

Ana GALLARÍN LÓPEZ

Air Force Captain in charge of institutional relations and professor at the General Air and Space Academy.

Email: anagl2144@hotmail.com

Impact of the European Union training mission on the Malian crisis

Abstract

As a regional actor seeking to increase its presence and position in international crisis management, the European Union is committed to reforming the Malian defence sector by instructing, training and advising its troops. However, the deep political crisis, internal conflicts and citizens' growing loss of confidence in their institutions, together with the rise of jihadism, have been a major stumbling block for European troops who, since the beginning of operations, have witnessed an overall worsening of the situation in the country. After nine years of intervention, it is time to objectively analyse quantifiable indicators to assess the impact of the strategy chosen by the European Union in its EUTM-Mali operation. The results obtained will form the basis for developing responses that are better adapted to the realities of the Malian conflict.

Keywords

Mali, governance crisis, jihadist terrorism, European intervention, defence system reform.

Cite this article:

Gallarín López, A. (2022). Impact of the EU training mission on the Malian crisis. *Journal of the Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies*. No. 20, pp. 253-278.

Introduction

The state of Mali, located in the troubled Sahel region, is still ten years into the process of seeking peace in order to rebuild its damaged economic, social and political structures. The main obstacles identified by the international community, in this case the European Union, include the marked absence of a security system capable of guaranteeing the implementation of the economic, social and political growth programmes that the Malian state so badly needs.

The country's legitimate security system, consisting mainly of the Malian Armed Forces (FAMA), must be consolidated as the main body responsible for the protection of the people and their institutions. State armed forces, in close cooperation with various civilian agencies and with the support of the European Union, play a key role in stabilising the country and contributing to a peaceful and effective democratic transition.

The purpose of this article is to analyse the impact of the European response to Mali's crisis of governance and state destructuring, carried out through the reform of the country's defence system. Specifically, it will discuss the EUTM-Mali mission, which aims to train, coach and advise the Malian armed forces in order to strengthen security in the region and contribute to the recovery of the country's overall stability.

Almost a decade after the launch of EUTM-Mali in 2013, has the European Union's action through the EUTM-Mali mission been effective in bringing about defence sector reform that contributes to the restructuring of governance and stability in the country?

Despite the longevity of the European mission and the amount of information published in different specialised media, institutional sources and official bodies such as the European Council, the official website of the United Nations or the Spanish Ministry of Defence on the Malian case, no quantifiable data on the results of EUTM-Mali have been published. There are no records that allow us to assess the degree of achievement of the strategic objectives set by EUTM-Mali in its different areas of intervention in order to be able to truly assess the mission's impact on defence sector reform and on the country's governance crisis. The only available references can be found on the official EUTM-Mali website, which offers a very generic view of the achievements and shortcomings of the European intervention. Therefore, there is a gap that will be filled by the data provided in this document.

In addition to the main objective of determining the impact of the EU's defence strategy on the Malian crisis, three specific objectives have been set that will define the research structure and shape its development. These objectives are: understanding the impact of the EUTM-Mali mission on the development of the FAMA; assessing the degree of fulfilment of the strategic objectives on which the EUTM-Mali mission is built; and identifying possible alternative courses of action in which the EU could invest its efforts more effectively in order to contribute to the reform of the Malian defence system and the country's democratic transition.

In order to achieve the objectives described above, data from different open official sources have been collected and analysed. This analysis has made it possible to select a series of quantifiable indicators to measure the degree of achievement of the strategic objectives established for the mission.

The conflict in Mali: internal dynamics and foreign intervention

Mali is in a situation of constant tension due to the difficult coexistence between the various social groups in its territory. The heterogeneity of Malian society, with more than ten known ethnic groups¹ inhabiting the country, can be perceived in the marked differences between their lifestyles, which sometimes present totally opposing positions that can lead to conflicts of interest (Expósito Guisado, 2020). This social diversity was negatively affected by the borders drawn at the Berlin Conference more than 130 years ago, in which tribes, clans of the same ethnic group and populations were divided. These borders responded to the interests of the colonisers, without respecting the idiosyncrasies of the region, and as a result, these North African countries found it difficult to control their territory and extensive borders that sometimes include inhospitable areas, such as the Sahara desert in the case of Mali (Gil-Casares *et al.*, 2015: 18).

Some of the forced ethnic divisions led to nationalist movements such as the Tuareg², a trend that in the following years would provoke protests and uprisings against state action that would hinder the country's governability. In 2011, the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), the main precursor of the Tuareg movement, began the insurrections that would later lead to clashes and military actions across large parts of the country (Ramos, 2020). In the following nine years, Mali experienced three coups d'état and two failed attempts, revealing a marked crisis of governance and political instability in the face of the government's difficulties in managing internal conflicts between the different ethnic societies.

On the other hand, there was a rise and expansion of jihadist terrorist groups, including Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) —an affiliate of al-Qaeda in Mali and West Africa— and of the Islamic State in central and eastern Mali. Several of these jihadist groups, such as Ansar Ad-Din (Helpers of the Religion), the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), supported the MNLA in the early days of the rebellion by helping to conquer the northern region of Mali. These groups subsequently took advantage of

¹ The Bambara and Malinké make up around half of the Malian population, followed by the Peulh or Fulani with 14.7 per cent, the Songhai (11.6 per cent), the Tuareg (7.7 per cent). Maure, Soninké (10.8 per cent), Senoufo (10.5 per cent), Minianka. Dogon (8.9 percent), among others. (Minority Rights Group International. 2019).

² The Tuareg or Imuhars are of Berber or Amazigh descent, white, traditionally nomadic Saharan desert people whose origins are in North Africa. Its population is mainly spread over five African countries: Algeria, Libya, Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso, although there are also residual populations in Nigeria and Senegal (Martín-Peñato, M., 2013: 2).

the crisis and chaos generated by secessionism to absorb the Tuareg independence movement in order to promote a jihad, controlled from the shadows by Al Qaeda, which would allow them to exercise religious and political control over the country (Expósito Guisado: 2020, 6).

Similarly, there were inter-community clashes between the Peulh and Dogon ethnic groups who, by using their own self-defence militias³, were involved in various conflicts in the regions most affected by terrorist action. These clashes contributed to growing instability and represented a major stumbling block for the inefficient Malian armed forces in exercising control over their territory.

The unsustainability of the situation and lack of state control led the Malian government to request military support from France, which managed to contain the advance of jihadism with Operation *Serval*. Other international organisations such as the United Nations and the European Union subsequently approved the creation of multilateral operations in the Sahel area and specifically in Mali.

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) is currently the last of the international executive missions deployed in Mali. The European Union has two Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions: *European Training Mission Mali* (EUTM-Mali) and *European Union Capacity Building Mission* (EUCAP Sahel Mali)⁴.

May and June 2015 saw the delayed signing of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali after several arduous negotiations. This agreement, signed in Bamako on 15 May 2015 between the Malian government and pro-government rebel movements in the Azawad region in the north of the country, and subsequently by the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA)⁵, refers to the implementation of a national reconciliation process that respects territorial integrity and takes into account ethnic and cultural diversity, as well as specific geographical and socio-economic characteristics. All this by implementing a system of governance coherent with the geohistorical and sociocultural reality of the northern regions, based on transparency of management, respect for human rights, justice and the fight against impunity; also taking into account the importance of the fight against terrorism, and transnational crime and organised crime⁶.

3 Ramos, 'The situation with the self-defence militias has turned into a brutal and increasingly violent conflict, mostly involving the Fulani and Dogon-Donzo, ethnic groups living in central Mali' 2020:6.

4 Diplomatic Information Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation (April 2022). *Country fact sheet: Republic of Mali*. https://www.exteriores.gob.es/Documents/FichasPais/MALI_FICHA%20PAIS.pdf

5 Alliance of armed groups including *Mouvement National pour la Libération de l'Azawad* (MNLA), *Haut Conseil pour l'Unité de l'Azawad* (HCUA), and part of *Mouvement Arabe de l'Azawad* (MAA-CMA) (Díez Alcalde, 2015: 2).

