3), few decentralization reforms have ever been fully implemented because "strong decentralizations threaten many actors." In reality, it is difficult "to imagine a more intensely political process than decentralization" because no matter the design of reforms, decentralization "involves changing the institutional rules that divide resources and responsibilities among levels of government" (Eaton, Kaiser, and Smoke 2010, 1).

This may seem like a simple conclusion to draw, but after years of false starts, when decentralization gained popularity in the late 1980s and 1990s, development practitioners became hyper focused on the developmental value of decentralization and paid little, if any attention to the politics of decentralization. Over the past couple of decades, the non-recognition of decentralization as a political process has contributed to the "disappointing performance of donor support for decentralization relative to the substantial volume of resources devoted to it" (Eaton, Kaiser, and Smoke 2010, xix). Recently, donors like USAID (2009, 96) have increasingly come to emphasize the centrality of politics to decentralization and that "progress"

on decentralization reforms "will occur in fits and starts." Additionally scholar-authored reports for USAID have warned of the necessity for development practitioners to understand the political incentives of central government actors in supporting decentralization because, otherwise, donor "emphasis on political will and good leadership combined with the assumption that decentralization will lead to positive results, can lead to overly optimistic programming" (Dickovick and Riedl 2010, 8). Yet, we continue to see this "overly optimistic programming" at play.

For instance, in Mali, though donors recognized in the late 2000s that "decentralization seem[ed] to have stalled," and the support for decentralization within the central government had dissipated (Pousse 2012, 31), they continued to pour money into the reforms. In 2010, the European Commission, one of the largest supporters of decentralization in Mali, initiated the 5 year, €75 million PARADER program. The program includes €31 million in direct project support to promote regional development, regional assemblies, state reform, and the *Direction Nationale des Collectivités Territoriale* (DNCT), within the Ministry of Territorial Administration and provides €44 million in sector budget support, the majority of which is "directed towards" the *Agence Nationale d'Investissement des Collectivités Territoriales* (ANICT), the Malian agency created in 2000 to provide grants to municipalities for special projects and help bridge development gaps between municipalities (81).

The design of the PARADER program combines the two types of donor support for decentralization – policy support and promotion at the national level and project support at the subnational level – the merits of which have been debated in the literature (Dickovick 2013, 1). However, donors should not be preoccupied by which type of support best promotes decentralization. Both are necessary. Rather, donors should consider the timing of their support

for decentralization reforms. It has been demonstrated time and again that "decentralization is weaker when pushed by donors in the absence of… incentives" that drive central governments to decentralize (11). Thus, to promote more sustainable decentralization policies, donors should provide more financial support when governments demonstrate a strong commitment to decentralization. Just think of what the MD might have been able to accomplish in Mali if donors had provided the agency with €75 million over five years beginning in 1993. Additionally, if donors had provided strong support for the Konaré administration's decentralization plans in the 1990s, they would have had more success in promoting necessary elements of decentralization, like resource transfers, than they did once genuine support for decentralization reforms dried up under ATT. When central government support for decentralization seems to wane, donors also need to have the flexibility to be able to pull back on funding. Realistically, donors will have to continue to provide support for local governments during these droughts of central government support; however, if donors provided significant support to the development of sustainable decentralization reforms when the central government drove them forward, local governments should be better prepared to support themselves and maybe even advocate for themselves during periods when the central government seeks to recentralize power.

