

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGES OF AND PROSPECTS FOR PEACE SUPPORT OPERATIONS TO
ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE HUMAN SECURITY AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT:
THE CASE OF MINUSMA IN MALI**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the challenges of and prospects for achieving sustainable human security and human development in Mali through United Nations peace support operations. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) was established in 2013 following the Tuareg Rebellion and the activities of Islamist armed groups that wrecked havoc in the West African country in 2012. One of the major objectives of peace support operations is undoubtedly to achieve human security. The United Nations Assembly Declaration of the High Level Meeting reaffirmed that the three main pillars of the organisation are: international peace and security, human rights and development. Human security and development are embodied in all these pillars; hence the UN Peace Support Operations in Mali was meant to achieve sustainable human security and development. Conclusions drawn from this paper are that UN PSO in Mali through MINUSMA has traversed contested terrain due to a number of social, economic and political challenges. This is not to say the mission has been a fiasco. There are, however, indications that the operation could materialise to the desired level if the challenges are dealt with accordingly. The researcher used books, newspaper articles, journal articles and desktop research to gather data for this research.

Keywords: Challenges, prospects, peace support operations, sustainable human security, human development, Mali, MINUSMA

INTRODUCTION

The MINUSMA deployed in Mali on 1 July 2013 following the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution 2100 of 25 April 2013 to achieve sustainable human security and development has been confronted with various challenges. This followed the 2012 rebellion by Islamic fundamentalist groups in northern Mali and the subsequent *coup d'état*. The mission was established to protect civilians, support political process, to monitor human rights, to create conditions of for humanitarian assistance and the return of displaced persons. It has faced political, economic and social challenges hindering the mission from achieving the desired goals. As a result the human security situation has not been completely improved despite considerable progress. In spite of the inherent challenges MINUSMA has encountered in abetting the humanitarian situation in Mali, there are prospects for maximising the progress if the shortcomings are addressed according and in good faith. For the mission to be successful, parties involved in peace support operations, those that have the potential for assisting as well as Mali itself should redress the various shortcomings complicating the mission.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Peace Support Operations

Peace support operations is a military term that entails multifunctional and multinational operations conducted impartially in support of a UN mandate involving diplomatic efforts, humanitarian organisations or their agencies and military operations (Peace Support Operations Handbook, 2000). In its broadest term, it denotes conflict prevention, peacekeeping, peace building, peacemaking, peace enforcement and humanitarian operations. The objective of peace support operations is to achieve lasting peace. As specified in its mandate, the objectives of peace support operations through MINUSMA in Mali are to provide to support political process and conduct security related stabilisation tasks with a view to protect people in major population centres and communication lines, protecting civilians, monitoring human rights, creating an environment conducive for humanitarian assistance and the return of internally displaced persons and peaceful elections (MINUSMA Background, February 2016). In accordance with the mandate of the mission, achievement of human security is one of the objectives of peace support operations in Mali.

As stated in the mandate of MINUSMA, among other things the mission seeks to monitor human rights, protect civilians and establish and conditions favorable for humanitarian support and the return of those who were internally displaced due to the activities of Islamic insurgents. There is no doubt therefore that the mission intends to achieve sustainable human security and development in Mali. Even the other objectives which appear distant to the achievement of human security work towards the achievement the security of individuals. For instance, the monitoring of political processes to achieve peaceful elections works for the benefit of none other than individuals.

Human security, human rights and human development

Human security is a concept of relatively recent origins. It was first used in the 1994 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Report. It is conceptualised as the protection of individuals and communities from effects of internal violence (Annan,

2001: 1). Gomez and Gasper (2013: 1) defined human security as people's freedom from fear and freedom from want. It emerged as a response to the rigid state-centred conception that conceived security only in purely militaristic terms. Central to the human-centred approach to security is the understanding that people have the right to life, dignity, safety and freedom from violent conflicts and other security threats. The concept emerged to broaden the understanding of security to encompass the individual as the referent object of security. Human security is said to have two main dimensions. First, it is understood as people's safety from chronic threats such as hunger, diseases and repression (UNDP Human Development Report, 1994). Second, it is understood as the protection of people from abrupt and spiteful destructions in the patterns of daily life in households, workplaces and communities (Ibid).

Human security, human rights and human development are distinct concepts which are explicitly interwoven in a simple manner. While human security is concerned with people's security, human rights denotes the entitlements people have as a virtue of being human and human development is concerned with the enlarging people's choices and freedoms. Though the three are not identical, their referent object is the same; the human being. It can be argued that these three concepts are identical and appear different due to terminological variance. To substantiate such a claim, one could base the argument on the apparent fact that they intend to achieve a single goal; the welfare of the individual. Be that as it may, these three concepts are identified as different.

