MINUSMA and UNOWAS Executive Summary

In late January 2018, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, described the Mali situation as a “race against time”:

...with growing insecurity claiming hundreds of civilian lives, in addition to fatalities among peacekeepers in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and members of Mali’s defence [sic] and security forces. The human rights and humanitarian situation was worsening...with humanitarian actors estimating that 4.1 million Malians, or 22 per cent of the national population, facing the prospect of food insecurity in 2018.
Mali’s challenges are part of a regional whole. In November 2017, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reported the “precarious security situation” in Africa’s five-country Sahel region, that eclipse “…a massive humanitarian crisis affecting 12 million people…exacerbated by climate change, poverty and food shortages.” The ICRC further noted, “Three-quarters of the region's 80 million people are under age 35, and while job opportunities are already scarce, the population is expected to double in 30 years.”

Many observers, such as Crisis Group, suggested that peace in Mali is “one step forward, two steps back.” Some armed rebel groups still do not recognize the 2015’s “Algier’s Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali” and the 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. There are concerns that similar issues will impact the 2018 elections. Other major concerns are:

- The most recent mandate renewal, UNSCR 2364 (2017), continued to charge MINUSMA to “take all necessary means” to complete its tasks and retained 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 “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 contradiction in mandate objectives complicates MINUSMA engagements as well as its relationship with both the government and the population, creating hostility towards MINUSMA from all parties. Now five years into this mission, the UN expects to complete a comprehensive review prior to June 2018’s mandate revision “to reassess the assumptions underpinning MINUSMA’s presence in Mali, to review its key mandated tasks against achievements on the ground and to re-examine its layout…”

- While a signed peace agreement exists, the actions and rhetoric of some of the conflict parties are impediments to stabilization in Mali. Discrepancy resolutions are 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 can be familial, tribal, and temporary alliances of convenience. A BBC analyst suggested: “The peace deal is just a fig leaf behind which people are hiding who actually do not want peace. They want instability so they can continue their shady business.” IRIN News observed that the young Malian population join armed groups in “the search for social success and recognition.” Regardless of rationale, two 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 IRIN News observers noted that the government’s reaction to purported violence is “alienating.”

- Many aspects of 2015’s “Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali resulting from the Algiers Process” remain unfulfilled due to continuing violence and poor governance. As an example, while a “mixed” military unit—part of the Mécanisme Opérationnel de Coordination (MOC, or Operational Coordination Mechanism)—executed its first joint patrol in February 2017, it was in the aftermath of a January 2017 car bomb attack, which killed 80 of the MOC personnel at their camp in Gao. In the past year,
however, further development of the MOC appears stalled. Mali continues to suffer both state- and 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 non-state 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 then-President of Burkina Faso to mediate 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 UN 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, in 2013, as the security situation in Mali continued to degenerate, France intervened with a military force. The 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 they were not originally popular with most Malians. In July 2013, United Nations Multidimensional Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) replaced both UNOM and AFISMA.

United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) is a political mission established in December 2016, to operate for a three-year period from 1 January 2017 until 31 December 2019. It merged the previous United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) with the Office of the Special Envoy for the Sahel (OSES).

2. Mandate(s). 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 UN presence initially authorized to provide coordinated and coherent support to (i) the on-going political process and (ii) the security process. The current mandate directed 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.
New to the 2017 renewal is the specified task of “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.” It was also the first UN mission mandate to include a task addressing transnational organized crime (TOC), and that task remains in its current form. The renewed mandate reminded 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 current mandate continued 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.

In September 2017, the UN Security Council’s UNSCR 2374(2017) imposed “a travel ban on and freeze the assets of designated individuals and entities actively stymying (peace in Mali) progress.” Another MINUSMA-related mandate is expressed in UNSCR 2391(2017). It was established in December 2017 to delineate the “modes of support” and reimbursement authorizations and processes between MINUSMA and the newly organized Force Conjointe des Etats du G5 Sahel (FC-G5S). The UNSCR requests a “technical agreement among the United Nations, the European Union and G5 Sahel States…with a view to providing operational and logistical support through…(MINUSMA)...to the joint force conducting cross-border counter-terrorism operations across the region.” Such support must be:

…at the discretion of the Special Representative for Mali, and without affecting MINUSMA’s capacity to implement its mandate and strategic priorities… (and) be restricted to MINUSMA areas of operation where it was compatible with the Mission’s current capacities.

