



Institute for Security Studies

SITUATION REPORT

MALI IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE FRENCH MILITARY OPERATION

New opportunities or
back to square one?

While the deployment of the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) was painstakingly being planned, events suddenly accelerated on 10 January 2013 when the town of Konna fell into the hands of the armed groups occupying the northern part of the country. This triggered the French military operation code-named Serval and the deployment of AFISMA to support the Malian army and introduced a new set of political and security dynamics. In light of recent developments, it is important to analyse these dynamics and the prospects for settling the serious political and security governance crisis that first drove the country to the current situation.¹

Some blind spots remain in determining the exact reasons that led the armed groups to cross what was until then the front line separating them from the Malian army. Some observers believe that the attack against Konna was meant to be the first step towards taking Sévaré, where both an international airport and the Malian army's operational headquarters for the campaign in the north are located. Control of this town would have cut off the Malian army from the theatre of operation, hampered the deployment of AFISMA, and facilitated the takeover of the south of the country.² Whatever the case, the subsequent launch of Operation Serval and the deployment of AFISMA, including in Bamako, have introduced new processes that should be analysed. To that end, it is worth recalling the situation that prevailed just before military action was stepped up. Once the context has been established, it will be possible to analyse the impact of the intervention on the two main issues at the heart of the transition: the management of the situation in the north and the organisation of elections.

UNCERTAINTY AND CONFUSION: THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE BEFORE MILITARY INTERVENTION

The accidental coup d'état of 22 March 2012, which suspended constitutional order in Mali, occurred about one month before the scheduled presidential election. In the words of one of the actors, the coup came 'both from far away and nowhere'. Indeed, the anger that led to the putsch first manifested in the form of a mutiny, which arose from a protest against the appalling conditions in which the soldiers were fighting the armed groups in the north. Those conditions reflected the military facet of the decadent governance that had prevailed for many years.

The mediation efforts undertaken by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) following the coup d'état led to the Framework Agreement of 6 April 2012. This agreement put in place fragile institutional arrangements in a bid to introduce them into the Malian Constitution of 1992. It entrusted the post of Interim President to the Speaker of the National Assembly,

Dioncounda Traoré, following the resignation of ousted Head of State Amadou Toumani Touré. It also provided for the appointment of a transitional prime minister, the head of government, with 'full powers'. Further, since the Framework Agreement had been signed between the mediators and the junta, the latter became more or less legitimised as a leading actor in the transition and took full advantage of the situation to establish itself as a major player in the political game.

More specifically, three basic facts need to be highlighted. Firstly, there was a gap between, on the one hand, the normative approach of the international community, predicated on the restoration of the institutional arrangements that had existed before the putsch, and, on the other, the perception of some Malian actors that the restoration of constitutional order was tantamount to the 'return of a corrupt regime and a dubious governance system'. Taking advantage of this gap, the junta cleverly adopted a populist posture with nationalistic undertones and mobilised local support to resist the demands of an international community perceived, rightly or wrongly, as trying to bring back to power a largely discredited political class held responsible for the defeat of the Malian army by the armed groups in the north.

Secondly, and this is related to the above-mentioned point, the pre-intervention period was characterised by the persistence of the 'Kati factor', named after the military camp that is the base of the junta embodied by Captain Amadou Haya Sanogo. Despite the formal handover of power to civilian authorities, some elements of the junta have continued to play a major role in the political scene, as shown by the conditions in which Prime Minister Cheick Modibo Diarra was forced to resign in December 2012. The televised statement by Sanogo was also evidence of the persistent influence of the authors of the coup d'état.³

Finally, while the armed groups in the north were taking over Konna, a number of political parties and civil society organisations, regrouped into the 'coalition for immediate sovereign national consultations for change in Mali', were orchestrating demonstrations in Bamako to demand national elections and the departure of the Interim President.

Some observers claimed that these demonstrations were staged by the former junta and were meant to cover up their formal comeback as the leaders of the country through a 'civilian coup'. The demands were made against the backdrop of the debate on the adoption of the road map that was expected to set out the objectives of the transition and the ways and means of achieving them. The international community had made the road map the condition for reinforcing its support for Mali. For several months, the process was stalled as a result of the divergent positions of the Malian actors regarding the nature of the exercise – should the consultations be sovereign or not? – and the choice of the personality who should serve as its chairperson.