6 United Nations. (2015). *Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali resulting from the Algiers Process*, preamble Microsoft Word - ML_150620_Accord pour la paix et la reconciliation au Mali _Issu du Processus d'Alger_FR-tr.docx (un.org)

However, only five years later, on 18 August 2020, the fourth coup d'état in Mali's history was to take place (Cifuentes, 2021: 6-7), after which the transition period would begin, stipulated with a maximum duration of 18 months starting on 25 September 2020 (Cifuentes, 2021: 8). However, on 24 May 2021 the transition would be cut short again after the capture of the president, exposing the inconsistency of the transition process and the future of the nation (Proto, 2021, 25 May).

Proposals by the new transitional government to postpone elections, extending the transitional period to a total of five and a half years, would be in direct conflict with the agreement reached with ECOWAS on 15 September 2020 and the Transitional Charter commitment⁷. These events led to international sanctions imposed by ECOWAS on 9 January 2022⁸.

More recently, during the ECOWAS ordinary session held on 3 July 2022 in Accra⁹, ECOWAS member country heads of state addressed the path and progress needed for the return to constitutional order in Mali, Burkina Faso and Guinea after their respective coups d'état. The main breakthroughs include the agreement to reduce the transition period in Mali to 24 months as of 1 July, as well as the approval of lifting most sanctions imposed on 9 January (Summers, 2022).

The European Union in Mali. EUTM-Mali

Following the outbreak of the crisis, the President of the Republic of Mali sent a letter to the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on 24 December 2012 requesting the deployment of an EU military training mission in Mali. Accordingly, Council Decision 2013/34/CFSP¹⁰ of 13 January 2013 was adopted, setting out the structure and objectives of the European Union Training Mission (EUTM) in Mali. On 8 February 2013, the first European soldiers thus arrived in Bamako and on 18 February, Council Decision 2013/87/CFSP¹¹ was

⁷ Council of the European Union. (4 February 2022). Press release 75/22, Mali: EU adopts targeted sanctions against five individuals. Available at: [Mali: EU adopts targeted sanctions against five people \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu/press-room/en/dae-20220204-75)

⁸ Council of the European Union. (4 February 2022). Press release 75/22, Mali: EU adopts targeted sanctions against five individuals. Available at: [Mali: EU adopts targeted sanctions against five people \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu/press-room/en/dae-20220204-75)

⁹ Department of National Security of the Government of Spain. (Accra, 3 July 2022). Summary of the ECOWAS ordinary session. Available at: [CEDAEO - ORDINARY SESSION | DSN](https://cedaeo.es/ordinary-session)

¹⁰ Council of the European Union. Decision 2013/34/CFSP of 17 January 2013 on a European Union military mission to contribute to the training of the Malian Armed Forces (EUTM Mali). <https://www.boe.es/doue/2013/014/L00019-00021.pdf>

¹¹ Council of the European Union. Decision 2013/87/CFSP of 18 February 2013 on the launch of a European Union military mission to contribute to the training of the Malian Armed Forces (EUTM Mali), <https://www.boe.es/doue/2013/046/L00027-00027.pdf>

adopted, officially launching EUTM-Mali, which was immediately activated from Brussels. Finally, on 20 February 2013, the mission started in Bamako¹².

Operation *European Union Training Mission Mali (EUTM-Mali)* is, as its name suggests, a training mission whose objective is to transform the Malian Armed Forces into an effective and reliable security provider for the Malian people by advising and training its troops. The scope of EUTM-Mali does not include combat operations¹³, as set out in the Status of Forces Agreement or Status of Mission Agreement¹⁴.

The Status of Forces is the legal framework of the operation and defines the main aspects governing actions, limitations and conditions affecting deployed troops. This document defines, among other aspects, the use of the host state's infrastructures and means. As well as the regime for the operation of forces on Malian territory, and limitations on the use of force.

With almost 700 soldiers, EUTM-Mali is composed of military personnel from 25 European countries, including 22 EU members and three non-member states. EU member countries include Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden. The three non-EU European countries are Georgia, Moldova and Montenegro¹⁵.

EUTM-Mali has evolved in four main areas over the course of its five mandates¹⁶: staff numbers, budget, geographical responsibility for action and cooperation with other regional and international organisations. No mention is made of the possibility of direct provision of material means.

During the mission's first mandate in 2013, EUTM-Mali had around 200 military personnel deployed and a budget of €12.3 million, figures that have multiplied to almost 700 European soldiers and €133.7 million approved in the fifth and last mandate to date¹⁷.

In terms of territorial responsibility, there has been a notable evolution in that EUTM-Mali's area of action has increased from the south (first mandate), extending

12 Defence Staff. *Deployments and Operations. EUTM MALI, EU's military mission in Mali*. Available at: <https://emad.defensa.gob.es/operaciones/operaciones-en-el-exterior/43-UE-EUTM-Mali/index.html>

13 EUTM Mali shall not be involved in combat operations. Council of the European Union DECISION 2013/178/CFSP of 25 February 2013. Article 1, Scope and definitions.

14 Council of the European Union. DECISION 2013/178/CFSP of 25 February 2013 on the signing and conclusion of the Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Mali on the status in the Republic of Mali of the European Union military mission to contribute to the training of the Malian Armed Forces (EUTM Mali) *L00001-00006.pdf (boe.es)

15 European Union Training Mission (n.d.). Mali, *EUTM Mali. Factsheet*. Available at: <https://eutmmali.eu/factsheet/>

16 EUTM-Mali (n.d.). *Mandates*. <https://eutmmali.eu/mandates/>

17 EUTM-Mali (n.d.). *Mandates*.

to the south bank of the Niger River, including the cities of Timbuktu and Gao (third mandate), to encompass Mali as a whole and other surrounding areas (fifth mandate).

Finally, with regard to cooperation with other regional entities, since the adoption of the third mandate, support for the G5 Sahel mission has begun in the framework of activities with the Malian Armed Forces. Cooperation which, following the strategic review prior to the approval of the fifth mandate, was considerably strengthened, focusing on training and interoperability between state actors and international forces.

With the adoption of the Fifth Mandate in March 2020 and following a strategic review process, the Council of the EU decided to extend the mandate of the European Union Training Mission in Mali until 18 May 2024, setting the following strategic objectives:

‘-To contribute to the improvement of the capabilities of the Malian Armed Forces under the control of the political authorities.

-Consolidate the improvements achieved since 2013.

-Contribute to the political stabilisation and improvement of the security situation in Mali through support for the implementation of the Algiers Peace Agreement.

-Support the restoration of state control and the rule of law throughout Mali.

-Support G5 Sahel, through the consolidation and improvement of the operational capabilities of its Joint Force, strengthening regional cooperation to address common security threats, especially terrorism and illegal trafficking, especially of human beings¹⁸.

Overall, the mission has provided training for more than 15,000 Malian military personnel¹⁹ which, taking into account the size of its armed forces²⁰, represents 71 percent of its total registered strength in 2019²¹, reflecting the scale and scope of the mission.