UNOWAS is headquartered in Dakar, Senegal. It has responsibility for “preventive diplomacy, good offices and political mediation and facilitation efforts” in West Africa and the Sahel. It is the lead agency for the implementation of UN’s Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, which was authorized by the UN Security Council in 2013 and contains programs and initiatives related to Governance, Security, and Resilience. It collaborates and coordinates with all the other UN entities and many regional and international partners.

The UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel has been described as an antecedent of the UN’s “sustaining peace” methodology. It:

...identified the common structural root causes of instability in the region, i.e. poverty, underdevelopment and weak governance, especially in border regions. It then sought to promote a coherent and regional approach among UN agencies operating in the region to tackle these problems, while also coordinating with non-UN actors.

However, the UN’s unpublished 2016 Sahel Strategy independent review determined it to be, thus far, a “failure”. Implementation challenges included:

- the traditional fragmentation of UN agencies across the region (particularly as budgets are determined by country programs);
- the density of “Sahel strategies” among the plethora of inter-governmental organizations and governments; and
- the general disregard of “infrastructure and energy projects that are vital to the development of Sahel states.”

To improve its implementation on the future Sahel Strategy, in July 2017, the UN established **Executive Committee Working Group on the Sahel**.
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 revision 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 (as of June 2017) retained 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.”

As of December 2017, the bulk of the Troop/Police Contributing Countries (T/PCCs) are from other African nations. The five largest T/PCCs (over 1,000 uniformed or staff personnel), regardless of continent or origin, are: Burkina Faso (1,872), Bangladesh (1,678), Chad (1,412), Senegal (1,404), and Togo (1,240). They are closely followed by: Niger (891) and Guinea (884).

In January 2018, the United Kingdom (UK) announced its deployment of 100 troops and three Chinook helicopters to Mali to serve alongside the French forces of Operation Barkhane. Currently, the only British support in Mali is a C17 Globemaster airplane. According to another report, Italy will soon send 470 troops to the Mali to counter people-smuggling and combat extremism.

MINUSMA is not the only military force operating in Mali or the greater Sahel region. Among the plethora of organized military in or around Mali, France has an estimated 3,000-4,000 troops deployed as part of its Operation Barkhane (2014-current) [its predecessor was Operation Serval (2013-2014)]. In addition, in 2017, the G5 Sahel organized and deployed its Force Conjointe des Etats du G5 Sahel (FC-G5S) in its first mission. 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 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.”

Since its inception in 2013, MINUSMA personnel have been accused of—and found guilty of—sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). By the end of that first year, five Chadian soldiers allegedly raped several...
local women. These allegations, among similar incidents from other UN missions, contributed to the UN’s last five years of investigative reporting into both SEA and general misconduct and its subsequent program initiatives and data management. Between 2013 and 2015, the MINUSMA SEA allegations per year averaged at 18 perpetrators. However, in 2016 the number of alleged perpetrators diminished to only four persons. In 2017, there were only two allegations. Over 70% of all the alleged SEA perpetrators in MINUSMA were military.

Almost 200 MINUSMA personnel (civilians and uniformed) are alleged to have engaged in “other misconduct” in the past five years. The majority of the “other misconduct” was committed by uniformed personnel (61%), and almost half of the total misconduct allegations thus far (47%) occurred in a single year (2014). While most of MINUSMA’s “other misconduct” allegations are considered “category 2”—such as driving under the influence and infractions of regulations—over 20% are “category 1.” Most of the category 1 misconduct occurred in 2015, which corresponds with the “unauthorized and excessive force” incident in which Rwandan police personnel fired upon protesting civilians, killing three.

“Other misconduct” may range in behaviors from traffic violations to extortion, embezzlement, and other abuses of authority. They are also categorized by levels (1 or 2, with “1” being more severe), “depending on the risk such incidents would present to the organization.”

4. Casualties. MINUSMA is commonly referred to as the UN’s “most dangerous” Mission. Deliberate attacks on peacekeepers by armed groups 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. Increasingly, it appears that regional terrorist groups are leading—or supporting—attacks on MINUSMA and other UN personnel.

The UN Peacekeeping Fatalities Data indicates 158 total MINUSMA fatalities since April 2013 (as of December 2017), of which 95, or two-thirds, are due to “malicious attacks”.

