



Centre FrancoPaix en résolution des conflits et missions de paix

THE EUROPEAN UNION INTEGRATED AND REGIONALISED APPROACH TOWARDS THE SAHEL

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A Stabilizing Mali Project Report
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List of abbreviations

AFISMA: African-led International Support Mission to Mali
AIDCO: Europe Aid Cooperation Office
AJUSEN: Appui à la Justice Sécurité et à la Gestion des frontières au Niger
BIS: Brigade d'Investigation Spécialisées
CFSP: Common Foreign and Security Policy
CSDP: Common Security and Defence Policy
CSA: Comité de Suivi de l'Accord de Paix
DCAF: The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces
DG DEV: European Commission Directorate-General for Development
DG DEVCO: Directorate-General for Development and Cooperation
ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States
EDF: European Development Fund
EEAS: European External Action Service
ESDP: European Security and defence Policy
EU: European Union
EUBAM: European Union Border Assistance Mission
EUCAP: European Union Capacity Building Mission
EUTF: European Union Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa
EUTM Mali: European Union Training Mission Mali
GAR-SI Sahel: Groupe d'action rapides – surveillance et intervention au Sahel
GFJ5: G5 Sahel joint Force
GIZ: Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HD: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
IcSP: Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace
IfS: Instrument for Stability
LOPM: Loi de Programmation et d'Organisation Militaire
MINUSMA: Mission Multidimensionnelle Intégrée des Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation au Mali
OECD: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAIERA: Plan d'Actions à Impact Economique Rapide
PARSEC: Programme d'appui au renforcement de la sécurité dans les régions de Mopti et de Gao et à la gestion des zones frontalières
PRISM: Prevention of Conflict, Rule of Law/Security Sector Reform, Integrated Approach, Stabilisation and Mediation unit
PROJES: Programme Jeunesse et Stabilisation dans les régions Centre du Mali
PSIRC: Plan de Sécurisation Intégré des Régions du Centre du Mali
SIPRI: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
UN: United Nations

Executive summary

Increasingly worried about the deteriorating security situation in the Sahel with the proliferation of armed groups, transnational organised crime, and insecurity and poverty feeding migration towards the European continent, the European Union (EU) and its member states have mobilised important human and financial resources to support Sahelian governments. The Sahel is often portrayed as a ‘laboratory of experimentation’ for the EU’s external action. On the one side, the EU is now one of the largest donors, both for development aid and security cooperation, an unusual situation for an organisation which is best known for its trade power and development assistance. On the other side, the importance given to the Sahel by the EU and its member states has indeed taken place at a moment of institutional change and new foreign policy ambitions driven by the Lisbon treaty reform and the recent EU Global Strategy. The situation in the Sahel has been understood as an opportunity to give the EU a more important role as a security actor.

Drawing on its development aid experience and on its new security instruments, the EU’s ambition has been to provide an integrated and a regionalised approach to deal with the mix of development, governance, and security problems plaguing the Sahel. Compared to other actors such as France which employs mostly coercive action, and the UN mission (MINUSMA) which focuses exclusively on Mali, the EU’s holistic and regional action is an asset. However, in practice, the implementation of this Integrated Approach has faced many difficulties such as the proliferation of instruments and actors, vaguely defined roles and responsibilities, and a lack of effective strategic guidance which have opened the way for many coordination issues, conflicts, and much competition among EU actors. In some cases, decisions regarding the use of an instrument and the implementation of a project appear to be less driven by their added value and the conditions on the ground, than by the EU’s internal politics.

Political stakes are high as the EU and its Member states have invested a lot to support capacity-building as well as governance reforms in the Nigerien and Malian security sectors, including through the EU military training mission (EUTM) in Mali, and two civilian EU capacity-building missions (EUCAP) in Mali and in Niger. Capacity-building and structural reforms in the security sector are vital to enable the states to, not only strengthen or restore their authority over their territory, but also build more accountable security and defence forces on which populations can rely on for their security. However, the EU’s ambitions to support security sector reform processes have been affected by the fragmentation of its own action as security sector reform activities are scattered across instruments without being driven by a clear framework or an appointed actor. These activities are not based on a good understanding of the political economy of the security sector. Moreover, EU member states’ political pressure to focus on counter-terrorism and border management has negatively affected efforts for structural reforms. This has undermined the sustainability of the EU’s capacity-building activities while the endemic corruption and/or exactions perpetuated by security and defence forces tend to fuel the dynamics of insecurity and a lack of trust within the populations.

This state of affairs has also affected the EU’s ability to articulate security and development initiatives. In this context of competition and tensions between instruments and actors, it

has been difficult to think about how to contextually integrate different instruments and projects to address security, structural governance and socio-economic issues. This is one of the most intractable challenges for international actors amidst growing worries that international support overly focuses on coercive strategies driven by the counter-terrorism agenda. It is thus important to engage on all fronts and to help the governments by providing a set of governance, justice, security, and social services to (re-)gain the trust of their respective populations. The sequencing in the delivery of these services cannot be successful as jihadist groups are feeding on local conflicts and governance problems to disrupt the fragile social fabric of the Sahelian states. Hence, the prioritisation of the fight against terrorism in border areas through the support to the G5 Sahel Joint Force, while delaying the need to address structural governance and socio-economic problems, might be risky.

While the G5 Joint Force still has to demonstrate its usefulness, potential harmful consequences such as the marginalisation of the African Peace and Security Architecture, should also be taken into account. The West African component of this architecture, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), is an important and useful organisation which has set up various institutionalised mechanisms to build trust, provide mediation and manage conflicts, and on which Sahelian states could have relied. More generally, the prioritisation of the G5 Sahel by international actors risks disrupting the integration process and the political legitimacy of ECOWAS.

In this complex and challenging situation, the EU should take the following elements into account:

- In each context, it is important to carefully examine which actor is the most appropriate one to intervene and to achieve specific objectives. Instead of letting institutional interests and competition take precedence, the added value of each actor and instrument needs to be analysed.
- Development and security projects should be based on conflicts analyses and perception studies to understand the drivers of insecurity, test assumptions, orient the projects, and adapt them to the needs on the ground. Security sector reform activities should be informed by political economy analyses of the security sector.
- Governance and accountability reforms should be prioritised in security sector reform activities.
- The EU needs to find better ways to support the Sahelian governments in providing a set of security, governance, justice, and social services to their population. Focusing on security first without addressing structural issues will not succeed as insecurity arises from the interplay between jihadist groups' strategies – feeding on local cleavages – and governance and socio-economic problems. In each context, more cooperation should be established between the various security and development projects which articulation requires a deeper reflection.
- Efforts to support the G5 Sahel should be re-connected to ECOWAS and the African Peace and Security Architecture which are important stability factors.

Résumé exécutif

L'Union européenne (UE) et ses États membres ont mobilisé des ressources humaines et financières importantes pour soutenir les gouvernements sahéliens, dans un contexte caractérisé par de nombreuses préoccupations : la situation sécuritaire au Sahel avec la prolifération des groupes armés, le développement de la criminalité transnationale organisée, l'insécurité ainsi que la pauvreté qui alimentent les migrations vers le continent européen. Le Sahel est souvent présenté comme un «laboratoire d'expérimentation» de l'action extérieure de l'UE. D'une part, l'UE est désormais l'un des principaux donateurs tant pour l'aide au développement que pour la coopération en matière de sécurité, ce qui aboutit à une situation inhabituelle pour une organisation mieux connue pour sa puissance commerciale et son aide officielle au développement. D'autre part, l'importance accordée au Sahel par l'UE et ses États membres doit se comprendre dans un contexte de changement institutionnel et de nouvelles ambitions en matière de politique étrangère, sous l'impulsion de la réforme du traité de Lisbonne et de la récente stratégie globale de l'UE. Ainsi, la situation au Sahel a été perçue comme une occasion de donner à l'UE un rôle plus important en tant qu'acteur de sécurité.

Forte de son expérience en matière d'aide au développement et de ses nouveaux instruments de sécurité, l'UE a eu pour ambition d'adopter une approche intégrée et régionalisée pour faire face aux problèmes de développement, de gouvernance et de sécurité que connaît le Sahel. Par rapport à d'autres acteurs tels que la France, qui emploie principalement des actions coercitives, et la mission des Nations unies (MINUSMA) qui se concentre exclusivement sur le Mali, l'action globale et régionale de l'UE constitue un atout. Toutefois, dans la pratique, la mise en œuvre de cette approche intégrée s'est heurtée à de nombreuses difficultés, telles que la prolifération d'instruments et d'acteurs, la définition imprécise des rôles et des responsabilités, l'absence d'orientations stratégiques efficaces. Tout ceci a occasionné de nombreux problèmes de coordination, des conflits et de la concurrence entre acteurs européens. Dans certains cas, les décisions concernant l'utilisation d'un instrument et la mise en œuvre d'un projet semblent moins dictées par leurs valeurs ajoutées et les conditions sur le terrain que par la politique interne de l'UE.

Les enjeux politiques sont importants, car l'UE et ses États membres ont beaucoup investi pour soutenir le renforcement des capacités et les réformes de la gouvernance dans les secteurs de la sécurité au Niger et au Mali, notamment par le biais de la mission de formation militaire de l'UE (EUTM) au Mali, et de deux missions civiles de renforcement des capacités (EUCAP) au Mali et au Niger. Le renforcement des capacités et les réformes structurelles dans le secteur de la sécurité sont essentiels pour permettre aux États non seulement de renforcer ou de rétablir leur autorité sur leur territoire, mais aussi de mettre en place des forces de sécurité et de défense plus responsables sur lesquelles les populations peuvent compter pour leur sécurité. Toutefois, les ambitions de l'UE de soutenir les processus de réforme du secteur de la sécurité ont été affectées par la fragmentation de sa propre action, car les activités de réforme

du secteur de la sécurité sont dispersées entre plusieurs instruments sans être dirigées par un cadre clair ou un acteur désigné. Ces activités ne sont pas fondées sur une bonne compréhension de l'économie politique du secteur de la sécurité. En outre, les pressions politiques exercées par les États membres de l'UE pour qu'ils se concentrent sur la lutte contre le terrorisme et la gestion des frontières ont eu une incidence négative sur les efforts de réformes structurelles. Cela a miné la durabilité des activités de renforcement des capacités de l'UE, tandis que la corruption endémique et/ou les exactions perpétrées par les forces de sécurité et de défense ont tendance à alimenter la dynamique de l'insécurité et le manque de confiance au sein des populations.

Cette situation a également affecté la capacité de l'UE à articuler les initiatives en matière de sécurité et de développement. Dans ce contexte de concurrence et de tensions entre les instruments et les acteurs, il a été difficile de réfléchir à la manière d'intégrer différents instruments et projets dans leur contexte pour aborder les questions de sécurité, de gouvernance structurelle et socio-économiques. Il s'agit là d'un des défis les plus difficiles à relever pour les acteurs internationaux, qui craignent de plus en plus que l'appui international ne soit trop axé sur des stratégies coercitives dictées par un agenda de lutte contre le terrorisme. Il est donc important de s'engager sur tous les fronts et d'aider les gouvernements en fournissant un ensemble de services de gouvernance, de justice, de sécurité et de services sociaux pour (re)gagner la confiance de leurs populations respectives. Une prestation par séquence de ces services ne peut réussir, car les groupes djihadistes se nourrissent des conflits locaux et des problèmes de gouvernance pour perturber le fragile tissu social des États sahéliens. Par conséquent, il pourrait être risqué de donner la priorité à la lutte contre le terrorisme dans les zones frontalières en soutenant la Force commune du G5 Sahel, tout en retardant la nécessité de s'attaquer aux problèmes structurels de gouvernance et socio-économiques.

Alors que la Force commune du G5 doit encore démontrer son utilité, les conséquences potentiellement néfastes telles que la marginalisation de l'architecture africaine de paix et de sécurité devraient également être prises en compte. La composante ouest-africaine de cette architecture, la Communauté économique des États de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (CEDEAO), est une organisation importante et utile qui a mis en place divers mécanismes institutionnels pour instaurer la confiance, assurer la médiation et gérer les conflits, et sur lesquels les États sahéliens pouvaient compter. Plus généralement, la hiérarchisation du G5 Sahel par les acteurs internationaux risque de perturber le processus d'intégration et la légitimité politique de la CEDEAO.

Dans cette situation complexe et difficile, l'UE devrait tenir compte des éléments suivants :

- Dans chaque contexte, il est important d'examiner soigneusement quel est l'acteur le plus approprié pour intervenir et pour atteindre des objectifs spécifiques. Au lieu de laisser prévaloir les intérêts institutionnels et la concurrence, il convient d'analyser la valeur ajoutée de chaque acteur et instrument.
- Les projets de développement et de sécurité devraient être basés sur des analyses de conflits et des études de perception pour comprendre les facteurs d'insécurité, tester les hypothèses, orienter les projets et les adapter aux besoins sur le terrain.

Les activités de réforme du secteur de la sécurité devraient s'appuyer sur des analyses de l'économie politique du secteur de la sécurité.

- Les réformes en matière de gouvernance et de responsabilité devraient être prioritaires dans les activités de réforme du secteur de la sécurité.
- L'UE doit trouver de meilleurs moyens d'aider les gouvernements sahéliens à assurer la sécurité, la gouvernance, la justice et les services sociaux à leur population. Se concentrer d'abord sur la sécurité sans s'attaquer aux problèmes structurels ne réussira pas, car l'insécurité résulte de l'interaction entre les stratégies des groupes djihadistes - qui se nourrissent des clivages locaux - et la gouvernance et les problèmes socioéconomiques. Dans chaque contexte, une plus grande coopération devrait être établie entre les différents projets de sécurité et de développement, dont l'articulation nécessite une réflexion plus approfondie.
- Les efforts visant à soutenir le G5 Sahel devraient être rattachés à la CEDEAO et à l'architecture africaine de paix et de sécurité, qui sont des facteurs de stabilité importants.



Introduction

Increasingly worried about the deteriorating security situation in the Sahel with the proliferation of armed groups, transnational organised crime, and insecurity and poverty feeding migration towards the European continent, international actors such as the European Union (EU), France, the United States and many others, have mobilised important human and financial resources to support Sahelian governments. Policy practitioners often portray the Sahel as the new ‘laboratory of experimentation’ for foreign aid, and security and governance reforms. Indeed, the difficult mix of security, governance, and socio-economic issues, the multiplicity of local conflicts contributing to fuel instability, and the regional dimension of the problems have proven both difficult to understand and to manage. In particular, the interplay between jihadist groups’ discourses and strategies and local cleavages and grievances have produced a volatile mix which has taken its toll beyond the Northern region of Mali, to the centre of the country and to the border regions with Niger and Burkina Faso. So far, and in spite of their important investment in the region, it is difficult to say that international actors’ interventions and support to Sahelian states and regional initiatives such as the G5 Sahel have drastically improved the situation.

The EU, in particular, has intensified its efforts in the Sahel region after the beginning of the 2012 conflict in Northern Mali, the spread of instability to other areas in the Sahel, and the migration ‘crisis’ which has reinforced or triggered the interests of EU member states in the region. The ‘laboratory’ dimension of the Sahel is particularly important for the EU which is now one of the largest donors, both for development aid and security cooperation, an unusual situation for an organisation which is best known for its

trade power and development assistance. The importance given to the Sahel by the EU and its member states has indeed taken place at a moment of institutional change and new foreign policy ambitions driven by the Lisbon treaty reform and the 2016 EU Global Strategy. Besides the shared perceptions that the situation in the Sahel is affecting Europe, the situation in the Sahel has been understood as an opportunity to give the EU a more important role as a political and security actor.

