



Peace in Mali?

An analysis of the 2015 Algiers agreement
and its implementation

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Titel	Peace in Mali? An analysis of the 2015 Algiers agreement and its implementation
Title	Fred i Mali? En analys av 2015 års fredsavtal och dess implementering
Rapportnr/Report no	FOI-R-4311-SE
Månad/Month	November
Utgivningsår/Year	2016
Antal sidor/Pages	43
ISSN	1650-1942
Kund/Customer	Försvarsdepartementet/ Ministry of Defence
Forskningsområde	8. Säkerhetspolitik
Projektnr/Project no	A16104
Godkänd av/Approved by	Lars Höstbeck
Ansvarig avdelning	Division of Defence Analysis

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Sammanfattning

Sedan ett fredsavtal skrevs under mellan den maliska regeringen och två sammanslutningar av väpnade grupper – CMA och Plattformen – sommaren 2015 har framstegen i att implementera avtalet varit få. Två av avtalets områden – *Socioekonomisk och kulturell utveckling* samt *Rättvisa, försoning och humanitära frågor* – har fått stå tillbaka för områdena *Politisk och institutionell reform* och *Försvar och säkerhet*. Bristande förtroende parterna emellan och avsaknad av en gemensam vision för en varaktig fred har dock försvårat implementering även inom dessa områden. Under 2016 har också de väpnade grupperingarna kommit att överträda eldupphöravtalet och stridigheter om territoriell kontroll fortsätter.

En stor del av problemet ligger i hur fredsavtalet är formulerat. Avtalet skrevs under efter påtryckning från det internationella samfundet utan att alla detaljer var färdigförhandlade. Istället för implementering av överenskommelserna har därför de 16 månader som avtalet varit i kraft handlat om förhandling och politisk manövrering.

Problemet grundar sig också i att avtalet bara reglerar konflikten mellan nord och syd utan att ha funnit lösningar på övriga konflikter som finns i Mali: konflikten mellan grupper i nord som bl.a. lett till eldupphöröverträdelserna samt den ideologiska konflikt som ligger till grund för de extremistgrupper som idag utgör det största säkerhetsproblemet i landet. Fredsprocessen har inte heller skapat ett ägarskap för freden hos lokalbefolkningen och civilsamhället.

Den bristande implementeringen av fredsavtalet är mycket oroande. Samtidigt skulle inte enbart en kraftsamling kring avtalets implementering från parterna räcka till för att skapa en hållbar fred i Mali. Behovet av fortsatt dialog kopplad till implementeringen innebär dock en möjlighet att behandla även olösta frågor och säkerställa att fredsprocessen utvidgas till att inkludera både frågor och delar av befolkningen som tidigare varit exkluderade från processen.

Nyckelord: Mali, fredsavtal, Sahel, MINUSMA

Summary

Since the Algiers peace agreement was signed between the Government of Mali and two coalitions of armed groups – the CMA and the Platform – in the summer of 2015, little progress has been made in implementing its provisions. Two of the agreement’s four main articles, *Socioeconomic and Cultural Development* and *Justice, Reconciliation and Humanitarian Issues*, have largely been put on hold while efforts have focused on the provisions relating to *Political and Institutional Matters* and *Defence and Security*. However, lack of trust and lack of a shared vision on the components of a peaceful end-state among the signatories have obstructed implementation of those two articles as well. Instead, the signatory armed groups have recently begun to violate the ceasefire arrangements, fighting each other over territorial control.

Part of the problem lies within the peace agreement itself. Signed under significant international pressure to ‘close the deal’, the Algiers agreement is vague on a range of details. Instead of progress on implementing the agreed conditions, in the 16 months that have passed since the signing of the agreement there has been continued manoeuvring and negotiation between the parties.

Another major challenge is that the peace process has neglected to fully address the intercommunal tensions that exist in the north of Mali, which are a major factor in the ceasefire violations, and the ideological conflict that has generated the many armed and radical Islamist groups preventing the advancement of security in the northern regions. Moreover, the peace process has not generated any sense of ownership of the peace amongst the broader population or civil society groups.

While the lack of progress in implementation of the agreement is a concern, renewed commitment to implementation by the signatory parties is in itself insufficient to generate sustainable peace in Mali. There is a need for continued dialogue, which would also provide an opportunity to address outstanding issues and to extend the ownership of the peace process to groups currently excluded from the process.

Keywords: Mali, peace agreement, Sahel, MINUSMA

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Abbreviations

AMC	Agreement Monitoring Committee/ <i>Comité de suivi de l'accord (CSA)</i>
AU	African Union
AQIM	al-Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb
CMA	<i>Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad</i> /Coordination coalition of Azawad movements
CMFPR	<i>Coordination des Mouvements et Fronts Patriotiques de Résistance</i>
CPA	<i>Coalition du Peuple de l'Azawad</i> /Coalition for the Peoples of Azawad
CSA	<i>Comité de suivi de l'accord</i> /Agreement Monitoring Committee (AMC)
CTS	<i>Commission technique de sécurité</i>
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
GATIA	<i>Groupe d'Autodéfense Touareg Imghad et Alliés</i> /Self-defence group for Imghad Tuaregs and their allies
G5	Group of Five for the Sahel (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger).
HCUA	<i>Haut Conseil pour l'Unité de l'Azawad</i> /High Council for the Unity of Azawad
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
EU	European Union
FLM	<i>Front de libération du Macina</i> , Macina Liberation Front (MLF)
GoM	Government of Mali
MAA	<i>Mouvement Arabe de l'Azawad</i> /Arab Movement of Azawad
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MLF	Macina Liberation Front/ <i>Front de libération du Macina</i> (FLM)
MNLA	<i>Mouvement National pour la Libération de l'Azawad</i> /Movement for the Liberation of Azawad
MOC	<i>Mécanisme Opérationelle de Coordination</i> /Operational Coordination Mechanism (OCM)
MUJAO	<i>Mouvement pour le Tawhîd et du Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest</i> /Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation

OCM	Operational Coordination Mechanism/ <i>Mécanisme Opérationelle de Coordination (MOC)</i>
SSR	Security Sector Reform
UN	United Nations



Map of Mali.¹

¹ Mali, map no. 4231, Rev. 3, United Nations, Department of Field Support, Cartographic Section, March 2013.

1 Introduction

After months of negotiations, under the auspices of Algeria, a peace agreement was signed in May 2015 between the Government of Mali and the *Platform Coalition of Armed Groups* (primarily consisting of pro-government self-defence militias). On 20 June 2015, this was followed by an agreement between the Government of Mali and the *Coordination coalition of Azawad movements* (primarily consisting of Tuareg and Arab rebels in opposition to the Malian state). This finally regulated the violent conflict which broke out in Mali in January 2012, in an agreement expanding beyond cessation of hostilities.²

The peace agreement, commonly known as the Algiers agreement³, seeks to manage a longstanding conflict in northern Mali between minority populations and the state over state power and political influence. Although this has been the primary conflict in the north, it co-exists with two parallel conflict tracks: an ideological conflict related to the armed Islamist groups operating in northern Mali and nearby regions, and local armed inter- and intra-communal conflicts between individual leaders and groupings of often ethnically based militias. While these conflicts are intertwined and frequently feed into each other, the 2015 agreement addresses only the primary conflict and its parties.

While the signing of the Algiers agreement was a major step towards putting an end to the violent conflict in Mali, it has proven difficult to get the implementation process underway. Thus, there has been limited progress in key areas such as security sector reform and decentralisation. Since the drivers of conflict were not properly addressed, the threat of new violent conflict is still present. In order to ensure popular support, there is a clear need to show the Malian people, especially those living in the north of the country, that the peace process will bring change and improvement to their lives. However, the window of opportunity for doing so could close unless progress materialises soon.

1.1 Aim of the study

One year after signing, little progress has been made towards implementation of the Algiers agreement. The aim of this study is to analyse the challenges facing the parties involved in the conflict and their international partners in implementing the peace agreement. The analysis focuses on the current status of the peace agreement, its actors and conflict dynamics. It also seeks to identify factors that

² Nilsson and Tham Lindell. 2015. *Framåt Sahel*. Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI).

