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MALI CONFLICT INSIGHT

ABOUT THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide analysis and recommendations to national, regional and continental decision makers in the implementation of peace and security-related instruments.

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SITUATION ANALYSIS



Figure 1: Country profile and demographics

Source: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2018). Human Development Index (HDI), 2018, Country profile/Mali. Retrieved from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/MLI>

The Republic of Mali is located in the heart of the West Africa Sahel region. Between 1990 and 2017, its population increased from 8.5 to 18.5 million, with 41.6% of the population currently concentrated in urban areas.¹ Its economy relies on agriculture and raw materials - mainly gold and cotton - that are highly exposed to price fluctuations in the global market.² The Mande (50%) including the Bambara (37%)³, Malinke and Sarakole combined (13%) are the largest ethnic group, followed by the Fulani (17%), Voltaic (12%), Songhai (6%), and the Tuareg and Moor combined (10%).⁴ Though 68% of the total population resides in rural areas, 90% of the total population lives in the southern part of the country. This uneven distribution points to internal migration driven by the search for economic opportunities and better livelihoods.^{5,6}

Mali has a presidential political system based on three important institutions, the executive, legislative and judicial bodies, that are theoretically driven by the democratic principle of separation of powers to ensure transparency and rule of law.⁷ Yet, since gaining

1 UNDP. (2018). *Ibid.*
 2 World Bank. (2019, June 6). Mali. Country overview. Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/mali/overview>
 3 World Population Review. (2019). Mali Population 2019. Retrieved from <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/mali-population/>
 4 Nations Encyclopedia. (2019). Mali-Ethnic groups. Retrieved from <https://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Africa/Mali-ETHNIC-GROUPS.html>
 5 World Population Review. (2019). Mali Population 2019. Retrieved from <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/mali-population/>
 6 World Population. (2019). *Ibid.*
 7 République du Mali. (1992). *Constitution de la République du Mali adoptée par Referendum du 12 janvier 1992 et Promulguée par Décret n°92-073 P-CTSP du 25*

independence from France in 1960, the implementation of that democratic system was hampered by a series of coups d'état (1968, 1991, 2012) and cyclical Tuareg rebellions (1963, 1991, 2006, 2012) over grievances resulting from north-south rivalries.⁸ These conflicts fostered long-lasting authoritarian military rule that undermined transparency and the rule of law despite brief periods of apparent democracy between 1991 and 2012.⁹ Throughout the years, several Peace Accords aimed at ending insurrections were concluded between the Malian Government and Tuaregs rebels (Tamanrasset Peace Accord of 1991, the National Pact of 1992, Ouagadougou 1995 Peace Accord, and the tripartite agreement between the governments of Niger and Mali and Tuareg rebels in 2009).¹⁰ However, there was repetitive failure to implement these accords due to a lack of representation and poor governance challenges in addressing the unresolved grievances of the Tuaregs and wider Malian population.¹¹ As such, conditions for hostilities and internal turmoil remained.

Making the situation more complex were the

février 1992. Articles 29-82.
 8 Centre d'Information Inter Peuples (CIIP). (2013, March 19). *Chronologie et histoire récente du Mali*. Retrieved from <https://www.ritimo.org/Chronologie-et-histoire-recente-du-Mali>
 9 Chauzal, G., & Van Damme, T. (2015). *The roots of Mali's conflict Moving beyond the 2012 crisis*. Page 24.
 10 Arnaud Joue. (2016, April 15). *Touaregs, les rébellions*. Retrieved from <http://www.rfi.fr/bebdo/20160415-afrique-touareg-rebellions-niger-mali-algerie-burkina-faso-histoire>
 11 Pezard, S., Shurkin, M. (2015). *Achieving Peace in Northern Mali. Past Agreements, Local Conflicts, and the Prospects for a Durable Settlement*. Rand Corporation.

counterterrorism strategies deployed by Algeria and Libya that aimed at using the ungoverned northern regions of Mali to confine the spread of terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Jamaat Nosrat al Islam Wal Muslimeen (JNIM) and the Movement for the Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO).¹² The presence of AQIM and other terrorist groups led to the rise in smuggling of drugs, arms and cigarettes allegedly under the auspices of Malian officials linked to the regime of President Toumani Touré.¹³

These factors – the unresolved grievances, poor governance, growing presence of terrorist groups, and subsequent illicit trafficking - as well as the collapse of the Libyan State that had trained and provided arms to Tuareg soldiers, led to the coup d'état that deposed President Amadou Toumani Touré in 2012 and the 2012-2013 occupation of North Mali by terrorist groups.

The eruption of the 2012 crisis prompted a multidimensional response from the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), France and the United Nations (UN).¹⁴ As a result, the Algiers Peace Accord was signed in 2015 by all belligerent parties, namely the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA), the Platform, and the Malian Government. However, the crisis continued to evolve marked by fast-spreading community conflicts, the spill over of violent extremism in central Mali, and the persisting crisis in the North. As such, an analysis of the current situation in Mali needs to jointly take into account both the regional and internal dynamics driving conflict in the country.

¹² Caprini, M. (2015). *The Mali crisis and responses by regional actors*. Norwegian Institute of International Affairs. Page 6.

¹³ Caprini, M. (2015). *Ibid*. Page 6.

¹⁴ Okeke, B., Onyekwelu, V.S., Oji & Okechukwu, R. (2014). *United Nations-Ecowas Intervention in Mali- Guinea Bissau: Geo-Economic and Strategic Analysis*, *Global Journal of human-social science: e-economics*, volume 14, issue 3.

CAUSES OF THE CONFLICT

The main causes of conflict in Mali are state absence and ineffective social services, inefficient governance and justice mechanisms, unemployment, population growth, climate change and radical influences.

Absence of state institutions and ineffective social services

The absence of state and ineffective social services in Mali are characterized by the limited availability of government and state administration offices capable of delivering basic social services such as security, health, water, electricity.¹⁵ This situation is severely accentuated in the north, central and southern rural zones. Conditions became worse during the 2012-2013 crisis when the northern regions (Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal) were occupied by terrorist groups and the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA); in addition to the recent shift of violence from northern to central Mali.

Historically however, the distribution of state administration was never extensive in Mali, with most presence limited to Bamako, the capital city, and main regional towns such as Sikasso, Kayes, Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu among others.¹⁶ As a result, many rural localities throughout Mali and remote desertic spaces in the north and the centre have been ungoverned for decades.¹⁷ Consequently, those who felt excluded developed parallel models of governance to provide basic social services in place of the state.¹⁸ In addition, illicit trafficking groups profited from state absence to develop unlawful activities such as weapons, drugs and human trafficking as well as cigarette smuggling. Terrorist and other criminal groups ousted from Algeria and Libya took refuge and reorganised themselves in the ungoverned regions of northern Mali.

Poor governance and justice mechanisms

In Mali, poor governance and justice mechanisms are manifested by overstretched and limited services that fail to deliver efficient and quality services to the citizenry.¹⁹ Impunity from judicial oversight and corruption at all levels (including local governing boards, judicial and security forces) are noted as key concerns.²⁰ This fosters a lack of confidence among citizens who are less likely to turn to the state for assistance.²¹ Instead, they are more likely to use their own resources to fulfil their needs, including the formation of local militias, often drawn along ethnic lines, to protect themselves.²² The resulting negative shift in community relations and the proliferation of ethnic militias act as a trigger of conflict when minor disputes occur.

Climate change, population growth and unemployment

Climate change, population growth and unemployment are interlinked factors as they create vulnerabilities for the people in Mali. Climate change in Mali is characterised by rising temperatures that negatively impact the quality of soil and availability of water, which are vital for agriculture, one of the main sources of income in the country.²³ Climate change reduces farming and fishing opportunities and, coupled with the fast-growing population, further stretches the limited availability of resources by increasing the demand for food.²⁴ In this context, farmers overexploit land, grow crops on traditional grazing land, and urbanisation further reduces usable land.²⁵ As a result, competition over land and pastures between different communities, especially herders and farmers has increased and become more violent and accentuated in the north and the centre of Mali.²⁶

The failure of the courts to fairly adjudicate in disputes over land and other natural resources also contributes to intensified community clashes.²⁷ Unemployment appears

19 Reeve, R., & Al. (2018). *Ibid.* Page 24.

20 Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. (2017, November 10-30). *Mali-Mètre N°9. Enquête d'opinion : "Que pensent les Maliens (nes) ?" ». Bamako, Mali.* Page 12.

