

AMBASSADOR'S RESPONSE:

Freya Jamison has done an admirable job in gathering the elements of domestic rebellion, terrorist incursion, failings of governance, and regional instability that conspired to create Mali's multi-faceted crisis beginning in 2012, and at tracing the historical trajectory of Tuareg rebellion to current events.

Reliance solely on English-language sources was perhaps a handicap; she paints an overly direct a line from the 1992 National Pact and the outbreak of war in 2012, without reference, for example, to the unrest that provoked the 2006 Algiers Accords. Nevertheless, her eventual conclusion is only strengthened. Indeed, the serial failures to properly implement the variety of agreements reached between the north and south of Mali remind us of the importance of finally finding success in that endeavor. The stakes have only grown higher over time, and security and prosperity for all Malians must inevitably pass through a durable agreement that ends instability in northern Mali, facilitates development and economic growth, and reduces the space for extremists who would use the north and its instability as a safe haven. Whether the issue is counter-terrorism or counter-narcotics, progress is inherently a long-term and regional affair. The international community including the United States has been eager to support Mali in recovering from its recent crisis both for the well-being of Malians and to enable a fruitful partner with its Sahelian neighbors in those long-term tasks.

The current decade's instability brought kaleidoscopic shifts in patterns of allegiance in northern Mali, and my strongest caution flows from her discussion of the links between Tuareg actors and terrorist groups. My personal recollection of evolving events put Iyad Ag Ghali and his Ansar Al-Dine, for example, at the nexus of the opportunistic alliance with AQIM that delivered northern Mali into terrorist control. Although Miss Jamison speculates about the relative approachability of MUJAO and Ansar al-Dine as negotiating partners for the Government of Mali, it is essential to recall that the U.S. Government formally designated both groups as terrorist organizations in 2013.

A theme I have stressed since the earliest days of the crisis remains true today: the crucial task is to gather together those many Malians who wish to work for a restoration of a state able to serve the needs of all its citizens. The current draft agreement recently reached in Algiers provides the vehicle

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for that process, and the U.S. Government urges all parties to formally adhere to it.

I would turn finally to the paper's diagnosis of insufficient international community support for past peace endeavors in Mali. While much contemplation of the reasons for the failures of past peace agreements attended the run-up to the current draft Algiers agreement - and my personal list also gives weight to complicity in corruption both in Bamako and among northern elites - few would doubt that international support is an essential element to durably resolving Mali's multi-faceted crises of governance, rebellion, and terrorist incursion. Happily, the very prescriptions Miss Jamison raises - a muscled intervention to reverse terrorist's gains in northern Mali and a carefully considered support to both the peace process and development resources - are a reality in Mali today. The initial French intervention of Serval, succeeded by the more regionally based Operation Barkhan is working with regional partners, efforts for which the U.S. has been proud to provide enabling support. The umbrella of the United Nations presence, MINUSMA, provides a forum for diplomatic and material support - and yes, pressure - to the peace process and its implementation.

In 2015, Mali stands with the most significant diplomatic, financial, and material resources to ever accompany the goal of durably resolving long-standing questions of Tuareg aspirations. Success in that long elusive goal is a key element in Mali's long-term prosperity, stability, and ability to act as a solid partner with its neighbors to address shared challenges. We urge all parties to take advantage of this unique moment of broad international support to build a lasting peace.

-MARY BETH LEONARD, US AMBASSADOR TO MALI