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On April 21, 2016, the International Peace Institute (IPI) co-organized a workshop with the Stimson Center and Security Council Report to assess the challenges faced by the UN in Mali. This event is part of a series of workshops bringing together member states and UN actors to analyze how UN policies and the June 2015 recommendations of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) can be applied to country-specific contexts.

This meeting note was drafted collaboratively by IPI, the Stimson Center, and Security Council Report. It reflects the rapporteurs' interpretation of the discussions and does not necessarily represent the views of all other participants.

IPI's Brian Urquhart Center for Peace Operations conducts wide-ranging research and policy facilitation on prevention and mediation, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding, aimed at informing and assisting a broad range of policymakers and civil society on emerging security challenges and multilateral response capacities.

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# Applying the HIPPO Recommendations to Mali: Toward Strategic, Prioritized, and Sequenced Mandates

MAY 2016

## Introduction

In light of the challenges faced by the UN's Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the expected renewal of its mandate, the International Peace Institute (IPI), the Stimson Center, and Security Council Report co-organized a workshop on April 21, 2016, to give member states and UN actors the opportunity to develop a shared understanding of the situation faced by the UN in Mali. Based on this shared understanding, the objective was to advance toward a common strategic assessment to use as the basis for enhancing political strategies and mission design and crafting a strategic, prioritized, and sequenced mandate for MINUSMA. This workshop was the first in a series analyzing how UN policies and the June 2015 recommendations of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) can be applied to country-specific contexts.

The first session focused on political strategy, aiming to develop (i) a shared understanding of the current context in which MINUSMA is operating, how the situation in Mali has evolved so far, and how it is likely to evolve in the future; (ii) a shared vision of what self-sustaining peace in Mali would look like in the future; and (iii) a shared understanding of how MINUSMA could best assist the people of Mali to move toward that future, based on lessons from responses under its strategy and mandate to date and what new strategies could look like. The second session aimed to apply one of the HIPPO recommendations—the need for prioritized and sequenced mandates—to the Malian context.

## Political Strategy

The past year has seen significant progress in Mali, with the signing of a peace agreement in June 2015 between the government of Mali, the Coordination of Movements of Azawad (CMA), and the Platform and the ensuing decrease in violence between the signatory parties. These achievements have allowed the UN to shift from prioritizing cease-fire monitoring to focusing its efforts on the implementation of the peace agreement. Increased criminal and extremist activity, however, continues to threaten to destabilize these fragile gains.

Participants agreed that MINUSMA must first and foremost continue to assist with the implementation of the peace agreement. However, the political strategy thus far has focused on the restoration of territorial integrity and the extension of the formal structures of the state. Now that the cease-fire has been maintained with some success, MINUSMA must turn its attention to ensuring that the population enjoys peace dividends and that the return of

state authority provides for the delivery of public goods and services throughout the Malian territory. It must ensure that its security-focused activities are tied to this political goal.

Participants suggested that, to reflect this shift in context, the mission's political strategy should address the following issues:

- **Inclusiveness:** The majority of the population of Mali that did not take up arms was excluded from the peace negotiations in Algiers. MINUSMA should pursue a more inclusive approach to implementing the peace agreement by considering the perspectives of youth, women, and civil society actors, addressing the injustices of war in the north, and building stronger partnerships with development actors. Moreover, MINUSMA should address the question of representation of armed groups, which has become increasingly problematic in the implementation phase, notably in the peace agreement's Monitoring Committee (*Comité de suivi de l'accord*). The mission should do its best to ensure that all constituencies feel a sense of ownership of the peace process and feel that they are represented by the state, including by emphasizing their inclusion in the National Accord Conference (*Conférence d'entente nationale*) provided for by the peace agreement. The establishment of two new regions (Taoudenni and Menaka) and the implementation of a new interim administration law will be key to ensuring this sense of ownership. The Malian government's authority must derive from legitimacy in the eyes of the population, notably from concrete peace dividends and a better marriage of politics, security, and development, not just from winning a majority of votes.
- **Trust:** MINUSMA should continue to use its good offices to help build trust between the parties to the conflict to ensure progress on the implementation of the peace agreement. Toward this end, MINUSMA should help expedite the appointment of the independent observers provided for by the peace agreement to provide regular and impartial reports on its implementation.
- **Spoilers and asymmetric threats:** It is challenging to distinguish between proactive protection of civilians and counterterrorism objectives in Mali. MINUSMA should receive clear guidance on what its role in relation to these two objectives should be. This role could include identifying regions vulnerable to radicalization and engaging in prevention work, developing mechanisms to support defectors from extremist groups, developing corrections programs to ensure that individuals in prison do not radicalize, and strengthening the counterterrorism capacity of the Malian government and the G5 Sahel (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger). A more granular understanding of armed groups and their links to extremist groups and organized crime is also needed.
- **Political-military balance:** The balance between political and security reforms in Mali has reached a potentially destabilizing stalemate. Security concerns have impeded the return of state administrative control to much of the north, yet until crucial political and institutional components of the peace agreement are implemented, armed groups are hesitant to proceed with cantonment and disarmament. The mission should try to ensure that its security efforts, including disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) and the reconstitution of defense and security forces, are linked to the broader political strategy. Despite the defense and security sub-committee's progress on the follow-up to the agreement, there is at times a disconnect between the political direction and the needs of the people. The mission's credibility also risks being called into question if it is unable to protect itself and, therefore, to protect civilians.
- **Partnerships:** The success of the peace agreement depends on many factors, not all of which fall within MINUSMA's purview, including economic development, organized crime, border security, and development of counterterrorism capacity within the Malian defense and security forces. The mission should identify the comparative advantages of national, regional, and international partners in addressing these factors and support those partners in whatever way is appropriate.
- **Capabilities:** The HIPPO drew attention to the gap between some missions' mandates and the

