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European security assistance
The search for stability in the Sahel

Olivier Guiryanan, Lucia Montanaro and Tuuli Räty

September 2021

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Acknowledgements

This paper is part of a strand of work to promote long-term peace through research and analysis, and by setting up policy dialogue with governments, international organisations and civil society on peace, terrorism, stability and responses to forced displacement.

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Cover photo – An Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC) of the French Army patrols a rural area during the Bourgou IV operation in northern Burkina Faso along the border with Mali and Niger.
Michele Cattani / AFP

Abbreviations

(I)NGO	(International) non-governmental organisation
ACLED	The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project
AMISOM	African Union Mission to Somalia
APF	African Peace Facility
AU	African Union
CBSD	Capacity Building for Security and Development
CDSP	Common Security and Defence Policy
CSO	Civil society organisation
CSS	Collège Sahélien de Sécurité (Sahelian Security College)
DG INTPA	Directorate-General for International Partnerships
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management
EEAS	European External Action Service
EI2	European Intervention Initiative
EPF	European Peace Facility
EU	European Union
EUCAP	European Union Capacity Building Mission
EUTF	EU Trust Fund for Africa
EUTM	European Union Training Mission
FAMA	Malian armed forces
FIIAPP	International and Ibero-American Foundation for Administration and Public Policies
G5	Group of Five (referring to the five Sahel countries)
GAR-SI	Groupes d'Action Rapides – Surveillance et Intervention au Sahel
IcSP	Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace
MINUSMA	Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
P/CVE	Preventing/countering violent extremism
P3S	Partnership for Security and Stability in the Sahel
PARSIB	Projet d'Appui au Renforcement de la Sécurité Intérieure au Burkina Faso
RACC	Regional Advisory and Coordination Cell
RAP	Regional Action Plan
SSR	Security sector reform
WPS	Women, peace and security

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A man and woman in Central
Niger ride a motorcycle down a
dusty road.
Djingarey Maiga/Saferworld

Executive Summary

While peace, democracy and human rights remain central to its external action, Europe is increasingly turning towards securitised responses to crises. The current Commission leadership wants the European Union (EU) to 'learn the language of power'[1] in defending its interests abroad. However, the EU's global security ambitions – linking foreign policy with domestic security – have already been taking shape over the last ten years. The 2016 Global Strategy[2] marked a shift to more state-centred responses to instability, through intensifying defence cooperation, new security assistance[3] instruments and the adaptation of existing foreign policy tools.

This report maps how the EU is piloting its new security assistance instruments in the Group of Five (G5) Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger). It analyses its political drivers and its risks and impacts – and identifies lessons and recommendations in response.

Drivers of securitisation

Two Member States have strongly influenced the EU's growing security role. While **France** has long wished for greater European backing for its overseas security interventions, the fact that **Germany** has overcome its former hesitancy has accelerated the securitisation of EU foreign policy, catalysing new initiatives and growing defence cooperation.

Two main factors have underpinned this shift. First, **geopolitical shifts and threats** (the inward turn of the US, aggressive behaviour by Russia and Turkey) have increased Member States' appetite for defence initiatives. Second, **domestic security concerns** – especially over terrorism and migration – have prompted military operations to defeat violent groups, and efforts to reinforce border control outside Europe.

Security engagements in the Sahel

Since the Sahel strategy of 2011, the EU has invested €1.4 billion[4] in building security and military force capacity in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, summarised in the table below.

Counter-terror has been central to the EU's Sahel activities from the start, and EU capacity building for Sahelian security and military forces has taken place alongside French-led counter-terror interventions. The three EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions were set up to strengthen the Malian and Nigerien governments' control over their territories and contain armed groups. The EU has also played a key role in operationalising the G5 Sahel Joint Force's regional counterterror efforts. EU security assistance in the Sahel has also been shaped by a drive to **control migration beyond EU borders**. Since 2015, CSDP missions in the Sahel have focused on countering 'irregular' migration, and new funds have been launched to build the capacity of border security forces.

Many programmes presume that the capacity of state forces is a pre-requisite for stability and development – and to protect Europe. Building the capacity of military and security forces is thus the overwhelming focus. Out of the €710 million's worth of projects supporting security actors in the Sahel, around €490 million has gone towards training and equipping security forces to fight armed groups and strengthen 'porous' borders.

EU Member States have also provided military equipment as donations, and sold arms worth over €400 million to the region between 2013 and 2019.

Risks and concerns

In the past ten years, violence towards civilians in the G5 countries other than Mauritania has grown tenfold.[6] This prompts important questions about the impacts of Europe's security assistance. Instead of eliminating proscribed groups, heavy-handed counter-terror operations in the Sahel have fed mutually escalating violence and inter-communal conflict.[7] In the context of abuses by state forces, building their capacity risks undermining security rather than improving it. **International appetite for counter-terrorism has encouraged aggression by Sahelian forces:[8] in 2020, more civilians were killed by state forces than jihadist groups**.[9] Many communities are caught between attacks by armed groups, self-defence militias and security forces. While the EU trains forces on human rights, in the absence of systems to monitor and hold them accountable, trainings have little impact on preventing civilian harm.[10]

Because corruption, abuse and neglect by states are important drivers of conflict in the Sahel, which are in turn exploited by violent groups, boosting state control through strengthening security forces can be counterproductive. There is a real risk that the EU's security partnerships in the Sahel could legitimise abusive governments that are more interested in cementing their power than protecting citizens and addressing their needs.[11]

Expanding state presence without escalating violence would require much greater dialogue and trust-building among local populations, but such efforts have been sidelined under the current counter-terror paradigm. As explained by Assitan Diallo, President of the Association des Femmes Africaines pour la Recherche et le Développement (AFARD), **"[s]tabilisation in Mali has meant a stabilisation of a militarised status quo."**[12] Security assistance also risks entrenching the primacy of military solutions to political problems,[13] as demonstrated by recent coups in Mali and Chad.

Arms proliferation in the Sahel fuels conflict and abuses.[14] Corruption and inadequate oversight mean that state stocks are armed groups' main source of weapons. Thus European efforts to equip national forces carry a deadly risk of diversion and misuse.[15]

EU security assistance in the G5 Sahel countries since 2011				
CSDP missions[5]	**Security assistance projects**			
EUTM Mali (military mission): €255 million 2014–2022	African Peace Facility: €235 million support to the G5 Joint Force	EU Trust Fund for Africa: €307 million	Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace: €90 million	European Development Fund: €78 million
EUCAP Sahel Mali (civilian mission): €254 million 2014–2024				
EUCAP Sahel Niger (civilian mission): €237 million 2012–2021				

Key lessons to learn

As the EU reflects on its approach to conflict, it should take stock of the results of its security assistance in the Sahel. It needs to tackle drivers of insecurity more effectively, and support security forces in a way that makes them more responsive to people's security needs. Existing EU policies include sound approaches to supporting inclusive and sustainable security provision. The Strategic Framework to support Security Sector Reform,[16] the EU Stabilisation Concept[17] and the Strategic Approach to Women, Peace and Security[18] all emphasise human security, inclusive political settlements, accountable security institutions and partnering with civil society as part of a sustainable peacebuilding approach. However, a preoccupation with migration and terrorism, and the focus on boosting state forces' capacity to fight short-term threats, are undermining conflict sensitivity, human security and gender equality – and effective action on the drivers of conflict – as aspects of EU security assistance in the Sahel.

The EU's revised Sahel strategy speaks of a 'civilian and political leap forwards'. This requires less focus on state-centred stabilisation, and much more civil society and community engagement, as the basis for a people-centred peacebuilding strategy to address longer-term structural drivers of insecurity – such as inequality, poor governance and climate change – and engage communities in its delivery.

Recommendations on the EU's approach in the Sahel

To help operationalise a 'civilian and political leap forwards', the EU should consider:

■ **a much greater focus on and resource mobilisation behind Pillar Four (development) of the Coalition for the Sahel's plan**, to include: the reorientation of funds to deliver substantial investments in the G5 states' ability to deliver basic services, including necessary physical and administrative infrastructure; support for existing formal and informal mechanisms and initiatives for conflict resolution, gender equality and accountability, and governance initiatives aimed at addressing inequalities and ensuring that populations have fair and equitable access to natural resources, land and decent livelihoods; flexible and predictable funding for civil society including women-led organisations to engage in the planning and implementation of development strategies and activities.

■ **the reorientation of any expansion of state presence to focus on responding to people's actual security and justice needs** through: robust and regular participatory analysis of conflict, peace and power dynamics and community security and justice needs; planning assistance on the basis of meaningful consultation and dialogue with communities, and broadening the understanding of security from the narrow counter-terror and state capacity lens to encompass issues such as access to water, services and economic opportunities, and social cohesion; support for dialogue initiatives at all levels, in particular between communities, between national security forces and populations, and between armed groups, communities and authorities.

■ **genuine people-centred security sector reform under Pillars Two and Three leading to greater accountability and more democratic security sector governance**, including: a laser-focus on building institutional and individual accountability within the military and security forces; making the needs of people and communities the primary purpose of the military and security forces; substantially increasing funding to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and local civil society, including women-led organisations, to engage in security sector reform (SSR) and governance reform processes, independent of government.

■ **protecting civilians as a top priority within counterterror operations under Pillar One**, including publicly and consistently condemning acts of violence against civilians committed by defence and security forces and community militias, not just abuses perpetrated by armed groups, and ensuring that cases of misconduct and civilian harm are brought to justice and civilians impacted are supported and compensated.

■ in line with suggestions made by the People's Coalition for the Sahel,[19] the Sahel Strategy and EU security assistance and stabilisation efforts cannot succeed without a robust accountability framework designed and implemented with and for communities and civil society in the Sahel. Local civil society (not only those based in capitals, but throughout the five countries), including women's rights organisations, should be given flexible support and involved more closely in the planning and implementation of the EU's activities, as they are best placed to ensure that the EU's assistance improves human security.

In addition, the EU and its Member States can mitigate some of the risks associated with arms proliferation and misuse by better regulating the provision of arms and security equipment to the G5 states through its arms export controls.

To do this, the EU and its Member States must strengthen **safeguards regarding the provision of military equipment** (for example under the EPF) in the Sahel and elsewhere, ensuring that:

- any transfer of items on the EU's common military list, whether bilaterally between a member state and a member of the G5 or via the EPF, undergoes a rigorous risk assessment that considers the recipient's human rights record and the risk of diversion from its stockpiles

- states and/or the EPF do not authorise a transfer where there is a clear risk that it may breach one or more of the EU's arms export criteria unless sufficient mitigation efforts are possible, for example through supporting effective physical security and stockpile management programmes, human rights training and robust monitoring and accountability frameworks for security force behaviour security force behaviour, post-export verification and tracking

- civilian complaints mechanisms are in place and easily accessible for people impacted by the misuse or diversion of assistance to report these incidents

Broader lessons and recommendations for the EU's approach to supporting peace and security

As the EU continues to build its role as a global security provider, political leaders, planners and officials should consider the following issues:

At the **policy** level, in order to ensure coherence and translate into practice the commitments enshrined in the EU's security policy framework, EU political leaders, planners and officials should:

- ensure security assistance is situated within a long-term peace and development strategy that incorporates other programmes and tools – such as dialogue and mediation, human rights monitoring, and conflict- and gender-sensitive security and development support – and is people-centred

- ensure SSR programmes within EU security assistance support the emergence of a culture of institutional and individual accountability and protection of civilians

- write in the ability to end/adapt programmes as necessary based on regular monitoring and evaluation, and ensure CSDP missions and other security initiatives have an exit strategy

- build coalitions for change well beyond elites, engaging a wide range of societal actors to create positive incentives and demand for lasting change

- ensure policy coherence across the EU's security policy portfolio, including reconsidering train-and-equip support to state security forces that risks undermining long-term peace and stability as well as the EU's credibility as a partner providing support to peace processes

Officials and leaders also need to work together to build a **political environment conducive for collective learning** and the evolution of effective and sustainable security strategies and approaches.

- Draw on processes to ensure accountability and learning from security initiatives to ensure that Member States confront the risks and problematic track record of short term, heavily securitised approaches to managing their immediate concerns over terrorism and migration.

- Draw on lessons learnt from both the EU's security assistance in the Sahel and the global track record of Western counterterror initiatives for the establishment of norms, guidelines and safeguards, decision making, resource allocation, strategy development, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and oversight in the field of security assistance.

- Encourage and support member states to recognise the need for more effective and sustainable responses to conflict, security threats and mass displacement than has been achieved in the Sahel and other key counter-terror, migration control and stabilisation theatres via military interventions and train-and-equip programmes in recent years.

- Based on this, support member states to engage in dialogue on how to connect EU policy commitments with the real world strategies they adopt, and support collective learning and evidence based approaches. Encourage EU political leaders, individually and collectively, to communicate more effectively to the public the need for patient, comprehensive strategies to address drivers of conflict more effectively than discredited 'war-on-terror' or migration containment methodologies.

To ensure **institutional capacity** to implement its policy commitments, the EU should:

- invest in recruiting and retaining sufficient in-house expertise on gender, conflict sensitivity, protection of civilians and civil society space, security sector governance and anti-corruption

- seek strategic partnerships with civil society experts, networks and organisations at community, national and international levels with experience of working in complex crisis contexts to complement their own expertise

Programme planners and implementers should:

- ensure strategies and programmes are informed by a peacebuilding lens with regular gender, conflict and political economy analysis using existing participatory tools and expertise including The Community Security Handbook and Gender Analysis Of Conflict Toolkit[20]

- integrate protection of civilians and human security into the planning, design, implementation and evaluation of projects and trainings

- partner with civil society to gain timely insights into people's changing security needs and their experiences of dealing with security and justice institutions and give them a greater say in the shaping, design, implementation and evaluation of programmes

- focus more on capacities of societies and communities rather than that of states

- not neglect the 'R' in SSR and ensure EU support to security institutions contributes to their legitimacy, accountability and ability to respond to the security needs of people, including women and marginalised communities

- apply a conflict sensitivity lens throughout the programming cycle to ensure assistance contributes to peace and addresses drivers of conflict rather than doing harm. Use monitoring indicators based on people's perceptions of the situation and adapt programmes continuously to mitigate any potential harm

- use the recently developed risk matrix for all EU security assistance missions and programmes to monitor risks related to civilian harm, political will, governance impacts, corruption dynamics, diversion and misuse, use of force and ensure conflict sensitivity, accountability and mitigation plans

- adopt a due diligence policy to ensure that EU security assistance is not misused to facilitate abuses against civilians, or contribute to repression

- lead by example on accountability and monitoring impact by ensuring EU security missions and projects contain stringent safeguards, whistle-blowing mechanisms and robust frameworks for follow-up when incidents occur

- to better monitor the combined impact of disparate EU security assistance programmes (including provision and transfer of arms and dual-use goods), design a joint monitoring and evaluation mechanism to review overall progress towards the shared objectives in the relevant long-term peace and development strategy for the country/region

- ensure transparency through encouraging, supporting and building parliamentary and public oversight into European security assistance and SSR efforts

Notes

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2 EEAS (2016), 'Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe', June (https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf)

3 Security assistance could refer to a range of different forms of support to partner security forces, including training, mentoring, financial assistance, the provision of equipment, joint deployments, joint exercises and security sector reform involving assisting financial or administrative capabilities. For the purposes of this report, security assistance is defined as assistance which targets security or military forces or the authorities overseeing them as its main recipients, including through training, provision of equipment and infrastructure, mentoring, budget support, support to regional cooperation, or supporting security sector reform or civilian oversight of security institutions.

4 €1.4 billion if budgets of CSDP missions until 2024 are included; €1.2 if budgets for them are only included until 2020.

5 The budgets for military CSDP missions include common costs covered by the EU only and therefore exclude the salaries of seconded staff and other costs falling on Member States to cover.

6 Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED): www.acleddata.com

7 Wiuff Moe L (2020), 'The dark side of institutional collaboration: how peacekeeping-counterterrorism convergences weaken the protection of civilians in Mali', *International Peacekeeping* **28** (1), pp 1–29.

8 Saferworld interview with a European civil society expert; Nsaibia H (2020), 'State atrocities in the Sahel: the impetus for counterinsurgency results is fueling government attacks on civilians', Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), May (https://acleddata.com/2020/05/20/state-atrocities-in-the-sahel-the-impetus-for-counter-insurgency-results-is-fueling-government-attacks-on-civilians/?s=09); Nsaibia H, Duhamel J (2021), 'Sahel 2021: communal wars, broken ceasefires, and shifting frontlines', ACLED, June (https://acleddata.com/2021/06/17/sahel-2021-communal-wars-broken-ceasefires-and-shifting-frontlines/)

9 Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED): www.acleddata.com; Traoré D (2021), 'The Sahel: "In 2020, more civilians were killed by the security forces than by extremist groups"', FIDH (originally published in French in *Le Monde*), 26 February (https://www.fidh.org/en/region/Africa/mali/the-sahel-in-2020-more-civilians-were-killed-by-the-security-forces)

10 Saferworld interview with a European civil society expert

11 Saferworld interview with a Sahelian civil society expert

12 Saferworld (2021), 'EU leaders adopt €5 billion fund to train and equip security forces and militaries worldwide that risk fueling armed conflict', 22 March (https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/news-and-analysis/post/953-eu-leaders-adopt-a5-billion-fund-totrain-and-equip-security-forces-and-militaries-worldwide-that-riskfueling-armed-conflict)

13 Saferworld interview with a Sahelian civil society expert

14 Mangan F, Nowak M (2019) 'The West Africa–Sahel Connection: Mapping Cross-border Arms Trafficking', Small Arms Survey, December (http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/T-Briefing-Papers/SAS-BP-West-Africa-Sahel-Connection.pdf)

15 Saferworld interview with a Sahelian expert on arms diversion; see also Jouve A (2020), 'Sahel: d'où viennent les armes et les munitions?', *RFI*, 9 April (https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20200409-sahel-do%C3%B9-viennent-les-armes-et-les-munitions)

16 European Commission (2016), 'Joint communication to the European Parliament and the Council: Elements for an EU-wide strategic framework to support security sector reform, JOIN(2016) 31' (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52016JC0031)

17 EEAS (2017), 'EEAS/Commission services' issues paper suggesting parameters for a concept on Stabilisation as part of the EU Integrated Approach to external conflicts and crises, EEAS(2017) 1554', 8 December (https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-15622-2017-INIT/en/pdf)

18 Council of the European Union (2018), 'Council conclusions on Women, Peace and Security', 10 December (https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/37412/st15086-en18.pdf)

19 FIDH (2020), 'The Four People's Pillars of the People's Coalition for the Sahel', 16 July (https://www.fidh.org/en/region/Africa/the-four-people-s-pillars-of-the-people-s-coalition-for-the-sahel); People's Coalition for the Sahel (2021), 'The Sahel : What Needs to Change', April (https://www.sahelpeoplescoalition.org/report-sahel-what-must-change)

20 Saferworld (2016), 'Gender analysis of conflict', July (https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1076-gender-analysis-of-conflict); see also Saferworld (2020), 'Gender-sensitive conflict analysis: a facilitation guide', October (https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1284-gender-sensitive-conflict-analysis-a-facilitation-guide)

Security cameras at the EU delegation in Bamako, Mali.
Hamdia Traoré/Saferworld

1

Introduction: The securitisation of EU foreign policy and crisis response

Amid growing authoritarianism and instability in the world, the European Union (EU) finds itself at a crossroads in its approach to fostering peace and stability in its foreign policy. Established to bring an end to continuous wars in Europe, the EU has always had the promotion of peace as the central pillar of its foreign policy.[21] However, while peace, democracy and human rights remain important issues in its external action, Europe is increasingly turning towards militarised responses to crises – with Member States arguing that hard security tools offer greater control over conflict dynamics. As European foreign policy grows more security-focused, the concept of 'peace' has come to be used for a widening range of activities. In March 2021, EU Member States set up the European Peace Facility (EPF), a €5-billion fund to provide training and equipment – including arms and ammunition – for foreign security forces and regional military operations.[22]

The EPF was adopted amid high-level conversations about the EU's role in the world. The European Commission, under the leadership of Commission President Ursula von der Leyen (formerly Germany's Minister of Defence), has been vocal about its ambitions to make the EU a stronger global actor, including in matters of security and defence. **The von der Leyen Commission has branded itself a 'geopolitical Commission' and has called for the EU to be more forceful in defending its strategic interests abroad**. High Representative Josep Borrell has emphasised that in order for the EU to be a geopolitical power, it needs to 'learn the language of power' – or otherwise risk becoming 'a playground for other big powers'.[23] This 'Borrell doctrine' became clear during his visit to Addis Ababa, during which he said that the EU must supply weapons to partner countries in Africa in order to help them fight terrorism: "We need guns, we need ammunition, and that is what we are going to give to our African friends because their security is our security."[24]

While this rhetoric is new, **the EU's global security ambitions, and the linking of foreign policy and domestic security objectives, have been taking shape over the last ten years.** In 2012, Member States called on the EU to use development funds for the purpose of building third countries' counter-terror capacities.[25] In 2016, the EU Global Strategy spelled out its ambitions as a global security actor. While the Global Strategy committed the EU to 'engage in a practical and principled way in peacebuilding' and enshrined concepts such as human security and conflict sensitivity, it also further strengthened the link between internal and external security.[26] Framing state fragility in the European neighbourhood as a threat to European citizens, the Global Strategy called for the EU to step up efforts to invest in the security and resilience of partner governments.

The adoption of the Global Strategy accelerated a pre-existing trend of securitisation in the EU's foreign policy and crisis response. This has taken place both through **shifting the focus of the EU's existing foreign policy tools, and the launching of new security assistance instruments**. The African Peace Facility (APF), established by the EU in 2004 to support the African Union's (AU's) capacity to promote peace and security, has allocated 90 per cent of its funding to so-called 'Peace Support Operations'.[27] Many of these focus on counter-terrorism. While the APF also supports the AU's Peace and Security Architecture – as well as early warning and mediation activities – the overwhelming majority of its funding since 2011 has been allocated to the African Union Mission to Somalia's (AMISOM's) fight against al-Shabaab in Somalia.[28] Similarly, in recent years, the EU's own Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions have adopted new tasks and focus areas, with civilian missions expanding their tasks from conflict prevention, peacekeeping and security sector reform (SSR)[29] to areas such as counter-terrorism, border management and countering irregular migration,[30] while military missions have increasingly been taking the form of military training missions.

Along with these shifts, in recent years the EU has established new instruments which have enabled it to provide security assistance to foreign security and military forces. The EU Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF), set up in 2015 to fund the EU's external migration policy, includes projects for training and equipping security forces to control borders and counter terrorism, and similar activities have also been funded through the Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP). In 2017, the EU added a

> " How do the objectives of fighting terrorism and containing migration sit with the EU's commitments to promote peace, human security, gender equality and sustainable development? "

new component under the IcSP for 'Capacity Building for Security and Development' (CBSD) which for the first time enabled the EU to fund projects directly benefiting military forces, as long as their impact could be justified as contributing to development objectives.[31]

A significant amount of this new security assistance funding has been directed to the five Sahelian countries of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger – to the extent that some officials now refer to the Sahel as a 'laboratory' for the EU's new train-and-equip approach.[32] Indeed, as noted by Signe Cold-Ravnkilde and Christine Nissen, 'the EU's engagement in the Sahel has become an attempt to construct and confirm the Union's ability to act as a global security actor.'[33]

To guide its rapidly expanding security engagements, in 2016 the EU adopted the EU-wide Strategic Framework to support Security Sector Reform. The SSR Framework emphasises human security, inclusive governance, accountability of security institutions and the central role of civil society in ensuring EU security engagements support lasting peace and stability.[34] Furthermore, in 2018 the EU adopted the Strategic Approach to Women, Peace and Security,[35] building on its earlier commitments to ensure European security engagements promote gender equality,[36] as well as the Integrated Approach to Conflict and Crises, calling for EU engagements in fragile setting to be conflict sensitive.[37] **However, amid increasing rhetoric on robust action to defend its interests, and proliferating security assistance operations and funding, it is worth assessing whether the EU's security assistance is living up to the principles to which it has committed.** How do the objectives of fighting terrorism and containing migration sit with the EU's commitments to promote peace, human security, gender equality and sustainable development? With security assistance provided through several different operations and instruments, is it guided by a coherent approach to addressing grievances and transforming drivers of conflict? And, most importantly, what is its impact on the safety and security of people in the countries in which it is provided?

