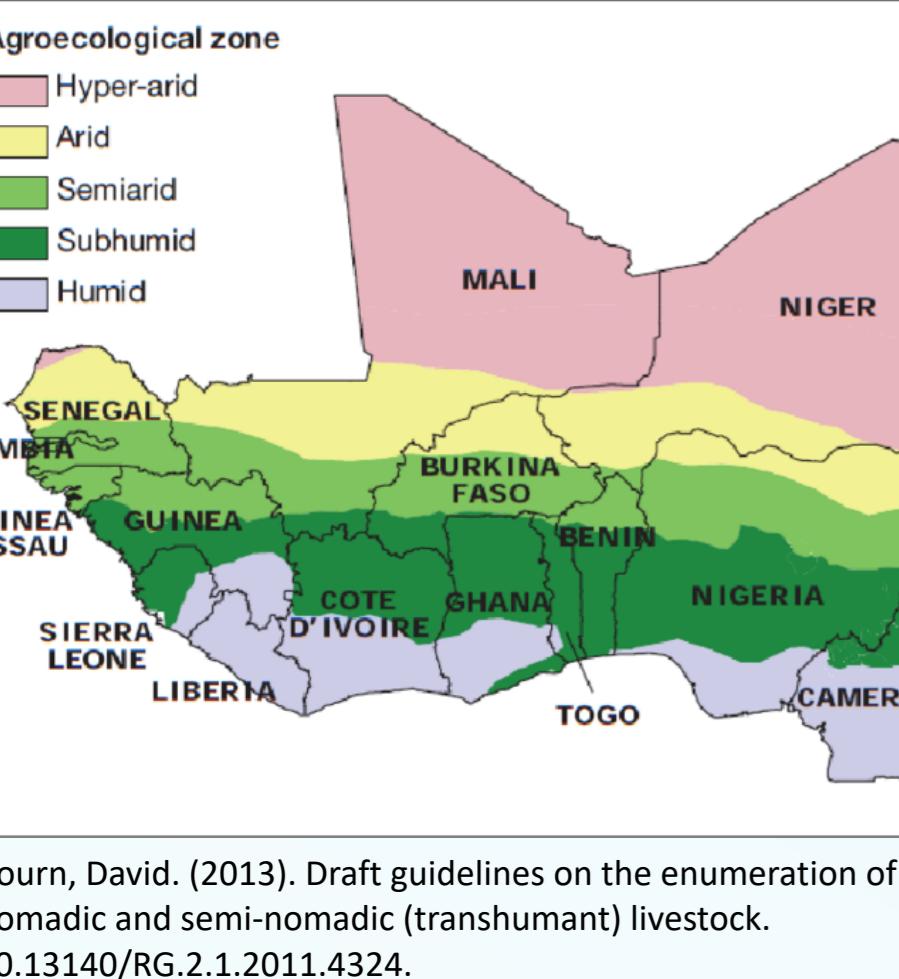


DV435 Economic and Political Geography of Mali

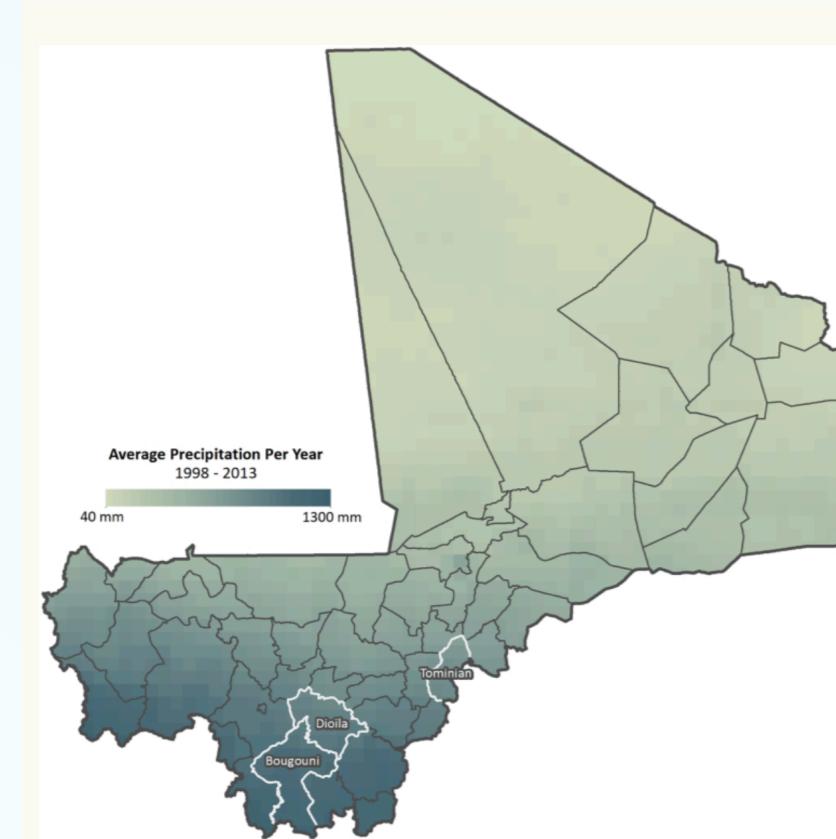
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Shuyi Geng, Afiola Etomi

This poster analyzes the location and endowment, colonial economy, economic geography and political geography of Mali. It considers the effects of these four major themes on Mali's present-day economic growth rate, institutions, and sources of political instability.

I.1 Location



Mali is a landlocked country in the Sahel region of West Africa. It borders Senegal to the West, and Niger to the east, with the northern region of the country consisting of mainly desert and arid climates. Only 3.8% of Mali's total land area (1,241,000 km²) is arable (FAO 2003), all of which is located in the southern region of Mali and features both the Niger and Senegal Rivers.

