

Roadmap to Sustainable Political Stability and Peacebuilding in Mali: Framework Appraisal (1905 – 2016)

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ABSTRACT

Mali had witnessed recurrent armed rebellion since 1962, especially in the North. The 2012 rebellion led to loss of its northern territory, mainly due to catch of loose arms owing to state failure in Libya. However, a new peace process had begun. The paper examined the conflict management strategies deployed and its effectiveness. The root causes of conflicts in Mali lies in decades of unresolved grievances in the Northern territory, exacerbated by neglect by the central government. It is rooted in long-standing structural conditions e.g., feeble state institutions; ineffective governance; fragile social cohesion; deep-seated animosity due to political and economic exclusion. The conflict management strategies have been effective; based on its outputs leading to significant pathways towards political stability such as: bringing all actors to the negotiation table, brokering 2015 Peace Agreement, completion of a more representative political transition process, among others. These efforts are paramount to lowering the mistrust.

Keywords: Roadmap, Political Stability, Conflict Management Strategies, Mali, Tuareg, Peacebuilding, West Africa, MINUSMA.

BACKGROUND

Restoration of peace in Mali was one of the cardinal objectives of the recent peace agreement brokered by the United Nations (UN) and signed between the Malian government and the northern rebel groups on 15th February 2015 and consolidated in June 2015 (Bensimon, 2015). While this is not the first peace deal between the government and Tuareg rebels, this was however assumed to be a more comprehensive deal capable of addressing the grievances of all parties; especially agitation for more political inclusion by the rebels and greater autonomy for the north against earlier stand on independence.

Will this provide the war-ravaged country with the needed political and economic stability for development? How different is the June 2015 agreement from the previous once including those signed in 1963, 1996, 2007 and 2013? Does it address the core problems, causes of the relapses to conflict experienced since independence and endorsement of all main actors? Is the reality conducive for intervention and deployment of peacekeeping as an effective conflict management strategy? All these and more are explored for better overview of the conflict.

The 2015 Accord for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali commonly referred to as the Algiers Accord was signed on May 15 and June 20, 2015, after negotiations in Algiers between the Malian government, the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA), and pro-government armed groups (Carter Centre, n.d.). The agreement aimed to address longstanding grievances of northern communities through political decentralization, economic development, and the integration of former combatants into national forces (International Crisis Group, 2020). The accord was mediated by Algeria and supported by international actors such as the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), providing it with regional and global legitimacy (Carter Centre, n.d.).

The 2015 agreement sets out the preconditions for peace and reconciliatory pathways and additionally recognizes challenges especially in relation to the multicultural diversity that prevails within the regions under conflict. These challenges are again re-emphasized with the understanding that “reconstruction is a more difficult path than destruction” – Mongi Hamdi,

Special Representative and head of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) (UN News, 2015).

The paper adopted the use of a conflict tree tool for analysis of the conflict and equally appraised the effectiveness of the conflict management strategy deployed.

Since independence from France in 1960, Mali had witnessed phases of rebellion against the state, especially in the north, from the Tuareg rebel movement before the recent one in 2012 (Fisher, 2000). Only this time (2012), they made substantial success due to the catch of arms available as a result of state failure in Libya following NATO invasion in 2011 (Lewis & Diarra, 2012). Mali has witnessed several coups and 23 years of military dictatorship before return to democracy in 1992 (Fisher, 2000).

Earlier regarded by some analysts as a model of democracy in African, until a military coup of March 2012 and the loss of its northern territory to rebel groups; the conflict has left approximately 144,000 refugees abroad and around 230,000 internally displaced persons (CEU, 2013). By end of 2012, according to Office of the Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), there are over 595,000 Malians who had fled their homes in northern Mali (OCHA, 2013). Over 350,000 internally displaced persons are taking refuge in households in the south, while more than 175,000 are living as refugees in camps bordering Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger (UNHCR, 2013).

While Mali is one of Africa's major cotton producers (BBC, 2015), however, its chronic foreign trade deficit makes it nonetheless heavily dependent on foreign aid and remittances from Malians working abroad; thereby relegating it to one of the 25 poorest countries in the world (ibid). Mali is a multi-ethnic society: Mande (50%) largely in the south, Fula (17%), Voltaic (12%), Tuareg (10%) mainly in the north, Songhai (6%), others (5%) (BBC, 2015).

