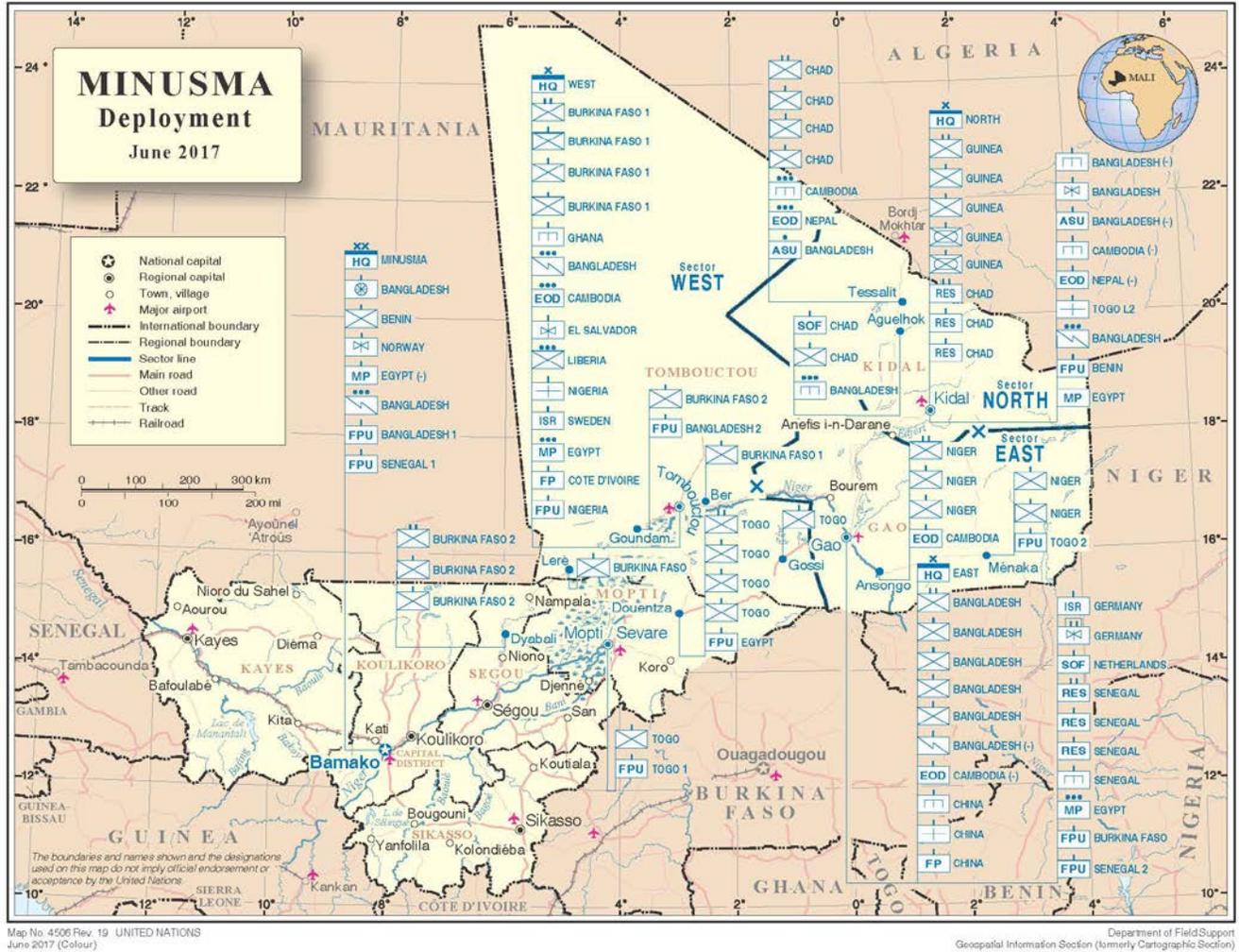**Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute (PKSOI)**
Peace Operations Estimate – MINUSMA

United Nations Multidimensional Stabilization Mission in Mali
(updated 10 July 2017)

MINUSMA Deployment Map

Link to MINUSMA Mission
Link to CIA Country Fact Sheet Mali

MINUSMA Executive Summary

Six months since the United Nations (UN) January 2017's "Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali" not much has changed in Mali. The January report observed:

> The peace process in Mali is at a critical juncture. Notwithstanding some progress made over the past 18 months since the signing of the peace agreement, the signatory parties continue to disagree on key interim measures, thus stalling the process for all other provisions. Although the peace process is complex and challenging, it behooves the signatory parties to act promptly and decisively to fulfil their obligations to the Malian people.

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Other observers have emphasized, "Twenty months since the government and armed groups signed the Algeria-brokered Bamako peace agreement in June 2015, implementation is faltering and the deal's collapse is a real possibility" and that peace in Mali is "one step forward, two steps back." Certainly, specific challenges remain. Some armed rebel groups still do not recognize the Algiers Agreement (Accords) and any subsequent derivatives; criminal networks continue to thrive; and the November 2016 local elections—the first Malian elections since 2009—were hampered by irregularities, such as boycotts, kidnapping, and ballot burning. A "Peace Forum", planned by the Government of Mali (GoM) for the end of March 2017, was boycotted by opposition groups and the Tuareg rebels due to concerns of inclusion and timing, and no significant peace-related meetings have occurred since then. **Major concerns are:**

- The most recent mandate renewal, UNSCR 2364 (2017), continues to charge MINUSMA to "take all necessary means" to complete its tasks and retain the increased troop level authorized in the previous year. The increased level of troops was intended to provide for modern equipment and quick-reaction units for actions against terrorist threats, many of which are also armed rebel groups. However, while MINUSMA's mandate continues to include the tasks of "support the Government's efforts for the effective and restoration and extension of State authority and rule of law" and providing "support to the redeployment of the reformed and reconstituted Malian Defence and Security Forces" (MDSF), it is also expected to continue to be "impartial" in its actions. This apparent contradiction in mandate objectives complicates MINUSMA actions as well as its relationship with both the government and the population, creating hostility towards MINUSMA from all parties. Consequently, much of MINUSMA's assets (personnel and equipment) are dedicated to mission protection, rather than mission implementation.

- While a signed peace agreement exists, the actions and rhetoric of some of the conflict parties, coupled with lack of enforcement, are impediments to stabilization in Mali and MINUSMA's success. Resolving differences is complicated by the overwhelming number of existing groups— most of them armed and hostile to the government and each other—as well the interrelationships between groups, which are both familial and temporary alliances of convenience. Two developing trends are most worrisome for Mali security: the growing reach of jihadist groups, and the unrest in central regions. In regard to the security of Mali's central region, some observers note that the government's reaction is "alienating." Continuing violence from all parties "affect local populations on a permanent basis and are the main reasons why Malian refugees…do not return."

- Although a "mixed" military unit [*Mécanisme Opérationel de Coordination* (MOC)] of Malian soldiers and former Tuareg rebels executed their first joint patrol in February 2017 as directed by the 2015 peace agreement, it was in the aftermath of a late January 2017 car bomb attack, which killed 80 of the MOC personnel at their camp in Gao. Continued political conflict has stalled further MOC efforts, as well as the installation of interim government authorities. More recently, Mali has suffered an increase in non-state armed groups' attacks against the population, humanitarian workers, and MINUSMA personnel. The Malian army soldiers are also targeted for violence and kidnapping by Islamist armed groups.

Mission Overview

1. Background. The March 2012 Tuareg rebellion, a military coup d'état that deposed Mali's democratically elected president, **Amadou Toumani Touré**, ended 20 years of democratic political stability. On 27 March 2012, the Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) appointed the President of Burkina Faso, Blaise Compaoré, to mediate in the crisis. On 6 April of the same year, the military *junta* and ECOWAS signed a framework agreement that led to the establishment of a transitional Government, headed by a prime minister with executive powers.

Mali's interim authorities requested United Nations assistance to build the capacity of the Malian transitional government in the areas of political negotiation, elections, governance, security sector reform, and humanitarian assistance. On December 20, 2012, the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2085 established the UN Office in Mali (UNOM).

However, the situation continued to decline, leading to a decisive French military intervention in January 2013. French forces regained control of northern towns of Gao and Timbuktu, then Kidal, with support from the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) troops of Chad. They faced little resistance as armed groups largely vanished into the rough terrains of northern Mali's '*Adrar des Ifoghas*' and southern Libya. In the same period, Islamist groups established theocratic governance in many regions, but it was not popular with most Malians. In July 2013, United Nations Multidimensional Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) replaced both UNOM and AFISMA.

2. Mandate. In June 2017, the UN Security Council extended the MINUSMA mandate until 30 June 2018 [UNSCR 2364 (2017)], confirming "the robust mandate that the Security Council gave MINUSMA in support of the peace process…(and strengthening) peacekeepers' support for the redeployment of Mali's defense and security forces, and cooperation between peacekeepers, the new joint G5-Sahel force, and French forces."

