

West Africa and the Sahel in the Grip of Organized Crime and International Terrorism – Why the UN, EU and Germany Should Prepare for a Long Stay

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Abstract: This article assesses the rising threat of both organized crime and terrorism and their link to the conflict in Mali and the West African region. The author argues that organized crime, especially the activities of Latin American drug cartels, and its close relationship to international terrorism are key to understand the failure of Mali's democratization process and rising instability in the West African region. The article closes with recommendations for the stabilization of both Mali and the West African/Sahel region. This includes local, regional and international measures.

Keywords: Organized crime, terrorism, Mali, West Africa, Sahel
Organisierte Kriminalität, Terrorismus, Mali, Westafrika, Sahel

In early 2014, Germany as well as the international public witnessed a notable change in the German approach to international peace and security policy. Leading members of the new 'grand' coalition government of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), in particular Foreign minister Steinmeier and Defense Minister von der Leyen, declared that the past doctrine of "Zurückhaltung" (restraint) would no longer be the primary guiding line regarding Germany's involvement in international crisis prevention and peace operations. Both ministers agreed that the important role that Germany is playing these days in Europe as well as internationally made it imperative for the country to assume more responsibility. This is particularly true regarding Africa and the worrying number of violent conflicts. Streams of refugees as well as spreading organized crime and terrorism are threats to Europe, apart from endangering European economic interests. The change in German politics, however, does not imply a radical change to the past German policy. It rather aims at conducting a more "active" policy in the field of peace and security. "Civilian" means would remain primary elements of Germany's conflict prevention and crisis management activities (Steinmeier).¹ Yet, there are limits to what these means can achieve, as past experience has shown. Therefore, situations may arise in which civil means have to be complimented or preceded by military means.

Soon after, during the International Munich Security Conference on January 31, 2014, both Ministers were strongly backed up by President Gauck. In his opening speech he came out quite critically against the old German policy of "Zurückhaltung". Indeed, in his view, this policy had turned into a policy of "doing nothing" and shunning responsibility.² The author is very much in agreement with this line of argument which he

has outlined in earlier publications.³ However, there is no doubt that this policy change will be very demanding for German politicians and diplomats in at least two ways: first, to properly understand what precisely are the dynamics of conflicts in which Germany, together with other international partners, is getting involved, and which are, secondly, the proper ways and means to deal with them. The conflict in Mali is a case in point. Perceptions that Mali's recent decay is "just another case of corrupt African politicians", quite often to be heard in German political discussions, and that its dramatically failing army "just needs proper training" by European militaries to be put it in order again are dangerously simplistic.

Mali's Promising Democratization – What Went Wrong?

The total inability of Mali's government and military to adequately respond to the resurgence of the Tuareg conflict in early 2012 surprised many international observers. The country collapsed within a matter of weeks. Its army barely presented a challenge for advancing Tuareg troops. Instead, led by a previously unknown captain, Amadou Sanogo, it overthrew the political and military leadership in Bamako. In the ranks of the army, enormous anger had accumulated because they had been left alone in the war in the North. Instead, leaders in Bamako had embezzled the soldiers' salaries as well as funds earmarked for military equipment.

It was this coup d'état that shattered the illusion of Mali being a model for democratization in Africa. However, the common explanation for this failure, namely that it was an illusion from the very beginning, falls short of what truly happened. Looking back to the events that took place in the early 1990s, when Sub-Saharan Africa was swept by a wave of democratization comparable to the Arab Spring, leads to a different conclusion. At that time, Mali's dictatorial regime under Moussa Traoré faced

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1 Sueddeutsche Zeitung, Interview with Frank Walter Steinmeier, January 30, 2014.

2 Bundespräsident Gauck in his Opening Speech at the 50. Münchner Sicherheitskonferenz. http://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/DE/Joachim-Gauck/Reden/2014/01/140131-Muenchner-Sicherheitskonferenz.html;jsessionid=0EEB73AE037FAB9C2B31F8E2657147D6.2_cid285.