Background of the study

The deployment of MINUSMA was a welcome preventive diplomatic strategy to deal with the threats to human security posed by political instability caused by activities of Islamic extremist groups in northern Mali. Since the establishment of the mission in 2013, lasting peace has not yet been achieved. In June 2014, the UNSC adopted another resolution, 2164, to improve the security situation by focusing on guaranteeing security, stabilisation and protection of civilians through assisting national dialogue, reconciliation, reestablishment of state authority, reconstructing of the security sector and protection of human rights in Mali (Ibid). The adoption of the second resolution shows that creating conditions for human security was central to the mandate of MINUSMA.

However, the attack on Radisson Blu Hotel in Mali's capital city Bamako on 20 November 2015 by Islamist militants could be interpreted as an indication that the sustainability of the human security situation in Mali could still be complex. The Islamist militants held hostage 170 guests at the hotel, killed 22 people and wounded 14 people before the arrival of the Special Forces (BBC News, 26 November 2015). Questions should be asked pertaining to the means the insurgents used to get to the hotel when MINUSMA forces were present in Mali. Resolution 2100 emphasised the protection of major population centres. Even though Radisson Blu Hotel could not be classified as a major population centre, the fact that it is an international hotel that accommodates a considerable number of people from various countries could have been identified by MINUSMA as a potential target of attack by the Islamic militants. In that regard, some security personnel could have been deployed not only to Radisson Hotel, but to other hotels and equivalent facilities. An explanation for failure to deploy military personnel to all population centres could be shortage of adequate military personnel. By February 2016, the mission had not yet reached the desired strength.

Nevertheless, MINUSMA has the potential of attaining sustainable peace which is panacea human security and development in Mali. For instance, the hotel attack crisis was resolved and two suspected Islamic extremist persons were arrested. Challenges confronting the mission should be addressed and redressed amicably if lasting peace is to be achieved. Against this background, this paper analyses the challenges facing MINUSMA and examines prospects for the attainment of human security given the prevailing situation and prospects for change.

Challenges for achieving human security through MINUSMA

Inadequacy of human resources is one of the major challenges hindering MINUSMA from achieving human security. The mission is not fully equipped to the desired strength authorised by the Security Council. For instance, as of 29 February 2016 the mission had 11 781 uniformed personnel, 585 international civilian personnel, 661 local civilian staff and 143 UN volunteers instead of the authorised strength of 12, 680 uniformed personnel and other addition civilian component (MINUSMA Facts, February 2016). The mission is short of 899 uniformed personnel. There is no doubt that such a difference has a disparaging effect on the effectiveness of the mission. Shortage of adequate resources can be attributed to lack of seriousness by some states in respect of contributing uniformed or non-uniformed personnel to the mission. For example, Burkina Faso sent a contingent of less than 600 personnel when the UN had requested 850 from the country.

Apart from lack of adequate human resources, the mission has inadequate military technology and transport resources. At its inception, the mission had only four aircraft and was in dire need of transport planes, helicopters and engineers (Flynn and Lewis, 2013). However, individual countries have voluntarily supplied aircraft for the mission. A case in point is the provision of three Chinook transport helicopters by Netherlands in October 2014 in addition to four Apache attack helicopters the country sent in 2013 (Netherlands Ministry of Defense, 2015). Furthermore, El Salvador sent three helicopters to Mali in April 2015. Even though planes and helicopters have been sourced, the mission is still short of the required transport resources for effective conduct peace support operations. Coupled with the shortage of human resources, this is also obstructing the mission's military prowess and undermines the prospects for the achievement of lasting peace and security. The mobility of military personnel as well as the speedy transportation of logistical, medical and military supplies contributes to success of peace support operations.

The escalation of the crisis notwithstanding the presents of peacekeepers raises question in relation to the source of the weapons used by rebels. The mission also involves the control of border posts and related entry and exit points. Nevertheless, the rebels continue to wreck havoc in especially Northern Mali. Other parts of the country have also remained fragile. For example, there was an attack on Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako, Mali's capital, which claimed more than 20 lives in November 2015. These continued attacks by rebel groups suggest that there are some states or terrorist organisations operating within some West African states that are supporting Islamist insurgents in Mali. Apart from tracing the source of military technology used by rebel groups in Mali from West Africa, one can argue that even some rogue Western and Asian countries have a record of arming rebel movements. Such bad behavior has a bearing on the protracted crisis that is threatening human security in Mali.

