

The EU Strategy for the Sahel: state of play One year later, disillusion and fears for the future in Mali

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Abstract

18 months after the adoption of the EU Strategy for Development and Security, the EU's implication in the security issues that currently plague the Sahelian region is still confronted to a wide range of challenges and hindrances. In this piece of opinion, the author seeks to provide an assessment of the Strategy and focuses on three of its limitations: first, the lack of timeliness of its reaction. Secondly, the mismatch between ambitions and means for serving these aims. Thirdly, the discrepancy between the EU actions and the expectations and needs of the Sahel countries. Eventually, the paper concludes by providing clues on where the author believes the European security policy in the Sahel should head, and how.

Key words: EEAS, Sahel, prevention measures, CSDP missions, EDF, conflict analysis, institutional memory.

Résumé

Un état des lieux de la Stratégie européenne pour le Sahel : Désillusions et craintes pour l'avenir du Mali

18 mois après l'adoption de la Stratégie européenne pour le développement et la sécurité au Sahel, l'action de l'UE dans la région se heurte toujours à un large spectre de défis. Cette note tente de dresser un bilan de la Stratégie en s'arrêtant sur trois difficultés en particulier: le manque de réactivité de l'UE, le fossé existant entre les ambitions et les moyens mis au service de ces ambitions ainsi qu'entre les actions de l'UE et les attentes et besoins des pays sahéliens. Cette note termine en émettant quelques recommandations de l'auteur sur l'avenir du Mali.

Mots clés: SEAE, Sahel, mesures de prévention, mission PSDC, FED, analyse des conflits, mémoire institutionnelle.

Quote:

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Introduction

The Tuareg rebellion in Northern Mali in January 2012 and the Coup against President Amadou Toumani Touré (ATT) two months later have managed to ruin the apparent stability of this country, which seemed to be the good performer of the region. For some years, Mali has been contaminated by corruption up to the highest levels of government and its territory has been crossed by all kinds of traffickings (weapons, drugs, cigarettes, human beings). Mali is also seen by its neighbors as the weakest link in the region in the fight against terrorism: President ATT's regime is indeed suspected of having contracted a "gentleman agreement" with the main terrorist group in the region, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. According to such suspected agreement, AQIM would not commit any attacks within Mali territory and, in return, Bamako's authorities would turn a blind eye on their presence in the country's territory. But as soon as the regime collapsed AQIM and its acolytes -- Ansar Eddine and Mujao --, subdued the north of the country. Brussels was caught "short" ...and yet it was considering the Sahel region for a while...

This note discusses the long inadequate assistance of the EU in the Sahel, and focusses more precisely on the 2011 European Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel. Its objectives are to simultaneously tackle security and development issues at a regional level, with an initial emphasis on three countries: Mali, Niger and Mauritania. In order to better understand the origin of this inadequate aid, this note stretches the analysis back to the problem of institutional coherence within the EU which persists even after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. Then the strategy will be assessed with regards to its accomplishments 18 months after its release. Three issues will be given particular consideration: the slowness of the EU reaction; the mismatch between ambitions and means for serving these aims; and the discrepancy between the EU actions and the expectations of the Sahel countries. Lastly, the note provides some comments and recommendations on Mali's future.

1. A lack of coherence¹ behind a lost opportunity in Sahel

First of all, the EU prevarications and slowness to act in the field of foreign policy draw their roots in institutional obstacles that linger even after the adoption and ratification of the Lisbon Treaty.

1.1. Before the Lisbon Treaty

For ten years, the EU has been talking about security and development in its policies guidelines (cf. the EU Security Strategy in 2003: "Security is a precondition to development") but has been facing difficulties to tackle these issues simultaneously. The main explanation for this is the division of competences between the Commission and the EU Council: before the Lisbon Treaty, the Commission was in charge of managing development cooperation and was given quite a free hand in handling this competence. The Council, which deals at an inter-governmental level, was in charge of managing the common foreign and security policy (CFSP) and the common security and defense policy (CSDP). Yet, development cooperation and CFSP/CSDP were sometimes overlapping, in fields such as the promotion of good governance, rule of law or conflict prevention, i.e. in development issues. Development cooperation management as a Community competence

1. For a more detailed approach to this point, see SANTOPINTO, Federico. Le Traité de Lisbonne et l'action extérieure de l'Union européenne. *Rapport du GRIP n°5*, 2007.

was a strongly integrated policy whereas the CFSP/CSDP was far less integrated, due to the member states' firm stance on their respective sovereignty. Security aspects (including CSDP missions), where unanimity was difficult to reach, were neglected and delegated to Member States within the framework of their bilateral agreements with third countries. Development aspects were therefore privileged by the EU. Furthermore, competences were partitioned within the Commission and the Council themselves. This complex organization generated overlaps or put a brake in the decision-making process and in the measures undertaken. This could only have substantial and lasting impacts on the efficiency and coherence of European actions.

1.2. The Lisbon Treaty and the creation of the European External Action Service

The EU has become such a strong supporter of the "Comprehensive Approach" concept – which allows for actions in various areas, from financial and economic to security and military – that the European Lisbon Treaty intended to reform the European foreign policy in order for the EU to act as a global actor. This reform materialized through the creation of the European External Action Service which was supposed to resolve the institutional problems mentioned above and provide more coherence in EU external actions. How?

One of the new elements was to appoint a High Representative (HR) of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy who would gather some of the competences of both the Commission and the Council. Second was the merging of joint staff members from the Council, the Commission and the Member States' diplomatic services within the newly created structure, the European External Action Service (EEAS). The purpose was to facilitate interactions between the EU and the Member States and especially to try and develop a common diplomacy. Although it is obvious that the establishment of the EEAS would take several years, problems rapidly emerged with the status of the High Representative:

First, Lady Ashton is not free of her actions because of the existence of other commissioners, in particular for humanitarian aid and development, whose actions are under the supervision of the President of the Commission and whose fields of actions were supposed to be included in the foreign policy. Despite the merger between the Directorate General for Development and Relations with ACP States and EuropaAid Cooperation Office, the division of tasks between the EEAS and these commissioners is not clear and, therefore, can create confusion or struggles for prerogatives. In addition, between the HR and the President of the Council, one could observe competition rather than collaboration.

