

THE EUROPEAN UNION TRAINING MISSION IN MALI: AN ASSESSMENT

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I. Introduction

The European Union Training Mission in Mali (EUTM Mali) falls within the framework of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) of the European Union (EU). It is a component of the EU's strategy to support the stabilization of Mali, along with the EU delegation to the country and the EU Capacity Building Mission in Mali (EUCAP Sahel Mali). EUTM Mali was established in 2013, after the occupation of the country's northern regions by separatist and jihadist armed groups, and its main objective was to support the restoration of the military capability of the Malian Armed Forces (Forces Armées Maliennes, FAMA): 'with a view to enabling them to conduct military operations aiming at restoring Malian territorial integrity and reducing the threat posed by terrorist groups'.¹

EUTM Mali's first two mandates (2013–14 and 2014–16) focused on the following areas: training and capacity-building activities; training and advice on command and control; logistical chain and human resources; training in international humanitarian law (IHL), protection of civilians and human rights; and strengthening conditions for political control by legitimate civilian authorities.² Its original mandate was limited to southern Mali and stated that the mission 'shall not be involved in combat operations'.³

EUTM Mali's third mandate (2016–17) extended the area of operations beyond southern Mali, up to the River Niger loop, including the municipalities of Gao and Timbuktu.⁴ Other significant changes were related to EUTM Mali's support to the national armed forces of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel)—Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger—and its contribution to Mali's disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process, 'upon Malian request' and in coordination with the United Nations

¹ Council Decision 2013/34/CFSP of 17 Jan. 2013 on a European Union military mission to contribute to the training of the Malian Armed Forces (EUTM Mali), *Official Journal of the European Union*, L14/19, 18 Jan. 2013.

² Council Decision 2013/34/CFSP (note 1); and Council Decision 2014/220/CFSP of 15 Apr. 2014 amending Decision 2013/34/CFSP on a European Union military mission to contribute to the training of the Malian Armed Forces (EUTM Mali), *Official Journal of the European Union*, L113/27, 16 Apr. 2014.

³ Council Decision 2013/34/CFSP (note 1).

⁴ Council Decision (CFSP) 2016/446 of 23 Mar. 2016 amending and extending Council Decision 2013/34/CFSP on a European Union military mission to contribute to the training of the Malian Armed Forces (EUTM Mali), *Official Journal of the European Union*, L78/74, 24 Mar. 2016.

SUMMARY

● This SIPRI Background Paper provides an overview of the European Union Training Mission in Mali (EUTM Mali) and assesses its impact on Mali's conflict dynamics since it was established in 2013. The third of three country-specific papers, it is part of a larger SIPRI project analysing the effectiveness of the EU's training missions in Somalia, the Central African Republic and Mali. All three papers will feed into a synthesis paper that will offer a comparative analysis of the missions and recommendations for the way forward.

This paper analyses EUTM Mali's main training and advisory activities, before assessing its political and operational impacts. It summarizes the main factors that account for the mission's successes and limitations, and makes three recommendations to augment the future impact of the mission.

It concludes that EUTM Mali has made an impact in terms of military capacity building, but that further progress is needed to improve coordination with the Malian Armed Forces (Forces Armées Maliennes, FAMA). In addition, EUTM Mali faces many obstacles that lie largely beyond its control, including the deteriorating security situation in the centre of Mali and in the border region of Liptako-Gourma.



Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).⁵ As framed by the 2015 peace agreement, it was to contribute through the provision of training sessions ‘in order to facilitate the reconstitution of inclusive Malian Armed Forces’.⁶

EUTM Mali’s fourth mandate (2018–20) included supporting the operationalization of the G5 Sahel Joint Force (JF-G5S).⁷ Thus, the mission started to conduct decentralized training activities for the FAMA and to help the G5 Sahel process through ‘dedicated advice and training support’.⁸

More recently, with the fifth mandate renewal for four years (2020–24), several important changes can be noted. For example, the area of operations has been expanded and now covers the whole of Mali and includes the other G5 Sahel countries. Further, EUTM Mali has been mandated to

provide military training and advice not only to the JF-G5S but also to the national armed forces of the G5 Sahel countries, prioritizing first Burkina Faso and then Niger in order to build up their operational capacities.⁹ Mandated activities in Mali include ‘military advice, training, including pre-deployment training, education and mentoring, through non-executive accompaniment down to the tactical level’, which will allow EUTM Mali to monitor the performance and behaviour

of the FAMA, including its ‘respect for human rights and international humanitarian law’.¹⁰

To carry on its mission, EUTM Mali has grown from 500 personnel in December 2013 to more than 700 in December 2021.¹¹ Compared to other such missions in the Central African Republic, Somalia and Mozambique (newly launched in October 2021), EUTM Mali is the largest EU military training mission. The representation of women is low, however, with 36 women representing 6.4 per cent of the personnel.¹²

This SIPRI Background Paper provides an overview and assessment of EUTM Mali since it was established in 2013. It is based on a review of relevant primary and secondary sources, 35 semi-structured interviews with stakeholders, and 3 focus group discussions with civil society organization and military representatives. The interviews were with various EUTM Mali personnel based in Mali and Brussels, mission partners (i.e. MINUSMA, Operation Barkhane and G5 Sahel), Malian Government officials, FAMA officers, civil society organization representatives and researchers. Some

⁵ Council Decision (CFSP) 2016/446 (note 4).

⁶ Council Decision (CFSP) 2016/446 (note 4).

⁷ Council Decision (CFSP) 2018/716 of 14 May 2018 amending and extending Decision 2013/34/CFSP on a European Union military mission to contribute to the training of the Malian Armed Forces (EUTM Mali), *Official Journal of the European Union*, L120/8, 16 May 2018.

⁸ Council Decision (CFSP) 2018/716 (note 7).

⁹ Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/434 of 23 Mar. 2020 amending Decision 2013/34/CFSP on a European Union military mission to contribute to the training of the Malian Armed Forces (EUTM Mali), *Official Journal of the European Union*, L89/1, 24 Mar. 2020; and Pichon, E. and Fardel, T., ‘The G5 Sahel and the European Union: The challenges of security cooperation with a regional grouping’, European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) Briefing, Sep. 2020.

¹⁰ Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/434 (note 9).

¹¹ SIPRI Multilateral Peace Operations Database, <<https://www.sipri.org/databases/pko>>, accessed Nov. 2021.

¹² Pfeifer, C., Smit, T. and van der Lijn, J., *Women in Multilateral Peace Operations in 2021: What is the State of Play?*, SIPRI booklet, Nov. 2021.

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interviewees had received some EUTM Mali training or were training partners.

The study was challenged by the consequences of both Covid-19 and the political context in Mali in 2020. First, as preventative measures against Covid-19, non-essential EUTM Mali personnel were temporarily repatriated to Europe, the mission significantly reduced activities and there was reluctance to allow field-based staff to give interviews. Second, a coup d'état in August 2020 seriously disrupted the political situation in Mali following the suspension of the constitutional order. While international actors also suspended their activities, interviews continued to be conducted with Malian stakeholders, soldiers and partners. Only after the designation of a (civilian) president (September 2020) and the establishment of the National Transitional Council (October 2020) did EUTM Mali reinvigorate its collaboration with the Malian authorities, but access to the mission was difficult and limited. Interviews were conducted in batches during July, August and November 2020 and February 2021, in Bamako, Kati and remotely. All interviews and focus group discussions were conducted on the basis of non-attribution.

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This study uses a framework developed by the Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON), a network of over 40 research partners from across the globe, to assess EUTM Mali's impact.¹³ The framework allows for an assessment of the impact of a peace operation by its ability to: prevent armed conflict and sexual violence; build confidence among local parties; stabilize the area; protect civilians; strengthen public safety; promote human rights; contribute to peace dividends; extend state authority; support institution building and development; reform the security sector; promote the rule of law; and support community policing and transitional justice. The framework explains an operation's impact with reference to the following factors: the primacy of politics; realistic mandates and matching resources; a people-centred approach; legitimacy and credibility; coordination and coherence; and promoting the women and peace and security (WPS) agenda.

This paper is organized as follows. Sections II and III summarize the background and context in which EUTM Mali works and the activities it undertakes. Section IV analyses the impact of EUTM Mali and section V examines the factors accounting for its successes and limitations using the framework developed by EPON. Finally, section VI provides the main conclusions and recommendations.

II. Background

Context

In 2011–12 the occupation of Mali's northern regions by separatist and jihadist armed groups exposed the FAMA's 'poor performance in fighting the rebellion'.¹⁴ This triggered a coup d'état that overthrew President Amadou Toumani Touré on 21 March 2012. On 18 September 2012, under

¹³ Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON) website, <<https://effectivepeaceops.net/>>.

¹⁴ Boutellis, A. and Zahar, M-J., *A Process in Search of Peace: Lessons from the Inter-Malian Agreement* (International Peace Institute: New York, June 2017), p. 15.



the ad interim presidency of Dioncounda Traoré, the transitional authorities addressed a letter to the UN secretary-general requesting the deployment of an international military force to assist the FAMA in recovering the northern occupied regions. UN Resolution 2071 of 12 October 2012 then invited regional and international organizations, including the EU, to provide coordinated assistance, expertise, training and capacity-building support to the 'Malian Defence and Security Forces', to support the restoration of state authority.¹⁵

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On 10 December 2012 the Council of the EU approved the concept of a military CSDP training mission in Mali, intended to provide military training and advice to the FAMA. On 20 December 2012 UN Resolution 2085 authorized the deployment of the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) for one year, and just days later, on 24 December, the president of Mali officially requested that the EU deploy a military training mission in the country.¹⁶ On 17 January 2013 the Council of the EU decided on the deployment of a military training mission.¹⁷ EUTM Mali was officially launched on 18 February 2013 in Brussels, Belgium, and started in Bamako, Mali, on 20 February 2013, with the aim of contributing to the training of the FAMA.¹⁸ All activities were to be conducted in coordination with other actors, including the UN and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).¹⁹

As part of international efforts to restore Malian territorial integrity, negotiations in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, were mediated by ECOWAS and led by the presidents of Burkina Faso and Nigeria, with the support of the UN, the African Union (AU) and the EU. These negotiations led to the signature of a ceasefire and a 'Preliminary Peace Agreement to the Presidential Election and the Inclusive Peace Talks in Mali' on 18 June 2013.²⁰ The implementation of the agreement was to be monitored by a joint technical security commission and supervised by AFISMA and later MINUSMA, with the assistance of French-led Operation Serval.²¹

Despite this initial commitment, the newly elected Malian president, Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, delayed the implementation of the political phase of the peace agreement (national conferences on decentralization reform and the north) and instead pursued the military option of fighting in the north, resulting in armed clashes between the separatist and jihadist armed groups and the FAMA. However, when the FAMA was defeated again in May 2014, during a visit by Prime Minister Moussa Mara to Kidal, the armed forces

¹⁵ United Nations Security Council Resolution 2071, 12 Oct. 2012.

