

By the Africa Center for Strategic Studies

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*The Malian military junta has repeatedly refused to honor its commitments to transition back to a democratic civilian government, resulting in mounting security and economic costs to citizens.*

Mali's military junta marked the fourth calendar year since seizing power in an August 2020 coup by indefinitely postponing elections that were to facilitate a transition back to democratic civilian rule. This marks yet another occasion that the junta has broken a commitment it had made to Malian citizens regarding a transition deadline.

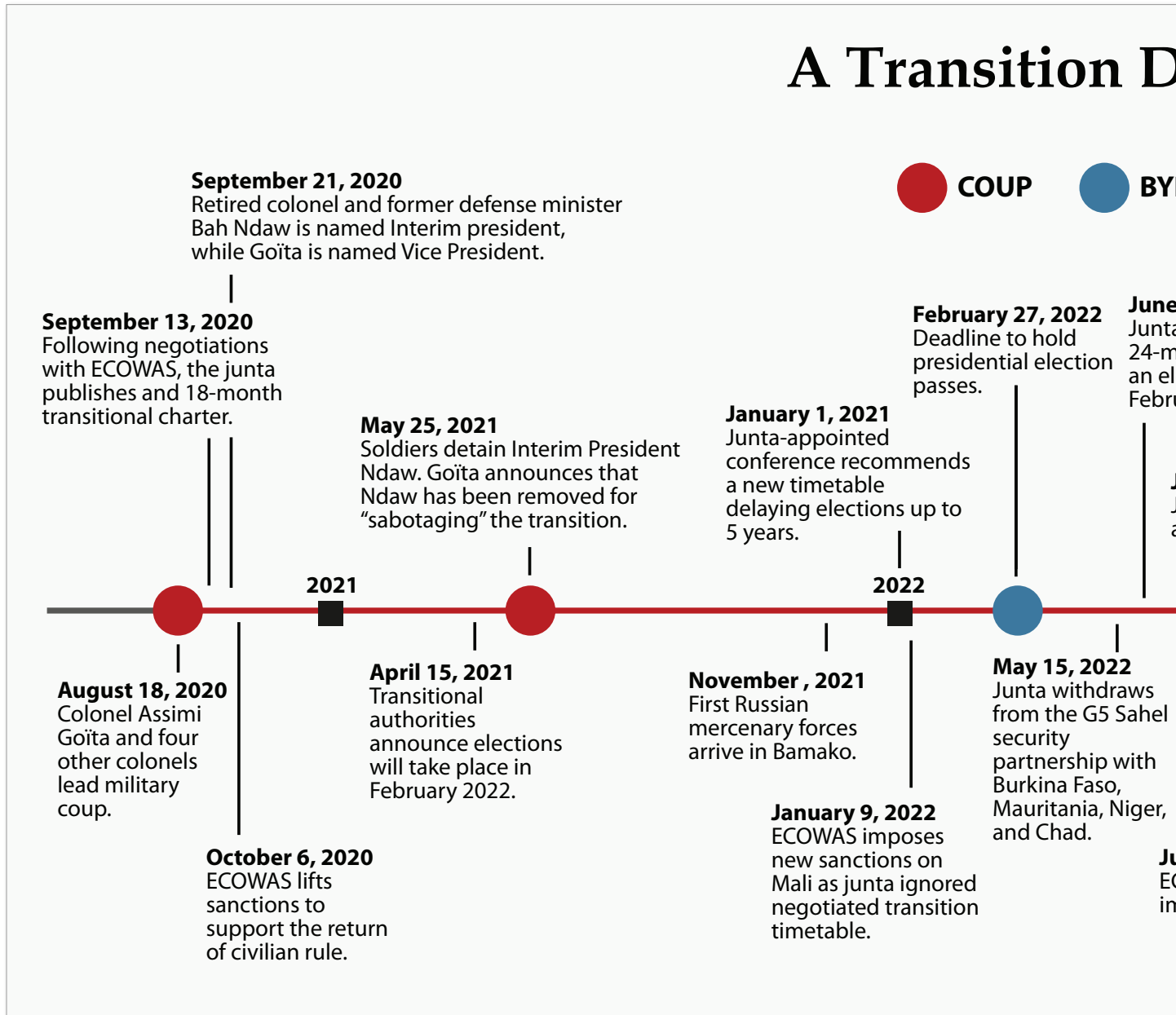
This failure to maintain the transition timeframe fits a pattern of unkept claims the junta has made since seizing power. Coupled with the military regime's announcement that it is withdrawing from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), all indications are that the junta is intent on holding power indefinitely. In the meantime, security and economic conditions have worsened substantially under military rule—affecting the livelihoods of millions of Malians.

