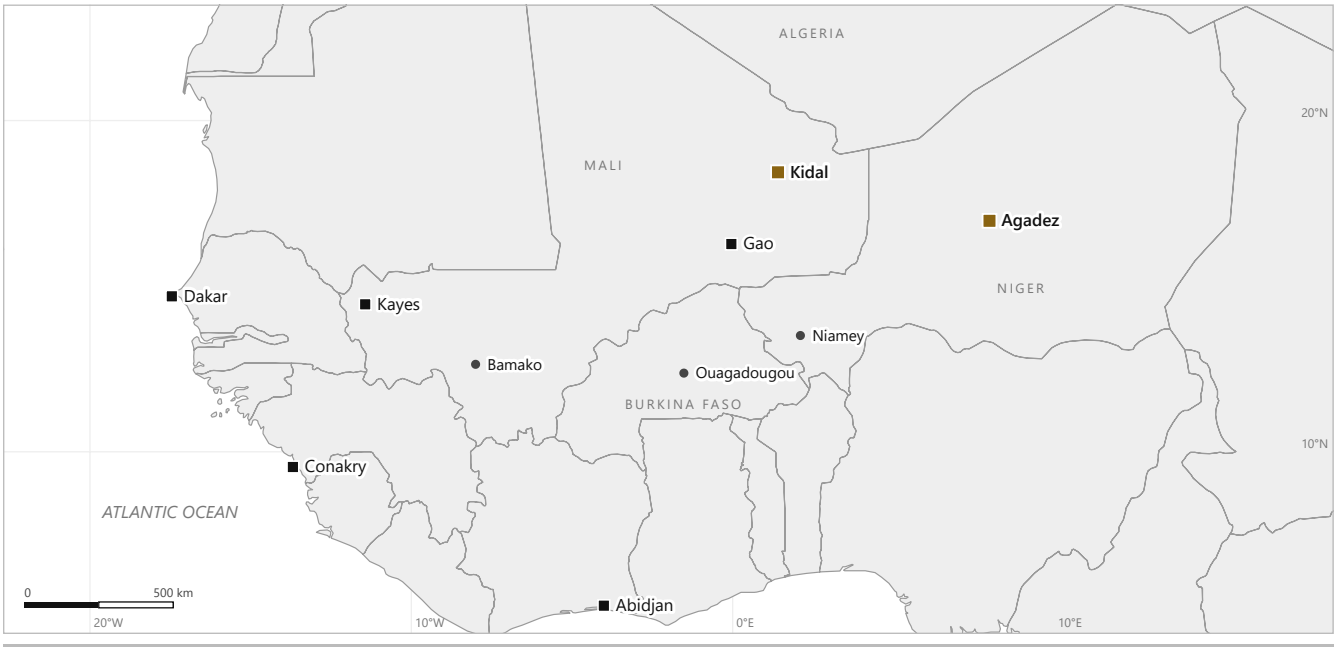
2027

STRATEGIC OUTLOOK · PREVIEW EXCERPT

SAHEL

Held capitals, contested roads, borrowed guarantors

Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger enter 2027 holding their cities, not the roads between them, with outside powers doing more of the holding.



LOCATOR MAP · NATURAL EARTH · PLACES AT AREA LEVEL · BOUNDARIES ARE NOT AN ENDORSEMENT OF ANY CLAIM

DOCUMENT	VERSION	RESEARCH CUTOFF	PUBLISHED	JUDGMENTS	OVERALL CONFIDENCE
VO-2027-SH	1.0	15 November 2026	17 November 2026	7 · frozen	moderate

Preview excerpt. This file contains the cover, the executive assessment, the judgment table and the publication record of the full document. The complete publication adds the position entering 2027, the evidence and evaluation rule for each judgment, the alternative pathways, the cross-system implications, the monitoring framework and the full source register.

01 EXECUTIVE ASSESSMENT

Held capitals, contested roads, borrowed guarantors

CENTRAL JUDGMENT MODERATE

Vigil expects 2027 to prolong the equilibrium of 2026, not resolve it: three military governments hold their capitals and hubs, cannot secure the roads between them, and have no election on any calendar. What decides the year is economic and internal: corridors, fuel, gold revenue and the cohesion of armies taking losses. Outside guarantors carry more of the weight: Russia in all three states, and Algeria through a deployment to Niger decided in October 2026 and not yet observed at the cutoff.

Moderate: the record is well documented for Mali, but Vigil's records for Burkina Faso and Niger are baselines, Burkina Faso has been a limit of visibility for eight weekly reviews, and army cohesion cannot be observed before it fails.

