

**CONFLICT RESOLUTION MECHANISMS OF THE AFRICAN UNION IN MALI
FROM 2020 TO 2024**

IGBOELUSI JOHNMARY CHIMAOBI

GOU/U22/IRE/629

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL SCIENCE,
GODFREY OKOYE UNIVERSITY,**



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TITLE PAGE

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BY

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**A PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL SCIENCES,
GODFREY OKOYE UNIVERSITY, UGWUOMU NIKE, ENUGU.**

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
AWARD OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (B.Sc.), DEGREE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS,

SUPERVISOR:
OKONKWO W.O.

MAY, 2026

DECLARATION

I, Igboelusi Johnmary Chimaobi hereby declare that this work was written by me and has not been submitted or received anywhere for the purpose of acquiring a degree in International Relations or any other programme.

Igboelusi Johnmary Chimaobi

GOU/U22/IRE/629

Date



APPROVAL

This is to certify that this project titled: "Conflict Resolution Mechanisms of the African Union In Mali From 2020 To 2024" has been read and approved as meeting the requirements of the Department of Political Science and International Relations, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Godfrey Okoye University, Ugwuomu-Nike, Enugu for the award of Bachelor of Science Degree in International Relations.

Okonkwo W.O.

Supervisor

Date

Prof. Ugwuozor Samuel

Head of Department

Date

Prof. John Odoh

Dean of Faculty

Date



External Examiner

Date



DEDICATION

To God Almighty, For your guidance, Inspiration and clarity even in the moment of doubt. And to my Late father Mr. Igboelusi Joseph



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Meaning
AU	African Union
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
ASF	African Standby Force
CEWS	Continental Early Warning System
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
LDF	Logical Data Framework
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
PSC	Peace and Security Council
REC	Regional Economic Community
UCG	Unconstitutional Change of Government
UN	United Nations

ABSTRACT

This study looked at conflict resolution mechanisms of the African Union in Mali from 2020 to 2024. Its main goal was to judge the use and effect of AU action during political crisis. The specific goals were to find the mechanisms used, judge the effect of sanctions, diplomacy on restoration, and explain the factors that weakened AU success. Study used second hand data from AU statements, ECOWAS records, United Nations materials alongside trusted reports. It covered Mali within the 2020 to 2024 period. The design was ex post facto, the method of study was content analysis supported by descriptive alongside thematic judgement. The results show first that AU used suspension, public rejection, transition demands, checking requests alongside mediation support with ECOWAS. Second the actions created limited procedural gains such as continued dialogue, a revised pledge yet they failed to restore civilian constitutional order within study period. Third the weak result came from inside enforcement gaps, outside pressures that included Russia linked support, Wagner activity, the changing UN role alongside junta security framing. Study concludes that AU rule defence was clear but its power to gain obedience was weak. One recommendation is that AU should adopt a joint transition enforcement protocol with ECOWAS, that sanctions review mediation tracking and milestone reporting follow one binding process. This would connect continental authority to verify transition control in future coup responses in practice.

Keywords: *African Union, Mali, conflict resolution, sanctions, diplomacy, constitutional order.*

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Regions have taken a more clear role in managing international peace, security focused on their own regions and this development is driven by the idea of local ownership, often framed as African solutions to African problems. Kouassi and Mbongo (2021) stated that regions stand in a better position to understand the parts of local conflicts than distant world actors. The African Union AU, sub-regional groups such as the Economic Community of West African States ECOWAS sit at the centre of this shift because they are main bodies for conflict mediation and peacebuilding on the continent. Their role reflects a wider pattern in which regions take responsibility for their own stability.

The clarification of the key ideas that guide this study holds great importance because clear and clear concepts give a strong base for study. A conflict resolution mechanism refers to the set of diplomatic, legal, security tools used to stop, manage and solve disputes. Suzuki (2020) stated that these tools range from advance warning systems, mediation to sanctions and peace support work. The African Union acts as a continental body created by its Constitutive Act which defines its mandate for action (African Union, 2000). A major part of this mandate is Article 4 h, which gives the Union power to intervene in a state in grave situations such as war crimes, genocide and this marks a major break from the older principle of non-interference that guided the Body of African Unity.

To carry out this mandate, the African Union built the African Peace and Security Architecture APSA and this structure contains several key bodies designed to work together for peace across the continent. Gardachew (2020) explained that the core elements include the Peace and Security Council PSC which is main decision making body for conflict matters. The structure also contains the Continental Early Warning System CEWS which gathers information to predict crises. Another key part is the Panel of the Wise, which is formed by respected elders who help with mediation. The final pillar is the African Standby Force ASF which is a planned peacekeeping group with multidisciplinary ability. These parts work together to give AU with the formal tools needed to manage conflicts in an ordered way.

This study focuses on use of these tools in the recent crisis in Mali. Mali faced a period of intense political instability between 2020, 2024 marked by two military coups in August 2020 and May 2021 (ISPI, 2021). These events happened within a long running setting of structural problems. Charbonneau, Sears (2021) described these problems as mixed state weak point, a continuing jihadist insurgency in the northern and main regions. The situation grew more hard through intercommunal violence, including deadly clashes between Fulani, Dogon communities over land, resources as explained by Benjaminsen and Ba (2021).

The African Union activated its conflict resolution tools in response to this crisis. PSC acted with speed after the May 2021 coup by issuing a statement that suspended Mali from AU activities until constitutional order returned (African Union [P0], 2021). Omorogbe (2022) explained that this step formed part of a wider diplomatic effort supported by ECOWAS to pressure the military junta to accept a short transition led by

civilians. These actions show a direct use of AU protocols for dealing with unconstitutional change of government.

Role of AU in Mali gives an important case for academic study. A review of the action permits an assessment of how regional security tools work in a hard and ongoing crisis. Witt (2024) emphasised the importance of understanding how local people perceive such actions because such views help shape acceptance and effectiveness. Tossou (2025) stated that studying the inside and outside challenges faced by AU in Mali can create lessons that improve future conflict management efforts across Africa.

The actions of AU in Mali faced major challenges, which revealed weak points in its approach. A main problem has been the enforcement of its decisions because Malian junta refused to obey with AU and ECOWAS demands for a quick return to civilian rule. Nyinevi (2023) explained that this behaviour shows a wider challenge for AU in upholding its rules against unconstitutional change of government. The Mali crisis gained further difficulty due to role of outside actors. The Russian private military company Wagner Group stands out as the most important example because as Olech (2024) stated, it altered the security landscape and weakened the influence of regions.

This study goals to give a focused examination of conflict resolution tools of the African Union within Malian crisis from 2020 to 2024 because of this background. The research will offer a critical review of the use, effectiveness of AU diplomatic and formal methods. It seeks to find the specific factors that supported, limited AU in restoring constitutional order and promoting stability in Mali. The results of this study goal to

contribute to the broader debate about effectiveness of regional actions in Africa. This aligns with the call by Etyang, Abdulkadir (2024) for constant judgement of the peace and security structures of AU. The goal here is an assessment of the performance of AU mechanisms in a demanding real world conflict situation.

1.2 Statement to the Problem

The rule based framework of the African Union against unconstitutional change of government faces a crisis of effectiveness and this crisis appears with clear force in the failure of AU to reverse the military seizure in Mali. After the May 2021 coup, the Peace and Security Council of AU responded with firm action by suspending the membership of Mali on June 1 2021 and this measure served as a direct use of its zero tolerance policy for coups (African Union [P1], 2021). ECOWAS applied hard economic sanctions and AU supported these measures to secure a quick return to constitutional order within a short period (Ventevogel & Hövelmann, 2022). These steps failed because the regional pressure met public resistance from Malian junta. Junta overturned the timetable through its own decision by postponing the presidential election planned for February 2024 for an indefinite time, which left the military with firm control over the state. This failure to carry out its own decisions shows a gap between the formal anti-coup system of AU, its actual influence over states and Nyinevi (2023) states that this gap places the governance rules of the continent under growing threat.

This weak point in enforcement grows worse due to the loss of diplomatic influence held by AU and this loss comes from main shift of Mali toward new

geopolitical partners. Junta weakened regional pressure through the creation of a new security link with Russia, this change became clear through the arrival of Wagner Group forces in late 2021 which gave the regime with military and diplomatic protection. This support allowed junta to take actions such as the expulsion of the French ambassador in January 2022 and it also allowed the demand for the complete departure of the 13,000 strong UN peacekeeping mission MINUSMA in June 2023. Olech (2024) states that this outside backing made junta opposed to the usual tools of AU which included sanctions and political isolation. AU lacked the ability to counter the influence of a permanent member of UN Security Council and this exposed the limits of AU within a with high force competitive geopolitical setting which Tossou (2025) finds as a major outside block. Because of this background, this study seeks answers to the following questions. What conflict resolution mechanisms did the African Union use during political crisis in Mali from 2020 to 2024? How effective were the sanctions and diplomatic steps of AU in securing a return to constitutional order in Mali? What key factors limited the carrying out and success of conflict resolution actions of AU in Mali?

1.3 Research Questions

1. What specific conflict resolution mechanisms did the African Union apply in response to political crisis in Mali from 2020 to 2024?
2. How effective were the sanctions and diplomatic actions of the African Union in achieving a return to constitutional order in Mali?
3. What were the key factors that hindered the carrying out and success of conflict resolution efforts of the African Union in Mali?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

Main goal of this study is to study the use and effectiveness of conflict resolution mechanisms of the African Union in addressing political crisis in Mali from 2020 to 2024.

In a specific way, the goals are:

1. To find the specific conflict resolution mechanisms applied by the African Union in response to political crisis in Mali from 2020 to 2024.
2. To study how effective the sanctions and diplomatic actions of the African Union were in achieving a return to constitutional order in Mali.
3. To study the key factors that hindered the carrying out and success of conflict resolution efforts of the African Union in Mali.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The results of this study will give value to several groups. In theory, the research will add to academic knowledge by offering a modern case study on the strength of regional conflict resolution methods. It will build the studies on the African Peace and Security Architecture APSA through its focus on the gap between the rules of the African Union and the real conditions that shape its work in a hard geopolitical setting. In practice study will give major value to AU with a clear benefit for its Peace and Security Council. The review of the challenges, failures in Mali can be an important lesson learning process which can guide policy changes and possible reform of action methods for a better response to future unconstitutional change of government. African



leaders, national governments can draw lessons from Malian case on the limits of regional sanctions and the influence of outside actors on security in Africa. International partners such as the United Nations, the European Union will also gain because study will improve their understanding of the work of AU and will help them adjust their policies to give support for African led solutions to African problems.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on conflict resolution methods of the African Union as used during the political and security crisis in the Republic of Mali. The geographical scope is limited to Mali between 2020, 2024 because this period includes two military coups and the long action by AU which makes it a useful case for judgement of the current strength of the Union. Study has no demographic scope because it focuses on state and formal actors rather than on population groups. The ideological scope sits within the ideas of regionalism, shared security, it covers the challenges raised by state sovereignty and geopolitical rivalry against these ideas. The method scope uses an ex post facto, documentary research design which is suitable for the full review of past events with the support of second hand data from official reports, academic journals and other published materials.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The researcher faced four main limits during study. First the time set for the research was short and this could have limited the depth of data gathering. This issue was managed through a tight focus on the 2020 to 2024 period, on the two AU tools of

sanctions and diplomacy. Second, the researcher had no access to sensitive, classified data from the African Union or Malian government. This issue was managed through use of many public documents such as AU statements, UN reports and reviewed by scholars articles with triangulation used to confirm facts. Third, limited funds made it impossible to carry out fieldwork, interviews, this issue was managed through use of documentary study based on online databases and digital archives that were easy to reach at low cost. At the end, study was limited by the materials held in the school library. This issue was managed through use of inter library loan services and access to international academic databases that gave a full range of important sources.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

African Union AU

In this study the African Union refers to main continental body whose peace, security organs focused on the Peace and Security Council carried out conflict resolution actions in response to the unconstitutional change of government in Mali between 2020 and 2024.

Conflict resolution mechanism

In this study conflict resolution mechanism refers to the formal instruments used by the African Union which include sanctions, suspension of membership and diplomatic mediation to address political crisis in Mali.

Unconstitutional Change of Government UCG

In this study Unconstitutional Change of Government refers to the military coups that took place in Mali in August 2020, May 2021 which removed civilian rule and triggered the action of the African Union under its zero tolerance policy.

Sanctions

In this study sanctions refer to the political, economic measures focused on the suspension of Mali from the Union and the support of financial restrictions imposed by ECOWAS to pressure junta into a return to constitutional order.

Diplomacy

In this study diplomacy refers to use of non violent tools by the African Union including the appointment of special envoys high level mediation work, the release of public statements to persuade Malian authorities to accept and follow a transition back to civilian rule.

Action

In this study action refers to the set of non military actions which include political suspension and diplomatic engagement undertaken by the African Union in the inside affairs of Mali after the coups based on its rule of non indifference.

African Peace and Security Architecture APSA

In this study APSA refers to the formal framework through which the African Union carries out its peace and security work with a focus on role of the Peace and Security Council as the decision making body that allowed the response to Malian crisis.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Conflict Resolution Mechanism

The idea of a conflict resolution mechanism has a long history as shown through its slow rise across many centuries. It grew through old traditional ways and community based practices to become an important feature of modern international relations in a steady manner that shaped present understanding. In a historical sense many societies used customary systems and local structures to manage disputes through peaceful behaviour that reflected shared rules. The importance of these methods in the modern day is stated in recent academic work which shows their role in the prevention and resolution of communal conflicts in Africa (Journal of Peace Research, 2024). A change occurred over the last century because the concept was made formal inside formal structures that developed across world society. This happened first through world bodies like the United Nations then later through regions that created new expectations. These bodies created ordered processes, tools to address conflicts between states and within states through organised action. The development of these formal mechanisms shows a ordered attempt to shift conflict away from violent confrontation towards managed outcomes of a peaceful kind that are based on set up principles and procedures.

A distinction between the different stages of work inside the larger idea of conflict resolution is a point of great importance because each stage serves a separate

purpose. According to Suzuki (2020) the range of work includes three separate, connected phases which are conflict prevention, conflict management and conflict resolution. Conflict prevention includes measures with a early nature to stop disputes from growing into violence that harms social order. Conflict management in contrast goals to limit and contain violence that is already happening in a harmful way. At last conflict resolution works to address the root causes of a conflict so that a lasting peace can be created across the affected space. An understanding of these differences is critical because different mechanisms have a design for different stages that demand separate actions. For example advance warning systems are for prevention while peacekeeping work are a management tool and mediation for a full peace agreement is a resolution tool.