In these circumstances, no significant progress could be achieved in the political process. The international community, which had more or less agreed to support the transitional authorities, was ambivalent, a situation that did nothing to help mobilise the external support Mali needed to reassert its authority in the north of the country and restore institutions by holding transparent and credible elections. In fact, as the situation was building up militarily following the offensive by the armed groups that was to be stopped by France, political deadlock persisted in Bamako, maintaining a climate of uncertainty and confusion.

REPOSITIONING ACTORS AND POWER RELATIONS AFTER INTERVENTION

For several months, the military junta opposed the deployment of any foreign forces in Mali, arguing vis-à-vis ECOWAS, which wanted to station troops in Bamako,



The garrison town of Kati, 15 km from Bamako, is the headquarters of the leaders of the 22 March 2012 coup d'état.

that it could guarantee the security of the transitional institutions and that air support was all that was needed to take back the occupied territories. The positions drew closer after the Support and Follow-up Group⁴ met in Bamako on 19 October 2012 and the Strategic Concept for the Resolution of the Crises in Mali was adopted.⁵ The concept of operations for the envisaged military action was thereafter agreed upon by the Malian actors and their international partners, ECOWAS and the African Union (AU), before being adopted by the decision-making organs of the two organisations on 11 and 13 November 2012 respectively,⁶ thus making it possible to establish AFISMA. In line with these decisions, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on 20 December 2012 adopted Resolution 2085, which authorised the deployment of AFISMA. This paved the way for the operationalisation of the mission, made all the more complex when the UNSC failed to favourably consider the request to establish a support package financed by United Nations (UN) assessed contributions and neither ECOWAS nor the AU could mobilise the necessary resources.

The offensive by the armed groups, the launching of Operation Serval and the arrival of AFISMA re-dealt the cards and generated two developments: a repositioning within political and military circles and a redefinition of the relations between the two. With respect to the political sphere, the effects of the new military situation are manifested in several ways. First, the triggering of the war and Traoré's 'commander-in-chief' status have conferred upon him a new authority. The expression 'Dioncounda no longer fears the stick', used by a Malian newspaper,⁷ sums up the change. His televised speech to the nation in the

aftermath of the French operation being launched and the one he delivered during the visit by his French counterpart, François Hollande, in early February 2013, speak volumes about this new posture. Suddenly this President, whose authority had hitherto been challenged but who – if only by default – represents legality in the eyes of the international community, seems to be back at the centre of the game. One can sense it in his words, which sometimes have a martial undertone and are in sharp contrast to those of the powerless President who was assaulted in his office on 21 May 2012 and forced to spend several weeks convalescing in France.

As a matter of fact, the political system became somewhat 're-presidentialised', breaking with the arrangements put in place by the Framework Agreement, which conferred 'full powers' on the Prime Minister and seemed to downgrade the President to a ceremonial figurehead.⁸ This issue would have taken a more serious turn if Diarra had not been forced to leave his post in the above-mentioned circumstances, especially in view of the 'second-President' attitude he had adopted and his almost parliamentary interpretation of the institutional arrangements arising from the Framework Agreement. In a context where, since the appointment of Diango Cissoko as Prime Minister, relations between the current executive couple seem to be more harmonious, this issue can no longer be seen in the same light. Nevertheless, the issue is still relevant, particularly in view of the difficulties that might arise in the management of the transition.

Beyond the dynamics at play between the executive couple, the ex-junta has, perhaps temporarily and in appearance only, lost some of the political support it used to enjoy. Those who were most vocal in their opposition to any foreign intervention are now forced to remain silent and more restrained because of the significant popular support the intervention currently enjoys. The proclamation of a state of emergency by the Interim President following the launch of Operation Serval, set against the backdrop of demonstrations demanding his resignation and the holding of a sovereign national conference, suddenly conferred new powers on the transitional authorities that, at least for the moment, enabled them to reduce the capacity of their political opponents to mobilise support. On the other hand,



The branches of this tree, located on the road to Koulikoro, are covered with French and Malian flags. Its trunk has been painted with the colours of the tricolour flag in an acknowledgement of the French intervention.

the parliamentary institution that had been discredited in the eyes of the very same political actors, who claim that its term ended in August 2012 and that it was in cahoots with the ousted government, is once again operating. On 29 January 2013 this institution, whose proceedings had until then been regularly disrupted, approved the road map for the transition. This enabled the authorities to avoid the national consultations demanded, especially by the extra-parliamentary opposition.

