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FHSMUN 35

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

THE SITUATION IN MALI

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Introduction

While the country of Mali and the broader region of the Sahel are rarely discussed in many countries outside of high school history courses, recent events and the presence of various non-state actors in Mali and the Sahel have captured the attention of governments and journalists. The Security Council has added Mali to its agenda as the security situation there is not only volatile within the country itself but represents a significant spillover threat to the entire Sahel region. Concerns about the presence and activities of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and varying *jihadi* and nationalist groups as well as debates about the efficacy of "humanitarian intervention" must be paired with national, regional, and international responses tailored to eliminating the sources of the grievances that have led to such pronounced volatility and violence over the past 18+ months.

Don't Worry About It. It's Just Mali…

The relative isolation of Mali as a landlocked Saharan country and its overall low levels of human development have contributed to global attitudes often approaching indifference. Ranking 182 out of 186 countries in terms of its current Human Development Index (HDI)[1], Mali remains one of the world's Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and the current crisis in Mali is at least in part a very predictable byproduct of not only Mali's lack of development overall but also the marginalization of the Tuareg community in the north.[2] Without abundant mineral or petroleum wealth, and until recently relative political and military stability, the deterioration of Mali's economy generated no international outcry.

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1 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), "Human Development Report 2013 Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World" 2013. Found at: http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2013_EN_complete.pdf

2 Heather Hurlburt, "Mali's crisis is caused by development failures, not military aid" *The Guardian* January 15, 2013.

Scale of the Problem

The potential for regional conflagration remains the greatest overall concern for the Security Council in regards to the current situation in Mali. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), by January 2013, approximately 150,000 Malian refugees had fled to neighboring countries, including Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Niger, and at least 225,000 Malians are now considered internally displaced persons (IDPs).[3] Even after the French-led military intervention routed many of the Tuareg rebels and assorted jihadis from northern Mali, or the self-declared Republic of Azawad, the security situation in northern Mali and throughout the surrounding Sahel region remains quite fragile and tense. Furthermore, as noted by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his June 2013 report to the Security Council on the security situation in Mali, "the human rights situation in Mali remains of grave concern, with continued reports of abuses."[4]

Mali and the Sahel's natural and political geographies further complicate the security considerations for the region and the broader international community. The "epicenter of all Tuareg rebellions since Malian independence,"[5] the city of Kidal, capital of the Kidal region, is nearly 1,000 miles northeast of the Malian capital, Bamako, presenting enormous logistical hurdles for the Malian army and even most African militaries, including troops from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Mali's border with Algeria alone is over 1,200 miles long; the enormous distances and the unforgiving landscapes of the Sahel region present considerable potential obstacles to achieving and maintaining peace.

Development of Tuareg Nationalism

Marginalization of ethnic minorities is often a cause of armed conflict but while it may be a necessary condition in many conflicts it is not always sufficient. Tuareg nationalism developed in response to French colonialism and has surfaced in both Mali and Niger. When France's West African and Sahelian colonies gained independence in the early 1960s, many Tuaregs in Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Libya, and Mali pursued political accommodation within these newly independent countries, while other Tuareg communities in Mali and Niger found themselves systematically excluded from economic and political power. "As a result, the only option left for many Tuareg was to migrate to the richer oil-producing countries of Algeria and Libya. In Libya, they were welcomed with open arms by [Muammar] Gadhafi, in power since 1969 and already looking for ways to expand his regional influence."[6] Gadhafi would provide military training and weapons to his new Tuareg troops, many of whom fought in Libya's conflicts with Chad and

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[3] UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "2013 UNHCR country operations profile – Mali situation (Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso)" January 2013. Found at: http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e484e66.html
[4] Ban Ki-moon, "Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali" S/2013/338 June 10, 2013 p. 8.
[5] International Crisis Group (ICG), "Mali: Security, Dialogue and Meaningful Reform" April 11, 2013 p. 10.
[6] Martin Dörrie, "The Origins and Consequences of Tuareg Nationalism" *World Politics Review* October 30, 2012 Loc. 283 (Kindle Edition).

with other Sahelian foes. Libyan-trained Tuareg rebels would attempt an insurrection in the 1990s and would then return in even greater numbers after Gadhafi's overthrow in 2011.

