

Mali

Population: 10.7 million

Life expectancy: 47 years

National capital: Bamako

Independence from France: 22 September 1960



Abstract

Mali fell into dictatorship in 1968. Moussa Traore's authoritarian rule lasted until 1991. The conflict in the North was between Tuaregs (ethnic group) and the Malian military, between the nomadic Tuaregs and the sedentary people of the North, and between different classes of the Tuaregs, mainly over land issues. It took place after the change of climatic conditions had destroyed the livelihood of pastoral people, marginalizing them and making them refugees. Because of a lack of attention and central governance over the Northern parts of the Republic of Mali, the parties to the conflict, including the military, could use unchecked violence, and thus create an atmosphere in which groups needed to mobilize in order to protect themselves. The highly successful international approach (with the UNDP in an important role) to the conflict integrated a security approach with development needs (an integrated approach) and thereby addressed the economic root-causes of the conflict.

Mali and the Integrated Approach to Arms Management

Timo Kivimäki¹

The militarized dispute in northern Mali, 1990-1997, does not qualify as a conflict according to most definitions of conflict. Despite military involvement, relatively fixed fronts hostile to each other and the organized mobilization of military forces, the number of casualties was fewer than is often considered as the threshold to war. Yet the case of Mali is interesting because of the success of the international response.

Agents

Parties to the conflict in northern Mali can be illustrated in Table 1:

Parties in Mali's civil war						
Acronym	Name	Established	Represents	Affiliation	Support	conflict with
MFUA	Movements et Fronts Unities de l' Azwad	1988, gained meaning in negotiations in Jan 1992	Northern populations: Tuareg, Songhoy, Arab, 3,000-10,000 combatants, modern unlike the traditional Tuareg political representation in UDPM	a roof organization for ARLA, FPLA, MPA & FIAA	Algerian government, Libya	the Malian army
ARLA	Armée revolutionnaire de libération de l' Azwad	Separated from MPA in 1991	Tuareg, anti-Muslim, in Kidal/Gao. Revolutionist, modernist, vassal population	under MFUA		Malian Army, MPA defeated by MPA in 12/1994
FPLA	Front populaire de libération de l' Azwad	Accepted peace in 1994	Tuareg, Timbuktu, Gao further south from Kidal, closer to Northern Riverain people, radical (independence of Aswad), traditionalist	under MFUA		Army, FIAA, competed with MPA
FIAA	Front Islamique Arabe de	1990 as a response to indiscriminate	Arabs, from Timbuktu + Mauritanian	under MFUA	Libya, Mauretania	Army, FPLA,

¹ This chapter is based on Timo Kivimäki's study in Kivimäki, Lehtinen & Laakso 1998.

Parties in Mali's civil war						
Acronym	Name	Established	Represents	Affiliation	Support	conflict with
	l'Azawad	Malian army attacks against Arabs & Tuareg	border, militant Islamics. Most militant Northern rebels			
MPLA	Populaire de Liberation de l'Azawad	1988	Tuareg in Kidal, collaborationist.	became MPA in 1990		
MPA	Mouvement Populaire de l'Azawad	28.6. 1990 Signed the National Pact	Tuareg in Kidal, nobles, tradition of collaboration, moderate & traditional			army, ARLA, competed with FPLA
MPGK	Mouvement Patriotique Ganda Koy	19.5. 1994 as a response to government's inability to control rebel Tuareg violence	Songhoys, sedentary people, anti-Tuareg, from Kidal. Later northern riverain people against looting by MFUA		Alleged affiliation with Malian Army	MFUA and FIAA
Government & Army	Malian govt & Army	1960	South			MFUA, and officially also MPGK

The structure of antagonism was complex. On the one hand, there was the antagonism between ethnic and regional identitive affiliations, on the other hand, there was antagonism in vertical, hierarchic fragments between the center and the periphery as well as between the Tuareg nobles (MPA)² and vassals (ARLA)³. These two and the former slaves exploited and pillaged sedentary populations (Ganda Koy)⁴. Furthermore, most parties in the conflict had their internal divisions between the political moderates and militant extremists. Also, there was antagonism between various rebel groups (including the Ganda Koy) and the State.

