

War in Mali

Background study and annotated bibliography

July 2012 - March 2013

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Acronyms

AFISMA	African-led International Support Mission to Mali
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
AU	African Union
COPAM	Co-ordination of Patriotic Organisations in Mali
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EEAS	European External Action Service
EUTM	EU Training Mission Mali
FDR	United Front to Safeguard Democracy and the Republic
FRIDE	Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IBK	Alliance Ibrahim Boubacar Keita
ICC	International Criminal Court
MAA	Arab Movement of Azawad
MENA	Middle East and North African Countries
MNLA	National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad
MOJWA/	
MUJAO	Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NOREF	Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre
PKO	Peacekeeping Operations
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNMAS	UN Mine Action Service

Foreword

Not long ago, Mali was considered a beacon of stability and a model of democratic evolution in West Africa. The country then experienced a military coup in the capital in March 2012, followed by the usual post-coup volatility and uncertainty. In the immediate aftermath of the coup, armed insurgents swiftly took over half the country. It did not take long to dismantle a country that on the paper appeared to be functioning, stable and democratic. French troops intervened in the conflict in the north. Yet even if this intervention put a stop to the outright threat of the insurgents taking over the south and significantly shifted the balance of forces in the north, it did not end the conflict. The insurgents have dispersed into remote areas in the sub-region, changing their tactics to terrorist-like activities.

Different forms of political negotiation and reconciliation are certainly needed in the region. With the current global clash between radical Islam and the Western “War on Terror”, northern Mali will probably continue to be contested terrain for a long time. In the meantime, a transition to democratic rule is planned for the country, with elections scheduled for July this year. In all likelihood, this will prove to be only an illusory end to an intense power tussle over state control in Bamako.

In the following text, Emy Lindberg has gathered material from successive reports covering the conflict in Mali from its outbreak to the present. The text, in providing the conclusions of these reports in chronological order, allows the reader to follow the unfolding of events on the ground as well as the interpretations placed upon the crisis by a variety of experts.

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Summary of dominant arguments and perspectives, main themes and divergences

In the papers, reports, blogs and articles presented in this paper, there are a few main themes, which will be summarised in this first section of the background paper on the war in Mali and the international intervention. These themes are: *Causes and drivers of conflict; Solutions; Involvement of the international community; Humanitarian consequences and Diverging themes and notable perspectives.*

Causes and drivers of conflict

Several researchers point out that many analyses of Mali and the ongoing violent conflict are, and have been, deficient. Perhaps this is because the crisis was unexpected both to outsiders and to Malians, as well as to the coup-makers themselves. Many texts argue that the conflict and crisis have been over-simplified: they were, in fact, the culmination of many historical, social and political factors and triggers (Boisvert 2012, 2013; Boukhars 2013; Bøås 2013b; Marchal 2012; Whitehouse 2013a, 2013b). This perspective is explored below.

State failure, including weak and corrupt institutions, and unfulfilled promises from earlier peace settlements are, according to several researchers, among the causes of conflict in Mali (Boukhars 2013; Bøås, 2013b; Bøås and Torheim 2013; Lebovich 2013; Marchal 2012). This includes a governance system built on patronage in which ruling elites in Bamako cooperated with regional power-holders in the north, in return for stability. They also collaborated with northern terrorist groups, which could safely pursue their economic interests, such as the extensive trans-border drug trade in the Sahel region. It is important to consider these “big men” and the informal networks to understand why the conflict in Mali began and continues (Bøås 2013a, 2013b; Bøås and Torheim 2013; Galvin 2012; Guichaoua 2013a; Lacher and Tull 2013; Marchal 2012; Utas 2012b, 2013a, 2013b). Another cause of conflict is thus identified as economic interests, or greed. Frequently used concepts are *elite bargains*, *power balance* and the *political marketplace*. Many writers argue that the main stakeholders in the conflict are seeking influence and financial gain (Boukhars 2013; Guichaoua 2013a; Lacher and Tull 2013; Marchal 2012). It is argued that central to the crisis is a conflict between elites from different ethnic groups, which ally themselves with extremists when this is considered beneficial to their cause (Lacher and Tull 2013). At the moment, Bamako lacks alliances in the north, and this is prolonging the con-

flict. Actors such as the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) rebelled because they had been excluded from deals with Bamako and President Touré. However, as bargaining positions changed, they chose to collaborate with France (Boukhars 2013; Lacher and Tull 2013).

Local grievances are recognised as a motive for and driver of the conflict. The rebellion by the Tuareg and other northern peoples was born not only of economic motives but also the failure by ruling elites in Bamako to acknowledge their grievances. Ethnicity is a major factor in Malian conflict dynamics both among the Tuareg themselves and between the different communities in the north. Some researchers stress that these ethnic grievances have a history of being used in political games. The government uses them to play northern groups and tribes off against each other. Ethnic discourses are also apparent in the current crisis, in which tensions between north and south and within the north are growing (Armstrong 2013; Boisvert 2012; Boukhars 2013; Bøås and Torheim 2013; Guichaoua 2013a; Lacher and Tull 2013; Marchal 2012; Whitehouse 2013b). The military coup of March 2012 was also built on military grievances with the government (Boisvert 2012; Bøås 2013b; Marchal 2012).

Several readings apply the concepts of power balance and political marketplace more broadly and emphasise the importance of the regional context to understanding the causes of the conflict. Before the fall of Qaddafi, there was extensive collaboration between Bamako, Algeria and Libya to control northern Mali. Several of the fighters who formed the MNLA returned from Libya with weapons and ammunition. The wider Sahelian region is also connected to the crisis in Mali, since larger economic interests, including the trans-border drug and arms trade, affects the conflict (Boukhars 2013; Bøås 2013b; Bøås and Torheim 2013; Ellis 2013; Guichaoua 2013a; Utas 2012b). The transnational terrorist groups involved have links to Al-Qaeda and can be

understood as connected with different conflicts in the region, thereby emphasising the importance of the spatial dimensions of the conflict (Ellis 2013; Rogers 2013a, 2013b, 2013e).

The mix of religion and politics is identified as a final cause and driver of conflict. In Mali, religious leaders have taken on increasingly political roles. The rise of political Islam – “a transnational movement feeding on national dissent” (Rogers 2013c) – is not unique to Mali, but is also evident in the wider regional context. A mixture of greed and grievance seems to be in play here. Some perceive Islamist movements in Mali, such as Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Ansar ed-Din, as engaging first and foremost in illicit activities, rather than the spread of Islam. In this sense, the involvement of both criminal networks and a global jihad has complicated and internationalised the conflict (Boisvert 2012; Bøås and Torheim 2013; Lebovich 2013; Marchal 2012). However, Islam is also highlighted as a vehicle for expressing grievances. Others note that Malians themselves are generally unsupportive of the Islamist interpretation of Islam (Whitehouse 2013a), but that life under Islamist rule was considered acceptable since it provided stability and other goods (Armstrong 2013, Bøås 2013a, 2013b, Bøås and Torheim 2013, Utas 2013a). Interestingly, Whitehouse notes that AQIM is documented as consisting of very pious Muslims. Both ideology and resources seem to drive these movements (Whitehouse 2013d).

Various causes and drivers of conflict in Mali are thus discussed, and out of this has emerged an image of a very complex conflict in which many interests are at stake and expressed in terms of greed, grievance, ethnicity, religion and historical experience.

Solutions

Most of the material on the conflict discusses possible solutions. Some writers warn that the tendency of international actors such as the UK to frame the conflict in terms of on the “War on Terror” shifts the focus from the complexity of the conflict (Boisvert 2012; Marchal 2012; see also Rogers 2013d).

The solution is unanimously proclaimed to be democracy. A first step towards this should be the holding of the promised elections in late July 2013 (Boukhars 2013; Bøås 2013b; Lacher and Tull 2013; Marchal 2012). However, the conflict is multilayered and there is no quick fix (Boukhars 2013; Marchal 2012; Teirilä 2012). Reform of po-

litical institutions is needed. There is also a need for inclusive negotiations to address the grievances of the population. Knowledge of local conditions is essential (Boisvert 2013; Boukhars 2013; Bøås 2013a, 2013b; Guichaoua 2013a, 2013b; Lacher and Tull 2013; Rogers 2013f) and a national discourse on reconciliation based on shared history and identity should be initiated (Lebovich 2013). A dialogue between north and south is necessary, but will be difficult since both regions are becoming increasingly divided (Bøås and Torheim 2013; Utas 2013a). Military reform should follow. Some argue for military pressure and incentives to cause the warring groups to switch allegiance to the government (Boukhars 2013; Lacher and Tull 2013). To make this happen, many of the studies agree that involvement by external actors is needed.

Involvement of the International community

There has been speculation about why the French chose to intervene in Mali in January 2013. However, Operation Serval seems to have been a last resort caused by the collapse of the Malian army as the Islamists moved south (Whitehouse 2013a). Several readings stress that because international intervention, including Operation Serval, the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) and EU Training Mission Mali (EUTM), occurred earlier than anticipated, there are not enough troops on the ground and EUTM has not had time to train the Malian army (Lacher and Tull 2013; Rogers 2013f; Teirilä 2012). Some argue the EU should take a leading role in Mali, both in its own interests and because the organisation is perceived as benevolent by Malians (Boukhars 2013; Marchal 2012; del Sarto and Tholens 2013). Looking at earlier West African peacekeeping missions, it is important to recognise that peacekeepers on the ground often become involved in the war economy (Utas 2013a). AFISMA could increase its legitimacy and funding if put under a UN mission (Lacher and Tull 2013). However, Guichaoua warns against the creation of a neo-trusteeship in which the players entrusted with power by the UN might lack legitimacy in the eyes of local Malians (Guichaoua 2013b). International involvement could trigger resistance among locals in northern Mali, resulting in more recruits for the militias and increasing radicalisation (Utas 2013a, 2013b). Interestingly, Algeria and Mauritania are not contributing troops to AFISMA, perhaps for fear of spillover effects or because the elites in Mauritania have close ties with the Arabs and Tuaregs

in Mali (Lacher and Tull 2013). Algeria, the potential regional hegemon, is “oddly quiet”, notes Ellis (2013).

A question discussed in some readings is with which actors the international community should seek to collaborate? MNLA is a minority group that lacks the support of the north, yet France is currently benefiting from its knowledge of the region. The Malian army and government in Bamako, on the other hand, are respectively dysfunctional and illegitimate. If negotiations and settlements are not inclusive enough, there is a risk of creating winners and losers (Boukhars 2013; Guichaoua 2013b). The international actors involved will inevitably be drawn into the conflict, changing the balance of power. France is now a central actor and participates in the bargaining process in the political marketplace (Lacher and Tull 2013; see also Utas 2013a), as evidenced by the alleged killing of French hostage Philippe Verdon by AQIM on 10 March in retaliation for the French intervention (BBC, 2013).

If international peacemaking is approached the wrong way, there is a risk of prolonged conflict. Some researchers argue that recent events in Mali are reminiscent of early events in Afghanistan, when the Taliban regrouped and came back after the initial US success in 2001 (Lebovich 2013; Rogers 2013c, 2013d, 2013f). It is important to recall that the insurgents have not been defeated, but have only retreated (Boisvert 2013; Utas 2013b; Bøås and Torheim 2013). At the moment, there is a risk of guerrilla fighting from the mountains (Ellis 2013; Lacher and Tull 2013) and many Islamists might cross the Malian border to neighbouring countries. Boukhars interestingly conceptualises the terrorists as nomads, effectively linking the historical structure of the Sahel region with current Islamist movements (2013).

Humanitarian consequences

The United Nations and other human rights organisations stress the humanitarian aspects and consequences of the conflict. There is an ongoing humanitarian emergency with food insecurity, an urgent need of aid in the north, undetected explosives and terrible war crimes on all sides that must be considered and investigated, possibly by the International Criminal Court (ICC). There is also a growing number of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (see below for websites of interest) (Bøås and Torheim 2013; Human Rights Watch 2013a, 2013b; United Nations News Centre 2013a,

2013b), who need to return in time for the general elections. Currently, there are widespread violent reprisals and people in the north expect further re-tributions once international actors leave (Armstrong 2013; Boisvert 2013; Human Rights Watch 2013a; Konyndyk 2013; McCarney 2013; United Nations News Centre 2013a). Reprisals risk prolonging the conflict, turning it into a violent spiral expressed in terms of ethnicity, religion, economic and political power (see Armstrong 2013; Lacher and Tull 2013; Whitehouse 2013b, 2013c). External stakeholders need to support Mali with relief and development assistance (Bøås and Torheim 2013).