21 Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. (2017, November 10-30). *Ibid.* Page 12.

22 Reeve, R., & Al. (2018). *Ibid.* Page 24.

23 USAID. (2017, April). *Climate change risk profile. West Africa Sabel. Regional Fact Sheet.* Pages 2-3.

24 Interpeace & Institut Malien pour la Recherche-Action pour la Paix (IMRAP). (2015). *Ibid.* Page 75.

25 Mitra, S. (2017, December). *Terrain fertile pour les conflits au Mali : changement climatique et surexploitation des ressources.* Planetary Security Initiative. Clingendael, Note de politique. Page 3.

26 Caprini, M. (2015). *Ibid.* Page 5.

27 Reeve, R., & Al. (2018). *Ibid.* Page 26.

15 Reeve, R., & Al. (2018). *Ibid.* Page 22.

16 Reeve, R., & Al. (2018). *Ibid.* Page 22.

17 Reeve, R., & Al. (2018).

18 Interpeace & IMRAP (2017). *Analyse locale des dynamiques de conflit et de résilience dans la zone de Koro-Bankass. Région de Mopti. Portraits Croisés.* Page 40.

as a consequence of the reduction of agricultural and other related opportunities that in turn grows frustration among people, especially youth who are more vulnerable and more likely to undertake criminal activities or join armed factions, community militias and terrorist groups.²⁸

Radical influences

Although Mali is traditionally diverse with relative tolerance for different religious and ethnic groups, over the last decade radical influences have steadily been pervading the Malian social fabric²⁹. Radical influences are understood as a “*complex phased process that leads individuals or communities*” to push people to “*advocate extreme ideologies or actions*” driven by political, social or religious purposes³⁰. Generally, these extreme ideologies and behaviours aim to drastically reframe the contemporary social, political, economic or religious orders³¹. In the context of Mali, radical influences are manifested by violent inter-ethnic interactions and through the spread of extreme Islam. Radical influences, whether ethnic or religious, negatively impact social cohesion, particularly in northern and central Mali. The potential risks of radical influences are illustrated by the ethnic cleavages rooted in the 1990s between Tuareg rebels and pro-government militias, namely Ganda Koy and Ganda Izo, in northern Mali; the more recent violence between the Dogon and Fulani in central Mali since 2015; and the proliferation of Islamist groups throughout central and northern Mali.

The massive militarisation of civilians since the eruption of the 2012-2013 crisis led to the proliferation of ethnic armed factions and militias along ethnic lines and the emergence of terrorist groups spreading radical Islam. Both ethnic armed factions and terrorist groups in north and central Mali have been enrolling members and communities through radical discourse by portraying those who disagree with their ideology as enemies. As such, mistrust was nurtured and existing issues between communities (over natural resources and political concerns) became important sources of violent conflict.³²

28 *Ibid.* Page 28.

29 *Interpeace & Institut Malien pour la Recherche-Action pour la Paix (IMRAP)*. (2015). *Ibid.* Pages 29-31.

30 *The European Union Commission*. (2019). *Radicalisation*. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/crisis-and-terrorism/radicalisation_en

31 *The University of Sheffield*. (2019). *What is Radicalisation?* Retrieved from <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ss/safeguarding-overview/prevent/radicalisation>.

32 *Reeve, R., & Al.* (2018). *Ibid.* Page 16.

ACTORS

KEY

-  or  Links/ Close Relationships
-  Discord/ Conflict
-  Alliance
-  Informal/ Intermittent
-  Predominant Direction of Influence
-  External Actors

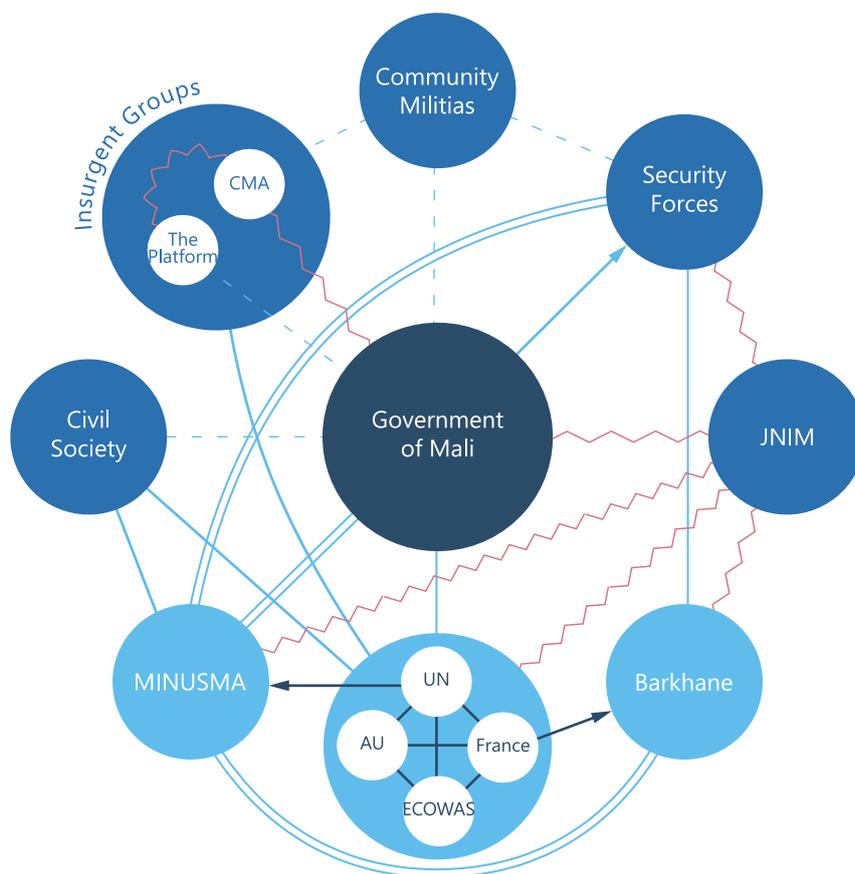


Figure 2: Actors Mapping

The Malian government

The role of the Malian Government is to guarantee the Malian people’s interests, protect the state borders and satisfy the needs of the citizenry in line with Article 53 of the Malian constitution.³³ The current government was appointed on 5 May 2018 and is comprised of 36 ministers and two secretaries of state.³⁴ As a low income country, the capacity of the government to achieve these objectives and ensure security remains weak.³⁵ Moreover, the government requires strong political support to address economic, political and social disparities that undermine relations between the State and the citizenry, especially in the north and in the centre.

The government is supported by wide range of external partners that provide multidimensional assistance (financial, technical, political and humanitarian) to mitigate the crisis and foster development in the country. Among them are the UN, the European Union (EU), the AU, ECOWAS, and a multitude of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

³³ Constitution of Mali 1992, article 53
³⁴ Jeune Afrique. (2019, May 5). Mali : le nouveau gouvernement de Boubou Cissé dévoilé. Retrieved from <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/771068/politique/mali-le-nouveau-gouvernement-de-boubou-cisse-devoile/>
³⁵ World Bank. (2017). Mali at a glance. Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/mali>

Malian security forces

The Malian security forces are comprised of various corps, with the military forces and the police being the most involved in the current conflict dynamics. Surveillance and border protection against external threats are specifically assumed by the military forces including the national Gendarmerie and the national army known as the Forces Armées Maliennes (FAMA).³⁶ Internal security and the protection of persons and goods within the boundaries of Mali are ensured by the police forces and the Gendarmerie (considering its hybrid nature).