In theory, drawing on its development aid experience and on its new security instruments and ambitions, the EU should be well equipped, compared to other international actors, to address the intersecting development, governance, and security problems plaguing the Sahel. Whereas other international actors have emphasised a coercive strategy, like France with its Barkhane operation, or have exclusively focused on Mali such as the MINUSMA, the United Nations (UN) Mission supporting the Malian peace process, the EU’s ambition is to bring together its development and security instruments to provide an integrated and a regionalised approach to instability in the Sahel. However, in practice, the implementation of this Integrated Approach faces difficulties such as the proliferation of instruments and actors, vaguely defined roles and responsibilities, and a lack of effective strategic guidance which have opened the way for many issues of coordination, conflict, and competition.

Political stakes are high as the EU and its Member states have invested a lot to support capacity-building as well as governance reforms in the Nigerien and Malian security sectors, including through the EU military training mission (EUTM) in Mali, and two civilian EU capacity-building missions

(EUCAP) in Mali and in Niger. Capacity-building and structural reforms in the security sector are vital to enable the states to, not only strengthen or restore their authority over their territory, but also build more accountable security and defence forces on which populations can rely on for their security. Endemic corruption and exactions perpetuated by the armed forces tend, on the contrary, to fuel the dynamics of insecurity. At the same time, the EU has to show its added value, particularly regarding its ability to articulate its security engagement with development and governance-related programmes and projects which are needed to address the complex socio-economic issues and conflict dynamics destabilising the region. This is one of the most intractable challenges for international actors amidst growing worries that international support overly concerns coercive strategies driven by the counter-terrorism agenda (Charbonneau and Jourde 2016; Sears 2017; Tobie 2018; ICG 2018; International Alert 2018).

One of the key priorities in the Sahel of the EU and its member states has been to support the G5 Sahel and the operationalisation of its Joint Force (GFJ5). The G5 is presented as the most appropriate regional initiative as it brings together states facing similar security problems and depending on each other's stability, while still falling within the 'African solution to African problems' mantra that has characterised the rise of African regional organisations since the 1990s. Moreover, in support of the G5 Sahel, the EU has engaged in a complex process of regionalisation of its own action. Even if the European Commission is used to cooperate

with regional organisations across the world and has often been attentive to add a regional layer to nationally focused programme, the EU has never attempted to coordinate its own action in one particular region. While this new regional cooperation approach might be an interesting development for the EU's foreign policy, as it might help with the fragmentation of EU action, the support to the G5 Sahel needs to be carefully examined. Indeed, the unwavering support to the G5 Sahel and its Joint Force, which has become the new obsession of international actors present in the region, is not without consequences. While its efficiency has yet to be proven, it could also be harmful, weaken regional integration processes and marginalize the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).

This report aims to provide an overview of the EU action in the Sahel and discuss the challenges and difficulties it faces, with a particular focus on Mali and on the security dimension of this action. It is based on multiple research trips and more than 60 semi-structured interviews conducted in Brussels, Abuja, and Bamako. Interviewees are civil servants, diplomats, military and police officers working for the EU¹ and its Member states, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union, and the Malian government. They also include staff from the EU's implementing agencies and from Malian civil society organisations.

The first section of the report describes the evolution of the EU's priorities in the Sahel in a context of institutional transformation. It

¹ In Brussels, EU interviewees are located within the EEAS (including in the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) structures), and the Directorate-General for Development and Cooperation (DG DEVCO). In the field, EU interviewees work for the EU Delegations, and for the CSDP missions. For purpose of anonymity, interviewees in Brussels will be identified as EEAS officials and DEVCO officials, while all EU interviewees located in the Sahel will be identified as EU field officers.

emphasises the necessity to examine the EU's responses to the events on the ground in light of its internal politics. The second section examine how the EU is attempting to integrate security, governance, and development objectives in evolving or new development instruments. The third section focuses on the EU security cooperation and security sector reform ambitions. It brings attention to the multiplicity of actors, the competitions and lack of coordination that tend to undermine the overall action of the EU, and to the inherent difficulties to engage in security sector reform, reinforced by the scarcity of expertise on this issue. Finally, the last section engages with the regionalisation process and asks whether the support to the G5 Sahel and increasing neglect of ECOWAS are indeed the right solutions.

Changing priorities for the EU in the Sahel

The massive scaling-up of the EU action in the Sahel shows the extent to which this region has become a priority for the EU, not only as an area where the EU and some of its member states have particular interests and close relationships, but also as a ‘laboratory of experimentation’ for a comprehensive and integrated approach of the EU external action. This expression is often mentioned by EU officials, researchers and analysts working on the Sahel (Lopez Lucia 2017; Pietz 2017; Venturi 2017; Lebovich 2018a).² In this last decade, the multiplicity of policies, initiatives, and programmes that the EU has deployed in the Sahel both testifies to, and has triggered, important innovations, evolutions and re-arrangements of the EU external action.

The modalities of the EU action in the Sahel and its institutional innovations are so closely intertwined with the challenging situation on the ground that this report seeks to both examine the ‘external’ and the ‘internal’ logics of the EU action in Mali, and in the broader Sahel. The ‘internal’ logic refers to processes internal to the EU, its internal politics, and in particular to the re-definition of roles, instruments, identities, and interests within EU institutions after the Lisbon Treaty reform process and the creation of the EEAS. Paying attention to this ‘internal’ logic means analysing bureaucratic and institutional interests, and looking at cooperation, competitions, as well as conflicts between various groups of actors who are attempting

to shape the EU external action.³ These groups of actors include groups within EU institutions and services, as well as within EU member states. The ‘external’ logic is driven by the rapidly evolving political and security situation in Sahel, as well as by events taking place in EU member states’ territories. Terrorist attacks on European soil, the recent migration ‘crisis’ and the pressure of populist nationalism have also been the drivers of the rising interest in the Sahel of some EU member states. These two logics, however, cannot be isolated from each other: as much as the ‘internal’ logic feeds decision-making processes towards the Sahel, events in Mali are invoked to justify institutional innovations. One of the aims of this study is thus to simultaneously taking these two logics into account to understand how they shape the EU action in the Sahel.

The activism of the EU in the Sahel: drivers and modalities

The EU started addressing the ‘Sahel’ as a coherent region through the elaboration of the EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel (the Sahel Strategy), adopted in March 2011 by the Foreign Affairs Council. This document, reshaping the EU’s policy towards Mali, Niger, Mauritania and Algeria (to which Burkina Faso and Chad were added in 2014),⁴ was the first of its kind⁵ and laid down the foundations for the EU action in the Sahel for the years to come. Its elaboration emerged from a context marked by an increasing concern of EU member states towards the worsening of the security situation in the Sahel (including the

² Interviews with EEAS and DEVCO official (2012, 2015, 2018).

³ The importance of looking at such issues to understand the EU integration process and EU policies is emphasised in the field of Sociology of EU integration (See for e.g. Saurugger 2008).

⁴ Conversely, Algeria was dropped out of the Strategy at the same moment.

⁵ A dozen of Sahel strategies have been elaborated by states and international organisations since then.

kidnapping of EU citizens)⁶ (Simon *et al.* 2012), and the proactiveness of the West and Central Africa Directorate located in the former European Commission Directorate-General for Development (DG DEV). Working on this strategy was seen as a political opportunity during a moment when DG DEV was nearly transferred to the newly created EEAS.⁷

Up until this time, the EU action towards Sahelian states was mostly, even though not exclusively, focused on traditional development aid programmes. A relatively small number of security-oriented projects were already in place targeting illicit trafficking and border management, funded by the former Instrument for Stability (IfS),⁸ which is now the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP).⁹ A substantial amount of money from the European Development Fund (EDF)¹⁰ was also allocated to regional security in the form of capacity-building and support to the operationalisation of ECOWAS' peace and security architecture (European Community-West Africa 2002). Nevertheless, most of the funds allocated to Niger, Mali, and Mauritania was spent on traditional development aid.

The Sahel Strategy was thus instrumental in inserting security objectives in development aid. A number of security priorities such as the fight against terrorism, improving weak law enforcement and judicial sectors, and better border management were integrated in the framework of the Strategy, alongside more traditional priorities (improving public services to local populations, education, employment opportunities, human rights, democracy and good governance, furthering decentralisation, etc.). The Strategy included four lines of action: 1) governance, development, and internal conflict resolution; 2) political and diplomatic; 3) security and the rule of law; 4) violent extremism and radicalisation. As a result, 10 million euros of the 2013-2018 EDF were redirected towards the security priorities defined by the Sahel Strategy which also, and more importantly, provided directions for the on-going EDF (2014-2020). The insertion of security objectives were justified through the 'security and development nexus' defined as the idea 'that there cannot be sustainable development without peace and security, and that without development and poverty eradication there will be no sustainable peace' (Council of the EU 2007).¹¹ Today,

⁶ Multiple kidnappings of European citizens by Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the killing of a French national led a group of eight member states to send a letter to the High Representative requesting further European engagement in the region.

⁷ Interview with EEAS officials (2012).

⁸ For example, the IfS funded SEACOP, a programme that aimed to build capacities and strengthen cooperation against maritime trafficking across countries situated on the transatlantic cocaine route.

⁹ The IcSP is a financial instrument used in situation of emerging crises, crises, and post-conflict environment. It funds activities in the areas of: crisis response; conflict prevention, peace-building and crisis preparedness; and responses to global, trans-regional and emerging threats such as illicit trafficking and counter-terrorism.

¹⁰ The EDF is the main financial instrument that provides development assistance to African, Caribbean and Pacific states as planned by the 2000-2020 Cotonou Agreement.

¹¹ This nexus is at the centre of the Sahel Strategy narrative: 'In few areas is the inter-dependence of security and development more clear. The fragility of governments impacts on the stability of the region and the ability to combat both poverty and security threats ... The security threat from terrorist activity by Al-Qaida in the Maghreb (AQIM), which has found a sanctuary in Northern Mali, is focussed on Western targets and has evolved from taking money to taking life, discouraging investment in the region ... Deteriorating security conditions pose a challenge to

this nexus is widely circulated and accepted across EU institutions. In 2010, however, attempting to act simultaneously on security and development in one particular geographical area was considered innovative. While the nexus had been floating around for a few years already (see for e.g. EU 2003; EC 2006), the previous pillar structure¹² of the EU which separated its external action instruments, and the many resistances that the nexus triggered, in particular among development actors, did not facilitate its acceptance.

Dealing with terrorism and transnational organised crime was therefore at the core of the Sahel Strategy, in particular after the outbreak of the 2012 crisis which saw the Tuareg rebellion backed by Jihadist groups proclaiming the independence of the Northern regions of Mali on April 2012, the coup d'état against President Amadou Toumani Touré on March 2012, followed by the advance of several Jihadist groups towards Central Mali in January 2013, which was stopped by French military operation *Serval* (Djiré *et al.* 2017). However, migration was soon added to these priorities in the midst of the so-called migration 'crisis' that began in 2015 in Europe following an important increase of migrant arrivals on EU shores (Davitti and Ursu 2018). This was one of the key events driving policy change in Brussels regarding the Sahel. The Sahel

Regional Action Plan (RAP) 2015-2020 took note of this evolution: 'Irregular migration and related crimes such as trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants, corruption, illicit trafficking and transnational organised crime are thriving particularly where there is weak and/or little presence of any governmental authority. Migration pressure is mounting, with serious implications both for the countries in the region and the EU' (Council of the EU 2015). In the context of the Valletta Summit in November 2015, dominated by the EU's migration agenda, new partnerships and instruments were put in place, with origin and transit countries, notably Niger and Mali, and reinforcing the much criticised process of externalisation of European borders (Venturi 2017).¹³ The Summit also led to the creation of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa (EUTF). The EUTF embodies this dual EU focus on 'hard' security (border security and countering terrorism and trafficking), and 'soft' human security (addressing the root causes on a longer term through development actions) (Van de Vijzel 2016).¹⁴

Hence, in addition to the migration 'crisis', the worsening of the situation in Mali saw civilian populations, the Malian army and peace-keepers suffering from an escalating number of casualties, followed by the

development cooperation and restrict the delivery of humanitarian assistance and development aid, which in turn exacerbates the vulnerability of the region and its population' (EU 2011).

¹² Before the Lisbon Treaty that entered into force in 2009, the EU external action was mainly divided into two pillars: the first 'community' pillar which included the EU development policy and other 'community' external relations instruments; and the second pillar (inter-governmental) which included the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the former European Security and defence Policy (ESDP) which was renamed CSDP by the Lisbon Treaty.

¹³ These 'partnerships' are based on the idea that these countries can, as asked by the EU, close their borders, detain migrants in centres, and accept asylum seekers who have been rejected. In return, the 'partners' receive financial and political advantages such as development aid or, in some cases, the liberalisation of visa policy (Molenaar 2018).

¹⁴ However, for Bernardo Venturi (2017), the idea of tackling the root causes of irregular migration lacks a broader view and understanding of the complex phenomena of migration such as the role of the diaspora, and the actual effects of development policy on mobility.

spreading of attacks to Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire in 2016, and by the deterioration of the situation in the Centre of Mali. This rising and shifting instability pushed the EU to respond by way of institutional innovations and new actions in domains related to terrorism, radicalisation, and migration including border management, smuggling, and trafficking (Council of the EU 2015, 2017b). Three CSDP missions have been deployed with these priorities progressively integrated in their mandate (Davitti and Ursu 2018). While the first mission EUCAP Sahel Niger responded to challenges initially identified by the Sahel Strategy, the second mission EUTM Mali responded specifically to political instability in Mali after the coup d'état and the first attacks in the North. The third mission EUCAP Sahel Mali was driven by the aim to train internal security forces in Mali to enhance the presence of the State throughout its territory. The support to the G5 Sahel¹⁵ and its Joint Force¹⁶ also became an integral and important element of the EU action in the Sahel after the EU announced a first 50 million and then an additional 50 million euros in funding to the G5JF through its African Peace Facility.¹⁷

The addition of a strong migration component fits within the reading of the EU engagement in the Sahel through the frame of an internal-external security continuum

which contributed to a rapprochement of EU member states' positions¹⁸ on the region in spite of a variety of strategic and economic interests (Pichon 2017).¹⁹ Some as Lebovich (2018a: 2) have highlighted that 'It is in the Sahel that some EU members believe they must fight a key battle for the future of the European project, viewing the stabilisation of the region – particularly through initiatives to curb migration and counter terrorist threats – as key to heading off populist nationalism at home.' It should be emphasised, however, that the logics of intervention of EU member states in the Sahel are too diverse to be reduced to a fight against migrations and populist nationalism at home. For instance, France is mostly driven by geopolitical reasons, Spain and Germany are partly there to support France and the action of the EU, while Italy and Spain are also driven by migration concerns. Nordic states have been present in the Sahel for a while, pushed by their development agencies, and are also there to support the UN. Most EU member states currently engaged in the Sahel are thus not new to the region and are motivated by various reasons and commitments. Although, the migration prism might be particularly helpful to explain why some Eastern European member states, who were not particularly favourable to the EU action in the Sahel early on, are now supporting it and sending staff to the CSDP missions. In any case, consensus is now strong among

¹⁵ The G5 Sahel is an institutional framework created by Niger, Mali, Mauritania, Chad, and Burkina Faso in 2014 to facilitate coordination and cooperation in the fields of security and development

¹⁶ On February 7th, 2017, the Heads of States of Mali, Niger, Chad, Mauritania and Burkina Faso decided to establish the G5JF with the aim to mutualise their effort in the fight against common security threats. The Joint Force was supposed to include 5000 troops but it might be scaled up to 10 000.

¹⁷ The African Peace Facility, financed through the EDF, provides funding to support the development of the African Peace and Security Architecture.

¹⁸ Interviews with EU member states officials (2018).

