

WEST AFRICA EARLY WARNING & EARLY RESPONSE NETWORK

WARN

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MALI

**Challenges and Opportunities for Multi-stakeholders' Engagement for
Transition to Democratic Governance in Mali**



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Challenges and Opportunities for Multi-stakeholders' Engagement for Transition to Democratic Governance in MALI

Introduction:

Over the last decade, Mali has been plagued by political crisis and insecurity occasioned by military interference in governance, terrorist and armed groups insurgency that pervades beyond the country to the entire Sahel region. The 2012 rebellion by the Tuareg and the subsequent military coup against President Amadou Toumani Touré, accentuated security challenges and proliferation of armed groups in the restive northern region¹. Other terrorist groups such as Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahel (ISGS) have exploited the prevailing insecurity to establish their operations in the region, especially against peacekeepers and civilians, which has led to fatalities and humanitarian crises. Between 2012 and 2020, a total of 144 peacekeepers² and over 4,364 civilian fatalities were recorded in the country³, while over 438,900 are internally displaced⁴. In addition, more than 1,344 schools have been closed, affecting 403,200 children in the North and Central region of Mopti⁵. Increased insecurity in the affected regions has resulted in health and food insecurity with implications on women, children and the aged⁶.

Rising insecurity in Mali has weakened state presence in several communities, creating ungoverned spaces for insurgent groups to thrive and expand their operations⁷. This has been



Map (shaded blue) showing Mali's administrative regions
Source: Google Maps

further compounded by persistent abduction and killing/assassination of traditional leaders by armed groups, especially in the North and Central regions⁸, where agriculture and commerce have been impeded and has affected the livelihoods of the local population. Additional challenges are caused by the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic, especially its effects on small businesses owned by young people.

Amid the growing insecurity, Mali has been under a Transition Government for 18 months, following the August 18, 2020, military coup led by Colonel Assimi Goita, in which President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita was overthrown after months of anti-government protests against alleged corruption and insecurity in Mali⁹.

1. Amadou Toumani Touré, former president who steered Mali to democracy, dies at 72. Available at <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20201110-mali-s-former-president-amadou-toumani-toure-dies-at-72> (Accessed on July 11 2021)

2. UN Secretary General Report on the Situation in Mali/ United Nations S/2021/519. Published on 1 June 2021.

3. The World Bank, battle related in Mali and Aljazeera, Many killed in central Mali ethnic attacks: Officials. Available respectively at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/VC.BTL.DETH?locations=ML> ; <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/5/28/many-killed-in-central-mali-ethnic-attacks-officials> (Accessed on 20 June 2021)

4. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNICEF%20Mali%20Humanitarian%20Situation%20Report%20No.%202%20-%20February%202021.pdf> (Accessed 03/04/2021).

5. Op.cit. Reliefweb.int

6. Ibid

7. See: WANEP NEWS Monthly Bulletin, Mali. Available at: <https://www.wanep.org>

8. Ibid

9. The Conversation (Article), "Inside Mali's coup within a coup". Available at <https://theconversation.com/inside-malis-coup-within-a-coup-161621> (Accessed on 14/09/2021).

West Africa Early Warning & EARLY RESPONSE Network (WARN)

The West Africa Early Warning Network (WARN) is an integral part of the West Africa Preventive Peacebuilding Program co-ordinated by the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP). Through its WARN Program, WANEP is setting the stage for a civil society-based early warning and response network in Africa with emphasis on human security.

WARN covers the entire Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) region.

Since 2002, WANEP entered into an agreement with ECOWAS through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in the framework of capacity building in Conflict Prevention. One of the goals of

this agreement is to interface WARN with the ECOWAS Early Warning Systems to optimize early warning conflict prevention in West Africa. In view of this development, WANEP has been operating a liaison office located at the ECOWAS Secretariat in Abuja, Nigeria since April 2003.

In recognition of the role and achievements of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) in Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding in Africa, particularly in West Africa, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations at its substantive session of 2006 granted WANEP Special Consultative Status to the UN. WANEP is therefore mandated to designate official representatives to the United Nations in New York, Geneva and Vienna to further its advocacy and outreach strategies for peace and human security.