Furthermore, the humanitarian catastrophe in Mali resonates notwithstanding the deployment of MINUSMA. Both security forces and armed groups are to blame for perpetrating human rights abuses in Mali. On 19 February 2016, Human Rights Watch documented that Islamist extremists in Mali rob, rape and kill civilians while security forces have responded by severely mistreating many they take into custody (Human Rights Watch News, 19 February 2016). The abuses have to southern parts

of the country. Civilians' freedom, welfare and dignity are therefore in a quagmire due to mistreatment by both armed groups and being tormented the security forces who are supposed to be their guardians. Hence, humanitarian challenges continue to prevail in Mali in spite of the presents of security forces in the country. If the abuses by the security forces continue unabated there is a likelihood that civilians will make the environment unfavorable for the operation of security personnel and that is not desirable.

African states seem not to be serious about attaining sustainable human security and development through peace support operations in Mali. Material and financial support to peace support operations from African countries can be put into question. There are more European countries than their African counterparts that have intervened in the Malian crisis. As of February 2016, only 19 African states have contributed to military personnel for the mission in Mali. Comparatively, the total number of European and South and North American countries combined that have contributed is 22. Moreover, the total number of Asian countries participating in MINUSMA is 7. More so, not even a single Southern African country contributed military personnel to the mission. However, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Madagascar have managed to send police personnel. On the whole, 29 states from other continents have committed to send troops for MINUSMA while only 19 African states have decided to support peace operations in Mali. To go by these figures, it can be argued that African states are less committed to the cause of peace and security in Mali at a time the mission is operating below its minimum authorised strength of 12 680 military personnel. Such lack of commitment has resulted has a bearing on the prolonging humanitarian crisis in Mali.

Lack of commitment by African states to send troops to Mali can be attributed to Africa's dependency on not only Western but also Asian states. African countries are dependent on Western and Asian countries for military weaponry, capital, skills and other essential support. The dependency syndrome has its origins largely in colonialism and imperialism which led to the incorporation of African states into the capitalist system in which the rich monopolises economic, political and military strength. The rise of Asian economic powerhouses such as China, United Arab Emirates, Japan and Singapore among others has added Asian countries into the pool of capitalist giants. Even though wealth states are to blame for instituting and perpetrating dependency, African states are more to blame for failure to rise from the slumber of capitalism and to come up with effective and lasting solutions to African crises to achieve peace and security.

Apart from being shackled to developed states, the African continent's participation in Mali has been limited due to preoccupation with other conflicts in the continent. Southern African has been preoccupied with the Lesotho crisis and recovering from the Zimbabwean, Madagascar and DRC crises. Central Africa has been preoccupied with the Central African Republic crisis. East Africa has been concerned with Burundi internal strife. West Africa has also been preoccupied with Boko Haram terrorists in Nigeria. North African has also been concerned with and recovering from the Arab Spring. Be that as it may, the African Union has been a toothless barking bulldog in respect of dealing with African conflicts such as the Mali crisis. Hence, achieving human security in the country has been betrayed by African countries' and their supranational institutions' weaknesses.

Peace support operations in Mali have been constrained by the difficulties in fighting war on numerous fronts whilst understaffed. MINUSMA has faced the challenge of fighting several Islamist armed groups in northern Mali and other parts of

the country. Ansar Dine, Macina Liberation Front, Al Qaeda linked Murabitoun and Jihad in West Africa among others have all been claiming responsibility for various attacks in Mali since 2011. Fighting various armed groups who have no fixed abode has created confusion that has undermined the smooth operation of the mission. For instance, there was confusion in tracing the culprits because various Islamist militant groups claimed responsibility for mass shooting of hostages at Radisson Hotel. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Macina Liberation Front, Ansar Dine and Murabitoun separately claimed responsibility for the attack (BBC News, 26 November 2016).

MINUSMA has been confronted with the challenge of failing to deal with sexual violence. Islamist militants have been accused of raping, killing and robbing civilians in especially Northern Mali due to the high levels of anarchy following attacks by the militants since in 2013. Zainab Hawa Bangura, the United Nations Secretary General's Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, expressed concern over the increase in conflict-related sexual violence in Timbuktu in Northern Mali (United Nations News, May 2016). Addressing sexual violence is essential in peace processes. Sexual violence results in destructive physical and psychological disturbances which are detrimental to human development. The mission should double its efforts to mitigate the increasing rate of sexual violence. Sexual violence is crime against humanity and is a serious threat to human security. A lot needs to be done to quell the abuse of women in Mali because redressing sexual violence in a conflict is central to achieving sustainable peace conducive for sustainable human security and development.

Antagonism of relations between security forces and civilians has generated instability that has further threatened human security and development in northern Mali. The presence of peacekeepers in Tuareg rebels' strongholds such as Kidal has generated animosity by the civilians for the security forces. The hostility turned violent in January 2015 when violent protests against French forces in Kidal broke out which claimed two lives and left six injured (France24, 18 April 2016). The protests were triggered by the arrest by French forces of suspected Islamist militants (Ibid). Since the civilians demonstrated in solidarity with the militants, one can conclude that the civilian population in Northern Mali backs the cause of the rebels to make northern Mali autonomous from the southern part. That makes the security situation in Mali more complex.

