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**Working Paper**

## China's Development-Security in Practice: The Case of Mali

Working Paper, No. 2020/40

**Provided in Cooperation with:**

China Africa Research Initiative (CARI), School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Johns Hopkins University

*Suggested Citation:* Benabdallah, Lina; Large, Daniel (2020) : China's Development-Security in Practice: The Case of Mali, Working Paper, No. 2020/40, China Africa Research Initiative (CARI), School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Johns Hopkins University, Washington, DC,  
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This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/248168>

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WORKING  
PAPER

NO. 40

AUG 2020

# CHINA★AFRICA RESEARCH INITIATIVE

## Development, Security, and China's Evolving Role in Mali

Lina Benabdallah and Daniel Large



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**TO CITE THIS PAPER:**

Benabdallah, Lina and Daniel Large. 2020. *Development, Security, and China’s Evolving Role in Mali*. Working Paper No. 2020/40. China Africa Research Initiative, School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, Washington, DC. Retrieved from <http://www.sais-cari.org/publications>.

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Editor: Daniela Solano-Ward

# ABSTRACT

**SAIS-CARI WORKING PAPER  
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The idea that development produces security and peace is prominent in China’s engagement with Africa. The construction of critical infrastructure like roads or railways is often framed by Beijing as a show of the Communist Party of China’s commitment to peace and stability in the continent. To date, scholars have examined China’s development-security nexus in Africa by looking at cases of post-conflict reconstruction, applied in periods of political transition, or in so-called fragile states. Focusing on Mali, this paper builds on this scholarship by exploring the links between development and security in the context of conflict to understand the extent to which China’s security approach in Africa is adequately conceptualized, successful, or challenged.

Our findings indicate that China’s development-for-security approach has pronounced limitations when applied in Mali for the following main reasons. First, China’s development-security nexus lacks a focus on governance. Development projects without government control or political will to turn them into profitable investments risk decaying, being destroyed, or getting used subversively by non-state actors and armed groups. Second, even though the Chinese ambassador in Mali has been actively reaching out to the country’s religious leaders and other parties to the country’s national dialogue, China’s approach in Mali remains largely government-focused and Bamako-centered, presenting limitations to Beijing’s grasp of the multitude of political actors involved in Mali’s crisis. Third, although China’s peacekeeping contribution to the mission in Mali is very efficient with regards to development work conducted by Chinese engineers and the medical assistance provided through the Chinese-run hospital which provides essential trauma treatments and emergency services, Chinese peacekeepers are often perceived to be risk averse. Lack of deeper engagement with Mali’s diverse cultural and linguistic background further hinders the potential for social capital and trust building necessary for China’s development-for-security approach to be successful in a crisis situation.

## INTRODUCTION

The idea that development produces security and peace has been prominent in China's engagement with Africa, including Beijing's engagement with security and "hotspot" conflicts. One notable "hotspot" is Mali, which plunged into a multifaceted political crisis in 2012 involving a separatist rebellion, jihadist insurgency, and military coup in the capital Bamako. Beginning in January 2013, a French military mission, Operation Serval, intervened to end jihadist control over northern Mali after which the international community "marshalled enormous resources in an effort to restore a modicum of peace and security".<sup>1</sup> In 2013, the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), consisting of over 12,000 uniformed personnel, was mandated to broker and implement a peace agreement, protect civilians, and stabilize population centers. A peace accord between Tuareg rebels and the central government was eventually signed in 2015. A French regional anti-terrorism force, Operation Barkhane, succeeded Operation Serval and focused much of its attention on Mali. Finally, international partners have launched numerous initiatives to assist the government in building peace and reconstructing the state, including the security sector. Despite substantial efforts and long-standing intervention, the security situation in Mali "has been deteriorating continuously since 2013" culminating in anti-IBK (Ibrahim Boubacar Keita) protests for several weeks in the summer of 2020, followed by a mutiny turned into a military coup on August 18, 2020.<sup>2</sup>

Although the overriding association between China and Mali today concerns security, relations between Beijing and Bamako are rooted in a deeper history of political ties and development assistance. China and Mali's relationship dates back to the post-colonial period, with diplomatic relations established on October 25, 1960. Efforts to rejuvenate relations through economic links were made in the 1990s, especially after the visit to Bamako by China's Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing in January 2005. Li Zhaoxing visited Bamako again in 2006, meeting Mali's President Amadou Toumany Toure and Prime Minister Ousmane Issouti Maga and signing an agreement on technological and economic cooperation. During Li's visit, ZTE (a Chinese telecommunications equipment company) signed an agreement to install Mali's first wireless network for Sotelma, the state-owned telecoms operator, and Li attended the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of a China-Mali sugar cane joint venture, Sukala S.A. In February 2009, President Hu Jintao visited Bamako in a state visit heralded as opening a "new chapter in bilateral relations."<sup>3</sup> Arguably, however, in reality this new chapter did not begin until 2013 when, under Xi Jinping's leadership, China agreed to support MINUSMA. Since then, China's relations with Mali, and its role in the country and in the Sahel region, have been dominated by security concerns but also accompanied by the framing of economic development as "the key to solving all problems." Of note among the more recent development projects are the Chinese government-funded Center of Vocation Training constructed in Senou, the University Campus of Kabala, and the agriculture demonstration center in Baguineda. The question then is how successful are these development projects in pushing for security and stability in Mali.

## AIMS

This paper examines China's changing security engagement in Mali with a particular interest in the applied relationship between development and security. China's thinking about development and security emanates from its domestic context and is mobilized for the purposes of legitimizing China's expansive security engagement in parts of the African continent, seeking to enhance China's self-ascribed global credentials and reputation as a "responsible major power." Because of this, a host of questions and more critical lines of inquiry are typically drowned out. There is a lack of empirical analysis about the actual, not ascribed, connections between security and development in China's engagement, even if the theme is familiar beyond China and long predates Beijing's entry.

Mali matters for understanding China's evolving engagement with peace and security in Africa for several reasons. First, Mali was the site of a remarkable turnaround in China's approach to armed intervention in the continent, from blanket condemnation of France's Operation Serval as neo-colonial to active support for, and participation in, the UN peacekeeping mission MINUSMA. Second, China deployed its first, however symbolic, contingent of "combat troops" to Mali thus, with South Sudan, inaugurating a new phase in the evolution of China's UN peacekeeping. Third, Mali is one part of a complex regional conflict in the Sahel, where conditions are undergoing a fast and fluid deterioration. Although Mali has also been somewhat overshadowed by interest in China's more high-profile engagement with South Sudan, and its naval base in Djibouti, the Sahel region represents an increasingly challenging and strategic engagement for Beijing. Finally, a set of more practical questions about policy, including China's approach to engaging in conflict zones and how other states and external powers respond, also demonstrate the importance of this case.

