
Mali Mission Brief

I. Activity Summary

Overview

Mali is an exemplar of a complex crisis, involving a military coup, a separatist insurgency, an extremist insurgency involving terrorism, a weak state with a limited capacity to tackle corruption and organized crime, failed security sector reform, and regional power struggles. Mali is also a case of diverse peace operations that have not been well designed to resolve the country's crisis.

By 2011, Mali was widely considered one of the most successful examples of democracy in Africa, having held free and fair elections since 1991. But Mali has suffered a number of rebellions in its northern regions since gaining independence from France in 1960, spurred by inequality and discrimination between the country's arid north, populated by nomadic peoples, most notably Tuaregs, and its southern power center in the capital (Bamako), as well as by competition within nomadic communities.

Additionally, the Malian Sahara has been particularly affected by conflict spillover, including terrorism and unrest in Algeria and Libya. In 2007, the Islamist group Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which had first established bases in northern Mali in the early 2000s, became increasingly active. In early 2012, the return of well-armed Malian Tuaregs who had traveled to Libya to defend Muammar Gaddafi in the Libyan civil war, seized the opportunity to advance their interests, and sparked a rebellion combining Tuareg irredentism and militant Islamism. The combination of increased activity of AQIM and other splinter groups, grave humanitarian circumstances, and a secessionist agenda of the Tuareg led to crisis, which in turn spurred the development of one of the most complex and multifaceted international peace operations to date.

Following a coup led by members of the Malian army in 2012, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) imposed sanctions on Mali and initiated political negotiations with the rebels. The state's control of the north was increasingly threatened by violent extremist groups, and in response the African Union (AU) deployed a peace enforcement mission, the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA). This mission was followed and supplemented quickly by the French-Chadian Operation Serval in January 2013 due to extremist threats to advance on Bamako. Later that year, AFISMA transitioned into the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), which functions as a peacekeeping operation, with Serval continuing in parallel. Within MINUSMA's mandate lie provisions for support from the European Union, which mandated the European Union Training Mission in Mali (EUTM-Mali) in 2013. This mission is focused on providing training to the Malian armed forces, rather than engaging in combat operations. Operation Serval ended in July 2014 after successfully driving violent extremist and terrorist groups out of the major city centers in the north. Operation Serval was replaced by a follow on French Operation Barkhane in August 2014, which focuses on wider counterterrorism efforts throughout the Sahel.

While the prospects for peace were improved by the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in June 2015, signed by the Malian government, the politico-military movements of northern Mali engaged in the "Platform of Algiers", the International Mediation team, and the coordination of the Azawad Movements (CMA), violations of the ceasefire and a constant barrage of attacks have limited progress in implementing the

accord. Mali's security situation remains unstable as Islamist groups and AQIM splinter groups continue to attack civilians, Malian forces and peacekeepers, and violence spreads to the central and southern parts of the country. The international peacekeeping community faces violent extremism, organized crime and illicit trafficking making it currently "the deadliest UN peacekeeping mission," and challenging attempts to successfully execute its mandate and develop an exit strategy.

While successive waves of terrorist attacks have been primarily concentrated in the Northern regions of the country, the November Radisson Blu attack marks the third attack in 2015 against targets in Bamako and Sévaré and signals extended reach and enhanced tactics.

Background

Though Mali has a history of Tuareg uprisings (1962-1964, 1991-1992, and 2006-2009) the 2011-2013 conflict in the north was exacerbated and coopted by Islamic extremists. Fueled by regional unrest associated with the 2011 Arab Spring and the subsequent collapse of Libya's Gadhafi regime (especially returning foreign fighters and increasing availability of munition), in early 2012 disparate internal and external Tuareg insurgent groups united to form the secular National Movement for the Liberation of the Azawad (MNLA) and launched an independence movement. These groups unilaterally declared an independent Azawad state, the first and most notable cause of the 2012 conflict. But an underlying series of recurrent rebellions in northern Mali had occurred prior to 2011 due to dissatisfaction with the implementation of the National Pact which had been developed in 1992 as a platform for political negotiation between the Tuaregs and the transitional Malian government at the time^[i]. As these insurrections escalated and the threats of secessionism lingered, the Government of Mali called upon the AU and its member states to help maintain the territorial integrity of the nation.