National Self-Affirmation, Thy Name is Azawad

In April 2012, secular Tuareg nationalists, many of whom who had just recently returned from Libya, in an uneasy alliance with deserters from the Malian army and Islamist militants from Mali and countries throughout the entire Sahel region, announced the independence of the new republic of Azawad. Western political analysts quickly noted that this marriage of convenience was based on irreconcilable differences and tensions soon surfaced between the secular National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (NMLA) and jihadi groups, including Ansar Dine ("Defenders of the Faith"), a Tuareg nationalist group, and elements of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), over the imposition of *shar'ia* law.[7] As the militant jihadi elements sought to consolidate their rule and enforce strict *shar'ia* law, they angered local residents and also attracted considerable attention from regional actors, including Algeria, Chad and Mauritania, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and ultimately, the former colonial power, France.

France Intervenes – to Popular Acclaim

Armed interventions by Western powers in their former colonies invariably involve complex scenarios. Anger over potential post-colonial dominance, particularly in regards to financial and resource considerations, may be juxtaposed alongside grudging gratitude for removing unpopular and/or violent governments or non-state actors. France's latest foray into its former Sahelian colonies has enjoyed widespread public support coupled with bitterness over the fact that African militaries cannot adequately address these particular security problems.[8] After a March 2012 coup in Bamako and the establishment of an initial, *shar'ia*-based governing authority in the self-declared independent republic of Azawad, ECOWAS troops were deployed to remove the NMLA, AQIM, and related groups from power in northern Mali and to assist the Malian government in [re]establishing effective political control over the north. This first attempt to remove the jihadi government in the north was largely unsuccessful for a variety of reasons. "Deployment of ECOWAS troops was a lengthy process because of the ex-junta's reluctance, ECOWAS's own doubts about its capacity or organize a military operation against heavily armed groups, a lack of funding and even deeper doubts among Security Council members, particularly the US, about the chances of a successful African intervention…."[9] As the violence in northern Mali and in surrounding areas escalated through the end of 2012, high-level discussions about both the wisdom and feasibility of foreign military intervention were held in

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[7] *The Economist*, "An unholy alliance" June 2, 2012.
[8] The International Crisis Group (ICG) notes that in interviews conducted with diplomats in January 2013, "the AU, EU, US and even China supported the intervention in Mali." ICG, "Mali: Security, Dialogue and Meaningful Reform" April 11, 2013 p. 7.
[9] ICG, "Mali: Security, Dialogue and Meaningful Reform" April 11, 2013 p. 2.

Bamako, Ouagadougou, and New York, with the Security Council adopting resolution 2085 on December 20, 2012, authorizing the deployment of the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) for the period of one year.

After demonstrations in Bamako and Kati in January 2013, and a renewed jihadi offensive aimed at conquering additional territory in the center of Mali, French troops, with some support from Chad, launched a rapid offensive aimed at removing the Tuareg nationalist and jihadi elements in the north from their tenuous political control. The International Crisis Group notes that "the weakness of the Malian army – despite efforts to mobilize a few operational units by the senior officers that had escaped the March 2012 purge – and the prospect of an inevitable military intervention explain the decision taken by Islamist groups to build on their advantage before their opponents were ready to act."[10] The French military intervention, combined with the Chadian forces' expertise in fighting desert warfare, quickly drove the militant factions out of a number of key cities and towns in northern Mali but it has certainly not eliminated the potential for asymmetric warfare and continued fighting. France's motivations for liberating much of northern Mali from the control of AQIM and related jihadi elements are also driven by its desire to free French hostages taken by jihadi groups in the north.

Jihadi Concerns: The Prisoners of Azawad

Malian Tuareg rebels fighting for independence from a government that they deem illegitimate and discriminatory would rarely generate significant headlines outside of Mali itself. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon himself noted that "for much of the past year, the world watched in horror as long-standing political grievances in Mali were overshadowed by appalling acts of violence carried out by insurgents linked to Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb."[11] With the introduction of Al-Qaeda and related jihadi elements in the Sahel region, the profile of the security situation in Mali and the Sahel has been raised exponentially. While there are homegrown jihadis within Mali, more critically in terms of potential regional conflagration, "there is no lack of jihadi support or weapons in Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, and even Morocco. Without a regional approach to security involving all countries of North Africa and the Sahel, the threat will quickly return."[12] In January 2013, armed militants seized a gas plant in Algeria and took dozens of hostages, with at least 37 foreign workers ultimately dying during the 4-day confrontation between the militants and the Algerian military.[13]