The need to go beyond formal frameworks and China's official discourses and attempt to connect and test these with actual empirical dynamics on the ground is well recognized across a myriad of aspects in China's relations with Africa. For all its prominence in official speeches and communiqués, China's approach to developmental security still needs to be squared with its application, and the relationship between economic investment and security explored in more depth in the context of states like Mali, which are routinely labelled "fragile" in a manner that barely helps in understanding how governance there actually exists.

To evaluate China's development-security nexus in the context of conflict, this paper is organized as follows. It first examines China's engagement with development and security in terms of foreign policy, theoretical debates, and efforts to link these with its role in Africa. The second section contextualizes the situation in Mali and China's engagement there across time and currently, from an economic, socio-cultural, and political perspective and China's role in UN peacekeeping. It then goes on to examine the contours of China's development for security approach. Finally, it evaluates the theme of development and security. It concludes by looking forward to China's role in Mali and what this might say about its wider peace and security engagement in the African continent. However, before delving into the background of China's development-security nexus in Africa, explaining our case choice and methodology is warranted.

## METHODOLOGY AND CASE SELECTION

This paper is a preliminary part of a larger research agenda to understand, probe, and evaluate China's security approach in the Sahel. We chose to examine the case of Mali for three primary reasons. First, China's involvement in Mali is bound to set the tone for its approach to the entire Liptako-Gourma region, between Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, and might have significant ramifications outside of the Sahel and into the Gulf of Guinea region as Beijing continues to "actively explore and apply a Chinese approach to addressing hotspot issues."<sup>4</sup> Understanding how China is learning to manage its security involvement in Mali reveals much about what to expect in other areas in the Sahel and countries where China does not have a high profile financial investment presence but a growing security footprint. Second, on top of rich ethnographic research concerning various aspects of trading linkages between China and Mali, traditional medicine, or agricultural investments, Mali has also been used as a case study of China's front-line, combat UN peacekeeping, although theoretically making sense of and evaluating Chinese involvement in Mali in terms of development-security connections has been lacking. Third, China's multi-dimensional involvement in Mali provides a unique case to analyze the development-security nexus in practice: Chinese enterprises have been present in Mali for several decades realizing several infrastructure projects and getting involved in agribusiness, and recently the Chinese government deployed a peacekeeping contingent to the MINUSMA camp in the city of Gao. With these elements, the case of China-Mali ties presents a unique opportunity to probe the development-security nexus and evaluate its strengths and limitations in the context of conflict.

Research for this paper involved a combination of content and text analysis of secondary and primary literature, including official documents, relevant press statements, presidential speeches and white papers relevant to China-Mali relations, and fieldwork in Bamako. While in Bamako, we targeted interviews with a wide range of actors in Mali. Some of these interviews required permission to be obtained in advance (mainly for MINUSMA and Malian Army staff), while others relied on a snowballing effect as the basis for meeting several civil society actors, think tank experts, and other actors. We also spoke with journalists, Chinese state-owned enterprise (SOE) officials, and diplomats posted at the French as well as US embassies. Conducting field research in Mali was also necessary to gauge perceptions of China's involvement in security and commerce, even if formal survey work was not possible.

Many of our interviewees asked for anonymity. Because of the relatively small community of experts, journalists, and diplomats working in Bamako, we abide by our interviewees' preferences and refer to them anonymously. Most conversations were in French, except for one interview with a journalist conducted in Arabic and a few conversations with MINUSMA staff that were in English. Our interviews were for the most part structured as open-ended because we believe that we can achieve a better flow when our interactions were as conversation-like as possible. We drafted a long list of questions we were interested in inquiring on, but we did not restrict the conversations to the questions we had. Instead, we updated our questions regularly and adapted our approach to match the language used by interlocutors and items they emphasized in our discussions.



## CHINA, DEVELOPMENT, AND SECURITY IN AFRICA

The Chinese government stresses that economic development is central to overcoming the sources of armed conflict and achieving peace, understood as more than the absence of fighting. Interest in the relationship between development and security began to be fed into the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) process with the official adoption of a peace and security component in 2012. This has also been codified into Chinese variants of “developmental peace,” which essentially provide Chinese characteristics to longstanding debates about economic processes, conflict, and peace.<sup>5</sup>

Such apparent faith in the efficacy of economics in addressing security challenges predated the launch and rolling out of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) but the BRI elevated the type of grand statements concerning development as the route to peace that had typically been directed toward Africa – notably in China’s high-profile engagements like Darfur and South Sudan – to a global scope. President Xi Jinping told the 2015 FOCAC that, “development holds the key to solving all problems.”<sup>6</sup> China’s Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, went further in telling the September 2019 United Nations General Assembly that, “development is the master key to solving all problems. Development should be placed at the center of the global macro policy framework, with continued focus on priority areas such as poverty reduction, infrastructure, education, and public health.”<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, he promised that Beijing would, “actively explore and apply a Chinese approach to addressing hotspot issues, and play a constructive role in upholding international peace and security.”<sup>8</sup>

On top of such claims, in the past few years China has talked about contributing its “wisdom” to global governance, including in the realm of peace and security, indicating how its current role has gone far beyond Africa. Xi’s report to the Communist Party of China’s (CPC) 19<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in 2017 thus invoked, “Chinese wisdom and a Chinese approach to solving problems facing mankind,” and underscored how, “China will continue to play its part as a major and responsible country, take an active part in reforming and developing the global governance system, and keep contributing Chinese wisdom and strength to global governance.”<sup>9</sup> Alongside such public messaging regarding development as the solution to conflict, there seem to be private doubts about how well such certitude squares with empirical reality, whether in Mali or South Sudan, or within China itself. Xi Jinping noted the limits to what development could achieve in China, noting in relation to Xinjiang that, “We say that development is the top priority and the basis for achieving lasting security, and that’s right...But it would be wrong to believe that with development every problem solves itself.”<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, the public confidence in this link has continued, and has not been confined to China’s leadership. For example, former Malian Prime Minister, Moussa Mara, told *Xinhua* in 2016 that, “Chinese peacekeepers are not only a force of peace, they are also a force of development. They understand that maintaining peace not only means weaponry and sending soldiers, but also means improving the livelihoods of locals, winning their hearts.”<sup>11</sup>

If China’s rhetoric concerning Mali and other “hotspot” cases in Africa continues to be taken literally, what appears to be left based in actual fact is merely a residual faith that lacks any robust,



empirically substantiated foundation. Here, China would not stand out as unique; other external powers and international organizations have experimented with, and sought to apply, variations on the same broad “peace through development” theme (indeed, this slogan has been used by insurgent rebel movements in Africa to articulate and legitimize their armed struggle).<sup>12</sup> Indeed, such thinking marks one facet of current international approaches to Mali, predicated on stabilization linked to counterterrorism objectives. China is facing familiar, intractable constraints and there is little reason to think it, as a relative newcomer, can make any decisive difference in such a complex conflict in Mali and the Sahel.