Just two months after the MNLA's revolt, members of the Malian military, led by Captain Amadou Haya Sanogo under the name of the National Committee for the Restoration of Democracy and the State (CNRDR) ousted President Amadou Toumani Touré (known as "ATT") in a coup, in part due to the military's outrage at the government's overall "incompetence in the fight against Islamic terror"^[ii] and frustration with its failure to support the military in their ongoing operations against groups in the North. This came to a head in March 2012 just weeks before the national Presidential election. This military coup constituted an unconstitutional change in government. The first response was an ECOWAS action to suspend Mali's membership in the regional group. The coup also automatically required the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) to suspend Mali from the organization pending a return to democracy. However, the PSC recognized the nature of Mali's "dual crisis" and the need for a coordinated policy that also responded to the insurgency and terrorism. The AU's overall "Strategic Concept" (adopted by the PSC in October 2012 and endorsed by the UNSC in Resolution 2085) outlined a dual approach of preparing for and supporting the 2013 elections while simultaneously negotiating with insurgents in the north. The PSC lifted Mali's suspension in October 2012 due to the signing of an agreement that would hand power to a democratically elected president following the 2013 election.^[iii]

In the North, the mutual short-term interests of the MNLA and Islamic extremist groups (AQIM in particular), diverged in the aftermath of the coup over incompatible long-term visions for Mali.^[iv] Disagreement within the MNLA over the group's alignment with extremist groups resulted in infighting, fatally weakening the MNLA. Out of this political power struggle, local Tuareg Islamist extremist group Ansar Dine, as well as AQIM, gained traction as the predominant non-state armed actors in northern Mali, supplanting the MNLA. Their preeminence attracted other Islamic terrorists and precipitated greater external interest in the conflict.

In Bamako, Captain Sanogo retained considerable power behind the scenes. In October, the AU developed its strategy for responding to the "dual crisis": First restore civilian rule and a democratic process, and then deal with the rebellion. A ceasefire was negotiated shortly thereafter with the MNLA and Ansar Dine. However, rebel groups continued to dominate northern Mali. At the end of the year, Ansar Dine broke the

ceasefire and made significant military moves toward the south. They captured Kona, a northern town just 680 kilometers from Bamako in January 2013, leading the transitional authority to request defense assistance from France because the AU Standby Force (nominally designed for rapid response) did not have the capacity to effectively deploy. By that time, the conflict had displaced an estimated 350,000 people in the North and exacerbated food insecurity in an already insecure region.^[v]

The threat of violent extremism and terrorism, overlapping with the separatist insurgency, also had a transnational aspect. The dominant terrorist group, AQIM, was linked to militants throughout the Sahara and Sahel. This threat spurred an urgent regional and international counter-insurgency intervention. France expressed alarm at the impending Islamist takeover, and mounted Operation Serval at the request of the Malian government^[vi] on January 11 to support Malian defense and security forces. Chadian combat troops were deployed alongside the French in the operation, under AU authorization and with command and control integrated with the French forces. The French made their priority combating the violent extremist groups, and in doing so cut deals with the secularist Tuareg nationalists. The deployment of Serval to fight the rebels made the North a war zone, leading to immense displacement: an estimated 1,500 Malians fled to neighboring countries in the first week of fighting, adding to the estimated 144,500 Malian refugees around the region, and 300,000 internally displaced persons.^[vii] However, this mission is widely considered a success, as it subdued the most intense fighting the conflict has seen. The AU and the United Nations (UN) worked together to construct a strong political mandate focused on peacekeeping, then stabilization in Mali to complement the militarized intervention led by the French.

