



Southern China International MUN

Official Background Guide

Security Council: On measures to address the crisis in Mali

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1. Description of the Issue

1.1 History of the Issue

Since 2012, the internal strife in Mali, commonly referred to as "the Mali War," has endured. It originated from political divisions between Northern Mali, led by the Tuareg people—a nomadic tribe in the Sahara—and Southern Mali, governed by the Malian government, alongside several West African states.

The conflict between Mali and the Tuaregs had occurred before, such as in the Tuareg rebellion of 1962-1964, and the unrest in northern Mali had never been completely resolved. Over the years, the international community has made attempts but faced failures in resolving the political, economic, and humanitarian crisis. The security situation in Mali remains precarious, demanding increased attention and cooperation to address issues related to political instability, ethnic tensions, economic challenges, and persistent violence.

From January to April of 2012, Tuareg rebels initiated military operations against the Malian government to assert control over Northern Mali, designating it as Azawad—a permanent Tuareg homeland. The Tuaregs were one of the marginalized and neglected cultural minorities in Mali. The rebels, armed with the weapons they salvaged from the First Libyan Civil War, formed the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA). On March 22, discontent with President Amadou Toumani Touré's perceived inability to effectively address the rebellion led mutinying Malian soldiers to overthrow his government in a coup d'état. The mutinying soldiers then established the National Committee for the Restoration of Democracy and State (CNRDR), suspended the Mali constitution, and dissolved state institutions. Although these actions were swiftly reversed after international condemnation, the period of political instability and regional power vacuum that resulted from the coup was sufficient for the Tuareg forces to seize major cities in northern Mali. In the later stages of the conflict, Ansar Dine, a jihadist militant organization, began supporting MNLA in its struggle against the Malian government.



Fig 1: Areas of control by different factions during the crisis

After capturing Douentza, the fourth and last Northern Malian city that the MNLA had in mind, the rebels controlled the entire northern half (note Figure 1) of Mali, and Azawad was declared independent. At this news, extremist Islamist groups, some that had initially cooperated with the Tuaregs, including Ansar Dine (and later Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen, or JNIM), Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MOJWA), al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and affiliates of the Islamic State (IS) united together, and on January 2013, they advanced southwards. The cause of the conflicts between the MNLA and Islamist extremists, or jihadists, was the failure to reach a consensus regarding the future of Azawad as a state. The MNLA sought to establish a secular autonomy, while the jihadists saw a chance to build an ideological Sharia (land run by Islamic law). On June 27, the first of the clashes, the Battle of Gao, ended with a jihadist victory. By July 17, the MNLA had been driven out of most major Northern Malian cities.

The government of Mali, under President Dioncounda Traoré, reached out to the international community for assistance in reclaiming its Northern territories from the jihadists. On January 11, 2013, the French military deployed its forces in Mali to assist the Malian government. Several African Union (AU) states and United Nations (UN) member states, such as Russia and Turkey, joined in the efforts shortly after. However, the effectiveness of the efforts made by foreign forces is a topic of debate. The MNLA also fought against the jihadists, though it was still accused of attacking the Malian forces. Peace treaties were signed from 2013 to 2015 between the Malian government and Tuareg rebels, but the administration of the treaty proved to be difficult and government control had not been restored in all areas.

On January 11, 2013, France initiated Operation Serval, composed of the French Army, Navy, Air Force, and National Gendarmerie (French military police), as well as troops and forces aided by coalition states. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the European Union (EU) ordered the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) and European Training Mission in Mali (EUTM Mali) to be deployed respectfully. The results of these initial missions were successful, as the control of all major northern cities in Mali was regained by the Malian government.

