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WINNING PEACE TO REFUND MALI

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WINNING PEACE TO REFUND MALI

Abstract:

Military operations have taken away the power to jihadist groups in northern Mali, but also have exposed the enormous challenges facing the African country to gain a stable and lasting peace. The Transitional Government stands firm in its decision to hold presidential and legislative elections in July, but first has to give way to a complicated national reconciliation, to legitimize a political, social and security project for the refounding of the Republic of Mali

Keywords:

Mali, jihadist groups, MNLA, ECOWAS, France, elections, UN operation

INTRODUCTION: TOWARDS A NATION PROJECT

In Mali, the situation today has little to do with the situation seen over three months ago. Levels of security and freedom in the north have improved dramatically, although the jihadist threat is cruelly present; but perhaps the most remarkable aspect is that cooperation and international military intervention, motivated by the severe crisis of 2012, have brought to light the reasons of this conflict patent in the country since the independence in 1960. Mali, one of the most admired African democracies in recent decades, is now at a crossroads, and its viability as a country is affected by a group of political decisions that the Transitional Government has to take, immediately, if it wants to create a real identity on which the refounding of the State can be based.

In the field of security, the military offensive led by France, together with Malian and Chadian forces against armed jihadist groups has improved the situation in northern Mali enclaves. However, as stated by Colonel Thierry Burkhard, Islamist radicals continue to be "a well-armed and fanatic adversary, that fights without giving up ground," especially in the mountains of Ifoghas, and have now started to attack indiscriminately in cities that they once dominated.

Before the French intervention, in response to the call for help from the Government of Bamako, Islamist terror had already settled in the north, and had destroyed the will and the freedom of a half million Malians. Chaos spread around the region, fueled by crime, the imposition of Sharia law and the open war between Islamist militias and Tuareg rebels, and, as a result, over 700,000 Malians had to flee and seek safe shelter inside and outside the country. Because of that, the decisive and forceful intervention of France was supported by the entire international community and, even more, by the citizens of Mali, who now see the former colonial power as the friend and ally who saved them from jihadist cruelty.

While French and African forces, in support of the Mali Army, were reconquering the northern enclaves occupied by criminals and terrorists from Al Qaeda militants in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the Oneness Movement for Jihad in West Africa (Muyao) and AnsarDine; the African contingent of AFISMA and the European EUTM Mali mission arrived in the country to assist in the recovery of the north and to train Malian units, respectively. Today,

they deploy more than 11,000 soldiers under the UN resolutions, which are committed to give back to the country and its people a chance, even if it is a long-term process, of a peaceful and stable future.

For Mali, a path to peace is thus being opened, this situation is unprecedented and complex and it will soon be watched and guarded by a United Nations operation. Jihadist extremism that threatens both within and outside the region, has placed this African nation in the focus of international cooperation, but has also uncovered many internal conflict factors that political authorities in the country need to face. Eradicating the scourge of terrorism is urgent, as well as beginning to firmly resolve the political, social and development crisis if Mali wants to be rebuilt. It is crucial to overcome many obstacles, and the most important obstacle will be winning peace on all fronts, not only in the battle against Islamist terrorists, but also in terms of politics, society and national security.

NORTH FRONT: THE BATTLE CONTINUES

In northern Mali, called Azawad by Tuareg peoples, both the French and the African military operation has been advancing to eradicate jihadist terrorism since January 11th. Recovered in just twenty days, the enclaves of Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal; the offensive was directed in February to the northern mountains of Ifoghas, on the border with Algeria and Niger, where Islamist militias had their shelters and where they had fled without facing battle to the French, Malian and Chadian troops. After the incontestable military success, on March 21st, President Hollande confirmed the operation had entered its final phase, consolidation, and virtually the entire territory would be under the sovereignty of the country of Mali in a few days¹.

