



Austrian National Defence Academy  
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## MALI AFTER OPERATION SERVAL

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On 11 January 2013, on the request of the Government of Mali, France launched a military intervention to stop the advance of the rebels and Islamist groups from the north of the country. Exactly one month later, the French President François Hollande declared that the Islamists had been defeated. Only six months later (29 July 2013), presidential elections were held, contributing to the stabilisation of the country. The agreement between the Government and the Mouvement National pour la Libération d'Azawad (MNLA) prior to the elections gives rise to the hope that, afterwards, discussions on a state system, in which all social forces may feel represented, can be started. Despite favourable signs, Islamist groups may carry out attacks and suicide attacks as well as exert pressure on the international community by way of taking hostages.

### Peace Agreement

On 18 June 2013 the Government of Mali, the Mouvement National pour la Libération d'Azawad and the Haut Conseil pour l'Unité de l'Azawad (HCUA - High Council for the Unity of Azawad) signed an agreement to make sure that there are free and fair elections and to ensure a peaceful development in Mali in the long run. Upon signing the agreement, an immediate ceasefire entered into force and the Malian Armed Forces could take over control of the city of Kidal in Northern Mali, which until that moment had been controlled by the Mouvement National pour la Libération d'Azawad. By this, the Mouvement managed to free itself from

the Islamist touch that it had acquired with its alliance with Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM), positioning itself as a political factor in the north for the period after the presidential elections. All other groupings that did not sign the agreement might still adopt a destructive attitude. In the past, however, similar agreements led merely to temporary stability. Unfulfilled expectations of the population in the north often resulted in new confrontations.

### Presidential Elections

The presidential elections of 29 July 2013 went, by and large, in a peaceful manner. Both, the governments of Mali and France,

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made positive statements and spoke about a big success. The head of the EU election observer mission considers the election process to be acceptable; in the Northern provinces of Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu, however, no EU election observers were employed. The Malian non-government organisation Appui au Processus Electoral au Mali (APEM) criticises some irregularities (some persons eligible to vote did not figure in the election register or did so under a wrong name and the distribution of the registering cards was problematic), although it views the conduct of the elections as positive, in essence. The presence of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) is, according to the NGO, to have made an essential contribution to the peaceful development of elections. Despite threats by individual groups prior to the elections, these threats eventually were or could not be put into practice.

### **Militant Groups**

Although militant groups are still present, they were forced to retreat and weakened by Opération Serval. Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb lost fighters and parts of its leadership and had to withdraw into the north and the neighbouring states. At the moment, also other groups are obviously unable to oppose the national security forces and the international presence. The threat of (suicide) attacks, however, is not to be underestimated. Terrorist groupings could upset the population for years to come and complicate the process of social reconciliation.

The political and economic situation can only be decisively and lastingly improved if the interests and goals of the various groups are also taken into consideration. In so doing, the beliefs and expectations of three ideal-typical groupings are to be distinguished: (1) groups with a political agenda, (2) groups with predominantly economic interests in smuggling and (3) groups with an Islamist ideology. Although the borders

between the individual categories are partly blurred, they can serve as a political basis for the Government of Mali and the international community.

### **Social Problems**

There was little change in the social problems in Mali in the past months and presumably they will continue to be the biggest challenge for the Government and the international community. Since the situation has not improved for large parts of the population, violent clashes might flare up again, resulting in increased influx into militant groups. The precarious supply situation could quickly intensify this trend. Humanitarian organisations, such as UNICEF, are already warning about another famine in Northern Mali. Especially the region around the city of Gao is supposed to be particularly endangered.

### **International Crisis Management**

Since the beginning of the French intervention (Opération Serval) on 11 January 2013, international crisis management in Mali has changed. At the beginning of April 2013, France has started to withdraw from Mali, planning to gradually reduce its forces on the ground from approximately 4,000 soldiers to some 1,000. The African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) supported the French intervention with African troops and international logistical help. Parts of the African-led International Support Mission to Mali were incorporated into the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission. The EU Training Mission Mali complemented the measures from the toolbox of international crisis management for the Malian Armed Forces.

### **Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission**

On 25 April 2013 the UN Security Council passed Resolution 2100 (2013) and, hence,

established the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission. The operation took over the tasks of the African-led International Support Mission to Mali on 1 July 2013. In this way, the course of the international crisis management in Mali seems to be traced out for the oncoming years. In total, up to 12,640 uniformed personnel (11,200 soldiers and 1,440 police officers) are earmarked for this operation; its budget is set with 366.77 million US Dollars for the period of 1 July to 31 December 2013. The mandate of the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission includes

- Supporting the Malian authorities in stabilising relevant population centres and in re-establishing the authority of the state in the entire country,
- Supporting political processes and elections,
- Protecting civilians and UN personnel,
- Supporting in fostering and protecting human rights and humanitarian help, as well as
- National and international jurisdiction.

