

## Bridges from Bamako

*Life in a bustling West African metropolis*

### Understanding Mali's "Tuareg problem"

Posted on [February 25, 2013](#)

Last week I took part in a ["teach-in" organized by Michigan State University](#) devoted to the ongoing crisis in Mali. A half-dozen Africanist scholars joined a pair of retired U.S. ambassadors to discuss the origins and consequences of that country's state collapse, ethnic tensions, the rebel takeover and French military intervention. The audience, mostly MSU students and faculty, included several Malians. One recurring subject was the Tuareg people and their place in the Malian nation. Various non-Malian participants spoke of the need to grant the Tuareg some kind of autonomy, while Malians in the room rejected such an arrangement. At one point a Malian graduate student in attendance stated flatly, "There is no 'Tuareg problem' in Mali."

This remark reminded me that listening to Tuareg and non-Tuareg Malians talk about their intertwined history can be like listening to Israelis and Palestinians talk about theirs: the two groups' respective visions of the past they share are fundamentally divergent, with each group casting itself as victim.

Plenty of analyses by Western officials and journalists these days are structured around simple binaries dividing Mali's population into north and south, white and black, North African and sub-Saharan, good guys and bad guys. Such crude dualisms need to be dispensed with. Below are a few facts about northern Mali generally, and the Tuareg specifically, that can help in this regard.

- **Even in northern Mali, the people we call "the Tuareg" are a minority.**

It's notoriously difficult to count nomads, so we cannot know precisely how many Tuareg live in Mali, or anywhere for that matter. The [CIA World Factbook](#) estimates that the "Tuareg and Moor" account for 10 percent of Mali's population. The Malian government doesn't collect statistics on its citizens' ethnic affiliations, but it does sometimes ask what languages they speak. [Figures from the 2009 census](#) suggest that about 3.5 percent of Malians speak Tamasheq, the language of the Tuareg, as their mother tongue; in the country's three northern regions (Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal), Tamasheq speakers account for about 32 percent. They probably constitute a majority in the Kidal region, which in 2009 had a population just shy of 70,000 people — the size of a modest Bamako neighborhood. But the Songhay, a sedentary, phenotypically "black" population, are the biggest group in northern Mali. (Arabs or "Moors" make up about four percent of the population in those three regions, and one percent nationally.)



Map by National Geographic (click on image for larger version)

- **Most of the people we call "the Tuareg" are black.** Tamasheq speakers are divided into racial categories determined not only by skin color but by lineage. Dark-skinned descendants of slaves held by high-status

Tuareg are known as *eklan* in Tamasheq, or *Bella* in Songhay, and they are more numerous than the light-skinned descendants of slave owners. (See Bruce Hall's [A History of Race in Muslim West Africa](#) on the evolution of racial categorization in this region.) Historically they have little interest in Tuareg nationalism. Dark-skinned Tamasheq speakers were among the first victims of war crimes — including looting, rape and murder — committed by rebels of the Mouvement National pour la Liberation de l'Azawad (MNLA) last year. "For the MNLA, dark-skinned Tuareg are fit only for enslavement or death," a dark-skinned, Tamasheq-speaking woman recently [told Sky News](#). Maybe there's no such thing as a dark-skinned Tuareg. In Sikasso I used to frequent a Tamasheq-speaking family of blacksmiths, all of them of dark complexion, who had moved there from Gourma-Rharous (southern Timbuktu region) in the 1980s. Later in Bamako I met a light-skinned, turbaned *Targui* (the singular form of "Tuareg") who knew them, but he objected to my assimilating them with his own ethnic category. "They are not Tuareg," he scoffed. In his eyes, no member of a servile sub-group qualified as Tuareg.

- **The people we call "the Tuareg" are not united on anything, least of all separatism.** In addition to race, Tamasheq speakers are divided into multiple categories of tribe, clan, and hereditary status. The MNLA — the group that, in the eyes of many Malians, north and south, brought this current tragedy upon the country — has no legitimate claim to speak for "the Tuareg," still less the Texas-sized chunk of territory which it declared sovereign last year, in which Tamasheq speakers constituted less than a third of the population. An [online petition](#) now circulating among Tuareg Malians disavows the MNLA and its separatist aims. "We have been, remain, and will always be full-fledged Malians," the text claims. Those who seek an independent state for the Tuareg are a "minority within a minority," as the Bamako press likes to point out.
- **The people we call "the Tuareg" have not been excluded from Mali's government.** Following the Tuareg rebellion of the early 1990s, thousands of Tuareg fighters were integrated into the Malian army, and Tuareg leaders have long held prominent roles in the Malian state. President Amadou Toumani Touré's [first prime minister](#) (2002-2004), and two ministers in [Mali's current government](#), are among the many Tuareg officials who have served the Malian state. It would be foolish to argue that Tuareg Malians have been underrepresented, let alone shut out, of the political process in Bamako. Like Malians everywhere, they may not have been well represented, but they have been represented.
- **Innocent civilians identified as "Tuareg" have been abused and murdered.**



Bodies in a well in Sévaré: Who are they? Who dumped them there? (Photo: Jerome Delay, AP)

Far too often, Malians who point out the above facts downplay or deny the systemic violence against light-skinned Tuareg in Mali. Their claim that the MNLA and other rebel groups have carried out far more crimes against Malians is probably correct: several MNLA leaders are now under [international arrest warrants](#) for war crimes. But surely the Malian state must be held to a higher standard, and reports of its troops killing civilians in northern Mali have grown too numerous to ignore. (The MNLA is keeping [a list of reported abuses by Malian forces](#) and [claims to have filed suit against the Malian government in the International Criminal Court](#).) The recent statement by Dioncounda Traoré, Mali's interim president, that "[the Malian army has not committed any exaction](#)," failed to convince even his own partisans. Since French and Malian forces took Timbuktu last month, Arab civilians too have been "disappeared" after being taken into custody by Malian troops (see a heartbreaking [report by France24](#) including footage of an Arab woman finding her husband's body in a shallow grave outside town). The French are [growing uneasy](#) amidst mounting evidence that their own allies are committing war crimes. Remember that Tuareg civilians in Kati and Bamako were already the [targets of mob violence](#) in early 2012. Harsh repression by the Malian army of earlier Tuareg uprisings dates [back to the 1960s](#). And yet...

■ **The label of historically oppressed minority does not easily fit the people we call "the Tuareg."**

Despite all the abuses just described, it's inappropriate to cast southern, "black" Malians as aggressors and northern, "white" Tuareg as victims in any uniform sense. Generations of enslavement, raiding and domination by light-skinned Tuareg over their dark-skinned neighbors has left an indelible mark on inter-group relations (again, see [Bruce Hall's book](#) on that sordid history). Due to this legacy, some non-Tuareg Malians just cannot perceive "the Tuareg" as victims of oppression. They perceive them, instead, as racists who refuse to accept black majority rule (see [Greg Mann's commentary on the racial politics of Tuareg nationalism](#) from last year).

This last point was brought home to me after I was [interviewed on NPR last month about Mali's Tuareg population](#). My remarks included the statement that "even in Libya, the Tuareg were still subject to discrimination." Amadou, a Fulani Malian with whom I've exchanged friendly e-mails, wrote on an online forum, "With 'even' and 'still' one may wonder if in Bruce's mind Tuareg are 'subject to discrimination' in their places of origin." I responded that indeed they were. His prickly retort read, in part, "You know very well that attacks on

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Tuaregs [sic] were just reactions of misguided people who were acting out of frustration rather than inherent or systematic prejudices against a group of people." For Amadou, the burning of Tuareg-owned homes and businesses wasn't discrimination, it was a misunderstanding. Perhaps the MSU student who thinks Mali has no "Tuareg problem" feels the same way.

I'm no expert on the Tuareg or northern Mali in general, and I don't claim to offer any solutions. But I know three things. One, whatever the "Tuareg problem" is, an independent or autonomous state for "the Tuareg" is unlikely to solve it. Two, simplistic categories used to describe these people and their relations with neighboring groups actually keep us from understanding, let alone preventing, the race-based injustices that have occurred in Mali and throughout the region. And three, until Malians of all backgrounds can meet for open dialogue about the crimes they have endured — and carried out — they will continue talking past each other, and their divergent views of their common history will only grow further apart.

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## 131 Responses to *Understanding Mali's "Tuareg problem"*



[Serge Survivorguy](#) says:

February 25, 2013 at 3:05 am

Thanks again Bruce for your 'spot on' analysis!

[Reply](#)



[Andy Morgan](#) says:

February 25, 2013 at 3:38 am

Hi Bruce,

A good analysis, but a Bamako-orientated one I fear. I've just spent two weeks talking to Touareg of all kinds, from all social and clan backgrounds, in houses, clubs and refugees camps in Niger and Burkina Faso and although support for the MNLA is by no means universal, it does exist. And where it does exist it's passionate and sincere. There's also a feeling that although the MNLA have made some serious mistakes, they often had no other option. The Touareg are a minority in the north, and if you take all Touareg, from the Kel Antessar of Timbuktu and Goundam to the Iwellemen of Menaka and Amderamboukane and did a poll, you'd probably find that the MNLA poll less than 50%. But I would suggest that they might easily poll 30%-45%. Their support is VERY HIGH in the Kidal region, make no mistake about that.

I spent hours talking to a Touareg who stayed at home in Gao throughout the entire Islamist occupation. He was no fan of the MUJAO and was hauled up in front of the Islamist police for being a smoker and a musician, but he pointed out the irony of the fact that, as a Touareg, life for him in Gao was possible under the MUJAO, but is impossible under the Malian army. I also did a long interview with an MNLA fighter who was one of last combattants to be ejected by the MUJAO from the Gouvernorat in Gao last July. He received a bullet wound in his shoulder. That man was a black skinned Bellah. He told me that he was recruited along with another 55 black skinned Bellah and Songhoi and trained in the Zakak base in Nov – Dec 2011. I did another long interview with Mohammed Djiré, vice-president of the MNLA, who is a black skinned Songhoi. So the racial politics of the Touareg and the MNLA aren't simple, and it's dangerous to draw too many straightforward 'black vs white' conclusions from it.

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I met another Touareg, an ex-rebel and senior government security advisor, a very intelligent and perceptive character, who said "Andy, the Touareg problem ended about five years ago. What we have now is a Sahelian problem. It affects ALL the peoples of this region and the solution must take all of them into account." These were among the wisest words I heard during my extensive fact finding mission. This is a Sahelian problem. The Bambara of Bamako were as pissed off with the utterly corrupt, self-serving, mendacious and machiavellian regime of ATT as the leaders of the MNA and MNLA were. Proof is that when Sanogo threw out ATT within months of a presidential election, the mass of the southern Malian population seemed to think it was a rather good idea.

I agree that an independent Azawad is a pipe-dream. Apart from anything else, Algeria won't allow it to happen. I said as much to Djiré and he answered with some fervent but rather dreamy revolutionary rhetoric. However, a properly governed Mali, with some intelligent and functioning decentralisation, a political elite who aren't either corrupt, incompetent or allied to disorganized crime, a disciplined army with good morale (rather than one openly selling drugs, alcohol and prostitutes as it was in Gao before the outbreak of the hostilities last year), a working civil society with strong institutions, a sensible cross-border trade and tariff strategy between the countries of the Maghreb and the Sahel – all these things ARE possible, they aren't a pipe-dream. That's what everyone needs to be working towards, whatever the colour of their skin, their ethnicity or their family name.

With respect and friendship,  
Andy.

[Reply](#)



**brucewhitehouse** says:

February 25, 2013 at 7:18 am

Thanks Andy for your thorough and thoughtful feedback. Bamako-centered analysis is what I'm here for 😊

[Reply](#)



**Andy Morgan** says:

February 25, 2013 at 7:25 am

Yes, of course Bruce. And I'm not the first to say you do it damn well!!



**ptinti** says:

February 25, 2013 at 8:56 am

Bruce: great stuff, as always.

Andy: you make some excellent points and offer great insight.

I think it is important to note just because someone supports the MNLA passionately and with sincerity does not mean their motives for doing so are necessarily pure or righteous. There are plenty of folks in the MNLA leadership who are/were firmly entrenched in the "utterly corrupt, self-serving, mendacious and machiavellian" networks that caused the Malian state to rot from the inside.

Like their counterparts in Bamako, leaders in northern Mali have a lot to answer for. Meaningful decentralization is more than just Bamako keeping up its end of the bargain, it requires a northern leadership that is actually interested in good governance. Certain politicians/leaders/notables have mastered the art of using the rhetoric of marginalization to gain concessions from the state, yet the people they purport to represent have very little to show for it.

The oft-cited grievance that there is no paved road from Gao to Kidal says just as much about the leadership in Gao and Kidal as it does about Bamako.

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[Reply](#)**Andy Morgan** says:

February 25, 2013 at 10:00 am

Totally agree Peter. And Touareg leadership is a point I should have raised in my original response to Bruce's article. My two weeks in Niger and BF have taught me that the Malian crisis has revealed two glaring issues within Touareg society that are beginning to weight heavily on Touareg opinion. The first is the idea that the old 'nobility' are predestined to lead their people. Many Touareg I spoke to are now denouncing that precept. Their frustration is being expressed in particular against the Ifoghas, who many now see as something close to a busted flush...not only because of Iyad's disastrous collusion with AQIM and MUJAO but also because of Alghabass' weak and rather ineffectual attempts to counterbalance Iyad's shenanigans and the opportunistic timing of his eventual break from Ansar ud-Dine. My prediction is that we will now see Ifoghas power in terminal decline and the rise of Taghat Mellet, Chamanamas, Imghad and Iklan leaders. The current Malian ambassador in Niamey, Alhamdou Ag Ilyene is a prime example. The second example is clanism and factionalism. I encountered a great deal of nostalgia for that era in the mid 1980s to early 1990s when the Touareg rebel movement purposefully and specifically played down the significance of clan-affiliation and attempted to instill the notion that Tamashek identity as a whole was the important thing, not individual clan identity. There were many Tinariwen songs written on precisely that subject. People are now expressing the opinion that clanism has more than outlived its usefulness. The pressures and influences that are being brought to bear on the Touareg people are so enormous, so beyond their normal realm of consciousness and understanding, that unless clanism is eradicated once and for all, the Touareg people and their culture risk being caught up in a downward spiral of decline and eventual elimination.

**brucewhitehouse** says:

February 25, 2013 at 10:06 am

I hope you're going to write more extensively about this elsewhere, Andy (not that I mind you using the comments section here, I just want your ideas to have a bigger audience!).