PROSPECTS FOR ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE HUMAN SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT THROUGH MINUSMA

Chances of attaining sustainable human security and development through lasting positive peace in Mali are very high. However, the success of MINUSMA in people's security is dependent on eliminating the challenges facing the mission. The conclusion of the peace agreement in June 2015 indicates that lasting human security and development can be achieved. The Peace and Reconciliation Agreement was signed between the government, Azawad and armed groups to put an end to the crisis, to institute political and security reforms and to continue with the Algerian facilitated dialogue. The conclusion of the agreement ushered a new political dispensation in respect of ending the anarchy that had characterised the political environment in Mali since the coup d'état of 2013. Tension has eased and the environment is relatively peaceful. However, lasting human security and peace have not yet been achieved. Islamist militants are still wrecking havoc in Kidal, Timbuktu, Gao and other northern cities despite the conclusion of the agreement. However, MINUSMA has done a lot in terms of conflict prevention even though the crisis escalates. Nevertheless, more should be done to deal with sexual violence, killing and robbing of civilians.

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali's efforts has been successful in securing the security and development of children, albeit with some challenges. Since the deployment of MINUSMA in 2013, schools which had closed down in the north of the country due to the Mali war reopened to give children access to education which is a fundamental children's right essential for child development. Whilst, MINUSMA has been working to improve the political situation, education partners including UNICEF have also assisted in ensuring access to education for children in northern regions to prevent the exploitation, abuse and conscription of children by armed groups. Through 'Every Child Matters' campaign, UNICEF has assisted about 344, 115 children in Kidal, Gao, Mopti, Segou and Timbuktu who were affected by the security situation to regain access to formal education (United Nations News, May 2016).

The campaigns have been successful in facilitating the return to and remain in school for 29, 592 children in crisis ridden areas, 4, 934 of which from Kidal alone. It can be argued that the reopening of schools and return to school for some children through UNICEF campaigns could not have been successful without the efforts of MINUSMA to stabilize the regions. Even though not all children have been assisted to return to or remain in school, the mission's efforts have gone a long way in securing children's security. Since there has been considerable success, more efforts will undoubtedly result in preventing the recruitment of children by armed groups.

However, the security and humanitarian situation in the northern regions is still fragile. Of the 344, 115 children who have been affected by the conflict, only 29, 592 have been assisted to regain access to education. Even though the figure is huge, there is need for more comprehensive support operations to ensure the rights of children are protected in the northern regions. It should go without mention that the local people are an integral part of the Mali peace process and are central to its success. The local population should also be conscientised about the importance of education for children so that they will refrain from making them participate in the conflict. When violent protests against French forces broke out in Kidal on 18 April 2016, many children were removed from schools to participate in the protests (Ibid). Civic education is needed to enlighten the population in northern Mali about the significance to supporting peace operations instead of sabotaging the mission.

It should be observed that the mission has brought considerable order in northern Mali. The mission was deployed at a time when Tuareg political and military separatists as well as Islamist extremists had sieged northern Mali in 2012. The deployment of the mission from July 2013 ousted the rebels. Therefore, military intervention succeeded in attaining a political environment favorable for the security of the people. The amendment by the UNSC of the MINUSMA mandate through resolution 2164 of June 2014 to improve the humanitarian situation among other issues signifies the commitment of the mission to avert the humanitarian crisis in Mali. Furthermore, the mandate was amended in June 2015 through resolution 2227 with a view to secure the welfare of civilians among other objectives. However, Tuareg separatists in northern regions who are assisting armed groups with human, drug and arms trafficking are degenerative to the peace process in Mali. A lot needs to be done to make local population aware of the importance of their cooperation to achieve lasting peace and security in Mali.

CONCLUSION

Peace support operations in Mali have been confronted with various challenges obliterating the chances of achieving lasting human security. The challenges have undermined the prospects for securing the welfare of individuals. Despite the challenges encountered, MINUSMA has managed to restore order in northern Mali; even though some separatist elements are still wrecking havoc in the northern regions the mission has successfully facilitated the conclusion of a Peace Accord. The chances of attaining lasting peace are very high provided the challenges are addressed accordingly. The continued operation of armed groups in Mali is worrisome and more worrisome is the fact that some people in the northern regions are supporting the rebels. That is a major stumbling block to lasting peace and security. A lot needs to be done to conscientise ordinary people about the need for them to cooperate with MINUSMA personnel to curb the crisis.

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