

The growing insecurity in Mali since the 2012 multidimensional crisis

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Abstract

Mali, like many countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America, is facing unprecedented insecurity. Everyone is working hard to find the probable causes are at the root of the security deterioration and possibly the beginning of a solution to alleviate the pain of the populations that suffer terribly from it.

A few weeks ago, the announcement of the massacre of 37 Fulani civilians wound the entire Malian nation in the village of Koulogon, Bankass town, Mopti region. It attributed this attack despite a denial to the alleged Dogon hunters who have been roaming the area for some time. It will at least be necessary to wait for the first investigations by the massively deployed security forces after the attack and the confessions of the arrested suspects to reach a conclusion on the identity of the perpetrators of this abominable act. The time reflects and seeks answers to what the country is going through. They must recognize it that Malian by nature is foreign to these kinds of barbarism.

It must be objectively acknowledged that the Malian State, as the first entity responsible for the stability and protection of people and their property, has sinned. Sinned for having politicized the security problem by refusing to attack the roots, sinned for having divided national public opinion instead of settling sovereign affairs, sinned for having softened, cajoled, pampered Mali's technical partners, namely foreign forces under the leadership of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the French forces (Barkhane) present on the battlefield, instead of telling them the truth, and finally sinned by saying a lot of untruth compared to the reality on the ground.

National reconciliation and unity remain major challenges for Bamako's central government, which has been facing a security crisis since the 2012 military coup.

Key words: Mali, insecurity, inter-community conflicts, religious leaders, foreign forces

INTRODUCTION

Mali is a vast semi-arid country landlocked in the Sahel belt, a low-income economy with little diversification and exposed to fluctuations in commodity prices. It's dynamic demography (18 million inhabitants in 2016) and climate change is an important issue for agriculture and food security¹.

Mali shortly after its accession to independence more precisely between 1962 and 1964, the regime of the first President Modibo Keïta, faced the rebellion launched from the Kidal region by fellaghas². Later, successively, each regime experienced its moment of instability linked to the rebellion of the Tuareg separatists. This instability, which successive governments have managed, has often been managed through the responses of the Malian armed forces or through the signing of pacts or agreements aimed at establishing peace. They must acknowledge it that the residual insecurity in the northern part of the country has spread to the center and south of the country, resulting in recent inter-community clashes. These crises contribute to increasing the vulnerability of populations and trigger conflicts over access to resources in high demographic pressure.

Since January 2012, Mali has been facing one of the most serious crises in its history since the country's independence on 22 September 1960: In mid-January, a blitz offensive by the

¹ <https://www.banquemonde.org/fr/country/mali/overview>

² <https://maliactu.net/mali-mali-les-grandes-dates-de-la-rebellion-touaregue-de-lindependance-a-nos-jours/>

Tuareg rebellion supported by armed Islamist groups seized nearly a third of the territory; on 22 March, on the eve of the presidential election, a group of coup soldiers overthrew President Amadou Toumani Touré (ATT), who had not represented himself and established a National Committee for the Restoration of Democracy (CNRDR)³. This multidimensional crisis has led to the massive exodus of many refugees to neighboring countries, namely Algeria, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mauritania.

The return to constitutional order after the military coup through the establishment of a transitional government chaired by a transitional President, who, with the support of technical partners including France, the European Union, the United Nations, and Japan, organized the 2013 presidential election. At the end of the presidential election won by the candidate Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta (IBK), the enormous challenge turned out to be the establishment of state authority through the reconquest of areas under the control of armed separatist movements, protecting citizens and their property, the in-depth reform of the Malian armed forces, the return of the State to the international scene, the reduction of unemployment, the improvement of the living conditions of each citizen, the fight against corruption, financial mismanagement and inequality. Unfortunately, despite the many measures put in place by the new regime since September 2013, Mali's security situation remains more than precarious and worrying. Today, we are witnessing the emergence of many actors such as separatist movements, terrorists, self-defense militias or traditional hunters (Dozo). The Central Delta is a perfect example of the complexity of managing the security crisis in the Mopti region, which has recently been plagued by inter-community clashes.