**Andy Morgan** says:

February 25, 2013 at 3:42 am

It's also worth adding that many of the mujahedeen who fought for the MUJAO against the Malian army and the French in Gao in recent weeks were either Songhoi or Peul. This makes the 'racial' picture even more confusing. Race isn't so much of a determining factor in all this as money and clan...that's my feeling anyway.

[Reply](#)**kantara** says:

February 25, 2013 at 6:17 am

I always thought that ATT was a rather heroic figure in Mali, who launched its democracy project by sacking Moussa Traore and refusing to be president himself, and took a back seat and allowing the democratically-elected Alpha Konare to rule for 2 terms before seeking election and being elected president? Were these criticisms — “utterly corrupt, self-serving, mendacious and machiavellian” — made of him when he was in office, and if so, why didn't we hear of them until he was deposed by Sanogo? Even if they were true, what was their relevance at the time of the coup, since he was leaving office in at most 4 weeks time? How does Andy know that his overthrow was welcomed by the people of Bamako? Even if he had become unpopular (and remember that once a “big man” falls in Africa, popular opinion tends to condemn him, under the illusion that a redistribution of power and influence would occur that might benefit some of them or people they knew) why wouldn't his enemies use the projected election to throw him out?

The facts today are that Sanogo worsened the army's situation in the north so much more that the French had to inter-

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The French will soon leave, and ECOWAS won't be able to stay for too long, due to economic reasons. The Americans will use the unstable situation to dominate the region, on the pretext that the only problem that really matters is killing off Al Qaeda adherents; and if the Sahelian drought plays its old tricks again, more and more people will die.

How can Mali be helped to work out a durable political solution, which will eliminate instability and thus — perhaps — open the door to a secure future unblighted by starvation and poverty? It is immensely tragic that foreign powers should opportunistically seek to use the weaknesses of this giant of a country with clay feet, to pursue their own selfish interests; the French regime, to court popularity at home, and the US, to cement the presence of Africom in Africa.

[Reply](#)



**brucewhitehouse** says:

February 25, 2013 at 7:23 am

It's true that nowadays it's hard to find anyone who will admit to having voted for ATT, although officially he polled close to 2/3 of the vote in 2002, and surely not all of that was due to fraud! But I also agree with Andy that ATT was terribly unpopular by late 2011 in Bamako, and that once the coup happened there was close to zero public support for ATT to come back and finish his term. This is something I [wrote about on this blog last March](#).

[Reply](#)

Pingback: [Daily Trawl | Better Giants](#)



**Gloria Silva** says:

February 25, 2013 at 6:44 am

Honestly and straight forward, the Tuaregue, does not exist in the REAL LIFE up NORTH of MALI, I have spent years living between the North and the South. The Problem of Tuaregue gets upside DOWN, when Marketing is done about them. For example, its the "Small Quantity" of Tuargues that belong to the MNLA that have to adjust to TODAYS Living worldwide like all other TRIBES, in all the WORLD, making them as victims is completely WRONG and misleads to racial problems. They just have to adjust to nowadays, like Songhois, peules, Zulus in South Africa, Conhamas in Angola and so on. They really have to WORK to earn their money, wether they want it or not, when I say work I really mean have an INCOME, its absolutely awful, to have a city like KIDAL, built on the TAXES of the others, KIDAL did not give one single CENT of TAX. Lets stop TWISTING thin gs around, they are no better than the rest of us that have to pay taxes in order to have SCHOOLS ! Lets stop Vixtimising something that is non existant ! Yes Malian army has done some awful things (But are not only to Tuagues), just like MNLA did some terrible things, like many Tuaregues do some awful things, liking waiting for farmers to finish their Crops and then come in and ROB them. Like I say, let all TRIBES Start working and payin g for their MEAls, WITHOUT EXECPTION ! That is the KEY WORD for PEACE in Mali.

[Reply](#)



**Fati** says:

March 2, 2013 at 1:57 am

Again Gloria, I notice that you are very quick to insult the Tuaregs "let all tribes start working and paying for their meals without exception", who exactly is supposed to put these tribes to work? I would love to hear what you have in mind for these lazy Tuaregs? A forced labor camp maybe? Maybe we should wake Hitler from his grave, he would teach them some work ethics??? I beg you, please enlighten us...

[Reply](#)



**Gloria Silva** says:

February 25, 2013 at 6:54 am

Sorry for my typing mistakes, but Mali's problem, is at the end of the DAY, you work you eat ! You do not want to work, you

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starve, and do not at all forget that its one of the Poorest Countries in Africa. Worse that the NORTH you have cities down SOUTH, like Mahina, that have to work very hard to have food and still supply other areas ! They did not pick up Weapons, because they are working like Hell and still do not have roads neither Telephone Lines ? But some Northerners that have a better life than they do, and do not even work 50% of what they work, picked up Arms ? If the Mahina people thought like the MNLA then they would have all the right to pick up arms, they contribute with enormous amount of Food ... and because of MNLA Marketing they were not given an Hospital like Kidal !!! I really get angry yes correct ! Because victimization makes me angry when not at all correct, when compared to the rest of Mali.

[Reply](#)



**Bozo woman says:**

February 25, 2013 at 10:24 am

I agree very much what you wrote, especially your conclusion! Thanks, I appreciate a balanced view.

[Reply](#)



**Cassidy says:**

February 25, 2013 at 11:02 am

Thanks, Bruce, for bringing up a subject that so many would rather avoid.

[Reply](#)



**Yaya Touray says:**

February 25, 2013 at 11:25 am

Thank you everyone for your contributions....especially to Andy.

Tuaregs have to integrate for survival...(to survive Globally, Educationally, health, trade etc etc) there will never be a Azwad state neither in Mali no in any of the bordering states.

Tuaregs name now tarnished by gun welding bandits, drug traffickers who are using Islamic jihad to to gain support from Islamic world...one question I always asked, why are no Muslim(jumma) demonstrations against the brutalities committed on Malian Muslims(Mali is over 90% Islamic )because Muslim world is only interested in Muslims in the Arab world...Being black in Islam is a subject people are now looking closely(Bilal was Black Sudanese in Pub's time)

[Reply](#)



**ali ag moha (@ALIUF) says:**

February 25, 2013 at 1:35 pm

Away from the fallacies carried by the article:

Must differentiate between "the political problems" and "social distinctions" and "intellectual differences" ideological ..

exm ..

azawad and Mali: political problem

Tuareg, Albella, songai ... etc: social distinctions

Salafist, secular, conservative : ideological

In short:

- Mali in azawad management failed, "militarily, politically, and developmentally"!

= So natural that there will be in azawad ... Demands a real "political and development!"

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- Tuareg are like any other tribes in Africa, they have class distinctions inherited .. This social study, although policy attempted to use!

= It is natural that there is a difference in views on inherited social status, and this is when Bambara and Arabs and Hausa and Songhai ... etc!

- Surprised at those who say that the Tuareg in azawad are small in number:

And forgetting displacement and cleansing that has been practiced against them since the French colonialists and then Modibo Keita .. Even today with Traore!

Example says

"Tuaregs returning from Libya!" , Means confirms that they are going back to azawad , asks, "How they went to Libya?"

This drives to the question of how many who did not return?

In addition:

Communities in the world multiply !! in Mali as well

but ratios in azawad They reduce the number of Tuareg population!

How so?!

They are either dying or there is fraud of these ratios?! Or were expelled?

This question appears social and political realities!!

As for the political solution:

- The solution is certainly not war!

And much regret Mali .. on lack of understanding of the demands of azawad! ,

arrogance for many of the facts makes the problem up to a point can not be with a simple solution that satisfies all parties and bring peace and love, security and justice!

This is all miss him as one of the Tuareg azawad in Mali!

[Reply](#)



**brucewhitehouse** says:

February 25, 2013 at 1:39 pm

Try posting your comment in French if that's any easier, my Arabic is not very good

[Reply](#)



[ali ag moha \(@ALIUF\)](#) says:

February 26, 2013 at 1:42 am

ok .. I will work on it, even though I'm not good in English and Frenchok .. I will work on it, even though I'm not good in English and French 😊



[ali ag moha \(@ALIUF\)](#) says:

February 25, 2013 at 1:46 pm

Add that compared to MNLA and Mali:

Is compared unfair!

MNLA did not administer AZAWAD.. fact even evaluate! Or judge its success or credited!

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While the Government of Mali, took over the management of AZAWAD more than 50 years, what is the result? !

Many states world succeeded as states while separated

For example: Germany  
North Korea and South Korea  
India and Pakistan

And also the United States of America  
Succeeded by federal!

There must be a serious initiative! !

[Reply](#)



**Graham Whitehouse** says:

February 25, 2013 at 9:33 pm

The idea that separated Germany, Korea, or India/Pakistan could be a positive model for a separate state doesn't hold much water. Germany reunited, Korea has been at a state of war for over 60 years, and both India and Pakistan have sponsored surrogate attacks on each other for decades, broken only by periods of open warfare between the two countries. Successes indeed! I have no expertise on Mali, but I certainly hope it can do better than Korea, India, and Pakistan in finding a peaceful future. Perhaps South Sudan can serve as a more appropriate role model?

[Reply](#)

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Pingback: [Understanding Mali's 'Tuareg problem' — War in Context](#)

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**Sanjay** says:

February 25, 2013 at 8:18 pm

What a strong post and enlightening comments by all – i ni che! But what does not sound logical is some type of outright rejection of "autonomy." Why not for Kidal especially if Kidal is 70% Tuareg? Autonomy is NOT the same as independence – never has been in any part of the world. The ruler, like Nehru in India, often attempts to be quite flexible on autonomy while sticking hard to non-independence. Autonomy can mean at least 50/50 rights to minerals, shared with the center or State. It would seem that autonomy for Kidal be on the table; while Mali's entire territorial integrity be non-negotiable. The Malian military must do something to guard and enforce the border between Kidal and Algeria, not to mention defend Timbuktu and Gao. It was just not clear to me why, based on many arrangements in the world including our own U.S., autonomy should be discarded. Thanks to all.

[Reply](#)



**Peter Singhaty** says:

February 26, 2013 at 8:44 am

Reblogged this on [peter singhaty](#).

[Reply](#)



**Timbuktu** says:

February 27, 2013 at 12:13 pm

I am a Tuareg and nobody here knows better than Andy Morgan to talk about them. I knew Bruce Hall in Timbuktu while doing his research at Ahmed Baba's Center, where he had his quarters. Without being wrong I can say that he does not know

Follow

the Tuaregs and that his knowledge of the region of Timbuktu and its population is inner the city because He never went to the terrain. So, I'm kind of disturbed by his opinions that are far from being accurate. Mr. Bruce Hall developed the idea already supported by the common Malian to justify their detestation and hostility, close to hatred against Tuaregs. He should see this antagonism in the history of the population and the most recent in the post-independence era....

He has patronized the Songhai (language he speaks properly), Bellah (former slaves) and other ethnic southerners in the city. I understand his position on slavery by only frequenting a specific part of population. But is it necessary to remind him that slaves also existed among the Songhai under the term of "Bagna"; in Bambara "Ton Djon"; among the Moors/Arabs "Haratin/Abd" in Mandingo "Djon" as well as in Fulani and all ethnic groups that have influenced the history of this part of West and the North Africa.

The thing is that Mr. Bruce ignores or deliberately passes under silence that the modern State of Mali is built on false dogma and did not hesitate in the early hours of its independence to proceed of large-scale massacres based on comments like those he said. In 1974 and 1984, Mali had a deliberate intention to let the people die of hunger and thirst with famine and drought despite the excessive response of the international community. A large part of the population and livestock is decimated while food donations are thrown into the Niger River to avoid pilling up stocks In the 1990s, the killings resumed again and I think that Mr. Bruce Hall arrived in Timbuktu just after a few years and saw on-site scars of this period (unless he is blind). What Mr. Bruce Hall does not say is that Mali has tried to take away our freedom and incurable desire to remain nomads and the denial of difference in diversity. The actions of the state (violence) and deeds of the people towards Arabs-Berbers clearly show their animosity. On the basis of literatures like his, militaries and the people are making pay a population called "white" without distinction for rebels and terrorists acts. Since the return of Malian military in the North with the help of the French, at least 300 civilians Tuareg and Arabs were executed on a simple presumption or revenge. I am not justifying the actions of the rebels nor the Islamists, but 10 months of occupation, we have not had many victims sorted by color. Lately, we clearly see the images on television that most jihadist fighters are black Africans and it is passed over in silence by people like you and Malians in general. Why don't you speak the truth?

This land of northern Mali is our land and we will not let no one, MNLA, MUJAO, AQIM terrorists and much less the army of a State that does recognize any citizen rights and denies our very existence.....

[Reply](#)



**brucewhitehouse** says:

February 27, 2013 at 7:52 pm

This just goes to show: When you write about the Tuareg, all kinds of voices come out of the woodwork....

[Reply](#)



**Timbuktuér** says:

February 28, 2013 at 11:42 am

yes brucewhitehouse, all kinds of voices will be heard because of the bullshit you tell under your PhD title you acquired with the help of Tuaregs and Arabs living in Timbuktu who have well introduced in the system despite the problems you had at the beginning with the Ahmed Baba center managers.

Second, your research and your title do not give you the right to stick a fake label to an entire people and justify abuses on him. I invite you to revisit your way thinking b putting aside your personal feelings.



**brucewhitehouse** says:

February 28, 2013 at 12:15 pm

Je pense que toute personne qui fait partie de cette échange devrait mettre ses sentiments personnels de côté. Je pense également que vous avez non seulement mal compris le contenu de ce blog, mais vous vous trompez de moi car je n'ai jamais travaillé au Centre Ahmed Baba. Enfin je vous conseille de ne plus afficher de langage abusif sur ce site car nous tentons (à la différence de la plupart de sites d'info) de mener des discussions fructueuses ici.

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**Timbuktu** says:

February 28, 2013 at 12:42 pm

Je sais que vous n'aviez pas travaillé au Centre Ahmed Baba, mais je sais aussi que vous y aviez mené vos travaux de recherche. Tout comme vous, j'explore aussi les voies et moyens pour une solution consensuelle, satisfaisante et humaine à ce problème qui nous fait mal à nous tous.

Je ne vois pas en quoi mon langage est abusif du moment que je réponds proportionnellement à vos propos (ça pourrait ne pas vous plaire, mais c'est aussi mon opinion que j'exprime). Si j'ai peut être mal saisi le contenu du Blog, c'est que certains propos dans les écrits sont tendancieux et préconçus (ceci dit, je reste dans le cadre d'échange fructueux comme vous dites), et qu'il est de mon devoir de réfuter la véracité de certains comme l'avait fait ici même Andy Morgan qui apporta une correction significative que vous aviez appréciée.