¹⁶ United Nations Security Council Resolution 2085, 20 Dec. 2012; and Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Mali on the status in the Republic of Mali of the European Union Military mission to contribute to the training of the Malian Armed Forces (EUTM Mali), Translation, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L06/2, 16 Apr. 2013.

¹⁷ Council Decision 2013/34/CFSP (note 1).

¹⁸ Council Decision 2013/87/CFSP of 18 Feb. 2013 on the launch of a European Union military mission to contribute to the training of the Malian Armed Forces (EUTM Mali), *Official Journal of the European Union*, L46/27, 19 Feb. 2013.

¹⁹ Dicke, R., 'The European Union Training Mission in Mali: A case study', *Croatian International Relations Review*, vol. 20, no. 71 (2014).

²⁰ United Nations, Security Council Press Statement on Mali, Press Release SC/1140-AFR/2651, 20 June 2013.

²¹ United Nations Security Council Resolution 2100, 25 Apr. 2013.



were left devastated. The lack of military alternative then led to some progress at the political level. In May and June 2015 the ‘Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali Resulting from the Algiers Process’ (also referred to as the Bamako Agreement) was signed, but its implementation has been slow.²² This agreement is based on four priority areas: (a) political and institutional issues; (b) defence and security; (c) socio-economic and cultural development; and (d) reconciliation, justice and humanitarian issues.²³

Since 2015, while the security situation in the north has stabilized, the situation in central Mali (Segou and Mopti regions) has deteriorated and transformed the Liptako-Gourma region, which covers the border regions of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, into the epicentre of violence in the central Sahel. In addition to the prevailing insecurity, rampant corruption and bad governance, particularly irregularities during the legislative elections of March–April 2021, have also fuelled broader contestation against the Malian president.

After weeks of popular mobilization, President Keïta was removed from power on 18 August 2020 when high-ranking officers staged a military coup. Mali then entered a phase of transition for an expected period of 18 months.²⁴ Some months later, against a backdrop of tensions related to a government cabinet reshuffle and the exclusion of the (military) ministers of defence and security—also leading members of the junta—the crisis resulted in a ‘coup within a coup’.²⁵ On 24 May 2021, the transitional president and prime minister were forced to resign and the vice president of the transitional government, Colonel Assimi Goïta—who was also the leader of the junta—took power.²⁶

Despite the proliferation of security initiatives and the presence of multinational peace operations and other stabilization missions—MINUSMA, the AU Mission for Mali and the Sahel (MISAHHEL), EU civilian missions, the JF-G5S, French-led Operation Barkhane and, more recently, the military task force Takuba deployed by a number of European countries—the security situation continued to worsen.²⁷ Indeed, the externalization of security did not constitute an assurance against the country’s own coup-prone armed forces ‘embarrassing international actors and further derailing their plans for stabilizing Mali’.²⁸

While the security situation in the north has stabilized, the situation in central Mali has deteriorated and transformed the Liptako-Gourma region into the epicentre of violence in the central Sahel

²² Boutellis and Zahar (note 14); and Carter Center, *Observations on the Implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, Emanating from the Algiers Process*, Report of the Independent Observer, yearly since 2018.

²³ United Nations Peacemaker, Accord Pour la Paix et la Réconciliation au Mali Issu du Processus d’Alger [Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali Resulting from the Algiers Process], 20 June 2015. English translation: PA-X Peace Agreement Database, ‘Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali Resulting from the Algiers Process’, [n.d.].

²⁴ Baudais, V. and Chauzal, G., ‘Mali’s transition: High expectations and little time’, SIPRI WritePeace Blog, 4 Sep. 2020.

²⁵ Haidara, B., ‘Inside Mali’s coup within a coup’, *The Conversation*, 26 May 2021.

²⁶ Jezequel, J.-H., ‘Mali, a coup within a coup’, International Crisis Group, Africa, Q&A, 27 May 2021.

²⁷ Campbell, J., ‘EU Task Force Takuba in Mali’, Council on Foreign Relations Blog, 8 Dec. 2020.

²⁸ MINUSMA was established by UN Security Council Resolution 2100 (note 21); Campbell (note 27); and Charbonneau, B., ‘Counter-insurgency governance in the Sahel’, *International Affairs*, vol. 97, no. 6 (2021), p. 1806.



The degradation of the security situation had exposed the poor condition of the FAMA, which was overwhelmed, under-equipped and poorly trained. Further, it was severely challenged by internal struggles, an insufficient structure and corruption—resulting, among other things, in its inability to carry out its mission in the north of the country.²⁹ Soldiers' recurrent demands for better conditions, their denunciation of the corrupt military hierarchy and their absence of strategic direction caused growing discontent, which was exposed by the 2012 coup d'état. Eight years later, the ever-declining security situation in Mali and growing dissent among the FAMA towards the civilian regime led to another coup d'état.

However, while the 2012 coup d'état exposed the complete dismantling of the armed forces, military structures remained in place after the 2020 coup d'état. The interesting difference between the two lies in the state of the armed forces, which were in better condition in 2020 than in 2012. In 2019, the FAMA comprised about 13 000 soldiers, 2000 national guards, 1800 gendarmerie and 1000 police. The air force has a small number of attack helicopters, but no working combat aircraft.³⁰ Furthermore, the drivers of the conflict have evolved over time, turning it into a regional conflict that affects the whole of the central Sahel and has an international impact (including terrorism, migration and various forms of trafficking), which in turn has led to a strong commitment from the international community in terms of providing development, humanitarian and military assistance.³¹

The degradation of the security situation exposed the poor condition of the FAMA

III. EUTM Mali's activities

EUTM Mali's strategic objective has evolved and taken on additional tasks over time, from providing support to the FAMA through training (2013 and 2014) to, in coordination with MINUSMA, supporting the DDR process as framed by the Bamako Agreement and the G5 Sahel process (2016), to supporting the operationalization of the JF-G5S (2018). From 2020 the strategic objective is twofold: (a) to contribute to improving the operational capacity of the FAMA under the control of Mali's legitimate civilian authorities; and (b) to support the G5 Sahel through making the JF-G5S and the national armed forces of the G5 Sahel operational.³²

EUTM Mali's activities include tactical and operational training for the FAMA and advising the FAMA leadership at the Ministry of Defence. Since 2018 it has also engaged in advice and training for the JF-G5S.³³ At the country level, mission staff mentor, advise and train the Malian military

²⁹ EUTM Mali international partner, Interview with author, Bamako, 24 Feb. 2021.

³⁰ International Institute for Strategic Studies, 'Chapter nine: Sub-Saharan Africa', *Military Balance*, vol. 119, no. 1 (2019); and International Institute for Strategic Studies, 'Chapter nine: Sub-Saharan Africa', *Military Balance*, vol. 120, no. 1 (2020).

³¹ European Commission, European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, 'Mali: Factsheet', accessed 15 Jan. 2022.

³² Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/434 (note 9); and ReliefWeb, 'The crisis in Mali must be a wake-up call for a new response in the Sahel: Statement from the People's Coalition for the Sahel', 2 Sep. 2020.

³³ Council Decision (CFSP) 2018/716 (note 7); and Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/434 (note 9).



to develop local and regional capacities to defend the territory. All of these activities are implemented through non-executive accompaniment.³⁴

Education and training

EUTM Mali is mandated to provide training to the FAMA at the tactical and technical levels (including with arms), as well as in terms of professional behaviour, conduct and discipline.³⁵ The courses are provided by the Education and Training Task Force based in Koulikoro and staffed by 111 personnel (as of February 2021). The support includes the development of a doctrinal body, the training of instructors and ‘train the trainers’ courses. Courses aim to support the FAMA’s education and training systems and to improve the ability of Malian commanders to train their soldiers, including in basic military skills and weapon handling. Tailored training and capacity-building activities are designed to help deliver a sustainable, Malian-owned training programme.³⁶

At the end of 2013 the FAMA’s Combined Arms Tactical Group’s (Groupement tactique interarmes, GTIA) combat battalions (600–700 soldiers) were trained over a period of 10 weeks in the region of Koulikoro, followed by many other training courses for other battalions between 2013 and 2014. The Combined Mobile Advisory Training Team (CMATT) then conducted 19 training courses in eight different locations between 2016 and 2019.³⁷ The approach taken to train the GTIA combat battalions was later replaced with training smaller units, and ‘train the trainers’, command and specialized courses. It is not clear how many Malian soldiers have received training from EUTM Mali and other international actors, as no database exists to monitor these training activities. Discrepancies can be perceived as national authorities provide contingents to be trained and EUTM Mali does not have a mechanism in place to monitor and assess training activities.³⁸ Nevertheless, most figures report almost 14 000 soldiers, which represents two thirds of the FAMA.³⁹

Referring to these training courses, various GTIA personnel interviewed mentioned the effectiveness of the modules taught by EUTM, especially in self-protection techniques and survival in theatres of operation.⁴⁰ Several techniques have been taught, notably checkpoint security and the detection and destruction of mines.⁴¹ EUTM Mali also collaborates with MINUSMA to train ex-combatants of signatory armed groups and compliant armed groups that were registered for integration into the national armed forces in the framework of the DDR process. Since 2019, 1423 ex-combatants

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³⁴ Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/434 (note 9).

³⁵ European External Action Service (EEAS), *EU CDSP Missions and Operations for Human Security* (EEAS: Brussels, Dec. 2019), p. 20.

³⁶ FAMA officer, Interview with author, Bamako, 27 July 2020.

³⁷ European Union Training Mission in Mali (EUTM Mali) website, <<https://eutmmali.eu/>>.

³⁸ This lack of monitoring was frequently mentioned by EUTM Mali international partners.

³⁹ Tull, D. M., ‘The European Union Training Mission and the struggle for a new model army in Mali’, IRSEM Research Paper no. 89, 11 Feb. 2020.

⁴⁰ Former EUTM trainee, Interview with author, Bamako, 28 July 2020.

⁴¹ Djiré, M. et al., University of Legal and Political Sciences of Bamako, *Assessing the EU’s Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Interventions in Mali*, Whole of Society Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding (WOSCAP) Case Study Report Mali (WOSCAP: 24 Mar. 2017).



have received a three-month training course carried out by the FAMA, ‘with the support of MINUSMA and the EU’.⁴² In May 2019 another 1662 ex-combatants and 600 soldiers received a different three-month training course before their deployment to the north.⁴³ Continuous, collaborative efforts between MINUSMA and EUTM Mali have resulted in the successful training and integration of large numbers of former combatants into the FAMA.⁴⁴

Advice to the FAMA

EUTM Mali provides strategic and operational advice to the FAMA and to FAMA leadership at the Ministry of Defence. The Advisory Task Force (ATF) is based at the Mission Force Headquarters in Bamako and comprises 29 staff (as of February 2021). Outside the Mission Force Headquarters, advisers are deployed to the Ministry of Defence, FAMA headquarters and some regions. This advisory task is based on day-to-day collaboration, supporting the empowerment of the FAMA through a range of activities from training, recruitment and payroll management to housing and medical care. Thus, EUTM Mali provides advice at different levels and on various issues, including military doctrine, human resources management, information management systems and intelligence.