Divergent themes and notable perspectives

A borderland perspective on the Malian conflict has already been mentioned, but del Sarto and Tholens look at the conflict from the viewpoint of the EU. Mali and the Sahel are in this perspective viewed as a borderland region, or perhaps a periphery to the EU borderlands. The EU thus has a strategic interest in involvement in Mali to promote security and continue its current policies towards neighbouring countries and regions (del Sarto and Tholens 2013). A related theme is the view of northern Mali as a power or security vacuum, and the criticism of this general perspective (Ellis 2013; Guichaoua 2013a; Marchal 2012).

A question discussed by Rogers is what type of conflict the war in Mali will turn out to be. Rogers argues that it could reflect a new phase in the “War on Terror” and become a “remote control” war in which, unlike in Afghanistan and Iraq, there will not be as many Western soldiers on the ground should the conflict prove to be long-lasting (2013c, 2013d).

Bøås and Torheim argue that to measure the strength of the Islamists in northern Mali, one should examine their strategies of integration with locals, especially as actors such as AQIM have been active in local communities for many years (Bøås 2013a; Bøås and Torheim 2013; see also Armstrong 2013). This may mean that Islamists should be considered in a national dialogue on peace and reconciliation (Bøås and Torheim 2013).

Utas argues that it is important to consider youths’ motives for joining rebel movements. These tend to involve escaping socioeconomic marginality and avoiding “social death”, rather than political or religious beliefs. To prevent the youth from becoming more than “sporadically radical”, alternative social and economic opportunity structures are needed (Utas 2012a).

Whitehouse brings an additional perspective by discussing Mali's advantages. He argues that Malians' "combination of strong social capital, concern for dignity, national identity, and joking relations" could help them through the conflict (Whitehouse 2013c).

Notably lacking from the readings summarised above and below is a focus on the role of women in this conflict, apart from their being the refugees and rape victims of NGO reports.

Summaries of the material by date

These summaries include the historical context of and current developments in the conflict.

JANUARY 2012

On Sporadic Radicalism, by Mats Utas

Utas, M. 2012a. On Sporadic Radicalism. [Online]
Available: <http://matsutas.wordpress.com/2012/01/27/on-sporadic-radicalism/>
[Accessed 19 April 2013]

27 JANUARY 2012, PRESENTATION/BLOG

In this presentation, published on his blog, Mats Utas comments on youth motives for participation in rebel movements relative to how groups such as AQIM are perceived. In his work on youth and conflict, Utas found that political agendas for participation in rebel movements and radicalism tend to be secondary. The primary motives are generally “a hunt for fresh social turf, or social platforms; aiming for social mobility and escaping socio-economic marginality”. Economic motives are thus important and closely associated with military activism. Youth also seek to escape “social death”. Through participation in militant religious groups and other rebel organisations or radical movements, social change is made possible, as illustrated by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone or al Shabaab in Somalia and AQIM in the Sahel. However, argues Utas, youth seem to be “sporadically radical”, and only when “there is an opportunity for it”. Other reasons for joining rebel groups can be to provide “security for self and family”. Youth might also join rebellions because of resentment against the national political leadership and its low moral standards. As Murray Last has concluded in relation to northern Nigeria, historically radical Islam has come and gone, and at the moment is visible in, for example, Boko Haram. However, as illustrated above, more motives than solely religious ones are in play. The risk is that members of these groups, if pushed too hard through military violence and structural action, may “no longer be sporadically radical, but enter a state of chronic radicalism as seen in many places across the world today”. Instead, there is a need to create “alternative social and, but not only, economic opportunity structures for young marginal citizens whether in Sierra Leone, Somalia or Mali so ... they will not see radical movements as their only path to escape social death”.

MAY 2012

The coup in Mali: Result of a long-term crisis or spillover from the Libyan civil war? by Roland Marchal

Marchal, R. 2012. The Coup in Mali: The result of a long-term crisis or spillover from the Libyan civil war? [Online] NOREF
Available: <http://www.peacebuilding.no/Regions/Africa/Publications/The-coup-in-Mali-the-result-of-a-long-term-crisis-or-spillover-from-the-Libyan-civil-war>
[Accessed 20 March 2013]

MAY 2012, REPORT/NOREF

This report argues that the crisis in Mali was born out of a combination of factors, including decayed state institutions and practices, a collapsed military force and a system of governance built on patronage, not democracy. Marchal explores the background to the crisis and argues that while Libya was the trigger, the crisis is long-term and several aspects lie behind it. Four dynamics that led to the military coup of March 2012 are identified: “the debatable implementation of previous peace settlements with Tuareg insurgency; the growing economic importance of ... AQIM ... activities in the Sahelian region; the collapse of the Qaddafi regime in Libya; and the inability or unwillingness of Algeria to play the role of regional hegemon now that its rival (Libya) has stopped doing so” (Marchal 2012:1). He continues: “the many armed groups have different agendas, and position themselves differently towards the local population and the Malian state. What is unclear is whether they will be able to co-exist on the same territory while trafficking and a protection economy are the only sustainable resources” (Ibid).

Mali was viewed by international actors as a model democracy. However, as this ideal quickly fell apart in early 2012, it is important to examine various aspects of the Malian system of governance. Several Malian observers have noted that political elites in Mali relied on Algeria and Libya to address the Tuareg question and to implement the previous peace settlement through which Tuareg rebels were absorbed into the Malian army. Thus, there is a need to examine the role of Algeria in the Sahel and Mali’s relations with Muammar Qaddafi.

Another issue is the presidency of Amadou Toumani Touré, which used “patronage to co-opt the main parties’ leadership to prevent any oppo-

sition” (Ibid:2). Malian ruling elites and the military became increasingly corrupt and criminalised under his rule. In 2011, Transparency International ranked Mali 118th of 182 countries in its corruption perceptions index. Government corruption meant that diplomatic resources and aid were not used as intended. The Malian army, for example, was apparently receiving funding from international donors and the authorities in Bamako, but did not have the means to control northern Mali. The easy Tuareg rebel victory in April 2012 resulted from the defection of many Malian officers unhappy with the central government (Ibid:2-3).

The Libyan civil war should be viewed as a trigger for the crisis in Mali. Qaddafi was involved in northern Mali and used his position to pacify the region. After the rebellion in 2006, Libya played a leading role in paying rebels to join either the Malian or Libyan armies. When former Libyan soldiers began to return to Mali in February 2011, little was done to disarm them. Fighters with money and weapons probably precipitated the current crisis. However, there were tensions in the region even before the overthrow of the Qaddafi regime in Libya and Tuareg rebels unhappy with the implementation of the last peace settlement were already mobilising (Ibid:3).

Northern Mali is politically, socially and ethnically divided. Many groups inhabit the region, among them the Songhai, Fulani, Arab Berabiches and Moors. Historically, these groups often organised themselves against Tuareg insurgencies, since they “would become second-class citizens in any Tuareg-controlled state” (Ibid:4). The Tuareg themselves are divided into noble and commoner clans, with the former usually supporting the insurgency while the latter support the Malian government. Thus, any perceived unity in the north is only superficial (Ibid:4).

Lyad ag Ghali, leader of Ansar ed-Din and a former Tuareg commander reinvented as an Islamist in 1999, is “a good illustration of the type of people often needed by Algiers and Bamako to interact with AQIM or the Tuareg to maintain channels of communication”. Ag Ghali has been negotiating hostage releases from Islamist groups in the region and has good relations with AQIM and the Tuareg. Marchal argues that groups like AQIM, MNLA and Ansar ed-Din “may not be perceived in northern Mali in the way they are by Western governments”, and writes that Salafism and the enforcement of sharia law is not supported widely in northern Mali, even

though it is growing in popularity. The movements coexist and are involved in illicit activities. They recruit relatives to become members. However, since the overthrow of the dictatorship in 1992, Islam has become “one of the channels to express disaffection towards a negligent state that did not deliver on its promises of economic development and never undertook investments or provided social services in the north” (Ibid:5-6). It is, however, likely that the insurgent groups in the north will “split (especially the MNLA) and fight each other for the control of trade routes and monopoly of the wider protection economy in the north”. The creation of “a new self-fulfilling prophecy of the spread of radical Islamism in the region” has to be avoided (Ibid:8).

Structural problems are the core issues and military and religious entrepreneurs are benefiting from them and the security vacuum in the north. Marchal argues that there is no quick fix for Mali. A democratic government in Bamako is the first step towards resolving the crisis. There is also a risk that the conflict will spread beyond Mali’s borders (Ibid:6). Mali is one of the poorest countries in Africa. It faces more problems than the international focus on the Islamist movements and the “War on Terror” can convey. The EU could be an effective agent of international intervention, as it is viewed as more neutral by Malians than the US or France. The EU has a policy towards the Sahel with a focus on security, local administration, engagement and development (Ibid:7).

JULY 2012

Post-Kaddafi repercussions in the Sahel: The Mali emergency, questions of radicalization and emerging West African discourses of “clashing civilizations”, by Mats Utas

Utas, M. 2012b. Post-Kaddafi repercussions in the Sahel: The Mali emergency, questions of radicalization and emerging West African discourses of ‘clashing civilizations’. [Online] Available: <http://matsutas.wordpress.com/2012/07/10/post-kaddafi-repercussions-in-the-sahel-the-mali-emergency-questions-of-radicalization-and-emerging-west-african-discourses-of-clashing-civilizations/> [Accessed 19 April 2013]

10 JULY 2012, ACADEMIC/BLOG

This text consists of personal reflections on the papers presented at a conference on political unrest in the Sahel at the Kofi Annan Peacekeeping Training Centre in Accra in late June 2012.

The events in Mali are, writes Utas, the first major incidents in the post-Qaddafi political landscape

and in the power vacuum in the Sahel region. Positions in the Malian political game have shifted partly due to the return of “new recruits and military personnel from within a North Malian diaspora in Libya, typically from within the army”.

The political capacities of the various actors in Mali, such as Ansar Dine, MNLA and AQIM, are difficult to describe, but the members of Ansar Dine and MNLA seem to have close ties or are derived from the same families, even though their political agendas differ. The recent success of Ansar Dine is a consequence of the looting and use of force against civilians by the MNLA rebels. It would be interesting to ascertain whether the MNLA aims for state cooption and who the strong men behind the scenes are. The interim government in Bamako is “weak and disorganized” and the army fragmented, which indicates that the necessary negotiations are still a distant goal and opens the way “for the deployment of a peace enforcing force from ECOWAS”.

Utas notes that an important aspect in the ongoing conflict is the drug route that runs through Mali. This illicit business is likely to involve actors from rebel movements, the army and the government in Bamako and unravelling the linkages among these actors could be informative.

The UN Security Council delayed its endorsement of the deployment of 3,000 ECOWAS troops to Mali. ECOWAS needs resources and therefore depends on UN approval. The ECOWAS representative at the conference described a radical zone in the Sahel shaped like a banana, stretching from Mauritania to northern Nigeria. This links AQIM, Ansar Dine and Boko Haram, seen as part of an Al-Qaeda threat in the Sahel. A researcher pointed out that dubbing events as “terrorism” elicits more money from the US and the Europeans. An expert on Mauritania described AQIM as a ghost – no-one knows exactly what it is. On the topic of radical Islam, several West Africans interpreted the problems in the Sahel as a Muslim north/Christian south clash, making references to Huntington’s *Clashes of Civilizations*. All these ideas, together with the US “War on Terror” discourse and the European fear of the “Sahel Wind”, make for “a rather explosive and dangerous cocktail”, concludes Utas.

Most conference participants held that the solution to the conflict is hindering further radicalisation. An “understanding of the larger conflict as a series of local conflicts where each one must be understood and dealt with both in its local, sociological and historical context” is important.