The context of the security situation in Mali is markedly different from most other contexts of Chinese foreign policy making in Africa, where the extrapolation of the CCP’s domestic development-for-security approach has yielded positive results.<sup>13</sup> The development-security nexus in China’s domestic politics is premised on the policy prescription that creating economic growth (via direct and indirect employment-creation from basic infrastructure construction) is the backbone of stability (and peace). When applied to Mali, China’s contributions to development projects are framed (by Chinese diplomats) as contributions to peace and security. In practice, this contribution faces many challenges when applied in context.

Despite development being central to stability in Mali, the context of the security crisis marks a vast departure from the original vision and premise of developmental peace and development-security nexus within China’s domestic institutional make-up. Thus, it becomes imperative to explore how China’s ideas about responding to the crisis in Mali and the Sahel travel, are applied, and revised. What does the actual application of development-for-security ideas by China look like and entail, and to what extent are they successful in achieving development-centered security? Are the Chinese actors involved – from the People’s Liberation Army to SOEs, soldiers, and engineers – well positioned to realistically implement this in their own capacities, or in conjunction with a diverse, dynamic array of other foreign partners in the context of a fluid regional conflict complex? Conceptually speaking, Beijing’s emphasis on the development-security nexus and developmental peace represent a departure from the so-called liberal peace and place China as the norm-setting power.<sup>14</sup> Moving beyond the descriptive, we probe how these norms and alternatives travel and resonate on the ground in Mali.

## CHINA’S ENGAGEMENT IN MALI SINCE 2012

Relations between China and Mali have developed into a broad and diverse spectrum of areas, spanning socio-cultural relations, political and economic links, and an expanding security relationship.

### DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE AND SOCIO-CULTURAL RELATIONS

Three main development projects stand out among China’s many projects in Mali. These are the *Centre de Formation Professionnelle* in Senou, the *Centre Universitaire de Kabala*, and the *Centre Pilote Agricole* in Baguineda. These three projects have in common a huge potential for job creation,

skills transfers, and improving living-conditions in Mali. They also have in common being located in or near the capital city. In Bamako, not too far from the capital's airport, the brand new Vocational Training Center sponsored by China Aid was completed in 2018, ready to equip young Malians with technical skills that prepare them for the job market. The Center's entrance displays a huge banner of Mali's now former President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita shaking hands with Xi Jinping. The center has been ready and waiting to be used for almost two years. Despite its core mission to provide youth with skills that can lead to finding suitable jobs and improve socio-economic living conditions, it has proven to be a rather inconsequential investment. Examining the underlying reasons behind this missed opportunity gives us an important look into the drawbacks of China's development-backed conflict resolution and peace building in Mali.

People-to-people exchange initiatives and scholarship programs are a trademark of Chinese foreign policy in Africa and an important part of China-Mali bilateral relations.<sup>15</sup> Under FOCAC funding, Sino-Mali cooperation has diversified and expanded to include more of these cultural and education exchanges. China organizes about 80 seminars for Malians annually and sponsors 300 professionalization trainings. Indeed, as of September 2017, 2,536 Malians had participated in FOCAC-organized professionalization trainings in China.<sup>16</sup> Another important component of these exchanges is the launch of a series of vocational training workshops for artisanal skills, which were announced by Xi Jinping at the 2018 FOCAC. These workshops, called Luban Workshops, aim, “to provide vocational training for young Africans.”<sup>17</sup> Mali's first Luban workshop was launched on December 20, 2019 in the form of an *Atelier de Medecine Traditionelle Chinoise* located at the Chinese-funded campus of Kabala University.

Other such initiatives aiming to improve living conditions include launching a school construction program in rural areas in Mopti, Sikasso, and Kirina that runs mainly on solar energy, and a project that was started after the 2015 FOCAC that partners with StarTimes to connect 200 villages to satellite TV. StarTimes provides selected villages access to satellite TV, world news, and other educational programs, but also gets to promote Chinese television channels through its satellite offer.

Mixing cultural projects with aid is indeed common to several China-sponsored cultural exchange projects. Another example includes the first China-Mali Spring Festival Evening Gala which took place in January 2019 at the *Centre International De Conférences De Bamako*, which China originally helped to build and, more recently, renovate. Amongst the performances, and with now former President Keita in attendance, the gala featured Chinese participants from a range of groups present in Mali, including medical teams, those working for the Confucius Institute in Bamako, and Chinese peacekeepers (who performed a dance named The Sword of Peace). The Confucius Institute located at *l'Université des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines de Bamako* in Badalabougou is another important player that sits at this intersection of cultural exchanges and aid.<sup>18</sup> Students enrolled at the institute take a variety of classes on Chinese language, China's history, introduction to China, as well as learn about China's culture through dancing, acting, and martial arts activities.<sup>19</sup> The institute plays a role in facilitating the selection of Chinese government-sponsored scholarships for Malian students by hosting information sessions about studying in China.

Despite only being open since 2018, the Confucius Institute has attracted an impressive crowd of young Malians interested in learning about funding opportunities to study in China.<sup>20</sup>

The long lines and crowded rooms filled with students interested in studying in Chinese universities indicates how China's development projects and cultural exchanges in Mali enjoy an overall positive perception. Young Malians aspire to travel to study in China, or to work as translators in Mali for Chinese companies after studying Chinese at the Confucius Institute. Evidence found in the 2014/2015 Afrobarometer surveys show positive attitudes toward China's role in Mali from an economic perspective. The survey indicated that Malians had overwhelmingly positive views about China, with 92 percent saying that China's influence was positive, and a further 88 percent indicating that they had favorable views about China's development assistance.<sup>21</sup> This is congruent with our informal examination of people's perceptions of China in Bamako during our research. Most of our interlocuters expressed positive impressions of China-built infrastructure projects in Bamako, specifically, the third bridge connecting both sides of the Niger River in Bamako was a recurring example and subject of praise.<sup>22</sup> Whereas China-Mali cultural and aid relations seemed to enjoy positive attitudes on the part of Malians, the state of the countries' political relations was not as uniform.

## POLITICAL RELATIONS

Founded on deep historical ties, China has maintained strong political relations with Mali. China's role in Mali, and deepening security role in the African continent, is a world away from historical ties but is still officially framed using time-honored foreign policy principles. While visiting Mali in January 1964, Premier Zhou Enlai listened to President Keita praise China for its low cost technical assistance, Chinese technicians' readiness to adapt themselves to Malian life, and "the speed and competence" of Chinese projects undertaken, "without the slightest intention of interfering in our internal affairs."<sup>23</sup> Relatedly, the most recent coup that led to ousting IBK in August 2020, showed once again that China's political relations with Mali are far more restrained and differing to the norms of non-intervention and regional institutions than other major partners of Mali. Beijing's reaction to the news of the coup was limited to supporting regional organizations in resolving the political crisis.