¹⁸ DEFENCE STAFF (n.d.). *Deployments and Operations. EUTM MALI, EU's military mission in Mali, mandates*. Available at: <https://emad.defensa.gob.es/operaciones/operaciones-en-el-exterior/43-UE-EUTM-Mali/index.html>

¹⁹ EUTM-Mali (n.d.). *Factsheet*. Available at: 20220113_Fact-Sheet-EUTM-sans-elections-22FEB_ENG.pdf (eutmmali.eu)

²⁰ 21.000 registered personnel in 2019. World Data Bank (2019). Information from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). Available at: [Armed forces personnel, total | Data \(worldbank.org\)](#)

²¹ World Data Bank with information from the IISS. Available at: [Armed forces personnel, total | Data \(worldbank.org\)](#)

EUTM-Mali findings on the Malian crisis. Indicators

An initial general analysis of EUTM-Mali's mandates confirms the progressive need not only to extend the duration of the mission, which has now been running for nine years since its inception in 2013, but also to increase the number of human and financial resources, responsibilities and territorial areas of action. In addition, there is a perceived need to strengthen cooperation with other regional and international forces²², suggesting a lack of improvement in the security situation, as more and more intervention is required to achieve the objectives.

Despite having contributed through training and advisory programmes to improving the capabilities of the Malian Armed Forces, these advances have made no tangible contribution to the political stabilisation of Mali, which, as discussed above, has continued to suffer from government coups and internal revolts, and the responsibilities, personnel and budget allocated to EUTM-Mali need to be expanded. Nor has it been possible to maintain effective state control in northern parts of the country, despite the re-establishment of control lost after the 2012 revolutions perpetrated by the Tuaregs and the advance of terrorism with the action of France and its anti-terrorist operation.

Considerable progress has been made in cooperation with the G5 Sahel by increasing EUTM-Mali's capabilities and areas of operation during the mission's recent mandates, contributing to strengthening regional cooperation to address common transnational threats, especially terrorism²³.

After this overview, a more complete and quantifiable analysis will be made of the degree of compliance with each of the proposed objectives, using the five selected indicators. Based on the analysis of these data, and using the five strategic objectives established for EUTM-Mali as a reference, each of the proposed specific objectives can be addressed.

The following are the indicators selected:

- Evolution of the FAMa. Number of troops and defence spending in relation to GDP.
- Security situation.
- Corruption index.
- Human rights abuses and violations at the hands of the FAMa.
- Situation and development of terrorism in Mali.

²² COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION. (23 March 2020). Press release, 174/20. EUTM Mali: Council extends training mission with broadened mandate and increased budget. Document available at: EUTM Mali: Council extends the training mission with broadened mandate and increased budget (europa.eu)

²³ EUTM-Mali (n.a.). *Mandates*. <https://eutmmali.eu/mandates/>

Evolution of the FAMA. Troop strength and defence spending as a share of GDP

Evaluation of EUTM-Mali as a training mission aimed at training and mentoring FAMA should start with a review of the status of the FAMA themselves in order to assess the level of progress of the first of the strategic objectives set by their mandates: ‘to contribute to the improvement of the capabilities of the Malian Armed Forces under the control of the political authorities’²⁴.

Truly responsive Armed Forces require, first and foremost, having sufficient personnel to train to carry out the mandated missions in a satisfactory manner. For this reason, the evolution of the number of troops in the FAMA before and during the development of EUTM Mali will be reviewed.

The comparative evolution in the number of troops forming the FAMA and the Spanish Armed Forces is shown below for a better understanding of the data provided. It is highly relevant to note that despite a four-fold increase in the total number of FAMA troops since 1985, they still fall far short of the numbers in Spain (more than nine times higher in total) despite being twice the size of the European state. However, there has been a clear and mostly stable upward trend since EUTM Mali began, having increased the number of its armed forces by more than 160 per cent from 7,800 troops in 2012 at the outbreak of the crisis to a total of 21,000 in 2019.

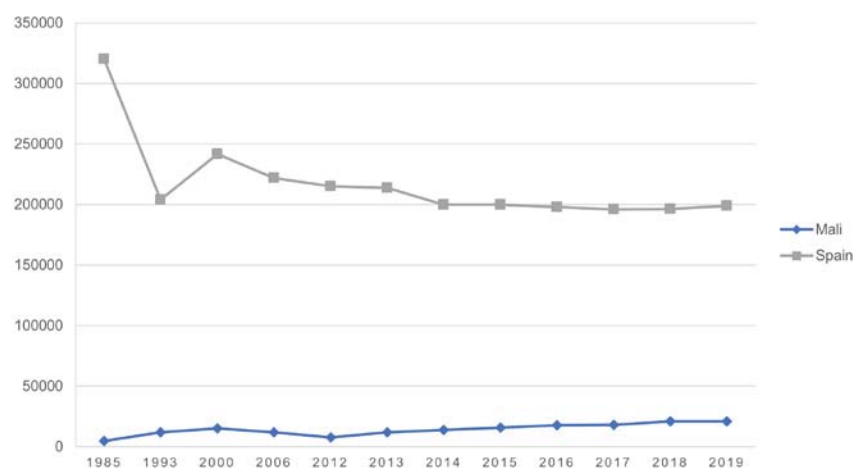


Figure I. Evolution in the number of troops of the Armed Forces Spain vs Mali²⁵. Source: Prepared by author²⁶.

Furthermore, it is relevant to review the trend in the percentage of central government spending on defence (see Figure II), in order to verify the government's

²⁴ Defence Staff (n.d.). Deployments and Operations. EUTM MALI, EU's military mission in Mali, EUTM-Mali mission.

²⁵ Column x: Years Beginning In 1985 To 2019; Column Y: Number of Troops.

²⁶ World Data Bank with information from the IISS. Available at: Armed Forces Personnel, Total | Data (worldbank.org)

awareness of a competitive investment in its security system, among other aspects. In the case of Mali, a downward trend is observed until the outbreak of the crisis in 2012, where the graph reverses the direction of growth to start a sharp upward trend until stagnating from 2017 onwards.

The change in the state's GDP must also be taken into account. Lack of economic growth will limit the development of other areas that depend on state coffers due to the scarcity of economic resources with which to acquire social, political and, of course, military means, as well as to develop the necessary infrastructures for their management. In the case of Mali, GDP growth suffered a deep dip coinciding with the 2012 crisis, from which it quickly recovered with the temporary stabilisation of the state and the intervention of international organisations. In subsequent years, however, the downward trend can be seen to continue, despite the government's increased military spending. Despite a blip in 2020, presumably due to the global crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic²⁷, it is worth noting that military spending continues its upward trend without disruption. These developments may portend future underfunding to sustain the marked trend in defence spending. Or instead, a neglect of investment in other areas of society in favour of defence.

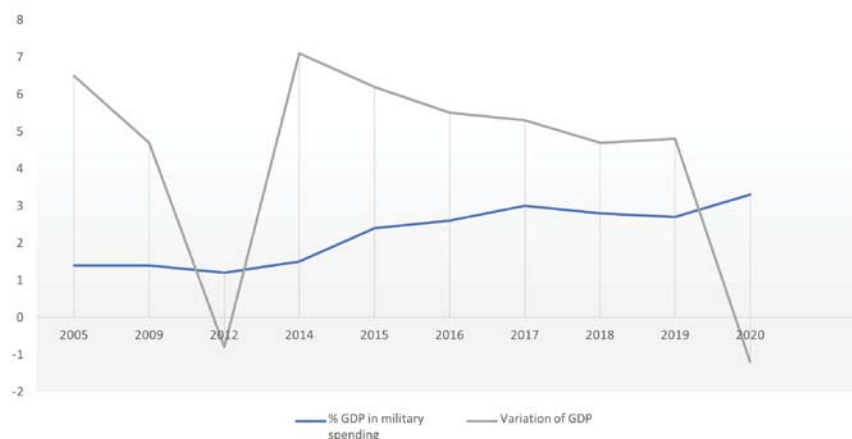


Figure II. Evolution of GDP vs. % of GDP spent on military expenditure of the Malian government.
Source: Prepared by author.