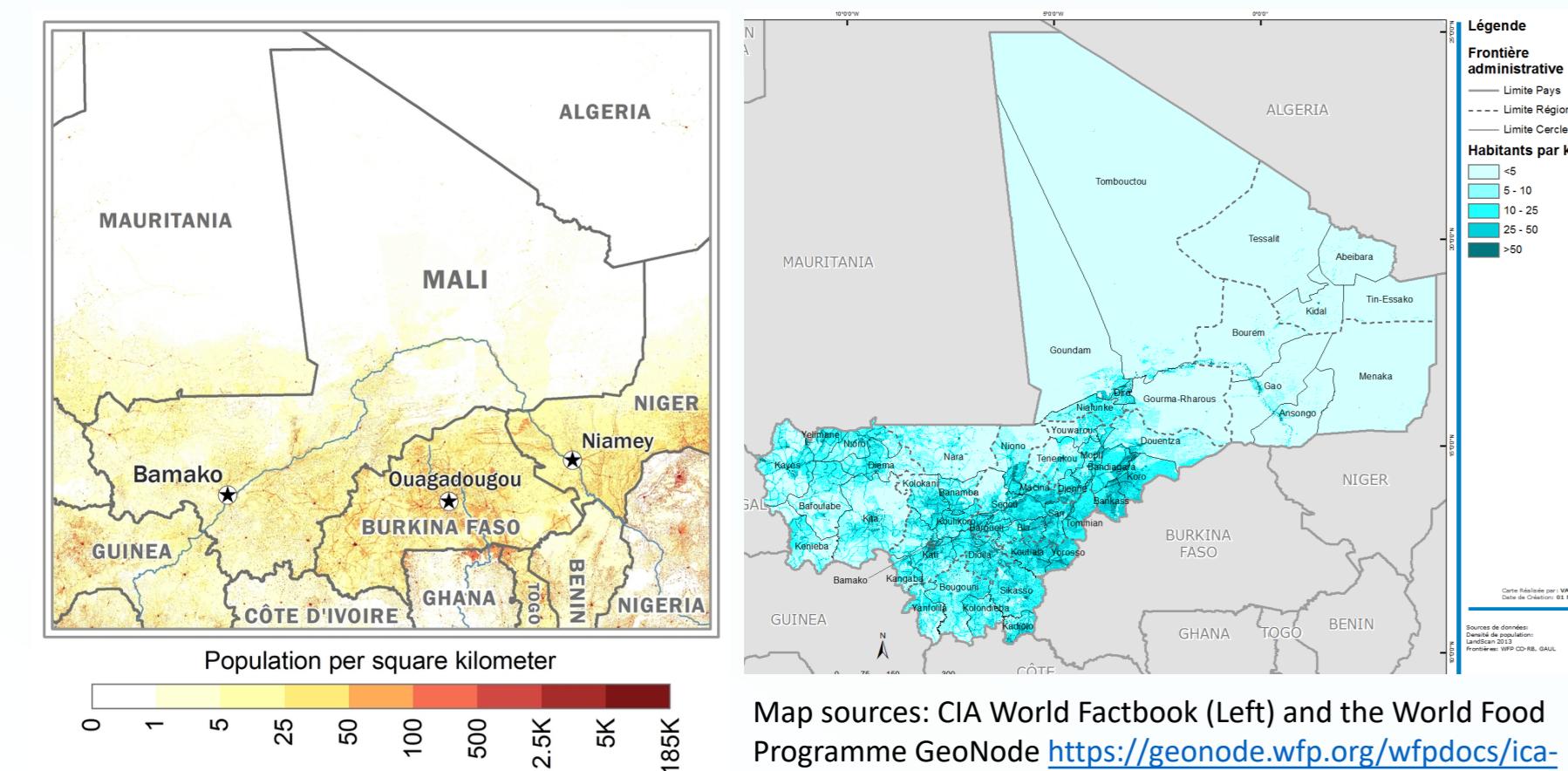


I.2 Agro-Ecological Zones

There are four main agroecological zones in Mali, two of which are located in desert regions, and with less than 200mm of precipitation per year these regions are unsuitable for agricultural cultivation (Waldman & Richardson, 2018). The Subhumid Zone and the Sudanian Savannah comprise only 18% of Mali's total land area, and are the only zones available for agriculture. Its primary export crops include sorghum, cotton, maize, groundnuts and cowpeas. Prolonged drought is the primary threat to the agricultural sector in Mali, coupled with the adverse effects of climate change. Overall, approximately 98% of Mali's land area is at risk from desertification (FAO AGL 2003).

I.4 Population

Mali faces adverse effects from disparities in population density. 90% of the population lives in the south, and this pressure on land contributes to desertification (FAO AGL 2003). The disparity in population density also contributes to poverty, income inequality, and political instability, and is a constant theme from Mali's colonial period that prevails in the current day.