Nonetheless, Mali's long history of supporting Beijing is part of ritual encounters between high level leaders. As China's ambassador in Bamako put it, Mali, "has, like a good brother, unswervingly supported China on its core interests."<sup>24</sup> Mali has participated in the FOCAC process, in December 2015 high level meetings were held between Xi Jinping and former President Keita in Johannesburg, and again before the 2018 FOCAC in Beijing. The government of Mali has supported Xi Jinping's foreign policy positioning China as a major power, expressing support for Xi's "community of common destiny" and the BRI.<sup>25</sup>

A further strand of relations has involved political party exchanges between the CPC and Mali's ruling party, which long predate the 2012 military *coup d'état* and relations after 2013.<sup>26</sup> Given Mali's multi-party political system, the CPC has maintained links with a number of Malian political

parties, not just the current ruling party (Rally for Mali). In September 2018, a special envoy, including Xi Jinping and Zheng Jianbang, attended President Keita's inauguration ceremony in Bamako.

China's relations with Mali are only one part of the country's foreign relations. Former President Keita participated in the India-Africa Forum Summit in 2015 and at the Tokyo International Conference on African Development in 2019, for instance, and Mali's relations with France loom prominently. As such, one part of China's engagement in Mali and the Sahel also involves China's relations with France.<sup>27</sup>

Further, in November 2015, an attack on the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako left at least 20 people dead, including three China Railway Construction Corporation executives. The attack dramatically highlighted security risks and helped render salient the importance of security to China's current and future interests in the region. After the attack, Xi demanded greater efforts to ensure the safety of Chinese nationals overseas. China's foreign minister further pledged to fight extremism and strengthen counter-terrorism cooperation with Africa.

## ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Economic relations between China and Mali are not insignificant but are not at the scale of China's relations with other resource-rich African states. A landlocked country, Mali's economy is dominated by raw commodity exports (gold and cotton account for 86 percent of exports, with only 3 percent of cotton being processed).<sup>28</sup> In 2017, China was the second top country from which Mali imported goods, after Senegal, but Mali's top five export partners were South Africa, Switzerland, Burkina Faso, Bangladesh, and Cote d'Ivoire.<sup>29</sup>

The broad profile of China-Mali trade relations has remained broadly constant across time - Mali imports manufactured products and exports raw commodities - but the context has changed significantly, including the emergence of dynamic transnational trade in commodities such as green tea and other finished goods. The top importers of Chinese goods have been local Malian traders.<sup>30</sup> There is also a flourishing business in finished goods like bikes, phones, and tea. Additionally, rooted in the informal sector, there is a more illicit strand of economic relations featuring trade in donkey skin and poached animals.

Agricultural cooperation has been one constant aspect of Sino-Malian economic relations.<sup>31</sup> This featured a notable project, three years before the 2012 crisis. In 2009, the China Light Industrial Corporation for Foreign Economic and Technical Co-operation and the Malian government allocated an additional 20,000 hectares of land to a new sugar scheme, N-Sukala, which combined pivot-fed plots east of the *Canal du Sahel* and furrow irrigated fields on the west side of the canal. The government of Mali regarded irrigated agriculture as the, "best means to modernize the agricultural sector, ensure greater food security, and produce key commodities, such as sugar and oil seeds."<sup>32</sup> Work on N-Sukala began in 2010, with then President Amadou Toumany Toure wanting to show progress before the elections scheduled for April 2012. Total investment was estimated at

80 billion CFA francs (US\$ 136 million at 2018 rates), to be funded by a 20-year Chinese loan to the Malian government. The project,

“was presented as a positive factor leader to greater development for people living in the project zone, with the prospect of 10,000 seasonal and 600 full time jobs. Social benefits were also promised, with provision of roads, schools, and health centers all envisaged.”<sup>33</sup>

Mining is a major economic sector in Mali. The third-largest producer of gold in Africa, gold accounted for 60 percent of Mali's exports in 2016 and industrial gold production increased to a record 65.1 tons in 2019.<sup>34</sup> Gold is also an important part of the informal economy and trade export networks, with Switzerland, China, and particularly Dubai acting as major importers. Trade networks connect southern Mali to Guinea and the Kidal region in northern Mali to Algeria. China's role in goldmining has been relatively small to date, instead goldmining is dominated by companies from Australia, Canada, and the UK. China remains a bigger importer and consumer than an investor in Malian resources. However, this does not mean there are no Chinese mining activities in Mali, simply that Chinese companies operate on a smaller scale and as relative late comers.<sup>35</sup>

More recently, amidst efforts by the government of Mali to attract Chinese investment, there have been signs of an increased Chinese presence in Mali's mining industry.<sup>36</sup> These efforts are part of Mali's attempts to diversify beyond gold. In addition to the fledgling hydrocarbon sector, whose progress has stalled due to conflict, other minerals are also being targeted for extraction. In September 2019, Australian Mali Lithium announced that it was expanding its partnership with Minmetals Corporation, the Chinese SOE headquartered in Beijing. The partnership is through Minmetals' subsidiary, the Changsha Research Institute of Mining and Metallurgy. Reportedly, Changsha was also going to test samples from the Goulamina project, reportedly the world's, “largest uncommitted hard rock lithium mineral reserve.”<sup>37</sup> The mineral sector appears likely to see further interest from Chinese corporations as well as other foreign parties.

The Malian market has been a diverse site for Chinese business engagement, from small and medium sized companies to larger SOEs.<sup>38</sup> Amongst the business sectors involved, pharmaceuticals, for traditional Chinese medicine and other products, and construction have been prominent. Within the construction sector, China has sponsored many infrastructure projects, including university campus and dorms, football stadiums, a bridge crossing the Niger River, the Bamako expressway, conference center, and national museum renovation.<sup>39</sup> The Sino-Malian Friendship Bridge (*Le Pont de l'Amitié Sino-Malienne*), crossing the Niger River in Bamako, was inaugurated September 22, 2011, Malian Independence Day, as a gift offered by China in celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mali's independence (1960-2010). Like football stadiums, this was part of, “a series of diplomatic attempts to represent China as the new privileged partner of Mali in the beginning of the century.”<sup>40</sup>

More recently, and now connected to the BRI, railway construction has also stood out. In December 2015, state-owned China Railway Construction Limited (CRC) announced that Mali and



Senegal had signed a US\$ 2.7 billion contract for CRC to rehabilitate the Bamako-Dakar railway line.<sup>41</sup> More projects, notably the US\$ 8 billion railway link between Mali and the port of Conakry in Guinea, demonstrate how Mali fits into a regional geography of China's economic interests that now falls under the banner of the BRI. In July 2019, in a move that was presented as a means to strengthen security cooperation, Mali signed a memorandum of understanding to join China's BRI as part of a number of proposed areas of deepened cooperation.