¹Hollande promises that Malí will get back sovereignty in a matter of days. RiaNovosti, 21/03/13. Accessible at <http://sp.rian.ru/international/20130321/156676055.html> Last access: 05/04/13



Mali

In these three months of fighting, Islamist groups have suffered a clear defeat, but this can not yet be considered definitive. In early March, the announced death in battle of the two top leaders of the jihadist insurgency: Abu Zeid and Mojtár Belmojtár, was the biggest blow to the leadership and cohesion of the pseudo-franchises criminals and terrorists from Al Qaeda in the region. France has confirmed the death of Abu Zaid², a smuggler of arms and human beings that became the most ruthless and bloodthirsty Islamist leader in the region, but has not yet stated its case regarding Belmojtár, known for directing the attack on the gas plant of In Anemas in Algeria the past 14th January and for, long before, being one of the biggest drug dealers and snuff of the Sahel, from which comes the nickname "MisterMalboro". He is one of the Islamist leaders who, for years, based his defense of the sharia on financial and mercantile matters, and not in some interest to implement Islam in the Sahel.

²Paris confirms the death of the AQMI leader thanks to DNA clues. EFE, 23/03/13. Available at <http://www.efe.com/efe/noticias/america/ame-mundo/paris-confirma-muerte-del-lider-aqmi-con-pruebas-adn/2/12/1999070>. Last access; 26/03/13.

From the Jihadist hand, the death of leader Abu Zaid was recently denied by AQIM³, in an attempt to safeguard the militancy of their bases and in order to convince other foreign extremists to come to the Sahel and defend their fanatical and criminal view of Islam. On April 8th, another global call to jihad was launched by the leader of Al Qaeda, Al Zawahiri, through an audio message released on jihadist websites, in which he prophesied that "France would find in Mali the fate of the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan"⁴.

MUYAO Muyao in the area of Gao, and its main hideout in Kadji, an island in the Niger River, has been completely dismantled. However, combat power is not blown, as evidenced by the fighting in late March, and French forces continue searching and dismantling its huge arsenal of weapons⁵.

The situation of AnsarDine is different, "defenders of the faith" are led by the pragmatic and versatile Iyad Ag Ghaly, that has virtually disappeared from the battlefield. Everything indicates that militants have laid down their arms, at least for the moment, and have returned to their nomadic camps in the region of Kidal or take refuge in Burkina Faso. Moreover, the dissent in March of the Islamic Movement of Azawad IntalaagAtaher, influential and aristocratic Tuareg leader who has renounced to armed struggle and to jihad thesis, has been crucial to further weaken the Islamist project of AnsarDine.

And in the middle of the dismantling of the Islamist network, the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (Tuareg and secular movement, seen as the real trigger for the current crisis in Mali (is getting strong in its bastions of the region of Kidal. Thanks to the determination of France, the Tuareg rebels have laid down their arms and is now fighting, along with the Gallic troops to eradicate the terrorist threat and to position themselves with authority, strongly questioned within the Tuareg community, nevertheless, national reconciliation still remains uncertain.

³ AQIM denies the death of one of their leaders, possibly Abuzeid. Reuters/EP, 06/04/13. Available at <http://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-aqmi-desmiente-muerte-lideres-posiblemente-abu-zeid-anuncia-dias-oscuros-francia-20130406113119.html> Last access: 08/04/13

⁴ Al-Qaeda chief urges post-Arab Spring Muslim unity. The Journal of Turkish Weekly, 08/04/13. Available at <http://www.turkishweekly.net/news/148805/al-qaeda-chief-urges-post-arab-spring-muslim-unity.html>. Last access: 09/04/13

⁵Up to no, French troops have seized more than three tons of weapons and seven of ammunition in north of the country, which will be delivered to the Army of Mali, according to the Russian newspaper RiaNovosti (30/03/13). Available at <http://sp.rian.ru/Defensa/20130330/156743808.html>. Last access: 03/04/13.