With the adoption of the EPF, which steps up the EU's efforts to boost the combat capabilities of partner countries, and allows it to provide them with lethal weapons, these questions are more relevant than ever before. This is why Saferworld has undertaken research to interrogate the drivers and motivations behind the securitisation of EU foreign policy and crisis response, to build a clearer picture of the existing efforts and assess their impacts. As the Sahel has become the epicentre of European security interventions, and as it has

featured prominently in the development of new EU security assistance instruments, this report maps the EU's security assistance efforts in the Group of five (G5) Sahel countries – Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger.

In order to get an accurate picture of the European 'security architecture' in the Sahel, Saferworld analysed:

- European military interventions

- The EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions

- EU-funded security assistance programmes (notably those funded by the EU Trust Fund for Africa, the African Peace Facility, European Development Fund, and the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace)

- European arms exports in the region

Through interviews with officials, researchers and civil society experts in both the Sahel and Europe, we sought to understand the drivers behind the increase of security assistance, and to analyse the emerging impacts of this assistance and the current European approach to conflict dynamics in the Sahel. By doing so, this report seeks to identify necessary adjustments for the EU's assistance in the Sahel, but also draw lessons for the future of the EU's approach to conflict and crises. This study will be complemented by a parallel study based on interviews with community representatives in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, presenting their perspectives and suggested policy alternatives for a more sustainable approach to supporting peace and security in the Sahel.

Notes

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French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel attend a news conference following a Franco-German joint cabinet meeting at the Elysee Palace in Paris, France, July 13, 2017.
Stephane Mahe/REUTERS

2

EU Member States: What's behind the push for securitisation?

France and Germany – deepening partnership to strengthen the EU's security role

The EU's increasing focus on hard security tools in its foreign policy and crisis response is tied to political developments across European capitals. Decisions on EU foreign and security policy are made by unanimous vote by its Member States. There has therefore been a broad consensus among European countries about adopting more military and hard-security tools in the Union's external action. However, two Member States have played a particularly influential role in pushing for a stronger EU security and defence role: France and Germany.

France has long been pushing for a stronger security and defence role for the EU.[38] Bruno Charbonneau highlights that, since the early 2000s, this has been driven by the desire to more equitably share the cost, resources, and risks of what it sees as the protection of Europe, as well as increasing the legitimacy of its operations.[39] However, France also wishes the EU to serve as a 'force multiplier' for French influence in the world.[40] France derives its leverage in the UN Security Council and other international bodies largely from its colonial- and post-colonial role, networks, and know-how in Africa. It therefore remains keen to retain influence in Africa, including by military means – and increasingly through European interventions.[41]

France has increasingly aimed to move its military and security activities under an EU flag, in order to strengthen its legitimacy and credibility, while reducing the risks and costs of interventions.[42] In particular, the public backlashes from the failure of its Operation Turquoise to protect civilians in Rwanda in 1994, and the heavy-handed activities and civilian casualties of Operation Licorne in Côte d'Ivoire in 2004[43] prompted the French Senate and military officials to debate and start implementing a 'Europeanisation' of French military operations.[44] The first demonstrations of this were the EU missions in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2003[45] and in Chad in 2008,[46] for both of which France was playing the role of a 'lead nation',[47] as well as the multi-state NATO-led coalition in Libya in 2011.[48]

Similarly, French President Emmanuel Macron's calls to European partners to step up their support to counter-terror operations in the Sahel, as well as the announcement to end Operation Barkhane, have been part of the French strategy to Europeanise the resource sharing of counter-terror operations – while maintaining significant influence in them.[49] Doing so would also allow Macron to manage public opinion in both Mali, where local perceptions of the French operations are far from favourable,[50] as well as in France where, ahead of the 2022 presidential elections, it is becoming increasingly challenging to justify a costly operation that has had limited results while claiming the lives of French soldiers.[51]

Furthermore, an unwavering optimism that military counter-terror operations will 'defeat the enemy' and create space for stability and political solutions, has contributed to a 'strategic stubbornness'[52] **that has kept France continuing with military operations, despite their often poor results.**[53] Overseas operations have also been useful to the French military apparatus and industry as a way of maintaining knowledge, capacity and networks, as well as for arguing against budget cuts.[54] While there has recently been some interest in balancing the military focus with more peacebuilding and civilian crisis management,[55] so far the overall emphasis has continued to be on the three 'D's of defence, diplomacy and development.[56] Overall, there has been a continuity of militarised counter-terror approaches since the François Hollande and Nicolas Sarkozy presidencies.[57] This has been partly credited to Jean-Yves Le Drian, Defence Minister from 2012 to 2017 and the current Minister of Foreign Affairs, who oversaw the transfer of French troops from Afghanistan and the deployment of Operations Serval and Barkhane in Mali, as well as leading a surge in French arms exports that have resulted in multi-billion euro contracts for the French defence industry.[58]

However, while French efforts to promote a stronger security and defence role for the EU have been a constant, what has really accelerated the securitisation of EU foreign policy is a shift in Germany's position.

Germany has historically had a long tradition of peacebuilding and civilian crisis management,[59] with the German Federal Government's Guidelines on Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace[60] as well as its accompanying strategies on Rule of Law, Transitional Justice and Security Sector Reform[61] putting the emphasis on human security, local ownership and accountability. Germany has enshrined its commitment to peace in its constitution and has historically been among the largest supporters of reconstruction and peacebuilding.[62] As a result of its political culture of civilian primacy and military restraint, Germany has in the past pushed back against France's security and military initiatives at the EU level. However, over the past decade, Germany has increasingly accepted and even promoted European initiatives to train and equip foreign military and security forces, advocating for both the Capacity Building in support of Security and Development (CBSD)[63] and the European Peace Facility (EPF).[64]

This has been a result of debate on the role that Germany should take vis-à-vis conflict and instability, as well as high-level decisions to cooperate more closely with France to strengthen European defence cooperation and the EU's role in the world. Since 2014, and especially since 2016 (the reasons for which are discussed below), there have been calls by the Chancellor, the Federal Foreign Office and the Bundeswehr for Germany to take on a bigger role in international affairs and assume more responsibility for security matters. At the 2014 Munich Security Conference, in the context of waning US military presence, then-President Joachim Gauck called on Germany to take more responsibility for international security, to 'stabilise' the European neighbourhood – the Middle East and Africa.[65] Then-Defence Minister (and current European Commission President) Ursula von der Leyen echoed this and called for European security and defence cooperation for Europe "to remain a credible actor in security policy".[66] The rhetoric has been matched with funds: Germany has expanded its crisis management toolbox and increased its military spending by over thirty per cent to US$52.8 billion in 2020.[67] Germany is also increasingly engaged in train-and-equip security assistance,[68] with new funds such as the Enable and Enhance Initiative. This approach has allowed Germany to engage in military responses to crises with a light footprint – therefore limiting the risks for German troops and navigating the sensitivities of German public opinion.[69]

As part of this trend, there has been a strengthening Franco-German alliance on security and defence, with the Élysée and the German Chancellor's office increasingly finding consensus on the need to strengthen European security and defence capacities.[70] Despite France and Germany continuing to have significant divergence in their approaches to crises, with Germany favouring a more civilian and France a more military approach, political leaders of the two countries have found increasing convergence,[71] as demonstrated by the formalisation of their security and defence industrial cooperation under the Aachen Treaty,[72] as well as their increasing cooperation in the Sahel.[73]

What are the political drivers behind the securitisation of European foreign policy?

There are two primary drivers that have underpinned the push for securitisation of EU foreign policy and crisis response: the wish to advance European defence in the context of geostrategic competition, and the increasing influence of domestic security considerations over European foreign policy. These trends have particularly shaped the shift in Germany's position; however, they have also strongly influenced several other Member States' priorities, growing their appetite for European security cooperation and their approval for a stronger global security role for the EU.

1. European reactions to geopolitical shifts

There have been a number of important geopolitical changes ongoing in the past decade, including instability in the Sahel, Eastern Europe (alongside the continued instability in the Middle East), renewed Russian aggression, the growing influence of China, and a trend towards US isolationism. While already during the Obama presidency the US was shifting its attention to Asia and calling Europeans to contribute more to NATO, the Trump presidency put into motion discussions about increasing Europe's 'strategic autonomy' in order to reduce its security reliance on the US.[74] This has resulted in a stronger appetite for boosting defence capabilities and cooperation in Germany as well as other EU Member States.

Meanwhile, Russia's military projections of power and influence in Ukraine have prompted an urgency among Member States to boost their military capacities and to seek stronger defence cooperation in Europe. The annexation of Crimea in 2014 in particular resulted in Eastern European countries and the Baltics increasingly turning to France and the EU as future security guarantors.[75] In this context, also those in the EU's north – Finland and Sweden outside NATO and Denmark within it – are increasingly seeking other options for security cooperation within the EU particularly after Brexit.[76] Similarly, Turkey's increasingly aggressive energy policy in the Eastern Mediterranean has pushed Member States in the southeast of Europe to look to European allies to defend them.[77]

Austerity has also made defence cooperation initiatives and resource pooling more urgent. In her 2014 speech at the Munich Security Conference, German then-Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen called for the pooling of defence capabilities in Europe, citing the impacts of the financial crisis.[78]

> " The new defence cooperation has been piloted and practised outside of Europe, and these operations have at times been more about relationship building with European allies than addressing the drivers of insecurity in the countries in which they are carried out. "

This is part of the reason why the EU is **reinforcing and integrating security and defence structures**. Such moves include increasing defence and security cooperation structures within and outside the EU,[79] and new funding instruments for pooling resources and increasing European security and defence capabilities, such as the European Defence Fund and the EPF.

France has been frustrated by slow progress on EU defence and security cooperation.[80] As a result, in 2018, France launched the European Intervention Initiative (EI2), inviting those countries it deemed 'willing and able' to drive European defence cooperation – in other words those countries that responded when France evoked Article 42.7 at the time of the Paris attacks in 2015. The EI2 established a 'flexible and independent' forum for defence officials to plan joint operations and to drive European defence cooperation forward.[81] In the spirit of 'mutualising' threats,[82] the EI2 coordinates discussions on initiatives in the Sahel (such as on the planning of special task force operation Takuba) while also including working groups that focus on regions of concern to other members.[83]

While the emergence of new security and defence alliances and initiatives may not be surprising given these geopolitical changes, the extent to which they have played out as **overseas military operations and remote warfare** is striking. The new defence cooperation has been piloted and practised outside of Europe, and these operations have at times been more about relationship building with European allies than addressing the drivers of insecurity in the countries in which they are carried out. In the framework of the EI2, for example, Estonia has been active in contributing troops and equipment to Barkhane and Task Force Takuba in the Sahel, while France has increased its defence presence closer to the Russian border despite not seeing Russia as an immediate threat.[84] Indeed, a French National Assembly report notes that, although Estonia has few links to Mali, the desire to support France as 'a reliable ally' led the Estonian authorities to send troops to a base in Gao.[85] Similarly, Greece has indicated its willingness to contribute special forces to Task Force Takuba in the Sahel,[86] as France has sent its navy to the Mediterranean to deter Turkey.[87] Following Brexit, the UK has kept close security and defence relations with France by maintaining and increasing its troop contributions and providing three Chinook CH-47 helicopters in the Sahel – something that UK soldiers have admitted is less about improving security in the region and more about nurturing the relationship with France.[88]

2. Domestic security concerns: terrorism and migration

The underlying assumption of security vacuums incubating transnational 'jihadist' threats has framed a narrative of imminent threat to European citizens that needs to be contained and defeated. While connections between attacks in Europe and violent groups in places such as the Sahel have been opaque,[89] European decision-makers' urge to react forcefully to terror attacks within Europe has prompted them to make counter-terror objectives pre-eminent within security policy engagements *outside* of Europe. **This urgent and overwhelming focus on counter-terror has led to short-term and heavily militarised strategies that fail to focus on the underlying drivers of instability – and often make them worse.**

Another major shift in attitudes towards security assistance across Europe has been driven by European politicians' panic at the increase in anti-immigration populism since 2015. In 2015, as EU Member States failed to agree on a shared European asylum system following the arrival of one million asylum seekers in Europe, they turned their focus beyond Europe's borders and intensified efforts to seek partnerships with third countries to prevent migration towards Europe. **The objective of migration containment has increasingly shaped EU Member States' foreign as well as security policy.**

Amid growing populist-nationalist rhetoric and out of fear of voters sliding to the far right, traditionally progressive or moderate parties in many European countries have given in to the rhetoric, adopting populist policies instead of challenging fear-based narratives. An example of this dynamic has been Merkel's growing attention on the Sahel since the political crisis that followed the arrival of some 890,000 refugees in Germany in 2015. While Merkel's leadership in welcoming refugees to Germany was widely supported by the German public, it also created significant political tensions and anxiety in her party, the Christian Democratic Union, over losing voters to the hard-right Alternativ für Deutschland (AfD) party.[90]

As German politicians were looking for any possible action to avoid giving 'ammunition' to AfD,[91] in 2016 the Chancellor called for more attention to Africa in German foreign policy, stating that migration from the continent was a 'major challenge'.[92] As a result, Merkel has called the Sahel "one of the most serious problems we face at the moment", arguing for a stronger German presence in the region (followed by the launching of a bilateral security cooperation mission in Niger) and urging parliamentarians to reconsider their restrictive arms export stance.[93] This has also played into Germany's increasing acceptance of French security approaches in the Sahel, of which it had before 2015 been critical of.[94] Similarly, the objective to contain migration, counter terrorism and build relations with France and Germany has prompted Italy to send troops to Niger, open new embassies in the Sahel countries and take part in the Takuba Task Force.[95]

Growing contradiction due to polarisation

As a result of geopolitical and domestic concerns across European capitals, EU Member States have increasingly found consensus in opting for securitised foreign policy responses, directing EU funds to military and security capacity building overseas, for the purposes of fighting terrorism, containing migration and competing with rivals. This trend has not been uniform – both between different Member States and within their policy establishments there have been parallel efforts to focus the EU's efforts on civilian crisis responses.

While there are contradictory dynamics within many Member States with regards to migration and securitised foreign policy, several of them continue to moderate the European hard security approach and promote civilian crisis responses, women, peace and security, and conflict prevention – some for constitutional reasons, and others due to their long experience of addressing the root causes of conflict. **However, in the context of polarisation and the fear and distrust stoked by nationalist-populist parties, the EU's approach to crises is increasingly torn between military-security approaches to containing instability and its traditionally more constructive investments in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, human rights and development.**

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Members of the EUTM Mali take part in a military training in Koulikoro Region, Western Mali.
Baba Ahmed/Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

3

European security interventions in the Sahel

Drivers of conflict in the Sahel versus the EU Sahel strategy

The Sahel region, particularly Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, has in the past ten years suffered from intertwined and overlapping violent conflicts and crises. While conflicts in different locations have specific, local drivers, there are shared factors and trends:

■ The region historically exhibited a great degree of regional mobility and trade, on which local economies were based.[96] French colonial administrations imposed artificial borders, hindering this. In recent years, the introduction of severely restrictive migration and border control strategies – sponsored by European countries – have further disrupted seasonal migratory patterns, destroyed livelihoods based on regional mobility and fuelled instability.[97]

■ Although the Sahel was traditionally very politically decentralised, the legacy of French-style governance models reinforced a heavily centralised rule across the region, led by a more urban-focused political elite that is less accountable and more prone to corruption. As opposed to focusing on the priorities of their citizens, especially regarding security and economic equality, the overriding trend of Sahelian governments has been to consolidate personal and group power.[98]

■ Post-colonial access to and control of many national natural resources have been over-concentrated in the hands of political elites, compounding economic, political and social inequalities.[99]

■ Climate change severely challenges the region's development efforts, and the dominant focus on security and its related drain on national budgets means there is less money available for education, health and other social budgets to reduce inequality.[100]

■ Desertification and extreme variations in the distribution of rainfall resulting in unpredictable floods and droughts have severely disrupted the agro-pastoral activities on which the populations of the Sahel depend. Environmental degradation, sustained population growth and climate change have exacerbated competition over scarce resources, increasing tensions surrounding land use between sedentary farmers and nomadic herders, thus fuelling conflict escalation.[101] On top of this, conflicts in Central Sahel are worsening food insecurity.[102]

■ To avoid military coups, governments have tended to deliberately maintain weak national armies, who have failed to protect communities.[103]

■ Excessive use of force against citizens and human right abuses by security forces have become normalised and widespread, such as in Mali, Burkina Faso, and more recently in Niger.[104] A systematic lack of accountability of security forces includes impunity regarding physical and sexual violence towards women and girls.[105] The proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons have meanwhile fuelled escalating cycles of retaliatory violence.[106]

The result is the presence of over-centralised states run by political elites, where clientelism based on divide-and-rule has been the norm. Citizen–state social contracts are, almost without exception, weak, and national authorities are largely failing to address the structural issues that lead to, and exacerbate violent conflicts. Exclusionary governance has at times left communities like the Fulbe (also known as Fulani) and the Bella in Mali at the political margins. Abuses by state security forces – or perceptions of them – have fuelled distrust towards the state and influenced young people's decisions to join violent groups.[107]

While the EU's 2011 Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel noted poverty, corruption, climate change, social exclusion and unresolved grievances as central challenges in the region, it identified as a more 'urgent and a more recent priority' the need to prevent al-Qaeda attacks (noting 'its potential to carry out attacks on EU territory') and protect the EU's economic interests in the Sahel.[108] Indeed, both the EU's Sahel strategy and its Regional Action Plan (RAP, April 2015) perceive the Sahel first and foremost through the lens of European security, and emphasise the fight against terrorism as the EU's key objective in the Sahel.[109] The RAP was adopted in April 2015, in parallel with discussions on stepping up cooperation with third countries to curb migration towards Europe, and this prompted the addition of migration and border management as focus areas of the EU's actions in the Sahel.[110]

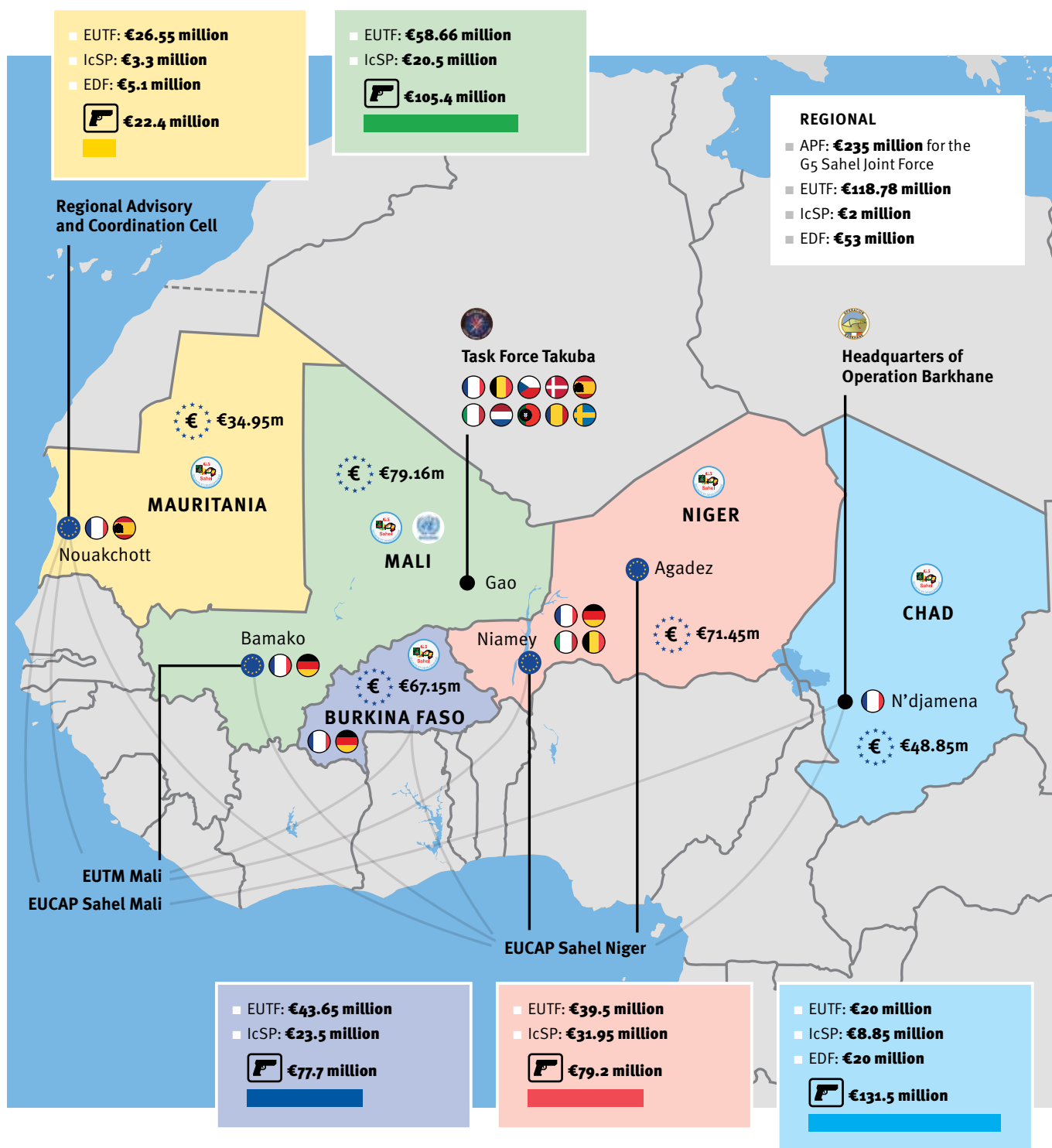" **The vacuum of the state is the oxygen of terrorism** "

– EU Special Representative to the Sahel Angel Losada, in an event hosted by the Brussels International Center in July 2020.[111]

The Sahel strategy also brought to the forefront the security–development nexus, asserting that 'improving security and development in Sahel has an obvious and direct impact on protecting European citizens and interests and on the EU internal security situation.'[112] The strategy portrays the Sahel as an area where the weakness of governments to 'combat' both poverty and security threats has created 'inherent instability that can impact on uncontrolled migratory flows'. Since the adoption of the Sahel strategy, the Sahel has become in EU rhetoric a region of 'ungoverned spaces' and 'porous borders',[113] which, if not controlled through military means, poses a threat to Europe. The Sahel strategy's linking of internal and external policies on one hand, and between security and development actors on the other, has since become commonplace in EU foreign policy documents.[114] Indeed, the Sahel has been described by EU officials as a 'laboratory' for piloting new security policies and initiatives.[115] A 2019 assessment of the Global Strategy described the EU's support to the five countries as an 'important test case' for linking the EU's political, security, development, migration and humanitarian initiatives.[116] Through this lens, climate change, poverty and unemployment have become secondary issues that are 'exploited by terrorists', rather than being seen as the key drivers of insecurity.

