



NIAS Africa Studies  
Africa Weekly #72, Vol. 2, No. 27  
25 July 2023

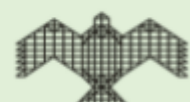


IN FOCUS

**End of MIUSMA in Mali and Chinese Security Interventions  
in Africa**

AFRICA IN BRIEF

**Regional | Economy | Gender | Climate Change | Migration | Peace and Conflict  
| International | Sports**



## In Focus

### The UN in Africa: MINUSMA has failed. So did Mali

Nithyashree RB



Image source: AdamaDiarra, Reuters

On 30 June, the UN Security Council unanimously voted to terminate the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and end its mandate. According to the resolution drafted by the French government, MINUSMA is to continue responding to violence, safeguarding civilians, and providing humanitarian assistance until 30 September 2023. Further, MINUSMA will limit its operations providing security to UN personnel and infrastructure until 30 December 2023, when its mandate will completely cease. MINUSMA's withdrawal from Mali is to begin on 1 January 2024.

Permanent Representative of Mali to the UN, Issa Konfourou, commented: "The Mission has not achieved its fundamental objective of supporting the Government's efforts to secure the country." Konfourou welcomed the UNSC decision and acknowledged MINUSMA providing humanitarian and social assistance. He assured cooperation with the UN during the withdrawal process and ensured that Mali would implement the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation 2015.

Amidst the voting, representatives raised concerns over the role of the Wagner Group and the impact of the termination of MINUSMA on the Malians. Permanent Representative of the UK to the UN,

Barbara Woodward said: "We do not believe that partnership with the Wagner Group will deliver long-term stability or security for the Malian people." Acting Deputy Representative to the UN, Jeffrey DeLaurentis stated: "While we deeply regret the transition government's decision to abandon MINUSMA and the harm this will bring to the Malian people, we voted in favour of this resolution as we are ultimately satisfied with the drawdown plan this Council has just adopted. We call on all signatory parties to continue their cooperation and avoid any actions that would jeopardize the ceasefire."

#### A profile on MINUSMA

On 25 April 2013, MINUSMA (Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali) was established by the UN Security Council. On 1 July 2013, MINUSMA took over from the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA). MINUSMA was adopted on 25 June 2014 and the UN Office in Mali (UNOM) was included under it.

The mission aimed at providing security, stability, and civilian protection, supporting political dialogue, and reconciliation, and ensuring human rights promotion amid rising insurgent and jihadist movements in Mali.

Since 2019, the insurgency in the region has exacerbated significantly in Central Mali. MINUSMA, already understaffed, made its operation difficult once Central Mali was mandated under it. On 29 June 2022, MINUSMA's mandate was renewed and was extended for one more year. The mission is the largest, with over 17,000 personnel deployed as of February 2023. Chad is the top military contributor, and

Senegal is the top police contributor. The mission has lost 303 personnel, making it the deadliest UN peacekeeping mission.

### **MINUSMA's termination: Three reasons why**

#### *1. Rising anti-West sentiments*

Following the withdrawal of the French government's Operation Barkhane in 2022, anti-West sentiments demanding non-intervention by the West are rising. For the Malians, deploying French and other European troops is seen as a colonial occupation. Following the coup of 2021, the Malian military's relationship with France was strained and the French troops withdrew stating the lack of cooperation by the government. The call for the termination of the mission was based on the same ground along with its failure to achieve stability and peace.

#### *2. Mali's accusations*

Mali's Foreign Minister Abdoulaye Diop accused MINUSMA of deepening internal divisions and conflicts and called for withdrawal for its failure to contain the militants. Diop added that there exists distrust towards the mission. He commented: "MINUSMA seems to have become part of the problem by fueling community tensions exacerbated by extremely serious allegations which are highly detrimental to peace, reconciliation and national cohesion in Mali."

#### *3. Role of Russian mercenaries*

US National Security spokesperson John Kirby asserted that the Wagner Group was responsible for the Malian government's decision to push MINUSMA out. Kirby commented: "We know that senior Malian officials worked directly with Prigozhin employees to inform the UN Secretary-General that Mali had revoked consent for the MINUSMA mission." The condemnation of the Wagner Group's involvement in Mali is increasing. Since 2022, the Russian mercenary has been

operating in Mali, taking hold of the vacuum left by the French.