Quick Timeline and main events (CEU, 2013):

Dates	Main Events
1905	Most of current Mali is under French colonization
1960	Independence of Mali, Moibo Keïta wins the first elections and establishes a one-party state.
1962	Rebellion of Tuaregs formally began
1968	Moussa Traoré's coup overthrows Keïta
1990	First rebellion for the independence of Azawad by the Azawad People's Movement. Peace treaties in 1991 and 1995
1991	The March Revolution overthrows Traoré's dictatorship. New constitution and declaration of the democratic multi-party state
2007	Restarting of the hostilities
2011	Libya Civil War facilitates inflow of weapons for the NMLA.
16th January 2012	Tuareg secession led by the NMLA, beginning of the conflict, supported by the Islamist groups Ansar Dine, MOJWA and AQIM
22nd March 2012	Military coup launched by Col. Amadou Sanogo.

16th January 2012	Tuareg secession led by the MNLA, beginning of the conflict, supported by the Islamist groups Ansar Dine, MOJWA and AQIM
22nd March 2012	Military coup launched by Col. Amadou Sanogo.
5th April 2012	Kidal, Gao, Timbuktu and Douetza taken by the rebels, who announce to have accomplished their goals and call off their offensive. Declaration of the Independent State of Azawad. Almost immediately after, the MNLA and the Islamists start fighting each other over the rule of the new State.
17th July 2012	Most of the cities in Azawad are already controlled by the Islamists.
December 2012	The MNLA realigns with the Malian government. Against the Islamist
11th January 2013	French intervention upon request of the Malian government and UNSC resolution.
30th January 2013	All of the important towns under Islamist control have fallen to the strike to the Malian, Chadian and French troops.
18 June 2013	The Malian government and Tuareg rebels signed a peace deal in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso; but later violated
15th Feb. 2015	A new peace agreement was signed without some key actors
21st June 2015	A final peace agreement with all parties reached

Source: Adapted from Central European University (CEU). (2013); Quick timeline and main events. Central European University.

The quest for independence in the north (also known as Azawad) began fully in the 1990s by Tuareg and some element of Arab nomads under the Mouvement Populaire de l'Azaouad or Azawad People's Movement (MPA) (Naizghi, 2014). The political aspiration was therefore collectively housed under the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) much later in 2011. The MNLA is a coalition of interest groups whose aim is the capture of northern territory (Azawad) as independent country home for the Tuareg people (Schroth, 2013).

Antecedence of the Current Conflict (2012)

The current resurgence of conflict in Mali can be viewed from the new alliances forged between the political/secular and the Islamic Tuareg movement: National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) and the Islamist groups such as Ansar Dine and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Movement of Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MOJWA), Islamic movement of Azawad, who had been rebelling against the Malian state since 1962 (Naizghi, 2014). National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) was a protégée of an earlier political movement known as the National Movement for Azawad (MNA), whose ultimate goal is to create a homeland (state) for the Tuareg people (Nadin, 2013). The MNLA's leader Bilal Ag Acherif said that "the onus was on Mali to either give the Saharan peoples their self-determination or they would take it themselves" (Rémy, 2012; Yahaya, 2020)

The strength of the new rebel forces under the MNLA was created following the NATO invasion of Libya and outstay of Muammar Gaddafi in the summer of 2011 (Ajazeera, 2015). About three thousand Tuareg-Malian indigenous soldiers serving in the Libyan army and in the Gaddafi mercenaries or Revolutionary Transition Council returned to Mali (ibid). Combined with the existing political movement formed in 2010 (MNA) and some experienced radical Tuareg politicians, the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) was not only born in October 2011 but became the rallying point for the 2012 resurgence of conflict and take-over of the entire northern region of Mali and its consequent declaration of "independent state of Azawad" (Lecocq & Klute, 2013; Felix, 2012). This movement also had some Arab leaders support (Lecocq, 2013).