Bonne continuation Cher Monsieur!

[Reply](#)



**brucewhitehouse** says:

February 28, 2013 at 12:47 pm

Mon nom de famille c'est bien WHITEHOUSE et non pas HALL, donc vous vous trompez visiblement de moi monsieur. Je n'ai jamais effectué de recherches dans la region de Tombouctou. D'ailleurs accuser qqn de propager "bullshit" c'est un mot abusif qui n'a pas de place sur ce forum. Andy peut écrire ce qu'il pense mais il le fait sans insulte ni injure.

[Reply](#)



**Timbuktu** says:

February 28, 2013 at 1:03 pm

Et pourquoi vous sentez vous personnellement attaqué par mes propos à l'endroit des propos de Mr. Bruce Hall? Je ne me suis pas directement adressé pas à vous et c'est vous qui défendiez et publiez sur votre blog des contre-vérités insultantes et injurieuses sur mon peuple que vous taxez d'esclavagiste et dont les dernières exactions subies trouveraient leur justification dans son passé. Ensuite vous me répondez en me qualifiant de "nulle part" lorsque vous dites: "Lorsque vous écrivez sur les Touaregs, toutes sortes de voix viennent de nulle part ...."

Non, c'est trop simpliste de trouver mes propos insultant et injurieux par rapport aux propos irrespectueux et sans considération pour mon peuple. Je vous demande au moins un peu de respect pour la mémoire des victimes mortes sur la simple cause de leur couleur et d'un supposé passé esclavagiste sans aucune chance de présomption d'innocence.

Encore une fois, je me répète, sachiez que mes propos ne vous indexent particulièrement pas.

[Reply](#)



**brucewhitehouse** says:

February 28, 2013 at 1:11 pm

Il faut qu'on se comprenne, si vous voulez vous en prendre a M. Hall alors faites-le ailleurs. Je persiste que vous avez très mal compris mon texte et mon objet qui n'était pas du tout ce que vous semblez présumer. Enfin "venir de nulle part" n'est pas une traduction correcte de "out of the woodwork", qui ne comporte aucune signification pejorative. Votre commentaire était alors une réaction exagérée.

[Reply](#)



**Fati** says:

March 2, 2013 at 2:05 am

Follow

Mr. Bruce, with all due respect, "out of the woodwork" is insulting, therefore Timbukteer's reaction was not out of place. I even looked it up and found a couple of definitions: 1) based on the idea of insects that suddenly come out from under boards in a house where they have been hidden; 2) to appear after being hidden or not active for a long time, especially in order to do something unpleasant...so, either he is an insect or he is unpleasant...pick one.



**brucewhitehouse** says:

March 2, 2013 at 7:20 am

The connotation I was seeking in writing that phrase was "to appear suddenly and unexpectedly", but now that I've also [looked it up](#), I see that it is "usually said about someone who was not invited or wanted," and that was not what I meant to express. Therefore I apologize for the offense I gave; it was not intended. I strive to maintain a respectful tone in these discussions, and I thank Fati for doing the same.



**Timbuktu** says:

February 28, 2013 at 1:30 pm

Ne me dites pas ce que je dois ou ne dois pas faire parce que je n'ai aucune leçon de morale à recevoir de vous ni de personne. Mon opinion est mienne et je l'assume. Si vous ne voulez pas des avis contradictoires sur vos opinions et publications, alors verrouillez l'accessibilité votre blog à une liste choisie de vos intervenants. Si vous publiez, vous recevrez forcément des réponses que vous n'espérez pas.

Je vois que vous en faites une affaire personnelle, alors dépassionnons le débat si vous le voulez bien. Il aurait été plus judicieux d'ajouter que les propos de chacun n'engagent que leurs auteurs comme les miens que j'assume. Et enfin de vous à moi, je suis loin de vouloir vous offenser ni personne, pas même Bruce.

Ceci étant dit, je vais quand même continuer à suivre le fil des publications puisqu'apparemment je suis interdit de donner un avis contraire....Bonne continuation à vous en espérant que vous trouverez la formule pour nous sortir tous (les maliens) de l'ornière.

[Reply](#)



**brucewhitehouse** says:

February 28, 2013 at 3:17 pm

A friend writes: "Two small points: inclusion of Tuareg in governments in high posts dates from post Moussa Traore only as far as I know, so 'long' might be a bit overstated. Slavery: yes, but slavery was/is a main issue in other communities in Mali as well. see Greg Mann's work and especially Lotte Pelckman's excellent PhD for starters. The point with slavery in Tuareg and Arab societies is that it has a phenotypically 'legible' racial component: most think they can see who's slave and who's master, whereas that is less legible (but to insiders visible in other ways ) in other societies.

"Iklan belonging to Tamasheq society is more complex than you sketch it here... in my experience most Iklan do see themselves as Tuareg, albeit they are angry with their low status in that society. Then again: those who do not want to be Tuareg opt out and just become someone else in the big cities, so up north the portion of 'inclusive' thinkers is higher I guess. On the other hand: plenty of 'red' Tuareg are no longer accepting Iklan discrimination either and are active in Timidria or other social movements, especially city folk with Libyan socialisation."

[Reply](#)



**Barbara A. Worley, Ph.D. (Columbia University) - Anthropologist and Tuareg specialist for forty years** says:

March 1, 2013 at 7:45 am

Follow

Bruce Whitehouse, you should be ashamed of yourself. You are no expert on the Tuaregs to be saying such misleading and damaging things about them, and you have grossly violated the anthropological code of ethics. No one should take anything you say seriously because it is clear that you have a lethal axe to grind on the Tuareg people, without any authority whatsoever.

The American Anthropological Association (AAA) Code of Ethics says anthropologists have an obligation toward vulnerable populations, to carefully weigh the consequences of what they claim about them. Your statements about the Tuareg people demonstrate your partisan bias against them, at a time when people of Tuareg identity are at high risk for genocidal attacks, in a very sensitive geopolitical situation that is dangerously impacting them. You are in flagrant default of the AAA Code of Ethics and you should be ashamed of yourself for making claims and arguments that are damaging to the Tuareg people. You owe an apology to the hundreds of thousands of Tuareg people that you have disrespected at a time when they are fleeing racialized hatred and genocidal attacks. Your words have added to the propaganda and hatred against the Tuareg people.

For you to say that In Kati, the burning of Tuareg homes wasn't discrimination, it was "a misunderstanding" is a gross misrepresentation of what happened at Kati. The streets filled with mobs of people screaming "Death to the Tuaregs!" The Tuareg people were chased, robbed, and had their homes burned, and hundreds of thousands of Tuareg people have fled the visceral hatred and horrific abuses against them in Mali. A year later, they are still refugees, having lost their homes and livelihoods. What happened at Kati is emblematic of the abuses and atrocities that Tuareg people have suffered for the past 53 years. Your attempt to softpedal the ethnic hatred that has motivated the government of Bamako and people in the south is insulting and damaging to the Tuareg people. In soft-pedaling the ethnic hatred, you are showing your support for it.

You have tried to shut up the Tuaregs who have posted on your blog, telling them (in French) to keep their opinions to themselves, while at the same time blathering your own racist opinions against the Tuareg people. Tuareg voices have been shut up for much too long. They are indeed "coming out of the woodwork" – your choice of words, a pejorative usage for disgusting things like bugs that "come out of the woodwork." Your words constitute propaganda against the Tuareg people, and your attempts to shut them up are utterly disgraceful for an anthropologist. The Tuaregs are not bugs, and they are beginning to have their voices heard by speaking out against unjust propagandists such as yourself. You insulted one Tuareg who attempted to write in imperfect English, and claimed you could not understand him – but it is plenty clear that the Tuareg writer is bringing his own argument to bear on your damaging words.

It's true that you are "no expert on the Tuareg," and you should not be making arguments against them. You are unable to bring clarity to the problems facing the Tuareg people, and you have no authority whatsoever to be making the claims you are making against them. As an anthropologist, you have exceeded the limit of ethnocentrism and you are actively promoting perspectives that are damaging to a vulnerable ethnic group that you do not even know well enough to discuss responsibly.

[Reply](#)



**Gloria Silva says:**

March 1, 2013 at 12:20 pm

Anthropologist and Tuareg specialist for forty years, Its a pity that you are only a specialist on Tuaregues, you should try and study deeper all other ethnic GROUPS of the Northern Mali, maybe you would stop saying the Writer of this article is Racist ! I am not Racist ! And I know quite well the living between the Tuaregues and the Northern People, and its time, you put them to work, as specialist, in 2013 they can not live out of the air and simply ROB all other that have to do HARD working to eat !

[Reply](#)



**Fati says:**

March 2, 2013 at 1:49 am

My dear Gloria, you are asking an anthropologist to put the "Tuaregs" to work? with all due respect, what do you think we are? her slaves? her puppies?



**Gloria Silva says:**

Follow



March 2, 2013 at 9:48 am

Fati, yes, you look like slaves of <Tuaregues !!! Actually you are absolutely Correct ! Once you have drinken tee and heard their Music, they are wonderful, you know all of us at the end, all the tribes in the world, would lobe to drink tea, and listen to Music and do nothing at all of our lives



**Fati says:**

March 4, 2013 at 4:26 pm

Have you ever spent a day in a Tuareg camp? Do you have any understanding of the conditions in which people live in the desert? Tending to animals, traveling kilometers to fetch water for cooking, and yes for tea? They are living and surviving in one of the hardest terrains and climates on this earth. This does not excuse an armed rebellion, nor does it provide grounds for your insults. Please go spread your ignorance and hatred elsewhere.

Also for your information, I am 100% Tuareg, I work from 9am to 8pm every day, I pay taxes, and I love tea and music.



**GROSJEAN Martine says:**

March 1, 2013 at 9:20 am

On top of your article I see: Understanding Mali's "Tuareg problem"

At the bottom you write: I'm no expert on the Tuareg or northern Mali in general, and I don't claim to offer any solutions. I confirm, you're not an expert and I'm either. But, why the hell do you write an article about something you don't know? On top of it, some of your (well, I should say "some of the sentences of other people you copied in your article) sentences are quite stupid and untrue.

Vous ne faites que jeter de l'huile sur le feu !!!

[Reply](#)



**brucewhitehouse says:**

March 1, 2013 at 9:26 am

If I include untrue assertions by others (e.g., "Mali has no Tuareg problem"), my intention is to highlight their falsehood, not to argue on their behalf. I hope it's still possible, even in the current impassioned moment, to make a nuanced argument about the place of Tamasheq-speaking people in Malian society and history; I cannot subscribe to the simplistic argument that "The Tuareg are historically oppressed" or, alternatively, that "The Tuareg are historically oppressors." As you point out, I'm open about the limitations of my knowledge, because I don't think it's necessary to have done fieldwork in Tuareg communities to highlight the problems with either of those arguments. But if you've identified my own errors of fact or interpretation in this post, I encourage you to point them out.

[Reply](#)



**Fati says:**

March 2, 2013 at 4:04 am

Bruce, it is hard to point out fallacies in your post because you did such a good job of using sources which represent themselves and their own biases, or so-called facts that are practically impossible to prove or disprove (i.e. Tuareg density, pro-MNLAs vs anti-MNLAs, etc..).

Secondly, the title of your post is about "Understanding Mali's Tuareg Problem", but then you end up misleading the reader into believing that there is no Tuareg problem in Mali. I guess the ones who keep on bearing arms every few years just do it for lack of better things to do? And even if that is the case, it is s

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PROBLEM and it needs to be addressed honestly and productively; and not just be dismissed.

In order to prove the non-existence of this "Tuareg problem", you do a pretty good job at gathering evidence, which I will be happy to debate anytime, however I think that the harm is not only in what you wrote (via your sources), but rather in what you left out. By writing about only biased opinions that you, the writer/anthropologist elected to share, and without counteracting it with a holistic and in-depth analysis of the crisis, all you ended up doing was contribute to the anti-MNLA propaganda that all of Mali seems to be fixated on these days, instead of explaining the complexity of the issue at hand.

Journalists/educators/anthropologists all have a responsibility to convey information in the most unbiased manner possible, so as not to say public opinion in favor of any group(s). At the end of the day, your post is not just about the facts and the sources behind which you hide, it is really about the message that you are passing on to the reader. And if this message is conveyed in a vacuum, without any context, as is the case here, you end up causing unnecessary harm. There exists a "Tuareg problem" within the context of a greater problem, failure of state and corruption in Mali, which ultimately affects all ethnic groups for different reasons and to different degrees. The reasons for there being a 'Tuareg problem' might be different from the ones that MNLA has championed and the ones you attempted to disprove, but that doesn't not erase the problem from the map. If anything, it warrants for more research. Next time, be mindful about what you write.



**brucewhitehouse** says:

March 2, 2013 at 7:11 am

Fati, if you think the goal of this blog post was to deny that there is a "Tuareg problem" in Mali, I really recommend that you read it again. My viewpoint here is that there is a problem of anti-Tuareg discrimination in Mali, and nowhere in the post do I attempt to deny or minimize that problem. But anti-Tuareg discrimination is only part of what I see as a broader historical dynamic pertaining to the peoples of northern Mali, a dynamic that defies simplistic, black-and-white analysis.

People may disagree with the sources I cite, but as Abdoul points out, none of the hostile comments made here since Thursday has referred to alternative sources to back up their contention that the claims I made are false. By all means, let's debate the evidence: I invite you to pick a specific claim I've made (that the Tuareg are a minority in the north; that most Tuareg are black; that the Tuareg aren't united behind separatism; that the Tuareg have not been excluded from the Malian govt.; or that the label of "historically oppressed minority" doesn't easily fit their history), address the sources it's based on, and explain why the claim is wrong, or add important context I omitted. That would help me and other readers better understand these issues. I've been up-front about the limits of my knowledge and I'm open to new ideas.



**Fati** says:

March 4, 2013 at 1:08 pm

I reread your post a few times trying to decipher the flaws in this post that have bothered so many of us. I agree with your conclusion and the last paragraph in your introduction. But frankly, you did not accomplish in this post whatever the title indicated because there was too much time spent proving that Tuaregs are minorities that do not get along and are hated by everyone else, without bringing into the equation the problem from the Tuareg's perspective and highlighting some of the views from those passionate about Azawad. As Andy Morgan pointed out, it was Bamako centric. So let's discuss the topics you covered:1) that most Tuareg are black:

1) "Maybe there's no such thing as a dark-skinned Tuareg". I disagree with you. There is such a thing as a dark-skinned Tuareg. My father is a dark-skinned Tuareg who has lived in the south for the past 40 years and still refuses to learn a word of Bambara. Yes, there is stigma associated with being a dark-skinned Tuareg in the south, some embrace it and others decide to change their last names to Songhai ones etc... But there are many dark-skinned Tuaregs who are proud of their culture and heritage. So my question to you is the following on this topic: statistically, how many proud to be dark-skinned Tuaregs do you need for the

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such a thing as a dark-skinned Tuareg?

