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Md. Mamunur Rashid

CHALLENGES OF PEACE IN MALI

Abstract

Mali faced a great challenge when Islamic extremists linked to al-Qaeda took control of the desert north in early 2012, exploiting a Tuareg separatist uprising defeating Mali Armed Forces (FAMA). Malian Government asked help from France to save Mali from catastrophic defeat. French Forces landed Mali in 2013 and within three and half months they recaptured all important provinces of northern and eastern regions. United Nations (UN) Troops were deployed in 2013 for bringing peace in Mali. The Mali government signed a peace deal with the main rebel coalition keeping transnational and local Terrorist Armed Groups (TAGs) out of peace agreement. The rebels, signatory to the peace agreement, were not sincere in the peace process. TAGs are taking this opportunity. They are also motivating tribes to fight each other. As the French Forces attack and kill TAGs to eradicate terrorism from this region, the TAGs are also aiming French and UN Forces in weak deployed cantonments to take revenge. Though French Forces could eradicate TAGs major deployment from northern and eastern part of Mali but they could not wipe them out totally. TAGs are taking shelter in bordering states and continuing attacking French and UN Forces sporadically making peace process more difficult to implement. Absence of political, legal institutions, good communication network, administrative infrastructure, law and order situation control and monitoring system including securing of borders in northern and eastern part of Mali is aggravating the crisis in Mali. Difference between north, east with south may be reduced so that people living in the north and east do not feel neglected by the Government operating from the South.

Keywords: Peace, TAG, Peacekeepers, French Forces, UN

1.   Introduction.

Mali, a land-locked country of Sahara Desert, has experienced the most devastating consequences since independence (in 1960) when transnational and local Terrorist Armed Groups (TAGs) led by Islamic Militants and Tuareg[1] rebels defeated Malian Armed Forces in northern Mali region in January 2012. The crisis

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[1] Tuareg are the nomads of Barber people and Arab descents wandering in the desert of Sahara. They live in northern Mali, Niger, Algeria and Mauritania.

in the northern part of Mali led 137,975 Malian to take shelter in neighbouring states of Mauritania, Burkina Faso and Niger as refugees, and 99,039 people within Mali was internally displaced.[2] The situation got worsened when a group of Malian army committed a military coup in the capital Bamako led by Captain Amadou Sanogo in March 2012 and ousted the President Amadou Toumani Toure from power. Meanwhile, Tuareg rebels declared independent "Azawad" state in April 2012. At the same time, Tuareg rebels started fighting with other religious militant armed rebels who wanted to implement "Sharia Law" in Mali which made the situation worse.[3] Map 1 shows the location of Mali in the African Continent, Mali with neighbouring states and the Sahel region of Africa.

**Map 1: Location of Mali in African Continent[4]**

After the fall of President Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, Tuaregs, ethnic relatives of Gaddafi, left Libya and took shelter in the northern region of Mali with money, weapons and ammunitions. They had the political will to change the status quo in the country.[5] When the TAG started moving towards the capital to gain control of the lost territory, especially the whole northern region, interim President of Mali, Dioncounda Traore requested France to help, and without any delay French Armed Forces were deployed in Mali on 10 January 2013.[6] French Forces conducted "Operation Serval" to regain the lost territory in the north and to deport Islamic militants from there, who had begun a push into the centre of Mali. French troops and Mali Forces could successfully recapture Gao, Timbuktu, Kidal, Tessalit (including Adrar des Ifoghas) the lost territories of Mali.[7]

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[2] Available at https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/malisituation, accessed on 02 January 2019.

[3] Kathleen M. Baker and Andrew Clark, "Mali", available at https://www.britannica.com/place/Mali/2012-coup-and-warfare-in-the-north, accessed on 05 March 2019.

[4] Available at https://www.worldatlas.com/maps/mali, (Fig-1), https://www.britannica.com/place/Mali (Fig-2), https://theconversation.com/sahel-region-africa-72569 (Fig-3), accessed on 02 January 2019.

[5] Dario Cristiani and Riccardo Fabiani, "From Dysfunctionality to Disagreement and Back? The Malian Crisis, Local Players and European Interests", *Institute Affari Internationali (IAI)*, Working Paper, 08 March 2013, pp. 4-5.

[6] Freedom C. Onuoha and Alex Thurston, *Franco-African Military Intervention in the Mali Crisis and Evolving Security Concern*, NDC, Nigeria (Abuja): Aljazeera Center for Studies, 19 February 2013, p. 5.

[7] Michael Shurkin, "France's War in Mali, Lessons for an Expeditionary Army", USA: RAND Corporation,

Meanwhile, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) formed the United Nations Peacekeeping Operation (UNPKO) in the name of United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) on 25 April 2013. MINUSMA officially started their mission on 01 July 2013, and it has become the most dangerous UNPKO of the world where 219 peacekeepers died out of 15,451 troops as of now in the hand of TAG.[8] Map 2 shows that the area of operations for peacekeepers in Mali was limited to scarce road networks (as of 01 March 2013).

Map 2: Area of Operations in Mali for Peacekeepers Limited to Scarce Road Networks[9]
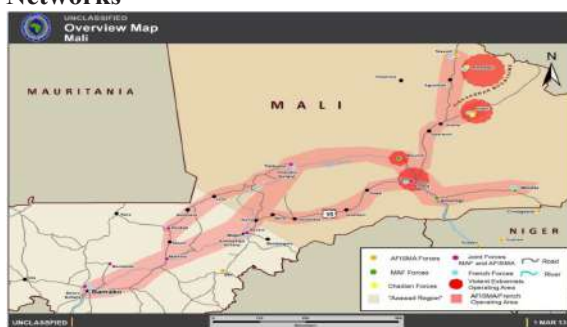
Though French Forces defeated TAG in important cities of Mali, but they could not eradicate them completely. TAGs had been conducting asymmetric war through clandestine and insurgent operations against the UN and French Forces and hid themselves inside the civil population, and in some cases, to bordering states. The UN and French Forces are conducting operation separately in most of the important cities and regions of Mali. French Forces are conducting counter insurgency operation to eliminate terrorist activities in Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad commonly known as G-5 Sahel. This operation of French Forces is known as "Operation Barkhane" started on 01 August 2014 with 4,500 troops after "Operation Serval".[10] Though the UN and French Forces have different mandates and their operations and purpose are different, both forces are equally targeted by TAG which has become a great concern for all. The success of the UN and French Forces is very important to bring peace and stability in the Sahel region. To protect innocent civilians from militants and to bring back normalcy in the life of people living in the northern region of Mali, there is no alternate other than route out TAG from Sahel region.

2014, pp.16-21, available at https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR770.html, accessed on 06 April 2019.

[8] Available at https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/minusma, accessed on 07 April 2019.

[9] "Dutch Deploy to Mali as French Plan to Withdraw", 10 January 2014, available at https://codebookafrica.wordpress.com/tag/operation-serval/, accessed on 25 January 2019.

[10] Available at https://www.thedefensepost.com/tag/operation-barkhane/, accessed on 06 May 2019,

The objective of this research is to find out the reasons of Malian crisis which has destabilized the Sahel region and give plausible solution to bring sustainable peace in Mali in particular and in the Sahel region in general. The research questions are: what challenges do Mali face in order to ensure effective and sustainable peace in the country? How can those challenges be resolved to make the UNPKO most effective in bringing sustainable peace in Mali and Sahel region?

This research paper will contribute to find out the challenges that Mali is facing in bringing peace in the country. As Mali is facing asymmetric war, where the UN, French and Malian Forces are fighting against unconventional forces, the findings of this paper would help UN to deploy forces in the similar environments what the UN did not experience before. The Sahel region, Burkina Faso and Niger are also having peripheral effect of Malian crisis, as such measures suggested by the researcher would help in resolving those challenges in bringing viable peace in Mali and Sahel region.

The paper is organized in chronological order where the researcher covered methodology, theoretical framework, background of conflict and peace process in Mali, operations of French Forces and operation by the UN. Findings of the MINUSMA activities were covered in challenges of MINUSMA and solution for peace. Finally, based on the previous discussions conclusion was made followed by recommendations.

2.   Methodology

As the research topic is participatory and interpretive, it needs a subjective approach and multi-method focus on the subject for finding out the problems and solutions. For that, qualitative method worked out well. The researcher conducted qualitative study on the subject in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to the subject through interviews and secondary sources. The researcher tried to find out the facts and explain those facts. Interviewing 24 important appointment holders involved with UNPKO in Mali and Bangladesh helped the researcher unearth true information on the challenges for peace in Mali and Sahel region.

As the northern region of Mali is a hot-spot of conflict, the researcher took interview of the head of office, Kidal Region who is the senior most UN Civil Staff working for the whole northern region of Mali. The researcher also took interview of Brigadier General Zakaria Ngobongue, who worked as the Sector Commander of Sector North in 2018-2019 and also contributed by participating as a member of Chad Army during Operation Serval. He conducted a land operation in Kidal, Gao and Tessalit region with French Forces to regain control of those areas in 2013.

The researcher took interview of Colonel Pierre Santoni, Deputy Sector Commander of Sector North from France who coordinates with French Forces for all kind of operations to know the role and task including anti-terrorism activities of French Forces deployed in northern region in particular and Mali in general. Information was also collected from peacekeepers including Ex-Contingent Commanders, experts, planners and organizers of the UNPKOs in Bangladesh. The researcher used logical and systematic search for new and useful information on contemporary UNPKO conducted in Africa. Secondary sources such as books, journals and relevant online materials were studied in search of new knowledge. Secondary documents were consulted to critically and objectively review published and printed facts, opinions and observations. This helped in formulating an idea regarding the answers of the questions regarding challenges for bringing sustainable peace and probable solution for bringing peace in Mali.

3.   Theoretical Framework

UNPKO in Mali is different than traditional peacekeeping missions. The theory of peacekeeping started with first-generation peace operation commonly known as traditional peacekeeping organized during Cold War, and few of them are continuing till now. Those missions were deployed under Chapter VI of the UN charter to observe land border disputes between states. After the end of Cold War, second-generation peace operations started with more civilian tasks, such as to conduct Disarmament, Demobilize and Reintegration (DDR), organize election, deliver humanitarian aid, promote human right, assist refugee, control law and order with increased number of police forces and governments, and develop capability on administration and political institutions. Third-generation peace operation focused on peace enforcement under Chapter VII in Somalia, Rwanda, Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina. Fourth-generation peace operation deals with peacebuilding where peacekeepers got involved in robust peacebuilding operations. The fifth-generation hybrid mission started when the world began to experience the asymmetric warfare where unconventional forces and non-state actors started destabilizing countries with a weak government. In hybrid mission, peacekeepers experienced mixed command with other forces operating in the same Area of Responsibility (AOR) under Chapter VIII.