MINUSMA's mandate remains both unique and broad. It is a multidisciplinary United Nations presence initially authorized to provide coordinated and coherent support to (i) the on-going political process and (ii) the security process. The mandate directs the force levels to a ceiling of **13,289** military personnel and **1,920** police personnel.

In this resolution, MINUSMA's priorities remain:

- support of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation implementation by the Government and the relevant Malian stakeholders (also identified as the "strategic priority");
- good offices and reconciliation;
- protection of civilians and stabilization (this version adds: "including against asymmetric threats");
- protection, safety and security of UN personnel;
- promotion and protection of human rights; and
- humanitarian assistance.

A new, specified, priority task is "Countering asymmetric attacks in active defence *[sic]* of MINUSMA's mandate." (Some tasks are part of the police mandate.)

MINUSMA "is the only one of the 16 active UN peacekeeping operations that authorizes troops to deter and counter 'asymmetric threats' (terrorist groups) that could harm its work or civilians." The renewed mandate reminds MINUSMA to "achieve its *[sic]* more proactive and robust posture to carry out its mandate" — language that some read as encouraging more offensive operations.

Further, the mandate continues to express concern about the volatile security situation in Mali, especially the recent expansion of terrorist and other criminal activities into central and southern Mali, the intensification of intercommunal violence, and the proliferation and illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons. It was the first UN mission mandate to include a task addressing transnational organized crime (TOC), and that task remains in its recent revision.

On **15 December 2016**, the UN Secretariat approved an updated mission concept for MINUSMA with three interrelated objectives:

- To ensure a sustainable, credible and inclusive peace process to accelerate the implementation of the peace agreement;
- To improve security, including support for the redeployment of the Malian defense and security forces;
- To reach full operational capacity, including capacity to protect and sustain the mission, and conduct priority tasks in key areas.

While the current mandate reinforces these objectives, it also emphasizes the Mission's (and the UN Secretary General's) responsibilities to develop and initiate:

> …a transition plan with a view to handing over relevant tasks to the UNCT *[United Nations Country Team]* based on their mandates and comparative advantages as well as a mapping of capabilities, and also with a view to a possible long-term exit strategy of the Mission on the basis of improved security and political conditions as well as the progress in the implementation of the Agreement…

It further authorized MINUSMA to use its existing capacities to assist in implementing the following tasks: (a) Projects for stabilization; (b) Weapons and ammunition management; (c) Support for cultural preservation; and (d) Cooperation with the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee.

The UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) also has programs in Mali. UNMAS "collaborates with…other UN departments, agencies, programs and funds to ensure an effective, proactive and coordinated response to the problems of landmines and explosive remnants of war, including cluster munitions" in order to meet principles of protection of civilians and support to the humanitarian sector, support to the national authorities, and support to stabilization efforts.

3. Deployment. The June 2016 mandate significantly increased the previous mandates' authorized force levels. The increased number of troops was intended to provide for modern equipment and quick-reaction units. The current mandate retains those increased troop levels and charges the UN Secretary-General "to take the necessary steps to expedite force and asset generation, as well as deployment."

> *Authorized strength. 15,209*
>
> *includes: 13,289 military personnel, 1,920 police (including formed units), and an "appropriate" civilian component.*

As of June 2017, the bulk of the Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) are from other African nations. The three largest are: Burkina Faso (1,886), Bangladesh (1,814), and Chad (1,423). They are closely followed by Togo (1,230), Niger (893), Guinea (882), and Senegal (872). Other-than-African countries with large troop contributions include: Germany (618), China (400), and Cambodia (303).

The United States currently contributes 26 troops. There are only **239** women deployed in MINUSMA, or **1.9%** of the total force.

In July 2016, the African Union (AU) announced its intention to explore "how we can deploy an African force [as part of] the UN in northern Mali to preserve the peace agreement" along the model of the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). This proposed force was to be in addition to, yet part of, MINUSMA forces. While there was no further development of this particular concept, in July 2017, the G5 Sahel group announced the establishment of a

> *Current Strength: 14,043 total, including:*
> *Uniformed personnel: 12,553*
>
> - o *Troops: 10,591*
> - o *Military observers: 38*
> - o *Staff officers: 337*
> - o *Police: 1,587*
> - *Civilian personnel: 1,329*
>   - o *International civilians: 633*
>   - o *Local civilians: 696*
> - *UN Volunteers: 161*

5,000 troop organization called the **Force Conjointe des Etats du G5 Sahel (FC-G5S)**, which is intended to work closely with MINUSMA and the French forces of Operation *Barkhane* conducting counter-terrorism operations throughout the Sahel.

The MINUSMA mandate specifically authorizes French forces "to use all necessary means…to intervene in support of elements of MINUSMA when under imminent and serious threat upon request of the Secretary-General."

4. Casualties. MINUSMA is commonly referred to as the UN's "most dangerous." The Mission has averaged 28 fatalities per years since its establishment in 2013. In the first six months of 2017, there are already 10 fatalities.

The UN Peacekeeping Fact Sheet indicates **123** total MINUSMA fatalities since April 2013 (as of May 2017), of which **75**, or two-thirds, are due to "malicious attacks". Chad suffered 40 of the deaths, or one third of the total.

The UN Development Program, Malicious Acts Insurance Policy, February 4, 2003, defines "malicious acts" as fatalities as a result of "war; invasion; hostilities; acts of foreign enemies, whether war be declared or not; civil war; revolution; rebellion; insurrection; military or usurped power; riots or civil commotion; sabotage; explosion of war weapons; or terrorist activities." In contrast, "accidents" is defined to include "stray bullets, friendly fire, and road accidents" and other incidents, such as natural disasters.

These totals do not account for other MINUSMA casualties due to injuries, disease, or accidents. Nor does it include the French army fatalities and other causalities in either *Operation Serval* (2013-2014) or *Operation Barkhane* (2014-current). At least three French soldiers were killed in early 2016 (with a reported total of **17** fatalities at that date for *Operation Barkhane*). Another French soldier was killed in April 2017, and there are unconfirmed reports of another six French soldiers killed in July 2017.

The number of UN peacekeeper fatalities is steadily rising across all current missions. The most accepted reason for this growth is that UN members are deliberately targeted by increasingly capable armed groups. The rise in fatalities may also correspond to significant growth to the overall numbers of peacekeepers, combined with the ever more risky environments in which they are deployed. In fact, a 2016 UN casualties analysis suggests exactly this point—that "overall UN fatalities are not substantively on the rise" once data is controlled for deployment numbers.

In MINUSMA, however, deliberate attacks on peacekeepers by armed groups has characterized the Mission operations since its first year. Armed groups' attacks against peacekeepers are conducted as a political statement or provocation, to gain access to supplies, or any combination of factors.

Situation

5. Drivers of Conflict. While the June 2015 Algiers Accords were welcome, it appears that the agreements did not cover the "structural or root causes" of conflict. The Malian crisis "goes beyond the distribution of political power" and includes drug trafficking, poor governance, lack of legitimacy, and corruption. Into this mix, various armed groups – primarily in the north – have their own agendas, and peace is not in their best interests. Separatist rebels, militia groups opposed to separatists, and radical Islamist groups have conflicting objectives.

Since 2012, armed conflict occurred between parties such as the Tuareg movement [*Mouvement national pour la libération de l'Azawad* (MNLA)] as well as Islamic armed groups including *Ansar al-Dine*, Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the *Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest* (MUJAO). While the Parliament attempted a political solution in 2013, complete with a road map to restore

territorial integrity, realize free and fair elections, and re-establish state authority in the north, the process met with little enthusiasm. Reconciliation is key to mitigate the conflict, but there is little progress in dialogue between the GoM and armed groups.

The November 2016 local elections generated mixed results towards mitigating the overall reconciliation efforts. On the one hand, the national government demonstrated its intent to meet its avowed election timeline; on the other hand, intimidation and corruption reports (on behalf of all involved parties) allowed for political opposition groups (many with armed elements associated with them) to declare the elections as fraudulent, since security measures appeared to be inadequate in selected areas.

6. Significant Events.

a. Recent Events.

