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Mali. Conflict Analysis

Raul-Ionuț BADALE
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Abstract. *The beginning of the 21st century brought about significant shifting trends in the predominant types of conflict that mankind was dealing with – as various conflict practitioners have often acknowledged. With a high degree of importance, magnitude, and prominence, the intrastate conflict is without a doubt a growing reality of our times, a reality impossible to ignore, as it affects human society at every level. Approached from a conflict practitioner perspective, in the present paper we strived to expose and analyze both context and elements of one of the most severe and highly publicized North African intrastate conflicts, which covered, for a year, one of the poorest countries from the African continent: The Republic of Mali. Far from claiming to be complete, the present paper performs its analysis through a bi-dimensional parallel approach, using the United States Institute of Peace and International Network for Education in Emergencies conflict analysis frameworks for gaining a plus of comprehensiveness and for offering valuable insights regarding the elements underlying the Mali conflict. The analysis focuses first on the geographical and socio-cultural context, and in the second part on the main actors in the Malian conflict. Once the elements mentioned above have been scanned, the reader has gained the basic knowledge for going deeper into the analysis, thus allowing him/her to observe the multiple causes and the dynamics of the Malian conflict. Finally, the analysis appeals to Michael Lund's Curve of Conflict in order to provide a visual timing framework upon the evolution of the conflict, as well as to serve as a basis for building other possible effective intervention strategies that could be implemented.*

Keywords: Mali, France, Senegal, Tuareg, Al-Qaeda, Ansar-Dine, AQIM.

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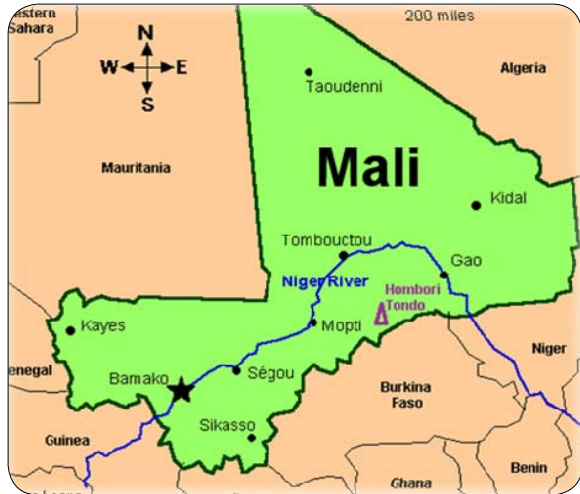
Mali Conflict – Another “Legalized” Afghanistan?

Mali – A Multi-Contextual Perspective

When trying to draw a comprehensive conflict portrait, it is necessary to first learn about its history. Although the Malian conflict was widely debated and presented across the globe by various media outlets, its history and culture still remained unknown for most of the people. Most outsiders

are presented only with the commercial part of the story, unable to understand all underlying factors behind a conflict. By descending into the Malian history, we will have the opportunity to gain knowledge about the disorganization, uncertainty, and violence that were long part of the poorest African state, embracing its latest facet within the 2012 spring uprising.

The Republic of Mali is the largest country in West Africa, sharing common borders with seven other African states: Algeria to the north-northeast; Niger to the east; Burkina Faso south-southeast; the Ivory Coast to the south; Senegal and Mauritania to the west. The country's **climate** spans across the transition zone between arid Sahelian savannah and the Sahara desert itself, exposing the country to substantial climatic variations as years of abundant



rainfall alternate with years of scarcity or actual drought (1977; 1982). Like in Egypt, the most important geographic feature of the country is undoubtedly the great river Niger, which crosses the Sahel and the southeastern section of the country, representing a critical source of sustenance and a major transportation artery. With a **population** of 14.5 million people, the Malian Republic can be considered a heterogeneous country, as more than 24 distinct ethnic groups live on the Malian territory: Mande 50% (Bambara, Malinke, Soninke), Peul 17%, Voltaic 12%, Songhai 6%, Tuareg and Moor 10%, other groups, 5%. In what concerns **religious** membership, 90% of the population is composed by Muslims, 9% have indigenous beliefs and 1% belong to the Christian religion. Although the official **language** is French, Mali's true lingua franca remains Bambara. **Administratively**, the Republic of Mali is divided into eight regions, namely Gao, Kayes, Kidal, Koulikoro, Mopti, Segou, Sikasso, Timbuktu, and the capital district-*Bamako*, each administered by a governor.

Malian History and the Path to Multi-Party Democracy

The history of modern Mali can be divided in **three periods: Pre-colonial Mali; Colonial Mali; and the Republic of Mali**. Throughout history, the Malian region was the seat of extensive empires and kingdoms. The first of these empires was *Ghana*, which controlled the trans-Saharan caravan routes from 4th to 11th century. It was a powerful empire, dominated by the Soninke or Saracolé people, and it was centered in the area along the Malian-Mauritanian frontier. Then Ghana fell under invasions by the Muslim

Almoravids only to be soon replaced by the *Mandinko Empire of Mali*. The medieval empire of Mali was a powerful state and one of the world's chief gold suppliers; it reached its peak in the early 14th century, under the emperor Mansa Musa. During that time, Muslim scholarship reached new heights in Mali, and such cities as Timbuktu and Djenné became important centers of trade, learning and culture. However, Mali's power did not last too long, as in the 15th century it fell into the hands of Songhai. *The Songhai Empire* expanded its power from its center in Gao during the period 1465-1530. At its peak under Askia Mohammad, it encompassed the Hausa states as far as Kano (present-day Nigeria) and much of the territory that had belonged to the Malian Empire in the west. It was destroyed by a Moroccan invasion in 1591. The Moroccans, however, could not effectively dominate this vast region, which broke up into smaller states. By the late 18th century, the area was in a semi anarchic condition and was subject to incursions by the Tuareg and Fulani. The end of the Songhai Empire also marked the ending of the importance of the region as a trading center, as the trans-Saharan trade routes quickly lost their vitality after the establishment of the sea routes by the Europeans.

French military penetration of Soudan (the French name for the area) began around 1880. By 1898, the French conquest was virtually complete. A French civilian governor of Soudan was appointed in 1893, but resistance to French control did not end until 1898, when the Malinké warrior Samory Touré was defeated after 7 years of war. The French attempted to rule indirectly, but in many areas they disregarded traditional authorities and governed through appointed chiefs. A nationalist movement, spearheaded by trade unions and student groups, blossomed during the period between the two world wars. The Sudanese Union, a militantly anticolonial party, became the leading political force. Its leader, Modibo Keita, was a descendant of the Mali emperors. As a colony of French Soudan, Mali was administered with other French colonial territories as the *Federation of French West Africa*. After the French Constitutional Referendum in 1958, the Republic of Sudan became a member of the French Community and enjoyed complete internal autonomy.

In 1959, the republic joined Senegal to form the Mali Federation which became fully independent within the French Community on June 20, 1960. The federation collapsed on August 20, 1960, when Senegal seceded. On September 22, Sudan proclaimed itself the Republic of Mali and withdrew from the French Community. In order to promote the African unity, the Republic of Mali joined a largely symbolic union with Ghana and Guinea, joining also in 1963 the newborn Organization of African Unity. From another perspective, the political stage was dominated by the Sudanese Union-African Democratic Rally, headed by the Malian president Modibo Keita, who quickly declared the newborn republic a single party state. Keita engaged in developing socialist policies based on extensive nationalization, but the continuously deteriorating economy led to a decision to rejoin the Franc Zone in 1967, a decision which allowed French administrators to assume a supervisory role in their economy.

After the rejoining of 1967, militant factions from the Sudanese Union started to oppose it vehemently and the Malian president formed a people's militia to destroy this opposition. After the militia arrested several dissenting army officers, in November 1968, a group of young officers staged a bloodless coup and set up a 14-member Military Committee for National Liberation (CMLN), with Lt. Moussa Traoré as Chairman. The military leaders attempted to pursue economic reforms, while internal political struggles and the disastrous Sahelian drought shattered the country's agriculture economy by killing thousands of livestock and hindering crop production. A new constitution was approved in 1974, which was designed to move the republic toward civilian rule, although the military leaders still remained in power.

The Democratic Union of The Malian People was established in September 1976 and was followed in June 1979 by single-party presidential and legislative elections, where the *General Moussa Traoré* was reelected president by over 90% of the voters. He managed to repress three coup attempts in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and was elected again in 1985. In the same year, a border dispute with Burkina Faso erupted into armed conflict. Although the neighboring nations sent troops to end the fighting, the relations between the two countries remained strained. The political situation was generally calm throughout the 1980s, as the government shifted its attention to Mali's economic difficulties. The new agreement signed with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was regarded with growing dissatisfaction due to the austerity demands imposed by the IMF. In March 26, 1991, after 4 days of intense anti-government rioting, a group of 17 military officers arrested President Moussa Traoré and suspended the constitution. In the same year, a new constitution was approved, which provided a multiparty democracy and Alpha Oumar Konaré of the *Alliance for Democracy (ADEMA)* became Mali's first democratically elected president. In 1997, Konaré was reelected virtually unopposed and ADEMA won decisively in the legislative elections, which were boycotted by much of the opposition. General elections were organized in June and July 2002. President Konaré did not seek reelection since he was serving his second and last term, as required by the constitution. Retired General Amadou Toumani Touré, former head of state during Mali's transition (1991-1992), became the country's second democratically elected President as an independent candidate in 2002, and was reelected to a second 5-year term in 2007.

Malian Tuaregs – old grievances never fairly addressed

The book of Lieutenant Colonel Kalifa Keita, "Army of the Republic of Mali", gives insights on the previous conflicts that happened in Mali. Lieutenant Colonel Kalifa entered commissioned service in 1975, serving for most of his career in Armor leadership positions. The first tuareg rebellion took place in 1963 as the nomadic minority felt their traditions and way of life were threatened, and they were seeking to obtain their independence. The national government suppressed the nomadic rebellion with great

brutality and harsh coercive measures, which only increased rebel grievances and their hostility towards a government seen as an oppressor and an enemy. An economically and politically vulnerable Mali faced a second rebellion in 1990. As in the first uprising, the rebels were by no means united in one insurgent force, but were divided in four major movements and a number of minor ones. This time, however, they were much better organized and equipped, having learned from their previous experience. Outside forces also had an interest in backing them up. Libya for example, provided help with weapons in an effort to destabilize Mali. Indications of economic support from other countries can be seen in the equipment, as the rebel¹ combatants drove light vehicles and seemed to have an unlimited supply of modern Soviet small arms. They were also much more effective in destroying government facilities and eluding government pursuit, as well as finding apparent safe haven in neighboring countries. Even if their number wasn't that high, in the vast, sparsely populated regions of Mali, guerilla war is highly effective. For ending the conflict, both parties accepted a mediation (done by Algeria), and started working on means to alleviate the grievances of the rebels. The problem was that not all rebel leaders were able to be present at the negotiations, thus leaving some of them unsatisfied with the agreement. Some of the measures were to integrate former rebels in administrative roles, police, army, providing medicine and foodstuffs. Agreements were made for the government to concentrate also on directing funds for the development of the northern part of the country. In 2004, a locust invasion cut cereal harvest by up to 45%, which, coupled with severe draught, led to food shortage in the region. In May 2006, a third rebellion led by Ibrahim Ag Bahanga took place and lasted until 2009. Even if the government stated that the attacks were conducted mainly by army defectors, under the traditional Algerian mediation, a peace agreement was signed in July 2009, restating the demands made in the National Pact. However, due to the lack of trust manifested by all parties, it seemed to be a highly uneasy peace. Until 2011, multiple attacks were conducted against the governmental forces, followed by abductions and other terrorist operations. All these ended with multiple cease-fire agreements that weren't respected either by the rebels or by the Malian army. In 2009, Bahanga was exiled to Libya, where he remained until he returned on the Malian soil, in the summer of 2011. According to Lt. Colonel Rudolph Atallah's statement prepared for the United States Committee on Foreign Affairs, Bahanga's Libyan exile proved an important milestone on the way to the 2012 spring insurgency.

Emergent Issues in the Malian Context

From a *political perspective*, the Malian republic suffered violent regime changes which led to internal instability and failed attempts to implement effective reforms in key sectors: agriculture, health, and education. Major progress has been achieved in

1 <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/people.cfm?authorID=485>

the area of democratization, as the Malian Presidency struggled to unite all of Mali's political forces. Just like other Sahelian countries, Mali is among the **poorest and least developed** in the world, rated 178th of 187 countries on the UNDP human development index of 2011. With an annual gross domestic product of \$300 per capita, about half of Malian population live below the international poverty line of \$1.25 day. Following colonial rule and with limited finances, the government converged on developing the more populated parts of the country and, by 1990, the largely ignored desert areas from the northern part of the country. After the second nomadic rebellion, the government signed an agreement to direct some of its finances for the infrastructure in that region; however, due to the economic situation, the areas which are sparsely populated have had a poor development. **Education** in Mali is in a **precarious state**, as primary schools suffer from shortage of teachers and buildings. The ill-equipped universities and the unimproved curricula left Malian human resources undeveloped. Many Malian children are abandoning the school after 3 or 4 years, ending up in the street, where they end up recruited by different terrorist groups, which use them as child-soldiers. Women are subjected to intense discrimination in acceding to professional or social employment. Confronted with these stringent issues, the government is unwilling to invest in ecological sustainability.

National and International Actors in Malian Conflict

The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) – In a statement for the US Committee on Foreign Affairs, Lt. Colonel Atallah explained the birth of this movement: in October 2011, in the oasis settlement of Zakak, Mali, near the border of Algeria, Tuareg youth, intellectuals, Malian Army defectors, and Libyan-trained Tuareg soldiers, merged two movements together, the Mouvement National de l'Azawad (MNA) and the Mouvement Touareg du Nord Mali (MTNM) to form The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), "Azawad" being the name of the Tuareg homeland. This move was one of the two largest fighting groups within the Malian territory, which strengthened its military strategy, enhanced tactical war-fighting capabilities, and generally augmented the nomads' political strength. The MNLA is the most recent manifestation of periodic rebellions by Mali's ethnic nomadic minority; **ideologically, it is a secular, pro-democracy secessionist movement**. A Stratfor report states that the MNLA Secretary General Bilal Ag Acherif leads the group's political wing, while the former Libyan army Col. Ag Mohamed Najem, who fought in the 2007-2009 Tuareg rebellion, leads the military wing. *Territorially*, the MNLA is based in northeastern Mali around the Adrar de Ifoghas Mountains because of group members' familiarity with bases there and the heavy Ansar Dine presence further west and south around Timbuktu. At international level, neither the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), nor any international body recognizes the group's claims of sovereignty over northern Mali. Bearing all these in mind, a pertinent question is how MNLA and Al-Qaeda in the

Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) ended up working together so efficiently, taking into account that these two organizations had been engaged in the past in numerous violent armed confrontations against each other. Opposed to the strict Sharia law followed by the Islamists, the MNLA were regarding these groups as outsiders able to corrupt their nomadic traditions and way of life. The only reason they ended up working together in the rebellion was because of Iyad Ag Ghaly, the current leader of Ansar Dine, of Tuareg origins. He is the founder of Ansar Dine and is known to have established connections with Al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia. The fact that he is a former Tuareg leader made the MNLA give credit to his words, persuading them to work with Ansar Dine, which had at its disposal a lot of resources and weaponry for the armed confrontations that were to come. If previously the communication between the rebel leaders had been effective and had succeeded in establishing a common goal for all the rebel groups-the independence of northern Mali, as the conflict evolved, the rebel leaders struggled to reshape their conflicting goals, but failed, resulting in an Islamic-nationalist conflict that included all the three main rebel groups. The Malian army has made life harder for many people of Tuareg lineage. Tuareg or the “people of the desert” as they are called, can be identified by their lighter skin color. Mali's president Dioncounda Traoré was recently berated by the French foreign minister, Laurent Fabius for the reports of military violence against light-skinned civilians. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has also accused them of racist attacks against the nomads, Arabs and Fulani. Even after all the recent events, among the nomad population, the dream of an independent state still lives.

Ansar Dine, or “defenders of the faith”, in a rough English translation, is a rebel group that appeared in Mali in March 2012 and is considered by far the most strongest militant force operating in Mali, having a great deal of resources provided by multiple sources. The Islamic group is led by Iyad Ag Ghaly, a former nomad leader who brokered negotiations for the releases of hostages held by Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, AQIM. Ag Ghaly has also family members involved in groups tied to Al-Qaeda, his cousin being presently a commander for AQIM. It appears that Ag Ghaly created the Ansar Dine movement after failing to achieve his ultimate goal in becoming the leader of the MNLA. Ansar Dine is the strongest militant force in Mali and has a great deal of resources that must come from different sources. The Islamists also used propaganda to bolster their ranks by releasing videos and establishing a presence in jihadist chat rooms, recruiting young boys from the regions they occupied and indoctrinating them in training camps. During their occupation over the three major cities from the northern part of the country- Kidal, Timbuktu and Gao, numerous reports of human right abuses were received, particularly against women. During the hostilities, Ansar Dine's has been constantly changing alliances among the other players in northern Mali: the MNLA, AQIM and MUJAO. Ansar Dine's involvement in the Malian conflict, along with their close ties to Al-Qaeda has, made the United Nations and the United States of America add them to their list of terrorist organizations.