The objective of peacebuilding is to reduce the risk of conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management. Peacebuilding lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development. It is a complex, long-term process of creating the necessary conditions for sustainable peace. Peacebuilding measures enhance the capacity of the state to effectively and legitimately carry out its core functions. The aim of peacekeeping is to support the implementation of a ceasefire or peace agreement. Today's multidimensional peacekeeping operations involve the

political process, protect civilians, assist in the DDR of former combatants, support the organization of elections, protect and promote human rights and assist in restoring the rule of law. UN peacekeeping operations may use force for self-defence, their mandate, and civilians, particularly in situations where the state is unable to provide security and maintain public order.[11] From the aim and objective of peacekeeping and peacebuilding, it is well understood that the UN is conducting peacekeeping mission in Mali, not peacebuilding.

Theory of peacekeeping has changed dramatically when peacekeepers were deployed for robust peacebuilding in hybrid missions. The success of UNPKO in Mali is very important for the UN to deploy its forces in the asymmetric environment of other countries like Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Libya, because military alliances, like NATO are withdrawing their forces from those countries gradually. Success and failure of a robust peacebuilding will depend on establishing enduring peace in Mali where the UN Forces work with French Forces in the same AOR with a separate mandate from the UNSC.

The Responsibility to Protect, known as R2P, is an international norm that seeks to ensure that the international community never again fails to halt the mass atrocity crimes of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. The R2P is a global political commitment which was endorsed by all member states of the UN at the 2005 World Summit in order to address its four key concerns: to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.[12] R2P stipulates three pillars of responsibility:

a. Pillar One: Every state has the responsibility to protect its populations from four mass atrocity crimes: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing.

b. Pillar Two: The wider international community has the responsibility to encourage and assist individual states in meeting that responsibility.

c. Pillar Three: If a state is manifestly failing to protect its populations, the international community must be prepared to take appropriate collective action, in a timely and decisive manner and in accordance with the UN Charter.[13]

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[11] Available at https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/terminology, accessed on 15 September 2020.
[12] Sheri P. Rosenberg, "Responsibility to Protect: A Framework for Prevention", *Global Responsibility to Protect*, Vol. 1, 2009, p. 443.
[13] Mahfujur Rahman and Saifullah Md. Akon, "The Responsibility to Protect Doctrine: Expectations and Reality", *International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (IJTSRD)*, Vol. 4, Issue 3, April 2020, p. 197.

"Sustaining peace" is aimed to take adequate measures in preventing the outbreak of conflict and stop escalation, continuation and repetition of it. To do that, all stakeholders including the government have to take responsibility in finding out the root cause of conflict and take necessary measures to end the hostilities forever by assisting all parties involved in the conflict. The UN's involvement is paramount for bringing the issue forward, engaging at all stages of conflict and providing all kind of support for conflict resolution.[14] For sustaining peace firstly a clear and cautious policy is needed no matter whether the state is involved in violent conflict or not. Secondly, sustainable peace must be supported by organizations which include bodies, rules, assertiveness and ability of all segments of population, and those organizations must be developed to meet the changing environment. Thirdly, resilient wide-ranging national leadership is required for the peace process to sustain without interference from external sources. Finally, sustaining peace has many directions and fields which need more developed policy and serious consideration at the highest levels of the national government.[15] Sustainable peace is a prerequisite for development. For achieving sustainable peace, civil society needs to find out the main reason of conflict, develop democracy through maximum participation, responsible, fair and impartial governance, the rule of law, regards for human rights, and fair and equal distribution of resources. If any country fails to ensure any or all of these factors, the consequence will be instability within states which will lead to violence and the absence of sustainable peace.[16]

4.   Background of the Conflict and Peace Process in Mali

4.1   *History of Mali*

Caravan routes in West African Region connecting states located in the west and east have passed through Mali since 300 AD. Map 3 shows the rise of Trans-regional Trading Route Network in Sahara desert area. The Malinke Empire reigned areas of Mali from 12th to 16th century. The Songhai Empire governed over the Timbuktu-Gao region in the 15th century. Morocco occupied Timbuktu in 1591 and governed over it for two centuries. The land became a colony of France in 1904 (named French Sudan in 1920) and it became part of the French Union in 1946. On 20 June 1960, Mali became independent in the name of Sudanese Republic and

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[14] Rosenthal Gert, "Reflections on the Meaning of Sustaining Peace", USA: International Peace Institute, 17 July 2017, p. 1, available at https://theglobalobservatory.org/2017/07/sustaining-peace-peacebuilding-architecture-united-nations/, accessed on 30 May 2019.

[15] International Peace Institute, "Sustaining Peace: What Does It Mean in Practice", available at https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/1704_Sustaining-Peace-final.pdf, accessed on 03 June 2019.

[16] Otive Igbuzor, "Peace and Security Education: A Critical Factor for Sustainable Peace and National Development", *International Journal of Peace and Development Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2011, pp. 4-5.

Mali Federation was formed with Republic of Senegal. Senegal separated from the federation on 20 August 1960 and the Sudanese Republic then changed its name to the Republic of Mali on 22 September 1960.[17]

Map 3: Rise of Trans-Regional Trading Route Network[18]
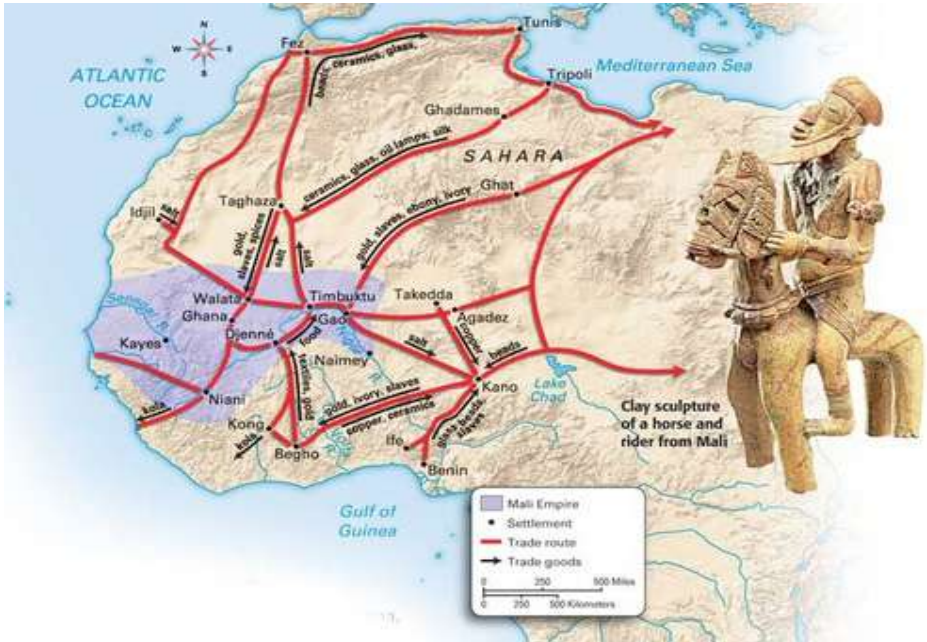
The name Mali is taken from the name of the Mali Empire. The name was originally derived from the Mandinka or Bambara word *mali*, meaning "hippopotamus", but it eventually came to mean "the place where the king lives". The word carries the connotation of strength.[19] After the French colonization, the Western powers established borders without regards to the ethnic groups. The newly drawn borders are the reason for many conflicts all over Africa because they fragmented the tribes and ethnic groups.[20] Tuaregs inhabit in the northern desert region in Mali and have little in common with other ethnic groups. Modibo Keita was the first president of Mali who imposed communism in Mali. He was in power until 1968. He was ousted in a bloodless coup organized by a group of young army officers led by Lieutenant Moussa Traore. Traore ruled Mali from 1969 to 1979 through an appointed Military Committee of National Liberation. In 1979, elections were organized and Traore was

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[17] Kathleen M. Baker and Andrew Clark, op. cit.
[18] Available at https://quizlet.com/256593869/94-rise-of-trans-regional-trade-networks-flash-cards/, accessed on 01 February 2019.
[19] Available at https://glosbe.com/en/bm/Mali, accessed on 07 June 2019.
[20] Available at https://www.pri.org/stories/2011-10-29/tuaregs-5-things-you-need-know, accessed on 10 June 2019.

elected as a president and was re-elected in 1985. Traore tried to diversify the economy and maintained a non-aligned position in international affairs. But he was toppled after pro-democracy riots in 1991. He was sentenced to death in 1993 for his handling of 106 people killed in that demonstration.[21] In 1991, there was an internal conflict with the Tuareg in the north of the country. In 1994 peace agreements were signed with some of the Tuareg rebel groups and the dispute mostly resolved by 1996. Former fighters of the various Tuareg Liberation Movements were absorbed into Mali's regular army. In 2002, Amadou Toumani Toure, a retired general, was elected as the president who had been the leader of the military aspect of the 1991 democratic uprising. During this democratic period, Mali was regarded as one of the most politically and socially stable countries in Africa.

Map 4: Northern Mali Conflict, Fullest Extent of Rebel Territory, January 2013[22]

A group of Malian Army committed a military coup in the capital Bamako led by Captain Amadou Sanogo in March 2012 and ousted President Amadou Toumani Toure from power. Tuareg rebels declared independent "Azawad" state in April 2012. At the same time, Tuareg rebels started fighting with other religious militant armed rebels who wanted to implement "Sharia Law" in Mali which made the situation worse. Religious militant armed rebels along with TAGs captured main cities of North and East from the Government Forces and started proceeding towards Bamako. Former Malian Transition President Dioncounda Traoré requested France to stop advance of TAGs towards Bamako. French troops were deployed in Mali in January 2013. Mali and French Forces fought against Tuareg rebels resulting in an exodus of approximately 412,000 persons who fled their homes and became internally displaced or refugee to the camps of Algeria, Burkina Faso, Mauritania

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[21] Pascal James Imperato and Gavin H. Imperato, *Historical Dictionary of Mali*, 4th Edition, USA: Scarecrow Press, 2008, p. 310.
[22] "Tuareg, their History and their Harsh Saharan Environment", available at http://factsanddetails.com/world/cat55/sub394/entry-5933.html, accessed on 11 February 2019.

and Niger.[23] French Force along with Malian Army and few Western African countries combined defeated TAGs in Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal within three and half months with the assistance of few European countries and the United States of America (USA). MINUSMA officially deployed on 01 July 2013. President election was held in 2013 and Ibrahim Boubacar Keita became the president of Mali. Peace agreements were signed between Malian government and Compliant Armed Group (CMA) and Platform in Bamako and Algeria in 2015. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita was re-elected again in 2018 national election.[24] On 18 August 2020, Colonel Assimi Goiti organized a military coup and removed President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita for corruption, mismanagement of the economy and disrupted legislative election. The African Union (AU) and ECOWAS did not accept the military coup. France and Germany condemned the coup and wanted the quickest possible transition to civilian rule. Assimi Goiti, the leader of the new military junta, which is calling itself the National Committee for the Salvation of the People (CNSP), is going to set in place a transitional council, with a transitional president who is going to be either military or civilian to run the country.[25]