³ The agreement is sometimes also referred to as the Bamako Agreement, supposedly to differentiate it from the 2006 Algiers Accord. However, the term Algiers agreement is used throughout this report to refer to the 2015 agreement, unless otherwise stated.

could facilitate further implementation and highlights some important lessons for the way ahead.

1.2 Method

FOI has previously carried out a range of analyses of the Malian conflict.⁴ This study takes a qualitative methodological approach and the analysis is largely based on primary and secondary sources dealing with the Malian conflict and the ongoing peace process. This includes a review of official documentation such as the *Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali emanating from the Algiers process* and UN and diplomatic reports⁵ on the situation in Mali, as well as a review of academic research. In addition, this study has used open-ended interviews with UN staff in New York and Mali, experts at think tanks and a subject expert and a diplomat recently based in Mali, in order to obtain complementary information and gain a better understanding of the conflict in Mali. The interviews are listed at the end of this report.

1.3 Outline of the report

Beyond this introduction, the second chapter of the report describes the conflict and the peace process leading up to the signing of the Algiers agreement; the signatories and overarching commitments made in the peace agreement; and provides an overview of how the conflict – and conflict resolving endeavours – has evolved since the peace agreement was signed.

The third chapter analyses the status of implementation of the Algiers agreement, identifying areas of progress and highlighting the main challenges. It also analyses the key dynamics generating this situation.

The fourth and final chapter summarises the findings of the report and seeks to provide insights on key factors and approaches that may facilitate effective implementation.

⁴ This includes e.g. Lackenbauer, H., Tham Lindell, M., and Ingerstad, G. 2015. *If Our Men Won't Fight We Will: A Gendered analysis of the Armed Conflict in Northern Mali*. Swedish Defence Research Agency FOI), pp. 37-46; Nilsson and Tham Lindell. 2015. *Framåt Sahel*; Elowson, C. and Tham Lindell, M. 2013. *En ny politisk modell för Mali*. Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI); and Tham Lindell, M. 2012. *Fred och säkerhet i Mali – vägen framåt (Peace and Security in Mali – the Way Ahead)*. Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI).

⁵ Information derived from diplomatic sources is not referenced in the report.

2 The Peace Process since 2012

This chapter outlines the peace process and its main parties from the outbreak of the rebellion until the signing of the peace agreement in 2015. It also provides an overview of the conflict, and conflict-resolving initiatives, in the post-agreement period. The purpose of the chapter is to set the context in which the agreement was signed and thereby facilitate an understanding of how this context affects the overall prospects for peace in Mali.

2.1 The 2012 rebellion and afterwards

The Tuareg nationalist separatist movement (*Movement for the Liberation of Azawad*, MNLA) was created in October 2010.⁶ Strengthened by Tuareg fighters returning from Libya after the fall of Ghaddafi in 2011, the MNLA soon started an offensive against state forces in northern Mali. In the first few months of 2012, Malian soldiers and their families expressed frustration over how the government was managing the offensive. In March 2012, President Amadou Toumani Touré was ousted in a military coup led by Captain Amadou Sanogo. This coup led a number of Malian soldiers to defect to the MNLA, strengthening its offensive. The fight against the army was also supported by jihadist movements such as *Ansar Dine*, *al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb* (AQIM) and the *Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa* (MUJAO).⁷ By April, the whole of northern Mali had fallen into the hands of the MNLA, which declared the area to be the independent state of Azawad.⁸ However, within a matter of days jihadist groups outmanoeuvred the MNLA and began implementing a brutal form of sharia law across northern Mali.⁹

State weakness prevented the Malian government from protecting its own territory and northern Mali remained occupied until the insurgency in January 2013 began extending to the south of the country. This caused the interim Malian president to request an international intervention. France responded immediately, concerned that Mali would otherwise fall into the hands of global jihadist movements.¹⁰

The French military response, supported by troops from Chad and other countries, successfully regained control of northern Mali from the extremist Islamist groups. In 2013, the MNLA, HCUA and the transitional government signed an agreement

⁶ Maïga, I. 2016. *Armed groups in Mali*. Institute for Security Studies

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Azawad is the term used for the portion of northern Mali claimed by the Tuareg rebel movement.

⁹ Wing, S.D. 2016. 'French intervention in Mali' *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 27:1, p. 62

¹⁰ Ibid. pp. 71-72, 62

with the main goal of organising presidential elections and laying the groundwork for further negotiations.

2.2 Multiplication of parties

Following the successful international intervention the armed groups started manoeuvring. Alliances shifted and splinter groups were created and re-aligned. According to Susan Wing, the different groups aimed to strategically position their own agenda at the table of the peace negotiations.¹¹ However, this process continued and the number of major armed groups associated with the peace process rose from two (the MNLA and the *High Council for the Unity of Azawad*, HCUA) in 2012, when the crisis started, to eight by the signing of the Algiers agreement in 2015.¹²

The push-back against the jihadist groups allowed the MNLA to make a comeback. In the ensuing peace process, the international community made a distinction between politico-military groups (like the MNLA and its off-shoots), which would be engaged in negotiations, and jihadist groups, which were considered legitimate military targets. The lines of differentiation among the actors were nevertheless blurred. Most notably, many supporters of Ansar Dine crossed over to join the HCUA, which signed the 2015 peace agreement alongside MLNA as part of a coalition of armed groups.¹³

Later in the negotiations, two additional movements, *the Coordination for Movements and Fronts of Patriotic Resistance* (CMFPR) and *the Arab Movement of Azawad* (MAA), became integral parts of the peace process. The establishment of these new movements marked a turning point in the negotiations. Unlike the MNLA and HCUA, which claimed independence for Azawad, the CMFPR and MAA were loyalists, advocating national unity. The CMFPR represented a range of self-defence movements that had been active in reconquering territories which had fallen into the hands of rebel and jihadist groups, and these movements came together primarily to ensure that their communities were not side-lined in the peace negotiations. The transitional government encouraged the inclusion of these loyalist movements in the negotiations as a means of countering the influence of the MNLA and HCUA.¹⁴

¹¹ Ibid pp. 62-63.

¹² Maïga. 2016. *Armed groups in Mali*.

¹³ Ibid; Wing. 2016. 'French intervention in Mali', pp. 63-64

¹⁴ Maïga. 2016. *Armed groups in Mali*.

All groups except the HCUA nevertheless experienced fragmentation. By the time the next round of peace negotiations started in Algiers in June 2014, the rather numerous politico-military movements had formed two main coalitions: the *Coordination coalition of Azawad movements* (CMA), an alliance of the MNLA and HCUA and others, and the *Platform Coalition of Armed Groups* (the Platform), a coalition of loyalist groups.

Both the CMA and the Platform are coalitions of armed groups with multiple and diverging claims on the state of Mali. A distinction between them is that the CMA's constituent movements have consistently pursued claims of self-determination for northern Mali, while the movements within the Platform have sought to resolve grievances within the unitary state of Mali.¹⁵ However, neither coalition has presented a clear agenda of its claims or specifically outlined which constituents it represents.¹⁶

2.3 The 2015 peace agreement

After nearly a year of inter-Malian dialogue, the Malian parties signed the *Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali emanating from the Algiers process* ('the Algiers Agreement') in May and June 2015. The peace process was carried out under the aegis of international mediation, led by Algeria and supported by a range of international partners.¹⁷

In addition to the Government of Mali (GoM), the signatories to the Algiers agreement were the CMA and the Platform.¹⁸

The Algiers agreement addresses a range of issues determining the future of Mali. Above all, the agreement commits the signatories to a continued unified and secular Malian state, setting aside any previous demands for independence, autonomy or federalism. It also determines a common understanding of the term Azawad, the Tuareg name for Mali's three northern regions.

The Algiers agreement includes an agreement monitoring system and covers four substantive themes on which the principles and foundations of sustainable conflict resolution will be built: *Political and Institutional Matters*; *Defence and Security*

¹⁵ Nyirabikali, G. 2015. Mali Peace Accord. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

¹⁶ *Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali*, 11 June 2015; Reeve, R. 'Devils in the detail: implementing Mali's new peace accord'. Oxford Research Group. For a more in-depth analysis of the CMA and the Platform groups, including their interests, behaviour and power, see Lackenbauer, Tham Lindell and Ingerstad. 2015. *If Our Men Won't Fight We Will*, pp. 37-46.