The laxity that prevails at the top of the State, the amateurism of the armed forces, which are poorly equipped,

³ <https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/rapmali592f.pdf>

malformed to face such adversaries in a theatre of combat, are at the root of the rampant insecurity.

1. The 2012 military coup and the opening of the Pandora's box

As mentioned above, the overthrow of the Amadou Toumani Touré (ATT) regime was the starting point for the recurrent insecurity faced by the population today, especially residents of the northern part of the country and the central delta. As a reminder, the deposed President, accused by some military personnel of incompetence in the fight against the Tuareg rebellion and Islamist groups in the north, was a former Lieutenant General who had resigned from the army before running in the 2002 elections. It should also be noted that it was under his presidency that the Malian army reached the height of its decadence, hence the launch on 17 January 2012 of the armed struggle of the Tuareg rebels of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), with the attack on Malian armed positions and the capture of Aguelhok, in the country's north⁴. The attack by armed separatist movements coupled with terrorist groups Ançar Dine, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Movement for Unicity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) has claimed over 100 victims among Malian defense forces. To some extent, this massacre of Aguelhok is the straw that broke the camel's back on the side of the army which was eager to overthrow the corrupt regime of President ATT.

The military coup caused the abandonment of strategic positions by Malian armed forces in the northern regions to join their southern comrade to better achieve the overthrow against the democratic power of President Amadou Toumani Touré. These abandonments will lead to the fall of the main cities in the north one after the other. Thus, as of April 2, 2012, Islamist

⁴ <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20130719-mali-presidentielle-dates-chronologie-crise>

groups joined by Aqmi troops and leaders contested control of the territories conquered by the Tuareg rebellion, which was finally "dislodged" from its headquarters in Gao on June 27, 2012, after bitter fighting that saw the Islamist masters of the city and the entire region; On 1 July 2012, the Islamist group Ançar Dine, which occupies the holy city of Timbuktu, resumed the destruction of the saints' mausoleums, 7 of 13 of which were ransacked and destroyed by these religious extremists⁵.

At the end of the coup, it dismembered the Malian army within its ranks with the problem of green and red berets, the political instrumentalization of the army's senior officers, the lack of logistical means to secure a country twice as large as France. The areas deserted by the Malian armed forces have fallen into the hands of terrorist groups that have overwhelmed the population by introducing Islamic sharia law, rape, murder, drug, and drug trafficking. Today, the Malian army despite the military programming law with a cost of billions of XOF to reform and strengthen the security sector cannot crisscross the entire country. For many areas, despite French forces across Barkhane, the international community through MINUSMA, the joint forces of the G5 Sahel, remain in the hands of certain terrorist groups - where the question of the usefulness of its foreign forces on Malian soil.

This failure to protect the civilian population since the military coup has more recently allowed the establishment of new extremist groups such as the Macina Liberation Front, led by Amadou Kouffa (probably killed on 23 November 2018 during a joint operation led by the Malian army and French forces), which also advocates the establishment of the Islamic Shariah⁶. And self-defense militias or traditional hunters, each militia claims to be an ethnic community it presumes to defend against the assailants. Thus, today we see the formation of a

⁵ <https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/rapmali592f.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/671217/societe/mali-le-chef-jihadiste-amadou-kouffa-est-probablement-mort/>

self-defense group from the Dogon community, called "Dana Ambassagou", which means "under protecting God", working to protect the civilian population of the Dogon ethnic group. The Fulani self-defense group works to protect the Fulani civilian population from attacks. And finally, the Bambara self-defense group works to protect the Bambara community living in the country's center. The absence of the State in these areas has contributed significantly to the creation of these militias and the upsurge in community violence.

Mali long regarded as a model of democracy in West Africa, progressively switched to anarchy, the outcome of which will probably be a bloody intercommunity confrontation that will permanently destroy the social fabric of the country.