4.2   *Background of Conflict*

Mali was the most democratic country in Africa in the past 20 years.[26] But the country faced the greatest crisis when Tuareg dominated northern region declared independent Azawad state in 2012. There are many reasons involved in the crisis in Mali. However, the most significant ones are given below:

a. Mali has experienced crisis inside the country four times after independence when secessionist rebel Tuareg and Arab Groups in the sparsely populated north, rebelled against the government attempting to gain autonomy in 1963-1964, 1990-1996 and 2006-2009, and finally to gain independence of their northern region they declared independent Azawad state in 2012-2013.[27] The north dominated by Tuareg people considered them being abandoned by the Malian Government located in the south since independence. There was limited development in the northern regions in compared to the south. Economic inequality between north and south was an important issue. Divide and rule

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[23] John Karlsrud, "Mali", in Alex J. Bellamy and Tim Dunne (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Responsibility to Protect*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 1.
[24] Available at https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13881978?ocid=socialflow_twitter, accessed on 11 June 2019.
[25] Available at https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-53854372, accessed on 15 June 2019.
[26] Ritter Noemi, "Mali: A New Challenge for Peacekeeping", *AARMS*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2014, pp. 103–111.
[27] Janos Besenyo, "Thoughts on the Crisis in Mali", pp. 415-419, available at https://www.academia.edu/12199988/Thoughts_on_the_Crisis_in_Mali, accessed on 20 June 2019.

strategy of the government was also a reason. Favouritism and patronage in government mechanism became bone of contention between Mali government and Tuareg dominated areas of the north, especially Kidal, Tessalit, Aguelhok, Timbuktu, etc. The primacy of military means to enforce national unity was a wrong strategy played by the Malian government in the northern region of Mali.[28]

Map 5: Ethnic Groups in Mali and Tuareg Area in Western Sahara Desert[29]
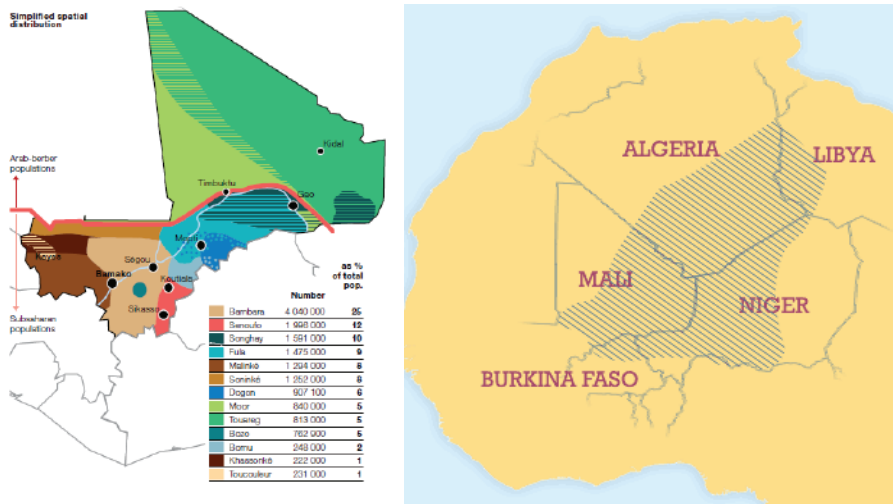
b.   Rivalry between ethnic groups has weakened the peace and stability in the northern and eastern region of Mali. Four ethnic groups are predominant in Mali. They are, the Bambara (Bamana) ethnic group (language predominate) commonly known as Mande People, the Fulani (Fulbe), Dogon, and Tuareg.

c.   There was a political and constitutional crisis occurred by the military coup to overthrow the democratically elected government by the army. The political problem is directly linked to the close regional impacts with the Sahel region, providing a huge ungovernable space for organized crime among state and non-state actors. The smuggling of human, drugs, weapon, cars, golds and cigarettes prospers as much as kidnapping.[30]

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[28] Gregory Chauzal and Thibault Van Damme, "The Root of Mali's Conflict, Moving Beyond the 2012 Crisis", The Netherlands (Clingendael): CRU Report, Institute of International Relations, March 2015, pp. 17-26.
[29] "Atlas Jeune Afrique 2010", *in* L. Bossard, *OECD, Sahel and West Africa Club*, 2015, p. 191 (Fig-1), accessed on 16 February 2019; "Tuareg, their history and their harsh Saharan environment", available at http://factsanddetails.com/world/cat55/sub394/entry-5933.html (Fig-2), accessed on 20 February 2019.
[30] Nadja Frercksen, "Foreign Interventionism, the Case of Mali, Counterinsurgency or Neo-Colonial Invasion?"

d. The conflict was also an attempt by Islamist Jihadists to take over Mali and to establish a terrorist state based on Sharia Law.[31]

e. Religion-influenced northern region, especially Timbuktu and Kidal area have bypassed the Malian State especially in case of foreign aid received from Libya, Algeria and Middle East countries by the rebels. That was also taken very seriously by the Malian government.[32]

f. The progressive decline in the power and affluence of the Tuareg people, the marginalization of northern Mali based on economic inequality and unequal political representation between the north and the west and poverty of northern Mali which include other ethnic communities are root causes of the conflict.[33]

g. The rules of good governance including transparency in the management of public affairs, absence of local governance and decentralization, national reconciliation, absence of social cohesion in peaceful coexistence, respect for human rights, justice and fight against impunity are the other causes of conflict in the northern region.[34] Fragile democratic transition and weak state institution contributed equally to the crisis.[35]

h. The Libyan war triggered a geopolitical chain reaction and created a complex and divided domestic environment in Mali. The Libyan revolution had a direct impact on the Saharan/Sahelian regional security environment.

University of Southern Denmark, Somderborg, 20 May 2015, p. 19.
[31] Ibid, pp. 3-4.
[32] Gregory Chauzal and Thibault Van Damme, op. cit., pp. 22-24.
[33] Elisabeth Skons, "The Implementation of the Peace Process in Mali: a Complex Case of Peacebuilding", in *SIPRI Yearbook 2016: Armament, Disarmament and International Security*, Sweden: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2016, p. 9,
[34] Ibid, p. 23.
[35] Abiodun Joseph Oluwandare, "The African Union and the Conflict in Mali: Extra-Regional Influence and the Limitation of a Regional Actor", Nigeria: National Open University, pp. 7-8, available at https://www.lindenwood.edu/files/resources/106-120.pdf, accessed on 10 July 2019.

Map 6: People Killed in Conflicts Involving Jihadists in Africa[36]
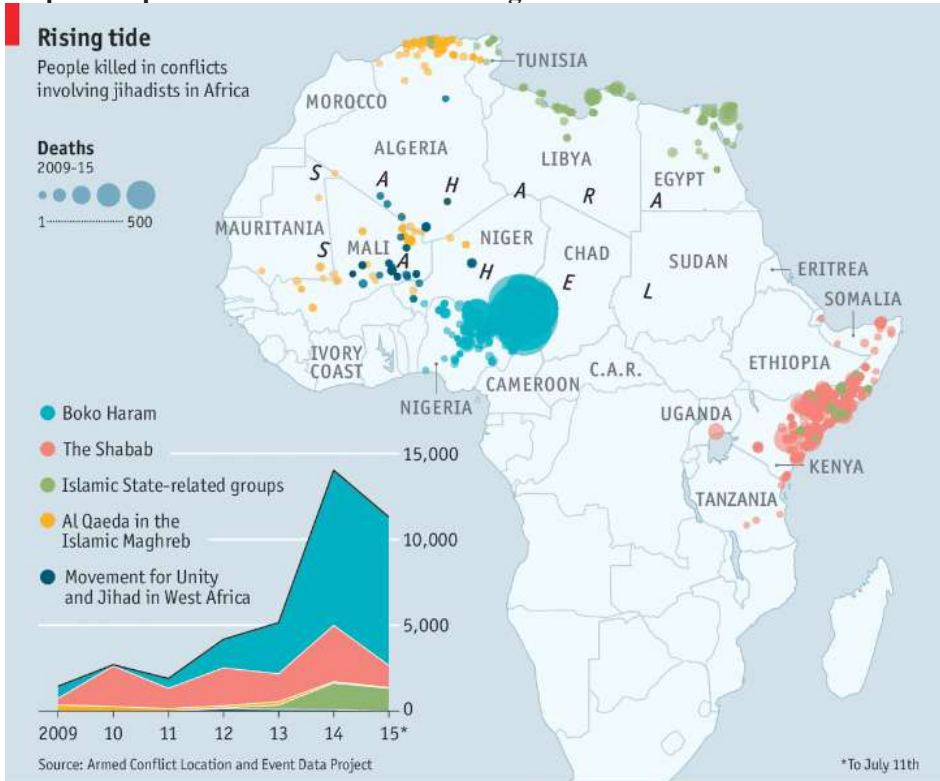
Fall of Libyan President Muammar Gaddafi led Tuaregs to fall back to northern region of Mali with a good number of arms and ammunitions, resulted in the declaration of independence of the Azawad followed by the "narco-Jihadism".[37]

i. International Islamic TAGs want to establish "Sharia Law" in Mali and fulfil their international agenda which other rebel groups do not agree. Trade of weapon, ammunition, natural resources, vehicles, human and drugs in the bordering areas are the organized crime committed by TAG.[38] Map 7 shows Islamist militant groups and their areas of influence in Africa.

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[36] "Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project", *The Economist*, 23 July 2015, available at https://mapsontheweb.zoom-maps.com/post/124828319165/people-killed-in-conflicts-involving-jihadists-in, accessed on 24 August 2019.

[37] Dario Cristiani and Riccardo Fabiani, "From Disfunctionality to Disagreement and Back? The Malian Crisis, Local Players and European Interests", *Institute Affari Internationali (IAI) Working Paper*, 08 March 2013, pp. 2-3 .

[38] Janos Besenyo, op. cit.

j.   In social and economic aspect, north and west show huge differences, north has limited access to education and healthcare.[39] Poor education systems, poverty in northern region are predominant. There is no good communication system developed as of now in the northern region. Due to very limited job, young people are unemployed, and they got involved in crime such as smuggling or abducting foreigners, etc.[40]

k.   Mali has experienced a number of military coups since liberation. These military coups have hindered the democratic process and development of democratic institutions. It had a ripple effect in Mali and increased poverty and terrorism. Though military coups were supported by common people due to the corrupt government and power monger former presidents, but in the long run, Mali failed to get the fruit of democracy due to that.