¹⁷ Namely the United Nations/MINUSMA, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the European Union, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania and Niger.

¹⁸ An overview of the groups included in the CMA and the Platform can be found in the Appendix.

Matters; Socioeconomic and Cultural Development; and Reconciliation, Justice and Humanitarian Issues.

2.4 Representation in the peace process

A considerable achievement of the Algiers process was the broad inclusion of armed groups – including local allies, proxies and recent splinter groups – in the peace talks. Representation in earlier peace processes was largely limited to the armed rebel movements that claimed to speak for *Azawad*. In reality, these represented – and continue to represent – only a small minority of separatists within small ethnic minorities, leaving everyone else to regard themselves as not being a party to the Algiers agreement.¹⁹

While the inclusion of a broader set of actors in the agreement was a positive development, the process still left little room for the Malian population. The Algiers agreement remains an agreement between the Malian state and northern armed groups. Focusing merely on the armed groups reduces ownership of the peace process amongst the non-rebellious populations.²⁰ Legitimate representatives of northern civil society were not included in the peace talks and their exclusion has led to protests and demonstrations, in particular from youth groups feeling excluded from the process.

2.5 Continued local conflicts

Since the Algiers agreement was signed, the political situation in Mali has remained fragile. Although the ceasefire has generally continued to hold, tensions have persisted and occasionally armed violence has erupted between the armed movements. In particular, conflict has simmered between HCUA (*CMA*) and GATIA (*the Platform*) as regards control of the city of Kidal. In-between July and September 2016, violence erupted between the two groups on several occasions, resulting in the death of a number of civilians. Intercommunal tensions have also resulted in violent clashes in other parts of northern and central Mali.

Similarly to other peace agreements signed over the past few decades, the Algiers agreement deals only with the political grievances against the government in Bamako, while not addressing the local conflicts in the north.²¹ Throughout the history of Mali, local conflicts have been an important motivator for the northern

¹⁹ Pezard, S, and Shurkin, M. 2015. *Achieving Peace in Northern Mali*. RAND

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ According to interviews, none of the parties pushed for the issue of the local conflicts to be included in the peace process, reportedly because of the presumed involvement of armed groups in criminal networks, and an unwillingness on the part of the GoM to stop supporting proxy groups in the northern regions as a way of influencing northern power struggles.

rebellions. While partly being a conflict with the south, the rebellion in the north has also been a “manifestation of internal power struggles and individual ambitions to dominate the northern movements or promote the interests of a specific clan”.²² Nevertheless, none of the parties to the Algiers agreement pushed for the issue of local conflicts to be included in the peace process. According to interviews, this was presumably because the local conflicts are often interlinked with criminal interests.²³ This is supported by data from international observers, who describe armed confrontations in northern Mali during 2015 as often being concerned with controlling smuggling routes and logistical hubs, rather than protecting populations.²⁴

2.6 The Anefis process

Given the relationship between local power struggles and the northern rebellions, the Algiers agreement does not cover all important areas of contention in the Malian conflict.²⁵ In this sense, the most important factor enabling successful implementation of the 2015 Algiers agreement may not be the agreement in itself, but local dialogue initiatives initiated after the signing of the agreement.

As continued tensions led to armed confrontations between the CMA and the Platform in August and September 2015,²⁶ the leaders of the two organisations commenced a series of talks in the city of Anefis i-n-Darane in September 2015. The so-called Anefis process addressed issues left unresolved by the Algiers peace agreement and was successful in ending the armed clashes between signatory groups that were ongoing at the time. The Anefis talks provided an opportunity for Tuareg groups such as the Ifoghas and Imghad, as well as Arab groups, to address long-standing disagreements. As such, it generated a great deal of optimism for long-term peace in Mali.²⁷ The talks allowed for discussion on sensitive issues such as power-sharing, intercommunal rivalries and trafficking, and led to several ‘honour pacts’ being signed on behalf of the major nomad communities in the region. However, the pacts generated by the Anefis process are not intended to address issues such as criminal trafficking, but simply to reduce the violence related to this.²⁸ Through fear of bolstering the criminal structures in northern

²² Lackenbauer, H. et al.. *If Our Men Won't Fight We Will*, p. 39.

²³ According to interviews, none of the parties pushed for the issue of the local conflicts to be included in the peace process, reportedly because of the presumed involvement of armed groups in criminal networks and an unwillingness on the part of the Malian government to stop supporting proxy groups in the northern regions as a way of influencing northern power struggles.

²⁴ Lackenbauer, H. et al.. *If Our Men Won't Fight We Will*, p. 39.

²⁵ Interview Shurkin, RAND 20 May 2016; Pezard and Shurkin. *Achieving Peace in Northern Mali*.

²⁶ Following the takeover of the CMA-controlled town of Anefis in the Kidal region by the Platform on 17 August 2015.

²⁷ *Mali: la paix venue d'en bas?*. 2015. International Crisis Group

²⁸ Ibid

Mali, the international community has been vary of verifying Anefis. This is a legitimate concern, but may be mitigated by ensuring that participation in the current peace process does not guarantee immunity in the future.

The fact that the Anefis talks occurred outside the Algiers process and with minimal participation from external partners also allowed for a more ‘home-grown’ approach, i.e. local re-appropriation of a peace accord otherwise largely produced from above and driven by international partners.²⁹ While bringing dialogue to the local level, representation in the Anefis talks was still limited to the heads of the armed movements and did not include traditional leaders of local communities. According to the International Crisis Group, the agreements reached during the process thus carry the risk of re-establishing the militarised politico-economic system in the north that was a major source of the conflict.³⁰

The Anefis talks should not be seen as a measure to reconcile communities, but rather as facilitating pragmatic agreements to help maintain the ceasefire. The resumption of fighting between HCUA and GATIA in Kidal in July and August 2016 is considered a violation of the peace agreement. Negotiations to find a solution are ongoing, but conflict between local armed groups risk further hampering peace agreement implementation and pose a severe threat to the civilian population.

2.7 Summary

The context in which the 2015 agreement was signed includes a number of actors with stakes in the conflict. While the peace process must be appraised for including a broad range of armed groups, the fact that no room was made for civil society is a concern for the future of Mali. Broader inclusion in further political dialogue and implementation of the Algiers agreement is needed to ensure a sustainable peace. The peace process leading up to the Algiers agreement focused on addressing northern grievances vis-à-vis Bamako but did not include management of the local and intercommunal conflicts which continue to lead to violence and put civilians in harm’s way in the north. While conflict resolving initiatives aiming to address this have been ongoing in the post-conflict period continued violence amongst northern armed groups is an indicator that these have not yet yielded sufficient results and that peace in Mali is still elusive.

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Ibid

3 Implementing the 2015 Agreement

The Algiers agreement makes provision for a transitional period of 18-24 months from the signing of the agreement (i.e. until the end of December 2016/June 2017). During this period the commitments made in the agreement are to be realised. However, almost 18 months after the signing of the agreement there is only limited progress on its implementation. While the signatories have remained formally committed to the agreement, most deadlines for initial reforms have passed without any significant advances. Only during October 2016 has substantial progress on political issues been reported.

This chapter outlines the commitments made in the peace agreements and analyses the implementation in the respective areas of: Political and Institutional Matters; Defence and Security Matters; Socioeconomic and Cultural Development; and Reconciliation, Justice and Humanitarian Issues.