The capacity of the military and police forces to effectively guarantee security is hampered by a range of factors that negatively impact their actions on the ground and their influence on the crisis. Among those factors is the influence of political divisions on those forces, low salaries that lead some members to engage in illicit trafficking, poor equipment and lack of professionalism.³⁷ In addition, the ignorance of local customs by the FAMA deployed in northern Mali creates

³⁶ Gendarmerie or gendarmerie is an hybrid force that is part of the armed forces in France and some other countries where French is spoken, acting simultaneously as a police force and military force. See <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/gendarmerie>
³⁷ Institut de Relations Internationales et Stratégiques (IRIS). (2018, August). Le contexte sécuritaire au Nord et Centre du Mali : Les jeux d’acteurs à l’horizon 2019. Programme humanitaire et développement. Observatoire de la prospective humanitaire. Page 11.

challenges and lack of confidence between them and local populations.³⁸

The Malian security institutions are supported by international and regional partners including the UN peace support operation MINUSMA, ECOWAS, the EU, the AU, France through its counterterrorism force Barkhane, and the G5 Sahel.³⁹ This multidimensional support aims to serve as a catalyst for the reinforcement of Malian security forces to ensure security after the eventual withdrawal of the international forces.

Insurgent groups

The main insurgent groups currently present in Mali are the Platform of Movements of June 14 of Algiers (The Platform) and the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA). Both groups are signatories of the peace deal concluded in Algiers on 15 June 2015 with the Malian Government. The Platform was created on 14 June 2014 to allow disparate insurgent groups to efficiently take part in the Algiers peace talks and defend their ethnic interests.⁴⁰ The CMA is an opportunistic coalition of disparate independentist and autonomist Tuareg groups created on 9 June 2014 for the same purposes.⁴¹ Whereas the Platform is considered to be pro-government, the CMA is opposed to the government. Members of both groups have divergent agendas according to their ethnic backgrounds. With a high capacity to mobilise their communities and initiate violence in northern and central Mali, these groups remain extremely militarised and involved in illicit trafficking.⁴² As such, disputes over illicit trafficking could easily fuel political and ideological grievances that bring about violent clashes and carry the potential to impede the prospects of peace in North Mali.

38 *Interpeace & IMRAP. (2018, November). Portraits Croisés. Analyse locale des dynamiques de conflit et de résilience dans les cercles d'Ansongo, Bourem et Gao. Région de Gao, Mali. Page 41.*

39 *G5 Sahel features 5 Sahelian countries including Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mauritania aiming to foster the security and development in the Sahel region. The organisation set with the support of international partners, a Joint Force known as the G5 Sahel Joint Force with the objective to counter terrorism and ensure security in the region. Further information available on <https://www.g5sahel.org/qui-sommes-nous/le-g5-sahel>.*

40 *Those disparate insurgent groups are the Tuareg Imghad and Allies self-defence group (GATIA), the Movement of Arab Azawad 1 (MAA 1), the Movement for the Salute of Azawad 2 (MSA 2), the Coordination of the Movements of Patriotic and Resistance Fronts I (CMFPR-I), the Azawad Popular Front (FPA) and the Popular Front for the Salute of Azawad (MPSA)*

41 *The coordination includes the High Council for the Unity of Azawad (HCUA) the hard core of the then defeated MNLA, the Movement of Arab Azawad 2 (MAA2) and the Movement for the Salute of Azawad 1 (MSA 1).*

42 *International Crisis Group (ICG). (2018, December). Drug Trafficking, Violence and Politics in Northern Mali. Africa Report N°267. Page 15.*

Terrorist groups

Terrorist groups have been active in Mali, mainly in the north, since 2012. MUJAO, Ansar Dine and the Sahara branch of Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) had been the most influential in the region, especially in Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu, before the 2013-2014 French intervention.⁴³ In March 2017, these groups were brought together by Iyad Ag Ghaly⁴⁴ to form a stronger alliance known as Jamaat Nosrat al Islam wal Muslemeen (Nosrat al-Islam or JNIM) that became the most important terrorist group in Mali.⁴⁵ The Katiba Macina, a terrorist group that emerged in 2015 and comprised of Fulani militants from central Mali led by Amadou Koufa, also participated in the meeting that formed JNIM. Through this alliance, the group was able to extend its activities in central Mali. Iyad Ag Ghaly views the alliance as a mean to create chaos and foster a secession of northern Mali from the Malian State, his long-lasting purpose since the years 1990s.⁴⁶ In September 2018, the United States designated the group as a foreign terrorist organisation.⁴⁷

JNIM is not an entirely compact and united entity due to the divergence of agendas among its members. However, its membership has the potential to fuel conflict in Mali by leveraging both radical religious and ethnic influences. JNIM may have support from other actors (a part from its membership), but the lack of factual information on that aspect makes it difficult to discuss its external connections in this report.

43 *Chazal, G., & van Damme, T. (2015). Ibid. Page 11.*

44 *Iyad Ag Ghaly is the leader of the Jihadi group Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM), also known as the group of support to Islam and Muslims (GSIM).*

45 *Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). (2018) Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM). Retrieved from <https://www.csis.org/programs/transnational-threats-project/terrorism-backgrounders/jamaat-nasr-al-islam-wal-muslimin>*

46 *Institut de Relations Internationales et Stratégiques (IRIS). (2018, August). Ibid. Page 17.*

47 *United States Department of State. Terrorist designation and States sponsors of terrorism. Foreign Terrorist Organisations. Bureau of counterterrorism and countering violent extremism. Retrieved from <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/>.*

Community militias

Community militias appear as a result of long-lasting state absence and poor governance in Mali. Since the 2012 crisis, the number of community militias has proliferated but their existence is not a new phenomenon in the country.⁴⁸ Their appearance as a parallel “security” actor emerged from the need of populations to protect themselves as well as the from deep-rooted grievances over their identity. They range from organised community youth groups called “brigades of vigilance” dispersed in northern and central Mali, to stronger militias such as Dana Amassagou,⁴⁹ Ganda Koy and Ganda Izo.⁵⁰ They are mostly concerned with ethnic and economic interests; some are also involved in illicit trafficking. The militias have the potential to aggravate community conflicts through clashes over the control of trafficking routes or products. Moreover, they gain confidence from the absence of the state in their respective areas; serving as a serious threat to the return of national security forces.⁵¹

Regional and international actors

The AU, ECOWAS, the UN and France are the most relevant regional and international third parties striving to resolve the Malian crisis. The AU and ECOWAS play a pivotal role in terms of diplomacy and mediation.⁵² Their joint intervention during the 2012 coup d'état helped to defuse tensions within the army and return constitutional order. France led two military interventions in Mali, Opération Serval (2013-2014) and Barkhane (current) its transboundary counter terror force in the Sahel.⁵³ The UN have supported ECOWAS and the AU in their efforts, and also strive to stabilise Mali by relying on the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Mission

for Stabilisation in Mali (MINUSMA), which was created by the UN Security Council Resolution 2100 (UNSC) in 2013.⁵⁴

Although peace and stability are the ultimate objectives, all regional and international actors have diverse interests and agendas in Mali. The AU and ECOWAS aim to ensure African ownership in resolving the Malian crisis, whereas the UN hope to establish an integrated solution by leaning on the AU and ECOWAS. France's interests are to protect its territory from terrorism beyond its borders as attested by the deployment of the Barkhane force, and to protect its economic interests, which to some extent, are threatened by terrorist and Tuareg rebel groups.⁵⁵ Yet, these actors have the potential to positively influence the situation on the ground if they are thoroughly coordinated in action and allow for local participation and inclusion. The contrary would only foster further distrust among the Malian people.