Secondly, Lady Ashton is at the same time member of the Commission and of the Council. This is likely to put her in a very uncomfortable position as High Representative. As a member of the Commission, she is "member of the executive"; as a Council member, she is member of a "deliberative body"². As a UK national within the Council, she is might be inclined to defend UK interests and position. As a Commission member and the High Representative for Foreign Policy, she is supposed to represent the EU position and interests.

Another purpose of the EEAS creation was to facilitate dialogue with the Member States in order to act more rapidly and effectively. But it seems that some information do not reach interlocutors in the Member States and within the service³. Adding to that, external communication is quite

2. GROS-VERHEYDE, Nicolas. Haut représentant : un vice de conception à corriger. *Bruxelles2*. 27 décembre 2011

3. GROS-VERHEYDE, Nicolas. Le service diplomatique : un an mais pas encore toutes ses dents. *Bruxelles2*. 26 décembre 2011.

neglected as well: indeed, if we consider the example of the Strategy for the Sahel⁴, little public communication is made about the concrete actions undertaken by the EEAS and the progress made⁵.

1.3. The lost opportunity in the Sahel

The strategic concept for the resolution of the Malian crises which was adopted on October 24th, 2012 by the African Union Council for Peace and Security⁶, points out that the United Nations would coordinate the initiatives of the AU, Ecowas, the United Nations and the EU⁷. Such coordination is quite positive: it will avoid overlaps and useless efforts. But let's underline that the EU has been present for decades in the region through its Member States, and for this reason has experts (historians, sociologists, anthropologists, diplomats, politicians etc.) at its disposal that may be more familiar with the region than UN staff⁸. And now the EU seems to be sidetracked by other international actors in the absence of EU political will. The EU lost the opportunity of positioning itself as a leader in conflict prevention in regions that are close geographically, historically and culturally.

What should we remember?

The answer to the question "Has the Lisbon Treaty been a successful test for the EU as a leader on the international stage and as a global actor?", should be moderate. We are only at the beginning of the functioning of the EEAS, in other words at the beginning of the coordination process: therefore, a lack of political impetus from the HR could be observed along with an overlap of competences and a lack of internal communication and coordination. This is coupled with the slowness intrinsic to the EU heavy policy-making machinery. With time and practice as well as with the recruitment of specific staff for the EEAS, a common diplomacy and a habit to work horizontally and, therefore in a transversal way, should emerge.

2. Assessment of the Strategy : emergency and disconnection in action

Let us now focus on the European Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel. When it was published, the Strategy seemed promising and the perspective was greeted by all: the EU recognizes the inextricable links between security and development and sets this principle in motion in the Sahel region⁹. By committing to act simultaneously in both areas, the EU endorses the "comprehensive approach" concept, which requires greater coherence and coordination of his

4. European External Action Service. Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel.

http://www.eeas.europa.eu/africa/docs/sahel_strategy_en.pdf

5. Concerning the Strategy for the Sahel more specifically, it was planned that a roadmap would progressively be completed and distributed to the EU Member States to keep them informed and updated on the Strategy. Interview with the author. Autumn 2011. The information process towards the Member States had been put in place indeed. Interview with the author. Autumn 2012. Communication strategy for broader public would be an asset to assert the diplomatic image and actions of the EU.

6. Concept stratégique pour la résolution des crises que connaît le Mali.

<http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/cps.concept.strategique.pdf>

7. The Organization of the Islamic Cooperation and the International Organization of La Francophonie will also be some partners whose actions would be coordinated by the UN.

8. The UN African Department is not efficient and "in favour of the status quo", "to do nothing, and especially not actions which could have any incidence on the ground". Interview with the author. Autumn 2012.

9. In other words, the Strategy implements a principle which had been adopted in the EU Strategy for Security in 2003.

intervention tools (financial, economic, civil and military). Finally, the EU abandons the approach of bilateral relations with third States and prefers a regional approach, which seems all the more relevant to the Sahel that this region faces transnational issues. The whole strategy aims at preventing the deterioration of the political, security and humanitarian situation in the countries of the region. In this part, we will try to bring some elements of response regarding these goals focusing primarily on the prevention aspect, the means deployed by the EU and the implementation of the Strategy.

2.1. Emergency measures instead of prevention measures

The EU orients its external actions in third countries to prevent conflict and promote political stability. Unfortunately, quite often, we observe that EU actions arrive once the crisis broke out and, as such, are emergency measures, more able to dress wounds in a palliative way than to offer deep and lasting healing.

2.1.1. More than three years for a Strategy

From 2008 on, some EU Member States have been worrying about -and asking for an action in- the Sahel region. It took three years to reach an agreement on a European document which planned a coherent strategy aimed at completing development actions with security components. As soon as 2008, the French Presidency of the EU, shared the concerns it expressed in its White Book on Security and Defence about the European Foreign Policy agenda: the Sahel States' vulnerabilities and weaknesses to fight against rebellions, trafficking, illegal immigration and terrorist actions, represent threats for the Sahel region first, and for the old continent secondly. The Union for the Mediterranean Project, badly perceived because of its hidden agenda, failed to mobilize the EU on the region's stakes. If, at the front stage, the topic was no more a "hot" one, at the back, French and Spanish diplomats especially were still demanding an action at the Sahel region level. In this region, food security of local populations and physical security of the Western nationals continued to deteriorate, trafficking networks to take root and the number of hostages to grow until the Foreign Affairs Council finally gave its approval in October 2010 to develop a strategy towards Mauritania, Mali and Niger, after several exploratory missions in these countries. Scheduled for early 2011, the publication of the Strategy was delayed until September 2011, particularly because of the Libyan crisis and its immediate consequences for the area.