### **MINUSMA and Mali: Two Takeaways**

First the MINUSMA's failure. According to MINUSMA's renewed mandate, its priority is "to support the implementation of both the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation 2015 in Mali and the full realization of the political transition." Regardless of the realization of the transitional government under Colonel Assimi Goita, the 2015 peace agreement between the actors has not been achieved. Crucially, stability has not been established. Despite having significant achievements, MINUSMA was unable to contain the spread of conflict from Northern to Central Mali. The mission was understaffed despite its strong financial reserve. The increase in civilian deaths and food insecurity exacerbated the existing humanitarian crisis and MINUSMA was unable to prevent it.

The termination of the mission indicates the limitations of the UN. The lack of cooperation of the actors with the UN obstructs the peacekeeping missions from fully providing their services. Regardless of offering civilian protection, peacekeeping missions do not project deterrence, and lack of intelligence from host governments, slows them down, making them irrelevant. In the case of MINUSMA, it lacked readily available military resources, unlike the Wagner Group.

Second, role of Mali. The failure of MINUSMA cannot be solely attributed to the mission. The MINUSMA mandate 2022 vividly states: "The Malian authorities have the primary responsibility to protect civilians in Mali." The lack of cooperation from the Malian government and its instability is also a significant cause. As a consequence of the military takeover in 2021, dwindled collaboration between the government and MINUSMA

limited its operations. For instance, the Malian military government demanded authorization for each flight of MINUSMA which slowed ensuring security and humanitarian assistance. The Malian Defense and Security Forces (MSDF) sometimes denied access to conflict zones requiring immediate assistance.

Following the back-to-back coups, the Malian government's relationship with the G5 Sahel and the ECOWAS deteriorated. Several countries held back humanitarian assistance. The partnership with the Wagner Group resulted in several countries including the UK, and Germany

pulling out their troops from MINUSMA. The arrest of 49 personnel from Cote d'Ivoire by the Malian government, made the country pull out its troops.

The Malian government is ill-equipped to face the humanitarian crisis. MINUSMA was responsible for supplying aid across the country. The mission monitored and reported human rights violations. Termination of the mission is most likely to increase human rights violations as there is no more accountability for the government. Amid growing internal clashes, and the deployment of the Wagner Group, pushing out MINUSMA puts the Malians at a greater humanitarian risk.

---

## COMMENTARY

## China-Africa Security Partnership: Expansion Across Spectrums

Devjyoti Saha

In the eighth edition of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) held in the Senegalese capital city of Dakar in 2021, peace and security cooperation received special emphasis, with China unveiling the China-Africa Peace and Security Fund (CAPF). It sought to cultivate personal and professional ties by forging ideological and political bonds of solidarity between the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and their African counterparts. Since then, China has been cultivating intensive security partnerships with Africa at the continental and regional levels. Through partnerships, including the African Peace Security and Security Architecture (APSA) and African Standby Force, the Chinese State has emerged as a major security partner in Africa. At the same time, China has solidified its position as a major security guarantor at the regional level by fostering partnerships in

the unstable West African region through enhancing security collaborations with the Economic Community of the West African States (ECOWAS) and the Sahel countries.

### Background

In 2012, Chinese President Xi Jinping asserted China's central role in fostering Global South-South cooperation, with particular emphasis on portraying China as a reliable development partner for the African continent. Since then, China-Africa relations have intensified and expanded across economic, telecommunications and infrastructure investments, dominated by concessional loans. However, with growing economic stakes in a continent where political instability and radical organisations are omnipresent, there has been a significant rise in Chinese-African cooperation in the

peace and security dimension. Cooperation in arenas of security and capacity building is not new in China-Africa relations. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the PLA played a major role, both logistically and ideologically, in supporting the pro-independence rebel groups in the 1960s in African colonies and anti-Apartheid militant struggles in South Africa. Post-independence, African countries sought a more significant Chinese role in countering emerging threats that the newly independent countries faced. However, China then neither had the capital nor the military equipment to play the crucial role.