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) – is a group which evolved from the Algerian militant group, the Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC) and took their recent name after joining forces with Al-Qaeda, in January 2007. According to ADL (Anti-Defamation League) their ultimate goal is to overthrow the Algerian government, which it seeks to replace with Islamic rule based on a “pure” interpretation of the Quran”. Although Algerian nationals run AQIM, its fighting force is made up of Mauritanian, Moroccan, Libyan, Malian and Nigerian nationals. From 2003 until present, AQIM gradually took advantage of Mali’s weak security infrastructure to establish itself in the northern part of the country. Iyad Ag Ghaly, the leader of Ansar Dine has ties to them, which he forged during his time in Saudi Arabia. It is believed that he is the one who mediated the talks between the nomads, AQIM and other Islamic groups. AQIM is the main source of finance and strategic coordinators for other AQIM Islamic groups, including Ansar Dine and MOJWA, obtaining a large part of its finances by kidnapping foreigners for ransom. According to a declaration of a former US ambassador to Mali, published in a French newspaper, the French government paid in 2010 AQIM 17 million Euros in exchange of releasing some French prisoners, action denied by the French government, which stated that French did not make deals with any terrorists. Whether the French government paid them that ransom or it is just a rumor remains to be seen. Nevertheless, the international community criticized the presumably French action, which contributed further in supporting the terrorist activities, providing them the necessary means for engaging in the current Malian conflict. Recently, we have witnessed the fact that The Arab Spring has triggered a domino, with Al-Qaeda slowly starting to concentrate its efforts in Africa. Recent Al-Qaeda activity is moving to gain power in some of the more weak African states after the Arab Spring was disrupted, in an effort to reorient and reorganize their strategy. A French bombing raid in the Ifoghas mountain region managed to kill one of AQIM’s top leaders, Abdelhamid Abou Zeid, who commanded the Taregh Ibn Ziyad brigade, a unit which operates in Mali, Niger, Mauritania, and southern Algeria. Even if his death is good news, the French population back home has urged for a pause in the bombing to allow negotiations for the return of hostages.

Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MOJWA) – broke with Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb in 2011, in order to concentrate on spreading the Sharia law to the areas of West Africa that were not within the scope of AQIM. A front-page magazine article claims the reason MOJWA separated from AQIM was due to the marginalization of its black African members and the contempt in which AQIM’s Arabs hold blacks in general: supposedly no black African is known to hold a leadership position in the terrorist organization. Nevertheless, the group remains close to Al-Qaeda ideologically. The number of armed fighters of MUJAO remains uncertain but there are rumors that it encompasses thousands. OCHA observed a notable influx of foreign fighters joining MOJWA.

The Boko Haram is an Islamic extremist group based in Nigeria, which started its affiliation with Al-Qaeda in 2012, when their attacks became more violent. Their presence increased in the current Mali conflict as hundreds of members were reported to have been sighted at training camps in Timbuktu, where they learned to fire Kalashnikovs and launch shoulder pad grenades. A witness that was hired to cook for the militants reported to the Daily Trust that new people were coming in every day. Recently, the group abducted a French family in Cameroon – one of the first instances when they crossed the border from Nigeria, abduction thought to be linked to the Malian conflict. Following the intervention of French troops, reports indicate that Boko Haram leaders are fleeing from Mali back to Nigeria.

Malian Governmental Forces – the Malian army numbers approximately 6,000-7,000 troops, consisting of land forces, air forces, a small navy, a paramilitary Gendarmerie, and a Republican Guard that is underpaid, poorly equipped and in need of rationalization. The Malian army suffered heavy losses at the beginning of the rebellion in 2012; the campaign in the north left them fragmented and demoralized. Malians were split into camps and a political disunity was installed at a national level after the coup organized by Captain Amadou Hya Sanogo, which hindered central control and prevented the formation of a cohesive military force. According to The Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS), a large number of military tanks have been destroyed and the air force hasn't been effective in fighting rebels in the north. At the end of September, the Malian Prime Minister Diarra appealed UN General Assembly for aid in the crisis, followed later by President Toure, who also asked ECOWAS for military assistance.

Malian militias – following Islamic occupation several civilian forces have sprung up. Though their influence is limited, there are reports of increased activities and fighting against Islamic rebel groups by these militias. There are more than 15 known armed Malian militia groups but the most important are the Patriotic Resistance Front (PRF) and The Northern Mali Liberation Front (FLNM). With an estimating fighting capacity of hundreds or low thousands, PRF consists of six armed groups banded together, whose goal is to drive the Islamic occupants outside the country. The Northern Mali Liberation Front (FLNM) is made of three other important groups in the region: two Songhai militias, the Ganda Koy and the Ganda Izo, and fighters under the command of a Tuareg army colonel El Hadji Gamou. Created to oppose the nomadic rebels who seized control of north Mali in the March coup, FLNM embers supposedly received training from Malian soldiers, although their training level seemed limited. The fighters primarily relied on guerilla tactics, which proved successful during two attacks on the occupying Islamists. The strength of these groups grew gradually as new volunteers, tired of the Islamic occupation, joined their ranks, planning to remain active as long as the northern Malian territory remained occupied.

International Actors

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) describes itself as a regional group of fifteen countries, founded in 1975. Its primary mission is to promote economic integration in "*all fields of economic activity, particularly industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial questions, social and cultural matters*"². The countries constituting ECOWAS are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Ghana, Guinee, Guinee Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togolese. ECOWAS agreed to send 8,000 troops to the northern region, to offer help to the Malian and French troops. The troops would come primarily from ECOWAS countries. CKN Nigeria news reported that Nigeria already deployed 1,200 troops to Mali for limited combat duties. The proximity of the Malian conflicting zone represented a major concern for the Nigerian government, who feared that the conflict could spill in their own back yard.

The European Union has acknowledged the present crisis in Africa and is keen on supporting the French and Malian troops by deploying 500 military trainers for a length of 15 months, with the sole purpose of training the Malian troops. Predicting that the first trained battalion will be operational by July 2013, the EU will provide also logistical and economic assistance, announcing that it will support ECOWAS initiative in the conflict with a 50 million euro donation. Combined with an estimated 583 million euros granted so far to the Malian government, the EU is without a doubt a key economical supporter in solving the Malian issue efficiently.

France – after initially stating that it would not engage militarily in the Malian conflict, France became a primary actor by authorizing the rapid deployment of French troops at the beginning of January 2013. After the Islamist forces captured the strategic town of Konna, France launched Operation Serval. Using Gazelle helicopters and four Mirage 2000-1 jets, the French managed to destroy more than half of the Islamist armed pick-up trucks and a rebel command center, forcing the rebels to withdraw from Konna and take positions to the north. The first day of battle claimed the lives of 46 Islamist's fighters, numerous Malian soldiers, and one French pilot, whose helicopter was gunned down by ground fire during the operation. Regaining the control of Gao and Kidal, the French used the same air combat strategy, but also deployed around 4,000 fighting ground troops and by January 27, the French began securing Timbuktu as none of the Islamist rebel groups had the strength to launch a solid offensive against their ground operations. By February 8, the French, backed by Chadian troops, regained the control of one of the last airports still not controlled by the governmental forces – Tessalit. As a last option resort, the Tuareg and Islamist forces retreated to the Adrar des Ifhogas, hoping to unleash

2 http://www.comm.ecowas.int/sec/index.php?id=about_a&lang=en

efficient guerrilla warfare against the governmental forces and on February 19, France launched the operation Panther, with the objective of dismantling the last rebel hiding place. Following the deployment of troops, France has become the main responsible player for driving the Islamic extremists to the Ifoghas Mountains. Their intervention prevented Al-Qaeda and their affiliates to take control of Mali. While French and Malian troops succeeded in re-establishing control over most of the country, recent fighting in Timbuktu has reminded the international community that the country is not yet fully secured. Currently there are 4,000 French troops, but in the coming weeks only 1,000 are expected to remain till the end of the year, and together with the African troops, to defend the country against any other threat from the Islamic groups.

The United States of America – Mali has become a prime interest country for the United States after they became aware of the possibility it could become a base for international terrorist attacks. They are currently working with the French government to stabilize the country and contain the threat. For this purpose 100 personnel were sent to Niger in order to establish a drone base that will gather intelligence on the activity of the Islamic fighters. Their superior technology and resources make them an important factor in the conflict.

Algeria – even if not a member of ECOWAS, Algeria is a key player in the region due to its superior economic and military strength. Due to these qualities it is the natural leader in the regions security. Algeria has acknowledged the crisis but it has yet remained reluctant to provide military support in the international intervention. Algeria has its own nomadic population and there are worries that the present conflict might extend. There is also a worry for maintaining the inherited colonial borders. If the MNLA's demands for independence are met, it could be a catalyst for the nomadic tribes in Algeria to take this road as well. With the escalation of the Mali crisis, Algeria might be forced into a military intervention. Due to the fact that the Islamic fighters are fleeing to the Adrar des Ifoghas region, near the Algerian border, to regain their strength, the Algerian government has sent troops to the border.

In attempting to find a proper and efficient resolution to the Malian conflict, the parties mentioned above communicated through media or through a third party intervention. We have the President of Burkina Faso – Blaise Compaore, which acted as an ECOWAS mediator. Backed up also by the ECOWAS negotiators, Compaore succeeded in reaching an agreement with the military junta, which turned over the power to The National Assembly of Mali. On the other side, the rebels are delivering their releases through media channels (local radio stations and TV channels like Fance24, Al Jazzerah).

Even so, why did it happen? Apparently a simple question designed to reveal the de facto reasons lying behind a certain event or fact, when integrated in the subject analysis it simply becomes an open-ended question, with multiple facets and variables

to take into account. And for ensuring a chronological perspective, I proceeded with revealing to you first the **root causes** of the Malian conflict, causes that can be traced until 19th century, when a great resurgence of the Islam outspread along the region. In the empires of al-Hajj Umar (1794-1864) and that of Samori Toure (1870-1898) Muslims states strongly opposed to the French invasion of the region. Then the interwar period witnessed the emergence of various nationalist movements among the trade unions and the students groups. In the Tuareg' stated grievances, we can trace also **numerous structural and proximate causes**:

The Tuareg were utterly **hostile to the modernization** of their land and numerous times their political leaders stated that the nomadic Tuareg were marginalized and impoverished by the Malian government policies as the mining projects had damaged important pastoral areas. Also, they blamed the government for trying to force modernization onto the northern nomadic areas of the country, creating a feeling of lost identity. Al-Qaeda seems to be preying on those grievances and fueling them along with the promise of the coming day when they would have the possibility to fulfill their dreams of a state. The Tuareg are also called The Blue Men of the Desert; they are an Islamic nomadic people, who are divided by tribe and clan. Prior to the colonial era, the warlike nomads were able to exact "taxes" from the farmers who lived along the Niger River. French colonial authorities, in a desire to maintain peace with nomadic groups, did not dispute their claims to land ownership or the right to levy taxes in kind from the sedentary farming peoples, an issue that would ultimately poison relations between the nomadic population and their neighbors.

The region of Azawad became in time extremely important, as from early 1960 many among the nomad population dreamed of their own independent state that would encompass that particular region. It is this dream that was one of the bases for the creation of the MNLA. This state would be comprised of nomad-populated territory in northern Mali. The birth of this wish has its origins in the grievances of the nomad minority that started to feel like they don't have a place in the modern world.

Famine and Drought- The drought is an important issue, and an element that is tied to previous revolts in that area. The northern nomad tribes rely on their livestock for sustenance and with the drought there are fewer grazing pastures. The proud nomads are forced to sell their animals and go to shelters or look for work in towns, fueling their hatred upon the government who was viewed as the typical scape goat, being to blame for all their troubles. Of course the government isn't responsible for the drought because it can't be controlled, but they could have still offered some support for the nomads in those difficult times with foodstuffs.

The **precarious economic situation of Mali** – while the government subsequently announced a number of programs to improve local infrastructure and economic

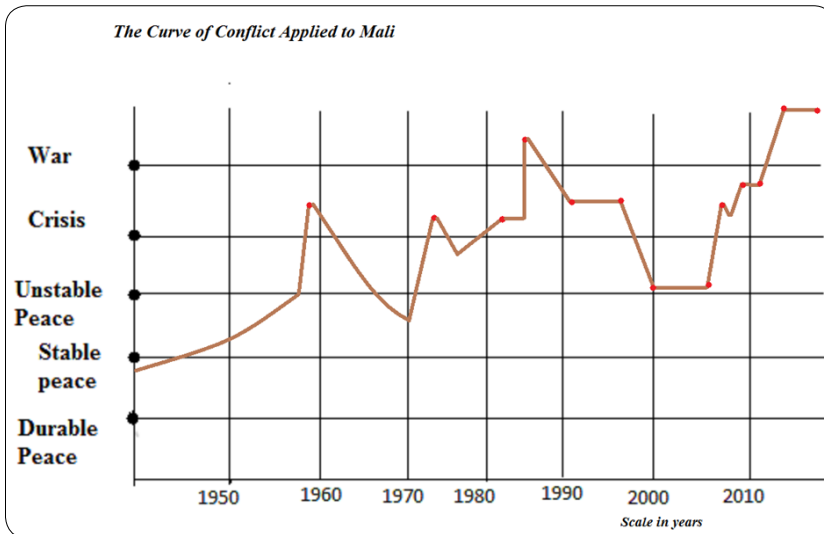
opportunity, it lacked the resources to follow through on most of them. As a result, the nomad population grievances remained largely unaddressed, and a seething resentment continued in many of their communities. BBC states that up until 2002 Mali owed debts amounting to 80 million Euros to France, debts that, according to an official French statement, would be cancelled in proportion of 40%. Going further, a country with an instable economy is a country with conflict brewing, as it is unable to meet the needs of all its citizens and protect itself from outside threats.

Al-Qaeda expansion in Africa – in early 2012 Al-Qaeda upped its recruiting in Iraq, numerous attacks conducted on Syrian soil being connected to Al-Qaeda operations. Analysis Intelligence theorizes that the central power of Al-Qaeda is shifting from its longtime strongholds in Afghanistan and Pakistan to unstable regions in Africa, a fact proven by the intense activity of the Islamic movements, in many other troubled African regions.

Triggering causes – Regarding their nature, the majority of the conflicts usually have a triggering cause and in Mali's case, it's no doubt that the fall of colonel Muammar Gaddafi combined with the military 2012 uprising represented the main key events that ultimately made the Malian conflict burst open. Why? Because many nomads in Mali joined Gaddafi's army and fought for him in his frequent wars on the African continent, including in Chad, Niger, Sudan, Mali, even Lebanon but finally, they fought for him in Libya. The nomad mercenaries were among those shooting down unarmed protesters in Benghazi in the first days of the February 17th uprising; they looted, raped, and murdered in Misratah and they were among his most loyal and steadfast fighters 'till his death. Dailykos article provides information on how the fall of Gaddafi led to the current conflict. Since the September fall of Gaddafi, thousands have been coming home from the fight in Libya, many of whom brought their heavy weapons with them too. Reports from northern Mali in late 2011 said two of the returning rebel contingents were seeking accommodation with the authorities and wanted integration into military and civilian structures, while a third wanted no part of this. With the high number of restless unemployed men having military experience, the government should have foreseen a crisis coming.

Finally as the military coup d'état took place in March 2012, it ended with the military junta seizing the power and suspending the Malian Constitution, creating thus the perfect context for an efficient rebel military action.

The Curve of Conflict Applied to Mali



An Efficient Resolution, or another “Postponed Old Struggle”?

Objectively speaking, there is no doubt that the two-month military intervention launched by Paris on January 11th was a success, since the last resistance rebel elements were neutralized in Adrar de Ifhogas region. After the military ground operations ended, the French President- Francoise Hollande stated that it was a matter of days until the territory would return to Malian sovereignty. France’s leadership also stated that almost 2,000 French soldiers would remain deployed in the former French colony until the end of the year; half of these troops would be probably integrated in a UN peacekeeping operation force, that France was pushing for. At this point a crisis can occur at the political level, as the Malian interim government plans on organizing free elections in July 2013.

Now the main question is for how long this “military resolution” will be able to preserve the peace, as security alone will not definitively resolve the conflict. Shouldn’t Malian officials and the international community focus on economic development rather than on security? Nevertheless, in the last decade, the West and its allies were to find out how difficult it was to wage the famous “war on terror”. Irak and Afghanistan are two of the most eloquent and plausible cases that winning the battle does not mean that you won the war. Unresolved grievances and numerous abuses supported by the civilian population prolonged the war and brought huge casualties among the coalition soldiers fighting for the so called “freedom”.