2.1.2. The lost opportunity to prevent the destabilization of the Sahel after the Libyan crisis

No to mention the Eufor Libya aborted mission, the delayed reaction of the EU has also been observed in the absence of consideration given to the fall-outs and implications of post- Western intervention against Kadhafi regime. With the turmoil in North Africa in 2011 and the fall of the Kadhafi regime, fears emerged about a spread of instability in the region. Indeed, waves of refugees and former fighters, proliferation of weapons, absence of strong borders monitoring could provoke pressure on resources and environment and raise insecurity¹⁰. In addition, delegations and embassies, nationals, businessmen, Intelligence Services and Special Forces from the EU or from some of its Member States have been present in the zone for decades and could have served as "early warning system".

10. See ROUPPERT, Bérangère. Rapport de la mission des Nations unies au Sahel : vers une centralisation des actions de lutte contre la déstabilisation de la région. Brève, 3 February, 2012. <http://www.grip.org/fr/node/576> See also SADATCHY, Priscilla. Le retour des Touareg au Mali et au Niger : quels enjeux ? *Les Nouvelles du GRIP* n°4, 2011.

While the publication of the Strategy for the Sahel was suspended (March-September 2011) because of the upheaval in the region, an adjustment to extend geographically the Strategy and to strengthen its security aspects would have been welcomed. What was the reaction of the EU at that time? It was to release emergency funds for humanitarian assistance. However, considering the risks listed above, it is a pity that no consideration in close cooperation with Libya's neighbors, was given to prepare the post-conflict period and to think about the consequences of the intervention and the collapse of the regime for the whole region. More specifically, a CSDP mission to control borders and monitor this flow of people (fighters, refugees and weapons) could have been planned and deployed –actually this mission is still waiting for an implementation.

2.1.3. A CSDP mission to strengthen the Sahel States' armed forces: a bit late...

When the Strategy was published in September 2011, the topic of a Common and Security Defence Policy (CSDP) mission in the Sahel had actually been in discussion for two years. Soon after the adoption of the Strategy, a CSDP mission was proposed but the lack of initiatives from the EEAS leadership as well as the absence of unanimity of the 27 Member States pushed aside the discussions on a CSDP mission. The rise of European hostage takings and the deterioration of the security situation pleaded for a discussion on a CSDP mission in December 2011. At that time, the Political and Security Committee agreed on this principle. The Malian events of the first quarter (the Tuareg rebellion and the coup) provoked the suspension of the programs financed by the European Development Fund (EDF), except emergency humanitarian aid; forced to review the content and the beneficiaries of the Sahel CSDP mission; and convinced the European Member States of the emergency of the situation. In addition to the institutional slowness, the EU, and especially the EEAS, lost time in discussions: it deferred hot issues and decision-making, and therefore lost its capacity to act in a preventive way as it is supposed to do. In the Sahel, the crisis and the risks of extension are well present and the only tools the EU can use are emergency tools.

With the coup in Mali, the EU demonstrated its unpreparedness and was constrained to accelerate the deployment of a CSDP civil mission in Niger (training and advisory mission for the armed forces, named EUCAP Niger) which became effective... on 1st August 2012! The mission in Niger would serve to "essayer les plâtres", meaning undergoing the inconvenience from a new situation, that is to say the Malian crisis and the delay in EU CSDP actions¹¹.

Since March 2012, the EU has been facing an urgent situation in Mali and is now committed to two missions: on one hand, EUTM Mali (European Union Training Mission) in the framework of the CSDP and, on another hand, a financial and logistic support to the international mission to support Mali under ECOWAS leadership. While the relevancy and the risks of the second one are still under discussion in the United Nations, the first one is still in the political proposal stage: mid-November 2012, the EU Member States agreed on the need to establish a Crisis Management Concept but the Operational Concept "Conops" does not exist yet, the effective number is unknown yet, as well as the lead nation¹². It means that EUTM Mali would not be able to be deployed before the spring 2013¹³.

11. Interview with the author. Spring 2012.

12. Interview with the author. Autumn 2012. Actually, after a meeting with another well-informed source, France is likely to be the lead nation for two reasons: first, it will provide the most important staff for the mission. Secondly, to train French-speaking armed forces and to establish the links with the Malian politicians and militaries, it is better to deploy French-speaking militaries and a French chief of mission.

13. The EUTM mission in Mali will be coordinated to but not dependent on the ECOWAS's deployment, which means that it is possible to deploy a CSDP mission before the ECOWAS mission. Interview with the author. Autumn 2012. To

It is worth underlining that the EEAS's lack of political impetus can hinder not only the political initiatives, but also the decision (multiple approbations) and implementation processes (tasks division, planning and recruitment) within the EU.

2.2. The EU does not provide itself with resources that match its ambitions

2.2.1. Lack of coordination between EU institutions and actions on the ground

When the Strategy for the Sahel was released, there was a strong will to coordinate actions between the different European actors involved in the Strategy's implementation¹⁴. At that time, we wrote "At the EEAS level, members of the Task Force Sahel meet two or three times a month. This Task Force is composed of relevant services of the EEAS, but also the EU Counterterrorism coordinator, Gilles de Kerchove, the Algerian Desk, militaries, and members of the Instrument of Stability. The purpose of this informal but important forum of discussion is to broadly evaluate the improvements and difficulties in the implementation of the Strategy. On the field, the Delegations are in charge of the coordination of development actions"¹⁵. At the end of April 2012, an EEAS member, although recognizing the existence of a "dynamic", admitted that the administrative processes were "heavy" and underlined the Member States' different levels of commitment in the region¹⁶.

