

# Political economy of the Sahel

Research  
and training  
programme  
in the Sahel  
2014-2015  
Capturing results



**Clingendael**

Netherlands Institute of International Relations

The Sahel  
Programme is  
supported by



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### About Clingendael

Clingendael is the Netherlands Institute of International Relations. We operate as a think-tank, as well as a diplomatic academy, and always maintain a strong international perspective. Our objective is to explore the continuously changing global environment in order to identify and analyse emerging political and social developments for the benefit of government and the general public.

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# Preface

In 2014, the Clingendael Institute received a single donation of EUR 500,000 from the National Postcode Lottery (NPL) to strengthen our work in the West African Sahel region. This was badly needed. The region had destabilised rapidly.

Two years earlier, Mali had entered a spiral of violence and instability as extremist and separatist groups took the North and a very corrupt civilian regime was overthrown by a military coup. Libya was also fragmenting in the aftermath of the 2011 revolution that broke the power of Colonel Qadhafi, and the extremist group Boko Haram was gaining ground at an increasing rate in Nigeria.

The international community, in turn, answered in the form of a military mission in Mali and a range of aid programmes in the region. The NPL's donation meant that the Clingendael Institute could use its research and training to support NGOs and policy makers active in the Sahel.

The result was a programme called "Power, crime and intrigue from Bamako to Benghazi: The political economy of the Sahel", created after extensive consultation with more than 25 representatives of these organisations. Just over a year later, Clingendael is now pleased to present the results of this programme, including interesting insights into topics ranging from the root causes of conflict in Mali and possible innovation in the country's justice sector to the interplay of politics, extremism and crime in Libya. These findings were discussed during 10 workshops with NGOs, policy makers and international researchers that also fed a two-week training session for Malian NGO staff.

We're proud of these results. Not just because it was a successful Clingendael project, but also because we were able to support direct and visibly action-oriented programmes from other NPL-funded NGOs. We therefore celebrate the completion of our programme with this special edition magazine that provides an overview of the impact of our work.



**Ko Colijn**  
General Director of the Clingendael Institute

# THE SAHEL PROGRAMME IN FACTS & FIGURES

The research was designed based on a stakeholder consultation with

25



NGOs and academic organisations

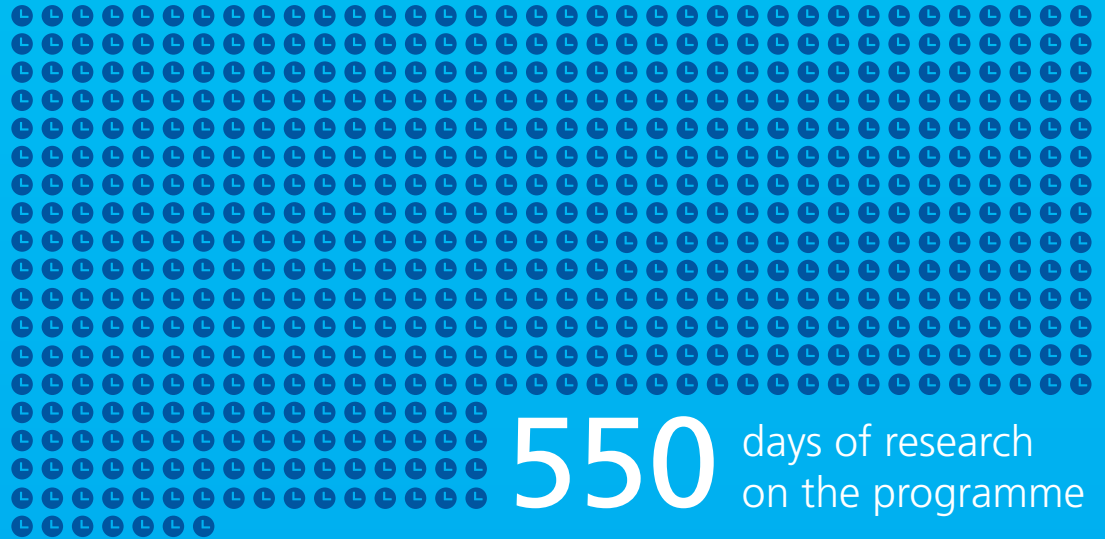
8  
researchers  
spent



5 research trips  
to Mali and



1 to China



550 days of research  
on the programme

This has resulted in



6 research  
reports

commentaries



6

10



workshops

for NGOs, policy  
makers and academic  
organisations in  
NL as well as Mali

The output mentioned above  
provided input for another



6

reports on the region, funded  
by organisations such as the  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and NGOs



3 training fellows  
spent



60 days of work  
on the training



19 participants from Mali attended

11 days of training



The age range was quite diverse, ranging from 26 to 58

The participants were working in diverse organisations and were active in a variety of fields. All but one participant worked at an NGO – either a Dutch NGO active in Mali or a local partner organisation of a Dutch NGO. The last participant (also a Malian) worked for MINUSMA in the civil society support department. These NGOs were working on various topics, including democracy promotion, women's rights and for the reproductive health of youth.



# The Sahel Programme

Increasing clarity and understanding



The Sahel Programme  
[clingendael.nl/sahel](http://clingendael.nl/sahel)

Africa's Sahel region runs from the Red Sea to the Atlantic Ocean, cutting a swath between the Sahara Desert to the North and the rest of Africa to the South. Unfortunately, a variety of factors make life difficult for the inhabitants of this region. Recurring droughts introduce famine and malnutrition. Large variations in climate have led to a deterioration of much of the arable land. And political instability in countries such as Chad, Sudan and Mali contribute to economic and security challenges.

## A much-needed investigation into the region's fragility

In 2014, the Clingendael Institute for International Relations wrote a proposal for – and received – a one-time fund of 500,000 Euros from the Nationale Postcode Loterij (NPL). The funding allowed the Conflict Research Unit (CRU) and the Clingendael Academy to conduct research and training activities that would complement and

strengthen the activities performed by other beneficiaries and policy makers. “The result was the Sahel programme,” explains CRU Deputy Head/Senior Research Fellow Rosan Smits. “Our driving goal was to examine the political and economic factors underlying the region's fragility. We did this through research, training, conferences and reporting activities focused on Mali and its influential border countries.” ▶

## Hands-on research and training

The proposal included tailored research in the region, as well as efforts to increase the accessibility of their findings and enhance the development abilities of people on the ground in Mali itself.