International military operations in the Sahel

The EU's Sahel Strategy is being implemented in a **space that is crowded with counter-terror interventions**. Following a Tuareg-led separatist rebellion in northern Mali and a military coup in Bamako in 2012, France launched Operation Serval in Mali in January 2013. Serval was a rapid campaign to recapture territory from jihadist groups, which French foreign minister Laurent Fabius warned were aiming 'to control the whole of Mali in order to establish a terrorist state… threatening the whole of Africa and Europe itself'.[117] In 2014, Serval was replaced by Operation Barkhane, a significant military operation for counter-terrorism activities alongside local troops and international partners in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. With an annual budget of approximately €700 million, Barkhane involves 5,100 French troops, hundreds of ground vehicles, numerous helicopters, fighter jets and, since 2019, armed drones.[118] 40 per cent of Barkhane's air strikes are now conducted by drones.[119] In 2017, the G5 Sahel countries launched a Joint Force to conduct counter-terror operations with the political, financial and operational support from international partners, notably the EU. Since the establishment of the G5 Sahel Joint Force in 2017, Barkhane has, alongside its own counter-terror combat operations, begun accompanying and training the G5 Joint Force troops that could eventually replace French forces.[120]

EUTF: **€26.55 million**
IcSP: **€3.3 million**
EDF: **€5.1 million**
€22.4 million

EUTF: **€58.66 million**
IcSP: **€20.5 million**
€105.4 million

REGIONAL
APF: **€235 million** for the G5 Sahel Joint Force
EUTF: **€118.78 million**
IcSP: **€2 million**
EDF: **€53 million**

Regional Advisory and Coordination Cell

€34.95m

MAURITANIA

Nouakchott

Task Force Takuba

€79.16m

MALI

Gao

Headquarters of Operation Barkhane

NIGER

Agadez

€71.45m

CHAD

Bamako

Niamey

€67.15m

BURKINA FASO

N'djamena

€48.85m

EUTM Mali
EUCAP Sahel Mali

EUCAP Sahel Niger

EUTF: **€43.65 million**
IcSP: **€23.5 million**
€77.7 million

EUTF: **€39.5 million**
IcSP: **€31.95 million**
€79.2 million

EUTF: **€20 million**
IcSP: **€8.85 million**
EDF: **€20 million**
€131.5 million

KEY

Total sum of EU security assistance projects

Total sum of EU Member States' arms exports in each country

EU Common Security and Defence Policy missions

Bilateral security assistance by EU member state

G5 Sahel Joint Force

United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

EUTF = EU Trust Fund for Africa
IcSP = Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace
EDF = European Development Fund

A UN peacekeeping mission, the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), was deployed in 2013, with a mandate to protect civilians and re-establish state authority in Central Mali.[121] Since 2015, its mandate has included supporting the implementation of the peace accord between armed groups and the Malian government, aiming to restore peace in Mali through a process of decentralisation, dialogue, economic development, and by reconstituting a national army – including members of the signatory armed groups.[122] However, alongside the French-led counter-terror operations, and with a stalling implementation of the peace agreement,[123] MINUSMA has increasingly found itself playing a de facto support role to the counterterror operations of Barkhane and later the G5 Joint Force.[124]

Amid escalating insecurity, growing anti-French sentiment[125] and a helicopter crash killing French soldiers in November 2019,[126] French President Emmanuel Macron gathered G5 Sahel and European leaders to reaffirm and step up their counter-terror efforts in a summit in Pau, France. As a result of the meeting, **the hard security focus of the international interventions was further solidified by the establishment of the Coalition for the Sahel** in January 2020. The Coalition brought French counter-terrorism operation Barkhane and the G5 Sahel Joint Force together under a joint command,[127] backed up by the capacity-building operations of the EU and efforts to expand state functions over the territory of the Sahel.[128]

As part of pillar I, 'the fight against terrorism', Macron announced the deployment of a new Task Force 'Takuba' to 'Accompany, Advise [and] Assist' national armies in counter-terror operations in the Liptako region at the borders of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. The Task Force will also conduct its own counter-terror operations.[129] Takuba draws its troops mostly from special forces of EU Member States active in the European Intervention Initiative (EI2) – including the Czech Republic, Belgium, Estonia, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden, together with Mali and Niger.[130] Operational since April 2021 and equipped with Swedish Black Hawk helicopters,[131] Takuba is a key part of the French-led efforts to Europeanise its counter-terror operations in the Sahel.[132] However, while Takuba was announced as a joint European effort,[133] France has continued to play the principal role in its leadership.[134]

The second and third pillars of the Coalition gave form to the Partnership for Security and Stability in the Sahel (P3S), the French–German initiative originally launched in 2019 with the initial intention of balancing the military focus of the European response in the Sahel with more emphasis on justice and governance.[135] However, as part of the Coalition, **the P3S has been reframed as a security capacity building initiative**, with the objective of strengthening the capabilities of the national military forces of the G5 countries (pillar II) and supporting the 'return of the state' through training and equipping their internal security forces (pillar III).[136] This **formalised an existing division of tasks in which France has the lead on the military counter-terror operations, while the EU is leading the capacity building of military and security forces of the G5 Sahel states.**[137] As its fourth pillar, the Coalition incorporated the Sahel Alliance, an initiative set up by France, Germany and the EU to balance military operations with more coordinated support for development.[138]

These overlapping security initiatives have made the Sahel the epicentre for new European military cooperation.[139] In addition to the above operations, several other EU Member States are either providing support to the French-led operations or have bilateral engagements in G5 countries. The Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia and Poland all contribute troops to Operation Barkhane, while Spain provides airlifts for Barkhane troops out of military detachments in Senegal and Gabon.[140] Italy has a bilateral Mission of Support to the Republic of Niger (MISIN).[141] Germany provides training and equipment to the Malian, Nigerien and Burkinabe forces in the framework of the Enable and Enhance Initiative,[142] and to Nigerien forces through its bilateral 'Gazelle' mission.[143] Germany has also contributed significant funds for civilian stabilisation, with projects worth €200 million on civilian infrastructure, countering crime, strengthening judicial capacities and combating abuses and impunity between 2016 and 2020.[144]

EU security assistance

Since the adoption of its Sahel Strategy in 2011, the EU has mobilised billions of euros aimed at stabilising the region, including €3.6 billion in development aid and €1.12 billion in humanitarian assistance.[145] In addition to its development and humanitarian assistance, the EU has invested significant funds for building the capacity of the security and military forces of Mali, Chad, Niger, Mauritania and Burkina Faso. As part of its capacity building efforts since the launch of its Sahel Strategy, **EU institutions**[146] **have announced over €1.4 billion's worth of security assistance** to G5 Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger), of which €1.2 billion was allocated for the period of 2012 to 2020.[147] This

includes three Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions, and €710 million's worth of security assistance projects funded through different EU instruments, summarised in the table below.

The assistance provided by the EU's missions and security assistance instruments consists largely of training military and security forces in the Sahel and providing them with infrastructure and equipment. While EU treaties prohibit the funding of arms and ammunition from the EU's budget, its security assistance programmes have provided large amounts of 'non-lethal' military equipment such as armoured vehicles, aircraft and crowd control equipment. Alongside security assistance provided by EU institutions, EU Member States have provided significant amounts of equipment to the G5 countries bilaterally as donations, and exported arms worth over €400 million since 2013.

To understand how this investment has been used – by whom and to what effect – Saferworld analysed a range of EU programme descriptions, mission mandates and relevant evaluations.

Counterterrorism has been central to the EU's presence in the Sahel from the start. In 2011, the €8 million 'CT [counter-terrorism] Sahel' project started EU efforts to strengthen the capacity of Malian, Nigerien and Mauritanian security forces and foster regional cooperation on security and defence.[149] CT Sahel was closely involved in the setting up of the Sahelian Security College (Collège Sahélien de Sécurité, CSS), established to develop a common culture between Mali, Niger and Mauritania on the 'large transborder threats' of terrorism, organised crime and trafficking of migrants. The CSS served as an 'incubator' for the G5 Sahel and was moved under the G5's leadership in 2015.[150]

The first CSDP mission, **European Union Capacity Building Mission (EUCAP) Sahel Niger**, was launched in 2012 to strengthen the Nigerien security forces' capacity to fight terrorism and organised crime.[151] For the EU, the mission had the dual purpose of resisting spill-overs of unrest from

Libya and Mali, while demonstrating that the EU was 'doing something about the risk of terrorism'.[152] Within two years, a military and a civilian mission followed in Mali. The three missions were all framed around a state-centred understanding of stabilisation, focused on strengthening state control over 'ungoverned areas' and countering insurgent groups in the region. In Mali, the **European Union Training Mission (EUTM) Mali** was tasked with training and restructuring the Malian defence forces to enable them to reconquer the north of the country,[153] while the civilian mission **EUCAP Sahel Mali** trains, equips and advises the Malian internal security forces to facilitate the expansion of state presence over Malian territory.

While in Niger EU officials deemed working on governance an unrealistic goal for EUCAP Sahel Niger,[154] in Mali EUCAP Sahel Mali's mandate extends beyond mere capacity building to assisting the government to implement its programme of security reforms. The mission was originally mandated to help create conditions for lasting peace by making the security sector more legitimate and democratic, and restoring state authority throughout the country.[155] In practice, the mission has gained most traction in activities related to the strengthening of the operational capacity of Malian security forces and authorities.[156] This corresponds with the assessment of CSDP missions' security sector engagement by the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM), which observes that, despite falling under the EU's SSR Framework, 'in practice they favour "train and equip" models to help security actors to establish a monopoly of force, but with limited attention to questions of legitimacy, accountability and public acceptance or human security'.[157] Thus, EUCAP Sahel Niger has provided training and equipment to fight terrorism and organised crime in Niger', but 'made little progress on setting up internal control and audit capacities',[158] while for EUCAP Sahel Mali governance and reform activities have been limited to the issue of human resources.[159]

EU security assistance in the G5 Sahel countries since 2011				
CSDP missions (common costs)[148]	**Security assistance projects**			
European Union Training Mission (EUTM) Mali (military mission): €255 million 2014–2022	African Peace Facility: €235 million support to the G5 Joint Force	EU Trust Fund for Africa: €307 million	Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace: €90 million	European Development Fund: €78 million
EUCAP (European Union Capacity Building Mission) Sahel Mali (civilian mission): €254 million 2014–2024				
EUCAP Sahel Niger (civilian mission): €237 million 2012–2021				

European Union Training Mission (EUTM) Mali

EUTM Mali was launched in February 2013, following a request from the transitional authorities to build the military capacity of the Malian Armed Forces (FAMA). With its mission headquarters in Bamako and a training camp in Koulikoro, EUTM Mali was tasked with training FAMA and advising Malian authorities, with the objective of enabling FAMA to restore Mali's territorial integrity and reduce the threat posed by terrorist groups.[160] At the beginning, the focus was on training combat battalions[161] that were immediately deployed to the battlefield.[162] In addition, EUTM Mali personnel advise the Malian military and authorities on command and control, logistics chain management and human resources, as well as providing training on international humanitarian law, the protection of civilians and human rights. EUTM Mali advisers have played a key role in shaping the Military Orientation and Programming Act,[163] which authorised the Malian President to reform Mali's defence and security system and called for a budget allocation of €1.5 billion to the defence forces.[164]

Since 2016, EU Member States have gradually expanded EUTM Mali's area of responsibility,[165] and tasked it with supporting the establishment and operationalisation of the G5 Sahel Joint Force, enhancing coordination and interoperability with the military forces of Niger, Mauritania, Burkina Faso and Chad.[166] In March 2020, EUTM Mali's mandate was revised to expand its military advice, training and mentoring activities to cover the G5 Sahel Joint Force and the national armed forces in all G5 countries (most urgently, Burkina Faso and Niger).[167]

Personnel trained: 18,000 FAMA personnel (by 2020)[168]

Budget: €255 million 2014–2022

Types of assistance:

European Union Capacity Building Mission (EUCAP) Sahel Mali

Established in 2014, EUCAP Sahel Mali provides training, equipment and advice to the Police, Gendarmerie and the National Guard in order to strengthen the presence of the internal security forces over the country's territory. The trainings cover operational management, command structure, forensics, maintaining public order, intelligence gathering, human rights and counter-terrorism. In addition, EUCAP Sahel Mali provides strategic advice on the deployment of the internal security forces, and has strengthened the capacity of a Special Investigation Unit, enabling it to start investigations in the northern and central regions of Mali.

Beyond capacity building, EUCAP Sahel Mali's mandate also includes components on supporting the Malian government in its programme of security sector reform (SSR). In its original mandate, the mission was tasked with helping create conditions for lasting peace by supporting the security sector in being more legitimate and democratic, and restoring state authority throughout the country. In practice, so far activities related to SSR have been focused on human resources and logistics management. In 2021, a new mandate was adopted, announcing a stronger focus on good governance and addressing impunity and corruption.

Since 2017, EUCAP Sahel Mali's activities have been regionalised through the establishment of a Regional Coordination Cell in Bamako, and the posting of Internal Security and Defence Experts to Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania and Niger to improve joint working between the internal security forces of G5 countries. In 2019, EUCAP Sahel Mali expanded its counter-terrorism and anti-crime activities to Burkina Faso and Chad.

Budget: €254 million 2014–2024

Types of assistance include:

Key

Military/security force training

Equipment for military/security forces

Border control/migration management

SSR/civilian oversight

Institutional support/regional coordination

European Union Capacity Building Mission (EUCAP) Sahel Niger

Established in 2012 to counter terrorism and organised crime, EUCAP Sahel Niger trains and equips the Nigerien internal security forces (police, gendarmerie and the national guard) and provides 'strategic advice' to relevant ministries.[169] Under its third mandate in July 2014, EUCAP Sahel Niger began supporting the Nigerien Defence Force, insofar as its actions were linked to internal security.[170] In its mandate to reinforce the capacities of the Nigerien security forces to fight terrorism and organised crime, EUCAP Sahel Niger works on policing methods and crisis management structures,[171] with a particular focus on strengthening the forensics capacity of the Nigerien Technical and Scientific Police.[172] Since the expansion of its mandates in 2015 and 2016,[173] EUCAP Sahel Niger's focus has been expanded to migration containment and border control, launching efforts to construct and equip checkpoints at Niger's borders and train border guards,[174] including on the detention of 'irregular' migrants.[175]

Budget: €237 million 2012–2021

Types of assistance provided:

Given growing European political preoccupation with reducing immigration noted in Section 2, since 2015, EU Member States' aim to **externalise border control and migration management has resulted in a significant increase in the volume of EU security assistance in the Sahel, as well as a reframing of the existing programmes**. In April 2015, European leaders announced the EU's commitment to stepping up assistance to third countries for controlling migration and 'preventing illegal migration flows'.[176]

EUCAP Sahel Niger, which had so far enjoyed limited attention from European politicians, was suddenly in the spotlight as the EU identified Niger as a transit country for migrants.[177] Following an Interim Strategic Review, the mission opened up a field office in Agadez,[178] and took on the additional objective of assisting Nigerien authorities and security forces to control and fight irregular migration.[179] Agadez, which was seen by European leaders as a transit point for migrants, quickly became a hub for European activity, although officials admit that this was more for the purpose of "showing its presence" rather than for operational

reasons.[180] Member states followed suit, with Italian military forces appearing in both Niamey and Agadez.[181] The German defence minister – now European Commission President – Ursula von der Leyen described Niger during one of her visits to the country as "part of the European neighbourhood" and a "valuable, reliable and determined partner in the fight against terrorism, organised crime and illegal migration in the region".[182]

Following its new mandate, EUCAP Sahel Niger focused on training and equipping Nigerien security forces to control 'migration flows' and Niger's 'porous borders', and convincing Nigerien authorities to adopt strategies to crack down on migration.[183] According to officials in the mission, the mandate shift was poorly managed: configured entirely around developments in Europe, it failed to draw on a fact-finding mission or consultations with Nigeriens[184] – opening it to the charge of 'providing African solutions to European problems'.[185] With the focus on assisting Niger to exercise control and combat migration, there was little emphasis on understanding the importance of regional mobility for the Nigerien economy and society and the risks of containing it.

While the EU's attempts at migration cooperation have been met with stronger resistance in Mali, EUCAP Sahel Mali's renewed mandate in 2017 introduced increased cooperation among G5 internal security forces and with the EU's border control agency Frontex.[186] The regular calls by European leaders to intensify the EU's efforts to curb migration along the 'Central Mediterranean Route'[187] have been matched with funds, with the budgets of the EU's CSDP missions and security assistance projects in the Sahel doubling between 2015 and 2020.

The political pressure to externalise border control and curb migration has also resulted in the mobilisation of funds for security assistance projects through EU funding instruments. Out of the total of €1.4 billion of EU security assistance in the Sahel, over €1 billion has been announced after 2015. A significant amount of this assistance is channelled through the **'EU Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa' (EUTF)**, a €4-billion flexible funding instrument set up to fund EU external migration management in Africa. The EUTF was established at a summit between African and European leaders in Valletta in November 2015, at which European leaders were determined to shift more responsibility for migration management to African countries to help alleviate the political crisis over sharing responsibilities for migrants and refugees within Europe. For many African leaders, the European policy panic was an opportunity to leverage support for their priorities.[188]

Budget allocations for EU security assistance in the G5 Sahel countries per year (million €)
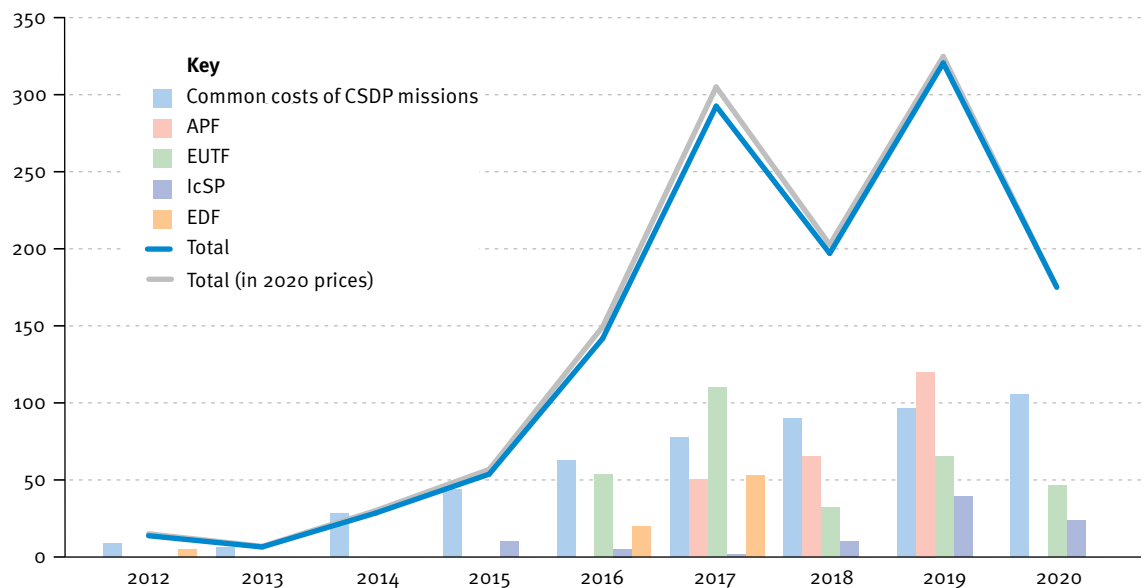
Most EUTF funding goes to development projects, but it also funds security assistance intended to strengthen borders and 'stabilise' countries with the intention of reducing migration towards Europe. This approach has been particularly prevalent in the Sahel, where EUTF assistance worth €307 million has been provided to support Sahelian security forces, border guards and counter-terror units. The biggest such initiative is the €71.7 million Groupes d'Action Rapides – Surveillance et Intervention au Sahel (GAR-SI) project, aimed at setting up mobile rapid action groups to fight terrorism, equipped by Spain-based International and Ibero-American Foundation for Administration and Public Policies (FIIAPP) and trained by Spanish, French, Portuguese and Italian gendarmeries. According to an evaluation, EUTF projects had by 2019 trained and equipped over 7,000 national security personnel in the Sahel.[189]

The project descriptions of EU security assistance programmes increasingly frame the Sahel as a region where armed groups, demographic growth, 'porous borders' and instability pose a direct threat to Europe.[190] EUTF-funded projects in countries designated as points of origin or transit often view conflict and instability primarily as drivers of migration, addressed by strengthening the capacity of security forces to expand state control in border regions. For example, according to the project description of the Programme of support for enhanced security (PARSEC) Mopti-Gao, 'conflict prevention can only happen by increasing interoperability of [the Internal Security Forces] with defence forces and neighbouring countries'.[191]

Security assistance has also become linked to and in some cases conditional on migration cooperation. EUTF funding has been closely linked to the Migration Partnership Framework, set up in 2016 to 'fully integrate migration in the EU's foreign policy',[192] including through agreements whereby countries get EUTF assistance in exchange for stepping up border control and cooperating on returns. In the Sahel, one such deal has successfully been struck with Niger, which the EU has courted as a key partner in curbing migration since 2015. Niger has leveraged the EU's migration panic, calling for massive amounts of funding to curb migration,[193] and becoming one of the largest recipients of EUTF funding. Much of this has come in the form of budget support,[194] conditioned on Niger's cooperation in curbing migration, including via the adoption of a national security law which criminalised cross-border movement and economic activities linked to it.[195]

The EU has also made the provision of equipment an incentive for Niger's cooperation on migration containment. A €90-million state building contract[196] offering Niger budget support under EUTF earmarked €15 million for the Internal Security Forces' equipment. EUTF funding has also been used to foster migration cooperation with Mauritania.[197]

Malian authorities have been adept at leveraging the EU's migration concerns to extract equipment and investment for their security forces,[198] with Malian then-President Ibrahim Keita portraying his country as a 'dam that must not break'.[199] Many EUTF-funded security assistance projects in Mali are loosely framed around migration management, while operationally they focus on capacity building of the Malian security forces in order to extend state control and conduct counter-terror operations.[200]

Indeed, whether justified by the EU as counter-terrorism or migration containment, the majority of the EU's security assistance programmes fund

a **similar type of train-and-equip activity, aimed at building the capacity of military and security forces**. As part of this mapping, Saferworld identified €710 million's worth of projects that the EU has launched in support of security and military forces and national and regional authorities governing them in the G5 Sahel countries since 2012. Analysis on each of these projects can found on pages 26–32. Out of this investment, two thirds – around €490 million – has been allocated for activities focused on training and equipping security forces. For example, capacity building programmes funded by the EUTF had by 2019 trained over 4,000 security personnel from Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger on topics including security, border control and counter-terrorism.[201] Much capacity building under EUTF projects has focused on the Liptako-Gourma region, a geopolitically sensitive area at the borders of Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso which has a heavy concentration of military counter-terror activities. While in recent years Liptako-Gourma has seen growing insecurity and attacks, a large part of EUTF-funded trainings in the region in 2019 focused on border management and security,[202] reflecting the perceived threat of insecurity and migrants moving towards Europe.
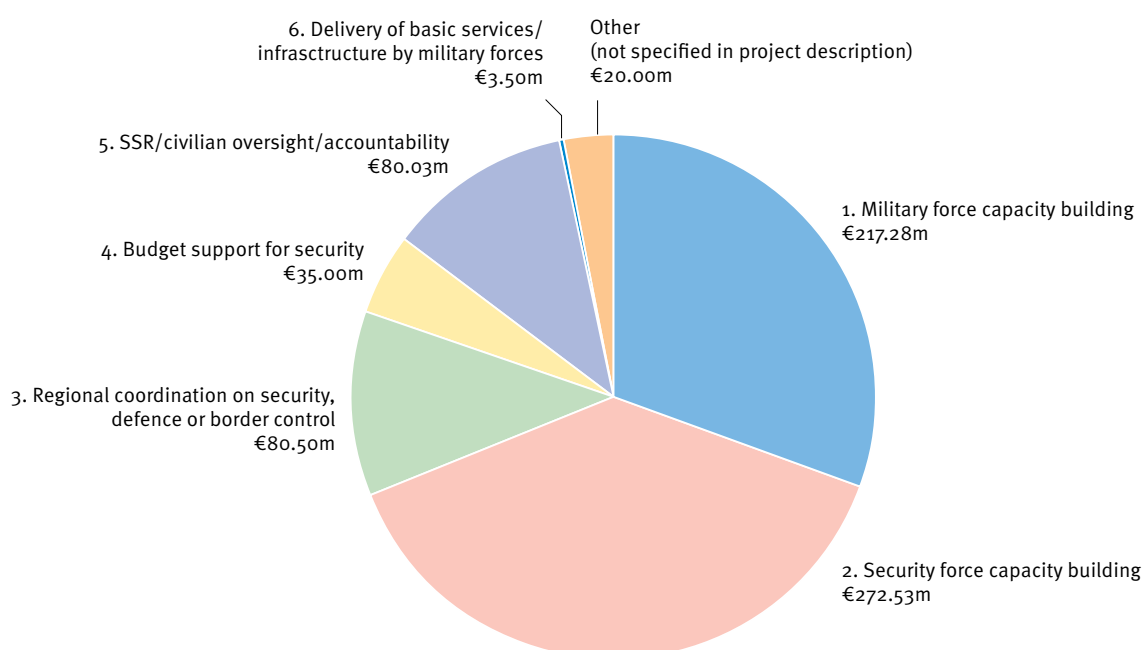
Meanwhile, only around ten per cent of the funding has been allocated explicitly to support security sector reform or improving civilian oversight of forces. While the EU's security engagements are set to be guided by its Strategic Framework to support Security Sector Reform (2016),[203] its principles of accountability, human security and civilian oversight often fall behind the focus on counter-terror and migration containment. This has been visible also in the projects funded by the **Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP)**. The IcSP was established in 2014 with a €2.3 billion budget to respond to crises and threats and contribute to peace, stability and conflict prevention. Since its establishment, it has provided €90 million of security assistance in G5 countries. In Burkina Faso, early phases of the EU's security assistance through the PARSIB[204] project focused not only on train-and-equip for internal security forces and the creation of new counter-terror units, but also support for long-term reforms to increase civilian participation and oversight.