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The ATF has supported the drafting of an action plan (2020–24) that sets out EUTM Mali’s operational capacities. In March 2021, doctrine handbooks and manuals, collaboratively prepared by EUTM Mali and the FAMA’s All Arms Doctrine Centre, were disseminated to Malian soldiers.⁴⁵ At the strategic level, EUTM Mali provided support for the development of the first Military Orientation and Programming Law (loi d’orientation et de programmation militaire, LOPM), which included an investment of 1230 billion CFA francs for five years (2015–19) and supported 10 000 new soldiers and the reinforcement of the air force’s operational capacities.⁴⁶ EUTM Mali also advises on the implementation of the LOPM. The second LOPM (2020–24) is yet to be adopted.

Advice and training to the G5 Sahel Joint Force

EUTM Mali’s fourth and fifth mandates involve political and institutional support to the G5 Sahel national armed forces, with priority given to Burkina Faso and then Niger. A permanent liaison has been established in Burkina

⁴² United Nations, Security Council, ‘Situation in Mali’, Report of the Secretary-General, S/2019/262, 26 Mar. 2019, p. 5.

⁴³ United Nations, Security Council, ‘Situation in Mali’, Report of the Secretary-General, S/2019/454, 31 May 2019, p. 7.

⁴⁴ United Nations, Security Council, ‘Situation in Mali’, Report of the Secretary-General, S/2021/299, 26 Mar. 2021, p. 3.

⁴⁵ EUTM Mali, ‘Doctrine handbooks and manuals to the Malian Armed Forces’, 10 Mar. 2021, EUTM Mali Newspaper no. 11, 1–31 Mar. 2021.

⁴⁶ Geneva Centre for Security Governance, International Security Sector Advisory Team (ISSAT), ‘Military Orientation and Programming Law: An investment of more than 1230 billion FCFA in 5 years’, [n.d.].



Faso.⁴⁷ While the objective is to contribute to the operationalization of the JF-G5S and to support G5 Sahel national armed forces (through pre-deployment training and continued training), EUTM Mali is also working on the standardization of procedures and information exchange.⁴⁸ However, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and Mali's 2020 coup d'état, the training has been delayed and operational plans for the implementation of the new mandate only resumed after some delays. Within this context, an important task of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC)—which exercises the responsibilities of an operation commander and command and control at the military level for EUTM Mali's planning and conduct—is to provide the necessary resources, working with EU member states to make funds available.⁴⁹

International coordination

Given the transnational character of the threats in the central Sahel and the coexistence of different interests in the region, several international actors are operational there through various peace and security or military frameworks. In December 2012, as part of international efforts to restore Malian territorial integrity, ECOWAS deployed AFISMA. In January 2013, armed groups launched an offensive against the Mopti region of central Mali. Supported by France (through Operation Serval) and African forces (in the framework of AFISMA), the armed groups were then pushed back and all the northern cities taken back—except Kidal, which was taken over by the MNLA. In April 2013, AFISMA was replaced by MINUSMA. Operation Serval (2013–14) ran in parallel and was then replaced in August 2014 by Operation Barkhane. These missions and operations worked alongside EUTM Mali, the G5 Sahel and EUCAP Sahel Mali.

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As the biggest executive mission in the country (12 465 troops as of March 2021), part of MINUSMA's mandate since it was established in 2013 has been to 'support national and international efforts towards rebuilding the Malian security sector'.⁵⁰ In 2021 the new mandate focused on MINUSMA's role to 'ensure coherence of international efforts, in close collaboration with other bilateral partners, donors and international organizations, including the European Union, engaged in these fields, to rebuild the Malian security sector, within the framework set out by the Agreement'.⁵¹

Since counterterrorism Operation Barkhane replaced Operation Serval it has focused its efforts on (but not limited them to) the Liptako-Gourma region, conducting its operations with the FAMA. However, in June 2021 it was announced that the counterterrorism operation is being reconfigured

⁴⁷ Council Decision (CFSP) 2018/716 (note 7); Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/434 (note 9); and EUTM Mali, 'First step of mandate 5 in Burkina Faso', 15 June 2021.

⁴⁸ Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/434 (note 9); and G5 Sahel official representative, Interview with author, online, 20 Aug. 2020.

⁴⁹ MPCC official 2, Interview with author, online, 10 Feb. 2021.

⁵⁰ United Nations Peacekeeping, MINUSMA Fact Sheet, [n.d.], accessed 15 Jan. 2022; and UN Security Council Resolution 2100 (note 21).

⁵¹ United Nations Security Council Resolution 2584, 29 June 2021.



and its capacity reduced, and in February 2022 the French president announced its departure from Mali, effective in June 2022.⁵²

Established in February 2014, the G5 Sahel is an intergovernmental institutional framework that organizes regional cooperation in development and fighting insecurity. In July 2017 the JF-G5S was created to fight security threats in the Liptako-Gourma region, often cooperating with Barkhane and the FAMA.⁵³ Under the command of Barkhane, Takuba—a task force composed of special forces from European countries—was set up to complement the counterterrorism strategy, operating in the Liptako-Gourma region. But its existence has been questioned following the departure of Barkhane and the withdrawal of Danish troops against a backdrop of increased tensions between the Malian Government and European countries.⁵⁴

In parallel, the EU deployed two missions to assist internal security forces in the Sahel: the EU Capacity Building Mission in Niger (EUCAP Sahel Niger) in February 2012 and EUCAP Sahel Mali in April 2014.⁵⁵ However, the deployment of troops in the region from the Wagner Group, a Russian private military company, has increased tensions with European partners to the point of questioning the continuation of EUTM Mali.⁵⁶

As part of this multilateral security architecture and a broader international approach, EUTM Mali interacts on a regular basis with MINUSMA, Barkhane, the JF-G5S and the FAMA. For example, its training activities and advisory role are coordinated with Barkhane and MINUSMA. At the senior level, a military coordination body—the Military Coordination Instance in Mali (Instance de coordination militaire au Mali, ICMM)—was established in 2018 to facilitate exchange and information sharing. Every three months, all the force commanders of the military missions, including the FAMA, meet to coordinate issues related to operations, informing partners about their activities, sharing intelligence and harmonizing plans.⁵⁷ On 12 March 2021 an ICMM round table conference discussed a comprehensive approach for sustainable stability in Mali and the Sahel.⁵⁸

EUTM Mali advisers also participate in other coordination working groups, which include, among other stakeholders, MINUSMA, EUCAP Sahel Mali and humanitarian clusters (e.g. the humanitarian protection cluster).⁵⁹

⁵² Deutsche Welle, 'France: President Macron announces end of Sahel military operation', 10 June 2021; Topana, E., 'Que retenir du changement de stratégie de la France au Sahel?' [What can we learn from France's change in strategy in the Sahel?], Deutsche Welle, 23 Sep. 2021; and Jeune Afrique, 'Départ de Barkhane: C'est aux Maliens de prendre leurs responsabilités' [Departure of Barkhane: It is up to the Malians to take their responsibilities], 18 Feb. 2022.

⁵³ United Nations Security Council Resolution 2359, 21 June 2017.

⁵⁴ Campbell (note 27); and Euronews, 'Mali orders Denmark to withdraw troops "immediately" from Sahel region' 25 Jan. 2022.

⁵⁵ Baudais, V., 'The impact of the Malian crisis on the Group of Five Sahel countries: Balancing security and development priorities', SIPRI Topical Backgrounder, 18 May 2020.

⁵⁶ Africa Intelligence, 'Face à Wagner, l'UE pose ses conditions pour rester' [Faced with Wagner, the EU sets its conditions for staying], 14 Mar. 2022.

⁵⁷ United Nations, Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali, S/2018/273, 29 Mar. 2018, p. 6.

⁵⁸ EUTM Mali, 'Instance de Coordination Militaire au Mali—ICMM', 12 Mar. 2021, EUTM Mali Newspaper no. 11, 1–31 Mar. 2021.

⁵⁹ EUTM Mali officer 1, Interview with author, Bamako, 26 Nov. 2020.

As part of the multilateral security architecture, EUTM Mali interacts on a regular basis with MINUSMA, Barkhane, the JF-G5S and the FAMA



While there is a risk of overlap in the training provided by these different international missions, they also provide joint training courses. For example, MINUSMA, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and EUTM Mali have provided joint assistance to the national specialized judicial unit in charge of the fight against terrorism and transnational crime.⁶⁰ MINUSMA also trains the FAMA, police and gendarmerie on human rights, in collaboration with EUTM Mali and the UN Police. Further, MINUSMA and EUTM Mali have adopted standard operational procedures for the disposal of improvised explosive devices (IEDs).⁶¹

IV. The impact of EUTM Mali

Using the EPON framework, this section assesses and reflects on the impact of EUTM Mali and its contribution to the improvement of the FAMA in the building of legitimate, efficient and credible armed forces. It focuses on the mission's intended and unexpected direct and indirect effects on (a) stabilization, the extension of state authority and the prevention of conflict; (b) institution building and armed forces development; (c) security sector reform (SSR); and (d) the protection of civilians and the promotion of human rights. It considers the fact that the mission's mandate is to restore the FAMA's military capacity, with a view to 'enabling them to conduct military operations aiming at restoring Malian territorial integrity and reducing the threat posed by terrorist groups'.⁶² EUTM Mali has worked with the FAMA and in collaboration with other international partners to achieve these goals. Given the specificity of the Malian context, the main impact is arguably related to extension of state authority.

The mission's long-term aim is that strengthening the FAMA will contribute to peace and security

Stabilization, extension of state authority and prevention of conflict

Based on the interviews and desk research carried out in this study, the impact of EUTM Mali's activities appears to be positive at the operational level. However, the mission faces several challenges in implementing its mandate and the FAMA is regularly accused of committing crimes with impunity.⁶³

EUTM Mali is not mandated to contribute directly to the stabilization of Mali and the prevention of conflict. Nevertheless, the mission's long-term aim is that strengthening the FAMA, so that it is professional and properly organized, led, equipped and trained, will contribute to peace and security for the Malian population. So far, however, these efforts have not prevented the constant degradation of the security situation in the country. Although the situation in the north has stabilized, armed groups have extended their presence to the detriment of state authority in other parts, particularly in the centre and more recently, since 2020, in the Sikasso and Kayes regions in

⁶⁰ United Nations, Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali, S/2018/1174, 28 Dec. 2018, p. 9.

⁶¹ United Nations, Security Council, 'Situation in Mali', Report of the Secretary-General, S/2018/866, 25 Sep. 2018, p. 9.

⁶² Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/434 (note 9).

