

## Sharing the River: implications for local and regional peace and stability in Mali and the Niger basin

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### ABSTRACT

This paper explores the dynamics of shared rivers and local and regional peace and stability, using Mali and the Niger basin as a case study. Mali contains 30% of the Niger River basin and relies heavily on the river for crop irrigation, fishing, and cattle grazing. Mali's capital, Bamako, is situated on the river, and over 8 million of Malians reside in the basin. Thus, the river is an important current and future resource for Mali's human and economic development. Likewise, the health of the Niger's waters is largely dependent upon Mali's use and development of the river. As one of nine countries party to the Niger Basin Authority, Mali has plans to construct at least one major dam within its jurisdictional area of the Niger River within the next few years. Alongside increased development, conflict within Mali has been escalating since rebel groups initiated a coup d'etat in early 2012 and began seeking occupation of the north. The situation has become increasingly unstable. Though the conflict is small in scale relative to the Niger basin as a whole, it can affect the resilience of the basin and its governing institutions. Likewise, political stabilization and post-conflict reconstruction in Mali are dependent upon the ability of the Niger to deliver necessary water and services.

**KEY WORDS:** *Niger River, Mali, Civil conflict.*