Some changes are also expected in the military sphere. The presence of fighting units in the field is likely to contribute to the creation of a new class of hero in the campaign in the north and to the marginalisation of certain key actors from Kati, who had claimed that the liberation of the north was their main reason for staging the coup d'état. Their absence from the field, for whatever reason, prevents them from practising what they preached and, according to their opponents, weakens their rhetoric. This state of affairs and the requirements for ensuring the efficacy of the ongoing military intervention could facilitate the emergence of a chain of command somehow freed from the Kati influence. In this context, the issue of the status of the former junta members is becoming increasingly urgent. The international community, taking due note of the context and the national processes, would be well advised to assist the Malians to find a proper solution to this issue, which will partly determine both the conduct of the transition and the achievement of its objectives.

In short, the civilian institutions have regained a broader margin for manoeuvre compared to the situation before the intervention. The presence of forces other than Malian has increased the latitude of the Interim President, whose security is no longer solely in the hands of forces loyal to the ex-junta. In these circumstances, the high-profile investiture on 13 February 2013 of Sanogo, more than six months after his discreet appointment by decree as Chairman of the Military Committee for monitoring the reform of the defence and security forces,⁹ may be perceived as a move by a president exercising his authority and trying to promote greater national cohesion in a bid to address the challenges at hand. Sanogo's statement affirming his loyalty to the Interim President and that the committee he heads will not interfere with the military chain of command seems to support this view. At the same time, this appointment may also be seen as evidence of his resilience and his capacity to adapt to the change in power relations.

NEW CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS FOR RESOLVING THE CRISIS

Developments on the ground over the past few weeks raise new questions about many of the issues concerning the transition in Mali with respect to its two main objectives: the management of the crisis in the north and the organisation

of elections. This section attempts to analyse these objectives, as well as the long-term prospects for the resolution of the crisis in Mali.

The necessity of an inclusive reconciliation

The strategy followed until now in the efforts to resolve the crisis in the north has been two-pronged: to negotiate with those armed groups willing to engage in dialogue under certain conditions; and to envisage the option of military action should the negotiations fail, bearing in mind that the use of force would in any case be necessary against the terrorist and criminal networks. In an earlier analysis, this strategy was described as making peace while preparing for war.¹⁰

The involvement of Ansar Dine in the attack on Konna, alongside Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), undermined efforts to bring this group to the negotiating table and sever its ties to terrorist and criminal groups. It confirmed the porosity of the boundaries between the different groups operating in the north and clarified the targets of the military action. As a matter of fact, the armed groups in the north appear to come together depending on circumstances and their interests at the moment. Clearly, both the ECOWAS mediation and Algeria have, in their efforts to promote a political solution, overestimated their capacity to influence the behaviour and thinking of these groups.

As avenues for negotiation with Ansar Dine now seem to be closed, the question is whether, as initially envisaged, dialogue is still possible with the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA). Quite clearly, the Malian people are reluctant to entertain any negotiations with this group, for reasons that are not always understood by the international community. This situation further deepens the gap between perceptions of the crisis within and outside the country. Firstly, the MNLA is considered by a large proportion of the public to be the Trojan horse of Ansar Dine, MUJAO and AQIM, which took control of the north of Mali after the MNLA launched its rebellion in January 2012. Secondly, this movement is thought to be non-representative of the Tuareg people, often wrongly perceived as homogeneous in terms of their sociological composition and political claims, with its strike force made up mainly of veterans of Muammar Gaddafi's army. Some of these veterans, even though Malian nationals, were born and spent all their lives in Libya. Thirdly, the allegations of human rights and other violations levelled against MNLA fighters have turned the population against them.¹¹

The fact that some MNLA elements, who had been integrated into the Malian defence and security forces as part of efforts to resolve earlier rebellions, had turned

against their brothers in arms made people even angrier. Finally, the secessionist option initially defended by the MNLA, before its defeat by MUJAO and Ansar Dine forced it to drop this option, has little support in Mali, particularly in the north of the country where the Tuareg community is largely in the minority. This perception is very different from the romanticism that clouds the analyses of some international actors.

