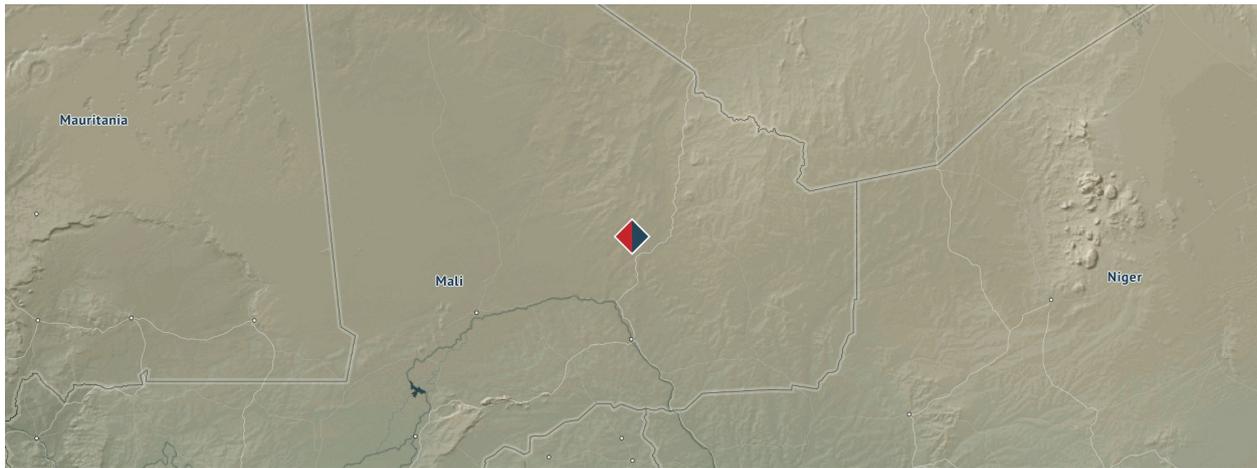




Conflict Factsheet

Conflict Between Tuareg and Farming Communities in Mali

Type of conflict Sub	Intensity 1.5
Conflict Locality Western Africa	Time 1991 – 1996
Countries Mali	Resources Agricultural / Pastoral Land, Water



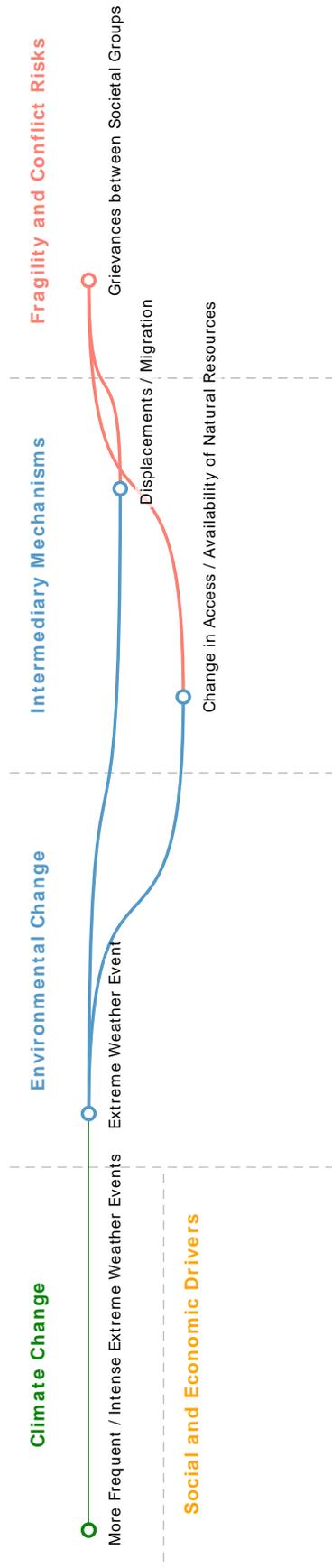
Local resource competition

Conflict Summary

During the Tuareg rebellion of 1990-1995 many farming communities in northern Mali formed self-defence militias. In 1994, these merged into a larger organisation known as Ganda Koi. Originally intended to protect farming communities against Tuareg banditry, it was soon accused of unprovoked attacks against Tuareg civilians. A further issue opposing Tuaregs and farming communities supporting the Ganda Koi was competition over land and an incompatibility over land rights. The Tuaregs were in favour of communal property rights in line with their mostly nomadic lifestyle, whereas farming communities preferred private property rights.



Conceptual Model



Context Factors



Agricultural / Pastoral Land, Water

Insecure Land Tenure
Water-stressed Area

History of Conflict
Low Level of Economic Development
Political Marginalization



Conflict History

From early 1991, the north of Mali saw a gradual rise of communal conflicts opposing Tuaregs and self-defence forces of farming communities such as the Songhoi. The conflicts often involved land disputes and mutual suspicions. Drawing on inter-communal and racial tensions, these conflicts often involved indiscriminate attacks on civilians associated with either Tuareg rebels or self-defence forces (see [Tuareg Rebellion in Mali](#)). In 1994, different self-defence units merged into an organisation called *Mouvement Patriotique Ganda Koi* ("Ganda koi" literally meaning "land owner" in Songhoi), which officially disbanded in 1996 along with the last active Tuareg rebel group ([Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 1997](#); [Hershkowitz, 2005](#)).