“Innocent unwilling combatants” – the Malian conflict is not far away from the facts above as it affected mostly the civilians which were forced to seek shelter in the

neighboring countries. According to Amnesty International, the conflict created the worst human rights situation since 1960. Both Tuareg and Islamist groups conducted gang rapes, extrajudicial executions along with the use of child soldiers for their military operations. Additionally, the rebels have destroyed or damaged numerous historical sites in Timbuktu. Human Rights Observers reported numerous abuses committed by the Malian army in the central Malian town of Niono, although these were directed primarily against the rebels. It is estimated that almost one hundred civilians lost their lives since the beginning of the conflict, followed by a few hundred combatants, both rebels and governmental forces.

The ethnic groups and their issues are extremely important within a country, both from geographical and a social perspective. If constantly ignored, they will eventually become grievances which will conduct to a conflict- like the Malian one (the worst case). As a middle solution and the best way, authorities can try to address some of their issues and to avoid the rising of tensions which can easily escalate, bringing the conflict into the sphere of reality. But I must emphasize that solving these grievances will bring other in contention. These scenarios are interdependent from the desire manifested by the actors to pursue a particular goal (their commitment to the cause), which can transform the parties from rational into irrational ones, making a resolution easy or impossible to find.

Annex

1. Other Options That Could Have Obtained a Positive Malian Conflict Resolution

Getting the Tuareg on the government's side against the Islamic fighters

Right from the start, the nomad rebels saw their alliance with the Islamic groups as temporary. There is a broad resentment within Tuareg society for the implementation of strict Sharia law. While of an Islamic faith themselves, the nomads don't like anyone to tell them how to practice their religion. Nevertheless, the grievances that comprise the latest backbone of Tuareg insurgency pushed some into Islamic factions, which share the same grievances and hatred for regional governments. If the government would come with a solution to these problems, the vast majority of them would opt for peace. Despite their contempt for strict Sharia law and a history of animosity towards radical Islam, Tuareg are opportunists and the prospect of money and having some of their grievances met are the links that bound them to AQIM.

Pro's

- A possibility for a long term solution to the conflict if coupled with mediation
- A less violent solution
- A quick solution to the conflict
- Stopping the expansion of Al-Qaeda in West Africa
- Saving human lives
- Uniting the ethnic minority with the government against a common enemy
- The Mali government gains military strength
- Tactic and strategic information gained as the nomad rebels were previous allies with the enemy

Con's

- Not all nomad rebels will be willing to do this
- Risk of spies and agitators
- Does not provide a long term solution to the conflict if not coupled with mediation
- Unwillingness of dialog on both sides

Mediations and negotiations

Previous conflicts in this area have been solved with mediations. The fact that Al-Qaeda and various Islamic factions have gotten involved will certainly complicate things, as these organizations are centered on Islamic radicalism. Traditional mediation methods involved getting them to take various positions in administrative fields, army or police, helping with food and medicine, protecting their culture and trying to integrate them.

Pro's

- Preventing loss of human life and loss of infrastructure
- Working towards a more stable peace
- Stopping the crisis from escalating even further
- Saving innocent lives and preventing anti humanitarian acts
- Will give a chance to NGO's and humanitarian foundations to give help to those in need
- Could lead to a win-win situation

Con's

- An unwillingness from both sides for discussion

2. Malian Conflict Timeline

August 2011: A high influx of armed Tuareg that fought for Gaddafi enter Mali'.

October 16, 2011: In the oasis settlement of Zakak, Mali, the Movement National de l'Azawad (MNA) and the Movement Tuareg du Nord Mali (MTNM) merge together to form The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA). Its purpose is to create an independent state for the Tuareg minority in Mali.

December 20, 2011: Algerian troops cross the border into Mali to help the government fight combat groups affiliated to Al-Qaeda.

January 2012: MNLA launches attacks on Ménaka in far north. Fighting also reported in Ageul-hoc, Tessalit, Léré, Andéramboukane and Nianfunké.

February 2012: MNLA attacks Hombori. Protests start against the president's inability to deal with the violence in the North.

March 13, 2012: Iyad Ag Ghali claims that Ansar Dine is fighting for an imposition of Sharia law and not a separate Azawad.

March, 22 2012: The National Committee for the Establishment of Democracy seizes control of the government.

March, 31 2012: MNLA captures Gao.

April 2012: MNLA seizes control of northern Mali and declares independence. Following this president Toure resigns, and the new interim president Dioncounda Traore threatens to wage war on both Tuareg rebels and Islamic factions.

May 2012: Ansar Dine and the MNLA merge and start imposing strict Sharia Law in Timbuktu

June 7, 2012: Armed groups form in Timbuktu with the purpose of fighting against the Islamic factions.

June 8, 2012: Tension begins to appear between Ansar Dine and the MNLA.

June 27, 2012: Ansar Dine betrays the MNLA and joins forces with AQIM and MUJAO in seizing control of Gao. Following this they start a strict implementation of Sharia law.

July 1, 2012: Mali appeals to UN to take action.

November 11, 2012: ECOWAS agrees to deploy 3,300 troops.

December 20, 2012: UN approves sending an African led force to take back Mali. The Islamic extremists capture the town of Konna and are pushing further south to the capital. Mali asks France for support.

January 11-12, 2013: France deploys airstrikes and the city of Konna is recaptured.

January 14, 2013: French airstrikes continue to central Mali driving the Islamic extremists further back.

January 18, 2013: United States offer their support by sending 100 military trainers.

January 21-28, 2013: French and Mali troops manage to recapture Diabaly, Douentza, Gao and finally Timbuktu. The rebels flee into the Ifoghas mountains.

February 2013: The Al-Qaeda affiliated groups start a guerrilla war against Malian and French troops. The United States deploys drones for intelligence reconnaissance.

March 4 2013: An important AQIM leader Abdelhamid Abou Zeid confirmed dead.

March 23 2013: MUJAO tries to take Gao but are defeated by Malian and French troops.

April 2013: Preparations for the withdrawal of French troops.

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An Analysis of the Conflict in Afghanistan

Alexandru CRAINIC

Abstract. *The conflict in Afghanistan is very complex, with multiple implications, and it can be analyzed, like every type of conflict, by using multiple tools and considering various aspects. This conflict is ongoing since 2001, making it one of the longest so far, and the reasons of its prolongation are numerous; some of them will be presented in the following paragraphs. We will go through the conflict history in the Afghan area as early as the British dominance in the 19th century, to the Russian intervention and through the American intervention in 2001. The important reasons and stages of this conflict will be emphasized in this paper, but the main focus will be on the most recent conflict started after the US intervention targeted to cut down a terrorist base located in Afghanistan. We will try to emphasize the most important causes for which the conflict emerged, the main actors, and the trigger causes that led to an ongoing complicated and unsecure situation in Afghanistan. The latest conflict will be correlated with other similar conflicts that the country passed through in the 20th century.*

Keywords: *Afghanistan, Pashtun, British Empire, Soviet Union, United States, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Turkmen.*

Overview

Afghanistan is situated in the southern part of central Asia, having Tajikistan, Pakistan, Iran, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and China as neighbors. This particular area from the Asian continent has proved to be a problematic one during the years, as many – typically internal – conflicts emerged. The capital city of the country is Kabul, and the official languages are Pashto and Dari (Persian). The country has few mineral resources; agriculture is also difficult and can be done in few places in the lowlands, where underground fresh water makes irrigation possible. Only about 15 percent

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of the land is suitable for farming. The rest of the country is dominated by highlands, with about one-half of the land over 2,000 meters in elevation; small glaciers and year-round snowfields are also common. Afghanistan is a country known for the multitude of ethnic groups that live inside its borders, like Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Aimak, and Turkmen. The majority of the people have a very low quality of life due to the poor development of the country's economy. The country's independence was granted after World War One in 1919, after a long run for influence between Great Britain and Russia. Current Afghan boundaries were determined in 1893 in a treaty with Britain and the main idea was to split the Pashtun ethnic group between Afghanistan and British India, a separation which would create some issues in the future years. This separation is based onto the 1893 Durand Line Agreement concluded after the second Anglo-Afghan war of 1878-1881. This would later emerge as a permanent factor between Afghanistan and Pakistan relations. The independence agreement was signed in 1919 and it is known as the Treaty of Rawalpindi. After this treaty, the country was in a relatively stable period with Great Britain, maintaining its influence until 1947, after Pakistan and India gained independence. It was after this period that the country knew its most tumultuous period, with numerous internal conflicts.

The country has known throughout its history a great number of conflicts, which had different internal or external sources. One of the first was during the 19th century, when Great Britain attacked the country in order to establish their influence in the area. The war was fought between 1838 and 1842, when the British forces invaded and appointed King Shah Shujah to lead the country. Before this, the country had known a period of stability which turned immediately into war. After this invasion, the king was assassinated in 1842, and the conflict got in the phase of unstable peace again when British and Indian troops were massacred during their retreat from Kabul. The tensions got high again between 1878 and 1880, when the second Afghan-British war started and the situation escalated from unstable peace to war again. After this war, a treaty was signed with the British, which gave them the control over the external affairs of Afghanistan, and the situation went back to a stable peace until 1919, a period when the British gained the control of the country's external policies. In 1919, Emir Amanullah Khan declared independence from British influence, and tried to introduce a series of social reforms, but this created civil unrest, and a civil war started. The situation perpetuated until 1933, when Zahir Shah became king and Afghanistan remained a monarchy for the following four decades, while the situation went back to a stable peace. The most peaceful period in the Afghanistan modern history was between the years 1933 and 1973, but in 1973 former Prime minister General Mohammed Daud overthrew the Shah in a relatively peaceful coup and declared Afghanistan a republic and so the situation evolved again into an unstable peace.

After 1973, Daud tried to implement a series of reforms in order to try to modernize the state, and Afghanistan got aid from the USSR in terms of arms procurement and

infrastructure development, and the United States provided development assistance. This new type of politics turned the tribal leaders and the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan against the regime turning the situation again into unstable peace and then to crisis in 1978, when General Daud and his family were assassinated in the Saur Revolution. After the revolution, Nur Mohammad Taraki formed the first Marxist government of Afghanistan with the help of USSR and a collective agreement was signed providing aid and security from the soviets. The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan lead by Taraki imposed a series of radical reforms after they got to power, which collided with the Islamist points of view. The so-called *mujahedeen* declared themselves against the "imposing of radical socialist changes on a traditional society, in part by redistributing land and bringing more women into government". The situation went again to the state of unstable peace with a possible armed conflict between the two sides. Between 1979 and 1989 the situation went from crisis to war when the USSR invaded Afghanistan in order to prevent the mujahedeen from taking over power. The Soviet Union deployed about 120,000 troops in the country but they did not manage to control the situation in the entire country, and most of the areas remained in the control of the mujahedeen fighters. At the same time, the mujahedeen received money and ammunition from the US, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and they were allowed to train in Pakistan in order to prepare their moves. The war continued, and after the USSR had lost about 14,000 troops they decided to pull out from Afghanistan after they signed an Accord in Geneva in 1989. The withdrawal ended in February 1989, leaving the country under the leadership of President Mohammed Najibullah. During the war with the soviets, a huge number of Afghans fled across the border into neighboring countries; the refugee number was as big as 6.2 million in 1990, and the conflict also made 1 million civilian deaths.

After 1989, the situation went back again to an unstable peace, as the mujahedeen went to create a secular state going back to traditional norms and customs. This period was characterized as having tense confrontations between the many ethnic groups in the country. The most important factions in this conflict were led by Mohammad Najibullah, Abdul Rashid Dostum, Ahmed Shah Massoud, Burhanuddin Rabbani, and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. In 1992, Abdul Rashid Dostum alongside an Uzbek militia force managed to take over the city of Kabul, which consolidated the power for his side; but this was not the end, because the Peshawar Accord was to be signed in March 1992, which meant that power was temporarily assigned to a 51 person-body for two months. This accord set the grounds for the future Islamic State of Afghanistan. After this Burhanuddin Rabbani was elected president of the state in 1992, he ruled until 1996 even though conflicts for the city of Kabul continued maintaining the situation at the level of unstable peace or even crisis at times.

This was a period in which a new group of people, the Taliban, emerged as an important minority. The Taliban were an ethnic group composed mainly of Pashtuns belonging to

the Ghilzai tribes of eastern Afghanistan, and they began to rise under the leadership of Mullah Muhammad Omar. During the period of unstable peace, the situation escalated to crisis when the Taliban peacefully captured Kandahar in 1994, followed by Ghazni and Herat in 1995, and finally Kabul in 1996. After the falling of the capital city, the Taliban established a new regime under the name of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Beginning from this period, the situation in the country got worse after the Taliban disbanded various militias and ruled according to the "Pashtun approach to Sharia law," imposing rigid and fundamental beliefs to the country. The crisis was obvious when they began to commit atrocities against women, girls, and minority groups particularly Shi'a Hazaras. These actions contributed negatively to a state of economic deprivation and malnourishment inside the borders. Also, these actions determined other leaders of ethnic groups to join their forces and form the Northern Alliance or The United Front (formed by Dostum, Rabbani, and Massoud) in order to oppose the Taliban regime. They even began to represent Afghanistan at the United Nations, but in the country the conflicts continued with the Northern Alliance succeeding in limiting Taliban progress northward in 1997. Even though in 1998 the city of Mazar-i-Sharif fell to the Taliban, marking their dominance across over 90 percent of the country. This event forced Abdul Rashid Dostum to find refuge in the neighboring Uzbekistan. On September 9th, after an attack, the Northern Alliance leader Massoud was assassinated by Al-Qaeda, thus removing a veteran and leader who represented a great enemy in their quest for power. All these conflicts, but especially the great influence of the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization in the internal affairs of the country, and knowing that the Taliban were protecting them, forced the international community to turn their attention over to Afghanistan. But it was after September 11, 2001 that the situation got serious and determined the United States to act immediately in trying to eradicate the organization and to eliminate the Taliban who helped all these things propagating.

In the quest to make a chronology of this apparently never ending conflict, and to better understand its dimensions, I will use a conceptual model based on Michael Lund research. This kind of approach can help us better illustrate how a conflict evolves over a period of time, for what reasons, and the main actors involved. I will take into consideration both violent and non-violent aspects of the conflict, and more importantly how the use of force in this conflict tended to rise and fall over time. The curve of conflict also helps us organize terms and concepts used in conflict management by professionals, but it can also show how a conflict's different phases become inter-related and to identify various kinds of third-party interventions. The Afghan conflict, like any other conflict, has been a highly dynamic and volatile one over time, with relatively short periods of Durable Peace, characterized by a high level of cooperation. The durable peace was not able to last because of the internal fights of different ethnic groups, and also because the country was not capable to develop a high level of internal security.

Periods of Stable Peace characterized by limited cooperation and a low level of violence were also frequent in the country's history, like was the case with the Unstable Peace situation in which the country now stands. For the last 11 years Afghanistan has found itself in a situation in which tension and suspicion among parties run high, and every now and then some of these situations can turn into an internal crisis. The Afghan crisis shows a high level of tense confrontation between armed forces that are mobilized and ready to fight. These forces usually engage in threats and occasional low-level skirmishes, but do not use a significant amount of force. In a period of crisis, the probability of the outbreak of war is high. An example of crisis is provided by the 1962 Cuban Missile crisis between the USA and the Soviet Union.

And the last term to be explained is War, which is defined as sustained fighting between organized armed forces. Once significant use of violence or armed force occurs, conflicts are very susceptible to entering a spiral of escalating violence, because either side feels justified to increase violence. This is exactly what happened with the Afghan conflict since 2001 American intervention, and even before this action. The country was in a continuous internal battle between the different ethnic groups fighting to gain influence and authority. These ethnic groups are just one type of actors that engaged in the conflict; when it comes to defining the actors in this conflict, we have to take into consideration the impact that this has had in time. Not only Afghan groups are important in this analysis, but also the allied countries that joined the US efforts to stabilize the country. After 2001, the number of states participating with military forces in Afghanistan grew up to more than 10 (with more than 50 contributing in other areas), all of them allied to the United States and the British in an effort to put the conflict to an end as soon as possible. Among the most important actors are the NATO coalition troops, led by the United States, which participates in the conflict with more than 60,000 troops. Other important actors are the contributing states allied to the US, states like Great Britain, Germany, Spain, France (who pulled out the troops), Romania, Georgia, Turkey, Canada, and Italy. On the other side, the Afghanistan local forces that have participated in the conflict are the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, as the most important ones, and some small networks or factions like HI-Gulbuddin, HI-Khalis, the Haqqani network, and Lashkar-e-Toiba. When it comes to important leaders, we can name David Petraeus, Stanley McChrystal, David D. McKiernan, Karl W. Eikenberry, Nick Parker, David Richards, Mauro del Vecchio, Goetz Gliemeroth, as commanders for the allied forces, many of them being American or British. On the other side, as Afghan leaders, we have Osama bin Laden, Mohammed Omar, Jalaluddin Haqqani and Ayman al-Zawahiri – many of whom have been killed during the war by the coalition forces.