Finally, Mali's longstanding battle with corruption within state institutions and the activities of transnational criminal cartels, including the illegal narcotics trade also represented a governance crisis. Particularly problematic was the corruption that existed within the security sector – the Malian army and police – which made an adequate response to the violence impossible without the support of outside sources. This weakness required yet another policy response. Analyzed below are the primary operations devoted to keeping peace, ending violence, and countering the continued extremist threat in Mali since the 2012 overthrow of the democratically elected government. This mission brief focuses on AFISMA and MINUSMA – however, these missions cannot be discussed without understanding the role the other three operations played and continue to play.^[viii] Finally it addresses the lessons learned and challenges for operations in Mali based on the 2015 UN High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) findings and current literature on peace operations in Africa overall.

African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA)

Mali's West African neighbors, through ECOWAS, were the first parties to officially respond to the Malian coup. Intense communication between ECOWAS, the AU, and the UN followed, which identified how to respond, and with what resources. The West African Standby Brigade, an AU multidisciplinary rapid reaction peacekeeping force deployed in times of crisis, was deemed not ready, paving the way for a coalition of the willing to intervene. Non-ECOWAS countries—Chad (a troop contributor) and Algeria (politically concerned)—also demanded a role. By October 2012, the AU had developed its strategic concept. The following month, the AU called on its members to mobilize resources to support an ECOWAS-led support mission for the Malian defense forces.^[ix] The involvement of a Chadian combat brigade contributed to its reformulation as an AU force. A month later, the UN Security Council authorized the deployment of the ECOWAS and AU-organized African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) on December 20, 2012 under a Chapter VII peacekeeping mandate (Resolution 2085).^[x] The AU mission was originally authorized to "assist in training the Malian security forces and to support them in recovering and stabilizing northern territory"^[xi] in hopes that the Malian military could handle the threat without external intervention. However, a regional deployment would have taken many months to prepare and required a restructuring of the Malian military.

The resolution that created AFISMA was supported by Mali's interim government (in hopes it would restore order and constitutional processes after the coup) as well as by other African nations concerned with

regional security issues. AFISMA was charged with “helping to strengthen Mali’s defense and security forces, in coordination with the European Union and other partners; supporting the Malian authorities in their primary responsibility to protect the population; transitioning to stabilization activities following the recovery of national territory; and assisting with humanitarian access to northern Mali, as requested.”^[xii] The resolution also established a United Nations Office in Mali (UNOM), which was charged with providing “coordinated and coherent support to (i) the on-going political process and (ii) the security process, including support to the planning, deployment and operations of AFISMA.”^[xiii] UNOM was deployed in January 2013 and served as a UN-authorized and UN-led entity that supported the African-led AFISMA mission. UNOM was eventually subsumed into mission planning for MINUSMA.

As the rebels moved towards Bamako and the French army intervened to halt their advance in January 2013, AFISMA shifted to serving more as a back-up support mission, the concept of operations being that the French would take decisive military action, and once territory was recovered AFISMA would secure it. The AU originally intended to deploy AFISMA later in 2013, but because of the rapid gains by armed groups, AFISMA began deploying immediately following Operation Serval, with troops moving into Mali in February. Due to capacity and funding constraints, its deployment was delayed.^[xiv] Additionally, major troop contributing countries such as Chad subsequently withdrew from the mission militarily, citing the lack of financial and material support provided to them for mounting major counter-guerilla operations over extensive geographical areas.^[xv]

In less than a month, the French pushed the insurgents out of the main cities in the North. This cleared the way for AFISMA.^[xvi] However, AFISMA’s contingents were uneven in their capacities especially their readiness to engage in robust operations. They were deployed primarily to assist Malian troops, and so were unable to truly secure Mali’s north. These Malian troops, Gendarmerie, National Police and National Guard were not adequately resourced to carry out their duties once deployed to the North.^[xvii] Almost at once, a discussion began on rehatting the forces as a UN operation, and in April 2013 the UN authorized MINUSMA to absorb UNOM and AFISMA.