### Tailored research with four themes

The Sahel Programme revolved around four main focal points: root causes of the conflict in Mali, the state of justice in the country, China's peacekeeping role, and regional factors such as the situation in Libya and regional Islamic State expansion. An initial report titled *The roots of Mali's conflict: Moving beyond the 2012 crisis* served as a fundamental analysis, and was used as a springboard for further research, writing, training, conferences, and seminars. The CRU proceeded to create a total of 20 additional publications, including reports, briefs, commentaries and blogs.

Workshops and training activities played a significant role in maintaining a hands-on approach to applying research to the real


world. The CRU also increased its visibility and research accessibility through a web portal on the Clingendael Institute's website, where they placed information directly linked to the Sahel Programme.

### Enhanced abilities on the ground

Part of the Sahel Programme included conferences in both Mali and the Netherlands, as well as a Clingendael Academy training programme for Malian NGO participants, which was extraordinarily well-received.

## Increased understanding of regional instability

Moving forward in the Sahel region requires dedicated efforts from a multitude of organisations. Clingendael's Sahel Programme was designed to help all of these players move forward with increased clarity and understanding when it comes to the root causes and main effects of regional instability in the Sahel region. ■



“ The Sahel project demonstrates and combines deep analysis of the political-economy of conflicts in a fragile state in Europe's backyard with operational insight into policy options for addressing them. This makes Clingendael's research of particular value for anybody working to stabilise these conflicts.

Bert Koenders, Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs

“ Understanding the complexity of today's conflicts is a critical prerequisite for effective stabilisation support. The Sahel is one of the priority regions for the Dutch armed forces within its broader foreign policy goal of addressing fragile countries. Clingendael's research has proven to be very helpful in that regard.

Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Dutch Minister of Defence






# Mali moving beyond 2012

International  
engagement and  
local development



The roots of  
Mali's conflict  
[clingendael.nl/rootcauses](http://clingendael.nl/rootcauses)

The CRU recently released a report titled *The roots of Mali's conflict: Moving beyond the 2012 crisis*. Written by Senior Research Fellow Gregory Chauzal and Research Assistant Thibault Van Damme, the report provides local and international bodies with a better understanding of the reasons behind the 'failure of Africa's poster child for democracy' in 2012. It also sets the ground for future research into security and development in the country.

 A #report I have been looking for:  
The roots of #Mali's conflict.  
- Tweet from researcher MarjeAkli

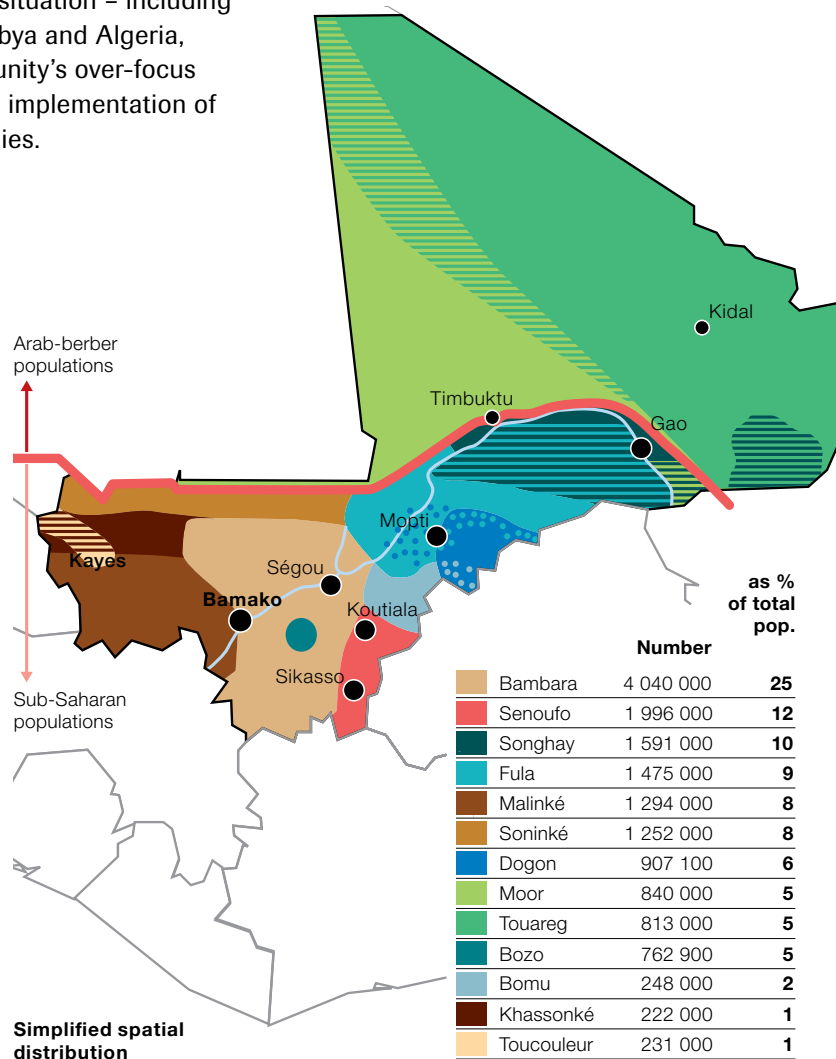
### The roots: where history and security collide

*The roots of Mali's Conflict: Moving beyond the 2012 crisis* highlighted three main causes of the 2012 outburst. One, the dominance of the south of Mali in the aftermath of decolonisation marginalised the under-developed north and transformed it into a security threat. Two, the Tuareg rebellions contributed to a gradual withdrawal of the state, enabling a security vacuum to develop. Then, in order to maintain some kind of order, Bamako used a proxy counter-insurgency strategy that further aggravated the historical tensions between northern communities. And three, interference from foreign powers aggravated the situation – including competition between Libya and Algeria, the international community's over-focus on security, and a failed implementation of existing security strategies.