MINUSMA averaged 37 fatalities per year in the past four years. In the first two months of 2018, there are already three fatalities. Almost 94% of the total fatalities to date are MINUSMA uniformed members. Chad has suffered the vast majority of the fatalities (47), or one third of the total. Other significant losses include those of Burkina Faso, Guinea, Niger, and Togo (16 to 18 fatalities each).

A 2016 UN casualties analysis indicated that “overall UN fatalities are not substantively on the rise” once data is controlled for deployment numbers and recognizes the “more risky” environments—where UN members are deliberately targeted—in which they are currently deployed. However, the UN’s "Cruz Report”—released in January 2018—argues that “a lack of leadership and a reluctance to move aggressively against potential attackers are responsible for the worst spate of United Nations peacekeeping fatalities in the organization’s history.” The report identified four broad areas where the UN “must take actions to reduce fatalities”:

At times, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) is called “most dangerous.”

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.
(1) Increase personnel awareness of the risks and empower them “to take the initiative to deter, prevent, and respond to attacks”; (2) Equip and train personnel “to operate in high-threat environments”; (3) Achieve a “threat sensitive mission footprint,” aligning mission mandates to limit threat exposure; and (4) Ensure leadership accountability to prevent fatalities and injuries.

MINUSMA’s fatality totals here do not account for other MINUSMA casualties and fatalities 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 and another French soldier was killed in April 2017. While there are unconfirmed reports of another six French soldiers killed in July 2017, one French news analyst indicated there have been a total of 18 French soldiers killed in Mali to date.

Situation

5. Drivers of Conflict. The Tuaregs remain one of the key drivers of Mali’s conflict. According to a Global Insight observer:

…the semi-nomadic Tuareg, who make up 10 percent of Mali’s population, feel discriminated against, oppressed, and marginalised [sic] by the French-backed central government, which is dominated by black Africans. They saw the government’s policy of modernisation [sic] as an attack against them, as the policy reduced the tribe’s access to agricultural land, and they have rebelled against successive Malian governments.

An analyst with Middle East News also noted a causal relationship between the 2011’s “ouster of Libya’s Muammar Gaddafi” and the Tuareg-led rebellion in Mali in 2012:

With his [Gaddafi] demise, many Tuareg from the region who had fought as mercenaries for Gaddafi returned home, bringing with them the contents of Libya’s looted armories [sic]. Some of the returnees launched a rebellion in Mali to try to create a breakaway Tuareg state in the desert north, a movement that was soon hijacked by al Qaeda-linked jihadists who had been operating in Mali for years.

While the 2015’s "Algier’s Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali" was welcome, it appears that the agreement 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 have their own agendas, and peace is not always in their best interests. Separatist rebels, militia groups opposed to separatists, and radical Islamist groups have conflicting objectives. In addition, generalized unemployment and a young population are factors that contribute to more recruits in various armed factions. As a BBC observer suggested:

Every young man wants a gun. Young men are prepared to steal, to kill to acquire a firearm…They want a firearm so they can claim the right to join the UN-backed demobilisation programme [sic] and be given a
job. Of course if an armed group offers these same men $500 (£389) or $800 to lay a landmine in front of a UN convoy they will do so. They are not acting out of conviction but for money.

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.

The 2018 electoral cycle (for presidential and legislative elections) will engender more instability in the near term. In the longer term, and in addition to its security and governance concerns, Mali must also address its “resource conflicts”—notably with its natural resources—since nearly 80% of the population depend on viable land and water management programs.

6. Significant Events.

a. Recent Events.

- **23 - 24 January 2018.** The UN’s Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations briefed the Security Council regarding the Secretary-General’s December 2017 report on Mali.
- **19 January 2018.** The UN’s Secretary-General announced the establishment of the International Commission of Inquiry.
- **15 - 16 January 2018.** The “Agreement Monitoring Committee” (Comité de Suivi de l’Accord) adopted a timeline for implementing the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali (independently observed by the Carter Center).
- **8 December 2017.** UN Security Council authorized UNSCR 2391(2017), which “outlined the ways in which MINUSMA is expected to support the G5 Sahel joint force and described how the UN will be reimbursed for its assistance.”
- **24 November 2017.** The UN released two statements, condemning two separate attacks against MINUSMA that resulted in three Nigerien peacekeepers and one Burkinabé peacekeeper, as well as several injured.
- **26 October 2017.** Another attack on MINUSMA personnel killed three peacekeepers from Chad and injured two others.
- **18-23 October 2017.** Security Council members undertook a visiting mission to the Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali and Mauritania).
- **14 August 2017.** The UN Security Council “condemned the terrorist attack against the MINUSMA…which caused the death of one Togolese peacekeeper and injured another.”
- **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 slightly injured.