NOVEMBER 2012

Meles Zenawi and Africa’s Second Fiddles, by Declan Galvin

Galvin, D. 2012. *Meles Zenawi and Africa’s Second Fiddles*. [Online]
Available: <http://matsutas.wordpress.com/2012/11/05/meles-zenawi-and-africas-second-fiddles-guest-post-by-declan-galvin/>
[Accessed 20 March 2013]

5 NOVEMBER 2012, ACADEMIC/BLOG

In this analysis, Declan Galvin elaborates briefly on the “Big Men” at play in Mali. He stresses “the omnipresence of informal power and its role in the function of contemporary political and social life in Africa”. The informal networks, not the formal political regimes, should be analysed. The failure to do so, argues Galvin, is the reason many academics and policy-makers were taken by surprise by the military coup in Mali. “This frustration, coupled with the Tuareg rebellion seemed to provide an opening for the informal networks in Mali to be reconstituted”.

DECEMBER 2012

Military intervention brings no simple solution to conflict in Mali, by Olli Teirilä

Teirilä, O. 2012. *Military intervention brings no simple solution to conflict in Mali*. [Online]
Available: <http://matsutas.wordpress.com/?s=teiril%C3%A4>
[Accessed 20 March 2013]

18 DECEMBER 2012, ACADEMIC/BLOG

Olli Teirilä discusses the challenges that a potential military intervention in Mali would face. Such intervention would need to be followed by the institution of legal governance in the invaded regions. The poverty that “drives the young into joining the armed rebel groups in hope for a future” must be tackled. However, the conflict is multi-layered and the following challenges for a military intervention are identified:

First, there is a need to define which forces are to be beaten. Should a military intervention support the dysfunctional Malian army, or should it seek cooperation with MNLA and Ansar al-Din against the more radical Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and AQIM? The MNLA and Ansar-al Din movements have seemed most willing to negotiate, and the MNLA has good knowledge of the northern terrain. Second, militarily there is a need for more men. Third, if the intervention proves successful, where will the Islamic fighters go? Algeria does not want them back on its

territory. Fourth, the Malian army is sceptical about external military intervention and the current ECO-WAS plan. Finally, UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon has stressed the humanitarian risks involved in an operation that results in large refugee flows.

Mali: The unexpected crisis, a year later...
by Marc-André Boisvert

Boisvert, M-A. 2012. Mali: The unexpted crisis, a year later... [Online]
Available: <http://matsutas.wordpress.com/2012/12/31/mali-the-unexpected-crisis-a-year-later-guest-post-by-marc-andre-boisvert/>
[Accessed 20 March 2013]

31 DECEMBER 2012, ACADEMIC/BLOG

Before the military coup of March 2012, the international community considered Mali an example of democracy and stability. Malians themselves, however, related to their state in terms of “corruption, lack of real democracy and injustice”. This text argues that analyses of Mali have been deficient, possibly because the crisis was unexpected for outside spectators and Malians, including the coup-makers themselves: “From the inside, the whole crisis has been a question of seizing opportunities while a failed state fell apart”.

Analyses of the crisis to date have been problematic since they oversimplify the Malian conflict by resorting to binaries: Tuaregs vs. the rest; Islamists/Al-Qaida/Ansar Dine vs. the secular; Malians vs. foreigners; and pro-ATTs vs. anti-ATTs. Instead, several aspects need to be considered, as well as the individual clashes that precipitated the crisis. Marc-André Boisvert identifies three main causes.

First, ethnicity plays a major role. Since independence, Mali has been shaken by ethnic tension. There have been several Tuareg rebellions, but there are also other ethnic militias, such as Songhai Ganda Koy. Politicians in Bamako exploit ethnic mobilisation to address political crises, including economic problems in the south. This has created increasing tension between south and north. Second, the rise of political Islam is an important aspect of the current crisis. Islam has become increasingly political in Mali and the High Islamic Council has been “mediating tensions, sending envoys to the north and putting pressure on all actors”. Third, the Malian army is fragmented and there has been fighting between different factions. Ganda Koy members are, for example, upset because they were recruited into the lower ranks in the 1990s while Tuareg re-

bels were given higher positions. Power, money and ambitious young men is a dangerous mixture and Western involvement in Mali needs to prioritise reforming and training the army.

Mali faces a social, economic and humanitarian crisis. It is problematic that the international community views the Islamists as the main challenge, when they are not.

JANUARY 2013

World Report 2013 on Mali, by Human Rights Watch

Human Rights Watch. 2013b. *World Report 2013: Mali*. [Online] Human Rights Watch.
Available: <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2013/country-chapters/mali>
[Accessed 20 March 2013]

2013, NGO/REPORT

This report notes that all parties to the conflict in Mali have committed war crimes such as sexual abuse, looting, pillage, torture, rape, summary execution, child soldier recruitment as well as amputations and other inhumane acts associated with Islamic law. Islamic groups have also destroyed numerous Muslim shrines and at least one Dogon cultural site. The conflict has led to the displacement of about 400,000 northern residents. Despite the attention and possible prosecution by the ICC, the Malian government has not investigated or prosecuted crimes committed by its army.

The report surveys documented abuses by Tuareg separatist rebels, Arab militias, Islamist groups and Malian soldiers. It argues that “ECOWAS, African Union, United Nations, European Union, France and the United States have not given adequate consideration of the potential abuse by Malian security forces and pro-government militias, or the issues, including endemic corruption and ethnic tension, that has given rise to the crisis”.

Al Qaida, idea in motion, by Paul Rogers

Rogers, P. 2013b. *Al-Qaida, idea in motion*. [Online]
Available: <http://www.opendemocracy.net/paul-rogers/al-qaida-idea-in-motion>
[Accessed 20 March 2013]

4 JANUARY 2013, ACADEMIC/ONLINE

In relation to the advance of Al-Qaeda-linked groups in northern Mali, Paul Rogers argues that Al-Qaeda is not a group or consortium but an idea with “the capacity to enter into and exert influence on local grievances in many diverse areas, often in

unpredictable ways”. Seemingly disparate regional phenomena are interlinked, claims Rogers.

The best recipe for protracted warfare in Mali is aerial bombing and rushed deployment of peacekeeping forces, by Mats Utas

Utas, M. 2013a. *The best recipe for protracted warfare in Mali is aerial bombing and rushed deployment of peacekeeping forces*. [Online]

Available: <http://matsutas.wordpress.com/2013/01/14/the-best-recipe-for-protracted-warfare-in-mali-is-aerial-bombing-and-rushed-deployment-of-peacekeeping-forces/> [Accessed 19 April 2013]

14 JANUARY 2013, ACADEMIC/BLOG

In this blog entry, Utas maps out the various actors involved in the conflict in Mali. He discusses actions, agendas and consequences.

Utas elaborates on what will happen next and writes that it is likely France will continue to bomb the rebels but will not deploy soldiers on the ground. Furthermore, it may be useful to look at earlier West African peacekeeping operations to understand upcoming events, particularly in relation to the rapid deployment of West African peacekeepers. The Nigerian missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s were not successful. Even though the interventions limited the intensity of the conflicts, they also prolonged them. The peacekeepers became “part of the war economy, trading in natural resources, loot and arms”. Utas warns that “a West African PKO will become part of the conflict and individual forces will try to benefit economically from their presence – where the most troubling perspective would be involvement in the trans-Saharan drugs trade”.

Utas maps out the different movements and groups operating in northern Mali. MNLA and other earlier Tuareg groups have fought for northern independence since Mali itself gained independence, but have also seemed interested in being included in the Malian state. Since the MNLA started to terrorise and loot northern towns and villages, Ansar Dine seems to be preferred by the local population. This support seems also to derive from Ansar Dine’s provision of security rather than popular “interest in their religious-political agenda”. These two movements have, however, declared their willingness to participate in peace talks with Bamako. Other movements in northern Mali are more troublesome. AQIM and MUJAO, both rooted outside Mali, have more “radical religious agendas”, and both movements are arguably obstacles to any peace

plan. There is also the pro-government Ganda Koy militia, created in the 1990s, that has been carrying out “atrocious raids against civilians in the north well into the 2000s simultaneously as western governments hailed Mali as a well-functioning democracy”.

Another obstacle to peace is the fragility of the political institutions in Bamako. The political elite, as well as the army, is internally divided. There is also the international drug trade that passes through Mali en route to Europe, from which both army members and rebel groups are believed to profit. Utas speculates that “an emerging shift in power, first opened up for the Ansar Dine led attack into the south and maybe also in fear of losing the fragile power they had in Bamako finally led France to take action showing that the old colony still lies well within France’s sphere of interest”. Finally, three consequences of France’s attack on northern Mali are presented. First, France becomes a more attractive target for terrorist attacks. Second, France now has the responsibility to help Mali to peace. Finally, France must “counteract the obvious rejuvenation of radicalization that always follows military attacks by outside forces and more especially so in the religiously over-politicized world order of our times”.

Mali, dynamic of war, by Paul Rogers

Rogers, P. 2013e. *Mali, dynamics of war*. [Online]

Available: <http://www.opendemocracy.net/paul-rogers/mali-dynamic-of-war> [Accessed 20 March 2013]

15 JANUARY 2013, ACADEMIC/ONLINE

French intervention in Mali intensifies and transforms the war there. It will probably be a long-term engagement for international actors, one that offers possibilities for Islamist forces far beyond the region, according to Rogers.

“[H]aving consolidated their control of northern Mali”, Ansar Dine and other Islamist paramilitaries began “to advance towards Mali’s southwest” to “occupy centres of population of strategic value”. For example, the occupation of Konna on 11 January, 60 kilometres northeast of Mopti, which has a large airfield, was a possible trigger for the decision of 12 January 2013 to intervene. The initial purpose of the intervention was to secure Mopti and Sevare and begin to strengthen the security of Bamako. This involvement could be used by jihadist propagandists via social media to depict yet another cruel attack on Islam. The intervention was also unexpected, since the UN was indicating that

no intervention could be mounted before September 2013 at the earliest, after substantial training of West African troops and access had been gained to more Western troops.

Behind Mali's conflict: Myths, realities and unknowns, by Bruce Whitehouse

Whitehouse, B. 2013a. *Behind Mali's conflict: Myths, realities and unknowns*. [Online]
Available: <http://bridgesfrombamako.com/2013/01/16/behind-mali-conflict/>
[Accessed 20 March 2013]

16 JANUARY 2013, BLOG/ACADEMIC

In this blog entry, Bruce Whitehouse argues from an anthropological perspective that the conflict arose because of state failure as a result of factors internal to Mali. He stresses the consideration of local realities.

In this text, Whitehouse discusses the motives behind France's Operation Serval and the general international interest in Mali. First, France and the West are not intervening because of Mali's mineral resources, a theme argued elsewhere. Whitehouse agrees that minerals could be a factor behind foreign intervention, but are not a reason to start a war. Mali has potential reserves of oil and gas, but they remain to be discovered. Mali is a top gold producer in Africa and gold is a key source of revenue. However, gaining "cheap access to Mali's gold or other minerals" is not difficult and there have always been generous deals with mining companies, since the Malian state lacks the capital and human resources to extract minerals. Second, it has been reported that several Malian officers trained through a US military programme defected to the rebels. Whitehouse notes, however, that US-trained personnel have fought on both sides of the conflict. Third, another argument is that France intervened in Mali for neocolonial and imperialist reasons. Although there are economic interests at stake and paternalistic sentiments towards a former colony, Whitehouse points out that the French government was "extremely reluctant to intervene". It preferred to support the West African regional operation, and Operation Serval was a last resort caused "by the collapse of the Malian army at the hands of Islamist forces in the Mopti region". Fourth, Mali has been called strategically important, but Mali has no oil and is remote. It is the presence of successful Islamist groups there that makes Mali interesting, argues Whitehouse. Fifth, it is wrong to perceive Mali as the new frontline in the war between Islam

and the West. Even though Malians are predominantly Muslim, they generally support the French intervention and have no interest in the views expressed by northern Islamist groups. "At its core, the conflict in Mali is not between Muslims and non-Muslims; it's between Muslims with different visions of Islam, and religion is by no means the most important issue at stake". Finally, Whitehouse explains that "the command structures of AQIM and MOJWA (Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa) in particular are dominated by Algerians and Mauritians" and are widely viewed by Malians "as *foreign* invaders, motivated by racism and greed as well as perverted, even ignorant views of their faith".

