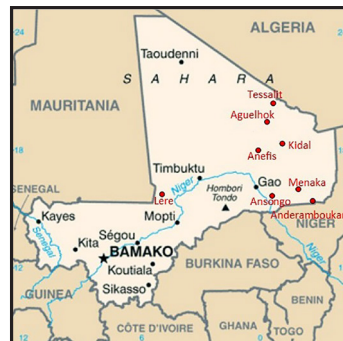


MALI—2012 ALL OVER AGAIN?

By George F. Ward

Renewed fighting broke out between the Malian army and Tuareg rebels on May 17, 2014, during a visit by Malian Prime Minister Moussa Mara to the separatist stronghold of Kidal in northern Mali. Days later, on May 21 and 22, an attempt by the Malian army to take control of Kidal was repulsed by a coalition of Tuareg separatist groups. After initially claiming that the Malian army had lost 20 killed and 30 wounded, Malian Defense Minister Soumeylou Boubeye Maiga, who has since resigned, [admitted on state television](#) that there had been 50 deaths and 40 wounded. The scale of the fighting is reminiscent of that in January 2012, when an alliance of Tuareg rebels and Islamic extremist fighters [defeated the Malian army](#) in the country's North, leading to the fall of the government in a military coup. Despite the similarities to 2012, there are also a number of factors that provide hope a larger conflict may be averted. [more...](#)



Mali population centers under rebel control, shown in red. (Source: CIA Factbook and Stratfor, "Mali's Tuareg Rebels Threaten Regional Security Efforts," May 23, 2014.)

Ambassador (ret.) George F. Ward is editor of Africa Watch and a Research Staff Member at IDA. He is a former U.S. ambassador to the Republic of Namibia.

MALAWI: TENSIONS AS PARTIAL RECOUNT DELAYS ELECTION RESULTS

By Alexander Noyes

On May 20, 2014, Malawi held presidential, parliamentary, and local elections. The presidential poll, the fifth since the transition to multiparty politics in 1993, was [expected](#) to be close. It was contested by incumbent President Joyce Banda of the People's Party and 11 other candidates, including Peter Mutharika of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), brother of the late president Bingu wa Mutharika. Despite efforts to [improve](#) Malawi's electoral process in the run-up to the vote, a number of irregularities and delays marred the poll, leading to a tense week of violent [protests](#), [allegations](#) of vote rigging, a failed attempt by Banda to [annul](#) the vote, and conflicting court orders. [more...](#)



Background from left to right, Chief Justice Richard Banda, his wife, Malawi President Joyce Banda, and younger sister Anjimile Mtila-Oponyo join a voting queue to cast their votes in the eastern district of Zomba, Malawi, Tuesday, May 20, 2014. (Source: AP Photo/Raphael Tenthani.)

Alexander Noyes is a Research Associate in the Africa Program at the Institute for Defense Analyses.

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The Institute for Defense Analyses is a non-profit corporation operating in the public interest.

IDA's three federally-funded research and development centers provide objective analyses of national security issues and related national challenges, particularly those requiring scientific and technical expertise.

IDA's Africa team focuses on issues related to political, economic, and social stability and security on the continent.

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Renewed Fighting and a Cease-fire

As in 2012, a coalition of Tuareg separatist groups came together militarily in Kidal. The [three principal Tuareg groups](#) are the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), the High Council for the Unity of Azawad (HCUC), and the Arab Movement of Azawad (MAA). Following their success there, the Tuaregs went on to take [control of most of the main towns](#) in northern Mali with the exception of Gao and Timbuktu. Unlike in 2012, the Tuareg groups have not, at least publicly, allied themselves with Islamic extremist groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), or Ansar Dine. Lack of evidence of direct Islamist involvement in the action at Kidal did not, however, stop protesters in Bamako from [denouncing the alleged participation](#) of AQIM, MUJAO, and other Islamist groups in the fighting. Thanks to the efforts of Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, the current chairperson of the African Union, and UN Special Representative Albert Koenders, [a cease-fire was signed](#) on May 23. This agreement has held since then.