However, after Burkinabe President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré requested security assistance in Brussels in 2018, amid growing insecurity, the subsequent phase of PARSIB, and the STABEST[205] project launched in 2019, emphasised building the operational capacity of the security forces to fight terrorism. Similarly, in Mali, the focus of IcSP efforts has shifted from an SSR focus before 2016 – as with the CORSEC project,[206] which in part aimed to ensure internal security forces were accountable and responsive to people's needs – to a technical capacity building approach focused on counter-terrorism.
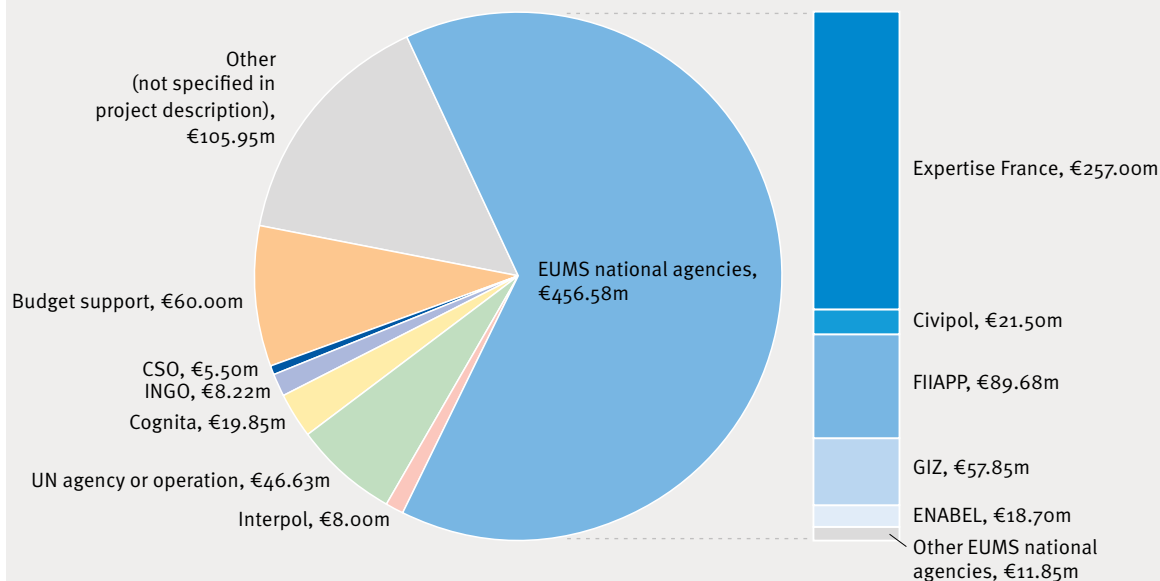
Since 2017, the IcSP has been able to provide capacity-building support to military forces under a new component named 'Capacity Building for Security and Development' (CBSD) which for the first time allowed the EU to fund projects directly benefiting military forces, as long as their impact could be justified as contributing to development objectives rather than combat. This has enabled IcSP to assist partner military forces with training, mentoring, equipment and infrastructure, but

Types of assistance funded as part of EU security assistance programmes (million €)

6. Delivery of basic services/ infrastructure by military forces €3.50m

Other (not specified in project description) €20.00m

5. SSR/civilian oversight/accountability €80.03m

4. Budget support for security €35.00m

3. Regional coordination on security, defence or border control €80.50m

1. Military force capacity building €217.28m

2. Security force capacity building €272.53m

Who implements EU security assistance projects in the Sahel?

Budget by implementers (million €)

Other (not specified in project description), €105.95m

Budget support, €60.00m

CSO, €5.50m
INGO, €8.22m
Cognita, €19.85m

UN agency or operation, €46.63m

Interpol, €8.00m

EUMS national agencies, €456.58m

Expertise France, €257.00m

Civipol, €21.50m

FIIAPP, €89.68m

GIZ, €57.85m

ENABEL, €18.70m

Other EUMS national agencies, €11.85m

The majority of the EU's security assistance funding in the Sahel goes to EU Member States' national agencies. The top recipient is French technical cooperation agency Expertise France, with implements €256 million's worth of projects in the Sahel countries, amounting to over a third of the EU's funding for security assistance projects in the region. Other major recipients include French internal security agency Civipol, Belgian technical cooperation agency ENABEL, Spanish government agency FIIAPP and German development agency GIZ. Often, specific European countries' national

agencies implement several projects in the same country; for example, ENABEL leads on the implementation of programmes in Burkina Faso while French agencies are the lead for most projects in Mali.

UN agencies and MINUSMA implement a handful of assistance projects. As for non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Swiss security assistance organisation Coginta implements several projects in Chad, but other NGOs and local civil society organisations (CSOs) play only a minor role in most projects.

precludes the provision of lethal equipment, recurrent military expenditure, or training to increase fighting capacity.[207] CBSD had a budget of €100 million, of which nearly a third – €31 million – has been allocated to build the capacity of the military forces of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso or, for two projects in Mali, funding the delivery of basic services and dual use infrastructure by military actors.[208]

The objectives of migration containment and counter-terror do not seem to have had as much of an impact on projects funded through the European Development Fund (EDF). The programme descriptions of the PAASIT[209] project in Chad and the regional OCWAR-T[210] project place emphasis on civilian oversight, gender equality and regional cooperation on problems like the proliferation of illicit weapons – representing a more holistic

approach to security assistance than those projects focused narrowly on capacity building for counter-terror or border control.

Since the establishment of the G5 Sahel Joint Force in 2017, its operationalisation has become a key objective of the EU's security assistance in the Sahel. G5 Sahel heads of state launched the Joint Force in February 2017 to combat terrorism and trafficking, restore state authority, and facilitate relief and development actions in border regions.[211] During her first official visit to Mali, the EU's High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy Federica Mogherini announced that the EU would provide €50 million to get the Joint Force "off the ground properly", saying that "the stability and the development of the Sahel region are crucial, not only for Africa but also for Europe". [212]

Since 2017, the EU has provided €235 million through the **African Peace Facility (APF)** for the Joint Force, €37 million through the EUTF, and €18 million through the IcSP.[213] The initial €50 million focused on equipping and institutional capacity building of the 5,000-unit Joint Force and its gendarmerie and police components. French security agency Expertise France was tasked to support the Joint Force's command structures by rehabilitating command posts and providing the equipment and infrastructure needed to make the force operational.[214] Soon after the first Joint Force operation in October 2017, the EU doubled APF funding to €100 million, adding €35 million for building the capacity of the Joint Force through equipment and services provided by Expertise France and support on logistics and operations from MINUSMA. German development agency GIZ was awarded €5 million to work on the governance structure of the G5, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) received €10 million to set up a human rights compliance framework. Following fundraising by France and the EU, several EU Member States have pledged funds for the Joint Force via the APF or bilaterally.[215]

At the same time, **the activities of CSDP missions have been regionalised to cover all of the G5 Sahel countries**, including through the establishment of a Regional Advisory and Coordination Cell (RACC).[216] As a result, their focus has been increasingly on supporting cross-border cooperation on defence, counter-terrorism and border control, and the operationalisation of the G5 Sahel Joint Force by integrating national security forces into it.[217] The EU's close engagement with the G5 Sahel since its early formulation[218] has been reflected in the G5's priorities for regional cooperation. An EU–G5 Sahel Roadmap was adopted in the November 2015 G5 Sahel summit in N'Djamena, drawing on the EU's Sahel Regional Action Plan, the G5's own security and development strategy, and the Joint Valetta Action Plan.[219]

In line with EU thinking, the roadmap's priorities were: security; border management; the fight against terrorism, organised crime and illicit trafficking; migration and mobility; and the prevention of and the fight against violent extremism.[220] Europe's strong financial and political support for the counter-terrorism force followed calls by France for Europe to step up its support for counter-terror operations.[221] As such, the EU's support to the G5 Sahel served both EU-wide objectives for mobilising funds for counter-terror and border control in the Sahel, as well as French aims to share the burden of resources for the costs of the counter-terror operations in the Sahel.

Arms and military equipment

European officials sometimes argue that the effectiveness of the EU's security assistance in the Sahel is undermined by its inability to provide combat equipment for security forces.[222] However, this study's mapping of arms and military equipment provided by the EU and its Member States found that in fact **a significant amount of military equipment has already been provided by the EU's missions and instruments, as well as bilaterally by its Member States**.

Equipment provided in the framework of the EU's security assistance programmes includes armoured vehicles, drones, boats, aircraft, and equipment for surveillance, communications and crowd control. The EU's civilian CSDP missions also provide equipment and infrastructure to the Nigerien and Malian security forces. While the EU's treaties prohibit the EU from providing weapons and funding operations with 'military or defence implications',[223] liberties have been taken with how this prohibition is implemented in practice. Although the EU's Common Military List provides clear definitions of military equipment, EU-funded security assistance programmes have handed over military equipment, as defined in the EU Common Military List, to military and security forces in the G5 Sahel countries. According to the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), military equipment such as armoured vehicles[224] are considered 'non-lethal' as long as they are not equipped with weapons, and are therefore eligible for EU funding.[225] However, in reality there is a fine line between lethal and non-lethal and much of the equipment supplied can be rendered lethal through adaptation or (mis)use.

> " **We need guns, we need arms, we need military capacities and that is what we are going to help provide to our African friends because their security is our security.** "
>
> – EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy Josep Borrell in Addis Ababa, 27 February 2020

Equipment provided in the framework of the EU's security assistance programmes includes:

African Peace Facility
Over €80 million worth of equipment and infrastructure provided for the G5 Sahel Joint Force, including 46 Bastion armoured vehicles delivered by Expertise France to the national armed forces of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger for the purposes of troop transport, explosive ordnance disposal, medical teams[226]

EU Trust Fund
EUTF-funded projects have provided drones, ground vehicles, helicopters, boats and planes

- **ECI-NIGER** Drones provided to the Nigerien internal security forces for border management, as part of a €11.5 million project to form joint investigation units in Niger to contain migration
- **PARSEC Mali** Of a €29 million budget, €21 million has been used for equipment and security infrastructure, including boats, vehicles, planes and border posts.[227] These include a Cessna-208 Caravan Light transport aircraft,[228] which was delivered with training, and 'state of the art equipment' for a combined total value of €5 million in April 2019
- **GAR-SI Sahel** Out of the €66-million project to form special gendarmerie units to fight terrorism, €38 million has been allocated for the provision of vehicles and equipment
- **SECUTCHAD** As part of a €10-million project to increase the Chadian internal security forces' border control capacity, the EUTF has provided equipment including 185 police batons, 217 handcuffs, 28 boats, 17 4x4 vehicles and 56 motorcycles[229]

Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace
IcSP-funded security assistance programmes have provided military and security forces with boats, ground vehicles, and communications and surveillance equipment

Civilian CSDP missions
- **EUCAP Sahel Mali** At least €5 million worth of infrastructure and equipment provided to the Malian internal security forces by 2018, including vehicles, detection equipment, IT equipment, generators, and the construction and renovation of operational centres and mobile garages[230]
- **EUCAP Sahel Niger** Material assistance worth €4.9 million provided to the Nigerien internal security forces, including vehicles, detection equipment, computers and printers, generators, along with the renovation of training and operational centres, and the construction and equipment of mobile garages.[231]

Provision of equipment by EU Member States

While the EU's security assistance has been limited to 'non-lethal' equipment, that is, excluding arms, missiles and ammunition, its Member States provide these alongside other military equipment through donations, exports and bilateral train-and-equip programmes. France, for example, has donated equipment worth € 24 million to the G5 and its national forces, including:

Three combat helicopters and eight planes;[232] armoured trucks and vehicles for troop transportation;[233] and helmets, vests, and anti-EID equipment[234] for the Nigerien military forces

Armoured vehicles and trucks (some equipped with machineguns and radios)[235] for the Burkinabe military forces

Two helicopters[236] for the Malian military forces

Military trucks[237] for the Mauritanian military forces

Germany has bilateral train-and-equip programmes in Mali and Niger, including in the framework of the 'Enable and Enhance' initiative.

In Mali, Germany has provided 29 ambush-protected vehicles,[238] 30 armoured vehicles,[239] 25 trucks,[240] and protective equipment[241] to the Malian army.

In Niger, Germany opened a military camp in 2018, and has since provided 53 vehicles, 100 military trucks, 115 motorcycles and 55 satellite phones to Niger for use by its special army and police counter-terrorism units to combat cross-border militancy and migrant trafficking through the Agadez region of the Sahel.[242]

In Burkina Faso, Germany has committed to providing military equipment worth €10 million.[243]

The Czech Republic, Croatia and Cyprus have donated military equipment to the Malian army. The Czech Republic has donated €0.37 million for the purchase of military equipment (helmets, vests), Croatia €0.24 million's worth of equipment, and Cyprus 2,360 assault rifles.[244]

Commercially, **EU Member States exported weapons valued at over €400 million to the G5 countries from the start of 2013 to the end of 2019.** The biggest recipient of European arms exports in the Sahel was Chad, with €132 million, followed by Mali with

€105 million. The biggest European arms exporters have been France, Italy, Bulgaria and Spain. Among Central and Eastern European countries Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia have exported significant amounts of small arms and ammunition to the G5 countries. See the full table on arms exports by EU member states to the G5 Sahel countries on pages 33–34.

Similar to the EU's security assistance programmes and missions, **the objective of migration containment has influenced EU Member States' decisions to provide weapons**. Many European countries have justified donations or exports of arms as investments in migration control or counter-terror. Chancellor Angela Merkel has been calling for Germany to step up its arms exports to the Sahel, saying restrictive export policies are not in Germany's interests.[245] The Czech, Dutch, Danish and Finnish framed their material support to the G5 countries as countering migration and the 'spill-over effects' of insecurity in the Sahel on Europe.[246]

Security development nexus: the EU's stabilisation doctrine in the Sahel

Saferworld's mapping of EU's security assistance in the Sahel reveals an approach that is focused on the security of states and the technical capacity building of their security forces. Training, advising and provision of non-lethal equipment is funded through EU missions and instruments, while arms, ammunition and other military equipment are provided bilaterally by Member States as donations or commercially.

While the EU's security assistance is funded through several instruments with different objectives and mandates, in practice they all focus predominantly on train-and-equip activities. Missions and programmes are focused on building security and military forces' capabilities in fighting terrorism, strengthening borders and expanding states' presence in 'uncontrolled areas'. Programmes are often framed around the 'security development nexus', arguing that building the capacity building of state forces is required to allow for stability and development – and to protect Europe.

Following this state-centred understanding of security, and what has become the EU's stabilisation doctrine in the Sahel, the solution becomes a military-first state expansion, with the expectation that stability and development will follow.

EU security assistance in the Sahel has had a limited focus on governance, accountability or on ensuring that security institutions respond to human security needs. While migration and the threat of terrorist groups are central to the framing of nearly all of the EU's project descriptions, corruption, inequality and exclusionary governance as drivers of insecurity are insufficiently featured. With some notable exceptions, considerations on gender, accountability and civilian protection are often limited to the 'horizontal issues' section of project descriptions, rather than shaping the intervention logic of programmes, while the activities linked to them are often limited to the inclusion of gender and human rights compliance as topics of trainings.

It is important to note that the EU and its Member States also provide support for justice, peacebuilding and civilian security initiatives in the G5 Sahel countries. The EUTF, the IcSP and the EDF finance projects to strengthen justice systems, foster dialogue between communities and among youth, and to support women's leadership in peace initiatives. However, in comparison with the EU's investment in national and regional security and military forces in the G5 Sahel countries, the scale of this type of support has been limited. Saferworld managed to identify approximately €60 million's worth of projects launched by the IcSP, EUTF or the EDF between 2012 and 2020 to support the justice systems in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and Niger, and another €60 million for peacebuilding initiatives in the five G5 Sahel countries.[247] This amounts to ten per cent of the EU's investment in the capacity of security actors. Furthermore, the involvement of local civil society – acknowledged in the EU SSR Framework as central to human security – in the implementation of these projects has been limited, with only a handful of projects being implemented by local CSOs.[248]

EU security assistance programmes in G5 Sahel countries

Regional

Programme	Amount, instrument	Type of assistance/description of purpose/activities included	Implementer
Appui à la coopération régionale des pays du G5 Sahel et au Collège Sahélien de Sécurité (PAGS I)	**€7.2m**, EUTF, 2016	Category: **3. Regional coordination on security, defence or border control** Support to the G5 Sahel Permanent Secretariat to strengthen regional cooperation on security, counter-terror, border control and migration management; support for transferring the Sahel Security College under the G5 Sahel Secretariat; support to the G5 Sahel rotating presidency	Civipol
Support to the strengthening of police information systems in the broader West Africa region (WAPIS)	**€8m**, EUTF, 2016	Category: **3. Regional coordination on security, defence or border control** Support to the establishment of a police information sharing system in West Africa (covers Benin, Ghana, Mali and Niger, and aims to establish a strategic partnership with Burkina Faso, Chad and Mauritania)	Interpol
GAR-SI SAHEL (Groupes d'Action Rapides – Surveillance et Intervention au Sahel)	**€71.675m**, EUTF, 2016	Category: **2. security force capacity building (train & equip)** Establishing, training and equipping of rapid response groups to fight terrorism, trafficking of migrants and organised crime	FIIAPP, Civipol, with national guards of France, Spain, Italy, Portugal
Programme d'Appui au G5 pour la Sécurité au Sahel (PAGS) Phase II	**€5.3m**, EUTF, 2019 (part of €10m project)	Category: **3. Regional coordination on security, defence or border control** Strengthen the capacity of the G5 Permanent Secretariat to foster regional cooperation on security, defence and migration control and development	CIVIPOL (in consortium with FIIAPP, GIZ, ENABEL)
EU Support to the UNDP 'Regional Stabilisation Facility for Lake Chad' (RSF)	**€5m**, EUTF, 2019	Category: €2.5m **2. security force capacity building (train & equip)** & €2.5m **5. SSR/protection of civilians/accountability** Support to the deployment of internal security forces and law enforcement agencies and establishment of mechanisms for human rights and IHL compliance (covers Niger, Chad, Nigeria, Cameroon)	UNDP
Appui aux forces de sécurité des pays membres du G5 Sahel pour la lutte contre l'impunité et le renforcement de leurs liens avec les populations	**€21.6m**, EUTF, 2019	Category: **5. SSR/protection of civilians/accountability** Support to the establishment of internal and external accountability mechanisms for the internal security forces of the G5 countries	DIHR, OCHCR

Key

Military/security force training		SSR/civilian oversight	
Equipment for military/security forces		Institutional support/regional coordination	
Support for CT operations by military/security forces		Confidence building	
Border control/migration management		Budget support	
Infrastructure		Arms control	
Human rights/IHL compliance		Countering organised crime	
Gender			

Programme	Amount, instrument	Type of assistance/description of purpose/activities included	Implementer
Soutien à la Composante Police de la Force Conjointe du G5 Sahel: Renforcement de l'intégration et coordination au niveau du G5 Sahel	**€2m**, IcSP, 2019	Category: **3. Regional coordination on security, defence or border control** Operationalisation of the G5 police component of the G5 Sahel Joint Force through strengthening its cooperation with the G5 military forces	Unknown
Support to the G5 Sahel Joint Force through the African Peace Facility	**€115m**, African Peace Facility, 2017–2018	€83.3m to Expertise France for the provision of equipment, infrastructure and training = Category: **1. military force capacity building (train & equip)** €10m to MINUSMA for its logistical and operational support to the G5 Sahel Joint Force on Malian territory = Category: **1. military force capacity building (train & equip)** €5m for GIZ to support the G5 Permanent Secretariat = Category: **3. Regional coordination on security, defence or border control** €17m for OHCHR for a human rights and IHL compliance framework = Category: **5. SSR/protection of civilians/accountability**	Expertise France, OHCHR, GIZ
	€120m, African Peace Facility, 2019–2020	€100m for Expertise France = Category: **1. military force capacity building (train & equip)** & €20m Category: **Unknown**	
Organised Crime: West African Response to trafficking (OCWAR – T)	**€20m**, EDF, 2017	Category: **3. Regional coordination on security, defence or border control** Countering trafficking of drugs, human beings and firearms in West Africa through establishing Criminal Investigation Task Forces, supporting regional coordination, countering the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons, protecting victims of trafficking	GIZ
Organised Crime: West African Response to Money laundering and the financing of terrorism (OCWAR – M)	**€8m**, EDF, 2017	Category: **3. Regional coordination on security, defence or border control** Fostering regional cooperation and adoption of measures to counter money laundering and financing of terrorism	Expertise France (€6.75m), Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa GIABA (€0.75m)
Organised Crime: West African Response on Cybersecurity and fight against Cybercrime (OCWAR – C)	**€8m**, EDF, 2017	Category: **3. Regional coordination on security, defence or border control** Improving the cybersecurity awareness and capacity of authorities	Expertise France
Support to ECOWAS Peace and Security Architecture and Operations (EPSAO)	**€17m**, EDF, 2017	Category: **3. Regional coordination on security, defence or border control** Strengthen ECOWAS's capacity to respond to crises, prevent and manage conflicts, and promote security sector reform/governance	GIZ

Categories

1. Military force capacity building (train & equip)
2. Security force capacity building (train & equip)
3. Regional coordination on security, defence or border control
4. Budget support
5. SSR/protection of civilians/accountability
6. Delivery of basic services/civilian infrastructure by military forces