Letter to French President Hollande on situation in Mali, by Jean-Marie Fardeau and Kenneth Roth

Fardeau, J-M. and Roth, K. 2013. *Letter to French President Hollande on situation in Mali*. [Online] Human Rights Watch
Available: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/01/21/letter-french-president-hollande-situation-mali>
[Accessed 20 March 2013]

21 JANUARY 2013, NGO

France should adhere to international humanitarian law and take all precautions to avoid further harm to civilians. France and AFISMA should cooperate with the investigation by the ICC (the announcement by the prosecutor of the ICC to open an investigation was made on 16 January).

Algeria, Mali and beyond, by Paul Rogers

Rogers, P. 2013a. *Algeria, Mali and beyond*. [Online]
Available: <http://www.opendemocracy.net/paul-rogers/algeria-mali-and-beyond>
[Accessed 20 March 2013]

21 January 2013, ACADEMIC/ONLINE

Rogers discusses the relationship between the siege of the In Amenas gas-processing plant in Algeria and French intervention in Mali, which occurred within a ten-day period in early January. The attack on the In Amenas plant is related to internal Algerian politics and "the desire of the organizing group to demonstrate its capabilities in the context of ongoing competition with rival Islamist paramilitaries". The operation was large and bound to elicit a "tough response from the Algerian authorities", indicating that the organising group knew its members risked being killed. This in turn indicates determined motivation and Rogers argues that strong religious commitment was probably involved. Alge-

rian sources claim the insurgents planned to bring the hostages to southern Algeria and across the border to the ungoverned region of northern Mali. The hostages could have been used as a bargaining pawn to demand French withdrawal from Mali and the release of Islamist prisoners in Algeria. This points to “overall Islamist paramilitary revival across northern Africa”, which is also indicated by other events such as the assassination of the US ambassador in Benghazi on 11 September 2012.

The Malian conflict, however, may be driven by Islamist rebellion at the moment but is also “rooted in ... years of opposition by many Tuareg in northern Mali to their relative marginalization”. Rogers warns that France will not be able to withdraw quickly from Mali. There is a risk that prolonged conflict could create new alliances between Tuareg and Islamist elements.

Islamist propagandists’ worldview is a mirror-image of the West’s. In this view, “Islam has been under attack for decades, by western agents motivated by a venal crusader mentality”. Both France and Britain, on the other hand, view developments across north Africa in terms of the “War on Terror”, Mali and Algeria being closer to Europe than Pakistan and Afghanistan. There may be little connection between the In Amenas attack and French intervention, apart from their simultaneous occurrence, but both illustrate a similarity in the understanding of the threats by, and the responses of either side.

Mali, and the al-Qaida trap, by Paul Rogers

Rogers, P. 2013d. *Mali, and the al-Qaida trap*. [Online] Available: <http://www.opendemocracy.net/paul-rogers/mali-and-al-qaida-trap> [Accessed 20 March 2013]

25 JANUARY 2013, ACADEMIC/ONLINE

In this text, Rogers warns that “rhetoric on Al-Qaida might amplify rather than diminish the power of Islamist groups in Mali, Algeria and beyond”. The world has been here before, but the leaders have learned so little, writes Rogers.

The events and statements of early 2013 suggest that the “War on Terror” dating to 2001 is entering a new phase. The escalation of war in Mali and the seizure of the In Amenas gas facility in Algeria have focused international attention on North Africa. At the same time, there are “signs of an increase in Islamist influence among the opposition forces in Syria’s ongoing war, and of an intensified bomb-

ing campaign against government and *Shi’a* sites in Iraq”. The conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan went on for years, leaving “immense suffering, injustice and destruction” in their train. Is there “really an ‘existential’ threat to European states from Islamist groups in regions like the Sahel, which must be countered by military force?”, asks Rogers.

Al-Qaeda is more idea than movement: it is a “sense of common transnational identity and potency in various theatres” all over the world. Yet, “the main emphasis and motivation of particular groups is rooted in almost every case to the specific circumstances of the country or territory concerned”.

The war in Mali might become a long-lasting guerrilla conflict. If France remains in Mali, “the agenda will be set by the core elements of ‘remote-control’ war: armed drones, targeted assassination, special forces, privatized military, and repeated airstrikes”.

Mali, war after war, by Paul Rogers

Rogers, P. 2013f. *Mali, war after war*. [Online] Available: <http://www.opendemocracy.net/paul-rogers/mali-war-after-war> [Accessed 20 March 2013]

31 JANUARY 2013, ACADEMIC/ONLINE

Rogers argues that “the combination of western advance and rebel retreat in northern Mali echoes the initial phase of the anti-Taliban campaign in Afghanistan.” This similarity is also illustrated by the British military commitment. Other parallels with the anti-Taliban operation in November 2001 are “the speed of the French advance” and the minimal amount of actual fighting – the Taliban also chose to withdraw. The intervention also seemed successful at first, but then the Taliban regrouped and “could maintain its insurgency over the next decade”.

Depending on how Western states act, argues Rogers, the similarities with Afghanistan could end there. However, the current dilemma is that France wants to “reduce the scale of its intervention and transfer responsibility to the Malian army and regional forces, which will have been trained and supported by European Union military personnel”. Unfortunately, there is not enough time to complete this, since the intervention came much sooner than anticipated. There is ambiguity in Western actions, writes Rogers. “Major states are reluctant to get involved on the ground in direct combat”, but Malian and West African forces cannot “maintain control in an insecure region” without external support.

The solution could be negotiating with the rebels. This should include “serious offers to meet the legitimate complaints of many inhabitants of northern Mali (especially Tuareg) about their past treatment, persistent marginalization, and aspirations for autonomy”. Recent reprisals by the Malian army and growing anti-Tuareg sentiments in Bamako might hinder this. Finally, there seems to be a military escalation impending in Mali. To avoid mission creep, negotiations are needed, otherwise there is a risk of a prolonged counter-insurgency war in Mali.

FEBRUARY 2013

Mali: Beyond Counterterrorism, by Wolfram Lacher and Denis M. Tull

Lacher, W. and Tull, D. M. 2013. *Mali: Beyond Counterterrorism*. [Online] German Institute for International and Security Affairs

Available: http://www.swp-berlin.org/en/scientist-detail/profile/wolfram_lacher.html [Accessed 20 March 2013]

February 2013, REPORT/SWP COMMENTS

This paper outlines the different elites competing for power in Mali and tells of internal conflict, alliances, elite bargaining, criminal networks and historical grievances. It elaborates on the pros and cons of international involvement in Mali and makes recommendations for international actors. The main argument is that pacifying northern Mali depends directly on making progress in the political process in Bamako, and free and fair elections are key to this.

Lacher and Tull argue that there are several risks in the military intervention in Mali. First, the campaign against the extremists in the north may only result in conflict between local communities. Attacks on civilians by Malian and African troops could make the situation worse. Second, to create peace in the north the government in Bamako needs widespread support, which it currently lacks. Third, when external actors intervene, they inevitably become part of the conflict. The EUTM will have to deal with those who participated in the coup in 2012 as well as dealing with ethnic militias absorbed into the military. It is very important that external actors focus on creating a legitimate political process in Bamako.

The authors argue that at the heart of the war in Mali are two closely connected crises. In the north, there is a conflict between different ethnic elites, some strategically allied with extremists. Secondly, the government in Bamako currently lacks alliances

in the north, so there is little regional security cooperation. This is also why the conflict erupted in early 2012.

There are several roots to the conflict. First, there is ongoing conflict between northern elites. Tuareg tribes of aristocratic descent found their “dominant position in Kidal region increasingly eroded by the policies of the Malian leadership under President Touré (2002-2012)”. This led to increasing dissent among Tuareg elites towards the government in Bamako. Touré depended on collaboration with leaders of Tuareg groups previously vassal to the aristocratic Tuareg. In return, these groups were granted economic benefits, for example, through the flourishing drug trade. Lacher and Tull argue that AQIM expanded in the north because both Malian leaders and their allies were involved in criminal activities, which in turn created shared interests between terrorists, tribal leaders and high-level Malian decision-makers. In autumn 2011, Tuareg fighters returned from the Libyan civil war. This altered the power balance and the Tuareg groups not benefiting from President Touré’s grace, for example MNLA, could launch the rebellion in early 2012. The militias that had fought on the government’s side fled to southern Mali or Niger, but some joined the extremists, while others “formed a separate militia – the Arab Movement of Azawad (MAA)” (Lacher and Tull 2013:2). French military intervention further changed conditions in the political marketplace. When the bargaining positions of some armed groups against Bamako were weakened, some alliances disintegrated. MNLA chose, for example, to collaborate with France. The authors predict that extremists will continue to “fragment into small groups, some of which will move into neighbouring countries, while others will remain in Northern Mali to adopt guerrilla tactics” (Ibid:2) in order to avoid the French. The risk is that the conflict will develop “into a war between groups based on different ethnic and tribal groups, similar to what happened in the 1990’s” (Ibid:3). To avoid being attacked by France, some armed groups might distance themselves from the jihadists. Other groups, including the Berabiche and Lamhar Arabs, could see the intervention as an attack on their community and instead draw closer to the extremists.

The authors suggest a gradual “process whereby individual groups are encouraged to switch their allegiances to the government through a combination of military pressure and incentives” (Ibid:3). For example, positions in the national administration or

military could be offered. However, a prerequisite is an effective government in Bamako.

At the moment, write the authors, Bamako is in ongoing crisis. The interim president, Dioncounda Traoré, the coup leaders under Captain Amadou Sanogo and former Prime Minister Chieck Modibo Diarra obstruct one another. The coup leaders forced Diarra to resign in December 2012. Increasing involvement by France and the international community affects the balance of power in government. It was French intervention that finally ended the extremist offensive, thereby illustrating the incompetence of the coup leaders. President Traoré, who has been unpopular, gained more support when he sought help from France (Ibid:3). It is likely the French will try to limit the coup leaders' access to the political process. The French release of Beret Rouge officers could lead to factions within the army. Pacifying northern Mali depends directly on progress in the political process in Bamako (Ibid:4.)

On international involvement in Mali, Lacher and Tull outline potential effects. When the extremists advanced south, the international plan had to change and France intervened. The original plan was that AFISMA would be operational in autumn 2013 and then help the Malian army win back the north. EUTM was to prepare Malian soldiers to lead this operation.

The fact that the AFISMA operation began earlier than planned pushed Mali's neighbours' reservations aside. AFISMA was, for example, seen as politically problematic, since it would support an illegitimate government. There was also doubt as to whether the coup leaders would approve the operation, since ECOWAS wanted to remove them from power. The authors argue that not too much should be expected of AFISMA, with its limited and unprepared troops. Interestingly, Mauritania and Algeria, the two most important neighbours, do not participate because of fear of spillovers. Mauritania, whose elites have close ties with the Arabs and Tuaregs of Mali, also perceives the conflict as being "about 'black' soldiers from Mali and West Africa attacking 'white' groups in northern Mali" (Ibid:5).

The report then discusses the potential impacts of military intervention. If the government in Bamako is strengthened, it could refuse to enter into negotiations. France and AFISMA should try to open the way for negotiations and since the rebels are now weakened, the focus can turn to the core issues behind the conflict. Northern groups may be prepared to negotiate now they have been weakened,

but first a strong central government is needed. Free and fair elections, which at the moment seem remote, are key. For elections to be free and fair, the vast numbers of IDPs and refugees from the north need to return home. Moreover, France is now a key political player in Mali, something which could give rise to accusations of neocolonialism (Ibid:6). Finally, the authors make several recommendations: first, AFISMA would increase its legitimacy and access further funding if placed under a UN mission. Second, robust and mobile African units should partly replace the French army. Third, external actors should refrain from taking positions in the internal conflict. The focus should be on establishing a legitimate government in Bamako that can negotiate with the north. Fourth, the Malian army requires attention: it needs to maintain stability and security and refrain from being political. EUTM thus needs to focus on reforming the army and dealing with the coup leaders (Ibid:7).

The Mali conflict: Avoiding past mistakes,
by Anouar Boukhars

Boukhars, A. 2013. *The Mali conflict: Avoiding past mistakes.* [Online] FRIDE.