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Within the timeframe of the transitional process, another coup also happened on May 24, 2021, as the military accused the interim President Bah Dao of violating the transitional charter by sidelining some members of the military in the new government¹⁰. Both coups heightened political tensions leading to the arrest and detention of political leaders and opponents in the country. Also, political parties and civil society groups have expressed concerns about the lack of inclusivity and participation in the latest Transition Government established.

Given the current political crisis and its relationship to human security and state stability, it is imperative to examine challenges facing the transitional process and their implications for a transition to democratic governance in Mali. To achieve this, the multiple actors and their responses to the crisis will also be interrogated in this policy brief.

Prevailing security context in Mali and the Sahel:

The trend of terrorist and armed group attacks remains significantly high, especially in the North (Gao, Kidal, Ménaka), Central (Mopti) and the South (Sikasso, Kayes, Koulikoro, Bamako) regions of Mali. According to data from WANEP National Early Warning System (NEWS), between January and September 2021, the country recorded 189 terrorist attacks. Similarly, in 2020, there were 242 attacks in Mali, up from 175 the previous year.

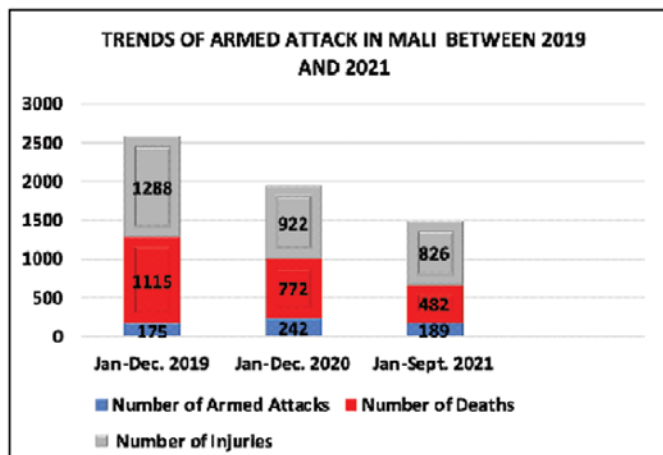


Figure 1: Number of Attacks, Deaths and Injuries related to armed attacks in Mali (2019-2021) – Source (data and visualisation): WANEP NEWS

In this regard, the data presents a cumulative deaths of 2,369 and 3,036 injuries recorded within the reporting period¹¹ (Figure 1 above).

Also, the current security landscape is replete with recurrent ethnic tension and communal violence. Terrorism, scarce resources and lack of effective governance have caused a significant increase in intercommunal violence, particularly in Central Mali where more than 1,000 civilian deaths were recorded in 2019¹² and 40,000 internally displaced in 2020¹³.

The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate in Mali, with significant insecurity affecting the civilian population and resulting in the displacement of 386,454 people, of which 64 per cent are children¹⁴. By August 2021, more than 1,573 schools were closed due to insecurity, affecting 471,900 children and 9,438 teachers, many of whom are in Central, Northern and Southern Mali¹⁵, while over three million children across the country, aged 5 to 17, are out of school for reasons linked to insecurity, household poverty, child labour and child marriage¹⁶.

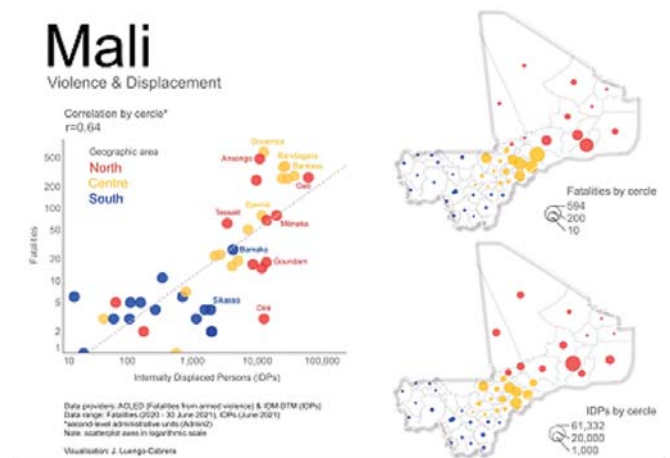


Figure 2: Presents a graphic representation of fatalities from armed violence (2020 – June 30, 2021) and IDPs (June 2021) in the north, centre and southern Mali by ACLED