resources to implement them. Such a gap is particularly evident in Mali, where the mission is a target of violence and operates in a challenging and changing environment. There is a need to enhance contingents' self-protection capacities, including through training and equipment for troop- and police-contributing countries, in order to minimize the "bunkerization" of the mission, which is counterproductive to the implementation of its mandate

- **Completion strategy:** The Malian government's call for an exit strategy for 2018, the year of the next presidential elections in Mali, can serve as an opportunity for MINUSMA to work in conjunction with the Malian government and its people to develop a shared understanding of the priorities and a vision for self-sustaining peace in Mali, with clear benchmarks for achieving that vision, including what each partner should be doing (the government, MINUSMA, regional and international partners, etc.).

## Prioritization and Sequencing

Considering that all priorities listed in MINUSMA's mandate are highly important, participants agreed that attempting to rank them according to importance would prove futile. Moreover, adding to MINUSMA's mandate without increasing its resources and capabilities would only widen the gap between the expected and the possible. It was noted that the mission's mandate should be considered as a starting point rather than an end in itself.

Participants discussed the importance of prioritization and sequencing to ensure that mandates are realistic and achievable. Both the Security Council and the UN Secretariat have to be pragmatic about what is and is not feasible at any given time. The UN's default setting for liberal peace must be offset by a realistic analysis of the context, political will, and financial means available. This will require the Security Council to make bold and difficult decisions about what to exclude from mandates.

Participants agreed that prioritization and sequencing should not be viewed as a contest to determine which agendas the international community considers most important. Instead, mandate sequencing should be approached

pragmatically, with consideration for the conditions that need to be in place for key mission objectives to succeed at different stages of the conflict recovery process. Prioritization also requires understanding how different parts of the mission work together to support evolving priorities under a coherent mission-wide strategy.

Another element raised by participants was the need to tweak the mandate and its priorities over time, highlighting how the mandating process needs to be more flexible to ensure that it responds to needs on the ground. Participants also highlighted the importance of the Security Council exercising its political leverage throughout the lifespan of peace operations, not only when their mandates come up for renewal.

MINUSMA's deployment has been severely hampered by a lack of critical operational capabilities and human intelligence networks. More than 80 percent of MINUSMA's military capacity is directed toward force protection, mainly of its facilities, leaving a very limited capability to support the mission's other objectives. In the face of these limitations, what can the mission feasibly achieve? Participants suggested possible achievements in the following areas:

- **Link the peace agreement's security and political dimensions:** The security and political dimensions of the conflict are fundamentally linked. At this stage, unless immediate institutional reforms take place, the defense and security aspects of the peace agreement cannot be implemented.
- **Support stabilization in the north:** State institutions are still absent in almost half of the country. The absence of basic services heightens the risk of radicalization and recruitment by extremist groups in areas, like Mopti, where the security situation has rapidly deteriorated in the last year. Where possible, and with full respect for the humanitarian space, MINUSMA should facilitate the deployment of humanitarian and development partners to the north of Mali. MINUSMA should also reexamine its approach to peacebuilding and stabilization projects in the north, which have so far been undertaken in a piecemeal way, and integrate them into a coherent stabilization plan.
- **Prioritize DDR as part of a long-term strategy:**

There is an urgent dilemma regarding the sequencing of DDR activities. The current DDR approach has been ad hoc; ideally DDR should be implemented as part of a longer-term and well-planned strategy for security sector reform (SSR). DDR should not be treated as a technical exercise and needs to be supported by a political strategy. Immediate gains need to be made on DDR to assure parties to the conflict that their concerns are being prioritized and alleviated. As the current cantonment process continues to move forward, critical questions remain. Which combatants will be integrated into the Malian defense and security forces, and which will be disarmed and reintegrated into civilian society? Who will take charge of the vetting process for those who are integrated into the armed forces? Is there an opportunity for some combatants to form part of a specialized counterterrorism unit within the defense and security forces? Will defectors from extremist groups be included in the DDR process? These questions must be answered, and quickly, before DDR and SSR reforms can move forward.