### Out-of-the-box research

An NPL grant provided the CRU with a unique opportunity to bring an 'out-of-the-box' approach to their research. "We weren't sponsored by a governmental agency or an NGO," emphasises Thibault. "So we didn't have to take any specific interests into account...we had nothing to defend." Gregory agrees: "When we speak of specific interests, remember that there are currently 16 different strategies in place right now. What Mali needs is a way to coordinate all international actors to make forward progress together. That will create real impact." ▶

### Ethnic groups in Mali





Clingendael's Sahel Programme is an innovative approach and serves as a very useful platform for open discussions and debates at a crucial moment in Mali's uncertain path towards stability. The programme provided all of the actors involved with a wide range of outputs such as research papers, expert meetings, working seminars and public conferences. It also offered very interesting and useful opportunities for academics, practitioners and policy-makers involved in the issues of peace and stability in Mali and the whole Sahel region to gather and have thorough exchanges of views and experiences.

**Michel Reveyrand-de Menthon, European Union Special Representative for the Sahel**

### Seminars in Mali and The Hague

The pair organised two seminars to help boost their own impact. The first was held in Bamako, just six days after a terrorist attack in the capital city. The event brought together participants from six West African countries, Malian civil society, journalists, local authorities, and international organisations such as the UN and the EU. With publicity through Twitter and the Malian press, the seminar led to a greater understanding of the importance of local development as both a cause of – and a solution to – further unrest. The second seminar, held in The Hague, included representatives from the United Nations, the European Union, the World Bank, the embassies of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Mali and Senegal, and officials from the Departments of Defence and Foreign Affairs from the Netherlands, Belgium and France. Participants emphasised the importance of local development, as well as the need for adaptability of current strategies in the region in terms of better coordination.

### Additional insight, additional impact

Our research also led to some additional outputs," says Gregory. The first focused on the third cabinet shuffle since the new government in 2013, with suggestions to symbolically 'turn the page' from President Keita's troubled first years, enlarge a coalition approach and emphasise the political will for stability. The second focused on Mali three years after the crisis, providing a 'snapshot' of the country, highlighting weaknesses of the current regime as well as the growing influence of religious actors in the political arena.

### Keeping a focus on Mali

Both Gregory and Thibault are certain that security and military options alone are not the panacea for Mali. "We need to keep looking at a range of issues, including local development," says Gregory. "And to do this, the international community must keep Mali at the top of its agenda." ■

**Thibault** wrote his Masters thesis on terrorism in Mali. "My trip to Mali definitely broadened my perspective, and gave me a better understanding of the country and the region. In fact, I am so committed to the region that the first thing I do when I wake up is check the Malian news. I am determined to share my new knowledge and understanding with others."

**Gregory** has been going to Mali for 15 years. "I started visiting Mali in an atmosphere of peace and stability. Then the first western hostages were taken by terrorists. So I have seen swings back and forth, along with a deep and constant deterioration in the north. But I have also experienced the impact and efficiency of new international programmes. More than anything, I admire the accessibility of the country and our ability to discuss anything at all with high-level authorities."



## Towards a new justice system in **Mali**

Innovation for other  
fragile states?



Beyond dichotomy  
[clingendael.nl/justice](https://clingendael.nl/justice)

Many Malians seek justice through ‘customary’ approaches run by community leaders. If this approach fails, they often give up or face the burden of starting again through the state system. The Sahel Programme therefore undertook an investigation into justice in Mali with two objectives in mind. One, to examine a tolerant and practical orientation to justice grounded in the reality of Mali’s legal pluralism. And second, to look for alternatives to ‘train and equip’ initiatives not grounded in context or culture. The result was a 60-page report called *Beyond dichotomy: Recognising and reconciling legal pluralism in Mali*.

“ The report looks at the Malian legal system in a creative and innovative manner, thereby contributing to a new way of approaching constitutional development in fragile and post-colonial countries. This is an important basis for Dutch policy in the area of rule of law development. Unlike the French legal system dating from the colonial period, the recommendations could lead to a pluralistic and modern legal system that respects Malian culture. Mali could therefore be a source of inspiration for the development of law in other fragile post-colonial countries.

**Roelof Haveman, First Secretary / Security and Rule of Law, Dutch Embassy in Bamako, Mali**

### Putting things into perspective

To investigate this complex and multi-faceted issue, Senior Research Fellow for Security & Justice Erwin van Veen, Research Fellow Diana Goff and Research Assistant Thibault Van Damme travelled to Mali after having conducted extensive desk-based research. There, they conducted 24 extended interviews with ordinary citizens, representatives of Mali's state judiciary, customary authorities, civil society organisations and journalists. The result was a set of five recommendations for improving justice in Mali.

### Five innovative and realistic recommendations

As a first step, they suggest mapping the experiences of people encountering the justice system, from crime victims to investigators to judges, and through customary or state-run approaches. The second step would be to use this knowledge to create a series of 'Justice Summits' throughout Mali, allowing stakeholders to discuss the current challenges and how they could work together to resolve them. Third, Mali could then make better use of customary justice leaders as legal officials of the state, especially as mediators in civil and criminal cases, to increase mutual awareness and exposure. Fourth, Mali could recognise and modernise customary approaches in positive law – especially those that the population supports. Finally, stakeholders could build on these successes to create a new, innovative vision for Malian justice.

### Wide-ranging interest and support

The report created a great deal of interest, with exposure through social media, the Dutch Foreign Ministry, Malian stakeholders and NGOs. Malick Coulibaly, former Minister of Justice for Mali, was especially complimentary: “The state of justice in Mali has led to an abundance of literature. And the number of studies and programmes are growing. However, Clingendael's analysis is profound, realistic and contains innovative recommendations – it is the type of analysis that the situation demands.”

### A results-oriented way forward

While the recommendations may not be about quick wins, they are definitely results-oriented. They offer a nuanced and sophisticated approach to addressing real issues faced by real people every single day in Mali. “There is a lot of space for innovation,” says Diana. “Both from a donor perspective, which could be more integrated, and from a Malian perspective, which I think should be optimistic.” The right amount of time and investment can lead to a positive and transparent integration of Mali's state and customary systems. It is achievable, and it could offer an approach with elements that can be used in other fragile post-colonial states. ■

**Erwin** has researched a variety of security and justice settings across Africa and the Middle East. “Mali was unique as a clear-cut case of an imported colonial legal system that got stuck in time and no longer met the justice needs of most Malians. But it has potential.”