The expansion of terrorist and armed group attacks from the North and Central to the Southern region of the country is facilitated by transnational organised crimes including kidnapping, human and drug trafficking, proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) as well as armed banditry. These crimes are exploited by armed groups as a means to fund and sustain their operations in Mali. In 2020, the WANEP-NEWS recorded a total of 30 kidnap incidents across the country¹⁷.

¹¹ See WANEP NEWS Mali (January to November 2020) (Accessed 03/10/2021)

¹² Human Rights Watch report 2020.

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ See: <https://reliefweb.int/report/mali/unicef-mali-humanitarian-situation-report-no-8-august-2021> (Accessed 27/01/2021)

¹⁵ Children in Mali, Mali's greatest resource is its children. Available at <https://www.unicef.org/mali/en/children-mali> (Accessed on June 17, 2021)

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ WANEP NEWS Monthly Bulletin (January – December 2020). Available at: <https://www.wanep.org>

Between January and September 2021, more than 35 incidents of kidnapping affecting more than 50 people, were recorded and many of the victims comprised humanitarian aid workers, state and local authorities and civilians¹⁸. Also in 2020, a total of 110 armed robbery incidents were recorded across the country¹⁹. Targets of these attacks comprise mobile money merchants, banks and other boutiques in Bamako and other cities across Mali²⁰.

Growing insecurity in the Liptako-Gourma region, bordering Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, has compounded security challenges in the entire Sahel region. In 2020, a cumulative number of 2,400 deaths were recorded in the region²¹. Local militias and national security forces were accused of killing more civilians as compared to recorded cases from suspected terrorist groups²². This situation continues to escalate insecurity in the Sahel region as well as undermine ongoing multistakeholder efforts to stabilize the region.

Additionally, climate change and its adverse impacts on community resources including water, land, food and biodiversity has resulted in complex conflicts over dwindling natural resources. Internal migration induced by climate change leads to increased competition over scarce resources between migrants and the indigenous communities across the country.

Governance fault lines:

Since the signing in 2015 of the Algiers Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, its implementation has encountered many challenges. Among the challenges include weak state presence in communities, lack of commitments of signatories (the Coordination of Azawad Movement and the Platform) to the Agreement, the lack of inclusivity in the peace talks, as well as inadequate management

of previous crises. Also, the lack of proper monitoring and evaluation of previous peace agreements, the forced change of governance through coups among others, have affected the implementation of the Agreement.

Additional challenges relate to public discontent over poor infrastructural development, weak governance structures and service delivery, economic hardship, corruption, unemployment and increasing poverty in the country. Out of the estimated population of 20 million in 2020²³, a total of 66.89 per cent²⁴ comprises young people under the age of 25 years, while youth unemployment is higher than the total average (12% in the whole country and 32% in Bamako)²⁵. Also, 73 per cent of the economically active population (majority of whom are young people) work within the informal economic sector such as street vending, hotels and restaurants, printing services, transport and agriculture²⁶. With the current socio-political and security landscape coupled with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Malian economy with significant impact on young people, the unemployment rate is likely to rise as the country continues to struggle with insecurity and political crisis.

The instability also affects the largely agriculture-based Malian economy. Between 2011 and 2015, the poverty rate in Mali was 47.2 per cent due to insecurity²⁷. In 2019, it dropped to 42.3 per cent due to some achievements recorded in agricultural production from 2014²⁸. However, the additional impact of the pandemic as well as escalation in security, social, and political crises in the country have led to a five per cent increase in the poverty rate²⁹. Also, 90 per cent of the country's poverty is concentrated in the densely populated rural areas of the Southern region where the activities of terrorists and other armed groups are on the rise³⁰.

