

# Mali Post-2023: Vacuums, Violence, and New Influence

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## Key Events 2013-23

March 2012	August 2019 – 2020	September 2020	May 2021	2021-2022
Military officers seize Bamako, forming the National Committee for the Restoration of Democracy and State (CNRDR) and toppling President Amadou Toumani Touré.	Colonel Assimi Goïta leads a mutiny, detaining President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta and his prime minister; the junta declares control and promises a transitional civilian government.	ECOWAS imposes sanctions, demanding a civilian-led transition; the junta agrees to an 18-month roadmap but retains military influence.	“Coup within a coup” – Goïta removes interim President Bah Ndaw after a cabinet reshuffle, declares himself president and extends the military rule.	Consolidation of military rule – the junta arrests former civilian ministers, stalls elections, and deepens ties with Russia, cementing a new political order.

Since the 2013 coup in Mali, many regional and third-party actors have intervened (see Figure 2). Post-2023, Mali's conflict and peace building has entered a decisively **transformative** period. The gradual withdrawal of international forces, mostly notably France, has **reshaped influence** among armed groups, external actors, and the Malian state. This has resulted in an erosion of recent peace processes, including the **2015 Algiers peace agreement**. We are now seeing a **collapse of state structures** within the country. This new context has **opened political and security space** for new and existing actors. **French** influence continues to decline. **Russia** has expanded its role in security cooperation. Jihadist groups, specifically the **JNIM** has adapted its strategies, capitalising on reduced oversight. This poster examines these major actors and their influence on Mali's **future prospects for peace**.

## France

France entered Mali in January 2013 with Operation Serval, rapidly pushing back jihadist advances and securing major towns. The follow-on Operation Barkhane (2014-2022) expanded the mission into a **regional counter-terrorism framework**, providing logistics, air support and training to Malian forces. (Finabel, 2023). French troops operated under a status-of-forces agreement with Bamako and coordinated closely with the UN mission (MINUSMA) and EU training missions. Following the 2022 coup, mounting political friction with the government and the rise of Russian private-military actors led France to **withdraw its forces**, marking the end of a near-decade of direct military involvement. (Bertrand, 2023).