Currently, China has much larger economic and geopolitical stakes in Africa. With the significant increase in BRI countries and upcoming projects, China has an essential responsibility to protect the projects and ensure the safety of Chinese nationals from growing armed attacks. For these purposes, Chinese investments in the peace and security arena have risen significantly.

### Capacity building initiatives and Chinese PSCs

Unlike France and Russia, China is completely against the deployment of PLA forces on foreign soil; rather, PLA plays a major role in capacity-building programmes. Between 2018 and 2021, more than 2000 African police and law enforcement personnel were trained in Nanjing. The training of security and law enforcement personnel has been considered a political indoctrination rather than a capacity-building programme. The political indoctrination of this personnel by China helps the African autocratic leaders, who have security arrangements with China, to use the police administration as

an instrument to implement their coercive regime policies in the society, suppressing any trace of dissent. The security arrangements have emerged as a valuable foreign policy tool for China to gain local political influence in African countries. The influence has also been wielded over the years through the passive deployment of an 8000-strong standby force under the UN Peacekeeping Missions in Africa, setting a narrative that, unlike the West, China does not engage in arbitrary military invasions, rather it works for the security of its partners through the multilateral UNPKF framework.

However, the fallacies of Chinese capacity-building initiatives to improve the operational capabilities of African security establishments were exposed when Chinese projects and Chinese nationals came under repetitive attacks, especially since 2019. Instances like the kidnapping of Chinese workers from mines in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria and attacks in critical project sites like in the Central African Republic in 2021 prompted China to bring in Private Security Companies (PSCs) to pursue their security interests in the continent.

Unlike the Russian PSGs that operate through legal loopholes and grey areas, Chinese PSCs are legally registered and mostly owned by retired high-ranking officials from the PLA. Around 4000 registered security firms are operating in Africa with the purpose of providing comprehensive security by protecting oil and gas pipelines, protecting workers and escorting merchant vessels through the treacherous Gulf of Aden. However, China has well-defined legislation concerning the PSCs that clearly prohibits PSC employees from using arms. Hence, the PSCs have to work in close coordination with the local forces, deployed purely as consultants. Chinese enterprises spend almost USD ten billion annually on PSCs, and the growing security needs of Chinese BRI projects

might give rise to the footprints of Chinese PSCs in Africa.

### **Surveillance technology and export of digital authoritarianism**

Other than the capacity-building initiatives and PSCs, the China-Africa security cooperation has also expanded through an increased supply of Chinese surveillance technology to the African countries. From Algeria to South Africa, around 40 countries have signed public security and enforcement agreements with China. On the one hand, Western security enterprises that are responsible for China's emergence as the global exporter of digital authoritarianism deny the same technology to the African countries on the grounds of blatant human rights records. China has emerged as the sole and leading exporter of surveillance security systems. China has taken advantage of the existing vacuum and used its expertise in surveillance technology. Chinese telecommunication giant, Huawei, has emerged as the leader in supplying surveillance technology, which includes the recently concluded agreements with Zambia and Uganda. Equipment like mobile spyware virus, biometric recognition systems and facial recognition software have allowed autocratic leaders to establish an authoritarian surveillance administration, leaving no space for dissent. However, the technology is not only used by local leaders to consolidate their autocratic rule, but China has used the same technology to track and expedite Chinese dissenters from Africa. For instance, in 2022, four Chinese nationals were arrested and expedited from Uganda back to China. In this operation, along with the Ugandan law enforcement officials, Chinese commandos also took part. Moreover, exporting these technologies in the name of security partnerships is a veiled attack on the privacy of the citizens and any existing space of dissent. In the face of the rising authoritarian stance of African leaders, this digital technology partnership with China



seems like a covert agreement among a group of authoritarian states that seek to use technology to consolidate their rule.