Today, as President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (IBK) tries to rebuild the government and broker a peace deal with Tuareg rebels in the North, it seems that another period of strong government support for decentralization reforms has arrived in Mali. In fact, the issues that IBK's administration faces seem eerily similar to those that confronted the Konaré administration in the 1990s when, as Prime Minister, IBK helped to promote decentralization as a way to strengthen democracy. IBK is trying to resuscitate democracy in Mali after the 2012

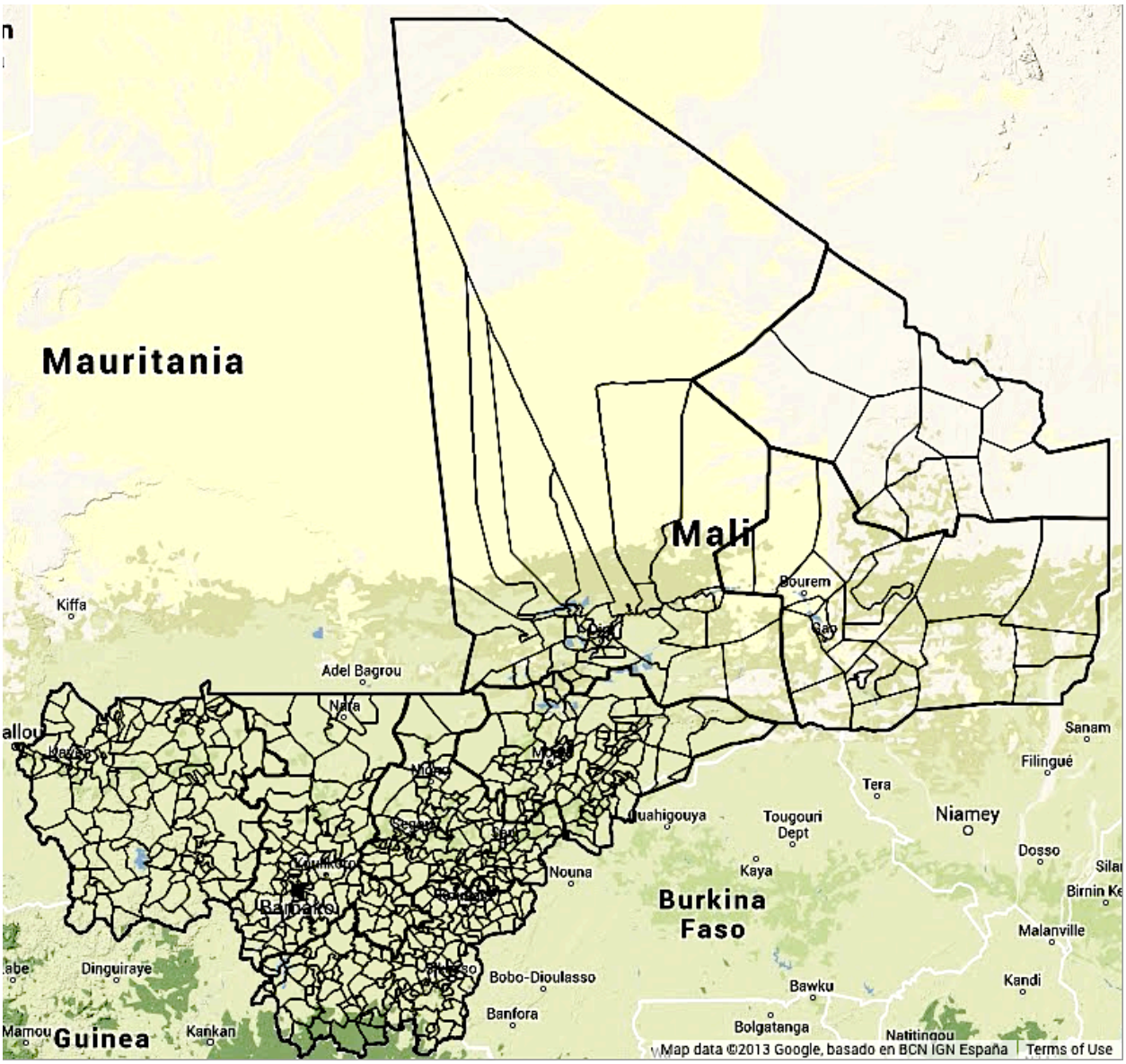
coup d'état while simultaneously trying to negotiate a peace agreement with the Tuareg who were able to briefly take control of parts of northern Mali following the coup d'état in coalition with Islamist regel groups. Since its democratic transition in the 1990s, the international community had continuously heralded Mali as one of the democratic success stories in West Africa, but it has become clear that Malians had become increasingly disenchanted with the government during ATT's two terms in office. Touré worked to keep aid money flowing to Mali while members of his government pocketed significant funds, and, by the end of his second term, "Malians had also lost faith in the rule of law" (Dickovick 2012).