Civil Society

International NGOs have been active in Mali both before and after the eruption of the 2012 crisis. However, local Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have demonstrated the capacity to positively influence the situation in Mali. In collaboration with international partners, the Malian CSOs play a pivotal role in mitigating conflict by providing humanitarian support in regions affected by conflict, especially in northern and central Mali; conducting research to contribute substantial insight and better understanding of the conflict dynamics; and through fostering social dialogue. For instance, the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP-Mali), the Malian Institute for Participatory Action Research (IMRAP) and its international partner Interpeace, as well as other local organisations, lead and implement impactful actions on the ground. Nevertheless, some organisations collaborating with the Malian Government are criticised for failing to accurately identify those in need of humanitarian aid⁵⁶.

48 Militias like Ganda Koy comprised of Fulani, Songhai and Bozo people have been created since to counter Tuaregs rebellions. They are mostly pro-governmental and are opposed to the secession of Mali.

49 Da Na Ambassagou is a Dogon militia created in 2016 and suspected of multiple crimes in central Mali against Fulani, including Ogossagou massacre. It was officially banned by the Malian Government on March 24, 2019.

50 Ganda Izo is a breakaway from Ganda Koy, created in 2009 and shares the same interest as Ganda Koy.

51 Remi Carayol. (2018, July). *Au Mali, la guerre n'a rien réglé*, in *le Monde Diplomatique*. Retrieved from <https://www.amis.monde-diplomatique.fr/Au-Mali-la-guerre-n-a-rien-regle.html>

52 Caprini, M. (2015). *Ibid*. Page 7.

53 Barkhane is France's biggest overseas military operation. It is composed of 4000 French soldiers who split into ground and air forces. Institut de Relations Internationales et Stratégiques (IRIS). (2018). *Le contexte sécuritaire au Nord et Centre du Mali : Les jeux d'acteurs à l'horizon 2019, programme humanitaire & développement, observatoire de la prospective humanitaire*, page 7. Retrieved from https://www.iris-france.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/RAIN_WCA_MALI-VF-003.pdf

54 MINUSMA. (2019). *About MINUSMA*. Retrieved from <https://minusma.unmissions.org/en/about-minusma>

55 *The Defense Post*. (2019, July). *Operation Barkhane*. Retrieved from <https://thedefensepost.com/tag/operation-barkhane/>

56 *Interpeace & IMRAP*. (2018, November). *Ibid*. Page 65.

CONFLICT DYNAMICS

Conflict dynamics

The 2012 Malian crisis was the product of a series of interlinked events that had been unfolding in Mali for decades. Neighbouring countries Algeria and Libya played ambiguous roles, both directly and indirectly, in underpinning instability and also in fostering Mali's recovery from the crisis.⁵⁷ Algeria profited from absence of the state in remote northern Mali, using the region to confine terrorist groups that were threatening its own stability.⁵⁸ Libya was accused of supporting Tuareg rebels and integrating those who fled from hardships into its military troops.⁵⁹ The collapse of Libya indirectly provided well-trained combatants and facilitated the armament of the MNLA.⁶⁰ In turn, Algeria's counterterrorism strategies allowed for the infiltration of extremist groups into northern Mali. Both countries have also made positive contributions to Mali, such as Algeria supporting peace processes like the Tamanrasset Peace Accord in 1991 and more recently the 2015 Algiers Peace Accord. Libya also supported Mali's economic development as illustrated by the vast agricultural project Malibya signed in 2008 and launched in mid-2009.⁶¹ These contributions were meaningful attempts at creating peace in Mali. Algeria's peace efforts brought antagonist actors to the table of negotiations and nurtured hopes of peace although Mali is still facing protracted conflicts. Furthermore, the Malibya project would have been impactful for the Malian agricultural sector, the cornerstone of the country's economy, by creating employments and enhancing the activities of the 80% of Malians engaged in agriculture without the collapse of Libya in 2011 and the crisis that erupted in northern Mali in 2012.

Actors from the Malian population, especially the leader of the High Islamic Council of Mali (HICM), the Dogon association Gina/Gogon, youth and the pro-governmental community militia Ganda Izo, parallelly, organised resistance to terrorist or extremist groups and made efforts to dialogue with the MNLA Tuareg rebel group.

The leaders of HICM and Gina/Gogon went to northern Mali in 2012 to directly talk to Iyad Ag Ghaly, a former influential member of MNLA who turned Islamist after failing to lead MNLA following the death of the general

leader.⁶² Their objective was to undermine the crisis in northern Mali by addressing both the Tuareg rebellion and the terrorist occupation through direct talks that the government had failed to do at the beginning.⁶³ In addition, young groups such as the *Patriots*, *Jeune Patrouille*, and *Nous pas Bouger* among others, organised themselves into informal security groups to fill the gap created by the withdrawal of Malian national forces.⁶⁴ The pro-governmental militia Ganda Izo, currently part of the Platform, also resisted the MNLA and terrorist groups.⁶⁵

These initiatives denote the resilience and abilities of the Malian people to fill the gaps created by state absence. Yet, the involvement of Ganda Izo in the crisis could be viewed as a result of the "divide and rule" approach of the Malian Government that aimed to fragment northern communities and prevent the Tuareg, Songhai, Fulani or any other northern people from gaining a strong political influence.⁶⁶ Furthermore, those actions undertaken above were not effectively impactful as the MNLA and Islamist groups continued to persist.⁶⁷

Grievances within the military over the government's management of the northern crisis as well as the under-equipment of the Malian military forces to adequately respond resulted in a coup d'état by mid-ranking officers led by Captain Amadou Haya Sanogo.⁶⁸ The MNLA in an opportunistic alliance with Islamist groups - Ansar Dine, AQIM and MUJAO - that took advantage of the Malian military collapse, occupied the northern cities of Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu, and declared independence for the Azawad State.⁶⁹ Yet, the divergence of their agendas allowed the Islamist groups to oust the MNLA from the occupied cities, consolidate their control over the northern region, and impose Sharia law on the local people.⁷⁰

ECOWAS was prompted to prevent the escalating situation from threatening the entire sub-region.⁷¹ The regional organisation immediately focused on

57 Caprini, M. (2015). *Ibid.* Page 5.

58 Chazal, G., & van Damme, T. (2015). *Ibid.* Page 24.

59 Chazal, G., & van Damme, T. (2015). *Ibid.* Page 22.

60 Chazal, G., & van Damme, T. (2015). *Ibid.* Page 31.

61 Adamczewski, A., & Hugon, P. (2013). *La crise libyenne et son impact sur les transactions foncières en Afrique. Le projet Malibya au Mali.* In *Afrique contemporaine 2013/1* (n° 245), Pages 105-107. Retrieved from <https://www.cairn.info/revue-afrique-contemporaine-2013-1-page-105.htm#>

62 Interview with an ECOWAS Early Warning System (ECOWARN) field Monitor for Mali, April 22, 2019 via WhatsApp.

63 Interview with an ECOWAS Early Warning System (ECOWARN) field Monitor for Mali, April 22, 2019 via WhatsApp.

64 Pezard, S., Shurkin, M. (2015). *Ibid.* Page 34.

65 Interview with an ECOWAS Early Warning System (ECOWARN) field monitor for Mali, Saly, Senegal, March 3, 2019.

66 Chazal, G., & van Damme, T. (2015). *Ibid.* Page 19.

67 Interview with an ECOWAS Early Warning System (ECOWARN) field Monitor for Mali, April 22, 2019 via WhatsApp.

68 Caprini, M. (2015). *Ibid.* Page 7.

69 Bate, F. (2012, April 6). *Mali rebels declare independent 'Azawad'*. Reuters. Retrieved from

<https://www.reuters.com/article/lozatzp-mali-20120406-idAFJ0E83500820120406>

70 Caprini, M. (2015). *Ibid.* Page 7.

71 Caprini, M. (2015). *Ibid.* Page 8.

addressing the unconstitutional occupation of power by the military junta of Amadou Haya Sanogo by condemning the coup d'état, threatening a regional military intervention, and applying a range of sanctions against the military regime.⁷² The sanctions, mainly economic, included freezing the assets of the military junta's leaders, banning international bank transfers to Malian accounts, travel bans, and interrupting crucial economic routes that serve and feed the Malian economy.⁷³ Parallel to those coercive measures, a mediation process under the lead of Blaise Compaoré, former president of Burkina Faso (1987-2014), was initiated.⁷⁴ As a result, the junta agreed to a timetable aiming to restore constitutional order in exchange for the lifting of sanctions and amnesty for the entire junta.⁷⁵ In addition, a transitional government led by Honourable Diancounda Traoré, former President of the Malian Parliament, was appointed to rule Mali until the organisation of regular elections in 2013.⁷⁶