The instruments available to international and regional actors can have a classification into several types that reflect different methods. These mechanisms go from diplomatic tools, political tools such as negotiation mediation and good offices to instruments with a more pressure based nature that require stronger action. Economic mechanisms like sanctions are used often to apply pressure on a party to change its behaviour as Nyinevi (2023) states in the setting of the African Union. Legal mechanisms such as arbitration or judicial settlement give a way for resolving disputes based on international law which gives clearness. Furthermore security mechanisms including peacekeeping and peace enforcement work have a sending to manage the violent parts of a conflict through ordered force. The choice of which mechanism to use often has a dependence on the nature of the conflict, the political will of the parties took part alongside the ability of the intervening body.

Inside Africa the concept of conflict resolution has had a unique adaptation to the political and security facts of the continent which shape regional thinking. The African Union AU changed the approach to conflict action in an important way by restructuring the old rule. It did this by moving away from the strict principle of non interference that was a mark of its predecessor the Body of African Unity. AU Constitutive Act (2000) introduced the principle of non indifference which gives the Union the right to intervene in states during grave situations where harm is clear. As Amvane (2015) analyses, this change gave the rule base for a more assertive role in continental peace and security through stronger action. This African led approach gives priority to regional ownership so it has led to the creation of a unique set of formal mechanisms designed to address the specific conflict challenges of the continent.

Use of these mechanisms is main to this study which has its focus on response of the African Union to the crisis in Mali through ordered observation. The political problems in Mali with a particular note on the unconstitutional change of government caused AU to send a specific group of its conflict resolution tools that fit the situation. This research will study with a specific focus use of political sanctions such as the suspension of membership and sustained diplomatic mediation that shaped outcomes. The case of Mali offers a critical chance to study the selection synergy and final effectiveness of these instruments as shown through their mixed results. According to Tossou (2025) an understanding of the inside, outside challenges that affected these mechanisms in Mali is key for an judgement of the broader ability of AU for conflict management and for learning lessons for future actions.

2.1.2 The African Union AU

The African Union AU is main between governments body of the continent since its creation. It had its establishment in 2002 as the successor to the Body of African Unity OAU which shaped earlier cooperation. The change from the OAU was a fundamental shift in mandate, ambition with a new focus on the promotion of peace security and good governance across Africa. The legal base of the body is the Constitutive Act which sets out its goals, principles and formal structure (African Union, 2000). AU was designed to be a more early body in contrast to the OAU which had a limit from a rigid following of state sovereignty and non interference. Azubuike (2021) states that AU now is main formal framework of Africa for managing conflicts which reflects a continental agreement on the need for shared action to address instability.

The rule based, legal foundations of the African Union give it a unique and powerful mandate for action in the affairs of its states through legal authority. Two articles in the Constitutive Act have particular importance in this area because they give clear guidance. Article 4(p) rejects, rejects unconstitutional change of government with clearness so it gives the legal base for the firm position of AU against military coups. Article 4(h) sets up the right of the Union to intervene in a state regarding grave conditions in a more important manner such as war crimes genocide and crimes against humanity. Amvane (2015) gives a full legal study of this article while describing it as the cornerstone of AU principle of non indifference. These provisions together give AU power to take action with a decisive nature when national authorities fail to protect their populations or when democratic order is removed.

To make its peace and security mandate working the African Union created the African Peace and Security Architecture APSA which shaped its structure. This full

framework is made of several interconnected bodies that are designed to work together to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts through joined action. Main decision making body of APSA is the Peace and Security Council PSC. PSC has the authority to impose sanctions, to allow mediation work and to send peace support missions (Amani Africa, 2021). PSC receives support from other key pillars including the Continental Early Warning System CEWS which monitors potential crises. Other pillars are the Panel of the Wise, some eminent Africans who conduct mediation and the African Standby Force ASF, a planned rapid sending ability for peace work. As Gardachew (2020) explains APSA was designed to give African solutions to African problems.

Role of the African Union goes beyond its direct security works to the promotion of continental governance through shared values. The agenda of AU is built on the understanding that peace, security have an inseparable link to democracy, good governance and respect for human rights. The Union has developed many rule instruments to advance these principles including the African Charter on Democracy Elections and Governance. The firm position of AU against unconstitutional change of government as discussed by Nyinevi (2023) comes from this broader commitment to democratic principles which shape its sanctions., its actions in countries like Mali do not alone have a goal of restoring stability but also of upholding the continental agreement on lawful governance.

In the setting of this study the African Union is main formal actor whose conflict resolution efforts are the subject of examination across the period. The research focuses in a specific way on the actions taken by AU in main through its Peace and Security Council as a response to the military coups in Mali between 2020 and 2024.

Study seeks to give a critical judgement of the performance of AU in line with the call by Etyang and Abdulkadir (2024) for continued assessment of the actions of PSC to draw lessons for the future in a reflective tone. The case of Mali is a key test for the ability of AU to turn its rule based duties into effective action which makes it a critical subject for study across academic discussion.

2.1.3 Sanctions

In the area of international relations sanctions are a main non military tool of a pressure based nature that seeks to change behaviour. They are designed to influence the actions of a target state or actor through the steady creation of pressure. Their theory based goal is to create costs with a great enough size to force a change in policy, to discourage actions that break international rules or to show strong disapproval from the international community. Sanctions are a middle option on the scale of foreign policy instruments because they are positioned between diplomacy and military force as a balanced point. Their work is to limit the access of a target to certain resources markets or political groups through clear structural limits. The logic behind this is that the economic pain, political discomfort applied will in time become greater than the benefits of the bad policy so the target will then follow the demands of the sender. Effectiveness of this instrument however is still a topic of major debate among scholars and leaders (Nyinevi, 2023).

Sanctions can exist in different forms because each type is designed to apply pressure through different methods that operate through different pathways. In a historical setting full economic sanctions were a common practice which blocked most trade and financial dealings with a target country through wide restrictions. A major shift towards smart or targeted sanctions happened however due to worries about their hard humanitarian effects on civilian populations as stated in policy debates. These measures have a design that is more clear with a focus on the specific individuals, entities or economic sectors that are responsible for the problematic behaviour. Common examples include asset freezes on leaders, travel bans for government officials and arms embargoes that limit weapons movement. In addition sanctions can be political such as the suspension of the membership of a country in an international or region which is a tool the African Union uses often (Amani Africa, 2023).

The African Union has created its own sanctions system as a key instrument for the enforcement of its rules focused on the ban on unconstitutional change of government which form a main part of its values. As Nyinevi (2023) explains, the framework of AU has a political character in its main form and has an self acting activation in the case of a military coup as a firm reaction. The first and most direct measure is the suspension of the offending state from participation in all AU activities. This is an action to isolate the new regime through diplomatic means and to deny it any type of continental acceptance in a clear manner. The Peace and Security Council of AU can also apply further targeted sanctions such as travel bans and asset freezes on the individuals took part in the unconstitutional power seizure although use of these measures has had an inconsistent use often (Omorogbe, 2022).

Despite their use often effectiveness of sanctions is still a matter of intense dispute that shapes academic discussion. Academic debates have pointed to several conditions that affect their success which include structural and political elements. These include the economic weak point of the target, the level of international cooperation in enforcement and the clearness of the demands being made. Critics make an argument that sanctions are often a clumsy instrument that can cause large harm to citizens without reaching the wanted political result. Furthermore, as stated in West Africa, one party like regimes can sometimes use sanctions to build home based support by putting blame on outside actors for economic problems (Ventevogel and Hovelmann, 2022). Amani Africa (2023) has also stated the challenges AU faces in the enforcement of its own sanctions with good effect which raises questions about the credibility and ability of its system when states make a choice to defy its decisions.

Sanctions were a main feature of the plan of the African Union as a response to the military coups in Mali because they fit AU rule against unconstitutional rule. AU put its main political sanction into place with an quick effect following the 2021 takeover by suspending the membership of Mali (African Union [P0], 2021). This action was followed by the strong support of the Union for the hard economic, financial sanctions imposed by the regional bloc ECOWAS which included border closures and the freezing of Malian state assets. These measures showed a combined effort to use both political and pressure to reach the single clear goal of restoring constitutional order. This study will for that reason study the specific use, impact and final effectiveness of this sanctions based approach within Malian situation (Tossou, 2025).

2.1.4 Diplomacy

Diplomacy in the setting of conflict resolution is the art, practice of holding negotiations and encouraging dialogue to manage disputes through peaceful methods that avoid force. It is a non pressure based method that goals to prevent the growth of conflicts into violence or to find a settlement for existing disputes that threaten stability. Diplomacy can exist in many forms which range from two sided talks between two parties to hard many sided negotiations that involve many state and non state actors (Kouassi and Mbongo, 2021). Its base is built on the principles of communication middle ground and mutual understanding which act as the heart of the process. Main alternative to use of force diplomacy is the bedrock of international, regional peace, security architectures because it gives the channels for states and bodies to engage each other to solve their differences without a turn to armed conflict.

Several key tools and plans exist under the general name of diplomacy in conflict resolution as described by scholars. Mediation is one of the most common methods which includes a neutral third party who assists communication and helps the conflicting parties to reach a voluntary agreement that reflects shared ground. The provision of good offices is a form with less intrusion where a third party gives a location or logistical help for talks without playing an active part in the parts of the negotiations. Diplomatic missions may also include the appointment of special envoys who receive a specific mandate to engage with the parties and to report back to the sending body. Fact result missions are another diplomatic instrument which are used to collect information, give a neutral assessment of a situation on the ground so that it can inform later diplomatic action (Bustamante, 2020).

The African Union has made efforts with importance to build its formal ability for diplomacy as a core part of its peace and security framework because it understands the need for skilled negotiation. A main feature of this system is the Panel of the Wise which is a body of five African personalities with great respect who have a mandate to conduct mediation and conciliation work across the continent. Bustamante (2020) notes that AU has worked to build a professional and permanent Mediation Support Unit. This unit is meant to give technical skill plus logistical help to its diplomatic work. Such formal growth points to an inside understanding at AU that good diplomacy needs more than political will alone. It also needs strong working capacity backed by solid resources, the kind needed to carry hard peace work forward (Gardachew, 2020).

Yet diplomatic action often meets many challenges, limits able to block its success across many conflict settings. A main block is the lack of political will from the conflicting parties who may not have a genuine commitment to a negotiated settlement with meaning. They may instead use talks as a tactic to gain time or to get a main advantage that strengthens their position. The presence of spoilers who are inside or outside actors that benefit from the continuation of a conflict can also undermine diplomatic efforts in an active way. Furthermore diplomacy can have a struggle to make progress in hard multi actor conflicts where there are many armed groups with competing goals which makes it difficult to find a full and inclusive solution. As Kouassi and Mbongo (2021) observe in the Sahel these structural factors are a frequent limit on effectiveness of regional mediation work.

In Mali diplomacy was the most sustained non pressure based plan of the African Union for engagement with the military junta during long talks. Following the

coups AU and ECOWAS appointed mediators with a high profile such as former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan to lead negotiations with the junta. These diplomatic missions took part in a long process of dialogue with great problem which aimed to secure an agreement on a timeline and framework for a transition back to civilian rule (Ventevogel and Hovelmann, 2022). This study will study the specific diplomatic engagements that AU undertook. It will study both their modest successes such as securing an initial commitment to a transition and their final failures in stopping junta from postponing the democratic process for an unlimited time (Tossou, 2025).

2.1.5 Intervention

The idea of action has experienced a great change over time within international law and practice through slow shifts in world thinking. It grew from an older Westphalian doctrine of state sovereignty that gave it a narrow definition which stated that the inside matters of a state were outside the influence of outside actors in all situations. This principle of non action served as a base for the international system for many centuries while it was designed to shield states from foreign interference across political spaces. This absolute view faced a challenge during the late twentieth, early twenty-first centuries because of a growth in concern over human rights and inside conflicts that threatened civilian safety. The rise of new rules with a major example being the Responsibility to Protect R2P showed a shift to a model where sovereignty became conditional on a state protecting its own population from mass atrocities.

One key regional shift inside this changing rule is the AU doctrine of non indifference, a doctrine that marks a clear break from the past. This idea stands as a

firm move away from the older policy of strict non interference once held by its forerunner, the Body of African Unity, across many decades. The legal ground for this doctrine sits in Article 4(h) of the AU Constitutive Act, the article that gives the Union power to step into a state during grave events such as war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity (African Union, 2000). Amvane (2015) explains that this rule gives a legal base for action with no equal among world regions today. It turns sovereignty into a duty, it hands AU the power to act as one body when a state faces crisis, and it places continental peace plus security above the full independence of single states.

Action can appear in many forms that range from non pressure based to pressure based and from non military to military because each form serves a separate work. Non-military actions are the most common type, include use of pressure, mediation work, the imposition of economic and political sanctions that goal to change behaviour. These tools are designed to influence the behaviour of a target state without use of armed force which avoids direct violence. Military action on the other hand includes the sending of armed forces and uses ordered force when required by the situation. It can range from peacekeeping work which have a sending often with the consent of the host state to peace enforcement actions which do not need consent and may involve use of force to impose a settlement. The African Standby Force, a key part of APSA, had a vision to give AU the ability for such military actions through organised readiness (Gardachew, 2020).

Despite the creation of legal frameworks to give it acceptance the practice of action is still a subject of great controversy that shapes world debate. A main concern is about the principle of state sovereignty since critics state that action can be a pretext

for powerful states or bodies to advance their own interests through indirect control. There are also continuous debates about the selective use of action where action is taken in some crises, not in others which leads to accusations of hypocrisy and double standards (AfricaNews, 2021). In addition questions of acceptance often appear with a special concern for times when an action is started without a clear mandate from the United Nations Security Council. As Amvane (2015) discusses, AU right to intervene under Article 4(h) has created a legal debate about its compatibility with UN Charter and its potential conflict with world authority.

In the setting of this study action is main idea based model for an understanding of all the actions of the African Union in Mali because it captures the full structure of its response. Response of AU to the unconstitutional change of government was not a single action but it was a sustained action with many facets that shaped the political timeline. This action took part combined political sanctions like suspension, the endorsement of economic sanctions alongside continuous diplomatic engagement from regional actors. These measures when taken as a group represent a clear use of AU doctrine of non indifference where the Union took an active part in the inside political process of a state to uphold its rule based principles (Omorogbe, 2022). This research will therefore judge the overall impact and effectiveness of this full non military action in reaching its stated goal of restoring constitutional order in Mali through ordered continental action.