- **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.** Installation of all Malian government interim authorities.

- **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 Opérationnel de Coordination (MOC) (a mixed unit of Malian soldiers and former Tuareg rebels).

**b. Upcoming Events.**

- **Early 2018.** The UN will conduct an overall strategic review of MINUSMA in 2018.

- **March 2018.** The Independent Expert report to the Human Rights Council is expected in March 2018.

- **1 March 2018.** Interim update expected regarding Mali sanctions implemented in accordance with UNSCR 2374(2017).

- **31 March 2018.** Expected date for the “expeditious implementation” of remaining obligations under the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali.

- **30 June 2018.** MINUSMA mandate set to expire.

- **1 September 2018.** Final report expected regarding the Mali sanctions implemented in accordance with UNSCR 2374(2017).

- **(Throughout) 2018.** Presidential and legislative branch elections, with the final presidential elections planned for July 2018.

**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.

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). A Security Council Report observer agreed, suggesting: “The constitution needs to be revised to, among other things, establish an upper legislative chamber and lay out a framework for institutional, security and justice reforms as stipulated in the agreement.” However, no work has begun to do so.

The President appoints the Prime Minister and other government ministers. He recently installed Soumeylou Boubeye Maiga, his fifth Prime Minister in the past five years, after the unexpected resignation of Abdoulaye Idrissa Maiga earlier this year.

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.

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 regarding the presence of the Malian army in Kidal during the ceremony. In September 2016, 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.

The devolving security situation contributed to the postponement of elections (district, regional, legislative and presidential elections, as well as municipal by-elections) from December 2017 to March-April 2018 (Presidential elections are scheduled for July 2018.) However, an Institute for Security Studies observer

Thus far, the candidates for the presidency are slim in number. Moussa Sinko Coulibaly, the second of two candidates, recently declared himself for the presidential elections planned for July 2018. He is a former army general and government minister. As a young man, he attended France's prestigious Saint-Cyr military academy and was later part of the army that participated in the 2012 coup d’état. He allegedly has “several key supporters…particularly in the military.”

The other candidate is Kalifa Sanogo, the mayor of Mali’s second-largest city Gao. President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta has not yet formally indicated his intention to seek a second term, “though he is widely expected to do so.”
remained uncertain regarding Mali’s “readiness” for elections at any level for this year, citing security of the polling stations, as well as “the uneven presence” of government throughout the territory and the return of refugees and displaced persons,” many of whom may not have citizenship documentation.

9. **Military/Security.** Since 2012, the number of Malian-specific armed groups associated with the peace process has grown from two (MNLA and HCUA) to at least eight (MNLA, HCUA, MAA1, CMFPR I, MAA2, CPA, CMFPR II, GATIA), and many smaller groups. While there is technically a division between the armed groups and the political-military groups, those divisions are indistinct. There is also strong evidence of transnational terrorism groups operating in Mali.

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<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>MAA</td>
<td>Arab Movement of Azawad (Mouvement arabe de l’Azawad)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMFPR</td>
<td>Coordination of the Movements of Patriotic and Resistance Fronts (Coordination des mouvements et fronts patriotiques de résistance)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPA</td>
<td>The Coalition for the Azawad People (Coalition pour le people de l’Azawad)</td>
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<tr>
<td>GATIA</td>
<td>Self-Defense Group of Imrad Tuareg and Allies</td>
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<td>1 and II (or 1 and 2)</td>
<td>denote subsequent “generations” of opposition groups, some of which are at times in opposition of their parent groups.</td>
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The relationships between all the armed groups—including the state security groups—are complicated by familial, political, ideological and geographic alliances of convenience among each other. The main threats to all parties are from the terror attacks occurring throughout the country. 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. 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 “official” security. In 2015, the European Union (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.

**Human Rights Watch’s** report on Mali for 2017 notes:

> Government forces took steps to protect civilians by patrolling and intervening to stop communal tension, but military operations to counter the growing presence of Islamist armed groups resulted in serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, torture, and arbitrary arrest... (with) little effort to hold to account soldiers or militiamen implicated in abuses.
In November 2017, MINUSMA officials signed a memorandum of understanding to provide “enhanced support” to the Malian Defence and Security Forces, as well as “upgrading six Malian military bases at a cost of $1 million.” According to some reports, the MDSF are expected to deploy additional troops to its central region to stabilize the area prior to elections.