The purpose of the Strategy logic was twofold: first, a global approach dedicated to the Sahel region linking development and security issues and supposed to coordinate all the EU intervention tools; and secondly, a regional approach instead of a bilateral one (which could not tackle transnational issues). That is why, soon after the publication of the Strategy, a CSDP mission in the Sahel (meaning in the three countries of the Strategy) was proposed. Given that these countries face common threats and supposedly pursue common goals, common response programs (border management, fight against terrorism, etc.) should have been elaborated. All the more so they require common military training and exercises, as well as information and intelligence exchanges. However, for the moment only one CSDP mission is being deployed in Niger (EUCAP Niger) and a Training Mission is planned for Mali (EUTM Mali). Their purposes are different, and so are the actions, a coordination between both is therefore more than hypothetical. Concerning a possible mission in Mauritania, it will only be established if Mauritanian ask for it and if EUCAP Niger is successful. In these conditions, it is legitimate to ask what have become the EU initial purposes, i.e. the regional and preventive approach: the Strategy for Sahel ambitions seem to have been considerably reduced.

2.2.2. The debate about EDF resources for security actions

Another lack of coherence is visible in the implementation of the security aspect of the Strategy. Indeed, although one of the Strategy's objectives is to "tackle simultaneously development and security issues", it seems that the EU does not provide equal efforts in financing these two kinds of activities. It is obvious that in an area where state authorities are inefficient, sustainable development activities are impossible. And therefore security actions (including training,

have more information about the timing coordination of EUTM Mali and ECOWAS intervention, see ROUPPERT, Bérangère. Les États sahéliens et leurs partenaires extra-régionaux. Note d'Analyse du GRIP. 6 décembre 2012.

14. Interview with the author. Autumn 2011.

15. ROUPPERT, Bérangère. The EU Strategy for development and security in the Sahel. Analysis note, GRIP. January 16th, 2012.

16. It means that some Member States don't have any interest in the region and also that Member States do not have the same perception of an « emergency situation ».

provisions of equipment, facilities infrastructures like check-points or military bases, military support such as intelligence cooperation, surveillance support) are needed, as well as actions specifically dedicated to the most vulnerable people (the youth especially) to counter indoctrination and jihadist ideology attraction. We may wonder why there is such a gap between the financial allocation for the development, 500 million Euros, and the financial allocation for the security issues and fight against extremism¹⁷, respectively 135 and 30 million Euros¹⁸.

We can object that European Development Fund (EDF) budget should be dedicated to development actions only and not security ones; but a global strategy is supposed to tackle development and security issues as problems of equivalent importance. Either one decides that EDF budget can also be allocated to tackle security issues because this kind of activities pursues the same goal as development issues; or one decide to allocate other funds of similar importance for these activities. This refers to the current debate between the European Commission and the Council of the EU about the possible use of EDF for security purposes. During a speech at the European Parliament, the European coordinator for the fight against terrorism, Gilles de Kerchove, raises its concerns about a possible reduction of the counter terrorism share in the new Stability Instrument (currently under discussions) and pleads for a review and an adaptation of these principles to the realities of the public development aid¹⁹. He builds his arguments on the OECD guidelines according to which development co-operation “*does have an important role to play in helping to deprive terrorists of popular support and addressing the conditions that terrorist leaders feed on and exploit*” and “*can help to dissuade disaffected groups from supporting terrorism*”²⁰.

The financing of counter-terrorism activities by funds from development cooperation seems to be the only way to guarantee not only that budgets are sufficient enough, but also to ensure their coherence and coordination under the framework of the European Strategy for the Sahel. If multilateral/regional funding fails, the risk is to see a return to bilateral assistance. This is actually a frequent phenomenon, which is a unproductive pity because on the one hand “*regional assistance must be the framework for bilateral assistance*” to ensure coherence; and, on the other hand, “*the regional/multilateral assistance allows to dilute the responsibilities and allow third countries to accept assistance from a regional entity whereas they would not have accepted the assistance from a country from this regional entity*”²¹.

17. See the comparison with the US funding in the security field *in* ROUPPERT, Bérangère. Les États sahéliens et leurs partenaires extra-régionaux: le cas de l'Union européenne. Note d'Analyse du GRIP. 28 novembre 2012.

18. EEAS. Strategy for security and development in the Sahel: implementation progress report. March 2012, pp. 19-20. According to the assessment made by the EEAS in March 2012, 14.5 millions €, out of the 30 millions, have an “ongoing implementation status”. These funds were explicitly targeted at fighting violent extremism. Yet, the author could not relate these investments to any on-the-ground operations or activities. According to the interviews conducted so far, the EU is still in the process of identifying potential actions in this particular field, meaning no action are, as of today, concretely happening.

19. Speech of Gilles de Kerchove. Subcommittee on Security and Defense of the European Parliament. 28 November, 2012.

20. DAC of the OECD. A development cooperation lens on terrorism prevention. 2003, pp.11-12.

21. Interview with the author. Autumn 2012.

2.3. In the implementation process, slowness and inadequate EU actions

2.3.1. *The lack of competences responsible for a too long-running reflexion? The case of counter-terrorism programmes*

In December 2011, a conference was held in Mauritania, gathering local participants, to identify specific areas to conduct deradicalization programs. Development Projects for “supporting young people integration, [...], strengthening the national agency for youth employment, [...], creating leisure and sports facilities for youth in suburban areas, promotion of civic education and civic culture etc.” were identified as well as an initiative to “support the Ministry of Islamic Affairs to train imams”²², which is the only action specifically dedicated to deradicalization. In the EEAS assessment of the Strategy in March, it is specified that these projects will start... in 2013.

However, in Spring 2012, an EEAS member was still wondering how the EU should undertake such programs, referring to the possible example of Mauritania where imams dialogue with extremists in prison. It seemed that the thinking process was still ongoing.