**Diana** already had experience with legal aspects in Africa. “But this was my first time in Mali. I was impressed with the ways which both state and customary actors in the justice system are already working together, whether through official or unofficial means. Our recommendations acknowledge that dynamic and suggest that efforts be focused on building upon what already exists.”

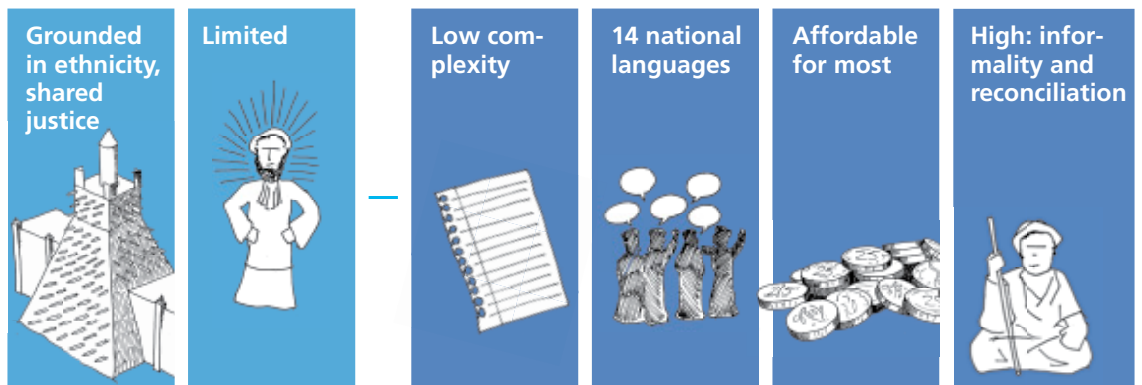
This was also **Thibault's** first visit to the country: “We wanted our report to set a new tone. Mali is in a unique position to be able to envision a new justice system that plays to the strengths of everybody concerned.”

# Beyond dichotomy: Innovating justice in Mali

## POLITICAL

## SYSTEMIC

### Customary Justice



### Characteristics

A shared concept of justice?

Executive dominance

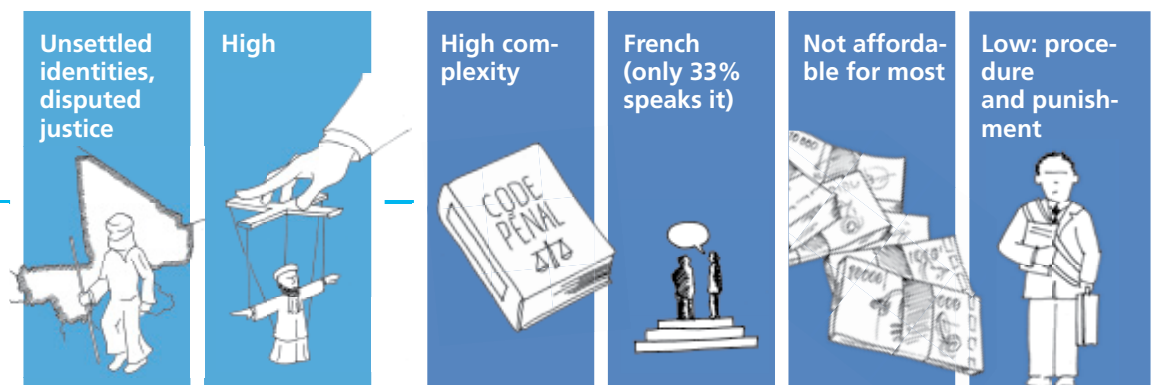
System complexity

Language

Cost of access and use

Cultural resonance

### State Justice







Greater recognition between Mali's state and customary systems provide citizens a loosely integrated range of options producing better justice

## Future state

### OPERATIONAL

### Improvement efforts 2000 - 2015

<p>Low but more limited opportunities</p> 	<p>Adequate but may struggle to enforce judgments</p> 
<p>Corruption</p> 	<p>Resource issues</p> 

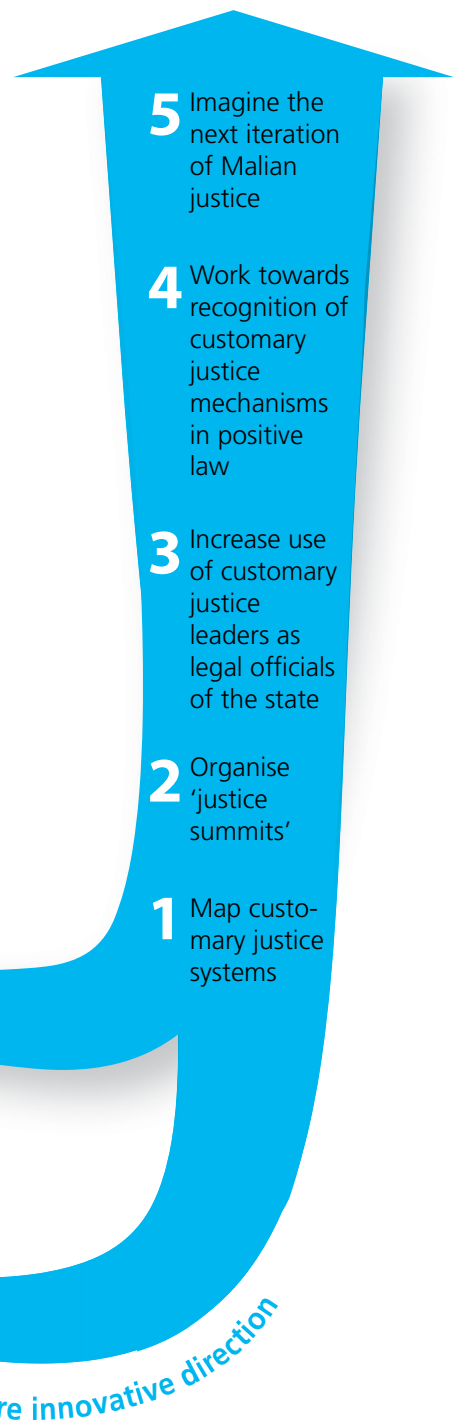
State-centric



Resource-focused



Institution-heavy



#Mali, 19 NGOs are trained on the role of civil soc. In the promotion of Peace and Development.