The Roles of External Players

Neither of the two external military forces present in Mali intervened in support of the Malian army's move against Kidal. The UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), which maintains a presence in Kidal, limited itself to providing medical treatment and sanctuary to Malian soldiers involved in the conflict. On May 20, UN representative Koenders provided an [even-handed assessment](#) of the situation to the UN Security Council. The priority, said Koenders, was "to pull Kidal back from the brink of renewed confrontation. It is absolutely imperative that all actions are taken to avoid further violence." While France sent 100 reinforcements to join its contingent in Mali, it also distanced itself from the Malian government's decision to move against Kidal. Gerard Araud, French Ambassador to the UN, said in a [tweet](#) that the Malian government informed "neither MINUSMA nor the French Serval [designation for the French force in Mali]. It is a Malian affair."

The Malian army's latest defeat illustrates the challenge that Mali's international partners face in helping to upgrade that force's capabilities. Conventional wisdom in Bamako ascribed the army's defeat in 2012 to the lack of adequate weapons, equipment, and ammunition. Since then, the army has added [4,000 additional soldiers](#). The governments of France and the United States and the European Union have all contributed to the effort to train and equip the Malian force. Despite these efforts, Tuareg forces were able to capture a number of Malian army armored vehicles, artillery, and



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tactical vehicles during the recent fighting at Kidal. Photographs show Tuareg fighters with captured armored personnel carriers, a howitzer, and French-supplied tactical vehicles bearing the insignia of one of the four combined arms groups that have been [trained by the European Union](#).

The Islamist Factor

A great deal has been written about the connections or lack thereof between Tuareg groups and Islamic extremists. Before the conflict of 2012, various groups claiming to speak for the Tuareg disavowed any linkage between their community and groups such as AQIM. For example, in a statement on October 20, 2011, the [Conference on Tamasheq Unity](#) said, "It is important to note that so far no sincere, and credible evidence has established a reliable link between the Tuareg community and the terrorist group of AQIM. Everything is different between these two entities." That sort of position became less tenable when the Tuaregs and Islamists joined in a military alliance, albeit transitory, in early 2012.

A second school of thought recognizes the existence of mutually supporting relationships between the Islamists and the Tuareg, but characterizes most of the Islamist groups as alien to heterodox, Sufi Mali. In this view, the [AQIM strategy for Mali](#) is to maintain access to the North of the country as a base from which to infiltrate Algeria and other North African states.

A third view goes further, asserting that since 2007, AQIM has skillfully pursued a strategy of embedding itself in the culture and economy of northern Mali. According to [Morten Bøås](#), a researcher with wide field experience, "AQIM should not just be viewed as a predatory, external force in northern Mali, but also as an actor that has managed to integrate into local communities over time." Bøås and others sharing this view note that the income from trafficking, kidnapping, and allied activities has become a significant factor in the economy of impoverished northern Mali. Kidal, which is only a day's journey from Algeria across the desert, has become an important node for smuggling cigarettes and trafficking of persons to European and Mediterranean countries. All in all, this view seems to be the most useful in understanding the current situation.

A Difficult Path Ahead

In 2012, the Malian army's military defeat produced an unstable situation in which a single triggering event—an army mutiny—morphed into a military coup and a near disaster that was averted only by outside intervention. In the current situation, the cease-fire agreement and the presence of MINUSMA and French forces may help avert another crisis of the Malian state. Nevertheless, the situation is fraught with difficulties:

- France would like to draw down its force in Mali, but the continued existence of a significant Islamic extremist threat in northern Mali limits its ability to do so.
- The UN's MINUSMA remains understrength and incapable of providing security across its assigned area. There is little prospect that it will be able to assume the missions currently covered by the French forces.
- The Malian army, staffed and led primarily by Southerners, is not effective in the North, and will not become so in the near future.
- Tuareg grievances, which are primarily economic and social, will continue to fester unless they are more effectively addressed by the government in Bamako. Conversely, a successful reconciliation effort combined with substantial economic assistance to the North could be successful in winning over at least a portion of the fractious Tuareg population while also limiting the appeal of Islamic extremist groups such as AQIM. In March, the Malian parliament established a [Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission](#) with a three-year term. This commission is a promising development, but only a first step.