⁶³ Amnesty International, 'Mali 2020', [n.d.].



southern and western Mali. The FAMA's presence also remains weak across the country due to a lack of personnel in relation to the challenges and the fact that soldiers are targeted by armed groups, which hampers their capacity to protect themselves and the local populations.

In the north, the FAMA was driven out at the beginning of the conflict (in 2012) and its return as a 'reconstituted army'—as provisioned in the Bamako Agreement—is still challenging and ongoing.⁶⁴ The reconstituted army is composed of an equal ratio of FAMA soldiers and ex-combatants from the Coordination of Azawad Movements (Coordination des Mouvements de l'Azawad, CMA) and a coalition of pro-government armed groups called the Platform (Plateforme). However, its implementation has been challenged by a lack of trust between signatory groups and groups close to the government, as well as by Malian officials.⁶⁵ A few days before the coup d'état in August 2020, a confidential UN report accused some Malian officials (such as the chief of staff) of delaying the implementation of the Bamako Agreement, including the deployment of reconstituted battalions in the north.⁶⁶ Yet the

redeployment of the FAMA, including these reconstituted battalions, remains a priority task as noted in UN Security Council Resolution 2584 (2021). As a consequence of the FAMA's weak deployment, security is generally provided by self-defence groups and militias in central Mali, by signatory and non-signatory groups in nomad and rural areas, and by the

FAMA in mostly urban areas of Mali.⁶⁷

In order to stabilize the situation, strengthening the presence of the FAMA in more remote areas is essential, because civilian populations are increasingly targeted by non-state armed groups and do not feel protected by either Malian or international forces.⁶⁸ As stated in EUTM Mali's mandate, restructuring the FAMA will help to enable it to restore Malian territorial integrity and to reduce the threat posed by terrorist groups. However, with the national armed forces targeted and weakened themselves, the deterioration of the security situation calls into question the capacity of the various military operations to stabilize the situation and reduce the threat from, for example, the Group to Support Islam and Muslims (Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin, JNIM) and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS).⁶⁹

***Strengthening the presence of the FAMA
in more remote areas is essential***

⁶⁴ RFI, 'Mali: le difficile déploiement de l'armée reconstituée à Kidal' [Mali: The difficult deployment of the reconstituted army in Kidal], 16 May 2020.

⁶⁵ Boutellis and Zahar (note 14), p. 30.

⁶⁶ VOA Afrique, 'Un rapport secret de l'ONU accuse de hauts responsables maliens d'entraver la paix' [Secret UN report accuses senior Malian officials of obstructing peace], 14 Aug. 2020.

⁶⁷ SIPRI Sahel/West Africa Programme, Data collected in central Mali, 2019–21.

⁶⁸ International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and Malian Association for Human Rights (AMDH), *In Central Mali Civilian Populations Are Caught Between Terrorism and Counterterrorism*, Fact-finding Mission Report no. 727a (FIDH/AMDH: Nov. 2018).

⁶⁹ Some of the attacks in central Mali in 2021 were: 6 Oct., 16 soldiers died; 12 Sep., 5 soldiers; 19 Aug., 15 soldiers; 15 Mar., 33 soldiers. See also Franceinfo, 'Mali: une attaque fait cinq morts dans le sud du pays, les autorités soupçonnent des jihadistes' [Mali: An attack leaves five dead in the south of the country, the authorities suspect jihadists], 30 May 2021; and EUTM Mali, 'Brochure on the fifth mandate: 2020–2024', [n.d.].



Institution building and armed forces development

Advising the FAMA and the Ministry of Defence

EUTM Mali personnel advise their FAMA counterparts and the Ministry of Defence on a daily basis but face various challenges in this collaboration and communication. Since 2020, interactions have also been impacted by travel restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, with the MPCC temporarily redeploying non-essential EUTM Mali staff and Brussels-based MPCC staff only allowed to travel to Bamako for essential reasons.⁷⁰

One challenge is the short rotation periods and high staff turnover. EUTM Mali advisers are generally deployed for a four to six-month period, including at the highest level of command. This potentially limits the mission's ability to build relationships with its counterparts, undermines regular activities, and negatively impacts the consistency and overall coherence of its advisory role if proper handovers do not take place.⁷¹ In part, this can be explained by the tendency of advisers to encourage their own approach, based on their national context and experience from their country of origin.⁷² At the same time, Malian counterparts must adapt to a different partner every six months, including the accompanying new working habits and different personalities.⁷³

Malian counterparts must adapt to a different partner every six months, including new working habits and different personalities

Another challenge is in terms of language skills. The French language barrier is problematic for many contributing countries, not only in the mission's training activities but also linked to its advisory role.⁷⁴ On the one hand, the lack of French-speaking staff adversely affects contact and interaction with the trainees. On the other hand, a substantial number of trainees are illiterate or lack basic knowledge in French, which further challenges the transfer of knowledge and skills.⁷⁵

Training the FAMA

Eight years after its start, EUTM Mali has contributed to the improved state of the FAMA. As noted above, by 2019 some 14 000 soldiers had been trained, representing about two thirds of the armed forces in Mali.⁷⁶ International partners have noticed that the behaviour of the troops in the field has improved at the tactical level.⁷⁷ This view is also echoed by national partners, who report that trained units are now able to foil ambushes and credit EUTM Mali for this.⁷⁸ However, the mission still faces a number of challenges in this respect.

First, although collaboration was said to be very good at the beginning of the mission, over time the nature of the training has not always been con-

⁷⁰ MPCC official 1, Interview with author, online, 10 Feb. 2021.

⁷¹ EUTM Mali officer 3, Interview with author, Bamako, 26 Nov. 2021.

⁷² MINUSMA official 2, Interview with author, online, 15 Feb. 2021; and National researcher 1, Interview with author, Bamako, 5 Aug. 2020.

⁷³ EUTM Mali officer 3 (note 71).

⁷⁴ National researcher 2, Interview with author, Bamako, 3 Aug. 2020.

⁷⁵ National researcher 2 (note 74).

⁷⁶ Hellquist, E. and Sandman, T., *Synergies Between Military Missions in Mali* (FOI: Stockholm, Mar. 2020), p. 40.

⁷⁷ MPCC official 1, Interview with author, online, 10 Feb. 2021.

⁷⁸ Civil society organization representative, Interview with author, Bamako, 13 Aug. 2020.



sidered as meeting the FAMA's requirements. Indeed, Malian interlocutors claim that it has become less adapted to actual needs.⁷⁹ They criticize the standardized content and argue that the courses do not always respond to requests for adjustments to the Malian context.⁸⁰ Even though coordination is regular between EUTM Mali and the FAMA, Malian partners mention insufficient consultation and information sharing, which has led to the duplication of courses and has not facilitated planning.⁸¹ There is a growing discrepancy between what trainees learn during training courses and the means at their disposal when deployed to the field.

For example, in 2012–14 the GTIA combat battalions had very limited capacities to carry out their tasks (e.g. fight terrorists and armed groups) because they needed, among other things, personnel, armament, vehicles, professional doctrine, planning and training. Thus, both the support and nature of the training they received from EUTM Mali were appreciated, especially as training objectives were defined in collaboration with the Malian authorities.⁸² However, although the perception of the mission varies, according to Malian partners, this collaboration gave way to a new period in which it tended to act unilaterally.⁸³ Increasingly, national partners felt that EUTM Mali continued to provide only 'basic training' that the FAMA could have provided itself, leading to further questioning of the mission's relevance.⁸⁴ Needs had changed and the training programmes had not taken into consideration the new challenges and requirements.⁸⁵ Insufficient flexibility and adaptability were then seen as an imposition of views linked to a foreign-owned assistance process.⁸⁶

Second, a related challenge is insufficient communication noted at all levels of the military hierarchy, from the leadership to the trainees.⁸⁷ FAMA partners have perceived persistently insufficient communication and information sharing from EUTM Mali.⁸⁸ The feeling of not being listened to was often shared by Malian interviewees, who frequently asked for a more balanced partnership. They felt that views and needs expressed during coordination meetings were not always considered in the finalized versions of training programmes.⁸⁹ The resulting frustration has strengthened the Malian push to train the trainers, as the FAMA's ability to develop its own training courses is seen as a critical element for its effectiveness and autonomy.⁹⁰

⁷⁹ FAMA instructor, Interview with author, Bamako, 11 Aug. 2020; and FAMA officer (note 36).

⁸⁰ FAMA instructor (note 79); and Committee on National Defence, Security and Civil Protection representative, Interview with author, Bamako, 11 Aug. 2020.

⁸¹ General Directorate of Gendarmerie officer, Recruitment, training and employment division, Interview with author, Bamako, 24 July 2020.

⁸² Military instructor, Interview with author, Kati, 27 Aug. 2020; and EUTM Mali national partner 1, Interview with author, Bamako, 13 Aug. 2020.

⁸³ EUTM Mali national partner 1 (note 82).

⁸⁴ EUTM Mali national partner 1 (note 82).

⁸⁵ Malian military staff member 1, Interview with author, Bamako, 27 July 2020.

⁸⁶ Malian military staff member 2, Interview with author, Bamako, 23 July 2020.

⁸⁷ National researcher 2 (note 74).

⁸⁸ FAMA officer (note 36).

⁸⁹ Focus group discussion 1, High-ranking FAMA officers in charge of education and training, FAMA headquarters, Bamako, 27 July 2020; and Malian military staff member 2 (note 86).

⁹⁰ Malian military staff member 2 (note 86); and Malian military staff member 3, Interview with author, Bamako, 27 July 2020. See also Boisvert, M. A., 'Forces armées maliennes, une lente

Even though coordination is regular between EUTM Mali and the FAMA, Malian partners mention insufficient consultation and information sharing



The relationship between Malian Government representatives and their international partners is fraught with tensions. This is not limited to EUTM Mali, but is part of a broader context in which ‘interveners tend to depict Malian counterparts as incompetent, corrupt, passive and in need of assistance, while Malians see foreign helpers as overbearing, paternalistic and self-interested’.⁹¹ More recently, however, the relationship between EUTM Mali and its Malian partners has evolved for the better. Since the coup d’état in August 2020, positive relations have been fostered with the military authorities. The coup d’état led to a reshuffling of the military leadership and a new generation of military leaders has taken over.⁹² According to international partners, these leaders are said to be more sensitive to the well-being of troops and committed to improving the conditions and preparation of the armed forces.⁹³ The common military culture is also said to be one of dialogue between the new military leadership and international military actors.⁹⁴

Third, the way the mission is set up and headquartered is a challenge, although things have improved since 2020 and the implementation of the fifth mandate. While MINUSMA (and Barkhane) is decentralized, with offices in regions in central and northern Mali, EUTM Mali is centralized, with its headquarters in Bamako and no offices in the field. EUTM Mali aims to contribute to the stabilization efforts in central Mali, but its staff have limited engagement outside their base and that also limits their understanding of the Malian context.⁹⁵ Training courses are conducted at the Koulikoro Training Camp and the choice to hold them in Koulikoro can be explained by its proximity to Bamako and the availability of the venue. One particular issue raised by Malian partners is that Koulikoro is so far and different from the field environment where operations take place. Koulikoro is a ‘green place’, whereas soldiers deployed in the north and centre of Mali face totally different environments, including desert.⁹⁶

The way EUTM Mali is set up and headquartered is a challenge, although things have improved

Only since 2016 (during the third mandate) has the CMATT—the mobile training team—had the opportunity to travel outside Bamako and provide training in the FAMA’s decentralized bases in Sévaré, Gao, Kayes and Timbuktu.⁹⁷ However, since the fifth mandate, training is regularly conducted in different regions of Mali and in Burkina Faso.⁹⁸ This mandate clearly emphasizes a focus on activities in the centre of Mali and re-basing efforts are being implemented, including a permanent presence in Sévaré. In order to carry out its decentralized activities, EUTM Mali works together with MINUSMA, which provides logistical support, air or ground transportation, logistics in the field (accommodation and office premises)

reconstruction’ [Malian armed forces, a slow reconstruction], *Afrique contemporaine*, vol. 260, no. 4 (2016).