However, the re-establishment of constitutional order in Mali was not reflected across the country. On 10 January 2013, MUJAO attacked and captured Konna, a strategic city in central Mali, from Malian forces and threatened to capture Bamako.⁷⁷ With regard to the degraded state of the Malian army and the unavailability of a ready African force to intervene, the Malian interim government called for military assistance from France, resulting in the French-led military intervention Opération Serval which was launched in January 2013.⁷⁸ Within the same month, French and Chadian forces had ousted Islamists from central and almost all of northern Mali.⁷⁹ Opération Serval helped, to some extent, to restore Malian territorial sovereignty and in the organisation of the 2013 elections that saw the election of current President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita.⁸⁰ The operation also led to the fragmentation and dispersion of Islamist groups throughout northern Mali; though, the lack of immediate follow up nurtured their ability to continue

threatening the country.⁸¹ Opération Serval handed over to the Barkhane force, France's largest overseas counter terror force, in August 2014.⁸² Additionally, on behalf of the Malian government, the UN deployed MINUSMA to help stabilise Mali.

With relative stability in Mali, the belligerent parties - separatist Tuareg rebel groups and pro- government anti-separatists featured in CMA and the Platform respectively as well as the Malian government - engaged in peace talks between 2014 and 2015. As a result, a Peace Accord, known as "l'Accord pour la Paix et la Réconciliation au Mali, issu du Processus d'Alger" was concluded on 15 May 2015 in Algiers, Algeria, under the auspices of Algeria, the AU, the UN and ECOWAS.⁸³ The main points of the Peace Accord gave more autonomy to the Azawad territory in recognition of the social realities behind the Azawad concept and the recognition of Mali as a unitary state that surrounds the Azawad territory.⁸⁴ The parties agreed to restore state authority in northern regions through a Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programme of all armed factions including the CMA and Platform; and the appointment of interim authorities in northern regions.⁸⁵ Although the appointment of interim authorities was completed in 2016, the mistrust between the different armed factions and tensions between the government and the separatist group CMA are hampering the implementation of the Peace Accord.⁸⁶

In addition to the issues occurring in the north, a violence hotspot emerged in the country's middle belt in 2015. Contrary to northern Mali, violence in central Mali is marked by community conflicts mostly between Fulani and Dogon communities over ideological divergences and control of natural resources such as land, pasture and water. This violence is related to issues of social co-existence that the state fails to address. The absence of the state fostered a vacuum of authority that led to the proliferation of community militias that were, in turn, empowered by a large availability of weapons. The

72 Caprini, M. (2015). *Ibid.* Page 8.

73 Caprini, M. (2015). *Ibid.* Page 8.

74 Caprini, M. (2015). *Ibid.* Page 8.

75 Caprini, M. (2015). *Ibid.* Page 8.

76 BBC News. (2012, July 8). *Mali interim government urged by Ecowas.* Retrieved from

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-18758150>

77 Diallo, T. (2013, January 10). *Mali Islamists capture strategic town, residents flee.* Reuters. Retrieved from

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mali-rebels/mali-islamists-capture-key-town-residents-flee-idUSBRE90912Q20130110>

78 France 24. (2013, January 11). *Mali asks France for help as Islamist militants advance.*

<https://www.france24.com/en/20130111-mali-asks-france-military-help-islamists-seize-konna-militants>

79 Caprini, M. (2015). *Ibid.* Page 10.

80 Interview with an ECOWAS Early Warning System (ECOWARN) field monitor for Mali, Saly, Senegal, March 3, 2019.

81 Interview with an ECOWAS Early Warning System (ECOWARN) field monitor for Mali, Saly, Senegal, March 3, 2019.

82 The Defense Post. (2019, July 22). *Operation Barkhane.* Retrieved from

<https://thedefensepost.com/tag/operation-barkhane/>

83 Interview with an ECOWAS Early Warning System (ECOWARN) field Monitor for Mali, April 22, 2019 via WhatsApp.

84 Accord pour la Paix et la Réconciliation au Mali issu du Processus d'Alger. Articles 1-5. Retrieved from

<https://peacemaker.un.org/node/2681>

85 Accord pour la Paix et la Réconciliation au Mali issu du Processus d'Alger. Articles 18-20. Retrieved from

<https://peacemaker.un.org/node/2681>

86 Ag Anara, S. (2017, April 21). *Mali returns interim authorities to last northern cities.* Reuters. Retrieved from

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mali-security/mali-returns-interim-authorities-to-last-northern-cities-idUSKBN17M2ZA>

banned Dana Amassagou - the most well-known Dogon militia in central Mali and suspected to have committed several atrocities including the Ogossagou attack - was a by-product of the security vacuum in central Mali.⁸⁷ Aside from ethnic and religious influences, unfair adjudications from judicial bodies are cited by local populations as one of the main drivers of community conflicts in the region.⁸⁸ As well, both religious and ethnic radical influences caused the emergence of the "Front de Libération du Macina" led by Amadou Koufa, who carried out mass recruitment among rural Fulani communities in central Mali. The Dogon community then began to consider all Fulani people as terrorists after Dogon assassinations suspected to have been committed by Fulani terrorists.⁸⁹ Violence in central Mali caused more than 500 deaths and casualties; peaking in 2019 with the massacres in Ogossagou and Sobame Da⁹⁰. Both massacres are suspected to have been perpetrated by Dogon and Fulani militias respectively.⁹¹ As such, these community conflicts have plunged Mali into cyclical ethnic vengeance that is shaking the already weakened unity in the country.

In 2017, Mali saw the revitalisation of terrorist groups including JNIM in its northern and central parts. JNIM threatened the 2018 presidential elections in northern Mali by intimidating local populations, state representatives and international forces. Contrarily, the insurgent groups (CMA and the Platform) collaborated with the government by allowing electoral bodies to operate in their respective zones.⁹² JNIM also constantly perpetrates attacks against Malian and international military forces, causing casualties and terror among civilians.

Since 2018, social and political tensions have affected the country, in addition to protracted insecurity. In December 2018, the education sector experienced a long strike by teachers who protested lack of payment for accommodation and working tools including books and other relevant research materials⁹³. The inability

of the government to satisfy those claims led to tense protests in Bamako.⁹⁴ Moreover, the decision by the government to freeze the salaries of certain striking teachers worsened the tensions as their professional union refused to join the negotiations.⁹⁵ The education system was subsequently paralysed for five months. Additionally, the Malian High Islamic Council called for a strike following a workshop organised by the government and the Embassy of Netherlands in Mali on the topic of introducing sexual education in Mali's education system.⁹⁶ This further added to suspicions concerned with growing Islamic influences in Malian politics.⁹⁷ In the context of that internal political and social turmoil, the government led by Prime Minister Soumeylou Boubèye Maiga was forced to resign on 18 April 2019 following pressure led by the Malian High Islamic Council, opposition parties as well as dissident voices within the ruling coalition over their failure to sufficiently prevent atrocities in central Mali, improve Malians' lives conditions and address security issues in the country.⁹⁸

Yet, the appointment of a new government led by Prime Minister Boubou Cissé on 2 May 2019 following an agreement with opposition parties to form a politically inclusive government, seems to gradually bring back Mali on the path to political stability⁹⁹. The UN hailed the consultations that led to that agreement and the renewed commitment of key Malian parties to implement the 2015 Peace Accord¹⁰⁰. However, further efforts are needed to return stability in the country.