The NATO-led troops are by far the more evolved and equipped; they are provided with modern equipment of war and modern tactics. Also, the allied force is better trained than the local Afghan forces but the locals have had the advantage of better knowing

the surroundings and the guerrilla tactics. The participating states' governments can also be considered as active actors in the conflict, with many of them providing not only armed forces but also economic aid. When it comes to conflict goals, positions or relationships, there are some differences on each side. For example, the main goal for the allied states in Afghanistan, and for the US, mainly, is the eradication of possible threats represented by terrorist organizations, and the elimination of the Taliban from the country's leadership. When it comes to important interests, they are represented by the idea of implementing a new constitution in trying to put Afghanistan on a more stable democratic path, with respect of human rights and political pluralism.

The Taliban group, on the other hand, have been fighting in order to keep its influence and control over the country, and mainly in order to keep the state in its Islamic form implemented years earlier. Even though the state that they were controlling was insecure and had a very low level of development, they found some people to support them. The Taliban were driven mainly by religious views, when it came to war, and by questions of keeping their identity intact. But as time passed, the allies managed to impose some control over the state when they managed to agree on the naming of a new president Hamid Karzai in 2001 and on a new constitution in 2004. Under his leadership and with the protection of NATO, Afghanistan has made great progress towards modernization, state security, and democratization. There are also organizations and actors that are defined as spoilers in this conflict, represented mainly by the ones that use opium in order to fund their war. Afghanistan is the world's largest opium producer, the raw material for heroin, with its farmers harvesting about 80 percent of the world supply. Large quantities of Afghan heroin are exported to Russia, Iran, and Europe. Many of these crops are owned by Taliban leaders and the profits are used to fund their military actions with no effective efforts made by the Afghan government in trying to eradicate it and to offer better alternatives for the people. In the past years since Hamid Karzai was named the reelected president of the state, the international community has been able to keep a well-connected dialogue regarding the future of the country. This has been done through conferences held by the UN or NATO, or by meetings between Karzai and important leaders, like the US president Barack Obama. All these efforts have helped in providing a path for the new Afghan state and have helped in the way of building new relations with important states than can help Afghanistan in economic terms for the future. These meetings have also helped in terms of conflict mediation and have provided some alternatives in order to end it.

Trigger causes

The most important causes for the conflict in Afghanistan are related to the Taliban and their way of ruling the country. During the mid-90s and the early 2000's, the Taliban allowed Al-Qaeda, a well-known terrorist organization, to build bases in Afghanistan and to train there. These actions have attracted the attention of the international community

and the country was under the scrutiny of important states mainly because of its close relations with terrorists. Another aspect was the great international pressure on the Afghan leaders to hand over Osama Bin Laden, the leader of Al-Qaeda; when the Taliban didn't do this, the United States decided they would use their armed forces. But the **trigger cause** of the conflict was the terrorist attack over the twin towers in New York in September 2001, an attack that was coordinated and implemented by Al-Qaeda and where more than 3000 people were killed. This was the last drop and in the same year, in October 2001, the USA began bombing Afghanistan, targeting bin Laden's Al-Qaeda fighters and also the Taliban. Other reasons for the armed attack may have been the Taliban leader's lack of collaboration with the international organizations, poor control and lack of security that has grown in the country and the threats that it posed to the democratic world.

Also, when it comes to conflict prolongation after 2001, we can mention the hard terrain of the country; it is mostly dominated by high altitudes and mountains with a great number of caves and areas which the Taliban used as hiding spots. Also, some of the population is pro-Taliban, so after the 2001 invasion, they joined the Taliban militia and helped the organization of improvised attacks over the allied soldiers. Even today, after more than ten years of conflict the situation in some areas of the country is still not settled. Moreover, the Taliban discourse over this conflict became radical, in an attempt to attract more followers. They tried to turn the conflict into some kind of sacred war in which the US would want to eliminate the Islamic culture from Afghanistan, but this approach did not meet with great success.

Actors

The main trigger of the conflict, as mentioned above, was the attack coordinated by Al-Qaeda on the twin towers in New York and on the Pentagon in 2001. This had determined the Bush administration to declare war on terrorism, and the first target was Afghanistan. The US had requested Afghanistan to hand over Osama bin Laden and all the other terrorist organization leaders, but this did not happen. We can establish as **root causes** the insecure situation of the country, and, more importantly the threats posed by the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda that had a privileged status in the country, being protected by the Taliban in power but also the magnitude of the 9/11 attacks. This is when the US began Operation Enduring Freedom, an international armed response, on October 7, 2001. **The main actors in this conflict** were the Taliban militia, who held control over the country at that time, and the US-led forces of NATO and allied countries. The main roots of the conflict were represented by a highly unstable situation that was in the country over the years and by the security problem posed by the many terrorist organizations based in Afghanistan. In the first phase of the conflict, Special Operation Forces were set to provide support to the Northern Alliance by targeting positions

through air strikes and missile launches from US and British ships and submarines. A new war was in course in a country that since the 19th century had known few periods of peace. The forces led by Abdul Rashid Dostum and backed by the US and Great Britain managed to capture the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif on November 9th, 2001, from the hands of the Taliban, and soon the regime collapsed, culminating with the fall of Kabul in November and Kandahar in December 2001. Even though the Taliban regime was eliminated, the Al-Qaeda organization managed to maintain its positions in Afghanistan, and its leaders were safe. After these events some peacekeeping actions were started by the international community with the congress of Bonn, sponsored by the United Nations. In Bonn, various Afghan factions were brought together in an attempt to carve the path for political reconstruction, a new constitution, and presidential and National Assembly elections. The UN Security Council endorsed the resulting Bonn Agreements on December 6th, 2001, in Resolution no. 1383 (2001). The agreements established an Afghan Interim Authority with Hamid Karzai appointed Chairman on December 22nd, 2001, who is still in power today. As agreed, UN-mandated ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) troops began deploying in Afghanistan in January 2002, with NATO assuming control of ISAF forces on August 11th, 2003, and after October, the mission was expanded through the whole country in an attempt to eliminate terrorist threats and to provide Afghanistan a secure and democratic future. The war continued with many other states joining the NATO force, but it was to be a long and harsh guerilla war with the Taliban engaging in low level skirmishes making use of the rough mountain terrain in order to take shelter from the allied attacks. They also improvised attacks over allied convoys or bases and used suicidal attacks on a large scale, thus inflicting important casualties on NATO soldiers.

In 2004, Hamid Karzai was reelected as president of Afghanistan, and in the same year a new democratic constitution was agreed upon. In 2006, NATO forces took control of security in the whole country, in an attempt to eliminate further threats. In 2008, the NATO troops were provided with 17,000 additional troops from the international allies, with the numbers continuing to rise over the years. The data provided in December 2012 showed that there were **about 120,000 troops from 50 contributing nations** in the International Security and Assistance Force, of which about 68,000 were US troops. After 2001, the situation in Afghanistan got from war to crisis and then again to what seemed an unstable peace, with each year having its important facts and with a hard guerilla war in place. In March 2009, the US President Barack Obama unveiled new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, with the decision to bring in an extra 4,000 US personnel that would train and bolster the Afghan army and police, providing support for civilians, also. In December the same year, another 30,000 US troops were sent to Afghanistan with General David Petraeus taking over the command. Also in 2010, at a NATO summit in Lisbon, an agreement was reached to hand over the control of the country to the Afghan forces by the end of 2014, which meant that the participating

countries would gradually retreat their forces based on a well set timeline. In 2011, the crisis escalated, when about 500 Taliban prisoners escaped from a prison, and in the same year the president's half-brother and Kandahar governor Ahmad Wali Karzai was killed in the Taliban campaign against prominent figures of the state. After more than 10 years of war and crisis, the country seems a more secure place and most importantly on its way to democracy and internal security with most of Taliban leaders and their strongholds eliminated, but some tension still persists. One of the most important successes of the US was the elimination of Osama bin Laden who was killed in a well-coordinated attack in Abbottabad Pakistan after years of data gathering, but by the time this happened, the organization was already weakened with many of its leaders having been eliminated. According to the US Department of State On May 2nd, 2012, the United States and Afghanistan signed the *Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United States of America*, a 10-year strategic partnership agreement (SPA) that demonstrates the United States' enduring commitment to strengthen Afghanistan's sovereignty, stability, and prosperity, and continue cooperation to defeat Al-Qaeda and its affiliates. This agreement also signals the U.S. intent to designate Afghanistan as a major non-NATO ally in an important peacekeeping attempt. As the conflict slowly began to decrease in 2012, the Taliban agreed to open an overseas office as a move towards peace talks with the US and the Afghan government even though low level encounters still take place in the country. Also in 2012, after Francois Hollande was elected as the new president of France, he decided that the country would bring its soldiers back home, signaling the beginning of the retreat for other forces as well, as the conflict seemed to settle down in some areas. At the same time, the newly formed Afghan military force is being trained by NATO soldiers in order to prepare them for the handover set for 2014. Also, the allied forces are helping the police forces in their training, in an attempt to leave the country on secure hands. But at the same time, Taliban attacks still occur in some areas, with casualties on the allied side and even on civilians and Afghan officials, which places the conflict in a stage of unstable peace in the near future.

When it comes to applying Lund's curve of conflict to the Afghan conflict, we have to take into consideration some aspects like the influence of terrorist organizations over the policy of the country that managed to bring it in a long and difficult war with the USA and then with its allies. Before 2001, the situation of the country could be defined as an unstable peace with few internal conflicts emerging because of the ethnic differences, but after the World Trade Center attacks, the situation escalated quickly. However, at the same time the United States had information regarding the presence of some important terrorist organizations like Al-Qaeda there, including the presence of its leader Osama bin Laden. This status quo already placed the situation into a critical crisis because the US leaders were determined to eliminate him and his organization, and to put an end to further attacks like the one in 2001. In this way, President Bush demanded publicly

that the Afghan authorities deliver Osama bin Laden and his organization to justice. He stated that if this action would not be taken, the United States would intervene directly. Then, after this diplomacy crisis between the two nations, the conflict began on October 7th, 2001 when the US and British troops began night bombings targeting terrorist bases in Afghanistan. The bombings continued until December, when Kandahar, the last Taliban stronghold was abandoned. The US-led troops succeeded in eliminating the Taliban influence from the major cities, who in turn managed to take refuge in the high areas of the country, where they managed to take key positions and to attack the US and UK forces with improvised devices and through ambushes or suicide attacks.

Final stage of conflict

After the conflict cooled down, the US government backed Hamid Karzai as the new leader of Afghanistan. Karzai was a tribal leader of an aristocratic lineage as he was named leader of an interim government of the country on December 22nd, 2001. Starting with this decision, the peacekeeping process slowly got under way. Later, in May 2003 Donald Rumsfeld, the US Secretary of Defense, announced the end of all the major combat operations. After this announcement, other nations came into the aid of the US efforts of restoring the country stability under a NATO command in August 2003. In the following years, more important steps were taken in the way of peace, like in 2004 when a new constitution was drafted, and then in 2005 when the first parliamentary elections in more than 30 years were held. In 2006, NATO took over the peacekeeping operations throughout the country from the United States troops. Following this decision, some important operations were launched in the following years, in order to gain control over some areas controlled by the Taliban. US government decided to send over 4,000 troops in Afghanistan, under President Bush, and then his successor Barack Obama sent more troops to help the operations. These would be the last important decisions, as a major troop pullout is expected by the end of 2014. An important step towards post conflict resolution was made in 2011, when the Afghan government signed a 10-year partnership with the US government for aid in order to stabilize the country. Furthermore, after the scheduled retreat there will still be US troops in Afghanistan to help train and prepare the new Afghan army force and the Afghan police as part of the post conflict process.

In the following paragraph, I will try to make a short analysis of the Afghan conflict dynamics after the 2001 invasion. Immediately after the intervention, the allied troops managed to gain control over the country relatively quickly, succeeding to overthrow the Taliban leaders in power at that time. After they gained control of the capital city of Kabul in 2001, things seemed to go as planned. In this first fights, the US were helped by the Northern Alliance Group. After 2001, the war with the Taliban continued in many of the country areas, but important progress was made with the

help of the international community and by the relatively calm situation on the Afghan political scene dominated by Hamid Karzai. For example, in 2004 he was reelected as president and the following year the Afghans voted for a new government in the first free elections in over 30 years. In 2006, NATO assumed the security for the whole Afghanistan, managing to secure some important areas in the country, and from 2008 to 2009 the number of troops sent by the US and the allied countries continue to grow. Then US President Obama decides to boost US troop numbers in Afghanistan by 30,000, bringing total to 100,000, mentioning that the United States would begin withdrawing its forces by 2011. At the following elections for a new parliament in 2010, Taliban violence and widespread fraud made a long delay in announcing results, but in the end the situations came under control. Another important decision was made in November 2010 at the NATO Summit in Lisbon, when the participants agreed over a timetable to withdraw the troops by the end of 2014. This was a major and important step to letting the Afghan authorities handle their situation at home. Then, slowly, the conflict began to de-escalate, as Afghan national police and new troops started to be trained by NATO soldiers in order to be prepared after 2014. Still in some areas of the country Taliban deployed some attacks over the allied soldiers; but they were few and did not have the force that they had in the past, as their resources were diminishing. After more than ten years of conflict, the situation in Afghanistan now seems more under control than it was at the start of the war, but there are still problems that need to be addressed by the future leaders. The United States have agreed to support Afghanistan even after their planned retreat and to offer solutions for internal problems. For the moment, the country has wide support when it comes to the international community, with many important countries interested in the development of a new democratic and secure Afghanistan and in the continuation of the progresses made in the past under these circumstances. On the other hand, there are some reports, like the one made by the International Crisis Group (ICG) that say the Afghan police and army are unprepared for security responsibility. These reports are based on an analysis of the capabilities and the equipment that the internal Afghan security forces have, but also on some information provided by Afghan politicians. In this way, the international support for the Afghan community is very important and the efforts made in these 10 years should continue at economic level, providing aid and support for the country's democratic leaders in an attempt to build a secure nation. This is obviously the best case scenario. On the other hand, **the worst case scenario** sounds more like a turn back in time with the possible system collapse after 2014 under a new internal battle for power and under a weak leadership. The Taliban could rise again to power, but this is not that probable having in mind that their resources are not that high and their position is very weak, as is the situation of the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda.

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Etwi, Ntul, Nkwifoyn and Foyn: Sites, Objects and Human Beings in Conflict Resolution in Precolonial Kom (Cameroon)

Walter Gam NKWI, PhD

Abstract. *Literature on conflict resolution the world over is replete. But literature on sites and instruments dealing with conflict resolution in Africa is largely inadequate and completely scarce in Cameroon historiography. The present paper attempts to fill this gap by focusing on the importance and role of sites and human beings in resolving conflicts in pre-colonial Kom of the Northwest Cameroon, popularly known in colonial historiography as Bamenda Grassfields. The article confronts these sites and instruments, using mostly archival data and interviews with those who were involved in the activities, to prove that pre-colonial Africa had a well defined mechanism for resolving conflict long before European colonialism set foot on the continent. The article takes Kom as a case study.*

Keywords: *Africa, Cameroon, Kom, Etwi, Ntul, Nkwifoyn, Foyn, Bamenda, Bamenda Grassfields.*

Introduction

Etwi, Ntul, Nkwifoyn and Foyn are all found in local diction, *itangikom*. In the pre-colonial Kom these sites, objects, and humans were used in the arbitration, mediation, conciliation and reconciliation of conflicts at a micro and macro level. These sites and objects, as well as humans, constituted punctilious sites as well. Through them, the societal peace and tranquility was maintained. Therefore, conflict resolution received an important place in society also as a result of the ingenuity of the indigenous people. This article is about appreciating the role and importance of these sites, objects, and humans in conflict resolution in pre-colonial Africa – paying close attention to

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Kom of the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon. Of crucial importance and more relevance to the article is the fact that these sites, objects, and humans implicitly played a quasi-religious role in conflict resolution.

The history of pre-colonial Africa has come of age and reflects a plethora of scholars and literature as well. Yet it could be observed that most of this pre-colonial literature was written through euro-centric binoculars. The dearly held belief of the Victorian age was that since nothing existed in Africa in a written form, there was therefore no history. In that philosophy, the conquerors largely ignored the indigenous mechanisms that were used to resolve conflict, although at the same time many of the colonial administrators recorded the pre-colonial systems in assessment and intelligence reports. This article upholds the approach that "the study of a people's history usually begins with the writings of its historians" (Collins, 1996:xi). The challenge therefore rests on the shoulders of local historians fundamentally, because the Eurocentric writers could never have grasped the internal dynamics better than the local historians. Following that reasoning and writing in 1990, the celebrated African oral historian, Jan Vansina stated, *inter alia*:

Imagine that Caesar arrived in Gaul and landed in Britain in 1880, a mere century ago and that your known history began then. You were not a Roman, your language was Latin, and most of your cherished customs had no historical justification. Your cultural identity was amputated from its past. Would you not feel somewhat incomplete, somewhat mutilated? Would you not wonder, what your cultural heritage was before Caesar?....It is no consolation to be told by others that because there are no written sources, no past can be recovered, as if living traces of that past were not part and parcel of daily life (Vansina, 1990:xi).