- **9 July 2017**. The draft Constitution was intended to go to vote, but the referendum was postponed.
- **6 July 2017**. MINUSMA condemned continuing ceasefire violations by two signatories of the 2015 Peace and Reconciliation Agreement [CMA and Plateforme]. These violations include movements of armed convoys, provocations and armed clashes.
- **July 2017.** The G5 Sahel (Mali, Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mauritania) announced the establishment of a combined counterterrorism force. All five states currently contribute to MINUSMA, and it is not clear if any of the five would withdraw UN peacekeepers in order to support the new force.
- **29 June 2017**. UN Security Council extended the MINUSMA mandate with UNSCR 2364 (2017).
- **18 June 2017**. A terrorist attack against a hotel on the outskirts of Bamako killed at least five people, with four MINUSMA personnel were slightly injured. The rapid response by the Malian defence and security forces and the French forces, which the MINUSMA supported, were credited with reducing the potential casualties.
- **8 June 2017**. There was an attack against MINUSMA.
- **22-23 May 2017**. UN Secretary General chaired the MINUSMA extraordinary force generation conference.
- **20 April 2017**. All Malian government interim authorities were installed.
- **27 March 2017.** A GoM planned Peace Forum was boycotted by the opposition and rebel groups for not being inclusive enough and poor timing.
- **5 March 2017**. At least 12 Malian soldiers were killed in an attack on an Army outpost near the Burkina Faso border. The jihadist group Ansarul Islam reportedly was responsible. (Note that this same group claimed to have killed 12 Burkinabe soldiers in December 2016.)
- **2 March 2017**. Three separate Islamist armed groups announced a merger under the al-Qaida banner.
- **February 2017.** First joint patrol of the *Mécanisme Opérationel de Coordination* (MOC) (a mixed unit of Malian soldiers and former Tuareg rebels.
- **24 January 2017.** The Presidents of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso agreed to establish a regional joint task force to combat rising insecurity in the area where those countries share borders.
- **23 January 2017**. An attack against the MINUSMA camp in Aguelhoc, in the north of Mali, caused the death of a Chadian peacekeeper and injured others.
- **18 January 2017**. A suicide bomber detonated an explosive-laden truck at the Malian Army garrison in Gao. The garrison was protected by Bangladeshi peacekeepers.
- **15 December 2016.** The UN Secretariat approved the updated mission concept for MINUSMA with three interrelated objectives

- **20 November 2106.** Local elections held, with reports of kidnapping and ballot burning. Seven districts cancelled elections due to security concerns, while other districts reported peaceful balloting.
- **November 2016**. MINUSMA and French army soldiers were attacked. The UN Security Council strongly condemns "the repeated violations of the ceasefire arrangements by the *Plateforme* and Coordination armed groups in and around Kidal over the last months, which threaten the viability of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali."
- **31 October 2016.** Mahmoud Dicko, the head of Mali's High Islamic Council (HCIM) announced "I confirm having received from (Ansar al Dine leader) Iyad Ag Ghali the cessation of hostilities throughout the country."
- **8 October 2016**. An opposition leader [Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA)] was killed when his vehicle exploded 1,000 feet from the MINUSMA camp after attending a regular security meeting, promoting fears that MINUSMA had deliberately targeted him.
- **4 October 2016**. UN Security Council members issued a press statement condemning the multiple terrorist attacks against MINUSMA, (in which two peacekeepers from Chad were killed).
- **1 October 2016**. Population of Bamako (Mali's capital) held a protest against the new electoral law and alleged state censorship.
- **9 September 2016**. Mali's Parliament approved a new electoral law that requires a filing fee of $43,000 USD for candidates for president, over 200% higher than previous fees.
- **8 August 2016**. The UN Security Council condemned the terrorist attacks that occurred between 5 and 7 August against MINUSMA in the northern region of Kidal, killing one peacekeeper and injuring another six.
- **August 2016**. The Canadian government announced it will deploy up to 600 soldiers and 150 police officers in "peace and stabilization operations" in Africa—most likely in support of MINUSMA.

b. Upcoming Events.

- **30 June 2018**. MINUSMA mandate set to expire
- **2018**. Presidential and legislative branch elections

Operational Environment (GPMESII)

7. Geographic. Almost twice the size of Texas, most of Mali lies in the Sahara. It is landlocked and divided into three natural zones: the southern, cultivated Sudanese; the central, semiarid Sahelian; and the northern, arid Saharan. It is bordered by seven other countries: Guinea, Senegal, Mauritania, Algeria, Niger, Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire. Droughts and little rainfall are common. When it rains from late June to early December, it is very common for the Niger River to flood. Mali's Inner Niger Delta is expected to experience its highest level of flooding in 50 years in the coming months.

The most recent MINUSMA mandate also directs the Mission "to consider the environmental impacts of its operations when fulfilling its mandated tasks and, in this context, to manage them as appropriate and in accordance with applicable and relevant General Assembly resolutions and United Nations rules and regulations, and to operate mindfully in the vicinity of cultural and historical sites…"

8. Political. Suffrage in Mali is all citizens 18 years of age or older. There is no birthright citizenship. In addition, at least one parent must be a citizen.

The government is considered a semi-presidential republic with a constitution. The latest constitution was drafted in 1991 (and amended in 1999). However, it was suspended during the 2012 rebellion and coup d'état and not reinstated until 2013. In July 2016, the current country leader, **President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta** (commonly referred to as **IBK**), suggested a review of the Constitution, under the aegis of a Committee of Experts, to resolve discrepancies between the current document and the tenets of the Algiers Agreement (Accords).

> *Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta (IBK) took office in September 2013 for a five-year term (a second term is permitted), in the first election since the coup d'état in 2012. He garnered 77.6% of the vote in a "run off" election. Born in 1945, he is the son of a civil servant and served as prime minister from 1994 to 2000 and as Speaker of the National Assembly from 2002 to 2007. While profiling as a corruption fighter, he has been criticized for appointing family members and of an inappropriately lavish lifestyle while he was prime minister from 1994 to 2000. His son, Karim Keïta, is a parliamentary deputy and president of the parliamentary defense committee; and Karim's father-in-law, Issiaka Sidibé, is president of the National Assembly.*

The President appointed the Prime Minister, **Modibo Keïta** (no relation), in January 2015, and the Prime Minister appointed the Council of Ministers. There is a unicameral National Assembly (or *Assemblee Nationale*) of 147 seats whose members also serve 5-year terms. Another 13 seats are reserved to represent Malians living abroad. 2017 is set to become an important electoral year, with regional and local elections ahead.

While there are over 100 registered political parties, only about 20 are active. A 2014 law outlines specific privileges for opposition parties in the parliament, requiring opposition leaders to be "informed and consulted by" the Administration leadership "on matters of national import", although it is unclear if that tenet is enforced. In June 2015, within the framework of the Algiers Accords, the government signed a ceasefire agreement with the different armed groups, organized in two dominate coalitions. However, the attacks between rival factions, between factions and the government, and against the international actors in the country have not abated. The Kidal Forum**,** which took place from 27-30 March 2016 after several postponements, was supposed to signal the completion of the reconciliation process between the CMA and the Platform (*Plateforme*). It was not attended by either the government or the Platform (*Plateforme*) due to differences of opinion over, in the main, the presence of the Malian army in Kidal during the ceremony. In September, IBK finally announced the *Conférence d'entente nationale* ("National Accord Conference") for December 2016, as outlined in the peace agreement. However, it was postponed yet again with no new date planned

On a broader scale, IBK's negotiated approaches to solving the separatist rebel issue differed from preferred international solutions, with the international community stressing northern security as the priority. The GoM still has limited presence in the north, and remains critical of MINUSMA for not doing enough in Kidal. In short, the Malian government appears to want MINUSMA to fulfill a governmental function in the north, effectively acting as the government's proxy.

9. Military/Security. Since 2012, the number of armed groups associated with the peace process has grown from two (MNLA and HCUA) to eight (MNLA, HCUA, MAA1, CMFPR I, MAA2, CPA, CMFPR II, GATIA), and many smaller groups. These groups are complicated by familial, political, ideological and geographic alliances of convenience among each other. Main threats to all parties are from the terror attacks occurring throughout the country, rebel groups, and criminal networks. Most threats originate in the north where government forces are incapable or unwilling to operate, although there is recent evidence of increasing attacks in the central and south regions of Mali. While there is technically a division

between the armed groups and the political-military groups, those divisions are indistinct. There are several influential players in the security arena:

a. State Armed Groups: Mali Armed Forces (FAMa) and Malian Defense and Security Forces (MDSF). There is an intended two-year conscript service obligation for Mali men over 18 years old, but it is unclear if it is enforced.

MDSF forces remain weak and lack basic equipment. Air support is nonexistent. Even in the eastern Gao region, armed pro-government groups have supplanted the MDSF as purveyors of security. On 19 January 2015, the EU approved a new assistance package (European Union Training Mission, or EUTM) to the MDSF which aims to bolster stability and security across Mali. Because MDSF is incapable of providing security, the government relies on militias, exacerbating political-military tensions in a country with a history of military coups. In recent years, Malian soldiers were attacked by several distinct elements, compounding any future reconciliation issues.

b. Non-State Armed Groups. Shifting splinter groups and loyalties, coupled with vast, unprotected desert terrain, complicate finding solutions to problems in the north—and increasingly in the central—regions of Mali. There are several transnational terrorist groups, of which the **Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)** and its splinters are the most prominent, with a large terrorist organization specific to the Mali boundaries, ***Ansar al Dine***. Finally, there are two dominant domestic coalitions with members that are most often armed—The **Coordination of Azawad Movements**, or ***Coordination des Mouvements de l'Azawad* (CMA)** and the **Platform (*Plateforme*)**. Developed in 2014, these coalitions were intended to reduce the complexity of stakeholders during the peace negotiations. However, in the past three years, the two dominant coalitions evolved, merged, disbanded and re-formed—often in temporary alliances with other organizations.