3 See Winrich Kühne. *Interessen, Kriterien, Probleme deutscher Beteiligung an Friedenseinsätzen. Wann? Wohin? Warum?* Zentrum für Internationale Friedenseinsätze, Februar 2007 http://www.petrakellystiftung.de/fileadmin/user_upload/newsartikel/PDF_Dokus/Aufsatz_Kuehne.pdf.

growing opposition from students and labor unions. Although Traoré himself had overthrown the authoritarian and corrupt regime of Modibo Keita in 1968, this did not stop him from quickly adopting a similarly authoritarian style. He therefore was determined to suppress the uprising of the students, labor unions and other parts of Mali's society. The man he placed in charge of this job was Amadou Toumani Touré, at that time Colonel and Commander of the Presidential Guard, and future president of Mali.

Touré, however, universally known as "ATT" in West Africa, performed a surprising volte-face. He refused to follow orders and, instead, commanded his units to arrest President Traoré and other politicians, and assumed power on an interim basis. Observers in and outside Africa met the coup d'état with suspicion. After all, it was uncommon for the military to honor its promises and swiftly return power to civilian, democratically elected authorities. Yet, shortly after seizing power, Touré and his comrades did exactly this. They initiated the democratization process demanded by students and labor unions. Touré himself assumed the chairmanship of a "national conference" that drew up a constitution in the summer of 1991.

Parliamentary and presidential elections took place in February 1992, with Alpha Oumar Konaré, a member of the opposition during the old regime, emerging victorious. Touré and his generals returned to their barracks. Overall, despite numerous problems, the country's stabilization and democratization process remained more or less on track during this time. Eventually, Touré became Konaré's successor. He had ended his military career in 2001 and won the elections in both 2002 and 2007 with a clear majority, notwithstanding the fact that the integrity of the 2007 elections, in particular, was challenged by the opposition and observers. When Touré entered office, Africa and the rest of the world had high hopes for his presidency. He had gained enormous popularity as "soldier of democracy" after the coup in 1991 and also acted as a successful broker on behalf of the *Organization of African Unity* (OAU) in the Central African Republic (CAR) which was suffering from military coups, instability and rebel groups. When new riots occurred in the CAR in 2001, Kofi Annan appointed him Special Envoy of the UN. (At the time he was also, like the author, a member of the International Advisory Group to UN DPKO's *Lessons Learned Unit*.) As far as his integrity was concerned, Touré enjoyed an impeccable reputation.

At the beginning of his first term in 2002, Touré and his government found themselves confronted with a country struggling with very basic problems of development and governance. Mali was and still is one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world. The extreme ethnic and regional divisions, severe droughts, and the challenge of reconciling the lifestyle of the sedentary population, such as the Bambara, in the South, and the Songhais as well as nomadic and semi-nomadic groups, such as the Tuareg, in the North exacerbated this situation.⁴

4 The Tuareg and other nomadic groups only account for a fraction of Mali's population (about 5%). Over 90% of the population lives in the South, with Bambaras accounting for over 50% of the population (other groups include Malinké, Sarakole, Dogon, etc.).

However, the unexpected failure of Touré's government and the implosion of Mali in 2012 were mainly due to the impact of two developments that shook the country during his time in government to its core: the dramatic *population explosion* and the emergence of *Latin American drug cartels* in West Africa.

The annual population growth of 2.5-3%, which Mali experienced in the past decades, made its population double within 25 years (1987-2012) and triple in about 50 years (1960-2012). In comparison, in Germany it took over a hundred years, from approximately 1870 to the mid-1990s, for its population to double. Obviously, only a miraculous economic growth policy would have been in a position to absorb the impact of such a population explosion. Furthermore, a key element of this growth was the phenomenon known as youth bulge: the extreme growth of the young population with little or no perspective for a decent life, i.e. education, employment, marriage, and having a family. Therefore, it is not at all surprising that Mali and West Africa in general became such a fertile breeding ground for organized, transnational crime and Islamist terrorism.