¹⁹ This continuum appears in various EU documents such as The European Agenda on Security: 'EU internal security and global security are mutually dependent and interlinked. The EU response must therefore be comprehensive and based on a coherent set of actions combining the internal and external dimensions, ... (EC 2015; See also EEAS 2016).

member states on the necessity of the EU's involvement in the Sahel. Two Foreign Affairs Council meetings have led to Council Conclusions on Mali and the Sahel in 2016 and 2017, and a dozen member states have substantially stepped up their activities in the Sahel through bilateral contributions and/or participation to the EU CSDP missions.²⁰

From a Comprehensive to an Integrated Approach

Through the Sahel Strategy, the security and development nexus became the driver of the EU action in the Sahel, which profoundly changed its modalities. Indeed, bringing the different instruments of the EU within the same framework partly ran against existing EU internal bureaucratic organisation, procedures and habits. These new modalities were first labelled the Comprehensive Approach and, more recently, the Integrated Approach. The Sahel Strategy was instrumental in promoting the necessity of an 'integrated and holistic approach' (EU 2011), while other internal debates, in particular in the field of crisis management, nourished the development of the Comprehensive Approach (EC 2013: See for e.g.). Eventually, this approach was defined as 'both a general working method and a set of concrete measures and processes to improve how the EU, based on common strategic vision and drawing on its wide array of existing tools and instruments, collectively can develop, embed and deliver more coherent and more effective policies, working practices, actions and results' (Council of the EU 2014). The more recent Integrated Approach is presented as a broader

implementation of the former in the field of external conflicts and crises: it is multi-dimensional (using all the instruments), multilevel (acting at the local, national, regional, and global level), multi-phase (applied through all phases of conflicts), and multi-lateral (engaging all players present in a conflict) (EEAS 2016).²¹

Bringing security and development together through the Comprehensive Approach was not merely an attempt to adapt to the EU's external environment. It was also a way for groups of actors within EU institutions and in particular, within the EEAS, to further their position in the new post-Lisbon institutional setting (Egger 2016; Lavallée and Pouponneau 2016), and transform the EU into a more strategic and political actor on the international stage. The Lisbon Treaty 'created uncertainties, fuzzy situations and struggles between groups of actors and institutions taking up new roles and attempting to construct new hierarchies through this re-organization' (Lopez Lucia 2017: 4). One way they have done so has been through the use of the Sahel Strategy and the corresponding Comprehensive Approach as a way to gain more influence over development aid by politicising it further, and re-orienting it towards the inclusion of security objectives. This was facilitated by the Lisbon Treaty which abolished the pillar structure and brought within one institution, the EEAS, various services that were previously located in separate institutions.²² At a moment where the roles of the EEAS and the newly created

²⁰ France, Germany, Italy which has just opened an embassy in Niger, Belgium, Luxembourg, Spain, Netherlands, Finland, Sweden, and Denmark are among these member states.

²¹ For a discussion of the Integrated Approach see Tardy (2017).

²² These services includes: the CSDP crisis management structures (from the Council Secretariat), the Directorate-General for External Relations (from the European Commission), and the geographical services of former DEG DEV, in addition to member states diplomats.

DG DEVCO²³ (responsible for the implementation of development instruments) were not clearly defined, crises situations such as the one in the Sahel and the invoked necessity to use all the instruments available to deal with it, enabled actors within the EEAS to advocate for the coordination of all EU instruments within one strategic framework and under their leadership. This was quite a drastic change as each financial instrument tends to be driven by its particular objectives and rationales (e.g. sponsoring development for the EDF).²⁴

The Sahel Strategy should thus be considered part of an attempt, led by actors within the EEAS, and pushed by a number of EU member states, to transform the EU into a more political and security-oriented international actor able to respond to external challenges beyond development issues. As such, the Strategy is different in many ways from other documents framing EU-Africa relations, in particular as it explicitly establishes that the EU is in the Sahel to protect its interests and its citizens. It states that ‘An urgent and a more recent priority is to prevent AQIM attacks in the Sahel region and its potential to carry out attacks on EU territory, to reduce and contain drug and other criminal trafficking destined for Europe, to secure lawful trade and communication links

... 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’ (EU 2011).²⁵ In contrast, previous documents on EU-Africa relations tend to stress African interests and the EU’s role as a development aid donor (See, for e.g., European Community-ACP 2000; Africa-EU 2007).²⁶ Moreover, contrarily to these other documents, the Sahel Strategy was not negotiated either with Sahelian partners. The reason given for this new modality was the different nature of the Sahel Strategy as a ‘real’ foreign policy strategy, mixing instruments and driven by the EU’s strategic interests. Thus the need was first for the EU to develop its stance before engaging the dialogue with the partners to identify security and development activities.²⁷ This shift towards a stronger acknowledgement of EU’s interests is part of a broader change which is also inscribed at the heart of the recent EU Global Strategy (Dijkstra 2016; EEAS 2016; Venturi 2017).

Some of these changes have triggered resistance from some quarters within DG DEVCO in the years following the adoption of the Strategy (Lopez Lucia 2017: 9–10).²⁸ However, more recent interviews suggest that this resistance has largely faded away.²⁹

²³ DG DEVCO includes the former budget execution services of DG DEV and former Europe Aid Cooperation Office (AIDCO).

²⁴ As explained in previous work ‘Many of the practices established through the Sahel Strategy aim to reduce this autonomy and re-orient DG DEVCO’s development objectives within the wider strategic objectives of the EU in the Sahel’ (Lopez Lucia 2017, 7).

²⁵ The discussion that took place in the Political and Security Committee of the EU on whether to call this document a ‘strategy’ is revealing of this shift and of its novelty. Indeed, some member states representatives argued against the ‘strategy’ label as, for them, the purpose of the EU was not to develop a foreign policy ‘strategy’ but to care for poverty and underdevelopment (Interview with former EEAS official (2018)).

²⁶ However, it should be noted that a document similar to the Sahel Strategy was elaborated for the Horn of Africa in 2011.

²⁷ Interviews with EEAS officials (2012, 2014).

²⁸ Interviews with DEVCO officials (2012), EEAS officials (2012), Council of the EU official (2012), and member states official (2012).

²⁹ Interviews with DEVCO and EEAS officials (2018).

The security and development nexus, the Comprehensive and the Integrated Approach are now commonly used by DEG DEVCO officials in Brussels and in the Delegations of the EU to describe EU action and their practices.³⁰ While the work done by EEAS officials to curb EU development instruments to the necessity of the EU's strategic priorities through the Comprehensive Approach can be seen as a success, it should be noted that newly created instruments such as the EUTF might also have played a role in this acceptance. Indeed, whereas the EEAS does not have direct influence on the EUTF – as, contrary to the EDF, this emergency instrument was not programmed in advance –,³¹ DG DEVCO is the service in Brussels that prepares EUTF project for adoption. The fear of DG DEVCO officials of becoming the implementing agency of the EEAS, devoid of political role, has thus evaporated as the EUTF has become one of the EU's largest sources of funding for security projects in Africa. While this newly gained influence might have contributed to their buy-in into the Comprehensive Approach and enhanced the bureaucratic power of DG DEVCO, it has also increased the organisational complexity in the management of the EU external action in the Sahel.³²

However, even if everyone explicitly acknowledges the importance of the

Integrated Approach, its practice remains complicated and contested. The multiplication of instruments in the Sahel, and in particular in Mali does not facilitate its implementation (Lebovich 2018a; Pietz 2017). The EDF, the EUTF, the IcSP, and the African Peace Facility are funding development, governance, and security cooperation projects in the five Sahelian countries as identified by the EU. CSDP missions are present in Mali and in Niger. A new instrument is currently being tested in Mali, article 28³³ of the Treaty on EU, in the form of stabilisation activity in Central Mali, piloted by a recently created division PRISM³⁴ within the EEAS. In addition, an unusual process of regionalisation of the CSDP is ongoing with the aim to coordinate the work of the three CSDP missions and the support to the G5 Sahel and its member states' security and defence capacities. The activism of the EEAS and, in particular of its Deputy Secretary General for CSDP and Crisis Response, can be understood in the context of the ambition described above to make the EEAS a 'real' diplomatic service and turn the EU into a relevant security actor. Nevertheless, while this activism has led to the acceptance of the Integrated Approach by other EU actors, the modalities and leadership of its implementation has become the object of new tensions and conflicts. Various services in Brussels and in the field (for e.g. CSDP actors, PRISM, the geo-desks,

³⁰ Interviews with DEVCO officials and EU field officers (2018).

³¹ The EDF is jointly programmed by the EEAS and DEVCO which provides the EEAS with a shaping power.

³² Interviews with EEAS and DEVCO officials (2018), and with one EU field officer (2018).

³³ Article 28.1 states that 'Where the international situation requires operational action by the Union, the Council shall adopt the necessary decisions. They shall lay down their objectives, scope, the means to be made available to the Union, if necessary their duration, and the conditions for their implementation' (UE 2012). The vagueness of the article represents its added value as it could be used to launch a variety of actions when other instruments are not available.

³⁴ PRISM is the Prevention of Conflict, Rule of Law/Security Sector Reform, Integrated Approach, Stabilisation and Mediation unit which missions are to further the EEAS security expertise and facilitate the implementation of the Integrated Approach. PRISM directly reports to the Deputy Secretary-General for CSDP and crisis response (Benraïs and Simon 2017)

DEVCO, and officials in the Delegation of the EU) do not always share the same views regarding the modalities and have a tendency to either compete for leadership or struggle to assert their autonomy.³⁵ Some member states bureaucracies have also grown wary of the political ambitions of the EEAS in the Sahel. These conflicts are particularly exacerbated in Mali where all the instruments are present. Section 3 will explore them in more detail to show how this internal logic also shapes decisions and affects the delivery of EU action in the field. In some cases, institutional interests and infighting seem to have prevailed over the thorough analysis of the conditions on the ground in the design of EU actions.

A pragmatic regional approach

Lastly, the Sahel Strategy has participated to re-define the way the EU engages with regions. Most EU action at the regional level are framed through a ‘Sahel’ prism (Council of the EU 2017a). This is a new direction as EU action used to be framed through a West African prism, embodied by ECOWAS. Indeed, the EU has traditionally linked regional integration to prosperity and security (See for e.g. EC 2001; EU 2003), and one of its main tools to foster international security has been the support to regional organisations, in particular the African Peace and Security Architecture (Lopez Lucia 2018). Departing from this traditional regional approach judged inefficient, the EU is now increasingly favouring a more pragmatic stance, supporting ad hoc and less institutionalised sectoral cooperation initiatives at the regional level, instead of initiatives aiming at regional integration. The

Sahel Strategy is one of the key documents which has initiated a reflection on how to better ‘think and work regionally’ (Council of the EU 2015). Emerging from this reflection, the consensus seems to have departed from a prioritisation of regional organisations such as ECOWAS, replaced by a support to initiatives such as the G5 Sahel that respond to the EU’s immediate interests and priorities (EU 2011; Council of the EU 2015). This new regional approach is now inscribed in the EU Global Strategy: ‘Regional orders do not take a single form. Where possible and when in line with our interests, the EU will support regional organisations. We will not strive to export our model, but rather seek reciprocal inspiration from different regional experiences. Cooperative regional orders, however, are not created only by organisations. They comprise a mix of bilateral, sub-regional, regional and inter-regional relations’ (EEAS 2016). Hence, the ‘normative’ support to regional organisations has been replaced by a more pragmatist regional approach aiming to further the political and security role of the EU. Section 4 will elaborate further on the reasons and the consequences of this change.

³⁵ It is revealing that DEVCO actors, implementing the EUTF and other financial instruments, assert their position through a constant reference to the security and development nexus but criticise the Sahel Strategy, an EEAS document, as irrelevant and disconnected from the realities on the ground (interviews with DEVCO officials (2018) and on EU field officers (2018)), while it is considered to be the guiding strategic framework among EEAS officials (interviews with EEAS officials (2018) and one EU field officer (2018)).

Integrating security, development, and governance initiatives in development instruments

The trajectory of the EU external action, described in the previous Section, has led to the integration of new security objectives in the EU's development aid, alongside development goals such as combating poverty, rural development, education, infrastructures building, decentralisation, and improving State governance and its institutions. Programmes related to security and migration issues, including security and justice sectors governance, border management, counter-terrorism, and fight against illicit trafficking, have thus been added to the range of programmes funded by EU development instruments. The EU is also engaged in the Malian peace process as a member of the *Comité de Suivi de l'Accord de Paix* (CSA)³⁶ attended by the EU Special Representative for the Sahel, and co-chairs the CSA sub-committee in charge of economic, social and cultural development. Whereas the EU is commonly criticised for the securitisation and even militarisation of its development assistance, it should be stressed that a large part of the EU's development aid still funds traditional development objectives, and that the militarisation of its action remains very limited (Frowd and Sandor 2018). However, it is true that, driven by the increasing adhesion to the Integrated Approach and the will to respond to an uncertain and multifaceted political and security situation, the conception of EU development projects have been increasingly coloured by security

priorities,³⁷ while new instruments have been designed to specifically target these security priorities. This section reviews the programmes and projects funded by the EU development instruments, showing the increase weight of security objectives in the development programmes as well as the increased amounts of aid targeted to those objectives. It highlights the difficult articulation of security and development initiatives in a context characterised by heightened political pressure, a proliferation of instruments, projects, and actors.

The increased weight of security objectives in the European Development Fund

Traditional development aid and governance programmes are still a big part of the EU action in the Sahel today. Together with its member states, the EU is the biggest provider of development assistance to the region with 8 billion euro over 2014-2020 (EEAS 2018). Currently, the EU's largest development instrument is the 11th EDF (2014-2020). Under this 11th EDF, Mali has been allocated a 615 million euro national envelop among which 100 million are allocated to rural development and food security, 100 million to education, and 110 million to the road sector (UE-Mali 2014). In Niger, out of the 686 million euro national envelop, more than half is allocated to food, nutrition, and resilience, and to strengthening state capacities to implement social policies (UE-Niger 2014). Almost the entirety of Burkina Faso's 623 million envelop funds governance, health, food, nutrition, and agriculture programmes (UE-Burkina Faso 2014). 63% of Mauritania's 195 million and 79,2% of Chad's 442 million envelops are

³⁶ The CSA is in charge of the implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali signed in 2015.

³⁷ Interviews with one EEAS official (2018) and one EU field officer (2018).

allocated to traditional development programmes (food security, agriculture, and health) (UE-Chad 2014; UE-Mauritanie 2014).

In contrast to the previous 10th EDF (2008-2013) though, new security-related priorities were introduced in the 11th EDF. In the Malian envelop, 280 million euro are provided for state reforms and consolidation of the rule of law, mostly under the form of budget support (State Building Contract) and aiming at structural reforms. This budget support³⁸ now includes security sector reform indicators which tie the disbursement of funds to progress in the Malian security sector reform process supported by the CSDP missions (DCAF 2016; Bagayoko 2018a). In Niger, a specific 100 million euro ‘security, governance and the consolidation of peace’ focal sector has been included in the national envelop which includes support to the judiciary system, and to state capacities to fight against terrorism, organised crime, and manage borders (UE-Niger 2014). Moreover, a number of the EU officials interviewed highlighted that, while the EDF still largely retains its specificity as a development instrument, development projects are increasingly imbued with security concerns. For example, a radicalisation component is added to projects concerning justice system reforms, while socio-economic or rural projects often include a conflict prevention dimension.³⁹

A more responsive instrument? The European Union Emergency Trust Fund

In spite of the transformation of the EDF, this instrument was not considered responsive enough, that is quickly adaptable to new needs and challenges, both by EU member states and various EU services, to respond to the EU security and migration priorities highlighted in the Sahel Strategy and its Action Plan.⁴⁰ As mentioned previously, a more responsive instrument was thus created, the EUTF. This instrument is considered to be more adaptable for various reasons: firstly, as an ‘emergency’ instrument it is not programmed in advance which means that, in principle, it can respond to evolving needs on the ground. Secondly, projects funded by the EUTF do not have to be requested by the national authorising officer which is the procedure for EDF programmes. Instead, they can also be proposed by EU member states or the Delegation of the EU. Thirdly, the EUTF is flexible inasmuch as it does not entirely have to abide by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee’s criteria for development aid which are quite restrictive in terms of funding security-related programmes.⁴¹ Moreover, while the EUTF is often presented as an instrument destined to tackle the root causes of irregular migration, and combat smuggling and human trafficking, it has been used more broadly to fund projects with a security dimension that cannot be funded by other instruments, even if the links with migration are dubious.