> **MNLA =** Movement for the Liberation of Azawad *(Mouvement national de libérationde l'Azawad).*
>
> **HCUA =** Higher Council for the Unity of Azawad *(Haut conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad).*

> **MAA =** Arab Movement of Azawad *(Mouvement arabe de l'Azawad)*
>
> **CMFPR =** Coordination of the Movements of Patriotic and Resistance Fronts (*Coordination des mouvements et fronts patriotiques de résistance)*
>
> **CPA =** The Coalition for the Azawad People (*Coalition pour le people de l'Azawad*)
>
> **GATIA =** Self-Defense Group of Imrad Tuareg and Allies
>
> **I and II (or 1 and 2)** denote subsequent "generations" of opposition groups, some of which are at times in opposition of their parent groups.

Most recently, the CMA appears to have fragmented into "community-based" armed groups, such as the ***Mouvement pour le Salut de l'Azawad*** and the ***Congrès***. There is also a recent emergence of groups based in the central region of Mali, with claims and grievances unique to their location and concerns.

Another development in non-state armed groups was the March 2017 merger announcement by the three largest Islamist groups [**Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM),** ***Ansar Dine*, and *al- Mourabitoun***]. This terrorist "coalition" is sometimes called ***Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin*** (JNIM).

In March 2017, **Boko Haram**, usually associated with terrorist activity in Nigeria, announced its intention to infiltrate in Mali. Lastly, most of the **organized crime** in the region, either domestic or transnational, includes armed elements (discussed further below).

The most significant non-state actors are:

Boko Haram. Boko Haram refers to itself as "***Jama'atu Ahl as-Sunnah li-Da'awati wal-Jihad***" (JASDJ; Group of the Sunni People for the Calling and Jihad) and "Nigerian Taliban"—other translations and variants are used (Boko Haram means "Western education is forbidden"). It is a Nigeria-based group that seeks to overthrow the current Nigerian Government and replace it with a regime based on Islamic law. It was losing influence in the past decade, but increased its profile in 2015 by pledging allegiance to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), at which point it began to use the name "ISIL-West Africa Province". In March 2017, Boko Haram leader, Abubakar Shekau, vowed to create an Islamic caliphate across West Africa, to include Mali.

Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)/aQ Splinter Groups. AQIM's senior leadership trained in Afghanistan during the Soviet war. It is a Salafi-jihadi organization. The primary aim is to rid North Africa of Western Influence, overthrow governments that are apostate like Mali, and impose *sharia* law. Since the French-led military intervention in early 2013, the group's presence is reduced in northern Mali. Its new strategy targets major cities of countries that collaborate with Western forces with conventional terrorist tactics, including guerrilla-style ambushes, mortar, rocket, and improvised explosive device (IED) attacks, in order to impact a larger part of the entire region. The group's principal sources of revenue include extortion, kidnapping for ransom, and donations. AQIM takes advantages of political chaos in northern Mali to consolidate its control and has ties of convenience to many secular opposition armed groups. In July 2017, the al-Qaeda's Mali branch released a proof-of-life video of six foreign hostages, including a French woman who was abducted in late 2016 in the northern Malian town of Gao.

- **Al-Mourabitoun.** In 2013, the **Movement for the Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO)**— also known as **Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MOJWA)**— and **The Masked Battalion** announced a merger of their groups renaming themselves The **Mourabitouns** (also known as al-Murabitun, The Sentinels, or Al-Murābiṭūn, The Almoravids). It had previously separated from AQIM in 2011, but recently re-merged. They are known as drug traffickers. In November 2016, one element of this group claimed the attacks on two airports with MINUSMA offices nearby. They also claimed responsibility for the MOC camp bombing in January 2017.

- **Ansar al Dine.** Ideologically, from the very start the group called for the application of *sharia* law throughout the entire country, a position directly opposed to the declared secular affinities of the other predominantly Tuareg group, the Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (*Mouvement national de libérationde l'Azawad*, **MNLA**). A number of followers broke away from the Higher Council for the Unity of Azawad (*Haut conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad*, **HCUA**). It seized most of northern Mali in 2012 and destroyed world heritage sites that it claimed were idolatrous. A combined French and Malian force dislodged them in 2013 from the territories they had occupied, but failed to destroy them. However, the scale and sophistication of 2016 attacks suggest that Ansar Dine is accelerating its tempo. Ansar al Dine attacks against the MNLA in the spring of 2016 indicate further

> *Ahmad al-Faqi al-Mahdi, a former Malian rebel leader, was recently prosecuted for "desecration of cultural heritage" by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for destroying priceless monuments in Timbuktu in 2012. The rebel group burned the ancient libraries and other artifacts when fleeing the French and Mali troops retaking the city.*

splintering of this informal alliance of ethnic Tuaregs. In the summer of 2016, the head of the Islamist group Ansar Dine, Iyad Ag Ghaly, released a video threatening French and UN troops in Mali, vowing to confront "the crusaders' military machine." In early 2017, it recently announced a merger with AQIM.

- ***Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin* (JNIM)**. This is the name that is often associated with the merger of the other Islamist non-state armed groups. It recently claimed responsibility for the June 18, 2017 attack on the hotel in Bamako. Last week, the JNIM allegedly conducted the attacks that killed

six French soldiers. It has apparently also attacked the Nigerian Army, seizing equipment and other resources.

- **Katiba Ansar Dine Macina.** Katiba Ansar Dine Macina has recruited fighters mainly from within the Central part of Mali since 2015. The group is partially comprised of former members of MUJAO and disciples of a radical preacher in the Mopti region. Through a video released in May 2016, the group officially cemented its relationship with Ansar Dine. It has repeatedly attacked members of the Malian armed forces and MINUSMA. It is often compared to another group active in the region, called the **Macina Liberation Front** (Front de libération du Macina, or **FLM**), a Fulani *jihadist* group allied to Ansar Dine, and led by Amadou Koufa, a cleric who calls on Fulanis to rebuild historic empires like Massina, which once stretched over the Mopti region.

> *While both groups (Katiba Ansar Dine Macina and FLM) conduct operations in the central regions of Mali, they do not have the same political objectives. The FLM members are Fulani herders in revolt against the theft of their livestock and the abuses of administrative authorities and certain traditional leaders. Fulani are nomadic cattle herders. There are approximately 20 million Fulani scattered across 20 nations, from Senegal's west coast to as far to the east as Eritrea. In Mali, they are found predominately in the central region, where they have access to the Niger River. In the past generations, the Fulani and the sedentary farmers have shared the Niger resources in a symbiotic relationship. However, as the Niger River dries, the resource competition intensifies, fueling Fulani anger with the potential to spread jihad throughout central and southern Mali—and beyond.*

- **Katiba Khalid Ibn Walid.** Katiba Khalid Ibn Walid (Ansar Dine of the South) is one of the newest of armed groups, emerging in June 2015 with attacks on Fakola and Misséni, two villages located in the Sikasso region, with primary targets of Malian military and administrative buildings. Several of the groups' leadership have close ties to both AQIM and Ansar Dine.

Platform (*Plateforme*). Constituted in June 2014, this coalition is generally understood to be pro-government. Two major movements comprise Platform (*Plateforme*): the **Coordination of the Movements of Patriotic and Resistance Fronts** (*Coordination des mouvements et fronts patriotiques de résistance*, **CMFPR**, of the first generation) and the **Arab Movement of Azawad** (*Mouvement arabe de l'Azawad*, **MAA**). Both groups advocate national unity. Another element of Platform (*Plateforme*) is GATIA, a group promoted as a self-defense organization.

- **Coordination of the Movements of Patriotic and Resistance Fronts I (CMFPR I).** CMFPR I was established in 2012, as a self-defense movements in the Gao and Mopti regions.

- **Movement of Arab Azawad (MAA)**. MAA was also established in 2012, under the name of the National Liberation Front of Azawad, with a primary objective to defend the interests of the Arab community of the north. In 2013, the group was joined by Arabs from the Gao region, individuals with links with the MUJAO and alleged involvement in drug trafficking which prohibits their inclusion in the political process.