2.2 Thematic Review

2.2.1 Application of the Conflict Resolution Mechanisms of the African Union in Mali

Nyinevi (2023) in his study of AU legal frameworks explains that the Union reaction to the coups in Mali came through a direct use of its long standing rule system against unconstitutional change of government. He states that this reaction was not an unplanned move since it gained guidance through protocols found in basic documents such as the Lomé Declaration, the African Charter on Democracy Elections and Governance. These instruments present a strict policy of zero tolerance for military seizures of power which requires an formal step from the body through a ordered rule based process. Use of this framework after the events in Bamako became the standard starting action for AU so it marked the formal beginning of its conflict resolution procedures. This protocol based approach goals to keep a consistent stand with principles that resist the decay of democratic governance on the continent so it forms the basic base for AU action.

Main formal body with the authority to approve and direct this reaction was AU Peace and Security Council PSC. Omorogbe (2022) gives a full study of PSC statements where he shows the decisive work of the council in its quick public rejection of the military seizure. PSC acted as the highest decision making organ so it turned AU rule based principles into practical steps. The council shaped the international, continental reaction through its statements which created the formal position that the military actions lacked acceptance and were not acceptable. This role is key since the authority of PSC gives weight to AU decisions, it makes sure that the reaction is not alone a political view but an formal command from the highest security body of the continent as described in the Amani Africa (2021) handbook on PSC processes.

The first definite punishing measure taken by PSC was the suspension of Mali from the African Union with no delay. This step which gained a formal announcement in the statement from the council 1001st meeting is a major instrument in the formal toolkit of AU (African Union [P0] 2021). Main goal of suspension is to place political costs on the new regime through a denial of any form of continental acceptance. According to analyses from Amani Africa (2024) this measure goals at the diplomatic isolation of junta which makes it clear that it will not gain recognition as the lawful government of a state. This sanction is therefore not a symbolic move but a practical block that weakens the ability of junta to engage in normal diplomatic relations inside the African state system.

The formal response of the African Union worked in close coordination with the Economic Community of West African States ECOWAS through the principle of subsidiarity. Suzuki (2020) studies this relationship and states that AU often depends on the correct Regional Economic Community REC to take main role in managing crises inside its sub region. In Mali AU gave the core continental acceptance, political support while ECOWAS as the actor with greater proximity led the deeper work of mediation and use of economic sanctions. This division of roles is a main pillar of the African Peace and Security Architecture which goals to use the combined strengths of continental and sub regions with coordination with good coherence.

A normal element of AU formal response is the appointment of mediators of a high level. Bustamante (2020) states that AU has tried to strengthen its mediation support system so use of respected African figures as special envoys has long been an set up practice. In the crisis in Mali the ECOWAS appointed mediator carried this role in

a main way while working with the full political backing of AU. These envoys have the task to engage with the military junta, political actors, other stakeholders on the ground, they help dialogue and negotiate the terms of a peaceful settlement. They also act as main line of communication between the regions and the authorities inside the crisis-ridden state.

The Peace and Security Council of AU used its statements as a key mechanism to fix its position and to apply pressure. Omorogbe (2022) explains that these published documents work as diplomatic tools not simple records of meetings. The statements worked to reject the actions of junta in a public way and they set out with clear form the conditions required for restoration of constitutional order. They also stated the possible results of refusing to obey. AU tried to create a clear record of its expectations through making these positions public, it held junta accountable not alone to AU but also to world community.

The formal reaction of AU also included the threat of more targeted sanctions against the key individuals who led the coup beyond the quick suspension. Nyinevi (2023) presents this as a possible second stage step inside conflict resolution toolkit of AU. PSC statements carried direct warning signs, naming steps such as asset freezes and travel bans as tools ready for use against junta leaders plus their backers should they refuse the call for a quick return to civilian rule. The record of using such targeted sanctions has stayed uneven over time, yet the aim behind the threat remains steady, to raise the personal cost faced by any actor who breaks constitutional order.

A clear gap in AU formal reaction appeared through the limited role of the Panel of the Wise. The Panel is one of the core pillars of APSA designed to give senior level mediation, preventative diplomacy but its direct role in Malian crisis was not a strong feature in the record. In his broader study of AU conflict resolution limits Birhan (2024) points to a general underuse of the Panels potential. In Mali the mediation work was led for the most part by ECOWAS envoys which points to this AU mechanism did not reach full mobilisation. This may represent a missed chance to use the unique expertise and status of the Panel members.

In the final stage AU formal response took part efforts to design a framework to monitor the political transition that junta promised. After long negotiations led to a commitment for a twenty four month transition period AU and ECOWAS attempted to build a follow up mechanism. As Emmanuel Dio (2025) explains in his study on APSA regional impact such monitoring is key to make sure that commitments are not empty statements. The goal of this mechanism was to track progress towards elections, other major transition points, it could give PSC regular updates and create a base for holding junta accountable to its stated timeline.

A joint mediation effort between the African Union and ECOWAS stood as the main feature of the diplomatic answer to the Mali crisis, with both bodies sharing duties in a linked way. Kouassi, Mbongo (2021) describe this pattern as a common one for conflict work in the Sahel, where AU offers wide political cover while ECOWAS leads the practical side of negotiation. Such a shared approach blends continental authority with sub regional know how, a mix that gives the mediation structure its strength. The special envoy named by ECOWAS served as the public face of the mediation, carrying

out direct talks on the ground. For its part, AU worked to support this process through its own diplomatic channels and public statements, making sure the mediator carried full continental backing.

A main focus for these diplomatic engagements was the negotiation of a timeline for returning the political system back to civilian rule. Ventevogel and Hövelmann (2022) describe the long nature of these talks where the discussions faced many difficult turns. Malian junta presented an initial proposal for a transition period of up to five years which was a suggestion the regions rejected with direct force. The diplomatic process that followed required tiring shuttle diplomacy and several rounds of negotiation as both sides searched for a workable middle ground. This dialogue later resulted in junta agreeing to a twenty four month timeline which became an important outcome of the mediation work and showed the ability of diplomacy to gain useful concessions.

Summits of a high level for both AU and ECOWAS were an important part of the diplomatic plan because they created platforms for united action. These meetings of heads of state served several linked works since they gave a forum to protect a united diplomatic front, to keep all states in alignment with the common position of condemning the coup and demanding restoration of constitutional order. As Idigo, Osegbue (2025) explain in their work on AU role in Mali these summits were also used to renew pressure on junta, to review the progress of mediation and to make collective decisions on next steps including decisions on sanctions.

The scope of the diplomatic engagement got criticism for its limited inclusion of non state Malian actors who were important for lasting peace. In her case study on women participation in Malian peace processes Ly (2024) shows an ongoing weak point in formal mediation which tends to remain state focused. While the envoys met the military junta, representatives of political parties the wider inclusion of civil society groups, women bodies and youth movements was alone a small part often. Such a narrow approach risks producing a top down settlement out of step with the needs of the Malian people, one that could weaken any lasting stability (Ly 2024).

The diplomatic plan run by AU and ECOWAS held a careful balance between quiet diplomacy plus open public rejection, a balance that called for steady judgement. Public statements and summit declarations spoke in clear terms against the coup, yet much of the real negotiation went on behind closed doors. This two track method serves as a common diplomatic tool, one where public positions guard rule based principles and press for change, while private talks allow frank discussion aimed at a workable middle ground. Niwe (2023) points to a similar pattern in earlier regional action in Mali, one that marks this method as a common feature when facing resistant authorities.

One major diplomatic challenge lay in holding a unified regional stand while carrying deep concern over the strict economic sanctions ECOWAS applied. The isolation policy won formal backing from all states, yet the real work of enforcing border closures plus trade limits placed a heavy load on states that shared a border with Mali. The Institute for Security Studies states that the risk of divisions inside the regional bloc grows as sanctions continue because national economic and security interests can begin to move in separate directions. Malian junta attempted to use these possible

cracks in its own diplomatic push which made the preservation of a united front a continuing focus for AU and ECOWAS diplomacy(Niwe 2021).

The diplomatic process also used clear communication of red lines directed towards Malian junta which framed the limits of engagement. The regional mediators used the negotiation channels to specify which actions, delays would be unacceptable so they would activate more punishing measures. For example the initial refusal of junta to propose an acceptable timeline led without a middle step to the imposition of the most hard economic sanctions. This method of pressure based diplomacy where the threat of punishment supports negotiation became a main part of the plan since it created a simple cost benefit frame for junta and linked their cooperation to possible relief from sanctions.

Some scholars have criticised the narrow reach of the diplomatic negotiations where main emphasis was securing a date for elections without addressing deeper issues. Charbonneau, Sears (2021) state that the continuing war in the Sahel has roots in deep crises of state failure and governance which cannot be solved through a basic return to electoral politics. The diplomatic efforts of AU, ECOWAS have been criticised for giving priority to restoring formal constitutional order while ignoring the structural and underlying issues that caused the collapse of that rule. This event based focus may be in a political way easier, it may not create conditions for a strong and lasting peace in Mali.

At last the success of the diplomatic efforts of AU depended on steady coordination with international partners who influenced the result of the crisis. Tossou

(2025) finds role of outside actors as a main factor in the outcome of Malian situation. The diplomacy of AU therefore took part routine talks with the United Nations, the European Union, key two sided partners like France and the United States. The goal of this coordination was to make sure the international community spoke with one voice which reinforced AU message and blocked junta from searching for more sympathetic allies. The later breakdown of this unity with increased Russian role became a major block for the regional diplomatic plan.

2.2.2 The Effectiveness of AU Sanctions and Diplomatic Interventions in Mali

In his full study of AU sanctions system, Nyinevi (2023) reaches a conclusion that the punishing measures used against Mali created an impact of a very limited kind on the political behaviour of the military junta. The core goal of forcing a quick return to constitutional order did not see its achievement despite the quick suspension from AU and the hard economic sanctions used by ECOWAS. The leaders survived the period of strong pressure, they later secured their power and postponed the elections for an unlimited time which the sanctions was designed to stop. This outcome points to a failure of a important nature for the sanctions as a pressure tool and it raises important questions about their real usefulness against determined one party like rulers with strong support.

The weak effect of the sanctions resulted in part from the powerful counter public story used by junta which shaped public opinion. As Ventevogel, Hövelmann (2022) note the authorities in Bamako presented the regional sanctions with care not as a fair reply to an illegal seizure of power but as an act of outside aggression with

influence from foreign forces. This message held strong appeal for many Malian population since it touched nationalist and anti imperialist ideas. The sanctions had an aim to isolate the regime, they instead created a rally round the flag effect which allowed junta to paint itself as a defender of national sovereignty and to gain a stronger home based position.

The broad economic sanctions used by ECOWAS also created important outcomes that were both hard and in some views counterproductive. These measures was designed to weaken the finances of junta, they also damaged the wider Malian economy and population. Several policy studies from the period note that border closures, financial restrictions disrupted trade, increased the cost of living and harmed the humanitarian situation. This became a major problem for AU, ECOWAS because the suffering of citizens reduced the moral, political acceptance of the sanctions so it made lasting enforcement difficult without facing claims that the measures were punishing the same people they intended to help.

The formal weak points of AU in the steady use and enforcement of its own sanctions system added to the limited impact on junta. Amani Africa (2023) points to a wider problem of inconsistent use where AU response to coups has shown different levels of toughness depending on the political setting. This sense of inconsistency can weaken the credibility of the sanctions system in particular when comparing the hard position on Mali with softer treatment in other cases. It creates a feeling that the rules do not have uniform use which can encourage resistant regimes to resist the pressure or to hope that the regional agreement will break apart at last.

Some scholars state that the sanctions created a degree of symbolic success even though they failed as a pressure tool. The quick suspension of Mali from AU was effective in denying any form of continental acceptance to junta. As Idigo and Osegbue (2025) observe in their study this political isolation is a rule statement of an important kind. It sends a message to the continent and the world that military takeovers are not an acceptable method of political change in Africa. This symbolic act did not remove the regime, it defended the core principles of AU and blocked the normalisation of the coup which preserved constitutional rules at least in theory.

The decision by ECOWAS to remove main economic sanctions in July 2023 before the key democratic milestone of presidential elections was met by several observers as a clear sign of policy failure. The removal was explained as a relief measure to reduce civilian hardship, to encourage more dialogue yet it removed the most important source of influence that the regions held over junta. This step taken without reaching main goal for which the sanctions were imposed signalled a weakening of the tough position, was treated by junta as a major political success so it strengthened its resistance of the timeline.

A comparative study of sanctions across the region offers more setting for the Mali situation and gives a wider frame. Use of similar sanctions systems against coup leaders in Guinea and Burkina Faso created results of a similar weak nature. This points to the failure in Mali was not an isolated event but may reflect a systemic problem with effectiveness of sanctions as a main tool for reversing the recent spread of military takeovers in the West African coup belt. The shared outcomes show that juntas in the region have developed plans to resist, survive regional sanctions often through public

support and through the search for new international partnerships(Idigo and Osegbue 2025).

One must recognise that the first use of sanctions did gain a limited short range success despite the later failures. The hard pressure used in at the start of 2022 was a key factor in forcing junta to drop its initial five year transition proposal. The threat of complete economic collapse pulled the leaders back to the negotiation table and pushed them to accept a more reasonable twenty four month plan. This shows sanctions can force negotiation and create early concessions even when they are not strong enough to make sure full carrying out of the agreements that follow (Idigo and Osegbue 2025).

At last the weak effect of the sanctions system in Mali can be explained for the most part by the contested geopolitical setting surrounding the crisis. As both Olech (2024) and Tossou (2025) state, sanctions lose their force when the target state finds strong alternative partners. The political, military, diplomatic support given by Russia and the Wagner Group gave Malian junta with a key lifeline that protected it from the intended effects of regional isolation. This outside support made the core pressure tool of AU, ECOWAS ineffective because junta no longer depended on good relations or economic engagement with its neighbours for survival.

The most important early success of the diplomatic work in Mali was its ability to build and keep a channel for dialogue with a resistant regime that stayed isolated in other ways. Kouassi and Mbongo (2021) note that in the unstable setting of the Sahel just keeping communication lines open counts as a critical gain. The steady

engagement by AU, ECOWAS envoys blocked a complete break in relations and formed a permanent space for negotiation. This process lasted for a long period yet it made sure the crisis stayed inside political management instead of turning into a direct clash which in turn reduced its wider security effect inside the region.