In recent months, concerns about cross-border militancy in the Sahel region has included new revelations about the extent of potential jihadi links. The International Crisis Group (ICG), in reference to the Islamist armed factions in northern Mali, noted that "the leaders of the armed

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[10] ICG, "Mali: Security, Dialogue and Meaningful Reform" April 11, 2013 p. 6.
[11] Ban Ki-moon, "Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Sahel region" S/2013/354 June 14, 2013 p. 1.
[12] International Crisis Group (ICG), "Mali: Security, Dialogue and Meaningful Reform" April 11, 2013 p. 26.
[13] Clifford Krauss and Nicholas Kulish, "Algeria Gas Compound Lacked Armed Guards" *New York Times* January 23, 2013.

groups were foreigners, especially Algerians and Mauritanians, and people from several West African countries joined the MUJAO [Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa], including Nigerians linked to Boko Haram."[14] Ensuring that these militant groups do not carry out further regionally destabilizing attacks will require coordination of anti-terrorism initiatives and policies throughout the Sahel region.

Further complicating domestic and international efforts at securing peace in Mali and the Sahel is the fact that these enormous regions are also quite attractive for organized criminal syndicates, particularly for the trafficking of narcotics. The International Crisis Group noted that "the combined effect of AQIM's main activity, the abduction of Western hostages, and the discovery by Latin American networks of the Sahel-Saharan option for transporting cocaine has destroyed almost all legal economic activities in northern Mali."[15] While hostage-taking has not yet become a widespread economic activity for financing either Tuareg nationalist or jihadi movements in northern Mali, there have been rumors of ransoms being paid in the amount of $30 million USD for 4 French hostages.[16]

The most recent high profile act of violence in the north, specifically in Kidal, was the kidnapping and murder of 2 French journalists in early November 2013.[17] Even with the kidnapping and murder of these 2 French journalists as well as the continued potential for further violence throughout northern Mali and the Sahel, French President Françoise Hollande announced that France would not delay withdrawal of its troops from Mali, although France has already delayed partial troop withdrawals over the past few months.[18] While the timetable for the withdrawal of French troops from Mali is ultimately a French decision, France's African and NATO allies have both privately and publicly expressed serious concerns about the possibilities of further conflict and violence after French troops leave Mali.[19]

UN System Actions

The Security Council established the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSUMA) in April 2013 and the UN System's efforts in Mali are being conducted with extensive consultations with the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA), the African Union (AU), and ECOWAS Commission, including meetings in Bamako from April 30 – May 2, 2013. Delegates to the Security Council must critically examine the mandate and force size of MINUSUMA as well as elaborate more precisely what its mission needs to be throughout 2014 and beyond. The International Crisis

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[14] ICG, "Mali: Security, Dialogue and Meaningful Reform" April 11, 2013 p. 26.
[15] ICG, "Mali: Security, Dialogue and Meaningful Reform" April 11, 2013 p. 24.
[16] John Lichfield, "France accused of paying Mali rebels €25m ransom for release of four hostages" *The Independent* (UK) October 30, 2013.
[17] Alissa J. Rubin & Maïa de la Baume, "Killing of Journalists Reverberates in France and Mali" *New York Times* November 5, 2013.
[18] *Reuters*, "Mali: France Says It Will Not Withdraw Its Troops" November 5, 2013.
[19] Eric Schmitt, "Terror Haven in Mali Feared After French Leave" *New York Times* March 17, 2013.

Group argues that "UN peacekeepers are certainly not able to undertake the type of military actions the French and Chadian forces have conducted in the Kidal mountains since January. As long as such combat operations continue, it seems inappropriate to transform the AFISMA, which now includes the Chadian forces who fought alongside the French, into a UN peacekeeping mission."[20]

UN System activities are furthermore directed towards comprehensive peace and development efforts, including working with the Malian government, Tuareg and other communities, and civil society groups within Mali to conduct free, fair, and transparent elections. The UN Mine Action Service continues to "coordinate the deployment of explosive ordnance disposal teams to priority contaminated areas in central Mali and has been further engaged in building the capacity of the Malian armed forces to mitigate explosive threats."[21] The European Union Training Mission in Mali has worked closely with MINUSMA and related UN System bodies to educate Malian troops on the protection of civilians in armed conflict and MINUSUMA has further coordinated efforts with the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UNWOMEN) to improve the protection of women and children during situations of armed conflict in Mali.[22]

A Political Roadmap to … ?