### **Security Partnerships: A necessity for China**

Chinese proactive role in security partnerships depicts China is in a predominant position. However, China needs its partners in Africa as much as the latter needs a major power like China on their side. Chinese President Xi Jinping seeks to modernise the Chinese military at par with the Western powers and fulfil his goal of making the Chinese military "world-class" by 2049. To attain that goal, China needs an active battleground to test

its rapidly developing military technology, and for this purpose, security partnerships with conflict-ravaged countries including Mauritania and Uganda are essential. By exporting arms to Africa, China gets the opportunity to test the battle readiness and effectiveness of its weapons. Moreover, a politically stable and peaceful Africa is in China's economic and geopolitical interests, owing to the massive investments China has made in African countries in recent years to fulfil its BRI ambitions. However, the on-ground effectiveness of these multidimensional security partnerships, ranging from maritime to capacity building to digital infrastructure, remains to be seen

## AFRICA IN BRIEF

19 July-25 July

By Jerry Franklin, Ryan Marcus, Nithyashree RB, Anu Maria Joseph, Sneha Surendran and Prerana P

---

### TUNISIA

**The Human Rights Watch campaign accuses Tunisian authorities of atrocities against Sub-Saharan African migrants**

On 19 July, BBC reported on the accusations framed by the international campaign group Human Rights Watch (HRW) against the Tunisian security agents. They accused Tunisian authorities of abuses committed against the black African migrants who attempted to reach Europe. The HRW group claimed to have interviewed more than 20 migrants, which explained that seven among the thousand black Africans were expelled by the Tunisian authorities. Additionally, Tunisian President Kais Saied blamed the migrants for violating the country's demographic structure. ("[Tunisia accused of 'serious abuses' against black Africans](#)," *BBC*, 19 July 2023)

### SUDAN

**Artillery air strikes in Khartoum**

On 20 July, Sudan's capital Khartoum and the city of El-Obeid witnessed artillery fire and street battles. The resident of El-Obeid stated that the fire targeted the bases of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Earlier, the Sudanese army accused the RSF of a drone strike, killing 14 civilians and injuring 15 others. In addition, the rights campaigners have blamed the RSF and the allied Arab militias for their reported atrocities, which include rape, looting and mass killings. Further, the Chief Prosecutor, Karim Khan, claimed that the International Criminal Court had opened a probe against the war crimes in Darfur. ("[Sudan: Fighting in Khartoum intensifies after generals briefly appear](#)," *Africanews*, 20 July 2023)

**Sudan: The governor urges the civilians to take up arms**

On 21 July, BBC quoted the Al Arabiya report on a renewed call by the Darfur Governor, Minni Arko Minnawi, who has urged the civilians to take hold of arms to defend themselves. The conflict between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese army has reached its fourth month. The conflict has spread across regions that include Khartoum, Omdurman and Bahri. Minnawi addressed the falling administration's efforts to end the conflict and raised fears about the probability of an all-out civil war amid the ethnic tensions. Heavy airstrikes and the death of 18 RSF fighters were reported in Omdurman and Khartoum. ("[Sudan governor renews call for Darfuris to take up arms](#)," *BBC*, 21 July 2023)

**Sudan: WHO expresses concerns over Sudanese war**

On 25 July, BBC reported that the World Health Organisation (WHO) has issued a warning regarding the humanitarian crisis in Sudan and urged the warring parties to protect civilians. The WHO stated that more than two-thirds of hospitals in Sudan are out of service and hundreds of thousands of civilians have been displaced. Additionally, the WHO stated that malaria, measles and dengue cases are on the rise due to disruption in health services. The WHO remarked that sexual and gender-based violence was reported in the country. ("[WHO warns of Sudan's deepening humanitarian crisis](#)," *BBC*, 25 July 2023)



## KENYA

### Anti-government protests

On 19 July, Al Jazeera reported that more than 100 demonstrators clashed with police in Kibera, Nairobi during protests against the cost of living and tax hikes in Kenya. The same day, the Kenyan opposition leader, Raila Odinga, announced the commencement of the three-day anti-government protests. The demonstration is against the tax hikes, followed by the country's surging cost of living. The UN Human Rights spokesperson, Jeremy Laurence, stated: "The UN is very concerned by the widespread violence and allegations of disproportionate use of force, including the use of firearms by the police during protests in Kenya." (Vivianne Wandera, "Kenya braces for 3 days of anti-gov't protests: All the details," *Al Jazeera*, 18 July 2023)