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With 30 percent of the votes counted, on Friday, May 23, the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) released preliminary results showing Banda with only 23 percent of the votes cast, coming in second behind the DPP's candidate, Peter Mutharika, who garnered 42 percent. Peter Mutharika served as foreign minister under the administration of his brother, Bingu wa Mutharika, and attempted to thwart Banda's succession to the presidency in 2012 after his brother died in office. Peter Mutharika is currently on trial for [treason](#) for these actions. A parallel vote tabulation by a local observer mission, the Malawi Electoral Support Network, reported even less promising numbers for Banda. Extrapolating from the official results, the group [projected](#) that Peter Mutharika would receive an estimated 32.7 to 39.3 percent of the vote, Lazarus Chakwera of the Malawi Congress Party between 25.1 to 31.7 percent, with Banda coming in third with a mere 18.2 to 21.8 percent.

In a sharp departure from the usual script of opposition parties claiming the incumbents rigged the vote, Banda, the sitting president, cited fraud and a variety of [alleged](#) irregularities, including multiple voting, tampered ballots, and computer hacking of the electronic system used to transmit results to the MEC. Another candidate, Atupele Muluzi of the United Democratic Front and son of former Malawian president Bakili Muluzi, [voiced](#) similar allegations. Although Banda did not mention Mutharika by name, he [responded](#) to the allegations: "People have spoken through a fair and credible election... there is no way the DPP can rig elections. I have heard nowhere in the world where an opposition rigs an election."

Citing these "rampant irregularities," on Saturday, May 24, Banda surprised the nation by attempting to [annul](#) the poll and reschedule fresh elections within 90 days, [announcing](#): "I am nullifying the elections, using the powers invested in me by the Malawi constitution... I want to give Malawians an opportunity to choose a candidate of their choice in a free and fair manner. When elections are to be held again, I will be stepping aside." This attempt at nullification was quickly reversed later that same day by the High Court, which [ruled](#) she did not have the constitutional authority to annul the vote. Although Mutharika initially succeeded in winning an [injunction](#) against a full recount of the vote by the MEC, on May 26 the High Court ruled in favor of a partial manual recount in 42 polling stations where the most egregious anomalies are alleged to have taken place. The BBC [reported](#) that in one constituency, 38,000 voters were registered, yet 184,000 actual votes were reported.

What caused Banda—a darling of international donors until she recently became [tainted](#) by a multimillion dollar corruption scandal known as "cashgate"—to attempt to annul an election that did not go in her favor? Although some have [cited](#) Banda's decision not to run in the new election she attempted to call as evidence that this was not a typical power grab, her motives were unlikely to be wholly beneficent. As alluded to by Kim Yi [Dionne](#) and argued by Simon [Allison](#), it is possible that Banda, realizing her political career was over, attempted to save herself from likely prosecution for

cashgate under a Peter Mutharika administration by annulling the vote and then negotiating a deal with one of the other leading candidates.

The court ruling for a partial recount could reportedly [delay](#) the release of the election results by up to two months, an interregnum that has the potential to further exacerbate tensions. If Mutharika does not prevail in the final tally, protests by his supporters are almost certain. In the current high-stakes atmosphere, such protests could easily turn violent. Despite high tensions and the potential for post-election violence, two positive developments can be salvaged from the current situation: the independence and nonpartisan stance of the military and the courts. The military has [vowed](#) not to intervene, and, as highlighted by Stephanie Burchard in the March 13, 2014, [edition](#) of Africa Watch, Malawi's judiciary has demonstrated increasing autonomy since 2009, a trend that has fortunately continued through the current crisis thus far.

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