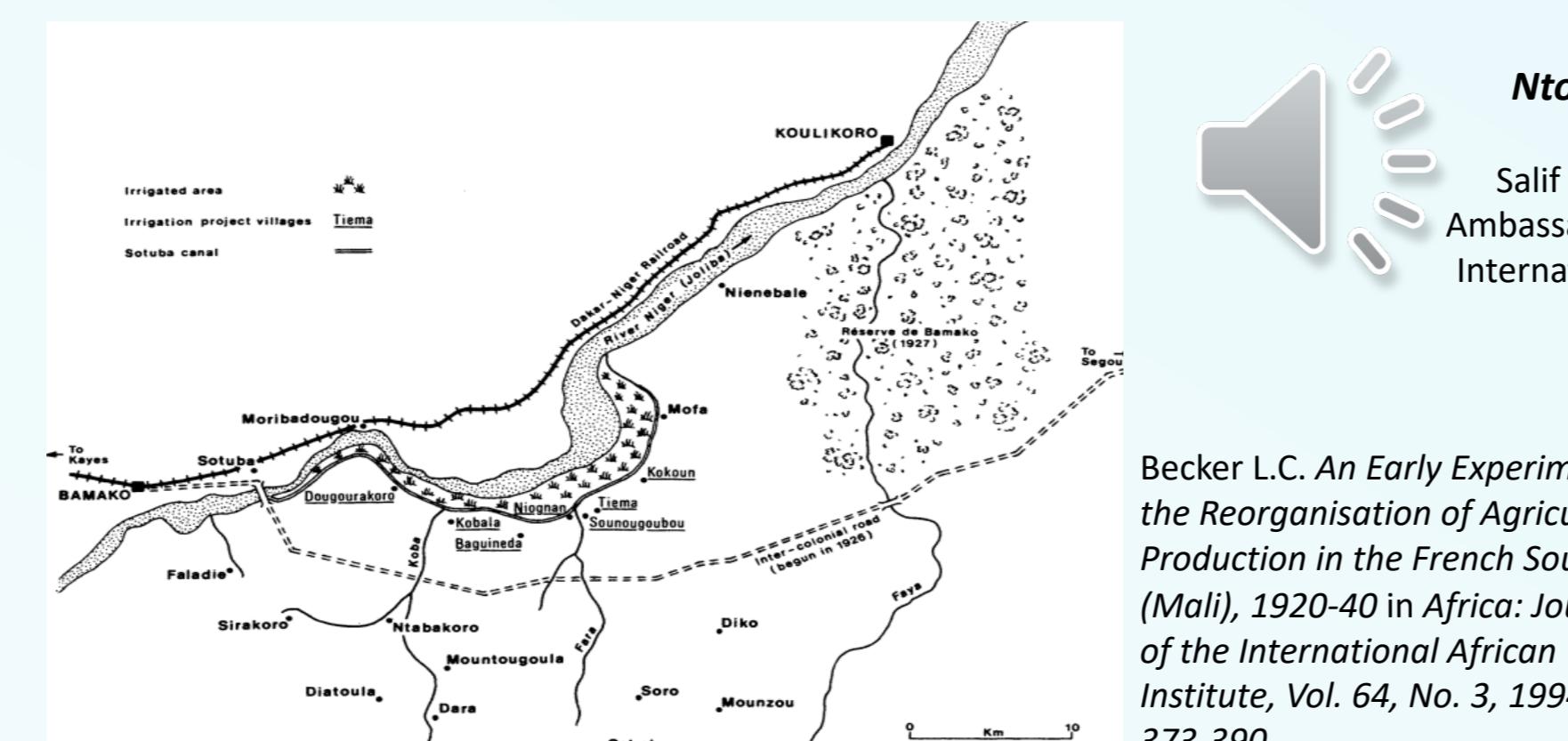


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II.1 Colonial land division

In the 1920s the French developed an irrigation scheme (later known as Office du Niger) to promote the production and commercialisation of cash crops, especially rice and cotton, in the more fertile Southern Mali. Before the project, the agriculture system was based on patrilineal family farming units, but the new scheme disrupted this institution. In fact, village chiefs were forced to supply labourers to build dams and canals and then work in the newly irrigated areas with the creation of settlement villages (Becker, 1994).



II.2 Labour Migration

Northern Mali contained a nomadic population on a vast, arid territory. Mobility and migration have always been a key strategy of the Sahelian population for dealing with tough conditions. (Bruijn & Van Dijk, 2003). Young men of the former French Sudan migrated to supply their labour to coastal French colonies in West Africa. Forced labour legislations were implemented to promote migration from Mali to the coasts - Gold Coast and Côte d'Ivoire to work on plantations, road networks and mines. This led to a 'male-dominated, seasonal and cross-border migration' in order to pay the tax regiments imposed by the colonial rule (Adepoju, 2005). From 1946, significant numbers of enslaved *iklan* peoples of Northern Mali migrated to the town of Gao to work on construction sites. This migration created opportunities to accrue capital and distance from their masters, which in turn enabled the *iklan*'s successful emancipation from historical vestiges of slavery in the late 1940s and early 50s. (Mauxion, 2012)