Map 7: Islamist Militant Groups and their Areas of Influence in Africa
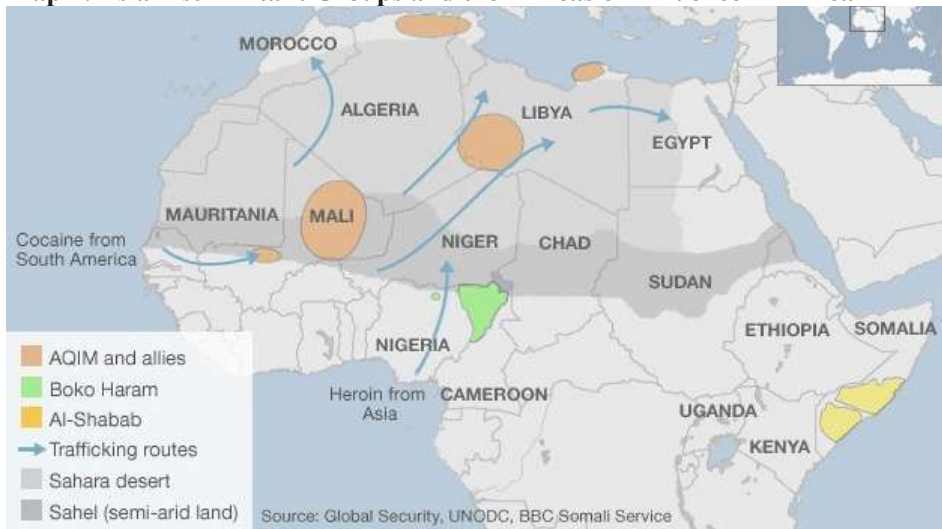
4.3   *Peace Accord Signed to Resolve Crisis in Mali*

a.   **The Tamanrasset Accords, 1991**: During uprise in 1990, President Traore understood that a negotiated settlement would be more preferable because a swift military victory was impossible. He focused on traditional chief close to his government, but it was evident that

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[39] Nadja Frercksen, op. cit.
[40] Christophe Sivillon, Head of Office, MINUSMA, Sector North, Kidal, Mali, interviewed on 19 March 2019.

the revolt was not only against the military regime but also against the traditional domination of the Tuareg aristocracy. The army continued to suffer a series of humiliating defeat and the insurgents could negotiate from a position of military advantage. President Traore entered into direct negotiations with the Movement Populaire de l'Azawad (MPA) and the Arab Islamic Front of Azawad (FIAA) with Algeria's assistance. On 06 January 1991, agreement on the cessation of hostilities was signed between the Government of the Republic of Mali on the one hand and the MPA and the FIAA on the other at Tamanrasset, Algeria. There were 13 clauses in the accord. The agreement satisfied the core demand of the movements, including a very high percentage of development funds allocated to the north, integration of nomads into the army, other uniform services in all levels of the administration, and greater regional autonomy for managing local affairs according to cultural customs. Songhoy communities had not been represented at the Tamanrasset negotiations and many worried that the agreement would install Tuareg dominance in the north, thus fuelling suspicions and tensions within the region. The Tamanrasset accord granted the north special status, with more political and administrative power given to local populations. It also provided for a lesser presence of the army in the north; the demilitarization of administration; the dismantling of several military posts; military withdrawal from grazing areas, as well as densely populated areas; and the granting of close to 50 per cent of an upcoming development program to northern regions.[41]

b. **The National Pact, 1992**: On 11 April 1992, National Pact was signed in Bamako between the transitional Government of the Republic of Mali and the Unified Azawad Movements and Fronts (MFUA) dedicating the special status of northern Mali. The agreement was based on four key points: peace and security in the north, national reconciliation, special initiatives to promote socio-economic development in the north, and according to the north a special status within the framework of the unitary state of Mali. The 1992 National Pact resulted in the integration of close to 2,500 former combatants and the provision of financial subsidies to 9,500 more into the army and administration. These numbers were, however, perceived as too small in the north and too large, favouring the troublemakers, in the south. Disarmament was relatively unsuccessful in spite of the well-publicized Flame of Peace monument in Timbuktu that commemorates the burning of close to

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[41] Stephanie Pezard and Michael Shurkin, *Achieving Peace in Northern Mali, Pat Agreements, Local Conflicts, and the Prospects for a Durable Settlement*, USA: RAND Corporation Publications, 2015, p. 13 .

3,000 weapons. Decentralization efforts were more successful; the number of communes (administrative units) increased from 19 to 703, and the first communal elections were held in 1998. A third region was created in northern Mali around Kidal. A series of meetings in Algiers concluded in the National Pact, but key stakeholders were left out, and implementation proved difficult.

c. **The Algiers Accord, 2006**: The Algiers Accords were negotiated between the Government of the Republic of Mali and Democratic Alliance for Change (ADC) on 23 May under the mediation of Algeria which granted northern Mali further political autonomy and more development funds. Algiers Accords was signed on 04 June 2006, focused on the restoration of peace, security and development in the region of Kidal. As in the 1990s, only a few of the accords' provisions were implemented. ADC took over control of Kidal and Menaka on May 2006 after the withdrawal of the Malian Armed Forces. Algeria came forward and Algiers Accord was signed on 04 July 2006 which gave northern Mali more political autonomy and development fund. The Algiers Accord was not accepted by few political parties of Mali because they consider the peace agreement to be fragile and not suitable for a political solution to a security issue. Even Tuareg leaders from non-Ifoghas clans did not agree with the peace deal because they consider this deal to be advantageous to the Ifoghas community led by Iyad Ag Ghali. In this agreement, the Ifoghas at Kidal was overrepresented and clans like Idnan and Taghat Mellet were excluded. 48.6 million euro was committed for the development of nortern population but ultimately the money was spent in unequal proportion by building army camps. It was said by some analysts that this is the reason for National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) to take up arms in January 2012.[42]

d. **The Ouagadougou Agreement, 2012**: The Ouagadougou Accord was signed on 18 June 2013 among the Government of the Republic of Mali, MNLA and Haut conseil pour l'unite de l'Azawad (HCUA) at Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso. The Ouagadougou Accord is different than any other peace agreement of Mali because it was signed to establish a cease-fire, prepare for presidential election and return of public service in the north.[43]

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[42] Arthur Boutellis and Marie-Joele Zahar, "A Process in Search of Peace: Lessons from the Inter-Malian Agreement", New York: International Peace Institute, IPI Publication, June 2017, p. 6.
[43] Stephanie Pezard and Michael Shurkin, op. cit., p. 5.

e. **The Algiers Peace Accord and the Bamako Agreement, 2015**: The Mali government, the self-defence group and movement called Platform, a coalition of pro-government armed groups had signed the peace deal in May 2015. On 20 June 2015, the principal rebel coalition in northern Mali, Coordination of Movement for Azawad (CMA) signed the peace agreement in Bamako.[44] The reasons for the failure of peace agreements are given below:

    i. Signatories failed to fulfil the commitments of the peace accord

    ii. Failure to monitor, evaluate and implement terms and conditions of peace agreement by all stakeholders

    iii. Information and communication gap among those organizations responsible for implementing the peace process

    iv. Complying with legal, political and institutional reforms those were not acceptable by the people of Mali

    v. TAGs, spoilers and media propaganda in spreading rumours on peace process.[45]

The challenges of Algiers Peace Accord and the Bamako Agreement, 2015 are as follows:

    i. Lack of coordination among security forces in the northern and eastern region in conducting joint patrols, especially in all northern regions

    ii. Establish local authority in the northern region and re-establish utility and social services to people affected in the conflict

    iii. Malian government failed in economic recovery and development under the agreement held in Paris on 22 October 2015

    iv. There are many rebels from east (from Fulani and Dogan tribes) who did not sign peace accord. They are highly involved in armed conflict and ethnic cleansing in those areas. They may be included in peace agreement gradually so that armed conflict in those areas could be stopped through DDR 46.

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[44] Ibid, pp. 19-21.

[45] Naflet Keita, "Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali Resulting from the Algiers Process. Between Euphoric and Scepticism: Traces of Peace", Mali: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Publishers, 2018, p. 18 .

[46] Available at https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/jul/01/mali-peace-deal-a-welcome-

The aspects for fruitful implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali are given below:

i. Making an atmosphere that would help in implementing the peace agreement with the help of Joint force of Sahel countries in fighting against terrorism, drug trafficking and insecurity

ii. Quick deployment and execution of Joint Patrol in Kidal and Timbuktu region in fast building of Cantonment and DDR process considering the point of concern of young people of Gao and the central regions of the country

iii. Establish local government in northern regions especially the state of Kidal that can effectively function and improve utility services and basic social services for the people living in the northern region

iv. Strengthening the truce signed between the signatory (the CMA and the Platform) time to time by stopping all kind of antagonism between two movements

v. Accomplishment of institutional reforms and amendment of the constitution which transfer the terms and condition of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali

vi. Government's utilization of the fund guaranteed under the peace agreement and proficiency required to implement the assurances

vii. Execution of all recommendations of all the high-level meeting of the agreement, monitoring committee and conducting these meetings on regular intervals

viii. Application of the new mandate of MINUSMA pursuant to UNSC resolution 2364 adopted on 29 June 2017 and take necessary measures against those responsible for hindering the implementation of the peace accord

ix. Inquiry all crimes and other serious violations of international law and human rights, in accordance with the guidance of UNPKO

x. Enabling the Carter Center, appointed as an independent observer for evaluating the execution of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali according to the Algiers process.

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development-but-will-it-work-this-time, accessed on 20 June 2019.

Figure 1: CMA's Current Organization in Sector North[47]
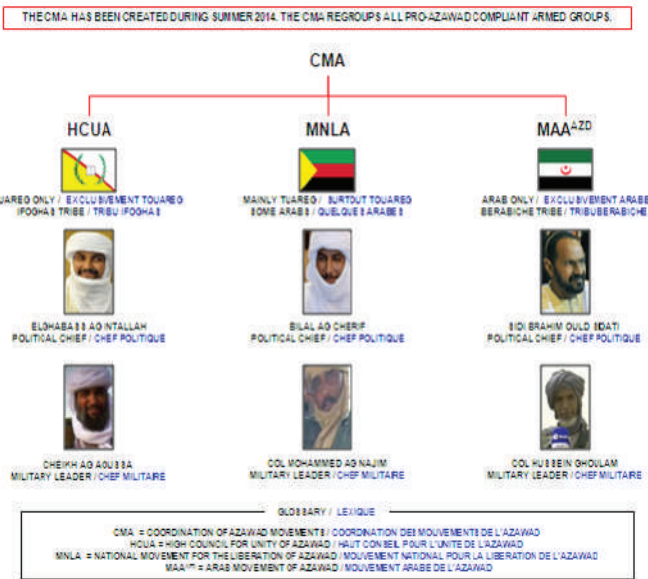
The crisis in Mali has erupted time to time and destabilized the country sporadically since independence. In Mali, there is a risk of downfall if international interest shifts to other conflict areas. Malian people understand that there is no military solution to the critical situation in the north and peace accord is still the best solution to stabilize that part of the country.[48]
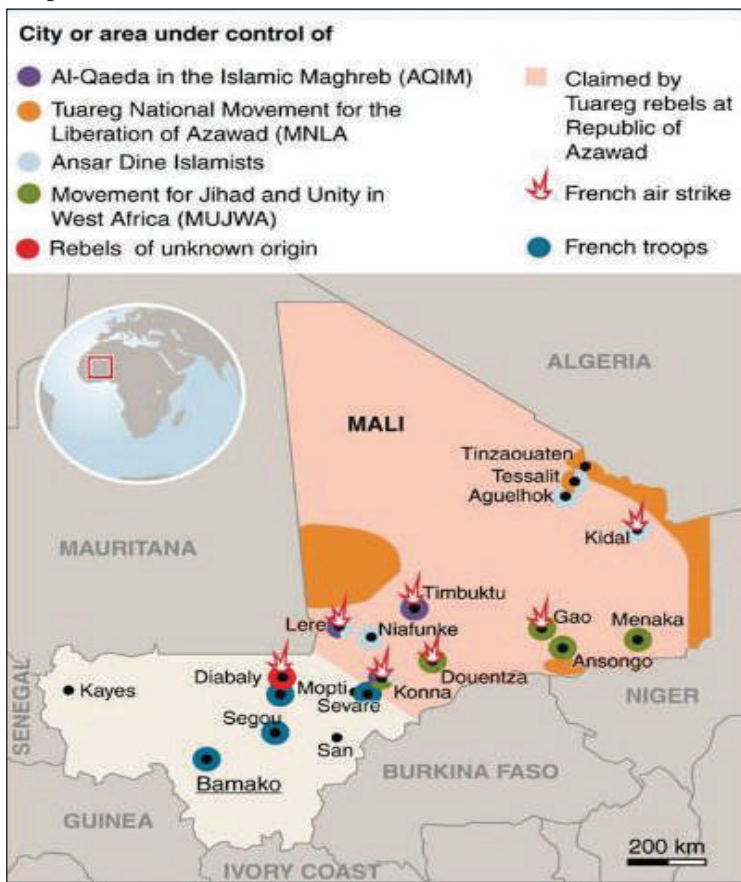
5.   Operation Serval