¹⁸ NEWS-Weekly highlights reports of Mali

¹⁹ Op.cit WANEP-NEWS

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect; Central Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger) population at risk/31 May 2021. Available at: https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/14-07-22-impact-of-conflict-malinigeria_final.pdf (Accessed on 20 June 2021)

²² Ibid

²³ Statistics available at: https://www.indexmundi.com/mali/demographics_profile.html

²⁴ Monograph on Demography, Peace and Security in the Sahel – case of Mali UNFPA, West and Central Africa Regional Office Immeuble Wolle Ndiaye, Almadies-Dakar. Available at https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/en_monographic_study_on_demography_peace_and_security_in_the_sahel_-_case_of_mali_1.pdf (Accessed on June 17, 2021)

²⁵ Available at https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/employment-intensive-investment/countries/WCMS_327090/lang-en/index.htm (Accessed on June 17, 2021)

²⁶ FAO, Country Fact Sheet on Food and Agriculture Policy Trends, July 2027. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/i7617e/i7617e.pdf> (assessed on June 20, 2021)

²⁷ Statistics available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/mali/overview> (Accessed on June 18, 2021)

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Ibid

Furthermore, the shift in urbanisation reinforced by climate change resultant factors such as floods, drought and desertification, constitutes a broader human security challenge across the country including the rural communities. Part of the effect is an increase in densely populated slums across the capital, Bamako and other major cities in Southern Mali³¹. As of 2018, 47.2 per cent of the Malian population live in slums across the country³². This has also compounded efforts to address housing problems, land disputes as well as growing cases of urban crimes.

Another cause for concern is the overcrowding of the security space with multiplicity of players with different agendas which undermines a concerted approach to insecurity. This has created mistrust and resentments among the citizens, leading to tension and violence between the local population and the international peacekeepers deployed in Mali.

Challenges of the transition and Implications for the 2022 elections

On March 2021, through a presidential decree, the Strategic Orientation Committee for Political and Institutional Reforms (*in French: Comité d'orientation stratégique sur les réformes politiques et institutionnelles*) was established by the Transitional Government. The committee aims to support the Prime Minister on political and institutional reforms, notably on territorial reorganisation, constitutional review, and electoral reforms³³. In this regard, a transition roadmap was developed including the announcement of an electoral calendar leading to the 2022 elections³⁴. However, the slow implementation of the roadmap presents a key challenge for the timely actualization of the constitutional referendum scheduled to hold on October 31, 2021 as well as the proposed action plans for the municipal, regional and local elections

for December 26, 2021³⁵ and the legislative and presidential elections of February 27 2022³⁶.

Civil society actors have stressed the need for the Transitional Government to address popular grievances through the constituted authorities before the conduct of the elections. This will ease the preparation by mandated Electoral Management Bodies comprising the Ministry of Territorial Administration, the Independent National Electoral Commission, the General Delegation for Elections and the Constitutional Court to conduct credible elections in the country.³⁷ Political stakeholders have also underscored the need to address the prevailing issues affecting the transitional plan by emphasizing the autonomy of an independent electoral management body to conduct elections in the country³⁸. Another concern is the demarcation of boundaries which is yet to be actualized and with implication for the election calendar. With growing insecurity and political tension among stakeholders, the delimitation of the country for election seems far-fetched.



Malian transitional President, Assimi Goita (R) and Prime Minister, Choguel Kokalla Maiga (L) have committed to holding elections by February 2022
Photo Credit: CGTN Africa

³¹ Monograph on Demography, Peace and Security in the Sahel – case of Mali UNFPA, West and Central Africa Regional Office Immeuble Wolle Ndiaye, Almadies -Dakar. Available at https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/en_monographic_study_on_demography_peace_and_security_in_the_sahel_-_case_of_mali_1.pdf (Accessed on June 17, 2021)

³² Populations living in slums (% of urban population) in Mali. Available at: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.POP.SLUM.UR.ZS?end=2018&locations=ML&most_recent_value_desc=false&start=2018&view=map. (Accessed on 09/24/2021)

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Atelier Thématique CE-PNUD: Renforcement de la crédibilité et de l'acceptation des processus électoraux: Le rôle des parties prenantes électORALES et des administrations électORALES. Available at: <https://www.ec-undp-electoralassistance.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/ec-undp-jtf-26-our-trainings-2014-dead-sea-day-4-2-mali.pdf> (Accessed on July 14, 2021)