3.1 Agreement monitoring

Implementation of the Algiers agreement is supported by an agreement monitoring committee, *Comité de Suivi de l'accord* (CSA). The CSA is composed of the Government of Mali, the signatories to the peace agreement and the mediation team (chaired by Algeria).³¹ The CSA is supported by four sub-committees providing technical expertise in the agreements foundational areas of *Defence and Security Matters*; *Political and Institutional Matters*; *Justice, Reconciliation and Humanitarian Issues*; and *Socioeconomic and Cultural Development*.³²

Initially, disagreement over how the splinter groups CPA-CMA and CMFPR-II would be represented in the CSA was a source of contention, creating deadlock

³¹ As stipulated in the peace agreement, the mediation team also includes Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauretania, Niger, the AU, ECOWAS, the EU, OIC and the UN. In addition to these, France, Nigeria and the US have also become official members of the mediation team since the signing of the peace accord.

³² The sub-committee on Defence and Security is co-chaired by Algeria and MINUSMA; the sub-committee on Political and Institutional Matters is co-chaired by Algeria and the AU; the sub-committee on Justice, Reconciliation and Humanitarian Issues is co-chaired by Algeria and ECOWAS; and the sub-committee on Socioeconomic and Cultural Development is co-chaired by Algeria and the EU.

and stalling implementation of the CSA.³³ After eight months of negotiations, the issue was resolved in January 2016 by an agreement between the CMA and the Platform to allocate each of the splinter groups one seat in a CSA subcommittee of their choice, under the umbrella of the CMA.³⁴ Since then, both the CMA and the Platform have been regarded as participating constructively in the deliberations of the CSA, which at the time of writing has held 10 sessions. However, in May 2016, both groups temporarily suspended their participation in the CSA, citing failure of the CSA to address a stalemate in the implementation process arising from lack of achievement in the area of decentralisation and a concern about lack of willingness to cooperate on the part of the government. The situation was eventually resolved in June with the adoption of an implementation roadmap covering the period 1 July-30 September 2016. As the security situation in Kidal deteriorated during the implementation period, at the time of writing the work of the CSA has come to focus on resolving the conflict relating to control of Kidal.

3.2 Political and institutional reforms

The political and institutional reforms set out in the Algiers agreement are intended to *decentralise* the governance system, including through transfer of authoritative power and financial revenues from the state to regional assemblies. Specifically, the Algiers agreement calls for elected regional assemblies, preceded by interim authorities that stay in place for a maximum of six months, and thereafter elections must occur. Local communities will also have governing bodies elected through universal suffrage and will be granted administrative freedom. In addition, the agreement calls for *increased representation of northern communities* in national institutions and public service, as well as a commitment to investments in the economic development of the north with the aim of ending its disparity with the rest of Mali. A *financial transfer* mechanism, whereby 30% of national budgetary revenue is transferred to the northern regions, will be put in place to provide financial support to regions, districts and communities.³⁵ Few of the political provisions stated in the Algiers agreement are new, however, as most of them have been included in previous peace accords in some form or another.³⁶

³³ The mediators put significant pressure on the parties to conclude the peace process and sign the agreement. While the leader of the CPA refused to sign the agreement, other members chose to sign on behalf of the CMA. Those who had signed were excluded as punishment, effectively breaking up the movement and establishing a dissident group, the CPA-CMA. The CPA subsequently refused the CPA-CMA a seat on the CSA. The CMA was also reluctant to concede that the status of the smaller parties in the coalition was equal to that of the MNLA and HCUA and sought to accept the CPA-CMA and CMPRF-II only as parties which had accepted the peace agreement, not as signatories, affecting their status in the CSA.

³⁴ *Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali*, 18 March 2016.

³⁵ *Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali emanating from the Algiers Process*

³⁶ Pezard and Shurkin. 2015. *Achieving Peace in Northern Mali*.

3.2.1 Implementing decentralisation and increasing representation

As mentioned, implementation of the political and institutional reforms has been slow, at both regional and local level, partly due to the long-term inability of the parties to reach agreement on establishment of the interim authorities.

Most advances have been made since March 2016 and include the creation of two new regions in the north, bringing the total to five regions³⁷; appointing and swearing in new governors for the Taodenni, Ménaka and Kidal regions; and adopting and revising legislative text in support of decentralisation. The latter includes the ratification by Parliament in April of an amendment to local government law allowing regional authorities to fill the gap left by the state.³⁸ It also sets out the membership of the regional authorities, distributing the control of the regions among the government, the CMA and the Platform.³⁹ The new government law has been heavily criticised by the political opposition,⁴⁰ which argues that the amendments are unconstitutional since they “sow the seeds for partition of Mali” by creating a difference in treatment of the north and the south. Furthermore, they argue that the law constitutes “a setback to democracy” by marginalising political opposition from groups outside those signing the peace agreement.⁴¹ The constitutional court nevertheless overruled the opposition and the legislative amendment was subsequently promulgated by the president in May 2016. An important amendment to the electoral bill has also been made, including the establishment of a single electoral management body. The application of direct universal suffrage for the election of territorial advisors was approved by the government in June 2016.

In June 2016, an agreement on the modalities of installation of the interim authorities was finally reached.⁴² A roadmap signed by the parties, also in June, stipulated that the regional interim authorities would be established by 25 August and that state administrations in the regions would be re-established by 15 August. Neither deadline was met. By mid-October 2016, however, the government nominated the candidates to the interim authorities that had been put forward by

³⁷ The new regions are Taoudenni, formerly part of Timbuktu, and Ménaka, formerly part of Gao.

³⁸ MaliActu.Net, April 6 2016; Maïga, Ibrahim. 2016. *Armed groups in Mali*. Institute for Security Studies.

³⁹ As of an agreement on 5 November 2016, the CMA and the Platform will control two regions each and the government the fifth. MaliActu.Net, April 6 2016; Maïga, Ibrahim. 2016. *Armed groups in Mali*. Institute for Security Studies.

⁴⁰ The opposition is led by Soumaila Cissé, president of the political party *l'Union pour la république et la démocratie* (URD). The opposition has not been engaged in the peace talks or the implementation process, but has stated a need to be included in the dialogue for peace.

⁴¹ Maliweb.net, April 3 2016; Maïga. 2016. *Armed groups in Mali: Beyond the labels*

⁴² Jeune Afrique, June 16 2016.

the CMA and the Platform. Getting the candidates physically in place will make the interim regional authorities fully operational.

The establishment of the interim authorities is the most significant achievement so far in the implementation of the Algiers agreement. Nevertheless, the security situation in the north is a major challenge to their full establishment, including the holding of elections and the establishment of state services across the country. Persistent insecurity and lack of infrastructure have prevented officials from taking up office in the regional capitals. Thus the governors of, for example, Toudenni and Kidal have had to operate out of Timbuktu and Gao⁴³, affecting how the populations relate to the new political structures. Local elections for the regional assemblies have been repeatedly postponed due to the insecurity in the north. While these elections, at time of writing, were still planned for 20 November 2016,⁴⁴ the security situation has not yet improved. Thus, it may require even longer to determine how the Algiers agreement will reform the governing of Mali and the participation of the people of the north.

The absence of a state presence in the north of Mali has also resulted in the *financial transfer mechanism* not yet being implemented.

With the intention of increasing northern representation in national institutions, the government commenced work in April 2016 on revising the constitution to permit the establishment of a second chamber in Parliament (a senate). A constitutional referendum, during which establishment of the second chamber is proposed, is planned for November 2016.⁴⁵

3.2.2 Outstanding issues regarding representation

The establishment of the interim authorities has been met by a series of protests by civil society groups in the north, in particular youth movements, who claim that the interim authorities do not represent the people. These civil society groups argue that, due to their marginalisation and exclusion from the peace process, too much power has been put in the hands of the armed movements, resulting in the peace process not being representative of the will of the general population and in a lack of punishment for crimes committed by the rebels.⁴⁶ In general, the protests are also aimed at the government and the president, which are seen as corrupt and undemocratic. While they started out as peaceful demonstrations, some protests have turned violent and have been met with brutality from the armed forces, resulting in death and injury, further aggravating the protesters.⁴⁷

⁴³ *Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali*, 31 May 2016.

⁴⁴ *Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali*, 31 May 2016.

⁴⁵ *Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali*, 31 May 2016.

⁴⁶ Reuters, July 12, 2016.