The coup d'état of April 2012 was the last in a series of events that exacerbated the conflict. While the north of Mali was embroiled in inter-group rivalry and independence of Azawad, the south experienced a military coup on 22nd March 2012; led by Captain Amadou Sanogo, aged 40, under the 'Comité national pour le redressement de la démocratie et la restauration de l'État' (CNRDRE) (ibid). By March 2012, the country was polarized in the two directions: political and security. The north (half of the country) was governed by Islamist groups with different system of governance; while in the south, President Amadou Toumani Touré was ousted in a coup for poor handling of the crisis, just a month leading to the presidential elections (CEU, 2013).

However, the unity of the rebel forces did not last beyond initial conquest of the northern territory from the Malian government. Shortly after, due to divergent objectives amongst the groups the centre could not hold. While the MNLA pursue a political agenda to conquer and create a political territory for an independent Azawad state, the mosaic of extremist Islamic collaborators such as the Ansar Dine, AQIM, and others did not share this view, rather wants an imposition of Sharia Law across Mali as its objective (OCHA, 2013). Hence, the marriage did not last, MNLA was kicked out by the Islamic allies (Guardian, 2015) and a peace agreement was reached on 18th June 2013 between the Tuareg rebels and the Malian government (ibid). However, three months later, the deal broke down; and on 26th September 2013 the rebels pulled out of the agreement, alleging non-commitment to truce by the government (Ajazeera, 2015). On the 19 February 2015, a new ceasefire agreement was signed in Algiers, although without initial consensus, but formalized in June 2015 (ibid).

The Conflict Analysis (Using Conflict Tree Framework)

Conflict analysis is the use of critical investigative mechanism to understand the phenomenon of a conflict from diverse point of views (Schroth, 2013). Analysing conflict is vital because it helps to understand the linkages between the past and present; it helps identify the direct and indirect stakeholders or actors; it gives better view of relationships between actors and their motives; and finally, help to draw lessons learnt for future references (Naizghi, 2014). For the Mali conflict, the conflict analysis framework or tool adopted to effectively dissect and analyse the situation is the conflict tree approach. The conflict tree helps to understand historical context of conflict among groups by segregating the issues into a tree form; where the root represents the causes, the trunk representing the core problems and the branches – effects or consequences of the actions (Fisher, 2000).

Core Problems/Historical Context (Trunk of the Tree)

The country is geopolitically divided into the north and south. Northern Mali is mostly consisting of the Berber tribe (desert-dwelling Tuareg) with strong linkages from Northern Africa and Mali's black-African agricultural population in the southern (Yahaya, 2020). These two groups are divergent in history and as well as in political aspirations but were solemnized into a nation by French colonial expedition in Africa. While the Tuaregs famous for the introduction of Islam into West Africa and the prosperous trade in trans-Saharan salt, slaves and gold; they are equally indigenous across modern recognized nation states of Mali, Libya, Niger, and Algeria (Meldrum, 2011; Yahaya, 2020). The black-African groups of southern Mali, who infamously originated from the medieval Songhai and Mali empires retains the identity of the name in a modern state (Naizghi, 2014).

The historical foundation premise set by the French colonial rule, which see the Tuareg northern desert as a mere piece of worthless land, gave birth to two distinct relationship between the two groups divided along the north/south geography: one in the more agricultural resource rich south (black-African population) and another in the less valued desert north (Tuareg population) ((Kay, 2019). The political, economic, cultural, educational and administrative potentials of the south was developed through French's well-structured indirect rule, however, the north, considered uneconomically vital, was left to fragmented autonomous Tuareg's rival political leaders to manage (Schroth, 2013). Hence at independence, the black south, having acquired governance skills dominated post-independent Mali; while the autonomous Tuareg's north were naturally unable to meet-up.

Following the discovery of oil and gas, and uranium in the Tuareg dominated deserts (of Mali, Algeria and Niger), the French's attempt to court the area into a super state was highly resisted by already created strong groups/warlords (Kay, 2019). Therefore, the Tuareg's revolt against Malian rule, resulting in armed rebellion from the 1960s could be understood from this point (David, 2013).