Insecurity and sectarian politics in northern Mali

Different factors contributed to the eruption of communal violence in northern Mali. Most apparently, the army's indiscipline and failure to provide security for northern communities motivated violent responses by both, Tuaregs and farming groups. As renegade elements of the army were indiscriminately attacking and displacing civilians in the North, some farming communities profited from goods and resources left behind by fleeing Tuaregs stirring resentment amongst Tuareg communities. On the other hand, the lack of security in the North provided the opportunity for Tuareg bandits to raid farmers and traders, prompting the creation of self-defence forces, which, in turn, got involved in indiscriminate retaliation against Tuareg civilians. This antagonism was reinforced by the perception of the government as being sectarian in favour of farming communities, in some cases even providing weapons to self-defence forces ([Keita, 1998](#); [Humphreys & Mohamed, 2003](#)).

Drought, agricultural encroachment and land disputes

Farmer-herder relations were further strained by the expansion of cultures onto pasture land, some of which had been abandoned by Tuareg pastoralists during the severe droughts of the 1970s and 1980s, when many Tuareg fled to Algeria and Libya. As they returned to Mali in the late 1980s, these herders entered into sharp competition over land and land legislation with farming communities: The Tuaregs were in favour of communal property rights in line with their mostly nomadic lifestyle, whereas farming communities - who had been privileged by past land laws - promoted the extension of private property rights. Given their privileged status, they were afraid of the concessions, the government would make if the Tuareg rebellion was to succeed, thus providing an additional incentive to fight Tuareg groups ([Keita, 1998](#); [Hershkowitz, 2005](#)).

It is however worth mentioning that the relations between farmer communities such as the Songhoi and different Tuareg insurgent groups varied in function of their economic interdependency. Tuareg groups having close business relations with Songhoi farmers and traders, for instance, were much less likely to attack these ([Keita, 1998](#)).

Eventually, the Tuareg rebels engaged negotiations with the Ganda Koi in late 1994 and several accords were signed throughout 1995. The Ganda Koi officially disbanded in 1996 along with the last active Tuareg



rebel group. They have however been involved in new attacks on Tuareg communities in the wake of renewed conflicts in 2012 ([HRW, 2012](#)).

Resolution Efforts

Negotiations between Tuareg rebel groups and the Ganda Koi began in November 1994 and were largely organised by community groups. Several accords were reached throughout 1995, providing for the coordination between Tuaregs and farming communities to prevent banditry and demilitarise the north of Mali. These efforts were encouraged by the Malian president Alpha Oumar Konaré and backed by military operations to suppress the violent activities of community self-defence forces. The Ganda Koi officially disbanded in 1996 along with the last active Tuareg rebel group ([Lode, 2002](#)).

Demilitarisation and local peace agreements

Several factors contributed to the demilitarisation process. Firstly, the Government of Mali was able to regain control over its army and to withdraw troops from the North, which had been involved in human rights abuses. Mixed patrols were put in place with a more humanitarian role, facilitating food distribution and engaging in consultations with local communities. Secondly, the Malian army dissociated from anti-Tuareg self-defence units and conducted several operations to suppress their violent activities. The Tuareg rebels, on the other hand, were weakened and financially exhausted by their fight against the government. Lastly, local communities were encouraged to take responsibility for the peace process in northern Mali, leading the way to a series of self-managed inter-community meetings, the creation of localised peace agreements, and the resolution of local land disputes ([Keita, 1998](#); [Lode, 2002](#); [Humphreys & Mohamed, 2003](#)).

Nevertheless, renewed Tuareg insurgencies in 2007 and 2012 have led to the resurgence of farming community self-defence units, such as the Ganda-Izo and the New Ganda-Koi ([HRW, 2012](#)).



Intensities & Influences



INTENSITIES

International / Geopolitical Intensity



Human Suffering



INFLUENCES

Environmental Influences



Societal Influences



Violent Conflict

Yes



Salience with nation

Regional



Resolution Success

Reduction in Violence

Violence reduced significantly, but did not cede.

Reduction in geographical scope

There has been no reduction in geographical scope.

Increased capacity to address grievance in the future

There is no increased capacity to address grievances in the future.

Causal Attribution of Decrease in Conflict Intensity

Decrease in conflict intensity at least partially the result of conflict resolution strategies.



Entry Points for Resilience and Peace Building

Disarmament, demobilisation & reintegration

3

The Malian government and army encouraged a peace process that included food distribution, engaging in consultations with local communities, and suppressing the violent activities of community self-defence forces.

Dialogue

3

Local communities organised negotiations between Tuareg rebel groups and the Ganda Koi, leading to the creation of localised peace agreements and the resolution of local land disputes.

Resources and Materials

Conflict References

[Tuareg Rebellion in Mali 1990-1995](#)

References with URL

[IRBC - Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada \(1997\). Mali: Information sur le Mouvement Patriotique Ganda Koi \(MPGK\)](#)

[Hershkowitz, A. \(2005\). The Tuareg in Mali and Niger: The role of desertification in violent conflict](#)

[HRW \(2012\). Mali: Rising ethnic tensions threaten new violence](#)

[Humphreys, M. & Mohamed, H. \(2003\). Senegal and Mali](#)

[Keita, K. \(1998\). Conflict and conflict resolution in the Sahel: The Tuareg insurgency in Mali](#)

[Lode, K. \(2002\). Mali's peace process: Context, analysis and evaluation](#)

Further information

<https://factbook.ecc-platform.org/conflicts/tuareg-farming-communities-1991-1996>