The antagonism between Tuaregs and the sedentary people is deeply rooted in the differences between sedentary and pastoral cultures. While movement had to be a virtue (associated with freedom) in pastoral production (without movement, lands would be

² *Mouvement Populaire de l'Azawad.*

³ *Armée revolutionnare de libération de l'Azawad.*

⁴ *Mouvement Patriotique Ganda Koy.*

overgrazed), for agriculturalists it is more natural to think that only the sower should harvest the land. To a large extent culture explains why sedentary people were seen by many pastoral people as slaves of the land, while the sedentary people easily saw pastoral people as parasites. Climatic change brought food insecurity to the North, and this caused competition and antagonism between groups (Imperato 1989, 81-6). The problem of insufficient integration within the state apparatus, lack of discipline, insufficient controls and insufficient funding and training of military officials in the North, were all intimately related to the antagonism between the groups in the North and the state.

The peace effort in Mali was certainly well balanced and took the grievances of the rebels into full consideration. The solution of the conflict was based on a national, territorial arrangement, which was contrary to the pastoral idea of transnational movement. But it also involved the idea of a special status for the North as well as the idea of the facilitation of transnational interaction in the North.

The question of antagonistic mythology was never touched upon. In Mali, ethnic myths were very racist, while the concept of racism naturally has a very negative connotation. Instead of using the negative value-load of racism in the destruction of the ethnic mobilization of antagonism, the international community remained very careful not to label as racist Tuareg or Ganda Koy attitudes towards their opponent racist.

Motivation

At the national level, we can see several structures and conditions making the economic development of Mali vulnerable. Fluctuations in overall, sectoral and regional economic growth have been characteristics of Mali and obviously this has prepared fertile ground for the emergence of relative deprivation (see framework in this book) and conflict. The heavy dependence on cotton (over 50 per cent of export earnings, Hodgkinson 1995; Africa Confidential 39:12, 1998, 8) and the inability to control the expansion of cities are probably the most important economic sources of this vulnerability.

In addition to providing sources for dissatisfaction in Mali, poverty, seems to lower the threshold of violence. For a long time, Soudan/Mali (with Niger, Chad and Sierra Leone) has been among the poorest nations in West Africa (Foltz 1965, 31-48). The development of per capita GDP has been slow and, in the 1990s, negative (World Bank 1991-1999). This was partly due to political instability, but also due to the poor government, the dominance of unfavorable trading patterns, the urban bias of western aid and investment, as well as the inappropriate imported development models. Furthermore, economic fluctuation has left very little room for long-term planning.

In the conflict in the North, the dispute was rather fundamental. It was not about who held the power and how decisions were made in the national political decision-making, but instead about whether (and which) decisions should be made as national, regional or transnational/federal units. Challenges of explicit national claims were made in an effort to move decision-making about the affairs of the North to the independent nation of Aswad (FPLA).⁵ At the same time, according to Poulton and Youssouf (1998, 30) for a long time during the Moussa Traore rule, older Malian civil servants and intelligentsia had articulated a Soudanese identity and decision-making within the larger Soudanese unit. Furthermore, a more transnational federation had already been suggested by certain Tuareg groups in 1957, later causing suspicion of Tuaregs not supporting the national independence of the young Republic of Mali (Imperato 1989, 81-6; Bourgeot 1996, 99-115).⁶ These disputes were the apparent motive for the conflict behavior and violence in the 1990s. This occurred after July 1990 when Moussa Traore claimed that Tuaregs were planning a secessionist state and declared a state of emergency in the North, which escalated the tension to the level of open direct violence.

While the conflict started in the context of a dictatorial regime, its settlement took place within the context of a more democratic regime, which had offered relatively efficient

⁵This claim, with the idea of an Azawad army and a national flag, was explicitly made by Rhissa Sidi Mohamed of the FPLA, who as a consequence received a lot of support among the people of the North (interviews among Tuaregs by T. Lehtinen, see Kivimäki, Lehtinen & Laakso 1998).

