

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Malian Crisis and the Lingering Problem of Good Governance

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This article draws on an original survey of 892 displaced persons in Bamako and Mopti/Sevare right before the 2013 presidential elections, which ushered Mali back into multi-party democracy. Our data demonstrates their prioritization of good governance reform as an important solution for the Malian crisis. We then leverage public opinion polling between 2014 and 2015 in Bamako to evaluate how far the government has come in good governance reform. We demonstrate Malians' dissatisfaction with the government's efforts to reduce corruption as well as concerns about instability in the capital.

Introduction

Despite a series of Peace Accords (the most recent being in June 2015¹), the reintroduction of a democratically elected government, and the presence of more than 13,000 military personnel (plus 1900 police officers), the Malian crisis continues. While international news media has put the greatest emphasis on events targeting foreign civilians, such as the November 2015 attack on the Radisson Hotel in Bamako, Mali is experiencing a much broader cycle of violence and insecurity than many realize. The most Northern regional capital of Kidal continues to be out of government reach, much of rural Mali remains outside of government control, and conditions in central Mali continue to worsen. The United Nations has had more of its staff killed in Mali than any other mission in recent years; 75 peacekeepers have

been killed over the last three years alone.¹ Also, there are still some 200,000 Malians living as displaced persons or refugees.² The last municipal elections were held more than seven years ago, while the continuing instability has delayed the current municipal elections for over a year.

This paper emphasizes the attitudes and opinions of Malian citizens to better understand Mali's protracted crisis of insecurity.³ Firstly, it draws on the authors' survey of nearly 900 internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the summer of 2013—the period immediately before presidential elections that ended the junta rule. These displaced persons are among those Malians whose lives were most profoundly affected by the crisis in the North of the country, but also constitute the group that is most likely to be pro-government. For instance, the survey reveals that IDPs are most likely to blame insurgent groups for the start of the crisis. However, when asked about solutions to the Malian crisis, IDPs' responses turn inward toward the Malian state: they suggest good governance reform.

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In light of the IDPs' emphasis on good governance as a solution to the crisis and the current president's anti-corruption platform, this paper analyzes the government's progress on corruption and security since the 2013 elections. While improving the governance in the North is the Malian government's most daunting challenge, the authors examine the government's progress on a more modest goal: improving and addressing corruption and security⁴ in Bamako and Sèvrè. To understand Malian citizens' assessment of their government's performance with regards to improving governance in its own backyard, this paper complements the survey of displaced persons with a more recent survey and focus group data that was collected between 2014 and 2015. The authors also assess how far the Malian government has come in addressing the issue of good governance. The data demonstrates that despite the reintroduction of legislative and presidential elections in 2013, Mali still struggles to govern its territory effectively—even in the capital city. Citizen responses underscore pervasive corruption and insecurity in Bamako in the period leading up to the attacks on the Radisson hotel.

This paper makes two contributions. Firstly, it provides descriptive data on an understudied population—internally displaced persons—at the height of population displacement during the Malian crisis. Demonstrated is the respondents' emphasis on governance deficits as one of the major causes and solutions to the crisis. Second, original survey and focus group data is used to show popular perceptions of pervasive corruption and ongoing insecurity in the current time period from Malians living in the two major cities of Bamako and Mopti/Sèvrè. In doing so, the authors aim to highlight broader governance issues that are often overlooked in efforts to address 'punctuated moments of crisis.'⁵

The first section of this paper provides a brief background on the Malian crises. The second section provides an overview of the research methodology and the timing of the

surveys. A third section describes research design and sampling strategies for the IDP survey in greater detail. The fourth section includes descriptive data on the respondents, the circumstances under which they fled, and the obstacles they confronted in the summer of 2013. A fifth section discusses the respondents' perceptions of antecedents and solutions for the 2012 crisis. Then, a sixth section draws on more recent survey and focus group data to assess the Malian government's progress on reforming governance. The final section concludes with a discussion of key research and policy questions moving forward.

Background: The Malian Crisis

Mali was once considered a democratic exemplar for West Africa. Despite weak human development indicators, Mali was able to successfully organize four presidential elections and manage two peaceful executive alternations since its democratic transition in 1991. In the decades that followed, Mali boasted a relatively free press environment as civil society groups could organize and operate with little interference from the government. However, Mali had always struggled with other indicators of 'good governance' including:⁶ broad participation; strategic country vision from leaders; responsiveness to constituencies and effective execution; accountability to the general public; and equity and impartial application of rule of law (Graham et al 2003: 3). When Malian governance is evaluated along these indicators a clearer picture emerges.

Broad participation in electoral politics has been weak since Mali's transition to multi-party elections in 1992. Despite regular elections, Malian voter turnout rates were among the lowest in Africa, hovering around 40 per cent. Citizens believed there were also substantial deficits in leaders' strategic vision, responsiveness, and accountability. Malians viewed elected leaders with scepticism; many citizens saw politics as merely the battle for electoral power rather than the responsive and the competent management

of the Malian state (Bleck 2015). Elected bureaucratic authorities were viewed as less reliable or legitimate than traditional and religious leaders. Finally, Malians believed that there was biased application of the law. In a 2008 Afrobarometer poll, 82 per cent of respondents trusted traditional authorities as compared to only 43 per cent who trusted the court (Little and Logan 2009: 13).

Troublingly, Malians perceived a further decline in government responsiveness, accountability, and performance of basic state functions in the period leading up to the coup (Whitehouse 2013). Afrobarometer data from surveys in Mali reveal that between President Amadou Toumani Toure's (ATT's) election in 2002 and 2012, respondents reported satisfaction with democracy dropped by half from 63 per cent of respondents to 31 per cent of respondents (Coulibaly and Bratton 2013: 4).

Mali's governance problems were compounded in 2011, when the invasion of Libya sent many former insurgents, who had been working as mercenary fighters under Muammar Gaddafi, back to Mali. In early 2012, insurgent groups launched a series of attacks against installations in Northern Mali. In response to the President's perceived mismanagement of the growing rebellion, a military junta launched a coup in March of 2012; one month before Mali's fifth scheduled presidential elections, the coup disrupted more than 20 years of multi-party elections. The junta, with the backing of civil society groups, justified the power grab in terms of the reestablishment of democracy (Whitehouse 2012). ATT's fallen regime was criticized for both for its lax stance on soldiers returning from Libya as well as its permissiveness of Al Qaeda of the Islamic Maghreb's (AQIM) earlier forays into the region (Gregoire 2013) and, moreover, for allowing pervasive corruption to hollow out the state administration (Hagberg and Kolling 2012: 228).