³⁸ It also covers a broad range of topics including justice system reform, improvement of security, decentralisation, fight against corruption, dialogue and national reconciliation, management of public resources, etc. (UE-Mali 2014).

³⁹ Interviews with one EEAS official (2018) and one EU field officer (2018).

⁴⁰ Interviews with EEAS officials (2018), DEVCO officials (2018), and EU field officers (2018).

⁴¹ The EUTF draws on the EDF reserve (1,29 billion euro), as well as on other EU financial instruments (DCI, ENI, HOME, and ECHO), and from EU member states and other donor contributions for a total of 4,1 billion euro.

Overall, 930 million euro have been committed through the EUTF to the Sahel region with Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso as the largest beneficiaries. In Mali, the EUTF funds 11 projects for around 197,5 million euro: 77 million to ‘improved governance and conflict prevention’, 65 million to ‘strengthening’ resilience, 39,5 million to ‘greater economic and employment opportunities, and only 15 million to ‘improved migration management’. According to a recent evaluation of EU policy in West Africa, the political dialogue on migration between the EU and the Malian government has suffered some difficulties which led the latter to tighten its position on the topic (IRAM 2018).⁴² As a result, the EUTF in Mali focuses mainly on supporting the peace process, mediation and community dialogue, and on the return of the Malian state and the internal security forces in the Northern and in the Central regions. *Sécurité et développement au Nord du mali*⁴³ and PARSEC (*Programme d’appui au renforcement de la sécurité dans les régions de Mopti et de Gao et à la gestion des zones frontalières*) are two projects featured among the 11, for instance. PARSEC is a 29 million euro flagship project implemented by Expertise France with the aim to support the Malian government’s efforts to improve security conditions in the Centre of the country and at the borders with Niger and Burkina Faso. It plans for the training of internal security forces and the provision of (non-lethal) equipment to, internal security

forces, as well as the construction of infrastructure.

In contrast to Mali, migrations are the main drivers of the 247,5 million euros dedicated to projects in Niger. It reflects the fact that Niger is the main hub on the trans-Saharan irregular migration route (Molenaar and El Kamouni-Janssen 2017), the strong political dialogue that the EU has developed with Niger on the topic of migration, and more generally the willingness of the Nigerien government to cooperate on this issue in exchange of various political and financial advantages.⁴⁴ As a result, most governance, conflict and socio-economic projects have a strong migration component such as: AJUSEN (*Appui à la Justice Sécurité et à la Gestion des frontières au Niger*);⁴⁵ PAIERA (*Plan d’Actions à Impact Economique Rapide*) which seeks to offer new economic opportunities to actors who benefitted from economic activities linked to migrants; and the creation of the *Equipes Conjointe d’Investigation* to strengthen the capacities of the Nigerien police concerning the fight against irregular migration and human trafficking.

At this early stage, EUTF projects have had mixed results. Some officials with the EU and its member states highlight the added value of this instrument both in terms of filling a gap between a rigid and long term instrument (the EDF) and a short term crisis management instrument (the IcSP),⁴⁶ and because of its built-in security and

⁴² Apparently, the EU announced in error that an agreement on forced returns from Europe had been concluded, which provoked a political crisis in Mali (IRAM 2018).

⁴³ This 13 million euro project is implemented by the French Development Agency. It aims to contribute to: the implementation of the Peace Agreement; the return to peace and the improvement of security through local consultation mechanisms on socio-economic development needs; and support to the return of economic activities.

⁴⁴ Interviews with EEAS officials (2018), and one DEVCO official (2018).

⁴⁵ AJUSEN (30 million euro) includes budget support and capacity-building to foster structural reforms in the domains of security, criminal justice, and migration.

⁴⁶ Interviews with EEAS and DEVCO officials (2018).

development dimension.⁴⁷ Others, however, point to its limitations, in particular to its lack of flexibility and adaptability, as a significant number of EUTF projects have been delayed, sometimes for nearly two years, and in situations where timing and flexibility were crucial.⁴⁸ PARSEC, for example, was validated by mid-2016, but results are still scarce. Many issues plagued the project such as cumbersome procedures, lack of coordination with other EU actors, political pressure, lack of understanding of the context and the needs on the ground, and weak communication and dialogue with Malian authorities.⁴⁹ Timing was particularly important as the situation has now further deteriorated which is complicating the implementation of the project and the capacity of the EU to make a difference, recreating a situation where the EU action seems always to run slower than what the situation on the ground requires. PARSEC also raises the issue of the articulation between security and development initiatives. The project aims to support the implementation of the security pillar of the *Plan de Sécurisation Intégré des Régions du Centre du Mali* (PSIRC)⁵⁰ to deal with the progressive infiltration of Jihadist groups, disrupting the fragile social fabric in Central Mali and increasingly destabilising the whole country. PARSEC should be conceived as

one important element of a broader answer to the complex security, governance and socio-economic problems nourishing the conflicts in the Central regions of Mali. The jihadist prism is not sufficient to illuminate all of the conflict dynamics. By itself, it might obscure the many local conflicts at play between semi-pastoralist, pastoralists and agriculturalists ethnic groups fuelled by, among other things, socio-economic transformations which have disrupted the balance of power between these groups, changes in social hierarchies and challenges to customary law caused by State action, and the perceived marginalisation of members of the Fulani group (often associated to jihadists) from state structures and opportunities⁵¹ (ICG 2016b; Tobie 2017; International Alert 2018). The interplay between jihadist' discourses and strategies – feeding on local cleavages – and local dynamics needs to be taken into account by national and international actors seeking to intervene in such contexts.⁵²

As it was acknowledged that PARSEC alone could not contribute to address these more structural problems, the project was supposed to be articulated with two other projects in order to provide a more holistic response supporting the different pillars of the PSIRC.⁵³ These two projects are an EUTF

⁴⁷ Interviews with EEAS officials (2018).

⁴⁸ Interviews with a EEAS official (2018), a member state official (2018), and one implementing agency staff (2018).

⁴⁹ Interviews with EU field officers (2018), one implementing agency staff (2018), and one EU member state official.

⁵⁰ The PSIRC is a Malian plan that focuses on four pillars: security, governance, development, and communication. According to Lebovich (2018a: 20), the plan 'is remarkably frank in its recognition of communal vulnerabilities and the state's failure to govern effectively, pursue socio-economic development, promote dialogue, or manage local affairs ...'

⁵¹ According to an International Alert study, 'real or perceived state abuse is the number one factor behind young people's decision to join violent extremist groups' (International Alert 2018: 7).

⁵² As argued by Kalyvas (2003: 479) in his study of civil wars, 'While local cleavages are by no means the only mechanism producing allegiance and violence, they appear to have substantial impact on the distribution of allegiances as well as the content, direction, and intensity of violence.'

⁵³ Interviews with one DEVCO official (2018), and one implementing agency staff (2018).

GIZ (German International Cooperation Agency) project, PROJES (*Programme Jeunesse et Stabilisation dans les régions Centre du Mali*) that aims to improve the population's access to basic social services; and a Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD)/Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) project dealing with the issue of trust between the population and the State and its internal security forces, and seeking to understand the needs and expectation of the population through community dialogue and perception studies. However, the late beginning of these two projects (in 2018 only) hindered their articulation with PARSEC. The HD/SIPRI project, for instance, would have provided a much needed material to test PARSEC's (as well as PROJES') assumptions, prepare its implementation, and improve its adaptation to the needs on the ground. It is indeed useful and even necessary to understand the drivers of insecurity from the perspective of the communities affected before launching projects aiming to address these drivers (Tobie 2018). Cooperation between Expertise France and GIZ does not seem to be optimal either which might obstruct possible synergies between two projects that should be seen as complementary.⁵⁴ Indeed, in a context of strong distrust towards the defence and security forces fuelled by the exactions they have committed⁵⁵ and growing temptation to join the jihadist groups, projects such as PROJES should address as soon as possible the governance aspect to improve the population's perceptions of the state, and also facilitate the

redeployment of the internal security forces in the Centre.

PAIERA in Niger suffered similar delays and shortcomings. Again, the timing was particularly problematic as, contrarily to PAIERA, the security dimension of EU action through EUCAP Sahel Niger's support to the Nigerien internal security forces was effective.⁵⁶ While migration was rapidly curbed, the project that was supposed to provide economic opportunities to people who were financially depending from economic activities linked to migration was not rapidly operational, as well as undermined by a limited amount of funding.⁵⁷ As a result, the EU contributed to disrupt the local economy⁵⁸ without providing any viable alternative. This created important frustrations and disappointment from the population, local and national authorities, and contributed to turn the population against local authorities, also fuelled by a lack of communication from the EU on what to expect from this project (Molenaar *et al.* 2017).⁵⁹

The difficult articulation of security and development

Looking at the integration of security objectives within the EU's development instruments reveals several tensions and contradictions. The security dimension integrated in the EDF and the creation of the EUTF testify both to a change of perspective within EU institutions and member states, and to specific needs in a region which is

⁵⁴ Interview with one implementing agency staff (2018).

⁵⁵ See the Human Right Watch (HRW) and Amnesty International (AI) reports (HRW 2017; Le Monde 2018).

⁵⁶ Interview with one DEVCO official (2018).

⁵⁷ A study highlights that only 5,7% of the EUTF budget is allocated to short-term economic development programmes (Molenaar *et al.* 2017)

⁵⁸ According to a study from the Clingendael Institute, a third of the interviewees from Agadez acknowledged that they were earning some income from activities linked to migration (Molenaar 2018).

⁵⁹ Interviews with one EEAS official (2018), and one DEVCO official (2018).

increasingly affected by conflicts. This transformation of the EU's development instrument raise some concerns. While a number of EU officials interviewed acknowledge the need to both tackle the security and the development aspects of the conflicts, they also stress the risk of disappearance of a longer-term socio-economic perspective, at least in the Sahel.⁶⁰ In particular, the creation of the EUTF which draws on development funds shows the risk of prioritising security-oriented action which are quickly launched without being informed by contextual conflict analyses, and without always being part of a broader strategy driving the activities of the different actors involved in the same area. Despite being presented as relatively straightforward, the security and development nexus does not mean much outside of specific situations. It is highly contextual and depends on the ways security and development activities are assembled to respond to specific demands and needs. The added value, sequence, and specific objectives of each instrument, projects, and activities should be considered, and their assumptions carefully tested through proper analyses of the causes and the nature of the conflicts. The built-in flexibility of the EUTF could potentially help devising a finer-grained integration of security, development, and governance aspects. However, many EUTF (and other) projects have been affected by diverging rationales and imperatives, strong political pressure,⁶¹ and are implemented by a range of different agencies. All this has often prevented them from being part of a contextual reflexion informing their articulation to other projects

and instruments in this much advertised Integrated Approach. The Delegations of the EU which should contribute to this articulation have also had difficulties in dealing with the various conflicts that the proliferation of new instruments and projects, and the autonomy of implementing agencies, can bring.⁶² In Mali, the creation of the post of 'security and development adviser' has been a positive step to bring more coherence, but the Delegation of the EU is still too understaffed to effectively manage bringing synergies between programmes and projects.

⁶⁰ Interviews with EEAS officials (2018), and one EU field officer (2018).

⁶¹ Staff from the implementing agencies have emphasised these diverging imperatives, for example, between the need to address structural problems and the need to show quick results on political priorities (interviews with two implementing agency staff (2018)).

⁶² Interviews with EEAS and DEVCO officials (2018), EU field officers (2018), and one EU member state official (2018).

Security cooperation and security sector reform ambitions

The EU has stepped up in terms of security cooperation in the Sahel. Besides development instruments that increasingly take into account the EU's security priorities, other instruments such as the CSDP, the IcSP, and the African Peace Facility are exclusively dedicated to these priorities. Key objectives of these instruments are the training of, and the provision of (non-lethal) equipment to the defence and security forces of Sahelian states. Besides this capacity-building dimension, the EU has added a more ambitious objective of supporting security sector reform, in particular in Mali as the government has explicitly engaged in such process. This section reviews the various forms that EU security cooperation takes, it explores two case studies which underline how security cooperation can be undermined by institutional conflict and competitions between actors, and asks whether the EU has what it takes to engage in security sector reform support.

The core of EU security action: the CSDP missions

The pillar of the EU security and military action in the Sahel are the three non-executive CSDP missions. This part will provide a brief overview of the mandate, achievements and difficulties of the missions.

Mandates and activities

EUCAP Sahel Niger

The first mission EUCAP Sahel Niger was launched in August 2012. The decision was motivated by EU member states' concern with the deteriorating security situation in the Sahel. The fact that the situation in Niger was relatively stable and that the Nigerian government was showing interest also played an important role in this decision.⁶³ EUCAP Sahel Niger's mandate aims to strengthen the capacities of Nigerien security agencies to fight terrorism and organised crime, and to foster their interoperability. The mission provides training, strategic and technical advice, as well as equipment to Nigerien internal security forces. It also has a coordination role of the security-related activities of international actors and other EU actors in Niger. Despite a slow start, plagued by difficulties to adapt to the context and to obtain support from the Nigerien government, the mission was well accepted gradually and granted access to the security agencies (Lebovich 2018a).⁶⁴ Training the internal security forces (police, gendarmerie, the national guard) to fight terrorism and organised crime, as well as magistrates, the municipal police, and the armed forces (until 2016), has been the most successful dimension of the mission so far. Training courses covered arrest techniques, crime scene management, forensic evidence analysis, and human rights, amongst other topic. However, the results in terms of interoperability of the forces were not significant (European Court of Auditors 2018). Regarding the advising part of the mandate, EUCAP Sahel Niger has successfully supported the drafting and adoption of a national internal security

⁶³ Interview with an EEAS official (2018).

⁶⁴ Interview with an EEAS official (2018).

strategy.⁶⁵ In 2015, EU member states' new migration priority had an important impact on EUCAP's mandate with the inclusion of a new objective: strengthening the security forces' capacity to fight irregular migration and associated criminal activities. An EUCAP office was opened in Agadez to monitor the central Mediterranean route. The mission also established links with the EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) in Libya to jointly collect information on migration routes, and undertake joint analytical reports on migration trends.⁶⁶ However, as mentioned previously, while EUCAP Sahel Niger was quite successful in strengthening the Nigerien internal security forces' capacities to fight irregular migrations,⁶⁷ the results for the population of Agadez were less positive in the absence of economic alternatives which will take much longer to foster.⁶⁸

EUCAP Sahel Mali

EUCAP Sahel Mali is the most recently launched CSDP mission (January 2015). The mission's mandate is to provide strategic advice and training to the Malian domestic security forces and the relevant ministries in order to support reforms in the security sector as set out by the Malian government. It has three lines of operations: strategic advice, training, and coordination and cooperation.

The mission, unlike its Nigerien counter-part, has a clear and ambitious security sector reform mandate. As commented by an EEAS official, 'it's easy to train and advise on the operational aspect when you are a policeman, and the Malian security forces like that, but real restructuring is much more complicated.'⁶⁹ The overall objectives are to improve the operational efficiency of domestic security forces, re-establish hierarchical chains, reinforce the role of judicial and administrative authorities with regards to the management and supervision of their missions, and facilitate their redeployment in the country. The training dimension of the mandate is seen as positive overall (European Court of Auditors 2018). The generalist training has been covered and specialised trainings have started such as training for the *Brigade d'Investigation Spécialisées*⁷⁰ (BIS).⁷¹ In the most recent mandate, Central Mali has also become a priority for advice and training activities.⁷² Furthermore, EUCAP Sahel Mali has provided support to legislative affairs, for example to the development of the national border policy and the accompanying plan of action, and to the strategy for the securitisation of borders.⁷³

⁶⁵ Interview with an EEAS official (2018).

⁶⁶ Interview with an EEAS official (2018).