IBK worked quickly after his August 2013 election to promote decentralization, and in October 2013, his government convened the "*États Généreux de la Décentralisation*" to discuss how to strengthen decentralization in Mali. The government has begun to articulate plans in meetings across the country that, in addition to strengthening local governments, will advance *régionalisation* and establish regional governments headed by a popularly elected executive (*L'Indépendent* 27 February 2014). Perhaps most importantly, Ousmane Sy, the man who led Mali's decentralization effort in the 1990s and has continued to advocate for decentralization since, was recently named Minister of Decentralization. Sy has already begun to give interviews and convene meetings throughout the country to explain renewed decentralization efforts, and the government is making plans for upcoming local elections. The government's plan will strengthen the decentralization reforms initiated in the 1990s, and, through regionalization, attempt to meet the demands of Tuareg rebels who during the current rebellion, for the first time in the history of the Tuareg conflict with the Malian state, become united behind a formal demand for independence from Mali (Lecocq and Klute 2013).

While donors have been vocal in their support for strengthened decentralization in Mali since the 2012 Tuareg rebellion and coup d'état, they are more concerned with ensuring that the reforms introduced in the 1990s are "fully implemented, including the appropriate transfer of resources and capacity to communes as outlined in the legal infrastructure for decentralization" (Wing 2013, 12). However, while donors might be hesitant to support the total overhaul of regional governments that IBK's administration has proposed, this is not the time to prevaricate. It may be risky for donors to support the creation of a federal system in Mali, and technical experts may show more concern for first working to get institutions right at the local level. However, if these are the reforms the Malian government has decided to pursue, donors should provide significant financial support and technical assistance now to make the reforms as sustainable as possible while a strong advocate like Ousmane Sy is head of the efforts that enjoy the support of the president. As Sy himself is quick to point out, "the best minister of decentralization is the head of government" (Segbedji 2014b).