Operation Serval was an operation conducted by the French and Malian Armed Forces combinedly with friendly forces of Europe, the USA and few states of West Africa. This operation was important for stopping humiliating defeat of Malian Forces against TAGs in all major cities in the north. It also brought security and stability in the country and stopped the political government to fail completely in running the country. If French Forces would not be deployed, the whole country could come under TAGs control, and Mali would be the breeding place for terrorists. Operation Serval helped Mali in particular and the Sahel region in general from terrorists thus helped to bring peace. France has economic and security interest in

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[47] Justine O. Obare, "History of Mali Conflict and Current Situation", paper presented in the Orientation Training of Bangladesh Airfield Services and Management Unit (BANASMU)-5, at Kidal, Mali on January 2019.
[48] Available at https://theglobalobservatory.org/2017/06/mali-bamako-agreement-agiers-process-minusma/, accessed on 22 June 2019.

Mali. The country's eastern neighbour Niger is the world's fourth largest uranium exporter. The mines at Arlit and Akoka, near the border with Mali, are exploited by French Uranium Exploration Company Areva. Niger's uranium provides 20 per cent of the fuel for France's 58 nuclear reactors, which are responsible for generating nearly 75 per cent of France's electricity. France wants to secure collection of its energy raw material from Niger. If political and security problem exists in Mali, France might face difficulties in collecting uranium from Niger. This has guided France to be involved in the operation with Mali.[49]

Map 8: Mali Conflict[50]

[55] Sergei Boeke and Bart Schuurman, "Operation Serval: A Strategic Analysis of the French Intervention in Mali, 2013-2014", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 38, Issue 6, 2015, pp. 801-825.
[50] "Mali, Conduct of Hostilities", available at https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/mali-conduct-hostilities, accessed on 24 March 2019.

With the request of the interim government of Mali, France deployed Armed Force to recapture the lost territories of north and eastern provinces occupied by rebel forces to stop growing a terrorist state at the doorstep of France and Europe. Following the UNSC Resolution 2085 of 20 December 2012, "Operation Serval" was named after the desert wild cat species Serval. The operation started from 11 January 2013 and ended in August 2014 with an aim to overthrow the Islamic militants from the north, east and south of Mali who had begun a push into the centre of the country.[51]

In the north, Chadian Forces and a small part of the Malian Forces were also involved. French paratroopers and French mechanized infantry went very quickly to the north taking the Chadian Army with them. TAG could not believe that French Forces would be able to fight in the Adrar des Ifoghas Mountains in such a hot weather condition in March 2013. So, they were totally surprised when they were surrounded by the French brigade.[52]

5.1   *Result of the Operation*

At the end of the operation, French and Malians Forces achieved victory and took over control of all major cities and towns those were lost in 2012. Ten French soldiers were killed during the operation. French Forces lost one Gazelle Helicopter. From Mali Armed Forces 82 soldiers were killed, from Chad 38 soldiers were killed and from MNLA 17 soldiers were killed and 60 other wounded. From Togo, Nigeria and Senegal 2 soldiers were killed from each country and from Burkina Faso, one soldier was killed during the operation. On the other hand, from TAG, 625 killed, 109-300 militants captured, 50 vehicles destroyed, 150 tons of ammunition and 200 weapons were seized and 60 Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) were defused.[53]

6.   Operation Barkhane

Operation Barkhane started on 01 August 2014 and continues till today. The operation is named after a crescent-shaped dune in the Sahara Desert.[54] The objective of this operation is to stop insurgency in the Maghreb and fight against terrorism. French President François Hollande, has said that the French Force will have a rapid and efficient

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[51] Ibid, pp. 1-2.

[52] Colonel Pierre Santoni (FA), Deputy Sector Commander, Sector North, MINUSMA, Kidal, Mali, interviewed on 22 April 2019.

[53] Sergei Boeke and Bart Schunrman, op. cit.

[54] Carmen Cuesta Roca, "From Operation Serval to Barkhane Understanding France's Increased Involvement in Africa in the Context of Francafrique and Post-colonialism", available at http://jpinyu.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/3-Hollande.pdf, accessed on 25 April 2019.

intervention in the event of a crisis in the region. The operation has been conducted in support of the armed forces of France's partners in the Sahel to counter armed terrorist groups and to prevent the reconstruction of terrorist sanctuaries in the region.[55] The mission is a matter of "cutting the lawn", that is containing the terrorist threat that cannot be totally eradicated and always come back. This operation also has a military aspect of the European strategy to manage the flow of illegal immigrants and illicit trafficking (drugs, narcotics, weapons, etc.) coming from the Sahel which could destabilize Europe.[56] The operation is aimed to become the French pillar of counterterrorism in the Sahel region. The aim is to prevent all forms of jihadist activities between Libya and the Atlantic Ocean which would lead to serious consequences for the security of the region.[57]

Map 9: The Deployment of French Forces in Operation Barkhane

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[55] Dan E. Stigall, "The French Military Intervention in Mali, Counter-Terrorism, and the Law of Armed Conflict", *Military Law Review*, Vol. 223, Issue 1, January 2015, pp. 15-16.

[56] Bruno Charbonneau, "The Dilemmas of International Intervention in Mali", A Stabilizing Mali Project Report, Centre Franco Paix, Canada, October 2017, p. 18,.

[57] Maxime H. A. Larive, "Welcome to France's New War on Terror in Africa: Operation Barkhane", The National Interest, 07 August 2014, available at https://nationalinterest.org/feature/welcome-frances-new-war-terror-africa-operation-barkhane-11029, accesed on 15 August 2019.

6.1   *Deployment*

The assets deployment of French Forces for Operation Barkhane is shown in Map 9. Operation Barkhane is conducted with 4700 French soldiers, 21 helicopters, 360 logistics vehicles, 210 light armoured vehicles, 260 heavy armoured vehicles, 6-10 strategic and tactical transport aircrafts, seven fighter aircrafts and three drones, all deployed over two permanent bases in Gao and N'Djamena (Chad). Operation Barkhane's logistics support is organized in three permanent support bases (N'Djamena/Chad, Gao/Mali, and Niamey/Niger) including two logistics and air support platforms in Niamey and N'Djamena; six temporary forward bases (Kidal, Tessalit, Aguelal, Madama, Faya, and Abéché of Mali); three maritime support bases in Dakar/Senegal, Abidjan/Ivory Coast and Douala/Cameroon. Barkhane's air capacities are stationed on two main operational air bases: Niamey, Niger and N'Djamena, Chad. Fighter aircraft and drones conduct coordinated action in support of operations on the ground or in complete autonomy, if necessary. The drone detachment deployed in Sahel region is now equipped with three Reaper drones. Their discretion and endurance make them key assets for Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) missions, and more broadly for operational performance and results assessment. Under Operation Barkhane, in 2019, French Forces conducted 105 combat operations in their fight against terrorism. Map 10 shows French Military Assets in Mali.

Map 10: French Military Assets in Mali[58]

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[58] Available at http://world-news-research.com/18jan2013.html, accessed on 25 April 2019.

6.2   *Outcome of the Operation*

As of now, 31 soldiers have been killed and 26 wounded from France against 450 killed or captured from TAGs.[59] It is very difficult to eradicate terrorism from Mali once for all. It will take time to neutralize all spoilers and splinter groups of TAGs from Mali. French Forces are doing a great job in Mali in war against terror, and they are successful in the asymmetric war in Mali.[60] French forces had casualties as well against TAGs. Instead of making a hybrid mission of two forces, if French Forces could be brought under the UN with separate chapter under UN charter, then the unity of effort could be maintained.

In addition to military operations, Barkhane conducts and supports a variety of projects that have a direct impact on local communities by enabling access to water, energy, healthcare and education as a part of Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC). Besides, Barkhane keeps performing an average of 100 consultations and over 400 cares every day for the benefit of the Malian, Chadian and Nigerian populations. In 2019, more than 75 civil-military projects were carried out for the benefit of the population, among which 35 projects dedicated to the population in Liptako, mainly around the towns of In Delimane, Ansongo and Menaka. Among these 35 projects:

  i.   Six projects are of water supply;
  ii.   13 projects are of agro-pastoralism;
  iii. 16 projects are dedicated to education and information access

Map 11: The Outcome of Operation Barkhane in 2019


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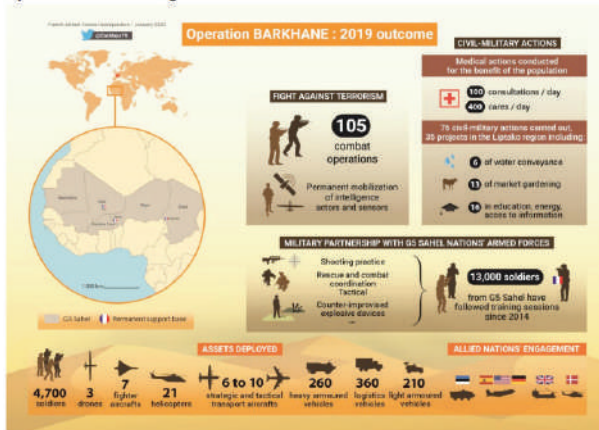
[59] Ibid, pp. 22-23.
[60] Colonel Pierre Santoni, Deputy Sector Commander, MINUSMA, Sector North, Kidal, Mali, interviewed on 25 April 2019.