Other problems are also reflected in the violent inter-racial confrontation, lack of strong administrative presence unlike in the south, militarization of the region which increases the exodus of Tuareg's especially into neighbouring kinsman countries (David, 2013). The paper argues that these historical relations and subjugation of Tuareg and the Arab nomad population may have necessitated the consistent search for identity and basis for constant conflict with the central government dominated by the south. These groups in the north have been politically excluded from power at the centre and development programmes remain very limited in comparison to the south (Chauzal & Van Damme, 2015; Pérouse de Montclos, 2021). These are the core of the Malian conflict: isolation, inaccessibility to resources, and non-inclusion (Schroth, 2013).

Causes of the Mali Conflict (Root of the Tree)

There had been, beyond the pre-independent marginalization of the north by the French in favour of the south, deliberate policies by the southern dominated government of Mali at perpetually keeping the north weakened; by sponsoring inter-group rivalry between the Tuaregs and the Arab population and promoting instability in order to label the north as security risk to the country (Nadin, 2013). The aim is to prevent an overriding political influence of one group over another, especially between the Tuaregs and Arabs. Electoral zoning of political representation of communities from northern region in the national government represented a strategic weapon used by the southern black elite to control and influence the north (Lacher, 2013). In 2012, miserly 12 Tuaregs out of 147 deputies, made it to the National Assembly; however, not one representative of the Arab community had a seat (Chauzal & Van Damme, 2015). Meanwhile, the post 2012 crisis election produces Zahabi Ould Sidi Mohamed as the first and only elected representative from the Arab community into the National Assembly (Lacher, 2013).

The root causes of the problems in Mali are multi-faceted but lies in the decades of unresolved grievances of the Northern people (especially the Tuaregs) and exacerbated by the deliberate neglect by the Bamako government. The exclusion of the Tuaregs from political, cultural, social and economic life of the country is more than enough trigger for the violence. Little wonder why the deep-rooted animosity and divisions between the north and south, especially as the parity in regions manifest itself so widely in access to education, health, economic livelihood, and social services.

Apart from the threats to peace posed by terrorist groups, and transnational and organized criminal networks, several internal issues underline the conflicts in Mali. These internal issues included the self-determination or autonomy claim pursued by the CMA movements, the socio-economic marginalization of northern regions, pervasive corruption, impunity, inter- and intra-community conflicts, and the lack of inclusive mechanisms in the management of public affairs (Nyirabikali, 2015).

Furthermore, economically, the Tuaregs and other minority northern population were disempowered, and the region desolated, with little optimism (Schroth, 2013; Kay, 2019). Politically, they are severely marginalized and excluded from decision-making; isolated roles are only given at Bamako's discretion, as their homeland was under constant military occupation (Naizghi, 2014). Culturally, the Tuareg ethnic identity was severely placed under superior pressure exemplified by attempt of the government to replace the Tamacheq script, Tifinagh, with a Latin script (Nadin, 2013). In sum, the causes could be represented in terms of poverty and underdevelopment in the north, unequal opportunities against their southern counterpart, extreme marginalization as discussed already, absence of investment development and socio-economic opportunities, natural resources exploitation without adequate reinvestment or compensation in the region, and so on.

Effects of the Conflict (Branches of the Tree)

The conflict has brought wanton destruction of live and property to Mali and continued to make the Sahel country unstable for economic investments and political governance (David, 2013). It has resulted in loss of northern territory to the Al-Qaeda-backed extremist rebel groups; thereby making sub-Sahara sub-region a new hotbed for extremist coordination (Ajazeera, 2015). It has led to weak state, instability, internally displaced persons, etc. (Nadin, 2013). A one-time Africa's major cotton producer is now heavily dependent on foreign aid and remittances from Malians working abroad for sustenance (Mutume, 2005; Martin & Weil, 2002; IMO, 2006). The conflict has relegated Mali to one of the 25 poorest countries in the world (BBC, 2015).