Burkina Faso

Programme	Amount, instrument	Purpose	Implementer
Programme d'Appui à la Gestion Intégrée des Frontières au Burkina Faso (ProGEF)	**€15.85m** (part of €30m project), EUTF, 2017	Category: **2. security force capacity building (train & equip)** Capacity building of internal security forces to control borders through provision of equipment, infrastructure and training	GIZ
Appui budgétaire pour la mise en œuvre du Programme d'Urgence Sahel du Burkina Faso	**€20.8m** (part of €90m project), EUTF, 2017	Category: €15m **1. security force capacity building and train & equip** & €5.8 **5. SSR/protection of civilians/accountability** Budget support to build the capacity of internal security forces through training and equipping, confidence building between the forces and civilians, combined with political dialogue on SSR and technical assistance on IHL/IHRL trainings	Budget support
Retour de la confiance et renforcement des capacités sécuritaires au Burkina Faso (RENFORCES BURKINA FASO III)	**€7m**, EUTF, 2020	Category: **2. security force capacity building (train & equip)** Support the deployment of National Gendarmerie units in volatile areas in the Sahel region *no programme description available yet*	Expertise France
Projet d'Appui au Renforcement de la Sécurité Intérieure du Burkina Faso (PARSIB & PARSIB-RSS)	**€5.2m**, IcSP, 2016	Category: €2.1m **2. security force capacity building (train & equip)** & €3.1m **5. SSR/protection of civilians/accountability** Support authorities in security sector reform while training and equipping the internal security forces to fight terrorism	ENABEL, Expertise France
Projet d'Appui au Renforcement de la Sécurité Intérieure du Burkina Faso II (PARSIB 2)	**€3m**, IcSP, 2018	Category: **2. security force capacity building (train & equip)** Capacity building of the internal security forces through the provision of training and equipping	ENABEL
Appui aux forces de défense dans le cadre du renforcement des capacités pour favoriser la sécurité et le développement	**€4m**, IcSP/CBSD, 2019	Category: **1. military force capacity building (train & equip)** Capacity building of the Burkinabe military forces through the provision of training and equipment (force protection and anti-EID equipment), dialogue with communities	ENABEL
Projet d'appui à la stabilisation de l'Est du Burkina Faso (STABEST)	**€4m**, IcSP, 2019	Category: **2. security force capacity building (train & equip)** Training and equipping mobile police and gendarmerie units, confidence building with communities	ENABEL
Projet d'appui aux Unités Nationales d'Investigation du Burkina Faso (Composante Police G5 + Burkina Faso)	**€3.5m**, IcSP, 2019	Category: **2. security force capacity building (train & equip)** Training and equipping the special anti-terrorism brigade (Brigade Spéciale d'Investigation Anti-Terroriste BSIAT) as part of the G5 Joint Force police component.	ENABEL
New CBSD project in Burkina Faso	**€3.8m**, IcSP/CBSD, 2020	Category: **1. military force capacity building (train & equip)** Strengthen the capacity of the light aviation component of the Burkinabe armed forces *no programme description available yet*	Unknown

Chad

Programme	Amount, instrument	Purpose	Implementer
Appui à la formation et à la sécurité publique au Tchad (SECUTCHAD)	**€10m**, EUTF, 2017	Category: **2. security force capacity building (train & equip)** Capacity building of the Chadian internal security forces through provision of equipment, training and infrastructure, and dialogue with civilians	Coginta
SECurité et GEstion des Frontières (SECGEF)	**€10m**, EUTF, 2017	Category: **2. security force capacity building (train & equip)** Budget support for training, equipment and infrastructure for the Chadian internal security forces and development of border control strategies	Budget support
Reinforcing river and lakeside border control in order to promote the security of residents and socio-economic activity faced with criminal activity and the terrorist threat in Chad (FRONTCHAD)	**€3.5m**, IcSP, 2015	Category: **2. security force capacity building (train & equip)** Training and equipment for the Chadian internal security forces, support to authorities for the development of a border control strategy	Coginta
Projet de consolidation et de pérennisation des acquis de la Compagnie de Sécurité Nautique afin de promouvoir la sécurité des populations et des activités socio-économiques face aux activités criminelles et à la menace terroriste au Tchad	**€1.85m**, IcSP, 2017	Category: **2. security force capacity building (train & equip)** Capacity building of the Chadian internal security forces through support in human resources management, training and equipment/ infrastructure	Coginta
Projet d'appui à opérationnalisation de la composante police de la Force conjointe du G5 Sahel et au processus de judiciarisation au Tchad	**€3.5m**, IcSP, 2019	Category: **2. security force capacity building (train & equip)** Training and equipping of Chadian internal security forces (Unité d'Investigations spéciale de la composante police UISCP) as part of the G5 Joint Force Police Component	Unknown
Amélioration de la sécurité intérieure au Tchad (PAASIT)	**€20m**, EDF, 2016	Category: €11.6m **5. SSR/protection of civilians/accountability** & €6.9m **2. security force capacity building (train & equip)** Improving governance of the Chadian security sector, capacity building of the Chadian internal security forces through training, equipment and infrastructure, improving relations between the forces and communities	EU delegation

Mali

Programme	Amount, instrument	Purpose	Implementer
Programme of support for enhanced security in the Mopti and Gao regions and for the management of border areas (PARSEC Mopti–Gao)	**€43.657m**, EUTF, 2017	Category: **2. security force capacity building (train & equip)** Capacity building of internal security forces through providing training, equipment and infrastructure, increasing interoperability with the Malian military forces and regional cooperation to strengthen control of border areas	Expertise France
Programme d'actions à impact rapide pour la stabilisation des régions du Centre Mali	**€15m**, EUTF, 2018	Category: **2. security force capacity building train & equip)** Infrastructure and equipment for security forces to enable their rapid deployment in Central Mali, confidence building activities to improve civilians' perception of security forces	EU delegation in Mali
Project contributing to security sector reform efforts (crisis management) in Mali (CORSEC)	**€5m**, IcSP, 2015	Category: €2.5m **2. security force capacity building (train & equip)** & €2.5m **5. SSR/protection of civilians/accountability** Provision of equipment and infrastructure to the internal security forces, improving their management, setting up structures to better respond to the protection of civilians	Civipol
Support to the security of Mopti/Sévaré airport	**€3m**, IcSP/ CBSD, 2018	Category: €1.5m **1. military force capacity building (train & equip)** & €1.5m **6. Delivery of civilian activities by military forces** Rehabilitation of the security infrastructure of Mopti airport for civilian and military purposes	UNOPS
Projet d'appui au renforcement des capacités des services de santé des Forces Armées Maliennes (PARSANTE)	**€4m**, IcSP/ CBSD, 2018	Category: €2m **1. military force capacity building (train & equip)** & €2m **6. Delivery of civilian activities by military forces** Support to the Malian military forces through training, equipment, infrastructure and civil-military activities to enable them to provide health services in Central Mali	Expertise France
Soutien à l'opérationnalisation de la Composante police de la Force conjointe du G5 Sahel au Mali	**€3.5m**, IcSP, 2019	Category: **2. security force capacity building (train & equip)** Training and equipping of Malian internal security forces (Brigade d'Investigation Spécialisée BIS) as part of the G5 Joint Force Police Component	Civipol
Appuyer le retour de la présence de l'Etat et de ses services dans les zones vulnérables au centre Mali et renouer le lien de confiance nécessaire entre la populations et les forces de défense et de sécurité	**€5m**, IcSP/ CBSD, 2020	Category: **1. military force capacity building (train & equip)** Construction of military infrastructure to improve the protection of military forces and their living conditions, trainings on IHRL, IHL and protection of civilians, civil-military dialogue activities to expand state presence in Central Mali	Civipol

Mauritania

Programme	Amount, instrument	Purpose	Implementer
Renforcement de la gestion des migrations et des frontières, et faciliter la protection, le retour et la réintégration durable de migrants	**€4.55m**, EUTF, 2017	Category: **2. security force capacity building (train & equip)** Capacity building of internal security forces for border control through construction of border posts, training and equipment, civil-military dialogue	IOM
L'UE pour le nexus sécurité-résilience-développement en Mauritanie	**€22m**, EUTF, 2018	Category: €20m **4. Budget support** & €2m **2. security force capacity building (train & equip)** Budget support to Mauritania conditional on the adoption of a security strategy, and capacity building of Mauritanian internal security forces	Budget support, FIIAPP
Projet d'appui à la coordination régionale de la mise en oeuvre de la Composante Police de la Force Conjointe du G5 Sahel	**€3.3m**, IcSP, 2019	Category: **2. security force capacity building (train & equip)** Training and equipping of Mauritanian internal security forces (Unité d'investigation spéciale/Direction de Sécurité de l'Etat UIS/DSE) as part of the G5 Joint Force Police Component	Expertise France
Appui à la sécurité et développement en Mauritanie	**€5.1m** (part of €13m project), EDF, 2012	Category: €2.55m **1. military force capacity building (train & equip)** & €2.55m **2. security force capacity building (train & equip)** Countering terrorism and organised crime through capacity building of Mauritanian armed and security forces through training, equipment and improved management	EU delegation/ Republic of Mauritania

Niger

Programme	Amount, instrument	Purpose	Implementer
Création d'une Equipe Conjointe d'Investigation (ECI) pour la lutte contre les réseaux criminels liés à l'immigration irrégulière, la traite des êtres humains et le trafic des migrants	**€16m**, EUTF, 2017	Category: **2. security force capacity building (train & equip)** Strengthen the capacity of Nigerien police forces to contain migration through providing training and equipment	FIIAPP
Contrat relatif à la Reconstruction de l'Etat au Niger en complément du SBC II en préparation Appui à la Justice, Sécurité et à la Gestion des Frontières au Niger	**€19m** (part of €90m project), EUTF, 2017	Category: €15m **4. Budget support** & €4m **2. security force capacity building (train & equip)** Capacity building of Nigerien internal security forces on security and border management through provision of budget support earmarked for equipment for security forces, training, infrastructure and equipment	Civipol, budget support
Soutien à la création d'un escadron polyvalent de la Garde Nationale du Niger	**€4.5m**, EUTF, 2020	Category: **2. Security force capacity building (train & equip)** Creation of a multi-purpose squadron of the Niger National Guard to fight terrorism and stabilise border regions, provision of equipment and supporting human rights compliance	Coginta

Programme	Amount, instrument	Purpose	Implementer
Mesures d'atténuation du risque sécuritaire et maîtrise des flux dans l'environnement frontalier immédiat/Reinforcing border security in the Diffa region, 'Sedini IBM'	**€1.6m** (part of €15.5m project), IcSP, 2015	Category: **2. security force capacity (train & equip)** Strengthening border control by rehabilitating border posts, building the capacity of the internal security forces and improving their relations with populations	IOM
Projet d'appui à l'opérationnalisation de la composante police de la Force conjointe du G5 Sahel et au processus de judiciarisation des fuseaux Centre et Est, et leurs zones limitrophes	**€3.5m**, IcSP, 2019	Category: **2. security force capacity building (train & equip)** Training and equipping Nigerien internal security forces (Service Central de Lutte Contre le Terrorisme et la Criminalité Transnationale Organisée SCLCT/CTO) as part of the G5 Joint Force Police Component	Unknown
Soutien à la Sécurité et à la Stabilisation au Niger	**€5.85m**, IcSP/ CBSD, 2019	Category: €2.925m **1. military force capacity building (train & equip)** & €2.925m **5. SSR/protection of civilians/accountability** Capacity building of the Nigerien military forces through provision of equipment and infrastructure, activities to improve civil-military relations	EU member state National Agency (TBD)
	€6m, IcSP, 2019	Category: €3m **2. security force capacity building (train & equip)** & €3m **5. SSR/protection of civilians/accountability** Capacity building of the Nigerien internal security forces through provision of equipment and infrastructure, activities to improve relations with civilians	EU member state National Agency (TBD)
Soutien à la stabilisation de la région de Tillaberi (CBSD)	**€5m**, IcSP/ CBSD, 2020	Category: €2.5m **1. military force capacity building (train & equip)** & €2.5m **5. SSR/protection of civilians/accountability** Capacity building of Nigerien military forces through training, equipment and infrastructure, activities to improve civil-military relations	Unknown
	€5m, IcSP, 2020	Category: €2.5m **2. security force capacity building (train & equip)** & €2.5m **5. SSR/protection of civilians/accountability** Capacity building of Nigerien internal security forces (gendarmerie and national guard) through training, equipment and infrastructure, and activities to improve civil-military relations	Unknown
	€5m, IcSP, 2020	Category: **5. SSR/protection of civilians/accountability** Dialogue between communities and security and defence forces to improvethe responsiveness of security forces to the needs of people	Unknown

Arms exports by EUMS in the G5 Sahel countries[249]

Total value of EU arms exports in the G5 Sahel countries 2013–2019: €416 million

	Burkina Faso	Chad	Mali	Mauritania	Niger
Austria: value of exports reported **€0.053m**	Aircraft[250]		€0.052m Small arms	€0.0005m Small arms	
Belgium: value of licenses[251] **€0.176m**	€0.005m Small arms		€0.128m Electronic equipment		€0.043m Protective/armoured equipment
Bulgaria: value of exports reported **€49.563m**	€24.845m Small arms, light weapons, ammunition, bombs/missiles, aircraft/UAVs[252], electronic equipment, protective/armoured equipment	€4.103m Small arms, ammunition, bombs/missiles	€9.549m Small arms, light weapons, ammunition, bombs/missiles, aircraft/UAVs	€1.129m Light weapons, ammunition, protective/armoured equipment	€9.93m Light weapons, ammunition, bombs/missiles
Czechia: value of exports reported **€13.677m**	€5.436m Small arms, aircraft/UAVs, imaging/countermeasure equipment	€0.205m Small arms, bombs/missiles	**DONATION** **€0.37m** for the purchase of military equipment[253]	€0.767m Small arms, ammunition	€7.269m Small arms, light weapons, ammunition, bombs/missiles, aircraft/UAVs
Croatia: value of exports reported **€0.0397m**			€0.0397m protective/armoured equipment **DONATION** **€0.34m** worth of military equipment[254]		
Cyprus: no commercial exports to the G5 Sahel countries reported			**DONATION** 2,360 assault rifles and military equipment[255]		
Finland: value of exports reported **€0.007m** **DONATION** **€0.9m** worth of material support to the G5 Joint Force[256]					€0.007m Protective/armoured equipment
France: value of exports reported **€151.684m** *Breakdowns of types of equipment based on licensing data*	€38.436m Small arms, light weapons, ammunition, bombs/missiles, fire control/target acquisition, armoured vehicles, aircraft/UAVs, electronic equipment, protective/armoured equipment, imaging/countermeasure equipment, firearm simulation equipment, software **DONATION** armoured vehicles, light weapons, communication equipment[257], aircraft[258] **DELIVERY** of 6 EU-funded armoured vehicles[259]	€24.4395m Small arms, light weapons, ammunition, bombs/missiles, fire control/target acquisition, armoured vehicles, electronic equipment, chemical/biological agents, protective/armoured equipment, imaging/countermeasure equipment, firearm simulation equipment, software **DELIVERY** of 7 EU-funded armoured vehicles[260]	€28.7896m Small arms, light weapons, ammunition, bombs/missiles, fire control/target acquisition, armoured vehicles, aircraft/UAVs, electronic equipment, chemical/biological agents, protective/armoured equipment, imaging/countermeasure equipment, firearm simulation equipment, software **DONATION** aircraft[261] **DELIVERY** of 13 EU-funded armoured vehicles[262]	€5.689m Bombs/missiles, fire control/target acquisition, armoured vehicles, aircraft/UAVs[263], electronic equipment, protective/armoured equipment, imaging/countermeasure equipment, firearm simulation equipment, software **DONATION** armoured vehicles[264] **DELIVERY** of 7 EU-funded armoured vehicles[265]	€54.33m small arms, light weapons, ammunition, bombs/missiles, fire control/target acquisition, armoured vehicles, aircraft/UAVs, protective/armoured equipment, imaging/countermeasure equipment, firearm simulation equipment, software **DONATION** armoured vehicles, protective/armoured equipment[266], aircraft[267] **DELIVERY** of 13 EU-funded armoured vehicles[268]
Germany: value of licenses[269] **€21.365m**	€0.207m Armoured vehicles, chemical/biological agents, explosives **DONATION** **€10m** worth of military equipment[270]	€1.568m Armoured vehicles, chemical/biological agents, electronic equipment, software, production technology	€13.243m Small arms, ammunition, bombs/missiles, fire control/target acquisition, armoured vehicles, chemical/biological agents, aircraft/UAVs, electronic equipment, protective/armoured equipment, imaging/countermeasure equipment, software, production technology **DONATION** protective/armoured equipment, armoured vehicles[271]	€0.421m Fire control/target acquisition, armoured vehicles, chemical/biological agents, aircraft/UAVs	€5.927m Bombs/missiles, armoured vehicles, chemical/biological agents, protective/armoured equipment, imaging/countermeasure equipment **DONATION** armoured vehicles, communication equipment[272]

	Burkina Faso	Chad	Mali	Mauritania	Niger
Greece: value of licenses[273] **€0.3m**	€0.3m imaging/countermeasure equipment				
Ireland: value of licenses[274] **€0.062m**			€0.062m Small arms, ammunition, bombs/missiles, imaging/countermeasure equipment		
Italy: value of exports reported **€104.145m** *Breakdowns on types of equipment based on licensing data*	€0.084m Ammunition, aircraft[275]	€91.656m Aircraft/UAVs[276], armoured vehicles	€0.288m Small arms, aircraft/UAVs, electronic equipment	€11.639m Aircraft/UAVs[277]	€0.478m Fire control/target acquisition
Latvia: value of exports reported **€1.98m**			€1.98m Small arms		
Lithuania: value of exports reported **€2.048m**	€1.74m Aircraft/UAVs, electronic equipment	€0.308m Bombs/missiles			
Malta: total value of licenses[278] **€0.234m**			€0.106m Small arms, ammunition	€0.078m Protective/armoured equipment	€0.0495m Small arms, ammunition
Netherlands: value of exports reported **€0.028**					€0.028m Aircraft/UAVs
Poland: value of exports reported **€3.779m**	€0.878m Small arms		€2.63m Small arms, light weapons, ammunition		€0.271m Bombs/missiles
Portugal: value of exports reported **€11.621m**	€0.95m Aircraft/UAVs	€9.278m Aircraft, protective/armoured equipment	€1.393m Small arms, ammunition, bombs and missiles, fire control/target acquisition, armoured vehicles, chemical/biological agents, aircraft/UAVs, electronic equipment, protective/armoured equipment, imaging/countermeasure equipment, software		
Romania: value of exports reported **€5.395m**	€4.545m Small arms, light weapons, ammunition, bombs and missiles	€0.001m Ammunition		€0.849m Aircraft/UAVs	
Slovakia: value of exports reported **€13.076m**	€0.225m Ammunition		€12.854m Small arms, light weapons, ammunition, armoured vehicles[279]		
Spain: value of exports reported **€37.04m**	€0.029m Protective equipment, small arms		€34.339m Bombs and missiles, armoured vehicles, aircraft/UAVs,[280] protective equipment, small arms	€1.774m Armoured vehicles, protective equipment	€0.898m Armoured vehicles, protective equipment
Denmark	no commercial exports to the G5 Sahel countries reported, but aircrafts provided for Barkhane				
Estonia	no commercial exports to the G5 Sahel countries reported, but unmanned ground vehicles provided to Barkhane				
Sweden	no commercial exports to the G5 Sahel countries reported, but Sweden has provided engines for Bastion armoured vehicles provided by France for the G5 Sahel countries, including for ones funded by the EU[281]				
Hungary, Luxembourg, Slovenia	no commercial exports reported in the G5 Sahel countries				

TOTAL	**Burkina Faso** €77.7 million	**Chad** €131.5 million	**Mali** €105.4 million	**Mauritania** €22.4 million	**Niger** €79.2 million

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228 *defenceWeb* (2019), 'Mali receives donated Cessna ISR aircraft', 5 April (https://www.defenceweb.co.za/aerospace/aerospace-aerospace/mali-receives-donated-cessna-isr-aircraft/) ; SIPRI (2020), *SIPRI Yearbook 2020* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) (henceforth SIPRI 2020). Ordered 2018, delivered 2019. For PARSEC. Second-hand; aid.

229 COGINTA (2020), 'Projet d'appui à la formation et à la sécurité publique au Tchad, Avril 2017 – Juin 2020', June (https://issuu.com/viktorvrdir/docs/secutchad_report___digital_1page__1_)

230 '[€1,248,621] was donated in the form of equipment to the Malian internal security forces in the capital Bamako and in the regions of Mopti, Ségou, Sikasso and Kayes. [€887,823] was donated for infrastructure projects (rehabilitation and renovation) in Bamako, Ségou and Kayes' – EEAS (2019) 'European Union Common Security and Defence Policy Missions and Operations – Annual Report 2018', April (https://www.sipotra.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/EUROPEAN-UNION-COMMON-SECURITY-AND-DEFENCE-POLICY-MISSIONS-AND-OPERATIONS.pdf); 'The amounts budgeted for buying equipment and services for the Mission and beneficiaries were €3.3 million for EUCAP Sahel Niger and €2.9 million for EUCAP Sahel Mali (2016/17 figures)' – European Court of Auditors (2018), 'Strengthening the capacity of the internal security forces in Niger and Mali: only limited and slow progress' (https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eca/special-reports/eucap-sahel-15-2018/en/)

231 European Parliament (2020), 'Peace and security in 2020: Evaluating the EU approach to tackling the Sahel conflicts', September (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/654173/EPRS_STU(2020)654173_EN.pdf)

232 Eight Tétras Light aircraft SIPRI 2020. Ordered 2009, delivered 2010–2014 as aid; three SA-342 Gazelle Light helicopter, SIPRI 2020. Ordered 2012, delivered 2013. Second-hand but modernized before delivery; armed SA-342L-1.

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234 Ibid.; SIPRI 2020. Ordered and delivered 2015. Second-hand; aid.

235 13 pickups equipped with 12.7 mm heavy machineguns and radios, two 3.5 tonne 4×4 vehicles, two 6×6 trucks, a recovery vehicle. *defenceWeb* (2017), 'France donates military hardware to Niger', 16 November (https://www.defenceweb.co.za/land/land-land/france-donates-military-hardware-to-niger/)

236 Two AS-532 Cougar/AS-332 Transport helicopters, SIPRI 2020. Ordered 2016, delivered 2016-2017. AS-332L version; second-hand.

237 Ten ALTV light tactical vehicles. *defenceWeb* (2018), 'France donates vehicles to Mauritania', 29 January (https://www.defenceweb.co.za/land/land-land/france-donates-vehicles-to-mauritania/)

238 *defenceWeb* (2019), 'Mali receives donated Casspir armoured personnel carriers', 17 July (https://www.defenceweb.co.za/featured/mali-receives-donated-casspir-armoured-personnel-carriers/); see also SIPRI, 'SIPRI Arms Transfers Database' (https://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers)

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240 *defenceWeb* (2019), 'Mali receives donated Casspir armoured personnel carriers', 17 July (https://www.defenceweb.co.za/featured/mali-receives-donated-casspir-armoured-personnel-carriers/)

241 4,100 bullet resistant vests, 4,300 combat boots and 2,700 ballistic helmets, German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (2019), 'Bericht der Bundesregierung über ihre Exportpolitik für konventionelle Rüstungsgüter im Jahre 2018', June (https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/DE/Publikationen/Aussenwirtschaft/ruestungsexportbericht-2018.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=20); ibid.

242 *defenceWeb* (2018), 'Germany donates vehicles to Niger', 20 November (https://www.defenceweb.co.za/land/land-land/germany-donates-vehicles-to-niger)

243 German Federal Government (2019), 'Zusammenarbeit mit Sahel-Region verstärken', 3 May (https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/suche/zusammenarbeit-mit-sahel-region-verstaerken-1604352)

244 Council of the European Union (2017), 'Joint Staff working document: Annual Report on the Sahel Regional Action Plan', 3 January (https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-5009-2017-INIT/en/pdf)

245 Shelton J (2019), 'Angela Merkel calls for weapons exports to Africa', DW News, 27 November (https://www.dw.com/en/angela-merkel-calls-for-weapons-exports-to-africa/a-51441421)

246 Finland Abroad (2018), 'Finland to support security troops in the Sahel region', 12 February (https://finlandabroad.fi/web/aze/foreign-ministry-s-press-releases/-/asset_publisher/kyaK4Ry9kbQ0/content/suomelta-tukea-sahelin-turvallisuusjoukoille/35732) ; Svobodova K (2018), 'Czechs to spend million euro on defence of Sahel countries', *Prague Daily Monitor*, February 22 (https://praguemonitor.com/news/national/22/02/2018/2018-02-22-czechs-spend-million-euro-defence-sahel-countries/); Government of the Netherlands (2017), 'The Netherlands pledges €5 million in support of regional military force in the Sahel', 13 December (https://www.government.nl/latest/news/2017/13/the-netherlands-pledges-%E2%82%AC5-million-in-support-of-regional-military-force-in-the-sahel/the-netherlands-pledges-%E2%82%AC5-million-in-support-of-regional-military-force-in-the-sahel); Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (2017), 'Denmark strengthens efforts against migration and terrorism in the Sahel', 19 September (https://um.dk/en/news/newsdisplaypage/?newsid=d4f8a15a-cbbb-43c1-b4e6-2f8c9c960c65)

247 Based on documents shared with Saferworld by the European Commission.

248 One example of such programmes is a €2.5-million project funded by the IcSP Projet d'Appui à la Consolidation de la paix et de la Stabilité dans les communes de Bilma, N'Guigmi, Ingourti, et Tasker (PACPS), in Niger, implemented by Association Nigérienne pour un Développement Durable, ANDD Garkua.

