Civil Society White Book

on Peace and Security in Mali (2019)

English Summary

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Introduction

In the 'Civil Society White Book on Peace and Security in Mali', Malian civil society organizations (CSOs) propose bottom-up policy recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the current national and international responses to the deteriorating security situation in Mali.[1] In spite of significant amounts of time and money pledged towards state reconstruction since the start of the rebellion and the subsequent coup in 2012, the root causes of the Mali crisis, such as structural state weakness, are yet to be addressed and few of the 2015 peace agreements have been implemented.[2] The strong focus on military security in response to the 2012 events has so far had limited impact. Instead, new battle lines have emerged, armed groups and local militias have proliferated, civilians have become a direct target of attacks, and the instrumentalization of ethnic identities has fuelled intercommunity conflicts of unprecedented violence. In March 2019, a massacre in Ogossagou left over 160 people dead.[3] According to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), the civilian death toll linked to direct attacks targeting civilians from November 2018 to March 2019 rose by over 300 per cent compared to that of November 2017 to March 2018.[4]

The recommendations in the White Book are built on data collected during three years of quantitative and qualitative studies on the needs and perceptions of security of local civil society actors. These studies were conducted by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and its Malian partner, the National Coalition of Civil Society for Peace and the Fight Against the Proliferation of Small Arms (Coalition Nationale de la Société Civile pour la Paix et la Lutte contre la Prolifération des Armes Légères, CONASCIPAL). The research results were previously published in two SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security papers, which present more detailed data analysis.[5]

With local and legislative elections as well as a constitutional review planned for 2019, Malian civil society now calls for a strong political response to insecurity. In addition, the White Book emphasizes the importance of an evidence-based approach to security policy that incorporates the high diversity of local perspectives.

This paper presents an English summary of the White Book. The next section outlines the methodology of the project. This is then followed by an overview of the project's most important research results, and civil society's recommendations at the national and regional levels.

Methodology

The 'Civil Society White Book on Peace and Security in Mali' is the final product of a joint SIPRI–CONASCIPAL project entitled 'Building a lasting peace in Mali: Contributions of civil society to security policies for the population' (2016–18). Steered by a White Book Commission (see 'About the White Book Commission') and coordinated and facilitated by two scientific coordinators, the White Book translates the project's

1 White Book Commission, *Livre Blanc de la société civile pour la paix et la sécurité au Mali* (SIPRI: Stockholm, Jan. 2019), <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2019/other-publications/white-book-civil-society-peace-and-security-mali>.
2 Craven-Matthews, C. and Englebert, P., 'A Potemkin state in the Sahel? The empirical and the fictional in Malian state reconstruction', *African Security*, vol. 11, no. 1 (2018), pp. 1–31.
3 Ahmed, B., 'Massacre d'Ogossagou au Mali: cinq assaillants arrêtés, selon le procureur de Mopti' [Massacre of Ogossagou in Mali: Five assailants arrested, according the prosecutor of Mopti], *Jeune Afrique*, 28 Mar. 2019, <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/755653/politique/massacre-dogossagou-au-mali-cinq-assaillants-arretes-selon-le-procureur-de-mopti>.
4 Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 'Political Violence Skyrockets in the Sahel According to Latest ACLED Data', Press release, 28 Mar. 2019, <https://www.acleddata.com/2019/03/28/press-release-political-violence-skyrockets-in-the-sahel-according-to-latest-acled-data>.
5 Tobie, A., 'A fresh perspective on security concerns among Malian civil society', SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security no. 2017/2, July 2017, <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2017/sipri-insights-peace-and-security/fresh-perspective-security-concerns-among-malian-civil-society>; and Tobie, A., 'State services in an insecure environment: Perceptions among civil society in Mali', SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security no. 2018/7, Dec. 2018, <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2018/sipri-insights-peace-and-security/state-services-insecure-environment-perceptions-among-civil-society-mali>.

findings into practical, solutions-oriented policy recommendations to curb the spread of insecurity and violence in Mali. It was presented to a broad range of national and international stakeholders and policymakers in Bamako in January 2019.

The project sought to identify the concerns of Malian civil society actors with regard to human security and the options open to civil society to support policies in this area. It included a component on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. Through an inclusive network of 15 facilitators and 36 Monitoring Groups for Peace and Security in selected localities across Mali's 10 regions, the project completed a quantitative mapping analysis of perspectives on security. Each monitoring group is composed of a youth representative, a women's representative and a local community leader. Quantitative mappings were complemented by qualitative studies by Malian academics (see 'Table of studies'), and all results were validated at a series of workshops in Bamako. In order to allow a comparison of data, three geographical zones were identified: (a) northern (the regions of Gao, Kidal, Ménaka and Timbuktu), (b) central (Mopti and Ségou), and (c) southern (Kayes, Koulikoro, Sikasso and the district of Bamako).