However, after the success of Operation Serval, France did not retreat immediately. Instead, on August 1, 2014, France, accompanied by members of the G5 Sahel (G5S) and assisted by some of the Operation Serval coalition states, officially initiated Operation Barkhane, a

counterinsurgency operation aimed to neutralize the threats that jihadist terrorist organizations can bring to France and Europe from the Sahel region. Operation Barkhane divided the opinions of the Malian public toward the French forces, with some questions posed regarding why the French forces decided to prolong their presence after Operation Serval, causing Malian civilian and military casualties. In 2020 and 2021, Malian military leaders led two successful coups, detaining Malian Presidents Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta and Bah N'daw respectively, as well as ministers and high government officials. After the 2021 coup, the diplomatic relations between France and Mali faltered, and France withdrew from Mali by August 15, 2022.

Key Terms

Tuareg People: Nomadic tribe in the Sahara desert.

Azawad: Designation by Tuareg rebels for Northern Mali as a Tuareg homeland.

Coup d'état: Sudden overthrow of a government.

Ansar Dine: Jihadist militant organization in the Mali conflict.

Operation Serval: French military intervention in Mali.

G5 Sahel: Regional organization addressing security challenges in the Sahel.

MINUSMA: UN mission for political processes and stabilization in Mali.

ECOWAS: Economic union in West Africa.

Humanitarian Aid: Assistance for people affected by disasters.

Sanctions: Measures to influence or pressure a country, often involving trade restrictions.

1.2 Recent Developments

The conflict in Mali has evolved into a severe and dynamic convergence of challenges, profoundly impacting its political, economic, and humanitarian stability. Persistent conflicts and fragile social cohesion, marked by years of battle and repeated coups, have left the government struggling to maintain territorial integrity. The blockade of trade routes and sanctions by international partners such as the ECOWAS, responding to political unrest and military interventions, has exacerbated economic woes, though talks on lifting the sanctions are now ongoing at the signs of an election being held in Mali. Additionally, there are rising concerns about climate change threatening to cause further damage. Mali finds itself ensnared in a complex web of challenges that demand immediate attention and concerted efforts to address the intricate and interconnected issues plaguing the nation. The crisis in Mali did not yet reach a definite end, as these factors continue to persist.

In October 2023, the UN declared an end to the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), its mission in Mali, in a pullout ordered by Mali's military government. The UN flag was lowered in the MINUSMA headquarters located in Bamako, Mali, even as the crisis is ongoing. The MINUSMA mission has helped in mitigating the fighting in Mali for a decade, and concerns are that fighting between the Mali army and armed groups will intensify in Mali.

Timeline:

Date	Event
October 2011	MNLA founded
January 16-17, 2012	The first battle between the Malian forces and the MNLA
March 21-22, 2012	2012 Malian coup d'état, CNRDR takes over the Malian government
April 2, 2012	ECOWAS and other African states place sanctions on Mali
April 6, 2012	The Tuaregs declare the independence of Azawad
June 26-27, 2012	The first battle between the MNLA and the jihadist forces
January 11, 2013	Operation Serval begins
July 15, 2014	Operation Serval ends
August 1, 2014	Operation Barkhane begins
August 18, 2020	2020 Malian coup d'état
May 24, 2021	2021 Malian coup d'état
November 9, 2022	Operation Barkhane ends
October 21, 2023	MINUSMA withdraws from Mali

2. Emphasis of the Discourse

2.1 Stance of Intergovernmental Organizations

On December 20, 2012, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 2085 and authorized the deployment of AFISMA to react to the 2012 coup d'état. AFISMA, led mainly by the AU and EU states, was later taken over by MINUSMA, which also took over the responsibilities of the UN Office in Mali (UNOM). MINUSMA was comprised of over 17,000 personnel and aimed to support Mali in its political process and its stabilization. MINUSMA spent over \$1.2 billion in its efforts to restore peace in Mali. It also is the deadliest UN peacekeeping mission, with more than 300 fatalities. However, according to the Malian government and other accusations, MINUSMA had been unable to solve the problem in Mali and instead had been intensifying them by fuelling community tensions. As MINUSMA withdraws from Mali, the UN expressed that it would continue to fund and assist Mali from outside its territories.