On the ground of operations, Barkhane pursues its effort against armed terrorist groups who operate in the region, especially Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), Ansarul Islam and Group to Support Islam and Muslims (GSIM). In this area, Barkhane operates along with partner forces and gathers the fruits of the operational military partnership, that has accelerated since 2019. Around 2000 Malian soldiers were trained in 2019.[61]

7.   The UN in Mali

MINUSMA is a UN peacekeeping mission established on 25 April 2013 by the UNSC Resolution 2100 to stabilize the country after the Tuareg rebellion of 2012. In March 2013, the African Union's Peace and Security Council requested the UNSC to transform the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) into a UN peacekeeping force.[62] In response, the UNSC passed Resolution 2100 on 25 April 2013, creating the MINUSMA, composed of 11,200 military personnel and 1,440 police personnel. MINUSMA was officially deployed on 01 July 2013, and has become the UN's most dangerous peacekeeping mission, with 219 peacekeepers killed within five years.[63]

Map 12: Deployment of MINUSMA and MINUSMA TCC and FPUCC Countries[64]

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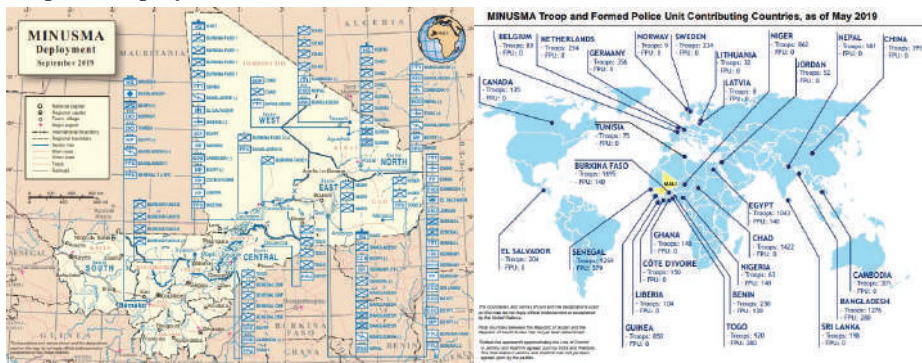
[61] Ibid, p. 15.

[62] Isaline Bergamaschi, *MINUSMA: Initial Steps, Achievements and Challenges,*Oslo: Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre*,* 2013, p.1.

[63] Available at https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/minusma, accessed on 07 April 2019.

[64] Available at https://reliefweb.int/map/mali/minusma-deployment-map-september-2019, accessed on 06 June 2019; Obare Justine, op. cit.

7.1   *Mandate*

The resolution was unique, as it gave MINUSMA a rare "peace enforcement" role, authorizing peacekeepers to use "all necessary means" to enforce its mandate, which includes the protection of civilians and the promotion and protection of human rights. Under Resolution 2100, MINUSMA is responsible for the protection of civilians "under imminent threat of physical violence"; with "specific protection for women and children" and addressing "the needs of victims of sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict"; must monitor, investigate and report to the SC on any violations of human rights of international humanitarian law.[65]
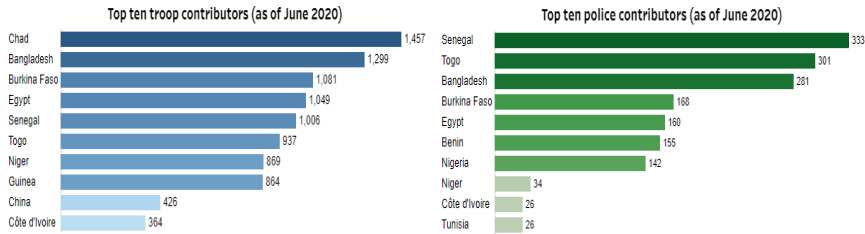
7.2   *Security and Protection*

From 01 July 2013 to 28 February 2019, MINUSMA military and police conducted 183,769 and 72,755 patrols respectively. 341 tons of obsolete and non-usable weapons and ammunitions were confiscated and destroyed by Armed Forces of Mali (FAMa) with support from MINUSMA. 4,655 members of the Malian Security Forces were trained in counter IED measures including 130 women. 34,553 members of the Malian Security Forces were trained by UN Police which includes 3,638 women.

7.3   *Deployment*

As of 28 February 2019, the UN deployed 13,010 military personnel and 1,759 police personnel in 14 locations of Mali. In Sector North, UN troops are deployed in Kidal, Tessalit and Aguelhoc. In Sector East, the UN troops are deployed in Gao, Menaka and Ansongo. In Sector West, UN troops are deployed in Tombouctu, Ber, Diabaly and Goundam. In Sector Center, the UN troops are deployed in Doenza, Bankas, Madhugo, Mopti and Sevare. Sector South, is in the capital Bamako with Force Headquarters (FHQ) and few deployments around FHQ close to Senou International Airport. The SC authorized 13,289 military personnel and 1,920 police personnel for MINUSMA until 30 June 2019.

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[65] Available at http://responsibilitytoprotect.org/index.php/crises/crisis-in-mali, accessed on 10 August 2020.

Figure 2: Top 10 Military and Police Contributing Country in MINUSMA

Top ten troop contributors (as of June 2020)

Chad	1,457
Bangladesh	1,299
Burkina Faso	1,081
Egypt	1,049
Senegal	1,006
Togo	937
Niger	869
Guinea	864
China	426
Côte d'Ivoire	364

Top ten police contributors (as of June 2020)

Senegal	333
Togo	301
Bangladesh	281
Burkina Faso	168
Egypt	160
Benin	155
Nigeria	142
Niger	34
Côte d'Ivoire	26
Tunisia	26

7.4   *Operation of MINUSMA*

MINUSMA conducts operations firstly to ensure that peace agreement is being complied by all signatory rebel groups. MINUSMA Force also conducts routine patrols to ensure the security of the area of operation, protect civil population from TAG attacks, control key points of the terrain and support DDR actions, search and detect IED and neutralize those, support Stabilization and Recovery (S & R) team action and enlarge the force area of influence, escort and support civilian pillars of the UN in infrastructure, local government and political development and show presence of force. MINUSMA Force acts proactively, stay vigilant and shows robust posture against TAG.[66] Impact points of mortar attack on Kidal Camp is shown below.

Map 13: Impact Points of 9 Mortar Attack on Kidal Heliport

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[66] Available at https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/minusma, accessed on 21 November 2019.

MINSUMA has become the most dangerous mission because of the sporadic attacks on MINUSMA patrol by TAGs. Peacekeepers were killed by mines laid in the road while going for patrol. MINUSMA carries and distributes food and logistics in a convoy where MINUSMA does not have the means to send those by air. Those convoys are also being attacked by mine or IED. In many occasions, TAGs orchestrated comprehensive attack on MINUSMA camps with mortar/rocket fire followed by Vehicle-Borne IED (VIED) attack over guard posts and entrance of camps. On 20 January 2019, TAGs attacked Aguelhuk Camp of Sector North and killed 10 Chadian soldiers and severely injured 17 of them. Again, they threw nine mortar shell over Kidal Camp of Sector North on 03 April 2019. The impact point of Kidal Camp is shown in the Map 13. As all the mortar hit in the heliport area, only two parked helicopters had minor damage in their hull. One Togo soldier died during that time due to heart failure. As the peacekeepers of MINUSMA are staying inside same camp with French Forces, TAGs treat both the UN and French Force equally and they attack both whenever they get the opportunity, though the mandates of both forces are totally different.[67] MINUSMA needs to develop current intelligence capability into a system that is accessible to all TCCs so that most exposed soldier get benefit from the mission's intelligence capability of All Sources Information Fusion Unit (ASIFU).[68] Figure 3 shows terrorist attack per region and targets of attack .[69]

Figure 3: Terrorist Attack Per Region and Targets of Atacks[70]
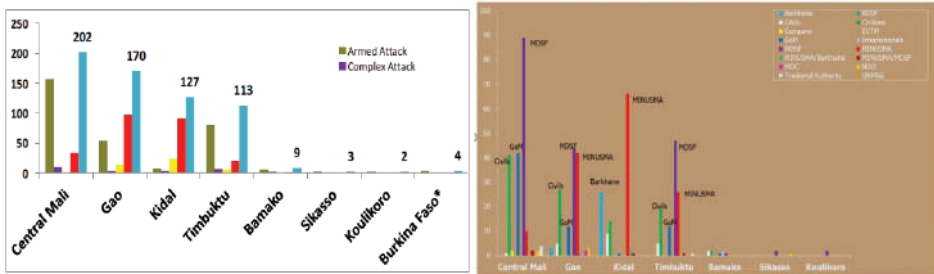
Air operation in MINUSMA plays a vital role in UNPKO in Mali. The road communication in Mali is very poor as such the UN aircraft and helicopter became the lifeline in transporting troops, equipment and food in most of the remote locations where MINUSMA troops are deployed. Helicopters are being used for

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[67] Brigadier General Zakaria Ngobongue, Sector Commander, Sector North, MINUSMA, Kidal, Mali, interviewed on 20 April 2019.

[68] "Inequality in MINUSMA, African Soldiers are in the Firing Line in Mali", *DIIS Policy Brief*, December 2016, p. 2.

[69] Bruno Charbonneau, "The Dilemmas of International Intervention in Mali", A Stabilizing Mali Project Report, Centre Franco Paix, Canada, October 2017, pp. 16-17.

[70] Bruno Charbonneau, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

reconnaissance, casualty and medical evacuation. It is also used for carrying troops, passenger, food and cargo, especially in those places where the runway is not available or not operational. In MINUSMA a good number of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) are deployed from Germany and Sweden which play a significant role in ISR information of TAGs movement. Moreover, Mirage F1CR, Rafael and Mirage-2000 of France are deployed in Chad for close air support and air interdiction missions.[71]

Figure 4: Number of Helicopter and Current Deployment of Civilian and Military Air Assets in Current UN Peacekeeping Mission[72]
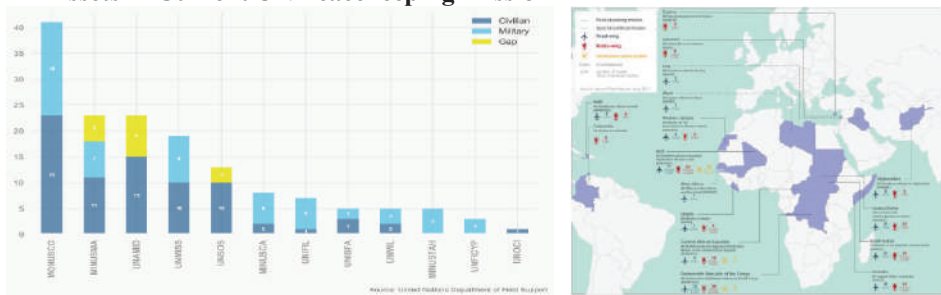

In Mali, seven fixed-wing aircraft, 25 helicopters and 42 UAS are deployed. In 2017, only 11 helicopters were operational; MINUSMA's authorities consider the lack of helicopters and of tactical air transport capacity to be one of the mission's major weakness. This gap exists because military helicopters and strategic or tactical airlift capabilities are expensive and rare, and countries tend to keep them for themselves before putting them for the disposal of the UN. Moreover, MINUSMA aviation is operating in a challenging security environment and harsh climate conditions; its military air assets had been damaged by attacks in Kidal and Gao over since deployment, and two attack helicopters (one Dutch Apache and one German Tiger) had crashed since 2015.[73]