⁴⁷ Maliweb.net, July 15 2016

The view taken of the interim administrations by both the protestors and the political opposition is based on a perception that communities outside the armed movements are poorly represented in the new political structures and a fear that the armed groups will continue to dominate the political landscape in the north. Holding elections for the regional assemblies and for the local and community governing bodies is essential in addressing these concerns.

However, the elections are likely to meet opposition from a number of actors who see democracy as threatening. This could include the armed groups, which will have much to gain from keeping the interim authorities in place for as long as possible. The armed groups are guaranteed seats in the interim authorities and elections might generate a different outcome. Delaying the elections may thus be seen as a way to extend the influence of the armed groups over time.⁴⁸ Researchers at RAND argue that, while democracy and decentralisation have been considered essential steps in addressing the marginalisation of the north, experiences from the past show that such provisions in all former Malian peace agreements have exacerbated rather than relieved intercommunal tensions.⁴⁹ One reason for this is that parties representing minority groups, such as the rural Tuareg, are likely to continue to be marginalised by the majority even after elections.⁵⁰ The RAND researchers ascribe this problem to Mali's immature political culture, which interprets democracy as a zero-sum game.⁵¹

While the provision on direct elections for local representatives in the Algiers agreement offers real potential for peace consolidation and enhanced local participatory governance,⁵² the question remains as to whether the regional assemblies are an appropriate forum for reconciliation, or whether they will exacerbate divisions and exclusions. Given that the conflict in Mali rests as much within the north itself as between the north and south of the country, this question is crucial to the success of the Algiers agreement. Furthermore, following a pattern evident in previous peace accords, the Algiers agreement is silent on the modalities that will allow for representation of the interests, issues and perspectives of diverse groups within Malian society. This includes not only the CMA movements, but also broader civil society groups.⁵³ In the past, traditional chiefs and community leaders have found democracy threatening and have sought to control elections and block democratisation processes emerging as a result of peace agreements.

⁴⁸ Interview with Swedish diplomat, 13 September, 2016.

⁴⁹ Pezard and Shurkin. *Achieving Peace in Northern Mali*.

⁵⁰ Reeve. *Devils in the detail*; Even though all groups in northern Mali have been marginalised within the Malian state, the largest ethnic groups in the north – the Fulani (14% of the northern population) and Songhay (7%) – have nevertheless been more integrated into the central state, and far less divided among themselves than the Tuareg (and Arab) communities. There is great resentment in the north among the Fulani and Songhay communities of Tuaregs and Arabs.

⁵¹ Pezard and Shurkin. *Achieving Peace in Northern Mali*.

⁵² Nyirabikali. *Mali Peace Accord*.

⁵³ Ibid

They fear having no role in a decentralised system.⁵⁴ It is essential that groups which may not have had a strong voice in the peace process are not forgotten. External actors, including donors, could play an important role in supporting civil society groups and making sure that their voices are heard in the continued political processes and in implementation of the Algiers agreement.

3.3 Defence and Security

The defence and security provisions of the Algiers agreement address four key areas:

1. The *cantonment* and subsequent *disarmament* and *demobilisation* of former rebel combatants, with some being selected for integration into the Malian security forces and the rest being *reintegrated* into civil society. The *reconstitution* of the security forces to include former rebels is considered essential in increasing northern participation in national institutions and in ensuring that the security forces are representative of the population.
2. After the security forces have been reconstituted, they will also be gradually *redeployed* across northern Mali to re-establish the state footprint that withered when state security forces were pushed back from the northern regions by rebels and Islamist factions in 2013. A substantial number of those forces deployed to the north will be northerners. The redeployment process is to be directed by an *Operational Coordination Mechanism* (OCM⁵⁵), representing all signatory parties. It will also be responsible for coordinating joint patrols that can provide security in the north until state forces have been fully re-deployed.⁵⁶
3. In-depth *Security Sector Reform* (SSR).
4. A commitment to *fight terrorism* and *organised crime*.

3.3.1 DDR, cantonment and reconstitution of state forces

The disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) process has experienced significant delays. While identification and construction of some cantonment sites is ongoing with support from the UN, actual cantonment has yet to begin. Consequently, no advances have been made on the issues that are to follow cantonment: DDR or the reconstitution of state forces. Based on the latest data available, eight cantonment sites (four for the Platform and four for the CMA)

⁵⁴ Pezard and Shurkin. *Achieving Peace in Northern Mali*.

⁵⁵ Also known as the *Mécanisme Opérationnelle de Coordination*, MOC.

⁵⁶ *Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali*, 31 May 2016.

are about to be finalised.⁵⁷ The UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) is also responsible for outfitting the cantonment sites. However, a final and official list of combatants from the CMA and the Platform to be cantoned is still lacking. The number of combatants in need of cantonment has been estimated by the CMA and the Platform to be 16,000-18,000 individuals, although this is most likely a high estimate.⁵⁸ The UN has placed the number at around 10,000.

In accordance with the Algiers agreement, a national committee for integration of the security forces and DDR was established in spring 2016.⁵⁹ However, it has since existed mainly on paper, as actual appointments to the commissions from the CMA and the Platform have only recently been made. The government has also been reluctant to allow representation from the armed groups in the committee, arguing that integration and SSR is “state business.”⁶⁰ Once in place, the commissioners will be responsible for establishing criteria and methods for determining the selection and participation of combatants in the DDR programme.

The lack of progress on cantonment is a result of the CMA and the Platform failing to provide lists of suggested cantonment sites and of combatants to be cantoned. This in turn is a consequence of the unwillingness of the armed groups to move forward on disarmament until sufficient progress has been made on the political and institutional reforms. While DDR has been a priority of the government, the CMA and the Platform have been hesitant to proceed with the cantonment process – the key to enable implementation on all other articles on defence and security – while progress on the political and institutional reforms remains limited.⁶¹ The signing of the June roadmap raised hopes that the political process would advance, providing impetus for the DDR process to accelerate. As mentioned, however, the political process has not moved forward as intended, leaving DDR at a stalemate.

Another concern is the protesting youth groups that have criticised the DDR process heavily for only including fighters from the signatory movements. Youth groups in Gao, that took up arms as self-defence militias to fight the jihadist occupation in 2012-2013 and to assume policing duties, have been protesting their exclusion from the benefits of DDR and from the broader representation of the population in implementation of the peace agreement. There is great resentment that the armed rebel combatants will be the only recipients of reintegration schemes, while these youth groups will go jobless.⁶² As the youth groups grow

⁵⁷ E-mail correspondence with MINUSMA desk officer, 18 September 2016.

⁵⁸ Jeune Afrique, April 29, 2016.

⁵⁹ *Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali*, 31 May 2016.

⁶⁰ Interview, United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 24 May 2016

⁶¹ *Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali*, 18 March 2016.

⁶² Kamara, C. 2016. ‘Violent protests have erupted in Mali’. *Washington Post*, August 15 2016

stronger and more organised, their disconnection from implementation of the peace agreement could be a spoiler for the entire implementation process.

3.3.2 Redeployment of security and armed forces to the north

Since no reconstitution of the security forces has yet begun, the redeployment of the security forces has been put on hold. Efforts in this area have instead focused on establishing the Operational Coordination Mechanism (OCM) and the joint patrols. The joint patrols play an important role in the peace process as they are intended to provide security in the north, including protection of the interim authorities, while also effectively integrating fighters from the armed groups into the Malian security forces. This is an essential step towards increasing the legitimacy of the Malian forces and will, at least in theory, relieve MINUSMA of some of the pressure associated with providing security, enabling the UN to focus its efforts on other issues.

According to the Algiers agreement, the OCM and the joint patrols were to be established within 60 days of signing. This deadline was not met. In a significant achievement, the June 2016 roadmap set out an agenda for establishing the OCM and the joint patrols by mid-August 2016. Each party submitted the names of 200 soldiers (a total of 600 soldiers) to partake in patrols in Gao and vehicles for patrolling were procured by the government. Renewed fighting between the armed groups nevertheless postponed the joint patrols. The parties have agreed to start the patrols as soon as possible, in particular as they are necessary to establish the security required to operationalise the interim authorities.