The final outcome of the mediation became a failure to secure a transition deal that junta would honour despite this early procedural gain. Diplomacy succeeded in getting a promise from the leaders for a twenty four month transition that would end in elections yet this promise was later broken. The decision of junta to postpone the February 2024 polls for an unlimited time showed the final collapse of the mediation process. This outcome shows the limit of diplomacy when one party does not negotiate in good faith and does not hold a real commitment to the terms it signs as stated by Niwe (2023) in his study of earlier regional failures in Mali.

A key reason for this failure was the lost influence of the regional mediators at a key stage. Tossou (2025) points with direct force to the influence of outside actors as the decisive element that weakened the diplomatic position of AU. Malian junta became far less affected by regional pressure once it gained a fresh security deal with the Wagner Group. The mediators who depended on mixed diplomatic persuasion and the threat of sanctions saw their position weakened in a major way. They could not offer security support, political backing that matched what junta got from its Russian partners, they held few incentives to offer and limited threats that carried real force.

There is also a strong claim that Malian junta used the long diplomatic process as a stalling tactic in a main form. The junta could gain needed time to strengthen their

own power, to push aside civilian political actors and to build tighter control over the state by taking part in what looked like endless talks over the exact shape of the plan. This points to junta may have treated the mediation not as a path to a real settlement but as a useful political show that kept regions calm while it followed its own lasting plan of staying in power which is a critique that has been made against resistant rulers in other conflict settings.

The diplomatic work has also gained criticism for its narrow focus on event based results with main concern placed on the timing of an election. Charbonneau, Sears (2021) state that this method does not treat the deep structural crises of governance and state weak point that have shaped instability in Mali for a long time. The regional mediation centred itself on the question of when the transition would end instead of what kind of political system would follow. This focus on restoring the pre-coup constitutional order without treating the forces behind its fall carried a risk of producing a political fix that stayed shallow and lacked lasting strength (Charbonneau and Sear 2021).

The strength of the diplomatic track also dropped because of problem in keeping a regional front that was in full united. AU, ECOWAS showed a united voice in public, there were hidden tensions and different national interests among the neighbours of Mali that junta tried to use. Any sign of a crack in the regional position whether on sanctions or on demands for negotiation would be treated by junta as a major signal of weak point. This shows the challenge of holding a unified policy among many states for a long period in particular when the policy creates heavy economic costs for some of the members.

A recurring critique of the high level mediation in Mali is the exclusion of local civil society from the process. Ly (2024) presents a specific study of how women groups were kept outside the high level state based talks for the most part. The diplomatic process had a domination from interactions between regional envoys and the leaders with little real role from wider parts of Malian society. This top down method has a risk of forming an elite based settlement that lacks strong support from the population, it also loses the chance to use the useful experience and peacebuilding strengths of local actors (Ly 2024).

The impact of AU diplomacy also fell because of mixed messages from world community. AU, ECOWAS led the mediation in an official way yet other world powers continued their own two sided talks with junta which created confusing signals. The absence of a single firm international position created a hard diplomatic space that the junta used to their own gain in particular with Russia showing active support for junta at UN Security Council. This point lays bare the problem faced by regions that lead a peace process inside a setting where world powers compete for influence.

At last a comparative assessment of the diplomatic results of AU in Mali shows a pattern of limited success in crises with strong political weight. In his study of AU roles in several continental conflicts Azubuike (2021) states that the diplomatic work of the body is most effective in disputes of lower intensity, it struggles to gain progress in situations that involve entrenched regimes or major geopolitical rivalry. The experience in Mali when placed beside difficult AU engagements in crises like Sudan, Ethiopia points to a systemic limit in the ability of AU to turn diplomatic work into binding and lasting political deals in the hardest conflicts of the continent.

2.2.3 Factors Hindering the Conflict Resolution Efforts of the African Union in Mali

One large limit on the response of the African Union in Mali comes from the ability expectations gap named by many scholars. Amani Africa (2023) states that AU working power to enforce rules remains below its political aim even with strong rule based statements against coups. The Peace and Security Council can suspend a member state. It can also sanction a member state. Yet the tools for strong pressure, close monitoring, and full follow up remain weak or lack enough support. This gap allowed AU to reject the junta with speed. Yet AU lacked firm influence to force real rule following, so steady resistance from the Malian junta became easier.

Uneven use of its own rules grew into a key formal weakness, one that damaged trust in the AU across Mali. AfricaNews (2021) raises this same critique, pointing to the gap between the hard AU response seen in Mali and the softer treatment given to the military takeover in Chad. Mali met AU sanctions paired with suspension. Chad met a far softer response. Such an apparent double standard weakens the moral force behind AU statements against unconstitutional change of government, and it gives resistant states a ready reason to refuse AU pressure. This doubt makes AU action look guided by principle or outside power interest. Such doubt then weakens acceptance of AU action.

In practice, the African Union gives heavy weight to sub regional bodies such as ECOWAS when crises arise inside their areas. Suzuki (2020) states that subsidiarity is sound in structure yet it can create serious trouble. In Mali, AU gave ECOWAS frontline mediation with use of the strongest economic sanctions. This reliance left AU with few other options when ECOWAS efforts failed. The hardest parts of conflict resolution were in effect outsourced. This dependence built into the system can stop AU from holding full control over the final outcome of a crisis.

Formal decision making inside AU can also create slow office process that blocks a fast and flexible response. The hard task of building agreement inside the Peace and Security Council includes many states with national interests that often differ. This task can slow the adjustment of

AU during a fast crisis such as a military coup. AU is built for careful debate over time. This pace fell behind events on the ground while the Malian junta moved with strong speed to build power. The delay opened a chance for the military to tighten control.

The lasting financial and logistical dependence of AU further reduced its strength in Mali. The European Court of Auditors (2018) showed the ongoing dependence of AU on outside partners for funding its peace and security programs including core parts of APSA. This financial dependence introduces outside influence, limits the autonomy of AU in decision making and carrying out. In Mali the need for outside funding for any long mission or hard follow up meant AU never acted with full independence which a determined state can use to its advantage.

The old tension with the traditional idea of state sovereignty continues to act as an inside limit even after the adoption of the doctrine of non indifference. Amvane (2015) studies the legal and political debates around Article 4(h). In practice many states remain in a deep way hesitant to support binding actions in another inside affairs of the state because of fear that such a precedent may later target them. This hesitation creates a political climate that limits AU to suspension, mediation and stops short of firmer steps that may risk confrontation with a state like Mali.

The formal weak point in turning advance warning data into fast preventative action also harms the conflict response of AU. Aeby (2024) explores trouble inside the Continental Early Warning System of AU, states that the link between data gathering and response of PSC is often thin. The crisis might have been handled in a different way if the signals about political weak point in Mali had pushed advance pressure or preventative steps before the coups. The failure to stop the political collapse meant AU

faced the less effective and more costly task of trying to reverse events after they had already taken place.

The African Union also holds limited independent influence over a determined state that commands home based support or gains strong foreign backing. As an between governments body its power rests for the most part on agreement and rule based pressure. AU ran out of high impact tools when facing a junta like Mali which was ready to reject regional unity and endure economic pain. Birhan (2024) states that this lack of independent pressure based strength limits the success of AU when it deals with rulers who put political survival over continental rules.

At last AU often faces critique for its weak structures for lasting follow up and monitoring. Even when diplomatic deals were gained in Mali such as the initial twenty four month plan AU lacked strong independent systems on the ground to monitor and secure sustained obedience by junta. This weak point allows resistant regimes to break their promises without facing fast and trusted negative outcomes. The lack of effective monitoring makes sure that the enforcement drive fades once the crisis leaves main spotlight as stated in broad reviews of the lasting conflict resolution record of AU.

The pivotal role of outside actors with a special focus on role of Russia and the Wagner Group represents the most important outside force that blocks the efforts of AU. Olech (2024) describes how this new security link gave Malian junta with a realistic alternative to regional and Western military cooperation. This partnership weakened the pressure of AU, ECOWAS in a deep, effective way because junta no longer depended on regional diplomatic goodwill or Western security support. The leaders created a political

shield by seeking outside backing which made sure that regional sanctions and isolation created a very small effect on their ability to govern.

This shift took place during a period marked by the reduction of traditional Western influence focused on role of France. Charbonneau, Sears (2021) study how the collapse of the French led counter insurgency mission and the strong anti French feeling in Mali created a wide political vacuum. Junta used this anti Western sentiment with political skill to justify its alliance with Russia, to remove French and UN forces from the country. This created a political setting where the diplomatic message of AU which had a close alignment with Western demands for a quick return to democratic rule lost ground level credibility and weakened the position of AU as a neutral judge.

Malian crisis must be understood within the broader picture of the Sahel becoming a space for growing geopolitical competition. Kouassi and Mbongo (2021) observe that the entry of world powers seeking influence creates deep complications for peacebuilding efforts that regional actors lead. The conflict is no longer a alone regional issue when major international actors support opposing sides with AU and Western partners supporting a democratic transition while Russia supports the military regime. This rivalry breaks the unity of the international response which fragments the pressure on junta and removes the chance of a unified African solution.

Malian junta acted as an active political agent rather than a passive victim because it with strategy used these outside factors. Tossou (2025) explains the actions of junta as a calculated plan of opposition. The leaders understood the geopolitical rivalries and used this knowledge with main clearness. They used nationalist public

language to secure home based acceptance while also choosing an outside security link that came with the fewest political demands. This outcome shows that the limits of AU in Mali came not alone from formal weak points, also from the purposeful and well planned opposition of the regime.

The failure to achieve a unified position at UN Security Council created another major outside limit that reduced the options of AU. Russia gave consistent political support to junta, used its veto or threatened to use its veto on resolutions related to Mali. This blocked AU and ECOWAS alike from securing any binding UN action, such as a broad sanctions regime carrying a world mandate. Such a lack of unity among the permanent Security Council members kept regional efforts limited in political reach, letting the junta hold on to a key diplomatic outlet and slip free of full isolation.

The economic pattern of uneven mutual reliance also shaped the weak effect of the sanctions approach of AU. Sandnes (2024) explains that Malian junta placed its security interests and sovereign autonomy above its economic ties to the region. The junta changed the balance of power by securing a strong outside security partner which made the regional sanctions less painful than the political concessions AU demanded. This makes it clear that economic mutual reliance alone cannot influence a regime when the key motivations relate to survival and security ideology.

The broader presence of longstanding regional insecurity also gave junta a strong public story for rejecting the demands of AU. Studies by Okafor (2023) show how the hard cross border threat caused by jihadist groups in the Sahel creates a political setting where military rule can be presented as a needed solution based on security.

This public story which places stability above democratic rules allowed junta to portray AU positions as distant, unrealistic during a period of intense national danger which thereby built home based support and sometimes created sympathy among outside audiences.

The success of Malian resistance created a wider regional influence that weakened conflict resolution ability of AU in an ongoing way. The ability of Malian junta to resist sanctions, strengthen its rule inspired similar military takeovers in Burkina Faso and Guinea. This formation of a coup belt weakened the regional rule system, divided the focus, the resources of AU and ECOWAS. They faced several unconstitutional change of government also which reduced the level of concentrated pressure they could apply to Mali.

At last, the limited impact of AU which came from its inability to reverse the coup or resolve the security problems contributed to a notable loss of local trust in the continental body. Witt (2024) studies how communities view regional actions, shows that people may lose confidence in AU, ECOWAS when they appear in a political way weak in the face of resistant regimes or when their sanctions increase hardship. This loss of trust creates further problem for future diplomatic or conflict resolution efforts because acceptance is essential for lasting engagement.

2.3 Theoretical Review

2.3.1 Realism (Structural Realism)

Realism with a focus on the structural form supported by Kenneth Waltz states that main ordering principle of international politics is anarchy. Within this system, each

state is main rational actor that works with a clear drive that comes from the goal of survival and security (Gardachew, 2020). The theory sets out an assumption that each state must at the end rely on its own defence which creates a continuous search for power or security maximisation. Cooperation that includes membership in regions like the African Union is a second hand concern that remains conditional because such cooperation can fall apart when national security interests meet a perceived risk. This view treats bodies as simple instruments that strong states design or remove when these tools support their quick self interests. This creates a conclusion that rule based duties stay in place alone when these commitments match the core main goals of the state. Realism meets frequent criticism although the theory holds a wide influence for its state centric structure because it overlooks inside factors. These inside factors include the quality of governance or democratic rules that AU promotes in an active manner. Critics maintain that Realism faces a struggle in giving an account of the political motivation that leads to the creation of bodies like AU that rest on shared security and shared values (Azubuike, 2021).

In addition, the theory receives criticism for ignoring the deep influence of non state actors such as the jihadist groups in Mali (Okafor, 2023). It also ignores the growing role of private military companies like the Wagner Group that operate outside formal state structures yet shift the balance of power in a dramatic form. The principles of Realism remain in a deep way important in the effort to understand the final failure of conflict resolution mechanisms of the African Union in Mali. Malian military junta faced sanctions, isolation yet, it acted as a rational security maximiser. The diplomatic and sanctions efforts of AU (Nyinevi, 2023) were later defeated because junta placed its

national survival above every other concern. It carried out this choice through the creation of a powerful counter alliance. As Olech (2024) sets out with part the alliance with Russia and the Wagner Group offered the strong security support that the region could not supply. This action removed the influence of the soft power and sanctions of AU. This outcome supports the Realist claim that power will always dominate when power politics meet rule based limits. It offers a strong explanation for the core factors that blocked the action of AU.

2.3.2 Liberal Institutionalism

Liberal Institutionalism states that states can and will cooperate with effectiveness under conditions of anarchy through the creation of formal international bodies. Leading institutionalists such as Robert Keohane state that bodies reduce the harmful effects of anarchy by giving shared information and lowering the negotiation costs linked with negotiation. They support this work through clear checking and enforcement mechanisms that guide cooperative behaviour in a ordered form. This framework gives an explanation for the base of regionalism in Africa where the African Union exists to create absolute gains for its members through shared security and conflict management. This structure makes a break from democratic rules costly in a political and economic sense (Suzuki, 2020). The establishment of the African Peace and Security Architecture APSA and its main organs such as the Peace and Security Council PSC offers a strong example of the practical use of this theory (Amani Africa, 2024). These structures follow a design that enforces rules and monitors obedience. They also work with steady action to make sure that cooperation continues beyond quick agreements made for specific situations.