Therefore, it can be considered that so far and since the beginning of the European mission, both economic and human investment in defence have maintained generally upward trends, but that they could be limited by the country's overall low development,

²⁷ Data from several countries are compared in 2020, with similar results of steep drops in annual GDP data: Spain -11.3%; Italy -9%; France -7.8% India -6.6%; USA -2.8%. These data reflect an overall decline in GDP data, attributable to the effects of the global crisis following the impact of COVID-19. Data available at: <https://datosmacro.expansion.com/pib/>

²⁸ X-axis: time measurement, starting in 2005 until 2020; Y-axis: percentage of GDP.

²⁹ World Data Bank with information from the IISS and the EXPANSIÓN consultation portal. All information available: Military expenditure (% of GDP) - Mali | Data (worldbank.org) and Mali GDP 2021 | datosmacro.com (expansion.com)

as reflected in its annual GDP variation. Security sector reform efforts could thus be increasingly undermined, without social support or future budgets.

This growth in defence spending will not be sustainable or acceptable to society if economic growth (GDP) does not keep pace, as state budgets could become unbalanced and other sectors of society neglected. The mismatch between development and defence spending may provoke an increase in anti-government revolts and foster rejection of the FAMa, thus moving away from EUTM-Mali's objectives of effective reform of the state's security system.

Security Situation

Having reviewed the state of its armed forces, it is now time to analyse the overall situation in the country, in order to assess the degree to which the strategic objectives to address the restructuring of the state have been met. Specifically, this section will study the effect of EUTM-Mali on aspects of general security perceptions in the country, with reference to the mission's third strategic objective: 'contribute to the political stabilisation and improvement of the security situation in Mali through support for the implementation of the Algiers Peace Agreement'³⁰.

To this end, the state of perceived security that can be assigned to the state of Mali will be assessed on the basis of a series of sub-indicators, such as the militarisation of the state, access to weapons by society, the number of reported homicides and internal conflicts, and society's perception of the insecurity generated by the armed forces. A comparative analysis will also be made of the variation of these indicators over time, reviewing the state of these indicators in 2013 when EUTM Mali was launched and their evolution after nine years of mission until 2022.

These indicators are rated from 0 to 5, with 0 attributed to factors considered as not contributing to the existing situation of violence and 5 as highly contributing. We can thus observe, firstly, that in 2013 the overall figure stood at 2.4 points, while in 2022 this value reached 2.9, an overall worsening of the perceived security situation in the country.

Aspects with the highest recorded increases included the rise in terrorist activities and especially the presence of internal conflicts, followed by perceived criminality in society and central government spending on military activities. On the latter point, it should be noted that defence spending has undergone significant increases since 2013, rising by 45 per cent to 2020. However, the evolution of the country's GDP has not been consistent with this expenditure, as discussed in previous sections, falling from a variation of 7 per cent to as low as -1.2 per cent³¹.

³⁰ Defence Staff (n.d.). *Deployments and Operations. EUTM MALI, EU's military mission in Mali, EUTM-Mali mission.*

³¹ See figure II.

In terms of aspects that have improved during this period, funds allocated to peacekeeping missions are particularly noteworthy. This figure is determined on the basis of country contributions against the annual assessment of the peacekeeping mission budget over an average of three years³².

Factors with the highest ratings in both periods are the perceived insecurity of the State's security forces and Armed Forces³³, and political instability³⁴. Both indices have been rated with the highest attributable score, denoting the lack of progress perceived by expert analysts in these areas. Other factors with extremely high values in both periods are the number of homicides and access to weapons by the civilian population.

These indicators clearly show that no significant progress has been made during these years of international action. On the contrary, setbacks have been detected in some of the most important areas when assessing the state of the country's security. Given these data, reflection is required on real results in terms of Malian society's perception of the situation of growing insecurity in their state, remembering that it is the citizens who are the target of the effort to reform the security system in order to guarantee the country's real stability.

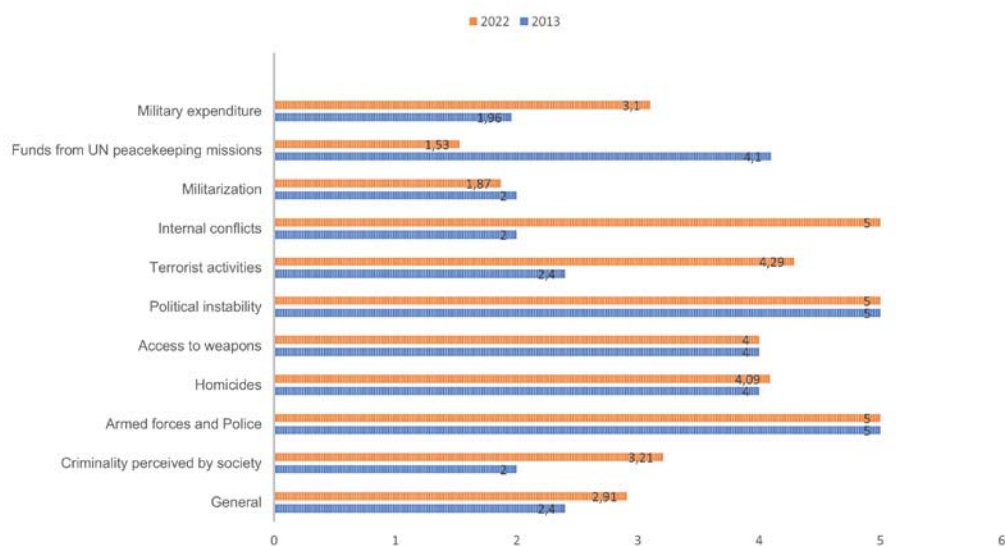


Figure III. Main indicators of the security situation. Source: prepared by author.

32 United Nations Committee on Contributions. How We Are Funded, source: Institute for Economics and Peace, as published on the website Vision of Humanity Mali. *Global Peace Index*. <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/maps/#/>

33 Referring to the perception of national security forces, as opposed to local militias, as a contributing factor to insecurity in the country, source: United Nations, *Crime Trends and the Operations of Criminal Justice Systems*, as published on the website Vision of Humanity Mali. *Global Peace Index* <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/maps/#/>

34 Qualitative assessment of political instability within the country, addressing the degree to which political institutions are sufficiently stable to meet the needs of its citizens, businesses and foreign investors, Political Instability, source: The Economist Intelligence Unit, as published on the website Vision of Humanity Mali. *Global Peace Index*. <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/maps/#/>

35 Vision of Humanity. *Global indexes*. See: Global indexes - Vision of Humanity

Corruption

Continuing with the analysis of aspects related to Mali's general stability, and bearing in mind that political instability has been rated with the highest score in the index presented in the previous section, it is worth looking at another highly relevant indicator: the state of corruption in the country.

According to the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), published annually by Transparency International³⁶, the level of corruption attributed to Mali has seen a rise in perceived levels of corruption in its public sector compared to reports issued in previous years. This index scores 180 countries and territories based on expert and business owner perceptions of their level of corruption³⁷ from 0 (high levels of perceived corruption) to 100 (very low levels of perceived corruption).

This index shows Mali's progressive fall before the crisis broke out, from 78th place in the world corruption ranking in 2003 to 118th place in 2011. In subsequent years the drop became more pronounced, bringing the country down to 127th place in 2013, before stabilisation was achieved and the peace accords were signed, resulting in a considerable improvement that brought the country up to 95th place in the table. However, political instability and the loss of confidence in the recovery of the state by the dubious Malian leadership led to a gradual decline from which the country has not recovered to date, despite international action. In the last report issued in 2021, Mali was ranked 136th, with the country with the highest levels of corruption among those assessed at 180th place in the table.