Following the coup of 2020 in Mali, the West African regional bloc ECOWAS reacted to the delayed elections by imposing economic sanctions, including the closure of members' land and air borders with Mali, the suspension of non-essential financial transactions, the freezing of Malian state assets in ECOWAS commercial banks, and suspending all financial assistance and transaction. These sanctions were placed only after a year of mediation between ECOWAS and Mali. Up to the first few months of 2022, ECOWAS and Mali continued to fail to reach an agreement on an election schedule that would transition its military government back to democratic rule. Then, after the coup of 2021, ECOWAS strengthened its existing sanctions on Mali and caused a sharp fall in imports in the country. Mali had defaulted over \$300 million due to the sanctions placed by ECOWAS. In 2022, The Malian military junta of the 2021 coup promised to restore civilian rule in 24 months from March 2022 and accepted

the electoral schedule presented by ECOWAS by publishing a new electoral law. At this, ECOWAS expressed, in its Ordinary Summit on July 3, 2020, that it would lift its sanctions immediately and reopen borders to Mali.

The EU mandated many programs to provide humanitarian aid and military, financial, and logistical support (though no direct military intervention in military capacities) in need in Mali. The European Development Fund (EDF), which has been supporting Mali's development since 1958, the more recently formed European Joint Programming (CEP), as well as other programs together, provided Mali with more than €472 million worth of food, essential items, water, sanitation, and shelter since 2012. During battles, the EU, joined by the G5S states, aimed to support the Malian forces through the provision of education and training.

2.2 Stance of Developed Countries

In terms of military and security support, developed nations, including France, the United States, and the United Kingdom, have actively contributed to combatting extremist threats through the deployment of forces, logistical support, and training programs. Their efforts have indeed underscored a substantive commitment to the restoration of security and stability in Mali. However, some critics, including the Malian government that asked France to withdraw, held different opinions about the degree of necessity and effectiveness of the military actions those high-income countries took in Mali. Some even pose that these developed nations caused Mali to face further conflicts and instability.

First-world countries also contributed diplomatically. In the UN, advanced nations actively condemned the armed forces that violated human rights in Mali and the coups that were causing political instability and violated democratic rights. Additionally, many significant peace talks and negotiations were held and supported by developed nations. Humanitarian aid and development assistance from developed nations have significantly contributed to mitigating the socio-economic impact of the crisis. Nations such as Germany and Canada have channeled substantial resources toward humanitarian aid and development projects. Developed nations have also emerged as the primary donors and contributors to United Nations projects focused on Mali, including MINUSMA.

Advanced nations will be interested in continuing their effective programs in Mali by communicating with each other to coordinate policies and discuss intentions on dealing with the extremists in Mali as well as methods to protect themselves and fellow member states from them without excessive intervention. Developed nations may also need to find ways to reach a consensus with the Malian government to allow UN peacekeeping nations to return to Mali, as factors causing the crises are not yet resolved. Developed nations also consider the need to adjust existing sanctions that they had placed on Mali if needed.

2.3 Stance of Developing Countries

Developing nations have actively joined in the international efforts regarding the crisis in Mali. Member states of ECOWAS had been the most active developing nations concerning military and logistical support. ECOWAS states had provided troops, information, and resources to the coalition forces during UN missions or first-world nations' operations. Developing nations in the AU also played critical roles during AFISMA and also made efforts to support the MINUSMA after AFISMA was integrated into it. ECOWAS also made statements that it desired to address the security threats, restore stability, and prevent the spread of extremism in the region using its military contributions. Developing nations also approached the crisis diplomatically. Most significantly, ECOWAS's sanctions have been

proven to have tremendous effects on the Malian economy and politics (both positive and negative). ECOWAS sanction and border control policies that were executed according to its policies could be called successful, as they stimulated military governments in Mali to return to democratic rule. Yet, the severity of its economic effects on the Malian population is dire.

Developing nations, especially those that are members of ECOWAS, would be interested in restoring regional stability in West Africa, ensuring its security by addressing extremist organizations in the region, and adjusting sanction methods and regulations in coordination with the degree of necessity. Developing nations may also need to coordinate policies with each other and developed nations to find more effective ways for the international community to address the crisis in Mali completely.