⁹¹ Tull, D. M., ‘Rebuilding Mali’s army: The dissonant relationship between Mali and its international partners’, *International Affairs*, vol. 95, no. 2 (2019), p. 419; and Malian military staff member 2 (note 86).

⁹² MINUSMA official 2 (note 72).

⁹³ MPCC official 1 (note 77).

⁹⁴ EUTM Mali international partner (note 29).

⁹⁵ EUTM Mali officer 3 (note 71).

⁹⁶ EUTM Mali national partner 1 (note 82).

⁹⁷ EUTM Mali, ‘Activities’, [n.d.], accessed 5 Dec. 2021.

⁹⁸ Focus group discussion 1 (note 89).



and medical assistance against payment, on the condition that ‘it does not affect the mandate of the mission’. For this purpose, EUTM Mali signed a memorandum of understanding with MINUSMA in 2018.⁹⁹

Fourth and lastly, while the FAMA has continued to face recruitment problems, the deterioration of the situation in the centre of the country has intensified the pressure placed on it. A number of structural problems within the national forces, as well as the fact that almost all forces are currently deployed in operations, has also affected EUTM Mali’s work: staffing limitations, budget constraints, lack of equipment, poor troop behaviour, weak human resources management and governance problems.¹⁰⁰ The appreciation of military training also depends on how some of the more structural contextual challenges are dealt with: training alone is not enough to ensure effective and accountable armed forces.¹⁰¹

Linking training to operations

EUTM Mali’s biggest limitation is arguably its lack of post-training assessment and mentoring. The mission’s mandate requires it to monitor the performance and behaviour of the trained armed forces, but as EUTM Mali does not accompany trainees (soldiers and officers) into the field—and as no database of training courses and participants exists—it is limited in its ability to assess operational capacity and performance during operations.¹⁰² This means that trainers do not receive the necessary feedback that would allow EUTM Mali to adapt training to the needs and realities on the ground.¹⁰³ As a consequence, the FAMA’s effectiveness cannot yet be effectively measured during operations and EUTM Mali’s operational impact is limited. This in turn impacts the legitimacy of the mission.¹⁰⁴

EUTM Mali’s biggest limitation is arguably its lack of post-training assessment and mentoring

This limitation can be partly explained by the non-executive character of EUTM Mali’s mandate, which does not authorize participation in executive tasks. The mandate only allows for support to the FAMA through advice, training or education under heavy security conditions.¹⁰⁵ EUTM Mali’s force commander decides on a case-by-case basis and using clearly defined go/no-go criteria whether field missions take pace. On completion of their courses, individual trainees are spread over diverse units and deployed to the field in battalions of about 650 soldiers. While the new and expanded mandate may give more opportunity to follow units and/or carry out more field missions, this also implies that EUTM Mali should be involved in the FAMA’s deployment plan, which it is currently not.¹⁰⁶

However, a number of related challenges also lie outside the mission’s sphere of influence. As there is no database of trained soldiers and because the current situation in the centre of Mali means that soldiers are sent dir-

⁹⁹ MINUSMA official 5, Interview with author, online, 18 Feb. 2021.

¹⁰⁰ MPCC official 1 (note 77).

¹⁰¹ Norheim-Martinsen, P. M., ‘The EU in Africa: Peacebuilding by proxy’, Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre (NOREF) Report, Oct. 2013, p. 5.

¹⁰² Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/434 (note 9); and Committee on National Defence, Security and Civilian Protection representative (note 80).

¹⁰³ EUTM Mali international partner (note 29).

¹⁰⁴ Committee on National Defence, Security and Civilian Protection representative (note 80).

¹⁰⁵ EUTM Mali officer 1 (note 59).

¹⁰⁶ Tull (note 39), p. 6.



actly to the field on completion of their training, follow-up training and trainee evaluation are hampered. Vetting and tracking trained soldiers should be a priority and included in EUTM Mali's mandate, as the UN has its Human Rights Due Diligence Policy and Barkhane has its own tracking process, but coordination does not seem to be working.¹⁰⁷ A further impediment to follow-up training is that the FAMA is essentially permanently deployed in operations, without room for training and rest in its official operational cycle (operation–rest–training).¹⁰⁸ Similarly, most of the FAMA's financial resources are allocated to its operations. In this context of growing insecurity, combat is seen as the priority, leaving less time for training.¹⁰⁹

Security sector reform

EUTM Mali is mandated to contribute to improving the operational capacity of the FAMA under the control of Mali's legitimate civilian authorities.¹¹⁰ The FAMA has changed significantly over the past six or seven years and is in better condition today. Nevertheless, the reorganization of the chain of command may take more time than the four-year extension of EUTM's mandate will facilitate. The 2020 coup d'état exposed Mali's vulnerability to praetorian intervention and the main objective of the mission is to enhance the FAMA's capacity to be deployed throughout the country in order to enhance stabilization and the restoration of state authority.¹¹¹ Stabilization and an improved security situation require the reform of the FAMA and the deployment of well-trained and well-equipped soldiers, who are able to combat armed groups and to protect civilian populations.

Since it was launched in 2005, SSR in the country is a Malian-led process, supported by the international community, including the UN and the EU. In 2013 the Multidisciplinary Focus Group on Security Sector Reform (Groupe pluridisciplinaire de réflexion sur la réforme du secteur de la sécurité, GPRSS) was established, in charge of defining the SSR framework.¹¹² In 2014 the National Council for SSR was created as an advisory and decision-making body. Placed under the responsibility of the prime minister, the council saw its attributions revised in 2016 to take into account the provisions of the 2015 Bamako Agreement and to integrate representatives from the north.¹¹³ The institutional framework comprises the office of the SSR commissioner,

Stabilization and an improved security situation require the reform of the FAMA

¹⁰⁷ MINUSMA official 3, Interview with author, online, 15 Feb. 2021.

¹⁰⁸ MPCC official 1 (note 77).

¹⁰⁹ Tull (note 39), p. 6.

¹¹⁰ Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/434 (note 9).

¹¹¹ van der Lijn, J. et al., *Assessing the Effectiveness of the United Nations Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)* (Norwegian Institute of International Affairs: Oslo, 2019).

¹¹² Ordinance no. 4444/MS-SG of 22 Nov. 2013 establishing the Multidisciplinary Focus Group on Security Sector Reform (Groupe pluridisciplinaire de réflexion sur la réforme du secteur de la sécurité, GPRSS); see Doumbia, S and Dakouo, A., *Étude du secteur de la sécurité au Mali: Analyse et recueil des textes applicables à la réforme du secteur de la sécurité (RSS)* [Study of the security sector in Mali: Analysis and collection of texts applicable to security sector reform (SSR)] (ARGA Mali: May 2016).

¹¹³ Decree no. 2014-0609/P-RM of 14 Aug. 2014 establishing the National Council for Security Sector Reform; see Doumbia and Dakouo (note 112).



whose role is to implement SSR, and security consultative committees were to be created in each region and in Bamako district.¹¹⁴

The international community is widely supporting the SSR process in Mali and EUTM Mali is part of the national SSR strategy, which includes justice, defence and internal security.¹¹⁵ In 2014 a strategic committee for SSR–DDR was created and it gathers ambassadors and heads of diplomatic missions and international organizations, such as MINUSMA, the AU, the EU and ECOWAS. EUTM Mali’s force commander and EUCAP Sahel Mali’s head of mission participate as observers. At the operational level, a SSR–DDR working group meets every month and it has included EUTM Mali representatives since 2018.¹¹⁶ A common DDR road map has been drawn up, which is aligned with the priorities of the transitional government in terms of the redeployment of reconstituted units, the dismantling of militias and other issues related to the governance of the security sector, but it is yet to be adopted.¹¹⁷ Since 2012, a lack of political will and ownership combined with political instability have not facilitated the implementation of the SSR process. However, a national strategy for SSR (from 2019) and a national action plan (2022–24) were recently adopted by the Council of Ministers (in January 2022).¹¹⁸

A lack of political will and ownership combined with political instability have not facilitated the implementation of the SSR process

EUTM Mali’s role in the reform of the Malian defence sector is limited: its mandate does not focus on the SSR–DDR process, but it does participate in the MINUSMA-driven process along with other peace operations. As part of the DDR process, EUTM Mali and MINUSMA train ex-combatants who will be integrated into the reconstituted units to be deployed in the north. In January 2020 the first reconstituted battalions were deployed in Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu. However, procedural issues caused various delays, including in ‘administrative decisions regarding ranks and appointments’ and in providing adequate equipment and logistics to the 1330 members of the reconstituted armed forces.¹¹⁹ In 2021, 1687 additional combatants completed the process, thus achieving ‘the benchmark of integrating 3000 combatants’.¹²⁰

Such reform is very complex and sensitive, as it is related to institutional reform, chain of command, discipline, provision of adequate equipment, knowledge, respect for international human rights and respect for civilian

¹¹⁴ Decree no. 2016-0401/P-RM of 9 June 2016 establishing the Institutional Framework for Security Sector Reform.

¹¹⁵ Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), International Security Sector Advisory Team (ISSAT), *Cartographie du soutien de la communauté internationale en matière de sécurité et de justice au Mali* [Mapping of international community support for security and justice in Mali], Final report (DCAF: Geneva, Feb. 2017).

¹¹⁶ Bagayoko, N., *Le processus de réforme du secteur de la sécurité au Mali* [The security sector reform process in Mali], FrancoPaix Centre for Conflict Resolution and Peace Missions, Raoul-Dandurand Chair in Strategic and Diplomatic Studies, UQAM (UQAM: Montreal, Feb. 2018).

¹¹⁷ Berger, F., ‘Assessing SSR opportunities and challenges during the transition in Mali’, DCAF Position Paper no. 4, Feb. 2021.