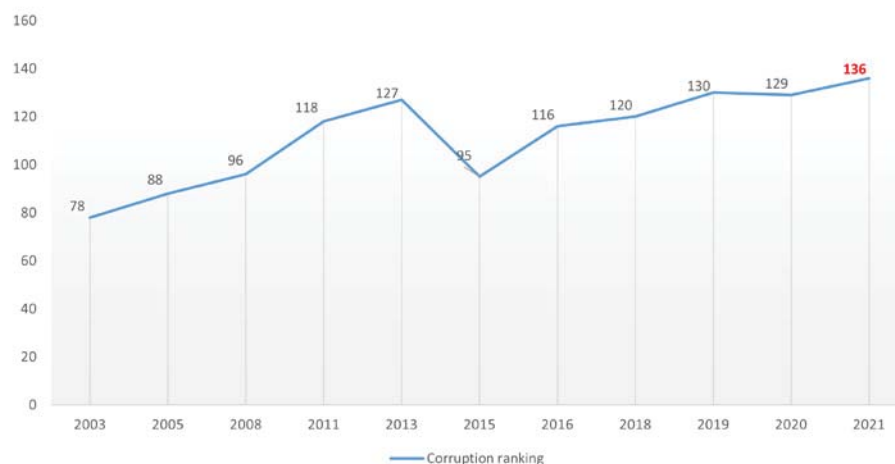


Figure IV. Corruption perception index in Mali³⁸. Source: Prepared by author³⁹.

³⁶ Transparency International (TI) is an international, non-governmental, non-partisan, non-profit organisation, which since its founding in 1993 has been dedicated to fighting corruption at national and international level by analysing and disseminating data and reports on the level of corruption in countries.

³⁷ Transparency International Spain. (2021). *CPI 2021*. Available at: Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)

³⁸ Column x: time starting from 2003 to 2021; column y: corruption ranking, rated from 1 to 180.

³⁹ Expansión. (2021). *datosmacro.com*. See: <https://datosmacro.expansion.com/estado/indice-percepcion-corrupcion/mali/>

These records cast a shadow over EUTM Mali's results and doubt on the effectiveness of the approach and actions employed to achieve the first and fourth of the mission's strategic objectives, respectively: 'contribute to the political stabilisation' and 'support the restoration of state control and the rule of law throughout Mali'.

Thus, the evolution of the mission throughout its various mandates is not yielding results that translate into direct or indirect improvements on public bodies or the government in the area of corruption. This also refers to the third EUTM-Mali objective: 'Contribute to the political stabilisation and improvement of the security situation in Mali through support for the implementation of the Algiers Peace Agreement'. These results show that a credible consistency in the fight against corruption and impunity, established as one of the principles included in the Agreement, is not being achieved.

Transparency of the state in general must be one of the foundations on which to build the pillars for the reconstruction of a competent armed forces capable of responding to various internal and external threats such as terrorism. Mistrust of state security resources promotes the need to resort to other non-state armed or terrorist groups, which are increasingly present throughout the territory as an alternative to inefficient government action. This decentralisation of security promotes instability, unregulated internal clashes and actions outside the principles of the rule of law, making it difficult for the state to recover. Government support and a public system that underpins the activities of its armies at all levels in a clear and transparent manner is therefore indispensable to restore public confidence in the state's armed forces.

Human rights abuses and violations at the hands of the FAMa

To verify the degree of achievement of the fourth objective: 'support the restoration of state control and the rule of law throughout Mali', the number of reported attacks and violations attributed to the Malian Armed Forces will be reviewed, as such actions are considered incompatible with the concept of the rule of law.

The precarious situation in which the FAMa find themselves, in many cases, has led to the development of conduct and behaviour that is far from the principles of respect for human rights promoted by EUTM-Mali. Determining factors such as infrastructure, manpower and economic resources in general stand out as the main shortcomings in the Malian ranks. In turn, the proliferation of internal clashes and ethnic strife, coupled with low morale among troops witnessing the unstoppable advance of armed groups and jihadist terrorism towards the centre of the country, have fuelled other forms of violence and the proliferation of attitudes among soldiers that are far from the code of conduct that any defender of order and the rule of law should display.

As a direct consequence, serious violations of applicable IHL have been reported during the course of the non-international armed conflict in Mali by FAMa components. These abuses and violations have been detected and reported by international bodies such as the United Nations through MINUSMA, human rights organisations such as

Amnesty International, and other experts appointed by the United Nations, such as its independent expert⁴⁰.

According to data provided in the UN Secretary-General's periodic report on the situation in Mali to the Security Council⁴¹, MINUSMA reported 34 cases of human rights violations and abuses in 2016. Among the cases, it highlights ill-treatment committed by the FAMA against 6 detainees and highlights, although without concrete data, that the national forces appeared to be responsible for an increasing number of cases that violated human rights.

In subsequent years the situation worsened, with 129 rapes and abuses reported in 2018, with FAMA as the protagonists in 18 cases, accounting for 14 per cent of the total. In 2021, this trend continues to rise, as reflected in the report presented in June⁴², where 422 cases of human rights violations and abuses were reported, 92 at the hands of the FAMA, or 26 per cent.

In the latest of these reports, submitted on 2 June 2022⁴³, MINUSMA documented 684 human rights violations and abuses, 218 more than in the previous reporting period. The FAMA were identified as the perpetrators in 173 cases, accounting for 25 per cent of the total and placing the national forces as the second force responsible for these actions, behind only radical and extremist groups.

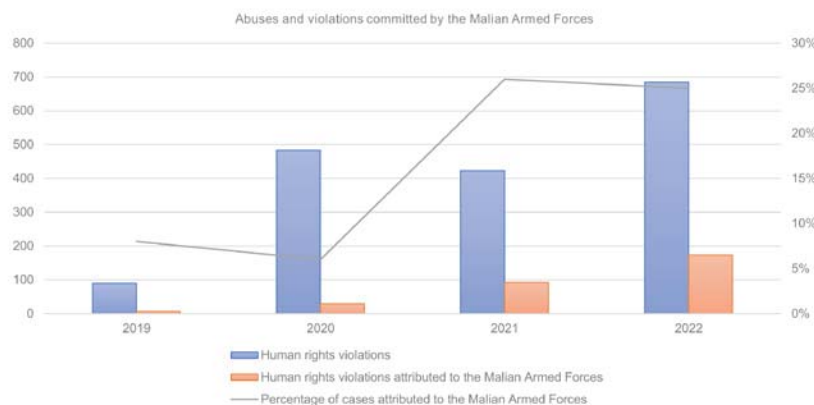


Figure V. Abuses and violations committed by FAMA in relation to total abuses and violations reported in Mali together with the evolution of the percentage it represents. Source: Prepared by author⁴⁴.

⁴⁰ Mr Alioune Tine, UN Independent Expert on the human rights situation in Mali since 1 May 2018. His main mission is to assist the Government of Mali in its actions to promote and protect human rights and in the implementation of the recommendations made in Council resolutions, as well as to issue reports reflecting the situation of the observance of Human Rights in the country, United Nations: <https://www.ohchr.org/es/special-procedures/ie-mali>

⁴¹ UN Secretary-General. (28 March 2016). Report S/2016/281, Situation in Mali.

⁴² UN Secretary-General. (1 June 2021). Report S/2021/519, Situation in Mali. Available at: <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/es/content/informes-del-secretario-general-al-consejo-de-seguridad-en-2021>

⁴³ UN Secretary-General. (2 June 2022). Report S/2022/446, Situation in Mali. Available at: [N2236097.pdf](https://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2022/2206097.pdf) (un.org)

⁴⁴ United Nations Security Council. (2022). Reports of the UN Secretary-General. Available at: [Secretary-General reports to the Security Council in 2022](https://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2022/2206097.pdf) | UN SECURITY COUNCIL (un.org)

Despite EUTM-Mali's actions in terms of training and advice, it can be argued that the overall human rights preparedness and knowledge of the FAMA has not been sufficient or at least effective in contributing to the reduction of violations committed by its components.

Another factor contributing to this rise in the percentage of violations or abuses committed by state forces can be attributed to the ineffectiveness of the country's judicial system, resulting from a state with no established public bodies working on the basis of the principles of the rule of law. A fundamental principle in the definition of rule of law is observance of laws, to which all persons, entities and institutions are subject, and specifies that there must be a system that ensures respect for the law, equality before the law and accountability⁴⁵.