In the following days, three rebel groups including, Ançar Dine, AQIM, and the Nationalist Movement for the Liberation

of Azawad (MNLA) seized three Northern regions of Mali: Gao, Kidal, and Timbuktu.⁷ The troubles in the North were not new; this was the fourth insurgency since Mali's independence in 1960. In the three previous uprisings, in the early 1960s, 1990s, and 2007–2009 respectively⁸, members of the Tuareg⁹ and Arab communities had taken up arms, citing marginalization by the government. Historically, the government has often coupled negotiation with harsh repression of these populations, which has fostered mistrust between local populations and the government.¹⁰

Analysts have described the Northern region of the country as chronically 'misgoverned' (Dowd and Raleigh 2013; Raleigh and Dowd 2013; Wing 2013). The Malian state struggles to control the various actors competing for power and influence in this region including traditional authorities, traffickers, and insurgent groups. The multiplicity of interests¹¹ is also evident in the hierarchical and competitive nature of different traditional authorities¹² claiming to represent marginalized groups, as well as the diversity of populations that actually inhabit the North. In addition to fractionalized insurgent groups, the presence of drug trafficking networks and jihadi groups¹³ in the Sahel add yet greater complexity to the most recent crisis. As Dowd and Raleigh argue, 'The challenges facing the Sahel are less the result of "ungoverned" space than of "too many overlapping forms of governance/interests"' (2013: 2).

The government has employed a variety of different strategies to manage instability in the North including decentralization, devolution of power to local actors, and targeted funds for Northern populations. However, due to lack of implementation, as well as corruption within federal government and among local elites, these strategies have been unsuccessful (Lackenbauer et al 2015: 36). For instance, Mali launched a national decentralization program, intended to give local communities greater control of their resources and management of governance, but the program waned under

president Amadou Toumani Toure (Wing and Kassibo 2010; Wing 2013). The Agence de Développement du Nord – Mali (ADN), has done little in its mandate to improve Northern infrastructure, and has been described as a ‘vehicle for the clientelistic co-optation of segments of Northern elites’ (van de Walle 2012 citing MSI Report). Solutions for increasing security in the region have been unsuccessful. Previous peace treaties, including the 1992 National Pact and the 2006 Algiers Accords, sought to increase the region’s provision of its own security, while limiting the reach of the Malian Army in Northern territories (Wing 2013: 481). The government has attempted to integrate former rebel fighters into the Malian military with mixed success. After the beginning of the January 2012 uprising, three of four military units operating in Northern Mali (approximately 1,600 men) defected to the MNLA.¹⁴

Timing of the Studies: IDP Survey Summer 2013 and Bamako/Mopti 2014–2015

After a nearly year-long stalemate in January 2013, 4,000 French troops responded to a request from Mali’s government and intervened to push rebel groups back out of the North in Operation Serval.¹⁵ The intervention set up the first of a long round of peace negotiations and paved the way for the 2013 elections. In July 2013, the United Nations established a Multidimensional Stabilization Mission in Mali to succeed Operation Serval (Lackenbauer et al 2015).

Mali held two peaceful rounds of presidential elections in the summer of 2013, which formally ended more than a year of junta rule. The elections garnered an unprecedented turnout of voters.¹⁶ Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (IBK), the former Prime Minister, and later the perennial opposition candidate eventually won in the second round of elections with approximately 70 per cent of the vote. Emerging from a time of crisis, themes of patriotism were evident in IBK’s campaign slogan: ‘le Mali d’abord’ (Mali First) and ‘pour

l’honneur du Mali’ (For Mali’s Honour). A second dominant theme in his platform was his commitment to anti-corruption reform. He launched a campaign early in his mandate that aimed to make 2014 the year to defeat corruption (Whitehouse 2014).

This paper examines the opinions of nearly 900 displaced persons in Bamako and Mopti/Sevare from the summer of 2013 to better understand their experiences of the crisis. The summer of 2013 was the height of population displacement; 353,400 people were internally displaced and nearly 180,000 refugees were living in Mauritania, Niger, and Burkina Faso.¹⁷ The three authors conducted the survey approximately one month prior to the presidential elections, six months after the French intervention, and just after the Ouagadougou Accords had been negotiated. The paper seeks to understand how populations that fled the North understand the causes and solutions for the Malian Crisis. Given IBK’s emphasis on corruption reform during the 2013 elections and IDPs’ emphasis on good governance as one of the major solutions for the crisis, the second part of our analysis takes stock of citizens’ perceptions of corruption and security since the reinstatement of democratic elections. It evaluates how far the Malian state has come in tackling corruption and reforming the state since the new government was elected in the summer of 2013.

To answer this question, we ask a broader population of Malians living in the capital city of Bamako, ostensibly the city in which the government has the most bureaucratic control and military capacity. We draw on a series of public opinion surveys conducted between 2014 and 2015 by the GISSE Institute, headed by one of the co-authors. The survey respondents are drawn from a multi-stage, stratified area sample in Bamako.¹⁸ The survey’s data are complemented by testimony from 38 focus groups conducted in *grins*—informal youth, social clubs ubiquitous in urban Mali—in Bamako and Mopti/Sevare in the months before the Radisson attack (September, October, and

November 2015). Grins are groups who meet regularly around tea, or another beverage, to discuss local news, their personal lives, and to share information. Grin members can be any age, but are stereotypically thought of as dominated by young, unemployed, educated men. Grins are less formalized than official associations, but play an important role in Malian society. A 2014 household survey in Bamako and Mopti suggests that more than 59 per cent of men and 24 per cent of women between the ages of 18 and 45 in these two cities are members of grin (Bleck et al 2016).

Displaced Persons Survey Summer 2013: Identifying the Population of Interest

In order to better understand the evolution of the Malian crisis, we introduce the opinions of Malian citizens who were among those most affected by the crisis: internally displaced persons (IDPs). The survey involved nearly 900 respondents in two cities that held the largest respective numbers of displaced persons: the capital as well as Sévaré and Mopti; 434, of the 900 respondents, were from Bamako and 458 were from Mopti (n = 892). At the height of the occupation in 2012, these twin cities, located in the center of the country, acted as an unofficial dividing line between the government-controlled South and the insurgent-controlled North. The Internally Displaced Monitoring Program (IDMC) estimated 54,000 displaced persons were housed in Mopti and 79,000 in Bamako as of July 2013 (October 2013: 6). At the time of the survey, an estimated 8,000 displaced persons had already returned back to their home region by July 2013 (IDMC 2013: 5).