However, although the death in combat of 600 jihadists – as declared by the Army of Mali⁶ – represents an important victory over terrorism, the threat is still very present in the north. Islamist groups have reiterated that they will return to battle once French troops are withdrawn and, to reaffirm their criminal will, they have launched a wave of terrorist attacks that endangers the military success achieved by the Franco-African coalition in the preceding months. Since February, the main sites of northern Mali suffer from continuous suicide attacks that have set off all the alarms on the latent jihadist threat. Thus, on March 30th, the car bomb and the infiltration of Islamists in Timbuktu demanded immediate intervention of French troops, including its combat aviation. And in Kidal, a terrorist blew himself up with an explosive charge in the local market on April 12nd, killing three Chadian soldiers and creating chaos among the local population.

In recent days, the French forces, supported by troops from Mali, have launched the Operation Gustav in the north of Gao, which aims to consolidate the neutralization of all the jihadist network in this region. As the general Bernard Barrera, head of the French land forces, stated, the Ifoghas Mountains are practically free, and "now we operate in the central area, to prevent the reorganization of Islamists." All this in order to minimize the risk of terrorists having the capacity to attack African military forces, once the French contingent has been reduced or removed⁷.

The ineffectiveness of AFISMA slows the withdrawal of French troops

Given the worrying scenario in the north, a progressive withdrawal of the French troops may cause a further escalation of the threat, especially when AFISMA forces (except for the forces from Chad) are far from being operational, nor are fighting yet against the jihadists. The nearly 5,000 members of the ECOWAS countries are restricted themselves, for the moment, to give security to certain areas in the center and south of Mali and the border with Niger. Moreover, its deployment is still too slow in the north of the Niger River, largely

⁶El Ejército malí cifra en unos 600 los islamistas abatidos desde enero. Abc, 27/03/13. Available at <http://www.abc.es/internacional/20130327/abci-balance-guerra-mali-201303271833.html>. Last access: 28/03/13.

⁷France launches major new offensive against militants in Mali. Digital Journal, 08/04/13. Available at <http://www.digitaljournal.com/article/347558#ixzz2Q924HazM>. Last access: 10/04/13.

due to the huge gaps in its chain of command and logistics, as well as its low funding capacity. For the moment, only the forces of Burkina Faso reinforce Timbuktu, while Nigerian ones are positioned in the center of the country.

Another important key for the immediate future of AFISMA factor is the progressive withdrawal of the Chad forces, which was approved by the Parliament on the 15th of April. 2,250 Chadian soldiers deployed in Mali at the express request of France, and have effectively fought the jihadists from the beginning of the operation, which have caused a total of 36 combat casualties. Therefore, Chad has never been considered as an integral part of AFISMA, even more because it is not a member country of ECOWAS. This could be the main reason for his departure, at least temporarily, of Mali, long before the "lack of preparedness of the troops to fight the threat" that argues now President IdrissDeby.⁸

For all these reasons, the urgent need to relieve the African force with a UN mission is becoming stronger throughout the international community. At the same time, officials of the Transitional Government ask France not to leave the country to its fate until "the African forces are able to pick up the baton" effectively. President Hollande pledged at the beginning of the operation Serval⁹ he would followed that request. That is why, the same Hollande announced on March 28th a progressive withdrawal of the French troops until accomplishing a quota of only 1,000 troops (facing the current 4,000) that will remain in the country fighting against terrorist groups at least until the end of 2013¹⁰. This decision seems to confirm, as predictably, that France will be the one leading this battle front in a UN operation, which is expected to be approved by the Security Council in this month of April, and that we will address later.

⁸ Mali: Chad Begins Withdrawing Troops From Mali. AllAfrica, 15/04/13. Disponible en <http://allafrica.com/stories/201304160134.htm>. Fecha de consulta: 15/04/13.

⁹ The French contingent will remain in Mali till July. 01/03/13. Available at: <http://actualidad.rt.com/actualidad/view/87839-contingente-frances-mali-julio>.

¹⁰ Mali: the French army will stay until 2014. AFP, 28/03/13. Available at <http://america.infobae.com/notas/68875-Mali-ejercito-frances-se-queda-hasta-2014>. Fecha de consulta: 29/03/13.