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ UN Secretary General Report on the Situation in Mali/ United Nations S/2021/519. Published on 1 June

Continued deterioration of state-citizen relations raises the question of State responsibility to provide basic social services and improve the wellbeing of citizens. The military takeover was predicated and legitimized by public discontent of perceived inability of the past government to address these problems. The recent assassination attempt by a civilian on the transition President, Colonel Goita during the Eid al Adha prayer in the Grand Mosque of Bamako on July 20, 2021, is a manifestation that responsive governance remains a key challenge for political stability in Mali³⁹.

There are additional public concerns on the political structure and inclusivity of the the Transitional Government which may affect the broad acceptance and credibility of the political transition. For instance, among the 28 ministerial positions, 15 are occupied by members of the military or their family members and friends⁴⁰. This suggests that the civilian Prime Minister, Choguel Maiga might have limited space to exercise his role within the Transitional Government.

The COVID-19 pandemic could impact negatively on the electioneering process especially within the context of low interest and unwillingness by Malians to take the vaccine due to social media misinformation and conspiracy theories on its efficacy⁴¹. This could undermine the Transitional Government's efforts to fight the pandemic and impede the implementation of the political transition roadmap.

Responses:

Following the coup of August 18, 2020, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) under its Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, condemned the unconstitutional change of government in Mali and suspended its membership to the Regional Body. In its effort to facilitate dialogue and joint agreement on the country's political transition, ECOWAS appointed

former President Goodluck Jonathan of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as the head of the mediation team. Despite imposed sanctions, ECOWAS urged international organisations and partners such as African Union, United Nations and European Union, to continue their support to Mali for the successful implementation of the political transition. However, there have been concerns about the lack of concrete actions geared towards effective preparation towards the elections. In its final communiqué on Mali issued on September 16, 2021⁴², the Commission reiterated its position on strict adherence to the transition timetable. It also demanded a timetable to be submitted by the Transitional Government by October 2021 that details essential steps to be taken for the conduct of elections. ECOWAS also resolved to sanction persons or groups whose actions would impede the transition timetable⁴³.

In its response on the political state of Mali, the African Union (AU) under the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, as well as the Protocol Relating to the establishment of the Peace and Security Council, condemned the coup and suspended Mali's membership of the Union. This did not affect AU's technical contribution for inclusive participation of women and youth in the transition processes⁴⁴.

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³⁹ Tentative d'assassinat d'Assimi Goita: le suspect meurt en détention. Available at: <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/1208577/politique/mali-tentative-dassassinat-dassimi-goita-le-suspect-meurt-en-detention/>. Accessed on 09/20/2021

⁴⁰ À la Une: un gouvernement un peu trop kaki au Mali. Available at: <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/podcasts/revue-de-presse-afrique/20210615-%C3%A0-la-une-un-gouvernement-un-peu-trop-kaki-au-mali> (Accessed on 23 June 2021)

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² ECOWAS Final communiqué on Mali during the Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government in Accra, Ghana.

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Communiqué of the 938th meeting of the PSC on the situation in Mali

⁴⁵ UN Secretary General Report on the Situation in Mali/ United Nations S/2021/519. Published on 1 June 2021



UN Peacekeeping Mission renews mandate in Mali

Source: Google Images

Such targeted sanctions are widely viewed as key to dissuade individuals or members of terrorist organisations from engaging or committing human rights violations and other criminal activities that obstruct the peace process in the country. The UN also renewed the mandate of its Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) for an additional year through UNSC Resolution 2531 on June 29, 2020. This is as a result of the fragile security and complex humanitarian contexts as well as the lack of trust and consensus among the national stakeholders involved in the Mali conflict. In response to this new mandate, the United Kingdom (UK) contributed 300 soldiers (Strong Light Dragoon Task group) to MINUSMA on December 4, 2020, to support political dialogue and contribute to the ongoing civilian protection efforts in the country⁴⁶. On July 2020, a counterterrorism force composed of Special Forces from European Union (EU) countries was deployed to support Operation Barkhane of the French forces in Mali. This was facilitated through a multilateral agreement among the EU countries. On January 2021, the G5 Sahel Joint Force with funding from the EU, launched the Civilian Casualties Identification, Tracking and Analysis Cell, in partnership with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Center for Civilians in Conflict, as

a complementary strategy to enhance civilian harm mitigation practices⁴⁷.