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 central regions of Mali. Human Rights Watch’s report on Mali for 2017 notes that non-state armed groups engaged in violent acts against government and international security forces, civilians, aid workers, and each other.

There are two dominant domestic coalitions with armed members—The Coordination of Azawad Movements, or Coordination des Mouvements de l’Azawad (CMA) and the Platform (Plateforme). There are also several transnational terrorist groups, of which the Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Islamic State (or Da’esh) (and their multitudes of “splinter” groups) are the most prominent, with a large terrorist organization specific to the Mali boundaries, Ansar al Dine. In March 2017, the three largest groups [Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Ansar Dine, and al-Mourabitoun] announced a merger that now includes four of the five main Islamist groups. This terrorist “coalition” is 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.

Boko Haram, Boko Haram refers to itself as “Jama’atu Ahi as-Sunnah li-Da’awat 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. Some analysts suggest a long-term but “secret” relationship between Boko Haram and Al Qaeda or its splinter elements.

Lastly, most of the organized crime in the region, either domestic or transnational, includes armed elements.

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.

Currently, the most significant non-state actors in Mali are:

Domestic (with selected affiliates). The two dominant domestic coalitions with armed members are the CMA and the Plateforme. Developed in 2014, these coalitions were intended to reduce the complexity of stakeholders during the peace negotiations. However, in the past four years, the earlier two dominant coalitions have evolved, merged, disbanded and re-formed—often in temporary alliances with other organizations:

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, or Groupe d’Autodéfense Touareg Inghad et Alliés), 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 had 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 U.S. 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. While there may have been an “independence dream” for this group at one time, it currently engages in extortion and trafficking in illegal “goods” as well as people.

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 libération de 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. In the past few years, 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.

- 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 peuple 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.

**Transnational (with local/regional affiliates):**

**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. Its strategy has targeted 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 recent years, AQIM and its Sahel-based offshoots appear more unified, “possibly in a bid to outpace French counterterrorism operations, undermine Mali’s peace agreement with northern rebels, and/or respond to competition from local groups aligned with the Islamic State.” One particular merger in 2017 (of four of the five main Al Qaeda groups, to include Ansar al Dine) uses the name *Jama’at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin* (JNIM, or Group for the support of Islam and Muslims). As JNIM, this group claimed responsibility for the June 2017 attack on the hotel in Bamako and another that killed six French soldiers. It has apparently also attacked the Nigerian Army, seizing equipment and other resources. In January 2018, it claimed responsibility for two attacks against the Malian army.

Da’esh and Al Qaeda elements are often in competition with each other throughout Africa and the Middle East. However, in Mali, they appear to occasionally coordinate their activities and attacks. This is in large part due to their use of affiliated local groups. While these groups appear disposed to leverage the
resources and reputation of one or the other of the larger transnational terrorist organizations, they are also ready to operate independently. Some examples include:

- **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 Al-Mulathamun Battalion (also known as 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). They are a transregional organization with an expressed aim to “replace regional governments, including in Mali, with an Islamic state.” Founding members were aligned with AQIM, but separated prior to the 2013 merger. However, the current structure operates with both AQIM (as part of Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin) and Da'esh as convenient. It targets international interests and 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 (AAD).** This 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 libération de 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. The spring 2016 Ansar al Dine attacks against the MNLA indicated further splintering from the informal alliance of ethnic Tuaregs. In early 2017, it announced a merger with AQIM.

Ahmad al-Faqi al-Mahdi, a former Malian rebel leader, was 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.

Two larger groups, Katiba Ansar Dine Macina and Macina Liberation Front, are both considered allied with ADD and represent AQIM’s “general strategy by allowing the jihadist group to exploit local ties and connections, as well as to appear as a local movement while masking ties to the international organization.” Since 2015, Katiba Ansar Dine Macina recruits fighters mainly from within the central part of Mali. It 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 ADD. It has repeatedly attacked members of the Malian armed forces and MINUSMA. It is often compared to the Macina Liberation Front (Front de libération du Macina, or FLM), a Fulani jihadist group also allied to ADD. The FLM is led by Amadou Koufa, a cleric who calls on Fulanis to rebuild historic empires like Massina, which once stretched over the Mopti region.

**Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (IS-GS, ISIS-GS, or Da’esh).** Considered an affiliate of the transnational Da’esh, this group claimed responsibility for the attack in October 2017 that killed four U.S. Special Forces soldiers (and three soldiers from Niger) as well as an attack against French forces that injured three. It reportedly consists of less than 100 members and includes the Peul ethnic group from the Mali-Niger border region. However, it also appears to have affiliations with other organizations in Mali. It is led by Adnan Abu Walid al Sahraoui (also known as Adnan al-Sahrawi). He was also a leader of the Movement for the Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) before its merger with the Al-Mulathamun Battalion. He then became a senior spokesman for—and “self-proclaimed emir” (leader) of—the resulting group, al-Mourabitoun (“The Sentinels”). However, in 2015 he declared his allegiance to Da’esh. Following that announcement, he survived an assignation attempt by other al-Mourabitoun members. In
2016, he released an audio message calling for attacks in Morocco (to include those against the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara, or MINURSO) and claimed credit for an attack in Burkina Faso that killed two people. Finally, in October 2016, Da’esh gave public recognition to ISGS, calling it “its battalion in Mali.”

c. Other International Actors.

Regional Neighbors and Organizations. Mali’s neighbors (the Sahel) are among the most fragile countries in the world and are 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 is expected to operate alongside the 12,000-strong UN peacekeeping mission and the 3,000 (or 4,000)-strong French troops already in Mali in Operation Barkhane (2014-current).

Initial operations commenced in fall of 2017 (“Haw Bi” of “Black Cow”), with focus on border zones: between Niger and Mali; between Mali and Mauritania; and across the borders between Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali. It is expected to be fully operational by March 2018.

Each of the G5 Sahel members contribute 10 million euros for the force, while France has contributed $9 million and over 70 vehicles. France is also asking for additional financing from its European and American allies. The EU pledged $57m, the U.S. $60 million, Saudi Arabia $100 million, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) $30 million for the new force. France also promised another $228m in development aid to the Sahel region over the next five years.

Chad, Burkina Faso and Niger already deploy around 4,100 soldiers within MINUSMA.

Another force, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), was formed in 2015 between Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria. It consists of 7,500 military and non-military personnel and operates in the region and shares intelligence in order to counter Nigeria’s Boko Haram militants. Its mandate was recently authorized by the AU for another year, to:

Conduct military operations,
Achieve coordination at inter-state level,
Conduct border patrols,
Find abducted persons,
Stop the flow of arms,
Reintegrate insurgents into society, and
Bring those responsible for crimes to justice.

In January 2017, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger established a joint task force focused on shared border security. It is unclear at this time what—if any-relationship exists between this task force and any other operating in the region.
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; and Niger recently declared a state of emergency along the Mali border. It is not clear if the decision to co-sponsor the Force Conjointe des Etats du G5 Sahel (FC-G5S) changed this declaration.

Other Countries.

China pledged the African Union with $100 million in military assistance for its peacekeeping operations (in the next five years) and has significant—and increasing—business interests in Africa. Asia Times observed:

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 current 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. In September 2017, when the UN Security Council imposed the sanctions against individual entities in Mali through UNSCR 2374(2017), Russia opposed the appointment of a fifth expert and cautioned against “the collateral effects of sanctions, expressing hope that they would not generate more mistrust among the Malian parties.”

The United States (U.S.) 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

While direct 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.
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. A recent joint statement highlights the primary organizations: The African Union (AU), the UN, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the G5 Sahel, and the EU. These organizations are also considered members of the Mediation Team that supports the Algiers Agreement implementation.

The AU has many interests and activities in Mali and the Sahel, beginning with the AU Mission to Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL). 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).

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 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.

Human Rights Watch suggested some improvement in accountability and justice in Mali during 2017, albeit limited. While some processes and organizations were developed last year, very little action occurred. A conviction of a former head of the Islamic police force in Gao for crimes against the state contrasts with the suspension of the trial of the leaders of the 2012 rebellion, who stand accused of the 2012 abduction and killing of 21 elite “Red Berets,” (detained and forcibly disappeared between April 30 and May 1, 2012). In another example, the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, at the last year of its three-year mandate:

…took over 5,000 statements from victims and witnesses. However, the credibility of the commission was undermined by government’s inclusion of nine armed group members, while excluding victims’ group representatives. The mandate of the National Commission for Human Rights was strengthened with improved funding and the appointment in May of nine full-time commissioners. However, the commission showed reluctance to investigate abuses by security force personnel…

b. Humanitarian Assistance. Among the myriad of humanitarian concerns in Mali, the refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) ranks among the most significant. One report indicated:
Across the Sahel region, more than five million people are facing the consequences of forced displacement. Persistent instability in northern Mali, Boko Haram-related violence and insecurity in the Lake Chad Basin, and the impact of the conflict in the neighbouring [sic] Central African Republic continue to cause massive population displacements and hinder the return of displaced people to their homes.