West Africa and the Latin American Drug Cartels

It is not so long ago that most West Africans felt quite confident about the future democratization and stabilization in their region. Following the difficult 1990s, with the conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia and other countries, the region appeared, albeit slowly, to be on track towards improvement. Besides the successful UN peacekeeping missions in Sierra Leone and Liberia, the rise of the *Economic Community of West African States* (ECOWAS) as a successful regional organization since the early 1990s has to be credited with this positive outlook.⁵

However, the mood has fundamentally changed in the last decade. The main trigger was the arrival of the Latin American drug cartels in West Africa starting in the late 1990s. As the Mexican cartels increasingly challenged traditional transit routes of these cartels through Central America, West Africa and its weak states offered an ideal alternative route. Additionally, most West African countries suffered from considerable corruption and "low-level" organized crime. It was easy for Latin American "pros" to exploit these conditions. Different types of illegal activities have a long tradition in West Africa and the Sahel, such as trafficking in cigarettes, gasoline and counterfeit drugs as well as small arms, human beings (mostly women), marijuana and – more recently – heroin.⁶

Estimates indicate that about 10-15% of the cocaine consumed in Europe is trafficked through West Africa. Reliable figures are hard to come by, but the volume of cocaine trafficked to Europe between 2007 and 2009 was estimated at about 50 tons annually and its value totaled about US\$ one billion. According to the *UN Office on Drugs and Crime* (UNODC), sales declined to about

5 At the time, the author, as director of the German Center for International Peace Operations (Zentrum für Internationale Friedenseinsätze/ZIF), traveled to the region several times a year, closely working with ECOWAS and the Kofi Annan Peacekeeping Training Centre in Accra, Ghana.
6 For more details see the recent report by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) "Organized Crime in West Africa: A Threat Assessment," Vienna, February 2013.

15-18 tons annually in the following years.⁷ However, it is hard to tell whether this decline has actually occurred since estimates are based on seized and not actually traded amounts. For 2013, independent sources estimate that the amount of cocaine which passed through West Africa was at least 20 tons.⁸

When it comes to the penetration of politics, state institutions and business in West Africa by drug trafficking and organized crime, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea and Mali are at the top of the list. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, longtime Secretary-General and president of ECOWAS, recently described this process in detail. He cites the seizure of a plane at the airport of Lungui in Sierra Leone in July 2008, which carried 700 kilograms of drugs valued at about US\$ 60 million, another seizure of two jets at the airport of Bissau in September 2008, and a similar incident in Boké in Guinea-Conakry. He also mentions a well-known incident in northern Mali in 2009, when a Boeing full of cocaine had landed on an airstrip in the desert and crashed. It is assumed that the traffickers loaded the drugs onto four-wheel-drives and subsequently burned the plane. In Guinea, the son of the late president Lansana Conté confessed to playing an active role in drug trafficking, while in neighboring Guinea-Bissau members of the military allegedly formed a human corridor to facilitate the unloading of drugs from airplanes.⁹ Developments turned more dramatic in April 2013 when the US *Drug Enforcement Administration* (DEA) apprehended the former head of Guinea-Bissau's navy, Admiral Bubo Na Tchuto, and several other suspects in international waters. Simultaneously, the US Attorney's Office of New York added the head of Guinea-Bissau's army, General Antonio Injai, to its list of wanted persons for allegedly having played a key role in importing thousands of kilos of cocaine into Guinea-Bissau in exchange for weapons for the Columbian FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*). Injai is also known to have instigated several military coups d'état against democratically elected governments in Guinea-Bissau, most recently in April 2012.¹⁰

Probably due to the successful detention of leading militaries in Guinea-Bissau by the Americans, Latin American drug dealers in particular from Venezuela and Colombia shifted their trade to a considerable extent back to Guinea. Guinea had been a key hub for them until about 2009 when the involvement of the President's son, Ousmane Conde, and the criminal network working with him, the "Untouchables", were revealed and came to an end. (There are indications that this network is active again.) Guinea and Guinea-Bissau are at the eastern end of "Highway 10", the nickname given to the shortest route across the Atlantic. Local and international officials report that the cocaine is increasingly arriving at unmonitored harbors or flown in by small planes using remote airstrips.¹¹ (In February 2014, authorities in Guinea arrested 20 Nigerians and started checking Latin American workers in the country in a crackdown

on the growing wave of drug trafficking, most probably in response to the above quoted report by Reuters).