Realists often criticise Liberal Institutionalism because they state that the theory fails to explain formal failures when core security interests separate or when strong outside actors take part. Malian crisis presents a difficult case for this theory because the hard formal mechanisms that include the sanctions system (African Union [P0], 2021) failed to push the regime into obedience. The importance of the theory remains key for an judgement of the use and effectiveness of AU mechanisms in Mali. Response of AU that took part suspension of diplomatic mediation and support for sanctions formed a complete Institutional response through a design that enforced the set up anti-coup rule (Nyinevi, 2023). The later failure to achieve the timeline shows the limits of the theory. Study applies the Institutional lens to find the specific formal weak points that include the weak enforcement of sanctions (Amani Africa, 2023) or the successful forum shopping by Malian regime. This creates a conclusion that the body lacked suitable influence or ability to secure obedience against a determined state even though the formal rules already existed.

2.3.3 Securitisation Theory

Securitisation theory had its development by the Copenhagen School with leaders such as Barry Buzan and Ole Waever. It introduces a critical view on the construction of threats in the international system. Main idea of the theory is that an issue does not carry an inherent quality as a security problem because it becomes one alone through a successful speech act carried out by an authority actor. This act frames the issue as an existential threat to a named referent object for example the state or the nation. This step gives justification for use of emergency measures, lifts the issue above the normal area of democratic politics and deliberation. The audience must

accept the claim that the threat is existential and must support extraordinary action for an issue to gain a successful securitisation (Waeuver). Securitisation Theory faces criticism for the most part from traditional security scholars who state that it reduces the influence of goal material threats in favour of subjective view. Critics also state that the theory faces a struggle in giving an account of situations where non elite actors or civil society groups manage to challenge set up security narratives. Nevertheless the theory is key for an understanding of the inside political dynamics of the crisis in Mali. It explains how the military junta used the discussion that centred on the widespread jihadist insurgency and the withdrawal of international partners with great effect. This framing allowed junta to construct justification for the suspension of the democratic transition and its continued position in power. Use of Securitisation Theory is essential for analysing the key factors that hindered conflict resolution efforts of the African Union Research question 3. The theory points to that main defensive plan of junta against regional pressure was to present the inside instability as a security issue. The military could portray the demands of AU for elections as a distraction from the real crisis or as a threat to national stability by framing the long security crisis in the Sahel as an existential threat to Mali (Okafor, 2023). This successful public story created the necessary home based acceptance for the regime to reject the diplomatic and sanctions based mechanisms of AU (Ventevogel and Hovelmann, 2022) which shows how security discussion can be used in a main manner to resist international formal rules.

2.3.4 Principal-Agent Theory (Applied to Regionalism)

Principal Agent PA Theory offers a framework for analysing given authority. In this model the Principal which is the collective of AU States delegates the task of executing peace and security policy to the Agent. The Agent includes AU Commission, the Peace and Security Council and its office units. The key concern is agency gap where the Agent moves away from the mandate of the Principal either because of its own separate interests or a lack of ability to complete the assigned task. The theory stresses that effective results depend on the ability of the Principal to monitor and punish the performance of the Agent. One main criticism of use of PA Theory to AU is the hard structure of the Principal itself. The fifty five States of AU not often act with complete agreement which blurs the lines of the original mandate. Critics also state that the theory can oversimplify formal failure because it focuses too much on inside monitoring issues which can hide role of outside geopolitical pressures. It remains a useful diagnostic tool for an understanding of the working weak points inside the action of AU in Mali with a focus on carrying out. The importance of PA theory lies in its ability to diagnose the formal limits that hindered the carrying out and success of AU mechanisms (Amani Africa, 2023). For example AU Peace and Security Council the Agent was mandated by the States the Principal to enforce sanctions (African Union [P2], 2021). The failure of the sanctions and the lack of strong follow up on transition deadlines show important agency gap. The European Court of Auditors (2018) finds financial dependence as a major limit on the performance of the Agent. This shows limited resources prevent PSC from in full carrying out the ambitious conflict resolution mandate delegated by the States which creates action gaps in Mali.

2.3.5 Neo-Gramscianism/Historical Materialism

Neo Gramscianism, Historical Materialism form a critical theory based lens for analysing international relations because they shift the focus away from simple state interactions toward the dynamics of world historical structures hegemony and counter hegemony (Tossou, 2025). This theory rooted in Historical Materialism does not treat bodies like the African Union as neutral bodies because it views them as sites where the dominant political economic, ideological interests of strong regional, world actors are embedded and legitimised (Azubuike, 2021). The supporters of the theory maintain that stability is maintained through mixed coercion as hard power, consent as hegemony because dominant powers create a historical bloc that defines the accepted rules of the game for example democratic rules and free market policies. A major criticism of the Neo Gramscian position is its difficulty, its perceived determinism because critics state that the theory sometimes places too much weight on deep structural forces, can weaken role of the agency of individual states or leaders in the World South. For a study on Mali the theory remains with high force useful because it explains why AU rule based framework collapsed within a in geopolitical terms contested setting. The theory offers a mechanism that interprets Malian crisis not alone as a local political failure, also as a moment where a Western backed hegemony that AU anti coup rules support faced a strong challenge from a main counter hegemonic alliance that took part Russia and Mali. The importance of Neo Gramscianism is key for analysing the outside factors that hindered conflict resolution efforts of AU Research question 3. The theory allows study to view main pivot of Malian junta to Russia, the Wagner Group (Olech, 2024) as a deliberate attempt to break away from the set up regional, international consensus defined by AU and its Western partners. The failure of AU to enforce sanctions and

secure a transition is therefore understood as a breakdown of the liberal historical bloc in the Sahel. Tossou (2025) explains that the successful opposition of junta came from its ability to align with an outside power that offered an alternative economic and security framework which weakened the hegemonic order that AU was in structural terms created to uphold.

2.4 Empirical Review

Omorogbe (2022) studied the specific statements AU Peace and Security Council issued after the twenty twenty one coup in Mali. The goal of study was to trace the legal and formal response of AU to the return of coups in West Africa. The results confirmed that AU with speed called upon its anti coup rules and in a specific way suspended Mali through a document study method. The conclusion stated that the legal framework of AU is strong but the challenge exists in its effective enforcement against resistant states. This evidence based study finds the mechanisms applied and the quick result of political suspension.

Nyinevi (2023) studied effectiveness of the sanctions system of AU in banning unconstitutional change of government across Africa. This study used the recent West African coups that include Mali as a case for its examination. Study found that AU sanctions are in a political way important, they often fail to force entrenched military regimes to change their behaviour because of formal enforcement gaps and opposition from the target state through comparative case study. The conclusion points to that sanctions are becoming a less potent tool for reversing coups which shows a gap in their intended effectiveness in Mali.

Witt (2024) based on evidence investigated how local people in the Sahel view regional actions that include those from AU and ECOWAS. The goal was to judge the acceptance and acceptance of these outside actions. Study found that local disagreement often begins when actions fail to address core security concerns or are seen as supporting specific elite interests through a qualitative approach based on fieldwork. The conclusion implies that the failure of AU to stabilise Mali weakened its acceptance at the local level which hindered diplomatic success.

Tossou (2025) aimed to study the specific factors that limited the mediation work of AU in Malian crisis during the twenty twenty to twenty twenty four period. Study found interference from outside actors, home based political opposition, inside formal weak points as main blocks through a qualitative case study and policy review. The result was that geopolitical competition with severity limited the influence of AU. The conclusion stresses the need for formal strengthening and better management of outside influence for future AU actions.

Kouassi, Mbongo (2021) judged this report on role of regions in conflict mediation and peacebuilding across the Sahel with a focus on Mali. The goal was to understand main challenges that shape these regional efforts. Study found that mediation faces limit from the difficulty of conflicts that involve many actors, lasting governance deficits through desk research and policy study. The conclusion showed that regional mediation can start dialogue but struggles to secure long lasting settlements without addressing deep structural issues.

Olech (2024) based on evidence studied the motivations and impact of the Wagner Group role in African conflict zones that include Mali. The goal was to determine how non state military actors change security dynamics. Study found that the presence of Wagner gave key security, political support to military regimes which allowed them to resist traditional regional sanctions and pressure through open source reports. The conclusion without a middle step finds outside actor influence as a key factor that hinders regional actions.

Ly (2024) carried out a case study to judge the level and impact of women participation in the recent AU ECOWAS led mediation processes in Mali. The goal was to study inclusivity in conflict resolution efforts. The result was that voices of women were with consistency marginalized in high level negotiations through qualitative interviews and document study. Study concluded that this lack of inclusivity weakens the acceptance and comprehensiveness of the diplomatic outcome which points to a factor that limits the lasting effectiveness of AU approach.

Indigo and Osegbue (2025) judged conflict resolution efforts of AU in Mali over a decade. The goal was to find the lasting challenges that block successful outcomes. The results revealed that political instability, the rise of jihadism and the recent resistance of junta with consistency weaken AU initiatives through a history based study. Study concluded that structural factors in Mali combined with formal ability deficits make use of AU mechanisms ineffective in the country in a large way.

Etyang and Abdulkadir (2024) judged this judgement of the overall performance of AU Peace and Security Council over the last two decades. The goal was to draw

lessons for future actions. Study showed that PSC often struggles to move from condemning a crisis to effective lasting carrying out and monitoring through a policy review. The results stressed the need for better main engagement and accountability. The conclusion confirms the formal ability gap that weakened the efforts of AU in Mali.

Aeby (2024) investigated the role, effectiveness of civil society participation in AU Continental Early Warning System CEWS and subsequent response mechanisms. The goal was to judge the functionality of a key prevention tool. Study found that there is often a weak link between the information generated by civil society supported CEWS and the decisive action PSC takes through document review. The conclusion implies that bureaucratic sluggishness, an insufficient link between advance warning and fast political response limited the initial efforts of AU to prevent Malian crisis.

2.5 Gap in Literature

The idea based theory based, thematic reviews conducted confirm that the African Union uses a formal and set up group of conflict resolution mechanisms to address unconstitutional change of government. These mechanisms are in main sanctions, diplomatic mediation and they arise from its Liberal Institutional framework (Nyinevi, 2023; Suzuki, 2020). The studies records with evidence the specific use of these tools in Mali noting the quick suspension of junta and the sustained efforts to negotiate a timeline (Omorogbe, 2022; Kouassi and Mbongo, 2021). The studies however shows agreement in its conclusion that these regional mechanisms failed to

achieve their main goal of restoring constitutional order. This failure has attribution to two main theory forces. One is the continuous Realist pursuit of power by junta with support from outside geopolitical actors (Olech, 2024). The other is the successful Securitisation plan of junta that neutralised regional pressure (Okafor, 2023). Existing studies judge the results of AU actions but they present three separate research gaps. First there is a gap in recent evidence based study after twenty twenty three that integrates the full effect of UN peacekeeping mission MINUSMA withdrawal and the indefinite postponement of elections. This study would give a holistic view of the ultimate major defeat of AU in twenty twenty four. Second, while challenges have identification, there is limited rigorous Principal Agent study focused on how inside formal deficiencies inside PSC contributed to the working failure of the sanctions mechanism in Malian setting. Third, insufficient research has in a planned way compared the specific counter diplomacy methods of Malian junta for example using the Wagner Group and nationalist public language against the mediation methods of AU. This research would explain main reasons why the diplomatic influence of AU was so in full undermined.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The research depends to a great degree on Liberal Institutionalism for an understanding of the architecture of the African Union response because it explains the existence and use of the anti coup mechanisms. Study however finds that this approach

fails to explain the policy result so it requires the anchoring of the failure study in main on Realism Structural Realism. Realism explains the result of this study with strict part because the successful resistance of Malian junta and its main pivot to outside actors confirms the core principle of the theory. This is the idea that national security, power maximisation override formal limits when a state survival or regime maintenance has a priority as studied in the third research question of study.

Structural Realism

The theory of Structural Realism has a large credit to Kenneth Waltz following the publication of his major work Theory of International Politics in nineteen seventy nine. It asserts that the international system has its definition from its condition of anarchy. This structural arrangement compels states which are rational, unified actors to give priority to their survival and security above all other concerns (Gardachew, 2020). As a result main goal of any state is not by need to promote democracy, uphold international law, to maximise its relative power or security position within the system. Cooperation through international bodies from a Realist point of view is alone a practical temporary method to advance national interests. It will face abandonment whenever a more favourable security plan appears, for example forming a powerful counter alliance to make sure regime survival.

Structural Realism relies on the tenets of anarchy state centrism and security competition with an assumption that the distribution of material abilities decides stability. The theory has faced many criticisms in particular from Liberal Institutionalists who state that it fails to account for the rise and influence of international bodies like

AU in an adequate manner (Azubuike, 2021). Critics also state that the focus of the theory on states ignores the power of non state actors such as transnational terrorist groups or powerful private military companies (Olech, 2024). The theory itself has not had a fundamental amendment, Neo Realists like Stephen Walt have emphasised balancing and bandwagoning behaviours. These concepts have strong importance to the shift of Mali away from regional alignment toward a geopolitical patron to balance against regional sanctions (Sandnes, 2024).

Current authors use Realism with success to explain the limits of international action in in geopolitical terms contested spaces. For example Olech (2024) uses Realist assumptions to interpret the entry of the Wagner Group into Mali as a clear power play that increased the hard security abilities of Malian junta. In a similar way scholars analysing sanctions failure (Tossou, 2025) draw on Realism to state that sanctions failed because they lacked the pressure based power to change the core security calculations of junta. This study uses Realism because its claims that security overrules rules, that resistance is rational when it has support from power explain how Malian junta could resist use of AU conflict resolution mechanisms and why the efforts of AU to enforce democratic rules failed against a Realist political decision.

Applicability of the theories

The Liberal Institutional framework gives the initial idea based structure for this study by outlining the rule based and structural commitments of AU (African Union

[[P0]], 2021). Realism however is applied as main explanatory tool to study the failure of the action. Study uses the Realist premise that power decides outcomes to study how Malian military regime gave priority to its survival, why the pressure and sanctions of AU failed to achieve a return to constitutional order. The theory in a specific way helps explain the outside limits (Olech, 2024) by stating that Malian regime made a rational self-interested choice to align with a powerful outside actor Russia to balance against the perceived threat of AU ECOWAS action which then neutralised the formal influence of the region.

3.2. Hypotheses

The alternative hypotheses derived from the research questions are as follows:

1. There is an important relationship between use of African Union sanctions, diplomatic actions and restoration of constitutional order in Mali.
2. Outside factors have a important influence on effectiveness of conflict resolution mechanisms of the African Union in Mali.

3.3 Research Design

This study adopts the ex post facto research design. This design is appropriate because study studies events that have already occurred, which the researcher cannot control or manipulate. It is therefore suitable for analysing political crisis in Mali from 2020 to 2024, focused on the sanctions, diplomatic actions, and other conflict resolution mechanisms applied by the African Union in response to the unconstitutional change of government in Mali.