"Later in Bamako I met a light-skinned, turbaned Targui (the singular form of "Tuareg") who knew them, but he objected to my assimilating them with his own ethnic category. "They are not Tuareg," he scoffed. In his eyes, no member of a servile sub-group qualified as Tuareg.":

How many light skinned Tuaregs have made this remark to you? And in which context did this particular individual make this remark? The reason I ask this is the following: in this blog, you have seen how someone challenged Elmehdi Ag Muphtah for not being a real Tuareg, simply because he made a petition against the MNLA. Most Tuaregs have a hard time accepting that another Tuareg would publicly reject the fights of people of their own; and whether the person is black or light-skinned, they are automatically rejected by the mass as not being a "real" Tuareg. And the reason I asked how many light-skinned Tuaregs made similar comments is the following: the relationship between most light skinned Tuaregs and their former eklans, or even the blacksmiths is very affectionate and inclusive one, at least in my experience. If anyone other Tuareg on this blog experienced this differently, please share.

2) the Tuareg are a minority in the north: it seems that Mariam Walet Anara already provided some facts proving that Tuaregs are not a minority in the North. However, I want to add one more view: if you were to redefine the North by moving the "so called Azawad state" slightly north of Timbuktu and Gao (and north of some of the surrounding smaller towns), you would be in lands inhabited largely by Tuaregs. Do you agree? And this area still represents at least a third of Mali. The point I want to make here is that you could have gone beyond the CIA fact-book and where you said "Songhay, a sedentary, phenotypically "black" population, are the biggest group in northern Mali", you could have added that the Songhay (despite their high numbers) only occupy a smaller area of the North, and these areas that they occupy are towns located in the southern areas of the "North". Thus you could draw the imagery of a dense Songhai population in the southern towns within this so-called "North of Mali", and the rest of the Sahara (not just Kidal) as the domain of the Tuaregs. It all depends on where you draw this imaginary line.

3) that the Tuareg aren't united behind separatism: even though the MNLA does not have a mandate from the Tuareg people, so far no data has proven that their ideology is not shared by the vast majority of people. The bulk of Tuaregs are in refugee camps or hiding in the desert with their animals; their voices are not being heard; as they do not have access to petitions or blogs. What you have currently is a group of Tuareg intellectuals on both sides of the equation who are either for or against "separatism", and are trying to drum up some support.

4) that the Tuareg have not been excluded from the Malian govt.; I agree, Tuaregs are represented in the government. But the title of your post is about "Understanding the Tuareg Problem), so I was expecting a bit more. Despite the fact that they are represented in government, there is still a Tuareg insurgency. This was a great opportunity for you to give us a more in-depth analysis of what the problem really is. In my opinion: because the system is broken, the government is corrupt and incompetent. This government is not working for anyone (besides the officials themselves), but the Tuaregs who took arms seem to be the only ones who seem to expect more from their government.

5) or that the label of "historically oppressed minority" doesn't easily fit their history: Yes, contrary to MNLA claims, the Tuaregs are not oppressed because the Malian government has a policy of discrimination towards the population of the North. As I said above, it is simply a result of corruption and the incompetence of the elected officials in Bamako and some of the regions. Tuaregs have it the worst because of their nomadic lifestyle which has become unsustainable and the fact that they are the furthest from Bamako where the universities are and all of the opportunities are. Personally, I think that Mali has an unprecedented opportunity to stand through initiative. Why not try a federal system with three different states (Azawad, Sahel, and Soudan)? Each with its own capital and budget and universities? This might be costly at first, but it could restore faith in the system and hope, and eventually lead to some development at the cost of ethnic diversity (which I think is a luxury right now). Anyways, instead of making this into an issue of race, of north and south, pro MNLA versus con MNLA, everyone will be better off if we could take a hard look at our government and policies and move towards a huge overhaul of the system, instead of rushing to elections and bring back the same corruption (which is so embedded in all of our institutions)—which I give you credit for highlighting in your conclusion.

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**brucewhitehouse** says:

March 4, 2013 at 2:04 pm

Thanks Fati for giving my post another chance and making some very constructive arguments here. Let me point out that the remark "Maybe there's no such thing as a dark-skinned Tuareg" from my post was intended to be read ironically, otherwise the section heading ("Most of the people we call the Tuareg are black") makes no sense. I consider the blacksmith family in question Tuareg, if for no other reason than that they speak Tamasheq. (In fact, although they had lived in Sikasso for years, they would beat their children for speaking Bambara.) But one thing I've learned over the last few days is that I should stay away from irony when writing about such a sensitive topic.

Regarding demographic figures, we now have one statistic produced by the Malian government saying Tamasheq speakers account for 32 percent of the 3 northern regions, and another produced by the US Embassy in Bamako saying that they are 60 percent of "northern Mali." I share some of Karim's skepticism toward the State Dept. figure: How was this number arrived at? What does it mean by "northern Mali"? Then again, I don't fully trust the Malian government to generate accurate statistics about anything, so what can we conclude? All the evidence at our disposal is problematic on this question.

Regarding popular support for separatism, your statement that "so far no data has proven that their ideology is not shared by the vast majority of people" is absolutely true, as is the opposite statement—"so far no data has proven that their ideology IS shared by the vast majority of people"!

As for the solution, I think meaningful de-centralization has to be carried out not just in the north but all over Mali, only this time (unlike in the previous round of de-centralization) local governments need significant economic resources to carry out their functions, which will mean taking money away from central government in Bamako. And I agree with you that precipitous elections (i.e., the ones currently scheduled for July) will probably just reinstate the problems that got us where we are today.



**Zeinab Walet** says:

March 1, 2013 at 10:19 am

Your blog is spreading fear and hatred for an entire population that you don't even know.

And yes as GROSJEAN Martine said in his comment above: why the hell do you write an article about something you don't know?

[Reply](#)



**brucewhitehouse** says:

March 1, 2013 at 10:24 am

It was not and never will be my intention to promote hatred, intolerance or conflict. Rather I am trying to de-bunk certain simplistic claims about "the Tuareg", specifying the evidence upon which my arguments are based. My blog condemns abuses perpetrated by the Malian security forces against civilians, including Tuareg. If you can identify one assertion that I make in this blog that encourages hatred toward Tuareg people, I will gladly change it.

[Reply](#)



**Khoumeidy Ag** says:

March 1, 2013 at 11:11 am

A travers la lecture des grands sous titre on arrive à conclure la facilité avec laquelle, sont faite des affirmations contre [Follow](#)

“Touaregs=Arabes-kel Tamacheqs...” à qui l'on trouve pour argument qu'ils sont minoritaire

Minoritaire par rapport à qui, et sur quel territoire?

La region de Kidal 100% kel Tamacheq,

la Region de Gao ( Menaka= Ville Touaregs, Ansongo, mis à part la ville d'ansongo, le cercle est à dominante Touaregs)-  
Bourem (mixte=touaregs Sonrhai)

Tombouctou: la ville mixte, et dans les cercles à majorité Kel tamacheqs-maures noirs blancs...

Donc donner nous la référence statistique qui fais des Touaregs une Minorité à travers les chiffres et sources que vous déterminez?????

L'intérêt accordé par la communauté internationale à la question touarègue fourni largement une lecture facile de ces dernières parutions sur la scène politique nationale et internationale.

La présence d'Aqmi au nord du Mali a été tolérée pendant des années par les autorités de Bamako. le déluge d'aide étrangère à la lutte antiterroriste, sans résultat tangible sur la réduction de la menace, a conduit à douter de la volonté des autorités maliennes de lutter contre Aqmi.

De manière assez schizophrénique, les puissances occidentales ont renforcé cet état de fait en payant de généreuses rançons à Aqmi pour la libération de leurs otages, alimentant un filon lucratif, non seulement pour remplir les poches des jihadistes, mais aussi celles des intermédiaires impliqués dans les négociations autour des libérations d'otages pour arriver à asphyxier les populations de l'Azawad.

La partition de fait du Mali s'est produite en raison de relations empoisonnées entre le Nord et le Sud, tant socialement que politiquement car toutes les élites Touaregs dans la sphère politique malienne et les autres figurants des communautés de l'Azawad ne sont des symboles pour entretenir une politique, s'enrichir, faire le trafic d'otage, de la cocaïne.....l'histoire nous en dira si justice existera. Comme Il y a énormément d'argent en jeu avec le trafic de drogue et les versements de rançons, le temps de se rendre compte le Mali était déjà à un stade de non retour.

[Reply](#)



**brucewhitehouse** says:

March 1, 2013 at 11:22 am

Je ne partage pas votre avis que le Mali est à un stade de non retour, mais je suis très heureux de votre intervention car je trouve que nous avons plus ou moins le même point de vue sur la culpabilité et la faiblesse de l'État malien dans le drame actuel (laxisme, corruption etc.). La référence statistique sur la population provient du recensement 2009 du Mali, dont je reconnais les limites méthodologiques dans mon texte. Si vous avez des sources contraaires sur la démographie des régions en question (Tombouctou, Gao, Kidal) je vous invite de nous y attirer l'attention.

[Reply](#)



**Elmehdi Ag Muphtah** says:

March 1, 2013 at 11:12 am

Dear Bruce,

Thank you very much for your excellent paper which am pretty sure will create all kind of reactions from all kind of people. Saying the truth, saying something "new" and "different" from the majority and the general point of views is never easy. I know what I am about talking about...

My name is Elmehdi Ag Muphtah, I am a Tuareg Malian living in Philadelphia, and I totally agree with your analysis and point of views. I have been one of the first Tuareg from Mali, since January 2012 to say clearly and permanently to my

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brothers, friends, etc. that MNLA will be more a danger for our People than a solution, and some of the reasons have been very well pointed by Mr. Andy Morgan (internal divisions within Tuaregs themselves, leadership problems – if any leadership still exist!-, inexistent political project and vision (for the next years and decades) by Tuareg leaders and MNLA, representativity issues, etc.). I am not going and I can simply not list all the reasons here and in a couple of minutes.

Personally, and as Tuareg (and I hope my voice counts as my other brothers' voices and as MNLA's voice), I do not think there is any kind of "genocide" from the Southern people on Tuareg people, as well as I do not think and do not agree with all those who say there is a "persecution" from black malians on white malians. This is simply incorrect! For your information there are still many Tuareg living right now with black people in Bamako, Segou, Sikasso and other cities in the South of Mali. My own sisters are living there in peace, fraternity with their Bambara, Bozo, Pular, Malinke, etc. neighbors and without any kind of problem. Of course there are some people who have been killed, their homes destroyed, etc. but you cannot conclude by saying it's a "genocide" or a "progrm". That will be simply intellectually dishonest!

Last but not least, regarding MNLA, my point of view has always been very clear and we all agree they made a lot of mistakes and they are still making them. Some of those mistakes are (in French) :

le MNLA :

- i) n'a jamais disposé d'un mandat légitime de la part des populations Touareg pour parler, agir et revendiquer en leur nom;
- ii) qu'il a déclaré contre toute logique et contre toute légalité et pratique internationale, l'indépendance d'un Etat que nous ne reconnaissons pas et qui n'a aucune chance d'être reconnu;
- iii) qu'il n'a jamais pu maîtriser même ses propres éléments qui ont commis en son nom des crimes et actes de vandalisme odieux;
- iv) qu'il a tissé à un moment donné des relations ambiguës et malsaines avec les milieux extrémistes islamistes et terroristes.

Because of all these reasons, I think it's really time now after 52 years for Tuareg people to take their own destiny into their hands and to start saying what they really think without being every time accused to be against their own people. We still have a lot of work to do within our own community and without doing that hard and very long work we will never be united and we will never ever go forward. That's what I hope we will achieve peacefully and democratically in the next years and decades, because that's the only safe and realistic way to definitely avoid all kind of armed conflicts, human disasters and build peace and social and economic development for our People.

Thank you once again for your paper and "courage"!

Sincerely,

Elmehdi Ag Muphtah

[Reply](#)



[ali ag moha \(@ALIUF\)](#) says:

March 3, 2013 at 7:06 am

iii) qu'il n'a jamais pu maîtriser même ses propres éléments qui ont commis en son nom des crimes et actes de vandalisme odieux;

iv) qu'il a tissé à un moment donné des relations ambiguës et malsaines avec les milieux extrémistes islamistes et terroristes.

mmmmmm

Government of Mali pain do the same this and more?!!

[Follow](#)



Why did not pretend to the Government of Mali at least to prosecute criminals

The world today continues, and interest is growing

Not lose your credibility for the purposes and passions

Example:

I'm talking to you

Mali's army killed 50 of my family since the nineties

The list can be found at the!

My father was tortured and repression with that he did not know arms days!!

I do not claim perfection of mnla

But never compare .. Mali and its crimes!

when I say Mali

Then of course I do not mean "people"

But I mean the government

Mali is not fighting only our governments

But kill people

This is documented!

We've had enough!

[Reply](#)



**Zeinab Walet** says:

March 1, 2013 at 11:40 am

Why are you trying to shut us up because we disagree with you??

[Reply](#)



**Zeinab Walet** says:

March 1, 2013 at 11:42 am

"I just posted the following on Bruce Whitehouse's article. It is not showing up yet, because he retains the right to filter posts and deny them. So let's see if he allows my post, and what he has to say about it.

Bruce Whitehouse, you should be ashamed of yourself. You are no expert on the Tuaregs to be saying such misleading and damaging things about them, and you have grossly violated the anthropological code of ethics. No one should take anything you say seriously because it is clear that you have a lethal axe to grind on the Tuareg people, without any authority whatsoever.

The American Anthropological Association (AAA) Code of Ethics says anthropologists have an obligation toward vulnerable populations, to carefully weigh the consequences of what they claim about them. Your statements about the Tuareg people demonstrate your partisan bias against them, at a time when people of Tuareg identity are at high risk for genocidal attacks, in a very sensitive geopolitical situation that is dangerously impacting them. You are in flagrant default of the AAA Code of Ethics and you should be ashamed of yourself for making claims and arguments that are damaging to the Tuareg people. You owe an apology to the hundreds of thousands of Tuareg people that you have disrespected at a time when they are fleeing racialized hatred and genocidal attacks. Your words have added to the propaganda and hatred against the Tuareg people.