International actors focus on the terrorism dimension of the crisis rather than threats to Mali's territorial integrity, which is as crucial for Malians as the issue of terrorism

Some of Mali's partners continue to encourage a dialogue with the MNLA in a bid to address the political causes of the successive Tuareg rebellions in the north, further isolate terrorist and criminal groups, and facilitate the freeing of foreign hostages. This thinking seems to have guided the management of the situation in Kidal, where the Malian army did not participate in the operation to take back the town. It was also not deployed there after Kidal was liberated. Many international actors seem to focus more on the terrorism dimension of the crisis, which is of more immediate concern to them, than the threats to the territorial integrity of Mali. However, these threats are as crucial for Malians as the issue of terrorism. This focus on terrorism by certain external partners illustrates the prioritisation of security interests and reveals the differing perceptions regarding the threat, justifying, in their opinion, a differentiated treatment of the groups, separating those who required military action from those for whom negotiation was a better option.

In view of these different perceptions, the issue of dialogue with the MNLA should be managed very carefully to avoid any adverse reactions from the Malian population, which has so far been supportive of the French intervention. Similar caution should be exercised with respect to the dialogue proposed by the Islamic Movement of Azawad (MIA), a recent breakaway movement from Ansar Dine. It is worth noting that its leader, Alghabass ag Intalla, son of the Amenokal of Kidal, enjoys some historical legitimacy, which makes him an interlocutor to be reckoned with in efforts to stabilise the region. As an elected member of the National

Assembly who enjoyed the support of many international donors for his efforts to achieve peace and social cohesion before he joined the MNLA, then Ansar Dine, Alghabass is often cited as an illustration of the lack of credibility of those who resorted to armed rebellion to further their political claims on the grounds that they are victims of exclusion. It would appear that, in the final analysis, beyond grievances against the Malian state, the issue of the redistribution of power, as well as its necessary articulation between the tribal leadership and democratic legitimacy within the 'Tuareg world' itself and between the various factions of that community, are absolutely vital.

Beyond dialogue with the armed groups and its modalities, stabilising the north in a lasting manner calls for a proactive approach in terms of intra- and inter-community reconciliation. As is often the case in such situations, the violence has affected the social fabric and local actors have taken advantage of the redefinition, or even the reversal, of power relations to settle old scores. The flight of the armed groups and the return to a degree of normalcy did not happen without retaliation and this raises fears about living together in the future. In this context, dialogue cannot be limited to a *tête-à-tête* between Bamako and the armed groups. It will have to include enough sociopolitical actors to ensure that the concerns of the local population are genuinely taken into account. In the process, it is also necessary to avoid rewarding recourse to armed rebellion, as in the past, while providing those who did not take up arms with the opportunity to be heard.

The Malian actors should fully appreciate the importance of the dialogue and reconciliation process. Hence, the envisaged setting up in February 2013 of the National Dialogue and Reconciliation Commission provided for in the road map, which is designed as an inclusive structure representing all the northern communities and which will have a crucial role to play. Given the importance of the issues at stake, it is essential to ensure that this Commission does not become an empty shell because of lack of political will or financial resources.

Securing and stabilising northern Mali

The management of the security component of the crisis in the north provided for three overlapping phases: the rebuilding of the Malian army, the deployment of AFISMA, and the launching of the operation to reconquer the north, followed by the withdrawal of international forces. This scenario was disrupted by the attack against Konna. On the one hand, this attack clarified the targets of the military action, which now included Ansar Dine. On the other, it called for an urgent response that the Malian army, whose reorganisation and training by the EU had not yet commenced, and AFISMA, then still in the planning stages, could not deliver.



AFISMA, authorised under UNSC Resolution 2085, was deployed before issues on its legal framework, financing and management were settled.