However, apart from Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Mali it is safe to assume that by now drug cartels are active in most states in the region. This assessment is supported by a recent UNODC report "Organized Crime in West Africa: A Threat Assessment." Benin and Gambia are on the list as well as Nigeria with its special connection to drug cartels in Brazil. In February 2014 a report by the Nigerian Anti-Drug Administration (NDLEA) reported that levels of drug trafficking, production and consumption had reached explosive levels in the country.¹² Even relatively stable democracies, such as Ghana and Senegal, seem to be increasingly affected.¹³ A recent study has therefore warned that "these groups represent an existential threat to democratic governance of already fragile states in the subregion because they are using narco-corruption to stage coups d'état, hijack elections, and co-opt or buy political power."¹⁴ Kwesi Aning, a prominent West African researcher on security issues, takes a similar line.¹⁵

Mali – a Hub of Organized Crime and Islamist Terrorism

The Latin American mafia uses different routes for trafficking drugs to Europe. Mali has been one of the major hubs. One of the reasons for this is that the Tuareg and other nomadic groups in the North have experience in trans-Saharan trade with a range of goods dating back to pre-colonial times. Therefore, they are very familiar with the terrain and know the practical requirements and pitfalls of such a trade. Given their economic hardships, due to repeated droughts and economic negligence by Bamako, many of them feel that they have no other choice than to look for new sources of income. Employment in organized crime is generally welcomed even though the resulting criminalization of the Tuareg culture is not appreciated among all Tuareg groups and their leaders.

Touré himself provided a second reason for the North's steady drift towards crime and terrorism, and ultimately his own downfall. Despite his remarkably democratic vita, he continued his predecessors' disastrous policy of manipulating the North's ethnic divisions and local networks in order to control the region, instead of integrating it into a functioning state. While he did try to achieve reconciliation and a constructive dialogue with the Tuareg during his first term in 2002, he lacked the determination to pursue this approach in a sustained manner, not least because he failed to vigorously confront problematic practices of his immediate political surroundings in Bamako. The incomplete implementation of the 2006 peace treaty with

7 Cp. UNODC, see footnote 5, as well as Andrew Lebovich, "Mali's Bad Trip: Field Notes from the West African Drug Trade," in: *Foreign Policy*, 03/15/2013; and Wolfram Lacher, "Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region," *The Carnegie Papers*, September 2012, p. 6.

8 <http://reuter.com/assets/>.

9 Mohamed Ibn Chambas, "ECOWAS: Herausforderung Fragilität und Gewalt," in: Georg Lennkh, Irene Freudenschuss-Reichl (eds.), "Nachbar Afrika – Dimensionen eines Kontinents," Vienna, 2010, pp. 23-130, here p. 124.

10 Cp. *New York Times*, 04/15/2013, 04/18/2013, and 11/01/2012.

11 *Ibid.*

12 See TV5 Afrique 15.02.2014 <http://www.tv5.org/cms/chaine-francophone/info/p-1911-Au-Nigeria-le-traffic-de-drogue-en-pleine-expansion.htm?&rub=6&xml=newsmllmmd.urn.newsm1.afp.com.20140214.1a207979.8cfe.45bd.bdde.40adc7c86e66.xml>.

13 Cp. UNODC, see footnote 5, p. 9ff.

14 David E. Brown, "The Challenge of Drug Trafficking to Democratic Governance and Human Security in West Africa", Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, May 2013.

15 Kwesi Aning and John Pokoo, "Drug Trafficking and Threat to National and Regional Security in West Africa," WACD (West Africa Commission on Drugs), Background Paper No. 1, Accra, January 2012.

the Tuareg is part of this failure. Eventually, he returned to the dubious methods of his predecessors.