The central Sahel enters 2027 as it spent most of 2026: states hold the towns and armed groups contest the space between them[1]. On 25 April 2026 a joint offensive by JNIM and the Azawad Liberation Front (FLA) took Kidal and killed Mali's defence minister with a vehicle bomb[2,3]. On 6 October the army, operating with Russia's Africa Corps, re-entered Kidal without resistance after the FLA announced a withdrawal it called temporary[4]. A month later, on RFI's reporting, it held Kidal and two other northern towns, had advanced no further, and the governor had not returned[5]. ATTRIBUTED

The decisive arena is not territorial. JNIM declared a fuel blockade in September 2025 and has applied it in phases; Bamako is supplied by escorted convoy[1,6]. The authorities' figure, relayed by the Institute for Security Studies, is roughly 200 to 300 escorted tankers a week since November 2025[7]. The pressure is negotiable locally and not nationally: on 23 June 2026 JNIM lifted a two-year blockade of the road to Mourdiah and Nara after talks with local notables[8], while the army denies that national talks took place[7]. The fiscal base has narrowed: the mines ministry plans industrial gold output of 51.2 tonnes in 2027 against 66.5 tonnes in 2023, on Reuters' reading of its plan[9]. ATTRIBUTED

None of the three transitions has an election inside 2027 on its own calendar. Mali's charter, revised by a law of 8 July 2025, gives its president five-year terms renewable until the country is pacified[10]; Burkina Faso's transition was extended by 60 months in May 2024[11], under a charter replaced in March 2026 by one that RFI reports sets no term[12]; Niger's charter of March 2025 set 60 months, adjustable[13]. The risk to them comes from inside. On 29 August 2026 soldiers mutinied in Niamey and were put down with Africa Corps support, which Russia's ambassador said Niger had requested[14]. Crisis Group judged in January 2026 that the risk of regime collapse in Mali and Burkina Faso was growing[15]. Vigil reads the three as durable against their oppositions and exposed to their own armies. VIGIL ASSESSMENT

Russia remains the principal partner, and the United States has reopened a channel without displacing it. Goïta met Putin in the Kremlin on 30 October 2026 and received the commander of US Africa Command on 10 November, on one regional outlet's relay of Mali's state agency[16]. US law still bars certain security assistance to governments that took power by coup[17]. The new actor is Algeria: parliament approved, and on 26 October the presidency announced, the deployment of army units to Niger[18,19]. By 11 November no unit had been reported in place[20].

The confederation has produced institutions faster than acts[21]. Its first formal negotiation with ECOWAS, in Dakar on 17 October 2026, set up working groups toward a framework agreement and signed nothing[22]. ECOWAS has reaffirmed its free-movement protocol and negotiates with the three only as one bloc[23]. JNIM, meanwhile, has been fighting Islamic State Sahel along the Mali–Burkina Faso border since August 2026[24].

Seven judgments follow, each written to be checked against public reporting on a stated date. Confidence is lower wherever Burkina Faso or Niger carries the weight: Vigil's record there is a baseline, and the 15 November review again recorded Burkina Faso as a limit of visibility, not calm[25].

PRINCIPAL DRIVERS

DRIVER 01

Corridor dependence

Three landlocked states import fuel through roads they do not control. Mali's Senegalese and Ivorian routes are reported to carry close to 95 per cent of its petroleum imports[1]; Mali took 26.5 per cent of Senegal's exports in 2024, so the blockade is also a coastal revenue problem[7].

DRIVER 02

Armies absorbing losses

Dioura was overrun on 10 September 2026 with no relief column reported and no return[26]. In Niger some August mutineers reportedly came from areas including Ouallam, Téra and Dosso, and analysts linked the unrest to heavy military losses[14].

DRIVER 03

A narrowing fiscal base

Mali's industrial gold output fell to 42.2 tonnes in 2025 from 54.8 in 2024[9]; its 2027 budget bill projects a deficit of 596 billion CFA francs[27]. Niger, an oil producer, ran short of petrol in its capital in October 2026[28].

MOST CONSEQUENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS IN VIEW

A reported mutiny or coup attempt

Vigil considers it plausible that armed action by serving soldiers is reported in or around one of the three capitals in 2027. No other event could change as many judgments here.

An Algerian unit stationed in Niger

Vigil considers it plausible that an Algerian unit is reported stationed in northern Niger by 30 June 2027, inside the confederation by invitation.

A renewed blockade of Bamako

Vigil expects at least one new blockade declaration or fuel-convoy attack on the western or southern corridors.

PRINCIPAL UNCERTAINTIES

WHAT IS NOT KNOWN

- Whether the FLA's October withdrawal from Kidal was a defeat or a conservation of force.
- The cohesion of each army, which is not observable until it fails.
- Burkina Faso's security position, which public sources cannot measure.
- The unpublished terms of the Russian arrangements and of Algeria's deployment, and whether Washington's contact becomes a channel.