The transition from an AU to a UN operation created considerable tensions between the two organizations, and even provoked an unprecedented formal complaint by the AU PSC. The source of the tension was both substantive and procedural. The AU felt that it possessed the policy capabilities for responding to both key elements of the dual crisis—the extremist insurgency and the unconstitutional change in government—but the UN did not agree. The AU also felt that the process of authorizing the transition was too expedited and opaque, and failed to acknowledge the considerable successes of AFISMA.

AFISMA statistics: ^[xviii]

- 3,300 personnel total
 - 2,990 troops
 - 30 individual police officers
 - 2 formed police units of, in total, 280 personnel
 - 65 troops killed

AFISMA’s total mission cost was \$455.53 million USD. African countries contributed 23% of the total cost—South Africa (\$10 million), Ethiopia (\$5 million), Nigeria (\$5 million), and Ghana (\$3 million) with the US (\$104 million), Japan (\$120 million), EU (\$75 million), France (\$63 million), and Germany (\$20 million) providing most of the rest.^[xix]

Nigeria led the mission and was the first to deploy, with 1,186 troops in Mali by March 2013. Other major contributors include Chad (2,015), and Burkina Faso (495), Niger (657), Senegal (501), Benin (300), Ghana (125), Guinea (144), and Togo (723).^[xx] While AFISMA met troop contributions relatively quickly, its fundraising capability was far less effective and ultimately required significant international donor assistance

through a UN trust fund and international donors conference that raised \$455 million US in January 2013.^[xxi]

United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)

In March 2013, the UN proposed two options for the future of AFISMA following the deployment of Operation Serval: The first was to strengthen AFISMA and establish a parallel political presence within the mission; the second was to replace AFISMA with a multidimensional Chapter VII UN mission. Both the interim Foreign Minister of Mali and the president of ECOWAS expressed a preference for the second option.^[xxii] However, their decision was clearly influenced by the indication of UN resources for a UN mission and by the French political preference for withdrawing Serval troops and handing over the reins to a UN mission rather than an AU one.

Therefore, on April 25, 2013, UN Security Council Resolution 2100 authorized the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) under the UN's Chapter VII mandate. UNOM was to be immediately subsumed into MINUSMA, and on July 1, MINUSMA was to take over authority from AFISMA. MINUSMA was originally charged with focusing on political efforts such as supporting "the transitional authorities of Mali in the stabilization of the country and implementation of the transitional roadmap, focusing on major population centres and lines of communication, protecting civilians, human rights monitoring, the creation of conditions for the provision of humanitarian assistance and the return of displaced persons, the extension of State authority and the preparation of free, inclusive and peaceful elections."^[xxiii] MINUSMA differed from AFISMA in that it was not established to be a peace enforcement mission, but it was mandated with a wider scope focused on attaining progress in the transitional political process in addition to providing security and humanitarian stabilization.^[xxiv]

Building on the stabilization efforts of AFISMA, the French army and the Malian authorities, MINUSMA was able to contribute to a first round of national elections, successfully held in August 2013.

The mission also included providing security throughout the country and was originally mandated for up to 11,200 military personnel, including reserve battalions capable of deploying rapidly within the country and as when required and 1,440 police personnel. This original mandate was based in the idea that the majority of the support would operate primarily in the north with a small presence in Bamako. On July 1, 6,000 deployed (a number that included the absorbed AFISMA troops), which was followed later in the year by the rest. The French were also authorized to maintain a military presence in Bamako to support MINUSMA under the imminent threat of continued terrorist activity. A year later, on June 25, 2014, in reflection of the improved security situation and withdrawal of French troops, the mandate was amended in Resolution 2164 to "focus on duties, such as ensuring security, stabilization and protection of civilians; supporting national political dialogue and reconciliation; and assisting the reestablishment of State authority, the rebuilding of the security sector, and the promotion and protection of human rights in that country."^[xxv] The new mandate maintained the originally mandated troop levels.

