

# Instability in Mali Caused by Imperialist Foreign Policy

Military mutiny results in the detention of president, prime minister and other officials

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*A mutiny by lower-ranking military officers on August 18 in the West African state of Mali has prompted the condemnation of regional, continental and international organizations.*

President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita was forced over the national media to resign from office after being elected just two years ago.

Demonstrations against the government in Bamako, the capital, have escalated over the last few months in the aftermath of legislative elections. Opposition parties and coalitions are accusing Keita of corruption, irregularities in the elections earlier this year and with the failure to bring stability to the northern region of the country which has been the scene of an insurgency by several Islamist groupings.

The mutiny began among the soldiers at the Kati military base where columns of troops headed towards the capital seizing control of the presidential residence and national media outlets. Later the president and prime minister were not available for comment after being detained by the mutineers.

This incident drew an immediate response from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), a regional organization of 15 governments. An announcement was made indicating that the borders of Mali with contiguous states were to be sealed and the membership of Mali in ECOWAS was effectively suspended.



Mali ECOWAS delegation fails to reach agreement with mutineers

Later the continental African Union (AU), composed of 55 member-states, followed the lead of ECOWAS by prohibiting the military regime from participating in meetings and deliberations of the organization based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres, spoke out against the coup as well saying that the situation should be returned to normal under the elected civilian government in Mali.

A [statement was issued by the AU Commission Chair](#) on the situation in Mali, saying:

“The Chairperson of the African Union Commission Moussa Faki Mahamat strongly condemns the forced detention of the President of Mali Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, the Prime Minister and other members of the Malian Government and calls for their immediate release. The Chairperson strongly rejects any attempt at the unconstitutional change of government in Mali and calls on the mutineers to cease all recourse to violence, and calls for the respect of the country’s institutions. The Chairperson further calls on the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the United Nations and the entire international community to combine our collective efforts to oppose any use of force as a means to end the political crisis in Mali.”

ECOWAS sent a delegation to meet with the coup leaders and the deposed politicians. Former Federal Republic of Nigeria President Goodluck Jonathan headed the mission to Mali where talks failed to reach an agreement to return President Keita to office.

According to reports, the military forces in control of the country are seeking to remain in their positions for a period of three years. They have agreed, in principle it appears, to the release of the president and other officials. However, the reinstatement of the president has been rejected by the mutineers.

### The Role of Imperialism in the Destabilization of Mali

Since 2012, the country has experienced heightened levels of violence and instability. With the imperialist war of aggression waged by the United States, NATO and its allies in the

region against Libya during 2011, triggered not only mass carnage in what was then Africa's most prosperous nation, the war which was approved by the UN Security Council in two resolutions, resulted in the increasing dislocation and conflict throughout North and West Africa.

Many Malians had taken up residence in Libya due to its economic strength and social stability prior to the overthrow of the Jamahiriya, the political system established by former leader, Col. Muammar Gaddafi. During the course of the daily blanket bombing operations in Libya carried out by the Pentagon and NATO in 2011, tens of thousands of people were killed including Gaddafi, who had just two years earlier, represented the AU at the United Nations General Assembly in 2009.

These events provided an opening for rebel groupings within northern Mali to make a bid for the control of key areas inside the country. The reemergence of an unresolved regional issue in Mali involving the Tuareg population in the north placed tremendous pressure on the military to end the insurgency.

The Tuareg question in northern Mali is a direct result of the failure of France to resolve regional issues in the country prior to independence in 1960. Mali represented in its earliest phase of independence the Pan-Africanist and anti-imperialist tendencies within the liberation movements which emerged in the post-World War II period.

There have been several military conflicts over the status of the Tuareg people even at the onset of national independence in the early 1960s. Later, in 1990, Algeria mediated an end to another series of clashes through the auspices of the predecessor of the AU, the Organization of African Unity (OAU). (See [this](#))

However, in recent years the emergence of Muslim groupings which are reportedly linked to al-Qaeda and ISIS, suggests that the objectives of these armed organizations are centered on the creation of a state controlled by Islamic law. Such tendencies within the Muslim world have their origins in geo-political regions where the U.S. is seeking hegemony.

For example in Afghanistan, it was successive Democratic and Republican administrations which armed and politically bolstered select Islamic groupings that served to undermine socialism and the role of the former Soviet Union. Later in Libya, Yemen and Syria, similar organizations waged the ground operations while Pentagon and NATO-allied bombers destroyed large swaths of territory in these states.

The U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) carried out its first major military project in Libya by destroying the national infrastructure, expropriating the wealth of the country and consequently plunging the nation into poverty and lawlessness. AFRICOM has established military relationships with many of the AU member-states under the guise of training and the enhancement of security. Nonetheless, since the formation of AFRICOM under the administration of President George W. Bush, Jr. in 2008, the security status of many states in West and North African has deteriorated.



Mali AFRICOM presence in source of instability

### Implications for a Political Settlement in Mali

Of course it will be up to the people of Mali to resolve the current political quagmire along with the assistance of ECOWAS and the AU. A coalition of opposition forces known as the M5-RFP and a broader June 5 Movement has welcomed the seizure of power by the military units.

The opposition had in recent months demanded the resignation of Keita and the entire government. Various leaders which were waging a struggle against the ousted government have been quoted as supporting the three year transitional period under the direction of the military mutineers.

A former foreign minister and member of the opposition M5 [told DW](#) that:

“What is important for us is to see that this transition delivers to the Malian people’s expectations. This is a historic opportunity for our country. We must take time to put things back in place.”

During the period after the previous coup in 2012, the military junta did not maintain power for an extended period. The elections held after the coup resulted in Keita coming to power. Keita has been very close politically to France which deployed thousands of troops to Mali when the situation worsened in early 2013. AFRICOM facilitated the intervention by France through the utilization of the Pentagon Air Force which assisted in the transporting of military personnel and equipment. French forces are continuing to occupy Mali irrespective of the recent coup.

France has spoken against the coup along with the U.S. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen what diplomatic posture Washington and Paris will take towards the new regime in Bamako.

Both of the officers designated as leaders of the 2012 and 2020 coups were trained in the



U.S. by the Pentagon. These military training programs also have an ideological and political orientation as well. The imperialist states are consistently recruiting potential allies which will adhere to the imperatives of Western foreign policy objectives.

An [article published in the Washington Post](#) emphasizes:

“Col. Assimi Goita, who emerged Thursday (Aug. 20) as the head of the junta in power, worked for years with U.S. Special Operations forces focused on fighting extremism in West Africa. He spoke regularly with U.S. troops and attended U.S.-led training exercises, said officers from both countries, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter publicly.

Goita, who also received training from Germany and France, according to the officers, headed Mali’s special forces unit in the country’s restive central region, where fighters linked to al-Qaeda and the Islamic State have established a stronghold that has alarmed global leaders.”

The same pattern holds true for Capt. Amadou Haya Sanogo, the leader of the 2012 putsch in Mali. Sanogo was educated in several military training centers in the U.S. The same [Washington Post wrote](#) in 2012:

“Capt. Amadou Haya Sanogo, who led a renegade military faction that on Thursday deposed Mali’s democratically elected president, visited the United States several times to receive professional military education, including basic officer training, said Patrick Barnes, a U.S. Africa Command official based in Washington.”

Consequently, the struggle of the Malian people is to overcome the influence of imperialism in its internal affairs. This can also be applied to the AU region as a whole. Genuine independence cannot be secured while the Pentagon and NATO maintain dominance over military affairs.

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