⁶ All these challenging claims to Malian nation-building were also presented in a less absolute form. Instead of producing all political values in the North, it was naturally possible to claim that more independence should be granted to the North or that more integration should take place transnationally.

channels of non-violent expression of grievances. The decline of the dictatorial regime of Moussa Traore, the creation of Kidal as a northern administrative unit, representation of the North in the interim government and the internationally-supported integration of rebels into the civil and military services of the nation went a long way in creating non-violent channels of influence.⁷

More generally, the role of the UN in the alleviation of the root causes of conflict and resolution of the dispute was very active throughout the peace process. UN activity was led by the UNDP in Bamako. Furthermore, the UN Center for Human Rights examined the civilian aspects of the peace process, especially the question of resettlement of refugees. Regional and UN guarantees for the safety of the returning refugees played an important part in the alleviation of the fears that hindered the peace process. The dispute resolution effort was also very much supported by the regional effort. The role of Algeria was especially crucial (as can be seen in the chronology appendix).

Instruments

The process of mobilization in Mali used very informal channels of communication. Mobilization of the rebels mostly took place in exile, where relatively depressed groups felt a natural togetherness in relatively concentrated areas of refugee camps. Poor communications between Bamako and the North made it easy for the Northern troops to use the national mandate for the benefit of their own professional group. With the military being a party to the conflict, rather than a guarantor of stability, there were really no effective checks to violence; different groups had to take up arms simply to defend themselves.

In the arms control process, the peace effort supported by the regional activity and the international community (UNDP) succeeded in utilizing similar, informal strategies that

⁷ Furthermore, Mali has introduced a Forum for Democratic Petitions (*Espace d'Interpellation Petitions*), partly modelled after the old tribal councils, in which citizens can file their complaints directly to the Government, which examines the case and very often invites the complainer to Bamako to further specify his/her case.

were used in the mobilization of rebel groups. Several leaders of the rebel groups campaigned for the National Pact in the refugee camps and among their supporters. The demobilization of violence by the military establishment was checked through a tightening central control over the regional forces. The establishment of a commission to investigate violence in the North, the special position of the North in Mali's administrative structure, and the demilitarization of the North all comprised of elements that were intended to increase the political control over the Northern military.

Much of the armament used in the conflict was transnational in nature (at least Libyan, Mauretanian and Algerian governments were suspected of supplying arms and military training to rebel groups). Tuaregs, as a group had their links across the Mali border. Thus, it was the prescription of the *UN Sahara-Sahel Advisory Mission Report* (1995; see also the paper by the deputy head of mission, van der Graaf 1996) to also take a regional approach to the arms management effort. The UN Center for Disarmament Affairs and the UNIDIR provided the Malian government with technical assistance in terms of military resolution aspects of the peace operation, including the physical destruction of weapons. The UNDPA in New York provided political advice and assistance to the UN Resident Coordinator in Mali in the context of preventive diplomacy, peace building and micro disarmament. The responsibility of the UN integrated development and peace effort for funding was largely assumed by a trust fund entitled "UNDP Trust Fund to Support the Peace Process in North Mali", which financed the demobilization of armed rebels and the re-integration into society of some 11,000-12,000 displaced persons in the North, by the end of 1997.

The peculiarity of the peace action was that the effort to influence different parties to the conflict, and the attempt to alleviate the economic root-causes of the conflict, were so well integrated with the effort to manage arms. This *integrated peace approach* (which integrates development goals with the security goals of arms management) did not only manage to collect and destroy a lot of rebel arms, but at the same time it aimed at integrating the rebels into the Malian society and the State, and to help create a new relationship with the other parties to the conflict. The UNIDIR has focused on the

relevance of the Mali case to the research community, particularly with regard to the integrated approach in international development cooperation and conflict resolution as a model case for conflict settlement.

Despite the successful settlement of the conflict, some important sources of conflict have remained in Mali. Democracy has not produced a State which reflects popular values. Instead corruption keeps both the opposition and the government in a firm grip, democratic processes, such as the parliamentary elections in 1997 have failed (due to irregularities, much of the opposition boycotted the elections) and, to a large extent the State has remained (both for the opposition and the govt) a vehicle for personal enrichment rather than for the common good.⁸ It still seems probable that whenever dissatisfaction boils over, the North, with the most economic grievances, will be the scene of violence.

Sources

Africa Confidential (London).

Bourgeot, André (1996) "Les rébellions touaregs: une cause perdue?" *Afrique Contemporaine*, Trimestriel n°180, octobre-décembre, 99-115.

Englebert, Pierre (1996) "Mali: Recent History", *Africa South of Sahara*, Europa Publications Limited, London: 603-608.