In June 2015, an Algerian-led mediation team succeeded in facilitating the **Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, signed by the Government of Mali and the Plateform Coalition of the CMA Tuareg militant alliance of armed groups**. In the aftermath of the signing, the UN amended the previous resolution. The current mission is under Resolution 2227, adopted in June 29, 2015, focusing the mission on supporting and monitoring the ceasefire, supporting the implementation of the **Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, protecting civilians, and promoting human rights**. This amended mandate also maintained the original troop levels. However, the mandate does indicate that it will "consider reviewing the mandate of MINUSMA before 30 June 2016, as necessary, especially in light of progress made on the implementation of the Agreement" thus reflecting the fluidity of this mandate and unclear exit strategy, particularly due to the fact that the implementation of the Agreement hinges upon the security situation, which does not show signs of improvement as of early 2016.

The Government of Mali pressed for the transition of AFISMA to MINUSMA anticipating that a UN operation would be more substantial and robust. What it did not perhaps anticipate was that UN peacekeeping operations are not mandated to conduct counter-insurgency and counter-terrorist operations. Thus while the capacity of MINUSMA undoubtedly surpasses its AU predecessor, its political-military capabilities are restricted: it patrols the areas that were originally secured by Serval and AFISMA but cannot extend them or defend them robustly. This has proved a disappointment to Malians. The fact that MINUSMA is not mandated as a counter-terror force has not meanwhile prevented it from being the target of military attack by militant insurgents, causing high fatalities among the peacekeepers. This poses serious challenges to the UN's peacekeeping concept of operations in Mali. Furthermore, while MINUSMA tries to act as a neutral party, terrorist and tuareg groups very much perceive peacekeepers as enemies.

MINUSMA Mission Statistics as of Feb 2016[\[xxvi\]](#) UN Security Council Resolution 2227 designates MINUSMA's authorized strength as follows from June 29, 2015 to June 30, 2016:

- 12,680 total uniformed personnel, including
 - 11,240 military personnel, including 40 military observers
 - 1,440 police (including formed units)
 - An appropriate civilian component

Strength: 12,893 total

- 11,511 total uniformed personnel
 - 10,481 military personnel
 - 1,030 police (including formed units)
 - 1,260 total civilian personnel
 - 578 international civilian personnel
 - 682 local civilian personnel
 - 122 United Nations Volunteers

Countering Terrorism

There have been over 86 fatalities since its deployment in 2013[\[xxvii\]](#). It should be noted that a study conducted by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) determined that MINUSMA fatalities "accounted for 80 percent of all UN peacekeepers who died from hostile deaths" in 2014[\[xxviii\]](#). Its research also ultimately determined that MINUSMA is in fact "one of the most deadly operations in the history of peacekeeping"[\[xxix\]](#). The mission sustains constant attacks, with threats emanating from terrorist armed groups, criminality, banditry, and insurgents that use mines and ambushes, reminiscent of asymmetrical warfare found in Iraq or Afghanistan. Landmine, rocket propelled grenade, checkpoint, and suicide attacks against personnel occur, as well as the prevalence of improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

Complicating matters, commanders and influential figures frequently switch allegiance from one jihadist group to another and some are currently split over whether to ally with the so-called Islamic State, or keep their connections to al-Qaeda, causing instability within the groups and making them more unpredictable. Divergent tactics (battles with armed groups - Malian and external military forces - and violence against civilians) reflect discrete goals among the groups, and the strategic use of signaling and anti-civilian violence in particular, as a means of creating a greater impact relative to the size and capacity of the group. The Malian army remains unready to take on the remaining militants, despite having received a massive EU training package since February 2013.