This article builds on indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms that were in place long before the Europeans set foot on the continent. This is much more justified because strikingly enough the role of sites and objects which were used in the pre-colonial period to resolve conflicts is largely missing from the literature.

Arguably, conflict is a feature of all human societies, poor or rich; developed or underdeveloped. Consequently, no human group or community exists without the logical dialectical opposition of friend-enemy either among its members or between it and others. Human groups exist with definite objectives which may be realized with or without the assistance of others. Whoever puts into jeopardy the concrete realization of the common objectives or the achievement of the *bonum commune* creates a situation of conflict and becomes the enemy or a less friendly partner (Nkwi, 1987: 64). The African continent has witnessed conflicts of various kinds. These conflicts are as varied as its causes and the ways these conflicts are managed are also as diverse as the mechanisms which have been put in place to resolve them. One of the ways in which conflict management is handled in the Bamenda Grassfields, which I intend to

tackle throughout this paper, is represented by the indigenous institutions and how they have withstood the changing world, although with some modifications. The traditional methods of conflict management have already taken roots in some parts of Africa and researchers have not failed in their duties to take note. Mwanjiru (2001) maintains that:

“One of the distinguishing features of Africa's political landscape is its many dysfunctional and protracted social and political conflicts. This problem is made worse by lack of effective mechanisms to manage these conflicts. Where they exist, they are weak and, thus, social and political relationships on the continent have been disrupted. This has had negative consequences, including the interruption of the development and the diversion of scarce resources for the management of these conflicts.”

Furthermore, the importance of traditional institutions in conflict resolution was echoed in 1999 when an international conference was held in Ethiopia. We cannot even attempt to view all the papers which were presented, but it is imperative to take one or two papers which were presented in that conference and which have had a direct relevance to this paper. Ofuho (1999), in his paper to the All-Africa Conference on African Principles of Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation, which was held from the 8-12th of November 1999 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, brings to light the experiences of grass root peace-making efforts among the communities of the Kidepo Valley of Eastern Equatoria. Kidepo is a big forest that starts from Karenga Hills in the north-east of the border with Uganda and extends deep into South Sudan. The people living along both sides of the valley regard Kidepo as a major asset in terms of both water and grazing resources, particularly during the dry season. It is worth pointing out that communities of the region under study have lived in hostility and co-existence for years and their conflicts have just recently picked up intolerable proportions due to the proliferation of modern weapons. The common source of conflict in the Kidepo Valley is cattle rustling. Cattle herds are the main source of income. Cattle can be sold in exchange for other commodities. A cow is like a modern account in the bank. A cow is payable as dowry in marriage negotiations or used in exchange for grain during hunger situations.

Cattle are used as a source of milk and beef, and cow dung mixed with mud is used for mud-slinging the walls of the huts for shelter. Cattle are a highly regarded asset and each community believes that all the cattle of the world belong to them by divine right. They also claim that each of them is bestowed with the divine right to retrieve by stealth or armed force all cattle that neighbors possess or which each ethnic group might claim to be their own. In the Kidepo Valley, cattle rustling are mainly carried out by a group of men widely known as *mojirimoit*. It is only after a group of *mojirimoit* from neighboring communities raided another community's cattle that responses to such incidences have led to conflict. Initially, all people who own cattle in the region used ordinary spears and arrows for protection of their cattle against rustlers. With the proliferation of light arms, such methods of defense have now been overtaken, and almost all cattle owners

have now acquired deadly automatic rifles. The Karamoja and Dodos of Uganda have been prominent notorious cattle rustlers even across borders into Kenya and South Sudan. These communities have often raided each other's cattle but often resolved their disputes at the community level without much government or NGO involvement. Thus traditional approaches to reconciliation and conflict resolution existed among these communities from times immemorial. Since the beginning of life in Kidepo Valley, there have been as many attempts and practices of peace-making as there have been wars over resources in the region. Each member group of the communities often began their attempts of peace-making by first identifying the root causes of the problem. Most of the problems occurred due to revenge for death previously committed over cattle rustling or during fighting over grazing and water resource areas in the Kidepo Valley. Once the problems are identified, communities convene meetings that may last two to three days in isolation in some forest where they deliberated over them and resolved them. But for such meetings to bear fruit, the role of what may be called opinion leaders and council of elders is crucial. These elders have gained their authoritative influence through wisdom and experience. What must also be keenly noted by conventional mechanisms is the salience of traditional practices such as the use of rituals, symbols and interpretation of myths to bring conflicts to an end. These include the identification of a particular type of cattle and/or goat that must be sacrificed to the evils of conflict from society. Another effective way of grass-root peacemaking in this valley is the use of curses by elders to deter the young *mojirimots* from continuous raids. The curse of elders is believed to lead to mysterious death. The words of elders are bitter and those who have caused troubles often vanish from society. Ofuho in his paper exposes factual stories about conflict, highlights the use of symbols and interpretation of myths to resolve them. All these represent practices of peacemaking, now fashionably termed "grass-root peacemaking" that have for years been used to contain cattle rustling in this region.

Lanek (1999) presented a paper he called: "Mato Oput", the drinking of Bitter Herb" in the same conference as Ofuho. His paper tackled integrating indigenous approaches with national and international mechanisms for conflict resolution and reconciliation. He also contrasted the indigenous approaches, especially the Acholi approach, to the western legal ones. Western legal approach emphasizes establishing guilt and executing retribution and punishment without reference to the victim or the wider families or future reincorporation of the offender into the community. Physical and material penalties and use of force, including costly prisons, provide the sanctions against offending. Western legal approaches are adversarial and evidence must be direct and specific. The process, according to Lanek, effectively encourages the accused to deny responsibility while the Acholi method of peace, conflict resolution and reconciliation are co-operative and can be indirect and circumstantial which does effectively encourage the accused to admit responsibility. He tells that the Acholi, a Luo speaking group occupying northern Uganda, for generations has used Mato Oput as a means of reconciliation within the

context of their tradition. The Acholi believe in leadership through consensus, allowing everyone in their localized clans to have a voice while the traditional head of each clan rules by consent. A major function of the traditional chiefs is to act as arbitrators and reconcilers when disputes occur in order to restore peace and maintain harmonious relations between families and clans. The reconciliation process he describes is called the "Mato Oput" process (Mato Oput - an Acholi vernacular meaning drinking the herb of the Oput tree)

Isike and Uzodike (2011), in their paper "Towards an indigenous model of Conflict resolution: Re-inventing women's roles as traditional peace-builders in neo-colonial Africa" shows how women played a significant role in pre-colonial Africa to resolve conflicts. Boege (2006) critically assessed both potentials and limits of traditional approaches to conflict transformation in the context of contemporary violent conflicts in the Africa. He has also analyzed the strengths and weakness of traditional approaches, which are formulated within the conventional framework of conflict transformation. Afisi (2009) attributes the problems of violent conflicts in Africa today to situations deeply rooted in exploitation and colonial domination of Africa. Cocodia (2008: 9-27), using the case of five African countries (Uganda, South Africa, Cote d'Ivoire, Bostwana and Tanzania) shows how conflicts in Africa could be re-dressed through a radical re-thinking of ethnicity and change of mindsets. Although the above works are not comprehensive enough, they are indicators showing that there is ongoing work on conflict resolution in Africa, their weak points notwithstanding.

Readings in the ramifications of colonialism on Africa suggests that its impact was complete. It also suggests that the lifestyle of Africans was radically altered to suit the colonial agenda. While that was partially true in certain situations, it did not completely hold for all of Africa. The traditional institutions of Cameroon appeared to have 'weathered the storm'. In other words, despite the onslaught of colonialism with its entire itinerary on the continent, these institutions have tenaciously remained the custodians in the traditional conflict management and maintenance of law and order.

In what follows, the article will pursue with detailing the Kom situation, which is the area of study. This will clarify to the reader its location, its social and political history, and how this has played a role in conflict resolution. The second part of the article takes a look at the sites (*Etwi, Ntul*), while the third part examines the human aspect of conflict resolution (*Nkwifoyn and Foyyn*). The fourth part is the conclusion.

Case study: The Kom Foyndom

The Foyndom of Kom is located in the Bamenda Grassfields in the present-day Northwest Region of Cameroon. It is the second largest Foyndom, after Nso, in the Grassfields (Chilver and Kaberry, 1967: 33).

Map .1: The position of Kom in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon



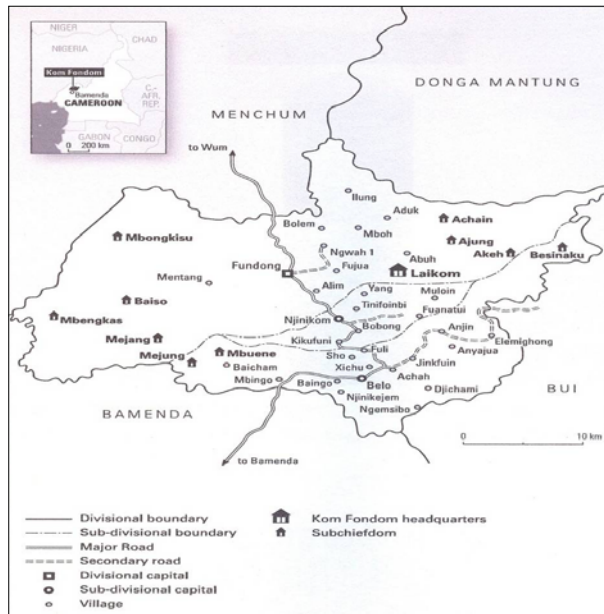
SOURCE: Aaron S. Neba, 1987, *Modern Geography of the Republic of Cameroon*, 2nd ed. (Bamenda: Neba Publishers), 15.

Kom shares its eastern boundary with the kingdoms of Oku and Nso, and the southern frontier with Kedjom Keku or Big Babanki and Ndop plain. Bafut is on the western border, while to the north are Bum and Mmen.

Politics in the Bamenda Grassfields is dominated and organised around the Foyndoms ruled by Foyns. These Foyndoms, in general, grew out of conquest and the politics of inclusion and exclusion through warfare, which led to the subjection of weaker neighbors. They were dominated by political and social hierarchies based on kinship/kingship and lineages, on social and political status. Most studies have focused on the Foyndoms and on the establishment of political hegemony through social organisations (Chilver and Kaberry, 1967; Rowlands, 1979; Dillon, 1990).

Kom Foyndom is believed to have been founded about the mid-19th century. It includes sub-chiefdoms which were incorporated into Kom proper as 'vassal states' by Foyn Yuh (c.1865-1912), the seventh ruler of Kom. These tributary chiefdoms included Achain, Ake, Ajung, Mbesinaku, Mbueni, Baiso, Baicham, Mejang, Mbengkas, and Mejung (Chilver, 1981: 457; Nkwi and Warnier, 1982: 65-68).

Map 2: Kom Foyndom, with its villages and sub-chiefdoms



SOURCE: Chilver and Kaberry, 1967, 'The Kingdom of Kom in West Cameroon' p. 126.

This study is concerned with Kom proper or central Kom, although reference will be occasionally made to the tributary chiefdoms that constitute the greater Foyndom. According to their oral traditions, the ancestors of the Kom migrated from Ndobu in North Cameroon with other Tikar groups, to Babessi where they settled temporarily. A popular legend recounts their movement from Babessi to their present settlement. It states that while Kom people were at Babessi, their presence was seen as threatening. The King of Babessi therefore devised a trick to eliminate them.

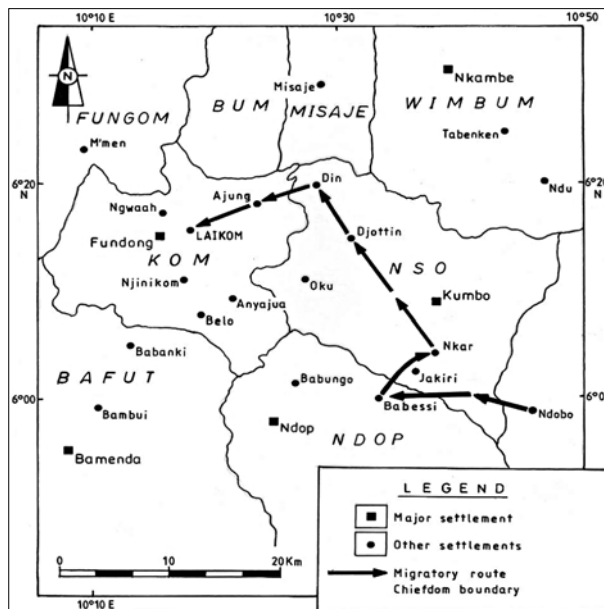
One day the king of Babessi told the Foynd of Kom that some of their people were becoming obstinate and might cause a war between the two groups. He therefore proposed that they should each build a house in which the trouble makers would be burnt. The Foynd of Kom, Muni, agreed to the plan and the houses were constructed accordingly. But while the king of Babessi built his house with two doors, the naive Muni built his own house according to what was agreed, with only one door. After locking the front doors, the houses were set ablaze. The Babessi people escaped through the second door while Kom people were burnt to death. This trick reduced the size of the Kom population in Babessi and made the Foynd of Kom very angry.

Oral tradition further states that in his anger and frustration, Muni promised his remaining wives and sisters that he would avenge the death of his people. He told them that he would hang himself on a tree in a nearby forest and on that spot a lake would

emerge and all the maggots from his decomposing body would turn into fish there. The lake was discovered by a Babessi hunter and immediately reported to the palace. A royal fishing expedition was organised. At the peak of the fishing the lake 'somersaulted' or turned upside down and all the Babessi people present drowned. Following Muni's instructions, a python's track, believed to be the incarnated Foyn, led Kom people from Babessi to Nkar and Idien in the present day Bui Division of Northwest Province.

At Idien they settled near a stream beside a raffia bush. There, the Queen Mother, Tih, bore a son who was to be the next king. That son was called Jingjua, meaning 'suffering'. She also gave birth to Nange Tih, future mother of the *Ikui* clan, Nakhinti Tih, future mother of *Itinalah* and Ndzitewa Tih, future mother of the *Achaff* clan¹. Once the python trail reappeared, Kom people left Idien for Ajung where the python's trail disappeared again. At Ajung, the Foyn of Ajung married Nangeh Tih and bore Jinabo, Nangebo, Nyanga and Bi. After a while the python's track reappeared and Kom people left again for Laikom.² From Idien, the trekkers moved through the Ijim forest to Laikom where the python disappeared. Map 2:3 shows the migratory routes.

Map 3: Migratory routes of Kom people to their present site.



SOURCE: Compiled by the author from oral sources.

- 1 The *Ikwi*, *Itinalah* and *Achaff* are seen as the founding clans of Kom because the three people who arrived in Laikom occupied three geographical cardinal points.
- 2 Interview with his Royal Highness, Foyn Vincent Yuh of Kom Foyndom, Laikom, Kom 14 June 2008.

As far as the literature of this area is concerned, Kom has over the years been subjected to studies of various and multifarious themes, which include sociology, anthropology, history, linguistics, to name but a few (see Nkwi, 1976, 1987 with Warnier, 1982; Dillon, 1973, 1976, 1977, 1979, 1980a, 1980b, 1981, 1985 and 1990; Chilver, 1961, 1963, 1965a, 1965b, 1981, and Kaberry, 1962 and 1968, Engard, 1986, Geary, 1979, Kaberry, 1952 and 1962; and Chilver, 1961; Kopytoff, 1981; O'Neil, 1987; Rowlands, 1979; Warnier, 1975, 1979, 1983, 1983, 1985 and Fowler, 1979). It will be surprising to note that despite this voluminous literature, scholars have not paid enough attention to traditional institutions and the management of conflict in a historical perspective. This paper therefore hopes to contribute to the plethora of literature which already exists in this sub region.

Methodology employed

This paper employs two methods- the use of archives and oral traditions. The National archives of Cameroon situated in Buea, and Bamenda were gleaned. In these archives, files on assessment and intelligence reports were mostly used. The history of Kom was first written in ethnographic mimeographs by the first colonial anthropologists. They were employed to do so by the colonial regimes so that the people could be easily understood, pacified, and governed. Some of these reports were grossly inadequate, some were misleading and yet others were described and understood in colonial language as 'primitive societies', 'natives', 'tribes', 'acephalous societies' or 'stateless societies'. The Assessment, Intelligence and Annual Reports of various administrative divisions were submitted by Divisional Officers (DOs) to the office of the League of Nations and United Nations on the Bamenda Grassfields. There is no doubt that these colonial administrators were faced with some insurmountable methodological and psychological problems in the collection of the traditions, but on the whole their recorded accounts remain one of the most useful bases for further investigations and analysis.