2. Security crisis management by the Malian government

Malian President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta told *Le Monde* that he would not discuss with terrorists, implied by the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), "The international community is forcing us to negotiate on our soil with people who have taken up arms against the state" (5 December 2013)⁷. Under pressure from France and the international community, he ended up engaging in inclusive talks with these armed separatist groups. It concluded this inter-Malian dialogue in the Algerian capital with the signing in 2015 of an Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali resulting from the Algiers process⁸. It intended the agreement, according to end the armed conflict with the separatist movements in the north, which resulted in several civilian casualties, but did not, in fact, have an expected effect. The difficulties linked to implementing the agreement are characterized by the intervention of a plurality of actors with often divergent interests. The armed groups that signed the

⁷ <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-01425745/document>

⁸ <https://photos.state.gov/libraries/mali/328671/peace-accord-translations/1-accord-paix-et-reconciliation-francais.pdf>

agreement have divergent interests and, in addition, the political weakness of the central government in Bamako to play its unifying role by calling on all signatory actors, including the international community, to respect the commitments made for implementing the agreement. According to Dr. Naffet KEITA, philosopher and anthropologist by training, Master of Conferences, for implementing the Algiers agreement, it is necessary:

- national ownership and inclusiveness of the Agreement implementation process. This challenge concerns the national capacity, including political and civil-society actors, to mobilize to contribute rationally to the implementation process of the Agreement, at the local, regional and national levels;
- implementing of UN Security Council Resolution 2374 on sanctions against those responsible for blocking the implementation of the Agreement⁹.

They must note is that not only has the government did not resolve the sources of the conflict in the north, but violence is now contaminating the center and north-east. Several hundred people have died in inter-community violence, the most recent attack of which dates back to January 2019, with the massacre of 37 people killed in the attack on a Fulani village in central Mali, led by traditional Donzo hunters¹⁰.

Since coming to power, the successive governments of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta have tried as best as they can to reform the army through implementing the Military Orientation and Programming Act, the cost of which is estimated at 1,230 billion of XOF¹¹. They should note is that this law a flagship program of the current President of Mali, who has made the reform of the army and the security sector his battle horse. For months now, the security situation has

⁹ <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/fes-pscc/14325.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.20minutes.fr/monde/2406779-20190102-mali-attaque-village-peul-fait-37-morts>

¹¹ <https://www.bbc.com/afrique/region-44948200>

only gotten worse with attacks that were initially sporadic in the Malian capital in Bamako, have gradually become frequent. We all remember the attack on the hotel Radisson Blu on November 20, 2015, in the heart of the Malian capital by the terrorist group Al-Mourabitoune led by Algerian Mokhtar Belmokhtar, loyal to al-Qaeda, killed over 20 people¹². Believing to be safe in the capital since the deadly attack on the Radisson Blu Hotel on 18 June 2017, the nearby resort of Bamako was attacked by attackers claiming to be the Malian Tuareg terrorist leader Iyad Ag Ghaly, also causing casualties, including a soldier from the ranks of the Special Anti-Terrorist Forces (FORSAT)¹³.

These repeated attacks in the capital show us that the government's security measures remain deficient and ineffective in many respects. Since the attack on the Radisson Blu Hotels, the Malian government, which declared a state of emergency, has continued to prolong it, naively believing it would further protect the civilian population.

Despite the signing of the Algiers Agreement, implementing the Military Orientation and Programming Act to reform the army and security, the creation of the Special Anti-Terrorist Forces (FORSAT), the uninterrupted extension of the state of emergency, it must be noted that the government cannot meet the population's aspirations in the fight against terrorism and intercommunal violence.

3. The impact of religious leaders in resolving inter-community conflicts

Mali is a country of strong Muslim consonance. Majority Islam belongs to the Malikite school (one of the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence, centered on the teaching of Imam Malik ibn

¹² https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/monde/afrique/en-direct-mali-170-personnes-retenues-en-otage-dans-un-hotel-de-bamako_1737842.html

¹³ http://afrique.lepoint.fr/actualites/mali-ce-que-l-on-sait-de-l-attaque-du-camp-kangaba-20-06-2017-2136771_2365.php

Anas [born around 711, between 708 and 716, died in 795 or 796] who spent most of his life in Medina).