MINUSMA, along with the armed forces of France and regional actors are reaching its goal slowly in bringing peace to the country, guarantying security of its people by removing the terrorist groups. MINUSMA is also helping in bringing stabilization to Mali by restoring government control in northern and eastern territories, assisting in political stabilization and upholding the human right. To face asymmetric war against TAGs in counterinsurgency operations, TCCs need to deploy forces with adequate equipment and trained personnel. Notwithstanding the

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[71] Md. Shafiqul Alam, Air Commodore, Contingent Commander, interviewed on 03 March 2017.
[72] Novosseloff Alexandra, "Keeping Peace from Above: Air assets in United Nations Peace Operations", New York: International Peace Institute, October 2017, pp. 8-21, available at https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/1710_Keeping-Peace-from-Above-1.pdf, accessed on 11 July 2019.
[73] Ibid, pp. 4-21.

achievement, many challenges still exist, such as security issue of terrorist attack, illegal weapon and drug trafficking, restoration of territorial integrity, security of the people which is undermining the MINUSMA.[74]

Map 14: Africa's Active Militant Islamist Groups
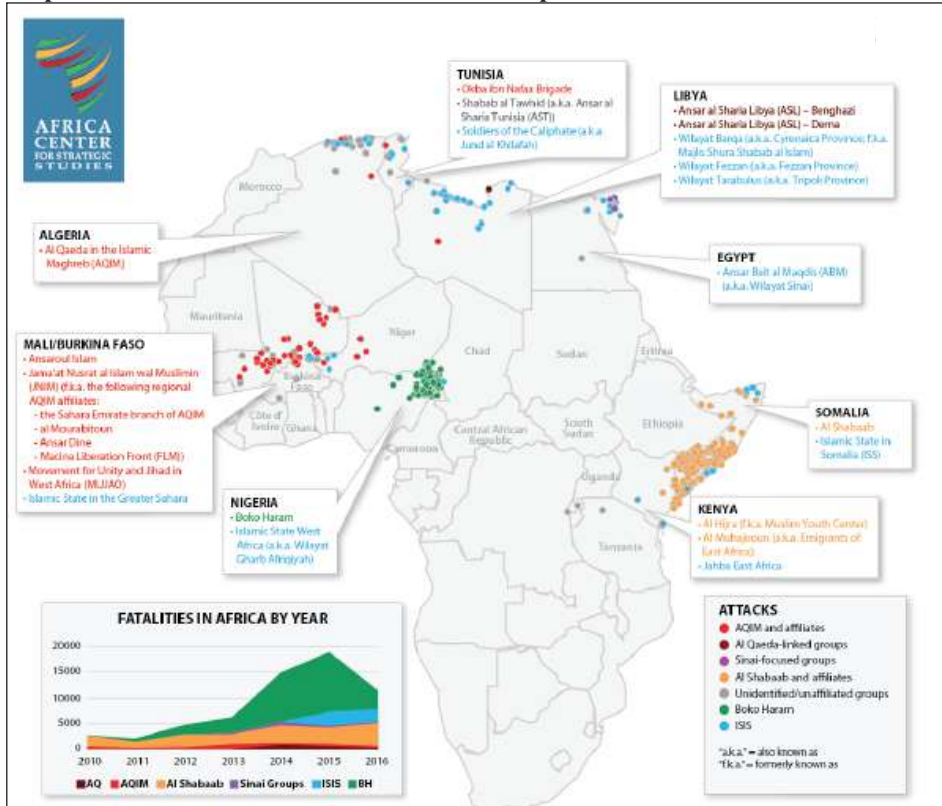
7.5 *Challenges of MINUSMA*

There are few challenges of MINUSMA which need to be addressed in Mali and at DPKO, UNHQ for bringing sustainable peace in the Sahel region.

    a. The Islamic militants and extremists did not give up their arms and their countless attacks remained to mark their presence. On the one hand, there are the internal problems in the country like the ethnic conflict and the deep economic disparity. On the other hand, there is regional instability with increasing extremism. The success of the MINUSMA

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[74] Huda Enamul, Wing Commander, MINUSMA, Mali, interviewed on 01 June 2017.

mission is largely inhibited by the increased strength of TAGs in the region. MINUSMA works in close cooperation with the French troops because of the fragile security situation in the country. The French forces will continue military actions against the TAGs. MINUSMA will have to face complex attack and insurgency against peacekeepers in Mali.[75]

b. MINUSMA is running with a shortage of air assets required for UNPKO. Providing adequate air support by air assets for operations has become a great challenge.[76]

c. To reduce fragmentation of actors, violent extremism, organized crime both local and transnational, establish rule of law in the northern region and bring all rebel and armed groups in the Peace Agreement and DDR process has become a great concern for MINUSMA.[77]

d. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) adopted a "seduction strategy" aimed at stimulating the virtually non-existent local economy and providing social service to the local population. The strategy includes:

  i.   The recruitment of combatants and auxiliaries (e.g. guides, drivers, informers and paramedics)

  ii.   The supply of food stuff (e.g. cereals, sugar and tea), fuel, tyres, spare parts and weapons

  iii   Subcontracting hostage-taking and keeping

It has resulted in whole families deriving their livelihoods from activities generated by AQIM. In addition, AQIM has developed family ties through marriage between its men and young local girls. Thus, AQIM has been able to take advantage of the weak public services and income-generating opportunities in the north and to gain support from selected parts of the population, while traditional chiefs have had difficulties in maintaining their authority. The organized crime started not from greed but for survival. There is an urgent need to invest in alternate livelihood opportunities for groups vulnerable to organized crime.[78] It has become the greatest challenge for MINUSMA to push Mali government to establish local government

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[75] Ritter Noemi, op. cit., pp. 7-8.
[76] Enamul Huda, Wing Commander, MINUSMA, Mali, interviewed on 01 June 2017.
[77] Abdul Al Ahad, Squadron Leader, Senior Air Traffic Controller (SATCO), Tessalit Airfield, Mali, interviewed on 02 January 2019.
[78] Elisabeth Skons, op. cit., pp. 16-17,.

in the north, develop proper educational facility, put law enforcing agencies, protect border and start economic activities so that poverty is reduced and people do not remain unemployed.

8.   Solution for Peace

The recent mandates for northern Mali represent a new trend of peacekeeping, with new tools, technologies and capabilities that have never been used so much in other UN peacekeeping missions, such as the use of UAS (in DR Congo, the UN also use UAV but for very limited scale) and ISR equipment to gather information. Critical human intelligence that could be provided to the mission from the local population is inherently limited as TCCs of EU do not speak the local language. TCCs of West African countries do not have access to information of ASIFU as such their field information is not included in the intelligence report. ASIFU has actual intelligence-gathering capabilities of the mission, but elements of ASIFU are absent in the northern region of Kidal, the hotspot of the mission.[79]

MINUSMA in Mali presents a threat to peacekeeping principles. Though UNPKO in Mali is an inception of fifth generation hybrid mission with mixed command of two forces introduced for the first time in the history of UNPKO, but the involvement of the AU, and French Military Forces could undermine the impartiality of this mission and consequently the consent of parties involved. Furthermore, MINUSMA Forces got involved in substantial fighting in Mali in order to ensure self-defence of its troops. As MINUSMA is fifth generation hybrid mission, all peacekeepers must be trained to work in mixed command with other forces like the French, take action under Chapter VII and develop their weapon system to meet asymmetric war scenario fighting against unconventional forces. The success of Mali would allow the UN to deploy forces where asymmetric war scenario is prevailing, like Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Libya. UNDPKO must develop policy guidelines for peacekeepers so that they can face unconventional threat with proper training and equipment. This would reduce the casualty of peacekeepers to a great extent.[80]

UN Forces are being targeted by TAGs because of coexistence of forces in the same camp with the French having totally different mandate. French Forces conduct anti-terrorism operation killing TAGs based on intelligence information. This creates vengeance among TAGs and local people related to TAGs. So, they retaliate by attacking soft and isolated garrison of MINUSMA. They also target

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[79] Fatema Tuzzohura Mow, Flight Lieutenant, Senior Air Traffic Controller (SATCO), Kidal Heliport, Mali, interviewed on 31 March 2019.
[80] Azazul Bar Chowdhury, Brigadier General, Director General, Operation and Plans Branch, Armed Forces Division, Dhaka Cantonment, interviewed on 26 September 2018.

patrol, convoy and camps of MINUSMA for success. Most of the TAGs conduct their operation in North and East of Mali, and after operation, they disappear within local population or in neighbouring states of Algeria, Burkina Faso and Niger. If the operation of MINUSMA and Operation Barkhane continues simultaneously, UN peacekeepers will be targeted for attack and casualty will increase in future. French Forces should make all-out effort to wipe out terrorists once for all. Supply of arms and ammunition to TAGs are to be stopped. Border of Mali needs to be protected for controlling exit and entry of TAGs into Mali. Mali does not have a dedicated border guard force. However, the government of Mali has planned to establish Border Guard Corps by 2020.[81] This would also help in stopping arms trafficking and movement of TAGs in Mali.

There is a stalemate condition in the peace process, and DDR activities are going very slow in Mali. There is a lack of sincere effort by agencies involved in the peace process and DDR. International and regional organizations are providing funds for DDR, but they are least concerned regarding the implementation of terms and conditions of peace process and DDR. The Government of Mali seems to be busy with other issues not really giving the required attention to the peace process and DDR. All stakeholders in Peace Accord of 2015 must act sincerely in fulfilling all the term and conditions on which they all agreed upon. The success of MINUSMA will depend on the effective implementation of the peace agreement and DDR is the prerequisite for that success. Government of Mali has to play major role in implementing all the terms and conditions endorsed in the peace agreement and bring sustainable peace in Mali. Regional organizations like AU, EU, ECOWAS can help Mali to come out from present crisis and bring sustainable peace in the region.[82]

MINUSMA and the European Union Training Mission in Mali (EUTM) are providing training to Malian Armed Forces and law enforcing agencies, but they are reluctant to be deployed in the northern region and border areas. Sensitization and motivation of local Tuareg is a must so that they do not help foreign, transnational and local TAGs operating from Libya, Algeria, Niger and Burkina Faso. Media can sensitize local Tuaregs through many innovative ideas so that local innocent Tuaregs do not help TAGs for any action against civil population and peacekeepers. Independence in the northern region of Mali will break the unity of Mali and create a safe haven for TAGs in the Sahel region.

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[81] Available at https://www.thedefensepost.com/2018/12/16/mali-border-guard-corps-reinforcements-timbuktu/, accessed on 25 August 2020.
[82] M. Yousuf Ali, Air Commodore, Director, Directorate of Overseas Air Operations, Air HQ, Dhaka Cantonment, interviewed on 20 September 2016.