Retrieved from

<https://www.bbc.com/afrique/region-47472934>

94 BBC News. (2019, March 6). *Ibid.*

95 BBC News. (2019, March 6). *Ibid.*

96 Bensimon, C. (2018, December 26). *Au Mali, l'influence du président du Haut Conseil islamique dépasse le cadre des mosquées.* *Le Monde Afrique*. Retrieved from https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2018/12/26/au-mali-mahmoud-dicko-imam-et-vizir_5402362_3212.html

97 International Crisis Group. (2017). *Islam et politique au Mali : entre réalité et fiction.* *Rapport Afrique N°249*. Retrieved from <https://d2071andvip0uj.cloudfront.net/249-islam-et-politique-au-mali-entre-realite-et-fiction.pdf>

98 Bensimon, C. (2019, April 22). *Au Mali, la contestation a pris le visage de l'islam politique.* *Le Monde Afrique*. Retrieved from https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2019/04/09/au-mali-la-contestation-a-pris-le-visage-de-l-islam-politique_5448004_3212.html

99 Radio France International (RFI). (2019, May 3). *Mali: signature d'un accord politique «historique».* Retrieved from <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20190503-mali-politique-gouvernement-union-ouverture-boubou-cisse-oumar-dicko>

100 United Nations. (2019, May 6). *Welcoming Accord between Mali Government, Opposition Parties, Secretary-General Urges All Stakeholders to Implement 2015 Political Agreement in Full. Meetings and Press releases.* Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sgsm19565.doc.htm>

87 *Le Point Afrique*. (2019, June 21). *Marcelin Guenguéré : « Les autorités maliennes ne peuvent pas sécuriser le pays dogon »* Retrieved from https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/mali-marcelin-guenguere-dans-certaines-zones-l-etat-n-existe-pas-20-06-2019-2320122_3826.php

88 Reeve, R. & Al. (2018, July). *Ibid.* Page 26.

89 *Interview with an ECOWAS Early Warning System (ECOWARN) field monitor for Mali, Saly, Senegal, March 3, 2019.*

90 Schlein, L. (2018, July 18). *UN Reports Alarming Surge of Violence in Mali's Mopti Region.* *VOA Africa*. Retrieved from <https://www.voanews.com/afrique/un-reports-alarming-surge-violence-malis-mopti-region>

91 BBC News. (2019, June 10). *Mali attack: '100 killed' in ethnic Dogon village.* Retrieved from

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48579475>

92 *Interview with an ECOWAS Early Warning System (ECOWARN) field monitor for Mali, Saly, Senegal, March 3, 2019.*

93 BBC News. (2019, March 6). *Grève des enseignants et des élèves au Mali.*

CURRENT RESPONSE ASSESSMENT

The Malian crisis started in 2012 prompted a various range of interventions from international, continental and regional stakeholders. ECOWAS and the AU mainly led actions including mediation, peace support and peace enforcement operations (AFISMA), especially at the beginning of the crisis, during the coup d'état in 2012 and in the frame of the Malian peace talks that brought about the Algiers Peace Accord in 2015 with the support of the UN. Whilst the collaboration between the UN, ECOWAS and the AU significantly impacted the situation in Mali, more efforts have to be done to build sustainable peace in Mali. France has been crucial to maintaining the Malian state, especially in 2013 when its forces led Opération Serval to push Islamist groups out of central and northern Mali. Currently, France is pursuing its efforts against terror through Barkhane.

ECOWAS and AU

There was a strong cooperation between ECOWAS and the AU in the management of the Malian crisis. The initial response was at the sub-regional level with ECOWAS quickly condemning the military coup and the Islamist occupation of the North. Regarding the coup d'état, ECOWAS initiated a mediation process and designated Blaise Compaoré, the former president of Burkina Faso, to take the lead in the process. By applying sanctions, the ECOWAS mediation team and the military junta managed to sign an agreement in April 2012. The option of a military intervention encountered some challenges due to the lack of capacity among member states and the opposition of Malian actors. Regional key players like Algeria and Mauritania also preferred the AU's intervention as they are not members of the ECOWAS.¹⁰¹ Due to these constraints, the ECOWAS Mission in Mali (MICEMA) was unable to deploy leading to the involvement of the AU's African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA).¹⁰²

The AU began playing an active role in the crisis in June 2012. It assisted ECOWAS in getting a UN financial support and 'continentalised' the framework of the intervention by transforming ECOWAS mission in Mali (MICEMA) into the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) and thus overcoming

101 Lacher, W. (2013). *The Malian Crisis and the Challenge of Regional Cooperation. Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, 2(2), p. Art. 18. Retrieved from

<https://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/ista.bgf>

102 Lori-Anne Théroux-Bénoni, L.-A. (2013). *The lack of credible and timely alternatives to France's Operation Serval in Mali has highlighted the shortcomings of ECOWAS, the AU and the UN, Lessons from the Malian crisis for the international security architecture. Institute for Security Studies. Retrieved from* <https://issafrika.org/iss-today/lessons-from-the-malian-crisis-for-the-international-security-architecture>

Mauritanian and Algerian reluctance to support the mission.¹⁰³ In July 2012, the UN withheld its support to the AFISMA stabilisation force and requested additional information on the objectives, means and modalities of the envisaged deployment. Due to the imminent threat posed by armed and terrorist groups, the UN adopted a resolution in December 2012 authorising the deployment of AFISMA for an initial period of one year.¹⁰⁴ With the delay on the side of AFISMA and the limited capability (particularly air force) of the Malian army, Mali requested France for support, which launched Opération Serval on 11 January 2013.

In July 2013, MINUSMA replaced AFISMA "to support the transitional authorities of Mali in the stabilisation of the country and implementation of the transitional roadmap"¹⁰⁵. Since then, MINUSMA has regularly been the target of terrorist groups, making Mali one of the most dangerous places for UN peacekeepers. The AU coordinated its involvement in the stabilisation of Mali through its Representative for Mali and the Sahel.¹⁰⁶ The peace process initiated in April 2014 under the auspices of Algeria and supported by the UN, AU, ECOWAS, and other came to fruition with the signing of the Algiers Agreement by the conflict parties in May and June 2015. Mali's future as a united and stable state rests on the successful implementation of the agreement.

Several key lessons can be learnt from the ECOWAS and AU management of the Malian crisis. By reframing the multilateral context for the African intervention from the sub-regional to the continental level, the AU showed that it could collaborate and complement with a Regional Economic Community (REC) as far as peace initiatives are concerned on the continent. However, despite ECOWAS' past significant experience in peacekeeping, the Malian crisis showed its very limited capacity for expeditionary land and aerial warfare as well as its inability to bypass the influence of Algeria and Mauritania, which are not member states of the organisation.¹⁰⁷ Additionally, the AU's AFISMA faced similar challenges in terms of

103 Théroux-Bénoni, L.-A. (2013). *Ibid.*

104 UNSC. (2012, December 20). *Resolution 2085, Adopted by the Security Council at its 6898th meeting. Retrieved from* [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2085\(2012\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2085(2012))

105 United Nations Security Council. (2013, April 25). *Security Council Establishes Peacekeeping Force for Mali Effective 1 July, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2100 (2013). Press release. Retrieved from* <https://www.un.org/press/en/2013/sc10987.doc.htm>

106 African Union Peace and Security Department (AUPSD). (2012, October 25). *The African Union appoints Mr. Pierre Buyoya as its high representative for Mali and the Sahel. Retrieved from* <http://www.peaceau.org/en/article/the-african-union-appoints-mr-pierre-buyoya-as-its-high-representative-for-maliand-the-sahel>

107 Caparini, M. (2015). *the Mali Crisis and Responses by Regional Actors, NUPI Working Paper No. 849, SIPRI, 15 pages. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2670222*

resource mobilisation as it heavily relied on financial and logistic support from the UN. More importantly, in a communique, the AU complained that they were not appropriately consulted by the UN Security Council in the drafting of the resolution for the takeover of AFISMA by MINUSMA.¹⁰⁸ The UN should have provided AFISMA with the logistical and financial means and there should have been greater continuity in terms of civilian and military leadership from AFISMA to MINUSMA.¹⁰⁹ Overall, although they have been impactful in terms of diplomacy and mediation, the actions made by the AU and ECOWAS interventions could not be sustained due to financial and logistical insufficiency.