- **Self-Defense Group of Imrad Tuareg and Allies (GATIA).** GATIA emerged in late summer 2014, following the Malian Army's withdrawal from Kidal. Presenting itself as a community self-defense movement, many of GATIA's members are battle-hardened with previous service in the Malian or Libyan armies. Viewed by many as one of several pro-government militia, it is comprised of mainly ethnic Tuareg and Arab fighters serving, essentially, as the CMA's main military adversary. The militia includes some former GoM soldiers and has logistical support from the Malian Army. Several members of GATIA appeared to have been trained by the EUTM, which is providing support to the Malian regular army. In September 2016, the US Ambassador to Mali called on the Malian government to sever any ties with

GATIA, "a militia widely blamed for rising tensions that risk undermining a fragile peace process in the country's desert north." The government of Mali views international pressure to rein in this irregular army as an affront to Mali's sovereignty.

Coordination of Movements of Azawad (CMA). Constituted in 2014 as an "umbrella" group to contain many less influential militias, this coalition was generally understood to be an independence-focused coalition (for an independent north). It was considered a Compliant Armed Group (CAGs), although it walked away from the proposed 2016 peace talks. Only two of the armed groups associated with the CMA signed the signed the Ouagadougou Agreement: the [National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (*Mouvement national de libérationde l'Azawad*, **MNLA**); and the Higher Council for the Unity of Azawad (*Haut conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad*, **HCUA**)]. However, three additional movements joined the process by declaring they would follow the tenets of the agreement [A second generation of the Coordination of the Movements of Patriotic and Resistance Fronts (*Coordination des mouvements et fronts patriotiques de résistance*, **CMFPR II**); a dissent arm of the Arab Movement of Azawad (*Mouvement arabe de l'Azawad*, **MAA-Dissident**); and The Coalition for the Azawad People (*Coalition pour le people de l'Azawad*, **CPA**)]. Reportedly, the CMA has suffered some high-level defections in the past few months, although the reasons are unclear. It appears to have fractured in recent months.

- **Azawad National Liberation Movement (MNLA)**. The MNLA is largely composed by the Tuaregs, while portraying itself as a secular organization representing all northern regions.

- **Higher Council for the Unity of Azawad (HCUA).** The formation of HCUA resulted from a merger in May 2013 of two dissident movements – the Higher Council for Azawad (Haut Conseil pour l'Azawad, HCA) and the Islamic Movement of Azawad (Mouvement islamique de l'Azawad, MIA). Also dominated by the Tuareg ethnicity.

- **The Coalition for the Azawad People (*Coalition pour le people de l'Azawad*, CPA).** The CPA is led by a former head of external relations for MNLA. It broke away from the MNLA due to differences of opinion regarding the 2014 peace negotiations.

- **The National Alliance for the Safeguarding of the Peul Identity and the Restoration of Justice (ANSIPRJ).** In early summer 2016, a new armed group emerged in the central Mali region. Its leader is a 27-year-old school teacher who alleges over 700 fighters on hand. They are neither separatists nor jihadists, but apparently another community self-defense organization with complaints of human rights abuses by both government and other armed groups. They may have an alliance with MUJAO that is based on hostility to MNLA and Mali authorities, not ideologies.

Youth Movements. There are a number of youth movements of varying organizational strengths and violence propensity. In the rebellion years, youth participated in the self-defense militias and also assumed police-like duties. After the 2013 presidential election, the expected reintegration for youth into the civil service or the army (as part of the peace accord's demilitarization, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process) did not occur. Instead, DDR was focused on the former rebels, leaving the unemployed Malian youth (48 percent of its population just 15 or younger) resentful of their treatment. "A Sera a Dana" or "*Trop c'est trop*" ("We've had enough" in the Bambara and French languages, respectively) is the newest in Mali. It is similar to Senegal's "Y'en a marre" and Burkina Faso's "Balai Citoyen." *Trop c'est trop* has a political agenda: preventing injustice in Mali and denouncing President IBK's administration.

Organized Criminal Elements (Domestic and Transnational). Organized crime in Mali exists at all levels of society. Local collaborators include a complex and dynamic mix of legitimate business people; Islamist extremists, terrorists, and kidnappers; police and army officers; militia groups; and local politicians. Crime exists in many forms with the most prevalent being drug and human trafficking, kidnapping, and poaching. Unfortunately, to date it does not appear that either international or domestic policy strategies adequately address the issue of organized crime in Mali, although the most recent mandate versions tasked MINUSMA to confront Transnational Organized Crime (TOC) issues.

c. Other International Actors.

Regional Neighbors and Organizations. Mali's neighbors (the Sahel) are among the most fragile countries in the world and are as vulnerable to insurgencies and *jihadist* armed groups. AQIM, Ansar Dine, and the al-Mourabitoun groups also operate in Burkina Faso, Chad and Niger. To address the shared threat, there are several bilateral and multilateral cooperation agreements between the regional countries. In 2014, five nations formed the **G5 Sahel,** comprising of **Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania,** and **Niger,** in order to strengthen cooperation on development and security in the region. The group works together to identify priority investment projects and seek sources of international financing, focusing on areas such as infrastructure, food security, agriculture and pastoralism as well as terrorist threats and other security concerns. In July 2017, G5 Sahel announced the establishment of a multinational force. The force is dedicated to eradication of non-state armed groups among the member nations. It is comprised of one battalion from each of the member nations, for a total of 5,000 soldiers. Known as the ***Force Conjointe des Etats du G5 Sahel*** **(FC-G5S)**, it will operate alongside the 12,000-strong UN peacekeeping mission and the 5,000-strong French troops already in Mali.

Initial operations, to commence in fall of 2017, is expected to focus on border zones: between Niger and Mali; between Mali and Mauritania; and across the borders between Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali.

> *Chad, Burkina Faso and Niger already deploy around 4,100 soldiers within MINUSMA. Niger and Chad also contribute troops to a similar regional force fighting Nigeria's Boko Haram militants.*

Each of the G5 Sahel members will contribute 10 million euros for the force, while France contributes $9 million and over 70 vehicles. France is also asking for additional financing from its European and American allies. The European Union has also pledged $57m towards the new force. France also promised another $228m in development aid to the Sahel region over the next five years.

Meanwhile, another **Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF),** formed in 2015 (**Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger** and **Nigeria**) reportedly operates in the region and shares intelligence.

Algeria led the 2014-2015 peace talks, supported by members from the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the European Union (EU), the UN, and Organization of Islamic Cooperation, as well as regional governments. The resulting peace agreement was signed in Bamako. Algeria maintains close interest in facilitating the implementation of the agreed upon accords.

Burkina Faso is involved with Mali in a demarcation dispute, although there has been no recent action on it.

Niger recently declared a state of emergency along the Mali border. It is not clear if the recent decision to co-sponsor the Force Conjointe des Etats du G5 Sahel (FC-G5S) will change this declaration.

Other Countries.

China [provided](#) the African Union with $100 million in military assistance for its peacekeeping operations and has significant—and increasing—business interests in Africa. Some observe that:

> In essence, China deploys peacekeeping troops because it needs to protect its multi-billion investments and numerous assets, enterprises and citizens abroad. Through its peacekeepers, Beijing can also elevate its status as a responsible stakeholder and security provider in the international community and improve operational capabilities of Chinese military and police forces.

France maintains the lead on counter-terrorism operations in the Sahel region, including portions of north and west Mali where it stations 1000 of its 3000 Sahel troops. These troops conduct anti-terror operations against al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). France has a long history in the region; Operation *Serval* in January 2013 preceded *Barkhane*, with France acting at Mali's request to stop non-state armed groups from advancing to the capital, Bamako. In strictly military terms, France's efforts appear to be achieving a great deal of success against the region's various armed groups. Yet, *Serval*'s (and *Barkhane*'s) long-term effects may be best measured by what they prevented than what they contributed to regional stability in [that the two missions also appear unable to address the conflict's underlying causes](#). In this context, [*Operation Barkhane*](#) may have [created more long-term harm](#) since it appeared to support the repressions of the government that contribute to the problems in the region. Even so, the most recent MINUSMA mandate continued the authorization of:

> French forces, within the limits of their capacities and areas of deployment, to use all necessary means until the end of MINUSMA's mandate as authorized in this resolution, to intervene in support of elements of MINUSMA when under imminent and serious threat upon request of the Secretary-General, and requests France to report to the Council on the implementation of this mandate in Mali…

While **Russia** has been a negligible influence in the region since the Cold War, there is [evidence](#) that may be changing. A Malian news site provided a story about a "high-level" Russian visit that was intended to discuss Russian support to Mali's counter-terrorism efforts through the provision of arms and training.

While [US military aid](#) has been suspended since the 2012 coup, the US military provides logistical support to Barkhane, such as drone support to [provide intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance to France and other partners.](#)

The United States (US) has long supported [economic and social programs in Mali](#), working within the international community to restore stability and security in Mali. On October 9, 2015, the US Government, through USAID, signed a formal agreement with the Government of Mali to implement USAID/Mali's new 5-year [Country Development Cooperation Strategy](#) with a projected $690 million investment for FY 2016-2020, with the four focus areas of Stabilization of Conflict-Affected Areas Reinforced (transition), Public Trust in Government Improved (governance), Adaptive Capacity of Vulnerable Communities and Households Improved (resilience), and Socio-Economic Well-Being Advanced (prosperity).