### Kenya: The opposition group announces its public vigils

On 25 July, BBC reported on the mass vigil call declared by the Kenyan Opposition group. After prolonged cost-of-living protests, the group declared to hold a public vigil in order to honor the people, who were killed in the previous demonstrations. The Azimio coalition reported on the death of fifty people along with hundreds of wounded civilians. It further accused police of their brutal and excessive force exercised against the civilians, who weren't a part of the protest. The country's interior minister has defended the police force claiming the situation to be highly dangerous. Further, the police have expressed their limited investigation capacity, which held only 250 officers across the country. (Lailla Mohammed, "Kenyan opposition calls for vigils instead of protests," *BBC*, 25 July 2023)

### Ready to meet the opposition leader says President

On 25 July, following anti-government protests, Kenyan President William Ruto tweeted that he is inclined to meet the opposition leader Raila Odinga. Odinga tweeted: "As you have always known, am available to meet one on one with you anytime at your convenience" addressing Odinga. The tweet comes following two developments. First, Odinga's denouncement of assault and killings perpetrated by the police and their supposedly hired gangs toward the civilians. According to the Azimio coalition, 50 people have died during the clashes since March 2023 but officials reported 20 deaths. Second, the Amnesty International report of 27 "extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary execution" in July 2023. (*Kenya's Ruto offers to meet leader of opposition protests*," *Al Jazeera*, 25 July 2023)

## SOUTH AFRICA

### African National Congress hosts meeting with BRICS political parties

On 19 July, Africanews reported on the upcoming meeting to be held on 22 August in Johannesburg, hosted by the African National Congress (ANC). The meeting would include political parties from Russia, India, China, Brazil, and others ahead of the BRICS Summit. The South African Deputy President, Paul Mashatile, expressed his support for the upbringing of peaceful coexistence between Russia and Ukraine. Additionally, the Representative of the Russian Federation Communist Party, Artem Prokofiev, accused the West of backing the Zelenskyy regime and triggering the war. Further, South Africa, during an interview with a news website, persuaded Putin to stay away in order to avoid the legal and diplomatic fallout over his international arrest warrant. ("*South Africa's ANC meets BRICS political parties ahead of summit*," *Africanews*, 19 July 2023)

### South Africa: Government applies for Putin's arrest warrant

On 21 July, BBC reported that the South African government applied for an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin if he visits South Africa. The decision comes in response to a lawsuit filed by the opposition, Democratic Alliance, which aimed at forcing the government to abide by a ruling from the International Criminal Court. If Putin is to set foot in the country, he will be arrested for accusations of abducting Ukrainian children. ("Richard Hamilton, "SA government applies for Putin warrant - if he visits," *BBC News*, 21 July 2023)

### MALI

#### Mali: US sanctions top military officials

On 24 July, Al Jazeera reported that the US sanctioned Malian Defence Minister Colonel Sadio Camara, Air Force Chief Colonel Alou Boi Diarra, and Deputy Chief of Staff Lieutenant Colonel Adama Bagaoyoka for the Wagner Group's activities in the country. US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken stated that the expansion of the Wagner Group in Mali has resulted in a 278 per cent increase in civilian deaths in Mali. Blinken commented: "We're imposing sanctions on three Malian officials who have coordinated with the Wagner Group to facilitate and expand Wagner's presence in Mali. Civilian fatalities have surged more than threefold since Wagner forces deployed to Mali in December 2021." ("US sanctions Mali's defence minister, officials over Wagner ties," *Al Jazeera*, 24 July 2023)

### NIGERIA

#### Nigeria: ECOWAS hold talks on democratic transactions and security

On 19 July, Africanews reported that four countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) conducted talks on democratic transactions and security. Nigerian President Bola Tinubu, who is the current ECOWAS President,

presided during the meeting in Abuja. Niger, Guinea-Bissau and Benin also participated in the meeting. The officials largely discussed the security in Mali following the withdrawal of the UN mission. ("Nigeria: ECOWAS discusses democratic transitions and security," *Africanews*, 19 July 2023)