Since the advent of democracy in 1991, Muslim religious leaders have steadily increased their sphere of influence in society. Certain actions taken by Muslim religious leaders can illustrate this influence, notably in 2009 with the annulment of the new family code, it deemed which contrary to Malian societal values. In 2013, for the first time in its history, the entire Muslim community, through religious leaders, chose Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta as one of many candidates. In addition, during the transition in 2012, the Prime Minister, as Head of Government, created for the first time a Ministry dedicated to Religious Affairs and Worship¹⁴. Another significant fact is that when the terrorist group Ansar Dine attacked and besieged northern Mali in 2012, this group, which wanted the establishment of Shariah (Islamic law), agreed to negotiate only with the President of the High Islamic Council, in this case Imam Mahmoud DICKO, the President of the Association for the Defense of Dogon Culture "Guina Dogon", Mr. Mamadou Togo and the President of the African Solidarity for Democracy and Independence Political Party (SADI), the Honorable Oumar Mariko. All this shows the impact that religious leaders can have on the civilian population, which makes up over 90% Muslim. Religious Leaders play an important role in raising awareness among decision-makers and communities about living together harmoniously in society.

When inter-community clashes broke out in the central delta, more precisely in the Mopti region, between Bambara and Fulani on the one hand and Dogon and Fulani on the other. The Malian government, under the leadership of former Prime Minister Abdoulaye Idrissa Maïga, had set up a good offices mission to conduct mediations between the various communities in the center and north of the country. It led this

¹⁴https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2013/07/27/au-mali-le-poids-de-la-religion-dans-la-campagne-est-considerable_3454547_3212.html

mission, despite the reluctance and mistrust of the Head of State, by Imam Mahmoud DICKO, President of the High Islamic Council between April and December 2017¹⁵. The President of the Republic, instead of leaving the latitude to this mission to maintain a dialogue between the various warring ethnic groups, to prefer to put an end to the good office's mission, once the former Prime Minister Abdoulaye Idrissa Maïga has left. According to the current government led by Prime Minister Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga, it is necessary to equip the army with more logistical means and double its strength to fight terrorists and the various self-defense militias, instead of delegating religious leaders to conduct mediations with these armed groups for the well-being of the habitats in these localities. Since Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga government, the country's security situation has only worsened, as no part of the territory has been safe from terrorist attack. What worries the civilian population most in recent times is the rise of self-defense militias, which attack peaceful citizens in the name of self-defense.

To denounce these mass killings and the growing insecurity in the capital and throughout the country, the High Islamic Council, through its President, organized on 10 February 2019, a major meeting in the stadium on 26 March, for a prayer to the nation and to demand the resignation of Prime Minister Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga. Over 60,000 people responded to this call, which quickly became an indictment against the government¹⁶.

¹⁵ <http://bamada.net/mission-de-bons-offices-dans-le-centre-et-le-nord-ibk-ne-voulait-pas-de-mahmoud-dicko>

¹⁶ <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20190211-mali-pari-reussi-le-chef-religieux-mahmoud-dicko>

4. The role of foreign forces in resolving the Malian crisis

Malian President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, during a visit to France in 2018, gave an interview to the newspaper "le monde", in which he launched a virulent diatribe against the United Nations Integrated Multidimensional Mission for Stabilization in Mali (Minusma). He said this way: "What is the point of peacekeeping when we are waging a regional war against jihadism? Without a more offensive mandate, which we are clamoring for, Minusma, which is one of the UN's most deadly missions, is now content to do social work".¹⁷ This statement by the Malian President best summarizes the usefulness of foreign forces in Mali. The Security Council established Minusma by its resolution 2100 (2013) of 25 April 2013. None of the world's UN missions are costlier in terms of human lives than the one deployed in Mali, with 12,500 soldiers and police officers. Since 2013, 160 deaths, including 103 deliberately targeted, representing half of the missing peacekeepers in service, have occurred¹⁸.