LEGITIMATE DEMOCRACY AND NATIONAL RECONCILIATION

The fight against jihadist terrorism is essential in order to established peace and stability in Mali, but it is even more essential to face, at the same time, the serious political crisis the country is suffering since the coup of March 2012, led by Captain Sanogo. Nevertheless, shortly after that and thanks to international pressure, he ceded power, at least on paper, to a transitional government, his influence on the political decisions of Bamako has been very evident ... at least until the beginning of the French military intervention.

However, the real causes of this crisis do not only settle in the future of the north of the country in 2012, many have been forged in the past times. In this regard, the UN secretary general, Ban Ki-Moon said, in its damning report on March 26th, that this crisis, among other reasons, "is due to long-standing structural conditions, such as weak state institutions, ineffective governance, fragile social cohesion, and a feeling, deeply rooted among northern communities, of abandonment, marginalization and unfair treatment by the central government (...)"¹¹.

To address the resolution of these serious democratic shortcomings, the interim president DioncoundaTraoré concentrates his efforts on carrying out a piece of policy consensus, approved the past 29th January at the National Assembly, and which includes the restoration of constitutional order and national unity through an inclusive dialogue, the restoration of state authority throughout the country , the restoration of the restructuring of the army and , finally, the restoration of the organization of a democratic and credible electoral process. As all interim authorities of Mali have repeated incessantly, this election, both presidential and legislative, will be held before the end of July, and the elected government will assume the responsibility of leading and consolidating the final reconstruction of the state. Meanwhile, in the north, the MNLA has declared its intention to boycott the elections, claiming that Bamako has not made the Tuaregs partakers of the project of political transition.

To the International Community, real architect of the beginning of the political process, holding of democratic elections has always been a sine qua non condition for providing

¹¹ Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2013/189), March 26th, 2013. Available at: http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2013/189.

support to the resolution of the crisis. However, both within the organization of the countries of the region, ECOWAS, and outside Africa, there is much skepticism about the dates of holding those elections, especially taking into account the short time available for the preparation of such a complicated electoral process. France, great ally of the Transitional Government of Mali on all fronts, is the only exception and doesn't doubt there will be elections "before the end of July (as underlined by Hollande at the end of March) and with all parts of society represented"¹². Undoubtedly, his support in this election process will be decisive and, certainly, the French forces will be the main guarantor of votes in the north.

Clearly not everything is as optimistic: the security levels in northern Mali are far from enough to guarantee the right to vote, especially for the hundreds of thousands of Malians living in IDP and refugees camps; and the talks in order to achieve national reconciliation, that must take place before the elections, have not begun yet. However, the future of Mali comes into play in this election, and the transitional authorities should be aware that its significance lies not only in its conclusion, but on the fact that a large majority of Malians recognize them as legitimate and representative. Moreover, without a previous effort of national reconciliation, the electoral process may cause greater instability and even more violence.

Is political regeneration possible in the short?

In Bamako, and despite the challenges the electoral process means, the machinery of political parties, looking now for presidential candidates capable of seeking consensus and recovering and building the trust of the Malian population in their ruling class and its state institutions, has been put in motion.

At the moment, the National Assembly is totally dominated by two social-democratic and Pan-Africanist political parties who were united until 2002: the Alliance for Democracy in Mali (Adema-PASJ), majority and led by the current interim president Dioncounda Traoré, and Union for the Republic and Democracy. Currently, the Alliance for Democracy and

¹²Hollande: France will reduce its troops in Mali to 2.000 July. Agencia Xinhua, 29/03/13. Available at: http://spanish.china.org.cn/international/txt/2013-03/29/content_28392075.htm. Last access: 03/04/13.

Progress has an overwhelming majority, which occupies 113 of the 147 seats in the legislature of Mali.

The second parliamentary alliance, with the same political ideology, is the Front for Democracy and the Republic, led by the influential Ibrahim Keita; nevertheless it only has 15 deputies in the Assembly. The independent group, with 15 deputies, and the leftist African Solidarity for Democracy and Independence (SADI) party, with only 4, close the current configuration of the seat of the Malian national sovereignty. An institution that, in practice, is totally dominated by the same groups and political leaders that have been in power since the early eighties.