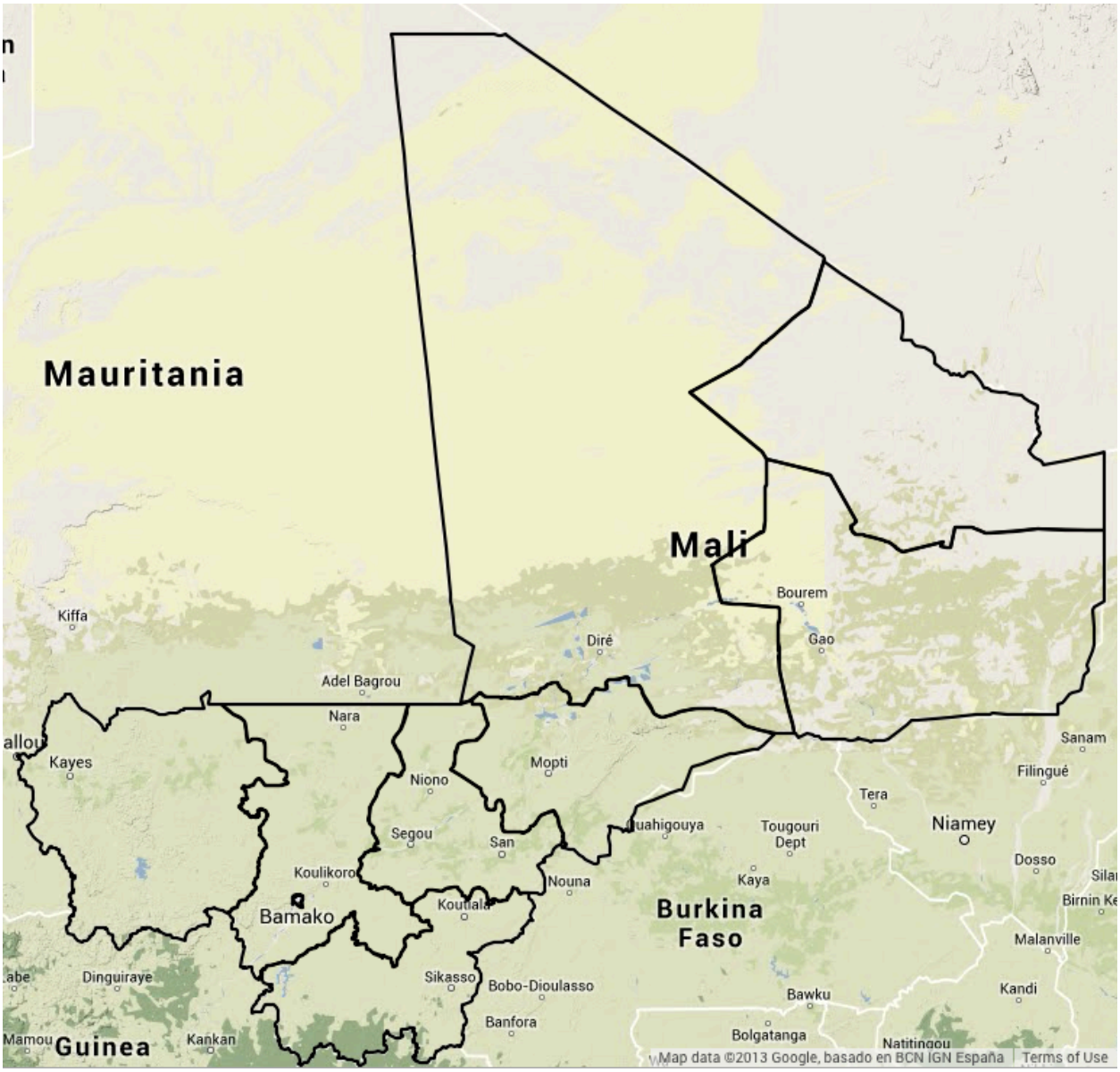
APPENDIX

Map 1: 703 Communes of Mali



Source: City Population http://www.citypopulation.de/php/mali-admin.php.
Accessed 6 December 2013.

Map 2: 8 Regions of Mali + the Special District of Bamako



Source: City Population http://www.citypopulation.de/php/mali-admin.php.
Accessed 6 December 2013.

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ELIZABETH A. POLLARD

Curriculum Vitae

I. PERSONAL INFORMATION

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II. EDUCATION & TRAINING

Master of Public Affairs (M.P.A.) August 2014
School of Public and Environmental Affairs
Indiana University
Bloomington, Indiana

International policy analysis concentration included coursework in benefit-cost analysis; comparative and international affairs; economic development, globalization, and entrepreneurship; international NGO management; microeconomics; program evaluation; public finance; research methodology; and statistics. Teaching assistant for graduate class, *Introduction to Comparative and International Affairs*, for Dr. Rafi Reuveny.

Master of Arts in African Studies (M.A.) August 2014
African Studies Program
Indiana University
Bloomington, Indiana

Coursework included concentrated study in African political economy, contemporary Africa, international development, research methods, and language. Thesis examines decentralization in Mali in the early 1990s.

Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) May 2005
Sewanee: The University of the South
Sewanee, Tennessee
Major: Political Science

Language Skills: Native English, Advanced Bamana, Conversational French (advanced reading proficiency) and Wolof

III. PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

A program management and research professional with diverse experience and education in African studies, international development, public health, public policy, legislative affairs, grant management and qualitative and quantitative research. Previous work as legislative aide in the U.S. House of Representatives. Experience living in sub-Saharan Africa and working with health professionals, domestic and international NGOs, and civil society organizations at the community level.