The Pre-colonial Kom society was made up of non-literate peoples – in the western sense, and as a consequence, the source for this article is largely Oral Tradition-information received from various peoples at different times about their histories. Thus, Oral Traditions encapsulated in interviews were very crucial to the writing of the article, and those interviewed were the people who were implicated in the conflict resolution. For the sake of convenience, one can distinguish between two broad categories: firstly, recordings of Oral Traditions or testimonials of people who were contemporary to the events they described and, secondly, recordings from those who only heard the accounts as handed from one generation to the next. The views of these individual and combined informants all joined to give this article its present shape.

Sites and Objects: *Etwi*, *Ntul*,

According to the Kom oral traditions, *Etwi* constitutes one of the oldest sites in Kom where conflicts were resolved. It was situated at Laikom, the capital of Kom. These oral traditions were supplemented by archival material. Writing in 1926, the District Officer for Bamenda Province, G.V. Evans, amongst other things stated that,

On passing through the porch at Laikom (sic) leading to the chief's compound, a circle of stones will be observed, which is the original site of the old original court of justice, and is still used to this day. It is known as the *etwi* in Bikom language. The stones, which are set up on the edge, were very much taller in the old days and must have been quarried and fashioned to fit so neatly, though crudely, as they do to form a circle. (File Ad (1926) 4, Bamenda Division: Kom Assessment Report on the Kom (Bikom) Clan of the Bamenda Division, Cameroon Province by G.V. Evans, District Officer, National Archives, Buea).

True to the description of Evans, the below photograph was taken by the author and it best describes the physical location of the site. The colonial processes led to a radicalization of the sacrosanct feeling given to the *etwi*. As it could be observed from the picture people of the palace uses it now as drying lines to dry their clothes. However, the above quotation of Evans also takes note of the nature of stones and labour that was involved in the construction.



Etwi court at Laikom photograph by the author

At *etwi*, the Foyin and some of the elders of the Kom land sat judging cases. If the person was found guilty, their cap will be rubbed with wood-ash. Wood ash symbolizes nothingness in Kom tradition. This meant that the person had no meaning amongst his/her peers in Kom. There were many and varied penalties, as well. The penalty for

murder was death and the servant of the *nkwi*foyn would be the executioner. Theft was punished by the offender giving back five goats, or paying the value of the goats stolen, or probably receiving some flogging. If food was stolen from the farm and the thief was found guilty, then at *etwi* his or her hand was cut off. The worst crime was to commit adultery with the Foyin's wife. It was considered a heinous crime especially if the two were caught 'flagrante delicto'; both were executed. But if there were doubts about it, they were given sasswood poison. *Etwi* was the highest court in the land. (Interview with Bartholomew Nkwain, Kom, 27 December 2011)

Ntul According to Mintoh, one of the oldest people who were members of *ntul*, *ntul* was a shrine square in form, seven feet by seven. Unlike *etwi*, which was made of stones, it was constructed of bamboos and thatched with grass and not mudded like other houses. Except for the Foyin, all members sat on stones laid around the shrines. Its membership was all male and all clans were free to join and the act of admission was known as *su gvuf ntul* (to drag *ntul*)

The *ntul* shrine, so to say, was a centre of reconciliation, mediation and appeasement which offered a forum for arbitration. If a person threatened the life of his neighbor or wounded him with a spear or cutlass the two were brought to the *ntul* shrine. The first attempt here was reconciliation and the moral and legal sanctions were imposed as well. If one of the litigants was wounded, the wounds were treated with medicine procured from the *ntul* lodge.

In the 19th century, Kom experienced many wars of expansion like most West African Foyndoms (Chilver and Kaberry, 1967). During such wars, the Foyin was charged with the duty of offering sacrifices at the *ntul* shrine. This was in order to avert any misfortune that might follow in the course of the war. If there were too many accidental deaths in the foyndom or when the foyndom was hit by a disaster, plague or famine, the foyin again had to enter the *ntul* shrine and offer sacrifices. Members of the *ntul* shrine had to assist the foyin in maintaining calm in the foyndom. If people were found committing crimes like uprooting crops without any reasonable justification – which of course did not exist, or cutting down trees forbidden by law, were usually fined with what was called *bzi-ntul* (the *ntul* goat). The members of the village *nggvin*, a *ntul* parallel, had similar duties. (Interview with Isaiah Chialoh, Fundong, Kom, 30 June 2012)

Apart from the foyin performing rites during warfare, when the wars came to an end, reconciliation was often sought by burying the *mukain* gun powder at an agreed place, which was like a buffer zone. *Mukain* has an ambiguous meaning within Kom cosmology. It meant both a pact and gun powder. To say that somebody had eaten *mukain* was to affirm that he had entered into alliance of friendship or marriage or perhaps a person's total integration into another's clan (Nkwi, 1974). Its medicines, when eaten, produced a forgetting and forgiving effect. It had the sole objective of uniting persons for a common

cause. When the priests appointed by the Foyin carried out the rites of *mukain*, they all spent the whole night at *ndo mukain* (the house of allinace) which was found to the left side of the entrance into the women's quarter of the palace. Of more relevance to conflict resolution, *mukain* symbolized reconciliation at its best.

Individuals in conflict resolution: *nkwi*foyn and the *Foyin*

If *etwi* and *ntul* played the sacred roles in conflict resolution as objects, then *nkwi*foyn and *foyn* played more a complimentary role as individuals and above all as humans. They were complimentary because it appeared that one was a handmade from the other, so to say. For a better understanding, we will treat the two separately, taking note of differences and similarities.

Nkwifoyn

The meaning and derivation of the name *nkwi*foyn is said to be *nkwi*, power and *foyn* – chief, which simply meant the power of the Foyin. In the area where Kom is found (Bamenda Grassfields), it came to have various dialectical variations. In Nso it was *ngwerong*; Bafut, *kwifo*; Bamunka, *ngwose*; Bali, *nggumba*; When a new *foyn* was selected his appointment was subject to the approval of the *nkwi*foyn society. The *nkwi*foyn was what we could call in modern political science jargon as the executive body of the traditional government, long before modern bodies of government were introduced by the western powers to Africa. It provided the Foyin with a police force, emissaries or envoys, and economists for the royal household. In short, it was in charge of the proper functioning of the *foyn*'s administrative machinery. It was also the instrument of the Foyin's secular authority and short of his personal intervention, there was no appeal against its decisions (File Ia (1926) 1 *Nkwifoyn* Society, National Archives, Buea). According to most sources who were contacted during fieldwork, it appears that they recognised the fact that it was their government. "It is *nkwi*foyn that rules Kom. It is our government", they asserted with confidence and emphasis. As the highest executive body of traditional government, it also played no small role in the judicial system and arbitration but not without the caution of the Foyin .

The role of the *nkwi*foyn in conflict in a traditional conflict resolution was noticed much more clearly in arbitration, reconciliation and judicial matters over land issues and witchcraft. Matters of nature were referred to it once there were signs of deadlock in the *etwi* and the *ntul*. Within the ranks of the *nkwi*foyn, if there was a deadlock, then a ban was issued, often known as *a-lang-a nkwi*foyn (The ban of the *nkwi*foyn). In cases of witchcraft, those who were found practicing it in the land were banished by *nkwi*foyn by simply placing a bamboo at their doorsteps. However, no matter how serious the case was, the *nkwi*foyn always acted in accordance with the *Foyin*, who was the alpha and omega of all the *foyndom*.

The Foyin

From the foregoing discussion, much has already been said about the Foyin and the role he played in conflict resolution implicitly. While not trying to repeat the information here, it is important to see the religious position of the Foyin in order to appreciate why he had to play the function which he played in the sites of conflict resolution. The *Foyin*, who is the paramount ruler of the Foyndom, played an instrumental role in the resolution of conflicts. Widely known in the colonial reports as *chief* and *foyn*, he played the role of the chief priest and custodian of all the land. In order to better appreciate the role of the *Foyin*, the throne occupation rites are quite relevant to us.

The *Foyin* was installed in by the ntul lodge, which was a shrine that symbolized the kom state, because, according to Kom oral traditions, it was the first hut which was constructed at Laikom. On the following day after the passing away of the predecessor, following the mourning and burial, people assembled in front of the lodge. The possible heir appeared and the king anointers followed and went round the crowd peering at everyone three times, and at the third time they grasped the arm of the possible heir and put him prostrate on a stone. 'He was then slapped and buffeted for the last time, and was then led to the royal grave shrine, placed on the throne, and robbed' (Interview with the Foyin of Kom, 14 June 2011 at Laikom) After the buffeting, the new king was handed over to the chamberlains (*chisento*, sing.*nchinto*). He was bathed over the grave of the deceased and placed in the chair of the deceased.

As a *Foyin*, he was the person who sat on the ancestral chair, and he was considered the embodiment of the beliefs, hopes, fears and aspirations of his people. Consequently, he was considered sacred in all the meanings of the word and ipso facto automatically, the chief priest of his people. The sacredness of the Foyin's person was encapsulated and found expression in the fact that he was scarcely seen in the public, except on very important occasions. Since one of the important responsibilities of the chief was to maintain a nexus between his people and the ancestral spirits, his religious functions included performing elaborate rituals on important festive occasions. This was not dominantly a reserve of Kom. Amongst the Akan of Ghana, in the West African coast, the chief played quite important roles in the festive of *Akwasidae*, *Wukudae* and *Odwira*. (see Abotchie, 2006: 172) .

It was in the mould of this religious and sacredness of the *Foyin* that one could best appreciate his role in conflict resolution. As a matter of fact, the predominant *modus operandi* of the *foyn* in pre-colonial traditional African society derived from his judicial functions. These included amongst many things to bring reconciliation among and between men and spiritual forces. This implied that the *Foyin's* judicial role included the settlement of conflicts such as land disputes and prevention of criminality.

In the pre-colonial African societies, crime was an act which offended the strong and definite dispositions of the collective consciousness, and was harmful to the gods. This

collective consciousness was enshrined in the laws of public and private crimes. The lineage heads dealt with violations of these crimes. The laws of public crimes were designated as things hateful to the gods and they included murder, adultery, stealing, certain forms of abuse, incest, witchcraft, and treason, just to name just a few. All these transgressions of laws were tried by the *Foyin's* law court, *etwi*. This court is constituted by the chief and his councilors, who were usually heads of the clan. This meant that the Foyin was paramount in all the conflict resolutions that took place in the Foyndom

Towards a Conclusion

Kom, which is located in West Africa, has been the foci of this article. West Africans during the pre-colonial period had many different achievements to their credit, and perhaps failures. Their 'cloth of History' was woven in many different patterns. Many ways of life were followed. Farmers cultivated a great variety of seeds, plants, and trees for food and trade and manufacture. Craftsmen worked in a wide range of skills. Traders extended their business. Outstanding men governed and taught, made war or pursued the arts of peace, wrote books or recited poetry, composed music or carved in wood and ivory, or made fine sculpture in clay and metal.

In all these ways of life, conflict became central. It was and it is found in almost all human societies. What is important about conflicts is how to prevent it or resolve them. In pre-colonial Africa, there were intense and varied ways of resolving conflicts, to which quite little attention has been paid in expert literature. This article has largely focused on conflict resolution mechanisms used in Kom, a West African Foyndom located in the Grassfields of Cameroon. Using multiple sources, the article has concluded that various sites, objects, and humans formed a very important place in the pre-colonial Kom to resolve conflicts. Consequently, they cannot be overlooked because it was these sites, objects, etc, that acted as social equalizers of the system.

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Somalia

- When Will the Struggle End?

Ofelia ZAHA

Abstract. *Somalia is an African country which hasn't really known peace, stability and prosperity in the last 60 years although in the media the year 1991 is considered to be the starting point of the civil war.*

First of all, in my paper I will start with a short description of Somalia's situation and organization in the pre colonial era, colonial period, during democracy, communism and in the end civil war.

Secondly, once the base is formed I will continue in detail about the events that occurred after 1991. With this occasion I will describe the escalation factors, the triggers that kept the conflict going and the conditions that contribute to peace.

Furthermore, the actors will be grouped in primary, secondary, other parties and peace makers. Because every conflict has a struggle for resources at its core I will proceed with exemplifying them for all the actors. Taking into consideration the complexity of this case there will be a focus on the facts regarding the present situation.

Finally, after so much information has been reviewed suppositions will be made on the future trends with an invitation to meditate on the course that this conflict will take.

Keywords: *Somalia, Siad Barre, Somaliland, al-Shabab, al-Qaeda.*

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Since 1991, Somalia has gone through civil war, poverty, terrorist attacks, famine, the pirate phenomenon, numerous leadership shifts, and is at present in the position to consider the light at the end of the tunnel to be merely a question. Africa is currently the arena for such turmoil events, but this country manages to become an exception that confirms the rule in conflicts that appearances are deceiving.

A study made in 2006 by Hae S. Kim shows that, in Africa, the most relevant cause of

conflict is ethnical heterogeneity. Also, research made by Creative Associates International sees ethnic group imbalance as a major reason for internal strife. However, if we look at Somalia we can see that they are unlike many African populations in this area. The Somali are part of a single, homogeneous ethnic group, which is Muslim and shares the same language and culture. In order to properly understand the present situation we must go in depth.



It is safe to say that their relationship was not always a peaceful one. Since the 7th century, the Somali people have had their system organized in the form of Xeer. This practice includes the existence of actors like judges, jurists, detectives, attorneys, witnesses, and police officers to enforce the law. With the rules they established, they managed to settle the conflicts in the past. However, they were known for harsh punishments like payment of blood money for libel, theft, physical harm, rape, and death. As I have mentioned earlier, Somali clans had often clashed over resources such as water, livestock (camels) and grazing long before Somalia became a sovereign country. Also, there was an idea that every pastoral Somali, thus, representing his clan, had a right to take ownership of a slice of this gift from Allah. This sort of behavior is incompatible with running a modern state. The use of force as an acceptable strategy is therefore rooted in Somali culture and one could argue that some features of Somali culture reward criminals who engage in violent activities.

Their religion was Islamic and the practices were taken out of the shari'a moral code. This tradition has played a significant part in Somali society. In theory, it has served as the basis for all national legislation in every Somali constitution. In practice, however, it only applied to common civil cases such as marriage, divorce, inheritance and family matters.

Things changed when the Europeans took over and imposed their own rules. This did not allow their system to evolve and compete with the ones in modern countries. Also, the great powers divided what some would call greater Somalia into five parts. Britain took two, Italy one and France one. The European powers gave the Somali region of Ogaden to Ethiopia's King Menelik to appease him. This is another root cause of the Ogaden War that took place in 1977. The partitioning of Somalia permanently damaged the Somali people. Hadrawi, a great Somali poet, argues persuasively in several poems that most of the malaise in today's Somalia stems from the colonial system. He claims that the colonial powers destroyed Somalia's socio-economic system. In addition, most

of the resources of Somalia's weak and poor government were used to reunify the Somali people. The effect of the partition continues to haunt the Somali people, since, according to this view, two Somali territories remained under the control of Ethiopia and Kenya.

Somalia changed completely after it gained its independence in 1960. First of all, many Somalis moved to urban areas, where the types of resources that are needed and the means used to obtain them changed, and so did the political leaders' interests. The clans began to struggle for power, and, as the system is known to have been corrupted, the only way to obtain it was through unfair means. This change of situation can be considered another root cause, which was displayed in governance and economy, and which is strongly related to the culture on which it was applied.

Nevertheless, as corrupt as it was, the system was a democratic one until 1969, and the people were allowed to express their grievances, so violent activities did not take hold. However, when General Mohamed Siad Barre took over power, things changed. The state followed the socialist model: there was a general obsession with controlling the population and punishing any unfavorable public opinion. Power and resources belonged to the members of his clan and the opposition groups were outlawed.

Another issue is the fact that Somalia's government could not provide employment or a meaningful education. The private sector was under-developed as well. As a result, many young men were in a hopeless situation. Their despair allowed the warlords and elites to obtain their trust and dedication. As they had no interest in helping the people, they proceeded to using the readily available human resources with grievances, without providing any other alternative for the future instead of military combat.

Because the situation was boiling with grievances in the 1970's and the leader Barre was hungry for power, a war with the neighboring country, Ethiopia, broke out and managed to destabilize the situation. This created a flow of arms in the region from the Soviet Union and the US, and managed to prepare the population for battle. The availability of weapons, combined with all the above grievances and disputes, were new causes that resulted in continuous outbreaks between the clans and the country government. When this coup failed, the Siad Barre regime started to use excessive force against the Majerteen clan (the clan to which most of the officers belonged). This event was the beginning of Somalia's civil war.

