

## **THE STRUCTURAL STRENGTH OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF MALI-THE FRAGILE OR CONSOLIDATED**

**Jane Krzesinski**

Independent Research Activist,  
WEST AFRICA.

### **ABSTRACT**

*The paper covers the current political scenario for the impact analysis of the contemporary happenings on the will of the leadership in the developing world. The Democratic Republic of Mali is being focused on to find out the influential factors for the structural issues in the leadership of the country.*

**Keywords:** Mali, Republic of Mali, Structural Strength, Current Scenerio.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Historically the crisis in Mali may predate 2012. As Robert I Rotbert explains:

*“Nation-states fail because they are convulsed by internal violence and canno longer deliver positive political goods to their inhabitants. Their governments legitimacy, and the very nature of the particular nation-state itself becomes illegitimate in the eyes and in the hearts of a growing plurality of its citizens...”*

This was the situation in Mali before the Tuareg rebellion was staged by fighters coming from Libya after the “fall of Moummar Gaddafi”, attacked Malian soldiers in the North, the soldiers however were killed in an extra-judicial way and photograph was taken of them and shown to the public in “January 2012”. The rebels however denied their involvement. The government on its own side did nothing to restore or calm the nerves of the people or soldiers involved or their families. This act of “let it be” paved the way for another attack, but this time around the soldiers staged a coup d’état led by a “United States trained military” in person of Captain Sanogo who sacked the democratically elected president Amadou Toumani Toure from

office, and immediately suspended the constitutions of the state. The people however were happy with this development. But this excitement did not last long. The tone of the conflict was changed because of the arrival of Ansar Al Deen (Defenders of Faith), Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) along with other religious groups that led to the brutal killings of civilians, enforcement of sharia law in the north which allowed for amputation for adultery or stealing, un-necessary killing of children among other atrocities.

The Democratic Republic of Mali could be described “as a developing and fragile state”; she gained her independence from France in June 20, 1960. She actually joined in a federation with Senegal which was “however short-lived”. Her founding president was “Keita Modibo”. His government was dictatorial in nature as he established a one party system that leaned on socialism. He was removed from office in a Military coup by “Moussa Traore” who served as president for two decades. However from 1989, Mali began yearning for democracy with multi-party system. This yearning resulted to the 1991 coup led by Amadou Toumani Toure who threw Modibo from office as well as organized an election that brought President Konare Omur to office. This act was regarded as the one that actually began to present Mali as a democratic country. Hence, free and fair elections have been observed since 2002. Toure got the name “soldier of democracy”; he was returned to office through the general elections in 2007. His political idea was a consensus government which was as a result of no clear ideological preference within the political parties. Hence, this attitude paved way for “corruption as an incentive for the political elite” and it gave a bad reputation to the government from the viewpoint of the public. The government in turn as well was uncertain of its stance in the next political election in 2012.

The Tuareg rebels are members of a partial nomadic community that occupies part of Mali, Burkina Faso, Algeria and Libya. Over the years, they have constantly rebelled against successive governments, despite the fact that they are among the minorities in Mali “no precise population can account for this”. The Tuareg groups feel that Mali is their rightful ancestral land and hence should be given a space in the running of Mali Republic, they have complained of the constant discrimination and neglect by the official authorities dominated by southerners since independence. Recently, a negotiation was brokered by Algeria concerning settlement issues in 2009 however other settlements had occurred in 1990s and 2006 and this contributed to the fragility of Mali.

Basically, the population of Mali can be divided into two major religious communities. One is the Muslim community with its “population taking 90% and the Christian community occupying the remaining 10% of the total population”. Hence, the Christians can be referred to as somewhat a minority in Mali. The strength of Islam in Mali is evident as a result of her role in the Sahara which has been the key player in spreading Islam to other West African states. Thus, Mali could be said to have an extremist Islamic activity like in 2009, “when a bill that would have expanded the rights of women was to be passed in to law, it was opposed by Mali’s civic and religious groups” the bill had to be changed by former president Amadou Toure in order to appease the people.

## **ANALYSIS OF THE CONFLICT**

It is against this backdrop as briefly illustrated in the historical background that we will give a detailed analysis of the actors, strategies and outcomes of the Mali conflict. The Mali crisis began when the Tuareg rebels returning from the Libyan war attacked the Malian soldiers in the North of Mali in early January 2012. However it is pertinent to analyze the main actors that have come to be the key players in sustaining and also important towards ending the war that has continued to threaten the once peaceful democratic state of Mali.

One of the key players in the Mali conflict consists of about five notable groups at the regional level and they include;

**“The National Movement for the liberation of Azawad” (MNLA):** The group could be regarded as the pace setter to which the crises in Mali eventually kick started. This group

sacked the military in Northern Mali in a protest of negligence the government has shown towards her since independence, her form of protest was through an unexpected attack. The National Movement for the liberation of Azawad is a strong force to reckon with in Mali with evidences of her exhibition of strong alliances. She wants and proposed an independent state of Azawad. However, since she ran out of cash, she has since supported a French backed intervention, and has changed her stand to an autonomy for all. However, she changed her stance when she attacked “Mousa Mara’s convoy and kidnapped 28 officials and soldiers, and she has also been accused of killing eight other officials”. She insists on an independent state of Azawad. Its leader is Bilia Ag Cherif and Mohamamed Ag Najim are in charge of the military wing.

**Ansar Dine:** It is an Islamist backed movement in Mali and its aim is to oversee the imposition of Islamic law in Mali. Recently, it has however called for a cease fire.

**Islamic Movement for Azawad:** This is actually a splinter group from Ansar Dine. As a result of the way Ansar Dine had been carrying out terrorist activities and promoting extremism, this group broke out to form their own organization.