Available: <http://www.fride.org/publication/1105/the-mali-conflict-avoiding-past-mistakes> [Accessed 20 March 2013]

February 2013, POLICY BRIEF/FRIDE

Anouar Boukhars explores the root causes of the conflict in Mali. He discusses the political economy of war, power balances, the regional political marketplace and argues for inclusive negotiations and settlements. The general elections will be a quick fix but there are complex local and regional dynamics to be addressed. Humanitarian relief, political dialogue and military reform are top priorities for achieving reconciliation and recovery.

It is simplistic to view the conflict in Mali solely through the lens of Islamic radicalisation or as a north-south dispute. There is a need for a comprehensive strategy that addresses root causes, which are, according to Boukhar, weak and corrupt state institutions, ethnic tensions and competition over scarce resources.

Ethnic and tribal war is a risk. Divisions and antagonisms exist within Tuareg tribes between Ifoghas aristocracy and Imrad vassals, a division that has existed since Mali attained independence in 1960. The government in Bamako has played groups and tribes off against one another. Even though international actors, including France, may

prefer to collaborate with secular forces such as the MNLA, it is important to recognise that MNLA is a minority group lacking in support from the main Tuareg tribes. The French-led intervention, however, needs to prevent the Malian army or vigilante militias from reprisals against Tuaregs and other light-skinned Arabs. There are documented cases of torture, execution and abuse by Malian soldiers. Both MNLA and Islamists have terrorised the population, so there is a risk of acts of revenge in the north. These ethnic conflicts could spill over to neighbouring Niger and Mauritania. IDPs and refugees might not return if this type of violence persists, thereby compromising the fairness of the general elections planned for July 2013. Refugee camps could also “become breeding grounds for radicalism and terrorist recruitment” (Boukhars 2013:2). Transnational terrorist groups such as AQIM, which are involved in crime and the trans-border drug trade, benefit from the social and cultural division in northern Mali by being attractive sources of employment for the poor. The drug trade shifts the balance of power among the communities in the north, a circumstance that contributed to the 2012 rebellion (Ibid:2).

Boukhars discusses the motives for joining terrorist and criminal organisations in the region, and notes that alliances change when interests diverge. For example, there were defections when the French intervened. Boukhars argues that the only way to isolate AQIM is to include the Islamic Movement for Azawad, which split from Ansar Dine, in future negotiations with Bamako. “Terrorist groups like AQIM thrive on local insurgencies and can only be marginalized if they lose local support and sympathy”. At the moment, communities attempt to “readjust to the changing balance of power on the ground” and armed groups have “disintegrated into community-based militias, while others have transitioned into purely ethnic organizations”. The interests of these groups must be taken into account when the power balance is renegotiated in Bamako, argues Boukhars.

Terrorists “are by their very nature nomads” that recruit internationally. For example, the attack on the In Amenas gas field in eastern Algeria was “hatched in northern Mali and executed by a multinational group of militants who crossed through Niger and Libya” (Ibid:3). The lesson from Algeria is “that massive military budgets and battle-tested security forces are not enough to eradicate terrorism. In addition, the victory is only temporary if the

danger is not tackled but simply exported to neighbouring countries” (Ibid:4). However, “banking on eradicating terrorist groups is as illusory as relying on ill-disciplined and ill-trained African troops to suppress them”, argues Boukhars (Ibid:4). The main problem in Mali is that the political marketplace is dominated by greed, and all the main stakeholders in the conflict – the military, insurgents and government officials – seek influence and financial gain.

Politics is key to a durable solution in Mali. Drawing on US experience in Afghanistan, Boukhars argues that excluding tribes, as the US did with the Pashtun, could be a mistake; in Afghanistan it refuelled the insurgency. The problem with external intervention, continues Boukhars, is that it creates winners and losers when the priority should be political reconciliation. Representatives from all communities need to be included in a dialogue for peace (Ibid:4).

First, there is a need to embark on a political process in Bamako to create legitimate institutions and state structures. The intended general elections could increase the legitimacy of the Malian state, but it is likely that candidates from the old order will be put forward, which in turn will produce a smaller turnout. Second, it is important to consider past mistakes and lessons, and perhaps look at the inclusive national conference of 1991, after the end of Traoré’s 23-year rule, that started Mali’s journey toward democracy.

Finally, the EU should invest in development projects and civilian security and promote economic empowerment for all stakeholders. International actors need to coordinate their activities. The Malian army must be reformed and the judicial system strengthened. The EU should promote regional cooperation and monitoring of drug trafficking (Ibid:5). It is important to understand the relationship and connections between different conflicts in the region. Therefore, there is a need for both a local and regional approach. Mali must face up to the legitimate grievances of its population (Ibid: 6).

Conflict at the EU’s southern borders: The Sahel crisis, by Raffaella del Sarto and Simone Tholens

Del Sarto, R. and Tholens, S. 2013. *Conflict at the EU’s southern borders: The Sahel crisis*. [Online]

Available: <http://www.opendemocracy.net/opensecurity/raffaella-del-sarto-simone-tholens/conflict-at-eus-southern-borders-sahel-crisis>

[Accessed 20 March 2013]

1 February 2013, ACADEMIC/ONLINE

This paper offers an EU borderland perspective on the Sahel crisis. It argues that the Sahel can be viewed as a borderland of the EU.

The Sahel region has moved from the shadows of world politics and achieved geopolitical significance. At the moment, Operation Serval, mandated through UN Security Council Resolution 2085, is continuing in Mali. The Malian conflict is also a test of the EU's foreign policy ambitions. "Historical ties, geographical proximity, economic relevance and strategic pertinence seem to call for a robust EU intervention", argue Rafaella del Sarto and Simone Tholens. Current EU involvement in the Sahel aims at countering "the deterioration of the humanitarian and security situation that has marked the area over the past two years". On 17 January 2013, the decision to send in the EUTM Mali was taken at the Foreign Affairs Council. Two hundred and fifty civilian experts and 200 military staff will participate. At the moment there is broad framework of activities aimed at assisting governments in the Sahel region, write del Sarto and Tholens, for example, through the 2011 *EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel*.

Some of the countries bordering the so-called southern Mediterranean have gradually been drawn into cooperation with the EU over past decades. The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries are borderlands to the EU and the Sahel region has been "rendered a classic periphery of the EU borderlands, in which all things destructive, illegal, and potentially dangerous are coalescing", including "poverty, underdevelopment, environmental degradation, ineffective and weak states, heavily armed militias undermining any central authority, circulation of weapons, nomadic groups fighting for self-determination, and the presence of the Al Qaeda franchise in the area". Local conflicts in the Mauritania-Mali-Niger nexus are now perceived as close to the EU, and as highlighting the connection between internal and external security.

European interest in the region includes securing energy supplies and export markets. It also includes preventing unwanted migration and hindering drugs and terrorism from crossing the Union's borders. The authors argue the EU should expand its foreign policy role in the region since this would provide an opportunity for the newly established European External Action Service (EEAS) to assert its institutional independence and legitimacy. If the EU does not get involved, the US will, making it a

stronger actor in the region. Finally, providing assistance aligns with EU strategies, interests and ambitions. The conflict in Mali is a perfect opportunity to develop the EU's foreign policy capacity, but external actors need more knowledge of the regional dynamics, as the UN-sponsored US interventions in Somalia 1992-93 and current NATO involvement in Afghanistan should remind us.

Mali: Malian Army, Islamist Groups, Executed Prisoners, by Human Rights Watch

Human Rights Watch. 2013a. *Mali: Malian Army, Islamist Groups Executed Prisoners*. [Online] Human Rights Watch Available: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/02/01/mali-malian-army-islamist-groups-executed-prisoners> [Accessed 20 March 2013]

1 February 2013, NGO

Human Rights Watch (HRW) has reported on reprisals, crimes committed by all sides in the Malian conflict, suffering children, refugees, IDPs, torture and fear of further reprisals by the army. The organisation urges the Malian government to curb abuses by its soldiers and punish those responsible. The government should also restore security in the north and protect all, regardless of ethnicity. Reports show that Malian soldiers have been responsible for torture, summary executions and enforced disappearances of suspected Islamist rebels and alleged collaborators in northern Mali. Government soldiers have "appeared to be targeting members of the Peuhl, Tuareg, and Arab ethnic groups in the Timbuktu, Douentza, Gao, Sévaré, Boni, and Konna areas". During January 2013, HRW documented the summary execution of at least 13 men and enforced disappearances of five more from Sévaré and Konna by government soldiers.

When new hostilities broke out in the north in January 2013, about 22,000 Malian civilians, the majority of them ethnic Tuareg or Arabs, are believed to have fled the area for fear of reprisals by the army and, to a lesser extent, by civilians. The latter report that their towns and villages are empty of Tuaregs and Arabs. A man describes the current plight as being "too afraid to stay and too afraid to leave" because of military checkpoints. In this text, several eyewitness accounts are presented.

HRW urges Mali's international partners to "bolster accountability efforts and civilian protection in the north to help prevent further abuses". At the moment, there is a security vacuum in northern Mali and a need for protection that plans by international agencies are not addressing.

New Situation in Mali and wider Sahel,
by Mats Utas

Utas, M. 2013b. *New Situation in Mali and wider Sahel*. [Online]

Available: <http://matsutas.wordpress.com/2013/02/01/new-situation-in-mali-and-wider-sahel/>

[Accessed 19 April 2013]

1 FEBRUARY 2013, ACADEMIC/BLOG

In this text, a brief analysis of the recent international intervention is made. It is considered a success, but local networks are still operating and might strike back.

First, Utas briefly analyses the recent military efforts, in which actors like Algeria, AU, France, Mali and West African states have come together to drive the militias in northern Mali out of Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal into the deserted mountain areas of the region. Supporting troops from Niger and Chad retook Kidal and might help to establish long-term control over this region, even though this could create further problems with the Tuareg. Utas argues that retaking the territory was relatively easy because there were fewer insurgents than anticipated. The rebel military organisation seems to have been weaker than expected and fewer arms and ammunition supplies were available. The militias also seem to have limited support among the local population. It is, however, unlikely that extremist groups will simply go away and there is a risk that increasing radicalisation will follow in the footsteps of the intervention. Northern Mali is vast and inaccessible and the borders are porous. There are also trading networks of which these groups form part, and it is likely that the “big men” in Bamako will continue to trade with the rebels. Finally, international intervention is likely to create resistance among locals in northern Mali, potentially creating more recruits for the militias.

What's to love about Mali? Four things,
by Bruce Whitehouse

Whitehouse, B. 2013c. *What's to love about Mali? Four things*. [Online]

Available: <http://bridgesfrombamako.com/2013/02/04/whats-to-love-about-mali/> [Accessed 20 March 2013]

4 FEBRUARY 2013, ACADEMIC/BLOG

Whitehouse describes four positive aspects of Malian culture and life. They are a “combination of strong social capital, concern for dignity, national identity, and joking relations”. According to Whitehouse, these could help Mali through the conflict.

First, there is *mogoya*, “the eagerness to engage with other people socially in almost any situation”. Second, there is *Danbe*, which is about dignity, reputation and keeping your personal history alive. Third, *Faso Kanu*, which translates as “love of father’s house”. “People unfamiliar with Mali might be tempted to dismiss the country as another African basket case built around arbitrary European-drawn borders lumping together ethnic groups that ought to be separate”, writes Whitehouse. “Overall Malians coexist quite well within the borders they inherited”. He writes that thanks to *Danbe* and a historical memory stemming from the 13th-century founding of the Mali empire, Malians embrace their national identity. For example, they cheer their national soccer team *Les Aigles* even though they are at war. “So don’t say their national identity is a meaningless colonial-era construction”. Finally, *Senenkunya* is a system of joking relations “that cross-cuts distinctions of ethnicity, caste and clan”. Two strangers can discover they are joking cousins. They then move on to insulting each other in a joking way and become good friends.

However, writes Whitehouse, Tuaregs have no joking cousins. They perceive themselves as historical victims. The Tuaregs, with lighter skin, argue they’ve been constantly repressed by the Malian state and its associated ethnic militias. Their darker neighbours in northern Mali, on the other hand, tell of a history of enslavement by the Tuareg. “The recent recriminations against Tuaregs and Arabs in Timbuktu are rooted in history”.