- Tweet from UN Special Envoy Sahel

# Training programme for NGO staff

## A huge success



Training programme  
[clingendael.nl/training](http://clingendael.nl/training)

### A programme to promote stability and development

On April 14, Malian staff from Dutch NGOs and local partners arrived at the Clingendael Academy for a two-week training programme. “We wanted to exchange views regarding the role of civil society in the promotion of peace, stability and development,” explains Project Coordinator Marianne Ducasse-Rogier. “We also wanted to develop professional competencies and increase participants’ networks and partnerships as they discovered Dutch civil society.”

### A diverse, experienced group

Most participants had a project/programme management role in Mali with between five to ten years of field experience. Seventeen

participants were selected to create a diverse and gender-balanced group representing different regions, plus two more so eager to attend that they paid their own travel and accommodation costs. Training focused on lobbying and advocacy, mediation, interaction with the media and presentation skills. Workshop topics included civil society in transition, dealing with Western donors, and public relations for NGOs.

### Bringing new skills back to Mali

Participant evaluations were extremely positive, with many requesting future programmes based on tailored topics to continue their professional development. “Participants then brought their new skills back to Mali to enhance their development efforts there,” says Marianne. “It was an extremely worthwhile event, and we hope to hold more in the future.” ■



“ The programme produced high quality analyses combining local knowledge and deep political and cultural understanding with strategic insight. The seminars organised in Mali and The Hague brought together representatives from Mali, the international community, NGOs and the academic world, and provided a unique platform to better understand the roots of conflict in the region. I cannot think of any other centre or programme that offers an equally professional hub of knowledge and expertise on the conflict in the Sahel.

**Sergei Boeke, Researcher at the Centre for Terrorism & Counterterrorism, The Hague**

“ In addition to the relevance of the content regarding the current situation in Mali, the institute was able to mobilise the people and resources to create a work programme suitable for achieving our objectives. Thanks to the training, I have a different perspective on the issue of cooperation and its link with the security challenges in Mali and the rest of the Sahel. The implementation of the action plan developed at the end of the session is a high priority for our organisations.

**Oumar Dembele, Advocacy and Communications Coordinator at the Association of Legal Clinics DEME-SO, Hamdalaye ACI 2000**

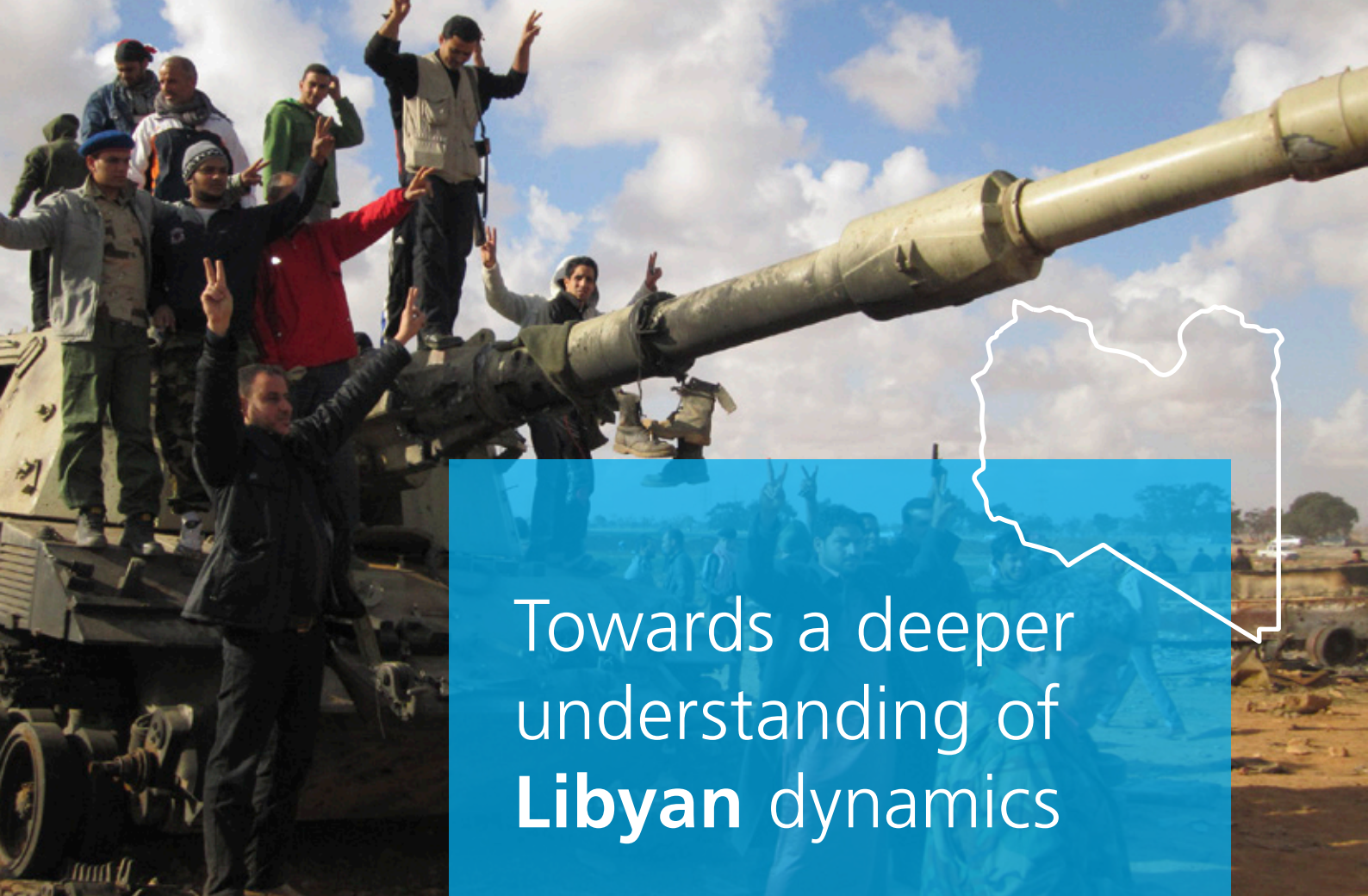
“ Organisationally, I particularly appreciated the professionalism you demonstrated in the assistance you provided for disabled people. The mix of courses, visits and discussions with parliamentarians was very informative and allowed me to assimilate the concepts during our meetings about the Malian crisis. The training allowed me to expand my knowledge about small arms as I got to know several Malian and Dutch experts. This gave me confidence, and I look forward to my next invitation to visit the Netherlands.

