Tuareg rebellions in Mali:
Historical context

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• Tuareg warriors (*imushar*) – tradition of raiding caravans and settlements
• In pre-colonial time, Tuaregs also had a difficult relationship with states
• The last group in Mali to surrender to French colonialisation (1917)
• 1960: independence of Mali
• The new government saw nomadism as an obstacle to modernisation of agriculture and development (attempts to convert nomads to ‘productive’ citizens; nomadism was considered backward, unproductive, and undesirable; northern Mali labelled ‘the useless Mali’)
• The modernisation policy that followed was considered by Tuaregs as a new form of colonisation
• Revolt in 1963 (Kidal) (MIG jets and public executions)
• 1968: military government, perceived as military occupation, ’decentralised plunder’
• Mid-70s and 80s: droughts. Young men leaving for Algeria and Libya (ichoumars) (exposed to Ghadaffy’s revolutionary discourse, soldiers, started plans for a new revolt, chateaux de sécheresse in Bamako, embezzlement of drought relief funds
The second rebellion (1990-1996)

- First attack: Menaka, 28 June 1990, - six Tuaregs from Niger who had fled from repression were jailed in Mali, MPA attacked the prison, took loads of weapons and 12 4X4s from NGOs
- July/August 1990: paratroopers kill civilians and livestock, create in this way several hundred new rebels, also among Moors
- 6 January 1991, peace treaty in Tamanrasset. Gvt of Moussa Traoré under pressure from democracy movement in the south and rebellion in the north,
• However, the text of the treaty was never published probably because the gvt went beyond what it could keep. This uncertainty led many in the farming communities to become suspicious of the motives and aims of the rebels.

• March 1991: riots in Bamako ending in overthrow of the president, transitional gvt established, which was not able to control the army, more violence against nomads and many people fleeing to neighbouring countries.

• June 1992: Alpha Oumar Konaré elected as Mali’s president.
• 1992-1994: Attacks from rebels continued with counterattacks on nomads and their properties in the cities
• May 1994: Ganda Koy (‘the landlords’) established
• From August 1994: The gvt organised community meetings in the north and thereby mobilised the voice of civil society. This tipped the balance of political debate away from Bamako and the political parties, and back to the general population and civil society.
• November 1994: The President withdraws military units from the north that had committed atrocities. He now seems to be controlling the army and leaves the peace process to be worked out by civil society.
• 27 March 1996: Flamme de la Paix in Timbuktu, - 3000 hand weapons collected from the rebels were burnt in a ceremony attended by President Konaré and President Rawlings of Ghana
Three explanations used

• Regional conflict between a privileged south and a marginalised north: The main argument used in the peace negotiations

• Resource war: Increased population pressure and/or climate change lead to rising competition over scarce resources (Homer-Dixon, UD?)

• Nomads vs the state: Nomads don’t like to be ruled by states + state marginalizing nomads + warrior culture