### BURKINA FASO

#### The NGO warns about the disastrous hunger issue

On 20 July, BBC reported on the warning by the NGO International Rescue Committee (IRC) that more than a million people would face hunger in Burkina Faso. The IRC estimated that the count would reach up to 3.3 million by September. The Islamist insurgency has resulted in an entire shutdown of food and healthcare supplies. Over two lakh people from the northern town of Djibo have left their homes. ("Africa Live: A million more could soon face hunger in Burkina Faso-NGO," *BBC*, 20 July 2023)

### INTERNATIONAL

#### Wagner Group to continue its activities in Africa

On 20 July, the head of the Wagner Group, Yevgeny Prigozhin, stated that the activities of the group would continue in Africa. Prigozhin stated: "There was no, and there will be no, reduction in our programs in Africa." Prigozhin assured: "If the assistance of the Wagner Group is needed anywhere to combat gangs and terrorists and to protect the interests of the people of these countries, we are ready to begin immediately to fulfill this task after agreeing on the conditions." ("Yevgeny Prigozhin: Wagner boss says activities to continue in Africa," *BBC News*, 20 July 2023)

### Black Sea Grain Initiative suspension causes food insecurity in East African countries

On 21 July, Al Jazeera reported that Russia's withdrawal from the Black Sea Grain Initiative 2022 which permitted the export of Ukrainian agricultural products has caused speculations on rising consumer prices. The Black Sea Grain Initiative, signed in July 2022, permitted ships carrying fertilisers and agricultural products from three Ukrainian ports to

traverse past Russian warships in the Bosphorus Strait. More than 32.8 million tonnes of Ukrainian grains have been exported following the agreement in 2022. Human rights groups have raised concerns regarding food shortage in East Africa following the Russian withdrawal from the agreement. ("[Concern mounts in East Africa over halted Black Sea grain deal,](#)" *Al Jazeera*, 21 July 2023)

---

#### About the Authors

Nithyashree RB is a Postgraduate Scholar from Stella Maris College, Chennai. Devjyoti Saha is a Postgraduate from the Pondicherry University. Anu Maria Joseph is a Research Assistant at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore. Jerry Franklin is a Postgraduate Scholar from Madras Christian College, Chennai. Ryan Marcus is an Undergraduate Scholar at Kristu Jayanti College, Bangalore. Sneha Surendran is a Postgraduate Scholar at OP Jindal University, Haryana. Prerana P is a Postgraduate Scholar at the Christ (Deemed To Be University), Bangalore.



### [About NIAS Africa Studies](#)

As a part of the area studies initiatives, the Institute started a focussed study on Pakistan in 2020. In 2021, it expanded the area studies to include Europe Studies, China Reader, and Maritime Studies. In 2022, the Science, Technology and International Relations (STIR) programme at the Institute is further expanding its area studies, to include Africa.

The primary focus of NIAS Africa studies would be on the following five verticals: contemporary political issues, colonial legacies, problems of governance, civil-military equations, and the rise of radical Islamic groups. The primary objective is to study Africa from an internal prism. ,

NIAS Africa Studies would include a series of expert lectures, workshops, publications and a weekly exclusively focussed on Africa. The initiative also aims to create a network of young scholars studying Africa and also African scholars studying in various Indian institutions.

---

### [About the team](#)

#### *Apoorva Sudhakar*

Apoorva Sudhakar is an Independent Scholar based in Kerala. Her areas of interest include peace and conflict in Africa and South Asia. She has previously worked on the conflict over the Nile Dam and the abductions in Nigeria.

#### *Anu Maria Joseph*

Anu Maria Joseph is a Research Assistant at the School of Conflict and Security Studies at the National Institute of Advanced Studies. Her areas of interest include peace and conflict in Africa, Afro-European and Afro-China relations.

#### *Jerry Franklin*

Jerry Franklin is a postgraduate scholar at Madras Christian College, Chennai. His interests include governance in North and Central Africa, and insurgency in Sahel.

---

©NIAS Africa Studies

Editor: D. Suba Chandran

Assistant Editor: Anu Maria Joseph