This impression was confirmed in November 2012 with an interview with another member of the EEAS who recognized that the “implementation [of the objective of the ideological fight against extremism] faces difficulties” and was somewhat a “vœu pieux” (wishful thinking). Some reasons can be put forth to explain this situation: the political difficulty to address religious issues²³; a lack of competences of delegations’ staff in security actions and the need to recruit experts in this field; the very heavy workload of delegations’ staff which makes them choosing to act on sectors with which they are familiar, instead on those on which they have no competence.

To correct this, a large 2-days workshop was organized in Mauritania at the end of November, with the EU delegation, local experts and people influential within their communities. Purposes were multiple and almost the same as those put forward at the seminar held in this country in December 2011: first, to create awareness on the importance of this topic for European staff in charge of programming activities; secondly, to convince Development and Cooperation Direction to act on security issues since it is very reluctant to use development funds for counter-terrorism actions; thirdly, to decide on actions to take in matters of counter-terrorism and fight against violent extremism. But this year, it was a “great opportunity” because the EU decided to release 2 million Euro for counter-terrorism projects in Mauritania²⁴. At the end of these two days, three projects have been identified: promotion of dialogue and citizen culture; improvement of the integration of minors in conflict with the law; support to the economic integration of minors. What is striking is that not only missions were already identified last year, but also that the same mistake has been made. The participants focused on development actions rather than on actions specifically targeted toward violent extremism and counter-terrorism issues. These outcomes prompted a person in relation with the Strategy’s security matters, to say that they were as “disappointing and frustrating” as the whole file since the launch of the Strategy²⁵. It took one year of intense thinking to finally reach a consensus on maintaining the status quo...

Mali brings about a wide range of issues related to the EU’s external action. Yet, it could also generate useful experiences and lessons, that the EEAS could mobilize to develop further its

22. EEAS. Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel: implementation progress report. March 2012, p. 12.

23. Interview with the author. Autumn 2012.

24. Ibidem. For the moment, no counter-terrorism projects are planned for Mali and Niger: “Mauritania is the only country where we are doing something but where nothing has been already done”.

25. Ibidem.

reflection on counter-terrorism projects, to recruit and strengthen delegations' staff in fragile States on these security issues as well as to work in close cooperation (and maybe to delegate?), on these specific programs, with local partners.

2.3.2. Facing the crisis, the awareness of an uncompleted conflict analysis

There is a gap between what the EU is providing and what is really needed or expected on the ground from Sahelian authorities.

When a Strategy's long-term purposes are to tackle issues in a country or a region, at different levels and on various fields (politics, economy, social...), it needs to be based on an in-depth study of the country/countries. Although the EU has developed, from the early 2000's, different analysis tools²⁶ in the framework of its Development Cooperation approach, it seems to have neglected their use for this Strategy. Indeed, the lack of in-depth analysis did not allow to assess the whole spectrum of Sahel states vulnerabilities; to identify current instability roots, whether they are structural or conjuncture related or triggers; to identify all the actors, at the national, regional and international levels, and their respective interests and needs; to conceive possible interventions and related risks. The EU policy will ensure conclusive results when it will take into account, in the elaboration of its development and cooperation policies and its action plans, the underlying driving forces as well as the interest and needs of each actor.

The comments of a high-ranking Nigerien official²⁷ can illustrate this point. During an interview in May 2012²⁸ about the security situation in his country and the related policies put in place, he pointed out that "on some parts of the territory, only the armed forces can exert some authority, without this being in contradiction with democracy" or with the administrative authority over the armed forces. Following his line of reasoning, "none of the Sahelian states would deploy any kind of administration if police is the only force in charge of its security". In Niger, outside of Arlit and Agadez, there are no police forces, only a public force which cannot be described as either police, gendarmerie, or military staff but which fulfills all these functions. Actually, he was merely pleading for one security force with extensive powers, meaning an armed force able to lead combat, police and gendarmerie missions. For him, the European support should ideally take the form of armed forced trainings to civil missions and of military equipment (aerial means especially) and weapons deliveries. But while the EU is more than willing to provide humanitarian aid (food, health care), development cooperation (urbanization, industrial supports...), or good governance assistance (training for members of the administration, training for police and gendarmerie forces, training on good governance's practices...), it is still reluctant to strengthen its commitment to the armed forces beyond training. It is quite understandable that there is a big gap between understanding that security can only be guaranteed by multipurpose armed forces and the financing of their material capacities. By contrast, a path to explore would be the (temporary) payment of soldiers' wages in order for the recipient State to have funds available for equipments and weapons.

This is not necessarily an idea to promote –all the more so if one considers the current situation in Nigeria where armed forces seem to be somewhat out of civil authorities' control from and

26. The Country Strategy Papers, the Göteborg programme, the consolidated list of the root causes of conflict, the list to monitor political situation in risk countries

27. According to him, his point of view is widely shared within the Nigerien Administration.

28. Interview with a high-ranking Nigerien official. 2 May, 2012.

entered a cycle of violence and human rights violations in their fight against Boko Haram²⁹. This example is only to demonstrate the mistaken European perception of a State needs and expectations, which makes the African questioning so pertinent: "Are the Americans and Europeans ready to listen to their African partners?"³⁰. Consultation mechanisms must not be rhetorical but should constitute a real support in the exploratory stage, in the elaboration stage of the strategy as well as during the monitoring and assessment stages.

It is essential to perfectly understand the situation to identify accurate and relevant action points, whilst measuring their impacts. If not, implementation of the Strategy would risk to suffer from a lack of support in the recipient country and, therefore to lead to inconclusive results.

What should we remember?