- **Clarify the protection of civilians mandate:** MINUSMA's current mandate links protection of civilians to the goal of stabilizing the north. However, this region holds only 10 percent of the country's population, and MINUSMA has found it extremely challenging to protect itself and civilians from violent extremist actors there. The mission's protection efforts in northern Mali have mostly consisted of using good offices and

political dialogue. Moreover, these efforts have been greatly limited by the "bunkerization" of mission personnel and the absence both of state institutions and of civilian actors in general (particularly development and humanitarian partners) from large parts of northern Mali. Greater clarity is needed with regard to the mission's responsibility to protect civilians and how this links to its political strategy. In the immediate security context, the mission may need to place greater emphasis on discreet partnerships with civil society actors that have greater capacity to engage with communities that feel marginalized by the political process in order to make its protection efforts more successful.

- **Come to a joint understanding of what the return of state authority means:** Some participants raised reservations to strongly linking MINUSMA's mandate to the return of state authority to the north. In the past, a similar mandate for the mission put it in a difficult situation with respect to the political process. Now that there is an agreement in place, some participants emphasized the need to come to a joint understanding of what the return of state authority means. It was noted that state authority should focus on the delivery of basic services rather than just on the return of security and defense actors. In addition, questions remain over the degree of decentralization of state institutions.

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## Agenda

Thursday, April 21, 2016

9:00–9:15

### Opening Remarks

Arthur Boutellis, *Director, Center for Peace Operations, IPI*

### Keynote Speaker

El Ghassim Wane, *Assistant Secretary-General for UN Peacekeeping Operations*

9:15–11:00

### Session 1: Political Strategy

*Experts will present a brief conflict analysis, outlining the major threats to peace and security in Mali. Participants will then define a political strategy for the mission that responds to the threats outlined in the conflict analysis. By defining a political strategy, participants will aim to outline what support the mission can provide with its current capacities.*

**Discussion questions:** *What is the political strategy underlying the current MINUSMA mandate? Is that political strategy still viable, or does it need to be revised? What are the primary obstacles to successful implementation of the peace agreement? How is MINUSMA working with other partners in the international mediation? What mission capabilities and approaches have proven effective at influencing the conflict? How can the UN best collaborate with regional organizations in evaluating the political and strategic context in which the mission is deployed? How can the Security Council remain engaged in supporting MINUSMA's political strategy?*

### Chair

Youssef Mahmoud, *Senior Adviser, IPI, and former member of the HIPPO*

### Speakers

William J. Durch, *Distinguished Fellow, Stimson Center*

Samuel Gahigi, *Mali Integrated Operational Team (IOT) Leader, UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations*

Dianguina dit Yaya Doucouré, *Chargé d'affaires, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Mali to the UN*

11:00–11:15

Coffee Break

11:15–1:00

### Session 2: Prioritization and Sequencing

*Participants will identify the mission's highest priority objectives in order to advance the political strategy defined in the previous session. Participants will also discuss the sequence in which priority objectives should be undertaken. By sequencing the objectives, participants will aim to ensure that the mission is not burdened by too many tasks at the same time.*

*Participants will also aim to sequence objectives so that the mission is not asked to carry out certain tasks prematurely, before the conditions for their success are in place.*



*Discussion questions: On the basis of the UN strategic review, which objectives in MINUSMA's current mandate should be prioritized? What obstacles have prevented the mission from translating mandated tasks into action, and what conditions need to be in place for those tasks to be carried out? How could the mandate better allow the mission to adapt to changing conditions on the ground? What prioritized and achievable benchmarks could be set for the mission, and how could these help prepare an exit strategy—as requested by the Malian government? Could these be translated into a compact with the host government?*

**Chair**

Ian Martin, *Executive Director, Security Council Report, and former member of the HIPPO*

**Speakers**

Aditi Gorur, *Director, Protecting Civilians in Conflict Program, Stimson Center*

Renata Dwan, *Chief of Policy and Best Practices Section, UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support*

Emmanuel Suquet, *First Secretary, Permanent Mission of France to the UN*

Brigadier General AKM Akhtaruzzaman, *Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to the UN*

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## Participants

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Security Council Report

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