249 This mapping provides an indicative picture of EU Member States' arms exports in the G5 countries from 2013 to 2019. Its accuracy is limited by the varying transparency and reporting practices between EU Member States. It draws first and foremost on data from the recently launched COARM database on EU Member States arms exports, which while a significant increase in the accessibility of the data supplied by Member States, does not address the variability in national reporting among Member States. In addition, this mapping is cross-checked and complemented by EU Member States' national reports, the SIPRI Arms Transfers Database and media reports. Where possible, numbers on actual deliveries have been used; however certain Member States only provide information on licences or to a level of aggregation that does not allow for identification of specific types of equipment.

250 DA42MPP Reconnaissance aircraft (identified by SIPRI but not reported by Austria, delivered 2016), SIPRI, 'SIPRI Arms Transfers Database 2020' (https://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers)

251 Belgium does not report its arms deliveries, only licences.

252 Two Mi-24D/Mi-25 Combat helicopters (second-hand), delivered 2018–2019 (SIPRI Arms Transfers Database 2020).

253 For the Malian contingent of the G5 Sahel Joint Force, Council of the European Union (2017), 'Joint Staff working document: Annual Report on the Sahel Regional Action Plan', 3 January (https://data.consilium. europa.eu/doc/document/ST-5009-2017-INIT/en/pdf)

254 To the Malian army, ibid.

255 For the Malian army, ibid.

256 Ibid.

257 Thirteen pickups equipped with 12.7 mm heavy machineguns and radios, two 3.5 tonne 4×4 vehicles, two 6×6 trucks, a recovery vehicle, and an assortment of field kit comprising tents, beds, and solar showers, *defenceWeb* (2017), 'France donates military hardware to Niger', 16 November (https://www.defenceweb.co.za/land/land-land/france-donates-military-hardware-to-niger/)

258 Three Tétras light aircrafts, aid, delivered 2012 (SIPRI Arms Transfers Database 2020).

259 Six Bastion APC/APVs, financed by the EU, delivered 2019–2020 (SIPRI Arms Transfers Database 2021).

260 Seven Bastion APC/APVs, delivered 2019-2020, aid financed by EU (African Peace Facility), SIPRI Arms Transfer Database 2021.

261 Two AS-532 Cougar/AS-332 Transport helicopter AS-332L version; second-hand, Airbus, ordered 2016, delivered 2016–2017 (SIPRI 2020).

262 Thirteen Bastion APC/APVs, delivered 2020, aid financed by EU (African Peace Facility), SIPRI Arms Transfer Database 2021.

263 Including two LH-10 Ellipse trainer aircraft, delivered 2013, six Tétras light aircraft, delivered 2012, two second-hand AS-532 Cougar/AS-332 transport helicopters, delivered 2016–2017. SIPRI Arms Transfers Database 2020.

264 Ten ALTV light tactical vehicles, *defenceWeb* (2018), 'France donates vehicles to Mauritania', 29 January (https://www.defenceweb.co.za/land/land-land/france-donates-vehicles-to-mauritania/)

265 Seven Bastion APC/APVs, aid financed by the EU (African Peace Facility), 2019 (SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, 2020).

266 Seventeen armoured vehicles, helmets, vests, anti-EID equipment, *defenceWeb* (2017), 'France donates military hardware to Niger', 16 November (https://www.defenceweb.co.za/land/land-land/france-donates-military-hardware-to-niger/)

267 Eight Tétras Light aircraft ordered 2009, delivered 2010–2014, aid (SIPRI 2020); 3 SA-342 Gazelle Light helicopter ordered 2012, delivered 2013. Second-hand but modernized before delivery; armed SA-342L-1 version; part of CFA270 m ($77 m) aid (SIPRI Arms Transfers Database 2020).

268 Thirteen Bastion APC/APVs, financed by the EU (African Peace Facility) (SIPRI Arms Transfer Database 2021).

269 Germany does not report its arms deliveries, only licences.

270 German Federal Government (2019), 'Zusammenarbeit mit Sahel-Region verstärken', 3 May (https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/suche/zusammenarbeit-mit-sahel-region-verstaerken-1604352)

271 Germany has also donated (via EUTM Mali) a Casspir APC122, 4,100 bullet-resistant vests, 4,300 combat boots and 2,700 ballistic helmets, 25 Mercedes trucks and other equipment to the Malian army

272 Fifty-three vehicles, officer training school, expansion of the military section of Niamey airport, 100 flat-bed military trucks, 115 motorcycles and 55 satellite phones to Nigerien counter-terror units. *DW News* (2018), 'Germany opens new military camp in Niger', 11 November (https://www.dw.com/en/germany-opens-new-military-camp-in-niger/a-46253187); Nkala O (2017), 'Germany donates 215 vehicles, 55 satellite phones to Niger Armed Forces', *defenceWeb*, 11 August (https://www.defenceweb.co.za/land/land-land/germany-donates-215-vehicles-55-satellite-phones-to-niger-armed-forces/)

273 Greece does not report its arms deliveries, only licences.

274 Ireland does not report its arms deliveries, only licences.

275 The transfer of an AW139 Helicopter was identified by SIPRI but not reported by Italy (SIPRI 2020).

276 Two C-27J Spartan transport aircraft, delivered 2014 (SIPRI Arms Transfers Database 2021).

277 Two A-109K light helicopters, delivered 2014 (SIPRI Arms Transfers Database 2020).

278 Malta does not report its arms deliveries, only licences.

279 Eighteen BM-21 Grad 122 mm self-propelled multiple rocket launchers, delivered 2016, second-hand. Not reported by Slovakia in COARM database, but featured in SIPRI Arms Transfers Database (2021).

280 C-295 transport aircraft, delivered 2016 (SIPRI Arms Transfers Database 2020).

281 SIPRI Arms Transfers Database 2021.

A Burkinabe woman observes the passage of the French Army in Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs) during the Bourgou IV operation in a village in northern Burkina Faso.
Michele Cattani / AFP

4

Risks and impacts of European security interventions in the Sahel

The ten years that have followed the adoption of the EU's Sahel Strategy have seen an unprecedented level of insecurity in the Sahel. In the past decade, incidents of violence towards civilians in the G5 Sahel countries, with the exception of Mauritania, have grown tenfold.[282] In 2020, nearly 6,000 people in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger lost their lives due to conflict, an increase of 20 per cent compared to 2019.[283]

The escalation of violence alongside the EU's significant mobilisation of resources to address insecurity in the Sahel prompts important questions about the effectiveness of the international security engagements and the appropriateness of the types of assistance. This section considers how conflict dynamics are evolving in the Sahel in light of Europe's security engagement, considering the available evidence of its impacts. Attributing precise impacts of conflict dynamics to European interventions or security assistance is not always possible, and other factors play their part. Nonetheless, the evidence that *is* available needs to be reflected on, and it is also necessary for the EU and Member States to consider adjusting their security engagement given the trajectory of conflict dynamics.

Pervasive insecurity is impacting different groups in different ways. According to the CSO White Book on Peace and Security in Mali, women, youth and poor people are often disproportionally affected by violence and the negative economic effects of instability.[284] Gender-based violence (GBV) is prevalent particularly in the north of Mali, where women reported having little or no access to medical care or legal support. Harmful gender norms – notably the stigma attached to survivors of GBV – and the impunity of perpetrators are major obstacles to survivors' support and access to justice.[285] Beyond direct, physical violence, gender experts in the Sahel interviewed by Saferworld highlighted that women are particularly impacted by displacement and loss of livelihood when villages are destroyed in attacks, as well as by exclusion from a society centred around militarised institutions and logic.[286] International Alert has observed the same: 'Although most acts of violence are targeted at men, women are often the indirect victims of the violence that is becoming structural and normalised…in the central Sahel.'[287]

International counter-terror responses and the logic of violence

The launch of the Coalition of the Sahel in January 2020 set in motion an intensification of counter-terror operations. As part of what French Defence Minister Florence Parly described as a 'relentless hunt',[288] in early June French forces killed senior leaders of both Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS).[289] Halfway through the year at the Nouakchott summit in June 2020, leaders of the Sahelian states along with French President Macron hailed the success of the intensified counter-terrorism operations[290] and vowed to further ramp up operations along the tristate border area of the Liptako-Gourma region.[291]

> **In 2020, more civilians were killed by state security forces than jihadist groups in the five Sahel countries.**

While the Coalition might have pushed back armed groups in specific areas and boosted the military capacity of G5 armies, the sharp escalation of violence prompts important questions as to whether these operations and security assistance can be considered a success. According to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), as well as experts interviewed by Saferworld, **international pressure for quick wins in counter-terrorism has pushed national military and security forces and the G5 Sahel Joint Force to be more aggressive, at the cost of civilian lives, community violence and grievances.[292] In 2020, more civilians were killed by state security forces than jihadist groups in the five Sahel countries**.[293] Human rights violations, including extrajudicial executions, forced disappearances and the burning of homes, have regularly been reported in the context of internationally-supported counter-terrorism operations in the Sahel, often targeted towards specific communities such as the Fulbe and Bella.[294] In early 2021, a UN report found that a French counter-terror attack killed 16 civilians attending a wedding in the village of Bounti in Central Mali in January 2021.[295]

Ramping up counter-terror operations in this volatile context risks intensifying indiscriminate violence that feeds into grievances and conflict, and causing more civilian harm.[296] If European operations and assistance encourage and enable violent state responses to such groups, Europe risks feeding into a spiralling cycle of violence.

Indeed, rather than bringing stability, experts interviewed by Saferworld warned that **counter-terror operations may contribute to a pattern of increased attacks by national forces, armed rebels and self-defence militias. The risk is that, as in other war-on-terror battlegrounds,[297] this will lead not to the elimination of proscribed groups, but rather to an indefinite logic of mutually escalating violence and intercommunal conflict**.[298] Indeed, according to ACLED, in 2021, following intensified international counter-terror campaigns in the Liptako-Gourma region, 'jihadist groups'[299] have expanded their presence to new areas beyond the reach of national and international forces, and have become increasingly violent towards civilians.[300]

In the Sahel, non-state armed groups are either labelled as local defence militias and trained and equipped by national security forces, or designated as terrorist groups and targeted militarily by the states and their international backers. In Burkina Faso, the formalisation of Koglweogo and Dogon community militias as 'Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland' (VDP) that receive training and equipment from state forces, while excluding Fulbe groups, has resulted in targeting of Fulbe civilians in VDP attacks.[301] Similarly, in Mali, the government has allegedly been arming Dogon self-defence groups in the context of a cycle of inter-ethnic violence and reprisals between the Dogon and Fulbe communities.[302] In 2019, as the Malian government escalated its counter-terrorism operations, Dogon gunmen killed 160 Fulbe in the Ogossagou massacre, enabling jihadist groups to present themselves to Fulbe villagers as their protectors.[303] The dangers of the state-supported proscription of communities is underlined by the fact that, according to UN reports, in the second quarter of 2020 militias committed more human rights violations than designated 'terrorist' groups.[304] Indeed, escalating attacks in the Sahel have left communities caught between violence by armed groups and by abusive security forces.[305] In Mali, atrocities by Malian security forces and state-supported self-defence groups, which have included incidents of mass rape,[306] have provided a strong push for Fulbe to join proscribed groups[307] or turn to them for protection.[308]

The spiralling intercommunal violence and the targeting of Fulbe shows the dehumanising effect of the global counter-terror agenda. According to Louise Wiuff Moe, since the beginning of French Operation Serval, Malian soldiers and authorities have increasingly been labelling their opponents as terrorists,[309] resulting in a sense of paranoia in which Fulbe boys and men are routinely suspected as 'terrorists' – regardless of whether they have anything to do with armed groups.[310] Furthermore, while al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and

the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara are a real problem, not all armed groups labelled as 'terrorists' or using 'terrorist or insurgent tactics' are actually committed to the ideology of violent jihad. In a context of insecurity, state neglect and economic precariousness, the reasons for joining an armed group are often more pragmatic than ideological. While business owners join armed groups to protect their businesses, livestock and trade routes, young boys are often motivated by the opportunity to get money, a motorbike and social status.[311] **In such a context, campaigns of indiscriminate violence that engulf entire communities will only further alienate communities and deepen the gap between people and governments.**

By reducing the complex political drivers of conflict and insecurity in the Sahel into a narrow paradigm of defeating jihadist groups, the **internationally supported counter-terror approach has undermined prospects for peace in Mali and stability in the region**. CSOs in Mali have warned that the excessive focus on military counter-terrorism has obscured the complex drivers of conflict, displaced any strategy for addressing them and taken dialogue and mediation options off the table.[312] Dialogue about, and strategies to deal with, factors that could lead to better security for individuals and communities – such as improved governance, and fairer access to resources and basic services – have consistently taken a back seat to the purported 'urgency' of the terror threat, while violations of human rights have become collateral damage.[313] The focus on terrorism has helped governments divert attention from addressing governance problems, shrunk the space for citizens to articulate their demands[314] and undercut the preconditions of gaining access and building trust that could lead to conflict resolution and other progressive processes of state–society bargaining.[315]

Often, the externally supported counter-terror agenda has contradicted local attempts to address conflict through dialogue. While governments, local authorities and citizens in the G5 Sahel countries see dialogue with violent groups as a possible way to seek an end to violence,[316] France has effectively ruled out political solutions. In November 2020, Macron stated: "With terrorists, we do not discuss. We fight."[317]

Impact of the EU's security assistance in the Sahel – the disconnect between capacity building and human security

It is in this context of intercommunal violence and internationally backed counter-terror operations, described above, that the EU has invested over one billion euros in building the capacity of military and security forces in the Sahel. The scope of this investment in itself is not the problem; as highlighted by local organisations in the Sahel, supporting the capacity of local security institutions is better for the security of the countries than bilateral or multilateral defence operations.[318] The Sahel countries do need security forces that can effectively protect civilians, facilitate the provision of justice and basic services and respond to the security needs of communities. **However, as highlighted earlier, Europe's preoccupation with migration containment and counter-terror has resulted in an approach that is focused on fighting enemies, strengthening borders and protecting states, rather than the protection of communities.**

EU efforts to build the capacity of the G5 Joint Force and the national security and military forces are taking place alongside French-led military operations and often with the primary objective of combatting terrorism. Whereas France, as part of the Coalition of the Sahel, leads the international response to terrorism, the EU is the main provider of support under pillars II (capacity building of national armies) and III (support for the return of the state), through training and equipping the military and security forces of the G5 countries.

While the EU's efforts are limited to security assistance rather than combat under a 'non-executive' mandate, the soldiers and security forces it trains and equips are engaged in active armed conflict and counterinsurgency campaigns. In the framework of the EUTF-funded GAR-SI Sahel project, special gendarmerie units established, trained and equipped by the EU have 'neutralised' 113 people deemed to have been terrorists.[319]

> "
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> "

In this section, we detail the risks and emerging impacts of the EU's capacity building approach in the Sahel. These include the impacts that security-focused capacity building have on the conduct of security forces, on governance, and for human security and civic space.

The problem with security force training

Since the beginning of its security assistance investment, training of security and military forces has emerged as the *modus operandi* for the EU's CSDP missions and security assistance programmes in the Sahel. Keen to find approaches which yield quick results, the EU has focused its security assistance efforts on increasing forces' operational capacity, delivering training on topics ranging from counter-terror to border control and forensics. But in a context of recurrent abuses by state forces against civilians, and with Sahelian governments resisting reforms to their security sectors, it is clear that increasing the capacity of forces does not necessarily lead to improved security; indeed, it can lead to the opposite.

> **As it stands, the EU has no effective means of monitoring the conduct of soldiers and members of the security forces it supports in the G5 Sahel countries.**

While the EU's training missions and projects include trainings on human rights and international humanitarian law, experts on the protection of civilians have highlighted that, without systems in place to monitor forces and hold them accountable for misconduct, trainings have little impact on preventing civilian harm.[320] As it stands, the EU has no effective means of monitoring the conduct of soldiers and members of the security forces it supports in the G5 Sahel countries. EUTM Mali, for example, has trained 18,000 Malian soldiers (most of the Malian army),[321] with no monitoring of the impact of its trainings once soldiers complete them.[322] **Given the lack of monitoring and follow-up on cases of misconduct, exacerbated by unclear chain of command structures between the various international operations,[323] soldiers and security forces trained and supported by the EU operate with effective impunity.** This is exemplified by the fact that, despite the EU's support for the Nigerien security forces' forensic capacity, which the EU has hailed as a 'regional centre of excellence',[324] abuses by Nigerien security forces continue to elude investigation.[325]

As reports on atrocities by state forces became more frequent, over the course of 2020 European and Sahelian leaders became more vocal in calling for accountability and the protection of civilians.[326] The Nouakchott summit statement in June 2020 made reference to violations for the first time, saying that national armies need to comply with the G5 code of conduct.[327] But these calls have not prompted serious reflections on how international counter-terror and capacity building efforts may contribute to impunity and legitimise abuses – rather, leaders such as German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas have emphasised the need for *more* security assistance.[328] However, as noted by experts on security force assistance, short-term activities, which focus on 'defence and security institutions' but allow civilian oversight to remain 'weak and ineffective…can lead to a situation where rights-violating security forces become better equipped to do what they have always done'.[329] This, in turn can undermine human security, leave populations trapped between the violence of abusive security forces and the terror of non-state armed groups, and stimulate people's search for alternative providers of security and governance.

Since 2018, in response to reports of abuses by state forces, the EU has launched projects to address impunity as part of its security assistance.[330] In 2018 the EU allocated €10 million for OHCHR to set up a human rights compliance framework for the G5 Sahel Joint Force, and in 2019 EUTF launched a €20-million project to improve security forces' compliance and victims' access to justice. But while compliance frameworks are being set up, **monitoring, accountability, evaluation and learning systems still fall short of providing an effective framework for tackling the critical problem of impunity, promoting behaviour change by regional security forces, or adapting strategy in response**. According to DG INTPA, as of July 2020, human rights due diligence policies and human rights compliance frameworks were still yet to be put in place for the G5 Joint Force.[331] Since then, a significant step has been the operationalisation of a Civilian Casualties Identification, Tracking and Analysis Cell (known by its French acronym, MISAD),[332] which includes ongoing monitoring of civilian harm incidents during the operations of the G5 Joint Force, investigates cases and makes amends to victims.[333] In April 2021, MISAD was activated after rapes committed by Chadian soldiers in Niger, prompting strong and unprecedented statements by the G5 command and the Chadian government, condemning the soldiers and promising an investigation into the atrocities.[334] The G5 Permanent Secretariat has also highlighted the mobilisation of a military police force to monitor the conduct of the G5 Joint Force.[335] However, in

Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso, as it stands, no cases of misconduct or atrocities by state forces in the Sahel have been brought to justice. [336]

Eagerness in Europe to invest in the capacity of security forces in the Sahel hasn't been matched with efforts to ensure that the security institutions are held accountable for their conduct. While the EU's High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy Josep Borrell has made assurances that EU support to the G5 is conditional on its members' respect for human rights, the acceleration of the EU's support amid reports of abuses and in the absence of functioning accountability mechanisms shows that, at the end of the day, short-term objectives prevail. The political focus of European security assistance on counter-terror, border control and the expansion of state presence through force has meant compromising on human rights conditionality.

Indeed, despite significant civilian harm in the context of counter-terror operations, it was only during the coup in August 2020 that activities in Mali were halted, and even then only temporarily.

Security assistance carries the risk of boosting problematic partners

With Chad, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger all troubled by various degrees of authoritarian governance and rent-seeking behaviour by elites, corruption and exclusionary governance are significant drivers of conflict in the Sahel. [337] In each of these countries, the security system is designed first and foremost to protect leaders and state institutions. Supporting the security sector, then, sometimes means making the protection of leaders more effective to the detriment of the population. **There is a real risk that the EU's security assistance partnerships in the Sahel contribute to legitimising abusive governments that are not interested in building trust between the state and its citizens, addressing disputes behind intercommunal conflict and improving human security, but rather in cementing their power and wealth.** [338]

Prioritising counter-terror and migration containment in security partnerships is particularly conducive to fuelling authoritarianism and corruption, and undermining civic space and citizen participation. The narrative of an external threat also provides a political distraction from calls for reform or peace efforts. As pointed out by Denis Tull, the excessive focus on security threats in Mali shrinks the public space for citizens to articulate their demands for change and allows the government to ignore political and social drivers of the crisis. [339] In both Mali and Niger, EU officials are aware that funds have sometimes disappeared or benefited corrupt officials, contributing to elite capture of resources. [340] However, with corruption being seen as too sensitive a topic to work on, and with assistance fragmented across instruments, addressing it has proven challenging. [341]

Counter-terrorism provides a pretext for governments to increase their legitimacy, justify authoritarian practices, and wipe out political opponents. [342] This is sometimes acknowledged in the risk assessments of the EU's security assistance programmes, some of which recognise that that they operate in environments with a high risk of governments closing down fundamental rights and civil liberties or security forces committing abuses. [343] However, the analysis is often focused on how insecurity might impact the operations or perceptions of the programmes, rather than how the programmes might impact the dynamics in the areas in which they operate, such as the risk that security assistance may embolden and legitimise repressive behaviour and violations. For example, the SECGEF project in Chad identifies shrinking civic space and growing repression as risks. However, to address this, rather than suggesting measures to counter repression or condition the EU's security assistance on authorities' respect for fundamental freedoms, the project description calls for 'well calibrated' communication about the project. [344]

In this way, rather than fostering political solutions to conflict, security force capacity building risks strengthening the hand of governments who have no interest in changing the status quo in pursuit of a political process to address drivers of conflict. As explained by Assitan Diallo, President of the Association des Femmes Africaines pour la Recherche et le Développement (AFARD), "stabilisation in Mali has meant a stabilisation of a militarised status quo". [345]

Similarly, Chad has enjoyed unfailing support from France for more than thirty years, with the late Idriss Déby owing his long tenure in power in part to French military support. France has also played an important role in legitimising the transitional military government which has placed Déby's son, Mahamat Kaka, in power. France's support for command, intelligence, logistics, and measures such as the restructuring of the nomadic

> **Stabilisation in Mali has meant a stabilisation of a militarised status quo**

– Assitan Diallo, President of the Association des Femmes Africaines pour la Recherche et le Développement (AFARD)

guard and of military education is reinforced by European Union assistance to strengthen Chad's security forces. Meanwhile, a silent consensus exists between international entities not to demand accountability in the security and defence sectors.[346] The lack of accountability, during the thirty years of Déby's reign, created a style of governance centred around 'strong men' who control all the sovereign institutions of the country. Experts interviewed by Saferworld warned that, with its heavy focus on boosting partner governments, the EU risks moving towards a stabilisation approach reminiscent of the French colonial and post-colonial eras, helping to perpetuate an existing logic of conflict by helping corrupt governments and elites stay in power.[347]

In the worst cases, partnering with repressive governments and unaccountable security forces can implicate the EU in severe human rights violations and lead to situations in which protests are violently repressed by forces which benefit from EU support. **In Mali in July 2020, EU-trained FORSAT special counter-terrorism forces[348] fired at demonstrators in Bamako, killing 14 people and injuring 109.[349] In such situations, continuing business as usual risks validating state-sponsored violence.**

In a region that has a heavy tradition of military leaders, international security assistance risks entrenching the primacy of military solutions to political problems. Prioritising military responses over dialogue also risks strengthening the concentration of power in the hands of 'men carrying weapons', therefore excluding minorities and women and consolidating a patriarchal status quo.[350] Recent coups in Mali and Chad demonstrate these risks. While the military takeovers were condemned by European leaders, the swift resumption of security assistance before the return of power to civilian authorities showed that stabilisation of state forces is prioritised over democratic processes and the legitimacy of leaders.