To break the decades-long cycle of conflict in the north, “Tuareg leaders must face up to the legacy of slavery and racism that marks their people’s relations with black Africans. Officials of the central government must face up to the pattern of neglect and abuse that marks their relations with the Tuareg”.

Report from Mali, by Marc-André Boisvert

BOISVERT, M-A. 2013. *Report from Mali*. [Online]

Available: <http://matsutas.wordpress.com/2013/02/11/report-from-mali-by-marc-andre-boisvert/>

[Accessed 19 March 2013]

11 FEBRUARY 2013, ACADEMIC/BLOG

This blog entry discusses several background factors to the conflict in Mali, the contemporary situation and potential future consequences. Marc-André Boisvert’s short summary answer to the complex questions about the conflict is that: “The War in Mali occurs in one of the harshest, poorest and

most isolated places (!) in the world. Beyond the complexity of the terrain, there are also numerous actors with centuries of history behind [them]". He writes that it has been difficult for journalists to access the conflict and that in 2012, Mali was "the under-reported crisis". He goes on to express the fear that journalists will move on to the next emergency before the conflict in Mali is really over.

Boisvert divides the conflict into the "capitalized war in Mali" and the "uncapitalized war in Mali". The onset of the latter can probably be dated to January 2012, when the Tuaregs "launched their offensive". The conflict unfolded with the military coup on 22 March followed by the Salafist takeover of "two-thirds of the country one week later". Thereafter the "capitalized war" was quiet until the recent escalation with the French army supporting the Malian army to liberate the north. This conflict will probably end soon and attention will shift elsewhere. The "un-capitalized war", on the other hand, has been going on since the country's independence, if not before, and it is unlikely to end soon.

Boisvert then discusses potential consequences of the conflict and international involvement in it. First, there is a "war on the people of Mali" in which civilians will suffer. Second, the Al-Qaeda-affiliated groups have only retreated. They will continue to reap economic profit from the drug trade and illegal trafficking and are likely to return. Third, there is still no solution to the Tuareg claim to independence. Their rebellion and the MNLA are not popular in the eyes of the Malian public and Tuaregs are afraid of violent reprisal and retaliation. Many non-Tuareg youths have also joined the fighting, motivated by economic incentives, and are now likely to be rejected by their own communities. Many Malians speak of justice to be realised. Fourth, the Malian army needs reform and professional peacekeeping is required. Finally, the political crisis in Bamako needs resolution, perhaps through new elections. However, further reform of political institutions is pivotal to ending the conflict. However, warns Boisvert, the war in Mali is likely to last several years.

What threat from Mali's Islamist groups?

by Bruce Whitehouse

Whitehouse, B. 2013d. *What threat from Mali's Islamist groups?* [Online]

Available: <http://bridgesfrombamako.com/2013/02/11/what-threat-from-islamists/>

[Accessed 20 March 2013]

11 FEBRUARY, 2013, ACADEMIC/BLOG

In January, UK Prime Minister David Cameron declared that Islamist terrorist groups in Africa are a threat to global stability. At the time of writing, the first ever suicide bombings in Mali had taken place in Gao. MUJAO, an offshoot of AQIM, claimed responsibility.

Whitehouse argues there is a tendency among analysts to view AQIM first and foremost as a criminal enterprise intent on smuggling and kidnapping rather than jihad. He refers to two books (Daniel 2012 and Fowler 2011) that describe AQIM as driven by "intolerant dogma and virulent anti-Western zeal", and to Mokhtar Elmokhtar, the AQIM leader who coordinated the hostage debacle in Algeria, as a very pious Muslim. "If they think like Al Qaeda, fight, kill and die like Al Qaeda and say they are Al Qaeda, then quite simply they are" (Fowler 2011).

When Operation Serval began in January, writes Whitehouse, AQIM was thought to have up to 1,000 fighters. The organisation is also trying to internationalise the conflict in Mali, not only by orchestrating the In Amenas attack, but also by bringing fighters from Nigeria's Boko Haram to train for several months in Timbuktu.

Whitehouse argues that the Islamists are driven by ideology, but also have considerable financial resources. This means they are likely to put up a fight that could last years.

Mali: The fallacy of ungoverned spaces

by Yvan Guichaoua, part 1

Guichaoua, Y. 2013a. *Mali: The fallacy of ungoverned spaces.* [Online]

Available: <http://matsutas.wordpress.com/2013/02/14/mali-the-fallacy-of-ungoverned-spaces-by-yvan-guichaoua/> [Accessed 20 March 2013]

14 FEBRUARY 2013, ACADEMIC/BLOG

This text argues that northern Mali is not an "ungoverned space", as UK Prime Minister David Cameron has recently proclaimed. The idea that the current terrorism has grown in a political vacuum fails to take account of the political and social realities of Mali. On the contrary, Yvan Guichaoua writes, the milieu within which AQIM and Tuareg separatism have sprung is a "heavily governed space", where different elites compete for power. The central government in Bamako has been collaborating with these elites for years to create and maintain stability in the north. AQIM has been present and tolerated for a long time. The two actors have even collabo-

rated during several hostage negotiations. Another example is that between 2006 and 2009, when Ibrahim Ag Bahanga, a Tuareg officer, led a rebellion, the government collaborated with other groups in the north to stop him. In return, these groups were protected by the state and could continue with the flourishing drug trade unpunished. Guichaoua also notes that even though the north has faced Tuareg uprisings since Mali's independence from France in 1960, there is no consensus among Tuaregs. There are also plenty of other communities in the north, such as the Arabs, Songhay and Fulani, not all of whom strive for independence.

The system of governance built on shared political and economic interests between Bamako and northern elites fell apart when MNLA, armed with weapons from Libya, drove out the Malian army in early 2012, shifting its loyalties from Bamako to AQIM. Thus, the division of Mali had "occurred because of poisonous relations established between the north and south".

If the conflict in Mali is viewed by international actors through the lens of ungoverned spaces, the solution would be to fill the northern political vacuum with legitimate institutions and administration. This will be impossible, argues Guichaoua, since the central authorities in Bamako, the main power-holders in Mali at the moment, are not themselves legitimate. Rather, relations between north and south must be considered, as well as the fact that northern Mali has been "heavily governed", even though the system of governance has benefited only a few, particularly the elite in Bamako. The challenge for Western donors is to give voice to the marginalised. A bottom-up, inclusive approach is needed to give those previously excluded from power a voice.

Mali: Towards a neo-trusteeship?

by Yvan Guichaoua, part 2

Guichaoua, Y. 2013b. *Towards a neo-trusteeship?* [Online] Available: <http://matsutas.wordpress.com/2013/02/26/mali-towards-a-neo-trusteeship-by-yvan-guichaoua/> [Accessed 20 March 2013]

26 FEBRUARY 2013, ACADEMIC/BLOG

In the second part of Guichaoua's analysis of the current situation in Mali, French intervention and its potential consequences are analysed. In brief, Guichaoua argues that the intervention removes "the lid on complex and heated intercommunity dynamics", and shifts the power balance by granting some players legitimacy from the outside but not

others. This, warns Guichaoua, might increase tensions between groups in Mali and could be used by the jihadists. It also provokes extrajudicial violence, as already seen in the actions of the Malian army against Arabs in Timbuktu. Once the violence has ceased, a participatory and inclusive peace and reconciliation process is needed.

The official motive for the intervention in Mali on 11 January 2013 was preventing Bamako from falling into the hands of the Islamist militias who had begun to move south. French intervention was also arguably motivated by security concerns, including preventing future terrorist attacks on French soil. The intervention will shift the balance of the political marketplace in Mali and create winners and losers, new players and power-holders. France chose, for example, to ally itself with MNLA for strategic reasons, since MNLA had the "intel and ... local auxiliaries" needed on the ground. France is also working with the Malian army, whose presence in the north is complicated. The army has a tendency, writes Guichaoua, to "terrify Tuareg populations". In Timbuktu, where Arabs form a large part of the population, France went in with the army. This resulted in reprisal killings, looting of Arab shops and disappearances.

The challenge is to create a legitimate political system and to make the transition to peace locally rooted, bottom-up and inclusive. The recipe for success is "wide, bottom-up consultations; micro-level peace-building efforts; the reactivation and eventual reconfiguration of decentralization policies; ambitious infrastructural investments; highly sensitive discussions over the composition of security forces and their territorial deployment, religious dialogue; and, of course, electoral processes". If the UN takes over the process, a new layer of governance based on the UN's institutional understanding will be added. The risk is that a neo-trusteeship will emerge that "distributes power among various institutional actors under the auspices of multilateral organizations". The chosen local partners may not be legitimate in the eyes of local Malians.

Mali: What we must get right before world's attention falls elsewhere, by Jeremy Konyndyk, Mercy Corps

Konyndyk, J. 2013. *Mali: What we must get right before world's attention falls elsewhere*. [Online] The Guardian Available: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters/2013/feb/19/mali-worlds-attention-elsewhere>

[Accessed 20 March 2013]

19 FEBRUARY 2013, NGO

“Mali needs aid donors to focus on resilience, a clear mission for peacekeepers, and peace-building at grassroots in the north”.

The challenge right now is to restore a degree of normality in northern Mali. There is a need to deal with “a humanitarian emergency and building peace amid weak governance and worsening ethnic tensions”.

The first priority should be reopening access to the north. After the offensive, access has been limited and food supplies to commercial markets and humanitarian aid have been largely blocked as a result of restrictions on movement, general insecurity and closure of trade routes with Algeria. Second, the role of aid in Mali needs to be rethought. Traditional humanitarian aid “treats the symptoms, but not the root causes”. Aid that enhances resilience is needed: that is, relief and development toolkits to help communities anticipate and adapt to shocks. Third, peace and security is needed in combination with the aid strategy. A strong government is required and “the lack of peacekeeping experience among many of the countries contributing troops to the Afisma mission in Mali – notably Chad, a major contributor with desert combat experience but little on the peacekeeping side”, is concerning. Fourth, the UN must build a strong human rights monitoring mechanism to complement the force. Finally, “high-level political dialogue between Mali’s interim government and northern groups paired with local peace-building initiatives across the north” are needed.

Mali: The People Behind the Headlines,

by Rosemary McCarney

Mc Carney, R. 2013. *Mali: The People Behind the Headlines.*

[Online] The Huffington Post

Available: http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/rosemary-mccarney/mali-crisis-malnutrition_b_2736033.html

[Accessed 20 March 2013]

22 FEBRUARY 2013, NGO

Almost 400,000 people, mainly women and children, have fled to the southern parts of Mali or into neighbouring countries. Behind “the vast geopolitical backdrop of military forces fighting rebel extremists” are the Malian people, in need of help and attention. Rosemary McCarney warns of extensive food insecurity. Before the escalation of conflict, more than 2 million people were at risk of food insecurity in Mali, according to the UN. Children are vulnerable to acute malnutrition.

Understanding Mali’s “Tuareg problem”,

by Bruce Whitehouse

Whitehouse, B. 2013b. *Understanding Mali’s ‘Tuareg problem’.* [Online]

Available: <http://bridgesfrombamako.com/2013/02/25/understanding-malis-tuareg-problem/>

[Accessed 20 March 2013]

25 FEBRUARY 2013, ACADEMIC/BLOG

Whitehouse argues that an independent Tuareg state will not solve the “‘Tuareg problem’ whatever it is”. In this text he discusses who the Tuareg are and highlights the differences within the group as well as their historical role as both oppressors and oppressed. Thus, Whitehouse points out, there are different understandings of history in Mali and the Tuareg are not a uniform category. Simplistic categories to describe the people and their mutual relations cloud our understanding of the conflict. Whitehouse argues that the conflict will continue until “Maliens of all backgrounds can meet for open dialogue about the crimes they have endured”.