Other International Organizations. There are many other international actors and organizations interested in the long-term stability of Mali (albeit within their own national or regional concerns). A recent [joint statement](#) highlights the primary organizations: The African Union (AU), the United Nations (UN), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the European Union (EU). These organizations are also considered members of the Mediation Team that supports the Algiers Agreement implementation.

The **African Union (AU)** has many interests and activities in Mali and the Sahel, beginning with the **AU Mission to Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL).** In 2016, the AU appeared to consider the establishment of a [new AU military force](#) to combat terrorist forces, akin to the Force Intervention Brigade in MONUSCO. However, among the significant political and legal challenges before establishing such a mission was the

determination of targets and the "capacity of the regional force to operate across borders." The establishment of the *Force Conjointe des Etats du G5 Sahel* **(FC-G5S)** may have precluded any additional AU forces. The AU's Nouakchott Process—focused on the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) in the Sahelo-Saharan region—includes eleven countries (Algeria, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Chad).

The **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)** was established on May 28, 1975, via the treaty of Lagos. It is a 15-member regional group with a mandate of promoting economic integration in all fields of activity of the constituting countries.

The **European Union (EU)** is rebuilding Mali's military and fostering cultural change through the European Union Training Mission (EUTM-Mali), where EU officers (currently 580 personnel from 24 nations) help the Malian Defense Ministry form new units from the ground up. By mid-2014, four battalions of about 650 troops completed 12-week EUTM courses in Koulikoro designed to foster unit cohesion as well as train capable soldiers. The mandate is expected to be in effect for 2016-2019 with a new focus on command posts and leaders, logistics, and human resources. The EU expanded the mission with the introduction of the EUCAP Sahel Mali, which conducts training with Mali's National Police, Gendarmerie, and National Guard. As well as cooperating and coordinating very closely with MINUSMA, the mission is working alongside civil society as it will have a key role in supporting the reforms introduced by the government and ensuring they are understood by the public. In addition, under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) for 2014-2020, the four sectors of priority are: rule of law and state consolidation (€ 280 million); agriculture (€ 100 million); education (€ 100 million), and infrastructure (€ 110 million). Mali is one of the five priority countries for the new Migration Partnership Framework, and one of the main beneficiaries of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa. The Annual Action Plan 2016 (€120 million) is currently under preparation and will also contribute to the implementation of the Peace Agreement, as well as to economic development. It will do so by supporting agriculture and job creation programs (€50), improving infrastructure (€60 million) and supporting security sector reform (€10 million).

The EU also contributes to the newly established *Force Conjointe des Etats du G5 Sahel* **(FC-G5S).**

10. Economic. One of the poorest countries in the world, with 36% of the population existing below the poverty line, Mali's fiscal status fluctuates with gold and agricultural commodity prices and the harvest and largely remains dependent on foreign aid. International Monetary Fund (IMF) assistance resumed in 2015 after a six month suspension in 2014 when Mali spent $40 million on a Presidential plane and $200 million on a "sole source" Malian contract to provide assistance to the army which never achieved full accounting. MINUSMA spends $69 million/year in Mali, constituting a contribution of 0.7% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Most economic activity is confined to the Niger River, given that 65% of its land area is desert or semi-desert. While 30% of the population is unemployed, 80% of the labor force is engaged in farming and fishing, with about 10% of the population remaining nomadic. Almost 40% of children (under age 14) are part of the labor force. While Mali's economic performance has improved since 2013, physical insecurity, high population growth, corruption, weak infrastructure, and low levels of human capital remain hindrances to sustained growth and deter foreign investment.

Mali is developing its iron ore extraction industry to diversify foreign exchange earnings away from gold, but the pace will largely depend on global price trends. Its industries are food processing and construction. Its primary export partners are Switzerland 48.5%, China 9.4%, India 9.1%, Bangladesh 8%, Thailand 4.5%, and Indonesia 4.4%; with export commodities of cotton and gold.

11. **Social**. Approximately 15 million people live in Mali speaking French (official language) and 13 other national languages (Bambara language accounts for 46.3% of the population). One third of the population is ethnic Bambara and almost 15% are Fulani (Peul). Over eight other ethnicities contribute to the remainder of the population. 95% are Muslim with Christian and Animist each at 2% of the population and the remainder unspecified.

The average Malian has only eight years of education, with only 40% of the population (15 years and older) literate, with men being more likely than women to be able to read. Life expectancy is only 56 years on average. Mali's demographic profile is described as follows:

Mali's total population is expected to double by 2035; its capital Bamako is one of the fastest-growing cities in Africa. A young age structure, a declining mortality rate, and a sustained high total fertility rate of 6 children per woman – the third highest in the world – ensure continued rapid population growth for the foreseeable future. Significant outmigration only marginally tempers this growth. Despite decreases, Mali's infant, child, and maternal mortality rates remain among the highest in sub-Saharan Africa because of limited access to and adoption of family planning, early childbearing, short birth intervals, the prevalence of female genital cutting, infrequent use of skilled birth attendants, and a lack of emergency obstetrical and neonatal care. Mali's high total fertility rate has been virtually unchanged for decades, as a result of the ongoing preference for large families, early childbearing, the lack of female education and empowerment, poverty, and extremely low contraceptive use.

a. **Rule of Law.** Mali's civil law system is based on the French model and influenced by customary law and judicial review of legislative acts in Constitutional Court. While the formal judicial system remains inadequate, traditional (local and tribal) authorities manage dispute issues within their own communities. All security factions and parties routinely arrest and imprison "suspects" without benefit of judicial proceedings. Rarely are these suspects turned over to government authorities, and when they are, the exchange takes place under prisoner swaps. Just now coming to trial are the leaders of the 2012 rebellion, "accused of the 2012 abduction and killing of 21 elite "Red
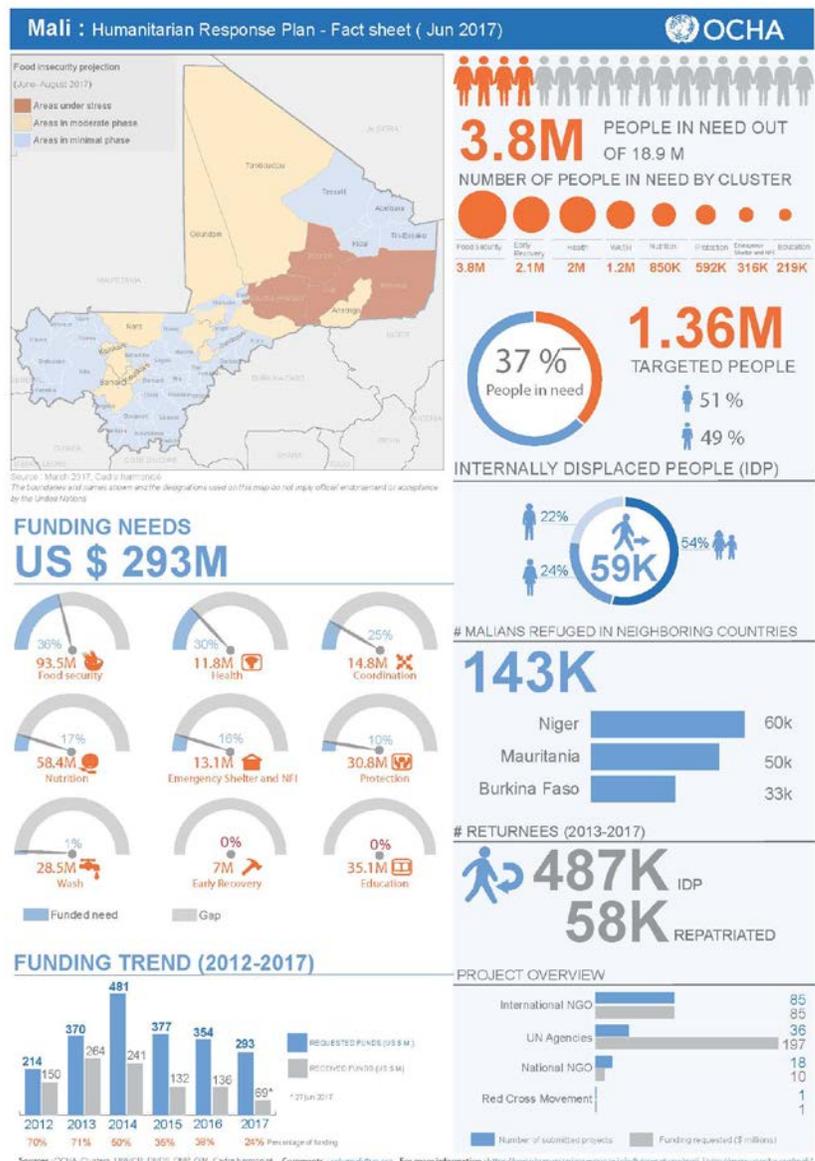
Berets," who were detained and forcibly disappeared between April 30 and May 1, 2012, after being accused of involvement in an April 30 counter-coup against Sanogo and his loyalists."