According to data provided by the UN independent expert, little progress has been made at judicial level to re-establish the rule of law in Mali. Most perpetrators of human rights and international humanitarian law abuses and violations remain unpunished. This impunity observed by the independent expert is due to insufficient budget allocation, limited resource mobilisation, lack of staff, lack of security guarantees for holding acts, and the sometimes questionable independence of the judiciary.

Impunity, as defined by the United Nations, can be understood as 'the impossibility, de jure or de facto, of bringing the perpetrators of violations to account—whether in criminal, civil, administrative or disciplinary proceedings—since they are not subject to any inquiry that might lead to their being accused'⁴⁶. Consequently, this lack of criminal responsibility is a breach of states' obligations to investigate, prosecute and punish. The investigation of these violations leads to the subsequent adoption of appropriate measures against the perpetrators so that those suspected of criminal responsibility are prosecuted, tried and sentenced to appropriate penalties, thus respecting the premises of the aforementioned concept of the rule of law⁴⁷.

The fight against impunity is therefore essential if the Malian people are to regain confidence in their institutions and their armed forces; it represents one of the indispensable pillars to ensure the establishment of a credible rule of law on which to rebuild all public state bodies, including the defence sector. However, according to the independent expert, several serious violations attributed to the Malian Defence and Security Forces remain unpunished to date, including, given their nature, extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions of civilians. This impunity goes directly against the general commitments established by the Algiers Agreement, which reaffirms there

45 UN Secretary-General. (3 August 2004). *The rule of law and transitional justice in conflict and post-conflict societies*. Available at: <https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/es/what-is-the-rule-of-law/>

46 United Nations Commission on Human Rights. (8 February 2005). *Updated Set of Principles for the protection and promotion of human rights through action to combat impunity*. Available at: <http://www.derechos.org/nizkor/impu/impuppos.html>

47 United Nations Commission on Human Rights. (8 February 2005). *Updated Set of Principles for the protection and promotion of human rights through action to combat impunity*.

be ‘no amnesty for the authors of war crimes, crimes against humanity and serious violations of human rights’⁴⁸.

As far as this study is concerned, FAMA impunity relates directly to the third EUTM-Mali objective: ‘contribute to the political stabilisation and improvement of the security situation in Mali through support for the implementation of the Algiers Peace Agreement’⁷⁸. It is thus clear that no improvement is being achieved in the fight against impunity as a result of the actions undertaken by EUTM-Mali, whose advisory and training work in this area is not producing satisfactory results.

As far as EUTM-Mali is concerned, action on the judicial system is limited. This important factor with such a strong impact on impunity affecting state bodies cannot be improved without the support and involvement of other national organisations and institutions with greater competence in this field. This leaves a clear gap in the European training mission’s ability to contribute to the restoration of the rule of law in terms of accountability. It can therefore be argued that the fourth objective of the fifth mandate, ‘support the restoration of state control and the rule of law throughout Mali’⁷⁸, will be difficult to achieve in this way.

Terrorism situation

Terrorism in Mali has consolidate its position as a major contributor to the destabilisation of the country and has exposed the state’s failure to effectively provide security for its citizens. Studying the impact of this scourge will make it possible to determine the extent to which the fifth and last of the EUTM-Mali objectives has been achieved: ‘support G5 Sahel, through the consolidation and improvement of the operational capabilities of its Joint Force, strengthening regional cooperation to address common security threats, especially terrorism’⁷⁸, as well as reemphasising the first of these objectives: ‘to contribute to the improvement of the capabilities of the Malian Armed Forces under the control of the political authorities’⁴⁹.

Despite one-off tactical successes by international forces and governments in the Sahel, data on terrorism in the country since the mission began in 2013 have registered the highest levels of terrorist activity on record, with an overall upward trend continuing throughout (Summers, 2022). These isolated achievements include the selective elimination of important jihadist leaders, including Abdelmalek Droukdel (leader of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb), Abu Walid al-Saharoui (leader of the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, IS-GS) and Abu al-Maghrebi (religious leader of JNIM) (Fuente Cobo, 2022: 8-9).

48 United Nations. (2015). *Agreement for peace and reconciliation in Mali resulting from the Algiers process*, Section I: Principles, commitments and foundations for a sustainable resolution of the conflict, Article 1.

49 Defence Staff. (n.d.). *Deployments and Operations. EUTM MALI, EU’s military mission in Mali, EUTM-Mali mission.*

If we compare data on the number of deaths and the total number of incidents classified as terrorist since the mission began, figures are not encouraging as there has been a clear increase in all the factors mentioned (see Figure VI). The most significant data is the rise in the number of casualties recorded (574 in 2021 compared to 42 in 2013), as well as the number of incidents reported (333 in 2021 compared to 31 in 2013) showing how the level of violence used in attacks has escalated, as well as the frequency⁵⁰.

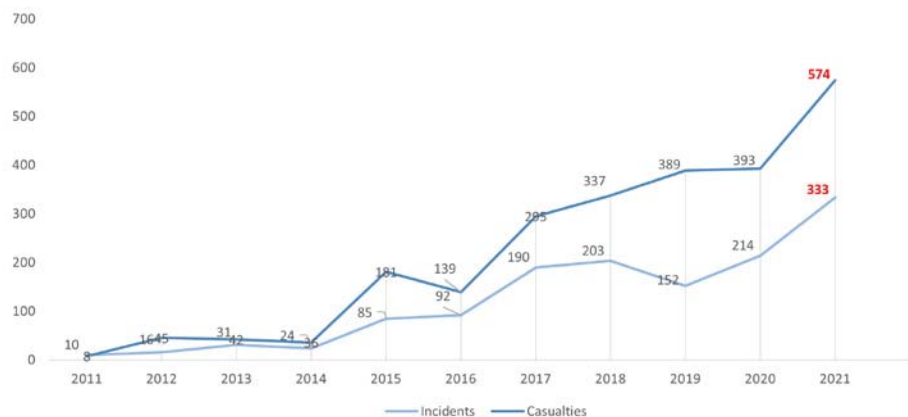


Figure VI. Comparison of the evolution of the number of attacks and victims in the period between 2011 and 2021.
Source: Prepared by author⁵¹.

The above data are part of the *Global Terrorism Index* (GTI), which is based on four indicators: deaths, incidents, injuries and property damage caused by actions considered to be terrorist in origin. The GTI is the result of a comprehensive study by The Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP)⁵² that analyses the impact of terrorism in 163 countries, covering 99.7 per cent of the world's population. The IEP uses data from *Terrorism Tracker* and other sources to assign a composite value to countries based on the impact of terrorism in each country. An ordinal ranking is then extracted to compare the values obtained on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 indicates that there is no impact of terrorism and 10 represents the highest value attributable to terrorism for this indicator⁵³.

⁵⁰ Vision of Humanity. (2021). Global Terrorist Index. Available at: <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/maps/global-terrorism-index/#/>

⁵¹ Vision of Humanity. (2021). Global indexes. Available at: [Global indexes - Vision of Humanity: Global Terrorism Index | Countries most impacted by terrorism \(visionofhumanity.org\)](https://www.visionofhumanity.org/global-indexes/)

⁵² The IEP is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit think tank dedicated to shifting the world's focus to peace as a positive, achievable, and tangible measure of human well-being and progress. It develops conceptual frameworks to define peacefulness; metrics for measuring peace; and uncovering the relationships between factors such as business, peace and prosperity. Institute for Economics & Peace. *Global Terrorism Index 2022. Measuring the impact of terrorism*. <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/GTI-2022-web-09062022.pdf>

⁵³ Vision of Humanity. (2021). Global Terrorist Index. <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/maps/global-terrorism-index/#/>

According to the GTI, Mali was ranked 19th out of 163 countries in 2013, but a sharp increase in the number of attacks as well as a rising number of victims, pushed the country to number 7 in the 2021 ranking, indicating that terrorism is clearly worse in the country. With regard to the most recent data, collected up to June 2022, the upward trend continues, with the worst figures recorded in recent years in the country being reported for the first half of 2022.