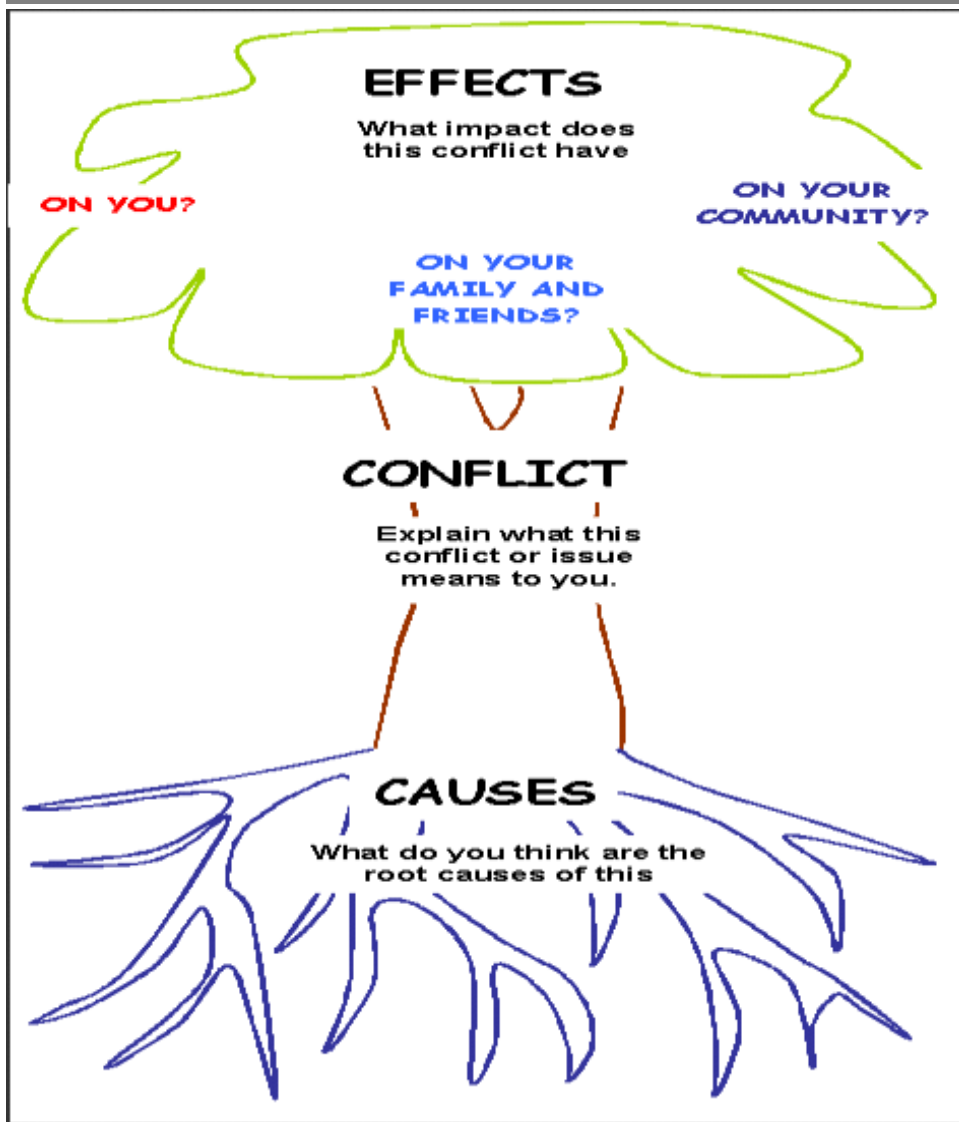


Figure 1 Conflict Tree Illustration (Jayne Seminare Docherty)

Conflict Management Strategies

There are two levels of conflict management strategies identified in Mali conflict. They are peace enforcement or military intervention led by France upon invitation by the Bamako government and authorized by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), which brought about the possibility for ceasefire; and peacekeeping initiated by ECOWAS and taken over by the African Union/United Nations (Naizghi, 2014; Hadzi-Vidanovic, 2013).

Peace Enforcement

Following the takeover of the northern region by the MNLA and its Islamist alliance and unilaterally declared the independence of the state of Azawad in April 2012; in addition to the March 2012 coup d'état by a small group of officers within the Malian army who chased the democratically elected Malian president Amadou Toumani into exile, the country was perverted by lawlessness and a palpable time bomb for regional instability (CEU, 2013).

A military intervention in Mali was launched by France, named Opération Serval, to stabilize the country and create room for negotiation/mediation, after invitation by the Malian government and acting on resolution 2085 adopted by the Security Council of the United Nations on 20th December 2012 (Bergamaschi, 2013; Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, 2013). The intervention was initially supposed to begin under ECOWAS/AU troops, after diplomatic interventions by the ECOWAS and eventually an AU-led push for UN-authorized military

intervention, but after months of no action and rebels' advancement to the south, the French supported by 2, 000 Chadian forces intervened militarily (Schroth, 2013).