It is important to note that this survey exclusively targeted displaced persons, and in doing so, reflects a particular political bias among all those who fled their homes. This article does not capture the attitudes of refugees or those who stayed behind in Northern regions, and thus, cannot claim to represent the opinions of all citizens living in the North of the country. For instance, refugees' choice, to flee abroad rather than stay within Malian

borders, suggests that their attitudes toward the government and the crisis are likely to differ from those respondents included in our sample. A World Bank study of refugees, returnees, and displaced persons, suggests that displaced persons are typically more pro-government and more critical of rebel groups than groups that fled to refugee camps in neighbouring countries.¹⁹ Thus, our finding stresses the need for good governance reform, and is even more salient as it comes from the most pro-government population.

There were no comprehensive lists of IDPs in Mali. In speaking with some displaced persons, we realized that many who fled the North were not yet included on official lists. Our sampling strategy combined official lists with random walks to identify homes housing displaced persons as well as snowball samples²⁰ of IDPs identified by other respondents. Firstly, in consultation with local organizations working with IDPs, we selected each of the 'densely populated' zones of displaced persons in Bamako. These were typically newer neighbourhoods in Bamako (Commune 5, 6) and the majority of neighbourhoods in Mopti and Sévaré. We have no reasons to believe that the responses of those displaced persons housed in less dense areas would differ systematically from our sample.

Due to the smaller size of Mopti and Sévaré, the survey was able to include the majority of neighbourhoods in these cities. The enumerators conducted a random walk in these areas in order to generate a list of houses/compounds that had at least one member who was a displaced person. In Bamako, these lists were supplemented with lists from local authorities and international organizations (humanitarian NGOs and municipal authorities). In Mopti/Sévaré, we selected an additional 28 people from the local refugee camp.²¹ During the census, enumerators noted the potential respondents' location, names, region of origin, and contact information (mobile/cell phone numbers). The surveyors combined the official lists of

displaced persons with the list of households identified during the walk (that housed at least one displaced persons) to generate a master list.

Then, potential respondents' households were randomly selected. Since address information is often unreliable or unclear, two supervisors in each region helped relocate the households by calling telephone numbers collected during the census exercise. In Bamako, the surveyors experienced difficulty getting in touch with the respondents by telephone and re-identifying households, and in some instances were forced to complement our list of randomly households with snowball samples as provided by those respondents who were randomly selected.

Once in a compound that housed displaced persons, enumerators explained the aims of the study and then asked for a list of all displaced persons living in the home. Then, all displaced persons (18 years of age or older) who were present, and provided consent, were asked to select a playing card.²² The participant that selected the highest playing card would become the respondent. In compounds that housed more than five displaced persons, two people were allowed to draw cards, but this occurred in a minority of cases.

Due to the sensitive political situation and vulnerable nature of displaced populations, it was deemed best to use other displaced Malians as enumerators. Recruitments were conducted in Bamako and Mopti, which selected 13 men and women, six from Bamako and seven from Mopti, to participate in a four-day training in Bamako. Some of these enumerators were university or secondary students, 18 or older, while others were teachers whom had been displaced from the North. The enumerators included members of the various ethnic communities—Songhai, Peuhl, and Tuareg—and hailed from all three Northern regions: Gao, Kidal, and Timbuktu. In most instances, respondents were interviewed by someone from their same ethnic/linguistic group. Due to

the stress and hardship of displacement, the importance of using peer-enumerators as interviewers in order to facilitate trust and encourage honest responses cannot be overstated. The peer-enumerator approach increased the quality of the data, and reduced non-response rates. All interviews were conducted using i-phones/i-touches and i-survey software.

The Experience of Displacement

Demographic characteristics of IDPs

Before presenting their attitudes on pressing political questions, this paper offers some initial insight into the factors that forced respondents to flee as well as the obstacles they have confronted in their host communities. At the time of the survey, 363 respondents were living in host families and 501 were renting their own home/concession, while 28 respondents were interviewed in a refugee camp in Mopti; 460 respondents were men and the remaining 432 were female. Their ages ranged from 18 to 80. **Figure 1** shows the distribution of respondents by self-identified ethnic group. The majority of the respondents were Songhai (n = 565 or 63 per cent), but 15 per cent of respondents identified as Tuareg (n = 142), seven per cent as Peuhl (n = 59), six per cent as Bella (n = 52), four per cent as Bambara (n = 37), and smaller numbers of respondents identified as Soninke, Dogon, Senoufo, Bozo, and Arab. Interviews suggest that larger numbers of Tuareg and Arab respondents are living as refugees than as displaced persons in Malian borders. This is consistent with findings from "Forced Displacement of and Potential Solutions for IDPs and Refugees in the Sahel, 2013" which suggest that the composition of Malian refugees is Tuareg (54%), Arab (27%), Songhai (4%), Peuhl (2%), and Other (3%). The estimated distribution of displaced persons in Bamako: Songhai (82%), Bambara (5%), Bella (4%), Bozo (3%), Dogon (2%) and Segou: Songhai (45%), Tuareg (15%), Peuhl (10%), Bella (10%), Bambara (7%) (Enquête sur les Conditions de vie et la Situation Abri

des Personnes Déplacées Internes au Mali – NRC). No secondary estimates of the ethnic distribution of displaced peoples were available for Mopti.

The majority of respondents were from Gao (n = 296) and Timbuktu (n = 190), but the entire population hailed from diverse *cercles* including the following: Mopti, Bourem, Tessalit, Menaka, Asongo, Diré, Nianfunké, Douentza, Abeibara, Rarhous, Goundam, Douentza, Tenekou, Youwarou, Gossi, Bamba, and Bambara Maode.