Risks of arms proliferation

Proliferation and diversion of weapons is a major conflict driver in the Sahel, seriously undermining efforts to restore security. As highlighted by Small Arms Survey, the widespread availability of arms and ammunition in the Sahel in a context where citizens negatively perceive state security forces 'increases the risk of the violent settlement of community tensions'. Given the abuses committed by state forces in the G5 Sahel countries, the risk of

misuse of equipment provided is high. **This, then 'risks fuelling a vicious circle where the availability of arms sparks insecurity, which in turn pressures communities to seek more firepower for the purposes of self-defence or retaliation'.[351]**

Yet although the misuse and proliferation of weapons facilitates widespread violence by predatory groups, this danger enjoys less attention than the threat of terrorism. Most illicit weapons in the Sahel used to originate from post-Gaddafi Libya, but this flow has since stopped due to growing demand for weapons in Libya.[352] As a result, in recent years armed groups and smuggling networks in the Sahel have turned to national armed forces' stocks to source their weapons – by looting, through the black market, or even by state-sanctioned acquisition from the authorities.[353] According to experts interviewed by Saferworld, stockpiles of national security forces have become the biggest source of weapons and equipment for armed groups.[354] Poor management and control of national stockpiles in Niger and Mali,[355] for example, have made them vulnerable to attacks through which such groups have managed to loot significant amounts of weapons, ammunition and other equipment.[356] Looting has also impacted international peacekeeping forces, which have suffered attacks resulting in the diversion of arms and ammunition.[357]

Looting and battlefield capture are not the only cause of equipment going missing from stockpiles: corruption also plays a part. Weapons stores in Nouakchott, Bamako and Niamey suffer from poor surveillance and management, allowing soldiers to take arms and ammunition from military warehouses and sell them in illicit markets or during deployments in remote areas.[358] Finally, in both Burkina Faso and Mali, government security forces arm voluntary defence groups, handing weapons to them after very brief periods of training.[359] As a result, there is a fine line between licit and illicit arms in the Sahel: arms are diverted and trafficked frequently from armed forces and through criminal networks, with the consequence that 'originally legal weapons' can quickly end up in the wrong hands.[360]

The EU often argues that, as it is a values-based institution, the weapons it provides through the European Peace Facility (EPF) to partners come with higher standards and safeguards than those of its competitors. The current reality of arms control in the Sahel stands in stark contrast to such claims. **Due to a lack of resources as well as local authorities resisting the adoption of a logistics management system,[361] the EU has little ability to control or even track what happens to the equipment it provides once handed over.** As it stands, the EU has no access to national warehouses that store equipment, meaning that it lacks information on management

standards, actual equipment needs and the fate of the equipment provided.[362] Given the current gravely insufficient stockpile management standards in most of the G5 countries, local security experts as well as several European officials involved in missions in the region raised concerns about the significant risk of diversion and misuse involved in any future provision of arms in the Sahel.[363]

Revisiting the 'security development nexus'

Core to the overall international security engagement strategy in the Sahel is the assumption that spaces which are not under central state control are dangerous, and therefore expanding state presence is necessary to restore stability. **However, in a context in which conflict is driven by state–society grievances and exclusion, the security-first state expansion approach can be counterproductive.** In the Sahel, where poor governance, marginalisation and exclusion are important parts of the problem, expanding state presence through strengthening security forces fuels conflict. For example, in many areas in Northern and Central Mali, where the EU is supporting a military-first state expansion, the state has been absent for a long time, with people in rural areas isolated from state services and reliant on non-state groups for services and protection.[364] In such areas, the state is often seen as corrupt and government is not trusted.[365] For the state to return to these areas heavily armed and attacking communities is disastrous for state–society relations. Rather than seeing the Sahel as a region of 'ungoverned spaces' or vacuums of power, the EU should understand it as a region of broken social contracts, where abuse and neglect by states is worsening the problem and exploited by violent armed groups. In this context, to expand state presence in a way that does not escalate violence requires doing it through dialogue and in a way that generates trust among local populations by working for their benefit.

Ultimately, this poses questions about whether the EU's security assistance contributes to the formation of security institutions that serve the security of Sahelian people and foster long-term stability, or if it instead merely seeks to address the interests of European and Sahelien politicians. Experts on gender and security in both Europe and the Sahel emphasised that, as long as the stabilisation approach is geared towards restoring damaged

institutions to the way they were to preserve the status quo, it will not be conducive for inclusive and sustainable peace and development.[366] **Rather, in an unequal and militarised context, stabilisation reinforces the primacy of military responses, patriarchal and exclusionary governance, and elite capture.** For long-term stability, Europe should rethink its strategy in the Sahel and move from a state-centred stabilisation approach towards one that focuses on people-centred peace. This would entail supporting existing local mechanisms for conflict resolution, and investing in decentralisation, education and basic services in a way that communities consider legitimate.

Rather than bringing the state back through expanding its military control, the focus should be on providing services and involving communities and civil society, including women and marginalised groups, meaningfully in the implementation of assistance, in order to restore trust. Establishing state control is ultimately a question of who is trusted, and decentralisation, education, and the provision of basic services and security need to be done in a way that communities deem legitimate. It is also important that development assistance is provided in a conflict-sensitive way, avoiding creating imbalances between, for example, pastoralists and farmers. In order to achieve this, the EU should shift its focus away from boosting the military capacity of central governments and towards partnering with local authorities and civil society, with particular attention to the expertise and efforts of women- and youth-led organisations. As it stands, local civil society representatives and women are largely excluded from the design and implementation of the EU's security assistance and SSR efforts in the G5 Sahel countries. Within the security assistance projects analysed by Saferworld, only a few individual projects noted the involvement of local organisations as implementing partners. Alongside security assistance, while EU delegations provide small amounts of funding for local civil society, particularly for women's rights organisations, local organisations in the Sahel noted that this is largely for the implementation of pre-set objectives, such as those related to preventing/countering violent extremism (P/CVE) programmes aiming to stop recruitment by proscribed groups, with only a tangential focus on empowerment and reform.[367] As a result of a lack of efforts to engage in dialogue with local organisations on their priorities, peacebuilding perspectives are less heard in policy discussions and institutional support for civil society, and for peacebuilding and gender equality in particular, is scarce.[368]

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An Afghan policeman walks at the site a truck bomb blast in Kabul, 7 August 2015.
Ahmad Masood/REUTERS

5

The global track record of security assistance

The EU's debates on instruments such as the EPF and its security assistance more broadly are marked by a high level of enthusiasm about these new types of assistance and the results and influence it could achieve through them. However, while the EU may be forging a new path in its approaches to crises, at a global level the provision of security assistance (also sometimes referred to as an aspect of 'remote warfare') is not new. From US interventions to support 'friendly' regimes in Vietnam and Latin America, to Western operations against violent groups in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Egypt and Yemen, Western leaders have for decades supported partner governments – often advancing their own security interests at the same time. Indeed, in the 2000s, this type of assistance has emerged as the predominant form of military engagement.[369]

External security assistance providers often seem to proceed with great optimism about the impact their engagement will have on stability and conflict dynamics. If external agencies are subject to democratic control, do not see themselves as corrupt, or have policies and training materials on human rights and international humanitarian law, it is not necessarily conceivable to them or their political masters that their assistance to others could undermine democracy and human rights, and fuel corruption and violence elsewhere. Amid the urgency to quell an immediate threat (most often terrorism or 'irregular' migration in recent years), local, national and regional counterparts are often trusted to share external objectives, principles and approaches, and important risks are wilfully overlooked. In the Sahel as elsewhere, it is vital to understand and reflect on the track record of international security assistance and ask challenging questions about the implications of this record for future strategy, resource allocation, monitoring, evaluation and oversight. With this in mind, this section summarises and offers brief examples of known challenges encountered in recent security assistance programmes.

1. Governance impacts and political will

Governance is the most critical factor in both conflict prevention and counter-terrorism.[370] How security assistance impacts it is thus critical. The availability of foreign financial, political and security assistance is typically extremely welcome to governments, ruling elites and security sector personnel in unstable contexts. While these may share a genuine interest in quelling threats from violent transnational groups or controlling migration, such assistance is likewise an opportunity to become richer, better armed and more 'legitimate' without raising taxes or having to attract public buy-in to the social contract. Security assistance can provide important capability to fight or suppress opponents, exploit civilians and control resources. For these reasons the recipients of external security assistance have much to gain from it. Their economic and political motivations are more important than the objectives and views of assistance providers. However sincere recipients may be in promoting peace and public wellbeing, they also have an interest in getting continued

> " Security and justice sectors are often the key places where power is wielded – and where corruption is most significant and most damaging. "

assistance. This can cause 'partners' to ensure the threat (for example, from proscribed groups or migratory emergencies) persists to some degree, and leverage it in their engagement with international backers.

For example, in **Egypt**, the military regime which seized power amid very bloody events in 2013 continues to use the cloak of 'counter-terrorism' to maintain international security assistance and consolidate power through repression of political opposition and civil society on a staggering scale – even as the repressive approach it has taken to counter-terrorism has predictably worsened instability in the country.[371]

2. Corruption and accountability of security actors

Corruption is a driver of conflict in context after context. Security and justice sectors are often the key places where power is wielded – and where corruption is most significant and most damaging. Despite this, security assistance programmes have repeatedly failed to challenge – or have actively fed into – corruption. For example, in **Afghanistan** supporting the Northern Alliance against the Taliban meant handing the state over to known warlords, institutionalising patronage and corruption.[372] As a result of this and the power of the drug economy, 'systemic corruption took hold at all levels of

the Afghan government, despite various public financial management and anti-corruption efforts'.[373] Corruption and predation were so bad that the public in some areas came to see the Taliban as providing a better alternative.[374]

3. Risks of feeding into violence and other abuses that can escalate conflict and insecurity

Provoking an overreaction that divides society and deepens conflict is often a primary objective of terror tactics used by armed rebel groups. However compelling the provocation, violent retaliation – especially when indiscriminate – feeds conflict. For this reason, programmes that strengthen security capacities of violent and abusive partners risk unleashing very dangerous consequences. Indeed, the narratives of remote warfare as a 'politically risk-free' approach that 'does not produce significant civilian harm', are based on false assumptions.[375] Risks do not only apply to military assistance – support for criminal justice capacities can also enable coercion and repression.[376] For example, in **Somalia** after the transitional federal government was set up in 2004, police units trained and paid by the United Nations acquired a paramilitary character, engaging in counterinsurgency operations and – like the armed forces – perpetrating abuses against civilians. AMISOM and other recipients of international funding and capacity assistance in Somalia have for years consistently been implicated in indiscriminate attacks and serious abuses against Somali civilians, sustaining the cycle of violence.[377] These are not isolated cases – a RAND study found that US security assistance in Africa during the Cold War increased the incidence of civil war in the countries receiving assistance.[378]

4. Unsustainability and incoherence

International security assistance has also foundered due to problems of incoherence, and the routine failure to account for the recipient state's capacity to absorb support and sustain the model being supported in the longer term. For example, Sierra Leone could never afford to maintain the kind of security equipment and standards that were provided by the UK.[379] And there have been grave problems with the sustainability of security force capacities despite enormous investments in war-on-terror battlegrounds such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia.

5. Waste, diversion and misuse

External security assistance – both in terms of equipment and expertise – is at high risk of waste, diversion and misuse. For example, many weapons supplied to the **Iraqi** army ended up in the hands of Islamic State. In the words of Amnesty International, 'Poor regulation and lack of oversight of the immense arms flows into Iraq going back decades have given [Islamic State] and other armed groups a bonanza of unprecedented access to firepower.'[380] Small arms and ammunition are in strong demand in conflict settings and are particularly vulnerable to diversion. The diversion of weapons and military equipment is a global problem that impacts both state forces and peace support operations;[381] once diverted, weapons can remain in circulation for decades and therefore fuel violence long after decisions to provide them take place.

6. Undermining gender equality and entrenching marginalisation and discrimination

While the use of force to counter terrorism is often justified by masculinist narratives about protecting women,[382] counter-terror interventions and remote warfare have had detrimental gender impacts. Security assistance for counter-terror has strengthened male-dominated and gender biased military institutions and increased impunity,[383] causing significant harm and abuses towards women, girls and marginalised groups. In both **Afghanistan** and **Iraq**, counter-terror assistance has reinforced gender stereotypes and increased gender-based violence, leaving women caught between counter-terror operations and violence by armed groups, with states failing to protect them.[384] In **Lebanon**, LGBT advocates have argued that US government support to the Lebanese security forces has increased surveillance and oppression of minorities.[385] And since 2001, the discriminatory use of counter-terror measures as part of the 'war on terror' has targeted specific communities on the basis of their ethnic and religious background, encouraging Islamophobia and anti-Muslim violence.[386] Counter-terror narratives have also been used by states to justify crackdowns on civil society, including women's rights activists.[387]

Learning lessons

Reflecting on these challenges, it is important to note how little evidence is available to suggest that building military-security capabilities leads to reform, behaviour change and improved peace, justice and development outcomes. Nonetheless, the ability to administer criminal justice in a human rights-compliant way is an important foundation for peace and sustainable development. Benign capacities in this area can contribute significantly to progress. Insufficient capacity in policing, investigation, prosecution, legal assistance, and in the prison and courts can drastically undermine adherence to human rights norms in insecure contexts, creating an environment which enables abusive security responses that can fuel violence and conflict. Therefore, efforts to strengthen human security, to promote community and civil society demand for and engagement in security and justice sector reforms, to extend access to justice and legal assistance and to support civilian oversight of military and criminal justice institutions can all contribute positively to peace and development.

Overall, however, there is much evidence regarding the negative impacts of military-security assistance in fuelling corruption, repression and violence. The repetition of familiar patterns in diverse contexts over decades means that this evidence cannot be dismissed as a handful of isolated examples. This should have profound implications for the establishment of norms, guidelines and safeguards, decision-making, resource allocation, strategy development, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and oversight in the field of security assistance.

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> **Since 2001, the discriminatory use of counter-terror measures as part of the 'war on terror' has targeted specific communities on the basis of their ethnic and religious background, encouraging Islamophobia and anti-Muslim violence.**
> "

Notes

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6

Assessing the EU's approach – a gap between principles and practice

Assessing the effectiveness, risks and impacts of the EU's security assistance and stabilisation efforts, and learning from their shortcomings, is crucial for adjusting the EU's support to people in the Sahel so that it contributes to lasting peace, human security and stability. However, examining the EU's Sahel response can also teach us important lessons for its overall approaches to responding to conflict and crises. As the EU and its Member States reflect on what kind of role the Union should play in response to conflict and instability in its neighbourhood and beyond, it should take stock of the results of its security interventions in the Sahel.

In particular, the escalating insecurity in the Sahel should provoke questions about whether the Union's significant investment in stabilisation is addressing the drivers of insecurity in a sustainable and coherent manner. With assistance dispersed through several different missions and instruments, a central question is whether the EU's security assistance initiatives are subject to a clear political strategy for conflict transformation, and whether there are credible mechanisms for monitoring their impact (including gendered impacts) on conflict dynamics and the drivers of conflict. As noted in the introduction, the EU has adopted several strategies that are set to guide its responses to conflict and its support to security sectors, which provide a set of principles to ensure that its assistance is sustainable and contributes to lasting peace and sustainable development. These strategies – notably the 2016 Strategic Framework to support Security Sector Reform,[388] the 2018 Integrated Approach to Conflict and Crises[389] and the 2018 Strategic Approach to Women, Peace and Security[390] – emphasise the importance of conflict prevention, inclusiveness, sustainability, human security and conflict sensitivity. However, this report's analysis has found that, in practice, the emphasis of the EU's mission has been on building the operational capacity of state forces to expand central state control rather than ensuring it responds to community security needs.

Previous sections have highlighted that European security initiatives in the Sahel have been strongly driven by a set of political motivations, some of which are external to the realities in the Sahel: containing the perceived threats of migration and terrorism, boosting the EU's geostrategic role, and enabling European security and defence cooperation. This section identifies key shortcomings in the EU's approach, drawing from the context of its assistance in the Sahel but with relevance to its wider security engagements in the world.

Measuring impact – weaknesses in planning, monitoring and evaluation

The EU has acknowledged that 'actions in the areas of CT/CVE [counter-terrorism/countering violent extremism], migration and stabilisation are at greater risk of indirect negative knock-on effects on human rights, rule of law, international law, and good governance, notwithstanding attention to mainstreaming those principles'.[391] To mitigate these risks, in 2015 the EU adopted a Concept on Protection of Civilians (PoC) in EU-led Military Operations, which calls on EU-led military operations to proactively track and prevent civilian harm and to ensure conflict sensitivity, 'warranting a deep understanding of the context, including civilian population insecurities/security concerns, and implications for the military operation and avoiding inadvertent contributions to conflict dynamics and civilians insecurity'.[392]

However, the rapid expansion of the EU's security assistance for migration control and counter-terror has not been matched with robust mechanisms for assessing and monitoring the impact of programmes, and so far, limited attention has been given to the unintended consequences that security sector assistance may have. Activities have often been launched under a sense of urgency with insufficient consultation with the recipient countries (and with communities and civil society in particular), resulting in insufficient consideration of their impacts on political, economic or conflict dynamics.[393] The prioritisation of domestic security objectives in its security assistance has resulted in poorly informed activities that have had harmful consequences for the wellbeing and security of people in the Sahel. According to an

official involved in the mission, the mandate shift of EUCAP Sahel Niger to focus on migration was poorly managed and failed to draw on fact-finding missions or consultations with Nigeriens.[394] As found by Clingendael, the result of a shift based on poor understanding of the tradition of cross-border movement and trade has been large-scale loss of livelihoods and heightened tensions.[395]

The detrimental impact that the EU's migration and security cooperation has had in Niger underlines the importance of ensuring the conflict sensitivity of the EU's foreign policy actions, particularly in the field of security. The analysis and assessments prior to and during the implementation of projects must include a gender-sensitive consideration of potential positive and negative effects of an intervention on the conflict context, including a realistic assessment of how the intervention and the involvement of the military will be perceived. **For EU security assistance initiatives to contribute to a wider conflict transformation strategy and approach, and to uphold high-level commitments to conflict sensitivity and gender analysis in its external action, there need to be credible mechanisms for monitoring the initiatives' impacts on conflict dynamics, including gendered drivers and impacts of conflict, and making relevant adaptations.**

So far, this has not been the case for the design and evaluation of the EU's security assistance in the Sahel. While most of the security assistance programmes funded by the EU include risk assessment tables, there has so far not been a structured, centralised procedure for how risk management should be conducted and how they should be followed up during implementation.[396] Furthermore, these tables tend to focus on how insecurity might impact the programmes, rather than how the programmes might impact the dynamics in which they operate. For EUTF-funded projects, the risk of repression and abuses by state actors is seldom identified, and when it is, this is approached as an issue to be mitigated through trainings and managing the perception the EU's assistance through careful communication strategies.[397] For IcSP-funded programmes, the design of actions in support of military forces does include considerations on whether actions may fuel conflict, enable abuses or whether support provided may be misused or diverted; however, conflict and gender sensitivity are not carried out as an ongoing process to assess the impact of projects and adapt them accordingly.[398]

An important step in this regard is the adoption of a risk management methodology, a pilot version of which has been used for CBSD actions in support of military actors. If conducted for all of the EU's security assistance projects, across all instruments,

and followed up by regular conflict sensitivity assessments and mechanisms for suspending actions in case of harm, this 'risk matrix' has important potential in increasing the coherence of EU security assistance. However, an expert on protection of civilians expressed concern about its lack of explicit focus on the risk of harm to communities,[399] and similarly, a stronger focus is needed on the inclusiveness and accountability of security institutions in order to ensure that EU assistance contributes to human security.

The prioritisation of migration containment and counter-terror capacity building is also reflected in ways the EU's programmes are monitored and evaluated. According to the audit by the European Court of Auditors (ECA), CSDP missions in Mali and Niger had weak performance indicators that did not adequately monitor and evaluate the achievement and impact of tasks.[400] For EUCAP Sahel Niger, the only activities for which indicators defined targets for the activities were those linked to combatting irregular migration, with other areas of work simply listing activities.[401] The focus on migration containment is also reflected in EUTF projects' indicators, which largely focus on the number of trainings and operations conducted, the strength and presence of security forces, levels of cross-border trafficking and the adoption of national migration and security policies.

Forgetting the R in SSR?

While legitimacy is an inherently internal issue that cannot be imposed by external partners, there are ways the EU could address the political drivers of insecurity and make security forces more responsive to people's security needs. Some central principles are outlined in the EU's 2016 Strategic Framework for supporting Security Sector Reform,[402] which has been endorsed by all EU Member States and is set to guide all of the EU's security engagements. These include human security, inclusive governance, accountability of security institutions and the central role of civil society in ensuring that EU security engagements support lasting peace and stability.

However, as highlighted in this analysis, the majority of the EU's engagement with security and military actors in the G5 countries has been focused on building their operational capacity rather than governance and human security. Staff from the European Commission have emphasised that technical projects, such the CBSD actions in

support of military forces, should not be looked at in isolation, but as part of the EU's 'integrated approach', alongside 'broader engagements' that contribute to reform.[403] EU staff have furthermore highlighted that CBSD actions have served as 'door openers' for the EU's engagement with military bodies, building its expertise and leverage as a security actor.

However, given the premium the EU sets on containing migration and combating terrorism in the Sahel, it appears that the EU is doing little to exert its influence to promote inclusiveness, accountability and human security. While both EUCAPs provide direct strategic advice to the internal security ministries in Mali and Niger,[404] the focus is on migration containment, counter-terrorism and fostering regional cooperation rather than accountability, inclusiveness and conduct. From 2016, EUCAP Sahel Niger helped Nigerien authorities adopt a new National Internal Security Strategy,[405] incentivised by conditioning budget support on the adoption of new policies and strategies to curb migration.[406] Likewise in Mali in 2018, the EU tied some of its aid to the adoption of strategies for national security sector reform, counter-terrorism and border control.[407] This use of conditionality to promote migration control and counter-terrorism rather than accountability and human security well illustrates the EU's overall priorities in the Sahel.