¹¹⁸ Commissioner for Security Sector Reform (CRSS), ‘Adoption par le Conseil des ministres de la Stratégie nationale RSS’ [Adoption by the Council of Ministers of the National RSS Strategy], [n.d].

¹¹⁹ United Nations, Security Council, Letter dated 28 Feb. 2020 from the Panel of Experts established pursuant to Resolution 2374 (2017) on Mali addressed to the President of the Security Council, 18 Mar. 2020, p. 14.

¹²⁰ United Nations (note 44), p. 3.



authority.¹²¹ A resistance to change was notable in, among other things, projects that aim to promote better governance and fight corruption. For example, EUTM Mali tried to promote the establishment of a new payroll system, which could help to fight corruption, and eventually abandoned the project due to recurrent accusations of salary embezzlement by the military leadership.¹²² As a result, the Malian security sector remains unreformed and arguably the ‘Malian military may have barracks and people wearing uniforms, but it still appears to have none of the basic operational dimensions of an actual military’.¹²³

Protection of civilians and promotion of human rights

EUTM Mali has no mandate to directly protect civilians or promote human rights, but the fifth mandate (2020–24) requires it to monitor the performance and behaviour of the FAMA, ‘including with regard to the respect for human rights and international humanitarian law’.¹²⁴ Training and advice efforts that include human rights, IHL and gender are intended to contribute to these aims through the professionalization of the FAMA and eventually the stabilization of the country. Communities also expect the FAMA to be deployed to protect civilians, as they have little confidence in international actors.¹²⁵ However, this expectation goes far beyond the FAMA’s capacity.

The FAMA is regularly accused of human rights violations and can be considered a source of insecurity and an obstacle to sustainable peace

MINUSMA monitors the human rights situation in Mali and it noted a sharp increase in the number of cases during the first half of 2021.¹²⁶ The FAMA is regularly accused of various human rights violations and can be considered a source of insecurity and an obstacle to sustainable peace. In 2021, while most violent incidents were perpetrated by jihadist armed groups (54 per cent of the victims), 20 per cent were by community-based militias and self-defence groups, 9 per cent by the FAMA and 6 per cent by international and regional armed forces.¹²⁷

EUTM Mali’s fifth mandate is starting to deal with the issue of the mission’s inability to evaluate the impact of its training, but this will remain a serious limitation as long as the mission is not allowed to participate in operations. As mentioned above, the mission lacks a database that would allow it to follow up on trained units and it cannot fully monitor their activities or behaviour in the field.¹²⁸ An underlying challenge is that EUTM Mali is not in charge of the selection of trainees. A UN vetting process is conducted by MINUSMA to

¹²¹ ReliefWeb, ‘Le comité stratégique de la SSR/DDR a tenu sa 6eme session à Bamako’ [The SSR/DDR strategic committee held its 6th session in Bamako], 6 Nov. 2020.

¹²² RFI, ‘La lente reconstruction de l’armée malienne’ [The slow reconstruction of the Malian army], Lignes de défense [Lines of Defence] podcast, 19 Nov. 2017.

¹²³ Craven-Matthew, C. and Englebert, P., ‘A Potemkin state in the Sahel? The empirical and the fictional in Malian state reconstruction’, *African Security*, vol. 11, no. 1 (2018).

¹²⁴ Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/434 (note 9).

¹²⁵ Hellquist and Sandman (note 76), p. 32.

¹²⁶ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), ‘Mali: Rampant impunity for human rights violations poses grave risks for protection of civilians—Bachelet’, 29 June 2021.

¹²⁷ MINUSMA, ‘Note on trends of violations and abuses of international human rights law and violations of international humanitarian law in Mali: 1 April–30 June 2021’, 30 Aug. 2021.

¹²⁸ FIDH and AMDH (note 68).

ensure that trainees have not committed human rights violations, but EUTM Mali has so far not been able to use the results for its selection process.

Since 2013, EUTM Mali has been working with different UN entities on courses about IHL and the protection of civilians, while MINUSMA, in collaboration with UN Women, has been training soldiers on the protection of women and children in situations of conflict. Gender issues, conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and IHL are integrated into the training curricula during the training of the Malian units. A EUTM Mali gender focal point has been appointed at the Ministry of Defence to facilitate the work and a working group on promoting gender equality within the FAMA has been established. The human rights training in EUTM Mali's courses is provided by the mission itself, together with the International Committee of the Red Cross and MINUSMA's Human Rights and Protection Division. It could be expanded, however, as the one-hour training module allocated to human rights issues (e.g. SGBV and other human rights violations) cannot possibly cover enough ground.¹²⁹

Nonetheless, FAMA soldiers and trainees claim that their human rights attitudes have improved, and they consider EUTM Mali's activities to have had a positive impact on the protection of civilians, the promotion of human rights and the prevention of CSRV.¹³⁰ Yet without a reporting system

and reliable data, it is difficult to measure any change in the attitudes to human rights among the FAMA. It is also not known whether the perpetrators of human rights violations are EUTM Mali trainees. As such, the UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policy, which requires that support to non-UN security forces is compliant with human rights, protects civilians and fosters accountability, should be a common instrument.¹³¹

The fact that EUTM Mali has little or no control over the selection of trainees and no feedback on their behaviour in operations is a serious limitation to its action, aggravated by a concerning lack of fight against impunity.¹³²

The fact that EUTM Mali has little or no control over the selection of trainees and no feedback on their behaviour in operations is a serious limitation

V. Explanatory factors behind the impact of EUTM Mali

What factors can best explain EUTM Mali's overall impact? Continuing to use the EPON framework, this section attempts to explain the mission's impact with reference to: the primacy of politics; realistic mandates and matching resources; a people-centred approach; legitimacy and credibility; coordination and coherence; and promoting the WPS agenda.

Political primacy

Political progress is essential to the peace process in Mali, but the mistrust of each party towards international actors inherited from the mediation experience in Algiers has limited the capacities of international actors to

¹²⁹ MINUSMA official 2 (note 72).

¹³⁰ DCAF, 'Mali: Training military staff on IHL and human rights', Case study, July 2014.

¹³¹ United Nations, *Human Rights Due Diligence Policy on United Nations Support to Non-United Nations Security Forces: Guidance Note and Text of the Policy* (United Nations: New York, 2015).

¹³² France 24, 'Mali: L'ONU déplore "l'impunité généralisée" des violations des droits humains' [Mali: UN deplores 'widespread impunity' for human rights violations], 29 June 2021.



support implementation of the Bamako Agreement. The reconstitution of the Malian national army is at the heart of the peace agreement, but the mixed units (soldiers and combatants from the signatory groups) of the Operational Coordination Mechanism (MOC)—one of the major provisions of the Bamako Agreement—are far from being fully operational.¹³³ The process of DDR, supported by MINUSMA, remains slow and sensitive: it was not until February 2020 that a reconstituted battalion was deployed in Kidal, yet it barely patrolled in the city.¹³⁴ A lack of political will on the part of the main political parties does not facilitate collaboration between them, even though the implementation of the Bamako Agreement remains the strategic framework, supported by the international community and the transitional government.¹³⁵

Due to the transnational character of the threats in the Sahel and given strategic interests in the region, EU member states provide more support to Mali and the Sahel than to any other conflict zone on the African continent. In 2011 the EU launched its Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel (Sahel Strategy) and, under the auspices of the CSDP, EUTM Mali was deployed in 2013 to support the rebuilding of the FAMA. In 2015 and 2016 the EU strengthened its regional approach within the framework of the Regional Action Plan (2015–20), including advising the regional joint forces of the G5 Sahel, even though EUTM Mali's area of operation was limited to Mali until its fifth mandate. In parallel, EUCAP Sahel Niger and EUCAP Sahel Mali are building the capacities of internal security forces, including the police, the gendarmerie and the national guard.¹³⁶ The Sahel is a priority for the EU but, as part of a complex, multi-actor architecture, the EU is the least endowed with capabilities, funds and equipment, especially when compared to MINUSMA and Operation Barkhane.

Due to the transnational character of the threats and given strategic interests, EU member states provide more support to Mali and the Sahel than to any other conflict zone on the African continent

All of these civil–military frameworks are supposed to be supported by a political strategy, as part of a broader and more viable peace process. On 18 June 2013 a ceasefire and preliminary agreement on a Malian presidential election and inclusive peace negotiations was signed in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.¹³⁷ The implementation of the agreement was to be monitored by a joint technical security commission and supervised by MINUSMA, with the assistance of French Operation Serval.¹³⁸ After the 2013 election, the inter-Malian dialogue was launched in July 2014. This led to the ‘Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali Resulting from the Algiers Process’ in

¹³³ Pellerin, M., ‘Mali's Algiers peace agreement five years on: An uneasy calm’, International Crisis Group, Africa, Q&A, 24 June 2020.

¹³⁴ United Nations Security Council Resolution 2480, 28 June 2019.

¹³⁵ Carter Center (note 22).

¹³⁶ European Union, ‘EU relations with Sahel countries—Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger’, Fact sheet, 17 June 2016.

¹³⁷ Accord préliminaire à l'élection présidentielle et aux pourparlers inclusifs de paix au Mali (Accord préliminaire de Ouagadougou) [Preliminary Agreement for Presidential Elections and Inclusive Peace Talks in Mali (Preliminary Ouagadougou Agreement)], 18 June 2013; English translation: PA-X Peace Agreement Database, ‘Declaration of Adhesion to the Preliminary Agreement on the Presidential Election and the Inclusive Mali Peace Negotiations’, [n.d.].

¹³⁸ Bombande, E. and van Tuijl, P., ‘In Mali, peace and reconciliation is a balancing act’, International Peace Institute (IPI) Global Observatory, 7 Feb. 2014.



June 2015, which remains a fragile process despite the stated willingness of the transitional authorities to implement it.

However, the recent decisions of the National Transitional Council to grant amnesties to all members of the armed forces who participated in the two coups d'état (and related events) is a bad signal in the fight against impunity and contrary to previous government announcements about prioritizing the fight against corruption and impunity.¹³⁹ Political instability is a significant obstacle to the implementation of EUTM Mali's mandate, and the fact that a military coup has taken place in a country where thousands of troops are deployed has raised questions about the mission's capacity to help stabilize the country.¹⁴⁰

Mandate and resources

EUTM Mali's current four-year mandate represents a unique opportunity to set up a longer-term strategy and is an important step for the continuity of the mission. According to most of the EU and non-EU interviewees, as well as national counterparts, the mandate is realistic and appropriate, and the relevance of the training mission is broadly recognized by all actors.¹⁴¹ However, as mentioned above, the short rotation of personnel, the problem of language and insufficient understanding of the local context represent major limitations to the ambitions and objectives of EUTM Mali as expressed in its mandate. The strong influence of the operational headquarters in Brussels is another constraint, even though it is an inherent part of a peace operation that deployment is based on multiple agreements (national and international). This limiting influence is experienced not only by EUTM Mali but also by national and international partners, particularly because of the necessity to find a compromise between contributing countries and other EU member states.¹⁴² The operational headquarters in Brussels strongly binds the capacity for action in Mali to a consensual civilian approach.