b. Humanitarian Assistance. Humanitarian assistance vehicles are routinely carjacked. Kidal airfield needs infrastructure improvements and is unreliable preventing food deliveries. The World Food Program suspended some food aid to schools due to security concerns and the killing of a Red Cross employee caused many relief agencies to suspend operations. A mass nutritional screening campaign suggests the food situation remains concerning, in particular in the Timbuktu region where the rate of global acute malnutrition is at least 18% and growing. OCHA predicted that 34% of the humanitarian assistance requirement in Mali was unmet in 2016, despite the UN commitment of $354.1 million (USD). Mali has one of the highest rates of acute malnutrition in West Africa, further contributing to instability. In September 2016, the UN reported:

> Nearly 3 million people remain food insecure, including 423,000 who need immediate assistance even though the harvesting season has started in several parts of the country. 709,000 children are at risk of acute malnutrition in 2016. In the north and center of the country, persisting insecurity continues to limit access to basic social services, undermine the provision of aid and exacerbate the vulnerabilities of populations in affected areas.

c. Human Rights. Known human rights violations remain un-adjudicated. Similarly, women's rights violations and sexual violence proceedings languish. Atrocities by Islamist armed groups in Mali and abusive responses by Malian security forces have spread south in the past year, engulfing more civilians in the conflict. Islamist groups tend to threaten, rape, and kill civilians, while Malian security forces (and associated groups) carry out military operations with arbitrary detention and torture.

Mali is a source, transit, and destination country for human trafficking for forced labor and sex trafficking. Internal trafficking is more prevalent than transnational trafficking, but both foreign women and children are forced into domestic servitude, agricultural labor, and support roles in gold or salt mines, as well as subjected to sex trafficking.

12. Infrastructure. Traditionally considered "At the World's Edge", remote and isolated Mali has yet to have a robust infrastructure. In 2013, in the wake of the coup, the World Bank pledged over $100 million to rebuild Mali's infrastructure. The African Development Bank supported paved roads around the capital, improving the economy and the EU provided up to 30 million Euro annually to road development in Mali, yet there are less than 1200 miles of paved roads.

13. Information. Radio is the most effective means of conveying information to the population. Land line telephones are virtually non-existent, with one installed for every 100 inhabitants. On the other hand, there are more mobile phones in Mali than there are people. Prior to the 2012 rebellion, Mali's information systems were promoted as the "freest in Africa". Radio is the top information medium, with hundreds of stations, run by the state as well as by private and community operators. MINUSMA utilizes *Radio Mikado* in Gao and Timbuktu to engage with local populations. Recently, Mali implemented a social media blackout after the population turned out in protest of the detention of a popular radio host.

Peace Operations Functions

14. Command and Control. MINUSMA is composed of civilian, military and police components, with the military the largest component. Leadership is as follows:

- **Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of MINUSMA:** Mahamat Saleh Annadif (Chad)

- **Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General in MINUSMA:** Koen Davidse (Netherlands)
- **Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General in MINUSMA and UN Resident Coordinator, Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Representative of UNDP:** Mbaranga Gasarabwe (Rwanda)
- **Force Commander:** Major General Jean-Paul Deconinck (Belgium)

15. Intelligence. MINUSMA is unique in that the **All Sources Intelligence Fusion Unit (ASIFU)** plays a robust intelligence gathering and analysis role. ASIFU's mission is to counter the asymmetric threats faced by MINUSMA and the local populations. Increased EU contributions to MINUSMA over other UN missions brings increased capabilities. The Dutch contribute an intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance unit. Sweden contributes a 220-person intelligence unit. In addition, MINUSMA has a **JMAC** (Joint Mission Analysis Center) and **JOC** (Joint Operations Center), and a robust U2 (intelligence headquarters) all staffed by European officers. German drones, Special Forces, and rotary wing recon assets throughout Mali gather intelligence for the Bamako-based ASIFU. ASIFU also has human intelligence (HUMINT) capabilities to provide a better understanding of key actors and public perceptions.

Yet, despite MINUSMA's exceptional intelligence-gathering capabilities, it does not yet appear to "effectively prevent and preempt a terrorist attack on the basis of information alone," perhaps due to a lack of clarity, roles, and responsibilities in the ASIFU-MINUSMA relationship, made more difficult by UN bureaucratic rules geared towards traditional, static peacekeeping deployment and operations. Another source of ineffectiveness may be the "inadequate collaboration and lack of trust between European and African forces in the mission impede sharing of intelligence…the intelligence capability could benefit from the cultural knowledge and language skills of African troops."

16. Operations. Instability and severity of working conditions in northern Mali limits MINUSMA's operational capabilities. North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-standard equipment of EU contributors enhances operational capabilities, but they are not interoperable with most of the TCCs equipment, further complicating command, control, and communications, and resupply. A large and unwieldy leadership team, coupled with too many mission sets, complicates MINUSMA's operations to ensure security, stability, and protection of civilians.

Also used in MINUSMA are the Community Liaison Assistants (CLAs). Originally conceived in MONUSCO, CLAs are "national staff, deployed alongside uniformed components of United Nations peacekeeping operations and managed by Civil Affairs components" in order "to fill a gap in community engagement skills." While helpful to the overall effort, MINUSMA CLAs are constrained by logistical and security conditions.

17. Protection.

a. Mission Protection. MINUSMA is considered one of the most dangerous of the UN missions, therefore approximately 80% of MINUSMA's capacity is dedicated for protection and sustainment

> *Ironically, a recent report lists MINUSMA as only the 15th most deadly UN mission, in comparison to all other missions between 1948 and 2015 (historic or current). This ranking, however, was not controlled by UN mission member density or length of mission. Still, MINUSMA also currently ranks as the 6th most deadly since 1948 with respect to "malicious acts" perpetuated on its members.*

requirements. UN agencies and other aid groups are under constant risk of attack, as are MINUSMA forces that attempt to provide them or the population protection. IEDs and ambushes are occurring more frequently as a result of growing IED use worldwide, an unstable north, and fragile peace process. Attacks against MINUSMA compounds are spreading south, and becoming more sophisticated with suicide

attacks, and mortars. Some observe a growing concern "that MINUSMA may (be) a 'two-tiered' mission" with NATO troops better protected than their peers in the African contingents, which exacerbates intra-MINUSMA relationships between TCCs.

b. Protection of Civilians. By the end of August 2016 there were approximately 33,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) (roughly half of the previous year's total) and 134,811 Malian refugees in neighboring countries (mostly Mauritania, Niger and Burkina Faso). Despite the reduction in IDPs, the late 2016 violations of the peace agreement were "a threat to the safety of civilians and triggered new displacements" leading to another increase in IDPs (now numbering 44,762, which includes almost 8,000 families). While clashes and movements of armed groups mainly occur in the Gao and Timbuktu regions, they are also occurring in the south (Mopti and Ségou regions). While "deliberate violence against civilians" arises at a low rate compared to other UN or UN -associated missions, it is not negligible. Some observe that "internal displacement in Mali can be resolved by the end of 2017, but only if there is no resurgence of communal violence or armed conflict."

Armed groups in the north continue to recruit and use child soldiers, some as young as 12 years old. However, in a positive development, in March 2017 the *Coordination des Mouvements de l'Azawad* (CMA) signed an Action Plan with the UN to end and prevent the recruitment and use, sexual violence and all other grave violations against children. It is unclear impact the more recent coalition fracturing will have on this action plan.

While the most recent MINUSMA mandate clarified and reinforced the Mission's Protection of Civilians task, it also reiterated "that the Malian authorities have primary responsibility to protect civilians in Mali…"

18. Sustainment. The 2016-2017 MINUSMA budget was $933,411,000. The 2017-2018 budget, approved by the UN General Assembly on June 30, 2017, provides for an increased amount up to $1.12 billion in the Mission's Special Account. Another $53 million was allocated for the peacekeeping support account, $13.25 million for the UN's Logistic Base, and $6.12 million for the Regional Service Centre.

The UN has acknowledged that much of the logistical requirement for MINUSMA is devoted to self-sustainment and force protection requirements with extreme conditions leading to maintenance challenges. In addition, one analysis points out:

> More often than not, African soldiers in charge of securing convoys in and out of these areas do not have adequate support, training and equipment to operate. The challenges to ensure supply lines seriously drains MINUSMA's resources and affects its ability to perform other tasks that are vital for the peace process in Mali.