The ex post facto research design allows the researcher to study the relationship between the actions of the African Union and the outcomes recorded in Mali after the coups. It is useful for a study of this nature because it allows a careful investigation of past developments through already existing evidence without any direct interference in the situation under review. In this study, the design helps in assessing whether the actions of AU contributed to restoration of constitutional order and in identifying the factors that limited the success of those actions.

The design is also suitable for social science research where the issues under investigation are historical, political, and formal in character. Since study focuses on completed events, depends on evidence from official documents, reports,, academic materials, the ex post facto design gives a proper framework for ordered study and fair reading of the issues being studied.

3.4 Methods of Data Collection

The data gathering for this study relies alone on the documentary method of data gathering otherwise known as second hand source. The types of documents for study include official reports which are AU Peace and Security Council statements, UN Security Council reports, policy briefs from ISS, ACCORD, academic studies which are journal articles, evidence based studies and official government statements which are Malian state media reports regarding Russian cooperation. The criteria for the selection of documents include their importance to the twenty twenty to twenty twenty four time frame, their focus on AU action, Mali resistance, their authenticity as either official publications or reviewed by scholars academic works. The process for obtaining,

accessing these documents includes using academic databases such as JSTOR, Taylor, Francis Online, official organisational websites such as AU, ECOWAS and formal archives. Techniques for analysing document content will include thematic analysis to find recurring patterns in use of AU mechanisms and content analysis to in a planned way judge the rhetorical framing Malian junta used to justify its resistance (Creswell and Poth, 2018).

3.5 Methods of Data Analysis

The data collected for this study will be studied using content analysis. This method is appropriate because it allows the researcher to study and interpret the contents of documents in an ordered way. Through content analysis, the researcher will find, classify,, study information got from textbooks, journal articles, official reports, policy documents, and other important second hand materials used in study.

The method will also assist the researcher in analysing issues relating to conflict resolution mechanisms adopted by the African Union in Mali, effectiveness of those mechanisms, and the factors that hindered their success. Content analysis is therefore suitable for this study because it gives a logical base for examining document evidence, relating the results to the goals and research questions of study.

3.6 Logical Data Framework

Table 3.1 Logical Data Framework

Research Question	Hypothesis is	Major Variables of the Hypothesis is: Independent (X) Dependent (Y)	Empirical Indicators of Variables	Method of Data Collection	Source of Data	Method of Data Analysis
RQ1-RQ3	H1-H2	X: AU sanctions, diplomacy and external factors	Suspension, sanctions support, mediation, public communiques, Russia linked support, Wagner activity, MINUSMA withdrawal	Documentary method/secondary data	AU and ECOWAS records; UN documents; policy reports; journal articles; reliable	Content analysis and thematic analysis

					media reports	
RQ1-RQ3	H1-H2	Y: Restoration of constitutional order and effectiveness of AU mechanisms	Transition timetable, election delay, sanctions relief, civilian rule outcome and compliance record	Documentary method/secondary data	AU PSC records; ECOWAS communiqués; UN records; Africa Center materials; Reuters reports	Comparative interpretation and hypothesis-based analysis



CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Chapter Four presents document findings on African Union conflict settlement work in Mali from 2020 to 2024. It follows three approved research questions. At the start, it identifies the methods used by AU. Then, it judges how sanctions and diplomacy affected the return to constitutional order. At the end, it studies factors that weakened the effort. Evidence comes from records of the AU Peace and Security Council. It also comes from ECOWAS statements as well as United Nations records with trusted reports. The main argument remains plain. The AU acted with a clear formal aim. Yet the AU response brought only limited gains, since power on the ground shifted faster than regional bodies could enforce their aims. The chapter draws on tables plus timelines to set evidence in order, alongside flow diagrams, scorecards, and evidence matrices built to test each claim. Every visual carries a point of its own rather than standing as mere decoration, which makes the document record easier to test. Discussion throughout stays tied to the research questions and the approved theory base. In this way Chapter Four acts as a bridge between approved method and final judgement, moving first from recorded action to measured meaning, then from measured meaning to a clear answer on effectiveness. Method, in short, leads the chapter throughout.

4.1 There is a significant relationship between the application of African Union sanctions and diplomatic interventions and the restoration of constitutional order in Mali.

4.1.1 Institutional Measures and Political Sanctions

Table 4.1 lays the document base for this chapter, setting out the public records used to track the AU response across the Mali crisis. Such a table matters because sound research must show the source path behind every finding. The records span the first coup through to the second, Mali suspension, ECOWAS pressure, the end of the UN mission, and the delay of elections. No single message runs through these records. Some state plain decisions, others reveal the results and breakdowns that followed. This spread of sources helps the chapter steer clear of a narrow account resting on just one institution.



Table 4.1 Documentary Corpus Index for the Mali Case

Source	Document focus	Evidence use	Chapter role
African Union Peace and Security Council 2020	946th meeting communique on Mali	AU endorsement of transition process after first coup	Mechanism identification
African Union Peace and Security Council 2021	1001st meeting communique on Mali	Suspension of Mali and warning of targeted measures	Mechanism identification
ECOWAS 2022	Extraordinary summit record on Mali	Regional pressure and sanction track	Effectiveness judgement
Reuters 2022	Sanctions relief report	Sanctions lifted after transition pledge	Effectiveness judgement
United Nations Security Council 2023	Resolution ending MINUSMA mandate	Shift in wider security field	Hindering factor analysis
Reuters 2023	Election delay report	Postponement of expected presidential election	Outcome judgement

United States Treasury 2023	Wagner sanctions release	Official record of Wagner expansion support	External factor analysis
African Center for Strategic Studies 2024	Mali election note	Continued delay in return to elected rule	Outcome judgement

Source note: African Union Peace and Security Council (2020 2021) ECOWAS (2022) United Nations Security Council (2023) Reuters (2022 2023) United States Treasury (2023) African Center for Strategic Studies (2024).

The table makes clear that this evidence base does not rest on opinion alone. It rests instead on formal statements, official security records, and trusted reports, brought in wherever official wording falls short on detail. AU documents show that suspension plus mediation support grew into formal responses. The ECOWAS record traces the path of regional pressure, while the UN record shows the wider security shift that changed the setting for AU action. Public reports help mark both election delays and sanction relief. Such a mix of sources strengthens the study, since it ties formal aims to political results and keeps the evidence frame secure.

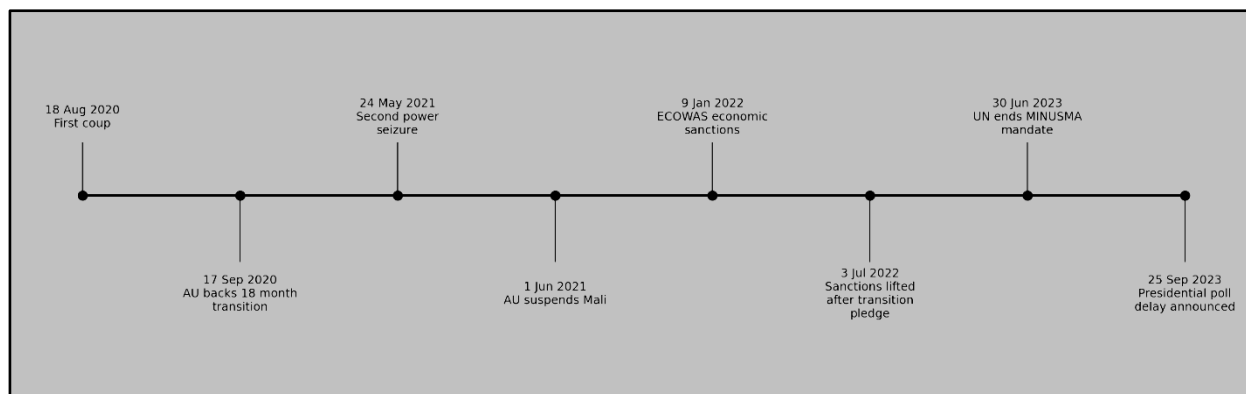
4.1 There is a significant relationship between the application of African Union sanctions and diplomatic interventions and the restoration of constitutional order in Mali.

4.1.1 Institutional Measures and Political Sanctions

Figure 4.1 turns the record of events into a timeline. Such an approach matters, since the Mali crisis did not unfold in one single moment. It moved instead through linked stages, from the first coup to the second power seizure, before pressure, talks, and delay followed in turn. A timeline sets this order out in clear form, showing when AU action followed each Mali event and helping test whether the response came before or after key political shifts. The visual frame fits the ex post facto design,

since it orders completed events without treating them as an experiment, while still showing how long the crisis has stayed unresolved.

Figure 4.1 Historical Timeline of Major Crisis and Response Events



Source note: Compiled from African Union Peace and Security Council (2020 2021) ECOWAS (2022) United Nations Security Council (2023) Reuters (2023).

This timeline lays bare a clear pattern. Each main political break drew a formal answer from the African Union in turn. After the 2020 coup, the Union supported a transition plan. After the 2021 seizure, it suspended Mali and warned of more steps. Yet later dates show that pressure did not bring stable civilian rule. Sanctions ended at a later stage. The UN mission mandate ended in 2023. The planned presidential election faced delay in September 2023. This order shows a wider gap between first formal answer and later political effect. Time became a tool for resistance. This supports the later judgement.

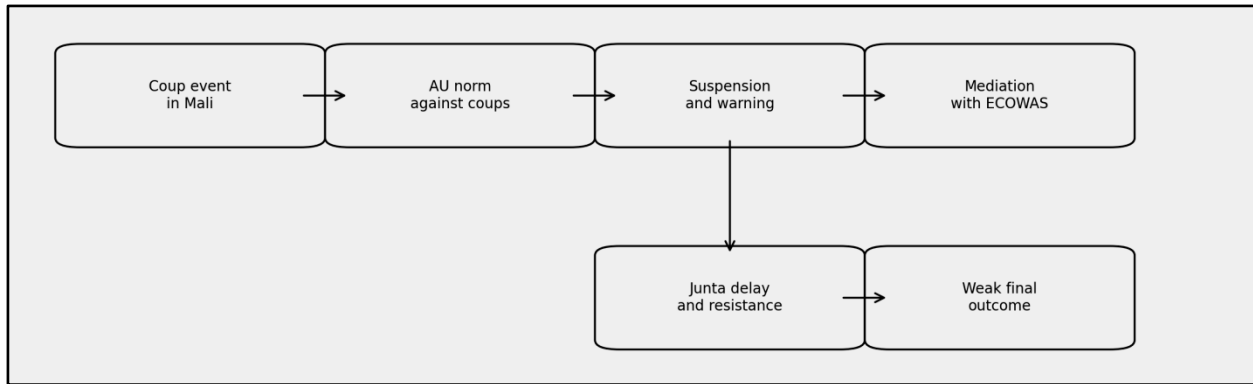
The document record backs a clear finding here. The African Union built a real package for conflict

settlement, rather than leaning on one single gesture. Its method joined together public rejection, suspension, transition demands, mediation support, and checking requests. African Union Peace and Security Council (2020) backed a transition path after the first coup, while AU Peace and Security Council (2021) suspended Mali after the second power seizure. Such moves point to a steady Union stand against unconstitutional rule. Yet this same record reveals a limit, since ECOWAS carried the strongest pressure and bore the direct mediation load. AU stayed central in law, yet leaned on sub regional delivery for much of the practical work. Liberal Institutionalism helps explain this system, while Principal Agent reasoning marks the gap between mandate and action. For this study, the evidence points toward layered action, continental in principle but shared in delivery. Such a difference matters, because later failure cannot just be read as inaction. It must instead be judged as active work carried out with uneven control over its own tools. The real issue is not whether AU responded at all. Rather, the issue is whether its tools carried enough strength to command obedience once the target regime chose to resist the rule.

4.1.2 Diplomatic Mediation and AU ECOWAS Coordination

Figure 4.2 sets out a process tracing map of AU action. Such a map helps, since the study looks past bare events to ask how each method was meant to work. The figure opens with the coup event, then moves through the legal anti coup norm, suspension, mediation, and junta resistance, before closing on a weak final outcome. This order follows the logic behind the AU response, and it opens room for critique, since a method may carry sound design yet still yield a weak result. In this way the figure turns a political story into a tested order fit for close reading. Such structure deepens the strength of this test.

Figure 4.2 Process Tracing Flow of AU Conflict Resolution Action



Source note: Author synthesis from African Union Peace and Security Council (2020 2021) and ECOWAS transition records (2022).

The process map reveals inner order behind the AU response. A coup triggered a legal answer, one that led on to suspension and formal warning. These steps moved forward alongside mediation carried out through ECOWAS. Yet the chain never closed with restored constitutional order, moving instead toward resistance and a weak final result. This matters for the study, since it draws a line between using a method and that method succeeding. The visual backs the wider study view that AU did not fail through silence, but rather failed because its measures could not secure the final political result. Such a reading deepens the weight of this test.

Table 4.2 sets out the log of diplomatic action, offering full detail on each meeting held. It also shows demands with public positions and mediation steps that formed the peaceful part of the response. This matters because sanctions cannot explain the AU plan alone. The Union also worked through dialogue and transition pressure. The log shows how mediation words joined the demand for a return to constitutional order. It also shows the central place of ECOWAS in face to face

engagement. The table helps answer Research Question One with more depth than a short list of actions. This keeps the evidence path clear.

Table 4.2 Diplomatic Intervention Log

Date or period	Actor	Documented action	Analytical value
17 Sep 2020	AU PSC	Endorsed ECOWAS transition approach and mediation effort	Kept civilian transition on agenda
1 Jun 2021	AU PSC	Suspended Mali and called for a swift civilian led return	Raised political cost of coup
2021 to 2022	ECOWAS with AU support	Continued mediation over transition length	Preserved negotiation channel
9 Jan 2022	ECOWAS	Applied stronger economic pressure after transition dispute	Raised cost of delay

3 Jul 2022	ECOWAS	Lifted economic sanctions after new transition pledge	Rewarded process movement
25 Sep 2023	Mali authorities	Election delay announced	Showed weak final control over timetable

Source note: African Union Peace and Security Council (2020 2021) ECOWAS (2022) Reuters (2023).

The diplomatic action log shows a repeated link between pressure and contact. AU accepted regional mediation while it kept the demand for a civilian path in view. ECOWAS envoys handled transition dates together with space for talks. Some effect appeared because the junta moved away from its longer timetable. Yet the document result remains mixed. Talk stayed open but the election path continued to slip. This means diplomacy served as a holding tool more than a deciding tool. It slowed a full break, yet failed to secure obedience to the main goal. Contact stayed open even as power remained with the junta.

