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Mali

# A new deal in Mali

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**While the capture of Kidal, a stronghold of the Tuareg rebellion, is a success for the junta, it may in turn encourage a recomposition of the autonomist and Islamist armed movements.**

After more than ten years of control by Tuareg rebel movements, the Malian Armed Forces (FAMA), accompanied by Wagner mercenaries, entered Kidal a fortnight ago.

## The capture of Kidal

The Malian authorities deployed considerable resources to capture the town in the north-west of the country. Air attacks by the air force and the use of recently acquired Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2 drones were decisive. While the government in Bamako congratulates itself on this victory, it is careful not to mention the dozens of dead and wounded civilians, including children, who fell victim to the bombardments. The FAMA have penetrated a town largely deserted by the population.

As for the rebel forces of the Cadre Stratégique Permanent pour la Paix, la Sécurité et le Développement (CSP-PSD), which brings together a large number of Tuareg organisations, most of them have returned to the Adrar Tigharghar mountain range.

## End of the peace agreement

This is undoubtedly a victory for the Malian junta. The junta, through its president Assimi Goïta, had constantly asserted its determination to defend national sovereignty by recovering the entire territory.

As a direct consequence, the 2015 Algeria peace agreement between armed movements and the Malian authorities has been shattered. Although this agreement was never really applied on the ground, it did have the advantage of being a reference for all the belligerents.

The capture of Kidal was achieved at the expense of the fight against the jihadists of both the al-Qaeda-linked Groupe de soutien à l'islam et aux musulmans (GSIM) and the Islamic State, which is beginning to put down roots in the Ménaka region.

## A Pyrrhic victory?

The real challenge is not to conquer a town or territory, but to stay there and be able to provide security, administer it and implement state services. All the more so as the rebel forces are bound to wage a guerrilla war that is likely to aggravate the already tense relations between the FAMA, their Russian auxiliaries and the local population.

The junta's victory could be undermined by an alliance between the CSP-PSD and the GSIM. Although the political

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agendas of the two groups diverge, there could be rapprochement. Iyad Ag Ghali, the leader of the GSIM, is an early fighter for the Tuareg cause and as such is highly respected. What's more, the borders between armed movements remain permeable. So one option that is now becoming plausible is to see converging attacks by autonomist/separatist and Islamist groups, as was the case at the start of the Malian crisis in 2012. A ten-year flashback that bodes ill for the future.

30 November 2023

Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [l'Anticapitaliste](#).

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