3.3.3 Security sector reform

Some progress towards Security Sector Reform (SSR) has been made, such as capacity building for the parliament as the oversight mechanism and civil society groups in their roles as ‘watchdogs’ of the security sector. In May 2016 a national council for SSR, intended to represent all signatories, was established. Similarly to the DDR commission, it nevertheless continues to exist mainly on paper, as nominations to the council have yet to be made.⁶³ According to the UN, this national council for SSR is of critical importance to implementing cantonment, DDR, reconstitution of the security forces and territorial police and local advisory committees on security.⁶⁴ In an effort to strengthen democratic oversight of the security sector, the government held a workshop supported by MINUSMA in March 2016 to discuss the role of the national assembly and the development of a

⁶³ Interview United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 24 May 2016.

⁶⁴ *Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali*, 31 May 2016

triennial strategic plan for 2016-2019.⁶⁵ Training of judges and of staff in the correctional system has also taken place.

Overall, however, a genuine SSR process is still lacking. As the national council for SSR has not yet been able to conduct a strategic assessment on which a comprehensive SSR approach can be based, any reforms made so far have been of an ad hoc nature, rather than part of a coordinated strategy.⁶⁶

It seems that SSR-related issues have been placed on the back burner, while DDR and the joint patrols have been prioritised in the hope of creating immediate security. The delayed SSR process carries obvious risks. Without a clear agenda for the security sector, issues such as reintegration, legitimacy of the security forces and civilian oversight risk being forgotten. This in turn would allow old drivers of conflict to come back and haunt the Malians.

The Malian government has reportedly been hesitant to address DDR- and SSR-related issues together with the armed groups, as it regards these issues as the core business of the state.⁶⁷ For these areas to move forward, however, all parties to the peace agreement, just as other groups in the Malian society, likely need to be involved.

3.3.4 Fighting terrorism and transnational organised crime

At this point, the Malian problem is intrinsically tied to the presence of radical, terrorist and criminal groups and the inability of the Malian government and the UN to provide security throughout the northern regions. Since the radical Islamist groups were left out of the Algiers agreement, questions are being asked about whether the end of the road has been reached in advancing security in northern and central Mali without engaging the armed Islamists politically. The issue of political Islam was reportedly left unaddressed intentionally in the peace talks, but is considered by some to be an avenue for opening up dialogue with the less radical elements.⁶⁸ However, given the blurred lines between Islamist and other armed groups, this has proven to be a challenging task.

Since the signing of the 2015 Algiers agreement, no significant progress in reducing the threat from terrorists has been made. In fact, while persistent insecurity has been a challenge affecting the implementation of all previous Malian peace agreements, the presence of extremist and jihadist groups has made the security situation in Mali worse now than in the aftermath of any former peace agreement.⁶⁹ Extremist and terrorist groups continue to operate in northern Mali,

⁶⁵ *Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali*, 18 March 2016.

⁶⁶ Interview United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 24 May 2016.

⁶⁷ Interview with Swedish diplomat, 13 September 2016.

⁶⁸ RFI (Radio) interview with Jean-Hervé Jézéquel (International Crisis Group), 20 December 2015.

⁶⁹ *Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali*, 18 March 2016.

constituting a severe security threat and undermining the peace process by targeting its supporters and preventing its implementation. An example of this is the threat posed by extremists and terrorists to the DDR process. The threat posed by the jihadists was used by the armed groups during the peace process to negotiate particular terms relating to DDR and to circumvent the original idea that groups would disarm before negotiations commenced.⁷⁰ So far, neither the government nor MINUSMA has been able to fully protect civilians in the north. Laying down arms before security is ensured in the north is therefore associated with very real threats. The armed movements may thus seek to further delay the process and remain armed, even when the political and institutional reforms are sufficiently advanced.

Attacks are also being conducted at an increasing distance into the south, pointing to high capacity and increasing reach of terrorist groups.⁷¹ Criminal activity in northern Mali, including looting and banditry, also continues to be a major threat to the civilian population, fostering insecurity and fear in local communities.⁷²

3.3.5 Approaches to subdue terrorism

The hard militaristic response to terrorism, driven by e.g. the US and France, assumes that the ‘terrorist’ groups are easily distinguishable and that partnership can be sought with the parties to the peace agreement to target these terrorists. However, the distinction between ‘terrorist’ groups and other armed factions is not always easy to make. The shifting and re-shifting of alliances has resulted in the designation ‘terrorist’ being primarily a political statement.⁷³ Throughout the peace process, international partners pushed for the armed parties to be cleared of any terrorist label, in order to enable cooperation and gain donor support for the process. The government, on the other hand, has argued that the armed movements, in particular elements of the CMA, are so intermeshed with groups like Ansar Dine that such a distinction is impossible to make. It is difficult to assess whether some of the attacks occurring in Mali should be labelled terrorist attacks, or simply communal or intercommunal violence.⁷⁴ Several of the groups often labelled as jihadists owe their existence to local interests and conflicts and excluding these from political dialogue may result in missed opportunities for progress and reconciliation.

One example is the *Front de libération du Macina* (FLM), a relatively new group operating in the Mopti region of central Mali, which conducted small-scale raids and assassinations throughout 2015 and in November claimed responsibility for

⁷⁰ Wing. ‘French intervention in Mali’, p 67

⁷¹ *Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali*, 18 March 2016.

⁷² *Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali*, 18 March 2016, p 8.

⁷³ Wing. ‘French intervention in Mali’, p 68

⁷⁴ Ibid

the terrorist attack on the Radisson hotel in the Malian capital, Bamako. This gained the group the label of ‘jihadist organisation’. There are strong reasons to doubt that FLM in fact carried out the Radisson attack.⁷⁵ The smaller-scale attacks were conducted at the instigation of the FLM, but carried out by Fulani cattle herders motivated by disagreement with the Fulani land-owning elite and the Malian government over pastoral rights and political representation. Few members were in fact radicalised and the alleged jihadist agenda was, at least at the time, an afterthought.⁷⁶ Adding narratives that attribute a global agenda to groups primarily motivated by local grievances carries the risk of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy, as repression may spur further radicalisation. The Malian security forces have conducted heavy-handed ‘counter-insurgency’ operations that have targeted Fulani communities. Fulani groups have also been attacked by other militias in the area and have responded by creating their own militias, primarily attacking the Malian state. Clashes between Fulani communities and Bambara communities in the Mopti region have also left many dead. This has opened up a new front in the Malian conflict, with attacks spreading to central and southern parts of the country – areas with much larger populations and greater economic importance than the north.

The conflict involving the Fulani has also highlighted the problematic issue of the involvement of actors not represented in the peace process. The government, with support from MINUSMA, has initiated dialogue with the Fulani groups that have taken up arms.⁷⁷ However, there is currently no dialogue with MUJAO, Ansar Dine or AQIM. One of the interviewees described a lost window of opportunity for engaging the latter organisations, arguing that they are currently too strong and the government too weak for dialogue to be constructive. Thus they could be expected to make impossible demands and ‘blackmail’ the government during any negotiations. However, these groups have goals and aims that oppose peaceful implementation of the peace agreement and thus it is not possible to work with them. Furthermore, it would most likely be a hard sell to invite these groups to the political discussions, as many Malians already feel that some armed groups have been given too much influence and power over the process.

Another option could be to increase the military effort to target the armed Islamist groups. Since the state still has little to no presence in the areas where terrorists primarily operate, the Malian government is supported by MINUSMA and the French regional counter-terror operation *Barkhane* in its attempt to combat terrorism.⁷⁸ The government of Mali has long requested additional support in the

⁷⁵ Al-Qaida in the Islamic Mahgreb and Al-mourabitoune also claimed responsibility and both are more likely candidates

⁷⁶ Waitling, J. and Raymond, P. 2015. Don’t call it an jihadist insurgency – yet. *Foreign Policy*, 16 December 2015.

⁷⁷ Interview UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 9 May 2016.