The following is a review of the junta's claims relative to the reality Malians face.

## FACTCHECKING THE MALIAN JUNTA'S CLAIMS

Junta's Claim 	The Record 	 
The junta is committed to a transition to civilian rule.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The junta has repeatedly missed transition deadlines and there is currently no timetable in place for achieving the return of civilian rule.</li> <li>The junta's <b>controversial referendum in July 2023</b> adopted a new constitution that permits junta leader, Colonel Assimi Goïta, to unilaterally dictate government policy and provides him the power to dissolve parliament.</li> <li>The junta's announcement that it is <b>withdrawing from ECOWAS</b> indefinitely postpones all transition benchmarks, including elections.</li> </ul>	
The security situation is improving under the junta.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Militant Islamist violence has significantly worsened under military rule. Fatalities linked to militant Islamist <b>violence have nearly doubled</b> in Mali between 2020-2021 (3,539 deaths) compared to 2022-2023 (6,690 deaths).</li> <li>The junta has <b>terminated security partnerships</b> with the G5-Sahel, ECOWAS, and the UN that provided much-needed financial support, materiel, and forces on the ground.</li> </ul>	
The junta enjoys popular support of Malian citizens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Space for media and dissent has dramatically shrunk</b> under the junta. Political party leaders have had to flee the country after voicing their opposition to the junta, while their <b>political parties face dissolution</b>.</li> <li>Journalists who publish critical reports of the junta face <b>kidnappings and death threats</b>.</li> </ul>	
The junta represents Mali's sovereign interests.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The junta is an unelected, self-appointed authority. To maintain regime security, the junta has brought in Russian mercenaries at a cost of <b>\$11 million a month, including granting access to Malian natural resources</b>.</li> <li>The Russian forces have committed <b>more than 300 acts of violence against civilians</b> in Mali, accounting for more than two-thirds of their operations.</li> <li>Dependent on Moscow to remain in power, the junta is now <b> beholden to Russian interests</b>.</li> </ul>	
The junta is managing the economy well.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic conditions have deteriorated. The poverty rate increased in 2022 to 45.4% from 42.5% in 2019. 1.3 million additional people in need of humanitarian aid, 20% of schools closed, and 2.5 million people lacking health coverage in 2022.</li> <li>Meanwhile, foreign direct investment in Mali has declined from 5% of GDP in 2019 to 1.3% of GDP in 2022.</li> </ul>	
The junta respects human rights.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The junta <b>expelled MINUSMA's Director of Human Rights</b> in February 2023 in an attempt to avoid scrutiny of the junta's human rights record.</li> <li>A May 2023 fact-finding report from the UN Human Rights Office concluded there are strong indications that <b>more than 500 people were killed</b>—the vast majority summarily executed—by Malian troops and foreign military personnel in a 5-day operation in Moura, central Mali.</li> </ul>	
The junta is protecting citizens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The junta demanded that the UN stabilization mission, MINUSMA, <b>withdraw from the country without delay</b> in June 2023. MINUSMA's departure created a security vacuum in central and northern Mali, heightening insecurity for Malian citizens.</li> <li>Civilian fatalities due to militant Islamist violence have increased fourfold under the junta.</li> </ul>	
The junta supports national dialogue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The junta <b>cancelled the Algiers Accord with "immediate effect"</b> in January 2024. This occurred after Malian soldiers took over the Tuareg-majority town of Kidal in northern Mali in November 2023, in violation of the Algiers Accord, 2 weeks after the MINUSMA troops exited the region.</li> </ul>	
The junta is upholding justice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No investigation has been initiated into those responsible for the massacre of hundreds of civilians at Moura by Malian soldiers alongside Wagner mercenaries, despite evidence gathered by the UN into the atrocity. Malian <b>authorities have blocked UN access</b>, impeding justice.</li> </ul>	

Since taking power, the Malian military junta has failed to uphold the commitments that it has made to return power to civilian rule, challenging the very premise of a transition. The timeline below reviews the broken commitments that have defined the junta's rule.



## Derailed in Mali

### PASSED TRANSITION DEADLINE