None of the parties represented in the Assembly represents, specifically, the Arab and Tuareg communities of the north of the country that, on the other hand, are less than the 15% of the total population of Mali. Currently MNLA leaders have declared they will not participate in the upcoming elections. Against them, a group of Tuareg political activists, that reject directly the armed struggle and any kind of claim¹³, has emerged. The consolidation of this group as a representative of the Tuareg movement would be a very significant advance in the political process, but for now, it has not attracted the support of Ifoghas, the more influential Tuareg clan in the region of Kidal.

This political landscape highlights the poor social representation Malian institutions have today. If we look at the percentages of participation in previous elections that poor social representation is even more obvious. In the 2007 call, and with a census of 6.3 million citizens, only a 34% went to vote. Amadou Toumani Touré was named president of the country with the support of 1.6 million voters, which was barely a 10% of the total population. If this happens again during the uncertain elections in July, which will be held with the same amount of citizens in the electoral census, less will have been done for the political regeneration in Mali, which should be the real basis of the refounding of the State¹⁴.

¹³The creation of a Tuareg movement against the independence movement is announced. Agencia EFE; 14/94/13. Available at: http://www.diariovasco.com/agencias/20130414/mas-actualidad/mundo/anuncian-creacion-movimiento-tuareg-mali_201304141403.html. Last access: 17/04/13.

¹⁴All of the statistics and quantitative data from the elections in Mali, and in Africa in general, are available at then AfricanElections Database. Disponible en <http://africanelections.tripod.com/ml.html>

It would be really desirable that the results of the forthcoming elections in Mali, regardless of the dates in which they are held, were translated into a profound renewal of the General Assembly, so the Assembly is representative, but a generational change is also important in the political class in a country where more than a half of the population are 16 year-old adolescents that live connected to the outside and frustrated in their own country. However, the high illiteracy rate (53%) and the small number of university students (5.8%) do not bring, for the moment, optimism to the country, and the fact of new political forces encompassing the trust of the younger population is unlikely to happen, and even less before July.

A notable exception is the youth movement within the African Convergence for Renewal (CARE)¹⁵, which has launched a campaign that seems to define well the feeling of youth, at least Bamako's: Calling for Change: Where is the equality if it is the same people? In its ranks, the popularity of the young and influential leader, Cheick Boucadry Traore, is growing. And it is not a coincidence that, like everything is happening in Mali, the media in China follows closely his political and social history. In spite of coming from a well known political family, his speech is offends the current system and is leaving a mark on the Malian youth: "The decisions of our political leaders, after 30 years in power, have caused great harm to our people, weakened our military, and destroyed the social fabric and keep our country into chaos"¹⁶.

We will have to pay attention to these leaders and youth movements; it would be very important if they join, in the near future, the process of national reconstruction. It seems that this generational change has also crystallized in the ranks of the majority party, Adema-PASJ, which has surprisingly chosen a politician of 46 years old, Dramane Dembele, as its presidential candidate and as substitute of Dioncounda Traoré as head of the party. Almost certainly, the ADEMA party will win the election again and, therefore, Dembele will be the new president of Mali and responsible for leading the refounding of the country.

¹⁵CARE is a social and political movement that became a political party in 2011 (http://www.caremali.com/docs/recepisse_parti.pdf). It is becoming more important in Bamako by defending that another political class and society are possible.

¹⁶ Mali's young politicians call for generational change in leadership. Agencia Xinhuan, 05/04/13. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/indepth/2013-04/05/c_132286800.htm.

However, those elections have a special significance for the political parties based in the south of the country, which seek candidates who are able to build trust and combine the will of many to carry out a new national project. In the north, however, safety remains a priority on the political field and, by far, the electoral process remains off the agenda, when it is not flatly rejected by the Arabs and Tuareg movements¹⁷.