In accordance with its foreign policy objectives for the Sahel region which consists of the fight against terrorism, military cooperation, territorial administration, as well as development assistance⁴⁸, France continues to play a leading role in the Malian crisis. Since 2013 when it deployed Operation Serval and subsequently Barkhane and Operation Takuba, the French-led military mission to Mali has supported MINUSMA in the fight against violent extremism and terrorism. In 2017, France was instrumental in the establishment of the G5 Sahel Joint Force comprising troops from Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger⁴⁹. On 12 June 2020, the G5 Sahel countries and France launched the International Coalition for the Sahel to coordinate responses to security, political and development issues in the region⁵⁰. Despite these efforts, its intervention has faced mixed debates over its negative and positive impacts in the fight against terrorism and violence extremism in Mali. One of the criticism is the limited success of operations in combating insecurity despite its presence since 2013. This could suggest the recent move by the the Transitional Government to engage the services of Wagner Group, a Russian private military contractor to help secure Mali from the growing insecurity created by terrorists and other armed groups operating in the country⁵¹. This attempt by the Transitional Government has been opposed by France which has commenced a series of diplomatic drives to prevent the Government from actualizing the deal with the Russian contractors. France views the deal as a threat to its decade old counter terrorism operations in the Sahel at a time when it is seeking to draw down its 5,000 strong Barkhane mission to reshape it with more European partners⁵².

⁴⁶ The British Army has arrived in Mali: here's what you need to know about the deployment. Available at: <https://medium.com/voices-of-the-armed-forces/the-british-army-has-arrived-in-mali-heres-what-you-need-to-know-about-the-deployment-b639c37a647e>

⁴⁷ Central Sahel, Burkina Faso-Populations at Risk, 31 May 2021. Available at <https://www.globalr2p.org/countries/burkina-faso/> (Accessed on July 9, 2021)

⁴⁸ L'action de la France au Sahel. Available at <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/politique-etrangere-de-la-france/securete-desarmement-et-non-proliferation/crises-et-conflits/l-action-de-la-france-au-sahel/>. (Accessed on 09/21/2021)

⁴⁹ Central Sahel, Burkina Faso-Populations at Risk, 31 May 2021. Available at <https://www.globalr2p.org/countries/burkina-faso/> (Accessed on July 9, 2021)

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ Aljazeera, Mali military coup supporters call for Russia military supports. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCZxtKm6tGw> (Accessed on 22 June 2021).

⁵² Irish J., & Lewis D. (2021). Exclusive Deal Allowing Russian Mercenaries Into Mali is Close. Reuters.com

The United States of America (USA) is another key player in the Malian crisis. Since 2019, the State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) have allocated \$130 million in bilateral aid to Mali, in addition to \$89 million in emergency humanitarian assistance. Following the 2020 military coup, it suspended its military aid to Mali pending a political transition to democratic governance. Despite this suspension, U.S. maintains keen interest in Mali as it works with France to counter the potential influence of Russia in the country and the Sahel.

Scenarios:

• Best case

With the supports from the international community including the UN, AU, ECOWAS and EU and other development partners such as France, USA, UK, Germany and Russia, a consensus is reached among the national stakeholders on the date for elections. Basic social infrastructure and services are restored in Central and Northern Mali. Increased joint multinational operations gain success in the fight against terrorist groups as they enhance security and stability in Central and Northern Mali. Detailed road map is developed and implemented that addresses the humanitarian crises of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Malian refugees repatriated from neighbouring countries. Registered political parties agree on the structure, composition and operation of the National Independent Electoral Commission. The Commission successfully completes voter registration process and the distribution of voter's ID. Polling stations across the country are well demarcated, electoral materials are disseminated in constituencies across Mali. Political campaigns are announced for parties to compete for new members leading to peaceful and credible elections. The winner of the election is announced and sworn in witnessed by Heads of States of ECOWAS member states and International diplomatic missions. **(Desirable but very unlikely).**

