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**INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES AND NATIONAL POSITIONS CONCERNING THE CRISIS IN MALI: TOWARDS AN INTERNATIONAL MILITARY INTERVENTION?**

**Abstract:**

The international consensus reached at the High-Level Meeting on developments in the Sahel, held on 26 September, has led to the adoption by the Security Council of Resolution 2071. Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, the Resolution calls for an inclusive dialogue of all parties involved in the crisis in Mali and opens the door for military intervention led by the African Union, with the support of other international organizations.

This possible military operation has provoked a variety of reactions in the African countries of the region. On the other hand, the European Union shows strong support towards any initiative that may return stability to Mali, and therefore to the Sahel. Mauritania and Algeria –both still suffering jihadist terrorism in the region and relentlessly fighting against it– are a bit reluctant to the deployment of a force which could have unexpected consequences within their frontiers.

United Nations has opened a period of 45 days for the African Union and ECOWAS to report on the feasibility of a military force in Mali. In this process, both organizations will have the strong support of the European Union. This represents a significant advance for the international community, which shows an unusual determination to return stability to the Sahel.

**Keywords:**

Sahel, Mali, ECOWAS, United Nations, France, Resolution 2071.

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## INTRODUCTION

Following the United Nations High-Level Meeting on developments in the Sahel, held on September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012, international support to this region has been activated, particularly the process of restoration of the territorial integrity of Mali. The priority and urgent objective is to regain sovereignty over the north part of country, which is currently dominated by terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM, Arab terrorism), Ansar Dine (Tuareg salafist rebellion movement), or the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MOJWA, a group split from AQIM), which is currently active in the South of Algeria, Niger and Mali. Only by controlling effectively the whole territory, with a strong democratic Government in Bamako, will it be possible to start fighting successfully the jihadist terrorism which prevails in the north of Mali and is spreading throughout the whole region, threatening Europe directly.

In the Sahel, there are currently different types of crisis going on:

- **Development crisis**, in the context of a pressing food crisis caused by draught and human displacement—with more than 250,000 refugees and displaced people—which is caused by the current governance crisis in the north of Mali.
- **Security crisis**, due to an increase of terrorist activity in the north of Mali and Arab movements against central powers in Bamako, the capital city. Moreover, this crisis is aggravated by weapon trafficking (which has increased due to the Libyan civil war), drug trafficking and human trafficking. Many of these activities, especially kidnapping westerners, are an important source of financing for terrorist groups.
- **Governance and sovereignty crisis in Mali**, aggravated by Captain Amadou Sanogo's coup d'état in March 2012. Malian army formed a Military Junta and took over the power despite the criticism of the international community, in and outside Africa, which demanded unanimously the restoration of constitutional order. Rebel movements in the north of the country, led by the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad, took advantage of the national chaos and declared unilaterally the independence of the so-called State of Azawad

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in April 2012. It is currently dominated by the terrorist group AQIM and the Islamist militia Ansar Dine.

Thanks to the mediation of the Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS), the Military Junta handed over the power to the Government of National Unity, led by President Dioncounda Traore and Prime Minister Mobido Diarra. This new Government will carry out an electoral process –bound for 2013, according to Malian authorities– in order to bring back a democratic regime to the country, legitimate the process, and regain the support of the international community

## NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

### Malian initiatives

The political process that started with the coup d'état in March 2012, aimed to give stability to the country and eliminate Islamist terrorism, ended up with the Military Junta taking over the power and the creation of a Government of National Unity in August 2012. However, far from achieving its goal, this political process has contributed to the disintegration of Mali, with the increase of pro-independence movements in the north of the country; it has also contributed to breaking the international consensus, due to the lack of legitimacy of the current powers. In view of this background, Malian authorities have proposed the following initiatives:

- On July 18<sup>th</sup>, Malian Transitional Government reported the situation in the north of Mali to the International Civil Court and condemned violent acts against civilians, hostage taking and recruitment of child soldiers by rebel and terrorist groups.

All these acts can constitute crimes that International Civil Court is competent to judge.

- The new Government of National Unity presented to the United Nations on September 18<sup>th</sup> the authorization for the deployment of an international military force in order to help Malian Armed Forces and to restore sovereignty in the whole country.

- At the United Nations High-Level Meeting held on September 26<sup>th</sup>, the Malian Prime Minister reiterated the request of authorization for the deployment of an international force.