⁶⁷ According to Lebovich (2018, 7), 'the response took the form of a security crackdown that led to the arrest of hundreds of alleged people traffickers and the confiscation of their vehicles; increased security patrols; and aggressive tactics to block well-trodden migration routes ...'

⁶⁸ Although EU officials argue now that economic support has started to produce results and will be stepped up (Interviews with an EEAS official (2018), and DEVCO officials (2018)).

⁶⁹ Interview with an EEAS official (2018).

⁷⁰ The BIS are units made of gendarmes and policemen which have a judiciary role in the investigation of terrorists intercepted by Operation Barkhane, the Malian armed forces, and the Malian gendarmerie in the North and the Centre of Mali. They are also supposed to be part of the future police component of the G5JF.

⁷¹ Interview with an EU field officer (2018).

⁷² Interview with an EU field officer (2018).

⁷³ Interview with EU field officers (2018).

EUTM Mali

EUTM Mali is the military pillar of the EU action in Mali.⁷⁴ It started to deploy on 18 February 2013 shortly after the offensive of jihadist groups towards Bamako and the deployment of French Operation Serval. As a capacity-building mission, its objective is ‘to respond to the need to strengthen the capabilities of the Malian Armed Forces, with the ultimate result being self-sustaining armed forces capable of contributing to the defence of their population and territory’ (EUTM 2018). It has four pillars of activities. The first pillar, the training of Malian military units, is usually positively assessed even though the relatively large number of trainees and the newly acquired skills have had a marginal effect on the security situation so far (Djiré *et al.* 2017; Lebovich 2018a).⁷⁵ Malian military units were first trained in the Koulikouro military camp for four months to learn skills enabling them to execute the full spectrum of infantry operations before being sent to combat. Training also includes modules on International Humanitarian Law (IHL), gender, the protection of civilians, and human rights.⁷⁶ Since 2016, the mission has started to decentralise the training to the military regions, and introduced a ‘training the trainers’ component.⁷⁷ The second pillar concerns strategic advice and includes five elements: doctrine, organisation, human resources, financial resources, material

resources and infrastructure. EUTM has supported the drafting of an important number of doctrine documents, proposed the reorganisation of different services of the armed forces, supported the creation of an inter-services operational control centre, and helped their Malians counter-part implementing the *Loi de Programmation et d’Organisation Militaire* (LOPM) 2014-2019 and drafting the LOPM 2020-2024.⁷⁸ They are also attempting to support the set-up of a logistic information system and a centralised software for human resources management. The third pillar is the improvement of the military education system, a difficult endeavour as Malians have been reluctant to let EUTM take over the training in their schools.⁷⁹ However, some progress were made as EUTM has been given one week in the training of officers to set up a few modules.⁸⁰ Finally, the fourth, more recently added, pillar is advice and training to the G5 Sahel Joint Force.

Challenges and difficulties

In spite of some progress in terms of capacity-building, the CSDP missions have encountered many obstacles and face a range of challenges. EU member states have put pressure on the missions to produce more tangible results, in particular regarding structural reforms the lack of which has been emphasised by a recent evaluation of the

⁷⁴ The Mission includes 600 soldiers from 21 EU member states and four non-member states (Albania, Georgia, Montenegro and Serbia).

⁷⁵ Eight special intervention groups (GTIA) were initially trained including 500 to 600 military personnel. One issue though has been the difficulty to find available units to train as the Malian army is highly engaged in operation (interviews with an EEAS official (2018), and an EU field officer (2018)).

⁷⁶ However, some interviewees commented that human rights-related training is sometimes resented by the armed forces who feel that they are risking their lives everyday (interviews with EU field officers (2018)).

⁷⁷ Interviews with an EEAS official (2018), and an EU field officer (2018).

⁷⁸ For a detailed account of EUTM Mali’s activities see Bagayoko (2018a)

⁷⁹ Some interviewee suggested that EUTM could have been more sensitive to the fact that Malians were not happy to see EU officers in front of their classroom. Instead, their preferred option was to have EU officers training their professors (interviews with an EEAS official (2018), and EU field officers (2018)).

⁸⁰ Interview with an EU field officer (2018).

EUCAP missions (European Court of Auditors 2018). While inefficiencies on the missions' side are also to blame, and we will later see that the lack of strategic guidance and understanding of the security sectors are problematic, two challenges appear to be important for explaining the lack of success in fostering structural reforms: political pressure from the EU and the host governments, and resistance to change.

EUCAP Sahel Mali has been particularly affected by political pressure which, in the last years, has partially diverted the mission away from its security sector reform mandate to undertake a new range of activities in the fields of border management and counter-terrorism. Since the migration 'crisis' and the deterioration of the security situation, EU member states have urged the missions to put more emphasis on terrorism, border management, and migration.⁸¹ The Malian government contributed to this pressure by asking EUCAP to focus more of its training on counter-terrorism and border management.⁸² Overall, it seems that host governments have been more interested in receiving technical assistance and equipment rather than support to undertake structural reforms.⁸³ Furthermore, the issue of political pressure from EU member states does not only concern their interactions with the missions but also the way they engage with the host governments. If EU member states choose to push the governments to deal in priority with migration and border

management concerns, the risk is high that they will not be left with much leverage to pressure the governments into effectively engaging in structural reforms in the security sector. Hence, this scattering of activities has partly been done to the detriment of a concentration of efforts on structural reforms, and has been reinforced by the staff's perceived need to deliver some results in other domains as these reforms are not moving forward.⁸⁴

The mitigated results in terms of structural reforms have undermined the sustainability of the missions' capacity-building activities. This is partly due to the fact that the three CSDP missions face important resistance to change on their partner side.⁸⁵ EUCAP Sahel Niger's mandate was re-oriented to increase its support to structural reform⁸⁶ (for e.g. the management of human resources and logistics) as a response to criticisms regarding its lack of sustainability.⁸⁷ However, even though interviewees comment on the good contacts that the mission maintains at ministerial levels, they also point to difficulties when trying to engage with the heads of security service, and the constant bureaucratic rivalries hindering possibilities to engage in structural reforms.⁸⁸ The same observation was made by interviewees in Mali. Bureaucratic rivalries between ministries and security services have obstructed reforms supported by EUCAP Sahel Mali such as the adoption of a 'status of the trainers', the organisation of training

⁸¹ Interview with an EU field officer (2018).

⁸² Interviews with an EEAS official (2018), and an EU field officer (2018).

⁸³ Interviews with EEAS official (2018).

⁸⁴ Interviews with EEAS officials (2018), EU field officers (2018), and one EU member state official (2018).

⁸⁵ In his report on the Malian crisis, Jonathan Sears (2017) emphasizes this 'Entrenched resistance to administrative reform ...' of the Malian government.

⁸⁶ This change in the mandate was not labelled security sector reform support as the Nigerien government is not formally engaged in a security sector reform process (interview with an EEAS official (2018)).

⁸⁷ Interview with an EU member state official (2018).

⁸⁸ Interviews with EEAS official (2018).

schemes, and the implementation of legislations that the mission helped drafting.⁸⁹ As for EUTM, the mission has not been able yet to reach an agreement on the setting up of a centralised software for human resources management.⁹⁰ The lack of progress on the improvement of human resources management, which is plagued by corruption and patronage networks, is particularly acute and inhibits progresses in many other fields. Hence, the lack of transparency databases and failure to follow procedures in the management of human resources brings a number of problems such as: difficulties to know who has already been trained;⁹¹ and an impossibility to make sure that trained officers remain in their unit and/or are maintained in their role, and are thus able to put their training to practice.⁹² It is also difficult to know whether the trained trainers are indeed pursuing their activities as trainers.⁹³ The impact of the various trainings are thus particularly complicated to evaluate.

These issues have raised concerns among EU officials over whether the security sector reform dimension of the missions' mandate is indeed realistic. In a context where privileges are maintained through the opacity of human resources management, incentives are very low to promote structural reforms, and being seen as promoting change means risking to lose one's position.⁹⁴ Niagalé Bagayoko

(2018a) points to the many blockages linked to the sociology of the defence and security forces in Mali such as: the influence of informal dynamics in human resources management including family and community links; endemic corruption; the existence of parallel chains of command; and various internal solidarity bonds based on corporatists, educational or political considerations. As clearly put by Rottman (2018), "Just" trying to professionalize security forces already requires redistributing power: we expect the individual mid-level commander to stop manoeuvring between multiple loyalties to his army, his family and his ethnic group and exert his authority exclusively by the book.' These blockages affect the impact of the missions and other EU projects in many ways, for example as the equipment, ammunition, fuel, and other materials provided by international partners cannot be traced and are easily misappropriated or sold. One EU field officer thus wondered 'if we are getting caught up in a carousel' as it appears doubtful that security sector reform as envisaged by EUCAP is possible while the Malian government is dragging its feet (DCAF 2016; Djiré *et al.* 2017).⁹⁵ This lack of overall reflexion and

⁸⁹ Interviews with EEAS official (2018), and member states officials (2018).

⁹⁰ Interviews with EU field officers (2018).

⁹¹ While EUCAP Sahel Mali has tried to deal with this issue by creating a database registering trainees and checking whether they have already attended similar courses with EUCAP or other organisations, EUCAP Sahel Niger did not develop such procedures (European Court of Auditors 2018).

⁹² On interviewee explained that trained counter-terrorism officers could end up doing road policing the following month (interview with a member state official (2018)).

⁹³ Incentives to engage in training activities are low for trainers as the Nigerien and the Malian authorities did not agree to grant recognition or financial reward to staff who became trainers. They are actually likely to earn more in an operational position (European Court of Auditors 2018; Interviews with EU field officers (2018)).

⁹⁴ Interviews with an EEAS official (2018), and EU field officers (2018). In the case of Mali, Sears (2017) speaks of a 'CEO-it is' which means rigidly top-down management that 'discourages dissent, and stifles frankness and innovation.'

⁹⁵ Interviews with EU field officers (2018).

framework for security sector reform⁹⁶ is shared by both the Nigerien and the Malian governments, and their visions of what security sector reform often diverges from those of international donors.⁹⁷ A lack of shared political goals can only undermine the process as underlined by the EUCAP missions' evaluation report which concludes that the few progress made on structural reforms have mostly depended on 'the extent to which the authorities in the host countries agreed that they were priorities' (European Court of Auditors 2018).⁹⁸ Furthermore, the timeline appears to be unrealistic. Security sector reform takes time, structural reforms might take a decade rather than a couple of years as sometimes expected by some EU member states. This is even more the case in such a context characterised by the heavy operational commitment of defence and security forces.⁹⁹ Hence, engaging in the support of security sector reform processes in Mali and Niger requires a long term strategy and a good understanding of the formal and informal practices and the power relations that shape security systems in these countries, both of which the EU is still, to a large extent, lacking as we will see in the last part of this section.

A multiplicity of overlapping and competing security and development instruments

The risk of overlap and competition between EU security and development instruments is clear. In addition to EDF security-focused programmes, EUTF projects and CSDP missions' activities, another instrument, the IcSP is also dedicated to security. In Mali, for example, it funds 12 projects for 30,5 million euros to support the role of civil society in the peace process, to prevent violent extremism, and to financially support the CSA. One project Panorama Corsec concerns establishing a crisis management architecture in Bamako¹⁰⁰ (a crisis management centre, equipment and training, and the drafting of a national strategy) that would enable the internal security forces to coordinate in crisis situations. Implemented by Civipol, this project aims as well to contribute to building trust between the internal security forces and the population through various activities and advice to the security agencies. Also funded by the IcSP, Capacity Building for Security and Development projects have recently been launched in Mali. These projects are supposed to benefit civilians while involving the armed forces at times and in places where the police cannot be deployed because of a deterioration of the security conditions.¹⁰¹ If

⁹⁶ Bagayoko (2018b) underlines the problems posed by the sector-specific approach of security sector reform in Mali and the absence of a comprehensive assessment of the Malian security system.

⁹⁷ Such divergence of views is highlighted in Bagayoko's (2018b) report as she explains that 'There are also deep-rooted conceptual differences between local stakeholders and international partners, especially regarding the links between defence and security: some local soldiers are still reluctant to embrace SSR, as "security". Instead, they view SSR as an essentially police-centered approach of the reform.'

⁹⁸ Interviews with EEAS officials (2018), an EU member state official (2018), and EU field officers (2018).

⁹⁹ Interviews with EEAS officials (2018), an EU member state official (2018), and EU field officers (2018).

¹⁰⁰ The crisis management structure is now operational. However, as no terrorist attack has happened in Bamako since the Radisson Blu attack in 2015, this structure has not been yet tested, even though it was partly used to do some monitoring during the elections (interview with an EU field officer (2018)). According to a Civipol staff, there has been a real ownership of the structure by the MSPC which has asked the EU to continue its support (interview with an implementing agency staff (2018)).

¹⁰¹ Two of these projects are the securisation of the Mopti airport and the construction of a garrison infirmary in Centre region accessible to the population.

these instruments were not enough, another instrument has recently been tested in Mali: article 28 of the TEU which was activated to launch a stabilisation action in the regions of Mopti and Segou. The action, launched in 2017, includes the deployment of a team of 12 experts for 12 months (three months were later added) to support ‘Malian national plans and policies through its advice to the Malian authorities on the re-establishment and expansion of the civilian administration in the Centre region of Mali’ (Council of the EU 2017c). The aims are mainly to advise the governors regarding the implementation of the PSIRC in Centre region, contribute to understand the needs of the population and to build trust between the population and local authorities, as well as facilitate relations between local authorities and donors.¹⁰²

The objectives of these projects and actions are often similar even when the means, procedures and modalities are different. They engage with similar actors (the security and defence agencies, the ministries, and local authorities), do capacity-building, training, advice, and provide equipment and infrastructures and, in some cases, have a security sector reform component which is not limited to CSDP missions. However, since they are elaborated and implemented by a variety of different actors within and outside of the EU institutions, they are often driven by different rationales and, sometimes competing, institutional interests as was explained in Section 1. The use of these different instruments is hardly part of a broader thinking on their respective added value and on the allocation of roles and

responsibilities among actors as planned for by the Integrated Approach. The following two case studies illustrate well the potentiality for competition and conflict between EU actors, and how they affect the delivery of EU action in the Sahel.

The stabilisation action

The stabilisation action was launched under the responsibility of the High Representative, led in principle by the Head of Delegation in Mali, even though operational control has been ensured by PRISM. Besides the will to do something in Centre region, the launch of this stabilisation action was motivated by different reasons such as testing article 28 and improving the visibility of the recently created division PRISM (Pietz 2017).¹⁰³ Indeed, article 28 has the potential to become an important foreign policy tool for the High Representative as it might be used to expand her room to manoeuvre in the security policy domain by launching actions that can be operationally controlled by EEAS services, and which could, in some cases, replace a civilian CSDP mission.¹⁰⁴ However, interviews suggest that a number of member states were less in favour of such initiatives. Indeed, the stabilisation action might also mean, for member states, weaker operational control than for a CSDP mission which strategic direction is in their hands through the Political and Security Committee.¹⁰⁵ Criticisms were also raised concerning the modalities of the action, in particular the rational to send European experts in the Centre of Mali where potentially their

¹⁰² Interview with an EEAS official (2018).

¹⁰³ Interviews with an EEAS official (2018), and an EU member state official (2018).

¹⁰⁴ The action was also supported by some member states driven by the perception that procedures for CSDP missions are too complex, and missions are too costly in financial and human resources (Pietz 2017).