**AI-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb:** Its main focus is the spread of Islamic law and the liberation of Malians from the former colonial masters France. Her tactics is mainly directed towards the kidnap of westerners.

**Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO):** Originally from AQIM, its goal is the spread of Islam in the region of West Africa and a spurious attack and violence on Tuareg separatist.

**Signed-in-Blood Battalion:** This actually is an off shot of AQIM and its main objective is the spread of Islam across the globe and the imposition of sharia law in Mali.

There are reasons to believe that according to “Galtung’s model of conflict; structural violence, cultural violence and direct violence” are being perpetuated by these groups without government intervention to resolve peace. Notable among their wicked acts is the imposition and compulsory execution of sharia law such as amputations, stoning to death for adultery or stealing, all in the name of sharia law. These Islamic extremists have gone as far as

destroying “Mausoleums and mosques associated with venerated Sufi’s from Mali’s past”. Their stance in the division of Mali, has been the “burning fuel” of the conflict.

**The junta leader:** Notable among the actors in the Mali crisis is captain Sanogo, a United States trained Malian military whose main objectives was to resist the AQIM in Mali. He however derailed from that part when he staged a mutiny at “kati military camp, close to the federal palace Bamako” that sacked President Amadou Toumani Toure from office. He however retreated when he and the Malian army ran out of cash and he has since ceased to take up arms, and actually agreed to hand over to Dioncounda Traore.

**Interim president:** DioncoundaTraore became the acting president when Amadou Toumani was ousted from office. He has been a major player in the politics of Mali since 1990. He was a founding member of the “political alliance for democracy” and since 1992 to 1997, he has held several ministerial portfolios notable among which was the Ministry of defense, he was attacked early May 2012 when captain Sanogo agreed to hand over power to him, so he travelled abroad for medical care, and the interim prime minister Cheick Modibo Diarra was made to resign in December 2012 after he was ordered to be arrested by Sanogo. This act showed the influence the military had in deciding the tone of the conflict in Mali.

**Foreign powers:** As a result of the political and sectarian unrest in Mali, coupled with the Malian government inability to handle the crisis, the leadership of Dioncounda Traore had to seek the help of the international community. Notable among them was the “Economic Community of West African States” (ECOWAS) whose interest is to oversee the peaceful transition to democratic rule in Mali and also to instill peace in order to reduce the spread of the conflict to other West African states. According to her, “the welfare and stability of Mali’s neighbors is her priority”. Hence in order to stop the spread of the conflict, ECOWAS has provided peacekeeping force together with France (French) backed proposal that was authorized by the “United Nations Security Council”, and they termed it “the African led International Support Mission”(AFISMA). This strong coalition together with the United States of America has “provided logistical support to the ongoing crisis”. The Obama administration has also provided “support to regional troops in

an effort to increase African deployment in AFISMA”.

France has also personally participated in the conflict by backing a military operation in Mali termed “operation serval” her aim is to secure the seavare military airport in Mali because of the strategic significance of the airport. Her military support actually contributed in reducing the conflict in Mali. However since the Movement for the Liberation of Azawad staged another attack on the government Moussa Mara in Mali, France has decided to look from the sidelines and she has been accused of letting the attack occur.

The role of the United States has been very strong because it was as a result of her efforts that paved the way for “an election to take place as soon as possible” which soon became the spine on the wheel towards restoring peace in Mali. However, her main interest in the peace process could be linked towards face-saving because the coup leader in the Malian crisis was actually trained in a “military program in the United States”.

From the foregoing, the Malian conflict has been characterized by a multitude of actors, strategies and outcomes. As such, the strategies that have been used to resolve the conflict have ranged from anti-terror strategies, kidnapping of soldiers and Malian officials alike, negotiation and sending in of foreign troops. Where there is a wide range of strategies, the question of coherence and continuity tend to take the center stage.

## **FRAME WORK FOR RESOLVING THE CONFLICT**

The purpose of my frame work is to put a final solution to this conflict so it would result to sustainable development for Mali and also “perpetual peace”. In order to achieve this, the leaders in Mali contributed to this conflict by espousing the extremist ideology with no respect for human lives and conflict took roots in Mali when the government was not delivering well and as well failed to address the source of the conflict which were not adequately taken care of. Mali crisis came up as a result of a weak central government and fragile democratic institution that were not reaching out to the people in the grass root level. Due to Mali’s democratic nature, a continuous military intervention solution may be found inadequate but rather a regular democratic process because that is a realistic approach to figure out how their grievances

could be resolved. The provision of proper education and civic enlightenment for its populace will also expose them to the evils of engaging in war when peaceful negotiation has not been exhausted. Nation building towards creating awareness should be put in place which will orientate the local people on the importance on resisting terrorism so as to build the capacity for indigenous peace-keeping that would nip emerging terrorist organizations.

Having a national conference will also go a long way towards ending the conflict peacefully because in that way everyone will air their views and find a collective way towards instilling democratic practices where everyone is equal before the law and given a fair share in participating in democratic governance.

## CONCLUSION

It is no longer news that Mali is returning to its original peaceful nature as it had been before. Added is the successful general election that was held and which was regarded as relatively peaceful and free and which returned Ibrahim Keita as the president. However the crisis in Mali is still an ongoing one as the National movement for the Liberation of Azwad has continued with her ceaseless attacks on the government of Mali and soldiers alike. Therefore, long lasting peace will be achieved if the skirmishes of the causes of the conflict are completely wiped out. First, the larger populations which were allies to the rebel group must be taken seriously targeting their grievances and also absorbing the war affected families in a national reconciliation process. As well, continuous peaceful elections with the electoral promises being kept will hence increase the confidence of the populace in its ruling class

and eliminate the possibility of any crisis in the future.

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