The targeting of UN peacemakers that occurs in Mali presents a major problem for the political and physical aims of the operation. The SIPRI study argues "the experience of MINUSMA underscores that the UN has found it difficult to adapt to these new kinds of threats".[\[xxx\]](#) As these attacks continue, the UN is faced with

a responsibility to better manage and protect its peacekeepers from continued asymmetric threats to the extent possible. This includes the provision of sufficiently robust equipment and enhanced pre-deployment training for personnel and access to immediate healthcare to safeguard the lives of those injured.

While MINUSMA tries to act as a neutral party, terrorist and tuareg groups very much perceive peacekeepers as enemies. A Chadian contingent, which served alongside the French during the January 2013 intervention to dislodge AQIM from their strongholds, was integrated into the UN mission shortly after the initial intervention. While the peace agreement was signed by all parties in the summer of 2015, violations of the ceasefire and a constant barrage of attacks have limited progress in implementing the accord. The security environment makes it very hard for the MINUSMA to focus on core tasks such as political facilitation, protection of civilians, human rights promotion, monitoring and institution building.

For 2015-2016, the mission's approved budget is \$923,305,800.^[xxxii] As of July 2015, the largest contributors to the current mission are: Burkina Faso (15 individual police, 1,710 military), Bangladesh (140 police units, 1,582 military), Chad (4 police units, 1,110 military), Togo (2 individual police, 140 police units, 935 military), and Senegal (15 individual police, 279 police units, 676 military). Note that other than Bangladesh, all major contributors are West African countries,^[xxxiii] likely because they have the most vested interest in maintaining regional stability.

International Actors

Prior to the coup, United States (U.S.) security assistance to Mali focused on training and equipping the Malian military to combat the AQIM regional threat in northern Mali. While Mali was a relatively significant beneficiary (by regional standards) of U.S. security and counterterrorism assistance, U.S. assistance to the Malian security forces—in addition to several other types of foreign aid—was immediately suspended after the 2012 coup. In its place, U.S. military planners assisted ECOWAS and the AU in developing AFISMA's original concept of operations. The U.S. has provided logistical support to ongoing French operations (Serval and Barkhane). It also provides logistical support to regional troop contributors and counterterrorism and border security assistance to states neighboring Mali.

After Operation Serval successfully pushed back AQIM and affiliates in mid-2014, France's transitioned to Operation Barkhane, whose mission is to target Islamist extremists in Mali, Chad and Niger, and has a mandate to operate across borders. Barkhane has drawn down French troop levels in Mali to an approximately 1,000-strong force, redistributing the remaining 2,000 forces in Chad, Niger, and Burkina Faso. France supports EUTM-Mali by providing mentors and has embedded advisors in each of the Malian security services. France also has a project called Security and Justice in the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Region (JUSSEC), which focuses specifically on counterterrorism. The United Kingdom provides monthly strategic airlift support to French forces in Africa.

Security Sector Reform

Comprehensive Security Sector Reform (SSR) in Mali has been a focus since the 2012 coup revealed the severe mismanagement and dysfunction of both the Mali Defense and Security Forces (MDSF) and the national police. The corruption that permeated Mali's governance structures by 2011 was also rampant within the military. Marina Caparini highlights that in addition to corruption, a variety of factors have weakened the Malian army, such as favoritism in promotions; a depletion of weapons and equipment due to corruption; complicity in smuggling and other illegal activities; and a general lack of professionalism within the force.^[xxxiii] These problems occurred despite significant inputs from western armies including France and the U.S., including counterterrorism training.