The March 21, 2012 coup in Bamako generated the expected condemnation of the replacement of civilian authorities by military commanders, including Captain Amadou Sanogo, and immediate calls to lay the groundwork for a transition to return to civilian rule, particularly as a condition of restoring international aid to Mali. The ousted president, General Amadou Toumani Touré, was restored as interim president and has agreed to support the reinstated Malian constitution. Security Council resolution 2071 (S/RES/2071) urged the transitional governing authorities as well as the various armed groups involved in the conflict to develop a roadmap for a full transition to civilian rule and legislative and presidential elections. While this roadmap was eventually presented, "little effort went into preparing the roadmap and little attention was paid to its contents when it was completed."[23] While political roadmaps are frequently considered critical elements of peace negotiations, the Security Council and the international community must avoid repeating the mistakes that characterized the negotiation and development of this first political roadmap for peace and civilian government in Mali.

Conclusion: Achieving and Maintaining Peace in Mali and the Sahel

Efforts at sustainable peace for the peoples of Mali and the Sahel must be comprehensive if the international community hopes to avoid returning to this juncture in the near future.

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[20] ICG, "Mali: Security, Dialogue and Meaningful Reform" April 11, 2013 p. 39.
[21] Ban Ki-moon, "Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali" S/2013/338 June 10, 2013 p. 7.
[22] Ban Ki-moon, "Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali" S/2013/338 June 10, 2013 p. 8.
[23] ICG, "Mali: Security, Dialogue and the Meaningful Reform" April 11, 2013 p. 19.

Addressing the legitimate concerns of the marginalized Tuareg communities of the north, including economic concerns, will be essential to ensuring acceptance of, and long-term support for, any final settlement. In this regard, the May 15, 2012 international donor conference in Brussels co-hosted by the European Union (EU), France, and Mali that generated pledges of €3.25 billion for improving state capacity, rebuilding damaged infrastructure, holding free and fair elections, and promoting dialogue and stimulating the economy, particularly in the north of the country, may serve as a promising model.[24] Regional actors, including Algeria, Mauritania, and Niger, must be consulted throughout the process, particularly in regards to efforts at eliminating jihadi threats throughout the Sahel.

Guiding Questions:

What does your government believe is necessary to end the violence and armed conflict in Mali, particularly in light of a potentially impending withdrawal of French troops?

Has your government contributed troops and/or civilian observers to MINUSUMA? Has your government committed any financial resources to electoral assistance and/or reconstruction in Mali?

Does your government feel that the mandates and/or force sizes for MINUSUMA and AFISMA are sufficient to achieve the goals and priorities set forth by the Security Council and the Secretary-General?

What roles need to be fulfilled by neighboring countries, including Algeria, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Niger? What roles need to be fulfilled by ECOWAS and the African Union (AU)?

How might the UN System, the European Union (EU), international financial institutions (IFIs), including regional development banks, and donor governments most effectively target and distribute assistance to foster inclusion, reconciliation, and reconstruction throughout Mali?

What steps can the various actors, including the government of Mali, Tuareg groups, and the international community take to ensure that the roadmap to peace and democracy in Mali is implemented effectively?

UN Documents:

Security Council resolution 2100 "The situation in Mali" S/RES/2100 April 25, 2013.

Security Council resolution 2085 "The situation in Mali" S/RES/2085 December 20, 2012.

Security Council resolution 2071 "The Siuation in Mali" S/RES/2071 October 12, 2012.

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[24] Ban Ki-moon, "Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali" S/2013/338 June 10, 2013 p. 8.

Security Council resolution 2056 "The Situation in Mali" S/RES/2056 July 5, 2012.

Ban Ki-moon, "The Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Sahel region" S/2013/354 June 14, 2013.

Ban Ki-moon, "The Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali" S/2013/338 June 10, 2013.

Map Courtesy of the Nations Online Project.