The project has four thematic subcommissions focused on (a) security dimensions of gender, generation and handicap, (b) spatial and environmental dimensions, (c) local and individual security initiatives, and (d) the economic impact of insecurity.

Research results

Local priorities versus national and international responses

The data collected by SIPRI and CONASCIPAL shows a growing discrepancy between local and national/international understandings of security. While the latter—including the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the French counterterrorism force Operation Barkhane, the European Union (EU) Training Mission, the EU Capacity Building Mission in Mali, troops from five Sahelian states known as the G5 Sahel Joint Force, and the Malian security forces (Forces de défense et de sécurité, FDS)—focus predominantly on military aspects of security, participants in the SIPRI–CONASCIPAL project emphasized the importance of human security issues. For them, security is as much a developmental question as an issue of exposure to violence.

About the White Book Commission

The White Book Commission is comprised of the following members:

Five civil society organizations: the National Council of Civil Society of Mali (le Conseil national de la société civile du Mali); the Forum of Mali's Civil Society Organizations (le Forum des organisations de la société civile du Mali); the Convergence of Malian Women (la Convergence des femmes du Mali); the National Youth Foundation of Mali (le Conseil national de la jeunesse du Mali); and the Coalition of African Alternatives to Debt and Development (la Coalition des alternatives africaines dettes et développement)

Five research institutes working on peace and security issues: the Malian Alliance for Rebuilding Governance in Africa (l'Alliance malienne pour refonder la gouvernance en Afrique); the West African Network for Peacebuilding (le Réseau ouest-africain pour l'édification de la paix); the Institute for Mali Research-Action (l'Institut malien de recherche-action pour la paix); Point Sud, Center for Local Knowledge Research (Centre de recherche sur le savoir local); and the Center for Analysis and Research of the Sahelo-Saharan Space (le Centre d'analyse et de recherche de l'espace sahélo-saharien)

One media representative: the Press House (La Maison de la presse)

Three former prime ministers: Her Excellency Cissé Mariam Kaïdama Sidibé, His Excellency Ousmane Issoufi Maïga, and His Excellency Ahmed Mohamed ag Hamani

Table of studies*

Study	Approach	Theme	Participants	Location	Time frames
Q1	Quantitative	Perceptions of security	93	The 9 regions and the district of Bamako	Oct. 2016
Q2	Quantitative	Legitimacy of the state	110 (70 men and 40 women)	The 10 regions and the district of Bamako	Mar. 2017
Q3	Quantitative	United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325	387 (102 men and 281 women)	The 10 regions and the district of Bamako	Oct.–Nov. 2017
E0	Qualitative	Perceptions and experiences of security challenges	Two communities	Niono (Ségou) and Kalaban-Coro (Koulikoro)	Nov.–Dec. 2016
E1	Qualitative	Role of external actors in local politics	129	Kayes, Ségou and the district of Bamako	Aug.–Sep. 2017
E2	Qualitative	Security concerns of vulnerable groups	130	Ségou, Timbuktu and Ménaka	Aug.–Sep. 2017
E3	Qualitative	Security–development nexus	176	Mopti, Gao and Timbuktu	Sep. 2017
E4	Qualitative	Geographic challenges of security programmes	121	Koulikoro, Sikasso and Taoudéni	Aug.–Sep. 2017
E5	Qualitative	Local security initiatives	135	Sikasso, Mopti and Gao	Sep.–Oct. 2017
E6	Qualitative	Modes of regulation of cohabitation between different socio-economic groups	107	Kayes, Mopti and Ségou	Oct. 2017
E7	Qualitative	Implication of women in the fight against gender-based violence in times of conflict	48 (12 men and 36 women)	Mopti, Ségou and Gao	Apr. 2018
E8	Qualitative	Women's socio–economic rights and resilience in times of conflict	44 (6 men and 38 women)	Mopti, Ségou and Gao	Apr. 2018
E9	Qualitative	Role and influence of women in times of conflict	44 (6 men and 38 women)	Mopti, Ségou and Gao	Apr. 2018

*   A 36th Monitoring Group for Peace and Security was added to the project in Mar. 2017, covering the Taoudéni region that was operationalized in 2016.