This corruption manifested in the inability of the MDSF to stabilize the crisis in the north which ultimately led to the need for international intervention. The European Union entered Mali in 2013 to implement EU

Training Mission – Mali (EUTM-Mali) and specifically assist in rebuilding the capacity of the Malian armed forces. Disengaged from combat operations, their aim is to “train and advise the Malian Armed Forces (MAF) under the control of legitimate civilian authorities, in order to contribute to restore their military capacity with a view to enabling them to engage in combat operations aiming at restoring the country’s territorial integrity.”^[xxxiv] The Mission’s objective is to respond to the operational needs of the Malian Armed Forces through the provision of: (i) training support for the benefit of the Malian Armed Forces unit capabilities; and (ii) training and advice in command and control, logistical chain and human resources as well as on international humanitarian law, the protection of civilians, and human rights.^[xxxv]

The institutional capacity of the sector needs to be developed in a way that defines the security sector more broadly, taking into account larger human security issues rather than just focusing on external threats such as terrorism or insurgency. If security is considered in a way that encompasses more than tactical operations, it will result in a more strategic peacebuilding exercise. Human security, in particular the provision of goods and services and the protection of those services by the security sector, is a priority that must be realized in Mali. One example of the importance of securing “tribal communities” in addition to securing the state is the reports of human rights abuses committed by armed groups, the MNLA, and the Malian forces in 2013 and 2014. As communities enter into the transitional justice and reconciliation process called for in the MINUSMA’s mandate, there must be confidence instilled in civilians that a respect for human rights and a system of accountability is incorporated into security sector reforms. Civilians should be made to feel safe from harm from outsiders, but also be able to trust that the Malian army and police do not continue to operate in a system that allows them to be above the law. For both the AU and the UN, ensuring that the commitment to addressing this particular issue is paramount in invoking a sense of stability moving forward.

The influence and continuous threat of terrorism cannot be dismissed when thinking about lasting peace in Mali. Singular focus on strengthening the Malian forces to be more tactical and strategic when fighting against terrorists will not be an adequate reform process in the country. If “prioritizing security overshadows the need to restore the state’s social function across the Malian territory,” true security sector reform will not have occurred in Mali.^[xxxvi] This would amount to another example of how modeling mandates after western doctrine can be problematic in meeting an overall goal.

II. Key Lessons and Conclusions

Mali’s crisis continues to challenge the peacekeeping community. The multiple, complex issues at hand include combating terrorism while implementing a peace agreement and attempting to also simultaneously reform a security sector so that responsibilities can be turned over to the state when the mission eventually exits.

1. Lack of AU Capacity Necessitated Handover to UN Mission

A major challenge for the AU has been its dearth of monetary resources for peace support operations and consequent need to rely on outside donors. For example, only 23% of funding for AFISMA came from African countries, with international donors providing the rest. However, African countries were able to meet troop contribution requirements.

One of the most criticized elements of the Africa Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) is the relative non-functionality of the African Standby Force (ASF). The AU has been staffing and training the ASF since 2002. Within the African Union’s Peace and Security Architecture are the guidelines for the ASF in Article 13 of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union^[xxxvii]. These guidelines describe the capabilities of the ASF as “multi-dimensional, including military, police and civilian on standby in their countries of origin and ready for rapid deployment”^[xxxviii]. The critical component that differentiates the ASF is that it is intended to allow the AU to act quickly under grave

circumstances that require immediate response. While the ASF is supposed to be able to function in a variety of ways from observation to humanitarian assistance, it has still not achieved full operational capacity. In addition, there is a lack of consensus about where the mobilization of these forces would receive their authorizing mandate from, the AU or the UN.

In Mali this became an issue as the standby force responsible for Mali, the West African Standby Brigade (WASB), determined that it would not be able to mobilize for at least six months when they were called upon to assist in 2012. The inability of these forces to respond contributed to Mali's decision to request assistance from France. ECOWAS was, however, able to put together a de facto coalition of the willing very rapidly with assistance from Chad, which was ready to conduct both peacekeeping and counter-insurgency operations. Due to resource constraints, donors were expected to "provide air lift, surveillance, equipment, and training to regional troop contributors."^[xxxix]

2. Strategic Approach Complicated by Competing Priorities of Involved Parties

Early in the Malian crisis, the AU articulated AFISMA's Strategic Concept and engaged with all of the key elements of the crisis, including its transnational dimensions. This reflected the AU's broad interests, which surpass the more constrained interests of the UN, and the narrower interests of France.