⁷⁸ *Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali*, 18 March 2016.

fight against terrorism and advocates a strengthened mandate for MINUSMA and deployment of an intervention brigade-like force, similar to the rapid reaction force the UN has deployed in the Democratic Republic of Congo. At the level of the African Union, discussions on whether the organisation would be able to deploy a multinational task force similar to that which is active in combating Boko Haram and the Lord's Resistance Army in Central Africa have also been ongoing.⁷⁹ In June 2016, MINUSMA was provided with a new mandate to act more proactively in dealing with asymmetric threats against the mission and the civilian population, but it is still not authorised to carry out anti-terror operations.⁸⁰

The weak capacity of the government and the porous borders in the Sahel region mean that defeating the terrorist groups militarily cannot come without strong partnerships with external actors, including international and regional organisations and neighbouring countries. The regional dynamic is nevertheless a complicating factor, with neighbouring countries like Niger and Algeria having vested interests linked to some of the armed Islamist groups.⁸¹

While the joint patrols could increase security in the north, it is unlikely that government security forces, even alongside fighters from the armed groups, will be able to defeat extremist and terrorist groups on their own in the foreseeable future.

3.4 Socioeconomic and cultural development

The provisions on socio-economic and cultural development in the Algiers agreement are focused on accelerating the socio-economic development of the north and on allowing local communities greater ownership of their own development. The intention is to empower local communities to formulate their own development strategies, thereby ensuring that the perspectives of the north are sufficiently taken into account. A variety of areas such as basic social services, food safety, infrastructure and employment are highlighted in the agreement. New administrative structures, with the purpose of facilitating increased participation by northern communities and raising development levels of the north to those of the rest of the country, also outlined in the agreement.

The holding of an international conference for the economic recovery and development of Mali in Paris on 22 October 2015 was one major achievement in advancing the socio-economic development of northern. The conference mobilised 3.2 billion Euro in support for Mali, providing a base for social reform

⁷⁹ Interview African Union Peace Support Operations Division, 13 September 2016

⁸⁰ *Security Council Adopts Resolution 2295. United Nations Meetings Coverage, SC/12426*, 29 June 2016

⁸¹ Unconfirmed claims from interviewees argue that Niger would not like to see MUJAO defeated, while Algeria is a supporter of HCUA, a CMA-group affiliated with Ansar Dine.

of the country, with special attention to the north. Moreover, an assessment has been made of the development needs in the northern regions and the Malian government is devising a development strategy for the north.

Other than this, little progress has been made. A primary reason has been that the political and security-related aspects of the peace agreement have been prioritised, with little attention being paid to long-term socio-economic issues as yet.

As in all other areas, the main challenge has been the persistent insecurity, lack of infrastructure and limited government reach in the north, which has also had a negative effect on restoration by the government of basic services to the people of the north. While a few schools have opened in Kidal, many have remained closed. This, in turn, has spurred demonstrations aimed at the government and the armed groups.⁸² In general, the Malian people have yet to reap the benefits of the Algiers agreement. A major concern has been the lack of delivery of so-called 'peace dividends' to the population, i.e. (socio-economic) benefits derived from being at peace that will generate support for, and confidence in, the peace process amongst the population. MINUSMA and other UN agencies, funding bodies and programmes in Mali have sought to mitigate this by establishing a range of projects to provide potable water and electricity to some communities in central and northern regions.

3.5 Reconciliation, justice and humanitarian issues

In order to facilitate broader peace building, the 2015 Algiers agreement commits the signatories to investigating human rights and war crime allegations against all sides to the conflict, denying amnesty to perpetrators and combating corruption, impunity, terrorism and organised crime such as drug trafficking. It also entails a commitment to the pursuit of national reconciliation, which will be supported by e.g. putting in place mechanisms for a truth and reconciliation commission, creating a commission to combat corruption and another to deal with war crimes, ensuring better coordination of judicial powers, and initiating judicial reform. In addition, through the Algiers agreement the parties commit to creating the necessary conditions that will facilitate return, repatriation and reintegration of the displaced population.⁸³

Some initiatives, such as a national conference to foster understanding and reconciliation are underway, although planning has been moving very slowly. This conference is intended to address key issues from the peace agreement, including dialogue on the use of the term 'Azawad'.

⁸² Interview with Swedish diplomat, 13 September 2016.

⁸³ *Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali emanating from the Algiers Process.*

A truth, justice and reconciliation commission was established in 2015, but the parties became locked in disagreement over its membership when the armed groups demanded greater participation.⁸⁴ In December 2015, it was decided that the number of commissioners would increase from 15 to 25, in order to address the representation issues. At the time of writing, the commissioners remain to be appointed.

Furthermore, the intended international commission of inquiry concerning the conflict and issues such as war crimes has not yet been established. A key question concerns how far back the commission inquiry should go, with the CMA arguing for inclusion of all conflicts since independence and the government wanting to focus on the 2012 conflict. So far, the government's work on transitional justice and impunity has reportedly made very little progress and the civilian population is suffering from ongoing abuse from terrorists, rebels and the Malian security forces.⁸⁵ Moreover, the government's counter-terrorism operations have been criticised for not respecting international humanitarian obligations.

The humanitarian situation continues to warrant attention. Northern Mali still lacks key services, including healthcare and schools for many children. Insecurity in the Mopti region has led to the closure of 25% of its schools.⁸⁶ The situation for refugees and internally displaced people in Mali also continues to pose challenges, although the numbers are no longer increasing.⁸⁷

Similarly to the issue of socio-economic and cultural development, implementation of commitments made in the area of reconciliation, justice and humanitarian issues has been considered of secondary importance to maintaining peace in the short term. As long as implementation of political reform and security are at a stalemate, no significant advances on development or reconciliation can be expected. Moreover, no room has been made in the CSA to engage with the longer-term issues in a parallel process, although these are of equal importance to fulfilment of the peace agreement.⁸⁸

3.6 Summary

At present, in month 17 out of a planned 18-24 month implementation period, the Algiers agreement is still the foundation on which hopes of a peaceful future for Mali rests. Nevertheless, in terms of actual implementation, not much has been achieved. A part of the problem has been the disagreement amongst the parties of how to sequence the implementation. While the government has prioritised

⁸⁴ *Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali.*, 18 March 2016, p 4.

⁸⁵ *Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali*, 31 May 2016

⁸⁶ *Ibid*

⁸⁷ *Ibid*

⁸⁸ Interview with Swedish diplomat, 13 September 2016.

disarmament and demobilisation of the armed groups, the rebels have refused to be forthcoming until sufficient progress on political reform has been made.

The signatories and the international partners have both recognised the slow progress and repeatedly agreed to speed up implementation in areas such as local administration, joint patrols and finalisation of the humanitarian emergency plan. Pressure from the international community has resulted in the Government taking the significant step of establishing the interim authorities in the north during October 2016. Whether this will lead to progress in disarmament and demobilisation as well remains to be seen. A second main issue is the presence of armed extremist and jihadist groups which continue to pose a major security threat and undermine implementation of the peace process by preventing officials from taking up office and make the armed groups unwilling to disarm. While the peace agreements include provisions on fighting terrorism, the issue of the role of political Islam in Mali was left unaddressed and Islamists were left out of the peace process. The road ahead likely includes both taking measures to bring less extreme Islamist groups to the negotiating table as well as increasing counter-terrorism efforts.

4 Concluding analysis

4.1 Implementation gone wrong?

The signing of the 2015 peace agreement in Algiers gave momentum to the peace process in Mali and created hope within and outside the country of a new, brighter, future for Mali. More than a year later, that hope has given way to renewed despair as violence is yet again building and new conflict dynamics are on the rise, now including central parts of the country. Little has happened within any of the four main articles of the agreement and the population is still waiting to reap the benefits of a peace that seems more elusive now than a year ago.

There has been a strong focus on the political/institutional and security aspects of the peace agreement. The DDR process, including cantonment of former combatants, together with the re-establishment of the state in the north and the setting up of government institutions, has dominated the agenda of the parties to the Algiers agreement and external actors. ‘Soft’ issues, such as socio-economic development, reconciliation and justice, have received less attention and have yet to show tangible results.