A quantum leap occurred around 2006: The Islamist terror group AQIM (*Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb*), which had evolved out of the Algerian GSCP (*Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat*), retreated to Mali in the face of increasingly successful repression by the Algerian state. The emergence of its well-trained cadres brought a new degree of quality to the organized crime-terrorism nexus in northern Mali. The AQIM leadership also encouraged its fighters to marry into Tuareg families, knowing that in the Tuareg culture they would become part of the family and thus enjoy all the ensuing privileges and solidarity of local clan membership.

The emergence of AQIM and subsequently *Ansar Dine* (“Defenders of the Faith”) and MUJAO (*Mouvement pour l’Unité et le Jihad en Afrique de l’Ouest*) led to the rise of another illegal activity: kidnapping, especially of Europeans. Eventually, it became a significant source of their income. Indeed, by this time, drug trafficking, terrorist activities, and kidnapping had become key elements of the survival and prosperity of criminal-terrorist networks in northern Mali and its neighborhood – networks that are difficult to fight from the outside but which easily fuse with local conditions, such as the Tuareg conflict.

As far as Touré’s personal fate was concerned, his politics had an inevitable consequence. He and his politico-military entourage, as well as his family, increasingly became collaborators of these criminal networks, and benefitted from them – to the detriment of the stability of Mali and its institutions. It was thus only a matter of time until the Tuareg would seize the opportunity for a new insurgency. This opportunity arose after the fall of Qaddafi and the return of many well-trained and well-equipped Tuareg units to Niger and Mali in late 2011.

Mali’s Unsolved Structural Problems

Lady Ashton, the European Union’s *High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy*, is reported to have stated immediately after the results of the first round of the presidential election in July 2013 were published that they signaled an important step forward in re-establishing the constitutional order across the entire territory of Mali.¹⁶ This may be so. However, it needs to be repeated that international actors would be well advised not to repeat past errors and overestimate the significance of such elections for stabilizing and democratizing conflict-ridden countries like Mali. The structural problems, analyzed above, still persist and have even become worse. Indeed, a report of the International Crisis Group with the title “Reform or Relapse”, paints quite a bleak picture: The North remains a hotbed of armed banditry, inter-communal violence, a continuation of jihadist attacks, clashes between Malian forces and local armed groups. UN peacekeepers and French forces are struggling to keep the past security gains. Even worse, it seems that the government in Bamako has returned to the old clientelist system used by previous regimes to control the North. Clientelist links are in

particular re-established with Tuareg and Arab leaders with the aim of gradually dividing and weakening the armed groups.¹⁷

In sum, it would be erroneous to assume that the clear victory of Keita at the ballot box is a reflection of the existence of a consolidated and constructive political class in Mali. This group is, as one expert very familiar with Mali’s domestic politics has pointed out, unified only on two issues: first, the profound dislike of the southerners for the nomadic Tuareg and, second, finding ways to profit from international development and humanitarian aid.¹⁸ The almost US\$ 4 billion promised by international donors once successful elections have been held will be a strong incentive to pursue this vice as vigorously as ever. Mali was “a darling of the international aid community” in the past. A recent analysis concludes: “At best, this aid to Mali has been ineffective [...] enabling corruption, undermining the government’s will and ability to raise revenue [...] and insulating it from accountability to the population [...] Nothing has fundamentally changed to address the deficiencies in accountability and oversight.”¹⁹ It remains to be seen whether Keita has the will and the ability to change this. In his campaign, re-establishing Mali’s “dignity” was a major slogan.

Furthermore, it would be erroneous to assume that the high voter turnout indicates a readiness in the South to reconcile with the Tuareg. In fact, the divide between the Tuareg and the southerners is deeper than ever. Immediately after the first round of the elections a spokesperson of the MNLA made it very clear that the organization will insist on nothing less than the “autonomy” of Azawad. Otherwise it will take up arms again.²⁰ Indeed, until spring 2014, the northern armed groups have steadfastly refused to take part in any official mediation and reconciliation meeting with the government in Bamako. They do not consider this meeting as a true, worthwhile dialogue with regard to their demands. The fact that the participation in the parliamentary elections in November/December 2013 was dramatically low, less than 38 % nationwide, and much less in the North, also does not spell well for solving Mali’s profound political problems.