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### ECOWAS' initiatives

Since the Malian governance crisis started in March, this organization –focused on economic matters and formed by 15 West African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo) – has led the mediation process to support the stabilization of Mali, before the United Nations and the African Union.

- On September 28<sup>th</sup>, it asked the United Nations for the approbation of a resolution authorizing the deployment of a stabilization force in Mali, in collaboration with the African Union.
- Moreover, it supports and hosts the Support and Follow-up Group meeting, called by the African Union and backed by the United Nations, which will be held in Bamako on October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2012. This meeting will be essential for determining the feasibility of the deployment of an African military force.

### United Nations' initiatives

After the United Nations High-Level Meeting, the Security Council –at the initiative of France, backed by the United Kingdom, India, South Africa, Morocco and Togo– has passed the Resolution 2071. That Resolution, adopted pursuant Chapter VII of the Charter, includes, among others, the following measures<sup>1</sup>:

- Exhorts Malian rebel groups to interrupt any relationship with terrorist organizations, especially Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the groups affiliated to it. It expresses its determination to penalize those rebel groups which do not comply with it.
- It urges the Transitional authorities of Mali, the Malian rebel groups and the legitimate representatives of the local population in the northern Mali to engage, as soon as possible, in a credible negotiations in order to seek a sustainable political solution in conformity with the country's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution 2071 (2012), adopted by the Security Council at its 6846th meeting, on October 12, 2012. Available at [http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/index.asp?symbol=s/res/2071%20\(2012\)&referer=/&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/index.asp?symbol=s/res/2071%20(2012)&referer=/&Lang=E)

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- It declares, after having received the report by the Secretary-General, its willingness to respond to the Transitional authorities of Mali's request for an international military force to help Malian Armed Forces recover the occupied regions in the north of the country.
- It asks the Secretary-General to provide military advisers to assist ECOWAS and the African Union and, in close consultation with Mali, neighboring countries and countries of the region, plan the eventual deployment of an international military force. It also asks the Secretary-General to present, in 45 days' time and in close consultation with the countries above, a written report on the feasibility of that operation. That is aimed to answer the petition made by Malian Transitional authorities that the United Nations authorize and support the deployment of this military force in Mali.
- It urges national transitional authorities to implement straight away the adequate measures to make preparatory activities easier in the regional and international level. Also, it asks United Nations Member States and regional and international organizations to provide coordinated support to those preparatory activities through military training, equipment supply and other types of assistance to fight terrorist groups and its affiliates.

With this resolution, the United Nations backs effectively the determination of international organizations to support Malian Government of National Unity and collaborate with it in order to restore the country's sovereignty and stability. That is a previous requirement which is necessary to activate other international initiatives, including the deployment of military forces to support the governance of Mali.

### **European Union's initiatives**

The main objective of the European Union Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel, which was approved in March 2011, is supporting the countries of the region (Mauritania, Mali and Niger) and collaborate with them in order to strengthen and grant the dissuasive presence of state structures in the whole territory, particularly in the far-off zones (northern Sahel<sup>2</sup>).

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<sup>2</sup> *Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel*. Available at [http://www.eeas.europa.eu/africa/docs/sahel\\_strategy\\_en.pdf](http://www.eeas.europa.eu/africa/docs/sahel_strategy_en.pdf)

This Strategy poses different challenges for the security of the region:

1. Spread of terrorist threatens, as well as radicalization, increase of the activity and recruiting of AQMI, including the development of ties with other terrorist groups.
2. Increase of transnational organized crime, particularly crime related to weapon trafficking, human trafficking and drug trafficking across borders.
3. Increase of rebel Tuareg groups, due to the return of combatants from Libya after Gaddafi's overthrow.
4. Conflicts between Arab communities and Black communities in the region.

Within the framework of this Strategy, the European Union has adopted the following measures:

- Deployment of the Mission of EUCAP SAHEL Niger. Spanish Colonel Francisco Espinosa is the head of this mission. Its aim is supporting Nigerian Government in the development of its security sector and particularly collaborating with the country's Security Forces in order to improve the operating capacity to fight terrorism and organized crime. This will avoid the spread of the Malian problem to Niger. This mission is deployed in Niamey (capital city of Niger) since August 8<sup>th</sup>. The initial core of the operation is formed by 50 members of military personnel.
- On October 14<sup>th</sup>, the European Union –through the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the 27 Member States– approved the planning of an eventual European military mission in Mali, in order to contribute to the training of the Malian Armed Forces. The United Nations supports European collaboration (Resolution 2071/2012), which takes place in the framework of “an African solution for an African problem”.