¹⁰⁵ Interviews with member states officials (2018). The Political and Security Committee is composed of member states’ ambassador based in Brussels.

security could not be ensured.¹⁰⁶ This reluctance from member states led to difficulties to recruit experts, only 6 out of 12 were actually deployed.¹⁰⁷ CSDP actors within the EEAS also disapproved as they perceived the action as duplicating and competing with CSDP missions.¹⁰⁸

The problems posed by the lack of consensus and the diverging objectives driving the stabilisation action were particularly acute in the field. As warned, the experts could not really perform their advisory task and establish relations with the governors as it was not safe for them to reside in Mopti and Ségou; they had to reside in Bamako and travel back and forth to the Centre.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, expecting them to build trust with the governors and provide advice on such complex issues over a one year period was probably too ambitious.¹¹⁰ In addition, disagreements in Brussels over the use of article 28 translated to difficulties in Mali: officials from EUCAP Sahel Mali perceived the action as redundant with their own activities in the Centre, while the Delegation of the EU which was neither consulted nor had the operational control did not welcome them with open arms.¹¹¹ As a result, when the experts arrived they were not able to draw on the expertise and contacts of other EU actors which undermined their capacity to be

rapidly operational.¹¹² In this unfavourable context, the detached experts did what they could. They organised activities such as a useful community forum in Ségou to communicate on the PSIRC and list the needs and demands of the population.¹¹³ They slowly started coordinating with EUCAP which eventually took over the leadership regarding the support to the implementation of the security pillar of the PSIRC.¹¹⁴ After months of mutual ignorance, some links were established with PARSEC to facilitate the dialogue between the project and local authorities.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, their role ended up being more technical than political as it was initially expected, and all this was too little too late since the program is on the verge of being terminated.

Mali is a difficult place to experiment with a new instrument. The situation in the Centre of Mali is uncertain and fluid, and the dynamics of the conflicts are particularly complex. Other EU actors and instruments were already present and the action added one more interlocutor for the local authorities which complicated the interactions in the absence of a clear delineation of roles.¹¹⁶ The analysis of the logics driving this stabilisation action suggests that it was as much (if not more) driven by institutional interests in Brussels – the willingness to activate article

¹⁰⁶ Interviews with EEAS officials (2018), and EU field officers (2018). Some member states argued for the deployment of Malian experts instead of European ones. According to Pietz (2017), other options could also have been chosen instead of article 28 such as asking the Delegation of the EU in Bamako to carry out these tasks.

¹⁰⁷ Interviews with an EEAS official (2018), an EU member states (2018), and EU field officers (2018).

¹⁰⁸ Interviews with EEAS officials, and a EU field officer (2018).

¹⁰⁹ Interviews with a EEAS official (2018), an EU member state official (2018), and EU field officers (2018).

¹¹⁰ Interviews with a EEAS official (2018), an EU member state official (2018), and EU field officers (2018).

¹¹¹ Interviews with EU field officers (2018).

¹¹² According to a member of the stabilisation team, they had to first engage with Malian authorities at a very low level (interview with an EU field officer (2018)).

¹¹³ Interview with an EU field officer (2018).

¹¹⁴ EUCAP and the stabilisation action are now collaborating on infrastructure projects such as the construction of a police post (interview with an EU field officer (2018)).

¹¹⁵ Interview with an implementing agency staff (2018).

¹¹⁶ Interviews with EU member states (2018).

28 and provide a role to PRISM – than by what was needed on the ground, and potential complementarity with other EU instruments. This stabilisation action was unfortunately a missed opportunity since there is a real need to support the implementation of the PSIRC, contribute to building trust between local authorities and the population, and to acquire a better understanding of local dynamics.

The case of PARSEC

Beside showing the difficulties to integrate security and development initiatives, PARSEC is also a good case to reflect upon the issue posed by the fragmentation of, and competition between, EU actors and instruments. In this case, the unclear delineation of roles between the Delegation of the EU and EUCAP, on the one side, which were the initiators of the project, and Expertise France on the other side, created many problems.¹¹⁷ Indeed, as EUCAP already had a presence in the Centre and participated to the identification phase of the project, it sought to play a central role in the next phases of PARSEC. Facing Expertise France's reluctance to give EUCAP such a central role,¹¹⁸ the mission disengaged from the project taking away its much-needed security expertise.¹¹⁹ This conflict should be understood in a broader context of competition between CSDP missions and EUTF projects which increasingly encroach (and with larger sums of money) on what

were mostly CSDP-reserved activities up until recently. Various interviewees suggest that many of the mistakes made by PARSEC could have been avoided by taking EUCAP's strategic advice into account.¹²⁰ The Delegation of the EU was not particularly helpful either as it lacked the experience and resources to deal with large and security-focused EUTF projects. New procedures were required and the staff needed was not in place yet.¹²¹ Hence, as Expertise France launched PARSEC, it lacked security expertise, contextual knowledge, and the local political contacts needed to implement such a project.¹²²

The implementation of PARSEC was slowed down by these inadequacies, and aggravated by long procurement procedures and difficulties to convey the equipment to the Centre.¹²³ In the meantime, the security situation in Central Mali worsened, delaying certain activities if not making them impossible to carry out: infrastructures could not be built and European trainers had to be removed from Centre region because of concerns for their safety.¹²⁴ The security conditions also limited the ability of the Expertise France team to travel to Centre region.¹²⁵ Another issue lied in Expertise France's initial difficulties to communicate and dialogue with Malian authorities and the heads of the security agencies. Trust was hard to build which also undermined their

¹¹⁷ Interviews with implementing agency staff (2018), and an EU field officer (2018).

¹¹⁸ For example, Expertise France did not fulfil one of EUCAP's request which was to be present at all meetings with the heads of security forces (interview with one implementing agency staff (2018)).

¹¹⁹ Interviews with implementing agency staff (2018), and an EU field officer (2018).

¹²⁰ Interviews with an EU field officer (2018), and EU member state official (2018), and one implementing agency staff (2018).

¹²¹ Interview with one implementing agency staff (2018).

¹²² Interviews with an EU field officer (2018), and EU member state official (2018), and one implementing agency staff (2018).

¹²³ Interviews with an EU field officer (2018), and one implementing agency staff (2018).

¹²⁴ This was particularly the case after the attack of the Headquarter of the G5JF in Sevaré.

¹²⁵ Interview with one implementing agency staff (2018).

activities. The lack of results in the first two years of the project, also a pre-electoral period, created frustrations from the Malians authorities which needed to show that they were doing something to improve the situation in the Centre. The authorities directly complained to the EU in Brussels and to Paris to show their dissatisfaction with PARSEC.

These difficulties raise the issue of Expertise France's lack of security expertise and, at the beginning at least, contextual knowledge, and show the clear need to work in synergy with other EU actors. Expertise France is a development agency and not a security one even though the ambition is to develop this dimension. Initially, the PARSEC team's knowledge of the Malian context and the political networks and informal practices shaping the functioning of the security agencies was scarce.¹²⁶ For example, PARSEC ended up working mostly with the gendarmerie while the National Guard is, according to an interviewee, the most present security agency in the Centre at the moment.¹²⁷ The PARSEC team is also still waiting for the list of gendarmerie units that they have to train.¹²⁸ While CSDP missions are confronted to similar issues as seen earlier, they can draw on their knowledge of, and contacts among, the internal security forces to deal with some of these difficulties.

After this difficult beginning, lessons were learned and coordination with EUCAP and the Delegation of the EU improved. An agreement was signed between PARSEC and

EUCAP to divide up training. The Delegation of the EU also reached out to PARSEC to advise the team and facilitate relations with Malian authorities.¹²⁹ Now Expertise France staff are regularly meeting people from the Minister of Security, the local authorities, and representatives of the security forces. This improved communication, as well as the arrival of the first results in the form of infrastructure and equipment, have also facilitated the dialogue.¹³⁰ This experience shows that politically sensitive and security-focused projects such as PARSEC need the political guidance of the Delegation of the EU¹³¹ and the security expertise that only CSDP missions can provide. It also raises the question of the pertinence of contracting development agencies to implement security projects in environments in which they cannot even ensure the security of their staff.

The two case studies, PARSEC and the stabilisation action, show well how the internal logic of the EU, and the sometimes diverging institutional interests – as in any organisation of this size and complexity – can undermine the implementation of particular actions. However, the set of different instruments and actions that the EU can mobilise also means that it has the potential to answer a broad range of issues which are always intertwined in fragile and complex situations such as the ones the Sahelian states are experiencing. The various experimentations of EU actors in the Sahel have indeed led to failures, but also to new practices of cooperation, sometimes learning from these failures. CSDP missions, for

¹²⁶ Interview with one implementing agency staff (2018).

¹²⁷ Interview with one implementing agency staff (2018).

¹²⁸ This issue is hindering many others activities such as the provision of equipment (interviews with implementing agency staff (2018).

¹²⁹ Interview with one implementing agency staff (2018).

¹³⁰ Interviews with one implementing agency staff (2018), and an EU field officer (2018).

¹³¹ The Delegation of the EU initially managed PARSEC in a hand's off approach as any other development project implemented by another agency.

example, are increasingly working with the Delegation of the EU and development actors to provide their expertise during the identification phase and to participate to the implementation of projects articulating security and development dimensions, which was not even thinkable not such a long while ago. Capacity-Building for Security and Development projects are a case in point and seek to address the crucial problem of implementing development activities in situations of high insecurity and even violence. The identification of security sector reform indicators by CSDP actors in budget support is another case of such cooperation as we will see in the following part.

Can the EU do Security Sector Reform?

Support to security sector reform-related activities is now an important dimension of CSDP missions' mandates and is increasingly integrated into other projects. This engagement with security sector reform is part of the efforts deployed to turn the EU into a relevant security actor which include positive development such as the setting up of a service to implement the Integrated Approach (PRISM) and various inter-services reflexions on issues such as security sector reform and conflict analyses. Nevertheless, security sector reform is a difficult process for any international actor to support, and the EU's action is hindered by a number of problems.

A lack of strategic guidance and structural perspective in security sector reform activities

As explained above, even if mandated to advise on and/or support structural reforms, in practice CSDP missions tend to focus on training, equipment, and technical support, and on reinforcing state institutions without tying these activities to a broader security sector reform perspective addressing governance and oversight issues, and fostering real reforms that can benefit the population in terms of better security and justice provision (DCAF 2016).¹³² Ultimately, the EU's security sector reform activities will be judged on the basis of these criteria as security sector reform is understood as a 'process of transforming a country's security system so that it gradually provides individuals and the state with more effective and accountable security in a manner consistent with respect for human rights, democracy, the rule of law and the principles of good governance' (EC 2016).¹³³

The development of such a perspective is clearly undermined by various issues. One of these issues is the short one year and a half or two year mandates of CSDP missions which prevent staff to think in terms of structural and long term reforms.¹³⁴ According to a member states official, almost a year before the end of the mandate, EUCAPs' staff have already started the planning process to prepare for the next mandate.¹³⁵ The situation is even worse for EUTM Mali where staff

¹³² According to DCAF (2016: 24) the missions in Mali have small components dedicated to accountability purposes (strategic advising, and reinforcing internal oversight mechanisms), but it is 'difficult to observe ... overall coherence between the training and equipment provided and the more strategic level support for better management, accountability and governance of the security sector in Mali.'

¹³³ The focus on short term initiatives at the expense of long-term efforts to enhance the accountability of the security sector is a common problem in international security sector reform programmes. This risk is even increased when donors' emphasis is on counter-terrorism and transnational organised crime (Ball and Hendrickson 2009; van Veen and Price 2014).

¹³⁴ Interviews with an EEAS official (2018), and an EU member state official (2018).

¹³⁵ Interview with an EU member state official (2018).

rotate every six months. The pressure is thus high on everyone to deliver something in a short timescale even if these things are not the most sustainable or impactful. This situation is exacerbated by member states' pressure on the missions to show that they are spending their money efficiently. An EUTM officer commented that 'We receive a lot of money but they [EU member states] don't realise that even to do simple things, it's complicated'.¹³⁶

The difficulties that the EUCAP missions have encountered to recruit good personnel,¹³⁷ in addition to their expanding mandate has not facilitated either the elaboration of a long-term perspective on structural reforms. Personnel in CSDP missions are not always used to engage in security sector reform activities. While providing training, assessing the capacity needs, and doing a bit of technical advice are tasks that they manage to do well, promoting structural reforms is far more challenging. In Mali, EUCAP lacks people able to do high-level strategic advice¹³⁸ while, according to one interviewee, EUTM only has one person able to advise the Malian Minister on high-level issues such as the LOPM.¹³⁹ Moreover, the ambition to support security sector reform processes is even more complicated by the fact that security sector reform activities are disseminated across EU instruments without strategic guidance. In Mali, projects such as

PARSEC (EUTF) and Panorama-Corsec (IcSP) have bits of security sector reform activities and invest large sums of money (in particular EUTF projects) in capacity-building of the internal security forces without having a clear idea of where their activities fit in a broader EU and Malian perspective.¹⁴⁰ Specific train and equip projects are useful but would have more impact as part a broader framework that focus on structural reforms to improve the sustainability of these projects. However, at the moment, no actor, either in Brussels or on the ground, is in the position to delineate such a framework and provide strategic guidance to the EU security sector reforms activities.

The Delegations of the EU are also very much involved in security sector reform processes through the development of security sector reform indicators in budget support (through the EDF in Mali and the EUTF in Niger). The Delegation of the EU in Mali is often criticised by other EU actors who underline the weakness of its political dialogue, its lack of leadership, and the disbursement of massive sums of money without proper conditionality.¹⁴¹ While this criticism is fair to a certain point, the Delegation does not have an easy job. It manages a considerable amount of money, it is clearly understaffed, lacks security expertise, and its political leadership is constantly challenged by other EU actors, in

¹³⁶ Interview with an EU field officer (2018).

¹³⁷ The occupation rate of staff posts has been 72% for EUCAP Sahel Niger and 77% for EUCAP Sahel Mali (European Court of Auditors 2018). While civilian CSDP missions have always faced difficulties to recruit staff, the need to find French speaking staff has even exacerbated the problem, and caused tensions among EU member states as some have argued that the knowledge of French should not be required (interviews with EU member states officials 2018).

¹³⁸ Interviews with EU field officers (2018).

¹³⁹ Interview with an EU field officer (2018).

¹⁴⁰ It is never clear whether these projects are capacity-building, security sector reform projects, or both. The line appears to be very blurry, and people implementing them have contradictory opinion on this topic between ambitions to do security sector reform and denial that they are involved in such processes.

¹⁴¹ EEAS officials (2018), EU field officers (2018), and an EU member state official (2018).

particular the Heads of CSDP missions. In this context of proliferation of EU instruments and projects, and vaguely defined roles, tensions and competitions have, as shown previously, plagued relationships and undermined activities. There is thus a real need to establish a clear political leadership of the Head of Delegation and improve the security and defence expertise of the Delegation in order to enable it to bring more synergies between EU projects. As mentioned, the CSDP missions have a much needed technical expertise and can coordinate actors in their own sector but lack a more general understanding of the structural context, reinforced by their short mandates and high turnover. Moreover, the elaboration of security sector reform indicators in budget support shows the added value of cooperation between the Delegation of the EU and the CSDP missions on such issues. In Mali, while EUCAP Sahel Mali has worked closely with the Delegation of the EU to identify an indicator, the Delegation – backed by Brussels – was able to conduct a dialogue on this with national authorities.¹⁴² After the inability of the CSDP missions to foster any real change in human resources management, the creation of this indicator on a human resource management system for the internal security forces has enabled the dialogue to be re-established with Malian authorities.¹⁴³

The production of analyses of the security sector

At the moment, it is difficult to understand how, by whom and for whom are analyses of the security sector of partner countries produced and circulated within EU institutions. Such security expertise is

dispersed across actors, it rarely is a joint enterprise, and is lacking in some crucial aspects. In the Sahel, various instruments fund this type of analyses. The EUTF has, for example, recently funded a study on the state of security forces in Burkina Faso. The IcSP includes a EU Security Sector Governance Facility Project which was used by the Delegation of the EU in Mali to contract the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) to undertake a mapping of security sector actors in the Sahel. Moreover, a ‘gaps and needs’ analysis reviewing the capacities of the G5 Sahel countries’ defence and security forces has been produced in the framework of the regionalisation process as we will see in the last Section. Nevertheless, the circulation of these documents across actors and instruments remains very limited.¹⁴⁴

One of the core recommendations of the recent EU-wide strategic framework to support security sector reform is the production of joint in-depth analyses, in particular when CSDP missions are deployed along other instruments (EC 2016). It is still far from being the case in the Sahel even if the proliferation of security sector reform activities across instruments would clearly benefit from joint (and regularly updated) analyses of the security sector as reference points for all EU actors. While the ‘gaps and needs’ analysis could be seen as a first step in this direction, few EU actors have been using this analysis which tends, anyway, to focus on gaps, capacities, and formal institutions rather than on how the security sector actually works.