## SECURITY AND MILITARY RELATIONS

China delivered 5 million Euros worth of logistics equipment to the Malian Army between 2012 and 2013.<sup>42</sup> The equipment, containing several 4x4 pickups and trucks, was meant as logistical support for the Malian Army to transport soldiers across the country. The size and type of military aid was carefully chosen so that the CCP could still symbolically show support for the Malian people in their struggle without the burden that comes along with overt interference in Mali's domestic issues. At this time, around 2012, Mali was receiving most of its lethal military aid from Russia and Bulgaria.<sup>43</sup>

In addition to military aid, China's UN peacekeeping is another prominent part of its security engagement in Mali. Although this contribution remained relatively modest in practice, the presence of peacekeeping troops had symbolic significance. In China there were vocal critics of France's military intervention in Mali, but Beijing's position evolved over time.<sup>44</sup> The evolution reflected, amongst other things, concern over the impact of the Arab Spring and the threat of terrorism. Chinese analysts were concerned that political turmoil in West Asia and North Africa would persist and become a long-term trend.<sup>45</sup> The rapidly deteriorating situation in Mali was widely regarded as a typical example of this "interconnectedness" and domino effect. Some argued that although the Libyan conflict in 2011 did not create a chain reaction in Africa, the grave spillover effects of Western armed intervention nonetheless damaged African security.<sup>46</sup> The outbreak of the Malian crisis is thought to have been significantly influenced by the spillover effects of Libya's civil war and NATO's armed attack in pursuit of regime change.<sup>47</sup> According to some Chinese studies, the destabilizing spillover effects spread across the Sahel-Sahara region.<sup>48</sup> The Chinese government assessed the threat of terrorism to be the major concern, heightened by the creation of a political power vacuum in Mali that could be exploited by groups like al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. Mali was included in the list of countries belonging to an, "arc of instability caused by terrorism" (*kongbu dongdang hu*) along with Libya, Somalia, Tunisia, Nigeria, and Egypt.<sup>49</sup>

The current priority of MINUSMA, created under UNSC resolution 2100, is to support the implementation of the Algiers Peace Agreement, which the Malian government and the *Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad*, an umbrella of northern rebel groups, signed in 2015.<sup>50</sup> Despite its initial criticisms of foreign interventions, China has been contributing to MINUSMA since December 2013. China's high-profile dispatch of comprehensive combat troops to Mali in 2013 was significant given China's traditional preference for providing logistical medical, transportation, and engineering support.<sup>51</sup> In June 2019, UNSC Resolution 2480 extended

MINUSMA's mandate to June 30, 2020. As of January 2020, MINUSMA had an approved budget of US\$ 1,221,420,600 for July 2019 to June 2020 and a total of 15,441 deployed personnel, 11,620 of those are troops. China has contributed 426 members, Chad 1,420, Bangladesh 1,295, and Germany 370, among others.<sup>52</sup>

Among China's peacekeepers deployed to Mali, only 170 are soldiers. The remaining peacekeepers are engineers, medical staff, and other peacekeepers who were tasked with completing the construction of the hospital in the city of Gao where the Chinese contingent is stationed. That the majority of Chinese peacekeepers in Mali are engineers and medical staff indicates how China's approach prioritizes development work. Chinese peacekeeping engineers are often involved in projects that result in road construction work, building security checkpoints, providing drinking water to the local populations, paving roads, as well as building fences around public schools in Gao.<sup>53</sup>

## EVALUATING CHINA'S DEVELOPMENT-SECURITY NEXUS IN MALI

There is no question about the necessity of development to secure and sustain peace and stability in Mali. Whether this is in the north, the center, or other regions in Mali, the escalation of the crisis since 2012 has had a crippling impact on the economy. Investments dwindled as construction projects halted, foreign aid disbursements were disrupted during the military junta-led coup in March 2012, and revenues from the tourism sector (whether through artisanal crafts or service industry) plummeted. The relationship between conflict and development, especially as seen from the development-security nexus is multidirectional in that just as much as conflict impacts the economy, lack of economic growth also plays a role in prolonging conflict. Indeed, diminishing economic revenues and higher rates of unemployment tend to open up opportunities for luring the young unemployed or by blackmailing them.<sup>54</sup> Unemployment or underemployment also exacerbates conflict by opening up a path for illicit trade activities such as drugs and narcotics trafficking which are widely recognized for their role in financing Jihadist activities. In fact, one of the many grievances held against the Malian government is its inability to provide youth employment and its inadequate economic reforms that often fail to open opportunities for socioeconomic betterment.<sup>55</sup>

Even though approaching peace and security from a development and economic growth perspective is hardly uniquely or exclusively Chinese, it is a trademark of Chinese foreign policy in Africa and evaluating, rather than describing it, has so far been lacking in relevant scholarship.<sup>56</sup> Thus, the question we are grappling with in this paper is how does the development-security nexus play out in a crisis situation such as the one in Mali? In this section, we evaluate the practical limitations, challenges, and advantages to China's development-security nexus approach in Mali.

## CHALLENGES TO CHINA'S SECURITY INVOLVEMENT IN MALI

Standing between China's development-for-security approach in Mali and the materialization of peace and stability in the country are several big and small challenges. We divide these into three



broad categories: challenges to China's approach to governance, challenges that come from lack of contact and trust-building with locals and from limited knowledge of the region, and challenges to Chinese peacekeeping. Yet before we get to these three structural challenges, there is a direct hindering impact on China's construction work and infrastructure development in Mali: the conflict targets basic infrastructure.

At first glance, a basic yet serious challenge undermining China's development-for-security approach in Mali and Mali's broad development goals is the fact that development projects (roads, bridges, schools, health clinics, and so on) are frequently targeted by armed groups in times of conflict.<sup>57</sup> Armed groups benefit from isolating populations from nearby communities (and government forces) by destroying vital infrastructure projects (such as bridges and schools).<sup>58</sup> This in turn opens up an opportunity for armed groups to start a new social contract with local citizens by replacing the state as the providers of basic public goods. Armed groups then have the opportunity to act instead of the state by performing basic tasks such as providing perimeter protection and other public services such as basic justice, security, and relief.<sup>59</sup> Destroying vital infrastructure is sometimes also a tactic that armed groups have been documented to use in order to isolate villages from receiving rescue aid before attacking them. Whatever the intentions, infrastructure construction is highly targeted during conflict and is highly critical during post-conflict reconstruction.

In the context of Chinese construction companies, their ability to carry on development projects, especially in the most vulnerable areas such as Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal, Mopti, and Makena are most directly impacted. For Chinese construction companies in Mali, the trouble is two-pronged. When road construction and infrastructure projects are such frequent targets of armed groups, the engineers and crews working on them become a target as well, which can lead to the suspension of construction work.<sup>60</sup> Second, because of the cost of conflict (and cost of ensuring the safety of Chinese engineers and construction workers posted in Mali), it is increasingly difficult for these contracts to be profitable for Chinese companies given how slow their operations are and how much security detail needs to accompany the teams. To recall, in 2015, three executives from a Chinese state-owned railway company (China Railway Construction Corp) were killed in an attack in the Radisson Bleu hotel in Bamako.<sup>61</sup> Beyond these direct hindering factors for construction work and development projects, there are more structural challenges to China's development-for-security projects in Mali.