Launched in these circumstances, at the request of the Malian transition authorities, the French Operation Serval had a number of effects apart from introducing a new actor. Firstly, it reversed the sequence of the military action as initially envisaged. Now, the Malian army is expected to rebuild while engaged in operations on the ground. Secondly, AFISMA is also expected to speed up its deployment, partly to take over from the French troops, before the issues of its legal framework, financing and management have been settled. The speeding up of the military action and multiplicity of actors have further complicated coordination between the Malian army, which is expected to play a primary role, AFISMA and the French forces. This is despite the fact that AFISMA has not yet completely resolved its command and control issues, including with its Chadian component, and that the French forces have large numbers of troops and logistical resources that cannot be compared with those of the Malian and African contingents. Finally, now that the north has been successfully liberated, the area needs to be secured and stabilised. In order to consolidate the military gains achieved and given France's expressed desire to scale down its presence or, at least, to 'multilateralise' its commitment, the idea now is to deploy a UN operation that will take over from AFISMA.

While this operation seems to be supported in principle by several members of the UNSC, it nevertheless raises serious issues given the volatile nature of the situation, which calls for the kind of coercive action that the UN has so far been reluctant to undertake. The UN has instead preferred the conventional concept of peacekeeping based on the principles of consent of the parties, impartiality and non-use of force except in self-defence or in defence of

the mandate. In any case, this eventuality has prompted many reservations in Mali. In government circles in Bamako, people are wondering about the timeliness of a UN mission, especially if it were to take the form of a peacekeeping mission, because it is still not clear 'what kind of peace should be maintained and between which parties'. On the street, frequent mention of the experience of the UN operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is evidence of both people's doubt about the efficacy of such a mission in the current security situation and fears of the social consequences such a presence might have.

The above makes it important to address the possible transition of AFISMA into a UN mission, keeping the concerns of the Malian population in mind. The transition must take into account the security context in the north and effectively address the security challenges at hand, especially as the armed groups have not at all given up, as shown by the repeated attacks in February 2013 against Malian and French military positions in Gao and Kidal. In any case, the type of mandate required¹² by the situation is more akin to a peace support operation, such as the one being conducted by the AU in Somalia, rather than to a traditional UN peacekeeping operation.¹³

The debate on a possible UN operation should not distract attention from the need to put in place an efficient and adequate security governance system in Mali and to strengthen regional defence and security cooperation. With regard to the first aspect, it is important to focus on the task of consolidating reconciliation between the 'red berets' and the 'green berets' pursuant to the decisions adopted by the Malian authorities on 15 February 2013, which provide for the restructuring of the commando regiment and the commitment of some of its elements to the north. Those decisions were taken after the deadly incidents that occurred in the Djikoroni camp in Bamako on 8 February. Efforts should also focus on security sector reform, which includes improvement of soldiers' living conditions, training and equipment; the transparent management of recruitment and promotions; and the restoration of civilian control over the army. A form of reconciliation between the Malian population and the army could be useful, particularly in the north. The reform process is a long-term one, which will require genuine political will at the national level and the support of the international community, especially financially.

With regard to regional cooperation, it is important to begin with an observation: the structures put in place by the core countries (Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and Niger) to address their common security challenges, namely the Liaison and Fusion Unit (UFL) located in Algiers and the Tamanrasset-based Joint Operational Command (CEMOC), have not proven their efficacy. Nevertheless, the baby should not be thrown out with the bathwater; rather, efforts should aim at strengthening the existing structures and

developing an architecture that involves all the countries of the Sahel-Saharan belt in order to address the various interrelated threats confronting the region.¹⁴

Making the electoral process credible

Before the north was liberated, the issue of the articulation between the holding of elections and the restoration of the state's authority across the national territory was extensively debated. For some, no elections could be envisaged as long as the north remained occupied, as this would be tantamount to legitimising the partition of the country.

The holding of elections alone will not bring a lasting solution to the Malian state's serious governance problems which led the country into the crisis

For others, particularly within the international community, only an elected and, therefore, legitimate authority could help the country emerge from the double political and security crisis it was mired in. The liberation of the towns in the north, speedier than at first anticipated, brought this debate to a close, even though the security situation still raises serious questions relating to the holding of elections across the country. Guided by the tentative timetable attached to the road map for the transition, the Malian authorities set 7 and 21 July as the dates of the combined legislative and presidential elections respectively for the first and second rounds.