¹⁴² EUCAP Sahel Mali has worked closely with the Delegation of the EU to identify this indicator (interviews with EU field officers (2018)).

¹⁴³ However, the impact of this initiative cannot be assessed for the moment even if it does look promising.

¹⁴⁴ Interviews with EU field officers, and a member state official (2018).

Indeed, the political dimension of security sector reform is not taken seriously enough for the moment. While everyone acknowledges that security sector reform is a complex political process, there have not been many initiatives to understand the political context in which this process unfolds (FES forthcoming). One way of doing that would be to undertake regular in-depth analyses (even if not joint) of how the security sector functions highlighting the formal and informal rules, norms, practices and networks, and analysing the intricate power relations that shape a sector in which actors have a lot to gain and lose (OECD 2007).¹⁴⁵ Donors need a good understanding of this context if their aim is to try promoting change in a sector which lies at the heart of the political system of the country (Denney and Domingo 2015; FES forthcoming). Adapting to changing local political dynamics is central to security sector reform engagement which requires a change of perspectives from seeing politics as a ‘set of obstacles to overcome in order to achieve SSR rather than a set of assumptions about actually *doing* SSR’ (Jackson 2011: 1804). Security sector reform and other development programmes funded by international donors have started introducing such in-depth analyses under the label of political economy analyses¹⁴⁶ in an attempt to develop analytical tools to understand how security and justice are embedded within

economic, social and political processes.¹⁴⁷ The aim is to anticipate power dynamics, diverging interest, entry points and windows of opportunities, or to understand when change is impossible if incentives are completely absent. This could also help mitigate EU member states pressure by providing more realistic evidence and expectations about what the missions can or cannot achieve, emphasising that what external actors can do is limited by local political processes (Denney and Kirwen 2014).

¹⁴⁵ A DCAF (2016: 21) evaluation reports that while analyses of the security and justice sectors in Mali have provided information useful for the deployment of the CSDP mission, they have not been actualised and did not provide up-to-date information. As a consequence, they have not been useful for defining ‘how the EU should engage in Mali or for identifying windows of opportunity or local “champions” of SSR.’

¹⁴⁶ Using PEAs is also recommended by the EU-wide strategic framework to support security sector reform (EC 2016): ‘Where large-scale SSR support is envisaged, the EU will carry out a structural context assessment (e.g. a political economy analysis) covering all stakeholders (e.g. security and justice actors, including expected sources of resistance, drivers for change and groups traditionally excluded from security and justice institutions, such as women, young people and minorities)’.

¹⁴⁷ Even though a clear challenge has been to connect these political economy analyses, often done by external consultants, to decision-making process and implementation. The aim is to make them a ‘living analytical tool’ rather than a ‘static descriptive report’ (Denney and Domingo 2015: 6).

The development of a strategic regional approach: the regionalisation concept

An innovation of the EU's actions in the Sahel has been the regional dimension given to its support that includes a strong support to the development of the G5 Sahel and its Joint Force, and an attempt to establish a regional layer of coordination to improve the articulation of the activities of CSDP missions, and those of other EU instruments. This section first reviews the many projects and activities that fit within the regionalisation process, and highlight various points of tensions. Second, it underlines the difficulties and weaknesses of this process, before asking whether the G5 Sahel and its Joint Force are the right solutions to security and development problems in the Sahel.

The EU's support to the G5 Sahel and its Joint Force

Regionalisation and financial support

The EU's support to the G5 Sahel and its Joint Force includes a multiplicity of instruments, projects, and actors that fit in a more or less coherent way in this regionalisation process. The coordination of this process is supposedly steered by a new body, the Regional Coordination Cell which is administratively located within EUCAP Sahel Mali but acting independently. The Cell includes a network of security and defence experts: seven are placed in EUCAP Sahel Mali, one is in EUCAP Sahel Niger, one in the Delegation of the EU in Niger, and two for each other Delegation (in Burkina Faso, Chad, and Mauritania). The missions of

the Regional Coordination Cell are to support cross-border cooperation in the Sahel, the regional cooperation structures of the G5 Sahel (G5JF, the G5 Permanent Secretariat the Sahelian Security College, the Sahelian Defence College, etc.), as well as to strengthen the national capacities of the G5 Sahel countries. The first phase of the regionalisation process, which is now completed, was the drafting of a 'gaps and needs' analysis of the security and defence capacities of the G5 Sahel countries and cross-border cooperation, and to undertake a mapping of the activities of all international partners in the region. This 400 pages analysis was turned into a regional implementation plan by the CSDP structures in Brussels.¹⁴⁸ The concept of operations which is now being written on the basis of this plan will probably include two lines of operations: strategic advice, and cooperation and coordination of national and international actors' counter-terrorist policies. The development of a regional training strategy, the improvement of information sharing, and of judiciary cooperation are among the aims which feature in the concept of operations.¹⁴⁹ The first step in the (second) operational phase of this process has been to authorise the CSDP missions to train officers from the G5 Sahel countries as part of the EU's support to the G5JF, and will continue through the delocalisation of the Regional Coordination Cell to Nouakchott in March 2019 to support the G5 Permanent Secretariat.

This regionalisation process also includes significant financial support to the G5JF through the African Peace Facility, 100 million euros which are being progressively disbursed (EC 2018). These 100 million are divided along the following lines: firstly, 75 million euros is attributed to the provision of

¹⁴⁸ Interview with an EEAS official (2018).

¹⁴⁹ Interview with an EU field officer (2018).

services and equipment to the G5JF through Expertise France, which are now started to be delivered after some delays¹⁵⁰ (Cold-Ravnkilde 2018). This support includes: the rehabilitation and support of the command structure of the force (the force headquarter and the three command posts, and the setting up of a communication networks); supporting the means of operation of the Joint force; and the settling of battalions in the area of operation through infrastructures and equipment (EC 2017). Besides advising the G5JF on its organisation and the development of its doctrine, EUTM plays a key role in helping the G5JF Commander draft specific requests for services and equipment that can be funded by the EU through the African Peace Facility and by other international donors. To facilitate this, the EU has set up a Coordination Hub in Brussels to enable donors to channel their financial support, and to match donors' offers with requests sent by the G5JF. The Regional Coordination Cell also plays a facilitator role for the signature of contracts between Expertise France and the G5 Sahel countries concerned. Secondly, 10 million euros are allocated to the MINUSMA for its logistical and operational support to the G5JF on Malian territory. In addition, 10 million are implemented by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for the purpose of establishing and operationalising a Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law compliance framework for the G5JF. Thirdly, five million are given to support the governance structure of the G5 Sahel. Finally, 14.7 million euros of EU member states funds destined to the Joint Force are also channelled through the African Peace Facility. The EU funding represents a large part of what has actually been disbursed for the moment in support to the G5JF.

The financial support of the EU is also channelled through the regional component of the EUTF (364 million euro). This component includes a 7 million euro project implemented by Civipol that aims to: strengthen the capacities of the G5 Permanent Secretariat and those of its member states in the field of security and border management; and to support the G5 Sahel Presidency in its daily work and in its cooperation with financial and technical partners. The EUTF also supports the development of the security structures of the G5 Sahel such as the *Plateforme de Cooperation en Matière de Sécurité*, and the Sahelian Security College. Another flagship project is GAR-SI Sahel (*Groupe d'action rapides – surveillance et intervention au Sahel*) which supports in each G5 Sahel country and in Senegal the establishment of flexible, mobile and multi-tasking law enforcement units (100 men). These units are supposed to improve the control over each respective countries' national territory and borders and help in the fight against illicit trafficking and terrorist groups. They are also supposed to be interoperable and therefore facilitate cross-border operations.

What coordination role for the Regional Coordination Cell?

While the potential of the Regional Coordination Cell to add a more strategic regional vision to the EU's support to the G5JF and G5 Sahel countries should be noted, conflicts among EU actors seem to have undermined this potential. Indeed, the decision to delocalise the Cell to Nouakchott with a blurry coordination mandate is the result of controversies and conflicting interests that have delayed the second operation phase of the process. This choice

¹⁵⁰ Interview with an implementing agency staff (2018).

was made as an alternative to the Deputy Secretary General for CSDP and Crisis Response's proposal to expand CSDP activities in the Sahel through the launch of a regional CSDP mission.¹⁵¹ Located in Nouakchott to assist the G5 Permanent Secretariat, this mission would have been tasked with the coordination of the three CSDP missions and a potential new mission in Burkina Faso which was also part of the proposal. Having one actor overseeing all activities in the Sahel was presented by some EU services (including CSDP) in Brussels as necessary to efficiently think and work regionally.¹⁵² This proposal, however, was countered by a group of member states (France, Belgium, Portugal, and Spain in particular) for a number of reasons: the legal complexity of such a mission in terms of reporting and command, the fact that neither Mauritania nor Burkina Faso have shown particular enthusiasm to host CSDP missions, and the small dimension of the G5 Permanent Secretariat which would be overwhelmed by a CSDP mission.¹⁵³

This controversy has been driven in great part by the interests of the various actors involved. The interviews conducted suggest that some EEAS services and, in particular, the Deputy Secretary General for CSDP and Crisis Response, are the main drivers of this regionalisation process with the purpose to increase political and strategic steering from the EEAS, while further promoting the EU's visibility in the field. In contrast, some member states are anxious to keep at bay the increasing number of EEAS' initiatives and maintain their control over CSDP missions which require important human and financial

resources from member states. It is also possible that the activism of the EEAS which aims to promote the role of the EU as a security actor is not always well received by member states, such as France, in their own area of influence. Member states have thus argued for a slower and less ambitious regionalisation process, including sending a small team of experts to Nouakchott (the Regional Coordination Cell) with a weaker coordination role.¹⁵⁴ However, not having the political weight of a CSDP mission, and without a mandate to oversee the activities of other EU actors, the capacity of the Cell to make people work together to address the fragmentation of EU actions will be limited. This is unfortunate in a context where coordination is critically needed to bring together all the elements of the regionalisation process and to avoid competition and conflicts between the different EU instruments.

As a consequence of this blurry role, the position of the Regional Coordination Cell in the field has been particularly problematic. In the Delegation of the EU in Mali, it has been perceived as the creation of a parallel coordination system which could compete with the work of the Delegation.¹⁵⁵ In parallel, CSDP actors in the field are not particularly happy with the coordination role of the Cell as they consider that they have their own mandate to implement, and only have to answer to their Head of mission. Hence, the Regional Coordination Cell finds itself in the midst of various conflictual interests as all other EU actors contest its added value in terms of expertise and

¹⁵¹ Interviews with EEAS officials (2018).

¹⁵² Interviews with EEAS officials (2018).

¹⁵³ Interview with an EEAS official (2018), and EU member states officials (2018).

¹⁵⁴ Interviews with EU member states officials (2018).

¹⁵⁵ Interviews with EEAS officials (2018), and EU field officers (2018).

coordination.¹⁵⁶ Illustratively, when asking interviewees in Bamako whether they have seen or used the work produced by the Regional Coordination Cell ('gaps and needs' assessment and donors mapping), the answers are mostly negative.¹⁵⁷ This seems to be a waste of its expertise since the team has provided a thorough assessment of G5 Sahel countries' capacities, on the basis of which more realistic expectations could be formed regarding the development of the G5JF. The Regional Coordination Cell could also bring a strategic regional perspective in the operational phase by coordinating, for example, the training and formation of the G5JF officers, and prioritising and orienting actions towards addressing the specific and most urgent needs of the different countries. However, this could only happen if other EU actors let the Regional Coordination Cell have this coordination role.

The difficult setting up of the G5 Sahel structures

While the EU and its member states are officially committed to the development of the G5 Sahel and its structures, interviewees remain critical of the slow pace of progress made so far, and emphasise the hurdles that they have encountered in their everyday work

with G5 Sahel countries. They emphasised the difficulties in dealing with the often conflictual relations between G5 Sahel countries, and with the G5 permanent Secretariat and Presidency; as well as with their lack of homogeneity, common discourse and agenda, and their mixed commitment to the strengthening of the G5 Sahel structures (ICG 2017).¹⁵⁸ For example, G5 Sahel countries seem to be frustrated with the G5 Permanent Secretariat which has taken much space and importance, and attracted international funding. Apparently, the realisation that they will have to contribute to the financing of its different structures is not particularly popular among the five countries.¹⁵⁹

The potential impact of the G5JF on the security condition in the Sahel is also called into question. Many doubt that the assemblage of five dysfunctional armed forces will successfully manage to navigate this complex security environment.¹⁶⁰ A common view is that the G5JF might, at best, complement Barkhane's operations but will not be able to replace the French force.¹⁶¹ Interviewees argue that it will take a long time to train and equip armed forces with such capacity gaps and governance issues.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁶ Interviews with EEAS officials (2018), and EU field officers (2018).

¹⁵⁷ Interviews with EU field officers (2018), and an EU member state official (2018).

¹⁵⁸ While interviewees agree that the Nigerien government is pro-active, they believe that the Malian government is not committed enough, and that Mauritania, Chad, and Burkina Faso appear to be much less involved (Interviews with EEAS officials (2018), EU field officers (2018), and an ECOWAS official (2018)).

¹⁵⁹ Interview of an EU field officer (2018).

¹⁶⁰ Interview with an EEAS official (2018), and EU officers (2018).

¹⁶¹ Various interviewees raised the point that the 5000 (now 10 000) troops planned by the G5JF will have a hard time making a difference when the 4500 well-equipped Barkhane troops have just managed to contain the problem (interviews with EEAS official (2018), a DEVCO official (2018), and EU field officers (2018)). Nevertheless, the G5JF is, according to Natasja Rupesinghe (2018), a part of France's eventual exit strategy from the region as the force advocates that the projection of force of the G5JF could tilt the balance of power against armed groups and disrupt the networks of organised crime that fund them.

¹⁶² Interviews with an EEAS official (2018), and an EU field officer (2018). The Report of the UN Secretary-General (UNSG) on the G5JF also stresses that 'amid important equipment and training shortfalls, the deadline for attaining full operational capability had to be postponed twice; a new timeline has not yet been defined' (UNSG 2018: 1).

Moreover, interviewees as well as the UN Secretary-General (2018) report raised the point that the way in which the G5JF is built now on the basis of static sectoral command posts¹⁶³ might not be the most adapted way to fight against a mobile and diffuse Jihadist threat.¹⁶⁴

The 105-strong police component of the G5JF is also lagging behind. While the EU strongly supports its development, and the Human Rights Compliance Framework has been set up with its financial backing, progress remain scarce. The police component should include two elements: a lead brigade as the principal intervener on the scene to ensure crime scene preservation, collect evidence, carry out interrogation and other activities; and specialised investigations units. Its slow development is a problem as an important task of the police component will be to monitor the behaviour of the G5JF troops and ensure their compliance with the Human Rights Compliance Framework which is critically needed as shown by the executions of the Malian armed forces in the Centre against the Fulani community (Rupesinghe 2018; Cold-Ravnkilde 2018). At the moment, the development of the police component is under the leadership of UNODC for the international community, and EUCAP Sahel Niger on the EU side. The commitments of G5 Sahel countries seem to be mixed. The Nigerien government is probably the most eager to pursue its operationalisation as it has already established an investigation unit and

deployed 15 judicial officers. In Mali, EUCAP's proposal to support the setting up of a lead brigade has been left unanswered, while the BSI are not yet operational. Burkina Faso, Chad, and Mauritania have not made much more progress.¹⁶⁵ Hence, the development of the police component can only be realistically envisaged over a few years in view of the G5 Sahel countries' limited commitment and the domestic security forces' deficit of experience with cross-border cooperation as opposed to the armed forces.¹⁶⁶

Is the G5 Sahel the right solution?