That is the reason why the European Union has decided that any contribution will be made conjointly with the United Nations, the African Union and ECOWAS<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Europapress (15/10/2012): Los 27 aprueban planificar una misión militar para entrenar al Ejército de Malí.

Available in Spanish at: <http://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-mali-27-aprueban-planificar-mision-militar-entrenar-ejercito-mali-20121015134456.html>. Consulted on: 16/10/2012.

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**NATIONAL POSITIONS CONCERNING A MILITARY INTERVENTION****Algeria's position**

Algeria has always been reluctant to the deployment of international forces in Mali and by extension, in the Sahel. Therefore, its interpretation of the Resolution 2071 is biased. On October 13<sup>th</sup>, the Foreign Affairs spokesperson, Amar Belani, declared that the resolution has “several elements” that ratify the Algerian position, which supports a diplomatic solution to the Malian, opposite to the military option, which is supported by other countries such as France<sup>4</sup>.

Despite the fact that the Resolution of the Security Council is very clear regarding the eventual authorization of a military intervention in Mali, Algeria describes it as “positive” and remarks the need of “establishing a credible negotiation process” between the Malian Government and the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad. In this process, Malian people should be “the main actors in the search for a solution, whilst neighboring countries should just accompany them”.

Nevertheless, Amar Belani has declared that “the resolution places Malian people at the center of the search for an exit to the crisis of the country and it involves neighboring countries to accompany Mali in this political process and in the search for a feasible solution”.

One of the reasons, among others, why Algeria does not support the deployment of an international force in Mali is the possibility that the terrorist groups go back to their places of origin, which are located within Algerian frontiers. Since the Military Coordination Command was created in September 2010, Algerian security forces have managed to push terrorist activity to the south –but without trespassing Malian frontiers– in order to look for more remote places to establish their training bases.

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<sup>4</sup> Agencia EFE, published in *La Razón* (13/10/2012): Argelia apoya la resolución de la ONU para resolver la crisis en Mali. Available in Spanish at <http://www.larazon.es/noticia/9633-argelia-apoya-la-resolucion-de-la-onu-para-resolver-la-crisis-en-mali>. Consulted on: 14/10/2012

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### Mauritania's position

According to the Mauritanian Government, the coup d'état in Mali in March 2012 and the overthrow of the President Amadou Toumani Touré have deprived the country of a legitimate actor in terrorism fight. For that reason, it pleads for the restoration of the democratic power in the country before carrying on collaborating in this coordinated fight in the Sahel.

In addition, Mauritania is not part of ECOWAS, although it has requested for it. Thus, it cannot debate about a joint and coordinated position in the frame of this organization or an eventual deployment of an international stabilization force in Mali. Also, Mali has not officially asked Mauritania what its opinion on that international mission is.

### Morocco's position

Since the beginning of the crisis in Mali and the destabilization of Sahel, Morocco has urged the international community to cooperate against terrorism in that region and in the whole East Africa. In May, Youssef Amrani, deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, asked for the "urgent establishment of a solid framework for dialogue, cooperation and solidarity which includes the States concerned about security and stability<sup>5</sup>".

The Minister expressed to the United Nations Security Council that "Morocco is deeply concerned" about the development and increase of terrorist activities in this vast African region. In addition, he highlighted his profound worry about the links between terrorist activities and drug or weapon trafficking, as well as piracy and kidnapping of civilians.

As a result, Morocco made clear to the United Nations Security Council that it supports the French initiative. Morocco also backed the approval of Resolution 2071.

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<sup>5</sup> FIDPRESS. Marruecos pide cooperación urgente contra terrorismo en el Sahel. Available in Spanish at [http://www.fidpress.com/article.php?id\\_art=289](http://www.fidpress.com/article.php?id_art=289). Consulted on: 13/10/2012

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### United States' position

In the framework of the United Nations High-Level Meeting, the United States maintained that restoring a real democratic regime in Mali was a necessary requirement to support an eventual military intervention. Despite that, the United States gave its full support to the position of France in the meeting, which was aimed to look for urgent solutions for the crisis in Mali. Regarding the Resolution 2071, the Department of State has highlighted how important its main objectives are, especially penalties against AQIM, as well as the availability and determination of the Security Council to answer the petition made by Mali that its armed forces receive support and military training in the field<sup>6</sup>.