Obviously, these deadlines are very close. Thus the need for the Malian actors and their international partners to redouble efforts to create conditions conducive to free, transparent and fair elections. In this regard, a number of basic elements have to be considered: preparing a consensual and secure electoral list; properly ensuring the security of the polling stations beforehand, given that security issues may arise; facilitating the participation of refugees and internally displaced people, including by adopting measures to enable them to return or to vote wherever they currently reside; and putting in place a mechanism to ensure the credibility of the electoral process and the results, so as to avoid any challenges that are likely to affect the resolution of the crisis.¹⁵

In view of the above-mentioned challenges, which should not be underestimated, flexibility should be exercised regarding the election timetable. There should

be no hesitation in slightly postponing the date of the elections if that is required to ensure that they take place in conditions of transparency and fairness and that the electoral process, which is supposed to mark the final resolution of the crisis, does not carry the seeds of future protests and problems.

Important as they are, the electoral process and the advent of a democratically elected regime alone do not constitute sufficient conditions for a lasting solution to the Malian state's serious governance problems or the dysfunctional management of its affairs, which had led the country into the crisis. The March 2012 coup d'état was welcomed by some sections of Malian society that were bitter about the political elite, which faced accusations of being responsible for the excesses of the past 10 or 20 years. These sections of society hoped that the putsch would create the conditions necessary for putting in place a new class of politicians. The fact of the matter, however, is that the military situation has repositioned the actors of the former establishment around the Interim President, at the centre of the current transition. To a certain extent, following a break of a few months, the political status quo has been re-established.¹⁶ While it had been an illusion to believe in the creation, by spontaneous generation, of a new political class free from the defects of the past, it should be underscored that any return to square one, especially to the old practices of corruption and greed, will cause exclusion, bitterness and conflict and, therefore, be harmful to the stability of Mali in the long run.

The current period should therefore be used to engage in brainstorming on the type of governance and state organisation that can lastingly promote political participation, inclusion, especially of the fringes, peace and stability. Malians should be encouraged to find consensus on the most fundamental challenges confronting the country. Such a consensus would then guide the government installed after the next elections. Indeed, it is that government that will carry out the far-reaching reforms needed by the country in order to have a better-adapted and more efficient political governance. These reforms could not be effected during the chaotic transition. In this sense, it is probably useful to think about a two-phase transition: the first phase would correspond to the immediate resolution of the crisis, through the electoral process, even though this is not a panacea; the second, which would take place after the elections, would provide the opportunity to overhaul the structure of the Malian governance system.

WHERE IS MALI HEADING?

In conclusion, while the situation in the north of Mali has radically changed from a security point of view, the problems that drove the country to crisis are still more

or less the same. In other words, the relief that was felt following the liberation of the north should not mask the fact that, for Mali and its partners, the hard part is just about to begin. The tasks that must now be attended to include national reconciliation, security governance with its regional cooperation component, managing the electoral process, developing the peripheral regions and, more generally, promoting good governance.

The successful completion of this exercise will require, on the part of Malians, a frank analysis of their country's trajectory since independence, some deep soul-searching, and the political vision and courage to undertake the reforms Mali so desperately needs. While the serious crisis their country is experiencing should serve as an opportunity to correct the mistakes of the past, it is not only Malians who must be clear-sighted. The need for clear-sightedness also applies to the international community. For decades the international community has, out of political blindness, tried to set Mali up as a model. It has seen Mali solely through the lens of electoral democracy, which, in itself, was not free from defects, as evidenced by the low voter turnout in elections and the emptiness of the democratic debate that has characterised the past few years. It is therefore hardly surprising that some Malian actors have seen, in the rhetoric about great democratic principles and constitutional legality after the coup d'état, more evidence of hypocrisy. Drawing a lesson from the present crisis, Mali's partners should be more mindful of the concerns of Malians and not only of the elite, while making sure that any new political arrangements that may emerge from the current situation do not reproduce the defects, real or perceived, of the previous regimes.

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NOTES

1 A preliminary version of this situation report was presented during the induction seminar organised for the AU High Representative of the Commission for Mali and the Sahel, Pierre Buyoya, in Addis Ababa, on 17 January 2013. The analysis was thereafter refined during field research and interviews conducted in Bamako in January and February 2013 with David Zounmenou of the ISS office in Pretoria.

At the end of the research mission, a revised version of the report was presented during a seminar for the enlarged group of ECOWAS Ambassadors in Dakar on 8 February 2013.