II.3 Infrastructure

Described as 'arid and landlocked', vast swathes of Northern Mali were perceived as 'l'Afrique inutile' – an area that was not prized for its wealth or fertility. The conquest of the territory in the late 19th Century depended on the ability of the French army to move goods over vast areas. Thus, the road to Bamako was improved to the point where wagons could be used, but porters were still necessary on ancillary roads or in the rainy season, suggesting the road network was fairly rudimentary at that stage. Around 1900, the French built a railway from Dakar to Koulikoro to transport raw materials. They also commissioned rail lines to be built from Bafulabe to Bamako with the use of more forced labourers (several of whom fled). The evidence suggests that most of this infrastructural development was concentrated in Southern regions.

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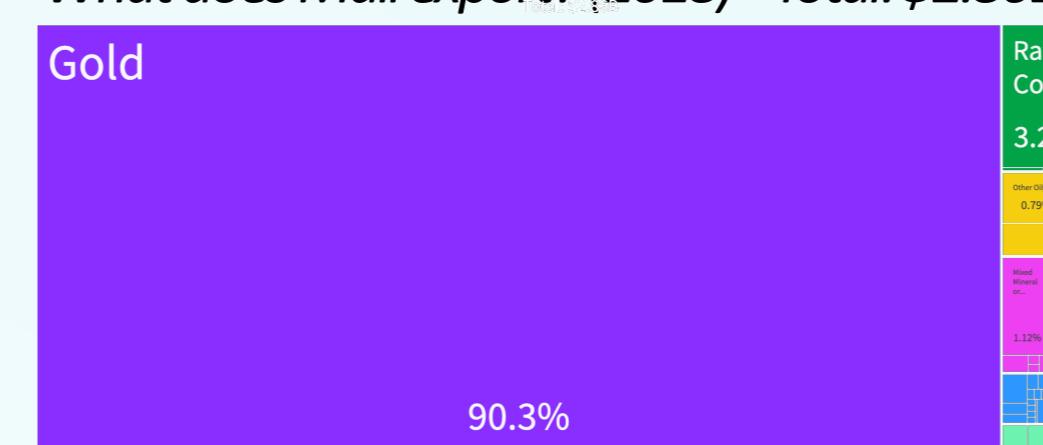
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III.1 Economic Activities and Spatial Inequality

High dependence on gold and cotton exports exposes Mali's trade balance to volatile commodity price shocks. Overt dependence on gold and cotton exports subjects Mali's export revenues to destabilizing global price shocks. In addition, cotton export volumes are vulnerable to weather shocks which compound the volatility of export revenues. In the absence of other sources of export revenues to dampen the impact of gold and cotton price shocks, the instability from export revenues is passed to the trade balance and the overall economy.

While northern regions are largely dependent on livestock and agriculture (42.7 percent of GDP) and tourism, the south relies mainly on gold mines (7.6 percent of the GDP and 75 percent of Mali's export revenue) and the exploitation of cotton (1 percent of the GDP) to fuel its economic activity.