Taken together, the process map alongside the action log show that AU diplomacy carried both aim and limit. The Union defended a rule based transition through public statements, while backing mediation led by ECOWAS. Such a stance fits the view held by Kouassi and Mbongo (2021), that regional mediation can hold conflict inside a political channel. Yet the Mali record also fits the concern raised by Tossou (2025), that diplomatic effort loses force once the target group can delay without facing a firm cost. The junta accepted talks for the most part because talks eased its isolation, not because it saw talks as any sure path toward quick civilian rule. This problem turns diplomatic access into a kind of shelter for delay. Even so, the AU diplomatic record in this study should not be dismissed as empty, since it gained contact and shaped the timetable debate. Yet it

still lacked the influence needed to bind the junta to its transition promise. Diplomacy, in this sense, proved useful for process but weak for a clear result. The Mali case lays bare a gap between dialogue as contact and dialogue as obedience, showing why engagement needs real influence, since access without obedience cannot count as a full diplomatic win.

4.2 External factors have a Significant Influence on the Effectiveness of the Conflict Resolution Mechanisms of the African Union in Mali.

4.2.1 Evidence of Limited Gains and Failed Final Outcomes

Table 4.3 judges effectiveness by weighing intended goals against actual outcomes, rather than treating every action as a success just because it took place. Instead it checks what each mechanism set out to do against what the documentary record shows once that mechanism was used. Such a check carries real weight for Research Question Two. A suspension can defend a norm even where it fails to remove a junta, just as mediation can produce a timetable even where that timetable later collapses. The scorecard therefore allows a layered judgement rather than a flat yes or no verdict, separating mere movement from full mission completion and keeping the evidence path visible throughout.

Table 4.3 Effectiveness Scorecard of Intended Goals and Actual Outcomes

Mechanism	Intended purpose	Observed result	Judgement
Suspension from AU	Deny normal continental standing to coup authority	Achieved as formal institutional action	Norm defence strong

Transition demand	Return to civilian order through stated timetable	Partially shaped timetable debate	Process influence moderate
Sanctions support	Raise cost of delay and induce compromise	Linked to later pledge and relief	Short term influence present
Diplomatic mediation	Keep dialogue active and gain commitment	Talks continued but final compliance failed	Holding value only
Constitutional restoration	Restore elected civilian rule	Not achieved within study period	Strategic result weak

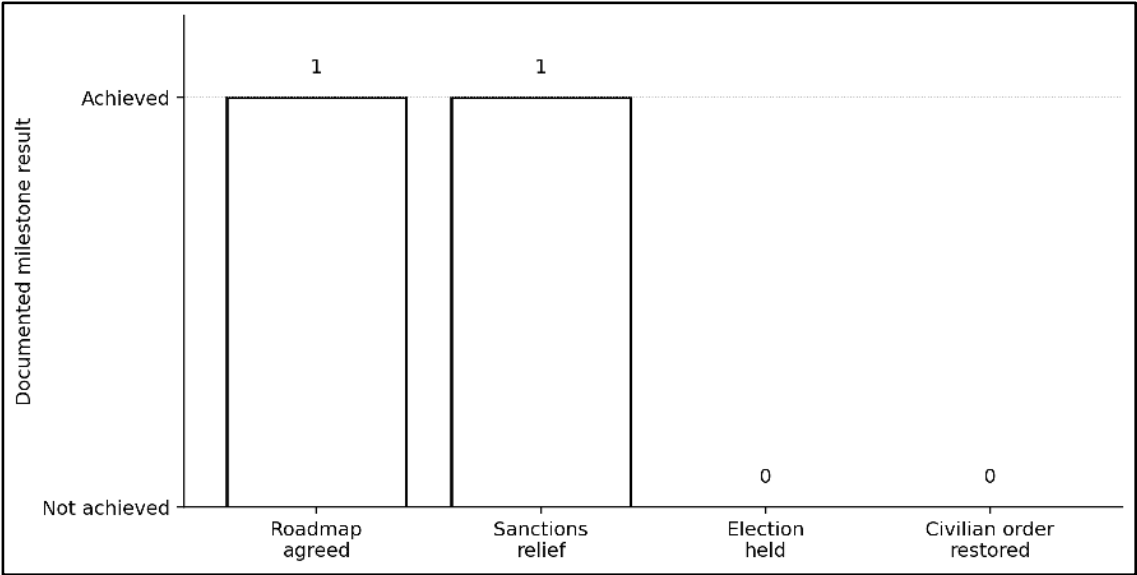
Source note: African Union Peace and Security Council (2021) ECOWAS (2022) Reuters (2022 2023) African Center for Strategic Studies (2024).

The diplomatic action log points to a repeated link between pressure and contact. AU supported regional mediation and kept the call for a civilian path in view. ECOWAS envoys worked on transition dates and space for talks. The process had some effect because the junta left its longer timetable after pressure grew. Yet the document result stayed mixed. Dialogue stayed open but the election path still moved away. This means diplomacy worked more as a holding tool than a deciding tool. It slowed a full break but it did not secure obedience to the final goal. Contact stayed in place but power did not shift.

The process map, read alongside the action log, points to the same broad picture, that AU diplomacy carried real aim but also a real limit. The Union stood behind a rule based transition through its statements, and lent support to mediation carried out by ECOWAS. Kouassi and Mbongo

(2021) reach a similar view, stating that regional mediation can hold conflict inside a political channel. Still, the Mali record echoes the concern voiced by Tossou (2025), that diplomatic effort weakens once a target group can stall without paying any real cost. The junta took part in talks for the most part to ease its isolation, rather than treating talks as any fast route to civilian rule. This pattern turns diplomatic contact into a cover of sorts for delay. Within this study, the AU diplomatic record deserves credit rather than dismissal, since it built contact and shaped debate over the timetable. Even so, it lacked the power required to bind the junta to its final transition promise. Diplomacy, then, proved useful for process but weak for final result. The Mali case lays bare a gap between contact as dialogue set against obedience as dialogue, and this is the very reason why contact without power, or access without obedience, cannot be counted as a full diplomatic win.

Figure 4.3 Documentary Milestone Chart for Transition Results



Source note: Author coding from AU PSC records ECOWAS transition decisions and reliable public reporting on the 2023 election delay.

These bars show why the AU result deserves the label limited rather than successful. Two process markers met their aim, a path won acceptance and sanctions relief followed. Two final outcome markers missed their aim instead, since the election never took place within the expected period and constitutional order stayed unrestored by the end of 2024. Such a difference carries real weight, since process movement can point to influence yet cannot stand in for the main policy goal. For this reason the chapter treats the AU action as influential in part but weak in its final effect, a judgement that fits both the design and the evidence base, growing stronger as a result.

The record on effectiveness calls for careful judgement rather than a quick verdict. It would be unfair to say AU had no effect at all, since pressure from AU and ECOWAS kept the transition issue alive, moving the junta away from a longer delay. Reuters (2022) reported that sanctions were lifted following a twenty four month transition proposal paired with a new electoral law, an order that points to a link between pressure and concession. Yet the larger result blocks any broad claim of success, since Reuters (2023) reported the postponement of the expected presidential election while the African Center for Main Studies (2024) stated that the junta delayed the election path a second time. This creates a direct tension, one where formal bodies shaped the process yet failed to secure the outcome. Liberal Institutionalism explains the attempt made to raise the cost of rule breaking, while Structural Realism explains junta rule, since survival needs plus outside support outweighed regional pressure. In this study, effectiveness proved real at the process level yet low at the constitutional level, with the record pointing toward influence that never became full result. Such a serious limit matters, since the study goal concerns restored order rather than short term negotiation movement, and this keeps the final judgement bound close to the main goal.

4.2.2 Decision Regarding Hypothesis One

Table 4.4 Rival Evidence Matrix for Hypothesis One

Evidence item	What it shows	Hypothesis meaning
AU suspension and sanction threat	Shows direct pressure after the second coup	Supports relationship with transition movement
ECOWAS economic sanctions	Created stronger bargaining cost in early 2022	Supports relationship with concession
Twenty four month transition pledge	Shows some shift after pressure	Supports rejection of H01 in a limited sense
Election delay in 2023	Shows that influence did not become full compliance	Limits strength of effectiveness claim

Source note: African Union Peace and Security Council (2021) Reuters (2022 2023) African Center for Strategic Studies (2024).

Research Question Two asks how far AU sanctions and diplomatic actions helped push Mali back toward constitutional order. The null hypothesis holds that AU sanctions and diplomatic actions carried no real link to that restoration. The document record backs a rejection of this null hypothesis, though only in a limited sense. Evidence shows that pressure shaped the political process throughout, AU suspension stripped Mali of normal formal standing, ECOWAS sanctions added real economic cost, and mediation held the transition dispute inside a bargaining track. The later shift

from a far longer junta timetable down to a twenty four month pledge shows that regional action did change behaviour. Yet this change never reached the full end point of civilian restoration within the study period, since the September 2023 election delay shows that process influence never became final obedience. This means the evidence backs a relationship, though not a strong claim of success. Regional measures changed the route of negotiation, yet they never controlled its final destination. For that reason H01 was rejected, since sanctions and diplomacy showed a measurable link to transition movement, though the study makes no claim of broad policy victory, since the true result runs narrower than that. AU and ECOWAS action shaped the path of events, yet failed to deliver the full constitutional result the main goal required. The test accepts influence while it refuses to mistake that influence for completion. Such a reading rests on both the scorecard and the milestone chart, which show the regional response changing the pace of the transition dispute without ever finishing the transition task itself. Such a finding matters for the hypothesis, since a relationship can exist without full success. Sanctions pressed the junta toward a shorter timetable, and mediation held the issue inside formal negotiation, yet the later election delay eroded the value of those gains. The study therefore rejects any claim of no relationship at all, while also rejecting any claim that the relationship grew strong enough to restore constitutional order within the chosen period. Such a reading gives the test a firmer link to both the document record and the research goal.

4.3 Factors Hindering the Implementation and Success of African Union Conflict Resolution Efforts in Mali

4.3.1 Internal Institutional and Operational Constraints

Table 4.5 codes the internal constraints that weakened the AU effort throughout. Its coding groups draw from the approved theory base plus the document record, covering enforcement weakness, dependence on ECOWAS, monitoring limits, and resource pressure. This table matters, since the failure seen in Mali cannot rest on outside actors alone, given that a regional body succeeds or fails for the most part through the strength of its own tools. The matrix shows where the formal design carried real force, while the power to carry it out fell short elsewhere, turning broad critique into named fields of weakness and making the later formal diagnosis easier to defend.

Table 4.5 Thematic Coding Matrix of Internal AU Constraints

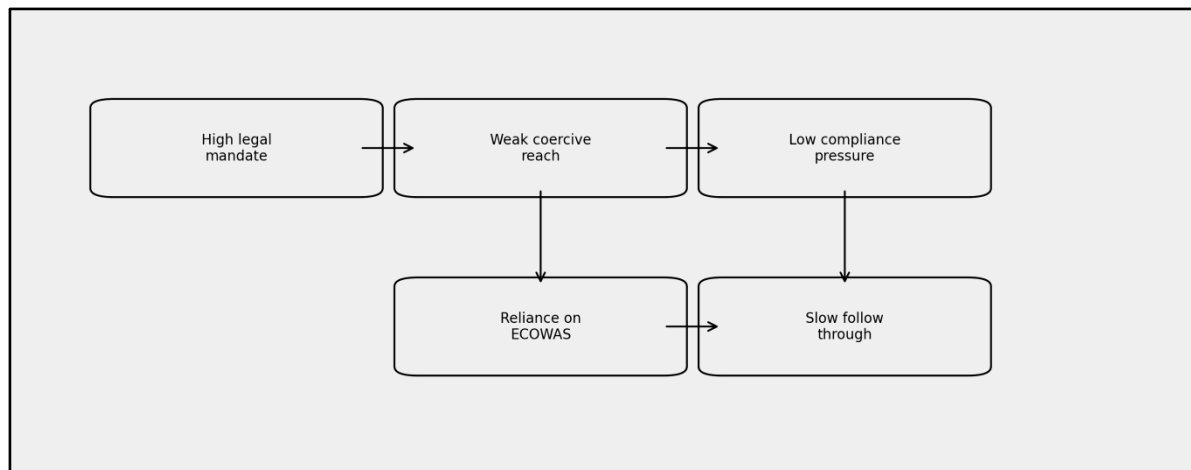
Constraint	Documentary meaning	Effect on AU result
Enforcement weakness	Formal action lacked decisive coercive reach	Junta outlasted the pressure
Dependence on ECOWAS	Strongest economic tools sat outside the AU itself	Continental control became indirect
Monitoring gap	Regular reporting was requested but pressure delivery remained thin	Delay was not stopped
Resource strain	AU capacity concerns reduced follow through	Implementation power stayed weak

Source note: Author coding supported by approved literature and AU process records.

The table shows that AU held a strong legal position paired with a weaker path for enforcement. It could reject coups, suspend participation, and call for monitoring, yet stronger pressure tools most often ran through ECOWAS or leaned on wider outside support. Such a pattern opened a gap between continental rule and practical influence, since checking requests alone did not build enough pressure to halt later delay. This fits Principal Agent reasoning well, where a mandate may read in clear terms even while delivery stays thin. The Mali case therefore reveals a carrying out problem set inside a larger political contest, one where authority existed yet enforceable weight stayed low. Such a gap strengthens the later judgement offered here.

Figure 4.4 maps the internal capacity gap in a direct way, starting from a high legal mandate and tracing the path toward weak compliance pressure. The diagram adds two connected problems, reliance on ECOWAS for hard pressure, and a slow pace of follow through once decisions are made. This process map helps the chapter explain why a formal rule against coups never became an enforceable result, while also making the institutional argument easy to test against later external factors. The visual shows how a rule can lose force during its own implementation, which makes later comparisons sharper and more secure.

Figure 4.4 Process Map of Institutional Capacity Gaps



Source note: Author analytical synthesis from the documentary pattern on AU mandate reliance and follow through.

This map points to a plain but serious problem, since AU held legal authority over the rules, yet that authority never turned into enough reach for real pressure. Once pressure came to depend on another body, the response grew easier to resist, and coordination that followed first decisions made such resistance easier still. Slow follow up then reduced the weight carried by the first public rejection. None of this means ECOWAS support was wrong, rather it means the AU system in Mali ran through a shared structure, one that could lose force whenever unity or speed grew weak. This inside power gap formed one part of the wider failure path, since legal strength never turned into working strength. Such a gap strengthens the later judgement offered in this chapter.