**Mme Konate Zeineb Guisse, Secretary General at The Malian Union of Associations and Committees of Women with Disabilities (UMAFH)**

“ I personally made use of the training to unblock a situation for which the authorities had so far failed to find a solution. I applied the lessons-learned at Clingendael to find a way out of the deadlock, allowing us to set up a trans-border committee to train and educate pastoral populations.

**Mr. Ibrahima Sankaré, Secretary General at Delta Survie**





## Towards a deeper understanding of **Libyan** dynamics



Revolution and  
its discontents  
[clingendael.nl/libya](http://clingendael.nl/libya)

In 2013, the CRU analysed the post-Qadhafi Libyan polity and demonstrated the importance of Libya in the Sahel region. Since the toppling of Qadhafi, Libya has witnessed a power juggle resulting in two parallel governments, continued fighting and a worrying rise in (transnational) crime. Jihadism – particularly the expansion of IS – has further compounded matters. The CRU therefore conducted follow-up research resulting in an online commentary and a policy brief to help explain the country's fall into chaos.

## Research with two important outputs

The CRU used a deep-desk study approach to create two outputs aimed at policy makers and the broader audience not generally familiar with local Libyan dynamics. “The purpose of the research was to offer in-depth analysis,” says Research Fellow Floor El Kamouni-Janssen, “but not write a sizeable and granular report for which many people have little time or interest.” The first publication therefore was an online commentary called *Understanding instability in Libya: Will peace talks end the chaos?* The second was a policy brief titled *Addressing Libya’s multiple crises: When violent politics, extremism and crime meet*.

## A commentary on Libya’s peace talks

The online commentary analysed Libya’s power balance and actor interests against the backdrop of a UN-led peace process for Libya. It was posted on Clingendael’s website and the website of the International Centre for Counter Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT). In the document, the team examined the peace talks between Libya’s warring parties, and questioned their feasibility in light of three trends of instability. First, in Libya the military has primacy over the political. Second, crime in Libya is both a product and a producer of the turmoil. And three, extremism in Libya is becoming more transnational and radical in character.

## A policy brief for current and future engagement

### The interlinking of crises

The CRU’s policy brief examined Libya’s crises in the fields of politics, the military, crime and extremism. It explored how the country’s crises are interlinked through the interests and actions of influential armed actors. “It is pivotal to understand the situation in Libya as a series of crises that are interlocked,” emphasises Floor. “In Libya, many military factions, for example, have a political role but are also involved in criminal activity.” The analysis concludes with a critical reflection on current and future international engagement in the country.



One of the best analyses of Libya that I have ever read.

– Tweet from war correspondent Jan Eickelboom

### Two pressing policy issues

Libya faces two pressing policy issues. First, the ongoing UN-led negotiations to establish a national unity government are at risk of failing because of the deep fragmentation of the Libyan polity. Second, the worrying rise in human trafficking as a form of criminal activity in which government-linked armed groups are also active. Many Libyan actors have little incentive to change the status quo or abide by a resolution that does not serve their interests.

### Three principles for change

The authors suggest three principles that should underpin policy for Libya. We need to move towards a realistic approach to what can be done. We need to invest in a deeper understanding of Libyan dynamics. And we should give priority to the containment of crises in neighbouring states.

### The need for follow-up

An overarching goal of the two documents was to contribute to the ongoing thinking on Libya, and inform policy debates with a better understanding of on-the-ground dynamics. However, Libya is complex and constantly in flux, requiring the continuous monitoring of the latest developments and actors. This can certainly be achieved using access to local, Arabic-speaking sources and the type of in-house capacity offered by the CRU. Additional commentaries and policy briefs can be used to analyse topical events and trends in Libya and the Sahel. Further avenues of exploration should include frequent strategic meetings with country experts and policy makers. We highly recommend including Libya in ongoing research into the Middle East and North Africa and the Sahel, in particular when focusing on the proliferation of IS and criminal networking. ■

## Rosan Smits

33 years old, Dutch  
Sahel Programme Project Leader



[clingendael.nl/  
smits](http://clingendael.nl/smits)

### Position

Deputy Director CRU / Senior Research Fellow.

### Field of expertise

Political economy analysis of fragile and conflict-affected states.

### The importance of Sahel research

“CRU’s knowledge of informal power structures and their underlying interests helps to provide innovative advice on various themes and expertise areas. This supports policymakers, multilateral institutions, bilateral governments and NGOs in their daily work.”

### The importance of external financing

“It enables independent and in-depth analysis focusing on the regional dimensions of conflict (IS in Libya), root causes (conflict in Mali) and out-of-the box policy strategies (access to justice).”

### Most important lesson

“The importance of considering the dynamics of conflict from regional and transnational perspectives.”

## Grégory Chauzal

34 years old, French  
Sahel region research project: The roots of Mali’s conflict + regional dimensions



[clingendael.nl/  
chauzal](http://clingendael.nl/chauzal)

### Position

Senior Research Fellow.

### Field of expertise

Post-conflict situations, governance, institutions, politics, security and military issues in Mali and Sahel region.

### The importance of Sahel research

“To present the 2012 crisis in Mali in all its dimensions and historical complexity. The seminars and conferences were a unique occasion to gather academics, experts and policy makers from all of the impacted regional countries and western partners involved in the stabilisation process. These meetings were rare and useful opportunities to confront North-South perspectives and to promote dialogue.”

### Most important lesson

“The need for dialogue and a better understanding of underlying perceptions for long-term stability. Solutions to a crisis need popular ownership. International programmes and foreign (military) assistance should match local expectations and needs.”

# Who's who?

Clingendael is proud to present the people behind the impressive research projects introduced in this magazine. They gladly share their personal research experiences and opinions.