MINUSMA

MINUSMA's intervention in Mali was a relative success from 2013 until 2016. It helped to stabilise northern Mali, decrease the number of casualties among civilians and facilitate the return of a large number of displaced persons to their home.¹¹⁰ The Mission also gave support to the organisation of the 2013 general elections and assisted the Malian conflicting parties in the process that led to the Algiers Peace Accord in 2015.¹¹¹ The majority of those achievements is still relevant regarding the challenges brought by the volatile environment MINUSMA is operating in, the country's size and the related logistic concerns as well as the relative limited budget of \$1 700 000 000 the Mission has been allocated to achieve its mandate.¹¹² Nevertheless, the Mission's effectiveness in terms of stabilisation and the protection of civilians is decreasing due to a range of factors including the hostile security environment that is actually the most serious concern. For instance, since MINUSMA was launched in 2013, the Mission lost at least 200 personnel, mainly military.¹¹³ Moreover, the significant destabilisation of central Mali showed the limits of MINUSMA's mandate aiming to help the Malian government address the situation since June

108 AUPSD. (2013, March 7). 358th meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU) on the situation in Mali, 2013. <http://www.peaceau.org/en/article/communique-of-the-358th-meeting-of-the-peace-and-security-council-of-the-african-union-au-on-the-situation-in-mali>

109 Caparini. M. (2015). *Ibid.*

110 Van der Lijn, J., & Al. (2019, April). *Assessing the effectiveness of the United Nations Mission in Mali/MINUSMA*. Norwegian Institute of International Affairs. Page 1. Retrieved from

<https://mupi.brage.unit.no/mupi-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2599513/EPON-MINUSMA-Report-Exec-Summary.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y>

111 Van der Lijn, J., & Al. (2019, April). *Ibid.* Page 1.

112 United Nations. (2018, July 5). *Fifth Committee Approves \$6.69 Billion for 13 Peacekeeping Operations in 2018/19, Overhaul of Secretariat Management Structure, as Resumed Session Concludes*. Press release. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/gaab4287.doc.htm>

113 Linfo.Re. (2019, October 10). *Mali : deux attaques contre la Minusma font un mort et 5 blessés*. Retrieved from <https://www.linfo.re/monde/afrique/mali-deux-attaques-contre-la-minusma-font-un-mort-et-5-blesses>

2018. In due course, the Malian government generally set the agenda, and does not always prioritise the interests of the ordinary citizenry.¹¹⁴ Although the Malian government showed a will to resolve the situation in central Mali through the "Plan de Sécurisation Intégrée des Régions du Centre (PSIRC)" implemented as an attempt to defuse violence in central Mali, only limited outcomes were achieved.¹¹⁵ In addition, MINUSMA is mainly present in larger towns. Its presence in central Mali and rural areas where armed community militias are active is very restricted, and the mission has not the required capacities to protect civilians although its mandate of June 2018 although that mandate extended its field of action to central Mali.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, the Mission is much under criticism. There is a growing feeling among officials, civil society and ordinary Malians that MINUSMA is no longer able to improve the situation in Mali¹¹⁷. For Instance, MINUSMA's association with the FAMA and the Joint Force of the G5 Sahel (JF-G5S) as well as with Barkhane in places where the Malian State does not have support, negatively affects its legitimacy¹¹⁸.

However, the Mission strives to engage with local communities and other range of civilian stakeholders mainly at the operational level and by implementing Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) in the context of its stabilisation efforts.¹¹⁹ Those actions help to balance MINUSMA's appreciation among the Malians as about 50% of the Malian population generally appreciate the Mission's performance¹²⁰.

France

France's Opération Serval in Mali Could be considered as proactive and a game changer having quickly responded to the need to protect the Malian state integrity. The operation maintained the already weakened Malian institutions from terrorist threat. However, Opération Serval did not guarantee a sustainable strategic gain although the French government declared it a success.¹²¹

The failure of Opération Serval to address the socio-

114 Boeke S., & Schuurman B. (2015). *Ibid.* Page 802.

115 Van der Lijn, J., & Al. (2019, April). Page 2.

116 MINUSMA. (2018, June 28). *The Security Council unanimously approved Resolution 2423 on 28 June 2018, renewing the mandate of MINUSMA for another year*. About MINUSMA. Retrieved from

<https://minusma.unmissions.org/en/mandate-0>

117 Interpeace Gao. Page 13.

118 Van der Lijn, J., & Al. (2019, April). Page 4.

119 Van der Lijn, J., & Al. (2019, April). Page 3.

120 Van der Lijn, J., & Al. (2019, April). Page 3.

121 Boeke S., & Schuurman B. (2015) *Operation 'Serval': A Strategic Analysis of the French Intervention in Mali, 2013–2014*, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 38:6, 801–825, DOI: 10.1080/01402390.2015.1045494. Page 806. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2015.1045494>

political causes of the Malian conflict calls into question its efficiency or effectiveness beyond the military victories. Moreover, Opération Serval strategically prioritised France's national interests (economic and security-related) in Mali and neighbouring countries such as Niger.¹²² The mines exploited by Areva in Niger at Akoka and Arlit (Niger) near the border with Mali provide 20% of the fuel indispensable for the estimated 58 nuclear reactors responsible for producing at least 75% of France electricity¹²³. The high protection of those mines by French commandos from threats like Jihadi groups and other criminals operating in the Sahel shows their importance for France. Furthermore, France's security-related issues that guided Opération Serval in Mali focus on preventing the formation of large terrorist sanctuaries in the Sahel that could in turn threaten France's stability, its institutions and citizens abroad¹²⁴. For instance, AQIM's attacks against French embassies in West Africa and kidnapping of French citizens justified the prompted reaction of France in Mali.

From that perspective, France is pursuing its military intervention in Mali through Barkhane. But Barkhane is considerably challenged being relatively few in number compared to the Sahel vast arid region and confronted to adaptive terrorist and criminal groups deeply entrenched in local communities. In addition, there is a growing anti-French feeling among the Malian population who view the force as non-reactive to local security needs. That in turn, reduce Barkhane intelligence capacities that should rely on the local population to be efficient.

122 Boeke S., & Schuurman B. (2015). *Ibid.* Pages 806-807.

123 Boeke S., & Schuurman B. (2015). *Ibid.* Page 806.

124 Boeke S., & Schuurman B. (2015). *Ibid.* Page 807.

SCENARIOS

Best case scenario

In this case, the security situation stabilises and the implementation of the Peace Accord continues. This may lead Mali to a lasting and sustainable peace. However, this scenario requires the success of the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) process and Security Sector Reform (SSR) as well as the socio-economic inclusion of northern communities. The fight against terrorism and organised crime will also be vital in consolidating peace in the country. A national dialogue would also be fostered with the recent appointment of a politically inclusive government. The best-case scenario is a long term-process that requires a great deal of resources; it is apparent that the peacebuilding process in Mali cannot be successful without it.

Most likely scenario

The most likely scenario is continued cyclical conflict marked by periods of quiet due to terrorist groups that are not bound to the peace deal, and which work towards derailing it. The January 2017 terrorist attack against the Joint Operational Mechanism base in Gao which claimed nearly 60 lives is one such illustration.¹²⁵ In fact, the Joint Operational Mechanism had hosted former Tuareg rebels and pro-government militia members who were preparing to go on joint patrol, a key part of the Algiers peace agreement. Another factor is the community conflicts over natural resources, ideological and political divergences. The growing community conflicts in central Mali could sustain this situation unless the government takes steps to settle them. The slaughters in Ogossagou and Sobame Da, respectively Fulani and Dogon villages, could become more frequent if immediate steps are not taken.