## GOVERNANCE

Much of the concerted effort to respond to the crisis in Mali has taken the shape of military operations. The Malian government set up a response plan that was supposed to integrate a military operation to take back territories captured by Katiba Macina, and then provide development aid, return of state officials and state capabilities, and economic development. However, experts have said that in reality, "efforts have focused primarily on the military campaign."<sup>62</sup> Besides the Malian army, the focus on the military can be seen in French operations in Mali, such as Operation Berkane, in G5 Sahel joint force involvement, and through MINUSMA

(although the latter's focus has centered more on civilian protection and return of the state). The governance aspect remains a weak element in these operations, whether led by the Malian army or by foreign interventions.

A recent survey from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute on Central Mali finds the, "poor provision and limited effectiveness of the institutions responsible for delivering public services are reported to have serious effects on people's livelihoods."<sup>63</sup> The state's weak physical presence in Central and Northern Mali causes governance gaps in areas such as the judiciary, public service provision, and overall rule of law and this is causing local people to perceive non-state actors (such as armed groups or self-defense militia) as legitimate actors.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, "populations in central Mali grant a high presumption of effectiveness to non-state security actors, whereas international and sub-regional actors are considered to be the least effective."<sup>65</sup> Exercising governance by the state is crucially important for the development-security nexus to be successful and effective. If the state fails to, "demonstrate effective authority and exercise the monopoly of force in these regions, chronic insecurity reigns and undermines prospects for peace and socio-economic development."<sup>66</sup>

Therefore, engaging with the crisis in Mali necessitates a holistic engagement with all three interrelated elements: development, security, and governance. So far, it appears that China has a big advantage over other foreign partners of Mali since it has and continues to invest greatly in development projects intended to contribute to security and stability in Mali but without the political will from the government to make these projects count, it is difficult for the development-security nexus to move beyond theoretical appeal. Indeed, when it comes to the development-security nexus, China continues to generate added value in terms of development projects across Mali (see sections above) effectively contributing to improving socio-economic living conditions. However, as was the case with the costly vocational training center in Senou (Bamako), the investment is not worth much when the Malian elites in charge of putting it to work are actually not taking that step and the Center remains inexplicably closed today. The vocational training center of Senou is a testimony to the difference between the assumptions on which China's development-backed approach to security rests and the reality of political will and governance in Mali. The Center is designed to be an investment in bettering the lives of hundreds of young Malians through skills transfers but until the center opens its doors, this just remains a very expensive ideal. Indeed, the governance angle remains largely missing from the Chinese approach in Mali and without paying close attention to the importance of state capacity and intentionality, the development-security nexus is effectively in danger of being undermined.

Beijing's preferred mode of diplomacy has generally been government-to-government ties, rather than being open to a larger scope of stakeholders (such as opposition parties, religious leaders, or civil society groups). This approach, while underscoring Beijing's interest in upholding sovereignty of partner states, has revealed severe challenges in Africa. In Sudan and South Sudan, for instance, China's National Petroleum Company (CNPC) was reporting hundreds of attacks against its workers and infrastructure in Darfur. Realizing the limitation of only engaging the official government, CNPC's international department, "called for the company to go beyond its

government-focused approach by establishing ties with local communities, major political opposition groups and religious leaders.”<sup>67</sup> Likewise, strictly sticking to government-to-government ties and prioritizing Bamako over other regions for Beijing-funded development projects have serious limitations given a landscape which is characterized by having several separatist movements and compliant as well as non-compliant armed groups. Indeed, the situation in Mali is unlike Sudan and South Sudan, the existence of various non-state actors such as armed groups, self-defense militia, as well as other actors make the conflict in Mali more complex. It is, therefore, easy to aggravate the situation, alienate potential allies, and even create enemies unintentionally by assuming that dealing with government and pro-government factions only is sufficient.<sup>68</sup>

### KNOWLEDGE OF LOCAL CONTEXT

The conflict in Mali, as mentioned above, is highly complex, multi-faceted, and ever evolving. It is rooted in decades of Tuareg rebellions, in the conflicts in Algeria and Libya, and in the politics of the Lake Chad region. The conflict is impacted by both the expanding intercommunal violence marked by a fragmented ethnic composition (often along lines of Peulh or Fulani and Dogon) and the recently revived decades-old grievances around resource sharing among the different groups engaging in farming, fishing, and herding activities. The multitude of actors, changing alliances within the various armed groups, and the existence of several non-compliant armed groups are among many other factors that make Mali very different from Sudan and South Sudan where Chinese peacekeepers have interacted with armed conflict more directly. Any meaningful engagement with peace operations in Mali requires a strong understanding of these intricacies, deep knowledge of the history and ethnic landscape of the entire region, as well as knowledge of religious cleavages. These, and a command of the diverse languages and dialects spoken in the country, are very important for meaningfully contributing to security operations in Mali, both for gaining the trust of local populations and also for the practical aspect of gathering intelligence and communicating with informants. Although we did not interview members of the Chinese contingent in Gao, MIMUSMA staff indicated that Chinese peacekeepers lacked proficiency in the region’s background and in Mali’s various local languages. Such challenges are impediments to the hard work and discipline displayed by Chinese peacekeepers and must be considered if the Chinese peacekeeping operations’ (PKO) contribution in Mali is to be appreciated.

Being a rather later comer to PKOs, China’s PKO troops are not nearly as experienced as peacekeepers from nations that have been engaged in PKOs for decades. Additionally, despite the various areas of cooperation we mentioned earlier in the paper, China does not have a long history of engagement in West Africa more broadly and Mali specifically, and therefore its engagement with West African states is largely limited to infrastructure construction, trade, and development projects without a strong engagement with the political make-up or governance of West African states. The shortcoming of China’s development-security nexus approach is most visible when examining the role of governance in the conflict in Mali and importance of including governance reforms in international efforts.

## LEVEL 2 HOSPITAL AND RISK AVERSENESS

Since April 2014, China has deployed several peacekeeping medical teams to Gao as part of MINUSMA. The Chinese Peacekeeping level 2 hospital (CHN L2 hereafter) is the only level 2 hospital in MINUSMA's East Sector. As a level 2 hospital it is, “the first level where basic surgical expertise is available, and life support services and hospital and ancillary services are provided within the mission area.”<sup>69</sup> Over the years, Chinese medical teams have performed emergency surgery, intensive care, postoperative care, and provided imaging, dental, and preventative services. As of 2018, the CHN L2 served, “more than 4,000 personnel including the peacekeeping troops, UN police and civilian staff, and has accumulated 1,235 inpatient medical records in 4 years.”<sup>70</sup>

Chinese civilian and military medical personnel are also gaining immensely valuable knowledge and expertise on combat-related trauma treatment and emergency management through observing and studying CHN L2 operations. In a study comparing Chinese civilian hospital trauma treatment protocol with the peacekeeping hospital CHN L2, the researchers conclude that the CHN L2 operates at higher standards due in part to a comprehensive data collection “registry system” keeping track of various details around received injuries.<sup>71</sup> The study also has recommendations for potential improvement of the Chinese military and civilian trauma care system by providing more evidence from the CHN L2 on the impact of air evacuation capabilities (which the authors estimate to be weak).<sup>72</sup> Another study also examining the Chinese peacekeeping hospital in Gao concluded that, “an effective injury surveillance system underlain by a uniform data collection, accurate analysis and successful dissemination of data can immensely facilitate prevention of injuries.”<sup>73</sup> Comparing China's several peacekeeping medical operations (including the one in Gao) can also serve to enhance the output and successful handling of trauma and decreasing the impact on peacekeepers' health across these facilities. Therefore, there is a symbiotic relationship between China's military, civilian, and peacekeeping medical operations as more experience in combat-related injuries can enhance China's military trauma treatment capacity at home. By the same token, peacekeeping missions can increase the efficiency of their trauma systems and combat injury treatments more broadly when armies have the means to train peacekeeping medical staff in combat-specific skills.