## Thibault Van Damme

26 years old, Belgian

Sahel region research project: The roots of Mali's conflict + Legal pluralism in Mali



[clingendael.nl/  
damme](https://clingendael.nl/damme)

### Position

Research Assistant.

### Field of expertise

Political economy analysis of the Sahel and Central Africa.

### The importance of Sahel research

"Our research takes a look behind the curtain and analyses generally unknown or hidden dynamics. It gives an out-of-the-box interpretation of current events and developments in the Sahel region. We provide an alternative analysis grid for policy-makers involved in the region."

### Most important lesson

"My realisation that international policies have yielded little result and have not usually taken the needs of the local population into account. On a personal level I've learned how kind and optimistic the Malians are, despite their situation."

## Erwin van Veen

37 years old, Dutch

Research projects in the Sahel region: IS Franchising + Legal pluralism in Mali



[clingendael.nl/  
veen](https://clingendael.nl/veen)

### Position

Senior Research Fellow.

### Field of expertise

Political development of security and justice issues in fragile areas.

### The importance of Sahel research

"A consistent, thorough and independent exploration of political and social developments to create new insights."

### Most important lesson

"It takes a lot of work to capture the essence of complex situations."

## Diana Goff

37 years old, American  
Sahel region research project: Legal pluralism in Mali



[clingendael.nl/  
goff](https://clingendael.nl/goff)

### Position

Research Fellow.

### Field of expertise

International and domestic law, civil litigation, universal justice reform and transnational justice.

### The importance of Sahel research

“Helping those who are working in the Sahel region to understand how they can make the most positive impact.”

### Most important lesson

“The importance of identifying the local priorities, culture and interests.”

## Floor El Kamouni-Janssen

30 years old, Dutch  
Sahel region research project: Instability in Libya



[clingendael.nl/  
elkamouni](https://clingendael.nl/elkamouni)

### Position

Research Fellow.

### Field of expertise

Contemporary dynamics in the Middle East and North Africa, political economy analysis, Arab transitions, political Islam, terrorism and radicalisation.

### The importance of Sahel research

“Researching the region’s problems, such as human trafficking, radicalism, terrorism and criminal activity from a regional perspective. Providing a portal to share insights on issues that affect the region as a whole and discuss the effective policy responses.”

### Most important lesson

“The need to understand the region’s instability as an accumulation of crises that are all interlocked. We must understand the individual crises and also paint the bigger regional picture. This is complex and challenging work, but also rewarding when we succeed.”

## Frans-Paul van der Putten

45 years old, Dutch

Sahel region research project: MINUSMA and the role of China



### Position

Senior Research Fellow.

### Field of expertise

China as an emerging great power.

### The importance of Sahel research

"It brings together multiple disciplines and perspectives and combines both academic insights and practice-oriented aims."

### Most important lesson

"On a personal level: it was nice to be back in Beijing once again. On an academic level: China will keep increasing its troop contribution to UN missions in Africa."



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putten](http://clingendael.nl/putten)

## Marianne Ducasse-Rogier

44 years old, French

Sahel region training



### Position

Senior Training and Research Fellow.

### Field of expertise

International peace and security, diplomacy in sub-Saharan Africa.

### The importance of Sahel research

"To provide local people working for local and international NGOs with an opportunity to improve their professional skills and thus become more efficient in bringing peace and stability to their countries. And to provide NGO workers with an opportunity to reflect on their missions, and share and learn from each other in a neutral environment, away from their daily tasks."

### Most important lesson

"Malian people are working hard to improve the future of their country and we can genuinely support them."



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## Islamic State 'franchising'

The factors  
behind its success



Islamic State franchising  
[clingendael.nl/is](http://clingendael.nl/is)

Last January, as the Islamic State (IS) spread throughout the Middle East, North Africa and Southeast Asia, the Clingendael Conflict Research Unit realised that something was missing. There had been no real research into the variety of factors behind the proliferation of these IS 'franchises'. The Sahel project provided an opportunity to fill in this knowledge gap with a report called *Islamic State franchising: Tribes, transnational jihadi networks and generational shifts*.





As the world watched the struggle against IS in Iraq, Syria, and eventually Libya, not as many people were paying attention to areas such as Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Yemen. The CRU decided to engage Rivka Azoulay to investigate the way in which IS used a 'franchise' approach to spread. After two months of intense work, they discovered a number of key factors distinguishing the IS franchising approach from other Jihadist movements.

### A focus on the 'near enemy'

One factor important to the success of the IS approach is its focus on what is called the 'near enemy'. "Other movements such as Al Qaida often base their strategies on the large, international enemies of their ideologies," explains Senior Research Fellow Erwin van Veen. "IS sets more local targets – including other forms of Islam. This helps them create targeted franchises that don't have to rely on international strategies to succeed but can tap into local grievances."

### A personal network effect

Much of IS' proliferation can also be traced to the personal networks used to further the group's goals. As Jihadists fight throughout the various conflict regions, they create bonds and build up a set of shared experiences. If they are imprisoned, the bonds can grow even stronger. "Once they return to their own countries, these fighters are able to capitalise on their new personal networks to embed franchises in their own areas," says Erwin. Imprisonment is therefore a widely underestimated factor – the removal of jihadists from the population as a deterrent can actually help to later foster the very proliferation that the authorities are trying to prevent.

**Erwin** conducted earlier research into the conflicts in Syria and Iraq, the organisation of security in Lebanon and the rule of law in Yemen. "The expansion of the Islamic State was a puzzle: it's clearly attractive but what really drives people to subscribe to such an apocalyptic worldview? I think we identified at least part of the answer."

### An impact from marginalisation

IS franchising is especially likely to succeed in areas that combine strong tribal structures with a central government that has a track record of repressing and marginalising the people that inhabit these areas. Libya's Fezzan and Egypt's Sinaï regions offer striking examples. This fertile ground provides opportunity and motive for IS expansion – an environment well-suited to IS franchising efforts.

### The report: a positive reaction from experts and the media

The report was created for international analysts and policy makers engaged in the fight against IS – especially those participating in the US-led coalition in Iraq. The report was used in an expert meeting (The Knowledge Platform on Security and the Rule of Law) that also included participants such as Oxfam Novib and War Child, working on a more local level to address those grievances that IS is capitalising upon. The CRU used social media (facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter) to spread the report, with a well-received blog that spurred interest. It was referenced in Jason Burke's new book *The New Threat: The Past, Present and Future of Islamic Militancy* and included in a variety of databases including INTELWIRE, EuroMeSCo, The University of Denver Center for Middle East Studies, ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives, Hamburg University's German Institute for Global and Area Studies, and ON TRACK (The Conference of Defence Associations Institute).