Finally, one of the key findings of this contribution is that the interplay between the Tuareg conflict, the dwindling resources for survival in the North, as well as the enormous population growth on the one hand and the penetration of West Africa and the Sahel by a more or less symbiotic relationship between organized crime and Islamist terrorism on the other was a key factor for Mali’s decay under the presidency of Touré. It will remain a key factor for the future. Illegal drug trafficking and other forms of organized crime are as strong as ever, although Mali, for the time being, may be less important as a route. There is no doubt that the French intervention has weakened the militant Islamist movements without defeating it. Those remaining went either underground, vanished into the population or withdrew to neighboring countries. In recent months the number of their attacks in the North has risen again. And in early February MUJAO went back to its old business and took more than 30 local Red

17 International Crisis Group Africa Report No. 210, 10 January 2014.

18 Charlotte Wiedemann, “Die Krise in Mali,” Heinrich Boell Foundation, Berlin, December 2012, p. 16.

19 IRIN News, 08/05/2013 <http://www.irinnews.org/printreport.aspx?reportid=98528>.

20 The National, 08/05/2013.

16 Der Tagesspiegel, 07/29/2013.

Cross staff members hostage. Movements like MUJAO and AQIM profit from the volatile situation in southern Libya in terms of arms and drug trafficking as well as reinforcement.

MINUSMA

On April 25, 2013, United Nations Security Council resolution 2100 transformed the previous African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) into a Chapter VII UN mission. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) took up its tasks as scheduled, on July 1st. The authorized personnel strength for MINUSMA is 11,200 military personnel, including reserve battalions capable of rapid deployment, and 1,440 police officers as well as civilian personnel. Former Development Minister of the Netherlands, Bert Koenders, was appointed Head of Mission. Previously, he was head of the UN mission in Cote d'Ivoire. Resolution 2100 also explicitly authorizes a French intervention force with a permanent strength of ca. 1,000.

Four Strategic Recommendations for the Stabilization of Mali, West Africa and the Sahel

The conclusion from the above analysis is rather obvious: The prospect that the new government in Bamako will be able to stabilize the country on its own is dim. One may convincingly argue that the conditions inside the country and its neighborhood are far worse than after ATT's coup in 1991 and the democratic re-start of Mali in 1992. The quality, staying power and effectiveness of the considerable involvement of the international community, spearheaded by MINUSMA (*United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali*) will be decisive for a lasting stabilization of the country. International involvements as such are, however, not *per se* a recipe for success. Success will depend on the will and ability of major regional and international actors, in particular the UN, ECOWAS, the EU, the *African Union* (AU), France, and the US, to join hands in key areas regarding the stabilization of Mali and preventing the further destabilization of the entire region. Such areas are in particular:

1. Strengthening of MINUSMA. The challenges faced by MINUSMA are enormous. As with other missions, the Security Council has not hesitated to burden it with a very demanding mandate. MINUSMA is tasked to support the authorities of Mali in several key areas such as: stabilization of key population centers and support for the re-establishment of state authority throughout the country; support for the implementation of the transitional roadmap, including the national political dialogue and the electoral process; enabling the rebuilding of the Malian security and justice sectors; developing and implementing programs for the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of former combatants; and the dismantling of militias and self-defense groups, etc. In his report to the Security Council of March 26, 2013 (S/2013/189) the UN Secretary-General is remarkably outspoken in identifying the enormous difficulties of stabilizing Mali.

For those familiar with missions in such a difficult environment there is no doubt that MINUSMA's tasks cannot be fulfilled given its current capacities, essentially transferred from AFISMA.