The first year has been marked by a logic that has not been conducive to implementation of the agreement. While the government has been pushing for the demobilisation of armed groups, thereby reducing the threat from its opponents, it has been less willing to include such groups in the administration of the country, mainly in the north. The armed groups, on their part, have been pushing for a greater say in the north, specifically calling for the introduction of the interim administrations set out in the peace agreement. Without these structures in place, the armed groups have not been willing to move forward on key issues such as DDR or the joint patrols set out in the agreement. This stalemate has had the consequence of preventing any improvement being made in the security situation, thereby making progress in the socio-economic and governance area very difficult.

Since the 1960s, Mali has experienced four Tuareg rebellions, giving rise to five different peace accords.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ While the first rebellion (1963-4) was put down brutally by the Malian state and did not result in a peace accord, the second rebellion (1990-96) resulted in a cessation of hostilities in 1991 – the so-called *Tamarasset Accord* – and a *National Pact* between the Republic of Mali and Unified Movements and Fronts of Azawaad in 1992. The third Tuareg rebellion (2006-2009) resulted in the Algiers Accord of 2006. The latest rebellion in 2012 resulted in a preliminary agreement for the presidential election and inclusive peace talks in 2013 – the *Ougadougou Accord* – and in mid-2015 the Algiers Agreement (sometimes referred to as the Bamako agreement).

Reviews of these accords show that they all prescribe the same solutions to the conflict.⁹⁰ However, the repetitive nature of the rebellions indicates that the root causes of grievances have never been sufficiently addressed in these accords. While each agreement may have generated some improvements,⁹¹ both sides have failed to honour their pledges, resulting in mounting dissatisfaction which has allowed conflict to erupt again.⁹² This track record provides a gloomy backdrop to the prospect of successful implementation of the Algiers agreement.

4.2 Facilitating further implementation

The slow pace of the process brings the commitment of the parties into question. So far, the Malian government has not taken the opportunity presented by the ceasefire and the peace agreement to kick-start implementation of the peace agreement. With the government in the driving seat, the armed groups are unlikely to move faster on their side of the deal. International pressure is a key factor in ensuring that the parties stay committed to the process. While no party seems fully dedicated to the implementation moving forward, neither the signatory groups nor the government wants to be held accountable for the collapse of the peace process. Rather, the parties are dragging their feet in an attempt to win time to further negotiate the terms of implementation.

The Algiers agreement in itself offers some answers as to why implementation has been so slow. While the agreement was an important step forward in the peace process, its content is still rather vague on the specificities of the reform process. The terms of the agreement are largely lacking in detail on *how* to implement the reforms, merely outlining the goals rather than the process for achieving these goals. There is also a lack of specific detail on what some of these goals will comprise once achieved. This lack of detail has provided the parties with room to continue to manoeuvre and the implementation phase is still a place for negotiation, effectively delaying efforts to move forward quickly.

Rather than focusing on monitoring the implementation of agreed conditions, the CSA and its sub-committees are hosting continued discussion and mediation, as several issues are still being contested by the parties. To resolve this, the chairs of the committees need to be strong, while international partners need to be firm in demanding genuine engagement from the parties in finding solutions to move ahead. During the CSA meeting in September 2016, the use of sanctions by the international community against individuals or collectives obstructing

⁹⁰ This includes recognising the north's special status; opening the way for decentralisation; improving treatment of northerners by the government and the armed forces; integrating northern rebels into Mali's security forces and administration; and promoting economic development in the north. For more detail, see Shurkin and Pezard X and the current peace agreement.

⁹¹ Pezard and Shurkin. *Achieving Peace in Northern Mali*.

⁹² *Talks without hope*. The Economist/Baobab, August 26 2014.

implementation of the agreement was first mentioned. The international community, including key facilitators such as regional heads of state, e.g. those of Algeria, Mauritania and Niger, will be essential in ensuring that the time lost on slow implementation is used to gain mutual trust, rather than to prepare for the next round of fighting.

4.3 Lasting peace in Mali?

A review conducted by RAND on the failure of previous peace agreements revealed that, apart from issues of bad faith among the parties and poor implementation, the failure of previous peace accords can be explained by six factors:

- Lack of representativeness, with the peace accord representing little more than small minorities within minorities
- A faulty understanding of the conflict as driven primarily by grievances against the Malian state, while ignoring intercommunal tensions in the north as part of the root cause of the problem
- A flawed understanding of decentralisation and democracy in which electoral competition is seen as a zero-sum game, exacerbating intercommunal tensions
- The absence of transitional justice and reconciliation
- The limited perceived legitimacy in the north of the government in Bamako
- Persistent insecurity.⁹³

In comparison with previous agreements, the Algiers agreement is faring only slightly better. The prospects for lasting peace in Mali looks bleak, unless dialogue and international efforts can be revamped to address the six factors outlined above. While the obstacles are many and great, opportunities do exist. Continued post-agreement dialogue and negotiations, both within and outside the implementation process, provides an opportunity to address some of the factors that prevented previous agreements from resulting in lasting peace. This will nevertheless require that the dialogue is expanded beyond the signatory parties. It will also require a parallel process in which the ‘softer’ and more long-term issues covered by the CSA sub-committees on *Socio-economic and Cultural Development* and *Reconciliation, Justice and Humanitarian Affairs* are addressed.

Above all, lasting peace in Mali is dependent on the design and construction of a new and more inclusive Malian state. Simply implementing the commitments

⁹³ Pezard and Shurkin. *Achieving Peace in Northern Mali*.

made in the Algiers agreement among its signatories will not be sufficient to generate this outcome. Fortunately for Mali, the country currently has the attention of the international community to help ensure a continued peace process that will enable the implementation of the Algiers agreement while at the same time seek to build a new Mali, in which sustainable peace is possible.

Appendix

The CMA⁹⁴

In general, the CMA includes Tuareg and Arab rebels opposed to the Malian state. The CMA is a coalition of:

- MNLA – the main secular Tuareg separatist group, primarily composed of the Idadnes clan
- HCUA – an Islamist movement led by Tuareg traditional leaders formerly associated with the *Ansar Dine* jihadist movement, linked to the Ifhogas clan and the Kidal region
- The *Arab Movement of Azawad, CMA chapter* (MAA-CMA) – the main Arab or Mauer separatist movement, primarily composed of Berrabiche Arabs from Timbuktu, many of whom were soldiers who deserted from the Malian army in 2012. A dissident group from the MAA, which joined the CMA rather than the Platform due to its proximity to the Ifhogas of Kidal/HCUA
- The *Coordination for Movements and Fronts of Patriotic Resistance-II* (CMFPR-II), a dissident group from the CMFPR that was initially excluded from the Algiers process but later joined the discussions by means of inclusion in the CMA, despite not sharing the same vision of autonomy for Azawad as the rest of the coalition
- A splinter group from the *Coalition for the Peoples of Azawad* (CPA), a dissident group from the CPA that signed the peace agreement against the wishes of its leader, causing the break-up of the movement
- A splinter group of CMFRP-II.

The Platform⁹⁵

The Platform primarily includes pro-government self-defence militias, including:

- The *Coordination for Movements and Fronts of Patriotic Resistance-I* (CMFPR-I), a coalition of self-defence movements made up primarily of Songhai and Peul clans from the Gao and Mopti regions
- The *Self-defence group for Imghad Tuaregs and their allies* (GATIA) – a movement drawing its membership primarily from Tuareg Imhads in the Kidal region. The presence of former fighters from the Malian and Libyan

⁹⁴ Lackenbauer, H et al. *If Our Men Won't Fight We Will*, pp. 37-46; Maïga. 2016. *Armed groups in Mali*.

⁹⁵ Lackenbauer, H. et al. *If Our Men Won't Fight We Will*, pp. 37-46; Maïga. 2016. *Armed groups in Mali*.

armies in the group has raised claims that GATIA is a militia in the service of the government

- The *Arab Movement of Azawad, Platform chapter* (MAA-Platform), a movement aiming to defend Arab interests in the north. Has associations to MUJAO and drug trafficking in the Gao region
- The *Popular Front of Azawad* (FPA) – a splinter group of the MNLA that left the CMA since it considered Malian unity essential to continued peace and the fight against the Islamists
- Splinter groups of the CPA and CMFPR-II.

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