Particularly in the northern regions of Mali, the primary causes of insecurity are lack of access to drinking water, lack of basic services, economic underdevelopment, banditry and limited social cohesion. Due to the high risk of attacks, humanitarian actors are failing to distribute the most urgent aid. There has been a rise in the number of attacks and robberies as well as the number of victims of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) on the roads in the north (and increasingly in central Mali).

A high diversity of needs

A majority of respondents across the country said they believed that security programmes are developed without taking regional disparities into account. National dynamics interacting with local and micro-local conflicts create a wide variety of conditions. Moreover, different actors define security in different ways, and security needs vary greatly according to gender and age. A Bamako-focused interpretation of the conflict, for example, might focus solely on the terrorist threat. However, according to study respondents, national and international interventions that focus on this dimension alone are often unsuitable or even counterproductive at the subnational level.

Vulnerable groups

Vulnerable groups, including women, youth and poor people, are often disproportionally affected by violence and the negative economic effects of instability. Although female respondents expressed the wish to be more involved in the peace process, women remain under-represented in decision-making circles.

Respondents also reported the prevalence of gender-based violence towards women and girls, particularly in the north. Women there reported having little or no access to medical care or legal support. The stigma attached to rape victims and the impunity of perpetrators are major obstacles to victim support and the application of justice.

Conflicting attitudes towards the state

In all regions, respondents expressed a strong desire for the return of state authority and agreed that the state is primarily responsible for the provision of basic social services such as security, justice, education and healthcare. However, they also expressed suspicion of the state.

Related to this, the White Book poses the question of whether the Mali crisis actually started in 2012. Indeed, well before the events of 2012, the Malian state was no longer able to provide basic social services throughout its territory. In this context, the White Book understands the security crisis as a precipitating factor for the collapse of the central government in Bamako, rather than as a trigger for the loss of that government's legitimacy. It emphasizes that the primary focus of stabilizing solutions should not be to restore the pre-2012 state but to address the profound structural drivers of state weakness, including the poorly managed decentralization process, corruption, impunity, clientelism, unequal distribution of wealth, porosity of borders and increased trafficking in arms and narcotics. It argues that the state should take the needs of the population into account instead of imposing its authority on the regions.

Local security initiatives and mistrust of the Malian FDS

The project revealed that suspicion of the Malian FDS is strongest in the central regions of Mopti and Ségou. The escalation of long-running tensions between different social and professional groups has encouraged state authorities to favour military-oriented responses there (as it had already done before 2012 in the northern regions). In this highly complex situation without clearly identified actors, a military approach is often perceived as biased and favouring one community at the expense of another. Moreover, as the state fails to stem abuses committed by its own security forces, the presence of soldiers is more of a risk than a protective factor for many.

Unprotected or even endangered by the state, people are forced to rely on local security initiatives, including self-defence militias. At the same time, as respondents pointed out, the proliferation of armed groups and weapons presents a significant danger in itself.

The need for socio–economic development

The research results indicated that southern Mali—the only area under the national government's control—is not as affected by insecurity as the northern and central regions. The perceptions of civil society actors from the south differed from those of respondents from the northern and central zones, where priority was given to basic needs and direct threats to physical security, such as unemployment, poverty and the presence of armed groups. In contrast, civil society actors from the south tended to focus on developmental needs and socio–economic infrastructure. In addition, reported trust in state institutions is strongest in the southern zone, even if attacks on state targets do occur there.

National recommendations

After validating the results described above, the White Book presents four recommendations at the national level. First, it urges national and international decision makers to recognize that there is no single conflict in Mali and the security priorities of the population are not the same in all regions. Policymakers need to better understand these differences and complement national strategies with local approaches. It proposes that decision making on local security issues be transferred to the regional level, engaging local actors. Grass-roots organizations are well placed to promote the inclusion of people who are often excluded from peacebuilding processes, especially women and youth.

Second, the White Book calls for the subordination of military operations to a holistic human security approach that respects the population's daily priorities, such as access to basic social services. In order to avoid elite capture, it advises a gendered and generational approach, including young people and women (in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions 2250 and 1325). Ministries and agencies responsible for development, including the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Family and Children, as well as those in charge of decentralization and economy, should be included in the security decision-making process.

Third, the White Book expresses the need for a functioning, sustainably transformed Malian state that embraces good governance. While shorter-term strategies are appropriate to respond to immediate needs—which, untreated, could exacerbate the existing crisis—a long-term perspective addressing root causes should remain the focus. It asks international decision makers to acknowledge that a profound structural transformation requires a longer-term financial commitment. An essential element of this transformation is to build trust between the government and the population it is supposed to serve. As the balance between dictating and providing services is precarious, CSOs propose to contribute to the acceptance of a new social contract by fulfilling an intermediary role.