IV. PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Clinical Paralegal April 2014 – Present
Elon University School of Law
Humanitarian Immigration Clinic
Greensboro, N.C.

Work directly with refugees, asylees, and asylum seekers. Assist clients as they work to obtain immigration benefits. Track client submissions to USCIS and provide research support. Work with U.S. embassies around the world to ensure speedy visa processing for the beneficiaries of approved refugee/asylee relative petitions. Manage the Clinic's grant from the NC Refugee Assistance Program.

Legislative Correspondent January 2009 – June 2010
Congressman Mike McIntyre
Washington, D.C.

Gained experience in policy analysis and project management. Tracked legislation and analyzed policy on issues, including child and family, education, federal employee, Social Security, and the U.S. Postal Service. Advised the Congressman and represented him in meetings with stakeholders. Translated complex policy issues into concise correspondence, outreach materials, memos, op-eds, and talking points. Managed several projects, including the development of a new website. Managed incoming correspondence, maintaining the database of over 40,000 constituents and coordinating staff to write timely outgoing correspondence.

Staff Assistant September 2008 – January 2009
Congressman Mike McIntyre
Washington, D.C.

Gained experience managing an office. Ensured the distribution of key supplies to four North Carolina district offices and coordinated the Congressman's support to constituents during President Obama's 2009 Inauguration, including the distribution of inauguration tickets. Assisted staff with research and constituent correspondence and managed interns.

Temporary International Support Associate May – September 2008
American Bar Association (ABA) Rule of Law Initiative
Washington, D.C.

Gained experience in operations for an international NGO as liaison between ABA offices in Washington and international legal volunteers in the field. Managed monthly mailings to field offices in Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe and assisted program staff with the implementation of volunteer training.

Health Education Volunteer September 2005 – September 2007
U. S. Peace Corps
Republic of Mali

Gained experience managing projects at a rural community health center in a developing country. In addition to daily outreach responsibilities at the health center, facilitated the development of a child survival program that covered over 1,000 children from zero to two years of age in the ten villages of the health center district. Wrote a successful grant proposal to USAID and implemented a training for two local women from each village to support health clinic staff in the implementation of the program. Designed and implemented a nutrition education training for fourteen mothers with malnourished children. Worked closely with the mayor's office and community groups to develop a grant proposal for the NGO, Engineers without Borders, to build a bridge on the main road to the village where the health center was located that would provide uninterrupted access during rainy season. At the organizational level, served as co-chair of the Volunteer Advisory Committee (VAC) that addressed issues of concern for volunteers and Peace Corps Mali senior staff and helped to develop new country office policies at quarterly meetings. As a volunteer participant in the "Training, Design, and Evaluation Workshop," developed new learning objective for Peace Corps Mali training alongside senior staff and Malian counterparts.

V. SERVICE

Volunteer English Tutor October 2013 – March 2014
Interfaith Refugee Ministry
Wilmington, NC

Assisted a Burmese refugee family with integration into the Wilmington community through weekly English tutoring and home visits.

President January – December 2012
Indiana University Graduate Students in African Studies
Bloomington, IN

Led coordination of organization's academic and social activities, including planning of the annual graduate student symposium that attracts graduate student participants from universities across the United States.

Vice President September 2011 – May 2012
Indiana University Returned Peace Corps Volunteers
Bloomington, IN

Assisted with coordination of all organization activities and represented the IU RPCV group and Peace Corps at campus events.

VI. AWARDS

Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship: 2012-2013 academic year award for advanced Bambara study; 2012 summer award for advanced Wolof study in Dakar, Senegal; 2011-2012 academic year award for advanced Wolof study; 2011 summer award for intermediate Wolof study in Dakar, Senegal

Pi Alpha Alpha National Honor Society for Public Affairs and Administration, Indiana University (2013)

Pi Sigma Alpha National Political Science Honor Society, Sewanee: The University of the South (2004)