At the time of writing, the mission is – with a staff of about 6,500 uniformed personnel – well below its authorized strength. Most of its troops are poorly equipped and insufficiently trained for the difficult task. Until recently the mission also lacked mobility and firepower in terms of helicopters, armored cars, etc. to cover the vast territory of Mali, as well as modern means of communication. In a briefing to the Security Council in late June, the Head of Mission, SRSB Bert Koenders, made an urgent appeal to the international community to provide the mission with the “vital resources” needed. One country quickly reacted, his home country, the Netherlands. Its government in fall of 2013 committed itself to send four *Apache* attack helicopters with the necessary support staff as well as a contingent of 200 staff specialized in intelligence gathering. Supported by further staff from Norway and Denmark, they formed an *Intelligence Fusion Cell* crucial for MINUSMA's ability to operate in an environment with elements of asymmetrical warfare. Yet earlier, in late July, the Nigerian government had announced the withdrawal of about 1,200 of its troops. Abuja was obviously not happy with the fact that the UN did not choose a Nigerian general as Force Commander for MINUSMA. Most of the Nigerian troops then were immediately redeployed to Borno State in northern Nigeria to join the heavy fighting against the Nigerian Islamist movement, *Boko Haram*.

The industrial countries, therefore, will have to seriously consider what additional resources they can contribute to enable the mission to successfully implement its mandate. This not only concerns the military pillar of the mission but also police and civilian experts. The fact that already in June 2013 the German government decided to transfer its logistical support from AFISMA to MINUSMA by providing cargo planes and about 150 support and liaison staff as well as ten police officers, is a step in the right direction. China's readiness to contribute 500 peacekeepers should be noted in Western capitals with due interest.

2. Army, and Security Sector Reform (SSR). The prompt start of EUTM certainly shows that Europe is taking Mali's and the region's problems seriously. However, with its present and limited mandate, focusing on the swift training of four battalions (about 2,800 soldiers) for combat, this mission cannot contribute much to a truly comprehensive reform of Mali's army and security sector. In December 2013 the 3rd Battalion concluded its training in the training center Koulikoro close to Bamako and was immediately sent to the North. The training of the 4th Battalion will be completed in early March. EUTM is planned to continue its mission, and German Defense Minister von der Leyden has already announced that it will be increased from a maximum of 180 to 250. At the time of writing *de facto* 99 Bundeswehr members are based in Koulikoro.

In general, the lessons regarding the role of such international training missions are quite sobering. The lackluster results in the DR Congo after years of engagement by the international community are just one case in point. The disastrous experience of the multi-million dollar US training program in Mali is another. When the fighting started in the North, most of the officers and units they had trained and equipped – in their majority Tuareg – defected and joined the insurgents. Regarding the immense financial and personnel investment to train the Army and Police in Afghanistan, the jury is still out whether or not it had a lasting positive impact – whether it was worth this investment.

There are two basic reasons why international SSR assistance has not produced high returns: First, local politicians as well as leaders of the armed forces and police only occasionally, as for instance in Sierra Leone, support such reforms; they rather perceive them as a direct threat to their profitable privileges, like embezzling the soldiers' pay or funds earmarked for buying equipment. This will not be very different in Mali. As has been pointed out, key figures of the army leadership in the past were quite significantly involved in profiting from the salaries of the soldiers as well as from funds earmarked for properly equipping and training army units. The split between the "green berets", i.e. the parachute units of the presidential guard, and the "red berets" of Captain Sanogo who rebelled against President Touré, remains unresolved, as does the divide between the officer corps and the rank and file. Indeed, the fact that the captain who led the coup, Sanogo, was not only put in charge of the commission tasked with the reform of the army but also promoted to the rank of general a few days before the final results of the elections were announced is worrisome. However, in the meantime Sanogo is no longer in charge of the army reform. In November 2013 he was arrested and charged with the killing of 21 paratroopers who disappeared two years ago. In December, their bodies were discovered in a mass grave in Diago in southwestern Mali, close to the capital Bamako. In February, authorities in Mali also arrested former defense minister General Yamoussa Camara for his role in the killing of the paratroopers. At this point of time it is difficult to judge whether this is merely a move by the new government to regain control over what has been left of Mali's army after the coup or whether it is a serious move to put the house in order and to start building a law-abiding, non-corrupt army. Second, on the international side the balance sheet regarding the coordination, integration and therefore effectiveness of the numerous national and multi-national SSR actors is disappointing. It is not very difficult for local actors to outmaneuver them. (Again, Sierra Leone was an exception in this regard. Great Britain proved to be an energetic and committed leader in implementing SSR). SSR in Mali will therefore only have a chance to succeed if the relevant international players – the EU, the UN, and the US in cooperation with ECOWAS and the AU – can agree on a joint strategy that is as well conceived as it is implemented. First steps in this direction have been undertaken. If they are sufficient to produce an effective, sustained Security Sector Reform in Mali remains to be seen!