Seventy per cent of the respondents were from urban centres in these zones and only 30 per cent travelled from villages. The large percentage of respondents fleeing urban zones suggests that rural residents were less likely to have migrated out of their villages during the crisis, or at a minimum, are less represented in these two major host cities.²³

Consistent with demographics of the regions, 97 per cent of respondents identified as Muslim and three per cent identified as Christian. Sixty-eight per cent of

respondents were married, 25 per cent were single, four per cent were widowed, and two per cent were divorced. However, the population of respondents had obtained substantially higher levels of education as compared to the national averages. Eighteen per cent of respondents had not attended any school, four per cent had received literacy training, 19 per cent had received exclusively Qur'anic schooling, and 24 per cent attended primary school. Eleven per cent of respondents had attended university, while an additional 22 per cent attended secondary/high school. This compares to 2008 Afrobarometer estimates that less than ten per cent of Malians have attended secondary school and only two per cent have attended any university schooling. While a measure of household wealth was unavailable, the findings above, including migration from urban zones and migration among the most educated, suggest that those whom were able to leave their homes for Bamako and Sevaré had greater access to resources for mobilization.

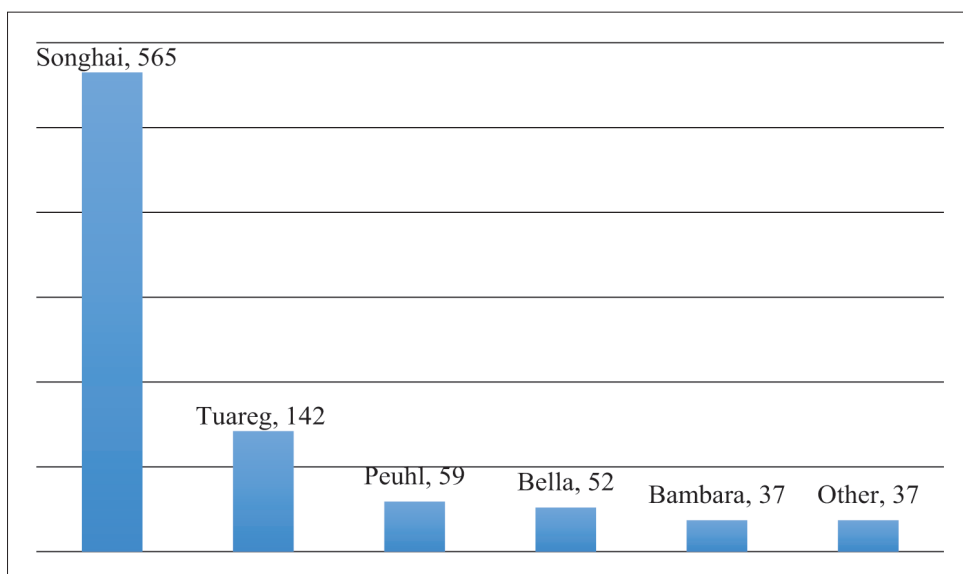


Figure 1: Number of Respondents by Stated Ethnic Group (N = 892)ⁱ. Only eight respondents refused to participate in the survey; we credit the low non-response rate to the fact that we used other displaced persons as enumerators.

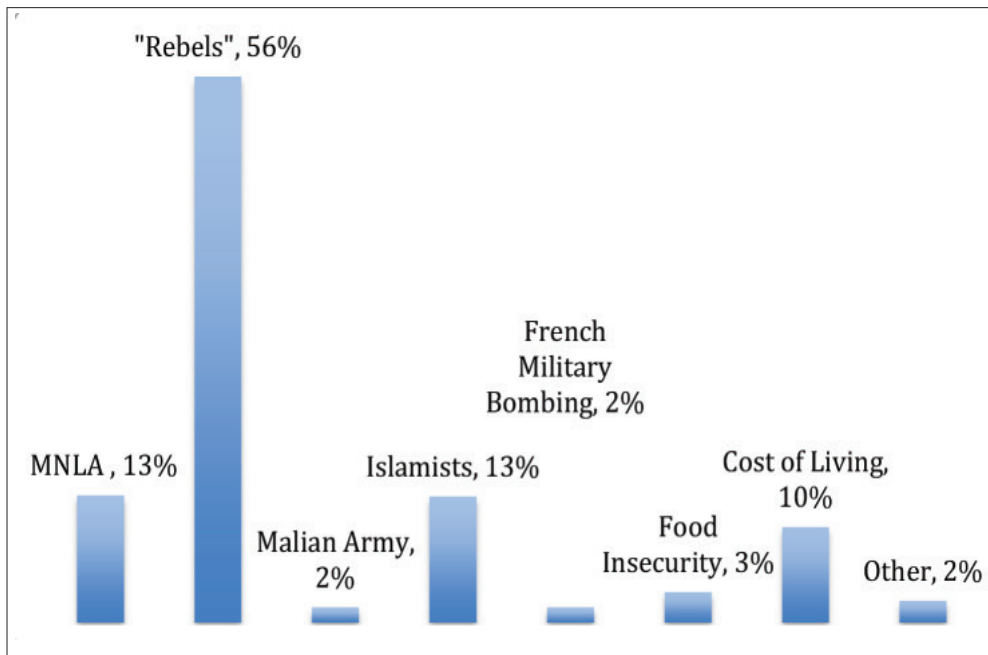


Figure 2: Stated Reasons for Leaving Zone of Origin.

Causes and Timing of Displacement

Since these respondents were confronted with multiple crises, including the initial occupation, food insecurity in 2012, and the French intervention in 2013, the authors were interested to know what factors ultimately provoked them to leave their home area. The surveyors asked an open-ended question, 'Why did you leave your home?' and later categorized the responses in different codes. As shown in **Figure 2**, the vast majority of respondents, 82 per cent, claimed to leave because of insecurity related to rebel groups.

A little over half of respondents were named 'rebels,' without naming specific groups (56 per cent), while another 13 per cent were named the MNLA and 13 per cent of respondents were named the Islamists explicitly. Additionally, three per cent of respondents cited food insecurity, ten per cent claimed they fled due to increases in household prices, two per cent blamed the Malian Army, and two per cent gave other reasons.

Respondents were also asked about their timeline for displacement. In order to help respondents to identify the time period in which they fled, they were provided with a list of prominent events to situate their departure. They were asked if they left a) before the rebel occupation (March/April 2012), b) between the occupation and the fight between Islamists and MNLA at Gao/ destruction of the mausoleums at Timbuktu (June/July 2012), c) between this period and French intervention (July–December 2012), or d) after the French intervention (January 2013). Consistent with the claims that they left due to rebel insecurity, 70 per cent of respondents claimed to leave their homes between March–June/July 2012. This is the period when the three rebel groups controlled substantial amounts of territory.