For many years, the EU development cooperation actions have aimed at preventing crisis by strengthening the institutional stability of developing States and more specifically of fragile states. But, despite the appointment of a High Representative for the EU's foreign policy, there is a constant lack of political impetus. Mali is an example: it seems easier to reach an agreement on collective actions when European interests are dangerously at stake and when the situation becomes urgent. Palliative actions seem to characterize the mechanism of EU external action where efficient, deep and sustainable actions are needed.

The EU is determined to act in accordance to a "comprehensive approach", that is to say to act simultaneously on several development and security areas, but several factors prevent this: institutional blockages (duplication, competition, lack of coordination), lack of intra-communication services and a lack of expertise on security issues. The EEAS has not yet developed security competences and seems to still rely on Member States on this point; the Malian crisis should serve as an experience in this regard.

In addition, the Strategy for the Sahel is an approach which originally intended to be innovative and efficient in addressing regional responses to transnational issues. But it seems now to be reduced to the old bilateral policy faced with the deficiencies of multilateralism. The EU does not provide itself with resources that match its ambitions.

The EU also seems to be discrepant with the wishes of countries. Its analyses do not sufficiently address the needs and interests of the various actors within a country. The result is an inadequate assistance and a lack of improvement in the situation of the country. Today it seems that the new cell Conflict Prevention in the European External Action Service (EEAS) has set up tools for conflict analysis for fragile states: they seem most likely to create awareness on the various root causes and triggers of troubles, and on priorities and interests of all stakeholders at the local, national, regional and international levels. This loss of time strengthens the idea of building an institutional memory within the EU.

29. Amnesty International. "Nigeria: trapped in the cycle of violence". 1st November, 2012.

30. Speech of the Nigerian Professor, Kwesi Aning, during the Abuja Debate.

3. Beyond the EU strategy for the Sahel and regarding International Community and EU plans for Mali, fears for the future in Mali

This part aims at raising some important questions about the military intervention in Mali and the after-intervention. Some recommendations are suggested for future European actions in the region and elsewhere.

3.1. Articulation between MISMA and EUTM?



*Présentation du rapport du SGNU
au Conseil de sécurité 5/12/2012 (@UNPhoto)*

The international support mission for Mali under African leadership (MISMA), more specifically under the leadership of ECOWAS, aims at helping Malian forces to recover their entire territory, by sending troops from the West-African organization. As for the EU mission, it aims at training the Malian army. The EU would like to deploy as soon as possible, even before the mission under the command of ECOWAS, that is to say in January 2013. This seems hardly feasible for several reasons³¹:

First, funds for a mission in the framework of the CSDP are released only when the head of the mission is named, which is not yet the case for EUTM Mali³².

Secondly, the legal construction of the mission takes time and is entirely the responsibility of the chief of mission: despite a request to create a "shared service center", the standardization of procedures for implementing CSDP missions is still pending. Logistics is also a factor explaining the delay in launching a mission because its success depends on preconditions to the deployment (such as finding a headquarters base, technical equipments)³³ and on the recruitment of specialized staff: for CSDP missions, Member States are willing to put at the EU disposal 4,000 seconded staff people, which is seen as too little with 1.7 candidate for each position.

But even if the EUTM Mali was deployed in the first quarter of 2013, the training time for soldiers would still take time: to make them capable of handling their new equipment and capable to "hunt down" the armed groups in northern Mali. Three to four battalions are to be trained by the EU plus one for combat support. These battalions are supposed to constitute the first line in ousting armed groups out of northern Mali. The first battalion should reach an operational status only by July 2013. It will then take more time to have the other two to three operational as well. Yet, the ECOWAS mission, designed as a second line and to prop up these battalions, is scheduled

31. Interview with the author. Autumn 2012. This view was also supported by M.Habber, Director of the EU Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability, during its audit by the subcommittee on security and defence of the EU Parliament, 28 November, 2012.

32. At the beginning of December, when this note was completed.

33. M. Danjean, President of the subcommittee on security and defence of the EU Parliament, explained that it was not uncommon for EU staff to go on mission with their own mobile phone and to pay for hotel accommodation.

in September 2013. It is thus difficult to see how the Malian battalions could be combat-ready by then³⁴. The incompatibility of schedules seems therefore obvious.

A possible reason behind that may be that international policy makers and planners (which operate under UN supervision) were well aware that Malian forces would not likely live up to the challenge of fighting well-organized, experienced armed groups³⁵. But, to avoid being accused of "violation of the sovereignty of a State" or "neocolonialism", they have preferred this kind of assistance plan to Malian forces, and cautiously placed the mission under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Thus, in case Malian forces were defeated by the armed groups, ECOWAS staff could engage in combats against them and take over as first-liners.

Moreover, even after the release of the report of the Secretary General of the UN on November 29th (requested by the Security Council Resolution 2071 of 12 October, 2012) on the military intervention, questions still remain unanswered. Despite the implication of numerous actors in this intervention, issues of coordination "are not well put together". However, coordination is paramount to avoiding duplication and waste of resources. Another issue that has not been answered, the financing of the equipment for the Malian army: the former leaders of the Malian army are known to have diverted funds that were supposed to buy troops equipment, and to have provided their soldiers with "obsolete weapons, not functional weapons, or weapons without spare parts"³⁶; other modern amenities provided by extra-regional partners such as Canada, have fallen into the hands of armed groups. Equipments are important and must be addressed quickly so that Malian troops can fulfill their role in the military mission against the armed groups. Yet the funding issue is still not resolved³⁷: neither France nor the EU have engaged in this area³⁸, perhaps the Russians, Chinese, Indians or Brazilians? Donors Conference to address these issues is to take place fifteen days after the submission of the report of the Secretary-General of the UN, that is to say mid-December³⁹.

3.2. Is a EUTM mission relevant for Mali?

The issues of relevance and timeliness are of preponderant significance here, because this type of mission requires time, a luxury that nobody can afford at the risk of strengthening the anchorage of armed groups in northern Mali. EUTM Mali is therefore inconsistent with the urgency of the situation and with the quick reaction which is required. In addition, this would mean training Malian troops for "low intensity combat" whereas they will face high intensity combat⁴⁰.