What does Mali export? (2018) Total: \$2.86B

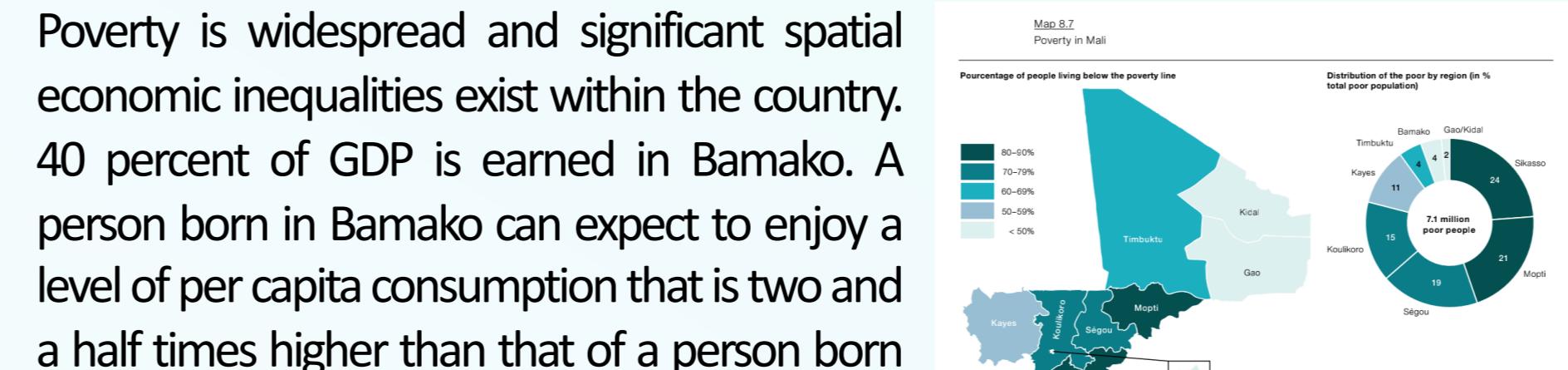


Exactly how much gold mining contributes to the Malian economy is hard to estimate. Different sources report different figures. Official sources do not help to clarify this, as the web pages of the Ministry of Mines and the Chamber of Mines are blank on this matter.