All but eleven respondents travelled with other members of their family. The modal respondent came with eight family members. Eighty-eight per cent of respondents still had family in the North. At the time

of the survey, 44 per cent had family members who had begun returning back North. Approximately, seven per cent of respondents claimed to have family members living abroad in Mauritania, Niger, Algeria, and Burkina Faso.

Almost 30 per cent of survey respondents claimed that they were not included on any government lists of displaced persons. Some respondents explained they were not on lists because they were unable to sign up, while others feared putting their names on government lists. We note that while 72 per cent of respondents said that they were registered on lists of displaced persons, 63 per cent said they did not receive any form of humanitarian assistance.²⁴ Many respondents expressed frustration about waiting in line to be registered on multiple lists and then receiving no tangible assistance.

The majority of respondents felt that their region of origin was marginalized by the Malian state as compared to other regions in the country. The surveyors asked respondents to name the four most marginalized regions in Mali—73 per cent cited Timbuktu, 71 per cent cited Gao, and 69 per cent Kidal. The next highest region named was Mopti with

44 per cent of the votes. This data demonstrates a shared sentiment of marginalization despite this population's largely pro-government (and anti-secessionist) orientation.

Causes of instability and solutions for Peace Security in Northern Mali

The respondents were asked to name factors that they felt were driving the current crisis. As shown in **Figure 3**, consistent with expectations, the respondents largely blamed the separatist group the MNLA (National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad). Sixty-one per cent of respondents cited the MNLA as a cause of the crisis. In addition, 44 per cent of respondents named poor governance and corruption, six per cent mentioned drought and famine, 16 per cent mentioned rebel groups other than the MNLA, 15 per cent blamed ATT, and eight per cent had other suggestions. These suggestions ranged from ending discrimination by the state and southern ethnic groups, French intervention in Libya, favouritism toward the Tuareg/MNLA, and the lack of domestic military capacity. Note that poor governance and corruption were cited as the second most popular reason for the crisis—even among these 'pro-state' respondents.

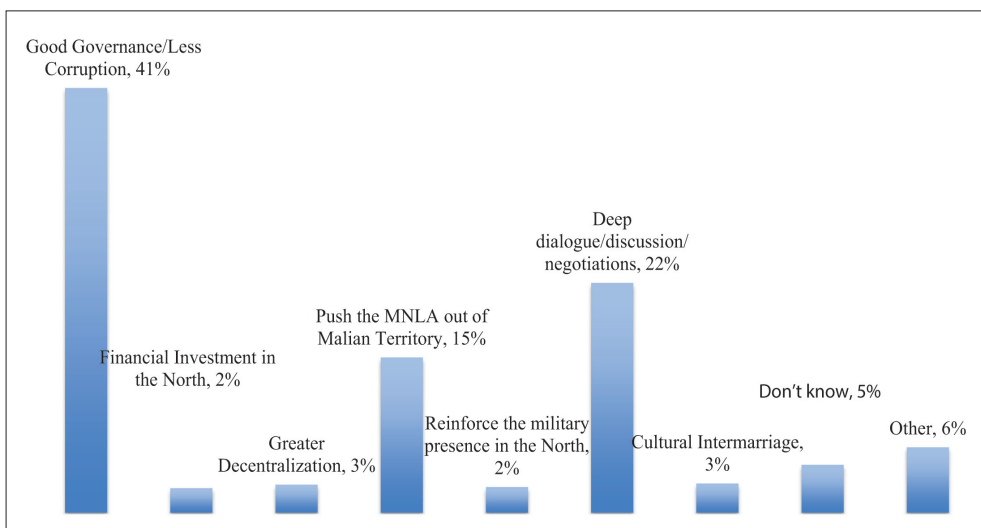


Figure 3: In your opinion, what solutions do you recommend for solving this crisis?

When asked respondents for solutions to this complex and multi-faceted crisis, good governance and reducing corruption was the most frequently cited response (cited by 41 per cent of respondents). It is striking that the largest number of respondents named improving the quality of governance, a policy prescription applicable to the whole of Mali, rather than specific policy initiatives for the North.

We adopted a data collection strategy from Bleck and Michelitch (2015), which allows respondents to record an open message to the US and Malian government.²⁵ Below are a few of these messages, which provide insight into why citizens stress the importance of government reform:

‘All that I know is that the country has been poorly governed for a very long time and these are the consequences of that poor governance that catch us again, there is no longer security in this country and not even decent lodging to live in’ (Respondent 1217).

‘I ask the government leaders to be loyal, to work hard for their country to ensure that peace can triumph in Mali, to stop corruption, and the nepotism and to inform citizens about what is going on’ (Respondent 1211).

‘My message – it’s a transparent management of all that belongs to displaced persons on the part of the state and international

organizations and the other part – to put a stop to the corruption and it’s that [corruption] which is the base of all the problems that we are living today’ (Respondent 1819).

‘I tell them to end bad management, corruption, and impunity. You must help us, because we are suffering’ (Respondent 1970).

The quotes above link poor governance and corruption with the broader security crisis. Citizens’ emphasis on corruption at the root of the crisis is consistent with other public opinion polls in Mali. Respondents in a December 2013 Afrobarometer poll—a nationally representative survey—cited ‘corruption’ as the second most important cause of the occupation and conflict in Northern Mali; foreign terrorists were the top-cited cause (Coulibaly 2014: 3). Relatedly, an Afrobarometer poll conducted a year earlier in the five ‘southern’ regions of Mali revealed that a combined 48 per cent of respondents cited governance-related variables: lack of patriotism among leaders, weakness of the state, or incompetence of the political class as the principal cause of the crisis (Coulibaly and Bratton 2013: 6).²⁶

These concerns about corruption were reflected in displaced persons’ priorities for political leadership moving forward. In anticipation of the 2013 elections, the