The AU nonetheless had to balance competing priorities, including among the neighboring ECOWAS states, Algeria, and Chad. ECOWAS initially approached the UN Security Council directly and not through the AU. AU involvement came about in part because of UN concerns, alongside the demands of non-ECOWAS neighbors for a role. The question of which of the neighboring states should provide leadership to the peace process was a complex and sometimes fractious issue, as those neighbors had differing views on which Malian insurgent groups should be included in the peace process, and which excluded under the label "terrorist".

Many of the political priorities were ultimately determined, not by a comprehensive strategy, but by bargaining over the resources available for peace operations, and the political priority of France to have what it considered a credible exit-and-handover strategy for its forces.

3. Counter-Terrorism Mandate Poses Challenges for Successful Peacekeeping

While the AU has been involved in multiple missions on the continent to combat terrorism,^[xli] MINUSMA is the first UN multidimensional peacekeeping mission to deploy in a context where transnational terrorism is present and countering that terrorism is part of its mission.^[xlii] This is an extremely challenging environment, as appropriate responses to transnational threats differ from responses to domestic threats. As Mali's governmental presence is not particularly robust in the north, groups are focusing their efforts on the most robust military security presence there, which is MINUSMA.

The mission's high death toll questions whether the UN is doing everything it can to protect its peacekeepers from these types of asymmetric attacks, both, in terms of equipment and tactics. The decision to deploy longer range unmanned aerial vehicles in hopes of freeing up troops previously dedicated to the protection of supply lines is welcome news that will free up soldiers, enabling the expansion of mission presence in key areas of the north.

4. Terrorist Groups Show Enhanced Capacity

Though violence is not escalating on a wide scale in Mali, attacks by terrorist groups continue to occur against civilians and have spread south to Bamako. In addition to AQIM, Ansar Dine, MUJAO, and al-Mourabitoun, a new group - the Macina Liberation Movement (FLM) – has emerged in Mali's previously stable central and southern regions. The FLM has attacked military posts and been accused of civilian executions throughout the country.

Three major attacks were coordinated in the south in 2015 against civilian targets – at a nightclub in Bamako, a hotel in Sévaré, and perhaps the most symbolic on the Radisson Blu hotel in Bamako in November.^[xliii] Ansar Dine continues to be active as demonstrated by their attack on a MINUSMA camp in Kidal in February 2016 and presents a complex challenge for both the implementation of peace and the general overall security situation in the country.

While the UN continues to emphasize that the implementation of the Peace and Reconciliation Agreement is proceeding, if violence continues to spread through central and southern Mali, it is uncertain whether or not this agreement will be realized. Many agree that the crisis in Mali was a political problem; however, mediating a political solution, when one side is a transnational, jihadist group (AQIM), is difficult. Because government officials are targeted in attacks, reestablishing state authority, especially in remote areas, has been a challenge.

5. AU/UN Coordination is Key to Mission Success

Strengthened partnership between the AU and UN is a crucial step in improving future peace operations in Africa. As the crisis in Mali continues to unfold, the AU and the UN have an opportunity and a responsibility to assess the major impediments to lasting peace in the country and continue to revise the mandate to be nimble enough to respond. Recognizing that the revision and eventual syncing of AU and UN doctrine is a process that takes a significant amount of time and resources, the AU and UN should focus on a short-term re-configuration of strategy as MINUSMA is at a critical juncture between implementing the peace agreement and disrupting the potential spread of violence farther south. MINUSMA must both protect its peacekeepers and civilians in the process. In reviewing its mandate for the remainder of the year, the UN should ensure that the reconfiguration of strategy adapts to the trends of increased violence and the clear capacity building requirements to effectively prevent this activity while also building on the political gains already made, ultimately focusing on how the mission will exit the country and complete this operation.

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