DEN
Data Exchange Network

The 2012 Malian Conflict Network

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1. Overview

The 2012 Malian Conflict Network is a dataset collected to illuminate the relationships between individuals affiliated with terrorists and rebel groups in the north of Mali in West Africa. The main objective of the data collection was to study to what extent the terrorists and the rebels were connected by strong brokers and how these two subgroups responded to the recent death of several prominent leaders. Based on open source data from the media, the Malian Conflict Network offers the opportunity to analyze a group of actors, such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) affiliated individuals, who normally operates through a covert network. Temporarily allied to the Tuareg-dominated National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), these terrorists have found in the north of Mali a relatively safe haven for developing their criminal and ideological activities.

2. Data collection

Our network analysis is based on the analysis of a selection of articles published between July 2010 and September 2012 by the French daily Le Monde (27 items) and the weekly Jeune Afrique (30 articles). The period between 2010 and 2012 covers not only the recent conflict between the Malian army, the Tuareg rebellion and the AQMI affiliated terrorists, but also some of the earlier violent events that include killings and abductions in the Sahel-Sahara region. This selection of articles was supplemented by a review of 25 articles published on African news websites such as African 1, Tamtaminfo, Sahara Media, Occitan Touareg and Maliactu, and El Watan.

We then looked for all the names and surnames contained in this corpus of 82 texts. Because our analysis focuses on the relationships between Islamists and rebels we have deliberately ignored the names of government politicians, soldiers from the Malian army and representatives of regional organizations. Our database is composed of 42 actors including 27 Islamists and 15 rebels.

Finally, we identified whether any of the 42 actors were connected to any of the others. We determined that a tie existed between two actors if they had participated in a common political or military event, whatever the duration or location of the encounter. Such operational ties result, for example, from a political meeting, a training in Afghanistan, Iraq or Libya, a participation in combat, a negotiation for hostage release, or an involvement with a killing, an abduction or a bombing.

3. Data files and formats

The data is provided in one Excel Workbook, called MalianNetwork.xlsx, containing two worksheets.

The first worksheet contains the relational data in the form of a matrix of positive and negative ties between social actors. If two actors are mentioned together in the same newspaper article we assume an alliance at degree

1. If there is a mention of a specific strong alliance then the tie has value 2. If there is a mention of two belonging to different factions/religious/ethnic groups we assume a value of -1 and if they are mentioned as enemies a value of -2.

The second worksheet contains attributed data. The following attributes are provided, forming a 42x14 matrix:

- Code
- Name
- Subgroup. Actors are divided between 'Terrorists' and 'Rebels'.
- Organization. The dataset identifies 7 different organizations: Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb ('AQIM'), the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa ('Mujao'), 'Ansar al-Dine', the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat ('GSPC') the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group ('LIFG'), the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad ('MNLA'), and the May 23, 2006 Democratic Alliance for Change ('ADC').

- Status. Since our analysis is restricted to the last two years of the Malian conflict, we did not consider individuals who deceased, were captured or surrendered before 2010. The data distinguishes between 'Alive', 'Deceased', 'Captured', and 'Unknown'.
- Role. This attribute describes the political or military role of each individual within his organization.
- Nationality

Alias1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. Because the spelling of names can greatly vary and because terrorists are well known for using noms de guerre, a list of potential aliases is provided for each, coded from Alias1 to Alias7.

4. Data Details	
Response Rate	N/A
Non-Respondent Bias	N/A
Theoretical Grouping	N/A
Publication Using These Data	Walther O, Christopoulos D. 2014. Islamic Terrorism and the Malian Rebellion. Terrorism and Political Violence 26(2).
Data Context	Territorial conflict in West Africa
Respondents	Members of terrorist groups and of the Tuareg rebellion
Longitudinal	From July 2010 to September 2012
Temporality	Ties between social actors are highly volatile due to the fragile political and ideological alliances. A military intervention initiated by West African states, with the support of their Western allies, has strongly affected the ties observed in the region.
Analytical or Pedagogical Utility	• Demonstrating how terrorists and rebels are interconnected • Showing how terrorists and rebels are internally structured • Illuminating prominent brokers • Illustrating triadic relations • Balance analysis
Known Issues	Data is based on ties reported in newspapers and do not depict actual relations. As is often the case in analyzing terrorist networks from publicly available sources, missing actors or missing links are likely to alter the centrality measures conducted in our work, which calls for caution regarding the interpretation of the rank of each actor.