Besides the difficulties linked to the practicalities of the operationalisation of the G5 Sahel and its Joint Force, the overwhelming international support to the G5 Sahel raises two problems regarding the appropriate level of action.

First, EU officials in Brussels and in the field argue that the G5 Sahel has become an obsession in Brussels and the G5JF, in particular, is monopolising most of the debates.¹⁶⁷ This is problematic as the G5JF can only be envisaged as one part of a broader response to deal with the problems of instability, governance, and social exclusion in the region. This frames the problem through the prism of the fight against terrorism and border management at the expense of dealing with structural governance and socio-economic problems. While the concept of operations of the G5JF combines counter-terrorism with softer tasks

¹⁶³ The G5JF military component includes a headquarter recently transferred from Sevaré to Bamako and three sector command posts in the Central sector (Niamey, Niger), the Eastern Sector (Wour, Chad), and the Western sector (N'beiket, Mauritania). The arrangement enables hot pursuit operations up to 50km on each side of the border.

¹⁶⁴ Interviews with EU field officers (2018).

¹⁶⁵ Interviews with EU field officers (2018). See the UNSG report (UNSG 2018) for a detailed account of the operationalisation of both the military and police components.

¹⁶⁶ Interviews with an EEAS official (2018), and an EU member state official (2018).

¹⁶⁷ Interviews with EEAS officials (2018), and EU field officers (2018).

such as facilitating humanitarian assistance and development, these tasks do not appear to be the priority for the moment.¹⁶⁸ This counter-terrorism approach does not either recognise and deal with the strategies that armed groups use to ‘mobilise civilians, and which often involve legitimacy-building tactics such as providing employment, local justice and basic services’ to certain groups (Rupesinghe 2018). In order to gain or regain the trust of populations, governments should provide a set of governance and justice, security and social services. There is no way that any strategy of sequentially delivering these goods could be successful against the action of the jihadist groups.

Furthermore, the operation area of the Joint Force merely concerns a border strip of 50 km on each side of the G5 Sahel countries’ borders in three different zones: the border between Mauritania and Mali; the border area between Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso; and the Chad and Niger border. The focus on the G5JF risks taking the attention away from the overall development of national capacities, orienting funding, technical assistance and advice towards the G5JF as is happening with the new mandates of the CSDP missions which have limited resources and expertise. Problematically, this dynamic frames the issue as being mainly regional, forgetting that security, development, and governance problems are also national. In Mali for example, the urgency is now in the Central regions which for the most part is not covered by the G5JF. This G5 Sahel obsession, maintained by the EU and France, could

drive the Malian government to neglect other areas of the country which attract less international funding.¹⁶⁹

The second problem concerns the impact of international and, in particular, of the EU and its member states’ support to the G5 Sahel on the West African Peace and Security Architecture embodied by ECOWAS. Initially, the purpose of the G5 Sahel was not to become a regional organisation.¹⁷⁰ This is however changing as the G5 Permanent Secretariat is attracting more and more international funding, capacity-building support, and is creating new governance structures. On the 6th of December 2018, a G5 Sahel donor coordination conference took place in Nouakchott and mobilised 2.4 billion euros to fund the G5 Sahel development and security strategy adopted in 2016.¹⁷¹ This dynamic has been very much fostered by the EU and France despite the flickering political will and tensions among G5 Sahel countries. The priority given to ECOWAS by the EU in the field of peace and security in the last two decades seems to have vanished. ECOWAS is barely mentioned by EU officials working on the Sahel and marginally acknowledged in official documents. As we saw in Section 1, some voices were raised within DG DEVCO against this shift in the EU’s regional approach, but they have mostly been ignored.

These changes should be highlighted as they have the potential to cripple the process of regional integration and major advances such as freedom of movement in the West African space (Lopez Lucia 2017; see also Lebovich

¹⁶⁸ One EU field officer argues that the Malian armed forces do not have the mean to carry out such actions (interview with an EU field officer (2018)).

¹⁶⁹ Interviews with EU field officers (2018).

¹⁷⁰ For the moment the G5 Sahel is a framework of coordination and cooperation in the field of security and development policies. It does not have a constituting treaty and is not recognised as part of the African Peace and Security Architecture as ECOWAS is.

¹⁷¹ This money is destined to fund projects in the border areas in the fields of governance, resilience, security and infrastructure. Again here, the risk of neglecting other fragile regions such as the Centre of Mali is high.

2018b). While ECOWAS is often criticised, its value should not be underestimated as an important stability factor in the region. It has developed the most advanced political and security cooperation framework among all the African Regional Economic Communities (Bah 2005; Lopez Lucia 2018). Various institutionalised mechanisms have been put in place to build trust, provide mediation and manage conflicts in case of crises such as the regular meetings of Heads of State, and the meeting of Chief of Defence Staff.¹⁷² ECOWAS has defined a regional security agenda and established a range of security cooperation practices including joint border monitoring, joint maritime patrols, and the control of small arms and light weapons. West African decision makers have started to use the ECOWAS Early Warning and Response Network to monitor conflicts and inform their response (IRAM 2018). Moreover, the regional organisation is considered legitimate enough in West Africa to be able to consensually intervene in the region in case of breaches of peace and democracy. It had a crucial mediation role after the coup d'état in Mali even if the deployment of its African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) was less successful (ICG 2016a; Diallo 2018), and has recently and successfully sent troops in Gambia to protect democracy (IRAM 2018).¹⁷³

Nevertheless, this consensus is still fragile and challenged by ECOWAS member states. Supporting coordination frameworks such as the G5 Sahel indiscriminately risks turning them into competing regional organisations

which can marginalise ECOWAS' centrality in West African security affairs and put this consensus in danger (Lopez Lucia 2017: 13). Increasingly, and undermining the ECOWAS peace and security architecture, regional security policies and practices are being established at the Sahelian level without integrating most ECOWAS member states. Regional security structures overlapping with ECOWAS' structures are being created such as the G5JF and training centres such as the Sahelian Security College and the Sahelian Defence College. ECOWAS already has three training centres, the Peace-Keeping School (Bamako), the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (Accra) and the National Defence College (Abuja) which are key settings for the socialisation of, and the building of trust among military and police officers from West Africa. The EU has invested a lot into the development of the ECOWAS Standby Forces and appears to be starting all over again now with the G5JF. However, as commented by an EU field officer, the operationalisation of the G5JF is neither easier nor faster than the ECOWAS Standby Forces even though it has access to much more funding and technical support.¹⁷⁴ A possible outcome of the current negotiations in Brussels over the next multiannual financial framework could be granting the G5 Sahel a direct access to EU funding on the same footing as ECOWAS.¹⁷⁵ This would further disrupt the long-term project of operationalising the ESF, and the commitment of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso to ECOWAS if better access to EU resources is ensured through the G5 Sahel.

¹⁷² The Chief of Defence Staff were meeting one a month at the height of the crisis in Mali in 2012-2013 (interviews with ECOWAS officials (2013).

¹⁷³ ECOWAS also had a major role in a range of crisis in West Africa, for example in Niger (2009), in Côte d'Ivoire (2010), or in Guinea-Bissau (2012).

¹⁷⁴ Interview with an EU field officer (2018).

¹⁷⁵ Interview with an EEAS official (2018).

Analysts such as Gilles Yabi (2017) have argued that the challenges of the G5 Sahel states could have been addressed within the framework of ECOWAS by creating an institutionalised dialogue with bordering countries, Mauritania, Chad, and Cameroon. Indeed, without questioning the fact that G5 Sahel countries suffer from similar problems, these problems often go beyond the borders of the G5 Sahel. Côte d'Ivoire also suffered a major terrorist attack in 2016 and is collaborating with Mali and Burkina Faso at its borders (Jeune Afrique 2018). Benin, Togo, Burkina Faso, and Niger have decided to cooperate to deal with armed groups (BBC 2018). Senegal might not be spared for long and has asked to become a member of the G5 Sahel which was refused.¹⁷⁶ Niger and Chad cooperate with Nigeria, Benin, and Cameroon within the Multinational Joint Task Force to coordinate the fight against Boko Haram. In this context, one could ask whether the G5JF is the right level of action and why it has been privileged over other solutions. Reasons linked to the security and migration interests of international actors such as France and other EU member states should not be forgotten. France is the privileged partner of the G5JF which is partly the outcome of cross-border military operations with Barkhane (Diallo 2018).¹⁷⁷ Using ECOWAS also means including Nigeria which would drastically change the balance of power; something which might not be welcomed by France and some of the G5 Sahel countries.¹⁷⁸ The risk of triggering new divisions and destroying trust-building efforts in West Africa are real as emphasised

by an ICG report which notes that an ECOWAS member state objected to the G5's request to loan equipment belonging to the Standby Force (ICG 2017). Gilles Yabi warns that this testifies to 'an unprecedented weakening of African regional organizations against a backdrop of a deep leadership crisis and lack of political vision at national level in the countries of the region' (Yabi 2017). However, despite frustrations concerning their marginalisation, ECOWAS and Nigeria, its driving force, have so far not shown much proactivity to become more involved in the Sahel. As for the African Union, which was also pushed aside with the creation of the G5 Sahel, it is now attempting to make a comeback by bringing the G5 Sahel into its Nouakchott process¹⁷⁹ initiative which aims to reconcile the 'Sahel' and 'West African' regions, although this still partly circumvents ECOWAS (Diallo 2018).¹⁸⁰ In any case, the priority now should be to connect the dynamics launched in the G5 Sahel framework to ECOWAS and draw on its political legitimacy.

¹⁷⁶ Interview with a DEVCO official (2018).

¹⁷⁷ Interviews with an EEAS official (2018), and a member state official (2018).

¹⁷⁸ Interview with an ECOWAS official (2018).

¹⁷⁹ The Nouakchott process was launched in march 2013 by 11 countries and several international organisations to improve and facilitate the coordination of security cooperation initiative in the Sahel-Saharan strip.

¹⁸⁰ Interviews with an ECOWAS official (2018), and an AU official (2018).

Conclusion

To conclude, the Sahel, and Mali in particular, has been a difficult ‘laboratory of experimentation’ for the EU and its integrated and regionalised approach. The EU has a broad range of instruments on which to draw to address security, development, and governance issues, and should be a valuable actor in the Sahel. However, making these instruments work together has been a difficult endeavour. While events in the region have provided an incentive and, sometimes, even constrained instruments and people to work together in new and productive ways, the multiplicity of initiatives, experimentations, and actors has also exacerbated conflicts and tensions. In some cases, decisions regarding the use of an instrument and the implementation of a project appear to be less driven by their added value and the conditions on the ground, than by the EU’s internal politics. The effect of these internal dynamics are particularly strong as the EU is in a moment of institutional transformation, enabled by the Lisbon Treaty reform, and led by various services which are trying to shape the EU into a relevant security actor. However, the leadership over this process is disputed and, certain services and agencies have been trying to assert their autonomy in a context in which the Integrated Approach is supposed to bring instruments together under the leadership of the EEAS. In the field, this has translated into: a reluctance to cooperate, competition enabled by vague definitions of roles and responsibilities, and a lack of strategic guidance, which have generally undermined the delivery of the EU development and security assistance. The EU’s ambition to support security sector

reform processes has been particularly affected as security sector reform activities are scattered across instruments without being driven by a clear framework and an appointed actor.

Moreover, competition and struggles characterise as much interactions between international actors as interactions among EU actors. As qualified by an EU field officer, Mali is a particularly ‘competitive environment’ in which each international actor is seeking to show that it is doing something, in line with its political priorities, and often without examining potential synergies and complementarities with other actors.¹⁸¹ For example, cooperation between MINUSMA and the CSDP missions is not perceived as particularly positive even though multiple overlaps between their mandates exist.¹⁸² Much more should be done to improve cooperation between actors, instruments, and projects.

This state of affairs has also affected the ability of the EU to articulate security and development initiatives. In this context of competition and tensions, a reflection on the ways and possibilities to integrate different instruments and projects to address both security, and structural governance and socio-economic issues, is in great part missing. This articulation needs more attention in a new situation where development actors are in possession of larger sums of money to fund security projects than security actors, and are under pressure to demonstrate quick results, which might diminish their incentives to retain a structural and long-term perspective. Particularly acute in the case of the EU, which has tried to build its legitimacy as a foreign policy actor based on its ability to

¹⁸¹ Interview with EU field officers (2018).

¹⁸² Interviews with EU field officers (2018).

provide a holistic answer to crises and conflicts, this problem characterises the action of international actors engaged in the Sahel. While analysts and researchers criticise national and international actors for not paying enough attention to the socio-economic causes of conflicts and for being overly driven by their counter-terrorism agenda, the problem also lies in the complexity of the task at hand. Having a good and updated understanding of the many conflict dynamics at play throughout the Sahel is far from evident. Designing actions which, together, provide fine-grained socio-economic answers adapted to very localised conflicts, address the discourses and strategies of jihadist actors who feed off these conflicts, and deal with the inefficiencies, and the governance and corruption problems of state institutions and security and defence forces, is a challenge. However, it is important to engage on all fronts and help the governments to provide a set of governance, justice, security, and social services to (re-)gain the trust of populations. A strategy that delivers these goods sequentially cannot be successful against the action of jihadist groups who are disrupting the fragile social fabric of the Sahelian states. The strategy of international actors is thus doomed to fail if they continue prioritising the support to the G5JF and the fight against terrorism in border areas, while delaying the need to address structural governance and socio-economic problems.

In this complex and challenging situation, some things could be done to facilitate development and security assistance:

Before launching any action, it is important to carefully examine which actor is the most appropriate to intervene in a particular context and to achieve specific objectives. Instead of letting institutional interests and competition take precedence, the added value

of each actor and instrument needs to be analysed. For example, it is important to ask whether development agencies are the best placed to implement security projects in unstable and violent contexts. This holds true both within the EU, and between international actors.

Development and security projects should be based on conflicts analyses and perceptions studies to understand the drivers of insecurity, test assumptions, orient the projects, and adapt them to the need on the grounds. Security sector reforms activities should be informed by political economy analyses of the security sectors.

The strengthening of security and defence forces is important to help states in the Sahel reinforce or recover their authority over their territory. However, capacity-building activities and a focus on counter-terrorism and border management, pushed by the security priorities and political pressure of the various intervening actors, are not sufficient. More emphasis is needed on governance and accountability reforms.

Efforts to support the G5 Sahel should be re-connected to ECOWAS and the African Peace and Security Architecture. ECOWAS is an important and useful organisation which has set up various institutionalised mechanisms to build trust, provide mediation and manage conflicts in case of crisis, and on which Sahelian states could rely. Moreover, the prioritisation of the G5 Sahel risks disrupting the integration process and the political legitimacy of ECOWAS. This dimension, which is largely ignored in Brussels should be urgently brought back on the EU's agenda.

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About the Centre FrancoPaix

Following the 15th Francophonie Summit and the Resolution on crisis situations, crisis resolution and peacebuilding in the French-speaking world, the Raoul-Dandurand Chair in Strategic and Diplomatic Studies set up the Centre FrancoPaix en résolution des conflits et missions de paix (in conflict resolution and peace missions) in order to support the strategic objectives of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) in conflict prevention and management.

Inaugurated in January 2016 with the financial support of the OIF, the mission of the Centre FrancoPaix includes:

- The promotion of scientific research and university training in French in the field of peace and conflict studies, in particular conflict resolution, conflict management and peace missions;
- The promotion of scientific research and university training about conflict resolution and conflict management in French-speaking countries, particularly in Africa;
- The production and diffusion of scientific research that focuses on conflict resolution and peace operations, particularly through knowledge production activities with policymakers and practitioners in the field;
- Enabling intellectual exchanges and the flow of knowledge by promoting mobility, innovation and collaboration between institutions, university researchers and students from the “Global North” and the “Global South”.

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