

## **Moussa Konaté: The coup d'état was foreseeable** [[Le Coup d'état était prévisible](#)]

- from *Jeune Afrique*, March 24, 2012; trans. by Bruce Whitehouse

The March 22 coup d'état was an unpleasant surprise for some, a painful one for others. As though, once again, black Africa was showing its incapacity to live in democracy. It didn't take long for condemnations to arrive, coming from regional and continental organizations as well as France, the former colonial power. Paradoxically, the most legitimate voice, that of the Malian people, remains silent.

The justification of the young soldiers who took power, and a superficial analysis of events, might lead one to believe that it was the inability of Amadou Toumani Touré (ATT) to counter the Tuareg rebellion that is at the origin of the putsch. The army's setbacks at the hands of a few hundred rebels are humiliating, certainly, as much for the troops as for the Malian people, so proud of their history; but they are only, in truth, indicators of a much more worrisome general situation — that of Mali.

To understand the problem we must make a rapid review of this country's history. In 1991, when the military regime of Moussa Traoré fell, Malians had hope in their hearts, and were convinced that with their newfound freedom, happiness was within reach. Alas, it was in fact the beginning of a long ordeal. Yes, multiparty politics took the place of the single party, but the evils infecting the military regime continued and have not stopped growing since. Corruption, the misuse of public property, nepotism, among others, wound up becoming the fuel running the engine of state.

Malians' misfortune was to have replaced a military regime with a mafia for which personal interest came before public interest. The elections were mere parodies, for those who were supposedly competing for popular votes were making secret deals to put in power whoever could best defend their interests. The play was so well acted that the world praised "Malian democracy." And ATT was one of those elected. No matter if he didn't have the makings of a head of state. Little by little, the Malian state became the private property of the political class and its accomplices in the civil service and in business.

To pacify the troublemakers, instead of using force like Moussa Traoré had done, the new politicians used corruption. Thus it was that students, who had been at the heart of the revolt against Moussa, were bought off with cash or promises of government jobs after finishing their studies. To get elected, one only had to bribe village chiefs and religious leaders so that people would vote with their eyes closed, since half of Malians are illiterate.

Henceforth, in Mali, everything was for sale, from one's birth certificate to one's death certificate, along with grades in school, driver's licenses, etc. And this in plain view of everyone! Recall that Senoussi, the former Libyan intelligence chief, was carrying a "fake" Malian passport, and that former President Amadou Toumani Touré had declared that he would not humiliate "heads of families" by jailing them for embezzling public

funds. Is this not an incitement to theft and corruption on the part of the highest-ranking state official?

Is it surprising that, in a country where the state belongs to a mafia, the army should be beset by corruption, theft and nepotism? If the rebels racked up victories, it's because they were facing an army where promotions were selling like hotcakes. The coup was predictable. The Tuareg rebellion was only a sign of the depths to which Mali has fallen. The state of the Malian army is just that of Malian society. Consensus, which had been an asset in Mali — where ethnic groups got along fraternally — wound up becoming a liability once it was hijacked by the politicians.

- Moussa Konaté is a Malian novelist, playwright and essayist, notably author of *Le Prix de l'âme* (1981), *Une Aube incertaine* (1985), *Fils du Chaos* (1986), *Chronique d'une journée de répression* (1988), *Les Saisons* (1990), *Goorgi* (1998), *L'Assassin du Banconi* (2002), *L'Honneur des Keïta* (2002), *L'Empreinte du renard* (2006) et *La Malédiction du Lamentin* (2009).