### Filling a research gap

This research effort was conducted amid the sudden burst of IS expansion in early 2015, and is just one of the positive unexpected outcomes of NPL funding for the CRU. It emphasises the importance of being able to conduct rapid research into worrying developments in real-life that ask for responses in policy and action, especially given the research gap that existed at the time of the report's creation. ■



## Mali: China's stepping stone to African peacekeeping



China's Evolving  
Role in Peacekeeping  
and African Security  
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China's contribution to the UN budget has increased from less than 1% in 1994 to 6.64% today. At the same time, it is currently expanding its peacekeeping presence in Africa, and is now the only country that plays a significant role as a contributor of both troops and money. Their 170-member contribution to The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) offers a fascinating glimpse into the country's evolving peacekeeping role in this region.

## MINUSMA Mandate

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) was established by the Security Council in 2013 to support political processes in that country and carry out a number of security-related tasks. In 2014 the mandate was amended. The Mission was asked to support transitional authorities in Mali as they stabilised the country and implemented a transitional roadmap, focusing on:

- Security, stabilisation and the protection of civilians
- Promoting and monitoring human rights
- Humanitarian assistance
- An extension of State authority
- Preparing free, inclusive and peaceful elections
- Supporting national political dialogue and reconciliation
- Rebuilding the security sector

## Total current strength



## Chinese troop contribution



### China's increased UN support

A recent investigation by Clingendael Senior Research Fellow Frans-Paul van der Putten examined China's changing approach to UN support. China wants to strengthen the role of both the UN Security Council and UN peacekeeping, as well as increase its own influence within both. "The country is not pushing for major reforms with regard to either," explains Frans-Paul. "But China would like to increase its ability to keep Western countries from initiating peace operations that it regards as undesirable."

### Evolving from support to protection

China's main concerns on the ground in Mali revolved around operational and strategic constraints. The operational challenges included language (it is difficult to find Chinese soldiers with a good command of French) and on-the-ground issues such as heat, unfamiliar housing, and disease. But these are issues faced by any troop-contributing country.

"More specifically, the Chinese were concerned by the security environment in which they found themselves," says Frans-Paul. "Remember...they began their UN involvement in a purely supporting role. In Mali, suddenly they came into contact with more conflict-driven situations." This has created an urgent need to define how their peacekeeping ►



In case you missed it > [#China's Role in Peacekeeping and Counter Terrorism in #Mali](#)

- Twitter recommendation from SACE Foundation: Sino Africa Centre of Excellence



forces on the ground should react to the potential for armed conflict, and whether their role should include combat.

### An expanded presence in Africa

While China plays a relatively large economic role throughout Africa, its current involvement in conflict areas remains modest. However, political, economic and citizen-related self-interest does seem to be driving China's engagement with the UN. An increased presence in South Sudan, where China recently deployed a battalion, also suggests increased military presence under UN command. This may eventually open up new possibilities for protecting citizens and economic assets in Africa as a long-term goal.

### The value of research: understanding China's role

Considering China's obvious self-centred approach to peacekeeping, this type of research and a continued focus on China's increased significance is extremely helpful. Moving forward, it remains to be seen what China's specific peacekeeping efforts

in the region will be. But in terms of their commitment to regional security, their efforts to prevent piracy in the Gulf of Aden should not be forgotten. "China sent ships to this area under a global UN mandate in 2009," explains Frans-Paul. "They are still there. In fact, China may increase their presence in the waters around Africa through their own port in Djibouti."

For more information, please read our recent report called *China's Evolving Role in Peacekeeping and African Security*. Written for Dutch organisations active in the Sahel region, Dutch government representatives, and international groups and experts, the report helps to increase understanding of China's evolving role in the Sahel region. ■

To discover more about how the Chinese themselves saw their role, **Frans-Paul** travelled to China. He had been there many times before, meeting with civilian experts. This trip he did in fact hold a highly productive meeting with Xue Lei – China's top peacekeeping expert in Shanghai. However, Frans Paul also took the unprecedented step of working with the Dutch Embassy to arrange a meeting with the Chinese Ministry of National Defence to hear their side of the story. "Our discussions there were open and friendly," says Frans-Paul. "There was a definite sense of mutual cooperation."

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## Key publications

Erwin van Veen, Diana Goff, Thibault van Damme (2015)

**Beyond dichotomy: Recognising and reconciling legal pluralism in Mali**

CRU REPORT

Floor el-Kamouni-Janssen, Iba Abdo (2015)

**Understanding instability in Libya: Will peace talks end the chaos?**

CRU COMMENTARY

Floor el-Kamouni-Janssen, Iba Abdo (2015)

**Addressing Libya's multiple crises: When violent politics, extremism and crime meet**

CRU POLICY BRIEF

Frans-Paul van der Putten (2015)

**China's evolving role in peacekeeping and African security**

CLINGENDAEL REPORT

Grégory Chauzal (2015)

**Fix the unfixable - Dealing with full-blown crisis and instability: How to bring greater stability to the Sahel?**

CRU POLICY BRIEF

Grégory Chauzal, Thibault van Damme (2015)

**The roots of Mali's conflict**

CRU REPORT

Grégory Chauzal (2015)

**A snapshot of Mali three years after the 2012 crisis**

CRU COMMENTARY

Grégory Chauzal (2015)

**Bamako's new government: Implications for Mali and the North-South reconciliation process**

CRU COMMENTARY

Rivka Azoulay (2015)

**Islamic State franchising: Tribes, transnational jihadi networks and generational shifts**

CRU REPORT

Thibault van Damme (2015)

**From neglect to hyperactivity: The regional force against Boko Haram**

CRU COMMENTARY

A series of guest posts by Sergei Boeke of the International Center for Counter-terrorism.

All publications can be found on our website  
**[www.clingendael.nl/sahelprogramme](http://www.clingendael.nl/sahelprogramme)**



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