3. Possible Solutions

3.1 In Favor of Developed Countries

At this conference, developed nations will seek to explore a solution that can address the military, economic, and political challenges in Mali, as well as address the extremist organizations in West Africa and beyond.

Developed nations' military presence had often been interpreted by the Malian government as excessive intervention or sources of conflict. Developed nations must set up agreeable regulations with the Malian government if they seek to send their troops once again to Mali to provide military support regarding the degree and method of assistance that both sides are willing to give and receive. The economic development of Mali can be revitalized by developed countries through further investment in Malian infrastructure, job creation, and vocational training in communities. Developed nations also may be interested in finding effective ways to reach out to the Malian public to provide humanitarian aid and address the threats of extremist groups.

3.2 In Favor of Developing Countries

At this conference, developing nations will be interested in strengthening military and intelligence sharing webs to address regional security threats and economic crises, counter extremist threats, and provide humanitarian aid.

Developing nations would be interested in, like developed nations, providing military support to the degree that would effectively resolve the problem while not making the historically repeated mistake of excessive intervention. Addressing extremist groups in the region will be a more significant issue to developing nations in the regions such as AU, especially ECOWAS, members. ECOWAS should also consider methods to stimulate regional trade and other activities such as tourism regarding Mali to allow its economy to recover from the sanctions that were placed. Developing nations can also discuss methods to assist developed nations in providing humanitarian aid to the Malian population given their closer geographical proximity to Mali.

In the absence of support from developed nations, developing countries must explore alternative strategies. Strengthening diplomatic ties, engaging with international organizations, and building internal capacities, including military and economic diversification, become crucial. Regional cooperation, peacebuilding initiatives, and technology transfer agreements play vital roles. Crafting favorable trade policies, humanitarian partnerships, and effective public diplomacy further empower developing nations to address challenges and contribute meaningfully on the global stage.

4. Keep in Mind the Following

When delving into the research on the Mali crisis, it is crucial to consider your country's geopolitical context and its potential impact on the nation's stance regarding the conflict. Examine the historical ties, diplomatic relations, and regional alliances that might influence your country's perspective on the Malian crisis. Additionally, explore the socioeconomic factors that may shape your country's approach to addressing the challenges faced by Mali. Keep in mind the interconnected nature of global security and the importance of collaborative efforts in addressing the complexities of the Mali crisis. Here are some questions to guide you through your research:

1. *How does the historical relationship between your country and Mali, including diplomatic ties and economic partnerships, influence your nation's perspective on the current crisis in Mali?*
2. *Considering the economic sanctions imposed by ECOWAS on Mali, how does your country view the role of regional organizations in addressing political instability and military interventions in West Africa?*
3. *In light of the military interventions led by developed countries such as France and the subsequent withdrawal, what is your country's stance on foreign military involvement in resolving internal conflicts, particularly in Africa?*
4. *How does your nation assess the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions, such as MINUSMA, in promoting stability and resolving the crisis in Mali?*
5. *Given the impact of the Mali crisis on regional security, how does your country envision collaborative efforts with neighboring nations to address the root causes of the conflict?*
6. *Considering the withdrawal of MINUSMA and the ongoing crisis in Mali, what strategies does your country propose to ensure the continuation of humanitarian aid and development assistance?*

5. Evaluation

The crisis in Mali presents a complex and multifaceted challenge that demands global attention and collaborative efforts. The historical context, political instability, economic sanctions, and military interventions have created a web of interconnected issues, impacting not only Mali but also its neighboring nations and the international community. As representatives of UN member states in this conference, you are expected to approach the Mali crisis with a nuanced understanding of your country's historical ties, diplomatic relations, and regional alliances. Collaborative efforts, diplomatic engagement, and strategic interventions will be essential to navigate the intricate web of challenges in Mali and work toward a sustainable and inclusive resolution. Success in addressing the Mali crisis will hinge on the ability of nations to transcend individual interests and prioritize the collective well-being of the region. Good luck, delegates.

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