The dialogue North-South: prior condition for the social reconciliation

The legitimacy of the electoral process and, by extension, of the entire national project is subject to the reconciliation of all communities and peoples of Mali. For this reason, the entire international community, and especially ECOWAS, has called on the authorities of Transition, from the beginning of the crisis, to initiate negotiations to achieve social peace and serve the development the whole country. To this end, on 6th March, the Government announced the creation of the Commission for Dialogue and Reconciliation, which should bring together all political and social forces that support dialogue and reunification.

This new state institution is headed by Mohamed Salia Sokina, a veteran political leader and defense minister in the nineties. In early April, and with a excessive delay, President Traoré appointed two vice presidents (Traoré Oumou Toure, president of the Coordination of women's associations in Mali and the Tuareg leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Azawad, Meti Rhissa Ag Mohamed) and thirty members of the Commission: a wide range group of political and social leaders who hold, in principle, the representation of all national communities.

In addition, this Commission is the body responsible of formalizing all the actions thought to strengthen national unity. Undoubtedly, at the moment, claims of the MNLA Tuareg leaders, who do not feel yet part of the future evolution of Mali, are the main obstacle of this Commission when strengthening the reconciliation process. This rebel movement appears on the scene in late 2011, after leaving Libya after the fall of the Gaddafi regime. Since January 2012, this movement led a new Tuareg revolt, heavily armed and for the first time,

¹⁷ *Mali Actualités* –news agency of Bamako– is preparing a report of all the activities related to the organization and celebration of the presidential and legislative elections, to be held in July. Web: <http://maliactu.net/>

with secessionist aspirations, and unilaterally proclaimed independence of Azawad few months later. However, the most serious consequence of this statement was an open war against Islamist groups of AQIM, MUYAO, and AnsarDine, who seized power and imposed terror in the main northern enclaves leading the whole nation to a deep crisis.

This last insurgent outbreak linked to a long history of Tuareg revolts that began almost with the independence of Mali. The one between 1990 and 1997, in which Tuaregs demanded more attention for the big famines and for the refugee crisis that crossed the north, while denouncing harsh repression of political rights, was especially cruel. In 2007, and despite the Algiers Agreement signed one year before, Tuareg took up arms again to report that the process of demobilization and integration of the rebels into the army or civilian life agreed was being slow and unsatisfactory.

But none of the precedent riots has generated a confrontation as open against the political authorities and the Mali army as the 2012 one. With it, the MNLA got to expel the regular forces from their garrisons in the north of the country, and the attacks on the military base Aguelhok, where allegedly 153 Malian soldiers were killed, were especially violent and are being investigated by the International Criminal Court international¹⁸.

However, the positions of the Government of Bamako and MNLA are still far apart. Even if now the Tuareg rebels are fighting against jihadist groups along the French troops, they maintain their visceral hatred towards the Malian regular forces, which are not allow to enter his stronghold of Kidal. In fact, the MNLA has threatened to file a lawsuit to the International Criminal Court against the government and the army, including the President Traoré.

¹⁸The 18th July, 2012, the Minister of Justice of Mali delivered a letter to the ICC prosecutor, denouncing human rights violations that were taking place in northern Mali since January 2012, and that national authorities do not have the capacity to investigate. The ICC decided to open an investigation on 16th January. In Mali: ICC investigation into crimes committed during the conflict, a fundamental step towards justice. 16/01/13. Available at: <http://www.amnesty.org/es/for-media/press-releases/mali-investigacion-cpi-crimenes-conflicto-paso-clave-2013-01-16> Last access: 28/01/13.

Nevertheless, and since February of this year, the interim President Traoré has indicated his willingness to negotiate with the MNLA, if the renounce to armed struggle and to their territorial claims; but at the same time he does not want the MNLA to become the sole spokesman for all Tuaregs in the north. While this is true, as many leaders and Tuareg communities¹⁹ consistently demonstrate, the force of the arms makes the MNLA a main actor for reaching peace in northern Mali. For this reason, and in the medium-term future, we must raise a new disarmament and reintegration of Tuareg rebels, a matter rejected by the Government of Bamako.