[Follow](#)

For you to say that In Kati, the burning of Tuareg homes wasn't discrimination, it was "a misunderstanding" is a gross misrepresentation of what happened at Kati. The streets filled with mobs of people screaming "Death to the Tuaregs!" The Tuareg people were chased, robbed, and had their homes burned, and hundreds of thousands of Tuareg people have fled the visceral hatred and horrific abuses against them in Mali. A year later, they are still refugees, having lost their homes and livelihoods. What happened at Kati is emblematic of the abuses and atrocities that Tuareg people have suffered for the past 53 years. Your attempt to softpedal the ethnic hatred that has motivated the government of Bamako and people in the south is insulting and damaging to the Tuareg people. In soft-pedaling the ethnic hatred, you are showing your support for it.

You have tried to shut up the Tuaregs who have posted on your blog, telling them (in French) to keep their opinions to themselves, while at the same time blathering your own racist opinions against the Tuareg people. Tuareg voices have been shut up for much too long. They are indeed "coming out of the woodwork" – your choice of words, a pejorative usage for disgusting things like bugs that "come out of the woodwork." Your words constitute propaganda against the Tuareg people, and your attempts to shut them up are utterly disgraceful for an anthropologist. The Tuaregs are not bugs, and they are beginning to have their voices heard by speaking out against unjust propagandists such as yourself. You insulted one Tuareg who attempted to write in imperfect English, and claimed you could not understand him – but it is plenty clear that the Tuareg writer is bringing his own argument to bear on your damaging words.

It's true that you are "no expert on the Tuareg," and you should not be making arguments against them. You are unable to bring clarity to the problems facing the Tuareg people, and you have no authority whatsoever to be making the claims you are making against them. As an anthropologist, you have exceeded the limit of ethnocentrism and you are actively promoting perspectives that are damaging to a vulnerable ethnic group that you do not even know well enough to discuss responsibly."

Barbara Worley

[Reply](#)



**Gloria Silva says:**

March 1, 2013 at 12:22 pm

Its incredible, that if one Tuaregue is HURT a BATTALION of People come to help, I would like to see the same treat by the Same People, on Fulas, Zulus, Songhois, Bozos.... No its just the Tuaregues that are Blue Blood, really it makes me wonder !!!

[Reply](#)



**Fati says:**

March 2, 2013 at 4:12 am

Gloria, please direct us to a blog where Fulas, Zulus, Songhois, Bozos are victims of biased postings, we will gladly bring a battalion to help out. And by the way, you should dial your anti-Tuareg radar down a notch. And I highly recommend some Tinariwen soundtracks for those anti-Tuareg sentiments that keep you up at night. I hear they work wonders.



**Gloria Silva says:**

March 2, 2013 at 9:55 am

Fati,

Thanks, by your answer, I immediately know you a LOVER of Tuaregues and Tuaregue Life and songs !!! Well, just look around and you will find all Tribes with worser problems to deal than the Tuagues, but they do not have the Desert, neither do they have tea, they have to work from 6 in the morning to 6 in the afternoon, you do not even to look at another country, you will find tribes, here in Mali, living in worser conditions than the Tuaregues, I am not an Anti-Tuareg, but I am certainly FED UP with them Robbing the other Northern Tribes and their attempting to be victims. Yes Mali army is SHET, but MNLA army was a Bigger SHET, in my city "DIRE" in the NORTH, they Broke the Hospitals, broke the Schools, shut down electricity and water ! Robbed who ever they wanted, is this by any chance a CRIME ?

Follow



**Zeinab Walet says:**

March 1, 2013 at 11:44 am

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Barbara Worley

[Reply](#)



**Ahmed Ag kemil says:**

March 1, 2013 at 11:50 am

Hi, i tried to understand your article, but I couldn't. Because it seemed to me like you are the spokesperson of Bamako somehow. And the petition that you are talking about, was made up by Malian government just to show people like you that the Tuaregs aren't marginalized, therefore they aren't with MNLA. As a Tuareg I found it surprising and unfair the way you tried to divid us by black and white! We are the same people as kel tamashek. And yes I agree that they used to be our slaves, but not now anymore. Finally I think you need to do some research again to try to understand the real problem. And if [Follow](#)

are a Bamako' spokesperson then you are an anti Tuaregs guy. Since you aren't even an expert why did do this propaganda against us? Why didn't you ask experts?  
I pity whoever believes you!

[Reply](#)



**brucewhitehouse** says:

March 1, 2013 at 11:58 am

After I approved Barbara's comment this morning, I saw that another commenter had posted it under her own name. I deleted the redundant comments, all of which contained the same identical text. My intention was solely to eliminate unnecessary repetition, not to shut anyone out of the discussion. This effort backfired and I won't be deleting any more comments, even if they repeat previous ones word for word.

On the substance of these comments: earlier today I e-mailed Barbara to tell her that her reading of my argument is erroneous, and asked her to engage with me on the evidence I cited. As a scholar I have the responsibility to correct any false claims I have made. I ask readers who disagree with me to direct my attention to specific errors of fact or interpretation in my analysis.

Let me be clear: while people like Amadou or Mr. Ag Muphtah above don't believe that Tuareg people in Mali have been victims of discrimination, I certainly do believe that "discrimination," "persecution," "racism" and "human rights abuse" are precisely the right words to describe events like the Kati riots that took place last year, or the multiple killings against light-skinned civilians committed by the Malian armed forces over five decades. It's now clear to me that this point did not get across to many readers, and I apologize if my language was unclear in this regard.

[Reply](#)



**Wade Walker** says:

March 1, 2013 at 12:03 pm

Hey bruce, who is funding your little prop machine?

[Reply](#)



**brucewhitehouse** says:

March 1, 2013 at 12:15 pm

Funding? I wish! This blog is a labor of love for me, though I have to say that I'm not loving it so much today.

[Reply](#)



**Gloria Silva** says:

March 1, 2013 at 12:29 pm

How are you funded ? Tell us ?

[Reply](#)



**brucewhitehouse** says:

March 1, 2013 at 12:31 pm

I teach anthropology full time at Lehigh University. In fact I've been trying to manage this blog between meetings with students today.

[Follow](#)

**Gloria Silva says:**

March 1, 2013 at 12:31 pm

The question Wade Walker is for yoy and all the TUAREGUE Defenders that actually completely forget all other TRibes in the NORTH , whn something arises you all come in all well organised... Who funds this ? Qatar ? Like they funded MNLA, by theway, how was MNLA funded anybody knows how???

**Khoumeidy Ag says:**

March 1, 2013 at 12:09 pm

Monsieur l'auteur Brice la pétition sur laquelle tu te base pour argumenter ton article ne concerne en rien les Touaregs et du moment ou l'initiateur Elmedhi lui même à mainte reprise mène campagne à Bamako pour faire signer les gens de porte en porte a travers ses relations. Cela n'engage pas un travail scientifique à travers des arguments ou t'accuse les Touaregs de tous les maux. Ils ont droit de vivre sur leur terre et disposer d'eux même conformément aux traités de Droit en vigeuer

[Reply](#)**Rif Amazighsson says:**

March 1, 2013 at 12:25 pm

Barbara worley !you should read more about the tuareg before to asking your malians toyboy malian slave. The Tuareg belong to the large Amazigh community, which stretches from the Canary Islands to Egypt and from the Mediterranean Sea to the Niger River. They are the only Amazigh speaking community to have preserved and used the Tifinagh writing, the common denominator of the dispersed Tuareg is the language, Tamasheq, the World Oldest Language. The Tuareg are a 'white' race who had originally lived in the northern tier of Africa but were later chased southwards by successive Arab invasions. you can ask more about american horses origin ?

[Reply](#)**Zeinab Walet says:**

March 1, 2013 at 12:44 pm

None of what you wrote Mr Whitehouse is accurate. As you said your are not an expert. So I will suggest you learn the facts before you jump to conclusions and judge my people. Tuaregs are very misunderstood by outsiders and your propaganda blog doesn't help! So please, please learn the facts! How about you start by going over there on the terrain and spend some time with Tuaregs?

[Reply](#)**brucewhitehouse says:**

March 1, 2013 at 12:46 pm

Please inform me which specific facts in my blog post are incorrect, and what evidence proves them incorrect. Such a contribution would truly help move this conversation forward.

[Reply](#)**Zeinab Walet says:**

March 1, 2013 at 12:55 pm

I though you understood English...

[Follow](#)

[Reply](#)**Zeinab Walet** says:

March 1, 2013 at 1:00 pm

you shut the first 2 Tuaregs up in French by telling them you don't understand what they were saying. even though what they wrote was pretty clear...

[Reply](#)**Vermondo** says:

March 1, 2013 at 1:21 pm

Has anyone of the above ever heard of Ganda Koy? It's a sort of KKK the other way around: militias of blacks who actively chase, harm and kill "white-skinned" people in Mali. They have a strong covert and sometimes overt support by the army and many of them have been enrolled in the army in the last weeks and are now in northern Mali (Azawad). Official sources might try to deny or minimize this fact, but it is well-known and is the reason why displaced refugees in surrounding countries don't come back now, even after the territories have been "pacified" by the French. So, I find pointless to discuss how many pale-skinned people are there in the North, how many Tuaregs, who is right and who is wrong and so on. The fact is that nowadays Malian people (I mean southern Malians) do hate northern (of any colour) and Azawadians don't feel at ease at all with a Malian army in their territory. I feel that, even if we don't like it, a de-facto split of former Mali has already taken place and no external action could put a remedy to this. The sooner the international community realizes it, the better.

[Reply](#)**mixdall** says:

March 1, 2013 at 8:44 pm

so now can you tell me where these songhoy that you named kkk came from?, if you think you can sell your toilet paper like this way u r completely wrong. your imaginary azamerd can exist if people from timbuktu and gao think like you do, but unfortunately you still even not on limit of the past. man let's not talk too much, your hatred toward other ethnics will not solve the probleme. we all know that how kidal has been created as administrative region so let's think responsibly and rightfully, like the french say NE Versons PAS L'HUILE SUR LE FEU. THINKING THAT YOU R GOING TO GET AUTONOMY IS JUST A BIG HOAX.

[Reply](#)**Ahmed kemil** says:

March 1, 2013 at 9:09 pm

Bulshit! It's not because the kandakoy are from the north that they have the right to kill the Tuaregs! Remember no one deserves death, therefor Mali should give up supporting gandakoy! You are talking about kidal as if the people there don't belong to that area. Versions de l'essence sur le volcan, meme pas l'huile. Thinking that you are going to continue to kill us is just inadmissible!

**Khoumeidy Ag** says:

March 1, 2013 at 1:39 pm

Quand la parole est censuré votre article n'a pas droit d'être. il s'agit pas de parler anglais pour poster, étant donné que les Touaregs dont vous prétendez avoir reçu des arguments, ne parle non plus anglais .....

Fermez les 2 premiers Touaregs reviendrai à prendre parti, ce qui discrédite votre connaissance et l'honnêteté intellectuelle est une valeur universelle à prôner

S'opposer à un mouvement MNLA M.Elmehdy ne vous donne pas droit aussi à se lancer dans une campagne pour par

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même nom encore du peuple Touareg (Nous Twreg), que connait tu des Touaregs???? Sinon allons-nous conclure que tu fais juste de la diversion.

[Reply](#)



**Zeinab Walet says:**

March 1, 2013 at 2:16 pm

Alright I give up! You keep deleting my comments. If you don't want comments on you blog then why post it in the first place?? Also if any one came out of the "woodwork" it will be you! using your "PHD" as a shield to badmouth Tuaregs.

[Reply](#)



**brucewhitehouse says:**

March 1, 2013 at 2:45 pm

The only comments I deleted were the duplicate ones 2-3 hours ago. If you've tried to post more recently and they haven't appeared on the blog, please let me know.

[Reply](#)



**Mingtoy Epstein says:**

March 1, 2013 at 2:53 pm

I find it very disturbing that Mr. Whitehouse's entire blog has been reblogged entirely on yet another site by yet another so-called expert on the Kel Tamashek. Specifically, Peter Singhatey. He's just a pilot.

[Reply](#)



**Malon says:**

March 1, 2013 at 8:23 pm

Sir Bruce Whitehouse, I think you're the worst anthropologist that I've read, both in terms of scientificity and in terms of morale. The worst thing is not that you write on a subject that you don't know obviously, but that you put forward the fact that you are an anthropologist for that you can write about a subject you don't know, as if being an anthropologist on one subject makes act of authority on the field of any subject. Not only you abuse your position, but also you pervert and dishonor the profession and the real experts on the subject, that is to say anthropologists worthy of the name, who are on ground in relation to the populations for several years, who write with conscience and professionalism on the subject, eg Barbara Whorley who knows the field and has a great concern for the ethics of the researcher. Bruce Whitehouse, I hope you will be removed of your university, not to the meaning of your words, but for the fact that they are not scientifically founded and that they mark an abuse of authority on a subject that you don't know, therefore you support the voice of prejudices and you incite the hatred in these troubled times, hatred which is endemic against the Tuaregs. Just read the reactions of some already on this forum to realize the disastrous effect of your words.

[Reply](#)



**Karim says:**

March 1, 2013 at 9:13 pm

I read the article 3 times to make sure I didn't miss something; I am not sure people leaving comments here have read the article. Some of the comments are so off-base, it's painfully clear (some of) the readers have either misunderstood it or not bothered to actually read it.

Follow

Instead of attacking professor Whitehouse, it would have been better to provide a counter claim to each of the points he's made. Yes the Tuareg are a minority in northern Mali. Yes the Tuareg have been associated to governments as far as anybody cares to remember. Tuareg are actually over-represented in some government-provided jobs — like the security forces before 2012.

Successive Malian governments have failed the Tuareg community, just as they have failed all communities in Mali. All. North, south, east and west. MLNA's actions — and I do not associate MLNA with the Tuareg — has brought the entire nation to the abyss.

It's hard to find people in Mali who do not have Tuareg relatives, particularly in the northern regions. Anything that happens to the Tuareg community is happening to all Malians. Even the abuse perpetrated by the Malian army today is geared toward many communities — not only the Tuareg. This is bad for everybody.

Where are we right now? MLNA is finished but has left a mess behind that will take years or decades to clean up. What did anybody gain? When would the refugees come back? When would people go back to their lives? When would Mali be safe for all? These are the questions that need to be answered. Not whether Prof Whithouse has spent 20 years studying poetry of the Tuareg.