III.2 Poverty Incidence

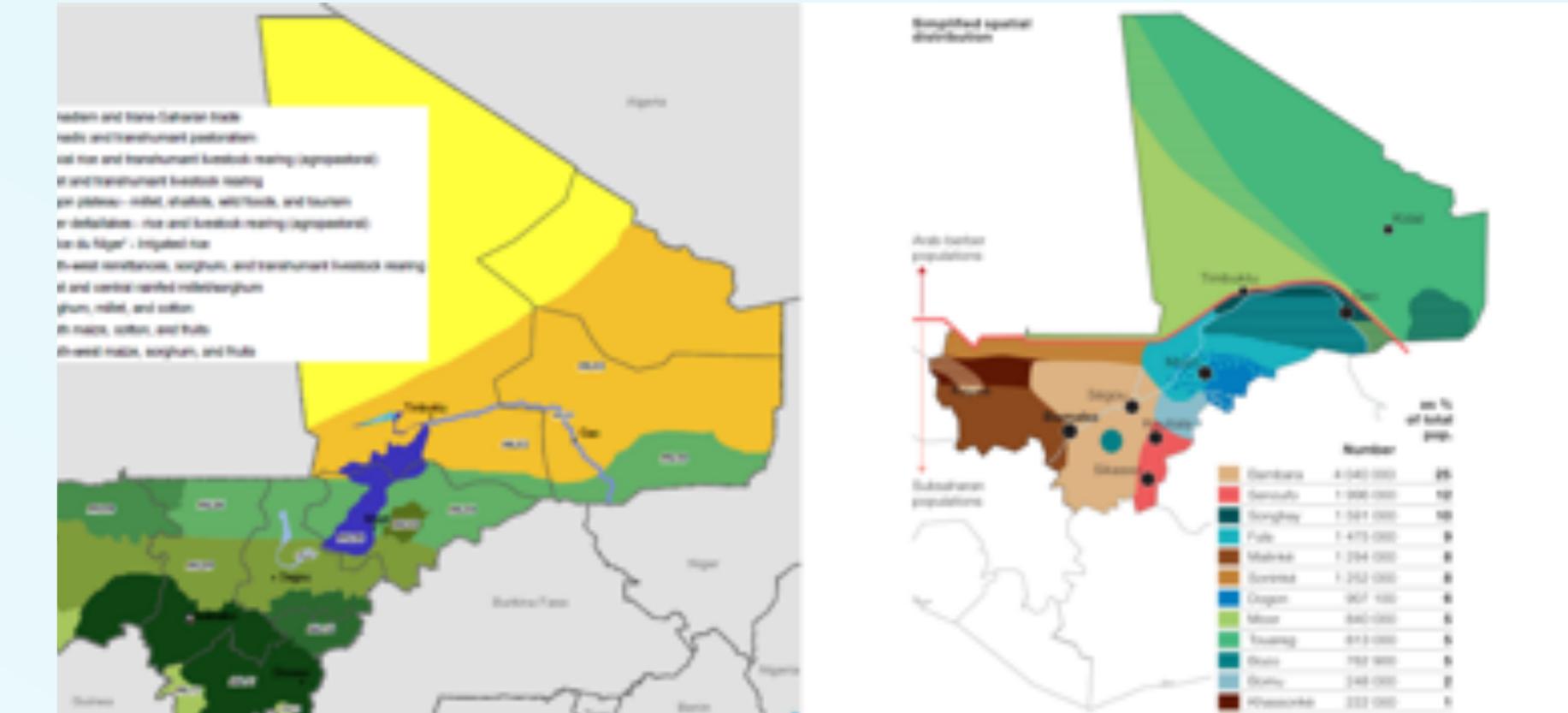
Poverty is widespread and significant spatial economic inequalities exist within the country. 40 percent of GDP is earned in Bamako. A person born in Bamako can expect to enjoy a level of per capita consumption that is two and a half times higher than that of a person born in Séguo or Sikasso.