Likewise, the United States has emphasized once more that Malian democratic institutions must be at the heart of terrorism eradication and, thus, it urges to restore a democratic and legitimate Government in the country as soon as possible.

### France's position

France has been the main supporter, within the European Union and out of it, of the initiatives aimed to restore stability in the Sahel and, especially, of all the initiatives orientated to restore the territorial integrity of Mali and eradicate Islamic terrorism in the north of the country.

Four French citizens are still kidnapped since 2010 by MOJWA, a terrorist faction in Niger. Regarding the eventual military intervention in Mali, François Hollande's Government has been the main supporter, within the Security Council, of the unanimous adoption of the Resolution 2071, which opens the door to the deployment of an international force. In this area, France makes the operation dependent on African forces in the framework of the African Union and the support of the United Nations<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department State. *Diplomacy in Action. UNSC Adoption of Resolution on Mali*. Available at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/10/199106.htm>. Consulted on: 14/10/2012

<sup>7</sup> Speech by François Hollande, President of the French Republic. High-Level Meeting on the Sahel. New York, September 26, 2012. Available at <http://ambafrance-us.org/spip.php?article3911>. Consulted on: 03/10/2012

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The fact that France supports unconditionally the military intervention has caused the immediate reaction of the terrorist groups in the region. Particularly, on October 15<sup>th</sup>, the spokesman of the armed group MOJWA, Oumar Ould Hamaha, threatened to execute the four French hostages if Hollande carried out the initiative of deploying a military force in the north of that country: "If he continues to throw oil on the fire, we will send him the pictures of French hostages' corpses in the coming days<sup>8</sup>".

Moreover, France seeks in Spain a solid ally for supporting the stabilization of the Sahel internationally. In this area, it was particularly remarkable the joint declaration in the Spain-France Bilateral Summit, held on October 10<sup>th</sup>. In the appearance after the joint declaration, the French President was very explicit about the situation of the Sahel and the convergence of France with Spain regarding an eventual intervention. Hollande said: "Finally, we have also talked about international issues. France and Spain not only share the same concerns about Mali and Syria but also have the same approach on the Resolution that the Security Council is preparing. We are aware that Africans are going to allow an intervention and therefore, they must decide when it will be carried out<sup>9</sup>."

## CONCLUSIONS

The United Nations Security Council Resolution 2071 is an important step to channel the reaction and the collaboration of the International Community regarding the alarming crisis in Mali; a crisis whose consequences in the Sahelian region, the African country or even beyond its frontiers are yet unforeseeable. That is the reason why the Security Council, with unanimous consensus of its members, has not hesitated to refer to Chapter VII of the Charter

<sup>8</sup> Reuters, published in La Razón (13/10/2012): Al Queda amenaza con matar a rehenes franceses si hay una intervención militar en Malí. Available in Spanish at <http://www.larazon.es/noticia/504-al-quedaa-matenza-con-matar-a-rehenes-franceses-si-hay-una-intervencion-militar-en-mali>. Consulted: 15/10/2012.

<sup>9</sup> Press conference of the President of the French Republic and the President of Spain. Paris, Wednesday, 10th October, 2012. Available in Spanish at <http://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/Presidente/Intervenciones/ConferenciasdePrensa/2012/prrp20121010.htm>. Consulted on: 12/10/2012.

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of the United Nations, as it considered the situation as a threat to international peace and stability.

International initiatives are now focused on the strong commitment of ECOWAS and African Union, supported by the United Nations, to implement policy and diplomatic measures to restore stability in Mali, including an eventual deployment of an international military force. This military intervention –strongly supported by France– has caused different reactions in the International Community, ranging from the tacit support of the European Union to take part in any initiative led by the African Union, and particularly by the affected countries, to the uncertain position of Mauritania and the reluctance of Algeria to accept the deployment of military forces in Mali.

Within 45 days, the Secretary-General will receive the report by the African Union and ECOWAS on the feasibility of this military operation and the rest of the measures outlined in Resolution 2071. Pending subsequent decisions, the commitment of the International Community is currently, without a doubt, the main guarantor of a solution —not in the short term, of course— for the serious humanitarian, security and governance crisis of Mali and, by extension, the whole region of the Sahel.

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