Where the EU has used conditionality to improve transparency, oversight or effective management, these attempts have often gained little traction. In Mali, EU missions' attempts to set up electronic systems for human resources management and logistics have been stalled and resisted by the Malian authorities, who see such attempts as interference in its national affairs.[408] The EU's leverage is undermined by the fact that governments in the region realise perfectly well its prioritisation of stabilisation and migration cooperation over governance reform. Aware of the importance that the EU places on the Sahel, Nigerien and Malian leaders have spun threat narratives of terrorism and migration to position themselves as crucial partners and gain material support, describing their countries as a "dam that must not break" or else "Europe will be submerged".[409]As a result, the EU has continued supporting Sahelian leaders and security forces even when they have manipulated elections, silenced critics or violently suppressed protests – further weakening the already broken mechanisms for accountability in the Sahel countries.[410]

> " Aware of the importance that the EU places on the Sahel, Nigerien and Malian leaders have spun threat narratives of terrorism and migration to position themselves as crucial partners and gain material support, describing their countries as a "dam that must not break" or else "Europe will be submerged". "

As noted in the EU's SSR Framework, supporting local civil society should be the EU's priority in all contexts, but particularly those in which repressive governance fuels conflict. Civil society, youth-led movements and women's rights organisations have a pivotal role in driving and incentivising peaceful change and bargaining for governance and security provision that serves human security and protects people. To be tenable and sustainable, much-needed security sector reform in the Sahel would require emphasis on oversight, representation and accountability – listening and responding to the security needs of populations. However, while the EU's security assistance programmes increasingly include dialogue with communities and civil society, this is often framed around increasing communities' acceptance of the presence of security forces, rather than making those forces responsible for addressing the security needs of communities.[411]

Securitisation undermines EU commitments on gender

The EU's commitments to women, peace and security go back to 2008.[412] In recent years, these commitments have been further elaborated as the EU has adopted its Strategic Approach to Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and committed to taking into account the gendered drivers and impacts of conflict, as well as ensuring that its own foreign policy actions have a positive impact on gender equality.[413] However, evaluations of the EU's support for gender equality in its external action have found that the implementation of gender analysis and mainstreaming are lagging behind in the area of security interventions.[414] While the mandates of CSDP missions have since 2019 included reference to the EU's Strategic Approach to WPS, gender is yet to be mainstreamed into the operation plans of the missions, sufficiently monitored and used to inform the planning of operations. While CSDP missions have human rights and gender advisers, whether they have influence depends on the backing of mission leadership.[415] **Overall, the EU's commitments to gender sensitivity and the WPS agenda have taken a back seat in favour of militarised counter-terrorism: in Mali, French military staff question the rationale for consulting women when "we're here to kill terrorists".**[416]

Such attitudes stand in contrast with the gendered impacts of violence in the Sahel. As highlighted in the impact section, women, youth and marginalised communities are impacted by insecurity in the Sahel, facing violence, economic insecurity and exclusion.[417] Security and military institutions in the G5 Sahel countries are not inclusive of women or marginalised communities and, as such, suffer from a gender bias. In this context, focusing on building the technical capacity of military and security forces without considering how this bias affects women and marginalised communities inherently risks reinforcing exclusionary institutions and harmful gender norms that fuel broader conflict and gender inequality.

According to DG INTPA, gender, conflict analysis and rights-based approaches are streamlined across all projects from formulation to evaluation, and a team of experts reviews all projects to ensure that they are integrated in the design of projects.[418] However, while gender is mentioned in the programme descriptions of EU-funded security assistance programmes under 'horizontal themes', and in some programmes included as a topic in trainings, the programme documents rarely explain how gender analysis informs the design or intervention logic of security assistance projects. Indeed, the technical capacity focus of security assistance programmes rarely allows for a more fundamental or transformative focus on how the programmes address gender dynamics in the G5 countries or how they may unintentionally impact them. Evaluations of specific projects as well as the EU's security engagements more broadly have found that gender has not been sufficiently taken into account.[419] An expert from a women's rights organisation in the Sahel also told Saferworld that women are absent from all stages of the EU's security assistance discussions, from planning to activities such as trainings. **With the focus on counter-terror capacity building of forces, gender considerations are added as an afterthought rather than influencing the planning and conception of assistance, resulting in programmes that may include considerations for women but without their involvement or say on what type of assistance is needed.**[420]

A gap between principles and practice

Despite the EU's comprehensive policy frameworks when it comes to supporting security actors in a way that is conflict sensitive and contributes to human security, there is a gap between their objectives and the implementation of EU security assistance programmes, which have focused on training and equipping partners rather than incentivising genuine security sector reform, inclusive governance, and creating opportunities for dialogue. Similarly, despite EU high-level commitments to conflict sensitivity and gender analysis in its external action, in the sphere of security initiatives the implementation of these commitments has been lagging behind.

The EU's stabilisation approach in the Sahel under the 'security–development nexus' also stands in contradiction with its own stabilisation policy. The 2017 EU Stabilisation Concept[421] defines the EU's support to stabilisation as contributions to political settlements and legitimate governance, through inclusive dialogue. The concept emphasises human security 'as the primary lens through which we approach Stabilisation', and calls for the inclusion of civil society, women and youth, and all sides to conflict (whether armed or not) in these efforts. Crucially, the Stabilisation Concept sets out conflict sensitivity and political economy analyses as the basis to ensure 'EU engagement minimises the risk of inadvertently contributing to continued conflict and human insecurity, and maximises the overall positive impact of EU engagement on stabilisation and longer-term peacebuilding'. **The state-centred focus of the 'security–development nexus', premised on the assumption that stability and development will follow a military-first state expansion, does not match the principles of the EU Stabilisation concept.**

Moreover, as noted by Francesco Stazzari and Luca Raineri, the EU's stabilisation efforts, aimed at fighting terrorism and containing migration, have contributed to the legitimisation of 'partners who are not in normative alignment with EU principles, leading to the entrenchment of dysfunctional governance and patronage politics'.[422]

As highlighted throughout this report, the perceived urgency to demonstrate action on short term pressures and the eagerness to build a stronger role for the EU as a security actor have sidelined its principles on security sector reform, inclusive governance and human security. This influence of domestic and geopolitical concerns is therefore increasingly shaping the EU's approach to conflict and crises, resulting in an approach that is focused on short-term threats, fighting enemies, and competition with rivals. But the containment strategy will not address the drivers of violence and instability – and may prove contradictory in the long run. The rush to provide assistance has led to programmes that have been poorly informed and at times contradictory to the EU's own goals, as well as to long-term peace and stability. As the EU seeks to take a bigger role as a global security actor, it should ensure that its walks the talk on its policy commitments and prioritises the quality of its engagement over its quantity.

> **The rush to provide assistance has led to programmes that have been poorly informed and at times contradictory to the EU's own goals, as well as to long-term peace and stability.**

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Daily life in Bamako, Mali. The roadside sign reads 'Inclusive national dialogue - I have my word to say'.
Hamdia Traoré/Saferworld

Conclusions and recommendations for the EU's approach to crises in the Sahel and beyond

Saferworld's mapping of EU's security assistance in the Sahel reveals an approach that is focused on the security of states and the technical capacity building of their security forces. Training, advising and provision of non-lethal equipment is funded through EU missions and instruments, while arms, ammunition and other military equipment are provided bilaterally by Member States as donations or commercially. In the future, both training activities and the provision of military equipment are foreseen under the European Peace Facility.

While the EU's security assistance is dispersed through different missions and instruments with each their own mandates and objectives, they share a focus on building security and military forces' capabilities in fighting terrorism, strengthening borders and expanding states' presence in 'uncontrolled areas'. Framed around threats for European security, programmes often refer to the 'security development nexus' as their intervention logic, arguing that security force capacity building is required for to expand state control – with the assumption that stability and development will follow.

However, experts and civil society representatives in the Sahel have highlighted that this has not been the case, with people seeing very little improvement in their security or access to basic services.[423] With the EU's security assistance often initiated at the request of Sahelian or European governments, they are shaped by the interests of leaders rather than being guided by consultative processes to ensure they respond to the security needs of communities.

With this state-focused understanding of security and stability, viewed as the ability of states to fight insurgencies and protect borders, what is ignored is the role of state–society relations as one of the significant drivers of insecurity. While the EU recognises in its policies the importance of supporting security institutions to be more inclusive of women and marginalised groups, and improving civilian oversight to strengthen accountability and the conduct of forces, these considerations are less reflected in its security assistance project descriptions than the issues of migration containment and counter-terror.

Reports of escalating attacks by violent groups and frequent abuses by state forces, along with the serious humanitarian and displacement crisis impacting millions of people in the region, provide a dark picture of the current reality – and the prospects for peace and security – in the Sahel. However, while the EU has included more funding for human rights compliance in its interventions and called for addressing impunity, this has so far not prompted serious reflections on how international counter-terror and capacity building efforts may contribute to impunity and legitimise abuses. Through focusing on short-term objectives of fighting terrorism and containing migration, the international efforts in the Sahel seek to suppress symptoms rather than causes of instability, and risk exacerbating conflict. The recent attempted and successful coups in Mali, Chad and Niger in the past year demonstrate that building stability through boosting military and central state capacity lapse easily into more instability.[424]

> " Through focusing on short-term objectives of fighting terrorism and containing migration, the international efforts in the Sahel seek to suppress symptoms rather than causes of instability, and risk exacerbating conflict. "

Despite calls by Sahelian people and civil society to change the military focus of the response,[425] the EU and member states' efforts to strengthen the G5 Sahel Joint Force's counterterror operations and build the capacity of Sahelian security forces have expanded in their aims, budgets and geographic coverage. With EUTM Mali's mandate extended until 2024 and EUCAP Sahel Mali's mandate until 2023, as well as the adoption of the European Peace Facility with a likely focus on the region, the EU is planning to maintain a security footprint in the Sahel for a long time to come.

The announcement by France to withdraw Barkhane may have come as a surprise, but it can be seen as a further step in the Europeanisation of French activities, with European partners sharing the burden of Barkhane-style counterterror operations through Task Force Takuba and the European Union playing an active role in other elements of the Coalition for the Sahel's four pillar approach. Despite the French announcement of withdrawal and the increased burden-sharing between European states, France intends to continue as the backbone – and lead player – within European counterterror and security assistance activities in the Sahel. However, the restructuring provides an opportunity for other European partners and the European Union to bring their strengths and expertise on more holistic approaches to security assistance and human security – including civilian protection, community engagement and more inclusive security sector governance – into the approach to rebalance the current military and state-centric focus with more

civilian engagement and political accountability. Those countries taking part on the operations of Task Force Takuba should promote the protection of civilians as their primary objective – over that of heavy-handed counterterror goals or the exercising of European defence cooperation.

The multiple overlapping international, regional and national initiatives create a confusing and sometimes contradictory policy terrain. The imposition of largely external and state-centric security-related priorities needs to be rebalanced across the whole policy portfolio with a refocus on human security approaches that tackle the drivers of conflict and instability as seen and experienced by the people living in the region. This would entail planning assistance on the basis of how it contributes to human security, gender and conflict sensitivity, the protection of civilians and accountability, and taking a community security approach in order to better understand the security needs of communities.

In April 2021, EU member states adopted a revised Sahel strategy, announcing a 'civilian and political leap forwards', promising a stronger focus on governance, accountability, decentralisation and inclusiveness in its Sahel response. The renewed strategy includes important commitments to increase the EU's focus on combatting corruption, impunity and support for security sector reform. However, at the same time the renewed strategy continues the EU's commitments to combatting terrorism, external migration control and the capacity building of military forces – including through the European Peace Facility. If the EU wants to support sustainable peace and security in the Sahel, it should put the emphasis on the former and prioritise human security.

For the EU and its Member States, the revised EU Sahel strategy gives political approval and backing to change the focus from short-term objectives to sustainable peace. Their engagement with the four pillars of the Coalition's plan and other national and regional initiatives offer practical opportunities to redress this balance and ensure that EU engagement is consistent with the policies and objectives of the Union's external action, in particular the EU Strategic Framework to support Security Sector Reform, the Integrated Approach to external conflicts and crises and the EU Strategic Approach to Women, Peace and Security.

In order to do this, the EU and its member states will need to work with the G5 to deliver stronger results on governance, accountability and inclusiveness as well as prioritising the protection of civilians, ending impunity for human rights violations and making progress on the provision of basic services. The EU's revised strategy states that the preferred framework

for its action is drawn from the G5's own Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel and that the G5 Sahel States hold the primary responsibility for regional stabilisation.[426] As such it is vital that the EU works with its G5 partners to ensure that their strategies, policies and approaches contribute to improved human rights, human security and equality and seek a just and inclusive vision of peace and stability based on widespread and sustained consultation and implementation in partnership with the people of the Sahel.

Calling for better conduct and accountability of partners also requires self-reflection and upgrading of internal accountability mechanisms for the EU and its Member States' operations. While there are EU-wide codes of conduct for officers seconded to CSDP missions,[427] the follow up on reports of allegations of misconduct is solely a national competency,[428] meaning that there is no centralised system for monitoring the conduct of European staff on missions and holding them accountable. The lack of a robust accountability mechanism for itself undermines the EU's credibility on calling for such a system for its partners. As for international counter-terror operations, as an increasing number of European countries join the Takuba Task Force, it will be crucial for the EU and its member states participating in the Task Force to clarify its position on accountability for misconduct if it wants to lead by example and be taken seriously on human rights compliance.

The EU's revised Sahel strategy speaks of a 'civilian and political leap forwards'. This will require them to focus less on state-centred stabilisation as seen through a largely domestic security lens and more engagement with civil society and communities to develop a people-centred political strategy that focuses on addressing the longer-term structural drivers of conflict and insecurity – such as inequality, poor governance, climate change and under-development – and engages communities in its delivery.

To help operationalise a 'civilian and political leap forwards', the EU should consider:

- **a much greater focus on and resource mobilisation behind Pillar Four (development) of the Coalition for the Sahel's plan**, to include: the reorientation of funds to deliver substantial investments in the G5 states' ability to deliver basic services, including necessary physical and administrative infrastructure; support for existing formal and informal mechanisms and initiatives for conflict resolution, gender equality and accountability, and governance initiatives aimed at addressing inequalities and ensuring that populations have fair and equitable access to natural resources, land and decent livelihoods; flexible and predictable funding

for civil society including women-led organisations to engage in the planning and implementation of development strategies and activities.

- **the reorientation of any expansion of state presence to focus on responding to people's actual security and justice needs** through: robust and regular participatory analysis of conflict, peace and power dynamics and community security and justice needs; planning assistance on the basis of meaningful consultation and dialogue with communities, and broadening the understanding of security from the narrow counterterror and state capacity lens to encompass issues such as access to water, services and economic opportunities, and social cohesion; support for dialogue initiatives at all levels, in particular between communities, between national security forces and populations, and between armed groups, communities and authorities.

- **genuine people-centred security sector reform under Pillars Two and Three leading to greater accountability and more democratic security sector governance**, including: a laser-focus on building institutional and individual accountability within the military and security forces; making the needs of people and communities the primary purpose of the military and security forces; substantially increasing funding to NGOs and local civil society, including women-led organisations, to engage in SSR and governance reform processes, independent of government.

- **protecting civilians as a top priority within counterterror operations under Pillar One**, including publicly and consistently condemning acts of violence against civilians committed by defence and security forces and community militias, not just abuses perpetrated by armed groups, and ensuring that cases of misconduct and civilian harm are brought to justice and civilians impacted are supported and compensated.

- in line with suggestions made by the People's Coalition for the Sahel,[429] the Sahel Strategy and EU security assistance and stabilisation efforts cannot succeed without a robust accountability framework designed and implemented with and for communities and civil society in the Sahel. Local civil society (not only those based in capitals, but throughout the five countries), including women's rights organisations, should be given flexible support and involved more closely in the planning and implementation of the EU's activities, as they are best placed to ensure that the EU's assistance improves human security.

In addition, the EU and its Member States can mitigate some of the risks associated with arms proliferation and misuse by better regulating the provision of arms and security equipment to the

G5 states through its arms export controls. During the negotiations for the European Peace Facility, one of the most prominent justifications for why the EU should have an instrument that would allow it to provide weapons to partners in conflict regions was that in places such as the Sahel, the effectiveness of the EU's security assistance is hampered by its inability to provide weapons.[430] This argument does not match the current reality in the Sahel. The proliferation of illicit weapons is fuelling violence and conflict throughout the Sahel, and the widespread diversion, sale and theft of weapons and ammunition from state possession highlights the risk of providing more equipment under the current circumstances.[431] As it stands, the EU has neither the ability nor access to track what happens to the equipment it provides, and it is unlikely that its member states are in a better position to do so given the lack of adequate marking and tracing processes and the reluctance of Sahelian governments to allow access to their weapons storage facilities.

Arms transfers via the EPF are subject to the obligations and mitigating actions enshrined in the EU Common Position on arms transfers and other relevant international commitments to which all member states are bound. These include, *inter alia*, conducting a robust pre-licensing risk assessment of the risk that the transfer may be used to commit or facilitate human rights violations or violations of International Humanitarian Law, or that it may be diverted to an undesirable end user either en route or subsequently through resale or loss. Evidence shows that such risks are high in the Sahel and the EU should take an extremely cautious approach to licensing exports of arms and security equipment to the G5 Sahel states.

The EU and its Member States must strengthen **safeguards regarding the provision of military equipment** (for example under the EPF) in the Sahel and elsewhere, ensuring that:

■ any transfer of items on the EU's common military list, whether bilaterally between a member state and a member of the G5 or via the EPF, undergoes a rigorous risk assessment that considers the recipient's human rights record and the risk of diversion from its stockpiles

■ states and/or the EPF do not authorise a transfer where there is a clear risk that it may breach one or more of the EU's arms export criteria unless sufficient mitigation efforts are possible, for example through supporting effective physical security and stockpile management programmes, human rights training and robust monitoring and accountability frameworks for security force behaviour security force behaviour, post-export verification and tracking

■ civilian complaints mechanisms are in place and easily accessible for people impacted by the misuse or diversion of assistance to report these incidents

As stated by Assitan Diallo, President of the African Women's Association for Research and Development (AFARD), "the business of selling death to stop conflicts is hardly convincing as a security assistance strategy".

Broader lessons and recommendations for the EU's approach to supporting peace and security

As the EU reflects on its approach to conflict, it should take stock of the results of its security assistance in the Sahel. Amid growing authoritarianism and instability in the world, the EU needs to tackle drivers of insecurity more effectively, and make security forces more responsive to people's security needs. Existing EU policies include sound approaches to supporting inclusive and sustainable security provision. The Strategic Framework to support Security Sector Reform,[432] EU Stabilisation Concept[433] and the Strategic Approach to Women, Peace and Security[434] all emphasise human security, inclusive political settlements, accountable security institutions and civil society strengthening as part of a sustainable peacebuilding approach. However, preoccupation with migration and terrorism, and the focus on boosting state forces' capacity to fight short-term threats is undermining conflict sensitivity, human security and gender equality in the EU's foreign policy and crisis response – and thus the effectiveness of its efforts to address drivers of conflict and insecurity.

Continuing with an approach focused on counterterrorism, migration containment and boosting the combat capacity of state forces thus risks resulting not only in violence and civilian harm, but also contradicting the EU's own objectives. **Rather than assuming that more assistance will deliver more results, the EU should think about how to adjust the logic of its response.** The recent failures of the international counterterror response in Afghanistan – echoed by the global track record of international military-security assistance – show the urgent need for reflection, leadership and a rebalancing of current security assistance

approaches. In a range of contexts – including Yemen, Somalia, and Egypt – we've seen such initiatives fuelling corruption, repression and violence, whilst neglecting social capital and social contracts.

Lessons from the EU's approach to security assistance in the Sahel should inform not only future EU support in the region but also the EU's approach to crises elsewhere. Complex and fluid crisis contexts require sophisticated and flexible responses. Security assistance is an important element of EU support to partners in conflict-affected contexts but it should be situated within a wider political strategy designed and implemented in consultation with affected communities and informed by regular conflict and gender analysis, risk management assessment and adaptation through participatory monitoring and evaluation. This requires an enabling policy framework, a conducive political environment and appropriate resources and expertise to put it into practice.

As the EU continues to build its role as a global security provider, political leaders, planners and officials should consider the following issues:

At the **policy** level the EU already has an extensive set of commitments and guidelines which should guide the design and implementation of EU security assistance, including: the SSR Framework, WPS Strategic Approach and GAP III, Protection of Civilians guidelines, and the Integrated Approach to conflict and crises. These are comprehensive policies which, if implemented as intended would provide a crucial first step towards promoting more democratic and transparent security governance and contributing to the transformation of security sectors into more accountable and effective public services. In order to ensure policy coherence and translate the commitments enshrined in the EU's policy framework as it relates to security assistance, EU political leaders, planners and officials should:

- ensure security assistance is situated within a long-term peace and development strategy that incorporates other programmes and tools – such as dialogue and mediation, human rights monitoring, and conflict- and gender-sensitive security and development support – and is people-centred

- ensure SSR programmes within EU security assistance support the emergence of a culture of institutional and individual accountability and protection of civilians

- write in the ability to end/adapt programmes as necessary based on regular monitoring and evaluation, and ensure CSDP missions and other security initiatives have an exit strategy

- build coalitions for change well beyond elites, engaging a wide range of societal actors to create positive incentives and demand for lasting change

- ensure policy coherence across the EU's security policy portfolio, including reconsidering train-and-equip support to state security forces that risks undermining long-term peace and stability as well as the EU's credibility as a partner providing support to peace processes

Political environment

Officials and leaders also need to work together to make collective learning and the evolution of effective and sustainable security strategies and approaches more politically feasible.

- Draw on processes to ensure accountability and learning from security initiatives to ensure that Member States confront the risks and problematic track record of short term, heavily securitised approaches to managing their immediate concerns over terrorism and migration.

- Draw on lessons learnt from both the EU's security assistance in the Sahel and the global track record of Western counterterror initiatives for the establishment of norms, guidelines and safeguards, decision making, resource allocation, strategy development, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and oversight in the field of security assistance.

- Encourage and support member states to recognise the need for more effective and sustainable responses to conflict, security threats and mass displacement than has been achieved in the Sahel and other key counter-terror, migration control and stabilisation theatres via military interventions and train-and-equip programmes in recent years.

- Based on this, support member states to engage in dialogue on how to connect EU policy commitments with the real world strategies they adopt, and support collective learning and evidence based approaches. Encourage EU political leaders, individually and collectively, to communicate more effectively to the public the need for patient, comprehensive strategies to address drivers of conflict more effectively than discredited 'war-on-terror' or migration containment methodologies.

Implementation capacity

To bridge the gap between EU policy commitments and practice, the EU should:

- invest in recruiting and retaining sufficient in-house expertise on gender, conflict sensitivity, protection of civilians and civil society space, security sector governance and anti-corruption

- seek strategic partnerships with civil society experts, networks and organisations at community, national and international levels with experience of working in complex crisis contexts to complement their own expertise

Improving programming

Programme planners and implementers should:

- ensure strategies and programmes are informed by a peacebuilding lens with regular gender, conflict and political economy analysis using existing participatory tools and expertise including The Community Security Handbook and Gender Analysis Of Conflict Toolkit[435]

- integrate protection of civilians and human security into the planning, design, implementation and evaluation of projects and trainings

- partner with civil society to gain timely insights into people's changing security needs and their experiences of dealing with security and justice institutions and give them a greater say in the shaping, design, implementation and evaluation of programmes

- focus more on capacities of societies and communities rather than that of states

- do not neglect the 'R' in SSR and ensure EU support to security institutions contributes to their legitimacy, accountability and ability to respond to the security needs of people, including women and marginalised communities

- apply a conflict sensitivity lens throughout the programming cycle to ensure assistance contributes to peace and addresses drivers of conflict rather than doing harm. Use monitoring indicators based on people's perceptions of the situation and adapt programmes continuously to mitigate any potential harm

- use the recently developed risk matrix for all EU security assistance missions and programmes to monitor risks related to civilian harm, political will, governance impacts, corruption dynamics, diversion and misuse, use of force and ensure conflict sensitivity, accountability and mitigation plans

- adopt a due diligence policy to ensure that EU security assistance is not misused to facilitate abuses against civilians, or contribute to repression

- lead by example on accountability and monitoring impact by ensuring EU security missions and projects contain stringent safeguards, whistle-blowing mechanisms and robust frameworks for follow-up when incidents occur

- to better monitor the combined impact of disparate EU security assistance programmes (including provision and transfer of arms and dual-use goods), design a joint monitoring and evaluation mechanism to review overall progress towards the shared objectives in the relevant long-term peace and development strategy for the country/region

- ensure transparency through encouraging, supporting and building parliamentary and public oversight into European security assistance and SSR efforts

Notes

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About Saferworld

Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. We work with people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and conduct wider research and analysis. We use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace. Our priority is people – we believe in a world where everyone can lead peaceful, fulfilling lives, free from fear and insecurity. We are a not-for-profit organisation working in 12 countries and territories across Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

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