[Reply](#)



**Timbuktu** says:

March 3, 2013 at 11:03 am

Karim,

All your arguments are just trash and when you say "Tuareg are actually over-represented in some government-provided jobs — like the security forces before 2012..." I just couldn't laugh because of the nonsense of your statement.

You also said that Tuareg are a minority in the north. I want you to prove it not by Malian false and fake statistics knowing how censuses are made. So if I was in your place, I would have at least doubts knowing that in the region of Timbuktu and Kidal Tuaregs are in the account for more than half the population and only partially the city of Gao (but not the region). In Menaka, they are the majority, and I can assure you that Bourem and Ansongo other black ethnic groups do not constitute a majority either. You can note this in representativeness at legislative level and I tell you it's not because of joy that Arab or Tuareg are elected by Songhai. Make your mind on that one, buddy!

One last thing, I absolutely do not agree with you when you say that "Even the abuse perpetrated by the Malian army today is geared toward many communities — not only the Tuareg".

There is no ethnic cluster in Mali who directly suffered the abuses and atrocities such as Arab-Berber group. Statements like yours are a denial of the blind bloody repression of 1963, 1992-1996, 2012-2013, and also from hunger and thirst cleverly desired and have globally made more than 100,000 deaths in 50 years. The file is in evidence with ICC and this time, those of you defend are afraid because they know what they have done. They do not sleep anymore since the file is received by the international judges.

But one thing I agree with you, is that the MNLA is finished. These so-called rebels were victims of their own depravity and amateurism.

But the facts of cruelties and killings are undeniable. You can always run or try to hide the sun with your finger, but the light will be...

Wa salam !

[Reply](#)



**Esther Kalkbrenner** says:

March 2, 2013 at 1:44 am

no touareg Problem... well, let me see. maybe about 200 years ago, there was no Problem with native americans as well? you

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spread war Propaganda, mr. whitehouse! nomadic cultures are not welcome in the so called modern world. and this is not a lie. there are many examples available to prove. what you do is to polarize. It is never easy for People to live together in a Country which has been "created" from the green table with a pen on a map. No one even thought of the Problems which might occur. And probably no one cared as well.

[Reply](#)



**brucewhitehouse** says:

March 2, 2013 at 7:23 am

You misunderstand my argument; see my response to Fati above.

[Reply](#)



**Fati** says:

March 2, 2013 at 12:28 pm

Bruce, so many people can not misunderstand your argument by coincidence. You might not have intended it to read as such, but that is how it reads. I do not know Ms Kalkbrenner personally, nor most of the people who commented, but how can you explain that we all walked away with the impression that you are attempting to disprove the existence of a "Tuareg Problem"? I have asked two different people to read it to make sure that I wasn't missing the point here, and that is the same impression they had. It must have something to do with all of the evidence you mounted to dispute the traditional arguments in favor of a "Tuareg problem", without countering them with any other arguments that prove that there might indeed be a "Tuareg problem" after all.



[علي محمد ali ag moha \(@ALIUF\)](#) says:

March 2, 2013 at 6:10 am

I thank the Tuaregs, who participated ..

&

I wrote in my first comment:

Far away from illusions conveyed by the article:

Must distinguish between "political problems" and "social distinctions" and "intellectual ideological differences" ..

&

I did not want to discuss these details with the owner of the article

Which carries a certain image !

Although he wrote: "I'm no expert on the Tuareg or northern Mali in general" !

Visitor comments suffice!

&

I every day convinced

Not to accept the return of Mali to azawad

If the opinion of the educated class and educated, is fraud, racism and cancelation against Tuareg in azawad !

Vmaho regular class opinion of the people in Mali!!? Against azawad?

&

Follow

Said the leader and architect of the revolution Ibrahim Ag Bahanaga "God's mercy" for deposed Toumani Toure:

"It is not important to disarmament in the hands, but more importantly that disarmament in the minds"

!!

[Reply](#)



**Elmehdi Ag Muphtah** says:

March 2, 2013 at 10:17 am

Cher(e)s soeurs, frères et ami(e)s,

Au-delà même de l'article de M. Whitehouse, sur lequel on peut d'ailleurs sans problème et avec beaucoup de courtoisie être d'accord ou pas, les commentaires qui suivent son article sont à mon humble avis beaucoup plus révélateurs et nous enseignent beaucoup plus sur les problématiques actuelles que l'article lui-même!

En effet, une lecture des différents commentaires postés depuis le jour de la publication de M. Whitehouse (avec lequel on peut encore une fois être d'accord ou pas) révèle sans l'ombre d'un doute un réel problème de communication, de dialogue, d'écoute et d'ouverture d'esprit entre les différentes parties.

Il va de soi, que ce problème n'existe pas uniquement sur ce blog, mais malheureusement il existe aussi entre le Mali et le MNLA, au sein du MNLA lui-même, entre les partisans et les "non-partisans" du MNLA, il existe entre les Touareg de Kidal et de Tombouctou, il existe entre les pro-indépendantistes et les anti-indépendantistes, etc.

Ce manque de communication, de dialogue, d'écoute et d'ouverture d'esprit entre deux visions, deux positions différentes et même parfois divergentes, est à mon avis un sérieux problème auquel nous devons tous remédier car si nous voulons avancer, si nous souhaitons surmonter et résoudre nos problèmes, il va de soi que nous devons "apprendre" à nous écouter, à dialoguer, à communiquer et à accepter nos différences et divergences de points de vue.

Malheureusement, sans cela nous resterons éternellement dans un "dialogue de sourds" et nos échanges perdront de leur substance et finiront comme nous le constatons en règlements personnels/ inter-personnels et en critiques vives et morales, en diatribes. Et pire tout le monde y perdra, personne n'y gagnera quoi que ce soit!

Avec toute ma fraternité et toute mon amitié,

Elmehdi Ag Muphtah

[Reply](#)



**Ibrahim Toure** says:

March 7, 2013 at 12:21 am

Excellente commentaire! Merci mon frère!

[Reply](#)



**Said Tuareg** says:

March 2, 2013 at 11:16 pm

To whom my to whom may be concerned it,

First of all, as Mr. Bruce has jumped to his poorly supported conclusions based on rubbish resources and completely ignored how Tuaregs marginalized, displaced, murdered, excluded and summarily executed by all Malian governments through history of its rule of the country as it has been confirmed by neutral humanitarian organizations, it seems that he is a Malian

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spokesman in a mission to spread Malian government propaganda against the Tuaregs and Azawad state .  
Therefore, no wiseperson should take his post more than a propaganda , serving Malian Gov.

.

Second, for Mr. Elmehadi Ag Muphtah who wrote the petition that Mr. Burce has supported his arguments with , he is not a Tuareg , but he is an Arab agent man working for Malian Gov. He has nothing to do with Tuaregs. A real Tuareg never forget how his people(Tuaregs) has been murdered , killed , displaced and denied their rights by Malian Government occupation.

[Reply](#)



**Elmehdi Ag Muphtah** says:

March 2, 2013 at 11:35 pm

Dear brother Said Tuareg (Sorry to call you like that, but I don't know your real name;)

Thank you so much for you reply and your comment!

The second part of your comment is concerning my person and not the article of Mr. Whitehouse or even my two comments but myself.

So let me just answer you simply and with all respect :

i) I am not an Arab, I am 100% Tuareg from Mali, my dad is, my mom is, my ancestors are, an I am from Kel Sheriffen tribe by my father, and from Kel Ansar tribe by my mother. And if you wanna know more about me, my family, just ask me, I can send you all my parents, grand-parents, ancestors names, who they are and where they live, etc....

ii) I am not an agent for anyone, and to make sur you trust me here are all my contacts (a real agent will hide himself!) :

Elmehdi Ag Muphtah  
1710 North 62nd Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19151

And please if you do need a map, or my "arbre genealogique", please do not hesitate!

And if you wanan discuss about facts, arguments, scientific proofs, etc,, do not hesitate either! All the pleasure will be mine!

Tres fraternellement et avec tous mes respects chere frère Said Tuareg,

Elmehdi

[Reply](#)



**ali ag moha (@ALIUF)** says:

March 3, 2013 at 6:41 am

I do not know why you insist that the Tuareg in azawad must all agree on secession!!

make this rule for judging  
judge that their demand acceptable or unacceptable

This nonsense!!

There is nothing – the agreed upon humans -

Even allah .. did not agree upon humanity!

Follow

It is natural, that does not have all the Tuareg in azawad, with a separation!

\* But today must know that the issue of the Tuareg become issue azawad !

mali aimed at the people of azawad, with all stripes "Tuareg, Arab and Songhai and Fallatah .." not only the Tuareg  
Both with independence  
kill him or arrest him or stick it terrorism charge!

not only the Tuareg  
Because there Tuareg in Mali's army ranks! , these are criminals with it!

[Reply](#)



**Said Tuareg** says:

March 3, 2013 at 7:53 am

Elmehadi, now you are defending yourself. You can't use Tuareg name to fight against them and spread Malian porpaganda . Your have used in your PETITION pronoun of " we " saying "we Tuareg of Mali" . I want to ask you : you said MNLA doesn't represent Tuaregs in Azawad ,so do you represent Tuaregs in Azawad? and how? Otherwise, what is the meaning of your using pronoun "WE" ? I have seen Tuaregs reactions concerning your petition and all of them against you , while there are hundreds of Tuareg groups who support MNLA and Azawad independence. So , please stop deceiving your self and others.

Yes , it is ture you are not a Tuareg or at least you have converted into another identity, maybe Bambara , i am affraid, or a brainwashed guy serving Malian government agendas, so no more being a Tuareg. You can't be a Tuareg with this attitudes . Being aTuaerg means to defend them not to fight against them in favor of their enemy. How you can support criminal government that killed , displaced, summarily excuted your people ? This never makes any sense.

[Reply](#)



**Timbuktuér** says:

March 3, 2013 at 10:21 am

A la suite de la proclamation par les rebelles de l'indépendance des Régions Nord du Mali, les Responsables Maliens protestent et réclament un Mali « Un et Indivisible » ; mais ce qu'ils oublient, pour que cela soit possible, il faut que la population soit « Une et Indivisible ».

Depuis notre indépendance, la faute d'un Touareg ou d'un Arabe retombe sur toute sa race sans distinction. Chaque fois qu'une minorité Touareg venant de l'extérieur se rebelle contre l'Etat, la majorité vivant à l'intérieur du Pays en subit les conséquences, les sévices, les mises à l'index, les rejets, les provocations et intimidations, les arrestations arbitraires et extra-judiciaires pleuvent et les obligent à fuir leur propre pays ; les contraignant ainsi à devenir malgré eux-mêmes des éternels réfugiés en Mauritanie, au Burkina Faso, au Niger, au Sénégal, en Algérie ; et j'en passe.

Seuls les rebelles sont admis à rester sur le territoire National, parce qu'ils sont armés ; et la plus grande majorité de la population civile sans défense et protection, qui n'a rien demandé pour mériter ce sort est bien sur comme d'habitude livrée à elle-même dans des camps de réfugiés.

Ces populations réfugiées oubliées de leur propre pays, ne bénéficient d'aucune attention des dirigeants ni des medias Maliens comme en bénéficient leurs homologues d'autres races du même pays et dans les mêmes circonstances : Jugez en vous-mêmes ?

Seuls les Pays d'Accueil et les Organisations Humanitaires auxquels qui nous adressons un hommage mérité, ont respecté leurs engagements ratifiés en relation avec les conventions Internationales pour la protection des populations réfugiées. Ces populations ont toujours été exclues des aides et des négociations en provenance de leur propre pays, le Mali.

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Si le Pays proclame la Paix avec les rebelles, ceux-ci bénéficieront à eux seuls des dividendes et avantages liés à la Paix et aux négociations. Par contre la population humiliée et chassée, qui a tout perdu, dignité et biens ne bénéficie d'aucun dédommagement.

Le Mali doit reconnaître que cette rébellion endémique qui a existé avant la colonisation et après les indépendances, n'a jamais tenu compte des populations de l'intérieur pourtant toujours restées fidèles.

La logique humaine et démocratique ne peut admettre qu'un Etat qui exclut toujours une partie de son peuple en raison de sa couleur et de sa passivité, demande l'Unité Nationale. C'est la Nation même qui est responsable de cette division en rejetant une frange de sa population.

Peut-on récupérer le Nord du Mali sans ses habitants ?

C'est une erreur d'attribuer la rébellion aux Touaregs. Elle vient d'ailleurs et comptent plusieurs sensibilités et nationalités. L'antidote à cette rébellion a bel et bien été anéanti à dessein. Les Maliens qui pouvaient la contrer ont été bannis, ceux-là même qui portaient l'uniforme ont été écartés, intimidés, menacés, jetés en prison et même éliminés tout simplement parce que gênants des intérêts et objectifs occultes.

Plusieurs jeunes ont dû rejoindre la rébellion à cause de leur statut de victimes innocentes ou tout simplement parce qu'ils craignaient pour leur propre vie.

Les islamistes ont eu un terrain vide et l'on occupé, tout simplement parce que les populations musulmanes qui ont toujours défendues l'islam et qui pouvaient les en empêcher, ont été chassées. Celles qui restent sur place sont désarmées devant des forces d'occupation.

Beaucoup de jeunes du Nord Mali toute race confondue ont rejoint la drogue, l'endoctrinement islamique non pas par conviction, mais par nécessité économique, ils ont faim. Pensez-y !

Le Mali compte le Nord dans son territoire, mais ne l'a jamais compté dans ses programmes de développement en réalité. Il y a discrimination en tout.

Même si la paix vient par signature sur papier, elle ne sera jamais effective sans le développement pour arracher la population du Nord de la misère, donc des mains d'AQMI, de la drogue, etc.

Que le Mali prenne l'exemple sur son voisin le Grand Sénégal qui subit une réalité similaire plus de 30 ans sans persécutions, rejets, discriminations aucune des populations non concernées qui y vivent.

Nous, Touaregs et Arabes fidèles au Mali et qui formons la grande majorité, n'optons pas pour la division du Mali, ni pour la rébellion, encore moins pour l'intégrisme ou le fondamentalisme.

Nous demandons et réclamons tout seulement le droit à la justice qui consiste à attribuer la faute aux fautifs et non à la Race ; et qu'on nous regarde en Maliens avec ce que cela comporte comme droits et devoirs.