Worst case scenario

The worst-case scenario could result in a spread of community violence in central Mali and the fragmentation of rebel alliances in the north over clashes erupting from illicit trafficking. Such a situation would facilitate the resurgence of terrorist groups and the revitalisation of violence in northern Mali. This situation would entirely be conditional on the failure of the implementation of the Algiers Peace Accord. MINUSMA and the counter terror forces, Barkhane and the Joint Forces of G5 Sahel, would need to fail completely for this scenario to unfold. Such a scenario may lead to significant geopolitical calamities for West Africa and the whole Sahel region.

¹²⁵ Aljazeera (2017, January 19). Suicide blast kills dozens at army base in Mali's Gao. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/01/mali-suicide-attack-kills-dozens-gao-military-camp-170118113919950.html>

STRATEGIC OPTIONS

To the Malian Government

The Malian Government should:

- Work with armed groups, the signatories of the Algiers Peace Accord, in a trusting environment and take the lead in implementing the provisions of the agreement. With the past failed peace agreements still looming in the Malian collective memory, trust is a recipe for durable peace. The government should work with its international and technical partners to restore basic social services and implement sustainable development projects in the peripheral areas to relieve local populations from the poverty trap.
- Implicate the local populations in designing and implementing the national policies to meet the regional and local specific needs. Grievances over governance problems - insecurity, state failure in providing efficient basic social services, biases resulting from unfair judicial adjudications - need to be addressed in a participatory and inclusive manner that places local populations at the heart of a national governance based on a constant dialogue. Such a process would rely on local resilience capacities such as local and traditional conflict resolution methods in order to build local ownership.
- Revitalise and expanded the peace process to other regions as the current situation goes beyond a north-south crisis. Constant talks between the national army and the northern local populations as well as between populations in central Mali could help to rebuild social cohesion in those regions. As well, the local peacebuilders need to be supported and put on the frontline in their respective areas as they are aware enough of the regional, local contexts and sensitivities.
- Adopt concrete mechanisms against corruption, in light of Article 2(i) of the ECOWAS Protocol on the Fight against Corruption, to make sure that local populations benefit from development projects.
- Given the current fragile recovery of the country, any major political reform requires dialogue and consensus with the political opposition and civil society, in conformity with Article 1(d) of the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance.

- In light of the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance¹²⁶, the government needs to rebuild trust and engage in continued constructive and inclusive dialogue with both community leaders and local populations in the different sensitive areas to heal the wounds of division in Mali and fully involve them in the nation building process.

To ECOWAS and the AU

- Take the lead in creating a regional security belt and coordinating the existing regional and sub-regional initiatives such as the expected joint G5 Sahel counter-terrorism force in order to address the root causes of radicalisation and to fight terrorism and organised crime.
- Work towards the national ownership of the AU Strategy for the Sahel by the different governments in the region.
- Closely monitor the Algiers Peace Accord in their capacities as members of the Mediation Team supporting the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali resulting from the Algiers Process.
- Collaboratively reinforce the capacities of their respective Stand-by Forces and early warning systems in light of the African Peace and Architecture Roadmap (2016-2020) to prevent similar situations.

To the UN and MINUSMA

- Encourage the relevant stakeholders in the conflict to fully implement the Algiers Peace Accord, and identify and apply targeted sanctions against the spoilers in the conflict if necessary.
- Support the restoration of state authority over the whole national territory and the delivery of public services in the peripheral areas.
- Support the implementation of inclusive DDR and SSR, which should be part of a long-term national security strategy.

¹²⁶ Article 1(g).

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MALI: CONFLICT TIMELINE (1960-2019)

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- 1960** - Mali becomes independent with Modibo Keita as president. It becomes a one-party, socialist state and withdraws from the Franc zone.
-
- 1968** - Keita ousted in coup led by Lieutenant Moussa Traore.
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- 1979** - New constitution provides for elections; Traore re-elected president.
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- 1985** - Mali and Burkina Faso engage in border fighting.
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- 1991** - Traore deposed in coup and replaced by transitional committee.
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- 1992** - Alpha Konare wins multiparty elections to become Mali's first democratically-elected president.
-
- 1995** - Peace agreement with Tuareg tribes leads to return of thousands of refugees.
-
- 2002** - April Amadou Toumani Toure elected president by landslide. Poll is marred by allegations of fraud.
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- 2007** - April President Toure wins a second five-year term in elections.
-
- 2007** - August Suspected Tuareg rebels abduct government soldiers in separate incidents near the Niger and Algerian borders.
-
- 2008 May** - Tuareg rebels kill 17 soldiers in attack on an army post in the northeast, despite a ceasefire agreed a month earlier.
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- 2009** - Government says the army has taken control of all the bases of the most active Tuareg rebel group. A week later, 700 rebels surrender their weapons in ceremony marking their return to the peace process.
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- 2010 Mali** - Algeria, Mauritania and Niger set up joint command to tackle threat of terrorism.
-
- 2012 March** - Military officers depose President Toure ahead of the April presidential elections, accusing him of failing to deal effectively with the Tuareg rebellion. African Union suspends Mali.
-
- 2012 April** - Tuareg rebels seize control of northern Mali, declare independence. Military hands over to a civilian interim government, led by President Dioncounda Traore.
-
- 2012 May** - Junta reasserts control after an alleged coup attempt by supporters of ousted President Toure in Bamako. Pro-junta protesters storm presidential compound and beat Mr Traore unconscious. The Tuareg MNLA and Islamist Ansar Dine rebel groups merge and declare northern Mali to be an Islamic state. Ansar Dine begins to impose Islamic law in Timbuktu. Al-Qaeda in North Africa endorses the deal.
-
- 2012 June** - July - Ansar Dine and its Al-Qaeda ally turn on the MNLA and capture the main northern cities of Timbuktu, Kidal and Gao. They begin to destroy many Muslim shrines that offend their puritan views.
-
- 2012 August** - Prime Minister Cheick Modibo Diarra forms a new government of national unity in order to satisfy regional demands for a transition from military-dominated rule. The cabinet of 31 ministers includes five seen as close to coup leader Capt Amadou Sanogo.
-
- 2012 December** - Prime Minister Cheick Modibo Diarra resigns, allegedly under pressure from army leaders who oppose plans for Ecowas military intervention. President Traore appoints a presidential official, Django Sissoko, to succeed him. The UN and US threaten sanctions.
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- 2013 January** - French troops intervened in Mali after an official request of President Diancounda Traoré.
-
- 2013 April** - France begins withdrawal of troops. A regional African force helps the Malian army provide security.
-
- 2013 June** - Government signs peace deal with Tuareg nationalist rebels to pave way for elections. Rebels agree to hand over northern town of Kidal that they captured after French troops forced out Islamists in January.
-
- 2013 July-August** - Ibrahim Boubacar Keita wins presidential elections, defeating Moussa Mara.
France formally hands over responsibility for security in the north to the Minusma UN force.
-
- 2014 April** - President Keita appoints former rival Moussa Mara prime minister in a bid to curb instability in the north.
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- 2015 May** - A Peace Accord to end the conflict in the north of Mali is signed by the government and several militia and rebel factions.
-
- 2015 June** - Government and ethnic Tuareg rebels sign peace deal aimed at ending decades of conflict. The government gives the Tuareg more regional autonomy and drops arrest warrants for their leaders.
-
- 2015 November** - Islamist gunmen attack the luxury Radisson Blu hotel in the capital Bamako, killing 22.
-
- 2017 April** - President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita announces a new government, appointing close ally Abdoulaye Idrissa Maiga as prime minister.
-
- 2018 August** - Re-election of Ibrahim Boubacar Keita
-
- 2019 March** - Massacre against Fulani people in Ogossagou, more than 130 killed.
-
- 2019 May** - Resignation of the Malian government after social and political pressures over its failure to address community conflicts in central Mali.
A new Prime Minister is appointed and an accord is found with the opposition parties to appoint a political inclusive government.
-
- 2019 June** - Massacre in Sobame Da, more than a hundred people from Dogon community were suspiciously killed by Fulani.
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