Mali has invested very little in its north – starting with roads – not to mention areas such as education, health, and subsidized foodstuffs and petroleum products. The second is more questionable, whether in terms of monetary poverty or access to basic social services. However, Between 2001 and 2010 poverty as well as inequality decreased rapidly. Poverty incidence declined from 51 percent to 41 percent; the Gini coefficient dropped from 0.40 to 0.33. Despite the decline in poverty incidence the number of poor increased by around 360,000 as a consequence of Mali's high population growth. The number of non-poor increased by approximately 3 million.



IV.1 Administrative Boundaries and Political Economic Significance

The area that is now Mali was once part of the three great precolonial Sudanic empires: Ghana, Mali, and Songhai. Since 2016, Mali has been divided into ten regions and one capital district. A reorganization of the country from eight to nineteen regions was passed into law in 2012. Since 2012, Mali has faced a succession of violent conflicts. The Tuareg-led insurgency exposed the deep social divisions between the nomadic Berber minority in the sparsely populated and arid north with the more populous and sedentary Mandé ethnic groups (comprising 50 percent of the population) in the more fertile south who have dominated political life in Mali since independence from France in 1960. (Diallo, 2017). Malian Muslims comprise more than 90 percent of the country's population. And the religion affects Mali's past and now the rising threat from Salafist jihadist groups based in the Sahel.



This geographic distribution of economic sectors makes the north more vulnerable to exogenous shocks.

IV.2 Political Mobilization in Colonial Era and Revolts after Independence

In colonial era, French colonial rule altered the political economy of the region with vast agricultural development projects as well as the introduction of legal codes and state administration that endure to this day. Mali gained independence from France in 1960 as the Mali Federation (joined with Senegal), before separating and becoming the Republic of Mali in Sep, 1960. Since Mali's independence in 1960, the Tuareg have staged successive rebellions, with the major ones occurring in 1963, 1990, 2006, and 2012. During the democratic period from 1992 to 2012, Mali was regarded as one of the most politically stable countries in Africa and was the darling of the donor community (Moseley, 2017). Since The Tuareg uprising of 2012, the security situation has deteriorated.

IV.3 Geographic Electoral Patterns and Cleavages

The presidential elections are an important step in rebuilding Mali's democratic political trajectory, which was established between 1991 and 2012. However, given Mali's ongoing fragility, the electoral process is fraught with risk. If violence and insecurity sufficiently affect voter turnout, this could lead the opposition and armed groups to question the legitimacy of the election's outcome. Instability precludes government officials from maintaining a presence across parts of the country. Only 20 percent of sub-prefects deployed in the northern communes in 2017, compared to 36 percent in 2016. In Mopti, in central Mali, only 33% of officials were present at their duty stations.