Notre pays le Grand Mali a honte aujourd'hui. Il lui faut de Vrais Cadres Nationaux au-dessus du racisme, de l'égoïsme, et qui sont capables de raisonner en inculquant au Peuple la notion d'Amour réciproque, de Tolérance, de Pardon afin de placer l'Unité Nationale au centre du débat, au lieu de le pousser à la haine et à l'exclusion, pour des intérêts sordides qui ne peuvent que détruire toute Nation.

Une telle discrimination, un tel égoïsme au 21<sup>e</sup> siècle de la part d'un pays dit démocratique doivent interpellé toutes les Nations Démocratiques du Monde.

Avant que la CEDEAO, l'Union Africaine et les Nations Unies ne chassent du Nord Mali la rébellion et l'Islamisme, ce qui est tout à fait normal ; qu'ils s'occupent des problèmes des pauvres populations réfugiées victimes des machinations. C'est le rôle primordial des Nations éprises de paix.

Follow

Ceci est une contribution à la paix d'un Malien Touareg affligé par le sort réservé à son cher Pays.

[Reply](#)



**Said Tuareg** says:

March 3, 2013 at 12:03 pm

Concerning Azawad cause, Azawad question goes back to many years , almost 50 years ago .When france had decided to leave its colonies in the 1960s, the inherited borders have splitted Tuaregs between, at least, four countries namely: Mali, Niger, Algeria and Libya . Of course , both regimes of north Africa and West Africa marginalized Tuaregs and treated them with injustice . However, when it comes to mass killings and descrimination , the West African regimes extermely involved in this regard against Tuaregs both Mali and Niger did the same for Tuaregs .

For Azawad Tuaregs in the north Mali, they have been suffered all kinds of racial descrimination , maraginalization, summary excutions and attempts of elemination at hands of Malian successive governments.

On 1964, the barbaric Malian army crossed Tenere (desert) of Azawad and shot tents of defenseless nomadic civilians and committed summary executions against civilians and killed a number of animals and poisoned wells as well. Hence, about 40,000 person among men, women and children fled the massacres to neighboring countries.

As matter of fact, Tuaregs have decided to revolt against oppression , first rebellion 1963, second 1990, third 2006 and the present rebellion.

Now we are witnessing the same scenario and the same method, as Malian troops and its militias are heading now towards Tenere of Azawad under support of french troops targeting Azawad civilians in an wicked attempt to exterminate people of Azawad.

[Reply](#)



**Eu-citizen** says:

March 3, 2013 at 7:25 pm

Interesting discussion but :

“what to do ?” “que faire” ?

- should the french forces and Ecowas accept the MNLA as useful allies, arm and sustain them to restore “peace and order” in the north ? But by doing so, create de facto an Azawad nation ?

- or, should they forbid the malian army to enter the northern territories, disarm and neutralize the MNLA and stay on the North-South border forever to avoid new clashes or retaliations ?

- or should they re-install the Bamako army in the north, restore the Mali state along its previous borders, regardless of the consequences for the northern peoples and/or independists ?

I honestly would not know.

[Reply](#)



**Mariama Walet Anara** says:

March 3, 2013 at 11:37 pm

Mr Whitehouse,

Someone in your position should refrain from making statements about a subject in which you are not an expert. You stated that “Even in northern Mali, the people we call “the Tuareg” are a minority.” This is not true. According to a 2008 cable from the US State Department, Tuaregs represent more than 50% of the population in northern Mali: <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2008/04/08BAMAKO371.html>

And this figure does not including all the Malian Tuaregs who fled Mali in the 90's to take refuge in neighboring Algeria,

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Mauritania, Libya, etc. because of the atrocities committed against them by the Malian army and by the Gandakoy militias armed by the Malian government. If there is truly no Tuareg problem in Mali then why are we in this mess in the first place? And how do you explain the hundreds of thousands of refugees in neighboring Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Niger?

The next time you want to express you biased views about Tuaregs in Mali I suggest you do more research.

[Reply](#)



**brucewhitehouse** says:

March 3, 2013 at 11:55 pm

It's one thing to say, as so many others have done, "You don't know what you're talking about." It's one thing to say, as have so many others, "Your sources are biased." It's another thing entirely to provide contrary evidence as you have done here, Mariama. Thanks for giving me something to think about. I wish all the comments could be this helpful.

[Reply](#)



**Karim** says:

March 4, 2013 at 10:53 am

"According to a 2008 cable from the US State Department, Tuaregs represent more than 50% of the population in northern Mali"

Wow!! I don't even know how to answer that. Is the State department sitting in DC using a new technology to count people we don't know about?

The only (administrative) region of Mali where Tuareg are a majority is Kidal — I believe it's close to 90%; but Kidal has less than 80,000 inhabitants!! Folks, let's come back to earth. We have official statistics going back decades — that people could choose to ignore — but please let's stop pulling numbers from thin air.

People are attacking this post for things it didn't even say — and very few of the critics are offering any solution. Mariama, Mali is not about to be split in two — you know it, I know and so does everybody else. That's a fact we have to live with whether we like it or not. And there are questions Malians need to answer collectively; not professor Whitehouse, nor any of the self-appointed specialists of the Tuareg question I just discovered here.

(1) How do we manage to put Mali back together in a way that will work for all?

(2) How do we get justice for all the people that have been victimized?

(3) What mechanism do we put in place to avoid a repeat of such crisis?

This is how we will move forward.

[Reply](#)



**Fati** says:

March 4, 2013 at 2:12 pm

Karim, agreed that we need to have an open dialogue in order to move forward. But you can not have an open dialogue through misinformation/bias information. Also, the intent of this post was not to resolve Mali's issues but rather to give a perspective on the problem. And it is this perspective that some of us are challenging. See my comments to Bruce above & feel free to challenge them if you wish.



**Tamasheq** says:

March 3, 2013 at 11:58 pm

To Gloria Silva:

You should take your medicine. Too much hatred is not good for your health. You are going to give your self a heart attack.

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[Reply](#)**Gloria Silva says:**

March 4, 2013 at 12:54 pm

Tamasheq, yest a lot of hate towards, the Idiots that created MNLA, plus the stupid army that came over from Libya and that were used to 5.000 USD salaries, and of corse, having quarrels, taking Viagra, distrurbing the Population in Libia, and now that the Fun ended over tehre for them, they decided to come over to Northen Mali, and try and so the same Rubbish, without having made with all the wars and their High Salaries, they were not able to do 1 School in the North of Mali, not 1. And its so easy to criticise the Malian Government, that by the way is a Poor Country, but manages do have done Roads in North in the past 20 Years, putten Mobile Network, Building Hospitals and schools, but that of corse has no interest at all for MNLA, destroying the Existing Structures, was easier to show the Tuaregue >Problem, that by the way, could have been solved by vote !!!! And maybe we would really know how many they are, beacause, what you guys do not mention, is that this Comunity, to get the Figures as high as possible, they Register, in Niger, in Burkina, in Mali and in Mauritania... You are such a HUGE COMMUNITY, that you are afraid to vote in Mali, and we see exactly how many you are that want Independence, I forget, you all are far too intellegent for that.

[Reply](#)**Vermondo says:**

March 4, 2013 at 3:30 pm

What "roads" are you speaking of in the North? As far as I know there still don't exist roads linking the main towns, i.e. Timbuctu, Gao and Kidal. Just dirt tracks, like under French rule, over 50 years ago.

As far as the MNLA is concerned, the "idiots" who contributed to its creation are the Malian authorities which forbade the pacific political activities of MNA, put in jail some of the young people who tried to organize a congress and finally compelled them to look for other, non-pacific ways of tackling the Azawadian problem.

And concerning the destruction of Existing Structures, I remember e video showing the remnants of an Hospital in Kati stormed and looted by blacks just because it was directed by a Tuareg....

**Ellen Lyons says:**

March 4, 2013 at 3:07 am

Professor Whitehouse, first and foremost, you have no authority to publish on this subject period. Let me explain why. Your PhD dissertation was entitled "Exile Knows No Dignity: African Transnational Migrants and the Anchoring of Identity." Your pre-and dissertation research were conducted in Bamako, Mali and Brazzaville, Republic of Congo. Did any of this research involve living and researching in Northern Mali amongst the Tuareg people for an extended period of time i.e. longer than say, six months? And while you were a Peace Corps volunteer, did you live with the Tuaregs? Did you learn Tamashek so that you could conduct extensive, in depth interviews face to face without an interpreter? I'm suspecting you did not go to the north or learn Tamashek because you said yourself "[t]hanks Andy for your thorough and thoughtful feedback. Bamako-centered analysis is what I'm here for smiley face" So these comments just beg the question: did you travel out of Bamako to see any of the refugees who have fled Mali?

Apart from your lack of expertise and scholarly research on your subject matter, there are so many things wrong with this so called piece of yours that it would take me days to pick it all apart. But here is my biggest beef apart from you lack of authority on the subject: You deny that innocent Tuareg civilians have been abused and murdered by the Malian army. Would you please explain why there are so many who have fled Mali for the Fassala and Mbera refugee camps in Mauritania not to mention neighboring Burkina Fasso?

You also say that the MNLA has committed far more crimes against Malians, and you cite the recent "arrest warrants" for MNLA leaders, who "are in the same category as the terrorists." You know I'm quite certain that Helen Dufka of Human Rights Watch will be more than happy to enlighten you on all the Taureg refugees in Burkina Fasso and Mauritania who have provided her with first person testimonials concerning the genocidal killings carried out against the Tuaregs in Mali or

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last 14 months+ by the Malian Army and members of AQMI.

Finally, I have a major problem with how you can consciously permit Peter Singhatay, a mere commercial pilot, to reblog this post onto his blog spreading even more anti-Tuareg propaganda. This is irresponsible on your part. If you are going to take full responsibility for your posts, then they should stay on your blog and you need to tell this blogger he does not have your permission and to take down your piece. Letting them be reposted is not the act of a responsible scholar. But your response to Andy Morgan, I suspect, is the reason why you are allowing your blog to be reposted: As you said to Andy on February 25th, "I hope you're going to write more extensively about this elsewhere, Andy (not that I mind you using the comments section here, I just want your ideas to have a bigger audience!)"

I think this is what you want; a bigger audience, namely the US State Department, where you can be appointed an expert on "The Tuareg Problem in Mali" about which you are not qualified and never will be.

Stick to what you know Professor Whitehouse, which is not the subject of the Kel Tamashek or Mali and it's devolving pigmentocracy.

Ellen B. Lyons, MA, International Policy Studies

Monterey Institute of International Studies

[Reply](#)



**brucewhitehouse** says:

March 4, 2013 at 6:57 am

(1) Of course I recognize the limits of my knowledge, and while I have been to northern Mali (Gao and Timbuktu, specifically), I haven't conducted fieldwork among the Tuareg. Hence, as I write in the post, I don't consider myself an expert on the Tuareg, and have no desire to be recognized as one. But I disagree with your contention that conducting fieldwork among the Tuareg is a necessary prerequisite for writing a blog post about relations between the Tuareg and non-Tuareg. My sources are cited throughout.

(2) If I "deny that innocent Tuareg civilians have been murdered and abused by the Malian army," perhaps you can explain why my post includes this bold-face heading: "Innocent civilians identified as 'Tuareg' have been abused and murdered." It's now clear to me that too many readers have misunderstood the message of this post; I should have been more explicit about certain things, and I plan to write another post to clarify those things. But it's also clear to me that too many readers have overlooked statements in this post that contradict their tendentious readings of it.

(3) Anybody can link to this blog for any reason without my permission, whether they like what I wrote (like Peter) or not (like Barbara).

[Reply](#)



**Malon** says:

March 4, 2013 at 9:35 am

Your responsibility as a teacher is engaged. Your credibility too. It is not enough to say that your knowledge is limited. By intellectual honesty, you should not write about this subject !



**Ellen Lyons** says:

March 5, 2013 at 12:55 pm

Professor Whitehouse, I think I am better off going and arguing with a brick wall. What I and others have seen here is a clear and obvious bias against the Tuareg people. Now you can put whatever you want in quotes, underlined, bolded or however else you want to try to make it look like certain comments are not authored by you but still, biased against the Tuareg people.

You said it yourself, this is not your area of expertise. As an anthropologist, you are ethically bound to maintain 100% complete impartiality towards your subjects. Just as Ms. Silva's contempt and racist views toward the Tuareg come shining through in her semi-literate comments, so does your bias and your ego Professor Whitehouse. Nobody is overlooking anything. Except you. You have not responded to the other half of the issues I contend are critical for a full fair unbiased report

I sincerely hope that if you insist on publishing any more on this subject that you do so only after you

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conducted research that is thorough and impartial. Perhaps a trip now to the Mbera and Fassala refugee camps might be in order.



**Gloria Silva says:**

March 4, 2013 at 9:44 am

One thing is clear for everybody that is reading, who ever is against the "CLAN TUAREGUE OF MNLA" has to be stupid and misformed, clearly all the intelligence, as gone to the MNLA/ TUaregue, and to their supporters ! Its amazing, if you do not agree, Hell !!! Its hell on earth ! Well go and help the Northners that have been, ROBBED, RAPED, HUMILIATED, by your brave, MNLA SOLDIERS ! They are so well behaved that they were even Kadaffis Body Guards to all the Incredible things they did to Women, amazing Culture, amazing tactics to treat the Human Being up North of Mali.

Well I am not stupid, not illiterate, have Songhois and Tuagues in the Family, and the only Bastards I have seen so far in the NORTH robbing us, and clearly seeding hatred between all tribes in the NORTH is the Gorgeous MNLA !!!!

[Reply](#)



**Fati says:**

March 4, 2013 at 10:53 am

Gloria, seriously you should take the advice from "Tamasheq" above. Emotions have no place in an intellectual debate (hatred least of all). You are distracting the rest of us.

[Reply](#)



**Gloria Silva says:**

March 4, 2013 at 4:42 pm

In the 70's, when the North was out of Food, and many Tuaregue Men, left their children and wives, to die of Hunger and took off, and all the remaining Tribes in the North, especially the Songhois, took over these wives and children, married them, took care of the children !!! I think you supporters of MNLA, call this Racism ???

I wonder if it was the other way AROUND !!!!



**Mariama Walet Anara says:**

March 4, 2013 at 12:27 pm

Mr Karim,

I am a Tuareg from the Gao region and I know for a fact that Tuaregs are a majority in that region (I'm not talking about the town of Gao, but Gao as a region). Also, please understand that the skin color does not define who is Tuareg and who is not. We call ourselves "Kel-Tamasheq", meaning "those who speak Tamasheq." We are defined by our culture and our language. So Tamasheq can be of any color: black, 'white,' or any color in between. Also, please note that the US political officer who wrote this cable didn't do it from Washington DC as you said. He served as a political officer at the US Embassy in Bamako for 4 years.