Development work in north and eastern areas of Mali is a prerequisite to reduce differences between north and south and to bring back normalcy in that region. Rule of law must be established in the northern and eastern part of Mali. A good number of educational institutes of different level (primary, secondary, tertiary) must be developed so that local people can be educated which would make them competent for a good job instead of becoming terrorist or spoilers. Representation of the northern region in central government must be ensured so that people of northern Mali do not feel that they are being marginalized. Local rebels and armed groups are to be endorsed in peace accord and DDR process. Government of Mali must stop corruption, mismanagement of the economy and disputed legislative election. This would stop military coup and build a strong government which can administer the country smoothly. Election of local government must be done, so that leadership at the root level is developed in the underdeveloped rural areas of Mali. Ethnic differences must be mitigated for the greater cause of peace in the Sahel region. The leadership of MINUSMA has to play a pivotal role in driving the Malian government to reduce differences among the regions in Mali.

9.   Conclusion and Way Forward

Mali, once the most stable and democratic state of West Africa became a hot spot of the world in 2012 after the northern region declared Independent Azawad state. Destabilization of Mali had a risk of spreading instability to the neighbouring countries of the Sahel region. France has contributed very well in regaining the lost territories in the north and eradicating terrorist activities in Mali. Operation Serval was successful in driving out all foreign terrorist groups from Mali and restore the territorial integrity of Mali in the map of the world. The UN and France are operating simultaneously in Mali having different agenda and mandate. MINUSMA is the most dangerous UN Peace Keeping Mission in the world now where the UN lost the highest number of peacekeepers in a single mission. As Islamic militants and violent extremists did not give up their weapon, they will keep on attacking MINUSMA and French Forces. MINUSMA forces must have training in asymmetric warfare so that they can contribute equally to counter-insurgency operations. To achieve the objective, MINUSMA forces need to be proactive, vigilant and robust in order to reduce casualties and increase dominance over TAGs. The differences between the Mali Government and people of the northern region and differences between ethnic groups in other regions are creating great difficulties for MINUSMA to bring peace in Mali. MINUSMA is a pioneering UNPKO where ISR has been done by UAS and other sources. ASIFU is primarily responsible for intelligence gathering and disseminating to concern agencies, but until today, TCCs exposed to the attack of TAGs did not get the benefit of ISR information. Challenges of MINUSMA need to be addressed by the senior leadership of MINUSMA to bring success in conflict

resolution and building sustainable peace in Mali. As the UN started fifth generation hybrid mission in Mali for the first time under mixed command, TCCs are to prepare, train and equip peacekeepers to meet the asymmetric warfare scenario to reduce casualty.

The mediators and signatories of the peace agreement have a very important role to play in bringing lasting peace in Mali. There are few weaknesses in the peace agreement. There are CMA members who still want independent Azawad state comprised of the northern region of Mali. As local, transnational and foreign TAGs were not included in the peace process, they are trying all out to make the peace process fail. Peace process focused on short term but did not highlight on long term goals. Agreement Monitoring Committee must try to sensitize all rebels to join the DDR process and resolve issues of integrating CMA and Platform in security forces of Mali. MINUSMA as a mediator will have to take an effective role in keeping continuous contact with CMA and Platforms, complete DDR process, integrate the rebels in security forces of Mali, and bring security situation to normalcy.

Initiative and bold steps must be taken by the Mali government in conducting local election so that local government can function for the development of remote underdeveloped areas. Unless the political wheel of local government starts rolling and law enforcing agencies start functioning in the northern and eastern region, normalcy in life will not be achieved. Local government must create more job opportunity for young people so that they do not involve in crimes like drugs, human and weapon trafficking, abducting foreigners, killing and looting etc. Education institutions must start functioning gradually so that people gain the capability to get job and lead their own area with knowledge and wisdom. The rule of law needs to be established in the north and east, which is totally absent now.[83]

The citizens of Mali must take major share in bringing peace in their country. They must reduce differences among different ethnic groups, stop killing each other, secure their border from entering foreign and transnational TAGs, stop smuggling of weapon, drugs, human and restore rule of law in all parts of Mali. MINUSMA, EUTM and G5 Sahel Joint Force can assist in training and developing law enforcing agencies, armed forces and political institutions in local government so that rule of law can be established in the northern and eastern region of Mali. For that, the willingness of political leaders is prerequisite, but as of now, political leaders are having weakness to do that.

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[83] Md. Monjurul Kabir Bhuiyan, Air Commodore, Director, Directorate of Overseas Air Operations, Air HQ, Dhaka Cantonment, interviewed on 30 October 2017.

International players and all stakeholders of the UN, EU, AU, ECOWAS, NGOs and Sahel Alliance have more role to play in focusing on the crisis of Mali and help Malian people come out of this crisis by providing adequate fund for training, developing infrastructure, educational institutions, political and law enforcing agencies etc. A strong, professional and committed Armed Forces need to be developed in Mali so that they can face foreign, transnational and local TAGs, secure the border from weapon, drugs and human trafficking. At the end, the success of MINUSMA and French Forces will depend on the effective implementation of the peace agreement. Most importantly, the Malian government must play a greater role in resolving the crisis in Mali once for all and build sustainable peace in the country. This will bring peace and tranquillity in the Sahara Desert and Sahel region as a whole. Finally, the following measures should be adopted for bringing sustainable peace in Mali:

a. French Forces need to engage all out to eliminate TAGs from the northern and eastern region taking ISR information from ASIFU (MINUSMA) and own sources. At the same time, MINUSMA Forces have to ensure safety and security of the civil population and stop human rights violation by TAGs. For that TCCs are to take ISR information from ASIFU, and they need to train and equip their forces to act decisively in asymmetric war scenario existing in Mali.

i. MINUSMA needs to develop current intelligence capability into a system that is accessible to all TCCs so that most exposed soldiers get benefit from the intelligence capability of ASIFU.

ii. Border of Mali needs to be protected especially in the north and eastern side so that entry and exit of foreign, transnational and local TAGs are controlled totally in the border areas with Algeria, Burkina Faso and Niger. For that, Armed Forces and Border Guards of Mali need to take the responsibility and be deployed in border areas as soon as possible.

b. All stakeholders in the Peace Accord of 2015 must act sincerely in fulfilling all the terms and conditions on which all they agreed upon. The success of MINUSMA will depend on the effective implementation of the peace agreement. Government of Mali has to play a major role in implementing all the terms and conditions endorsed in the peace agreement and bring sustainable peace in Mali. The regional organizations like AU, EU, ECOWAS can help Mali to come out from the present crisis and bring sustainable peace in the region.

c. MINUSMA should provide all-out support to DDR process and help local organizations in DDR activities so that arms and ammunition do not remain in rebels' hand. Local armed groups are to be motivated to leave their arms so that they can be endorsed in the peace process and DDR.

d. Sensitization and motivation of local Tuareg people living in the northern region must be done so that they do not help TAGs operating from neighbouring countries.

e. Ethnic differences must be mitigated for the greater cause of unity and peace in Mali. Without peace and stability, development work will not be possible to materialize.

f. Development work in the northern region of Mali is a prerequisite to reduce differences with south and bring back normalcy in that region. Establishment of local government and deploying law enforcing agencies, armed and border protection forces are a prerequisite for bringing the rule of law in the northern and eastern part of Mali. Local people should open educational institutions and develop qualified people for job. The Mali government must end corruption, mismanagement of the economy and disputed legislative election and work sincerely in reducing differences between north and south. MINUSMA can help in training and developing political institution and law enforcing agencies in those regions. Representation of these regions in the central government of Mali is very much required.

g. Election of local government must be conducted on a regular basis so that leadership at the root level is developed in the underdeveloped rural areas of Mali.

Annex: List of Interviewees

1. Abdul Al Ahad, Squadron Leader, Senior Air Traffic Controller (SATCO), Tessalit Airfield, Mali, interviewed on 02 January 2019.

2. Alam Md Shafiqul, Air Commodore, Contingent Commander, BANAIR-2, MINUSMA, Mali, interviewed on 03 March 2017.

3. Alam Siddiqul, Group Captain, Director, Directorate of Supply, Air HQ, Dhaka Cantonment, interviewed on 25 July 2017.

4. Ahmed, Jamil, Wing Commander, Deputy Director, Directorate of Finance, Air HQ, Dhaka Cantonment, interviewed on 15 December 2016.

5. Ali M Yousuf, Air Commodore, Director, Directorate of Overseas Air Operations, Air HQ, Dhaka Cantonment, interviewed on 20 September 2016.

6. Ali Shawkot, Air Commodore, Director, Directorate of Communication and Electronics, Air HQ, Dhaka Cantonment, interviewed on 13 August 2017.

7. Azazul Bar Chowdhury, Brigadier General, Director General, Operation and Plans Branch, Armed Forces Division, Dhaka Cantonment, interviewed on 26 September 2018.

8. Bakar Abu, Air Commodore, Director, Directorate of Finance, Air HQ, Dhaka Cantonment, interviewed on 15 December 2016.

9. Bhuiyan Md. Monjurul Kabir, Air Commodore, Director, Directorate of Overseas Air Operations, Air HQ, Dhaka Cantonment, interviewed on 30 October 2017.

10 Ehsan M Quamrul, Air Commodore, Director, Directorate of Engineering, Air HQ, Dhaka Cantonment, interviewed on 10 August 2017.

11. Mow Fatema Tuzzohura, Flight Lieutenant, Senior Air Traffic Controller (SATCO), Kidal Heliport, Mali, interviewed on 31 March 2019.

12. Huda Enamul, Wing Commander, MINUSMA, Mali, interviewed on 01 June 2017.

13. Huda Md Shaharul, Air Commodore, Contingent Commander, BANUAU, MINUSTAH, Haiti, interviewed on 19 April 2017.

14. Karim Md Mazharul, Air Commodore, Director, Directorate of Air Operations, Air HQ, Dhaka Cantonment, interviewed on 15 December 2016.

15. Mustafijur Rahman K H, Wing Commander, Deputy Director, Directorate of Finance, Air HQ, Dhaka Cantonment, interviewed on 20 March 2019.

16. Saiful Islam Muhammad, Wing Commander, G-3 Air Ops 1, Sector North HQ, MINUSMA, Kidal, Mali, interviewed on 03 April 2019.

17. Muhit Abdul, Air Commodore, Director, Directorate of Personnel, Air HQ, Dhaka Cantonment, interviewed on 17 August 2016.

18. Ngobongue Zakaria, Brigadier General Sector Commander, Sector North, MINUSMA, Kidal, Mali, interviewed on 20 April 2019.

19. Nuruzzaman M., Wing Commander, Deputy Director, Directorate of Meteorology, Air HQ, Dhaka Cantonment, interviewed on 25 August 2017.

20. Rashid Ahmed-ur, Wing Commander, OIC FF, MONUSCO, Bunia, DRC, interviewed on 10 July 2016.

21. Saifuddin Mohammad, Wing Commander, Pilot in Command, BANATU, MONUSCO, Bunia, DRC, interviewed on 15 June 2016.

22 Santoni Colonel Pierre, Deputy Sector Commander, MINUSMA, Sector North, Kidal, Mali, interviewed on 25 April 2019.

23. Sarkar Md Sharif Uddin, Air Commodore, CC, BANUAU, MONUSCO, Bunia, DRC, interviewed on 20 February 2017.

24. Sivillon Christophe, Head of Office, MINUSMA, Sector North, Kidal, Mali, interviewed on 19 March 2019.