CONFIDENCE — THE ANALYTICAL BASIS

HIGH MODERATE LOW

How well sourced and how contested the evidence is. High is the quietest mark by design.

EXPECTATION — THE OUTCOME

EXPECTED PLAUSIBLE NOT EXPECTED

Vigil's judgment for the stated horizon. Never a number.

EVIDENCE STATUS

ESTABLISHED ATTRIBUTED VIGIL ASSESSMENT UNRESOLVED CONDITIONAL

What kind of statement a sentence is. The louder the mark, the less is claimed.

02 FINAL JUDGMENT TABLE

The 2027 judgments at a glance

ID	JUDGMENT	EXPECTATION · HORIZON	BASIS	SUPPORTED IF
VO27-SH-01	Vigil does not expect Mali, Burkina Faso or Niger to hold a national election or referendum, or to fix a date for one by published law or decree, by 31 December 2027.	NOT EXPECTED By 31 December 2027	HIGH	By 31 December 2027 no national election or referendum has been held in Mali, Burkina Faso or Niger, and no published law or decree of any of the three fixes a date for one.
VO27-SH-02	Vigil considers it plausible that a mutiny or attempted seizure of power by serving soldiers, involving gunfire in or around Bamako, Ouagadougou or Niamey, is reported by international news agencies or acknowledged by the government concerned by 31 December 2027.	PLAUSIBLE By 31 December 2027	MODERATE	By 31 December 2027 at least two of AFP, Reuters and AP report a mutiny or coup attempt by serving soldiers, involving gunfire, in or around one of the three capitals, or the government concerned acknowledges one.
VO27-SH-03	Vigil expects JNIM to keep Mali's import corridors under phased pressure through 2027, with at least one newly declared blockade or reported attack on a fuel convoy on the Senegal or Côte d'Ivoire routes. Vigil does not expect JNIM or its allies to hold Bamako, or any other Malian regional capital outside the Kidal region, for seven consecutive days.	EXPECTED By 31 December 2027	MODERATE	Both hold in 2027: (a) JNIM declares a new blockade, or an attack on a fuel convoy on the Senegal or Côte d'Ivoire routes is claimed by JNIM or reported by AFP, Reuters, AP or RFI; (b) no seat of a Malian regional governor outside the Kidal region is reported by two of those outlets as held by JNIM or its allies for seven consecutive days.
VO27-SH-04	Vigil does not expect Mali's transitional government and the Azawad Liberation Front to sign a political or ceasefire agreement, or to open negotiations that both acknowledge publicly, by 31 December 2027.	NOT EXPECTED By 31 December 2027	MODERATE	By 31 December 2027 the government and the FLA have signed no political or ceasefire agreement, and neither has publicly acknowledged negotiations with the other.
VO27-SH-05	Vigil expects Russia's Africa Corps to remain Mali's principal foreign combat partner throughout 2027. Vigil does not expect the United States to conclude a published defence cooperation agreement with, or to announce lethal security assistance to, Mali, Burkina Faso or Niger by 31 December 2027.	EXPECTED By 31 December 2027	MODERATE	In the final quarter of 2027 Africa Corps is still reported operating with Malian forces by AFP, Reuters, AP, RFI or a UN report, and by 31 December 2027 the United States has published no defence cooperation agreement with, and announced no lethal assistance to, any of the three.
VO27-SH-06	Vigil considers it plausible that an Algerian army unit is reported as stationed in northern Niger — in an official statement of either government, or independently by at least two of AFP, Reuters, AP, RFI, the BBC and Al Jazeera — by 30 June 2027.	PLAUSIBLE By 30 June 2027	LOW	By 30 June 2027 an official Algerian or Nigerien statement, or two of AFP, Reuters, AP, RFI, the BBC and Al Jazeera reporting independently, describe an Algerian army unit as based in northern Niger for a continuing mission, not a convoy escort in transit. The aircraft sent to Niamey in August 2026 are not counted.
VO27-SH-07	Vigil expects visa-free movement and the existing trade arrangements between the three AES states and ECOWAS members to remain in force through 31 December 2027, and does not expect any of the three to resume ECOWAS membership.	EXPECTED By 31 December 2027	MODERATE	Through 31 December 2027 ECOWAS takes no decision ending visa-free movement or the trade arrangements for the three, no member applies a general suspension of entry or trade to an AES state for more than 30 consecutive days, and none of the three resumes membership. Niger's closure of its Benin border, in place since 2023, is not counted.

03 PUBLICATION RECORD

Edition, version and forecast-freeze status

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FORECAST REGISTER	https://vigilconsilium.com/assessments/2027/register/
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