Mali has one of the highest rates of acute malnutrition in West Africa, further contributing to instability.

c. Human Rights. In January 2018, the UN Secretary-General established an International Commission of Inquiry “to investigate allegations of abuses and serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, including allegations of conflict-related sexual violence, committed in the territory of Mali from 1 January 2012 to the date of the establishment of the Commission.” The Commission was established, in part, due to the MINUSMA and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) joint public report, which stated:

…more than 600 cases of human rights violations and abuses were committed between January 2016 and June 2017. More than 800 other incidents involving unidentified armed elements and placing the lives of civilians at risk also occurred during the same period. In total, these acts of violence impacted more than 2,700 victims, including 441 individuals who were killed. The vast majority of victims were men and children...More than 78 per cent of violations, abuses and other incidents putting the lives of civilians at risk involved signatory or non-signatory armed movements of the Peace Agreement, or unidentified armed elements...Malian State actors, primarily Malian defence [sic] and security forces, were involved in 20 per cent of these cases, while international forces, including MINUSMA, were involved in 2 per cent of them.

In addition, Mali remains 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. UNOWAS is led by Mohamed Ibn Chambas (Ghana). MINUSMA is composed of civilian, military and police components. Its 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)

• **Police Commissioner**: Issoufou Yacouba (Niger)

15. Intelligence. MINUSMA was unique in that the All Sources Intelligence Fusion Unit (ASIFU) had a robust intelligence gathering and analysis role. Its task was to counter the asymmetric threats faced by MINUSMA and the local populations. Increased EU contributions to MINUSMA brought enlarged capabilities, such as German drones, a Dutch intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance unit, and a 220-person intelligence unit from Sweden. 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.

In 2016, International Peace Institute observers noted that despite MINUSMA’s exceptional intelligence-gathering capabilities, it did not 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. In 2017, the Danish Institute for International Studies suggested another source of ineffectiveness was 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.”

In late 2017, a Norwegian Defence Command and Staff College thesis indicated similar observations regarding the strengths—and weaknesses—of the ASIFU and the JMAC in Mali. Based on interviews of several former members of MINUSMA, the author noted:

> While some political as well as military leaders believe that the ASIFU might be part of future UN peace operations, others warn that it might be controversial at best and could potentially intensify the divide among military, development, and humanitarian personnel. Moreover, integrating a high-tech intelligence capacity within a low-tech organization such as MINUSMA is likely to pose serious challenges…The deployment of the ASIFU was not founded on a clear division of labor between the ASIFU and the JMAC. No formal coordination mechanisms was in place, leading to some duplication of work…

The UN’s Office of Internal Oversight Services’ 2 October 2017 report (Evaluation of the effectiveness of United Nations peacekeeping operations in deterring and confronting armed elements in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali and the Central African Republic), concurred, stating:

> The mission’s unique All Sources Information Fusion Unit (ASIFU) produced high-value strategic analysis. Most mission personnel volunteered that ASIFU analytical products had played a meaningful role in informing MINUSMA stabilization plans. However, ASIFU did not cater to intelligence needs at the tactical level. ASIFU officers in field did not report to Sector Commanders, and had limited coordination with infantry battalions. ASIFU was also not present in Kidal, the most terrorist-affected region in the country. ASIFU was not well integrated into the existing United Nations information and intelligence structures. Many interviewees raised issues of poor information sharing with the military intelligence unit and the Joint Mission Analysis Center (JMAC). A joint coordination board was not entirely successful, with one senior official stating the challenge of “coordinating the coordination”. ASIFU did not allow the Organization to access raw data stored in its nationally owned intelligence networks, as Member States did not perceive the United Nations information systems as secure. A DPKO/DFS report acknowledged, 'issues surrounding...
the ownership and sharing of information gathered by nationally-owned intelligence assets are currently insufficiently treated by United Nations policy.

