

Special Issue on Africa

FRENCH INTERVENTION IN MALI: IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

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AFTER PRESSURE on the Provisional Government of Mali and the United Nations for a military intervention, France has started a military operation called Operation Serval in the north of Mali in January 2013. Operation Serval is much more serving in the interest of France than many pronounced interest of international community. This operation has huge risks for variety of reasons in the region and beyond. The information and news about the operation is not only quite common but also mostly manipulated through the French media outlets. Especially, the lack of information about the human tragedy is striking as it carries the risk of damaging the image of operation.

Looking at roughly to the issue, there are three international actors in this conflict. First one is France and its supporters in the European countries. Second key actor is African countries. Although the issue seems to be related to the West Africa, the conflict in Mali has repercussion for the whole Africa both for its results and the way the resolution of conflict is dealt with. Third actor is the Islamic world in general as the both parties in the conflict are Muslims.

Since the revolution in Libya, military intervention led by individual states is becoming more frequent in international politics. The latest one is the case of Mali. Although many people debated the French intervention in Mali from economic, political and terrorism threat perspective, the biggest loser in this case has been both the west and Africa.





Since the early 2000, there has been huge African ownership and agency to solve the problems of Africa by Africans. The motto of 'African solutions for African problems' have been talked in almost every meeting. This created a moment of golden diplomacy in Africa, where African leaders assumed the leadership and tried hard to solve problems in the continent. They re-structured the Organization of African Unity in a new form and re-named it as African Union in 2002. They articulated an economic strategy for the development of the continent, NEPAD, and they succeeded to get the support of international

community. Africa has occupied an important agenda at G-8, G-20 and other international forums.

Conflict resolution measures of the Africans were much more impressive. The African Union organized mediations in Ivory Coast, Burundi, Congo, Somalia and many other conflict areas; and in support of this, the African Union sent peacekeeping missions to various places.

Looked from now, one cannot really argue that all the initiatives of Africans were successful, but the point is that they were eager and willing to take the continental ownership and took measures to



create a conflict-free continent. Although most of the time, they has financial and structural difficulties to support their good intentions.

French military intervention in Mali should be seen as an indication of the end of this golden period in African agency and ownership in the continent. The fact that regional organization ECOWAS and UN was supportive of intervention does not change this. Africans have failed to take the initiative to solve their own crisis. Even it would have been easier for Africans this time because the case in Mali has an international dimension due to security threat. This would have even created a momentum to get both financial and training support of the international community.

Africa is not the only loser in this case in the long run. The international community or the west is

also a loser. International community neither has resources nor willingness to involve in every problem in Africa. Having an adequate African agency/leadership in the continent and supporting it is always the best solution for both side. Apparently, this opportunity has lost with the case of Mali intervention

The conflict in Mali is also related to the overall Muslim world, not only to Africa. The West (especially France) evaluates the situation from its own perspective and considers this as the issue security and the national interest, therefore, Paris continues to insist on the military intervention as the only solution. It is clear that the military intervention will result the loss of many lives and a deepening refugee crisis. This crisis in Mali should be taken up as serious matter and investigated by the institutions and organizations in the Islamic world. Especially the religious and ethnic dimensions of the crisis require a special attention and the International Cooperation Organization should send observes to see what is happening on the ground and report it.

As we proceed with the conflict and intervention, there is an urgency to call all armed parties for calmness and dialogue. Refugee crisis is deepening and moving from Mauritania, Niger, and Burkina Faso to the south of Mali. In these areas, state support is not sufficient and there is a huge role for the NGOs. Health and educational activities are also urgently needed in these areas. However, the biggest question now is about how to build a momentum for an Africa-driven agenda on the continent in coming years.

NOTE:

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