Whitehouse finds that current analyses by Western officials and journalists are centred on binaries that divide the Malian population into north and south, North African and sub-Saharan, white and black, and good guys and bad guys. He explores what the people called “the Tuareg” are. First, they are a minority within both the north and in Mali. The CIA World Factbook estimates that the “Tuareg and Moor” account for 10 per cent of Mali’s population. A 2009 census on languages spoken in Mali shows that 3.5 per cent speak Tamasheq, the language of the Tuareg, as their mother tongue. In northern regions this is higher, up to 32 per cent. Arabs make up 4 per cent in the Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal regions and 1 per cent nationally. Second, most Tuaregs are black. Tuaregs divide themselves into categories determined by skin colour and lineage. The dark-skinned are usually called Bella (in Songhay) and descend from slaves held by high-status Tuareg, who in turn are descendants of slave owners. Darker-skinned Tuaregs were “among the first victims of war crimes committed by rebels of MNLA last year”. Third, the Tuaregs are not united and many do not support the separatist movement. The MNLA is “a minority within a minority”. Fourth, the Tuaregs have not been excluded from Mali’s government. “Following the insurgencies in 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, for example President Amadou Toumani

Touré's first prime minister (2002-2004). They may not have been well represented, like Malians everywhere, but they were represented".

Recently, innocent civilians, both Arab and "Tuareg", have been abused and killed by the Malian army. This has been denied by Mali's interim president, Traoré. However, argues Whitehouse, the Tuareg are not an oppressed minority, and southern blacks are not aggressors towards northern white Tuaregs. The Tuaregs have been slaveholders who dominated their darker skinned neighbours. This history has exacerbated intergroup relations. Some Malians even see Tuaregs as racists who refuse to accept black majority rule.

Post-Conflict Mali: Reprisal or Reconciliation?

by Andrew Lebovich

Lebovich, A. 2013. *Post-Conflict Mali: Reprisal or Reconciliation?* [Online] Think Africa Press
Available: <http://thinkafricapress.com/mali/reprisal-or-reconciliation-mali-post-conflict-peace>
[Accessed 20 March 2013]

27 FEBRUARY 2013, ACADEMIC/ARTICLE

Andrew Lebovich argues that national discourse and dialogue on reconciliation, shared history and values are necessary in post-conflict Mali in order to avoid reprisals. Long-term post-conflict planning is needed.

Lebovich notes that Mali has a history of Tuareg rebellion and that previous periods of peace were always fragile and quickly forgotten. He writes that in Gao, militants are currently hiding nearby and there is an overhanging threat of assaults. In Kidal, the MNLA and Islamic Movement of the Azawad collaborate with France and Chad, but the absence of the Malian army creates confusion in Bamako. In Timbuktu, many violent reprisals have occurred, including disappearances and detentions among local Tuaregs and Arabs. This has attracted international attention and there is to be an inquiry.

Lebovich discusses whether there will be reconciliation towards the northern rebels, or reprisals. The Bamako government has issued arrest warrants for rebels and Islamist leaders, and rebels have been dismissed from the army. The vice president of the High Islamic Council (HCI), Chief Ousmane Madani Haidara, who is challenging the organisation's current president Mahmoud Dicko, has spoken out against the rebels, both nationalist and Islamist. This indicates the increasing political importance of religion in Mali, writes Lebovich, and hints at the post-conflict difficulties and challenges that will have to

be faced. He writes that general opinion in the south seems to be to "sooner tolerate jihadists and Islamists in the north than the MNLA".

Looking at history, Lebovich describes four Tuareg rebellions since Mali's independence in 1960. The first, in the area around Kidal in 1963, ended in repression. The second in the 1990s was perpetrated by rebels who had received training from Qaddafi in Libya, and resulted "in the 1991 Tamanrasset Accords and the more comprehensive 1992 National Pact." The rebellions in the 1990s and in 2006 resulted in a promise to the north to "promote economic development, administrative decentralization and the integration of former rebels into Mali's administration and security services". This promise has never been adequately kept.

The solution for northern Mali is, according to Lebovich, a national discourse on shared identity. From interviews in Bamako with "northern politicians and residents from different ethnic backgrounds", Lebovich found that many want a "dialogue between villages, communities, regions as well as nationally, based on a shared Malian identity and a common sense of the histories of geographic co-existence and intermarriage". The international community can help this dialogue move forward. However, feelings of insecurity among northern people will grow as time passes, and attitudes in the south are hardening. This might lead to difficulties in dealing with "the many legitimate grievances of northern populations, including Tuareg". Post-conflict planning must go "beyond short-term military goals".

Winning the War, Losing the Peace in Mali,

by Hannah Armstrong

Armstrong, H. 2013. *Winning the War, Losing the Peace in Mali.* [Online] New Republic
Available: <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/112539/malis-ethnic-tensions-fester-after-fighting>
[Accessed 20 March 2013]

28 FEBRUARY 2013, ACADEMIC/ARTICLE

Hannah Armstrong warns that even though northern Mali has been liberated from jihadist rule, peace and integration will be difficult to achieve. "A harrowing Tuareg insurgency followed by an Arab-led jihadi occupation depended on existing divisions in a region where most of the residents belong to darker-skinned Malian ethnic groups such as the Songhai". She continues: "Ethnic tensions now hang like storm clouds over efforts to restore peace and stability".

MUJAO made Gao their capital and imposed sharia law. When they took control in May 2012,

they had support from Arabs and jihadis but also local Songahis and other dark-skinned West Africans. Armstrong argues that the people of the north were in a way “predisposed in principle to adhere to Sharia”. Initially MUJAO was lenient, its rule brought cheaper food and gas and the movement was accepted and liked by many. However, its brutality increased progressively and sharia was imposed more harshly. In August 2012, public amputations were documented, there were public whippings and a ban on TV, soccer and cigarettes. “Every single victim of Sharia punishment belonged to local black ethnic groups; light-skinned, often foreign, judges decided their fates in foreign languages and communicated with them via translators”. MUJAO collaborated with Arab drug traffickers in return for money and fighters. Armstrong writes that “local Songhais, Peuls, and Bellas” now view the terms “Arab” and “trafficker” as synonyms. In spite of the severity of jihadist rule, Armstrong notes that many locals state their preference for MUJAO rule over the previous “reign of terror”, when Tuareg rebels joined with the jihadis. They claimed to be liberating the north but looted, murdered and raped, specifically targeting dark-skinned ethnic groups. In fact, writes Armstrong, they merely “set the stage for jihadis to grab power by restoring civil order and a simulation of justice”. These rebel crimes should also be seen in historical context, particularly the enslavement of darker-skinned ethnicities such as the Peul, Songhai and Bella (Tuareg) by lighter-skinned Tuareg.

Armstrong writes that the Malian army and northern locals feel that light-skinned northern ethnicities are at the heart of Mali’s problems. By the time of her visit to Gao, the Malian special police office had detained many Arabs and Tuaregs.

The counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism strategies of Western actors obscure these problems, and “regardless of when French forces depart ... the country, locals are expecting the ethnic recriminations and guerilla reprisals to continue into the foreseeable future”.

Mali, and remote-control war, by Paul Rogers

Rogers, P. 2013c. *Mali, and remote-control war*. [Online] Available: <http://www.opendemocracy.net/paul-rogers/mali-and-remote-control-war> [Accessed 20 March 2013]

28 FEBRUARY 2013, ACADEMIC/ONLINE

Mali faces many internal problems arising from historical and ethnic grievances and state failure, argues

Rogers. On the other hand, the current conflict is also characterised by terrorism and political Islam as a large transnational movement feeding on national dissent. The present international focus seems to be on the latter aspect, observes Rogers. International intervention in Mali offers insight into the changing nature of 21st century warfare, exemplified by the use of drones. Will Mali become yet another example of this type of war? A war in the shadows will foster public opposition and resentment, argues Rogers, as in Afghanistan and Iraq. Thus, Western states “risk provoking the reaction that defeated them in Afghanistan and Iraq”.

Britain is currently involved in combat operations in Mali through its Sentinel R1 radar reconnaissance-aircraft. The US has set up “a new base for Predator drones across the border in Niger”. France is likely to purchase the US Reaper within a few years. All this illustrates the “accelerating worldwide trend towards remotely-operated systems”, creating “security at a distance” or “below the radar of public accountability”. Other aspects of this type of war are the use of privatised military companies and special forces. This kind of warfare in Mali is a consequence of military failure in Afghanistan and Iraq, argues Rogers, and might become more typical of future war than those two campaigns, as there will not be thousands of US, UK or French troops involved.

MARCH 2013

Mali unmasked: Resistance, collusion, collaboration, by Morten Bøås and Liv Elin Torheim

Bøås, M. and Torheim, L.E. 2013. *Mali unmasked: Resistance, collusion, collaboration*. [Online] NOREF Available: <http://peacebuilding.no/Regions/Africa/Mali/Publications/Mali-unmasked-resistance-collusion-collaboration> [Accessed 19 April 2013].

MARCH 2013, REPORT/NOREF

This NOREF-report is based on in-depth interviews in Mali in February 2013 and considers the causes of the ongoing conflict. The report also scrutinises the strategies, stances and relations between key actors involved.

According to Morten Bøås and Liv Elin Torheim, there are several obstacles to peace in Mali. Even though the French-led military intervention forced Islamist rebels to retreat from the northern cities of Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu, challenges lie ahead. Northern Mali is vast and difficult to con-

trol. It is also factionalised and there is currently no united platform for negotiations with the interim government in Bamako. Bamako in turn is divided, with various political groups having different positions on the conflict, such as whether to negotiate with the north or support the international intervention. The Malian army is fragmented and in need of reform. In addition, there is a complex humanitarian emergency arising on the ground, caused by the war in combination with the 2011-12 drought. This has led to a large number of IDPs and refugees. The report argues that only the Malians can find a durable solution to the conflict, but there is a need for external stakeholder support in terms of “relief and development assistance” and “efforts to achieve peace and reconciliation” (Bøås and Torheim 2013:1).

According to Bøås and Torheim, the current conflict has similarities with the conflict in the 1990s, but there are notable differences. The involvement of criminal networks and the “global jihad” has complicated and internationalised the conflict. The military coup further altered the political context and negotiations with the north are likely to be more complicated than during the 1990s. The National Pact of 1992 and the Governance and Decentralisation Programme combined “political democratization, economic liberalization and administrative decentralization in a weak state” (Ibid:1) and were subsequently exploited by local “big men” and political elites in Bamako. The drug trade and other illicit businesses were allowed to thrive, creating more tensions in the region, as well as facilitating Islamist influence. Indeed, the National Pact aimed at solving a national problem instead “created a local problem that later would grow to once more become a national one” (Ibid:2).

Northern Mali has a history of conflict, including several Tuareg uprisings since independence in 1960. Tuareg unity has formed and dissolved over the years. Apart from the divisions among the Tuaregs, other northern communities such as the Songray, Peul and Arabs have not supported the Tuareg claim to independence. These divisions span nobility, ethnicity and lineages and increased after the 1992 National Pact. In 2006, Tuareg rebellion broke out once more, initially on a small scale but gaining strength after the fall of Qaddafi, when armed Tuareg fighters returned from Libya. The MNLA was established but non-Tuareg movements like the Islamist AQIM and MUJAO were able to take control of parts of the region after MNLA members

turned to looting and the Malian army “ran away” (Ibid:2). Interestingly, the “chaos, and ... looting, killings and sexual violence” committed by MNLA members “among what should have been their kin” (Ibid:2) could explain the success not only of the splinter Ansar-ed Din group but also AQIM and MUJAO (Ibid:2). While the MNLA had arms rather than public support, AQIM had for many years been part of the local power struggles and conflicts in the region. AQIM was well integrated into the community, with an image akin to an (armed) Islamic charity. AQIM initially emerged in the late 1990s, financed with money from hostage-taking, and gained popular support as “honest and good-minded traders” (Ibid:3). Its members distributed money, handed out medicine, married into poor families while gradually increasing the emphasis on its own interpretation of Islam. MUJAO, on the other hand, is a more violent organisation, and it is “no coincidence that whereas AQIM only carried out one amputation as part of its implementation of *sharia* law in Timbuktu, MUJAO carried out 15 in Gao” (Ibid:3).

The report then considers the Malian army, which faces a structural problem as well as internal division between the “red berets” favoured by former President Amadou Toumani Touré and the “green berets”, who appointed Captain Amadou Sanoogo their leader during the 2012 coup. The army has also committed serious human rights abuses in areas it recaptured from Islamist militants.