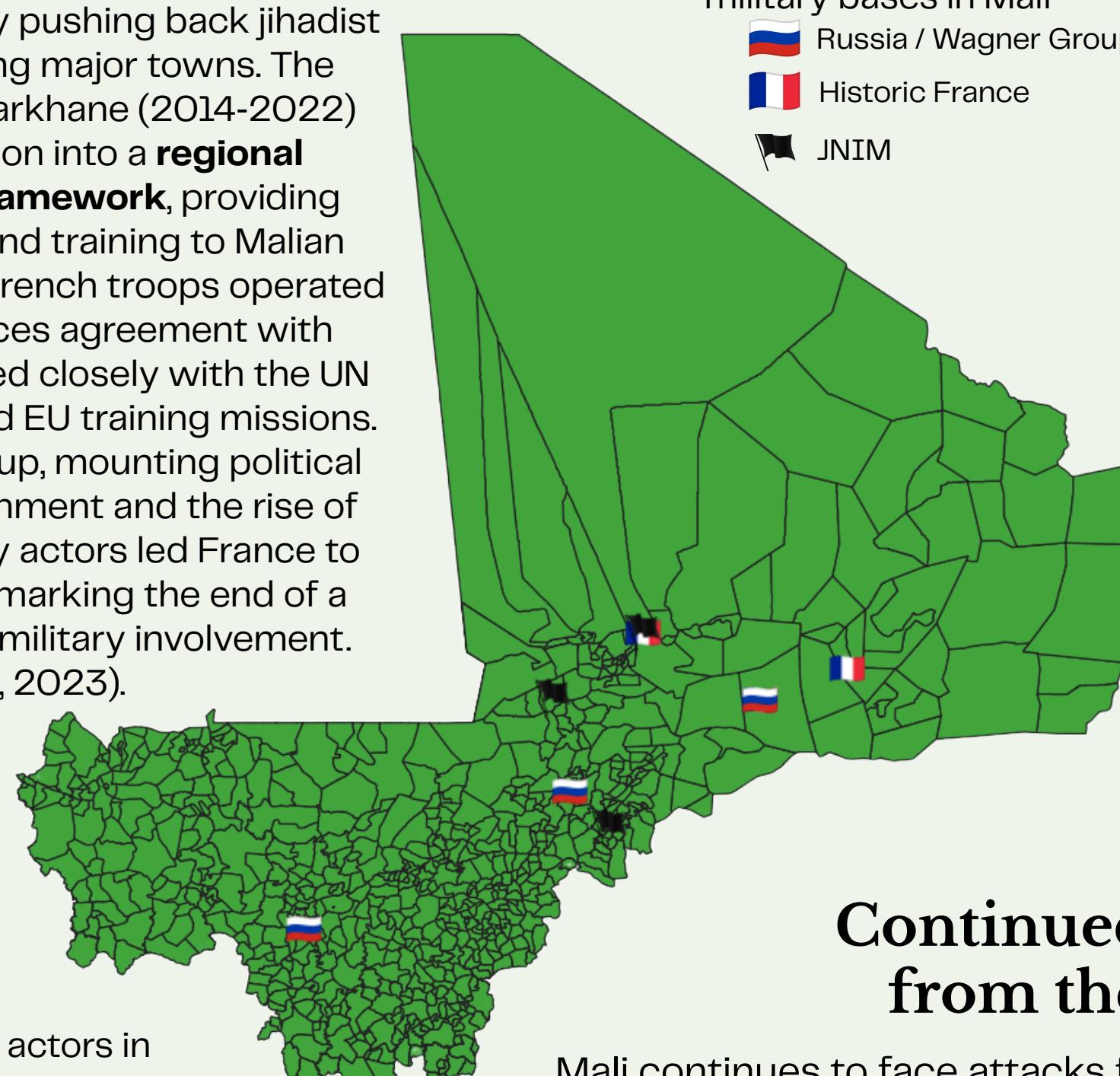
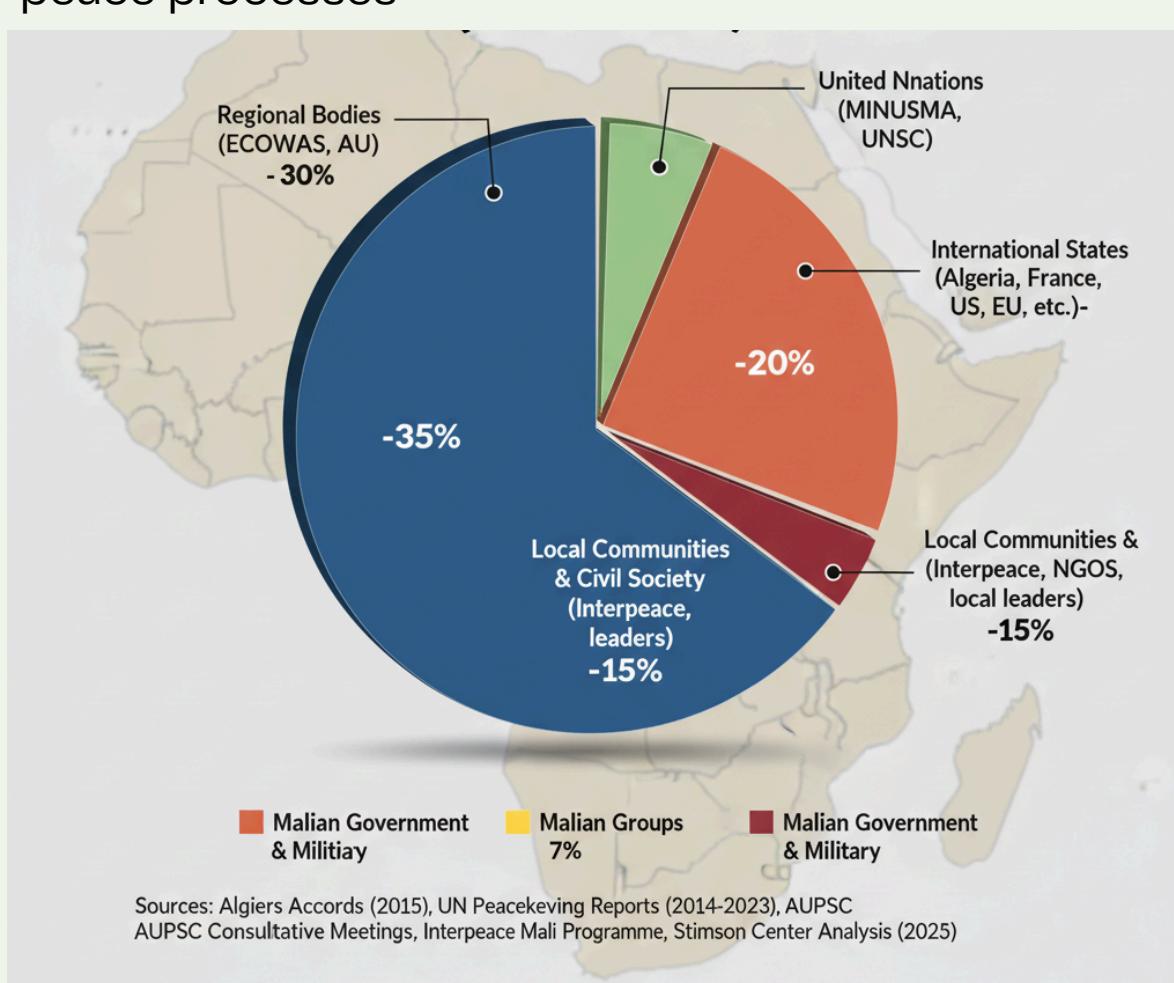


Figure 2. Involvement of actors in peace processes



## Russia

Russia has been an important partner for Mali since Soviet times. However, since 2021, this influence has been expressed through the **Wagner Group** (WG), a state-linked private military company (Gogny and de Castro, 2025). This power has only increased, which has been attributed to a **power vacuum** after the French withdrawal (Levine, 2025), as well as financial motivations, especially for the funding of the conflict in Ukraine. Russia's involvement has proved **popular** amongst Malians (Pokalova, 2023), despite accusations of **human rights violations** (Levine, 2025). After the death of their head, Prigozhin, the WG has been **nationalised**, absorbed by the Defence Ministry into the paramilitary Africa Corps (Omeje, 2025). Russia continues to expand operations in the country.

## Continued Attacks from the JNIM

Mali continues to face attacks from the JNIM, a **jihadist group** that operates in the Sahel region of Africa. Formed in 2017, three of the founding groups have ties to the **2012 violent uprising** for liberation in Northern Mali (International Crisis Group, 2021). Since 2017, the JNIM has launched many **attacks against Malian Defense forces**, MINUSMA, and French personnel in the region (United Nations, 2018). The group's leader, Iyad Ag Ghali, has expressed his allegiance to the leaders of both Al-Qaida and the Taliban. Their continued presence in Mali poses a **severe threat to peace efforts** in the region, with several of their attacks targeting third-party actors (Eizenga and Williams, 2020).



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