In summary, Opération Serval was a success following the eviction of the insurgent group from the major northern towns and cities, including Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu (Boeke & Schuurman, 2015; Shurkin, 2014). After restoration of the status quo, the French withdrew the majority of its forces (around 4,000); leaving behind just 1,000 troops, providing deterrence against any rebound and complementing on-going peacekeeping mission (Nadin, 2013).

The peace enforcement mission was not primarily done by France, but in collaboration with an ECOWAS Mission in Mali (MICEMA) later transformed into the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) (Nadin, 2013). But of course, the regional organizations inspired global political support for the enforcement of peace via a UN mandate, by framing it to draw urgent global attention; "preventing jihadists from establishing a base in northern Mali as a launching pad for attacks outside the region" (Lacher, 2013).

The instrumentality of diplomatic pressure was explored by ECOWAS before military intervention to manage the crisis, especially when the democratic government was toppled, but failed; however, achieved getting rid of the military and setting up a transitional government. The pressure was an imposition of diplomatic and economic sanctions announced on 30th March 2012, including suspension from the regional bloc; while member states bordering Mali closed their borders, thereby blocking Mali's access to neighbouring seaports (Haysom, 2014). But beyond all these, peace enforcement was one of the most important success of the conflict management strategy in Mali, because it compelled parties to the negotiation table, especially the Tuareg rebels.

Peacekeeping

The peacekeeping mission was activated after the push back of the rebels by the French and support from AFISMA, and a ceasefire agreement agreed upon, providing the basis for stabilizing the country and providing platform for negotiation and mediation (Haysom, 2014). Having conquered and retrieved the major territories capture from the Malian state, the peace enforcement was transmitted into a peacekeeping mission under the UNSC resolution 2100, in order to provide the needed stability for peace engagement (Haysom, 2014; (Lacher W, 2013). The peacekeeping mission was meant to build capacity (complement) of the Malian security forces and to provide support for recovery and stabilization of northern Mali. The deployed forces rose from 3,300 to 7,700 persons in January 2013 (CEU, 2013; Nadin, 2013).

The successful intervention and clear-out of the rebel groups from the north, coupled with the eventual ceasefire brokered between the Malian government and MNLA (main rebel actor) open the space for peacekeeping mission. Consequently, the peace enforcement was transformed into an entirely global (UN) peacekeeping mission in April 2013, due to UNSC Resolution 2100, which authorizes the establishment of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) (Lacher, 2013; Nadin, 2013). It is the third biggest UN peacekeeping force (12,600 personnel), less than MONUSCO in the DRC Congo (18,884 personnel) and UNAMID in Darfur, Sudan (20,071 personnel) (Lacher, 2013). However, MINUSMA still reserve a rare residue of peace enforcement role of using "all necessary means" to enforce its mandate (Naizghi, 2014). The mandate was expanded and renewed on 24 June 2014, via resolution 2164, and included long-range patrols, support for political dialogue and reconciliation, statehood and security sector building, and promotion of human rights (UNSC, 2014).

Appraising Effectiveness of Outputs of The Conflict Management Strategies

Has the approach so far adopted guaranteed a halt in the armed conflict? Has it preserved the Malian state and regional stability? Has it addressed the causes or historical problems that triggered the conflict? Has it reconciled the north and south under a single legitimate government? Has it laid the foundation for a lasting conflict resolution? Can or has it guarantee political inclusion of Tuaregs and Arab north in decision making? Is there a feasible roadmap for inclusive economic development of the northern region? All theses and more are the issues outputs of the strategies addressed.

Actualisation of the June 2015 Peace Agreement

Despite these ambitious goals, implementation faced persistent challenges, including delays in decentralization, security sector reform, and economic development projects (International Crisis Group, 2020). The Carter Centre, acting as Independent Observer, reported that many commitments remained unfulfilled, contributing to renewed tensions and insecurity in northern Mali (Carter Centre, n.d.). On January 25, 2024, Mali's transitional military government announced the termination of the accord, accusing Algeria of interference and citing failures by other parties to comply (Reuters, 2024; Associated Press, 2024). The collapse of the agreement, coupled with the withdrawal of the UN peacekeeping mission MINUSMA, heightened the risk of escalating violence and the expansion of extremist groups across Mali's northern and central regions (Associated Press, 2023).