In 1986, the president was facing health problems and there were talks about who would succeed him. The regime was weakened further in the 1980s as the Cold War drew to a close and Somalia's strategic importance was diminished. The government became increasingly totalitarian and resistance movements, encouraged by Ethiopia, sprang up across the country.

Somalia's large number of unemployed youth also fueled the conflict. In the 1970s, the Somali population was estimated to be about 5 million. Although no credible census

has been taken, Somalia now has an estimated population of about 9-10 million. In the 1980s this increase created a young population with no employment opportunities.

Conflict Evolution

Now that we understand the situation that led to the crisis in 1991 we will describe the path it followed until the present situation.

Since 1991, when the war between Barre's new Supreme Revolutionary Council (instead of SRSP) and the militia groups was won by the Somali National Alliance (SNA), the Abgal and the Habargidir clans that took over. They had never fought throughout their history and in fact belonged to the same clan (Hawiye) and sub-clan (Hiraab). However, when Mogadishu fell to the United Somali Congress (USC) (to which they both belonged) a power struggle broke out. The opposition leaders were Mohamed Farah Aideed (SNA) and Ali Mahdi Mohamed, and their frenzy for resources killed thousands of civilians. Other clans, such as the Isaaq, Ogaden, Hawiye, and Digil and Mirifle also started opposition groups in order to seize power. Although the region was at war, Somaliland managed to declare autonomy followed by Puntland in 1996. The chaos became an international problem, so in 1992 the UN peace forces were sent to restore order and safety in the area. However, this attempt finished in 1995, after the Somali attack on the US Army rangers known as Black Hawk Down. In 1999, Ethiopian forces invaded and captured the regional capital of Garba Harre, which lies 250 miles northwest of Mogadishu, in order to try to suppress fighting among rebel groups.

In 2000 there was a turn of events and Clan leaders and senior figures elected Abdulkassim Salat Hassan president of Somalia, which led to the emergence of the first government in the country since 1991 known as Transitional National Government. This attracted the opposition back up by Ethiopia to announce their intention to form another government. In 2003, their mandate expired and in October 2004 a new transitional parliament inaugurated at ceremony in Kenya with Abdullahi Yusuf as president. The country was hit by a tsunami in the same year, and thus the famine was aggravated, with no success from the UN to provide aid. As the transitional government was opposed by rebel groups, assassination attempts started in 2005.

The warlords started another clash in 2006 when the parliament met in a town called Baidoa. The new opposition was called the Islamic Courts and was a unification of Sharia courts who wanted to take down the Transitional Federal Government. Until the end of 2006, they controlled most of southern Somalia and the vast majority of its population. This insurgent group declared holy war against Ethiopia. The latter won the war side by side with TFG. Furthermore, because of the victory in 2007 President Abdullahi entered Mogadishu for the first time since 2004.

As one extremist group left the arena for a while another one, known from the September 11 attacks, emerged: Al-Qaeda. In the same year, the African Union attempted to calm the

tensions, but the result was an even higher resistance from the warlords who continued fighting against the national government backed up by Ethiopia. Given the complete chaos, the aid that was sent by the World Food Program was taken away by pirates. This phenomenon had been reported since 2005 and was strongly supported by the local coastal communities as they believed this was a protection for their fishing grounds and a way to restore justice. Some Somali businessmen and officials in Puntland were reportedly behind the piracy. The pirates were receiving valuable information about the types of ships, cargo, and timing from Somalis in the Persian Gulf.

In September 2007, another opposition government, consisting of members of the former Islamic Courts Union (ICU) and other Somali elements met and formed in Eritrea. On its hunt for Al-Qaeda members, the US launched a missile strike in 2008 in Dhusamareb region.

In June of the same year, there were some attempts to make peace as TFG and the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS), a group dominated by members of the ICU, signed an agreement in Djibouti mediated by the United Nations Special Envoy Ahmedou Ould-Abdullah. The parties agreed to a cease-fire, the withdrawal of Ethiopian forces, and the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping force. The deal, which provided for Ethiopian troops to leave Somalia within 120 days, was rejected by Islamist leader Hassan Dahir Aweys, who demanded that all foreign troops must leave the country. The piracy problem was becoming a chronic one as they started to hijack ships carrying weapons and other valuable goods, demanding ransom. On October NATO agreed to delegate a naval force to patrol the waters off Somalia to tackle the growing issue.

The regions that were once safe like Somaliland and Puntland were bombed, the targets being the presidential palace, the Ethiopian consulate, UNDP offices, and the offices of the Puntland Intelligence Service. The ones responsible were not found but are suspected to be from Al-Qaeda.

In late December 2008, President Yusuf resigned from office and left for Yemen. In January 2009, the Somali Transitional Parliament elected the leader of the ARS, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmad as president.

The same year, a group known as Al-Shabaab (a radical satellite of the Union of Islamic Courts formed in 2006), which was not active and did not control any territory in Somalia until 2007-2008, became a main actor in the scene. They took control of Baidoa, an important pillar for the TFG, and the southern port city of Kismayo. Also in September Al-Shabaab pledged allegiance to Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden. They threatened UN staff and caused the withdrawal of the UN's World Food Program (WFP) from their regions.

In 2011, 275 of the 439 pirate attacks reported to the IMB took place in Somalia in the east coast, and the Gulf of Guinea on the west coast of Africa.

As a result of the Al-Shabaab rebel clashes Kenya closed the border to Somalia. The famine was gravely aggravated by the drought in 2011 and aid agencies warned that millions faced starvation. Because of this situation the tensions with Al-Shabaab loosened as they partially lifted the ban on foreign aid agencies and pulled out of Mogadishu.

After the disturbances made by the rebels in Kenya, the country sent troops to Somalia. They managed to take control over Baidoa together with the TFG, and on February 2012, Al-Shabaab announced its merger with Al-Qaeda. The tables started to turn again, as the African Union and Somali government forces captured Afgoye town south of Mogadishu, thereby cutting al-Shabaab territory in half. They also captured Kismayo, the second largest port city.

A highpoint was the establishment of the formal parliament in Mogadishu in a highly secured area of the city, in August 2012. A new president was elected, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, and attempts to kill him were already ongoing on the second day after his election. Several other attacks were attempted a few months later.

Now, the piracy phenomenon is decreasing, but there is still a continuous struggle in the country. In 2013, a French intelligence officer was held hostage and killed by Al-Shabaab. Suicide bombing protests are a common activity that has spread over the years. The Shabaab remain a potent threat, still controlling rural areas as well as carrying out guerrilla attacks in areas apparently under government control.

There are discussions in the UN to lift the arms embargo but the opinions regarding this vary greatly. Those who oppose getting rid of the arms embargo say Somalia's security sector still includes elements close to warlords and militants. However, those who are in favor want to strengthen the poorly equipped and ill-disciplined military to help them fight against Al-Shabaab and restore peace.

Understanding the Escalation Factors

In order to fully understand the patterns of the conflict we must now revise the details of the events, look at the context, and take into consideration the triggers which kept the war going.

First of all, the change from pastoral state to colony and then to independent state again in 1960 created an unstable situation. In October 15, 1969 the assassination of President Abdirashid Ali Shermarke by his bodyguards while paying a visit to the northern town of Las Anod, led to a military coup d'état on October 21, 1969 (the day after his funeral), in which the Somali Army seized power without encountering armed opposition. The event was spearheaded by Major General Mohamed Siad Barre, who at the time commanded the army.

His reign continued to fuel the grievances and Ogaden War with Ethiopia was another trigger which led to three internal movements of the clans who started seizing power.

The first was the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), established in 1978 by Abdullahi Yusuf. This mainly Majerten clan movement engaged the regime in periodic skirmishes in the northeast of the country and was met with harsh repression.

The second major armed conflict was the war between the Somali military and the Somali National Movement (SNM) for control over Northwest Somalia.

The third armed conflict before 1991 pitted embattled government forces against a growing number of clan-based liberation movements in 1989 and 1990. The strongest of these movements included the United Somali Congress, USC (Hawiye clan), the Somali Patriotic Movement (Ogadeni clan), and the Somali Salvation Democratic Movement (Majerten clan). These three movements managed to throw the country into a multi-front war that continued in 1991–92. After the civil war started, the religious factor reappeared, as a number of new shari'a courts began to spring up in many different cities and towns across the country. These new shari'a courts serve three functions, namely, to pass rulings in both criminal and civil cases, to organize a militia capable of arresting criminals, and to keep convicted prisoners incarcerated. This return of religion would further cause a lack of control in the security sector as extremist groups were bound to appear.

The famine that resulted after the war caused the US to intervene and try to help the starving country by protecting food shipments from the warlords, and thus triggered another conflict. This operation was known as the *Black Hawk Down* and switched from a salvation initiative to a battle.

Another issue is the harassment and detention of journalists that occurred across the country, both by the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), and under the Islamic Courts Union. Somaliland has banned political demonstrations, and Puntland has outlawed opposition parties. Checkpoints around Somalia are manned by militia, who have at times extorted or killed civilians attempting to travel across the country. The right to privacy was also restricted. Without a civil administration, ownership of weapons mushroomed, especially assault rifles, as did the possession of light weapons such as rocket launchers, antiaircraft guns, mortars and other explosives. Violence and discrimination against women, including genital mutilation, became common. The rape of women by militia and bandits is still a problem, and there are no laws against spousal rape.

In 1997, Ethiopia contributed to destabilizing the wanted peace, as it was accused of blocking the Cairo Accord that had been signed by 28 Somali warlords and factions. It exerted pressure on the Somali Salvation Alliance (SSA, the Sodere Group of 15 factions) and forced it to opt out of the accord it had signed with the Somali National Alliance (SNA, which included the other 13 factions). Ethiopia was further responsible

for undermining the Transitional National Government (TNG) that emerged out of the Arta Conference in Djibouti in 2000, as it accused it of being an Islamic front, which led to it being denied recognition by the USA.

Moreover, the Ethiopian government started to openly send land mines, ammunition and weapons to groups that were opposing the TNG in Mogadishu, Lower Jubba, Bay and Bakool, Gedo and Hiran. Ethiopia also strengthened the Puntland regional state.

Because in October 2000, Abdiqasim Salad Hassan and Ali Khalif Galaydh entered Mogadishu as the newly appointed president and prime minister, respectively, of the provisional Transitional National Government, the other warlords, backed by Ethiopia, created a coalition opposing the TNG, the Somalia Reconciliation and Restoration Council in Mogadishu.

Again in 2002, because of the September 11 attacks, the situation changed as the United States froze funds of a major bank in Somalia, because it was suspected to have Al-Qaeda links.

Another escalation can be observed in 2006 when the transitional government met for the first time since 2004 in the town of Baidoa. There was a military confrontation in which the Al-Shabaab militia laid siege to the headquarters of the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG). In parallel, a conflict began in mid-February, 2006, when Somali warlords formed the ARPCT (Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism) to challenge the ICU's emerging influence. It had been alleged that the United States was funding the ARPCT due to concerns that the ICU had ties to Al-Qaeda. The ICU militia won control of Mogadishu and ARPCT forces left the city. Scores of people were killed and hundreds were injured during fierce fighting.

In November of the same year, the Monitoring Group reported suspicions that the governments of Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and Syria had all been involved in the supply of arms to Somali armed groups. In 2007, Eritrea, a non-Muslim country, also sent about 2,500 soldiers to Somalia in support of the Islamists, who named themselves the Supreme Council of Islamic Courts. This proliferation of ammunition contributed to maintaining a violent climate accentuated by the military support that secondary actors and third parties gave to the belligerent groups.

The year 2009 marked another important moment in the battle. As the TFG President Sheik Sharif Sheik Ahmed arrived in Mogadishu as a president for the first time. This caused Al-Shabaab and other radical Islamists to attack the new TFG president hours later. They accused the new President of accepting the secular transitional government. However, in this period suicide attacks had become a new aspect to the Somali Civil War: on June 3rd, 2007 a truck bomb exploded outside the home of the Somali interim prime minister, Ali Mohamed Ghedi; on February 22nd, 2009, Al-Shabaab carried out a suicide car bomb attack against an African Union military base in Mogadishu, and on

December 3rd, 2009, an Al-Shabaab militant dressed as a woman entered a medical school graduation ceremony and blew himself up killing three ministers of the Government.

In the years that followed, there were several kidnappings that added fuel to the conflict, the suicide attacks continued and aid was withdrawn due to the threats of Al-Shabaab. The neighboring countries that provided help were attacked, as for example the twin blasts which hit Ugandan capital Kampala, killing 74 people watching the World Cup football final on TV. In 2010, the Prime Minister Sharmarke resigned.

As famine was declared in 2012, a change in strategy was triggered as Al-Shabaab partially lifted the ban it had imposed on foreign aid agencies in areas under its control. Also, it pulled out of all its positions in Mogadishu. The Islamist group describes the move as a "change of military tactics".

Because in 2011 suspected Al-Shabaab militants raided Kenyan coastal resorts, killing one foreigner and kidnapping two, the Kenyan troops entered Somalia to attack rebels they accused of being behind several kidnappings of foreigners on Kenyan soil.

To get further help and to induce fear, in 2012, Al-Shabaab announced its merger with Al-Qaeda.

The last event that changed the political situation was the Mogadishu election of September 2012, when academic and civic activist Hassan Sheikh Mohamud was elected president in the first such vote on Somali soil since 1967. This was received with hostility by the opposing parties, as the following day a suicide bomber killed four security officers at President Mohamud's hotel in the capital.

Getting to Know the Actors

Primary

After losing the Ogaden War with Ethiopia in 1978, the liberation movements rose in the country with the purpose to overthrow Siad Barre, whom they held accountable. The first of these movements was the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), established in 1978 by Abdullahi Yusuf. The second major armed conflict was the war between the Somali military and the Somali National Movement (SNM) formed by some members of the Isaaq clan. This led to the proclamation of the self-declared state of Somaliland in 1991.

The third armed conflict before 1991 pitted embattled government forces against a growing number of clan-based liberation movements in 1989 and 1990. The strongest of these movements included the United Somali Congress, USC (Hawiye clan), the Somali Patriotic Movement (Ogadeni clan), and the Somali Salvation Democratic Movement (Majerten clan). This multifront war was a preview of the predatory looting and banditry that characterized the warfare in 1991–92.

Until 1991, we can say that the main opposing parties were Barre's new Supreme Revolutionary Council (instead of SRSP), the militia groups like the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), United Somali Congress (USC), Somali National Movement (SNM) and the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM), together with the non-violent political oppositions of the Somali Democratic Movement (SDM), the Somali Democratic Alliance (SDA) and the Somali Manifesto Group (SMG).

In 1991, the war was won and the Somali National Alliance (SNA) proceeded with taking down the president. With this turn of events, the Abgal and the Habargidir clans took over. They had never fought throughout their history and in fact belong to the same clan (Hawiye) and sub-clan (Hiraab). However, when Mogadishu fell to the United Somali Congress (USC) (to which they both belonged) a power struggle broke out. The opposition leaders were Mohamed Farah Aideed (SNA) and Ali Mahdi Mohamed and their thirst for resources killed thousands of civilians. Other clans, such as the Isaaq, Ogaden, Hawiye and Digil and Mirifle also started opposition groups in order to seize power. Before the struggle they had fought together, but as soon as the primary objective was achieved every clan started pursuing their own goal.

In the year 2000, the situation changed as Clan leaders and main characters meeting in Djibouti elect Abdulkassim Salat Hassan president of Somalia and prime minister, Ali Khalif Gelayadh, who announced his government, the first in the country since 1991. This created different opposing forces, and in 2001, Somali warlords, backed by Ethiopia, announced their intention to form a national government within six months, in direct opposition to the country's Transitional National Government (TNG). This government was called Somalia Reconciliation and Restoration Council.

In 2006, a new actor entered the arena, the Islamic Courts Union with Sharif Sheikh Ahmed as its head. This group was a unification of Sharia courts who wanted to take down the Transitional Federal Government. Until the end of 2006, they controlled most of southern Somalia and the vast majority of its population.

In 2007, because the Islamic Court Union was defeated, it splintered into several different factions. This changed the actors involved, as some more radical elements emerged, including the Al-Shabaab (in Arabic language the youth) militant group. They regrouped to continue their insurgency against the TFG.

In February 2009 sprang the conflict between, on the one hand, the forces of the Federal Government of Somalia, and on the other, various militant Islamist and factions. The violence displaced thousands of people in the southern part of the country. The conflict also saw sectarian violence between the moderate Sufis ASWJ, and the Islamists in Al-Shabaab.

In 2012, Al-Shabaab was formally recognized as the Somalia-based cell of the militant Islamist group Al-Qaeda.