Many standard operating procedures for MINUSMA operations or for peacekeeping missions in general follow varying chains of command depending on participating contingents. For this reason, one of the most challenging limitations to multilateral missions with several participating nations is speedy coordination and smooth communication. When investigating the perceptions of Chinese peacekeeping medical teams in Gao, we found that Chinese peacekeepers (medical teams included) have an established record of hard work, discipline, and a reputation for a strong work ethic. The services provided by the medical teams and the medical equipment available at the CHN L2 have made a palpable difference on the health and wellbeing of MINUSMA peacekeepers.<sup>74</sup> Studies have shown that having access to reliable medical and health care is a crucial factor for several European peacekeeping units when deciding to join any given UN

mission.<sup>75</sup> The CHN L2 hospital therefore offers an important reassurance for peacekeepers joining MINUSMA and contributes valuable resources to the well-being of fellow peacekeepers.

However, there are several challenges to China's medical operations at MINUSMA. Slow processing times from the Chinese contingent were cited as, at times, standing in the way of successfully reacting to an emergency. Not being open to improvisation in handling urgent matters is a serious impediment to the greater potential of the Gao-based Chinese contingent.<sup>76</sup> Chinese peacekeepers are praised for their strong work ethic, but at the same time are perceived and described as highly risk-averse, to the extent that their risk-aversion is perceived by other MINUSMA staff as an impediment to rapid response and handling emergency situations. For example, a MINUSMA staff member described a situation in Gao (which is the location of the CHN L2 hospital) as an ongoing emergency situation that often requires a degree of fast thinking and quick action, rather than slow bureaucratic procedures.<sup>77</sup> The interviewee described a hypothetical situation where during an emergency or attack in Gao, peacekeepers would need to dispatch an ambulance from the CHN L2 hospital as fast as possible. The time that it takes for Chinese medical staff to clear the ambulance dispatch up the hierarchy and chain of command would slow down the operation and impact the efficiency of the emergency response. The MINUSMA staff member added that the hospital is extremely useful and that the Chinese contingent does usually come through with such requests but the time it takes can in some cases outweigh and even undermine the mission.

## **RISK-AVERSE PEACEKEEPING?**

Taken from a Chinese perspective, precautions about peacekeeping operations might not necessarily be viewed as risk averse but rather as being careful about balancing domestic and international concerns. On the one hand, dealing with domestic criticism in the form of Chinese netizens' dissatisfaction and anger reacting to news of casualties among Chinese troops deployed in peacekeeping missions requires caution and restraint. On the other hand, meeting the international community's expectations that come with Beijing's aspirations for global leadership and participation in global peace and security necessitates engagement and risk-taking. Domestically, peacekeeping is important for the CCP's objectives of building a sentiment of national pride around the image of strong and masculine PLA soldiers. Indeed, studies find that, generally, Chinese public opinion is largely supportive of China's PKO contributions.<sup>78</sup> Yet, Chinese citizens have registered their anger and dissatisfaction with PKOs when they lead to Chinese casualties. This is illustrated in Chinese netizens reactions to events similar to the clashes that erupted in the summer of 2016 in South Sudan leading to the death of two Chinese peacekeepers.<sup>79</sup> Chinese peacekeepers in Mali also suffered an attack that claimed the life a Chinese military engineer and injured four more.<sup>80</sup> For this reason, exercising caution and paying attention to chain of command is very important to Chinese PKO contingents. Therefore, put in this context of domestic public opinion perceptions, the CHN L2 hospital staff could be viewed as merely following the protocol put in place in order to ensure as few surprising situations that might cause anger and criticism from the Chinese public.



Pressures by the international community on China to play a bigger role in global peace and security provisions have materialized in Beijing's evolving role within UNPKOs. Indeed, over the last decade, China has increased its PKO financing, personnel deployments, and trainings for a standby force. Yet, Beijing is not limiting its PKO contributions to increasing troop size or budget contributions only. Chinese officials have also expressed interest in taking on more leadership roles and higher-ranking posts within UNPKOs. In this vein, the current Sector East Commander (mainly responsible for the region of Gao) is a Chinese officer. This could mean that the time gap the Chinese contingent has incurred by going through an extensive chain of command could be improved significantly with a Chinese officer as sector commander. Yet, it is also important to note that regardless of Beijing's intentions about peacekeeping and balancing domestic and international gains, we have observed that several non-Chinese MINUSMA staff viewed the Chinese contingent as not combat-ready. Similarly, the average Malian national does not actually know there are Chinese peacekeepers in Mali, much less a combat contingent.

To summarize, while some critics might see risk averse behavior from Chinese peacekeepers in Gao and other missions as a sign of limited experience with peacekeeping on the part of Chinese contingents, we see the success of the CHN L2 hospital as closely connected to the meticulous (if slow) data collection and registry system put together by the Chinese staff in order to improve the hospital's trauma treatment system. Therefore, it could be argued that Chinese peacekeepers' risk-aversion is a calculated risk balancing between domestic public opinion in China and China's global leadership aspirations.

## CONCLUSION

The first three months of 2020 were the deadliest in Mali's recent history. In January 2020, the African Union's annual summit decided to deploy some 3,000 troops to the Sahel region, to be coordinated with the G5 Sahel, and France announced it was expanding the number of troops deployed under Operation Barkhane by 600. In February 2020, a highly symbolic move to demonstrate restored government control saw Malian government army troops being redeployed to the northern town of Kidal with UN support, regarded as important for implementing the 2015 Algiers peace deal. Yet the conflict seems far from nearing an end. Prior to the August 2020 military coup in Bamako and the ousting of President IBK, fear of COVID-19 was also spreading. Fear of COVID-19 spreading in Mali and interrupting the regular course of socio-economic life is looming over the horizon for both the Malian government as well as MINUSMA and its peace operations in the country. The pandemic has already caused a global health sector crisis, food shortages, supply chain blockages, and put a damper on many development projects. At its worst scenario, COVID-19 could negatively impact security, development, and governance in Mali reversing what little small progress has been achieved in the last few years.<sup>81</sup> At the very least, COVID-19 might further uncover the weak link in the development-security-governance triangle, namely governance (as it relates to public health and public service provisions during the pandemic). In August 2020, Mali's new military regime under the National Committee for the Salvation of the People reconfirmed the fundamental importance of political governance in Mali, now under military rule again, and to all external engagement, including that of China.

