

Since Mali's independence from France in 1960, there has always been tension in the North. The government has [exploited ethnic tensions](#) to control the North to divide the population. After the Libyan Civil War in 2011, Tuareg rebels were able to [get weapons from Libya](#) and start a rebellion for independence (MNLA) with the help of Al-Qaeda and jihadist groups. They quickly split off the jihadist groups which caused the jihadists to gain influence across Mali. France went in to help but was [replaced by the Wagner group](#). With UN and French forces gone, the government has committed mass atrocities against civilians with the help of the Wagner Group. Ukraine has recently been [accused of providing jihadists and the MNLA with intelligence](#) about Malian and Wagner forces. The main dynamic that needs to be considered is that there are many actors involved in Mali. There are foreign actors as well as non-state (mostly terrorist) actors. Ethnic groups in the North have all been fragmented because of government policy and all have different interests which makes negotiating difficult. To solve this conflict, a change in current dynamics will have to take place.

According to the [Violence and Conflict Assessment model](#), promoting social cohesion and limiting the outbreak of violence are dynamics that lead to peace. I recommend that the US support the Malian government in countering Islamic terrorism. Not only are the jihadists a threat to North Africa and Europe, but they have also spread into Ghana and other West African states, many of which are US allies. The Malian government must expel the Wagner group from the country to get American support. The Wagner group has been both ineffective in Mali and has committed mass atrocities against civilians. Since Mali only [expelled the French army](#) once they found a replacement, it is unlikely they'd do this without a replacement. Once Mali agrees to suspend the Wagner group, the US should form a coalition with West African nations such as Benin, Togo, and Ghana to help counter Islamic terrorism in Mali. I am not recommending that the US send its troops into Mali, however, the US should provide intelligence to its coalition as well as sell the coalition countries military equipment. With this much support from other African countries using American equipment, the country would most likely be under government control quickly which would limit the outbreak of violence.

To promote social cohesion, the international community should first focus on delivering aid to those in need. This will be a "cooling off" period so Tuaregs and other ethnic groups in the North do not feel threatened. The first strategy is for the US to push for complete integration of the North with the South. This would require civic engagement with the elites to make their voices heard and create a safe space to talk about trauma. The Malian government would also have to promote education in the North, so they don't feel marginalized. Another approach is for the US to strengthen local institutions in the North, while also remaining under government control. Although the North wants its own state entirely, this is not feasible as it would not get any international recognition or help as it is a terrorist entity. The North would get a considerable amount of regional autonomy and run their own education. If quality of life improved in the North, the government would have legitimacy and local institutions from the rebels would lose support, making peace more likely. However, the AU and US would need to make sure the government has some power, so the North doesn't attempt to rebel against the state all together.

This administration should take into consideration this proposal when considering policy in the Sahel region. Mali is one of the [worst humanitarian crises](#) in the world right now, and without a change in policy, more people will die. With Russia still [involved in the country](#) with the Africa Corps, nothing will change without other countries stepping in. The US should push countries like Ghana to do so in order to prevent terrorism from spreading into their country, a problem which would be hard to fix if not resolved. In conclusion, the US cannot sit by and do nothing, as this will increase Russia's influence in the region and allow it to get access to minerals, as well as perpetuate the humanitarian crisis in the Sahel.