At the end of the visit of former Prime Minister Moussa Mara and his delegation in 2014 to Kidal, which was marked by a deadly clash between the armed forces of Mali (FAMA) and the secessionist movements, Moussa Mara furiously announced that this attack by armed groups was a declaration of war. And to the answer to the question of Radio France Internationale (RFI) journalist Guillaume Thibault, whether MINUSMA and the elements of Serval (operation period between 11 January 2013 and 1 August 2014), the French force in Mali, present in Kidal, did not play their part? Mara replied bluntly: "their passivity surprised Us, but we are not drawing any conclusions from them at this stage. They are friendly forces in whom we

¹⁷ https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2018/02/22/ibrahim-boubacar-keita-pas-question-de-negocier-avec-les-djihadistes_5260800_3212.html

¹⁸ https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/monde/afrique/la-france-dans-le-piege-malien_2005524.html

recognize many benefits on this part of our territory, but among friends, we also tell each other the truths”¹⁹.

The foreign forces deployed on the battlefield in Mali are MINUSMA, the French Barkhane force which replaced the Serval force, the joint forces of the G5 Sahel including Mali, Burkina-Faso, Niger, Mauritania and Chad²⁰. Despite all its forces, the upsurge in violence, terror against the population and the consequences of an exacerbation of the situation, which is all the more precarious now than ever. The collapse of the Gaddafi regime by the Western powers is one of the aggravating factors in the insecurity situation in the northern part of Mali. Because after the fall of the regime, most of the Tuareg surviving fighters took refuge with their war arsenals in the northern part of Mali and then spread terror and destabilization throughout the Sahelo-Saharan strip.

Given the delay in financing the G5 joint forces, estimated at €423 million, the Malian President did not hesitate to scratch the international community, as he believed Mali’s problem was partly because of the fall of the Gaddafi regime. In the same interview with the newspaper's monde", the Malian President IBK said: "I'm really annoyed. When you know what it spends every day in Iraq and Syria on the bombing, seeing the Sahel countries today reaching out to get 423 million euros, I have to admit that it hurts me. We are not beggars. Nor are we responsible for the end of Muammar Gaddafi and the disintegration of the situation in Libya, where there are reportedly nearly 13 million weapons in circulation. The international community has a duty of action and solidarity”²¹.

As for the effectiveness of the 4,500 soldiers from the French Barkhane forces on Malian soil, the French Chief of

¹⁹ <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20140519-moussa-mara-kidal-jihadistes-mnla-rfi-cette-attaque-est-une-declaration-guerre-mali>

²⁰ <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/english/operations/actualites2/lancement-de-l-operation-barkhane>

²¹ https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2018/02/22/ibrahim-boubacar-keita-pas-question-de-negocier-avec-les-djihadistes_5260800_3212.html

Military Intelligence, General Jean-François Ferlet, stated: "While the number of security incidents is not increasing, we are seeing a shift towards the South, in a much more populated region, particularly by the Fulani, where the potential for destabilization is greater than that caused by a few jihadist Touareg in the desert's middle. In his reply to a Member of Parliament who was questioned by Parliament's Defense Committee and reported by the newspaper L'Opinion, General Jean-François Ferlet stated that the French presence in Mali had only worsened the situation²².

5. Possible solutions for a sustainable way out of the crisis in Mali

In the search for possible solutions for a sustainable way out of the crisis in Mali, the government must work hard to conduct frank dialogues with the entire Malian social stratum. As long as the State focuses its sole energy on the fight against terrorism, neglecting the suffering of the various communities living in the country's center, it will create many militias to protect the civilian population, which is abandoned by the central authorities in Bamako. It to provide an in-depth reform of public institutions and services for a new contract between the State and the citizen based on the documentation of the service offers and traditional leaders to play the role. These actions must support the constant and flexible articulation of institutional reforms to overcome the liabilities of colonization that still fuel inter-community conflicts. The power of communicative action can only achieve this in the habermasian sense of the word, by setting up and animating the debate in different spaces to mobilize and involve the populations at the grassroots level²³.