Taking stock of China's development-for-security nexus in Mali is crucial both for our academic understanding of the applications of the nexus in the context of a "hotspot" case as well as for policy purposes as it unearths the strengths and pitfalls of this approach. In this paper we have examined China's multifaceted security approach in Mali and argued that examining the case of Mali has the potential to give us a look into the direction, strengths, and limitations of China's development-for-security approach in Mali. We find that whereas China's development-focused approach to security in Mali has notable advantages (especially in initiatives aiming at improving people's living conditions such as the near-finished vocational training center or the project to build schools in rural areas), it nonetheless faces some serious limitations. These limitations concern Beijing's focus on development projects as well as peacekeeping (ensuring the safety of civilians as well as fellow peacekeepers at the Gao camp), at the detriment of paying attention to governance, the return of the state, and the legitimacy of the Malian state in the eyes of its population.

To be sure, China is not the only foreign presence in Mali facing the risk of having its development and security efforts jeopardized by a lack of a serious engagement on the governance front. Other international actors are facing the same challenge. Chinese (and more broadly international) interventions in Mali will continue to face serious limitations, setbacks, and could potentially lead to prolonging the conflict further rather than resolving it. Additionally, other challenges facing China's involvement include very limited rapport with and knowledge of local cultures, languages, and context of the crisis in Mali on the part of relevant Chinese actors in Mali be it MINUSMA staff, SOE officials, or Chinese merchants in the country. This lack of engagement, coupled with Chinese investments located almost exclusively in Bamako, creates a trust boundary with the local population and stands in the way of Malians (and international partners) perceiving China as a serious and legitimate security partner.

Looking forwards, this theme is topical not just because of political uncertainty in Mali after the latest military *coup d'etat* in 2020 but also given that the next FOCAC will be held in Dakar and hosted by Senegal in 2021 (pending the COVID-19 pandemic). Sharing a border with southern Mali, Senegal is simultaneously far enough away from the turmoil in northern Mali but proximate enough to be relevant. During President Xi Jinping's state visit to Senegal in July 2018, he and Macky Sall held talks about China's multifaceted role in the region's security and pledged that China will support, "Senegal in building capability in counter-terrorism, peacekeeping and safeguarding stability."<sup>82</sup> China's evolving presence in Mali's security is in a sense "watched" or "followed" by several states across the Sahel. It will have implications for China's relationships with other Sahel states, as well as France, and potentially for US strategy in the region. The 8<sup>th</sup> FOCAC's summit will likely have a strong component concerning security in the Sahel, not just given that Senegal is hosting it but also because of the increasing centrality of counterterrorism in China-Africa security considerations. ★



**Appendix A: China Exporting and Importing to Mali, 1992-2018 (US\$ million unadjusted)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>China Exporting</b>	<b>China Importing</b>
1992	5.43	34.91
1993	11.55	0.00
1994	10.81	9.09
1995	25.09	36.34
1996	15.22	13.61
1997	13.89	27.48
1998	24.38	4.86
1999	18.49	1.36
2000	34.85	0.41
2001	22.93	1.02
2002	21.62	1.73
2003	35.20	28.39
2004	58.77	106.75
2005	65.94	79.25
2006	74.99	114.24
2007	125.37	35.90
2008	167.73	62.95
2009	167.60	37.05
2010	229.69	70.41
2011	297.73	149.59
2012	290.23	331.69
2013	274.64	152.47
2014	297.07	95.65
2015	270.43	92.99
2016	366.65	98.70
2017	337.25	67.88
2018	345.61	88.51

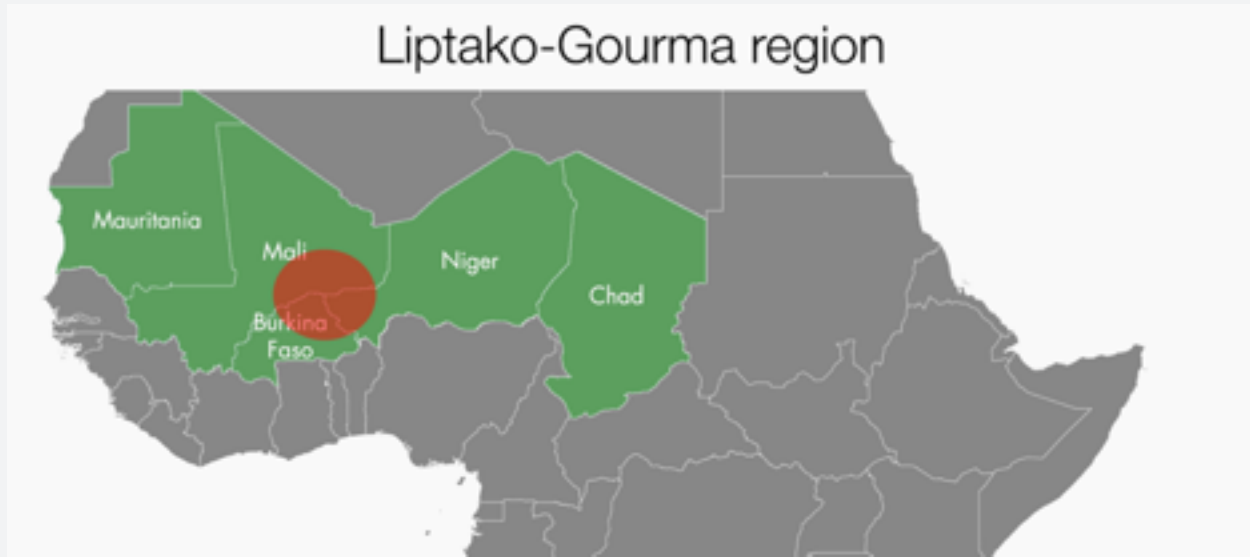
Source: Johns Hopkins University, SAIS China-Africa Research Initiative

**Appendix B:** Annual Revenues of Chinese Companies' Construction Projects in Mali, 1998-2018 (US\$ million unadjusted)

<b>Year</b>	<b>\$</b>
1998	94.6
1999	98.8
2000	102.1
2001	131.5
2002	62.5
2003	84.6
2004	95.8
2005	176.6
2006	200.3
2007	208.4
2008	163.3
2009	267.4
2010	388.6
2011	536.9
2012	442.9
2013	277.8
2014	341.0
2015	234.6
2016	299.8
2017	383.2
2018	400.7

Source: Johns Hopkins University, SAIS China-Africa Research Initiative and National Bureau of Statistics of China, <http://data.stats.gov.cn/easyquery.htm?cn=C01>

**Appendix C:** Map of Liptako Gourma Region (circled in red)



Source: <https://issafrica.org/amp/iss-today/the-g5-sahel-must-do-more-than-fight-terror>



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Support for this working paper was provided by a grant from Carnegie Corporation of New York. Carnegie Corporation of New York is a philanthropic foundation created by Andrew Carnegie in 1911 to do “real and permanent good in this world.”



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