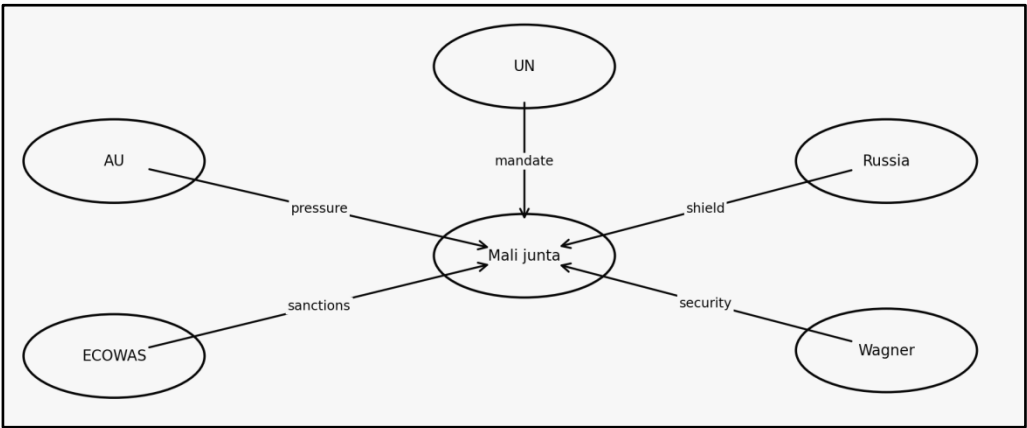
These inside limits deserve close attention, since they reveal a formal body that was, in practice, weak. Outside pressure never met a strong body in return, but rather acted on a system already carrying real gaps. Amani Africa (2023) points to uneven enforcement inside AU sanction practice, while Etyang and Abdulkadir (2024) add that the PSC shows a repeated drift from public rejection down to weak follow up. Both views fit the Mali record well, AU reacted with real speed after the second coup, yet it never built a pressure structure strong enough to outlast the junta. Dependence on ECOWAS helped at first, since ECOWAS carried local reach, yet this same dependence went on to narrow AU control over its own strongest tools. For this study, the formal problem is not a lack of rules, rather it is the gap between defending a rule and defending a result. AU could state the rule and could support pressure, yet it could not secure the full transition once resistance grew firm. This crisis reveals an obedience gap inside the regional peace structure itself, formal authority looked strong on paper, while practical authority weakened once the target regime refused the expected path. In practice, formal mandates must be matched by real pressure tools, ones that stay active well after the first public reaction fades.

4.3.2 External Geopolitical Factors and Decision Regarding Hypothesis Two

Figure 4.5 sets out the alignment of actors around the Mali case, placing the junta at its

centre, since the main question concerns the decision space open to it. AU alongside ECOWAS appear here as pressure actors, the United Nations as a mandate actor, and Russia together with Wagner as security support actors. This map matters, since the success of any conflict settlement depends on the options held by the target actor, and as the junta gained more options beyond regional pressure, AU leverage grew weaker in turn. The figure turns geopolitics into a leverage map, giving the chapter a clearer pressure map on which to base its judgement.

Figure 4.5 Actor Alignment Network in the Mali Crisis



Source note: Author synthesis from United Nations Security Council (2023) United States Treasury (2023) and AU and ECOWAS records.

The actor map presents an unequal struggle over influence. AU worked with ECOWAS to seek restoration through sanctions with mediation as well as formal isolation. The United Nations kept a peace mission role until the 2023 mandate ended. Russia with Wagner formed another support line that lowered the cost of resisting regional pressure. The United States Treasury (2023) named Malian officials as helpers of Wagner expansion. United Nations Security Council records in 2023 show a security setting change around MINUSMA withdrawal. This shift weakened AU influence in a direct way. The junta gained more room to endure pressure.

Table 4.6 tests the outside factor claim through a clear evidence matrix. It separates outside support from mission withdrawal from political shielding from security based public framing. Each factor is

linked to its effect on AU tools. Such a form matters, given how wide Research Question Three stands, since without a matrix the analysis could collapse into a loose list. The table brings order to the argument, while keeping the hypothesis test tied to recorded effects rather than broad claims about geopolitics. It further allows a clear comparison across pressure sources, guarding against any weak claim that rests on one force alone.

Table 4.6 External Factor Matrix and Hypothesis Two Evidence

External factor	Documented role	Effect on AU leverage
Russia linked support	New diplomatic and security option for the junta	Reduced value of regional approval
Wagner expansion	Alternative force support linked to regime survival	Raised resistance capacity
MINUSMA mandate end	International security field changed in 2023	Transition pressure lost part of its support frame
Security framing by junta	Delay presented as needed for stability	Regional pressure became easier to reject
Overall effect	External factors lowered isolation cost	Supports rejection of H02

Source note: United Nations Security Council (2023) United States Treasury (2023) Reuters (2023) with theory links from the approved Chapter Two and Three literature.

This matrix shows that outside forces reshaped both pressure and public view alike. Russia tied the

junta to a fresh security choice, while Wagner gave the regime a force source sitting outside regional systems. The exit of MINUSMA removed a major world presence, changing the field of political influence in the process. The junta then framed its delay as a matter of national security need. None of these forces worked alone, rather they worked alongside home based insecurity and formal weak points already present. The result showed up as a sharp fall in AU power to shape final obedience, with AU influence falling just as outside support rose. Such a pattern makes later comparison both clearer and more secure.

The evidence on outside limits stands strong, yet it still calls for balanced reading. Olech (2024) links Wagner support in a direct way to the survival space of the junta, while Tossou (2025) argues that outside competition reduced the power held by regional diplomacy. The formal action taken by the United States Treasury (2023) against Malian helpers of Wagner work lends real weight to this claim, and United Nations Security Council (2023) records on the MINUSMA withdrawal point to another major shift in the political field. Yet outside influence was never the whole force at play, since the junta also used insecurity itself as a public reason for delay. Securitisation Theory helps explain this choice, since a security story can make emergency rules feel needed, while Structural Realism remains the main frame here, given that the junta chose whichever option best served its own survival. For this study, H02 is rejected, since outside factors carried real influence over how far AU mechanisms could succeed, reducing isolation costs, while weakening the threat value carried by both sanctions and mediation. The result showed up as a stronger junta position paired with a weaker path back to constitutional rule. Such a reading shows why formal reform alone cannot solve this problem, and why the region must treat foreign security alignment as part of the conflict field itself, making foreign backing central to the final explanation.

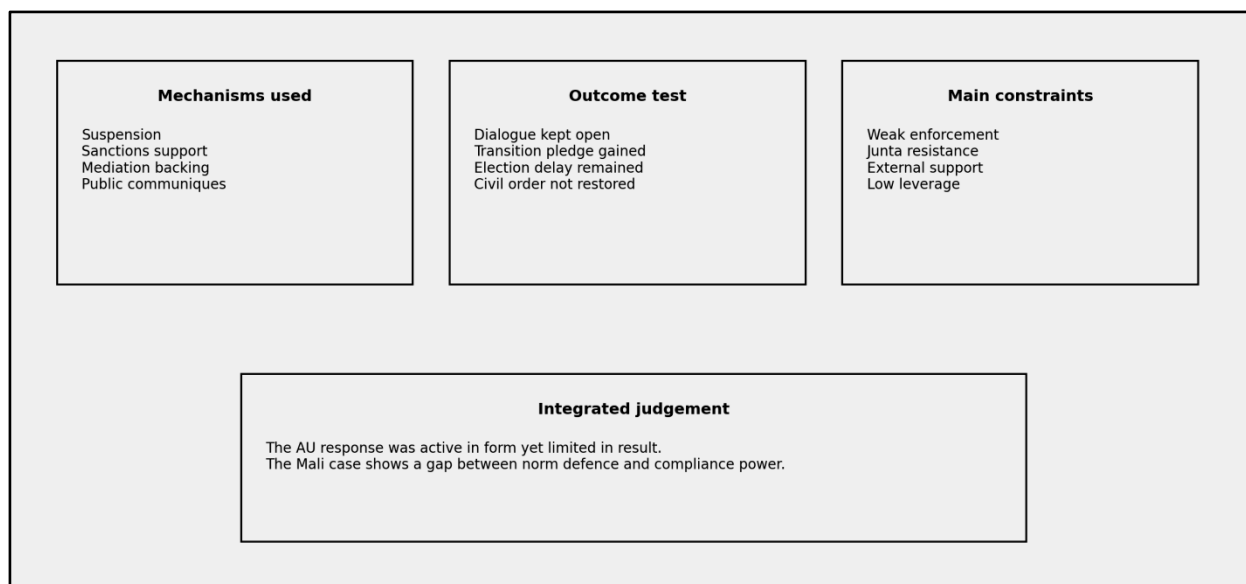
Research Question Three asks which factors held back the carrying out and success of AU conflict resolution efforts in Mali. The null hypothesis holds that outside factors carried no real influence over how far AU conflict resolution mechanisms could succeed in Mali. Document evidence backs a rejection of this null hypothesis, since Russia linked security support, together with the growth of Wagner activity, gave the junta a fresh power base sitting outside regional approval. The end of the

MINUSMA mandate in 2023 shifted the security field, reducing the world support structure built around transition pressure. Such changes made AU alongside ECOWAS tools easier to resist, an effect plain to see both in the continued delay of elections and in the survival of military rule right through the study period. Outside factors worked alongside inside AU limits and home grown junta plans, yet their role grew large enough to shift the whole cost calculation behind resistance. The study therefore rejects H02, since outside factors carried real influence over the weak result of AU conflict resolution work in Mali. This test backs the study claim that geopolitical backing weakened formal pressure, right at the point where obedience should instead have deepened.

4.4 Synthesis of Chapter Four Findings

Together, the chapter findings form one connected answer. Research Question One shows that AU applied a broad conflict resolution package, one built from suspension, public rejection, mediation support, and coordination with ECOWAS. Research Question Two shows that these same tools carried only limited process value, since the finding also points to low final success, they shaped negotiation and helped create brief movement, yet never restored constitutional order by the end of the study period. Research Question Three then explains this weak result, inside enforcement gaps reduced AU pressure, while outside support for the junta reshaped its security choices and weakened regional influence in turn. The chapter therefore supports one clear judgement, the AU response in Mali defended continental rules through clear action, yet that action could not turn rule based strength into final obedience. The visual record backs this same conclusion throughout, timelines trace the action, flow maps trace the process, scorecards reveal brief gains, and matrices reveal why the final goal fell short. Chapter Five draws these results together. It presents the conclusion, recommendations and abstract. The chapter does not confuse clear activity with completed success. It tests each action against the study goal. It shows why the next chapter must recommend stronger obedience tools instead of statements on their own.

Figure 4.6 Policy Evaluation Dashboard for the Mali Case



Source note: Author synthesis from all Chapter Four tables figures and documentary findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

1. The study found that the African Union used a clear set of conflict resolution mechanisms in Mali from 2020 to 2024. These mechanisms included public rejection of unconstitutional rule, suspension of Mali from AU participation, support for transition demands, checking requests and diplomatic work with ECOWAS. The evidence shows a response with formal shape. It was not passive or symbolic. Yet ECOWAS handled the strongest direct pressure tools in many cases, meaning AU led for the most part through continental authority while practical pressure work rested inside a shared regional system. This finding answers Research Question One, since it shows that AU action was real in design and clear within the record.

2. The study found that AU sanctions and diplomatic actions brought only limited process gains, falling short of any lasting restoration. The response kept dialogue open. It helped push the junta away from a longer transition delay toward a twenty four month pledge. Yet these gains did not settle the main question. The expected election path slipped after the pledge and civilian constitutional order was not restored within the study period. For that reason the action had influence without full success. It shaped the process but did not deliver the final outcome. This finding answers Research Question Two through a balanced judgement rather than a flat claim of success or failure.

3. The study found that the AU effort was hindered by linked inside and outside factors. Inside limits included weak enforcement power, dependence on ECOWAS, follow up gaps and limited pressure after first decisions. Outside factors included Russia linked security support, Wagner expansion, the changing role of the United Nations in Mali and junta use of a security based public story. These factors reduced the cost of resistance and weakened AU sanctions with diplomacy. For this reason the failure was created by mixed formal weakness and changed geopolitical influence. This finding answers Research Question Three and supports rejection of H02.



5.2 Conclusion

This study concludes that the African Union used recognised conflict resolution mechanisms in Mali but failed to secure a lasting return to constitutional order. Liberal Institutionalism explains the design of suspension, sanctions support and mediation. Structural Realism explains this result, since regime survival plus outside security support outweighed formal pressure. The document record shows some process influence through negotiation and transition pledges, yet final obedience never followed. The Mali case lays bare a serious gap between continental rule defence and enforceable political effect. AU reform must therefore focus on real power to gain obedience, rather than resting on statement power alone inside future unconstitutional change crises.

5.3 Recommendations

1. The African Union should build a joint AU ECOWAS protocol for enforcing transitions after coup cases. Such a protocol should set out who leads suspension review, mediation tracking, sanction advice, and public reporting at every stage. This would hold continental authority and sub regional action inside one clear chain, stopping any division of labour from turning into a division of responsibility. The protocol should switch on at once, triggered whenever the Peace and Security Council accepts any unconstitutional change case, and it should set a review date for every transition breach. This step should start before summit decisions can create fresh delay across all linked regions.
2. The African Union should tie any easing of pressure to checked transition benchmarks. Such benchmarks should cover electoral calendar publication, legal preparation, civic space protection, and outside review of milestone delivery. Relief measures should follow real evidence of obedience, rather than broad promises alone. This would cut the risk that a junta gains political space through pledges that later collapse once time passes. The Peace and Security Council should publish milestone review notes at fixed stages, so that diplomatic patience never turns into an open ended delay. It should record in clear detail which benchmark caused relief to remain or to end.
3. The African Union should build a dedicated unit to respond to outside influence during crisis mediation. This unit should track security partnerships that weaken regional influence, support joint



diplomacy with the United Nations, and prepare risk notes for the PSC. Its purpose is not to block sovereign diplomacy, rather its purpose is to judge when outside support shifts the chance of transition obedience and to adjust AU pressure in good time. This would help the Union respond to new power alignments before they weaken sanctions and mediation. It should prepare public guidance for cases where outside backing changes local obedience incentives in time.



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