The heavy protocols that have resulted from the Covid-19 pandemic are a good indicator of the reaction of EU member states. The Mission Force Headquarters in Bamako has been in lockdown since the first case of Covid-19 appeared in Bamako on 8 April 2020. Around 50 per cent of its personnel was repatriated to Europe and all training activities were suspended from 3 April

Political instability is a significant obstacle to the implementation of EUTM Mali's mandate

¹³⁹ Loi no. 2021-046 du 23 Septembre 2021 portant amnistie des faits survenus et ayant entraîné la démission du président de la République le 18 août 2020 [Law no. 2021-046 of 23 Sep. 2021 on amnesty for events that occurred and led to the resignation of the President of the Republic on 18 Aug. 2020]; and Loi no. 2021-047 du 24 Septembre 2021 portant amnistie des faits survenus et ayant entraîné la démission du président de la transition, chef de l'État et du premier ministre, chef du gouvernement, le 24 mai 2021 et leurs suites jusqu'au 28 août 2021 [Law no. 2021-047 of 24 Sep. 2021 on amnesty for the events that occurred and led to the resignation of the President of the Transition, Head of State and of the Prime Minister, Head of Government, on 24 May 2021 and their consequences until 28 Aug. 2021]. See also ABamako, 'Faits en lien avec la démission d'IBK et de Bah N'Daw: La loi d'amnistie adoptée par le CNT' [Facts related to the resignation of IBK and Bah N'Daw: The amnesty law adopted by the CNT], 17 Sep. 2021.

¹⁴⁰ Deutsche Welle, 'La mission de formation de l'UE au Mali critiquée' [The EU training mission in Mali criticized], 1 Sep. 2020.

¹⁴¹ This was noted by several interviewees and international partners.

¹⁴² MINUSMA official 2 (note 72).



2020. The mission was not operating at full capacity until 15 December 2020. Notably, the absence of decentralized field offices has been a severe constraint, meaning staff are based at the mission's headquarters, far from the actual theatres of operation in the centre of Mali, and do not know the reality on the ground. In addition, the mission has been dependent on MINUSMA for any deployment to the field.¹⁴³ However, things may improve with the establishment of decentralized bases, and direct coordination between the FAMA and EUTM Mali now takes place on a weekly basis wherever decentralized training is conducted.

Until 2021, the EU's funding mechanism did not allow military training missions to provide equipment. The equipment for trainees was provided by the Malian state, which meant that soldiers were being trained with equipment that they would not use in operations. This discrepancy was mentioned by Malian interviewees, who often argued that EUTM Mali's efforts should align training and equipment.¹⁴⁴ In addition, Malian trainees and interviewees often complained that EUTM Mali did not cover trainees' transportation costs to and accommodation in Koulikoro, nor did it provide them with per diems.¹⁴⁵ In the absence of such support by the mission, one EUTM Mali staff member suggested that bilateral support and donations should be better tailored to the needs of their Malian counterparts.¹⁴⁶ The recently approved European Peace Facility—the 'new global off-budget instrument that will finance external action having military and defence implications'—should give more credibility to the EU training missions and is intended to increase their effectiveness.¹⁴⁷ Under this mechanism, the EU will be allowed to provide military equipment, including through CSDP missions, and therefore will be able to train and equip partners, although this will also lead to ethical concerns.¹⁴⁸

The de facto reconfiguration and regionalization of the mission, and the accompanying budget increase, is an important step that reflects the reality on the ground

Overall, the de facto reconfiguration and regionalization of the mission, and the accompanying increase in the budget, is an important step that reflects the reality on the ground—a reality in which Liptako-Gourma has become the most affected region. Nevertheless, the successful implementation of EUTM Mali's mandate will also depend on the willingness of the contributing countries to accept more risk for their personnel, on the extension of the area of activities to cover the whole of Mali and the G5 Sahel countries, and on the mission's ability to conduct more decentralized activities.

¹⁴³ MINUSMA official 5 (note 99).

¹⁴⁴ Malian military staff member 1 (note 85).

¹⁴⁵ Malian military staff member 2 (note 86).

¹⁴⁶ EUTM Mali officer 2, Interview with author, Bamako, 26 Nov. 2021.

¹⁴⁷ Council of the EU, 'Council reaches a political agreement on the European Peace Facility', Press release, 18 Dec. 2020.

¹⁴⁸ European External Action Service (EEAS), 'Questions & Answers: The European Peace Facility', 22 Mar. 2021; and Maletta, G. and Berman, E. G., 'The transfer of weapons to fragile states through the European Peace Facility: Export control challenges', SIPRI WritePeace Blog, 10 Nov. 2021.

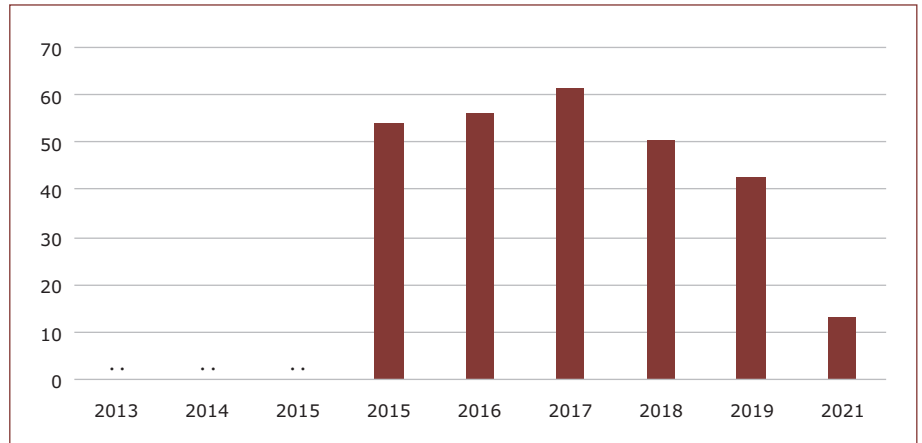


Figure 1. Per cent respondents answering ‘yes’ to having knowledge of European Union Training Mission in Mali presence

.. = data not available

Source: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), Mali Mètre, FES opinion survey in Mali, yearly reports since 2012.

A people-centred approach

EUTM Mali’s mandate is not directly people-centred, as it focuses on strengthening the FAMA and JF-G5S troops. Indirectly, however, a better trained FAMA should be better able to fulfil its responsibilities, including the provision of security to, and the protection of, populations. In order to retake territories, the FAMA needs improved capabilities and to take people-centred actions that allow it to respond to the legitimate need for the protection of affected communities.¹⁴⁹ Better trained soldiers may in turn foster confidence between local populations and the armed forces.

Due to the security situation and very strong security risks, EUTM Mali has limited direct contact with the local population. According to opinion surveys, the existence of the mission is known to roughly half of the national population (see figure 1).¹⁵⁰ It is more well known in Koulikoro, which overlaps to some extent with the physical presence of the mission, as it is in the Bamako and Koulikoro regions.

The visibility of the mission in these regions is also higher as a limited number of small civil–military projects have been implemented there, although the impact of these projects has been only very localized. Where state armed forces are absent, self-defence groups have proliferated and are the most present and effective security actors. Nevertheless, the FAMA maintains a high level of confidence over time.¹⁵¹

The disarmament of local militias and self-defence groups is one of the priorities of the current government, as recalled in the transitional government’s action plan (2021–22), but it can only be effective if the armed forces or gendarmerie and police take over on the ground—in particular in rural areas where people are in the most urgent need of protection.

¹⁴⁹ Focus group discussion 2, Soldiers trained by EUTM Mali, Bamako, 28 July 2020.

¹⁵⁰ Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), Mali Mètre, FES opinion survey in Mali, yearly reports since 2012.

¹⁵¹ SIPRI Sahel/West Africa Programme, Data collected in central Mali, 2019–21.

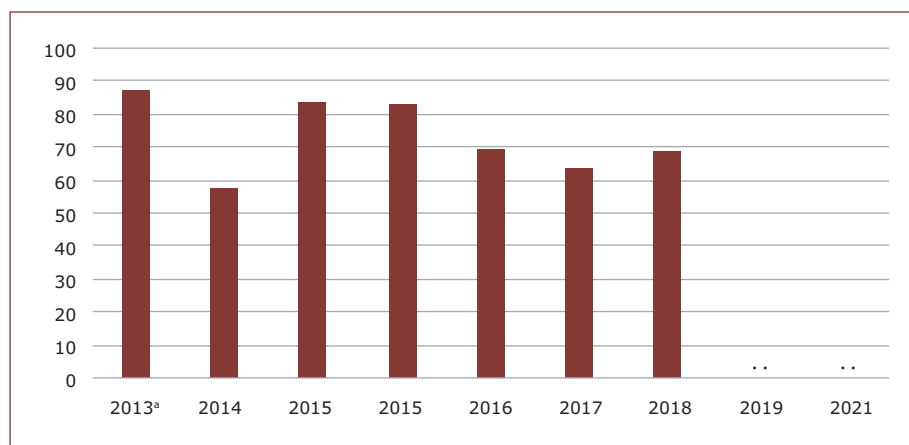


Figure 2. Per cent respondents answering ‘very positive/positive’ regarding their appreciation of the European Union Training Mission in Mali’s work with the Malian Armed Forces

.. = data not available

^a This data only applies to Bamako.

Source: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), Mali Mètre, FES opinion survey in Mali, yearly reports since 2012.

Legitimacy and credibility

EUTM Mali’s mandate derives from the Council of the EU and a UN Security Council resolution, and the mission is deployed based on an invitation from the president of Mali. Further, among the local population, the positive public perception of EUTM Mali’s work is an essential factor for its legitimacy and credibility (see figure 2).

However, EUTM Mali has faced important challenges. First, it suffered two terrorist attacks: on 21 March 2016 against the Mission Force Headquarters at Azalai Nord-Sud Hotel in Bamako, which was claimed by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb; and on 23–24 February 2019 against its premises in Koulikoro, which was claimed by the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims.¹⁵² Second, 2020 was a particularly challenging year, with the Covid-19 pandemic significantly affecting the working capacities of the mission. Later in the year, the suspension of all activities after the coup d’état on 18 August further deteriorated EUTM Mali’s credibility and legitimacy. Even though activities were suspended, the mission continued to keep a technical liaison. Activities only resumed after the installation of the transitional government and it was not until December 2020 that mission was operating at full capacity.