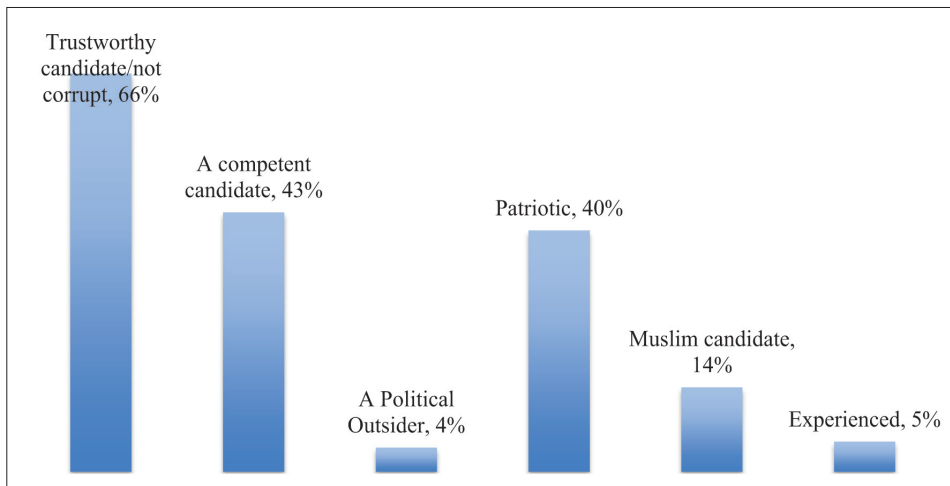


Figure 4: Most Desired Character Traits of a New President.

enumerators asked an open-ended question about particular character traits that their future president should have. As highlighted in **Figure 4**, most respondents wanted a trustworthy candidate who was not corrupt; someone who was competent, and patriotic. Again, respondents seemed to prioritize the theme of good governance.

As mentioned above, respondents were provided with an opportunity to record messages to President Barack Obama of the United States, and Malian Interim President Diounounda Traore that we later transcribed and made available to representatives of the U.S. and Malian governments. Eighty-five per cent of respondents chose to deliver a message, while 15 per cent declined. After transcription, each message was coded for applicable categories that were raised by the respondent. This means that a message could contain mentions of various categories.

As **Figure 5** demonstrates, the theme of peace, security, and reconciliation was named most often followed by the need for humanitarian assistance (food, money, etc). The third most common message was assistance for refugees in returning to their homes. However, respondents raised many other issues, including the need to increase job opportunities in their zones, reconstructing the North, liberating the North from rebel control,

messages of thanks for the foreign intervention, appeals for non-discrimination, the need for elections, the need for good governance, rule of law, unity, increasing Malian military strength, integrating militia forces into the Malian army, and some resistance to proposed agreements with the MNLA over Kidal.

These messages remind us of the tremendous hardships suffered by many of the Malian people since 2012 as well as the enormous challenges facing the government since that time.

Progress on Corruption and Security since 2013?

President IBK was elected in part due to his anti-corruption platform. In regards to how well the current government has kept its promises in the two years since the elections, the survey data from Bamako demonstrates the declining popular approval of the Malian government's management of corruption in Bamako. **Figure 6** compares two similar questions that ask for respondents' assessments of the government's campaign against corruption in surveys that were conducted in February 2014 (n = 1238) and then again in October 2015 (n = 1060). More than a year and a half after the initial poll, and nearly two years since IBK launched his anti-corruption campaign, support for the government's

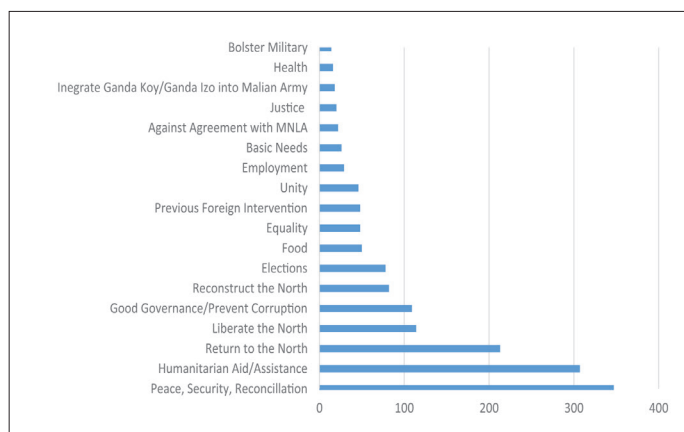


Figure 5: IDP Messages Transmitted to Malian and US Governments by Category.

handling of corruption in the capital has dropped by 50 per cent.

Everyday corruption continues to affect Malians lives, generating frustration with the anti-corruption campaign. Even when Malians were relatively optimistic about their president's efforts to fight corruption, many respondents regularly faced situations that required bribes and side-payments. The Institute's February 2014 poll revealed that nearly 14 per cent of Bamako residents claimed they were obliged to pay an official, police, judge, civil servant, or another person to resolve a situation during the prior month. The decline in support for anti-corruption efforts may reflect the lack of progress on these types of daily corruption that Malians regularly confront.

This type of petty corruption is directly linked to state weakness and insecurity. We

remind readers that a primary critique of the deposed president (Amadou Toumani Toure) was that he had allowed nepotism and corruption to cripple the Malian army and police (Sylla 2012: 58). It is important to evaluate how much progress the Malian armed forces and police are making on these indicators. In Bamako, petty corruption can translate into the ability to offer a bribe instead of having to show proper identification or to avoid a vehicle search at police checkpoints. Even more troubling, the willingness to sell the state's munitions or to use funding intended to strengthen state capacity for personal gain deepens insecurity.

According to the October 2015 poll, only 37 per cent of respondents thought that the president was doing a good job in quelling insecurity. While large-scale attacks targeting foreigners attract news headlines, the

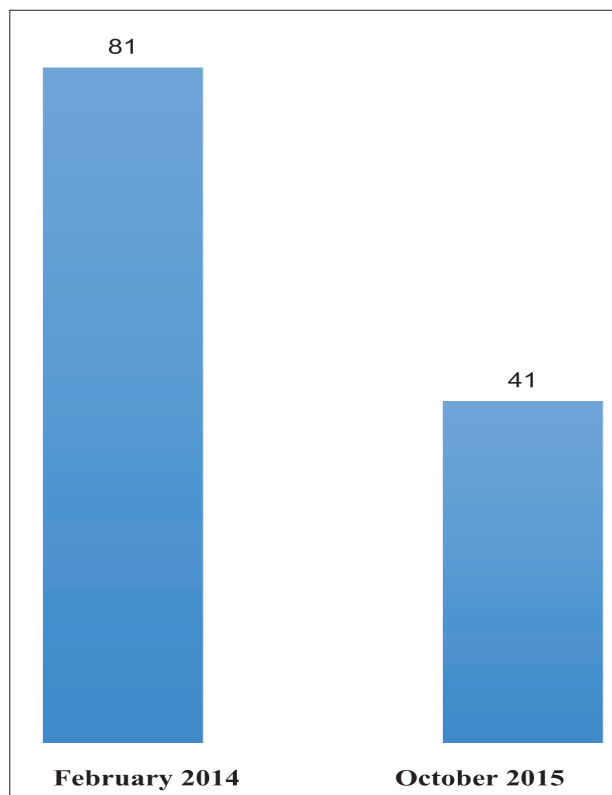


Figure 6: Percentage of Respondents with Positive Assessment of the Government Anti-Corruption Campaign.