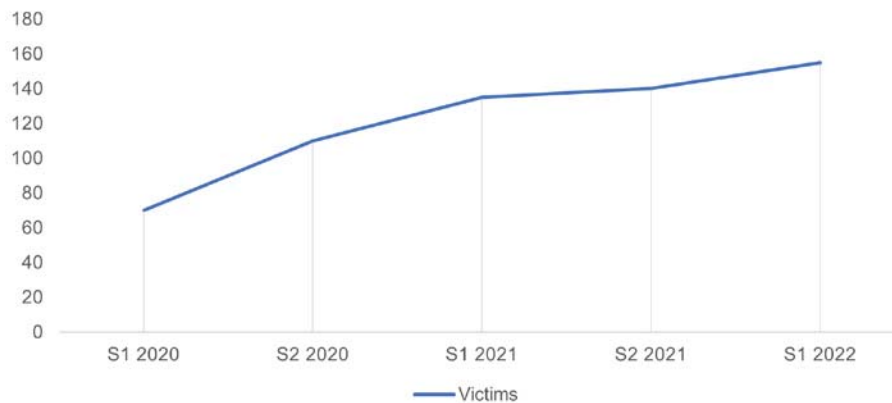


Figure VII. Six-monthly trend in fatalities. Attacks recorded from January 2020 to June 2022⁵⁴.
Source: Prepared by author⁵⁵.

A review of the evolution of the incidence of terrorism in the country shows that, despite international efforts, the situation has worsened since the beginning of EUTM-Mali. Heterogeneity and internal conflict in Malian society has provided an important breeding ground for the more radical branches of Islamism. These extremist groups have seen their opportunity to spread their ideas amidst the desperation of a population determined to promote change in power structures through popular uprisings and all manner of violent actions (Expósito Guisado, 2020).

On the other hand, the Malian government's ability to control its own territory is becoming less effective as it moves up into the inhospitable northern territories, where territorial control is supplanted by the various armed groups. Jihadist groups, located mainly in the north and interior of the country, have exerted greater influence over the nomadic populations that operate in these areas, facilitating their expansion and making it more difficult for national forces to control and monitor them.

Based on the data provided, it has not been possible to mitigate the situation in terms of terrorism control. However, with the training and capacity building offered by EUTM, the EU has contributed by providing the necessary technical and logistical support to help improve the capabilities of FAMa components, which has a direct impact on transforming the security system, although not with the desired results.

⁵⁴ x-axis: time demarcation by semesters; y-axis: number of fatalities.

⁵⁵ SUMMERS, Observatorio Internacional de Estudios sobre Terrorismo, *Actividad yihadista en el Magreb y el Sahel*, junio 2022. (2022). Available at: <https://observatorioterrorismo.com/analisis/actividad-yihadista-en-el-magreb-y-el-sahel-junio-2022/>

Finally, we will review the second objective set for EUTM-Mali, not specifically reviewed with these indicators, but which will be analysed based on results obtained after reviewing the indicators: ‘consolidate the improvements achieved since 2013’⁵⁶.

In 2013, Operation *Serval* brought stability back to northern Mali and regained government control over territories seized by the MNLA-led insurgency and some terrorist groups. The number of attacks and casualties thus decreased between 2013 and 2014, as can be seen in Figure VI, despite a marked increase from 2014 onwards.

In terms of respect for the rule of law in the country, looking at the data reported by the CPI reflected in graph four, the same trend is observed, falling in 2013 after the international intervention to historic lows since 2008 and then regaining its upward trend, even increasing progressively to date.

Likewise, a similar situation is observed with regard to economic growth in the country, measured through the variation in GDP, whose value begins to recover after the crisis until 2014, at which point records begin a continued overall decline until reaching historic lows in 2020, as can be seen in graph two.

It can therefore be stated that the improvements set in 2013, the target set by the EUTM, have not been maintained, but rather a one-off stabilisation followed by a progressive deterioration until the present day.

Assessing the impact of EUTM Mali on the crisis

A review of the objectives set after analysing data provided allows us to answer the question that opened this analysis: Have the actions undertaken by the European Union through the EUTM-Mali mission been effective in bringing about defence sector reform that contributes to the restructuring of governance and stability in the country?

The evolution of EUTM mandates over the years reflects a certain adaptability, showing flexibility but slowness in response. Despite the significant modifications implemented, they take too long to become effective, and changes have to wait for the renewal and ratification of the next mandate (after an average of 2 years) to be implemented. All this sums up the European response as adequately adaptive, albeit unresponsive and limited.

The first two objectives set for this paper have also been successfully addressed. The first sought to understand the impact of EUTM-Mali on the development of FAMa. We reviewed data provided by the indicators on the evolution of the FAMa in terms of their number of troops and defence spending in relation to GDP; and also the

⁵⁶ Defence Staff. (n.d.). Deployments and Operations. EUTM MALI, EU’s military mission in Mali, EUTM-Mali mission.

number of abuses and human rights violations committed by the FAMA. These two indicators intended to show the general state of both the human resources available and the economic means allocated to defence, as well as the degree of compliance with the basic rules of conduct that characterise the rule of law, especially the observance of human rights and compliance with IHL.

In the case of the FAMA, since the mission began, both the number of troops and investment in defence have followed an upward trend, signifying a greater involvement of the Malian government in allocating budgets and increasing the number of personnel, both important shortcomings detected before the start of the EUTM. However, this increase has not meant a significant increase in military presence in neglected areas of the north, where terrorist groups continue to swell their ranks.

With regard to increased spending, the problem of underinvestment in other sectors of Malian society remains. Prioritising state budgets to the defence sector directly affects the confidence of citizens, who perceive that their government's military spending is rising despite declining GDP growth, reducing the possibility of reforms in sectors and social infrastructures that are increasingly in need.

With regard to the observance of human rights, the significant shortcomings identified by the UN experts have made this area one of the cornerstones of the training programmes proposed since the beginning of the mission. However, the FAMA is operating in a precarious situation, marked by a shortage of both human and material resources to which the EUTM cannot contribute, as it is outside the scope of both its mandates and the status of forces, where there is no mention of the possibility of contributing in this area. Malian soldiers are therefore sometimes forced to resort to desperate, disproportionate and unjust measures as their only weapon against terrorism and insubordination. Moreover, the difficulty and lack of training and means to detect, identify and deal with an asymmetric threat that finds shelter among the civilian population encourages indiscriminate actions against the civilian population.

We must also not forget that the country's ethnic problem has an undeniable influence on the violent actions carried out by its military, which in many cases are reinforced by existing ethnic prejudices against certain minorities.

The numbers of abuses at the hands of the FAMA recorded are alarming, showing a clear increase in interventions by state forces against a civilian population that is increasingly distrustful of government action. As a direct consequence, many citizens are forced to seek security providers from other non-governmental armed groups, in many cases jihadist.

Continuing with the second of the proposed specific objectives, an analysis of the results of the intervention by reviewing selected indicators, the root cause of the Malian crisis can be established. This is based on three pillars: the ethnic identity problem caused by the current border lines; the political and governance situation in the country; and the spread of jihadist terrorism.

By implementing its integrated crisis management strategy, the European Union has opted for a combined strategy with two courses of action: civilian through EUCAP Sahel Mali and military with EUTM-Mali. This is a sound approach to tackling a deep and multi-sectoral crisis such as the case of Mali. However, by focusing the response on the military aspect, the EUTM has proved to be markedly insufficient and limited in addressing real security system reform in a state of Mali's characteristics.