But besides the Tuaregs, social reconciliation must also meet the legitimate aspirations of the Arab peoples of northern Mali, who have created a joint organization to coordinate their efforts and intentions in future negotiations with the Government of Mali. To this end, from the 4th to the 6th April, they held its first meeting in Nouakchott (Mauritania), where they declared their condemnation of terrorism and the prevailing crime in the territory of Azawad, as well as their determination to defend their legitimate aspirations as a community within a national project. Under this initiative, it seems that the talks with the Arabs will be more feasible, even if they are always subject to some confidence from both sides on a solid and inclusive national project.

Finally, Bamako should also provide a solution to the huge humanitarian crisis that 430,000 displaced persons and 107,000 refugees, who have been forced to flee their homes to escape the armed struggle in 2012, according to data provided by UNHCR, whose return has to be part of any negotiating process, have been facing. So far, the UNHCR has confirmed that 260,000 Malians have already returned to their home towns, although they claim that other 5600 ones, majority of Tuaregs and Arabs, have taken refuge in Niger since the start of military intervention, fearing reprisals from the Mali Army.

¹⁹In this sense, and to demonstrate the lack of absolute leadership of the MNLA, the new Tuareg movement advocates that they are a "representative alliance, which combines the positive values of the Tuareg (...), and whose strength lies in the openness of mind. Any Tuareg identifies himself as member of the MNLA ", according to its president, Bajan Ag Hamatou. They announced the creation of a Tuareg movement in Mali opposed to the independence movement. Op. Cit.

In this regard, according to the complaint of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in a report on March 12nd²⁰, minorities are fleeing because of fear of retaliation, while warning that interethnic conflicts can undermine any effort to win peace. To prevent the worsening of this situation, the Minister of Justice in Mali, MalickCoulibaly, appeared publicly to defend that those incidents were isolated and that the suspect soldiers had been withdrawn from the front line and brought to justice in Bamako.

THE RESTRUCTURATION OF THE MALIAN ARMY

A profound reform of the security and defense sector, particularly the restructuring of the decimated and ineffective Mali Army, is perhaps the most important and urgent challenge the government of Mali has to assume. At the moment, and although the government is fighting the jihadists along with French and African troops, operational levels are clearly insufficient to ensure security throughout the country, especially in the northern territories. Even with the support of the AFISMA African forces, after an eventual withdrawal of the French troops, they would be able to get it.

The European Union, aware of the huge challenge that that represents, took, on the 18th February, the responsibility of advising the Defense Staff on the overall reform of the security and defense sector; and also assumed the commitment to train four of the eight battalions of the Mali Army, made up of about 7,350 soldiers²¹. The EUTM Mali mission, with an authorized 550 personnel and an initial term of fifteen months, began its deployment in Bamako in early February and, since the 2nd April, has started to train the first 570 Malian soldiers in the military camp of Koulikoro, 60 km away from the capital, Bamako. In this operation, Spain deployed, so far, a total of 58 forces: 8 in the HQ of Bamako, 15 special operations instructors and 35 persons in charge of force protection, which will ensure, together with France, the safety of trainers in Koulikoro.

²⁰ Presentation of the Report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on Mali. OHCHR, 12/03/13. Available at <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=13123&LangID=E>

²¹ The International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2013*, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, Philadelphia, 2013.

Under the command of French general Lacoindre, and in close coordination with the Minister of Defense, General YamusaCamara, and with Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, Colonel IbrahimaDembelé, the European mission will assist in creating more effective, operational and better equipped armed forces, in which respect for human rights is the key base to restoring the confidence of the Malian population²². However, this effort will be void if it does not reestablish morality, cohesion and integrity of command within the armed forces creating a true institutional culture of respect for civil authorities.

On March 22nd, the coup d'état by Captain Sanogo fractionated further more an army traditionally divided by the color of their berets: the "red" of the paratroopers that make up the National Guard in Bamako, and the "green" o those who have fought against the successive Tuareg rebellions in the north and, largely, represented by Captain Sanogo. There is a deep rivalry between the two factions, as evidenced by his clashes in Bamako in April 2012 and, more recent, in February of this year. It would be necessary to face that rivalry to get, as a first step, the internal pacification of the security sector itself. Today, Captain Sanogo is virtually absent from the Malian political scene, at least since the French military intervention, although he remains as the official responsible for the security and defense forces reform programs, as well as the training.