If you have any evidence to prove otherwise, you are welcome to share it.

[Reply](#)



**Gloria Silva says:**

March 4, 2013 at 12:59 pm

Mr Karim,

Then if you are a Majority, how come the Population Never EVER accepted the MNLA in these Past 10 Months....

That means then that the Population of GAO DISTRICT does not accept MNLA !!!!

Follow

[Reply](#)**Karim says:**

March 4, 2013 at 1:05 pm

Ms Mariama,

I know who Tuareg are; I have Tuareg in my family too. But what you are saying is not a proof; I know many Songhay people who would also say that they represent the vast majority. This embassy officer you talk about, how did he get his numbers? Did he conduct a census the rest of us have not heard about?

I'm sorry but feelings and anecdotes don't make evidence. If I live for a year in a dogon village and all I hear is dogon language, that does not make dogon people a majority. I know what the 2009 census of Mali says; this is the only census done in Mali and its numbers are the official numbers. The census does not count people by race, color or ethnical group — it's in fact asking people to list their mother tongue (and any secondary language) they speak — only for people who are 6 years and older. That's plenty of opportunity for people to list tamasheq as their language.

Based on that, the numbers are very clear — Songhay are 45% of the population and Tuaregs are 32% in the 3 administrative regions of the north. If you take Mali as a whole then Songhay and Tuaregs are respectively 5.6% and 3.4% of the population. These are the numbers. Maybe some time back Tuaregs were 50% or 60% of the population, but not today.

What you're saying is that you don't like those numbers; this is your absolute right. But you're telling me that a US official based in Bamako has created some numbers and that those are true; I am sorry, but I am a scientist and I don't go by rumors; I need facts and hard numbers.

[Reply](#)**Mariama Walet Anara says:**

March 4, 2013 at 2:21 pm

Mr Karim,

I think you misunderstood the Tuareg identity that I just explained to you. I suggest you go back and read again. I also don't think that the US State Department will be going around making up a number out of the blue and base their strategies on it. I think they are much smarter than that.  
Wa Salam.

**Karim says:**

March 4, 2013 at 3:50 pm

Ms Mariama,

(a) you have no evidence that any policy was based on these numbers and (b) the 2008 embassy cable is hardly a proof; this is some guy sitting in a room typing a cable — BTW, if you check CIA's Factbook on Mali, the language numbers seem to have come straight from the 2009 census (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ml.html>) — so here we have another branch of the US government who seem to agree with the 2009 census. The Kel-Tamasheq are 3.5% (I have this number at 3.4%). So, let's not waste any more time on the number thing; we can agree to disagree. This does nothing for our brothers and sisters who go to bed hungry and scared or wonder when they would be back into their homes.

The main problem still remains : what to do? Fati suggested we split Mali in 3 federal regions — would we put that to a nationwide vote? Would we all accept the outcome of such vote? This, I am afraid, is one of those academic solutions that is not the result of any debate by Malians. Maybe it's the solution, maybe it's not; I have absolutely no idea. But this is a debate we should have had years ago. Because what we have now is clearly not working.

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Mali's governments going back as far as I can remember have failed its people; we have an opportunity to fix lots of these deficiencies — solutions that are good for Kidal are probably good for Kayes as well. We need an intelligent approach instead of back room deals conducted between Koulouba and a few folks from Kidal; an approach that includes EVERYBODY; whether Tuareg or Kel-Songhay or Kel-Bambara. We're in this together.

My village has about 4500 inhabitants (it's part of a commune of 13000 people). Everything there was built by the people — the state has not invested one red cent there! Nothing! We have a school — built and paid for by the locals. We have a water tower and running water. All built and maintained by the locals. A few folks have electricity (solar and generator). The constraints there are totally different from many places in the north, but the needs and grievances of that place are real too. We have to have a comprehensive approach that we can ALL agree on.



**Andy Morgan** says:

March 4, 2013 at 3:55 pm

Thanks for the wise words Karim...I'm glad you're reintroduced a tone of broad conciliation and realism into the debate that I can relate to: "solutions that are good for Kidal are probably good for Kayes as well." That's the crux of it for me.



**Mariama Walet Anara** says:

March 4, 2013 at 1:12 pm

Gloria Silva,

You are not making much sense. Calling us "bastards" is not going to solve anything and only demonstrates your ignorance. If you don't have anything constructive to contribute to this discussion I suggest you take your name-calling elsewhere.

[Reply](#)



**Elmehdi Ag Muphtah** says:

March 4, 2013 at 5:10 pm

Hey cousines Fati and Mariama, am so glad you guys are in the debate! 😊 Finally we got a real, intellectual, evidence-based, and respectful debate! 😊 Even if I disagree with you on so many things, you know how much I appreciate you with all my heart and how much your contributions as "open-minded" Tuareg are so important and crucial! 😊 That's ALL we need!!! And thanks to Karim too, I finally can go on Mr. Bruce Whitehouse's blog and read some useful and valuable comments which can make as move forward... Thanks guys!

[Reply](#)



**Elmehdi Ag Muphtah** says:

March 4, 2013 at 5:13 pm

Il y a de l'espoir...! 😊 loool

[Reply](#)



**Mariama Walet Anara** says:

March 4, 2013 at 8:45 pm

Elmehdi Ag Muphtah: lol 😊

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Karim,

I know for a fact that this cable was classified, and that it didn't get leaked by choice. I also know for a fact that the Malian government has always endeavored to keep Tuaregs' voices unheard. Using dismissive comments like "this is some guy sitting in a room typing a cable" just shows that you refuse to accept the truth and that you perpetuate the lies contrived by the Malian government.

You said we need to find a solution and I agree. But my question is: how are we going to find a solution when people like you are denying that the main problem ever existed? In one of your comments you stated, "Anything that happens to the Tuareg community is happening to all Malians. Even the abuse perpetrated by the Malian army today is geared toward many communities — not only the Tuareg. This is bad for everybody." If I go to your village, will I find mass graves of women, children and old men left by the Malian armed forces? You are in denial of the bloody campaign of violence carried out by the Malian government against Tuaregs since 1963. I can show you mass graves of an entire village of "Kel-Assouk," a Tuareg marabout clan who never held a weapon in their lives, who were slaughtered by the Malian armed forces in the 90s outside of Gao. If you deny the problem exists you'll never find a solution. It is time to stop pretending that these atrocities never happened and start getting serious about investigating the crimes and holding those responsible accountable.

[Reply](#)



**Karim says:**

March 4, 2013 at 10:46 pm

Ms Mariama,

This is really my last contribution to this back-and-forth because it feels like we are not moving an inch. I am very well aware of the the wikileaks cable and how they came about. I am also aware that there are lots of erroneous information in these gov cables. When a State Dept official writes something, it doesn't make it a fact. You accuse me of perpetuating the lies of the Malian gov; if only you knew me....

You keep reading everything out of context — where in my quotes or sayings does it say that the army has not (or never) committed murder against Touareg people? I am well aware of many of the killings that happened in the past. My comments were talking about TODAY; and the fact that the killing is color-blind — a turban or long beard is all it takes.

You seem to have a selective memory when it comes to Mali's army — didn't they kill 300 people in Bamako in 1991; in my book that's mass murder. Bodies are in graves at the Niarela cemetery. And that was in plain view of the whole world. So, I will never be surprised if that army is accused of doing the same or worse out of sight. I have done quite a bit of homework when it comes down to the Malian army.

Undeniably, Touareg have suffered at the hand of the military; but at some point, you also have to acknowledge that your pain is everybody's pain and vice-versa. The fact that Tuareg are killed is a Malian problem — not something that belong in one community. We are in this together, but through your comments you seem to be saying that I (or everyone not Tuareg) should first ask for forgiveness before we can move on; what is my responsibility in this? You say we need justice; this is exactly what I said in an early post — investigate all crimes to provide justice for all. But you insist on selectively quoting me.

Today, there are reported killings (by the army) against Tuaregs, Arabs, Pulars — regardless of skin or language. If there was a rebellion in Sikasso or Kayes, I have absolutely no doubt that what we have as an army will commit atrocities there too.

May you find peace. That is certainly what I am hoping for Mali.

[Reply](#)



**Mariama Walet Anara says:**

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March 5, 2013 at 12:02 am

Yes you are right Mr Karim we are not making any progress so this is my last contribution too. But I would like to point out that the mass killings in Bamako you are referring to are not being swept under the rug as it is the case for the Tuareg mass murders since 1963. We even have a national holiday to commemorate those who lost their lives on that day "le 26 mars" and a monument was built in their memories: "le monument du 26 mars". As Mr. Whitehouse said in his conclusion: "until Malians of all backgrounds can meet for open dialogue about the crimes they have endured — and carried out — they will continue talking past each other, and their divergent views of their common history will only grow further apart."

And don't worry, I am at peace.

[Reply](#)



**Tamasheq says:**

March 5, 2013 at 8:17 pm

To Karim

First of all kudos to Mariama for not responding to your rude personal attacks and for pointing out an important fact instead. Karim let me tell you this: the truth hurts but it will be told. like it or not. Hiding your true face behind your arrogant, derogatory and disrespectful comments will not stop this. Saying things like "Not whether Prof Whitehouse has spent 20 years studying poetry of the Tuareg" is insulting and unacceptable. Man don't let denial blind side you. Each and everyone of Your reactions remind me of those of Bamako towards the north and the reason why we are in this mess. You need to come off your arrogance high horse buddy! Your oversimplification of massacres against Tamasheqs only hows your support for it. You are taking some of the facts to personally. One has to wonder why...

[Reply](#)



**Tamasheq says:**

March 5, 2013 at 9:10 pm

Mariama is right, the people who were responsible for the 1991 crimes in Bamako were all arrested and sent to prison without a trail, even the ex President of Mali Moussa Traore was sent to prison/house arrest for those crimes. So your arguments are trash Karim. We will not take your nonsense excuses buddy!

[Reply](#)



**Said Tuareg says:**

March 7, 2013 at 11:28 am

Mr. Bruce,

To agree or disagree is normal and human being nature, but someone are not ethically, logically allowed to use this phenomenon to speak about something that is out of his knowledge, no first-hand information, on enough resources or at least neutral resources. Also, someone is not ethically, logically allowed to use his high title to spread disinformation about an entire nation, insulting them, opening all doors to those would like to express their inherited hatred against a nation. Yes, we can agree or disagree about some ideas and opinions. However, someone should not abuse international code concerning his professionalism to spreading propaganda against a nation that suffered a lot at hands of its enemies. Now let me respond to your the claimed facts about Tuaregs (Azawad):

1- You have stated" Even in northern Mali, the people we call "the Tuareg" are a minority" the problem is not whether Tuareg are minority or majority , but the problem is how Azawad people , specifically Tuaregs, are marginalized , discriminated against and displaced by northern people . I hope that you would remember this fact .

However, being Tuareg minority or majority in the north can't justify to be marginalized murdered , displaced. So, the problem is not whether Tuaregs are majority or minority, but the problem is the bad conditions under which Tuaregs and Azawad people in general live.

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2 – You have pointed out: “Most of the people we call “the Tuareg” are black” This also is not considered as problem whether Tuaregs are blacks or whites. The problem will remain how Tuaregs, whether are blacks or whites, have suffered a lot at hands of successive Malian governments. So, this point never makes any sense regarding Azawad issue as problem.

3- You have said “The people we call “the Tuareg” are not united on anything, least of all separatism” yes Tuaregs could be not united as far as Mali are not united itself, look at Bamako you can see chaos of political division. So, lack of unity is problem itself but it doesn't mean that there is no problem. Look at exiled people, displaced, summarily executed...etc. Isn't it problem??? How and Why?

4- You have mentioned “ The people we call “the Tuareg” have not been excluded from Mali's government” , Azawad people and specially Tuaregs are not just excluded from Mali' government, but they have been killed , murdered, raped , displaced. Let me ask you a questions : how someone who wants to eliminate you could allow you in his government??? This is completely nonsense.

5- You have reported: “The label of historically oppressed minority does not easily fit the people we call “the Tuareg” , When it comes to slavery, we can't blame only Tuaregs , but slavery phenomenon was globe one once before . The majority of nations all over the world have involved in this act, including blacks themselves. Do you know that the worst slavery trade have been carried out between America and Africa?? And you know that slavery spreads among black African them?? So this one is not a mistake done by Tuaregs onley, but it could be a common human being fault.

In conclusion , your attempt to show your readers that there is no problem for Azawad people while supporting your claims with some disinformation about Tuaregs is not well done. Maybe this as a result of what you have concluded in you your article when you said “I'm no expert on the Tuareg or northern Mali in general” . So you are highly recommended to understand more about Azawad cause, its roots , its history and its nature.

[Reply](#)



**Said Tuareg says:**

March 7, 2013 at 11:55 am

corrections of some mistakes in my article addressed to Mr Bruce:

1- someone are not ethically, logically allowed to use this phenomenon to speak about something that is out of his knowledge

2- how Azawad people , specifically Tuaregs, are marginalized , discriminated against and displaced by southern people

[Reply](#)



**Said Tuareg says:**

March 7, 2013 at 11:57 am

someone is not



**Said Tuareg says:**

March 7, 2013 at 11:56 am

someone is not

[Reply](#)



**Patron Ba says:**

March 8, 2013 at 3:30 am

I am ashamed of those " intellectuals " and " professors " who wrote in this blog in response to Dr. Bruce's posting on the Tuareg problem. Instead of being professional and academic in their response, they took it to the personal level and tried to score points over him. It felt as they have personal problem with him or are jealous or want to attract attention by attacking him. It reminds me of an ancient proverb : when an elephant and a little frog where looking down on the water's surface , the

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little frog thought that he was as giant as the elephant and started threatening it. I suggest to those who were deceived by the reflection of the water surface, as the frog did, to reconsider what they stated (personal attack and insults with no academic reasoning) so that they do not end up been crushed by the elephant and academic reasoning & logic .

Good luck Bruce and most of us thank you for bringing up such critical issues and letting everyone participate in enriching the discussions about the problem and the future of Mali and all its beloved people .

[Reply](#)



[علي محمد ali ag moha \(@ALIUF\)](#) says:

March 13, 2013 at 9:52 pm

Mariama Walet Anara .. Thank you

Said Tuareg .. Thank you

I read all posts ..

I still repeat

"Mali is not ready for unity with azawad"

The problem in the minds before the weapon!

[Reply](#)

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**Bridges from Bamako**

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