Finally, the White Book advises national decision makers to focus on the relations between the population and the armed forces and emphasizes that international investments in the training and equipment of the FDS (such as the EU Capacity Building Mission and the EU Training Mission) will only be useful if trust-building work between the FDS and the population is conducted at the same time. Policymakers need to instil a culture of service and respect for human rights within the FDS, and soldiers' understanding of their FDS mandate should be improved. It also argues that the identity of informants should be protected, and communication with the public should be strengthened. CSOs propose to play a key role in fostering dialogue and the formalization of existing local initiatives in order to improve communication.

Regional recommendations

The White Book proposes a number of recommendations at the regional level, according to zone.

The northern zone

As access to humanitarian aid is one of the most pressing issues in the northern regions, the White Book recommends improving the physical protection of humanitarian actors. In order to do this, the FDS

must be more mobile and less concentrated in specific strategic geographical areas. Adequate means, such as vehicles and petrol, are needed to react quickly, and above all, a constant dialogue needs to be established between the FDS, local authorities, residents and humanitarian actors. The reparation of roads will also help reduce attacks. In order to combat the scourge of anti-vehicle and anti-personnel mines, CSOs propose setting up local monitoring and warning mechanisms and training people to identify IEDs.

The second recommendation regarding the north concerns the fight against gender-based violence. The White Book recommends the creation of centres that offer medical, psychosocial and legal support to victims. In rural areas with traditional justice mechanisms, traditional leaders need to be included in the fight against impunity. In addition, it stresses the importance of girls' education, both to raise awareness of women's rights and to combat the stigma attached to victims of gender-based violence. CSOs propose to take steps to educate parents about the benefits of sending their daughters to school. As violent incidents often occur on the road, CSOs recommend special school lunch programmes for girls. The construction of separate, well-lit and secure latrines at school can also help prevent gender-based violence.

The central zone
The White Book warns against the potential harm of a predominantly military approach to dealing with terrorism and crime. It asks all actors engaged in counterterrorism operations in the central regions to give the protection of civilians the highest priority, reminding policymakers that the use of force to resolve conflicts inevitably risks exacerbating local violence by reducing opportunities for dialogue and mediation. The state should be a neutral actor and should refrain from supporting or collaborating with ethnically aligned militia or other armed groups, despite the perceived immediate benefits of such strategies. The harmonization of local

initiatives and national security programmes is a key element in the long-term success of the stabilization process. Decision makers need to take the existence of local security initiatives into account as part of ongoing and future security sector reform processes.

The White Book also urges spokespersons and media outlets to combat anxiety-provoking speech, to avoid labelling certain groups as terrorists and others as self-defence forces, and to work more effectively against false news reports and hate speech. It highlights the impact and risks of an ethnic interpretation of conflict and of polarization based on ethnic identity.

In order to address local drivers of insecurity, the White Book recommends concrete measures. The controversial ban on motorcycles, for example, which limits livelihood options, could be replaced by an identification system. Grass-roots CSOs are also well placed to help mend relations between competing groups by facilitating dialogue, and conflict-reducing steps—such as re-establishing a common calendar for agriculturists and pastoralists and creating corridors for the passage of animals—could secure transhumance and reduce tensions between farmers and herders.

The southern zone
In the relatively stable southern regions of Kayes, Koulikoro and Sikasso and in the district of Bamako, the White Book recommends the development of infrastructure in order to foster resilience and prevent conflict. Investing in better road conditions, efficient water and electricity delivery, and the improved quality of basic social services such as education and medical care, means investing in human security. In order to revive travel and socio–economic activity, it recommends that the Bamako–Kayes road be repaired. Good roads can also contribute to the reduction of banditry in the region. It argues that better urban planning is needed to fight banditry and insecurity, particularly in Bamako, and that public lighting projects are needed in rural areas.

This paper presents an English-language summary of the 'Civil Society White Book on Peace and Security in Mali'. In the White Book, Malian civil society organizations call for political solutions to the deteriorating security situation in Mali. They offer policy recommendations to improve the effectiveness of current national and international security initiatives by taking the needs and priorities of local populations into account. These recommendations are built on data collected during three years of quantitative and qualitative research on the security needs and perceptions of civil society actors by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and its Malian partner, the National Coalition of Civil Society for Peace and the Fight Against the Proliferation of Small Arms (Coalition Nationale de la Société Civile pour la Paix et la Lutte contre la Prolifération des Armes Légères, CONASCIPAL).

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