

Foreign Aid in Dangerous Places: Donors and Mali's Democracy

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Main question: Could foreign aid have prevented the breakdown of democracy in Mali?



A Quick Recap

- Mali widely viewed as successful democracy since 1991.
- Presidential elections scheduled for late April. National hero Amadou Toumani Touré (ATT) was retiring after two terms.
- Longstanding dependence on foreign aid. 42 official donors in Bamako. Major MDG campaign.
- Two long-standing if “minor” annoyances in the North:
 - AQIM
 - Tuareg discontent



Collapse of the ATT regime

- MNLA founded in October 2011, by Tuareg soldiers returning from Libya. Perhaps 1,500 soldiers.
- Form alliance with AQIM; with Ansar Dine (“defenders of the Faith”, led by Tuareg leader, Iyad Ag Ghaly), they overrun the three cities of the North, Kidal, Timbuktu and Gao in March and April.



Coup in Bamako, March 22



- Military defeats in north crystalize discontent with regime's corruption and complacency.
- Cpt. Amadou Haya Sanogo leads coup of junior officers.
- Almost universal domestic and international rejection of coup leads to negotiated transition and interim government, though Coup leaders still want to influence events
- What will happen next?

The Positive Impact of Aid

- Increases in aid a (minor) part of economic success story since 1995:
 - Growth (5.8% for 1995-2005)
 - Poverty alleviation
- Donors have promoted vertical accountability mechanisms:
 - Explosion of civil society, democratic zeitgeist
 - Afrobarometer data suggest strong, broad support for democracy
 - Democracy assistance

Democracy Assistance

- A small share of total aid (1% of total ODA according to Aiddata data base), mostly from subset of bilateral donors;
- Emphasizes vertical accountability mechanisms (civil and political rights, gender, elections) over horizontal mechanisms (legislature, political parties, judiciary)
- Accusations of “electoralism” seem wrong

Aid less effective at lessening structural impediments to democratic consolidation

- Weakness of political institutions for horizontal accountability;
- Gap between masses and elites:
 - The issue of language,
- North-south cleavages:
 - The road to Kidal; The AND debacle
- Urban bias; pro Bamako bias:
 - Services, poverty rates, food policy
- These structural imbalances too little changed since independence:

Table 2:
Decline in the Rate of Absolute Poverty, (1989 – 2006)

	1989	2001	2006
National	72.8	68.3	64.4
Rural		79.2	79.5
Urban		37.2	31.8
Kayes	60	67.9	
Koulikoro	61.7	83.5	
Sikasso	84.1	81.8	81.7
Segou	83.9	65.3	
Mopti	90	78.5	
Tombouctou	74.8	54.4	
Gao	66.9	48.2	
Bamako	37.2	27.5	11.0

Source: UNDP, Profile de Pauvrete du Mali, 2001. UNDP, Mali. (2001) IDA, p.14

Implications

- Difficult counterfactual
- Aid contributed to evolution of pro-democracy attitudes, notably in civil society;
- Aid not able to alter longstanding patterns that undermine political stability, national unity.