3. *No Rushed Solution for the Tuareg Problem.* The cease-fire agreement between the Malian government and the MNLA and HCUA was negotiated in June 2013 under enormous time pressure to clear the way for the elections. In the agreement, the two Tuareg movements have in principle recognized Mali's territorial integrity and its secular character (as the Tuareg have done in previous peace treaties). In return, the prosecution of Tuareg rebels by the Malian justice system has been suspended and the contentious word "Azawad" was included in the text of the agreement. The clarification of all remaining questions has been postponed until after the elections.

There is no doubt that both sides have a very different understanding of what should be the content of this clarification, in particular regarding the question of autonomy for the Tuareg. Tuareg leaders have already complained that the cease-fire agreement has so far been poorly implemented by Bamako. There are good reasons to

assume that both sides will not feel bound by the concessions they made, although they will be hesitant to let that be known publicly. Regarding Keita, being a committed "Southerner", it remains to be seen what exactly he meant by the promise of an "inclusive" dialogue immediately after being declared victorious.

Future international mediators would therefore be well advised to study past peace processes thoroughly. Indeed, the history of Mali abounds with failed peace processes and accords. They should also have a look at Niger, which in past decades had suffered Tuareg uprisings similar to those in Mali but has been quiet recently. Tuareg leaders have joined the Niger government and in fact refused to support their Malian brethren militarily when asked to do so in 2012.

4. *Containment of Organized Crime and Terrorism.* In the end, stabilizing Mali and preventing further destabilization in West Africa and the Sahel will only be feasible if the fight against the organized crime-terrorism nexus (and increasingly expanding piracy in the Gulf of Guinea) becomes a key concern of international and regional actors. Unfortunately, however, the extent of the geopolitical shift of international terrorism to North Africa, the Sahel, West Africa and the Horn of Africa continues to be underestimated by most Europeans. It is safe to assume that the failing Arab Spring will further trigger this shift. The total decay of the Central African Republic, turning it into a haven for criminal groups, as well as the revival of Al-Shabaab in Somalia and the unending fighting between the Nigerian army and the terrorist movement *Boko Haram* in northern Nigeria are very worrisome developments, too.

Africa and particularly West Africa – that is the AU and ECOWAS – but also the UN, the EU, and the US will have to join forces to counter this threat. Indeed, it is particularly with regard to this dimension that a strategically well-defined and sufficiently coordinated approach will have to be developed. In West Africa, the awareness for such a need has increased. This will make joint regional-international strategies easier to agree upon. Already a number of local and regional initiatives for confronting organized crime and terrorism have been launched. A recent, interesting example is the *West African Commission on Drugs* (WACD), founded in January 2013 by Kofi Annan, under the presidency of former Nigerian president, Olusegun Obasanjo. More are needed though.²¹

As far as the US and Europe are concerned, their interest in vigorously supporting this struggle should not only result from the continuing threat that their citizens might become victims of hostage taking, but even more so from the fact that the dangerous effects of spreading organized crime and international terrorism are increasingly impacting their own cities. Western politicians and publics will have to understand that it is not terrorism per se that poses the biggest threat, but rather its symbiotic relationship with organized crime, for terrorists without money lack teeth. The fact that terrorist groups in northern Mali gained a significant portion of their financial support, totaling several €100 million, from drug trafficking to Europe and ransom payments for the freeing of European hostages is virtually absent from the debate in Europe, as is the fact that cocaine consumption in Europe is possibly still rising in difference to the U.S.

21 For more details see Aning and Pokoo, footnote 11, p. 9.