Despite these challenges, EUTM Mali remains legitimate and credible in the eyes of many because of its support role in restructuring the FAMA, which is a shared interest for international and national partners. Over time, the mission’s effectiveness will be measured by its trainees’ behaviour. Although EUTM does not train the whole of the FAMA, the level of confidence in the

¹⁵² Le Monde, ‘Attaque contre la mission de l’UE au Mali, un assaillant tué’ [Attack against the EU mission in Mali, one assailant killed], 21 Mar. 2016; and ABamako, ‘Alerte! Le centre de formation de EUTM Mali attaqué à Koulikoro’ [Alert! EUTM Mali training centre attacked in Koulikoro], 24 Feb. 2019.



armed forces could be used to gauge progress or setbacks in EUTM Mali's mandated tasks and it seems to be improving over time.

Coordination and coherence

As part of an international integrated security approach, EUTM Mali's coordination with MINUSMA, the JF-G5S and Barkhane is said to have improved. The partners do not plan operations together, but they try to align activities and to avoid duplication. The establishment of the ICMC has strengthened collaboration and facilitated the sharing of information, and there is a common willingness to cooperate.¹⁵³ For example, Operation Takuba, backed by Barkhane, was expected to provide advice to the FAMA at the operational level and help EUTM Mali to have a better understanding of what is happening on the ground.

Coordination is important even though each partner comes with its own approach, based on its own mandate.¹⁵⁴ Information sharing is the cornerstone of the cooperation between the international community and Malian counterparts, but it also appears to be a goal in itself.¹⁵⁵ While the formal information-sharing process between different missions appears to face obstacles, the sharing of information channelled through French officers in MINUSMA, Barkhane and EUTM Mali seems more efficient. As well as having regular work exchanges, they personally interact with the French personnel of other missions.¹⁵⁶ Coherence has improved over time and, given the high number of civil and military operations active in Mali, an effective division of labour is necessary. EUTM Mali is not a key player in this complex security architecture, but the mission participates in all meeting forums and coordination mechanisms, either as a participant or as an observer.

The transnational nature of the threat resulting from the situation in Mali has also led to the regionalization of EUTM Mali's mandate. Since the mission's new mandate was only approved in 2020, it is too early to assess the situation and the impact of its cooperation with the JF-G5S. Nevertheless, it seems clear that the involvement of all regional actors, including North African countries, will be needed to stabilize the region.

The women and peace and security agenda

The WPS agenda, as set out in UN Security Council Resolution 1325, was mentioned by all interviewees but does not seem to be concretely integrated into EUTM Mali's activities, except in training activities. On paper, the implementation of Resolution 1325 is a guiding principle for all military operations, including EU CDSP missions. In practice, however, the low number of women serving in EUTM Mali and in the FAMA must be seen as a major con-

¹⁵³ MINUSMA official 3 (note 107).

¹⁵⁴ French Ministry of Armed Forces, 'Communiqué—Task Force Takuba: réunion ministérielle de lancement', [Press release—Task Force Takuba: Ministerial kick-off meeting], 27 Mar. 2020.

¹⁵⁵ MPCC official 1 (note 77).

¹⁵⁶ Guichaoua, Y., 'The bitter harvest of French interventionism in the Sahel', *International Affairs*, vol. 96, no. 4 (2020).

It seems clear that the involvement of all regional actors, including North African countries, will be needed to stabilize the region



cern. The integration of issues related to SGBV and gender equality into the mission's training activities is important but not sufficient, given the little time allocated for issues related to the WPS agenda. Further, according to national military staff, at the operational level, the attention given to gender issues in EUTM Mali's training courses is marginal.¹⁵⁷ The lack of available data on gender and women's participation is indicative of the weakness of the integration of the WPS agenda. A working group focused on the promotion of gender equality within the FAMA has been created, but it remains unclear how the WPS agenda is prioritized within the mission itself.

VI. Conclusions

Understanding the effectiveness—the overall strategic impact—of EUTM Mali is an issue as complex as the environment in which the mission operates. On the one hand, looking at the overall security environment in Mali, the fact that the security situation has deteriorated despite the presence of thousands of soldiers on Malian soil questions the effectiveness of the various peace operations, of the different mandates and of the purpose of such peace operations. Notably, events in Afghanistan have fuelled discussions on the relevance of Western military deployments and the insufficient understanding of local contexts.¹⁵⁸ Although the numerous peace operations were deployed to prevent the worst from happening in Mali, the situation was worse in 2021 than in 2013, with a spillover effect in the Liptako-Gourma region.

On the other hand, looking more specifically at the contribution of each operation, the analysis is nuanced. The better condition of the FAMA in terms of combat is an important indicator. While no mission has yet reduced the conflict dynamics in this immense area of operations, the most visible impact has arguably been to improve the response of the armed forces in Mali. While the FAMA was defeated in the north in 2012 and in Kidal in 2014, it is now in a position to repel armed groups' attacks even though the number of soldiers targeted remains high.¹⁵⁹

During the eight years of its existence, EUTM Mali has supported the Malian authorities with advice, education and training. The number of soldiers trained and the good relationship established with the Malian military leadership are two of the main successes. The achievement of the mission's more ambitious objectives is a long-term project and will partly depend on security and political developments in the region. The further deterioration of the security situation could seriously hamper the mission's efforts, but tangible steps have been made since its establishment in 2013, even though objectives remain only partially achieved.

¹⁵⁷ Focus group discussion 1 (note 89).

¹⁵⁸ Baczko, A. and Dorronsoro, G., 'Comment les talibans ont vaincu l'Occident' [How the Taliban defeated the West], *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Sep. 2021.

¹⁵⁹ RFI, 'Mali: exécutions sommaires à Aguelhoc, selon Paris et Bamako' [Mali: Summary executions in Aguelhoc, according to Paris and Bamako], 13 Feb. 2012; and BBC News, 'Mali: Tuareg rebels "defeat government army in Kidal"', 22 May 2014. The FAMA's strengthened position is regularly mentioned after attacks against them in central Mali; see e.g. Anadolu Agency, 'Mali: l'armée repousse une attaque dans le centre' [Mali: The army repels an attack in the centre], 29 Apr. 2020.



Nevertheless, the challenges faced by EUTM Mali cannot be underestimated, given the number of human rights violations perpetrated by the FAMA, the lack of equipment and structure in the armed forces, the lack of political will to implement indispensable political and institutional reforms (including defence and security institutions), the lack of trust between the conflict parties, and the ongoing political instability. Thus, the best way to measure the success of EUTM Mali is to assess FAMA's capacity to stabilize and provide security to local populations in an accountable manner. This paper has found that progress still needs to be made in terms of inclusion, effectiveness, and a well-equipped and responsible armed forces able to address the security challenges. Further, the sustainable operationalization of the armed forces will take time and continues to face obstacles in terms of the political engagement of the Malian authorities, the national ownership of SSR and various EU limitations.

The EU's CSDP is developing military operations based on cooperation and the EU is also learning by doing. Rebuilding the FAMA requires political and institutional stability, and the success of EUTM Mali depends on the

The achievement of EUTM Mali's more ambitious objectives is a long-term project and will partly depend on security and political developments in the region

commitment of the Malian authorities to set the basis for the necessary institutional reforms. The constructive role played by the mission was not questioned by the interviewees in this study, but the situation has changed since 2013. There is a place for the different stabilization and peace operations, as long as the sharing of activities and coordination is effective. These missions may not be doing enough, but it is important that they do not all do the same thing and that they respect the division of tasks: for example, MINUSMA (SSR), Barkhane/Takuba (executive operations) and EUTM Mali (advice, training and education). EUTM Mali is the smallest mission operating in Mali in terms of budget and personnel, yet being less visible does not mean that it is less effective. Building local capacity is a fundamental priority in supporting the sustainable transformation of a security sector better adapted to local expertise and aligned to the Malian context.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, three primary recommendations can be identified:

1. Improve the coordination between EUTM Mali and the FAMA

The FAMA's leadership would like to be more involved in the definition of EUTM Mali's objectives and in the organization of its training activities. Currently, training courses are considered to be based too much on 'European expertise' and they need to include national expertise. This study's recommendation is to: (a) expand decentralized training activities; (b) focus on 'train the trainers' courses to facilitate the transfer of capability; and (c) revise and adapt the transfer matrix to the Malian/Sahelian context. The creation of a warfare school is a clear signal that the Malian military authorities are willing to take ownership of military training.



2. Establish mechanisms to follow up the performance and behaviour of trainees after training

The lack of follow-up mechanisms after training is a serious limitation and prevents EUTM Mali from assessing the commitment and behaviour of trainees during operations. Currently, the mission does not know where trainees are deployed and cannot accompany them. Respect for human rights and IHL within the trainees' behaviour also has to be addressed, as expressed in EUTM Mali's mandate. This study recommends that the issue of insufficient mentoring should be addressed by integrating an effective feedback mechanism to monitor training results into the mission's work, as well as by involving EUTM Mali in the pre-deployment phase. Tracking FAMA soldiers and debriefing them on field missions would allow the mission to identify gaps and integrate lessons learned into training sessions.

3. Adapt activities to the evolving conflict dynamics

While all the military operations in Mali were deployed in a post-rebellion context (even though jihadist groups were already present), conflict dynamics have evolved since 2013 and the redeployment of reconstituted battalions in the north is only one side of the problem. Implementation of the 2015 Bamako Agreement is essential but not sufficient, because the agreement does not reflect the current situation in Mali and refers to relations between the north and the rest of the country. Therefore, within the renewed support for the agreement, this study recommends that all dimensions of the crisis are considered, including both security and development, and that activities are adapted accordingly. The expansion of jihadist armed groups is at a critical point and providing support to the national armed forces is essential, as is the need for the police and gendarmerie to be deployed to protect civilian populations in both rural and urban areas (supported by EUCAP Sahel). However, the provision of security cannot be effective without the effective presence of state authorities and the provision of public services, and military operations should also be given the capacity and mandate to focus on the protection of civilians.

There is a place for the different stabilization and peace operations, as long as the sharing of activities and coordination is effective



Abbreviations

AFISMA	African-led International Support Mission in Mali
AU	African Union
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EEAS	European External Action Service
EPON	Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network
EU	European Union
EUCAP Sahel Mali	EU Capacity Building Mission in Mali
EUCAP Sahel Niger	EU Capacity Building Mission in Niger
EUTM Mali	European Union Training Mission in Mali
FAMA	Malian Armed Forces (Forces Armées Maliennes)
GTIA	Combined Arms Tactical Group (Groupement tactique interarmes)
G5 Sahel	Group of Five for the Sahel
IHL	International humanitarian law
JF-G5S	G5 Sahel Joint Force
LOPM	Military Orientation and Programming Law (loi d'orientation et de programmation militaire)
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MPCC	Military Planning and Conduct Capability
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SSR	Security sector reform
WPS	Women and peace and security



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SIPRI BACKGROUND PAPER

THE EUROPEAN UNION TRAINING MISSION IN MALI: AN ASSESSMENT

VIRGINIE BAUDAIS AND SOULEYMANE MAÏGA

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