Issues and Considerations

19. Issues. The major issues confronting MINUSMA in Mali are summarized as follows:

- While Mali's problems cannot be solved through military action only, all progress in non-security sectors (political, economic, and social) is dependent on an improved security sector.
- Managing and disarming three different groups is a problem for Mali and MINUSMA: separatist rebels, militia groups opposed to separatist groups, and AQIM have different agendas, and are not interested in peace.
- Northern Mali is a location for terrorism, narco-traffickers, and trafficking in persons.
- The government of Mali lacks force projection capabilities and legitimacy in the north (Kidal); it cannot actively confront rebel groups in the north.
- The working conditions in the north are inhospitable.

- European TCCs contribute niche capabilities requiring increased coordination and patience; and the overall increased numbers of TCCs (and contributions within the TCCs) require larger mission headquarters and longer mission planning cycles.

20. Considerations.

a. US. At this time, US support is mainly financial and multilateral, although there are 26 US military personnel deployed to MINUSMA. The US government continues to support current EU and French efforts in order to hasten the growth of Mali's capacity.

For the US military, specifically, the US government should consider initiating or participating in any conference or symposium for the express purpose of synchronizing pre-deployment training amongst the multiple donor nations working with African TCCs to gain efficiencies and respond to the training needs identified by MINUSMA. For example, Africa Command (AFRICOM) could link TCC partners' pre-deployment training and in-mission mentorship to its Theater Security Cooperation plan by assuming an oversight role of US peacekeeping capacity building programs in Africa, and the US State Department's ACOTA programs should coordinate with MINUSMA for requirements.

Perhaps the most pertinent consideration for the Mali—and other international organizations' considerations regarding the Mali—are those apropos the future US policy and interests in Africa in general. On the one hand, perceived US disinterest in the continent may embolden some African leaders to further their less-democratic regimes. On the other hand, the current US Administration may remain inclined towards African engagement as a means to: counter Chinese influence and development on the continent; address access restrictions to mineral resources and supposed negative impacts on the global economy; and continue the fight against terrorism.

It is not yet clear what US policy changes towards African involvement—if any—the new Administration may promote. Some observers noted that "not one of the 29 leaders the president-elect had spoken to in the week following his election was from sub-Saharan Africa" and that "in his sole foreign-policy speech as a candidate, Trump mentioned Africa only once..." (he has reportedly spoken to some African leaders in the past month). In the past, both as a presidential candidate and in previous years, President Trump has indicated little interest in African issues, except to castigate President Barack Obama's Power Africa initiative (a bipartisan effort to build reliable electric power grids) as corrupt.

With little detail available regarding the Administration's policy objectives for Africa, future direction can only be extrapolated from other proposals and statements. Arguments that suggest the "America First" perspective will have negative repercussions on the African continent are supported by recent language and actions that suggest the following:

Aversion towards climate change-related international agreements. With rising sea levels, "more than 70 million Africans could be affected by coastal flooding by the year 2080, up from 1 million in 1990". Increasing drought conditions across the continent further exacerbate tenuous food security. Therefore, changes in US approach towards climate change regulations and agreements have the potential to drastically affect the African continent.

Antipathy toward trade agreements and regulation. President Trump has indicated antipathy over many international and bilateral trade agreements. The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), a trade deal offering preferential access to US markets to some three dozen African countries, may be considered one of those "bad deals". While Congress renewed it for 10 years (in 2016), it may be possible to secure the votes to repeal it.

Inclination to significantly reduce—and, in some cases, eliminate—funding for aid and development programs. The US provides significant development aid, security assistance, and emergency humanitarian assistance to many African countries. In one assessment, "the future of the Mali effort …is in doubt as Trump seeks to squeeze funding for foreign aid and international organizations in his bid to bolster defense spending." Perhaps most significant to long term US interests in Africa, however is that "China has positioned itself to be a steadfast partner for Africa in a time of geopolitical uncertainty and questionable American commitment to the continent… (replacing) the United States as Africa's largest trading partner." Therefore, it may be a "strategic mistake" to disengage from Africa if matters between the US and China escalate.

> *During the recent review and renewal process for the MINUSMA mandate, the US reportedly "sought to delete some of the tasks," specifically those regarding projects to promote reconciliation, justice, and stabilization. However, those tasks remained in the final resolution. Instead, the mandate directs the Secretary General "to develop within 180 days a mission-wide strategic plan that articulates a phased approach to implement MINUSMA's mandate, and presents a transition plan with a view to handing over relevant tasks to the UN*

Some observers suggest specific actions to consider:

- The US Administration should provide a statement that supports "all bilateral and regional initiatives that the United States has in Africa, to include AGOA, Power Africa, and the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership, among others."

- Ensure those officials appointed to US government positions at Africa desks have expertise and strong ties in Africa.

- Invite the newly elected chairperson of the African Union, Moussa Faki Mahamat of Chad, to visit DC, and host a US-Africa leaders' summit (similar to the one hosted by President Obama in 2014).

- Explore new US business engagement in Africa to show continued American support for Africa's economic rise.

In summary, observers indicate that continued Administration "silence" on Africa—coupled with apparent reversal of policies important to Africa—"threatens to undermine decades of bipartisan support for American engagement and sideline the United States as China reaps the benefits of increased cooperation with Africa." There are many areas in which the US can provide more assistance and support. At this time, US support is mainly financial and multilateral. The major recommendation for the US, in regards to Mali, is to stay engaged, since Malian instability has a significant impact on stability throughout the region. Or, as one observer suggests, the three priorities of the US in Africa should be: **Combating terrorism and instability, Securing Africa's fragile economic progress, and Reconciling national security interests with democracy objectives.**

b. UN. The UN continues to reinforce the need for all parties to comply with the peace agreements, charges the TCCs to make up the difference in the military and police capabilities not yet deployed, and calls on the GoM to continue progress on security sector reform and elections for 2017. Still other observers share recommendations regarding the UN peacekeepers' training, leadership, and sustainment. Some specific observations include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Increase participation of EU and NATO states to jointly train TCCs, prior to deployment,
- Reduce staff turnover; train staff at all levels in the UN planning process,
- Improve initial TCC deployment through assignment of experienced staff officers,

- Capture lessons learned in a central repository,
- Improve UN media strategies to bolster benefits of troop contribution, and
- Decentralize authority from the UN Mission in New York to lowest operational levels.

Specific recommendations for MINUSMA include, but are not limited to:

- Link the peace agreement's security and political dimensions,
- Support stabilization in the north,
- Prioritize DDR as part of a long-term strategy,
- Clarify the protection of civilians mandate,
- Come to a joint understanding of what the return of state authority means,
- Assist the state to redeploy at the local level; make the Mopti region a pilot site to test cooperative policies aimed at improving local security and specifically reforming the local police,
- Prioritize an approach that aims to restore public services, including those of the police, as much as seeking to reinforce the international military deployment, and
- Analyze and target organized crime networks (especially the involvement of the Malian government).

c. Mali. Many of the observations and reports strongly suggest that the GoM should avoid any appearance of conducting military operations against opposition forces. However, at the same time, Mali must learn from its past mistakes by adopting a proactive, rather than reactive, approach to security challenges. Some examples provided include: continue to strengthen the Malian Armed Forces (FAMA), with a particular emphasis on intelligence operations; ensure an investment of social services accompanies any FAMA redeployment into the northern region; allow religious authorities to play an important role in peace; establish policies against organized crime to reduce those benefits to terrorist groups; and offer opportunities to unemployed young people. In order to prevent the security situation deteriorating further, the Malian government is encouraged to develop a strategy to ensure the effective return of the state and the restoration of its legitimacy among all parts of the population. This should include:
- Reform of the local police, taking a lead for instance from recent projects in Niger; in particular, security forces should recruit women and men from different ethnic groups to enable the effective carrying out of their duties, including in areas lived in by nomads.
- Devise a plan, developed through inclusive dialogue, to coordinate the state's efforts in the center and to identify priority actions, specifically in justice, education and natural resources management. Work on the latter should establish mechanisms to enable herders and farmers to live together more peacefully.
- Name a high representative for the central regions to embody the state's commitment to them, to work in consultation with local communities and civil society groups, and to ensure coordination with newly active donors.
- Avoid using community self-defense groups, and strengthen the capacity of the security services while severely and publicly punishing security service abuses against civilians.

Yet another recommendation includes reinforcing the economic reality that "the war is too costly and bad for business." In the Human Rights arena, one observation noted the fewer cases of mistreatment when people were arrested by soldiers accompanied by government gendarmes who have the mandated role of provost marshal, and recommends additional manning and training of the same.

A 2013 survey of the Malian people contributed insight to strategies to create and reinforce stability that are still valid today. Civil society agencies—surprisingly active in parts of Mali—appear eager to

contribute their expertise and energies in addressing "root causes" of Malian conflict in order to promote good governance efforts of the elected leadership.

<u>Resources</u>

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