- 2 Some security sources talk about joint planning and coordination meetings between the leaders of these groups in preparation for the offensive. The same sources also claim that the large logistical and combat resources put together by these groups, both in the Douentza and Konna areas, as well as in the western zone north of the Niger River, with the town of Diabali as a staging point, were a sign that they were preparing for a more significant move.
- 3 See a national television excerpt of the televised statement on YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UqttrR9noEQ> (accessed 15 February 2013).
- 4 The Support and Follow-up Group was set up by the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the AU during its 314th meeting held in Bamako on 20 March 2012 to facilitate international support for African efforts to address the situation in the north of Mali (PSC/PR/COMM[CCCXI]). After the 22 March coup the PSC, at its 315th meeting held on 23 March 2012, extended the mandate of the Group to cover the issue of the restoration of constitutional order (PSC/PR/COMM[CCCXV]). The Group is co-chaired by the AU, the UN and ECOWAS and held its first meeting in Abidjan on 7 June 2012.
- 5 The Strategic Concept was adopted by the Support and Follow-up Group and endorsed by the AU PSC during its 339th meeting held on 24 October 2012 (PSC/MIN/COMM.2[CCCXXXIX]).
- 6 See the communiqué of the extraordinary session of the ECOWAS Assembly of Heads of State and Government held in Abuja on 11 November 2012 and the communiqué (PSC/PR/COMM.2[CCCXLI]) adopted by the 341st meeting of the AU PSC.
- 7 Tiékoro-bani, Procès Verbal, 28 January 2013, http://www.malijet.com/la_societe_malienne_aujourd'hui/actualite_de_la_nation_malienne/62967-chronique-satirique-dioncounda-ne-craint-plus-le-baton.html (accessed on 20 February 2012).
- 8 To the mediation this formula meant 'the full powers normally conferred upon a Prime Minister'. This interpretation was apparently not shared by Prime Minister Cheick Modibo Diarra.
- 9 Decree No. 2012-433/P-RM of 8 August 2012 appointed the Chairman of the Military Committee for monitoring the reform of the defence and security forces.
- 10 Lori-Anne Thérout-Bénoni and David Zounmenou, together with Paulin Maurice Toupane and Awa Faye Daou, ECOWAS Peace and Security Report, Mali: making peace while preparing for war, October 2012, <http://www.issafrica.org/uploads/1November2012.pdf.pdf>.
- 11 In a report entitled 'Chaos in Gao', published in *Jeune Afrique* 17–23 February 2013, an inhabitant of the city compared the behaviour of the MNLA, which had carried out a reign of terror, plundered buildings, robbed the inhabitants and raped the women, with that of MUJAO, which had promised order and delivered it with a

vengeance. He concluded with the words: 'Here, the absolute evil is not MUJAO, it is the MNLA.'

- 12 Conclusions of the meeting of the Support and Follow-up Group held in Brussels on 5 February 2013, while expressing the hope that the UN Security Council 'will positively consider the change, at the appropriate time, of AFISMA into a United Nations operation', underscored that such an operation should be provided 'with an appropriate mandate, determined in consultation with Mali and contributing towards strengthening the Malian State's authority over its entire territory and the safeguard of the country's unity and territorial integrity'.
- 13 See Lori-Anne Thérone-Bénoni, *Stabilizing Northern Mali: different approaches to peace operations*, *ISS Today* (Forthcoming on 12 March 2013), <http://www.issafrica.org>.
- 14 At its meeting in Brussels on 5 February 2013, the Support and Follow-up Group reiterated the 'importance of cooperation among the neighbouring countries of Mali on intelligence and border-control, in order to enhance the effectiveness of efforts to counter terrorist and criminal networks and facilitate the implementation of the mandate of AFISMA'.
- 15 The establishment of a mechanism for ensuring the credibility of the elections is mentioned in both the Strategic Concept for the resolution of the crises in Mali and the conclusions of the meeting of the Support and Follow-up Group held in Brussels on 5 February 2013.
- 16 It is, however, appropriate to differentiate carefully between those who were in power before the coup and the forces that sought to become the new actors after the putsch. Despite the apparent differences, most of the actors present on the current political scene come from the same mould of the democratic movement of the 1990s.

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