The final acceptance and signing of peace agreement with the only group hitherto excluded; the Coordination of Azawad Movement (CMA) in June 2015 marks a new turning point to the peace roadmap (Guardian, 2015). Without calling it federalism, a new frame of political structure had eventually brought all parties to a common position. "The final talks in Algiers took into account some of our demands, in particular, the commitment to withdrawal from controlled territories by pro-government militia groups; and the international community's formal pledges to see the process through to its end – convinced us to sign," said Ambeiry ag-Rhissa, chair of the CMA political committee (Guardian, 2015; Nadin, 2013)).

The conflict strategies had influenced the dynamics of the conflict resulting in all parties coming together and agreed on the peace agreement, which now serve as a roadmap for peace in the country (Naizghi, 2014). Some of the main concessions to the northern rebels are rights to form local administrations, investment in economic development of the northern region, more parliamentary representatives from the north, greater role in security architecture and protection, etc. Of course, not without denouncing their claim of independence state for Azawad (Ajazeera, 2015).

Political Transition

The most interesting development in the peacebuilding process was the adoption of a roadmap for an inclusive transition, approved by Parliament on 29th January 2013 (Ajazeera, 2015). It broadly set the tone for a comprehensive organization of free and fair elections and restoration of legitimate governance and territorial integrity of Mali (Guardian, 2015). Also, the conflict management strategies opened the space for consultations on political settlement of the conflict by bridging the gap between the actors through negotiations. Elections were held to usher-in a new legitimate political class leading to emergence of Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta as president (Yahaya, 2020). The MNLA and even some extremist Islamist groups have come to the political negotiation table with the government. This was one of the most successful conflict management strategies, which was completion of a political transition process.

Growth of ECOWAS/African Union Capacity to Manage Conflict in the Sub/Region

Another outcome of this Mali experience is the growth in the capacity of African regional organizations to manage continental/sub-regional conflicts or issues without or with little support from the west. This was the first conflict spare-headed by ECOWAS and eventually produced positive results; a peace agreement (TNH, 2012). The crisis in Mali has once again brought to fore the role and ability of regional organizations such as ECOWAS and AU to respond to political instability in the region; and by implication accessing their strength and weaknesses in terms of security, legitimacy, political engagement and in humanitarian spheres; in order to achieve their mandates.

Regional Stability and Security

Intervention or active engagement in Mali conflict by ECOWAS has been attributed to the preventive strategy against threats to West African regional stability that could have resulted in protracted conflict in Mali (Haysom, 2014). There were high presumptions of potential spill-over into neighbouring countries especially Niger and also the possibility of boosting the presence of Islamist extremist groups operating in the region, e.g., AQIM in Mali, Boko Haram in Nigeria and others (Ajazeera, 2015; (Naizghi, 2014). According to a UN report, in 2011,

not less than 100 Boko Haram fighters from Nigeria were training at AQIM camps in Mali; and Boko Haram is believed to have reciprocated the gesture by providing support to Islamist groups fighting in Mali (UNSC, 2011). Besides the effectiveness of the conflict management strategies spear-headed by ECOWAS displayed in Mali, the outcomes represented capacity of regional actors (ECOWAS, AU) to wield the big stick when necessary and deter future rogue elites and rebels or extreme groups within the sub-region especially in fragile states.

CONCLUSION

The Mali conflict is profound giving the nature of resurgence since it began in 1962. The conflict takes its roots from the long-standing structural conditions e.g., feeble state institutions; ineffective governance; fragile social cohesion; deep-seated animosity among the northern population due to neglect, marginalization and unfair treatment by the Bamako government; absence of strong civil society, etc. These conditions were exacerbated by more recent factors of coup d'état, corruption, abuse of power, growth of Islamic extremism in West Africa region, and incapacitation of the national military.