UN: NEW MISSION TO GUARANTEE STABILITY

Since January 2012, the United Nations has taken a real and active role in solving the crisis in Mali. In December 2012, through Resolution 2085 of the Security Council, it approved the deployment of an African operation, AFISMA, and authorized the EU training mission. By then, these were the two pillars of international cooperation to restore territorial integrity and national sovereignty in Mali. However, both the jihadist offensive in Bamako in January 10th, and the subsequent French intervention to stop that offensive, have created a substantially different political and strategic scenario inside and outside the country, which requires a new resolution of the Security Council of the United Nations.

²² The UE expects to start training soldiers in Mali in April Agencia EFE; 05/03/13. Available at: <http://www.abc.es/agencias/noticia.asp?noticia=1366449>. Lasta access: 07/04/13.

The afore-mentioned report of the Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, 26th March²³, delves into the root causes underlying the conflict in Mali, as well as the necessity to address all the challenges in the political, social and security areas we have analyzed in this article. Furthermore, and due to the questioned effectiveness of AFISMA African forces, the report believes that the time to relieve them by a UN force command, responsible of both the support and monitoring of the political process ,has come in order to strengthen the capacity and legitimacy of the state, and the security and stability throughout the country.

To achieve this aim, Ban Ki-Moon has two options that, to a large extent, are subject to safe levels in northern Mali. The first option would focus on politics, while AFISMA forces would be responsible of the security, with a special combat unit, supporting the forces of Mali, to eradicate the jihadist threat. Meanwhile, the second option includes the deployment of a stabilization mission, based on AFISMA, along with another military force (not determined yet) centered exclusively in combating operations against terrorism.

Between the two options, the only difference lays on the military that must confront the jihadist threat in northern Mali, since the success of the whole operation depends critically on their ability and efficiency to fulfill this mission. Therefore, it is not surprising that there is a broad consensus within the Security Council regarding AFISMA not to assume this difficult and risky task and, accordingly, everybody is inclined to adopt a resolution based on the second option of the Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon. The ECOWAS countries, including Mali, have repeatedly called on UN relieving their forces, so it is normal to think that they will support a mission to relieve them of carrying the main burden of the struggle against jihadism in the region, taking into account that they are not even prepared for that.

Whatever the choice is, and knowing it would probably be public this April, we can assure that this mission, unprecedented within the UN, involves a never seen evolution of the doctrine of this international organization, which had never raised before the open struggle against jihadist terrorism. Everything points to France as first supporter and promoter of international cooperation with Mali, and it is obvious that it will extend its support to the forces of Mali, but now under the umbrella of the United Nations and the Chapter VII of the

²³ United Nations Secretary-General's report. Op. cit.

Charter. Furthermore, and almost certainly, they will again have the support of Chad, their most operational ally in the region.

CONCLUSION

The international military intervention against the jihadist threat will not eliminate the root causes of the conflict in Mali, but is working on creating the necessary conditions to tackle the huge crisis that the country and its population are facing. The solution, without any doubt, even if it is in the very long term, must be based on a political, economic and social process that will generate a national identity, necessary when consolidate any project of a decent and strong democratic state.

While facing this challenge, the elections will be a key milestone to achieve the country's peace. It is likely that the climate of insecurity in the north of the country and the limited time to prepare those elections force to delay the call, but what is certain is that only a legitimately elected government will have enough credit to meet the national dialogue and fundamental reforms Mali needs.

For the moment, everything depends on the military effort, but the policy must get back in the short term, its total primacy. The International Community is providing an unprecedented cooperation plan to Mali: now, the political authorities of the country must be the ones showing the determination and ability to consolidate national sovereignty and, thus, assume responsibility for all its citizens, whether African, Arab or Tuaregs.

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