There are also emerging cleavages in southern Mali, particularly Bamako. As the general election date approaches, “there is clearly the danger that competing political groups will attempt to outbid one another in terms of hardline positions on the ‘northern question’” (Ibid:3). The authors identify the three most important power players in Bamako as the United Front to Safeguard Democracy and the Republic (FDR), the Alliance Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (IBK), and the Co-ordination of Patriotic Organisations in Mali (COPAM). FDR consists of several civilian organisations and parties, including the largest party in Mali, the Alliance for Democracy in Mali. It “opposed the coup and Captain Sanoogo, and has also called for the resignation of interim prime minister Diarra” (Ibid:3). According to FDR, the Tuaregs are already well represented in the political system: “the last National Assembly had 19 representatives from the north, 11 of whom were of Tuareg or Arab ethnic origin” (Ibid:4). FDR could support dialogue with the north, if no armed actors

are included. The group supports the international intervention. IBK formed part of the FDR coalition but split away in April 2012. It comprises various groups that have expressed support for the presidential candidate and former Prime Minister Ibrahim Boubacar Keita. Like FDR, it opposes Captain Sanogo and wants no negotiations with armed groups. The coalition wants a quick return to democracy, but supports the international intervention half-heartedly, because it fears that negotiations with the MNLA could prove to be an exit strategy for France and ECOWAS. COPAM is the group most closely affiliated with Captain Sanogo. The coalition consists of “former student activists from the 1990s [...] and various populist groups arguing for a Malian nationalism based on the black population’s autochthonous claim to its right to control the state, with the unifying factor being a common anti-neocolonial rhetoric” (Ibid.:4). COPAM does not support interim President Dioncounda Traoré, opposes the international military intervention and argues for a Malian solution. Ghanda Koy, the former Song-ray militia, is associated with the alliance. COPAM supported the coup as an opportunity for real political change and is critical of the transitional government, since it wishes to cleanse the state of representatives of the Touré regime. COPAM argues that national consultations are needed before elections can be held and that there can be no dialogue and negotiations with the north. The authors write that COPAM’s “radical discourse” could make negotiations difficult and affect the coming elections, based on recent experience in Côte d’Ivoire (Ibid.:4).

In Mali, a complex humanitarian emergency is developing. Due to the drought of 2011-12, there is already widespread food insecurity in the Sahel. More than 400,000 people have fled the conflict zone in the north and there are more than 260,000 internally displaced persons. About 170,000 refugees are in refugee camps in neighbouring countries and face additional poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition. Those remaining in the north face insecurity, food scarcity and lack of water. It is difficult for international aid to find its way to Gao in particular, where MUJAO attacks have continued, and to Kidal, where uncertainty exists as to who is in control and the major supply route across the Algerian border remains closed. Timbuktu, by contrast, has been more peaceful and easier to reach (Ibid.:4).

The report finds that an inclusive dialogue between northern-based actors and Bamako needs to

be established. The divisions between north and south and within both make this difficult. The militant Islamist groups are partly integrated into the northern communities. This means they may need to be considered in a national dialogue on peace and reconciliation. The Malian army needs to be reformed and it is likely that Mali will face a protracted IDP and refugee crisis. The international community must “be prepared to deliver humanitarian assistance for quite some time” (Ibid.:5). Finally, only the Malians can solve the conflict but external stakeholders should play a role. Now is not the time to disengage from Mali (Ibid.:5).

Reconciliation efforts urgently needed in Mali to address displacement, by the United Nations News Centre

United Nations News Centre. 2013a. *Reconciliation efforts urgently needed in Mali to address displacement*. [Online] The United Nations
Available: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=44258>
[Accessed 20 March 2013].

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The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) stresses that “efforts to achieve reconciliation and combat impunity are needed to avoid long-term displacement in Mali”. UNHCR estimates that “some 430,000 people have been uprooted by the crisis. Of those, more than 260,000 are internally displaced and over 170,000 have fled as refugees to neighboring countries.” Adrian Edwards, spokesperson for UNHCR, states that “almost two months after the French intervention, the number of IDPs as well as refugees are still high – people fear returning to their homes even though the security situation has improved”.

“For IDPs and refugees alike the primary worry remains insecurity. Continued fighting, suicide attacks, reprisal attacks against some communities, the presence of mines and unexploded ordinance in the regions of Mopti, Gao, and Timbuktu, are all cited as reasons to delay returning”. Another reason is the absence of services in the north. Few schools are currently functioning. Most of the refugees are Tuareg or Arab and they fear reprisal attacks. For this reason, the number of refugees is growing.

Myten om Mali, by Morten Bøås

Bøås, M. 2013b. *Myten om Mali*. [Online] Dagsavisen Available:http://www.dagsavisen.no/nyemening/alle_mening/1002/subcat1021/thread268586/#post_268676 [Accessed 20 March 2013].

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The myth about Mali was that it was a democratic state. It was a poster child for democracy and governance reforms in West Africa. However, war in the north, Islamists, the drug trade, a military coup, and a political crisis in Bamako illustrate the falsity of this story. The myth was created by international organizations, bilateral donors, NGOs and the Malian state, all having their own motives for portraying Mali as a success.

It seems none of the reforms stemming from the National Pact in 1992 had the desired effect. Arguably, simultaneous political democratisation, economic liberalisation and administrative decentralisation in a very weak state were doomed to failure. These reforms were hijacked by an alliance of regional power-holders in the north and the political elite in Bamako, resulting in corruption and a blind eye being turned as long as profits could be made, writes Bøås. This context allowed AQIM and other Islamist groups to thrive in the north and to open the country to trade and trafficking in drugs and arms. It also created a dysfunctional Malian army, which eventually staged the coup d'état and opened up the north to Islamist influence when Tuareg fighters returned after the fall of Qaddafi with plenty of weapons and ammunition. This, combined with the French intervention and the attack on In Amenas have changed the dynamics and reveal the deep crisis into which the country has been plunged. However, now is also the time for a fresh start to cleanse the political system of corruption, nepotism and patron-client relationships.

There is a need for a new roadmap to democracy. The upcoming elections, whether on 31 July or later this autumn, will be a first step. They need to be monitored, since most of the former president's regime is still intact and wants to keep its power. Direct manipulation of the results or manipulation of the electorate is likely.

The country is divided and negotiations with the rebels in the north will be challenging. External support will be necessary. Many of Mali's most important political groups oppose negotiations with the rebels, but they are needed for the country to heal. This will be a great challenge, but there is no alternative.

Belmokthar og Zeid drept? Er dette et vendepunkt?

by Morten Bøås

Bøås, M. 2013a. *Belmokthar og Zeid drept? Er dette et vendepunkt?*. [Online] Dagsavisen Available:http://www.dagsavisen.no/nyemening/alle_mening/1002/subcat1021/thread268815/#post_268815 [Accessed 20 March 2013]

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Chad's military forces in Mali have reportedly killed two central Islamist leaders, Belmokthar and Abou Zeid. If true, this is good news for Chad and its President Deby, who wants to secure support for his regime from the West, writes Bøås. For the leaders of the African Union (AU) and ECOWAS this is also important news, since it shows they can achieve results that have eluded French soldiers. This news, if corroborated, will be used for strategic purposes by various actors in Mali and the Sahel. However, asks Bøås, will this generate peace and security for the people of northern Mali?

The killings do not mean the imminent defeat of Islamist movements. Abou Zeid, although a key AQIM leader, is likely to be easily replaced, given the internal organisation and structure of the movement. Belmokthar had been a central figure in the network linking Islamists and the criminal groups with whom the Islamists collaborated for financial reasons. After the attack on In Amenas, however, Belmokthar lost this key position because the criminal networks were not keen to cooperate with the most wanted man in the region. Belmokthar had no central role in AQIM over the last year, but did have symbolic value after the In Amenas attack.

Bøås argues that to measure the strength of Islamist insurgents in northern Mali, it is better to focus on their strategies of integration with locals. During the period when they controlled the three most important towns in northern Mali, Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu, order was established and Islamists continued the work they have been doing in the area for several years. The local population saw them as honest traders, while remaining sceptical of their version of sharia. During their period of predominance, the Islamists handed out free medicine and a local hospital in Timbuktu was allowed to continue running. If we are to understand Islamist movements in this part of Sahel, we need to examine their actions in the areas they controlled or continue to influence. Gao, for example, is officially controlled by the French and Malian army, but evidence shows that at least some locals support the

Islamists, or perhaps are convinced they will return the day the international forces choose to withdraw.

Military intervention is needed, but the social, political and economic problems faced by the people of northern Mali should be addressed if there is to be a long-term solution to the conflict.

Two out of three victims of leftover munitions in Mali are children, UN says, by the United Nations News Centre

United Nations News Centre. 2013b. *Two out of three victims of leftover munitions in Mali are children, UN says*. [Online] The United Nations
Available: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=44280>
[Accessed 20 March 2013]

5 MARCH 2013, UNITED NATIONS

Since April 2012, 60 victims of explosive remnants of war have been reported. Of these, 53 were injured, including 38 children, and seven people were killed, including 5 children. Apart from leftovers from the current conflict, there is also historic landmine contamination, according to the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS)

The Mali Effect, by Stephen Ellis

Ellis, S. 2013. *The Mali Effect*. [Online]
Available: <http://www.opendemocracy.net/stephen-ellis/mali-effect>
[Accessed 20 March 2013]

7 March 2013, ACADEMIC/ONLINE

This text explores the larger connections between Islamist movements in North Africa and Sahara. It touches on nomadism and mobile populations in connection with Islamism and political Islam. Ellis views the wider Sahel as a borderland with mobile populations. Currently, North Africa and Sahara are “marked by a series of political transitions in which debates and struggles within Islam are central”. Therefore, what happens in northern Mali is linked to what happens in Egypt. These movements are trying to renew their societies through political Islam and Ellis argues that “many evolving disputes in north Africa and the Sahara fuse religious language and political impulse to powerful effect”. This is a time of “often bitter disputes about proper forms of religion that are also political struggles, in which modernizing and reforming ideas clash with traditional ones”. Islamist political movements like those in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya are linked with Islamist radicals who attack shrines and tombs.

Ellis points out the difficulty of finding independent information on the latest evolution of the conflict in Mali, since “the area where French, Chadian, Malian and other African troops are battling AQIM and its allies” is so remote. Fighting is currently going on in “the *Adrar des Ifoghas* mountain range in the Sahara desert, close to the border between Mali and Algeria”. There have also been attacks on the Malian army by jihadis in Gao, from which the jihadis were driven in January 2013. This, argues Ellis, might signify that guerrilla fighting will continue for a longer period. On the other hand, although the *Adhar des Iofghas* range contains water and Islamists have food, weapons and ammunition stockpiled there, supplies will run out. Escaping will be difficult since France controls the air and US drones are “being deployed from bases in the region”.

Ellis argues it is important to consider the spatial dimensions of the conflict as there is a connection to what happens in the wider Sahel region. The conflict in Mali is linked to what happens in Mauritania, Libya and “even Sudan and Egypt”, particularly given the history of the nomadic people of the Sahara.

When the Islamists in the mountains are defeated, a functioning state must be restored in Mali. This will not be a solution to “the long-term problem of how to deal with the hypermobile populations of the Sahara”. Ellis further notices that Mali’s neighbour Algeria, “an old-fashioned military-nationalist bureaucracy” is “oddly quiet”. After the civil war of the 1990s and 2000s, the country managed to suppress “its own radical Islamist movement”, partly by pushing Islamist leaders into the Sahara and over the border into Mali. This in turn led to hostage-taking campaigns and the payment of ransoms from European governments in particular. These “veteran jihadis”, some even having Afghan experience, writes Ellis, became AQIM. Algerian politicians also collaborated with Qaddafi to “dominate the political and commercial networks of the Sahara”, but after his removal there is a power vacuum in the region.

Ellis finally notes that a French success may limit the impact of the jihadi struggle in Mali on the countries south of the Sahara with large Muslim populations, including Nigeria, Côte D’Ivoire, Guinea and Senegal, all of which have problems of their own. He also notes that North Africa is “uncomfortably close” to southern Europeans.

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UNHCR Mali Emergency: <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4f79a77e6.html>