Foltz, William (1965) *From French West Africa to the Mali Federation*, Yale University Press, Yale Studies in Political Science, 12, New Haven & London.

Graaf, Henny van der (1996) "Proliferation of light weapons in the Sahel," Presentation to the Experts, Panel on Small Arms and Light Weapons. Regional Workshop in Pretoria, South Africa, September 23.

Hodgkinson, Edith (1996) "Economy", *Africa South of Sahara*, Europa Publications Limited, London, 608-614.

Imperato, Pascal James (1989) *Mali: A Search for Direction*, Aldershot, Dartmouth.

⁸ The consistency of the opposition coalition, Coppo, including on the one hand, *Mouvement Patriotique pour la Renouveau*, MPR (party of the supporters of the former dictator) and on the other, *Marxist Solidarité Africaine pour la Démocratie et l'Indépendante* on the other suggests that the motive for the opposition is not necessarily in a shared coherent set of political values.

Poulton, Robin-Edward & ag Youssouf, Ibrahim (1998) *A Peace of Timbuktu: Democratic Governance, Development and African Peacemaking*, UNIDIR publications, Geneva.

UN Sahara-Sahel Advisory Mission Report (1995) an unpublished document.

World Bank (1990-1999) *World Development Report 1990-1999*. Oxford University Press, Washington DC.

Chronology

- **1989-1990**: Return of Tuareg refugees accelerates causing social problems.
- **July 1990**: President Moussa Traore accused Tuaregs of separatism, state of emergency, political violence follows.
- **September 1990**: 1st regional peace conference in Algeria between Algeria, Mali, Libya and Niger: border controls and the facilitation of the return of refugees to the regions of their origin negotiated, a new administrative region was created in Kidal to address the special concerns of the North.
- **6 January 1991**: 1st meeting between the enemies, the Malian government and the MPA & FIAA: The **Tamanrasset Peace Accords**, cease-fire was agreed upon (not implemented), release of Tuareg prisoners, revoking of the state of emergency.
- **March 26, 1991**: President Moussa Traore's dictatorial regime fell, the Tamanrasset Accords rejected. MPA and FIAA received representation in the transitional administration. Conflict between militant and political elements of the MPA and especially the FIAA.
- **15 December 1991**: MPA, FPLA, FIAA, ARLA meeting with the Malian government at Mopti: **Mopti Agreement**, exchange of prisoners, an establishment of a commission to investigate violence in the North.
- **January 1992**: Rebel groups, associated in the MFUA met with the government in Alger (FPLA outside): implementation of Mopti Agreement, truce agreement.
- **March 1992**: Investigation commission (Mopti Agreement) inaugurated.
- **11 April, 1992**: The Alger negotiation breakthrough, National Pact was signed: special position for the North in Mali's administration, commission to monitor the cease fire (CCF), demilitarization of the North, idea of integrating rebel Tuaregs into the National Defense Forces, integrating the Tuareg in national politics and in the national economy.
- **June 1992**: Alpha Oumar Konaré was installed as the first democratically elected president of Mali. Fighting escalated, economy of the North was paralyzed by conflict.
- **May 1994**: Government and the MFUA decided in Alger, to integrate another 1500 former rebels into the national army and another 4,860 into the civil service. Dismantling of military bases in the North, development program for the North.
- **June 1994**: Meeting in Tamanrasset between the MFUA and the government: More effective integration of Tuaregs into the Army. Major army reshuffle later changing the Chief of General Staff, and moving the Commissaire au Nord to the post of Inspector-General of the Armed Forces.
- **August 1994**: Regional international agreement in Bamako: Mali, Algeria, UNHCR and IFAD to facilitate voluntary repatriation of Tuareg refugees, international guarantees for Tuareg fundamental rights and dignity (MFUA supported, did not participate).
- **8 June, 1995**: FIAA turned in favor of the National Pact.
- **January, 1996**: Ganda Koy met with FPLA in Bourem in. MFUA & Ganda Koy toured the North and the rebel refugee camps in support of the National Pact.
- **27 March, 1996**: Weaponry of about 3000 MFUA and Ganda Koy fighters burned in Timbuktu, MFUA & Ganda Koy joint statement in support of Mali's constitution, national unity, territorial integrity and the National Pact. Confidence was restored, the refugees started to return.