Firstly, the origin of the conflict was the crisis initiated in the north by the Tuareg ethnic group who, separated by the demarcation of borders as a result of the division of Africa by the West, demanded autonomy and recognition of their identity. The political context in which the conflict unfolded is directly linked to the real problem that hampers the development of the African country, its government. Marred by mistrust and insecurity and its manifest inability to manage the Azawad crisis, the Tuareg advance fuelled revolts in the upper echelons of the Malian defence sector, which would initiate a series of coups d'état that would destroy the credibility of successive governments in the eyes of their citizens and the international community.

The weak political system has resulted in a continued disregard for the basic principles that govern the rule of law. Among the most outstanding violations are the impartiality of justice, the observance of human rights —as corroborated by the data provided by the violations committed by state armed forces personnel—, impunity for crimes and corruption among institutions.

According to records, all of these factors have experienced no observable improvements since the training mission began, which precisely included 'contribute to the political stabilisation' in its strategic objectives, when there have been five coups or coup attempts in the country; 'support for the implementation of the Algiers Peace Agreement' when the main fundamental principles established by the agreement have not been respected; or 'support the restoration of state control and the rule of law throughout Mali' when corruption rates continue to rise and human rights violations continue to increase.

The proliferation of jihadism is the third pillar sustaining the crisis in Mali. Increased intensity and frequency of attacks, increasingly focused on areas of interest to Bamako, and the mimicry of its members, who are difficult to identify among the civilian population, maintain the growing pressure on a government that lacks credibility and the means to deal with the threat. Moreover, scarce resources are being spent on curbing this scourge, without addressing other important issues, such as restoring the rule of law and getting back on the democratic path.

It is noteworthy that Mali's ruling military junta, composed of high-ranking military officers, focuses its efforts on defence issues as if it were exclusively a war, emphasising the strategic factor over other aspects that concern the state. This has been evidenced by data on both the increase in the number of FAMA troops (a rise of 160 per cent since the beginning of the crisis) and the percentage of GDP allocated to military spending by the Malian government, which, despite the negative growth of its GDP, has continued to increase every year.

On the other hand, progress in justice, considered by the United Nations as one of the fundamental factors in recovering and guaranteeing the rule of law, has been scarce. This fact is confirmed by the percentage of violations committed by the FAMA, which has risen from 8 percent to 25 percent in recent years, and which moreover, according to the same sources, remain mostly unpunished.

In short, without a government that supports and drives the development of all sectors of society in the same direction, it will lack guidance and unity of decision and action, which will eventually, due to the tension applied in opposite directions, end up disintegrating it. Mali has an urgent need to restore the people's confidence in their leadership, their identity and their unity. A guide that is in turn a legitimate guarantor of security, preventing the proliferation of violent and uncontrolled alternatives that emerge outside the principles of the rule of law. This guide must also be governed by the acceptance of the differences that make up Malian society, representing them and looking after their real interests.

All in all, it can be said that EUTM-Mali has failed to bring about improvements in Mali's security system, largely due to the absence of a government that supports effective reform, observance of the fundamental principles of the rule of law, the development of its military infrastructure, and the training of its soldiers. The European approach, however, is undoubtedly correct as the education and training of the military must be the basis for ensuring the effective grassroots development of the military based on the principles established and learned in the training academies that will then govern the behaviour of companies in their operations.

Future strategies for EU action in Mali

Finally, in light of the results obtained, the third and last objective is to identify possible alternative courses of action in which the EU could invest its efforts more effectively in order to contribute to the reform of the Malian defence system and the country's democratic transition.

Several courses of action have been identified, depending on the causes of the conflict, which should take different directions in order to unblock the deadlocked Malian crisis. In the case of the Azawad crisis, the problem must be tackled as set out in the Algiers agreements, through the real and effective recognition of this region with its characteristics and differences, but within Mali's territory. The central government's presence in these areas must be much clearer, showing its support and above all its commitment to the security of its citizens. Recruitment and the creation of relevant bases in the north would help to show this commitment and allow the people to defend their territories from within government ranks, thus increasing people's commitment and confidence in state support and strengthening the central government.

As already highlighted, the training of Malian troops is considered a sound strategy, although the possibility of initiating other types of actions that go beyond training

and have a direct impact on improving the living conditions of the soldiers should be considered. They would also facilitate the acquisition of infrastructure and means to conduct combat actions with greater guarantees of success. This shortage of resources identified in the Malian ranks could be significantly mitigated if the European contribution were not limited to training, but were also part of the intervention, supporting Malian actions with personnel and material.

In coordination with EUCAP Sahel Mali, the problem of impunity enjoyed by the FAMA must be further monitored as any training and reform of defence structures is insufficient without ensuring exemplary and reliable compliance with the criminal code by legitimate defenders of state security.

The solution to the governance crisis is the most difficult goal to achieve as it implies a commitment by the current military junta to give way to a democratic system, losing the power it holds. This problem, from a security perspective, can only be addressed by strengthening security arrangements which, when the time comes, will allow free and secure elections to be held. Beyond this, comprehensive reform of the political system will have to be addressed from other sectors in a coordinated and joint manner, between civilian and military actors. All this in collaboration with both Mali's political representatives and the international community, especially states with greater regional influence, such as ECOWAS members.

In short, Europe must redefine its strategy, strengthening actions that tackle the root cause of the conflict from a local approach, involving the Malian people more in each of the areas of intervention and ensuring the representation of minorities in government institutions and security bodies. In the same way, reforms in all social sectors must be undertaken by fostering the support and trust of citizens as a whole in their institutions.

Bibliography

- Cifuentes, A. N. (2021). *Mali, un nuevo golpe de Estado: entre ausencia de soberanía nacional y competencias por el poder*. Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos. 126/2020,6-8.
- Díaz Alcalde, J. (2013). ¿Qué es la CEDEAO? fortalezas y debilidades para enfrentar el conflicto de Mali. Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos. 29/2015, 1-2.
- Expósito Guisado, J. (24 de febrero de 2020). *Mali, epicentro del terrorismo yihadista en el Sahel*. Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos, 13/2020, 6: https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2020/DIEEEEO13_2020JOSEXP_Mali.pdf
- Fuente Cobo, I. (30 de marzo de 2022). *El Sahel después de la Operación Barkhane. Situación de seguridad y perspectivas de futuro*. Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos. https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2022/DIEEEA23_2022_IGNFUE_Sahel.pdf

- Gil-Casares Satrústegui, R.; Salazar de Guerra, A. & Ferrer Ávila, J. (2015). *Monografías 144. África*. Ministerio de Defensa. Escuela de Altos Estudios de la Defensa. <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/Articulo?codigo=6661252>
- Martín-Peñato Moraleda, M. (14 de agosto de 2013). *El pueblo tuareg y su papel en el conflicto de Mali*. Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos (IEEE), 75/2013, 2: https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2013/DIEEEEO75-2013_Tuaregs_MMoraleda.pdf
- Rubin, B. R. (2005). *Consolidación de la paz, consolidación del estado: construir soberanía para la seguridad*. Madrid, Centro de Investigación para la Paz (CIP-FUHEM), pp. 7-8.
- Summers, M. (10 de agosto de 2022). *Actividad yihadista en el Magreb y el Sahel Occidental en julio 2022*. Observatorio Internacional de Estudios sobre Terrorismo. <https://observatorioterrorismo.com/analisis/actividad-yihadista-en-el-magreb-y-el-sahel-julio-2022/>
- (2022). *Actividad yihadista en el Magreb y el Sahel*, abril 2022. Observatorio Internacional de Estudios sobre Terrorismo. <https://observatorioterrorismo.com/analisis/actividad-yihadista-en-el-magreb-y-el-sahel-abril-2021/>

Article received: 19 October 2022.

Article accepted: 29 November 2022.