### **EU Training Mission Mali**

With the EU Training Mission in Mali (EUTM Mali), the EU, in conformity with the EU Strategy for the Development and the Security in Sub-Saharan Africa, pursues the basic goal of strengthening the Malian Armed Forces and bringing them closer to international standards. The EU Training Mission Mali offers training in the fields of command and control, logistics, personnel management as well as in international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians and human rights.

The EU Training Mission Mali will not engage in combat operations. It was mandated for a phase of 15 months and may be prolonged, as required. Some 200 European soldiers are used as instructors. In addition, personnel for support elements and for the protection of the operation are deployed. In

total, some 500 personnel will serve within the framework of the EU Training Mission Mali. The estimated costs for the duration of the mandate are EUR 12.3 million. Personnel from 22 EU countries participate in the operation, among them nine Austrians.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

- According to Malian NGOs, the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission has contributed considerably to the success of the election process. Despite continued attacks and threats, the operation could be launched as planned, since a delay would have caused a security vacuum and enabled terrorist forces to regain their strength.
- Holding elections at that stage, in the context of these events, seems premature. Moreover, by fixing the date of the election, serious negotiations have been impeded. After the elections, however, a democratically legitimated head of state is ruling the country. The future president will be able to point that out, should unpopular decisions have to be taken in the negotiation process.
- Negotiations on the future organisation of the coexistence of the various actors are to be held in the country, so that Malian journalists will be able to cover these negotiations and the population will be able to follow them as well. Alternating the venue of the negotiations between the capital Bamako and other big cities will not only increase the visibility of the process, but also serve as an inner-Malian confidence-building measure.
- An inner-Malian discourse could, similar to Somalia, result in a road map that will result in the institutional framework of a political system (constitution), which will be acceptable to all groups. A transitional parliament, in which all relevant actors are represented, could bring the consti-

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tution into force. Subsequently, on this basis a new president and a new parliament could be elected. In order for this to work in the long run, a suitable timeframe is to be ensured. Thus, negotiations should not be conducted under time pressure. Notwithstanding, the international community can specify a timeframe, within which it is willing to support the reconciliation process. A target date for the conclusion of this process could be set between 2015 and 2020, thereby considering also possible external disruptive variables.

- A type of autonomy of the Tuareg areas could remove very much pressure from both sides and tie the Tuaregs more to the overall state than centralised models would. The state structures do not necessarily have to be modelled after the French example, but could also follow those of other nations.
- Tying in the civilian society is of central relevance. The traditions lived and principles, such as shame, prestige and honour, would also create sufficient societal pressure on an autonomous Tuareg-administrated region, so as to break the vicious circle of repeated armed rebellions. Women, in particular, could take a prominent position, by being offered forums for stating their criticism of the political situation and decisions.
- A solution can only be achieved by including the entire region and, especially, the neighbouring countries. A withdrawal of terrorist forces and the translocation of smuggling activities into the surrounding states would mean that the problems are merely exported. Thus, an international Sahel-Sahara-solution should have the same priority. Therefore, a regional organisation should be entrusted with heading the international efforts.
- Due to the regional cross-linking of the challenges, the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) seems to be suited better for this purpose than the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Since states, such as Mauritania, Libya and Chad, are also represented in the Community of Sahel-Saharan States, regional challenges could be included into the transformation in Mali.
- Of all affected states only Algeria is not a member of the Community of Sahel-Saharan States. Since Algeria plays a key role with reference to Mali and also in the entire region, the country should be involved in all processes from the beginning.
- Only few consented negotiators should become active to give the conflicting parties enough space and time for debating their respective positions.
- In addition to political questions, also the role of Mali as a transit country in the fields of organised crime and drugs and human trafficking should be addressed.
- The Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission and the EU Training Mission Mali should be supported, continued and, if possible, expanded.

**Personal Data:**

Dr. Gerald Hainzl has been a researcher at the Institute for Peace Support and Conflict Management since 2004. He studies conflicts in Africa, local, regional and international conflict solving mechanisms as well as African security policy. Beyond that, the African Union (AU) and its regional organizations are the focus of his research. Alongside teaching at various academic institutes, he gives numerous lectures on the topic of Africa.

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