• Realistic case

ECOWAS alongside AU, EU, UN re-negotiate multi and bilateral cooperation with the Transitional Government which gives room to support the Malian Government to address institutional anomalies that affect its planned democratic elections and return of democracy. ECOWAS accepts an adjustment to

the electoral calendar and revised timetable while maintaining economic sanctions on Mali. Following the implementation of the reform agenda and the revised timeline, the elections are organised and democratic governance is restored in the country. **(Desirable)**

• Worst case

Given the limited timeframe of the transition leading to elections, the needed reforms are not implemented, while the Transitional Government insist on the extension of the transitional timeline. ECOWAS, AU, UN reimpose stricter sanctions on members of the Transitional Government. As a result, the socio-economic situation in the country becomes critical with negative impact on the population who increase the frequency of demonstrations against the French Forces and MINUSMA in Mali. The Russian military contractors are engaged with limited impact on the fight against insurgency. The frequency of attacks in Central and Northern Regions increased with more reported cases of humanitarian casualties. France withdraws a significant number of its troops from Mali and EU aid and support is negatively affected by the sanctions. Counter demonstrations are organised by political parties and civil society actors including demanding the immediate organisation of elections and the return of democracy. The military junta arrests and detains demonstrators with reports of human rights violations. **(Likely)**

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⁵³ Congressional Research Service, Informing the legislative debate since 1914, In focus Crisis in Mali, October 21, 2020. Available at: <https://crsreports.congress.gov> (Accessed on 17 June 2021)

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ opcit

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Recommendations:

Mali's Transitional Government and other National Stakeholders:

- The Transitional Government should create space for inclusive participation of key stakeholders including political parties, faith-based organisations, traditional authorities, CSOs, women and youth groups and other relevant actors to generate dialogue and consensus around the process leading to democratic transition in the country;

- Due to the multiplicity of actors involved in Mali, there is the need for the Malian Transitional Government to set up a coherent mechanism to better facilitate the coordination among actors (donors, national and international NGOs, local authorities, communities and women's and youth organisations) to develop or strengthen synergies between their various initiatives, geared towards a comprehensive contribution to the democratic transition process.

UN, AU and ECOWAS:

- There is a need for the UN, AU and ECOWAS to strengthen their quiet diplomacy with the Transitional Government in order to ensure the continued adherence of the transition process by the military government towards credible and peaceful elections in the country.

- The peace support operation deployed in Mali should intensify and strengthen responses to civilian protection and economic empowerment in their intervention strategies to mitigate the impact

of terrorist related attacks on the population especially women, children and elderly people in rural communities across the affected regions of Mali.

- There is the need for the peace support operation to also increase police support mission in order to contribute towards the ongoing efforts to address armed robbery attacks across the major cities of Mali.

Civil society groups:

- CSOs should strengthen collaboration and engagement with the Transitional Government through advocacy and provision of election management support to state institutions leading to democratic transition in Mali.

- CSOs should facilitate engagement with youth and women groups in peace education and community dialogue to strengthen social cohesion in the country during and after the transition to democratic governance.

Conclusion:

Mali is at a critical crossroad of restoring democratic governance and addressing the deteriorating security situation occasioned by terrorism, transnational organised crime, intercommunal violence and climate change. The recent military coups have implications on democratic stability, peace and security in the country. Furthermore, given the volatility of security coupled with the challenges facing the Transitional Government in Mali, there are concerns about the capacity to adhere to the processes leading to a smooth transition to democratic governance in February 2022. Notwithstanding the challenges, the crisis in Mali has provided opportunities for national, regional and international stakeholders to strengthen collaboration and engagement with the Transitional Government and enhance its capacity to ensure a smooth transition to restore democratic governance in the country. Thus, the need for multi-stakeholders to intensify engagement and provide adequate support to the Transitional Government to restore democratic governance, as well as address insecurity, is imperative to ensuring stability in Mali.

MALI

**Challenges and Opportunities for Multi-stakeholders'
Engagement for Transition to Democratic Governance in Mali**

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