34. The current state of the Malian army is not really known. What is certain is that the chain of command and control that the EU aims to restore was broken. The rest is greatly unknown and should be clarified by the audit conducted by the French army in November, in order to establish the size of the army in Mali, the knowledge of the soldiers and the equipment needs. The report from France is believed to have been presented to the Chief of Staff and the French Delegation for Strategic Affairs of the French Ministry of Defence (28 November) and Crisis Management and Planning Directorate (CMPD) and the State Major EU the day after. Interview with the author. Autumn 2012.

35. This seems to be confirmed by a conversation with two sources: a "non-paper" would have suggested to give Malian forces the opportunity of an easily won battle in order to boost their morale. Autumn 2012.

36. Interview with a Malian official. This diversion of resources to the detriment of the military equipment has also been mentioned during an interview with a well-informed diplomat. November 2012.

37. Interview with the author. Autumn 2012.

38. Ibidem.

39. When this note was released, this Conference was still not planned.

40. Interview with the author. Autumn 2012.

A military with a deep knowledge of the file believes that "the EU will be misled or that PSDC mission will last"⁴¹. Mali needs a "true SSR mission" (Security Sector Reform) because of the areas covered by this type of mission: recruitment, training and equipment. In addition, a process of demobilization and disarmament would be required to accompany SSR, for civilian militias that took up arms against the armed groups and for armed groups which will have chosen the path of political dialogue or will have been defeated. This option seemed more appropriate especially as the EU gathered experience in this field ... although "it takes time and specialists!"⁴².

Another recommendation would be to include, in EU training programs of the armed forces, modules on good practices. In Mali corruption and clientelism have been institutionalized under President Touré, from the very top of the political and military establishment to the police agent in a village. This corruption is not unconnected with some kinds of trafficking, which can explain why the international fight against criminal activities did not produce any relevant outcomes and why criminality continues to expand. Moreover, the cooptation and the discrimination systems have created frustration and resentment toward the national system: for example the Tuareg rebels, whose leaders were co-opted to "buy peace" and others left out, or military officers having been cashiered to be replaced by privileged people without military training. This is why it is necessary to include modules on corruption, in addition to the current modules on human rights (in order to avoid tortures, assassinations, violence abuses) and International Humanitarian Law. An option path that might be worth to explore in order to monitor the long term corruption degree in the army would be to establish a body which is not viewed as a "tool in the hands of the West" and whose role would be to observe practices and to propose some improvements for them.

3.3. Post-crisis Mali

3.3.1. Thinking about an exit strategy

To think about an exit strategy from a crisis theater is essential to avoid unpleasant surprises similar to that of the post-Libyan crisis. It refers again to the importance of conflict analysis, which is supposed to identify the broad spectrum of stakeholders in the region. Among them, there are states that have diverging opinions and stance towards maintaining active terrorism in the region⁴³ and states known for their support of Wahhabism⁴⁴, Islamic current which is claimed by Islamist groups in Northern Mali⁴⁵. Even before the military action began, it is essential that an open dialogue is established between Mali's partners, including the EU in particular, and those States, to prevent any interference by intermediaries and therefore the establishment of a lasting instability.

A post-conflict situation also requires considering the future of people who have lived for several months under the control of armed groups and Islamist groups, vectors of a violent ideology and of defenders a strict Islamic law enforcement. Even if armed groups are defeated by the

41. It is important to note in this context that the asymmetry issue and the risk of stagnation of the international mission are not sufficiently taken into account in official documents and in discussions between planners. Interview with the author. Autumn 2012.

42. Interview with the author. Autumn 2012.

43. The ambiguous role of Algeria in its fight against terrorism, against a background of internal struggle between civil and military power / intelligence services, was mentioned several times in interviews and seminars I have attended, both by Africans and Europeans.

44. Saudi Arabia and Qatar especially.

45. Indeed, the destruction of the mausoleums of Timbuktu is in the logic of the Wahhabism current which do not tolerate any holy tomb.

international mission and “ousted” from Northern Mali, socio-cultural issues will emerge such as the ideological footprint left by Islamists in populations of North Mali: reflection needs to be conducted on how to return to the diffusion of a moderate Islam for peaceful coexistence throughout the territory. Now it is also the time to launch a reflection about the management, in the post-intervention period, of new solidarities, clan and tribal allegiances which will have been created during the long period under the control of Islamist groups. This consideration must include the possibility of a return, in Northern Mali, of these fighters who benefited from popular support because of these new relationships.

In addition, a “civilian surge” must be reflected upon now, before the intervention, so that as soon as a town is recaptured, Development actors would be able to properly respond to the population's expectations to pave the way to the transition process⁴⁶.

3.3.2. Looking beyond the elections

When reading the strategic concept for the resolution of Malian's crisis adopted by ECOWAS, the AU and the UN as well as the conclusions of the EU Council in October, one of the common points is the emphasis put on the organization of free, transparent and democratic elections. Too often, the electoral process is considered as an end in itself, as the “return of democracy's gold standard”⁴⁷, instead of a key step of a wider process aimed at creating a common will to work together and lead towards a peaceful transition. And when external observers conclude that the process was quite satisfactory, the attention of the International Community (IC) moves away. Even though it is self-evident, it is worth recalling that the processes of political stability and of political reconstruction take time, several years quite often. Indeed, “to conceive the electoral calendar as the democratic transition's ultimate objective skips crucial questions such as the national community reconstruction”⁴⁸. Electoral processes were no guarantee against violent confrontations in the post electoral period in Democratic Republic of Congo and in Cote d'Ivoire because the upstream search for consultation and consensus among all the components of the society had been neglected⁴⁹. Westerners who created good governance principles and who are campaigning for transparency in governance and administration management in third countries, have difficulties respecting themselves (for example, corruption scandals involving officials). Practices of good governance are under construction everyday in every country and are not solved by free, transparent and democratic elections.