The restoration of the good office's mission led by religious leaders to engage in dialogue with all armed movements,

²² <https://www.algeriepatriotique.com/2018/03/23/echec-france-sahel/>

²³ <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/fes-pscc/14325.pdf>

including terrorist armed groups, so that together we can find common ground to ease the suffering of citizens. Those who think we should not negotiate with terrorists are enemies of peace in Mali. Because the movements that signed the Algiers agreement were the first to take up arms against the country, they played the role of Trojan horse to facilitate the installation of terrorist groups such as AQIM, MUJAO, Ansar Dine, etc. Despite these serious crimes, the State has entered negotiations with them, the outcome of which is the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali resulting from the Algiers process. The Malian State must overcome this vanity and denial of reality by engaging in a frank and fraternal dialogue with terrorist groups through the mediation of religious leaders. The organization of advocacy sessions by religious leaders for the faithful: at central, regional, district and community level will resolve the inter-community crisis in a sustainable way.

Implementing a roadmap by solemnly inviting Algeria to join the joint forces of the G5 Sahel, without which the Malian state will only get bogged down in the crisis. Algeria is the dominant power in the area, it is experienced and better equipped militarily to deal with this asymmetric war. To facilitate Algerian accession, we must already consider cutting the cordon with France, which provides funding and technical help for the forces of the G5 Sahel. For the troops deployed on the battlefield to be effective and successful, the collaboration and coordination of all countries in the Sahelo-Saharan band are required. Above all, it must refuse any financing of national defense structures by the imperialist powers. Funding and logistics must come from the countries affected by the crisis, as it is together that neighboring countries can dominate terrorist armed groups.

The French presence through the Barkhane and this thing the United Nations through MINUSMA will do nothing to resolve the Malian crisis, let alone fight the terrorist armed

groups whose positions they know²⁴. Its forces are there for their interest and the interest of the multinationals that will come to extract after a certain lull observed, oil, uranium, bauxite, natural gas, gold in the northern part of Mali.

CONCLUSION

The Malian state is fighting for a bad cause, namely to fight terrorism. It is naively thought that Mali's security problem is because of terrorists. Mali's problem is that these armed groups that are signatories to the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation, which handle the massacre of Malian soldiers in Aguel-hoc, are being blindly protected. At one point they agreed with the Ançardine terrorist groups and the MUJAO to spread terror. Despite everything, the State continues to cuddle them by letting them lead a Pasha life for all to see in Bamako or abroad. This approach is not to decriminalize self-defense militias to denounce a fact that has lasted long enough. As Einstein said, "madness is to do the same thing repeatedly and to expect different results". It has signed how many pacts or agreement to bring these secessionists to their senses. The former President of the Republic Alpha Oumar Konaré in megalomania and total madness burned weapons to satisfy their meanness. At some point, it is necessary to say stop and start the fight for the definitive liberation of Mali. And if the state continues in this denial of reality, tomorrow the authorities may face armed citizens to ensure their own security as is happening elsewhere.

The UN from its inception until today has never put a definitive end to the conflict, but rather is seen as a source of escalating conflict. TRUMP summed up well what was

²⁴<https://maliactu.net/mali-forces-etrangeres-au-mali-plus-de-15-000-hommes-pour-quoi-faire/>

happening at the UN, namely a "club where people meet, talk and have a good time"²⁵.

In conclusion, the Malian people and their government must remember that the country called Mali is at war. A war that threatens not only its territorial integrity but also its social cohesion. Because today we are witnessing inter-ethnic clashes, Malian civil society is desperately looking for a credible leader to defend its interests, it plunges young people into spiritual lethargy, politicians only see the presidential chair.

Mali will get by on condition that the government shows a firm commitment to the armed groups that signed the Algiers Agreement, and also to the foreign forces deployed on Malian soil, headed by MINUSMA. There is no obligation on the Malian State to continue to accept forces on its territory are of little use and that, even threaten its territorial integrity. If the government does not take serious steps to ensure order and security in the coming months, growing insecurity and social discontent will risk plunging the country into an ambient slump.

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