daily insecurities that plague Malians demonstrate the lack of rule of law in the capital. In a November 2014 Bamako poll (n = 1,050), ten per cent of respondents stated that a *Djakarta* (a local term for a popular type of motorcycle) had been stolen from their family compounds in the previous year. This public opinion data is consistent with focus group testimony gathered by one author's research team in the fall of 2015 in Bamako and Sévaré/Mopti. The team interviewed members of 38 different grins. These focus groups confirmed the narrative of lawlessness in the two cities. When asked whether 'the country is more or less secure since the presidential elections in 2013', many respondents resoundingly said: there is no security right now. Only seven grins out of 38 had any dissenting member(s) who thought that the security situation had improved since 2013. In the remaining 31 grins (including nearly 300 participants),²⁷ there was not a single member who thought that the security situation was better since the reinstatement of Malian democracy. The majority of respondents thought that the security situation was worse. They pointed to the increased incidence of armed attacks (including during daylight hours), motorcycles in communal courtyards in Sévaré/Mopti being at risk of theft, the circulation of arms in Sévaré/Mopti and increased attacks on boutiques and houses in both cities. The authors note that in the months since the survey and focus groups, the security situation in Sevaré and Mopti has deteriorated even further.²⁸

Discussion: Prospects for Better Governance and Security in Mali

The state's inability to govern these dense urban zones raises questions about its ability to govern its vast expanse of territory moving forward. As the Malian government and international donors seek to understand solutions to the current crisis in Mali and how to prevent other similar tragedies in the future, the testimony of ordinary citizens suggests the need for a

broader reflection on the evolution of corruption and governance in state institutions. While even the strongest states are vulnerable to acts of terror, forgetting the importance of a capable and well-governed state risks trapping Mali in a cycle of crisis. Good governance is not an elixir for state weakness or the increasing insurgent threats to the Sahel, but it is a necessary condition for creating the foundations for a sustainable peace.

Initial optimism around IBK's ability to 'restore peace in Mali' has dwindled; the population understands that this will be a difficult task. However, the current president is also judged to be doing poorly on corruption reform. As the polling numbers demonstrate, support for IBK's performance is declining in the capital city. In addition to his personal involvement in corruption scandals, including the purchase of a plane, there has also been scrutiny about corruption and embezzlement charges surrounding the purchase of military equipment.²⁹ There have been certain reformers who have been appreciated by the Malian public, but it remains unclear how much institutional support these leaders are receiving. Mody Berthe, the Director of the Gendarmerie (2013–2015), had attempted to reform recruitment practices to make them more merit-based and transparent, but was ushered out of office (given a new post as special representative to the UN Secretary General in Burundi).³⁰ Similarly, the National Police Director who tried to address corruption within his department was also relieved of his duties.³¹ Future research should evaluate progress on corruption reform in these government structures.

Despite the pervasive corruption and insecurity, Malians have historically remained optimistic about the importance of democratic elections. In our 2013 poll, an optimistic 90 per cent of IDPs thought that free and transparent elections could improve the situation in Mali. These results are consistent with the Afrobarometer December 2012 survey results that show more than 80 per cent of Malians committed to elections, despite

increasing scepticism about democracy as practiced in Mali (Bratton and Coulibaly 2013). However, the next few years will test Malians' commitment to democratic governance in the context of instability and weak institutions. There is a sense in Bamako that much of the population feels deceived by the ruling regime, and that the political leadership lacks political vision for the country. Unfortunately, this feeling pervades citizens' views much of the elite class who are seen as struggling over paths to personal enrichment through state coffers rather than potential agents of political change.

Parties continue to struggle to build strong connections to voters. RPM holds 115 of 147 seats in the National Assembly,³² but shows signs of fragmentation.³³ There is infighting among party leaders as RPM candidates are competing against each other to gain ground in Bamako's various communes in anticipation of municipal elections. Soumaila Cisse, the runner up in the 2013 presidential elections, remains the chief of opposition. In an October 2015 public opinion poll in Bamako, respondents gave Cisse a score of 4.36 out of ten score when evaluating his role as the chief of opposition.³⁴ Moussa Mara, former Prime Minister and head of the political party Yelema (meaning change in Bamana) is currently polling in third position, but lacks support in the rural regions.

The events of 2012 demonstrated the importance of maintaining democratic rule. The junta's takeover led to a sharp reduction in foreign aid, which has traditionally played a vital role in Mali's overall budget. Further, the power vacuum created by the coup allowed insurgent groups to take nearly two thirds of the country's territory. The junta leader, Captain Sanogo, initially promised to wipe away corruption, but was later found guilty of embezzling large sums of money from the Malian state as well as the extrajudicial killing of Malian soldiers seen as challengers.³⁵ Given recent history, it seems unlikely that Malians will support another coup. However, current malaise with the governing system offers citizens little

incentive to try to engage with and improve democratic institutions. As has been the case for much of Mali's democratic history, some of the most substantive gains by the population have happened through the rubric of contentious politics. For instance, a recent citizen-led online campaign and protests were able to eliminate side payments and cut the processing time for passports from many months to four days.³⁶ Unfortunately, there is little evidence that comparable systematic institutional reforms are taking place.

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Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

Notes

¹ Other works stressing the role of poor governance in generating the Malian crisis include Bergmaschi (2014), van Vilet (2013), Wing (2013), van de Walle (2012), and Dowd and Raleigh (2013).

² Nearly half of the Northern population was displaced by the conflict. To our knowledge, this is one of the three surveys that include displaced persons and has the largest sample. The other prominent studies, include a World Bank Project which, examines the attitudes of 100 IDPs and 180 returnees as well as 220 refugees (Etang et al 2015) as well as Afrobarometer's 2013 survey, which includes 219 displaced persons as a part of its sample (Coulibly 2014).