The political reconstruction process and its credibility require the establishment of transitional justice mechanisms: “the culture of impunity must end in order to diffuse a message according to which crime is not profitable”⁵⁰. Indeed, if impunity persists and some crimes remain unaddressed (the Aguelhoc massacres for example), resentment and vengeance as well as a continuation of criminal activities could long undermine the stabilization and reconciliation processes. This message must be conveyed not only to Islamist groups such as AQIM, Mujwa and Ansar Eddine, but also to the Tuareg movement (MNLA). Indeed, these transitional justice mechanisms must be impartial and avoid politicization. Malian authorities are now considering joining forces with MNLA

46. Speech of Gilles de Kerchove. Subcommittee on Security and Defence of the European Parliament. 28 November, 2012. He referred to US General Mc Chrystal strategy in Afghanistan “clear, hold and build”.

47. ABASS AHAMED, Saïd. « Démocratisation en temps de guerre : le rôle des Nations unies et de l'Union européenne en République démocratique du Congo ». *Annuaire des Grands Lacs n° 10, 2005-2006*. Paris: L'Harmattan, p. 304.

48. Ibidem, p.301.

49. LUNTUMBUE, Michel. L'implication de la communauté internationale dans les processus électoraux en Côte d'Ivoire et RDC : une analyse comparée. *Note d'Analyse du GRIP*. 3 août 2012, *passim*.

50. Speech of Gilles de Kerchove. *Op. cit.*

to defeat Islamist armed groups, hence disregarding the deep wounds that former combats with the MNLA have occasioned within the Malian military. In so doing, they would also put the upcoming transitional justice process in jeopardy: if MNLA members are granted an amnesty, this would undoubtedly endanger any reconciliation prospects.

Adding to that, a transitional justice should be adapted to the situation in Mali, meaning it should take into consideration what could and what could not be done according to the country's beliefs and traditions. But what is sure is that without "acknowledgment", "forgiveness" and "reconciliation"⁵¹, the State building on healthy, solid, peaceful and sustainable foundations would be compromised.

Conclusion

18 months after its publication, the implementation of the European Strategy for development and security in the Sahel faces a range of obstacles:

- Institutional obstacles with the lack of coordination between European institutions, even after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty; the lack of coherence between the different EU intervention tools; and the lack of political impetus from the leader of the EEAS.
- Contextual obstacles with the sudden deterioration of the situation in Mali which put into question the Strategy format.

18 months after its publication, the European Strategy for development and security in the Sahel seemed to have moved away from its initial aims, mostly because it does not provide itself with resources that match its ambitions:

- Instead of being a preventive policy with long-term goals, it results in an emergency and humanitarian policy with short-term goals. The lack of a systematic early-warning system in third countries, and particularly in fragile states is detrimental to the prevention ambition.
- The lack of institutional memory put asides some analysis tools developed a few years ago. The results are therefore quite disappointing: mistakes are still made on the conflict analysis approach, and gaps can be observed between EU perception and realities and expectations on the ground.
- Although the EU is committed to tackle security issues in parallel to development ones, it is still reluctant to dedicate Development funds for security programs even though the latter pursue indirectly development objectives and strengthen them. A global approach requires efforts of similar importance for issues of equal importance.

Some recommendations can be issued for the EU development cooperation policy:

- To set in motion preventive policy and to assume them as such, in order to prevent them from a disappearance under long-lasting emergency humanitarian policies;
- The need to adopt a model of conflict analysis for future strategies such as, for example, the scheme given in the appendix;

51. Interview with a source who, to expose the risks of future tensions in Mali, referred to the previous crisis in Biafra (Nigeria), traces of which were still palpable in the Nigerian society precisely because these three steps were not been completed. It was inspired by that of Chinua Achebe in his memoirs. Autumn 2012.

- To establish an institutional memory so that the initiatives taken in the past (including tools for conflict analysis) do not remain empty words and are taken over by the successors of the original developers;
- To provide itself with the necessary tools to implement its policy, and to create coherence by making the objectives and the means match, including in financial terms;
- To establish regular assessments to provide an accurate picture of progress and gaps in order to correct and redirect actions quickly.
- To lead considerations on post-conflict situation before or in parallel to the intervention is all the more necessary that it is part of the prevention approach.

Such observations have obviously their own lot of limitations, yet it is the author's strong opinion – and wish – that cumulatively, they would open the floor to some innovative thinking about the security situation in Mali and the EU's policy in addressing this situation. Although polemical, alternative options exist with regards to the EU's external action, especially in the Sahel. The case study provided by Mali proves that debates pertaining to the EU's role in its close and distant neighborhood should now encompass a wider variety of opinions and perspectives, and give a greater consideration to long-overlooked realities of the field. Opinions expressed here try to pave the way for such a redefinition of the debates to occur, and plead for a greater pragmatism in the EU's strategies.

* * *

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Le **Groupe de recherche et d'information sur la paix et la sécurité (GRIP)**, créé en 1979, est un centre de recherche indépendant reconnu comme organisation d'éducation permanente par le Ministère de la Communauté française de Belgique. Le GRIP a pour objectif d'éclairer citoyens et décideurs sur les problèmes souvent complexes de défense et de sécurité, et souhaite ainsi contribuer à la diminution des tensions internationales et tendre vers un monde moins armé et plus sûr en soutenant les initiatives en faveur de la prévention des conflits, du désarmement et de l'amélioration de la maîtrise des armements. Le GRIP est composé d'une équipe de 22 collaborateurs permanents, dont 14 chercheurs universitaires, ainsi que de nombreux chercheurs-associés en Belgique et à l'étranger. < www.grip.org >