Most observers of conflict in Mali hold doubtful views on the MINUSMA mission, due to the enormous task it faces; coupled with its mandate. It beholds on the mission to maintain the ceasefire and prevent a relapse to violation as witnessed in 2013. There is a positive prospect for conflict resolution in shortest possible timeframe in Mali, because most of the stakeholders such as the Malian government, Tuareg and Arab rebels, civil society and citizens are more willing to sacrifice, and of course with able support of the UN, EU, African Union, and ECOWAS. The new peace agreement of June 2015 has prospect of success as against the previous due to adequate representation of actors and significant concessions by actors.

However, while consultations, negotiations and mediations are on-going among the various parties to the conflict, the people, especially the displaced are left unattended or at best in the hands of under-funded humanitarian aid organizations. The same level of mobilization and attention to the actors in the conflict has not been reflected on the victims of the crisis, who are the women and children displaced across the country and in neighbouring countries.

RECOMMENDED POLICY OPTIONS

The conflict management strategies due to the outcomes so far are more effective than previous once and may result in better foundation for sustainable peace, if the current tempo is sustained.

This paper, therefore, recommends the following policy options.

Malian Government

1. Re-structuring of Malian military formation is critical to future political stability.
2. The Mali conflict transformation framework must invest in Malian security forces by emboldening national unity, discipline and efficiency.
3. Depoliticizing the security forces is essential to preservation of democracy in Mali, and respect for political authority.
4. Importantly, there should be an urgent reconstitution of chain of command for clarity in the military to promote internal cohesion and stability.
5. Expansion of the public administration coverage to the entire country, including the hitherto ungoverned/militarized northern region and devolution of power to local communities.
6. There should be constitutional review or amendments to incorporate powers sharing, proportional representation, partial regional autonomy, etc. agreed in the peace agreement; to also include jobs in the civil service.

7. The newly established Truth, Justice and Reconciliatory Commission should be activated and empowered to drive the national reorientation and reintegration process, such that Malians will command the process.
8. Commitment to increase economic development projects, infrastructure and opportunities to the northern region
9. Deliberate inclusion of the minority groups e.g., Tuaregs, Arabs, etc in the political and economic institutions that represents the Malian state.

Ecowas

1. The principal stakeholders (Malian government, the rebels, should be allowed to determine the mediation contents and outcomes rather than imposition based on certain theoretical templates or sponsoring of accord as was in previous cases.
2. Establish a committee to incorporate external actors (who could be spoilers) such as Algeria, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and other Tuaregs populated neighbours as observers or peace drivers. These actors may be forced to stop sympathizing with or provide support to rebels; given the fact that, some of them had objected to external intervention in Mali.

European Union Team for Mali (EUTM)

1. Beyond support to mediation efforts in the region, increase foreign aid to Mali, especially in the development of the northern economic space will make a huge difference to the new peace agreement.
2. Introduction of viable economic opportunities will affect and appease local communities from engaging in criminal and extremist/terrorist activities. Because without creating alternative economic sustenance, any efforts against smuggling (mainstay in the north) could destabilize the peace process.

The United Nations

1. There should immediately intensification of Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration (DDR) program, following the new commitment to the peace agreements signed in June 2015.
2. Non-combatant peacekeepers should be integrated into the mission to alongside monitor the peace agreement, begin facilitation of conflict resolution at the lower level – communities.
3. In order to avoid past mistakes, funds should be readily available to implement steps reached in the resolution.
4. The population is fundamental in regional approaches to peace; the resulting outcomes are dependent on ways they are engaged. Relapse to conflict in sub-Sahara Africa can be attributed to non-involvement or usual sideline during negotiation/mediation in peace process, either by the international community or by political elites. In the case of Mali, empowering local communities and people would be vital to improving human security.

Civil Society

1. Civil society groups have been very instrumental to the peace process in Mali; therefore, strengthening that base will be of immense value to long term peace in the county.
2. Civil society groups who have played active roles in the past such as advocacy networks have been instrumental to negotiating peace settlements in Mali and should be sustained, such as Northern Mali Network for Peace and Security, Advocacy Network of Peace, Security and Development in Northern

Mali (Réseau de plaidoyer en faveur de la paix, de la sécurité et du développement au Nord- Mali, Coalition for Mali, etc.

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