- ³ It joins an emerging literature emphasizing Malian perceptions of the crisis (eg Etang et al (2015), Coulibaly and Bratton (2013), Coulibaly (2014), and Bleck and Michelitch (2015).
- ⁴ We acknowledge the many definitions, dimensions, and rubrics for evaluating good governance (Grindle 2004). We emphasize perceptions of basic security, since it is thought to be a foundational condition for good governance (Grindle 2007), and also recognize that poor governance can exacerbate insecurity. We focus on corruption due to its inclusion in most good governance platforms (Grindle 2004), but also its visibility to average citizens.
- ⁵ We borrow this language from Bleck and Michelitch (2015) who highlight rural Malians' definition of the crisis as an ongoing crisis of state weakness in contrast to the international community's focus on the junta and occupation.
- ⁶ We draw on Graham et al's (2013) five principles of good governance for illustrative purposes.
- ⁷ For a comprehensive overview of rebel groups and their goals, see: Thurston, Alexander and Andrew Lebovich. 2013. "A Handbook on Mali's 2012–2013 Crisis." Northwestern University Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa (ISITA), Working Paper No. 13-001, September 2013. For an overview of events related to the coup see Whitehouse (2013).
- ⁸ For a comprehensive account of these rebellions as well as pre-independence uprisings and historical intra and inter community conflict, see Konate (2012) and Ag Sidalamine (2012).
- ⁹ We note that substantial portions of the Tuareg population have remained pro-government. See Gregoire (2013: 6).
- ¹⁰ For a more in depth discussion of the history of Tuareg Rebellion, see Baz Lecocq (2010) and Humphreys and Ag Mohammed (2005).
- ¹¹ See Ag Sidalamine (2012: 81) for a description of the many actors contributing to the initial uprising in the North.
- ¹² Konate (2012) notes feudalism within traditional societies in the North that make it difficult to ensure that traditional actors are actually accountable and responsive of the populations they claim to represent.
- ¹³ For a description of evolution of Al Qaeda of the Islamic Maghreb's (AQIM's) presence in the region including its strategy of integration into local communities and relationship to trafficking networks see Lounnas (2012). See Boas and Torheim (2013) and Tinti (2014) on how trafficking has changed the nature of the current crisis. Challenges spring from the state's capacity to manage these actors, but also elite actors' integration into these networks for personal gain.
- ¹⁴ Wing (2013: 481) citing Nossiter, Schmitt, and Mazzetti (2013).
- ¹⁵ During the intervention, the French Army pushed rebel groups out of Northern Malian territory with the exception of Kidal (Gregoire 2013). The French government launched a regional program Operation Barkhane in July 2014, which includes Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad.
- ¹⁶ Mali's presidential turnout had never previously exceeded 50 per cent. In 2013, there was decent turnout in the Northern regions except for Kidal. In second round voting, Gao and Timbuktu recorded voting rates of 59 per cent and 52 per cent respectively, but Kidal recorded a voting rate of only 19 per cent. (Calculated using turnout data from: http://www.eods.eu/library/EUEOM%20FR%20MALI%20PRESIDENTIAL%2017.10.2013_fr.pdf. See Bruce Whitehouse's blog for description of optimism around elections: <http://bridgesfrombamako.com/2013/08/02/malis-election-round-one/>).
- ¹⁷ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre: <http://www.internal-displacement.org>

/8025708F004CE90B/28httpCountries29/117B7B260B5E0E64C12579A500621292?OpenDocument. World Bank and UNHCR 2013 Forced Displacement of and Potential Solutions for IDPs and refugees in the Sahel Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania & Niger Global Program on Forced Displacement.

¹⁸ For a full list of studies, see author's website: www.gisse.org.

¹⁹ <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/892311468184426978/Socioeconomic-impact-of-the-crisis-in-north-Mali-on-displaced-people>.

²⁰ A snowball sample is a method in which existing participants recruit future participants from among people whom they know. In this case, we were asking participants to identify other IDPs. We limited the total number of affiliated respondents that could be supplied by each randomly selected respondent to three people.

²¹ This number was determined by the total number of refugees living in the camps relative to all the other refugees in Mopti.

²² We alternated each selection by gender.

²³ In Northern Mali, it is estimated that only eight per cent of the population lives in towns with more than 10,000 people (<http://www.oecd.org/swac/northernmaliataglace.htm>). Nationally, less than 40 per cent of all Malians live in urban zones (Farvacque-Vitkovic et al 2007).

²⁴ Four respondents were unable to say if their families were on a list.

²⁵ We collected verbal messages, transcribed them into French, and then made them publicly available as well as sending them to targeted policy-makers. The messages are categorized in **Figure 5**. The full transcript of messages can be found at: www.jaimiebleck.com/data.html.

²⁶ As compared to only eleven per cent of respondents who cited foreign terrorists. An additional 36 per cent cited other causes.

²⁷ Membership of each specific grin ranged from three to 18 members.

²⁸ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mali-violence-idUSKCN100309>.

²⁹ Description of one of the more recent corruption scandals here: <http://www.france24.com/en/20141003-france-mali-ex-defence-minister-maiga-corsica-godfather-tomi>.

³⁰ Author interview, Bamako, November 2015.

³¹ As reported (<http://maliactu.net/malien-un-mot-le-retour-du-laisser-aller/>) by Bruce Whitehouse's Bridges over Bamako blog on October 19, 2015: <https://bridgesfrombamako.com>.

³² <http://mali-web.org/politique/le-rpm-vers-un-congres-tres-houleux-en-avril-mai-un-duel-de-titans-sannonce-entre-bocary-treta-abdoulaye-idrissa-maiga-et-abdrmane-sylla>.

³³ <http://mali-web.org/politique/le-rpm-vers-un-congres-tres-houleux-en-avril-mai-un-duel-de-titans-sannonce-entre-bocary-treta-abdoulaye-idrissa-maiga-et-abdrmane-sylla>.

³⁴ Sondage de notation, par la population, du président IBK et des différents acteurs au Mali, <http://www.gisse.org/pages/prestations/enquetes-1.html>.

³⁵ <http://www.maliweb.net/societe/exactions-detournements-fonds-sanogod-devant-justice-et-ses-complices-480422.html>.

³⁶ Démantèlement de la mafia autour du passeport malien La virtuose Rokia Traoré monte au créneau: <http://www.maliweb.net/societe/demantelement-de-la-mafia-autour-du-passeport-malien-la-virtuose-rokia-traore-monte-au-creneau-1066652.html>.

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