Secondary

One of the main secondary actors, who is not an actual party of the conflict but has a high degree of interest and influence, was, during the entire conflict, Ethiopia. Its meddling has given shelter and arms to all spoilers (groups and individuals). It has undermined the two most important peace accords (Cairo Accord 1997, and Arta Agreement 2000) and has manipulated the Somali peace process in Kenya and the transitional government that was formed. Ethiopia has frequently sent weapons over the border and at times has occupied several towns in southern Somalia. In other words, Ethiopia, a powerful and well-positioned state, is a hostile neighbor that aims to maintain a weak and divided Somalia. Whatever its motives, Ethiopia is an important actor in blocking peace-building efforts in Somalia. Since the beginning of the civil war, Ethiopia has been playing with Somali factions: supporting one, destroying it, and then supporting it again. This process of balancing factions has become very obvious over the past ten years.

Another secondary actor, due to its proximity, is Radio Halgan. During the civil war, between 1980 and 1991, the insurgent groups, apart from issuing antigovernment statements, started broadcasting from the former Radio Kulmis station, now known as Radio Halgan (struggle).

As Somaliland gained its independence in 1991, it can be considered a primary actor that became a secondary one, as for the most part, it was not directly affected by the conflict. The same thing can be said about the neighboring region Puntland, which has remained relatively stable since 1998.

In 2000, Kenya became an active secondary part in the conflict, as the new government spent its first year operating out of Kenya because Somalia remained too violent and unstable to enter, and eventually settled in the provincial town of Baidoa. In 2011, Kenya entered Somalia to curb Al-Shabaab Islamist militants.

Other parties

Because of the extent of the conflict, a lot of regional and global players got involved. In the Cold War period, we can consider the Soviet Union to be a third party as it supplied the nation with military equipment and so did the US. After the civil war continued in 1991, the United Nations' Security Council Resolution 794 was unanimously passed on December 3, 1992, which approved a coalition of United Nations peacekeepers led by the United States. The Unified Task Force (UNITAF) was assigned with assuring security, until humanitarian efforts aimed at stabilizing the situation were transferred to the UN. Landing in 1993, the UN peacekeeping coalition started the two-year United Nations Operation in Somalia II (UNOSOM II), primarily in the south to provide humanitarian relief. Because of the opposition shown by the local clan warlords, Pakistan and Malaysia intervened to help US suppress the new leaders.

Since 2005, another phenomenon emerged because of the conflict. Many international organizations, including the International Maritime Organization and the World Food Program, have expressed concern over the rise in acts of piracy. Some reports have suggested that, in the absence of an effective national coast guard following the outbreak of the civil war and the subsequent disintegration of the Armed Forces, local fishermen formed organized groups in order to protect their waters.

After the UIC was established in 2006, the African Union peacekeepers intervened and air support by the United States managed to drive out the rival ICU and consolidate its rule. Also, the Arab League was involved to promote peace.

On December 7th, 2006, the UN Security Council voted to authorize an 8,000 strong peacekeeping mission built from the forces of members of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). IGAD's 7 members at the time were Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda. The makeup of IGAD, whose members supported both sides, was expected to make an actual mission difficult. The resolution also eased an 1992 arms embargo against the Somali government. In November 2006, the Monitoring Group reported suspicions that the governments of Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Libya, Saudi Arabia and Syria had all been involved in the supply of arms to Somali armed groups. All countries denied it. In reports from 2008, these accusations were not mentioned again. In 2007, Eritrea a non-Muslim country, also sent about 2,500 soldiers to Somalia in support of the Islamists, who named themselves the Supreme Council of Islamic Courts.

Also there are three more actors that are known to be supporting either UIC, ARS (Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia) or Al-Shabaab. They are Egypt, Iran and Yemen.

In 2007, the African Union Mission in Somalia AMISOM was created by the African Union's Peace and Security Council. It managed to gather support from Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Burundi, Tanzania, E.U., Ghana and Djibouti. The equipment is said to have been facilitated by the United States and France.

Although the Arab League suspended Somalia's membership, it has proven to be worried about the conflict and has made several calls to action for other nations to stop the atrocities.

On February 2012, from an interview taken with the British prime minister of Africa we can see the UK's wish to get involved, as Mr. Bellingham said: "The UK has been inspired to act partly by the terrible suffering of the Somali people and partly by the problems that affect us directly. We were profoundly moved by the humanitarian crisis in Somalia caused by the drought." (Hiiraan Online, 2012). The UK responded generously, providing £57m (\$90m) to Somalia alone. This was on top of existing plans to spend £69m a year in Somalia until 2015 in development assistance.

However, among the forces that encouraged further escalation there are some humanitarian actors who just want to bring aid to the innocent people. The most important are: Red Cross, Medicins sans Frontieres, CARE, CARITAS, OXFAM and Save the Children. In 2008 there were reportedly 52 such NGO's that either helped or supported the help. A list can be found at this link <http://www.oxfamamerica.org/press/pressreleases/statement-by-52-ngos-working-in-somalia-on-rapidly-deteriorating-humanitarian-crisis>

Peace makers

From the beginning of the struggle, there have been several attempts to bring aid to the suffering and thus promote peace in the region. However, if we look at these events chronologically, we can see that it took quite a long time for the actors to realize what they were doing wrong and to change their strategy.

The first attempt was initiated by the United Nations in 1992, who tried to provide aid, but was a complete failure as the troops were shot at, aid ships attacked and prevented from docking, cargo aircraft were fired upon and aid agencies, public and private, were subject to threats, robbery and extortion. Meanwhile, hundreds, if not thousands of poverty stricken refugees were starving to death every day. The second major intervention known as UNOSOM II was an even worse failure as it ended in the famous Battle of Mogadishu.

In 2005, the Intergovernmental Authority for Development known as IGAD proposed a Peace Support Mission to Somalia involving 10,000 troops. Due to many factors, IGASOM did not materialize in 2006 and was replaced by AMISOM, which is a mission supported by the African Union and authorized by the UN in 2007. It maintained its activities up to the present. Its main duties are to support transitional governmental structures, implement a national security plan, train the Somali security forces, and assist in creating a secure environment for the delivery of humanitarian aid.

However, before this in September 2006 in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum there was an attempt made by the Transitional government and the Union of Islamic Courts to make peace, but unfortunately it was not implemented. In 2006, the International Somalia Contact Group was established by the UN with the purpose to support peace and reconciliation. It was a leader in the Roadmap to end the transition, which was created on September 6th, 2011.

Another organization that started to be more active since 2008, when it opened permanent headquarters in the Somali capital Mogadishu, is the Arab League. The League, however, has remained a minor player in Somalia, and its basic role has been the provision of funding for the negotiation process.

Balance of Resources and Power

The two parties that are continuing to clash have different power levels due to their resources. Before 2008, there was not enough support from the international community and the TFG due to a lack of funding and human resources, and the arms embargo had difficulties in establishing a national security force. The president from back then, Yusuf, was obliged to deploy thousands of troops from Puntland to Mogadishu to sustain the battle against insurgent elements in the southern part of the country. Financial support for this effort was provided by the autonomous region's government. This left little revenue for Puntland's own security forces and civil service employees, leaving the territory vulnerable to piracy and terrorist attacks. After 2008, the TFG was assisted with money, aid, and human combat resources from actors from the international community described previously.

Al-Shabaab on the other hand is said to have been provided with weapons and financial support by Eritrea which has weapons from Belarus, Bulgaria, and France. A reporter from the Voice of America stated that "no one doubts that Eritrea has throughout the last four years been supportive of Al-Shabaab, sending in weapons, sending in trainers and also training hundreds of Al-Shabaab fighters in some of its military camps" (Voice of America, 2011). A Somalia report website suggests that both sides use weapons from Russia and that aid organizations and AMISON soldiers who are left with tons of weapons and no food sell them to survive the harsh conditions. These statements were confirmed by the UN, which estimates that one third of the US arms end up in the hands of Al-Shabaab.

In 2009, the US gave \$2 million to the TFG to buy weapons locally without concern about where they might come from and admitted that it had supplied \$135 million weapons, armored vehicles, logistical support, supplies and training for AMISON. In 2010, the government requested Ethiopia to help with arming.

At present, the AMISON is still the major provider of help to the new government. On the March 7th, 2013 the Chairperson of the African Union Commission welcomed a UN Security Council Resolution extending AMISOM's deployment in Somalia for another year. She stated that: "the African Union remains committed to this mission and will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of Somalia as they work towards rebuilding their country and its institutions" (Africa Press Organization, 2012). Another source of resources is the partial one-year lift of the embargo decided by the U.N. Security Council in March 2013, allowing the government in Mogadishu to buy light weapons to strengthen its security forces.

The representatives of each side do not communicate directly but only through official speeches made by leaders. For example in 2012 Al-Shabaab used their more moderate leader Hassan Dahir Aweys to deliver the message that they have no intention in stopping

the war and are not concerned by the election of the new government. Because the opposition is a recognized terrorist group we cannot talk about negotiation, mediation or arbitration and the relationship will continue to be a hostile one as neither of the parties actually engage in discussion to debate upon the issues and find a solution.

While the TFG communicates to the people mostly by radio, television, and press, Al-Shabaab uses various media in order to spread their propaganda. Besides traditional radio, the internet is the most heavily utilized. Because it is especially popular with today's youth, organizations such as Al-Shabaab are using online forums and chat rooms in order to recruit young followers to their cause. Al-Shabaab's official website, which has since been taken down, featured posts, videos and official statements in English, Arabic and Somali, as well as online classrooms to educate followers. On December 7th, 2011, Al-Shabaab also reportedly began using the Twitter social media network. The move is believed to be an attempt by the group to counteract tweets by allied officials as well as a way to interact with the press.

According to the National Counter Terrorism Calendar Al-Shabaab is not centralized or monolithic in its agenda or goals. Its rank-and-file members come from disparate clans, and the group is susceptible to clan politics, internal divisions, and shifting alliances. Most of its fighters are predominantly interested in the nationalistic battle against the TFG and not supportive of global jihad. Given the issues that caused the conflict in the first place, we cannot expect them to change over time. The main battle is for the scarce resources of the country, which the oppositions consider to be obtained only through power. Al-Shabaab seeks to exploit the vulnerabilities by manipulating clan networks in order to hold on to power. However, the new government is stating that its main goal is to restore peace in order to help the country evolve in a civilized manner by seizing the opportunities that have been provided by the international community.

Present Situation

In 2012, after the new president took over, Al-Shabaab started to lose ground because of the Kenyan forces that started to help tackle the problem. A lot of territories are in government hands now and the UN is even considering lifting the embargo. However, stable peace is still not foreseen as the rebel group is still striking with chaotic bomb attacks and the citizens cannot consider themselves safe. As other extremist groups, it can only be defeated with patience and consistent action. The good news is that the conflict seems to have passed its high point and is slowly proceeding from a crisis to an unstable peace. There are numerous plans for reconstruction and rehabilitation of the country, which the population together with external support are looking forward to implementing.

In the political field, Somalia has had 14 peace processes over 21 years, which have failed to provide anything close to safety. At present, the country finally managed to choose

a president who has been active in the civil service field. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud has worked in several organizations like: Life and Peace Institute, Oxford University, Center for Refugee Studies, International Peace Building Alliance (Interpeace), Transitional Federal Government of Somalia (TFG), UNICEF Somalia and many others. He was the founding member of Peace and Development Party (PDP) in Somalia, the first political party established in Mogadishu. Given the several assassination attempts on him, the Al-Shabaab failed and the people in the country have been chanting new slogans like: "Somalia has been liberated! The new president is here." (IHT Global Opinion, 2012). The issues that need to be confronted immediately are combating organized crime and piracy as a key link in offering security, creating a system that responds quickly to crises, collaborating with international organizations to improve the delivery of aid, and the development of rehabilitation programs. Also putting an end to the Al-Shabaab attacks is crucial as they continue to demolish what is being created.

An operational plan made by the UK Government stated that in the social field the effects of the conflict are reaching 1.36 million people who are internally displaced. Years of conflict, drought and flooding have caused a prolonged humanitarian crisis and last year Somalia was badly affected by the first famine of the twenty first century. Twenty three million people are estimated to be in need of emergency support.

The victims can be split in two, namely the Somali citizens and the international military casualties. The first, we can consider if we take into consideration the reports made by UNICEF, women and children suffer disproportionately. They have been living in the harshest of conditions for over two decades because consecutive years of droughts and conflict have resulted in repeated crop failure, depletion of livestock, rising food prices, deteriorating purchasing power, eroded coping mechanisms and a perpetual state of emergency. One in 10 Somali children die before their first birthday and one in 12 women die from pregnancy related causes. Somalia has some of the largest numbers of unimmunized children in the world and is thus a reservoir of vaccine-preventable diseases such as polio and measles. More than 2.3 million people, almost a third of the population are still in need of aid. A woman has a 1 in 12 chance of dying during her reproductive years According to the U.N. Girls and women face heinous rights' violations: Gender-Based Violence (GBV), early marriage for girls as young as nine, Female Genital Mutilation, rape, etc.

If we take into consideration the other variable, we can report that from 1991 up till the present there have been more than 500,000 casualties consisting of Somali citizens, soldiers from assisting countries like US, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Burundi, Tanzania, E.U., Ghana and Djibouti, Pakistan, Malaysia, and victims from the aid organizations.

In the economic sector, according to a UN report, the unemployment rate for youths in Somalia is one of the highest in the world at 67% among all 14 to 29-year-olds, 61%

among men, and 74% among women. The Somalia Human Development Report 2012, issued by the UN Development Program considers 82% of Somalis to be poor, with 73% living on less than \$2 a day. It also said that 40% of youths are actively looking for work, while 21% are neither working nor in school with unemployment becoming among the biggest threats facing the Somali society. However, the country has potential to develop its economy in services, notably telecoms, and for growth in fisheries and agriculture.

Future Suppositions

The conflict has shifted towards unstable peace in the last 2 years, as new territories have been rescued from the insurgent groups, aid troops have managed to reach those in need and the number of open fire incidents have been reduced.

The apparently positive change in the security situation of Southern Somalia, the transparent election of the president, speaker and cabinet, and the increasingly serious and sustained level of international engagement in Somalia are contributing to a change in the environment and a need to explore new approaches and options which may better reconcile the political interests and perspectives of the people and communities. The challenges which remain are finding new methods of increasing security and defense mechanisms against terrorists, a detailing of the future options and government perspectives, dialog for integration between Somalia and Somaliland and flexible ways of accommodating new free regions with the national context.

The Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) from the UN has drafted a new plan for 2013-2015 which has the purpose to:

- “1. Ensure equal and integrated life-saving assistance to malnourished children and people living in humanitarian emergency and crisis to reduce mortality and destitution.
2. Contribute to improving the quality, reliability, responsiveness, and accessibility of basic services, and promote predictable safety-net programming, thereby meeting the humanitarian needs of vulnerable people and households, and strengthening their resilience to shocks.
3. Invest in household and community resilience through increased access to durable solutions that address livelihood vulnerability, including displacement and climate change – and result in a return to stable and sustainable livelihoods.
4. Strengthen the capacity and coordination of NGOs, affected communities, and local, regional, and national-level authorities to prevent and mitigate risks and implement effective emergency preparedness and response.”

There are many scenarios that can be developed, however, reality will manage to shock us either way. The information presented has been collected from internet articles and

documents written by international organizations. However, we should never fully trust anything without further investigation. It would be advisable to read articles written by the citizens in Somalia to get a better insight on the issue. As so many countries are involved, it would be unwise to consider they don't have hidden agendas. A famous psychiatrist from Somaliland named Dr Abdishakur Sheikh Ali Jowhar, whose death was mysterious and sudden, considered that this is a dark hour for Somalia as the tables could turn and the ones that provide help for the liberation could turn out to be the real enemies. Ethiopia and other African countries have always wanted these territories and given the fact that the country is now weak their demands could be easily accomplished.

If we look deeper into the causes, we can see that the problems have not disappeared. The resources are still scarce, power still conditions access to them, there are still extremist groups and followers who are against the US and consider it guilty for intervening. The Somali president asked for financial international support especially from UK in terms of business investments. He supports the fact that with proper focus on the rich land, marine resources and cheap labor force, a win-win situation can emerge from such a deal. As a result, Prime Minister David Cameron promised to spend £35 million on security and government services as well as £145 million on preventing and coping with future famines. US also promised an extra \$40 million, and the EU committed to an extra 44 million euros. Other nations and organizations also pledged extra resources. Britain wants to initiate a program to train and equip an army of 25,000, double the number of policemen, roll out a modern coastguard, create a system of courts and tax collection as well as establish government ministries. This would seem normal, given the fact that it was one of the countries that contributed to destabilizing Somalia from the very beginning.

A positive future seems possible so far, but only if the situation is kept under control by outside forces long enough for the government to become strong and support itself, there could be a salvation for the people. Because the process is dependent on the goodwill of outside forces, we can also expect them to conspire to drain the country once again of its individuality and take over. We can predict a long struggle to educate the population and diminish religious extremism. Every conflict is different and we cannot, for instance, associate this one to Serbia's comeback and presume that it will be the same here. There is a certainty that the only way the future can become stable is through the elimination of the scarce resource problem which can continue to haunt the country endlessly.

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