16. Operations. MINUSMA remains the only one of the current U.N. peacekeeping operations that authorizes troops to deter and counter “asymmetric threats.” Instability and severity of working conditions throughout 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.

17. Protection.

a. Mission Protection. An observer for Sustainable Security noted: “In Mali, the mission is much busier protecting itself than protecting civilians.” Certainly, much of MINUSMA’s capacity is dedicated for protection and sustainment 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. 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…” There are no designated “protection” camps.

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 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/ISGS 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.
• The working conditions are inhospitable.
• MINUSMA—and the UN—has an uneven reputation among the Malian population.
• European T/PCCs contribute niche capabilities requiring increased coordination and patience; and the overall increased numbers of T/PCCs (and contributions within the T/PCCs) require larger mission headquarters and longer mission planning cycles. Coordination issues are compounded by the density of security organizations operating in the region.

20. Considerations.

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

Perhaps the most pertinent consideration for the Mali—and other international organizations’ considerations regarding the Mali—are those apropos the U.S. policy and interests in Africa in general. On the one hand, perceived U.S. disinterest in the continent emboldens some African leaders to further their less-democratic regimes. On the other hand, the U.S. 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.

With little detail available regarding the Administration’s policy objectives for Africa, direction can only be extrapolated from other proposals and statements. Arguments that suggest the “America First” perspective has 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 U.S. 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 U.S. 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 U.S. 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 U.S. 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…

During the 2017 review and renewal process for the MINUSMA mandate, the U.S. 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 country team, and 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.” U.S. representatives will likely express similar concerns prior to the 2018 mandate revision or renewal.
(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 U.S. and China escalate.

In one summary, Foreign Policy (periodical) observers indicated 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.” The major recommendation for the U.S., in regards to Mali, is to stay engaged, since Malian instability has a significant impact on stability throughout the region.

b. UN and MINUSMA. For several reasons, there remains a disconnect between MINUSMA’s purpose, activities, and capacity and capabilities. An IRIN News observer noted, “The UN deployed [here] without a peace accord, which is normally a precursor for a peacekeeping mission.” Further:

> Annual revisions of the mission’s mandate aimed at making the force more reactive have failed to silence critics. Both within and outside Mali, questions have been raised about the utility of spending more than a billion dollars in a single year when the mission has proved unable to fulfil its core tasks of protecting civilians and defending human rights…The killing of civilians during demonstrations by peacekeepers and accusations of rape have helped to sour public opinion of MINUSMA…and…The mission’s relations with the Malian government have frequently been strained, not least over the neutrality MINUSMA has shown towards certain rebel groups…viewed as impeding the state’s recovery of its sovereignty over the entire country.

With the recent task addition of support to the G5 Sahel’s military force, the “gap” between MINUSMA’s current mandate and its actual capacities and resources is likely to increase.

| The situation in Mali—and MINUSMA—highlights the philosophical discrepancy between some of the current UN peace missions and the UN’s core principle of impartiality: |

| The bloodshed has raised questions about how an institution developed in the 1940s can serve a world under threat from the Islamic State and al-Qaeda. The issue is especially potent given the expectation that U.N. peacekeepers will eventually go to places such as Syria and Libya…and the United Nations’ dilemma goes beyond a lack of preparation or anti-terrorism equipment. At its New York headquarters and around the world, diplomats are debating: Should UN forces be engaged in counterterrorism at all? |

Meanwhile, the UN continues to reinforce the need for all parties to comply with the peace agreements, charges the T/PCCs 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 2018. Civilians in Conflict observers provided some recommendations regarding the MINUSMA, members’ 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 T/PCCs, prior to deployment,
- Reduce staff turnover; train staff at all levels in the UN planning process,
- Improve initial T/PCC 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.

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.”

A 2013 survey of the Malian people gave 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. To that end, a Crisis Group observer suggested that Malian authorities develop “a more constructive partnership between political and religious authorities,” arguing that “religious leaders have a say in both political matters and conflict resolution and that the government has a role in limiting intolerant and hateful speech, both in sermons and in the media, as well as in regulating the training received by imams.”

In the past few years, Morocco developed several initiatives aimed to combat extremist ideology. The Mohammed VI Institute for the Training of Imams, Morchidines and Morchidates trains young people to preach moderate Islam. Morocco recently trained 500 Malian imams.

**Resources**

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